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Hashem glad dental service fees to be hiked for expats

MPs demand bedoon agency be placed under interior ministry

By B Izzak

UAE: Gulf Cup boycott is over Kuwait ban

DUBAI: A Qatar-hosted soccer tournament for Arab nations should not go ahead unless Kuwait's FIFA ban is lifted, the UAE Football Association's president said yesterday, denying that his country's boycott was related to the crisis between Gulf states. Qatar is hosting in December the Gulf Nations Cup, a tournament that usually involves Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Yemen.

At the competition's draw in Qatar last month, which was boycotted by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain, organizers said the UAE and Bahrain had requested the tournament be postponed. Neither country's representatives replied to Reuters' requests for explanation of their absence at the time. UAE FA President Marwan bin Ghalaita told Reuters in Dubai yesterday that his

federation has informed organizers that "the Gulf Cup cannot be played without Kuwait", adding that the request was "nothing political".

Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain cut ties with Qatar in June, including banning their citizens from visiting the fellow Gulf Arab state, over accusations that Qatar supports terrorism. Doha denies the charges. FIFA banned Kuwait's national soccer federation in 2015 over alleged government interference and said recently that the suspension would be lifted "only when the Kuwait Football Association (KFA) and its members (the clubs) are able to carry out their activities and obligations independently".

Asked if the UAE would compete in Qatar if Kuwait's FIFA ban was lifted, Bin Ghalaita said: "If Kuwait played, this would solve a lot of things". The Arab Gulf Cup Football Federation (AGCFF) has said the tournament would go ahead, though at least five teams are needed under the competition's current format. The tournament, which rotates hosts, could be an early test for Qatar which has spent billions of dollars preparing to be the first Arab country to host the World Cup in 2022. — Reuters

KUWAIT: MP Safa Al-Hashem, who has been calling to tax expatriates for walking on the road, said yesterday that charges on public dental services offered to expatriates will be raised like other medical services. The lawmaker, who had also called for imposing a five percent tax on remittances by foreigners, said that the health minister has revised the existing prices of dental services in a prelude to raising them for expats.

The lawmaker denied on her Twitter account that dental services have been spared from the hikes that include many medical services implemented at the start of October. She also blasted those who criticize the health minister for raising charges on expatriates, saying this is intended to protect medicine merchants, whom she described as "sharks" who are not concerned for the "lives and health" of Kuwaitis. Hashem, the only female in the 50-member house, has been targeting expatriates with proposals and calls that some of her colleagues and many Kuwaiti writers describe as "racist".

Incidentally, a group of dentists had expressed displeasure towards a decision by the assistant undersecretary for dental medicine affairs for not including expats who visit dental clinics in the fee increase. They claimed the official is aware that the equipment and material used to treat dental cases are very expensive and cost the country millions annually.

The dentists asked the government to



Safa Al-Hashem

move quickly and cancel the undersecretary's decision and apply the increase on expats "in the interests of the country and citizens", wondering what was the interest of the official to not include expats in the fee increase decision. They said the dental sector suffers from unilateral decisions without any study, condemning the official's response after an escalation in the media and the "bogus" achievements he continues to claim.

Meanwhile, well-known Kuwaiti writer Fajr Al-Saeed yesterday criticized lawmakers who are targeting expatriates with abnormal proposals and charged they are doing this

because they failed to oppose the government. She said that many lawmakers acted like strong opponents to the government during the election campaign, but later turned against expatriates because they failed to oppose the government.

An opposition MP on Monday proposed imposing an annual charge of KD 1,200 on every expatriate holding a driving license. MP Khaled Al-Otaibi said the proposal will be the best solution for traffic jams on Kuwaiti roads. The proposal must be approved by the National Assembly to become effective.

In another issue, lawmakers are moving quickly to propose solutions to the plight of over 110,000 stateless people or bedoons living in the country. Five MPs submitted a draft law yesterday calling to move the central agency for bedoons under the interior ministry, saying this would accelerate resolving their problem. The agency has been accused of deliberately obstructing any solution to the bedoon crisis.

A meeting of the agency yesterday chaired by the interior minister discussed ways to speed up naturalizing bedoons who qualify for citizenship. Head of the interior and defense committee MP Askar Al-Enezi said yesterday that 10 lawmakers will submit a proposal calling to vote on a law that determines the number of people who can be naturalized this year. This is one of the avenues to resolve the bedoon problem, he said. Enezi said the committee yesterday also approved an amendment to the army law to allow the admission of bedoons in the armed forces.

Islamic State loses emblematic Syria stronghold Raqqa

RAQQA, Syria: US-backed forces took full control of Raqqa from the Islamic State group yesterday, defeating the last militant holdouts in the de facto Syrian capital of their now-shattered "caliphate". The victory caps a battle of more than four months for Raqqa, and hammers another nail in the coffin of the militant group's experiment in statehood, which has collapsed in the face of offensives in Syria and Iraq.

Inside Raqqa, overjoyed fighters from the Kurdish-Arab Syrian Democratic Forces celebrated and raised their yellow flag in the city's Al-Naim traffic circle, which became known as "Hell Roundabout" after militants used it for gruesome public executions. Raqqa had become a byword for atrocities carried out by the militants and it was from the city that IS organized devastating attacks it has claimed abroad like the Paris massacres in 2015 or August's attacks in Barcelona.

"Hell Roundabout is now Al-Naim Roundabout again," the fighters in Raqqa cheered, surrounded by crushed buildings and charred cars damaged in the ferocious battle for the city. Rojda Felat, the SDF's commander for its Raqqa operation, flashed a wide grin as she waved a huge yellow flag emblazoned with the mili-



RAQQA, Syria: Rojda Felat, a Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commander, waves her group's flag at the iconic Al-Naim Square yesterday. — AFP

tia's name, her rifle hanging from her shoulder. "God willing, joy will return to the whole city," said fighter Sevger Himmo, his eyes gleaming.

The defeat of IS in Raqqa was a victory "the whole world was waiting for", said Omar Alloush, a member of the Raqqa Civil Council formed to run the city after its

liberation. Raqqa has been devastated by fighting and emptied of civilians, with the last few thousand departing under a deal implemented over the weekend. For Umm Abdullah, a Raqqa native who fled the city three years ago, news of its capture was overwhelming.

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Duterte declares Marawi liberated

MARAWI, Philippines: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday declared a southern city "liberated from terrorists' influence" but the military said the five-month battle against militants loyal to the Islamic State group was not yet over. Duterte led rain-soaked soldiers in celebrations in Marawi, a day after the military announced the death of the head of the Islamic State group in Southeast Asia, Isnilon Hapilon, in a gun battle in the city.

"Ladies and gentlemen, I hereby declare Marawi liberated from the terrorists' influence that marks the beginning of the rehabilitation," Duterte said, speaking moments after explosions and gunfire were heard in the city. "I promise you this will never happen again," he said as he gave troops a snappy salute. Duterte said the liberation was not a

cause for celebration and later apologized to the people of Marawi for the destruction. "We had to do it," he said. "There was no alternative."

Duterte stood on a gymnasium stage with a ruined roof near a tarpaulin bearing large photos of the dead militants. After he left, soldiers took selfies in front of a bombed-out building while others hoisted a Philippine flag atop a tank. Military chief of staff General Eduardo Ano later clarified that the fighting against 20 to 30 remaining militants continued, describing them as "stragglers" and the clashes as "mopping operations". "The small number of the remaining enemy can now be considered a law enforcement matter and does not constitute (a) serious threat to hinder (rehabilitation)," Ano said in a statement.

Continued on Page 11



MARAWI: Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte (on stage in brown) raises a clenched fist as he shouts declaring Marawi "liberated" during a ceremony inside the battle area of Bangolo district yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

MoI arrests fraudsters

KUWAIT: Members of an international money laundering and fraud network were arrested by a specialized unit from the interior ministry, a statement said yesterday. The ministry's public relations department said the suspects, who hold South African and Nigerian passports, lured victims through social media and convinced them to transfer money using different pretexts. The public relations department thanked all those who provided valuable information that led to the arrest of the criminals, stressing that citizens should be vigilant and aware that similar networks are still at large and continue their illicit acts.

DNA law scrapping hailed

KUWAIT: Human Rights Watch yesterday commended a decision by Kuwait to drop a controversial counterterrorism law mandating DNA testing for all citizens, residents and visitors, which had been passed following a 2015 suicide attack. "The court's decision to overturn the DNA law is a very positive step that ends this misguided and hastily passed invasion of privacy in Kuwait," said Sarah Leah Whitson, Middle East director at HRW. The law was passed in 2015 after a suicide bombing at a Shiite mosque which killed 26 people and wounded 227 others. Najd Province, the Saudi Arabian affiliate of the Islamic State group, claimed the June 2015 suicide attack. Kuwait's constitutional court, which oversees the compliance of law with the constitution, ruled on Oct 5 the DNA law unconstitutional on the grounds that it contravened articles on personal liberty.

Spaceship burns up over Dubai

DUBAI: Parts of an unmanned Russian cargo spaceship burned across the night sky of the Arabian Peninsula, drawing gasps from Dubai to Riyadh before breaking up in the Earth's atmosphere and scattering in the Indian Ocean. The fiery end Monday night to parts of Progress MS-07 came as planned after it delivered 2.5 metric tons of water, food and scientific equipment to the astronauts aboard the International Space Station. Parts of the ship could be seen re-entering the atmosphere from 7:35 pm Monday, said Hasan Ahmad Al-Hariri, CEO of the Dubai Astronomy Group. It streaked across the Dubai skyline behind the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building, drawing both stunned and anxious reactions from those watching. The governmental Dubai Media Office, citing the sheikhdom's Mohammed bin Rashid Space Center, had quickly described the aerial display a "meteorite".

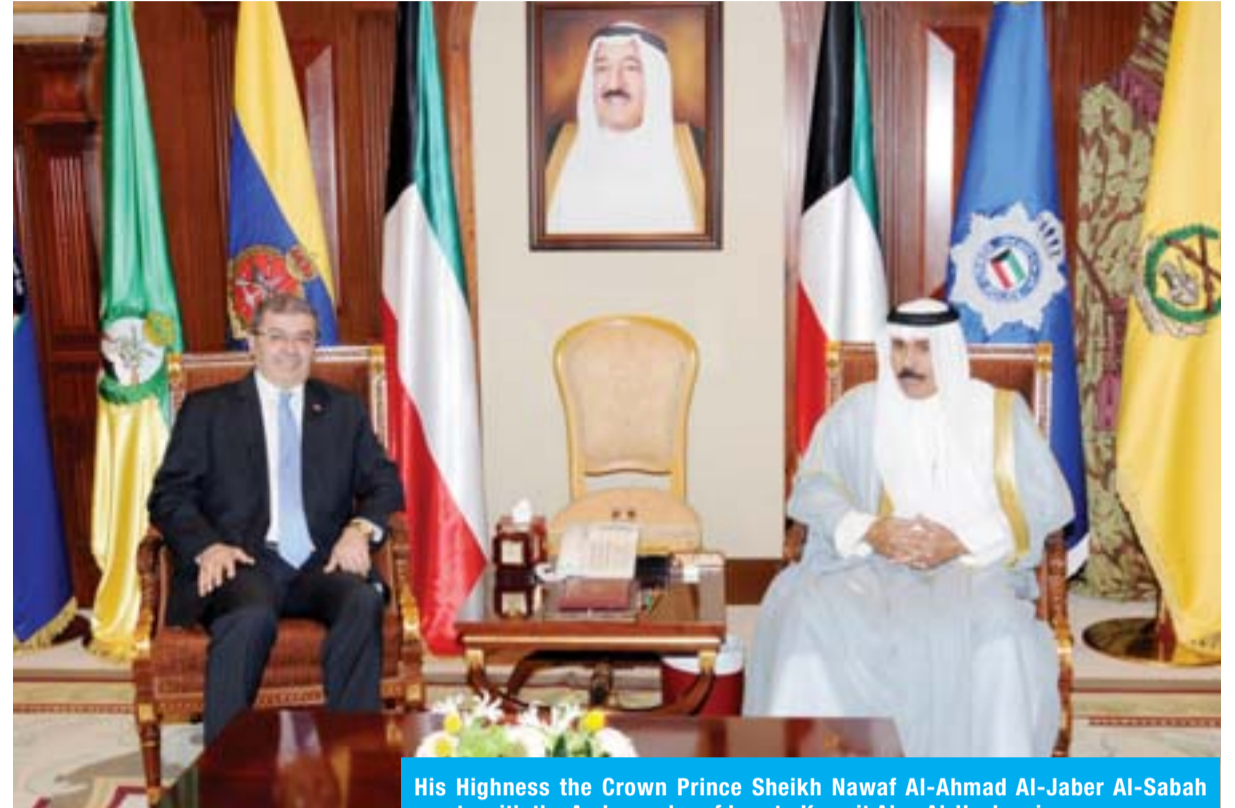
Local

Amir meets Italian defense minister

Crown Prince receives envoys



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting Italian Minister of Defense Roberta Pinotti. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the Ambassador of Iraq to Kuwait Alaa Al-Hashemi.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received the visiting Italian Minister of Defense Roberta Pinotti and her accompanying delegation. Deputy Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah also

attended the meeting. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the visiting Italian Minister later yesterday as well.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Public Works Abdulrahman Al-Mutawa accompanied by the newly appointed Director General of Public Authority for Roads and

Transportation Ahmad Al-Hassan. His Highness the Amir also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the Ambassador of Iraq to Kuwait Alaa Al-Hashemi on the occasion of assuming his new office. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Ambassador of the

Kingdom of Thailand Dooset Manabal and Ambassador of the Kingdom of Butan Tsereng Gelchen Banjor on assuming their offices. The meetings were held in presence of the Crown Prince Diwan Undersecretary for Protocol Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown received Mutawa, Hassan and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad. — KUNA

Arab lawmakers laud Ghanem's speech on Palestine

SAIN PETERSBURG: Arab lawmakers taking part in the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) lauded yesterday the speech delivered by Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem on the Palestinian cause, saying that it reflected Kuwait's strong commitment towards the issue.

Head of the Palestinian parliamentary delegation to the meeting Azzam Al-Ahmad said that Ghanem's speech to the IPU highlighted this paramount issue for the Arab world, affirming that strong opposition by the international community should meet the Israeli injustice towards Palestinians.

On the parliamentary level, the Israeli Knesset is approving legislations and laws that violate international laws and norms, said the Palestinian lawmaker, stressing that Palestine, in cooperation with Arab and international partners, will seek all legal and legislative measures to counter Israel's unjust policies.

Similarly, head of the Tunisian parliament's delegation Dr Lutfi Al-Nabli commended the Kuwaiti speaker for his sincere stance on the Palestinian issue. Arabs need to bond together and have a unified position on the Palestinian cause, said Nabli who indicated that Ghanem's speech was within such efforts to end the Israeli aggressions against Palestinians. Kuwaiti chief lawmaker addressed the IPU's 137th Session in Saint Petersburg, Russia, early Monday, where he called on the IPU to practice ethical power and counter Israel's violations.

Key contents

Kuwaiti MP Waleed Al-Tabtabae, treasurer of the parliamentary caucus, said Ghanem's speech was strong, expressive and effective. Ghanem's speech did not only represent the State of Kuwait but also all Arabs and Muslims, referring that it was praised by all delegations, he said. Meanwhile, MP Youssef Fadhalah, a member of the parliamentary caucus, said the speech by Ghanem contained some key contents, mainly the call for stopping humanitarian catastrophe the Rohingya Muslims are facing and violations of the Israel's Knesset against Palestinians as well as the activation of IPU's role to curb such violations.



Head of the Palestinian parliamentary delegation Azzam Al-Ahmad

Demands presented by the Kuwaiti delegation found positive reactions by other delegations, he said.

MP Safaa Al-Hashem stressed that the delegation's demand on freezing membership of those violating basic humanitarian principles was clear. She said the Kuwaiti delegation managed to influence on the participating parliamentary delegations at the conference regarding some issues, and promoted Kuwait's status on the international level.

She referred that Kuwait's parliamentary delegations have been growing impacts to activate the country's parliamentary diplomacy. She expressed her sorrow that most crises are occurring in the Middle East region, indicating that Kuwait is leading international efforts to achieve peace and humanitarian rights of peoples.

Effective speaker

President of Arab Parliament Meshaal Al-Selmi affirmed that Ghanem is an effective speaker in the Arab world, lauding his call for practicing pressures on the Israel Knesset to stop its criminal acts, which run counter to the international humanitarian law.

Selmi commended successful participation of the Arab delegations at the IPU conference, emphasizing that inserting the Rohingya's suffering as an emergency item at the event reflects keenness by the Arab world on supporting human rights. Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Secretary General Fayez Al-Shawabkeh also extolled Ghanem's efforts in organizing requests pertaining to the issue of Rohingya, saying Ghanem has several ideas, which serve the Arab issues. — KUNA

Envoy lauds Kuwait's initiative to host conference on Palestinian children

KUWAIT: Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub has praised Kuwait's initiative to host the first conference on the sufferings of the Palestinian children. It is normal for Kuwait, a 'Humanitarian Center,' whose leader His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was named 'Humanitarian Leader' by the global community, to host the event, Tahboub said in an interview yesterday. This is part of Kuwait's support to the Palestinian cause, he said, noting that he saw

for himself how the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry is working hard in preparation for the conference, slated for November 12, so that it can come out with positive results for the benefit of the Palestinian children.

The event will shed light on the sufferings of the Palestinian children at the hands of the Israeli occupation authorities over decades; they were detained, and their innocence was stolen, besides being deprived of the simplest basic rights enjoyed by peers worldwide.

Deputy Foreign Minister Khalid Al-Jarallah announced at the opening of the 148th Session of Arab League Council in Cairo last December that Kuwait would host the international conference in November 2017 amid Israel's violations against the Palestinians children.

Only country

Meanwhile, Tahboub said that Kuwait is the only country that fully honored its commitment for the construction in Gaza, paying \$200 million it pledged in a Cairo conference in October 2014. The envoy pointed to Kuwait's support to the Palestinian cause and rights over the years,

saying that bilateral relations were as "distinct as ever." On the local scene, Tahboub commended the recent reconciliation deal concluded between the Palestinian Fatah and Hamas movements, and highlighted His Highness the Amir's repeated call for unity among the Palestinians. The deal will no doubt bolster the Palestinian side in the political negotiations with the Israelis, he stressed. As for the Interpol's vote last September guaranteeing Palestine full membership in the organization, Tahboub said the resolution was a "recognition from the international community that Palestine is an "independent and sovereign state" that has the right to be part of the UN agencies. — KUNA



Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub

K-Net transactions value surpassed \$1bn in 2016, says minister

KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said yesterday that the transactions value of the retail payment system (K-Net) in Kuwait has surpassed \$1 billion in 2016. Digital business in Kuwait has seen lately a major prosperity, Roudhan, also Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs, said in his opening speech at the second edition of ArabNet Kuwait conference and exhibition.

Social media penetration in Kuwait is at 96 percent, one of the highest globally, and leading the MENA region on platforms such as Snapchat and Instagram, he said. Websites in Kuwait also attract a high percentage of viewers: around 320 million viewers monthly with an average of six minutes of time spent on a page, added Roudhan. Such an excellent ratio indicates that Kuwaiti web users prefer reading web headlines in more details than fast browsing, he said.

Kuwait gives special attention and keenness to all initiatives aimed to enhance youth potentials and foster their abilities and skills in various fields, Roudhan said. Kuwait also spares no effort in sponsoring, supporting, and



Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan

backing such serious initiatives, added the senior official. The Kuwait government has so far achieved significant steps in encouraging youngsters and supporting their private business initiatives, including information technology (IT), he noted. It has provided the youngsters with an environment for their IT initiatives, beginning with enhancing school and academic curriculums, said Roudhan. The government also helped in creating incubations for companies, securing funds and legislations, providing an infrastructure for economic and social development, and creating newer job opportunities for youngsters, he added.

Youth projects

Most of the new legislations in Kuwait were issued in favor of youth action and projects such as backing micro-enterprises, cutting-down on commercial licenses procedures and issuing them electronically in a record time, added the minister. The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise Development was established as an independent public corporation, with a total capital of KD 2 billion, to encourage youth potentials, support their busi-

Kuwait still stands in solidarity with Rohingya: Otaibi

NEW YORK: Kuwait stands in solidarity with the Rohingya and the government of Bangladesh which is hosting people trying to escape from the horrendous acts carried out by

the authorities in Myanmar, said a top Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday.

Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi told a meeting geared towards supporting the Rohingya that the event touched on the Kuwaiti humanitarian assistance to the prosecuted minority. He indicated that the UN meeting thanked the Kuwaiti efforts in aiding the Rohingya, affirming that his country was eager to live up to its UN honorary status as an international humanitarian hub.

The meeting touched on the upcoming Geneva conference on October 23 on the humanitarian response for the Rohingya in Bangladesh, said Ambassador Otaibi. He added that participants in the upcoming event must intensify their efforts to realize the goal of gathering \$2.3 million for this noble cause. Ambassador Otaibi indicated that yesterday's meeting also touched on statistics regarding this humanitarian catastrophe, revealing that since August 25, some 539,000 Rohingya have crossed the borders to seek refuge in Bangladesh. — KUNA

Local

Over 240 illegals arrested in crackdowns around Kuwait

Disabled woman kidnapped, raped in Ahmadi

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and agencies

KUWAIT: Detectives conducted an inspection campaign yesterday in Jahra industrial area where 70 expatriates in violations of residency laws, including absconders and people wanted for various crimes, were arrested. Meanwhile, security forces conducted a wide scale inspection campaign in various areas around Kuwait that resulted in arresting 174 illegal residents, seven people with possession of drugs as well as an unspecified number of fugitives and people caught under the influence of drugs and alcohol. In addition, 18 vehicles were impounded during the crackdown.

Rape

A man abducted a disabled woman from her workplace and raped her. He then dumped her and escaped. The victim went to a police station in Ahmadi governorate and told them a man forced her to leave her workplace, bundled her in his car and took her to an apartment where he raped her. Detectives were able to identify the suspect and his phone number. The man did not answer the phone when he was called, and detectives are looking for him to be arrested and questioned.

Forgery

An Asian woman and an Arab man working as company representative were arrested over charges of forging an official document, said security sources. The woman had paid the representative an amount of money to transfer her residency visa to another sponsor without the

original sponsor's knowledge. A case was filed.

Drugs

General security men found 17 bags of heroin and shabu (meth) that a Bangladeshi man hid in a sandy area in Farwaniya. Policemen suspected the man who was burying the bags near an abandoned car. The man ran away, but was chased and caught. Meanwhile, police arrested a citizen late at night in Hawally and found he is wanted in an undisclosed case by the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD). The man was taken to DCGD under heavy guard. Separately, a female citizen called police for help, and when police responded, they found that her son had detained and threatened her. Police were able to bring the man under control and found him under the influence of drugs. He was also wanted on several civil cases.

Reckless driving

A citizen was charged with resisting arrest, recklessness, driving the wrong way, running a red light, driving on the pavement and not paying attention while driving, before being sent to the Drugs Control General Department for drug possession and abuse. A police patrol noticed a car in a sandy area, and the driver escaped as soon as he saw police, but he was chased and caught. He was found under the influence, and had four tablets on him. In Hawally, a bedoon was arrested for attempting to attack police after being caught in Salwa with 280 illicit tablets. The bedoon attempted to hide a bag, then refused to open it and was resisting when some tablets fell out from it.

Theft

An unidentified person stole KD 6,000 from a broker's car. The broker parked his car in Amghara for a few minutes to buy wood, and when he returned, he discovered the money was stolen. He went to Sulaihiya police station and lodged a complaint.

Intrusion

Facilities security arrested two people for attempting to enter an off-limit area. One suspect, an Afghan national, was carrying a permit in the name of another compatriot, and entered along with the second suspect, Egyptian. The Ahmadi prosecutor ordered the arrest of the two men. The incident took place at Ahmadi Port.

Municipality campaigns

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department said the capital branch carried out several campaigns at co-op societies, shops and stores dealing with food items. The campaign resulted in taking two underwritings from store owners to comply with health conditions. Meanwhile, 35 citations were issued for employing workers without health certificates, dealing with food items without health certificates, failure to adhere to general hygiene and working with expired certificates. In the meantime, Farwaniya branch carried out campaigns that resulted in removing 17 abandoned cars from Khaitan and Farwaniya. The campaign also included washing garbage containers in all Farwaniya governorate's areas, while removing 1,824 cubic meters of leftovers.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality workers remove debris during a recent campaign in Farwaniya.

App shows progress at South Al-Mutlaa City project

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Recent images on the Kuwait Finder smartphone app showed much progress in construction works at the South Al-Mutlaa City project and that constructions were ahead of the schedule set by the housing welfare authority. The maps showed that the contractor working on the first contract has finished outlining main roads, said informed sources, noting that much of the construction of the 32 million sq m area and 143 km of roads, 61 intersections, 32 roundabouts, 13 bridges, 12 km of sewage lines and 3,500 manholes has been finished. Meanwhile, the technical team following up the second project of building the infrastructure needed for 18,519 land plots said that 4.2 percent of the work has already been completed, bearing in mind that the contractor started work in August.

The South Al-Mutlaa City is the largest housing project in Kuwait with 28,363 units, currently being executed in cooperation with international experts. By the end of last June, the Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) has signed a contract of about KD 288 million with the Italian Salini Costruttori engineering company and Turkey's Kolin group to build the city's infrastructure. The project will also see the floating of 60 tenders for construction including public utilities and power plants.

Government jobs

The head of the grievances and complaints committee at the National Assembly MP Hamdan Al-Azmi said the committee will propose a bill on regulating the acceptance of citizens applying for government jobs and adjusting some judicial regulation law articles. Azmi



KUWAIT: A computer generated image for the planned South Al-Mutlaa City. — Public Authority for Housing Welfare's website



An artist's rendition for neighborhoods in the new city.

added that the committee had received various complaints from young citizens who had applied for the jobs of legal investigators and prosecutors, but were rejected while less-qual-

ified people were appointed. He added that the justice ministry changed the conditions several times, including the minimum grades required and the age limit.

Folk tales vital for children's morals, values: researcher

ABU DHABI: Kuwaiti researcher Bazza Al-Batni stressed on the importance of folk tales in developing morals and social values in children. These stories, being one of the favorite methods of learning for children, promote positive behavior and provide information about society and heritage. Al-Batni said yesterday on the sidelines of the 5th GCC Heritage and Oral History Conference held in Abu Dhabi, under the slogan 'Moral Education: An Authentic Part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Heritage.'

Folk tales will protect children against negative ideas and wrong values spread over social media these days, she noted. It will also enrich their language input and teach them about their society's traditions and culture, she added.

Meanwhile, Batni said she wrote a book on Kuwaiti folklore and heritage and she had translated it into French, German and English to spread knowledge on Kuwait's heritage around the world. Batni had previously won an award for children stories from the GCC Arab Education Office in 1977. She also took part in directing many television and radio shows and programs for Kuwait and the Gulf states, while she is the author of many children books and other folklore books.

The conference kicked off on Monday with the participation of some academics, researchers, and experts at Gulf universities and institutions. In a speech at inaugurating the event, Saif Ghobash, Director-General of the



Kuwaiti researcher Bazza Al-Batni.

Department of Culture and Tourism (DCT), Abu Dhabi, underlined the importance of moral education for building young generations.

He said "we look forward to applying a unified Gulf approach in the field of moral education and other subjects which prepare our children for the flourishing future." Organizing the event in UAE enhances efforts exerted by the DCT in order to build a promising Gulf partnership on the level of culture and heritage. The event themed "Moral Education: An Authentic Part of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Heritage" featured several sessions which discussed different expertise and experiments in moral education. — KUNA

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Local

GOFSCO hails successful Platinum sponsorship of 3rd Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference

CEO participates in panel discussion

KUWAIT: Gas and Oil Fields Services Company (GOFSCO), one of the largest integrated service providers in Kuwait specializing in the upstream oil and gas sector, both onshore and offshore, hailed the successful Platinum sponsorship of the 3rd Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference (KOGS 2017) which was held from 15 - 18 October 2017 at the Kuwait International Fairground, under the Patronage of His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah - Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait.

The four-day conference focused on science and engineering factors facing the oil and gas industry in Kuwait and shed light on key topics that include petroleum geosciences, exploration and production, and refining and petrochemical products and services.

This year's conference witnessed Engineer Hussam Ali Marafie - Chairman and Chief Executive Officer at GOFSCO taking part in a panel discussion which was under the theme of 'Diversification - Value Chain Optimization,' alongside several other industry experts. During his discussion, Engineer Marafie outlined historical milestones and key success factors that led to Kuwait's progress and economic prosperity over the last few decades. He further elaborated on the importance of dissecting progress indicators in today's economic climate and taking steps towards fueling the future particularly for the private sector in Kuwait.

Competitive advantage

Engineer Marafie said: "Gaining competitive advantage within the private sector can be accelerated through three key factors. Modernization is crucial in today's marketplace and companies must innovate and diversify to remain their client's preferred supplier especially when communication lines are short and worldwide competition is fierce. Companies must also exercise flexibility in responding to their client needs and continually uphold excellent client orientation skills and be flexible in meeting their demands. Lastly, a transparent and rapid decision making process that is supported by solid justifications and information should



KUWAIT: Engineer Hussam Ali Marafie speaks during the panel discussion.

be effectively implemented." "Although the current market scenario is concerning to most of us, it is also important that we look at the many opportunities and advantages that we experience in the oil sector in Kuwait. Firstly, although there has been decline in oil revenues in the past few years, Kuwait has still largely retained its investment program in the oil sector and continues to invest in the crude oil and gas production program. Secondly, the diversification of the industry allows untapped opportunities in new markets. The government has also exercised considerable fairness to companies in the private sector and has provided appropriate opportunities to both international as well as local service companies" commented Engineer Marafie.

Exhibition

It is worth mentioning that KOGS 2017 incorporated an international exhibition of oil and gas hardware and services and a broad spectrum technical conference program, wherein GOFSCO showcased its services and products to both a local and international audience. The company's booth housed an array of activities as well as



Engineer Hussam Ali Marafie poses with GOFSCO staff.

a comprehensive display of the products and services it provides in addition to involving some of its key local and international partners' services.

Marafie also said: "We are very pleased with our participation and contribution to KOGS 2017. This year's conference and exhibition was an ideal opportunity for companies that operate in our industry to address and discuss increasing production, technologi-

cal advancement, innovation and the rising development of the human resources element within this field. On behalf of GOFSCO, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah - Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait, who most certainly played an exceptional role in ensuring the success of private companies in Kuwait."



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EQUATE showcases int'l achievements at KOGS 2017

KUWAIT: The EQUATE Group, a global producer of petrochemicals, sponsored the 3rd Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference (KOGS) 2017 under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

As one of Kuwait's biggest industrial events, EQUATE sponsored the previous KOGS events in 2013 and 2015 as part of the Group's local and global partnership with relevant industrial and commercial stakeholders within and outside the country.

EQUATE's President and CEO Mohammad Husain said, "We started as a local producer in Kuwait and now we enjoy

strong global presence as the world's second largest producer of ethylene glycol (EG). Being the main host of our industrial operations, EQUATE continues playing a significant role in diversifying Kuwait's income sources through petrochemicals, supporting the growth of the local plastics industry by over 450 percent since 1998, and contributing with over 60 percent of the value of national non-oil exports."

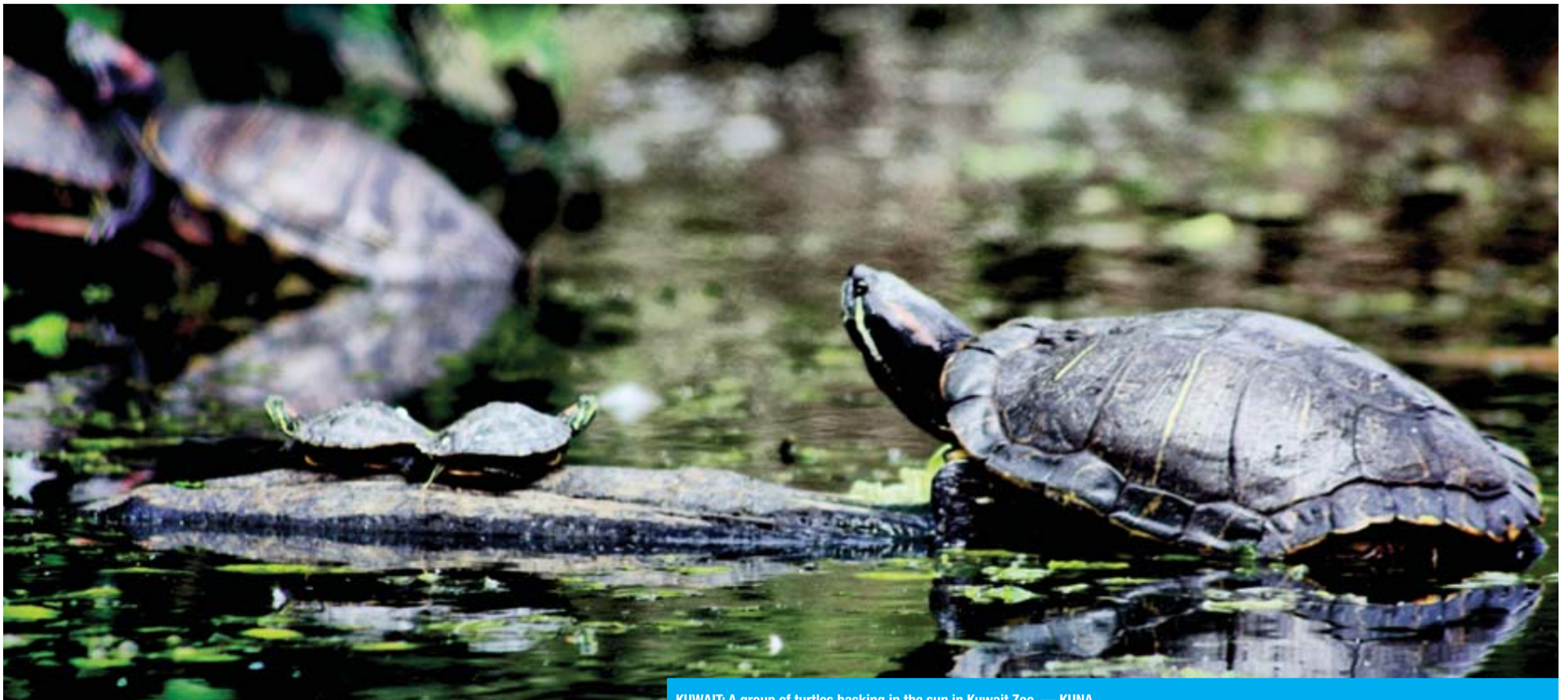
Husain noted, "More than 90 percent of the Gulf's overall income is attributed to the oil, gas and petrochemical sectors. In addition, the petrochemical sector represents this region's second main source of income as we export more than 80 percent of our products."

Making a difference through this sector is critical for overall sustainability as petrochemicals are truly part of the future," Husain noted, "We hope that KOGS 2017 will support efforts aimed at increasing production, technological solutions, overall innovation and developing human resources."



Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A group of turtles basking in the sun in Kuwait Zoo. — KUNA

Kuwait projects help 296,000 poor people worldwide, says IICO

KUWAIT: The International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) said that it has, so far, launched over 34,000 development projects for the benefit of 296,000 people in 32 countries around the world. IICO believes in the importance of development projects and their role in improving living, economic, health, and educational conditions for the poor and needy ones, IICO's Chairman Dr Abdullah Al-Matouq said.

Al-Matouq made his remarks in a press statement on the sidelines of commemorating the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which was marked yesterday. The organization has given a special attention to the microfinance program via the good loan fund, aiming to expand in civil society development programs and create partnerships with international and regional organizations, he indicated.

Around 60,000 poor families around the world have benefited from IICO's development programs on living, health, and educational levels, Matouq noted. He also added that the organization's support of small-sized projects in targeted poor societies have contributed significantly to reducing poverty in these societies, said Matouq.

The small-sized projects have made a huge impact in transferring thousands of poor individuals from the consumption circle to the production circle, which eventually secured them with stable monthly salaries, he said.

32 countries

Matouq also noted that IICO has backed development projects in 32 Arab, African, and Asian countries via financing small and medium-sized projects. The organization provided easy loans for financing such development projects in cooperation with the local charities in these countries, he said, noting that each project's average value estimated at \$1,000.

Matouq also mentioned that IICO's small loan program seeks to enhance and improve the poor, desperate, and hungry societies. The program became a strong development tool in alleviating the severity of poverty and reducing its effects on poor societies, he said. It has also become an influential factor in elevating the living levels of poor and needy ones, in addition to creating job opportunities for them, he added.

Meanwhile, Matouq urged all donating bodies, members and charities, to direct their donations and alms in favor of development projects in poor nations. Such a step would empower the poor to transfer to the work and production circle, and enable them to support their families and contribute in their societies' development, he added.

IICO is one of the leading humanitarian organizations that moved towards fighting poverty through the civil society development program, Matouq affirmed. The program has monitored the needs of poor categories and provided them with good loans to finance small-sized projects, he said.

It also sought to support the needy ones in targeted societies with life necessities such as food, education, and health, added Matouq. The program backs various vital projects such as commercial, agricultural, industrial, logistical, and production, he said, noting that such projects reflects the beneficiaries' interests and talents. The program's indicators of success lies in the total value of all its projects, reaching \$36 million, he said, adding that the projects' loans repayment ratio was 100 percent.

Sustainable development

Matouq also mentioned that sustainable development programs in small-sized projects have become very effective in building abilities in targeted poor categories. The programs enabled the poor from pursuing good occupations and securing a decent living for their families in light of increased non-employment, education costs, and lack of basic human needs, he noted.

The IICO chief also said that humanitarian activities are no longer limited to the customary humanitarian relief action, but have surpassed that tradition to human development and occupational production. However, philanthropic societies were recently forced to pay closer attention to the human relief action due to the humanitarian fallouts of ongoing crises around the world, particularly in Syria, Yemen, and Iraq, noted Matouq. — KUNA

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Iraqi forces take oil fields, dashing Kurdish dreams

With paper in hand, Indonesian maids fight exploitation

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GARDEZ: Afghan security personnel walk at the site of a suicide attack at a police training centre in Gardez, capital of Paktia province yesterday. — AFP

Suicide bombers, gunmen target Afghan security forces, killing 71

Suspected US drone strikes kill at least 26 Haqqani militants

GARDEZ: Two separate suicide and gun attacks on police and soldiers in Afghanistan left at least 71 dead and nearly 170 wounded yesterday in the latest devastating assaults on beleaguered security forces. The Taliban claimed the more deadly of the two assaults, a coordinated attack on police in the southeast city of Gardez in Paktia province. That assault killed 41 people and injured 158, according to the interior ministry, and left hospital officials calling for blood donations.

There were desperate scenes as relatives queued for news of loved ones after the hours-long battle. A separate ambush blamed on the Taliban in the neighboring province of Ghazni killed 25 security officials and five civilians with 10 wounded, the interior ministry said. Afghanistan's army and police, on the front line against the Taliban since foreign combat forces pulled back in December 2014, have suffered shocking casualties over the past year. Their ranks are beset by corruption and desertion. "The hospital is overwhelmed and we call on people to donate blood," said Shir Mohammad Karimi, deputy health director in Gardez, who put the number of wounded there at more than 200.

Doctors and nurses rushed to attend the wounded women, children and police filling the corridors where some bodies also lay. Outside, university students formed a queue to donate blood, an AFP photographer said. The attack, claimed by the Taliban in a tweet, began when two

suicide bombers driving an explosives-laden truck and a Humvee blew them up near the training centre, which is close to the Paktia police headquarters. The blasts flattened a building and enabled gunmen to force their way inside the compound, according to officials and the interior ministry.

"Most of the victims are civilians who had come to the police headquarters to get their passports and national IDs," a statement from the Paktia governor's office said. A university student who was in class at the time said he heard "a big boom" which shook the building and shattered windows. "As we were trying to find our way (out of the building) I heard a second blast and then the dust and dirt covered us in the class. Several of my classmates were wounded by broken glass," Noor Ahmad said. The battle between the attackers, armed with guns and suicide vests, and security forces lasted around five hours before it ended with all five militants killed, officials said. Photos posted

on Twitter showed two large plumes of smoke rising above the city.

The second attack, in Ghazni some 100 kilometers west of Gardez, followed a similar pattern involving insurgents detonating an explosives-laden Humvee near a police headquarters then storming the building. Haref Noori, the Ghazni governor's spokesman said. "Dozens of Taliban" were killed in the attack, Ghazni police chief Mohammad Zaman said. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani condemned the attacks and praised the "bravery and sacrifice" of security forces.

States and China were held in Oman with the aim of ending the Taliban's 16-year insurgency.

Paktia province borders Pakistan's militancy-plagued tribal areas where the Taliban-affiliated Haqqani network has a presence. Yesterday's attack in Gardez began hours after a US drone strike in Pakistan's Kurram tribal district, part of which borders Paktia, killed at least 26 Haqqani militants, officials have said. A senior commander in the Afghan Taliban said on condition of anonymity the attack was in retaliation for the US aerial assault, the deadliest targeting militants in the Pakistani tribal region this year. On Monday the US also carried out strikes in the Jaji Maidan district of Paktia "under counter-terror authorities", said US Forces spokesman Navy Captain Tom Gresback.

In Kurram last week the Pakistani military rescued a US-Canadian family who had been abducted by militants in Afghanistan in 2012. US President Donald Trump has said they were being held by the Haqqani network. The extremist group is known for its frequent use of suicide bombers. The Haqqanis have also been accused of assassinating top Afghan officials and holding kidnapped Westerners for ransom. These include the recently rescued hostages Canadian Joshua Boyle, his American wife Caitlan Coleman, and their three children—all born in captivity—as well as US soldier Bowe Bergdahl, who was released in 2014. — AFP



Taliban claims responsibility for the deadly attacks

Drone strike

The attacks are the latest in a series of assaults on security installations, including one on a military hospital in Kabul in March which may have killed up to 100 people, and a devastating attack on a base in Mazar-i-Sharif which left 144 people dead. They came one day after four-way talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United

Who are Haqqanis, Afghanistan's most feared insurgents?

ISLAMABAD: The rescue of an abducted US-Canadian family in Pakistan last week has spotlighted their captors the Haqqani network, former CIA assets now considered one of the most dangerous factions fighting US-led NATO forces in Afghanistan. Led by Sirajuddin Haqqani, who doubles as the Afghan Taliban's deputy leader, the extremist group has been blamed for spectacular attacks across Afghanistan since after the US invasion.

Long suspected of links to Pakistan's shadowy military establishment, the network was described by US Admiral Mike Mullen in 2011 as a "veritable arm" of Pakistani intelligence. "When you hear US officials, including in private settings, talking about what worries them the most, they always talk about the Haqqanis," said analyst Michael Kugelman, of the Wilson Center in Washington.

Who are they?

The group was founded by Jalaluddin Haqqani, an Afghan mujahideen commander fighting the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s with the help of the US and Pakistan. Jalaluddin gained notoriety for his organization and bravery, garnering attention from the CIA and a personal visit from US congressman Charlie Wilson. A fluent Arabic speaker, Jalaluddin also fostered close ties with

Arab jihadists including Osama Bin Laden who flocked to the region during the war. Later, Jalaluddin became a minister in the Taliban regime.

Now designated a terrorist group by the US, the Haqqanis are known for their heavy use of suicide bombers. They were blamed for the truck bomb deep in the heart of Kabul in May that killed around 150 people—though Sirajuddin later denied the accusation in a rare audio message. The network has also been accused of assassinating top Afghan officials and holding kidnapped Westerners for ransom. That includes recently released Canadian Joshua Boyle, his American wife Caitlan Coleman, and their three children—all born in captivity—as well as US soldier Bowe Bergdahl, who was released in 2014.

Where are they now?

Following the US invasion of Afghanistan, Taliban fighters flooded across the border into Pakistan, where they regrouped before launching an insurgency against the Americans. That included the Haqqanis, who coordinated attacks on NATO from across the border in their stronghold of Miran Shah, the biggest town in North Waziristan, one of Pakistan's semi-autonomous border tribal areas. The US has launched repeated drone attacks targeting the group—including one late Monday while Pakistan's military has conducted successive clearing operations, though skeptical Afghan officials have noted they always seemed to miss the Haqqanis. Pakistan intensified a military operation in the area in 2014, however, and some militant sources say the pressure has forced many of the Haqqanis underground or over the border into their Afghan strongholds, claims that AFP could not confirm.



KABUL: Afghan National Army (ANA) commandos fire during a military exercise at the Kabul Military Training Centre (KMTCC) on the outskirts of Kabul yesterday. — AFP

Linked to Pakistan?

Pakistan sees its arch-nemesis to the east, India, as an existential threat, and has long sought influence over Kabul as a bulwark against Delhi. The Haqqanis have frequently been accused of targeting Indian installations in Afghanistan, spurring speculation they were overseen by Pakistani intelligence agencies. "For Pakistan the calculus comes down to India," said Kugelman. "It views the Haqqanis and also more

broadly the Afghan Taliban as a useful asset to help push back against the presence of India in Afghanistan." Politicians and retired military officials in Islamabad acknowledge privately that having open channels with the Haqqanis is vital. Some stressed the nature of the connection. "There's a difference between contact and supporting them or being part of them," Mehmood Shah, a retired brigadier who worked in Pakistan's tribal areas said. — AFP

International

Iraq forces take oil fields' dashing Kurdish dreams

After losing Kirkuk, Kurdish forces pull out of Sinjar

BAI HASSAN: Iraqi forces took control of the two largest oil fields in the disputed northern province of Kirkuk yesterday demolishing Kurdish hopes of creating a viable independent state. The Kurds withdrew without a fight after federal government troops and militia entered the city of Kirkuk and seized the provincial governor's office and key military bases in response to a Kurdish vote for independence last month.

The fields accounted for around 250,000 barrels per day of the 650,000 bpd that the autonomous Kurdish region exported under its own auspices and their loss deals a huge blow to its already parlous finances and its dreams of economic self-sufficiency. Iraqi forces took down the red, white, green and yellow Kurdish flags that had flown over the pumping stations of the Bai Hassan and Havana oil fields and raised the national flag, an AFP photographer reported. The fields' Kurdish technicians had halted production and fled on Monday evening ahead of the entry of federal government troops and police.

Police Colonel Ahmed Modhi hailed the restoration of federal control over the two fields, which the Kurds had taken over during the chaos that followed the Islamic State group's lightning advance through northern and western Iraq in 2014. "It's a national resource and it belongs to Iraq, just like the natural resources of the country as a whole," Modhi said. Oil exports via a pipeline through neighboring Turkey account for a significant share of the autonomous Kurdish government's revenues. They have always riled Baghdad which views them as a breach of the constitution that makes them a federal responsibility.



Iraqi soldiers take down Kurdish flags

Roussel said that without the revenues from Kirkuk oil, the Kurds would never have set in motion the September 25 referendum that delivered a resounding 'yes' for independence but at the cost of triggering military intervention by Baghdad. "It was only after the annexation of the two Kirkuk fields in July 2014 that Kurdish president Massud Barzani started to talk of independence. Before, he spoke only of autonomy." Kirkuk lies outside the autonomous region but is one of a string of historically Kurdish-majority territory that the Kurds have long wanted to incorporate in it against the wishes of Baghdad. Kurdish forces took over many of them in 2014 when units of the Iraqi army disintegrated in the face of the jihadists' lightning advance.

Yazidi massacre town falls

But since entering the city of Kirkuk on Monday, government forces have moved to retake them one by one. Yesterday, troops and militia entered the Yazidi Kurdish town of Sinjar after peshmerga forces withdrew without a fight, the Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary force said. They also entered the town of Khanaqin, on the Iranian border, and three other towns in Diyala province northeast of Baghdad, a provincial security official said. Sinjar, in the northwest, is infamous as the site of one of the Islamic State group's worst atrocities, when it killed thousands of Yazidi men and abducted thousands of women and girls as sex slaves in August 2014. Tens of thousands of civilians fled into the nearby mountains in appalling conditions, helping to trigger US intervention against the jihadists. The Yazidis are Kurdish-speaking but follow their own non-Muslim faith that earned them the hatred of the Sunni Muslim extremists of IS.

'Betrayal'

Kurdish forces captured Sinjar from IS in 2015 and the town's loss is a symbolic blow for the Kurdish leadership. Ten peshmerga fighters were killed as they exchanged artillery fire with the army before it entered Kirkuk on Monday but otherwise its advance has been largely bloodless. That has been helped by a sharp division within Kurdish ranks over last month's independence referendum. Peshmerga forces loyal to the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan, historic rival of Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party, withdrew under an agreement with Baghdad, officials said. The KDP accused the PUK of "betrayal". The PUK, the party of Iraqi President Fuad Masum, had supported a UN-backed plan for negotiations with Baghdad in exchange for dropping the referendum called by Barzani.



KIRKUK: Photo shows the cement barriers surrounding the Kirkuk Governorate building in the multi-ethnic northern Iraqi city. Iraqi forces took control of the two largest oil fields in the disputed northern province of Kirkuk demolishing Kurdish hopes of creating a viable independent state. — AFP

But KDP peshmerga too pulled out without a fight in the face of the federal government's advance. It was they who abandoned Sinjar and the two Kirkuk oil fields. In Kirkuk, the army's 12th Division was able to restore some of its wounded pride from the collapse of 2014, as its armored cars entered its former K1 base in the northwest of the city on Monday. Yesterday, as it became clear that the feared bloodshed was not going to materialise, some of the tens of thousands of Kurdish residents who had fled the city began to return to their homes, security sources said.— AFP

Why are Portugal's wildfires so deadly?

LISBON: For the second time in four months, firefighters are struggling to contain a series of wildfires that are consuming thousands of acres across Portugal and killing scores of people trapped by the flames. Here are some of the principal causes of the blazes and reasons they turn deadly so quickly, based on a report by 12 experts released last Thursday. The report was commissioned by parliament after the huge fire that ravaged the Pedrogao Grande region in central Portugal in June, which left 64 dead.

Ill-trained volunteers

Most firefighters in Portugal are volunteers, meaning a fast-spreading fire can quickly overwhelm their efforts to contain it. The report called for the creation of more professional brigades and a revamp of the national firefighter training institute, as well as improved coordination with the Portuguese army, which was found to be under-utilized during natural disasters.

Communication breakdowns

Telephone lines and antennas providing

cellphone coverage are often damaged during the blazes, making it impossible for Portugal's various emergency services to communicate. The experts found that their communications systems were also based on "worn-out technologies", but AFP reporters covering last June's inferno at times saw firefighters having to ask locals for directions. Portugal's league of volunteer firefighters called Monday for "more modern and robust" equipment.

Quick-burning eucalyptus

Portugal's paper industry relies heavily on fast-growing eucalyptus, a highly flammable tree. The experts advised planting more oak, chestnut and other trees instead of the eucalyptus and pines found across the country, and in July parliament approved a gradual reduction of eucalyptus cultivation.

Reactive not proactive

Portugal does not have enough meteorologists capable of giving sufficient warning in case of looming dry periods or unseasonal temperature spikes. As a result, the government is often caught by surprise when multiple fires erupt: In June, which was much hotter than normal, it should have readied and reinforced firefighting teams—something it normally does in July. As a result, the experts found that in the current structure, teams are capable of reacting to wildfires, but cannot anticipate them.

Civil protection snafus

Portugal's civil protection agency

(ANPC) has been slow to react and deploy the necessary equipment and personnel, the report found. It said a water-carrying helicopter the ANPC said it had sent on the night the June blazes erupted had never even left the ground. The experts also discovered questionable choices in terms of who was in charge at the agency, with many postings attributed to officials who lacked the requisite skills. The report advised a more rigorous selection of "professionals having the required expertise and experience".

Too close to nature

Many Portuguese towns and villages are nestled in or next to forests, and both homeowners and municipalities often fail to fully assess the fire risks, neglecting for example to clear enough brush from around homes and buildings. On Monday, Portugal's interior minister Constanca Urbano said many farmers and residents were continuing to burn dead leaves on their land despite the drought.

Stubborn myth and no plan

It's a common belief for many in Portugal that most wildfires are caused by arsonists, a myth the experts would like to see put to rest for good. The June fire, they said, was caused by overloaded electricity networks and lightning. But they also criticized Portugal's leaders for failing to develop a coherent strategy with each new government scrapping the previous efforts and starting over from scratch.—AFP

With paper in hand, Indonesian maids fight exploitation

KUALA LUMPUR: Like millions of Indonesian women who earn a living through domestic work, Leni Suryani thought that long hours for a meagre salary was just the lot of a maid. But a pilot training scheme for domestic workers helped her improve her skills and earn a certificate, giving her the confidence to ask for a higher salary. "I have been a domestic helper for 15 years. I didn't think this piece of paper is important, I was wrong," said the 33-year-old mother, who worked as a maid in Singapore and Malaysia for six years before returning to Indonesia in 2003.

Suryani is one of the first graduates from the training which aims to enhance domestic workers' skills and win recognition for their work as a profession in a bid to fight exploitation and modern slavery. While Indonesia is a major provider of maids for places like Singapore, Malaysia, Hong Kong and the Middle East, some four million Indonesian women are also employed in households locally to cook, clean or to look after children and the elderly.


Maids account for the biggest group of Indonesian women who work. Despite this, they are not considered formal workers, leaving them vulnerable to abuses and unprotected under local labour laws. Excessive working hours, lack of a formal contract, unpaid wages are just

some of the most common abuses Indonesian domestic helpers face, according to campaigners. Unlike their counterparts who work overseas, who must go through extensive training regulated by the government, there are no such provisions for local maids.

Suryani said she brushed up her skills on cooking different cuisines, housekeeping and childcare during her training, as well as learning English and using computers. At the end of the 200-hour course last year and after a test, she received a certificate given by a national professional certification board that recognized her skills. "It taught me how to work more efficiently," Suryani told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by phone from Jakarta. "My employer, an American expatriate family, was happy with the certificate I got and the way I work, it gave me confidence to ask for a higher salary and they agreed."

Overworked, unprotected

The International Labour Organization (ILO), which runs the training with local workers' groups, said about 200 women have been trained in different batches since 2016, with the most recent group of 40 completing their course in August this year. Its national advocacy specialist, Irfan Afandi, said domestic work is poorly regulated in Indonesia, and most maids are overworked, underpaid and unprotected. Some earn as little as the equivalent of \$150 each month. "The laws don't see them as formal workers and many maids themselves are unaware of what exploitation is," Afandi said. "They think working from 6am to 8pm is normal and they should do anything they are told - from cooking to car washing and gardening.—Reuters



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International

Investigative journalist murdered for 'exposing corruption' in Malta

PM accused of turning Malta into a 'mafia island'

VALLETTA: The son of a slain Maltese journalist yesterday described finding his mother's body in pieces after a car bombing and accused Prime Minister Joseph Muscat of being "complicit" in her grisly killing. Matthew Caruana Galizia, himself a journalist involved in digesting the Panama Papers, said his mother had been assassinated for doing her job in investigating alleged corruption. In an emotional post on his Facebook page, the son of whistleblowing blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia accused Muscat of filling his office with crooks and creating a culture of impunity that had turned Malta into a "mafia island".

His mother was a veteran journalist, once described as a "one-woman Wikileaks", who used her widely-read blog to make a series of detailed allegations of corruption in Muscat's inner circle, some based on the Panama Papers data leak. Her killing has triggered an outpouring of grief on the island of just 430,000 people, with thousands turning out to an overnight candlelit vigil in her memory in the fortress capital Valletta. Further "Justice for Daphne" demonstrations were scheduled yesterday. The journalist was the fourth person to die in a Malta car bombing in just over a year but previous attacks were all linked to criminal feuds and did not generate anything like the shock created by Caruana's death.



Son describes finding mother's body in pieces

down and there were my mother's body parts all around me. I realized they were right, it was hopeless." Muscat described the killing as "barbaric" and vowed to bring the perpetrators to justice. That pledge was dismissed by the victim's son, who said even one of the police officers involved in investigating the murder had celebrated his mother's death online.

"A culture of impunity has been allowed to flourish by the government in Malta," he wrote. "It is of little comfort for the Prime Minister of this country to say that he will 'not rest' until the perpetrators are found, when he heads a government that encouraged that same impunity." "First he filled

his office with crooks, then he filled the police with crooks and imbeciles, then he filled the courts with crooks and incompetents. "If the institutions were already working, there would be no assassination to investigate - and my brothers and I would still have a mother."

Assange reward

The judge in charge of investigating the murder

stepped aside from the case yesterday following objections from the Caruana Galizia family that she was too close to the Labor Party administration. Magistrate Consuelo Scerri Herrera had been accused of misconduct by the blogger and had threatened her with libel proceedings. Caruana Galizia's death came four months after Muscat won a landslide victory in elections that were called early after she accused his wife of taking kickbacks from Azerbaijan's ruling family and hiding the cash in a secret Panama bank account. The claims, which Muscat fervently denies, were the latest in a string of scandals on the island based on information leaked from the records of Panama law firm Mossack Fonseca.



BIDNIJA, Malta: Police and forensic experts inspect the wreckage of a car bomb believed to have killed journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia close to her home in Bidnija yesterday. — AFP

The so-called Panama Papers revealed how wealthy individuals around the world, including a number of politicians, used shell companies based in the Latin American state and other tax havens to hide cash. Among those exposed were Keith Schembri, Muscat's chief of staff, and Konrad Mizzi, a government minister. The premier resisted

pressure to fire the pair, insisting their accounts were related to their private business and they had done nothing illegal. Wikileaks founder Julian Assange offered a 20,000 euros reward for anyone who provided information about the attack leading to the conviction of those responsible. — AFP

News in brief

Military chopper missing

TOKYO: A Japanese military helicopter with four people on board went missing yesterday during a drill in the Pacific off central Japan, the defense ministry said. The Black Hawk helicopter of the Air Self-Defense Force disappeared from radar at around 6:00 pm (0900 GMT), some 31 kilometers (19 miles) south of Hamamatsu, a ministry spokesman said. Some parts suspected to have belonged to the rescue chopper were found floating around the area, the spokesman said, adding: "We are searching for the four crew members." Quoting a government source, Kyodo News said the helicopter, which was conducting a night time search-and-rescue drill, was likely to have crashed.

A thief in a suitcase

LILLE: It was a mystery that had police puzzled for a while: a rash of thefts reported by passengers who had taken the 75-minute bus trip between Paris and Beauvais airport. An eagle-eyed driver has been credited with helping crack the case last week after he spotted a suspicious suitcase being loaded onto his bus as he prepared to drive from Paris to the airport, a hub for low-cost airlines. Acting on his tip-off about a large brown bag that appeared to be moving on its own, police at Beauvais pounced on a Romanian man who picked up the suitcase and a smaller black rucksack as he arrived. After arresting him, detectives found an accomplice hidden inside the case who, once alone in the baggage hold during the trip, would pull a strap to unzip himself and then begin his thieving. "In the black bag we found two laptops, money and various objects of value," a police source said on condition of anonymity. Both men, aged around 40, were from Romania and had criminal records for theft.

'No' to anti-Semitism

JERUSALEM: Austria's election winner Sebastian Kurz, who may form a coalition with the far-right, vowed "zero tolerance" on anti-Semitism in any future government, in an interview published in Israel yesterday. "The battle against anti-Semitism and our policy of zero tolerance against all anti-Semitic tendencies is very important to me," Kurz told the right-wing Israel Hayom newspaper. "It is a clear pre-condition for the formation of any coalition under my leadership," the 31-year-old conservative told the paper, which is a firm backer of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Kurz's People's Party (OeVP) won 31.5 percent of the vote on Sunday, near-complete results show, and his most likely coalition partner is seen as the populist Freedom Party (FPÖ), third on 26.0 percent. When the FPÖ last entered government, in 2000 under former head Joerg Haider, who praised Hitler's "orderly" employment policies and praised SS veterans, Israel suspended relations.

Two journalists freed

DHAKA: Bangladesh allowed two journalists from Myanmar detained while reporting about fleeing Rohingya Muslims to fly home yesterday and was dropping charges against them, their lawyer said. Minzayar Oo and Hkun Lat were picked up from the Cox Bazar's region in early September because they were working as journalists on tourist visas, police said. They were released on bail after calls from Germany's GEO magazine, which had assigned Minzayar Oo to cover the influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, as well as rights groups. "It's so good to be free again," Minzayar Oo, one of Myanmar's most prominent photographers, told Reuters soon after his plane landed in the Thai capital of Bangkok. Bangladesh authorities had begun the process to drop the charges against the pair, their lawyer, Jyotirmoy Barua, said.

Pro-Biafran leader absent as Nigeria treason trial resumes

ABUJA: The leader of a pro-Biafran group that wants to break away from Nigeria failed to appear in court yesterday as his treason trial was scheduled to resume. Nnamdi Kanu, who heads the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement, was nowhere to be seen as proceedings resumed at the Federal High Court in the capital, Abuja. Prosecutor Shuaibu Labaran said Kanu's absence was "contrary to the order of this court" but the separatist leader's lawyer, Ifeanyi Ejiolor, said: "I don't know where my client is. "The home of the first defendant (Kanu) was invaded by soldiers and since that time I have not heard from him. I cannot tell... whether (he) is alive or dead." Ejiolor also suggested Kanu was "in the custody of the (federal government)".

Judge Binta Nyako adjourned the case until November 20, pending more information as to Kanu's whereabouts. Kanu and three other defendants, who were remanded in custody, are facing several charges linked to his calls for a separate state for the Igbo people, the majority in Nigeria's southeast. He was first arrested in October 2015, stoking grievances that have festered since a previous declaration of independence in 1967 sparked a bloody, 30-month civil war. The conflict left at least one million people dead, most of them Igbos from the effects of starvation and disease, as federal forces blockaded the fledgling state.

Threat of violence

Kanu, who also runs the London-based Radio Biafra station, was released on bail in April this year on health grounds but under strict terms. The judge ruled that he should not attend any rally, be in a crowd of more than 10 people or give any media interviews while on bail. He was

At least 29 killed in central Nigeria

JOS, Nigeria: At least 29 people were killed in a new flare-up of violence in central Nigeria targeting people sheltered in a primary school, prompting President Muhammadu Buhari to issue an appeal to "stop the madness". The attack happened on Monday in Plateau state, which has been dogged for years by ethnic, sectarian and religious unrest. Sunday Audu, the head of the Irigwe Community Development Association, said armed men stormed the school in the village of Nkyie Doghwro, in the Bassa area of the state.

Hundreds of local residents had sought refuge there for fear of reprisal attacks, after unidentified assailants killed six cattle herders on Sunday. "Our people were attacked... with 29 dead, three injured at a school used as a camp and protected by security," Audu told reporters in the Plateau state capital, Jos, on Monday. Plateau police spokesman Tsoyev Terna confirmed the attack but declined to give a death toll.

Audu blamed the killings on the mostly nomadic Fulani herdsmen, accusing them of being "in denial of sponsoring these attacks". But the head of the Miyetti Allah Cattle Breeders Association of Nigeria (MACBAN) in Bassa, Umaru Sangare, denied claims they were to blame. "We have no hand in the attack against the Irigwe, despite the fact that our six men were killed on Sunday and beheaded at Bajju village



UMUAHIA, Nigeria: Photo shows political activist and leader of the Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) movement, Nnamdi Kanu, wearing a Jewish prayer shawl and posing in the garden of his house in Umuahia, southeast Nigeria. — AFP

ordered to pay sureties totaling 300 million naira (\$835,000, 710,000 euros) to ensure his attendance at trial. Ejiolor told reporters at the time they were "very sure we will fulfil the conditions for bail". But since then, Kanu has rarely been out of the spotlight.

He told AFP in an interview in May to mark the 50th anniversary of the declaration of independence that he was "more determined than ever" to secure a breakaway republic. He also called for "civil disobedience" until a referendum was granted on self-determination. Kanu's whereabouts have been the source of increasing speculation in recent weeks, after a military surge in his home city

of Umuahia and the surrounding area. The IPOB leader's younger brother, Prince Emmanuel Kanu, said the army attacked the family's compound last month, killing 28. The army has denied the claim and also that they were holding Kanu, but their tactics come in for criticism for fueling tensions in the restive region.

Comparisons have been drawn to Boko Haram's founder Muhammad Yusuf, who died in custody in 2009 during a military crackdown in the northeastern city of Maiduguri. "If anything happens to him (Kanu), the reactions are likely to be very violent in the southeast," said security consultant Don Okereke. — AFP

while grazing," he said. "We didn't take the law into our own hands but reported the incident to the military and police authorities and secured their permission to bury the decapitated bodies."

Resource conflict

Plateau state lies on the dividing line between Nigeria's mainly Christian south and the mostly Muslim north. It has seen sporadic violence and tensions for decades. The violence has been attributed to a battle for resources because of drought and desertification in northern Nigeria and the wider Sahel region, forcing herders further south. Farming communities, most of which are Christian, have complained the herdsmen, who are mainly Muslim, damage their fields and crops with their livestock. The problem is also linked to wider issues, with the farmers seen as "indigenous" and the herdsmen "foreigners", even if they have lived in the area for generations.

Fulani leaders say they are deprived of basic rights, such as access to land, education and even political office. Tensions frequently boil over and more than 10,000 people have been killed in the state since the turn of the century, according to groups tracking the violence. Last month, the International Crisis Group (ICG) warned in a report that the clashes threatened Nigeria's national security and were becoming as dangerous as Boko Haram Islamists. It called for more cooperation and the adoption of measures such as better rural security, designated grazing areas and conflict resolution programs. Southern leaders, however, believe President Buhari lacks the political will to tackle the problem, as the Fulani are his kinsmen. — AFP

Three killed in Togo after imam arrested

LOME: Three people were killed as violence broke out in Togo's second city, Sokode, after an imam close to the country's main opposition was arrested, the government said yesterday. "Two soldiers on guard duty at the home of a VIP were lynched and executed and their weapons and ammunition were taken," it said in a statement. "A young person also died and about 20 other civilians and members of the security forces were injured," it added.

Amnesty International's country representative, Aime Adi, told AFP the young person killed was an apprentice upholsterer and was shot. The clashes came against a backdrop of anti-government protests led by Tikpi Atchadam, from the Panafrikan National Party (PNP), who has a power base in the northern city, Ouro Akpo Tchagnaou, from the National Alliance for Change (ANC) party, said: "Electricity was cut off at about 7:00 pm (2100 GMT on Monday) after evening prayers. "Five police vehicles arrived to arrest Alpha Alassane, a very well-known imam in the city," he added. "The population felt targeted and took to the streets."

Clashes lasted throughout the night until calm was restored but the authorities have been warned of renewed protests if Alassane is not freed yesterday morning. "The situation was hard to put up with last night. The security forces and youths clashed in several parts of the city, with teargas and stone-throwing," one local said. — AFP

International

'Vanishing village' looks to Japan LDP for survival

Nanmoku trying to survive by luring young city dwellers

NANMOKU: Chikara Imai, 73, is quick to dismiss the new parties in Sunday's national election in Japan, saying old ties with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party is what the country's most elderly village needs for survival. Nanmoku, 107 km northwest of Tokyo, is at the forefront of Japan's battle against an ageing and shrinking population. Its population has halved over the past 20 years to 1,963, and with a median age of 70.6, Nanmoku is now Japan's oldest municipality.

Nanmoku and places like it across Japan are a key support base for the LDP, which has been in power for most of the past six decades. "Rural Japan is no Tokyo. Those people may say something ideal in Tokyo, something like 'Let's change Japan'. But here, it won't strike home," Imai said. Sunday's lower house election pits Abe's LDP-led coalition against two brand new parties: the Party of Hope headed by popular Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike; and the centre-left Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, which emerged from a breakup of the traditional opposition Democratic Party.

But Koike's "reformist, conservative" challenge doesn't resonate much in Nanmoku. Most municipalities are shrinking in Japan, so far the only important developed country with a declining population. They look to Tokyo for a lifeline. "For back country dwellers, strong ties with the central government come in handy when we need to ask for help in such times as a natural disaster. This village has no option but to support them," the 73-year-old Imai said.

Gunma prefecture, where Nanmoku is located, has long been an LDP stronghold and has produced four prime ministers, including Keizo Obuchi, premier from 1998-2000.



Elderly account for 27 percent of population

abandoned. Few customers come by the several general shops that remain open. The village's sole remaining elementary school has just 24 students this year, down from a high of 1,632 in 1959, when Nanmoku operated three grade schools. Farms that used to grow devil's tongue, a starchy potato-like plant, have yielded to large-scale operations in other municipalities blessed with ample farm land.

"Until this day, we have not found a substitute (industry)," Nanmoku Mayor Saijo Hasegawa told Reuters. With independent revenue sources covering less than 20 percent of the village's budget, Hasegawa sees a continuity in government support for Nanmoku as essential, and is wary of a change in government. "There's no such thing as one-year plan to fight population decline. It takes 20, 30 years for any measures to take effect," Hasegawa said. "In a change of government, politicians tend to deny everything about the former government, which is scary."

Japan's demographic challenge is one of the biggest facing the new government after Sunday's elections. People aged 65 or older account for 27.2 percent of the total population, the highest on record, while the population is forecast to fall by nearly a third by 2065 when almost 40 percent will be 65 or older. Japan's government has earmarked a record 32.5 trillion yen (\$29 billion) this fiscal year to pay for social security services, the bulk of which is spent on the elderly. Social security outlays account for roughly a third of this year's national budget.

Recruiting city-dwellers

As part of a drive to tackle Japan's demographic time-bomb, the government in 2009 started a program to financially help local municipalities recruit urbanites to work in agriculture and other sectors for eventual settlement. Yohka Tanaka, who grew up in Tokyo and went to college in the United States, moved to Nanmoku two years ago through the program. He is now working on natural farming, which uses no pesticides or fertilizers.

Tanaka, 26, aims to prove the viability of such farm-



TOKYO: Pedestrians walk at Ginza shopping district in Tokyo yesterday. Japan will hold a snap general election on October 22. —AFP

ing so environmentally-conscious young people will follow in his foot steps. "This place is perfect for natural farming ... As long as I stick around, the village won't disappear." For Shigeyuki Kaneta, a comparatively young resident at 46 who owns a confectionary shop, escalating tensions over North Korea does raise that distinct possibility. North Korea has launched two bal-

listic missiles that flew over Japan in recent months. "It's a dangerous world," said Kaneta, who believes the LDP is better equipped to handle security matters. "Strange objects are flying around. If they fell (on Japanese soil), we wouldn't (just) be discussing population decline." — Reuters

Asia struggles to meet the target to lower deaths during childbirth

BANGKOK: It seemed a simple statement: women should not die from complications related to pregnancy or childbirth. Yet two years after world leaders agreed to 17 global goals at the United Nations, including the childbirth target, countries in Asia Pacific are grappling to twin the rhetoric with social, cultural and political realities. An estimated 85,000 mothers died in 2015 from childbirth in the region, home to more than half of the world's population and some of its fastest growing economies, UN figures show, with the maternal mortality rate seen as a key way to measure improvement in a nation's health.

These deaths accounted for 28 percent of the global total, translating into a maternal mortality ratio (MMR) of 127 deaths per 100,000 live births, according to the UN agency for population UNFPA, which released its latest State of the World Population Report yesterday. Up to 90 percent of these deaths occur in 12 countries, according to UNFPA whose officials have calculated which are likely to meet the global target of reducing its MMR to below 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.

Bangladesh, Laos, East Timor and Indonesia are seen as likely to meet the deadline. But Afghanistan, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Myanmar, Pakistan, India, Cambodia and the Philippines, are seen as failing to reach the target by varying degrees.



UKHIA: A Rohingya woman carries a child as they cross a shallow canal after crossing the Naf River. —AFP

Reducing maternal deaths requires political will, government foresight and access to family planning, according to campaigners. "(This is) an issue that's still too often seen as medical, and strictly related to women's life."

It's not," Federica Maurizio, a sexual health and reproductive rights expert at UNFPA in Bangkok, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Maternal health ... is one of the key indicators that really tells you how much the health system in a country is able to provide for the people." Oona Campbell, professor of epidemiology and reproductive health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, said it raises wider issues of women's place in society. "Do we care about women? Do we think it's not a problem if the wife dies? Is this something we care about enough to deliver services that are good quality?" she said.

Too good to be true?

Campbell said it was not entirely accurate to chart a country's progress using a global goal. Another way to measure progress, she suggested, was to use country level targets, such as aiming to reduce maternal deaths by at least two-thirds from 2010, and for no country to have an MMR greater than 140 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. Campbell also cautioned that data is weak in many countries due to a lack of civil registration and poor cause-of-death records. This could mean calculations of Afghanistan's dramatic improvement, hailed as one of the gains of foreign aid there, may be an overestimate, said Campbell. UN figures showed the maternal mortality rate had dropped to 396 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2015 from 1,600 deaths in 2002 after the US-led invasion that ousted the Taliban after the Sept 11 attacks in 2001. But Afghanistan's own data put its MMR three times higher. —Reuters

Japan's PM sends ritual offering to Yasukuni shrine

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sent a ritual offering to the Yasukuni Shrine for war dead, seen in China and the two Koreas as a symbol of Japan's past militarism, to mark its annual autumn festival, the shrine said yesterday. Abe was expected to refrain from visiting the shrine during the festival, which will last until Friday, the Nikkei business daily and Kyodo news agency reported. He is scheduled to visit northern Japan, Akita prefecture and Yamagata prefecture, for an election campaign stump yesterday, Kyodo news said.

His ruling coalition is on track for a big win in Sunday's general election - even though almost half the country's voters don't want him to keep his job, a media survey showed on Monday. Abe's snap election comes amid

heightened global tension following North Korea's nuclear tests and missile launches, which prompted the UN Security Council to impose fresh sanctions. Health Minister Katsunobu Kato also sent a ritual offering to the shrine, a spokesperson for the shrine said.

Past visits to Yasukuni by Japanese leaders have outraged Beijing and Seoul because it honors 14 Japanese leaders convicted by an Allied tribunal as war criminals, along with Japan's war dead. China's position on the shrine was clear, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters in Beijing. "We urge the Japanese side to earnestly, squarely and deeply reflect on their history of aggression, appropriately handle the relevant issue and take actual steps to win the trust of their Asian neighbors and the international community," Lu said.

Abe has only visited the shrine in person once, in December 2013, since becoming premier the previous year. Rather than attend in person, Abe sends a ritual offering on several occasions in an effort to improve ties with China and South Korea, which have been strained by territorial and other disputes. Japan, China and South Korea are trying to hold a summit meeting this year, the Nikkei business said. —Reuters

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FOCUS

Midnight in Toulouse: How CSeries deal shook status quo

Two years ago, Airbus Chief Executive Tom Enders halted negotiations to buy Canada's CSeries program at midnight after the talks with Bombardier leaked to Reuters. Yesterday, he performed a U-turn by backing a similar deal after all - again at dead of night. The nocturnal gymnastics by Europe's largest aerospace group stunned the aircraft industry which had been riveted for weeks by a trade dispute between Boeing and Bombardier that threatened to hit the CSeries with large US import fees.

Now, the 110-130-seat jet will be built for US airlines at Airbus's Alabama assembly plant, circumventing any import penalties in a move that apparently caught Boeing off guard. Analysts say that potentially turns the CSeries from an attack on US jobs, as portrayed in Boeing's complaint, to a job creator in a key Republican state, though Boeing termed the move a "questionable deal" between two of its subsidized competitors.

The deal also signals the end of Airbus efforts to promote the A319, its smallest jet which has not posted a sale in years. "The stunning Airbus-Bombardier partnership for the CSeries program guarantees the future of the new airplane, kills off the A319 and thrusts a big stick up Boeing's tailpipe," Leeham Co analyst Scott Hamilton wrote. Strategically, however, the move extends well beyond the noise of Boeing's spat with Bombardier and could trigger a riposte from other planemakers, including Boeing itself.

Commercial aerospace has four main powers dominated by Airbus and Boeing, which share the market above 150 seats. Brazil's Embraer and Canada's Bombardier compete between 100 and 150 seats as well as in the market for smaller regional jets. But China and Russia lead a field of new entrants vying to break into the \$125 billion a year commercial market, along with smaller regional players such as Japan.

Boeing-Embraer Alliance?

Tuesday's deal starts to rearrange the deck in a move that many have been expecting since former Airbus head Louis Gallois warned six years ago that the market was getting too crowded. In particular, it could drive Boeing closer to Embraer, with which it already cooperates. Embraer's E2 jet is one of the main potential losers from the CSeries deal. "The world has two top-tier airframers, and two second-tier airframers," said Teal Group analyst Richard Aboulafia. "Airbus and Bombardier are now allies. This greatly increases the likelihood of a stronger Boeing-Embraer alliance as a response."

Such a move has long been contemplated in private. The CSeries benefits from a new type of efficient engine. Its launch in 2008 eventually prompted Airbus to put the same generation of engine on its own A320 to protect its main profit source. That in turn forced Boeing to dump plans for an all-new single-aisle plane in 2011 and opt for a makeover of its best-selling 737 with similar engines, to be known as 737 MAX.

But sitting in Boeing's filing cabinets are designs for an all-new jet that would have involved intense collaboration with Embraer, according to two people familiar with the project. A template for closer cooperation therefore already exists. Boeing and Embraer declined to comment. The two companies already work on projects including runway safety and alternative jet fuels. Their partnership has intensified in recent years to include Boeing's commitment to joint sales and support of Embraer's KC-390 military aircraft.

The Airbus-Bombardier deal also marks a pause in strategic advances made by China, widely seen as the most serious future competitor to Airbus and Boeing. Debt-laden Bombardier had been in talks with China as it waited for Airbus to come around to the CSeries. "China has missed out on a huge opportunity to advance its aims by not getting the CSeries," an industry strategist said.

Product Strategy

The deal also has potentially far-reaching consequences for product strategy and technology at Airbus and Boeing. A person close to Bombardier said Airbus would aim to pressure the key Boeing 737 MAX 8 model by squeezing it from below with the CSeries and from above with the popular A321neo. Some critics say it could also develop a larger CSeries. But critics say airlines don't want such a patchwork of products. The deal clashes with one of the core philosophies in the Airbus brochure to date - a compatible family of aircraft where pilots and maintenance staff can be redeployed easily.

Airbus will also get its hands on promising technology. Workers in Belfast, whose jobs have been at the center of a political storm over the Boeing-Bombardier dispute, are using innovative wing production techniques that may now be deployed by Airbus for future jets. That could increase tensions at the World Trade Organisation where Boeing has battled with Airbus for years over government loans. Bombardier received such UK funding in Belfast, meaning recent trade friction may shift to the larger stage at the WTO. — Reuters



Xi to codify legal clout, anti-graft drive

China's Communist Party once shunned the rule of law, preferring to rely on what Chairman Mao Zedong called "rule of man" - essentially using the authority of party leaders to govern. In recent years, though, as China's economy modernizes, the party has increasingly been turning to the law to exert central authority over the bureaucracy and keep citizens under control, according to legal experts and diplomats. And under President Xi Jinping, that trend has been accelerating, they say.

Emblematic of that drive is a move to enshrine in law Xi's signature anti-graft campaign, which has ensnared nearly 1.4 million party members in the past five years. The move, announced last year, will be finalized at the Communist Party Congress that opens today. "Don't underestimate the importance of writing these things down," says Jessica Batke, who covered China for the US State Department and now writes on China's leadership for the Hoover Institution. Legal reforms are part of efforts by the Communist Party under Xi to grant more freedoms to ordinary people, while drawing red lines and creating harsher punishments for those who cross them, Batke said.

Codifying the Informal

Human rights groups often criticize China for only paying lip service to the rule of law and say the Communist Party systematically ignores due process when prosecuting activists and dissidents. Courts are being pushed by the Communist Party to be more accessible and fair in the hope that law becomes an effective tool to resolve disputes and stabilize society. But the reforms also help the leadership enforce central control by codifying previously informal restrictions, or campaigns like the anti-corruption drive, legal experts say. "What Xi is trying to do is central-

ize power in order to exert that power over China's unruly bureaucracy," said Carl Minzer, a Chinese law expert at Fordham Law School in New York.

Under Xi, the legislature has issued a flurry of new laws governing issues like Internet controls, espionage and even how to sing the Chinese national anthem. New rules and laws are also being used to punish people who oppose the party, according to Maya Wang, a Hong Kong-based

rule of law reform, political and executive power has been legalized so as to erode the possibility of resistance," said Fu Hualing, an expert on Chinese law at the University of Hong Kong.

Role of Key Xi Aide?

Xi's anti-corruption campaign will be overseen by a new National Supervision Commission, which will be given legal authority with a law still being drafted. The new body will take over from the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI) and merge multiple anti-graft units into a single body, according to an announcement from the CCDI last year. It will also expand the graft campaign's purview to include employees at state-backed institutions.

The CCDI, justice ministry and the National People's Congress, China's legislature, did not respond to requests for comment. The extent of the commission's power is closely tied to the fate of Wang Qishan, who has overseen the anti-graft campaign and is expected to stay in a leadership role despite being past the customary retirement age of 68, sources have told Reuters.

Wang's exact position is likely to be made clear at the congress. One scenario would see him usher in the next phase of the graft fight as head of the super-ministry. Wang has said that the new commission should be granted detention powers by law, raising concerns among rights activists that practices like the informal detention of suspects for questioning could be validated. Rights groups consider the practice illegal and say that suspects are often tortured. Details about the commission are expected to be announced next year at an annual meeting of the National People's Congress, according to diplomats and legal experts. — Reuters



Reforms help the leadership enforce central control

researcher for Human Rights Watch. The justice ministry has taken a tougher line on lawyers taking on rights cases. Last year it ordered law firms to "support Party activities," which activists say raises the risks of taking on sensitive cases for lawyers.

This month, Zhu Shengwu became the first lawyer to be stripped of his license for online posts critical of the Communist Party under the new measures. His posts had mocked the anti-corruption campaign and said the party was lawlessly administering justice. "Under Xi Jinping's

A 'goddess party secretary' ponders her future in China

In the mid-1980s, as a wave of economic reforms swept China, Qi Jing's parents fled the poverty of their farming village to seek opportunity in the bustling city of Wuhan. Her father found a job as a glass cutter, and later as a security guard, while her mother took care of their home. Thirty years later, in a country transformed, Qi headed in the reverse direction in search of her own future.

Soft-spoken and rail thin, Qi grew up a city girl whose only inkling of the hardship her parents and grandparents knew came during annual trips back to their village in Henan province. In college, Qi majored in English and grew to love romantic British literature. One of her favorite books was Jane Austen's "Emma". She was attracted by the main character, a woman of strength and individuality.

She wanted to study sociology in graduate school, but failed to make it into the school of her choice. Instead, she applied for a program to turn fresh graduates into rural officials. She had been a red-scarf-wearing Young Pioneer as a child - like almost all her classmates - and then a member of the Communist Youth League in her teens. When a college professor suggested she take the next step and join the Communist Party it seemed like the logical thing to do. As did going to work for the party.

"I've all along been in touch with what my advantages are, where my abilities lie," she said. "And in going through certain experiences," she added, "I've dis-

covered what kind of profession I'm suited to. This is how my dream has become more and more clear." Qi moved from Wuhan, in central China, to a nearby village to be the assistant to the local party boss. It was an eye-opening experience, with a heavy work load and problems far more complex than she'd imagined.

Two years later she moved to Putuan, a rural township further afield, to run the local branch of the Communist Youth League, the organization in charge of cultivating future party members. "I really wanted to explore the flashpoints of humanity. In college it was all theoretical." The villagers posed complicated challenges, but sometimes so did her superiors in the system in which she worked. She felt she had a more open mind, and more creative ideas than some older officials up the chain of command.

Last year, she helped the township organize its first lotus flower festival to attract tourists. She contacted a photo studio and spent her own money and a weekend having photos of herself taken in traditional robes, hair extensions flowing, among the lotus fields. She posted the photos on the messaging app WeChat. Local media picked up the story, dubbing her the "goddess party secretary" - and the pictures went viral.

But five years into her new life in the countryside and approaching the age of 30, Qi feels like she's nearing a crossroads. She would like to find a boyfriend and get married, but her attempts to date rural boys haven't panned out. A long-distance relationship with someone in Wuhan, an hour away, doesn't seem practical. "I used to be fairly optimistic, but now I'm neutral," she said. "At a certain age, one's opportunities get fewer and fewer, especially for women when it comes to your work and family choices. You must face them all." — Reuters

As Xi ascends, will economic reforms take off?

As Chinese President Xi Jinping prepares for a second five-year term, foreign investors will be watching for any sign of his long-promised reforms to further open up the world's second-largest economy. Xi will likely lay out his future economic policies today, when he opens a five-yearly Communist Party congress that will extend his tenure as general secretary. While he is expected to fill top posts with loyalists, analysts are divided as to whether he will use his increased powers to let the market rule or keep the state firmly in charge of the economy.

Xi has sought to cast himself as a champion of globalization as the United States retreats behind President Donald Trump's "America First" policy. But foreign companies complain that his words have not been backed by deeds, as the state retains control over the economy. US and European firms report being barred from certain sectors and forced to share their technologies with local competitors. The EU Chamber of Commerce in China summed up the exasperation as "promise fatigue". Underperforming state-owned enterprises, which have saddled the economy with huge debts and overcapacity exceeding domestic demand, have been propped up or merged into massive companies.

Premier sidelined

Private firms, meanwhile, are being subjected to closer control by the Communist Party, via cells it deploys inside companies. While the government is seeking to turn toward a consumption-based economy, the

state has continued to fuel growth through an accumulation of debt that, according to the IMF, is on a "dangerous trajectory". Congress spokesman Tuo Zhen said yesterday that China "will not slow the pace" of reforms, but he admitted there were still "tough problems to solve" such as "systemic obstacles".

But some analysts are not convinced by such public pronouncements. "There has been general disappointment on economic performance and direction," said Christopher Balding, economics professor at Peking University in the southern city of Shenzhen. "China is significantly more centralized than it was five years ago. At this point, it would be very difficult for anyone to make a serious argument that China is seriously interested in opening up economically," he told AFP.

When Xi took office five years ago, his premier Li Keqiang was seen as the man in charge of shepherding the economy. Li had promised "fair treatment" to foreign firms, a larger role for the market and structural reforms in favor of the private sector. But analysts say the premier has been sidelined as Xi has further centralized power around himself. Li "struggled to rally support around his reformist views" and curb state-owned enterprises, but he "has clearly not been a very influential premier," according to the Economist Intelligence Unit.

Supported by his economic adviser Liu He, Xi chairs the commission leading financial and economic affairs as well as a powerful new committee devoted to reforms. In July Xi called for "stronger financial regulation" to contain "systemic financial risks" - raising concern among analysts that this could stifle much-needed reforms. "Xi Jinping has increasingly stressed the importance of 'stability' on all fronts," Louis Kuijs of Oxford Economics said in a note. "Bold, potentially disruptive economic reform and forceful deleveraging are not consistent with stability." — AFP

News

US judge blocks latest Trump travel restrictions

SAN FRANCISCO: A US judge yesterday blocked President Donald Trump's latest bid to impose restrictions on citizens from eight countries entering the United States, which had been set to take effect this week. The open-ended ban, announced last month, targeted people from Iran, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Somalia, Chad and North Korea, as well as certain government officials from Venezuela. It was the latest version of a policy that had previously targeted six Muslim-majority countries but had been restricted by the US Supreme Court.

The state of Hawaii sued in federal court in Honolulu to block Trump's latest policy, arguing that federal immigration law did not give him the authority to impose the restrictions. US District Judge Derrick Watson in Honolulu had previously blocked Trump's

last travel ban in March. In his ruling yesterday, Watson said Hawaii is likely to succeed in proving that Trump's latest travel ban violates federal immigration law.

The policy "suffers from precisely the same maladies as its predecessor: it lacks sufficient findings that the entry of more than 150 million nationals from six specified countries would be 'detrimental to the interests of the United States,'" Watson wrote. The Justice Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Trump had promised as a candidate "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States."

In announcing the newest travel restrictions, the White House had portrayed them as necessary consequences for countries that did not meet new requirements for vetting of immigrants and issuing of visas. Those requirements were shared in July with foreign governments, which had 90 days to make improvements if needed, the White House said. A number of countries made improvements by enhancing the security of travel documents or the reporting of passports that were lost or stolen. Others did not, sparking the restrictions. — Reuters

Lack of women in Mideast workforce hindering growth

LONDON: Women in the Middle East now outnumber men in universities but this isn't translating into jobs - curbing the benefits of the "demographic dividend" that fuels economic growth. Almost all girls in the Middle East and North Africa now attend school, and more women than men go to university, according to the World Bank, but women's participation in the workforce stubbornly remains among the lowest in the world.

The demographic dividend refers to an acceleration of economic growth as the working-age population expands relative to the non-working-age. But without enough women, its impact will be muted in the Middle East, experts say. "The demographic dividend is not going to be as good as in Asia," said Tiziana Leone, assistant professor in demography at the London School of Economics. "If they want the benefit of it then you need more gender parity."

Lack of access to contraception is a hurdle keeping women from the workforce, according to a report by the United Nations' Population Fund (UNFPA) released yesterday. Poorly educated women in rural areas especially lack the means to plan when and how often they fall pregnant. Barely a quarter of women in the region are in employment, but with sharp variations. Rates of women's employment are lower in conflict-hit places such as Yemen, Gaza and Iraq compared to the Gulf states and Iran.

The legal and social barriers hampering women's access to jobs and careers in the Middle East and

North Africa is costing the region an estimated \$575 billion a year, the OECD said this month. Such barriers include needing a guardian to travel as in Saudi Arabia or laws requiring permission from husbands or fathers to work, common in Egypt, Jordan and Libya. A recent survey of attitudes in the region, by the UN Women agency and Promundo found more than two thirds of respondents believed a woman's primary role should be caring for the household, while at least half the women surveyed also saw this as their most important duty.

Children as Status Symbols

Better investment in contraception and sexual health care and equality for women in the workplace could encourage more women into the workforce, according to the UNFPA report. "Poorer countries with large or emerging youth populations that reduce gaps in sexual and reproductive health care and promote gender equality also have the potential to reap and maximize a demographic dividend," the report found.

In parts of the Middle East, change is already happening. "Gender relations are changing," Bessma Momani, a non-resident fellow at Brookings Doha Center think tank, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Children as status symbols has definitely gone down... it used to be if you had 10, 12 children that was your

status symbol as a woman, now education and careers have become the new status symbols."

The types of jobs women do must also change, experts say. In the Middle East and North Africa only 17 percent of women have jobs in the non-agricultural sector such as engineering and finance, according to the World Bank, while the region has the lowest proportion of female entrepreneurs in the world. Overcoming these obstacles and tackling underlying gender inequality are crucial to progress, the UNFPA report found. "Without a greater and equitable engagement of women, the demographic dividend will remain an elusive objective," it said. — Reuters



MARAWI: Philippine soldiers walk past destroyed buildings in the Bangolo district after President Rodrigo Duterte declared Marawi City liberated yesterday. — AFP

Duterte declares Marawi liberated...

Continued from Page 1

Troops persisted in efforts to rescue about 20 hostages, Colonel Romeo Brawner, deputy commander of the task force battling the militants, told AFP. Asked by reporters if Duterte's declaration was symbolic, Brawner said: "Yes, because we cannot really say that (the area) is 100 percent cleared."

Pro-IS gunmen occupied parts of Marawi, the main Islamic city in the predominantly Catholic Philippines, on May 23 following a foiled attempt by security forces to arrest Hapilon. Insurgents endured a relentless US-backed bombing campaign and intense ground battles with troops in the nation's longest urban conflict since World War II. The military said Monday that Hapilon - who figured on the US "most wanted terrorists" list - was killed in a dawn offensive alongside Omarkhayam Maute, one of two brothers who allied with Hapilon to plot the takeover of the city. Duterte had said Hapilon led an IS bid to establish a Southeast Asian caliphate as the militants suffer battlefield defeats in Iraq and Syria.

Streets in Marawi were littered with machine gun bullet casings and rubble, including a van and twisted roofing sheets piled up on sidewalks. Troops were hunting a Malaysian militant, Mahmud Ahmad, who has

been tipped to take over IS in the region following Hapilon's death. The military said he was among six to eight foreign fighters in a battle zone comprising about 60 to 80 buildings. "Mahmud remains... one of our high-value targets in the operations being conducted," said military spokesman Major-General Restituto Padilla. He said the military believed Mahmud was in Marawi, but it could not be certain. He said Mahmud was no threat. "Dr Mahmud is an academic, he's not a fighter," Padilla said. "We don't feel he is a problem."

Terrorism expert Ahmad Kumar Ramakrishna from Singapore's S Rajaratnam School of International Studies said if Mahmud survived he would likely take over the leadership of IS-linked fighters in the southern Philippines. The militant is reported to be a university lecturer in his home country who was in charge of raising finances from abroad for the militants and recruitment. The restive south of the Philippines is home to extremist gangs which have declared allegiance to IS, including notorious kidnap-for-ransom group Abu Sayyaf and the Maute group.

Yesterday the military warned against retaliatory attacks from sympathizers of the militants. The United States, a longtime defense ally of the Philippines, vowed yesterday to support the military's final push in Marawi. "The US Government will continue to work with the Armed Forces of the Philippines in the final phases of this operation, and looks forward to cooperating in assuring the stabilization and rehabilitation of Marawi," US embassy press attache Molly Koscina said. — Agencies

Islamic State loses emblematic Syria...

Continued from Page 1

"I can't describe my happiness," the 44-year-old told AFP in the town of Kobane, 100 km north of Raqqa. "When my sister told me it had been freed, she started to cry, and then I started to cry. Thank God, thank God."

The SDF broke into Raqqa in June, after months of fighting to surround the city, and on Tuesday flushed the last few hundred IS fighters from their remaining positions in the main hospital and the municipal stadium. "Everything is finished in Raqqa, our forces have taken full control of Raqqa," the alliance's spokesman Talal Sello told AFP. He said the SDF was combing the city for any remaining militants who had not surrendered or been killed. "The military operations in Raqqa have finished, but there are clearing operations now under way to uncover any sleeper cells there might be and remove mines," he said.

The announcement came just days after the SDF launched the final phase of its operation to retake the city. There had been fears that the force, backed by the US-led coalition battling IS in Syria and Iraq, could get bogged down in a protracted battle for the last 10 percent of the city. But yesterday they captured the hospital and stadium in quick succession, effectively ending IS' more than three-year presence in the city. Sello said an official statement announcing "the liberation of the city" would be made soon.

The US-led coalition backing the operation made no statement on the city's capture, but announced that IS had lost 87 percent of the territory it seized in 2014. "ISIS is losing in every way," coalition spokesman

Colonel Ryan Dillon added in a tweet, using an alternate acronym for the group. "We've devastated their networks and eliminated leaders at all levels." The breakthrough in the Raqqa operation, which was launched on June 6, came after a deal was struck allowing the evacuation in recent days of civilians who had been held as human shields. Under the deal, a total of 275 Syrian IS fighters and relatives also surrendered to the SDF, though it was unclear whether they would be given safe passage elsewhere.

The battle for the city was fierce, with the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor saying Tuesday at least 3,250 people had been killed, including 1,130 civilians, with hundreds more still missing. Its capture leaves the group with little more than a "dwarf territory" in neighboring Deir Ezzor province, said Nicholas Heras, a fellow at the Centre for a New American Security think tank. "IS will be mainly boxed into a strip of territory running along the Middle Euphrates River Valley in the province of Deir Ezzor," he told AFP. "This will be the center of gravity for IS in Syria."

The militants face two separate assaults in the province, which neighbors Iraq, including a campaign by the SDF. A Russian-backed Syrian regime campaign has separately retaken swathes of territory in the province, further reducing a "caliphate" that three years ago was roughly the size of Britain. The Britain-based Observatory said regime forces had brought the entire area between Deir Ezzor city and Mayadeen, which was retaken on Saturday, under their control following a major military offensive.

"These are not desert areas, they are villages along the Euphrates that were IS strongholds," the monitor said. "The Islamic State group is collapsing under pressure from the regime in Deir Ezzor province," it said. IS also controls territory in neighboring regions on the Iraqi side of the border, where the militants are facing another US-backed offensive by Iraqi pro-government forces. — AFP

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Sports

**Leicester sack manager
Craig Shakespeare**

LONDON: Leicester City sacked Craig Shakespeare yesterday, just four months after handing him a permanent contract to manage the former Premier League champions, British media reported. Shakespeare, 53, was promoted from his role as assistant coach on an interim basis following the shock dismissal of Claudio Ranieri in February and in June he was handed a three-year contract. But the 2015-16 champions have struggled this season and are third from bottom of the table with a single league win. Monday night's 1-1 home draw with West Brom saw Leicester's winless Premier League run reach six matches—the same as when Ranieri was sacked. Shakespeare's appointment earlier this year sparked a striking upturn in form that saw Leicester secure their Premier League status and reach the quarter-finals of the Champions League. Reacting to Tuesday's development, former Leicester and England player Gary Lineker tweeted: "Was always a miracle, but it's even more remarkable really that Leicester won the league given the ineptitude of those that run the club." —AFP



**Middlesex appeal dismissed
for slow over rates**

LONDON: Middlesex failed yesterday in their appeal against a two-point penalty for slow over rates, which means they will be relegated just a year after winning the county championship. The club, who play at Lord's, were docked the points during their match against Surrey in August—a game that was abandoned when a crossbow bolt was fired into The Oval. They were subsequently relegated by a single point after losing their final match of the season to Somerset. The Cricket Discipline Commission, which operates at arm's length from the England and Wales Cricket Board, said it had upheld the points deduction, with chairman Tim O'Gorman adding that the rules are clear. "I do not accept that Middlesex only agreed to the abandonment of the match on condition that their slow over rate in the first innings would be overlooked," he said. "It is not within the power or gift of either the umpires or the players to make deals like that. The match was abandoned for safety reasons. Play ended accordingly and the points earned or deducted should stand with effect from that time." —AFP

**Biles chooses new
coach for comeback**

LOS ANGELES: Olympic gymnastics queen Simone Biles has appointed a new coach as she begins her comeback to the sport after a year-long break, US media reported yesterday. Biles, the reigning all-around Olympic champion and 10-time World Championship gold medalist, has hired France's Laurent Landi as she begins her journey towards the 2020 Tokyo Games. The 20-year-old superstar took a sabbatical from gymnastics following her performances at the Rio de Janeiro games last year, where she won four gold medals and a bronze. The change of coach comes after former mentor Aimee Boorman, who worked with Biles for more than a decade, relocated to Florida from Houston. Biles said she was drawn to Landi through his work with USA teammate Madison Kocian, who won a silver medal on the uneven bars in Rio. The uneven bars was the only event in which Biles failed to reach the final in Brazil. —AFP



Zain celebrates national jet ski team world champions

Company main sponsor of the team for 7th consecutive year



Zain's team welcoming the champions at Kuwait Airport.

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, welcomed Kuwait's national jet ski team champions at Kuwait Airport after the team achieved an unprecedented achievement of 13 titles during their participation in the recently concluded World Jet Ski Championship held in the United States. The company is the main sponsor of the team for the seventh consecutive year.

Zain participated in the reception ceremony held at Kuwait Airport's Honoring Hall, where the team's

sponsors and supporting organizations attended. The company expressed its keenness on encouraging Kuwaiti athletes to represent Kuwait in internationally renowned championships, and that its sponsorship of the team for seventh consecutive year falls under its strategy towards supporting the youth and sports sectors.

The company expressed its pride in the latest achievements the team accomplished, including 3 gold medals, 4 silver medals, and 6 bronze medals.

The team also landed a number of titles from the highest competitive categories including the Pro Open and Expert categories. Zain confirms its commitment towards Kuwaiti champions, which resembles the company's endless confidence of the competencies of these young athletes and their capabilities in excelling in different fields.

As a leading telecommunications company, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue

to put Kuwaiti National teams and individual athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition they deserve.

It is worth noting that the national jet ski team is authorized by the Kuwait Sea Sport Club to officially represent the country in regional and international jet ski championships. The team champions won a number of prominent titles during past and present participations.



**Kucherov scores twice,
Lightning beat Red Wings**

DETROIT: Nikita Kucherov is in the middle of one of those stretches when the puck seems to do whatever he wants. The dynamic forward scored twice Monday night to lift the Tampa Bay Lightning to a 3-2 victory over the Detroit Red Wings. Kucherov barely touched the puck on the decisive goal, but he did enough to deflect it past Jimmy Howard with 18:13 remaining in the third period, and Tampa Bay held on for its fourth straight victory.

Kucherov had exactly one goal in each of Tampa Bay's first five games this season. After adding two more Monday, he is second in the league in goals, two behind Washington's Alex Ovechkin.

"Special player," Lightning coach Jon Cooper said. "He didn't show up to Tampa in September. He showed up in July. He was on the ice four or five times a week just working on his game, and we're reaping the benefits of that."

Tyler Johnson also scored for the Lightning, who are now atop the NHL standings with 10 points. Justin Abdelkader and Mike Green scored in the second period to help Detroit erase a 2-0 deficit, but Kucherov broke the tie early in the third.

Kucherov reached out with one hand on his stick and barely got a piece of a loose puck in front of the net. It slid slowly under Howard and in. Johnson opened the scoring with a short-handed goal in the first period, collecting the puck near his own blue line and outskating Trevor Daley the other way before

beating Howard. Kucherov scored on a power play 101 seconds later with a wrist shot from the right circle.

"They play really tight and there's not much space on the ice," Kucherov said. "You have to kind of grind this out and play the right way. ... Sometimes just wait for mistakes."

Abdelkader's goal came after some extensive deliberation by the officials. He was hooked from behind by Victor Hedman on a breakaway, but he was able to get a shot off. Andrei Vasilevskiy made the save, and Abdelkader went sliding into him. Detroit's Darren Helm, who was trailing the play, put the rebound into the net.

After a review, officials took the goal away, ruling Abdelkader had interfered with the goalie and Hedman was guilty of a hooking penalty. After additional discussion, Abdelkader was given a penalty shot, which he converted. He was the first Detroit player to score on a penalty shot since Valtteri Filppula on Dec. 15, 2007.

Green's tying goal was set up by Tomas Tatar, who started a rush with some impressive stickhandling in his own zone, and then eventually passed to Green, who followed his own shot and scored on the rebound. "I thought we were the better team 5 on 5, I thought we had more scoring chances," Red Wings coach Jeff Blashill said. "In the end, the difference was specialty teams. They scored two on specialty teams and we scored zero." —AP

**McDonald's proud sponsor of
Kuwait national jet ski team**

KUWAIT: In line with its core philosophy of supporting the local sports culture and encouraging young athletic talents, McDonald's Kuwait announced its sponsorship of the Kuwait national jet ski team, who recently competed in the World Jet Ski Championship which was held in Arizona in the United States.

Luai Al-Kilani, Vice President of McDonald's Kuwait, congratulated the national champions on their stellar performance throughout the competition, as they successfully bolstered their already impressive roster of international achievements with a string of new victories.

The team's star athlete and renowned international jet ski champion, Mohammed Burabea,

scored a historic victory, becoming the first Arab athlete to win the gold medal in the Pro Open category. Designated for the most advanced pro athletes, the category is considered to be one of the most challenging in the sport. In addition to achieving a regional first, Burabea also broke his own personal record, earning his 21st gold medal in the span of 11 consecutive years.

In total, the national team nabbed 13 medals - three gold, four silver and six bronze. In addition to Burabea's gold, Abdulrahman Ghazi Al Omar won two gold medals of his own, while his teammate Walid Al Adsani won two silver. Abdullah Al Ghanim won three medals, one silver and two

bronze, whilst Rashed Al Rashed nabbed one silver and one bronze. Finally, Mohammed Jassem Al Baz won two bronze medals, whilst teammate Salem Al Mutawa added one bronze of his own.

"Sports has always been a cornerstone of the McDonald's culture and philosophy, and we at McDonald's Kuwait have always striven to play an active role in supporting the local sports scene," said Al-Kilani. "Our sponsorship of the jet ski team came as a result of our resounding belief in the limitless potential of these young athletic talents. We are also firm believers in the need to offer all possible moral and financial support to Kuwait's up-and-coming athletes, so that they can continue to shine and excel on a regional and global level."

Al-Kilani concluded by saying: "We wish these young champions all the best in their upcoming competitions. I, for one, am confident that they will continue to make as all proud, topping the rankings and setting new records in the sport."

Sports

History boys Italy draw Sweden in tricky World Cup playoff

N Ireland will tackle Switzerland and Croatia to play Greece

PARIS: Four-time winners Italy will play Sweden in a playoff for a place in the 2018 World Cup while the Republic of Ireland take on Denmark, following the draw yesterday.

Northern Ireland will tackle Switzerland and Croatia and Greece will contest the other two-legged Europe zone playoffs to be played between November 9 and November 14. Veteran goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon's Italy, who were seeded for the draw in Zurich, will travel to Sweden for the first leg of their tie as they seek a ticket to Russia.

Gabriele Oriali, the Italy team manager who attended the draw in place of coach Gian Piero Ventura, said: "I think it could have been better. But we accept this draw. We are Italy and we shouldn't be afraid of anyone."

"Sweden are a very strong team, who qualified in a difficult group. They beat France and eliminated the Netherlands. "We have optimism and history (on our side). Imagine a World Cup without Italy."

The Italians were condemned to the playoffs after finishing runners-up to Spain in their qualifying group, but they have not missed a World Cup finals since 1958. Sweden coach Janne Andersson said he expected "two tough games". "But it would have been the same with other countries. I'm happy we know now. Now we can start work," he told Sky Sports News.



'We are Italy and we shouldn't be afraid of anyone'

UPHILL TASK FOR NIRELAND

Northern Ireland coach Michael O'Neill admitted he faced an uphill task against the Swiss as he bids to steer his country to the finals for the first time since 1986.

The Northern Irish will play at home in the first leg. "Switzerland had a great campaign though their group was one of the easiest. Our job is to make their life as difficult as possible," he said. "Having played Germany twice in the group it will set us up nicely for the match," O'Neill said.

"Our aim is to take a lead to Switzerland and we had seven clean sheets in our qualifiers so we need a tight five when we go there." The Republic of Ireland need to keep up the form they showed at the end of qualifying when they eliminated Wales to reach the playoffs, their

coach Martin O'Neill said.

They have the advantage of hosting Denmark in the second leg. "We have momentum and that's important," O'Neill said. "We won the last two games to get here. I'm now concerned with the next couple of weeks and making sure my players don't get injuries at club level."

Croatia will host surprise Euro 2004 winners Greece in the first leg of their playoff. Croatia's coach Zlatko Dalic said the tie would be "a difficult job", but added: "I'm optimistic." —AFP



ZÜRICH: Spanish retired footballer Fernando Hierro performs the FIFA football World Cup 2018 European play-off draw, yesterday in Zurich. — AFP

IOC casts net for Winter Games hosts in 'troubled times'

LAUSANNE: The International Olympic Committee finds itself battling the weight of public pressure in potential host cities as it casts its net to find suitable candidates for the Winter Games amid concerns over costs and the merits of hosting multi-sport events. Next year's Winter Olympics will be held in Pyeongchang, South Korea, while Beijing hosts in 2022. The official bidding process for 2026 starts next year with the IOC due to make a decision in Milan in autumn 2019.

But the IOC were dealt a hammer blow at the weekend when the Austrian state of Tyrol voted against Innsbruck's bid for 2026, citing concerns over the high financial cost and environmental impact. That begs the question of how many bid cities will be unveiling their projects in 2019. There were just two in 2015, with Beijing beating the Kazakh city of Almaty for the right to host in 2022. Pyeongchang held off bids from Munich and Annecy. While several bid cities (Hamburg, Boston, Rome, Budapest) pulled out of attempting to win hosting rights to the 2024 Summer Olympics, attributed to Paris with Los Angeles to host in 2028, Innsbruck's withdrawal is a timely reminder that finding suitable cities is not a given.

The result of the referendum in Tyrol, with more than 53 percent of the population voting against, was "a setback but overall it's not disastrous", argued Jon Tibbs, head of the JTA agency and communications adviser to the LA bid for the 2024-28 Summer Games.

"It was a mistake to have this Tyrol referendum so early. The referendum created more questions than answers. They were not in a rush, they should have explained more before having this referendum." The IOC said it would have liked to continue its preliminary talks with Innsbruck, sharing "the disappointment for the Austrian Olympic Committee, the many supporting athletes and the promoters of the project who worked on it with so much energy and commitment".

IOC LOOKS WIDE AND FAR

Fresh talks with interested cities from North America, Asia and Europe will now go ahead, an IOC spokesperson said, with meetings already held with representatives from the Swiss city of Sion, Calgary in Canada and Stockholm.

To these three cities should be added an American venue, the US Olympic Committee confirming Friday it would be "interested" in hosting, though unsure of whether for 2026 or 2030. Denver, Reno-Tahoe and Salt Lake City, host of the 2002 Winter Olympics—the last organised by the US—are interested, while Japan's 1972 hosts Sapporo and Almaty could also join the running. Hopes of the 2026 Games going to Switzerland are also up in the air, with Sion at the mercy of a public referendum complicated by that country's federal system of governance. "We noted the decision made by the Tyrol public, which shows how it is so important to communicate as widely as possible," Sion bid president Jean-Philippe Rochat told AFP.

"Public voting is envisaged when all costs and their distribution are known. Our timing and approach are slightly different (from Innsbruck)," Rochat, a former vice-president of the Swiss ski federation, said he was "convinced that when all the margins of costs are known and communicated", the population will realise that "Sion proposes a really new approach, completely realistic and transparent, which will allow the entire region to benefit from a positive legacy from the Olympics". —AFP

Heynckes back as Bayern regroup for Celtic

MUNICH: Bayern Munich are looking to regroup in the Champions League at home to Celtic today as Jupp Heynckes coaches his first European game since winning the 2013 final. The 72-year-old steered Bayern to the Champions League title four years ago by beating Borussia Dortmund at Wembley to complete the treble of European, Bundesliga and German Cup titles in the 2012/13 season. However, after Carlo Ancelotti was sacked in the wake of Bayern's 3-0 hammering at Paris Saint-Germain three weeks ago,

Mahrez rescues point for Leicester in 1-1 draw with West Brom

LEICESTER CITY: Riyad Mahrez rescued a point for Leicester City who came from behind to draw 1-1 with West Bromwich Albion in the Premier League on Monday, as both teams' search for a first league win in almost two months continued.

The Algerian cancelled out Nacer Chadli's stunning free kick with his first league goal of the season to make sure the points were shared at the King Power Stadium.

Each side's last Premier League win came in August and so both were looking to kick start their season after the international break. The first half passed by largely without incident, with only Danny Simpson drawing a good save from West Brom's Boaz Myhill, who was featuring in his first league game since April 2016.

The second period started more energetically, with Jamie Vardy being awarded a foul after colliding at full speed just outside the area with the on-rushing Myhill. It was the visitors who broke the deadlock, however, with Belgian Chadli, in his first league start of the season, curling in a stunning free kick 25 metres out shortly after the hour mark.

The hosts rallied and were rewarded for their efforts as the clock ticked down. Mahrez, who was guilty of missing a sitter earlier in the second half, showed exquisite control to grab the equaliser with 10 minutes remaining.

The Algerian received a headed ball from compatriot Islam Slimani and controlled it with his chest before hitting it on the half-volley. Leicester could not find another breakthrough and Tony Pulis's men held on for a draw, which meant that the 2016 champions remained in 18th place, with six points from eight games. West Brom moved up one position to 10th.

"We're disappointed," Pulis told Sky Sports. "It's a very, very tough league. Every team you play, if you take the top six out of it, from them downwards there's not a lot between them." —Reuters

Heynckes came out of retirement to return as head coach until the end of the season. After four years away from football, Celtic's visit to Allianz Arena is Heynckes' first real test as Bayern look to show a reaction from their thrashing in Paris. "Reparation" is a word often used when you have lost a game in the group phases," said Heynckes when asked if Bayern want to atone for the loss. "I think we simply must have the ambition to reach the next round. "The team is highly motivated and looked good in training, but we know Celtic are a strong and aggressive team." The veteran head coach insisted the Germans will not underestimate Celtic. "You can always make the mistake of underestimating a team, but Celtic has been (Scottish) champions six times in a row," added Heynckes. "They twice held Borussia Mönchengladbach and Manchester City to a draw last season which shows they are competitive."

Bayern's hot-shot striker Robert Lewandowski is in rich form with six goals in five matches at Allianz Arena so far this season. The Polish star is Bayern's most successful foreign goalscorer, with a total of 24 goals, and has scored 10 times in his

last 12 Champions League matches.

MARTINEZ OUT

He scored in Saturday's 5-0 thrashing of Freiburg in the Bundesliga. The victory was Heynckes' first match back in charge and left Bayern second in Germany's top competition. However Bayern have just three points from their first two Champions League games and need a home win to get them back on track in Group B. "We're always under pressure here, but tomorrow is especially important for us," said Bayern defender Jerome Boateng. "After a defeat in the Champions League, we want to answer with a win."

Bayern's defensive midfielder Javi Martinez has been ruled out after suffering a shoulder injury in the Freiburg win. "I am not a fan of playing players who are injured and have agreed with the doctor that he (Martinez) will miss the next two games," said Heynckes. Alongside Martinez, long-term injury victims Manuel Neuer, Franck Ribery and Juan Bernat will also miss Wednesday's game. However, Heynckes said midfielder Arturo Vidal could feature despite a leg knock. —AFP



NASHVILLE: Tennessee Titans inside linebacker Wesley Woodyard (59) knocks Indianapolis Colts quarterback Jacoby Brissett (7) out of bounds to stop a Colts' drive late in the fourth quarter of an NFL football game Monday, in Nashville, Tenn. — AP

Mariota returns to help Titans beat Colts

TENNESSEE: The Tennessee Titans ended an 11-game losing streak to the Indianapolis Colts on Monday night with a big pass and a big defensive play. Marcus Mariota's tiebreaking 53-yard touchdown strike to rookie Taywan Taylor with 5:29 left in the game, coupled with Wesley Woodyard's stop of quarterback Jacoby Brissett on fourth down with 2:19 remaining, gave Tennessee a 36-22 victory at Nissan Stadium. Mariota, who missed the Titans' 16-10 defeat at Miami the previous week with a hamstring injury, completed 23 of 32 passes for 306 yards as the Titans (3-3) moved into a three-way tie with Houston and Jacksonville for first place in the AFC South.

Woodyard helped seal the victory by running Brissett out of bounds just shy of the first down on fourth-and-1 at the Tennessee 13. A replay review confirmed the ruling, and the Titans iced it with a 72-yard touchdown run from Derrick Henry with 47 seconds left. It was their first victory over Indianapolis since October 30, 2011.

Henry finished with 131 yards on 19 carries. The Colts (2-4) took a 19-9 lead 70 seconds into the third quarter when John Simon returned an interception 26 yards for a touchdown. Ryan Succop drew Tennessee within 19-15 on

48- and 23-yard field goals, giving him five for the night. The Titans finally found the end zone with 10:01 left in the game on a 3-yard run by DeMarco Murray, capping a 15-play, 87-yard drive. The Colts' Adam Vinatieri converted a 52-yard field goal with 7:27 left to even the score at 22, but all that did was tee up Tennessee's streak-breaking sequence. Brissett hit on 21 of 37 passes for 212 yards and a touchdown.

Tennessee opened the scoring 3:45 into the game with Succop's 48-yard field goal. It was his 47th consecutive conversion from 50 yards or closer, an NFL record that he increased to 51 by game's end.

Indianapolis got a 36-yard field goal from Vinatieri to even the score, but Succop hit from 32 with 47 seconds left in the first quarter for a 6-3 lead. The Colts took the lead with 10:54 left in the half as Brissett flipped an 8-yard touchdown pass to tight end Jack Doyle. The Titans responded with Succop's third field goal, a 40-yarder at the 4:10 mark, to slice their deficit to 10-9.

Indianapolis answered with a 25-yard field goal from Vinatieri 14 seconds before halftime, enabling the Colts to take a four-point lead to the locker room. — Reuters

Sports

Rampant Reds hit seven to silence Jurgen Klopp critics

Salah made it three with his seventh goal of the season

MARIBOR: Liverpool eased the pressure on Jurgen Klopp as Roberto Firmino and Mohamed Salah inspired a 7-0 thrashing of Maribor in the Champions League yesterday.

After drawing their first two European fixtures and spluttering in the Premier League, Liverpool arrived in Slovenia with critics questioning Klopp's signings and tactics. But, for once, Klopp's team showed a ruthless touch in the opposition penalty area to demolish woeful Maribor.

Firmino opened the scoring and Philippe Coutinho increased Liverpool's lead before Salah's brace put the Reds four up by half-time at Stadion Ljudski Vrt. Firmino netted again after the break, with Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Trent Alexander-Arnold also on the scoresheet as Liverpool's goal blitz moved them into first place in Group E with three matches left. After only one victory in their last eight games in all competitions, this was a welcome tonic for Klopp and company as they ended a three-match winless run. Now Klopp must hope the dominant display marks a much-needed change in his side's fortunes.

Saturday's goalless draw against Manchester United had continued Liverpool's frustrating recent trend of failing to kill off their opponents despite controlling possession.

Liverpool's profligacy sparked criticism of Klopp's failure to buy a top-class striker and, irritated by questions about his trophyless two-year reign, he sarcastically labelled himself a "charismatic, funny loser" earlier this week.

Aware the heat was being turned up, Klopp will be

relieved Liverpool looked more potent, although it helped that Maribor were totally out of their depth. Klopp's side quickly punished Maribor's naive defending to take a fourth minute lead.

Salah was left in acres of space down the right edge of the Maribor penalty area and the Egypt winger's low cross into the six yard box teed up Firmino to tap-in his fifth goal of the season.

RUNNING RIOT

Liverpool were running riot and Coutinho doubled their advantage in the 13th minute. Salah sent James Milner away down the right flank and he pulled a cross back to the edge of the Maribor area, where Coutinho arrived to slot home his fifth goal of the season.

Firmino went close with a flicked shot at the end of a flowing move, but for once applying the finishing touch wasn't a problem for Klopp's men. Salah made it three with his seventh goal of the season in the 19th minute.

Firmino was the creator, riding two tackles and slipping a deft pass to Salah, who guided a cool finish past Maribor goalkeeper Jasmin Handanovic. Maribor were in complete disarray and Salah notched Liverpool's fourth from virtually on the goal line after Alberto Moreno's cross unhinged the hapless hosts in the 39th minute.

It was only the seventh time an English club had scored four first half goals in the Champions League. Liverpool weren't finished yet and the Brazil connection combined for their fifth when Firmino rose to head in Coutinho's 54th minute free-kick.

Capping a night when everything when right for Klopp,



MARIBOR: Liverpool's Mohamed Salah, top, duels for the ball with Maribor's Marko Suler during the Champions League soccer match between Maribor and Liverpool at the Ljudski vrt stadium, in Maribor, Slovenia, yesterday. — AP

Oxlade-Chamberlain, on as a substitute, grabbed his first Liverpool goal since his August move from Arsenal. Daniel Sturridge's pass sent Oxlade-Chamberlain clear in the 86th minute and he calmly stroked his shot past

Handanovic. Klopp was all smiles on the touchline and there was still time for teenage defender Alexander-Arnold to net in stoppage-time with a deflected long-range effort. — AFP



This was a welcome tonic for Klopp

Leipzig claim landmark Champions League success

LEIPZIG: Jean-Kevin Augustin scored what proved to be the winner as RB Leipzig secured their first ever victory in the Champions League yesterday evening, beating Porto 3-2. Willi Orban and Emil Forsberg also scored for the hosts in a five-goal first half as Leipzig claimed a win that keeps alive their dream of reaching the knockout stages in their debut Champions League campaign.

The result puts Leipzig second in Group G, a point above Porto but five points behind Turkish champions Besiktas, who maintained their perfect record with a 2-1 win at Monaco. Leipzig were without star striker Timo Werner for much of the game. The 21-year-old is yet to return to full match fitness after injury so only came on as a late substitute, but his team were still brilliant going forward. It took just eight minutes for Leipzig to open the scoring. After Jose Sa preferred in the Porto goal to Iker Casillas-fumbled Bruma's long-range effort, the ball fell to Orban, who bundled it into the net from close range. More chances followed as Augustin first sliced a ball wide and then danced around two Porto defenders before being denied by Sa.

For all their flair in attack, defensive nerves soon cost Leipzig the equaliser. A long throw, twice knocked on in the penalty area, was turned in at the far post by Vincent Aboubakar on 18 minutes. The response was immediate from the home side. Marcel Sabitzer, Naby Keita and Forsberg all came close within minutes of the leveller and it was the latter who would make it 2-1 in the 38th minute. The Swede linked up brilliantly with Sabitzer before slotting the ball past Sa.

Moments later, Augustin had increased the lead. Ivan Marcano's error gifting him possession and a free run at goal. The Porto defender would make amends at the other end, scoring his side's second just before half-



LEIPZIG: Porto's Ivan Marcano, center, scores his side's second goal during the Champions League Group G first leg soccer match between RB Leipzig and FC Porto in Leipzig, Germany. — AP

time. The Leipzig defence was caught napping again at a corner, allowing Hector Herrera to head the ball back at the far post before Marcano prodded the ball in.

With an hour gone, Marcano would redeem himself further, clearing off the line after Augustin had poked the ball past Sa, and Augustin would miss another

chance in the 73rd minute, choosing to fire the ball over the bar rather than pass to the unmarked Sabitzer.

Brought on with a quarter of an hour to play, Werner was given a hero's welcome by the home fans, but his hopes of scoring a first Champions League goal were thwarted by a Sa save in the 83rd minute. — AFP

Bernard brace leads Shakhtar over Feyenoord 2-1 in CL

ROTTERDAM: Bernard scored twice in leading 10-man Shakhtar Donetsk past Feyenoord 2-1 and solidifying the Ukrainian team's grip on second place in Group F of the Champions League yesterday.

Shakhtar's second group stage win left Feyenoord without a point following three straight defeats. Manchester City stayed on top after beating Napoli 2-1. Bernard netted in the 24th and 54th minutes to cancel out a seventh-minute strike by Steven Berghuis.

Feyenoord started strongly at a sold-out De Kuip Stadium and Berghuis gave his team a deserved lead when he headed home a rebound after Andriy Pyatov parried Jean-Paul Boetius' swerving shot.

But Feyenoord eased off after scoring, allowing Shakhtar into the match. Bernard equalized in the 24th after running onto a perfectly weighted pass by midfielder Fred and rounding goalkeeper Brad Jones before calmly slotting the ball into the empty net. Feyenoord again started strongly in the second half and Pyatov twice had to sprint off his line to deny Nicolai Jorgensen and Sofyan Amrabat. But while Feyenoord couldn't capitalize on its chances, Shakhtar was clinical, with Bernard appearing unmarked at the far post to give his team the lead with a powerful header.

Shakhtar was reduced to 10 men with 15 minutes to go when Yaroslav Rakitskiy was sent off for his second yellow card for a foul on substitute Jens Toornstra.

Substitute Michiel Kramer came close to equalizing in extra time, but Pyatov pulled off another good save to block his header. "We can look back on a good match, but we still finished empty handed," Feyenoord captain Karim El Ahmadi told Dutch television network Veronica. — AP

FIFA Sec Gen hopes TV rights scandal 'will not disrupt' Qatar World Cup

MADRID: FIFA's number two Fatma Samoura said yesterday she hoped the criminal investigations into the sale of World Cup rights to the Qatari-owned beIN Media group will not "disrupt" Qatar's hosting of the 2022 World Cup.

Swiss prosecutors said last week they had launched a criminal corruption probe targeting Paris Saint-Germain president and beIN media chief, Nasser Al-Khelaifi, and disgraced former FIFA executive Jerome Valcke over the sale of media rights for World Cups in 2018-2030.

"I hope that the ongoing investigations will not disrupt the organisation of this World Cup," Samoura told AFP in an exclusive interview in Madrid yesterday. Samoura, from Senegal, took over the role previously held by Valcke as part of FIFA president Gianni Infantino's team tasked with cleaning up the battered image of world football's governing body after a series of corruption scandals.

"The World Cups, as you know, are the jewels of FIFA competition. "Now that our structure has become

much more credible, we cannot afford to jeopardise these competitions. The same goes for Qatar. "The organisation of the competition was awarded to them in 2010, well before the new leadership came in, and we will ensure that the right conditions are put in place to be able to organise this competition in the best conditions." The Swiss attorney general's office said its probe into Valcke and Khelaifi includes allegations of bribery, fraud, criminal mismanagement and forgery of a document. Italian police also seized a luxury villa in Sardinia that a police spokesman alleged had been used by Khelaifi as "a means of corruption." Khelaifi and beIN Media deny any wrongdoing.

FIFA ON 'RIGHT TRACK'

Qatar has found itself routinely accused of corruption since controversially winning the right to host the 2022 World Cup, charges it has always denied.

However, the latest scandal comes on the back of a widespread US-led investigation into corruption at FIFA. "We have collaborated and continue to collabo-

rate with the justice ministries of the United States and also Switzerland," added Samoura. "There is a firm and real willingness within FIFA to change. If we stick to the results published in FIFA's governance and financial reports at the end of 2016, we are on the right track."

Appointed in May 2016, Samoura, 55, is the leading light in FIFA's drive for more females in leading roles in football governance as the organisation's first female Secretary General.

And while she believes FIFA is close to maximising its income from the men's World Cup, the women's game has plenty of room for growth to make it a commercial success. The 2014 men's World Cup earned FIFA a whopping \$4.8 billion. "Women's football has every chance to develop, more so than men's competitions, which will possibly soon reach a ceiling," continued Samoura.

"Today the competition that finances the other competitions is the men's World Cup. "The idea is that through the new development strategy for women's football, the women's World Cup will be a product that can be sold to TV, commercial sponsors and made a special product, not a by-product of the men's competition." In an unprecedented move the Norwegian football federation announced last week its male and female internationals will be paid equally. "I was one of the first to send a tweet to rejoice and encourage Norway for this very important step that has been taken," added Samoura. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE		
Qarabag Aghdam v Atletico de Madrid	18:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
Moscow v Basel 1893	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 7		
Benfica v Manchester United	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 6		
Anderlecht v Paris Saint-Germain	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 3		
Bayern Munich v Celtic	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 5		
Chelsea v Roma	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 2		
Juventus v Sporting	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 4		
Barcelona v Olympiacos	21:45	
beIN SPORTS HD 1		

13 Zain celebrates national jet ski team world champions



14 History boys Italy draw Sweden in tricky World Cup playoff



15 Rampant Reds hit seven to silence Jurgen Klopp critics



MADRID: Real Madrid's German midfielder Toni Kroos (L) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's Ivorian defender Serge Aurier during the UEFA Champions League group H football match Real Madrid CF vs Tottenham Hotspur FC. — AFP

Real held by Lloris masterclass

Result keep both clubs at the top of Group H

MADRID: A pair of stunning second-half saves from Hugo Lloris salvaged a precious point for Tottenham Hotspur as they held European champions Real Madrid 1-1 at the Santiago Bernabeu yesterday.

Both sides remain unbeaten in this season's Champions League and well placed to progress to the last 16. They each have seven points after Cristiano Ronaldo's penalty cancelled out Raphael Varane's own goal in the first period.

The sides meet again with top spot in Group H on the line at Wembley on November 1. Borussia Dortmund's 1-1 draw at APOEL Nicosia means the Germans and Cypriots remain six points adrift of the group leaders. "At this level it's a great feeling to get a good draw," Lloris told BT Sport.

"They put a lot of pressure on. We could have buckled and conceded a second, but 1-1 at half-time was good and we kept working together until the end." An entertaining encounter got off to a flying start as 18-year-old Achraf Hakimi - on his Champions League

debut for Real - teed up Ronaldo to head off the post and Karim Benzema pulled the rebound wide with the goal gaping. After a nervous opening 10 minutes, though, Tottenham settled with Harry Kane predictably a constant threat up front.

The English international's sensational form saw him labelled a "complete player" by Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane on the eve of the game, fuelling speculation he could follow Luka Modric and Gareth Bale's lead in making a move to Madrid in the future.

"A point at the Bernabeu, you'd take that every day of the week," said Kane. "It shows how far we've come as a team." Kane's downward header was turned over by Keylor Navas before he broke free down the left and,

from his cross, Fernando Llorente appeared to be chopped down by Casemiro inside the area, but Polish referee Szymon Marciniak was unmoved.

Despite failing to get the final touch, Kane was involved once more when Spurs went in front on 28 minutes as Varane turned Serge Aurier's cross into his own net under pressure from the striker.

Aurier himself then had a long-range effort turned behind by Navas. And Madrid's frustrations shone through when Ronaldo was booked for a petulant slap on Jan Vertonghen. However,

Real demonstrated why they have won this competition for the past two seasons by restoring order and parity before the break.

A flowing team move put Toni Kroos clean through and when he was upended by Aurier, Ronaldo stepped up to bury the resulting penalty. Spurs were then bailed out by two outstanding saves from Lloris after the restart. The French captain's outstretched leg diverted Benzema's powerful header from point-blank range to safety, much to his former international team-mate's dismay. And Ronaldo then couldn't believe his eyes as Lloris leapt to turn over his rising drive which was headed for the top corner.

A hugely entertaining game continued to swing from end to end and it was the visitors who had the better chances to take all three points in the final 20 minutes. Kane had the best opportunity when he was picked out by Llorente's fine pass, but Navas spread himself well to divert the ball behind.

And the Costa Rican had to be alert again moments later to prevent Christian Eriksen's drive sneaking in at the near post. "Today was a game for the 'keepers,'" said Navas. — AFP

“ Today was a game for the 'keepers’ ”

Man City beat Napoli 2-1 for third win in Champions League

MANCHESTER: Manchester City scored twice in the first 13 minutes before holding off a spirited fightback from Napoli to win 2-1 in the Champions League yesterday, maintaining its 100 percent start to group play.

Napoli could have snatched a draw if it had converted both of its penalties at Etihad Stadium after City scored through Raheem Sterling and Gabriel Jesus. Dries Mertens had a penalty saved by goalkeeper Ederson Moraes in the first half and Amadou Diawara scored with his attempt in the 73rd.

Top of the Italian league, Napoli could struggle to advance in the Champions League having lost two of its first three games in Group F. Maurizio Sarri's team is third, three points behind second-placed Shakhtar Donetsk, and could be on the brink with a loss

to City in the return match on Nov. 1.

City is on a maximum of nine points and should need to win only one of its last three games to qualify for the knockout stage. Napoli arrived as not only the leader but the top scorer in Serie A, and with City coach Pep Guardiola labeling them as one of the best three sides in European soccer.

Still, there was defeatist talk in the build-up by Napoli president Aurelio De Laurentiis, who said City was such a favorite that Sarri should rest players ahead of a big Serie A game against Inter Milan at the weekend. Sarri, for his part, spoke in glowing terms about City and its attacking talent.

City lived up to its billing in the first 25 minutes. Picking up where it left off in the 7-2 win over Stoke on Saturday, City attacked in waves

and dominated a Napoli midfield that lacked regular starters Allan and Jorginho, who were on the bench.

Sterling side-footed home left-footed in the eighth minute after Kyle Walker's goal-bound shot, off a cross by David Silva, was blocked. It was his eighth goal in 11 matches this season, a record that was soon matched by Jesus.

De Bruyne seized on a poor clearance and threaded a low center across the face of goal that left Kalidou Koulibaly spread-eagled on the turf. Jesus couldn't fail to tap in. Napoli rode its luck, with De Bruyne crashing a 20-meter curler against the bar and Koulibaly clearing off the line from Jesus, but came into the game before halftime. When Walker pulled back Raul Albiol as they challenged to get to a cross, the Italian side was awarded a penalty but Ederson guessed the right way to parry out Mertens' effort. Napoli pushed City back in the second half and didn't waste a second chance from the spot when Fernandinho tripped Faouzi Ghoulam. Diawara took over penalty duties and beat Ederson, who again guessed the correct side. — AP



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's English defender Kyle Walker (C) concedes a penalty for his challenge on Napoli's Spanish defender Raul Albiol (centre R) during the UEFA Champions League Group F football match. — AFP

Business

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18 Gas output could boost Oman GDP next year; deficit a concern

21 Al-Sayer and Bahrah unveils new generation Hino 500 Series trucks

22 US tech giants may find their future shaped by Europe



LONDON: A woman looks into the window of a clothes shop in Kensington High street in London yesterday. — AP

Gulf Bank records 10% Y-o-Y rise in net profit for first 9 months of 2017

Bank generates net interest income of KD 97.2 million

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank K.S.C.P. announced yesterday its financial results for the first nine months of 2017. The bank recorded a net profit of KD 36.1 million in the first nine months of 2017, an increase of 10 percent over the same period in 2016. The Bank was able to generate net interest income of KD 97.2 million and operating profit of KD 89.7 million during the first nine months of 2017, recording double digit growth of 10 percent and 11 percent, respectively, over the prior year period. Meanwhile, expenses remained flat for the first nine months compared to the same period in 2016.

Over the first nine months of 2017, total assets of the bank grew by 3.5 percent while Loans and Advances to customers increased by 3.3 percent. Total equity reported

at the end of September 2017 was KD 591.2 million and general provisions stood at KD 225 million, representing 38 percent of total equity. Commenting on the results, Omar Kutayba Alghanim, Gulf Bank Chairman, said: "We are pleased with our Bank's solid performance in the first nine months of 2017. This has reflected positively on earnings per share as it grew by 10 percent to 12 fils per share for the first nine months of 2017 compared to the previous year."

“ Solid performance reflects positively on EPS ”

Credit ratings

Gulf Bank continues to enjoy favorable ratings from the top international credit rating agencies. In October 2017, Fitch Ratings upgraded Gulf Bank's Viability Rating to 'bb+' from 'bb' and affirmed

the bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A+' with a Stable Outlook.

In Addition, S&P Global Ratings revised their outlook on the Bank to "Positive" from "Stable" and affirmed its issuer credit rating at "A-" in June 2017.

Similarly, Moody's Investors Service affirmed the bank's "A3" long-term deposits rating and "Stable" outlook in May 2017. Furthermore, Capital Intelligence affirmed the Bank's Financial Strength Rating at "BBB+" and the subordinated bond rating at "BBB" both with "Stable" outlooks in May 2017.

Gulf Bank continues to be strongly recognized both internationally and locally. During Q3 2017, the bank received the 'Best Retail Bank in Kuwait' award and 'Best Mobile Banking Application in Kuwait', both by International Finance Magazine.

In regard to the FTSE classification of Boursa Kuwait as a secondary emerging market, Al-Ghanim said: "I



Omar Kutayba Alghanim

would like to congratulate Kuwait on this achievement.

It will have a positive impact on Boursa Kuwait's attractiveness to investors targeting emerging markets.

This will ultimately enhance the liquidity and the flow of investment funds to the Kuwaiti market. "Our congratulations go to everyone who contributed to this achievement including the Capital Market Authority, Boursa Kuwait and Kuwait Clearing Company," Al-Ghanim added.

Alghanim concluded his remarks on the Bank's results' by stating: "I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to these outstanding results. I want to thank our customers for their continuous support and loyalty towards Gulf Bank. I appreciate the dedication of our management and staff, commitment of our Board of Directors and Shareholders, and the support from the Central Bank of Kuwait."

Fitch Ratings upgrades Gulf Bank's viability rating to 'bb+' from 'bb'

KUWAIT: Fitch Ratings has upgraded Gulf Bank's Viability Rating to 'bb+' from 'bb' and affirmed the bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A+' with a Stable Outlook.

According to Fitch Ratings, the viability rating upgrade reflects Gulf Bank's strong strategy execution and improving underwriting standards and asset-quality. Fitch Rating mentioned



that Gulf Bank continues to benefit from a fairly stable operating environment in Kuwait despite the economic impact of low oil prices. The bank is exposed to slower economic growth, but Fitch believes that the government's continuing capital spending plans will partially offset the pressures. In their recent report, Fitch stated that Gulf Bank has an adequate franchise in Kuwait, both in retail and corporate banking.

Gulf Bank's large branch network and good brand support the bank's distribution capabilities. The bank's business model is domestic-led.

Fitch added that the bank has a good and competent management team, well-experienced in local and regional banking, with an improving record of strategy execution in Kuwait. The bank's strategic objectives are consistent and relatively cautious.

Gulf Bank continues to enjoy favorable ratings from the top international credit rating agencies. In addition to the most recent viability rating upgrade and affirmations from Fitch Ratings, S&P Global Ratings revised their outlook on the Bank to "Positive" from "Stable" and affirmed its issuer credit rating at "A-" in June 2017. Similarly, Moody's Investors Service affirmed the bank's "A3" long-term deposits rating and "Stable" outlook in May 2017. Furthermore, Capital Intelligence also affirmed the Bank's Financial Strength Rating at "BBB+" and the subordinated bond rating at "BBB" both with "Stable" outlooks in May 2017.

British inflation jumps to five-year peak in September

LONDON: Britain's annual inflation rate accelerated in September to the highest level in more than five years, lifted by rising commodity, food and transport prices, official data showed yesterday. Inflation has soared this year as the Brexit-hit pound ramped up import costs, placing household budgets under intense strain as wage growth has failed to keep pace with rising consumer prices.

The Consumer Prices Index (CPI) 12-month rate climbed to 3.0 percent last month compared to 2.9 percent in August, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement. The September reading—which was in line with market expectations—increases the likelihood of Bank of England policymakers raising interest rates at their next meeting in November. The last time the rate hit 3.0 percent was in April 2012, while it was last higher in March of the same year when it surged to 3.5 percent. "The latest headline figures were boosted by a pick-up in

fuel costs as pump prices respond to the recent increase in oil prices," noted ING economist James Smith. "But more importantly, it is clear that the impact of the pound's post-Brexit plunge is still very much at play. "Food prices, which are highly influenced by import costs, increased sharply."

The pound tumbled in value following last year's shock EU exit referendum. Britain is on course to leave the bloc in March 2019. Smith added: "Whilst we think a November rate hike is highly likely, for now we think the lack of domestically generated inflation combined with a sluggish growth outlook—and do not forget all the noise surrounding Brexit—mean that any subsequent tightening is likely to be very limited." Bank of England governor Mark Carney warned that inflation would likely surge even higher.

Carney, speaking before a parliamentary committee, said BoE policymakers believed an interest rate hike may be needed over the coming



LONDON: This file photo taken on September 02, 2017 shows customers shopping at East Street Market in south London. — AFP

months to tackle surging inflation caused by the weak pound. "Inflation rising potentially above the 3.0-percent level in the coming months is something we have anticipated," the governor told lawmakers. — AFP

Business

Fitch Ratings reaffirms KIB's long-term IDR at 'A+'

Agency affirms viability rating with a stable outlook

KUWAIT: Fitch Ratings, one of the leading global credit ratings agencies, has reaffirmed Kuwait International Bank's long-term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'A+' and affirmed viability rating (VR) to 'bb-' with a stable outlook on 16 October 2017. The stable outlook reflects the outlook on the Kuwaiti sovereign rating.

According to Fitch, KIB continues to benefit from a fairly stable operating environment in Kuwait despite the economic impact of low oil prices. The Bank is exposed to slower economic growth, but Fitch believes that the government's continuing capital spending plans will partially offset such pressures.

Fitch's expectation of support from the authorities is underpinned by Kuwait's strong ability to provide support to its banks, as reflected by its rating (AA/Stable) and strong willingness to do so irrespective of the banks' size, franchise, funding structure and the level of government ownership.

Fitch views KIB's new and experienced management team as necessary in order to execute the Bank's new strategy set out in 2015. Sheikh Mohamed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of KIB said: "This latest rating action is reflective of KIB's impressive standing, and they serve to highlight the Bank's strong financial core as well as the soundness of its growth strategy. KIB's positive performance, as highlighted



Sheikh Mohamed Jarrah Al-Sabah

by the improved financial results, comes as a result of the Bank's new strategy. This strategy, which is currently underway, aims to bring about a comprehensive transformation across all sectors of the Bank, including: better asset quality, healthy capital buffer, improved performance, increase in profitability, new and innovative products, and enhanced service offerings to customers."

Al-Jarrah further added: "KIB continues to make major strides in its mission to bring about a complete evolution of its banking operations and offerings. In an effort to provide customers with an enhanced digital banking experience, we have made major investments in upgrading our IT infrastructure and streamlining our systems and processes. We also continue to enhance our full suite of products and services, introducing innovative and state-of-the-art banking solutions. Our Al-Boushra and Arzaq Deposit accounts continue to offer attractive profit rates, and we continue to have the highest rates in the market for savings. There is also a major push on the corporate banking side of our business, as we are developing tailored solutions and innovative products for corporate clients.

The Chairman concluded by saying: "Within the past year, KIB has garnered a number of prestigious local,

regional, and international awards further enhancing its already impressive collection of industry awards and recognitions. The most recent of these achievements include the "Best Strategic Vision in Banking" award at the 2017 Arab Banks Awards & Commendations of Excellence ceremony, which was organized by the World Union of Arab Bankers (WUAB) in Beirut. Additionally, the Bank

Summary of Fitch Rating Actions



- Long-Term IDR affirmed at 'A+'; Outlook Stable
- Short-Term IDR affirmed at 'F1'
- Viability Rating affirmed at 'bb-'
- Support Rating affirmed at '1'
- Support Rating Floor affirmed at 'A+'

received the "Best Change Management - Kuwait" Award by The Banker Middle East. KIB was also awarded the 'Excellence in Development of Islamic Banking Services' award by the Union of Arab Banks (UAB) in recognition of the Bank's outstanding efforts to continuously develop its banking products and services, promote Islamic banking, serve the local community, as well as its customers.



HSBC wins Euromoney awards for best cash manager in Kuwait

KUWAIT: HSBC in Kuwait was voted as the best Domestic Cash Manager for the 8th consecutive year by both Corporates and Financial Institutions in the Euromoney Cash Management Survey 2017. HSBC was also awarded Best Regional Cash Manager in the Middle East, the Bank's 9th win since 2009, and retained its title as Best Global Cash Manager.

"These awards demonstrate that our Global Liquidity and Cash Management product offering stands out as a market leading and first class proposition for corporates and financial institutions. More than 40,000 clients worldwide rely on us for their liquidity and cash management solutions. With our expertise, we are able to advise clients to better manage their excess cash and



Roger Winfield, CEO of HSBC in Kuwait

ensure that they benefit from a range of investments," said Roger Winfield, CEO of HSBC in Kuwait.

HSBC gained the most votes and ranked first globally for quality of service delivered. The Bank also topped the ranks in four out of the seven regions for best service, a new metric that Euromoney introduced this year. In addition, Financial Institutions voted HSBC first in 27 awards for its expertise in foreign-currency payments. Roger Winfield added: "The success is testament to the strong relationships we have built and maintained with our clients and demonstrates the strength of our global footprint." Euromoney's Annual Cash Management Survey reached 28,000 cash managers, treasurers and financial officers. It provides them with the opportunity to comment on the standard of the international cash management services they receive, as well as rate the financial institutions they bank with.

Free checkup and amazing discounts from Chevrolet Alghanim

KUWAIT: In line with its unceasing commitment to guarantee the safety and peace of mind of its customers and their families, Chevrolet Alghanim introduces a free checkup campaign on all Chevrolet vehicles being serviced at any Chevrolet Alghanim service center, starting from October 15th to December 15, 2017. Chevrolet Alghanim encourages its loyal customers to visit their service centers and take advantage of this limited time offer.

The special safety checkup entails a detailed inspection performed by a team of professionally trained service advisors using

the latest tools and technology available for car inspection and service. The checkup covers the most important mechanical and electrical components related to a car's operation and safety, including disk brakes, tire treads and pressure, car battery, windshield wipers, front and rear lights, suspension, shock absorbers and controlling sticks. And because Chevrolet Alghanim is committed to total customer satisfaction, the offer also includes free car wash as well. Once the checkup has been performed, customers will receive a comprehensive report detailing the condition of the car, the required maintenance and pricing. With 30 percent discount on spare parts and 10 percent discount on labor fees for maintenance and professional service, customers can enjoy driving their Chevy safely without having to worry about potential car malfunctions ruining their quality time in winter. Chevrolet Alghanim encourages customers to take advantage of this free checkup before it's too late and enjoy the valuable benefits and peace-of-mind it offers.

Customers can benefit from this amazing checkup offer by visiting either the Shuwaikh Service Center, located in Shuwaikh Industrial Area, from Saturday to Thursday, 7:00am till 7:00pm, and Friday, 2:00pm till 7:00 pm, or the Fahabel Service Center, from Saturday to Wednesday, 7:30 am till 6:00pm, and Thursday, from 7:30am till 1:00pm.

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Business

Turkish Airlines flying to 10 Russian destinations

KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines is the only carrier that is flying to 10 destinations in Russia directly from Istanbul: Moscow, St Petersburg, Kazan, Sochi, Yekaterinburg, Ufa, Samara, Rostov, Stavropol and Voronezh. Six destinations through Moscow are: Syktyvkar, Belgorod, Mineralnye Vody, Makhachkala, Murmansk and Kaliningrad.

Europe" this year, like the last five years.

The Turkish Airlines lounge in Istanbul welcomes passengers who arrive early with privileged comfort features. It has brought the "Best Business Class Private Passenger Lounge" award to Turkish Airlines by providing various treats. Catering provided by the Turkish DO&CO both inside the aircraft and in the private passenger lounge was an important factor for this success.

Business Class Lounge in Moscow

The Istanbul-Moscow lounge is also run by DO&CO, which is a successful affiliation of Turkish Airlines. Great care has been placed on every detail like architecture and menu. The lounge's opening ceremony took place at Moscow Vnukovo Airport terminal yesterday. Turkish Airlines Chairman of the executive board Hamdi Topcu, Turkish Airlines Moscow manager Mefail Deriba, Vnukovo Airport chairman of executive council Vitaly Vantsev and Vnukovo Airport General Manager Vasily Alexandrov joined the opening ceremony.



In his opening speech, Topcu said: "We are leading the way again with our international passenger lounge, the first in the service of our passengers outside of our transfer center in Istanbul. We are proud

of providing a service like this, besides expanding our flight network to Russia, which already consists of ten destinations.

"We do believe that the Istanbul-Moscow lounge will give our guests the same comfort onboard our planes. The special lounge of Star Alliance member Turkish Airlines will be open to passengers of other Star Alliance member airlines. The lounge is built over a 635 m2 area and has a capacity of serving 150 guests at the same time. Turkish Airlines partner DO&CO offers Turkish hospitality elements at the Istanbul-Moscow lounge.

"The lounge has a kitchen and serving units, pide (Turkish pizza) and grill units, salad bars, sweet counters with traditional sweets like baklava, hot and cold drink counters, library, media screen, bar console, teleconference hall, work area with computers, charging units, luggage counters, and prayer rooms. There is wireless Internet service as well. Its design is dominated by porches, which is a must in traditional Turkish architecture. The lounge is similar to Turkish Airlines' Istanbul lounge."

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday 17 October 2017. Includes sections for Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, Global Bond Yields, and Commodities.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes sections for Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, Global Bond Yields, and Commodities.

Business

Al-Sayer and Bahrah unveil new generation Hino 500 Series trucks

Hino Advantage - drive your business easier



KUWAIT: Management team of Bahrah Trading Company (BTC) and Hino Motors Ltd during the unveiling of the new generation Hino 500 Series trucks in Kuwait. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

KUWAIT: Bahrah Trading Company (BTC), one of the Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies and Hino Motors Ltd, member of Toyota Motor Corporation has unveiled new generation of medium-duty 500 series trucks from Hino. The launch event which was held at Al-Sayer Ballroom at Ardiya was attended by Mubarak Naser Al-Sayer CEO, Bengt Schultz, Chief Operating Officer and Bader Musaed Al-Sayer, Business Director of Al-Sayer Group Holding, Melakandy Hamza General Manager BTC, Tadashi Fujiwara Deputy Chief of the Mission from Embassy of Japan, Tamazawa Chief Engineer, Sakagami Manager from Hino Motors Japan, Yoshihiro Koyama Managing Director, Nakamura General Manager from Hino Motors Middle East UAE, members from Bahrah and Corporate Marketing along with distinguished customers of Hino and representatives from the press and media.

Welcoming the audience Melakandy Hamza said, "It gives me immense pleasure to welcome you all to this exciting occasion of launching all new HINO 500 series trucks this evening dignitaries and our honorable customers present here, thank you for your graceful presence to enrich this important occasion that signifies an important milestone for HINO in Kuwait".

Highlighting Al-Sayer and Bahrah's customer commitment Bader Musaed Al-Sayer said "Since inception, over 60 years ago, Al-Sayer Group Holding vision was clear and insightful following the principle of "Ultimate commitment to our deep rooted values of honesty, trust, credibility and providing the best high quality products with the best aftersales services to our customers without compromising the continuous development of the quality of products and services offered".

According to Yoshihiro Koyama "HINO's history dates back to more than one-hundred years having founded in nineteen-ten, known then as Tokyo Gas Industry. The first Japanese truck was produced in nineteen-seventeen which was called TGE A model. In nineteen-forty-two, Hino spun off as Hino Heavy Industry. After that, HINO became a part of the Toyota Group. The alliance with Toyota Motor Corporation started back in nineteen-sixty-six. In two-thousand one, Toyota's ownership surpassed over 50 percent, Hino being their commercial vehicle arm".

New HINO500 series - Constantly at the forefront of evolution

The most recent age of the Hino 500 Series trucks is furnished with a 7.7-liter Euro III- compliant engine with a heavy duty common rail fuel injection system and turbocharger innovation for keeping up control in any driving conditions while accomplishing lower fuel consumption and emission levels.

The series is suitable for use in applications from tipper and reefer trucks to general cargo vehicles, and includes a range of safety features, including an anti-lock braking system, front underrun protection system (FUPS) and rear underrun protection system (RUPS).

Commenting on the main development concept of new Hino 500 trucks Mamoru Tamazawa, Chief Engineer said "We are deploying the New 500 Series from our base in Japan to make a valuable contribution to our customers' business in two ways: One is "Maximizing operational effectiveness" and the other is "Minimizing vehicle life-cycle costs". The New 500 Series is focused on achieving our global strategy. We aim to respond flexibly to local conditions in each region through "GLOBAL" manufacturing."

Performance

The all-new Hino 500 Series epitomizes Hino's plan



idea of value, solidness and unwavering quality. The improvement of the new Hino 500 arrangement concentrated on three fundamental targets - Implementing radical, earth shattering development by presenting new innovations and methodologies, including new outline, propelled innovation, exceedingly solid edge and upgraded undercarriage; guaranteeing high caliber even after customization, empowering incredible versatility and adaptability; supporting assorted client applications with extensive model line-up, adequately reflecting client needs

The all-new Hino500 territory is furnished with EURO 3 Turbo Charged Engines and Intercooler for enhanced effectiveness and yield. All-New Hino 500 has a complete line-up of model range with multiple wheel base options to suit super structure fabrication.

incorporate new multi reflector headlights offering in-wrinkled shine and also broadened sidelong spread and separation in from improving evening time visibility, fog light, front and back under run guard, non-freezing stopping device framework, guard support, ISO framework darts on tires for upgrading serviceability and furthermore lessening wear and harm of jolts even with rehashed establishment and evacuation (?) of tires. The Hino 500 is furnished with full air S-cam brakes that would enhance braking proficiency and also offer lessened upkeep costs.

Some of the other improvements on the all-new Hino 500 over its predecessor range are 2 step easier entry and exit, wider tread for increased stability, better seat, improved suspension and strengthened differential.



Experience the Hino quality, durability and reliability

Safety

A portion of the new safety features on the Hino 500



Comfort Space

Hino500 changed the driver's seat to make even long

drivers pleasant. The seats were re-designed to better fit the driver's body and alleviate fatigue at long-distance driving. With reclining and seat siding functions, the seat provides optimal driving position and contributes to reduce the driver fatigue.

Explaining the strategic commitment of Al-Sayer for Hino in Kuwait Bengt Schultz said "We are having a well spread network of 3 showrooms for Hino, including 3S facility for Hino products in Ahmad Area and with Two Spare Parts outlets. This year is proving very positive for Hino and ALSAYER, as we continue to grow our market share since the launch of the brand in 2014 and we are confident of our future facilities investment and expansion plans".

"HINO and Bahrah Trading think that to support our customers' business except truck is also very important. This is called Total Support activities. It should contribute to minimize the customers lifetime cost and maximize uptime of customer's vehicle. Through these activities it is our wish to be recognized as a Business Partner of our customers" said Yoshihiro Koyama.

As the only exclusive dealership in Kuwait Bahrah (BTC) is the one-stop-shop for Hino trucks:

- They sell the full range of light, medium and heavy duty Hino trucks, as well and light commercial vehicles in various makes and models.

- Their award winning service department helps keep your investment on the road longer by giving you the option to service your vehicle in hours to minimize your downtime.

- Parts department stocks an extensive range of quality Hino truck parts.

Hino is engineered to deliver outstanding performance in the harsh heat and dust of Kuwait. After all it is a technology that has proven itself in the heat and dust of the Paris Dakar Rally - which has earned the nickname Little Monsters Hino 500 Series offers enough variety to suit all needs. With its innovative technology, class leading engine and transmission choices, it maximizes efficiency and significantly reduces consumption.

"We are pleased to work side by side with the management of Hino Company to present an outstanding variety of trucks packed with strength, guaranteed durability and exceptional quality, which embody the essence of Hino Company and Al-Sayer Group Holding philosophy, to meet all your needs and requirements" added Bader Musaed Al-Sayer.

New 500 Series

Newly developed wide-ratio transmission that contributes to reduction of transportation costs.

- Reliable performance, improved comfort and class-leading safety features.

- Extensive Hino line-up always provide the most suitable vehicle to your business needs and working environment.

Hino is No # 1 Heavy and Medium Duty Truck in Japan for 44 Years.

JD power rated Hino No#1 for customer's satisfaction, eight years in Heavy duty segment and three years in Light duty segment in a row.



Technology

Huawei forges new alliances to drive ME digital transformation

ICT solutions provider offers new solutions, platforms for cloud services

KUWAIT: The leading global ICT solutions provider, Huawei, showcased an exciting range of innovative services and solutions as part of its 'platform + ecosystem' portfolio at GITEX Technology Week 2017.



Huawei showcases the power ICT at GITEX exhibition

The company announced that its all-flash storage OceanStor Dorado V3 is now certified as an enterprise storage solution for real-time database SAP HANA.

OceanStor Dorado V3 is now certified as an enterprise storage solution for real-time database SAP HANA. Following Huawei's best practices related to SAP software in industries, OceanStor Dorado V3 can improve the efficiency of a system running SAP software by at least 30 percent.

In addition, Huawei and local UAE fintech solution provider Omnia Pay showcased a new innovative bank branch transformation solution that provides an omni-channel experience across mobile, laptop, internet or Smart TV.

transformation through a network of multinational service partners. Also during GITEX was the third annual Huawei Certified Internetwork Expert (HCIE) Panel Discussion and Award Ceremony, which took place on Day 3.



al agendas and organizations are reinventing their business models through digital strategies. All-cloud, or the full 'cloudification' of networks, operations systems, and services, is the most effective enabler to bring the digital vision into reality.

expand on our ability to empower organizations to deliver value across a full spectrum of vertical sectors in the Middle East. It is through an embrace of ICT solutions and a dedication to collaboration that we will continue to maximize the development of a digital ecosystem here in the region.

Pricey high-tech features define new smartphone wars



TOKYO: A man checks his smartphone at Ginza shopping district in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: The front lines of the battle for smartphone dominance over the coming years have grown clearer after Chinese technology firm Huawei presented an AI-powered phone designed to go head-to-head with Samsung and Apple.

something that intertwines with our daily life," Huawei consumer devices chief Richard Yu said Monday, promising "a new era of intelligent smartphones".

High-stakes game

The latest round of the smartphone war also showcases just how huge the investments needed to compete for a podium position have become.

"Alongside Samsung and Apple, Huawei's growing technology capabilities threaten to place market leadership beyond the financial resources" of smaller firms, said Ian Fogg, mobile and telecoms industry expert at research firm IHS Markit.

'Open ecosystem'

"Huawei's challenge is how to maximize the use of its AI chip given it does not develop or control the smartphone operating system its devices use, Android, unlike Apple," IHS' Fogg said.

US tech giants may find their future shaped by Europe

LONDON: Silicon Valley is a uniquely American creation, the product of an entrepreneurial spirit and no-holds-barred capitalism that now drives many aspects of modern life.

But the likes of Facebook, Google and Apple are increasingly facing an uncomfortable truth: it is Europe's culture of tougher oversight of companies, not America's laissez-faire attitude, which could soon rule their industry as governments seek to combat fake news and prevent extremists from using the internet to fan the flames of hatred.

While the US has largely relied on market forces to regulate content in a country where free speech is revered, European officials have shown they are willing to act. Germany recently passed a law imposing fines of up to 50 million euros (\$59 million) on websites that don't remove hate speech within 24 hours.

"I anticipate the EU will be where many of these issues get played out," said Sarah T. Roberts, a professor of information studies at UCLA who has studied efforts to monitor and vet internet content.

Greenpeace faults many tech giants for environment impact

SEOUL: The environmental group Greenpeace issued a report yesterday giving technology titans including Samsung Electronics, Amazon and Huawei low marks for their environmental impact.

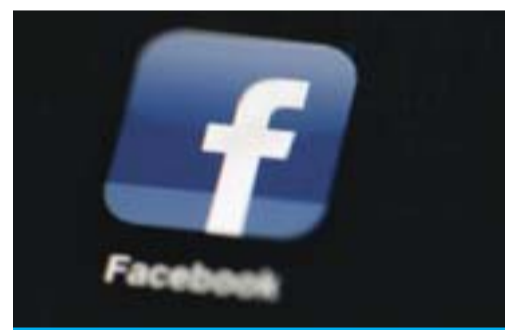
The report details the hidden cost behind what may be the most sought-after and celebrated consumer products in the 21st century: mobile computing devices like smartphones and tablet computers. Since 2011, Greenpeace has

ment on the internet has become a pressing question in the US since it was revealed that Russian agencies took out thousands of ads on social media during the presidential campaign, reaching some 10 million people on Facebook alone.

Global forum

But the pressure is on to act. Facebook, Google, Twitter and YouTube in June created the Global Internet Forum to Combat Terrorism, which says it is committed to developing new content detection technology, helping smaller companies combat extremism and promoting "counter-speech," content meant to blunt the impact of extremist material.

Facebook has recently published details of its counterterrorism strategy for the first time. These include using artificial intelligence to prevent extremist images and videos from being uploaded and algorithms to find and disable accounts linked to pages known to support extremist movements.



In this file photo, the Facebook logo is displayed on an iPad in Philadelphia. — AP

worldwide. "We want Facebook to be a hostile place for terrorists," Monika Bickert, director of global policy management, and Brian Fishman, counterterrorism policy manager, said in a statement.

But Roberts argues the companies have been slow to react and are trying to play catch up. The fact is the technology needed to detect and remove dangerous posts hasn't kept up with the threat, experts say.

In other words, taking down much of this material still needs human input, said Frank Pasquale, an expert in information law and changing technology at the University of Maryland.

"They don't like to admit how primitive their technologies are: it defeats their whole narrative that they can save the world," Pasquale said.



SEOUL: College students experience Samsung Electronics' Galaxy Note 8 smartphones during the 2017 Korea Electronics Grand Fairs in Seoul yesterday. — AP

urged global tech companies to transition to renewable energy, prompting some of them to switch to environmentally friendly power sources for their data centers. The group is urging the industry to tackle energy issues in manufacturing and supply chains, design longer-lasting products to reduce electronics waste and urging an overall rethink of its "take-make-waste" business model.

The report highlighted that tech companies' manufacturing processes are not as environmentally friendly as their innovative images might suggest. While the energy consumption in the tech industry rose rapidly to fuel the supply

chains and the manufacturing of these products as well as the data centers where social media, cloud computing and other applications run, so have the greenhouse gas emissions.

Samsung Electronics received a grade of D in its use of renewable energy, which accounted for just 1 percent of its manufacturing process, compared with Apple, which relied on renewable energy for 96 percent of its operation.

Health

Neutron star smash-up the 'discovery of a lifetime'

Evidence of this cosmic clash hurtled through space

PARIS: "Truly a eureka moment", "Everything I ever hoped for", "A dream come true" — Normally restrained scientists reached for the stars Monday to describe the feelings that accompany a "once-in-a-lifetime" event. The trigger for this meteor shower of superlatives was the smash-up of two unimaginably dense neutron stars 130 million years ago, when T-rex still lorded over our planet.

Evidence of this cosmic clash hurtled through space and reached Earth on August 17 at exactly 12:41 GMT, setting in motion a secret, sleepless, weeks-long blitzkrieg of star-gazing and number-crunching involving hundreds of telescopes and thousands of astronomers and astrophysicists around the world. It was as if a dormant network of super-spies simultaneously sprung into action.

The stellar smash-up made itself known in two ways: it created ripples called gravitational waves in Einstein's time-space continuum, and lit up the entire electromagnetic spectrum of light, from gamma rays to radio waves. Scientists had detected gravitational waves four times before, a feat acknowledged with a Nobel Physics Prize earlier this month. But each of those events, generated by the collision of black holes, lasted just a few seconds, and remained invisible to Earth- and space-based telescopes. The neutron star collision was different. It generated gravitational waves — picked up by two US-based observatories known as LIGO, and another one in Italy called Virgo — that lasted an astounding 100 seconds. Less than two sec-

onds later, a NASA satellite recorded a burst of gamma rays.

A true 'eureka' moment

This set off a mad dash to locate what was almost certainly the single source for both. "It is the first time that we've observed a cataclysmic astrophysical event in both gravitational and

“The chance to witness a new era at its beginning”

electromagnetic waves," said LIGO executive director David Reitze, a professor at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) in Pasadena.

Initial calculations had narrowed the zone to a patch of sky in the southern hemisphere spanning five or six galaxies, but frustrated astronomers had to wait for nightfall to continue the search. Finally, at around 2200 GMT, a telescope array in the northern desert of Chile nailed it: the stellar merger had taken place in a galaxy known as NGC 4993. Stephen Smartt, who led observations for the European Space Observatory's New Technology Telescope, was

gobsmacked when the spectrum lit up his screens. "I had never seen anything like it," he recalled. Scientists everywhere were stunned.

"This event was truly a eureka moment," said Bangalore Sathyaprakash, head of the Gravitational Physics Group at Cardiff University. "The 12 hours that followed are arguably the most exciting of my scientific life." "There are rare occasions when a scientist has the chance to witness a new era at its beginning — this is one such time," said Elena Pian, an astronomer at the National Institute for Astrophysics in Rome. LIGO-affiliated astronomers at Caltech had spent decades preparing for the off chance — calculated at 80,000-to-one odds — of witnessing a neutron star merger.

Don't tell your friends

"On that morning, all of our dreams came true," said Alan Weinstein, head of astrophysical data analysis for LIGO at Caltech. "This discovery was everything I always hoped for, packed into a single event," added Francesco Panarale, an astrophysicist at Cardiff University in Wales. For these and thousands of other scientists, GW170817 — the neutron star burst's tag — will become a "do you remember where you were?" kind of moment.

"I was sitting in my dentist's chair when I got the text message," said Benoit Mours, an astrophysicist at France's National Centre for Research and the French coordinator for Virgo. "I jumped up and rushed to my lab." Patrick



This handout image obtained from the European Southern Observatory on October 16, 2017 is an artist's impression showing two tiny but very dense neutron stars at the point at which they merge and explode as a kilonova. — AFP

Sutton, head of the gravitational physics group at Cardiff and a member of the LIGO team, was stuck on a long-haul bus, struggling to download hundreds of emails crowding his inbox.

Rumors swirled within and beyond the astronomy community as scientists hastened to prepare initial findings for publication Monday in a dozen articles spread across sev-

eral of the world's leading journals. "There have been quite a few pints and glasses of wine or bubbly — privately, of course, because we haven't been allowed to tell anyone," Sutton told AFP. But he couldn't resist telling his 12-year-old son, an aspiring physicist. "He's sworn to secrecy though. He's not allowed to tell his friends." — AFP

'Servant' midwives battle Cambodia's maternal deaths

PERAH ANDONG: After three deliveries, including a still-born, at her home in Perah Andong village in Cambodia, Yeng Sienghay gave birth to a healthy baby girl in the local health centre about four months ago, overseen by three midwives. Unlike her previous three pregnancies when Yeng did not visit the health centre even once, this time around she went to the centre every month — and every week in her eighth month — and diligently followed the midwife's instructions.

"From my own experience, I know there is more risk in having a baby at home with a traditional birth attendant," said Yeng, 32, while nursing her newborn baby. "At the health centre, there are more qualified people and more care for me and my baby." Yeng is a poster child for the advances Cambodia has made in reducing its maternal mortality rate, once among the highest in the world, that has won midwives new respect in communities.

The Southeast Asian nation is one of only nine countries to have achieved the United Nations' Millennium Development Goal to cut maternal death by at least 75 percent by 2015, having lowered its ratio by 84 percent between 1990 and 2015. In 2005 Cambodia had a maternal mortality ratio of 472 deaths to every 100,000 live births, but by 2010 this had more than halved to 206 and is now 161, according to UN data.

This improvement came as Cambodia made more progress than about 60 other developing countries over a 10-year period in increasing the poor's access to skilled

birth attendants, according to data from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). It also made the most progress in the number of visits by pregnant women to healthcare providers. But while 89 percent of all births are now attended by skilled health personnel compared to just a quarter in 2005, the maternal mortality rate is still higher than a regional average of 127, with authorities keen to keep the impetus going.

In the United Nations' latest set of global targets, the Sustainable Development Goals, world leaders pledged to reduce the global maternal mortality ratio to less than 70 per 100,000 live births by 2030. Cambodian Health Minister Mam Bunheng said from next year the government will offer women incentives of up to \$200 for every baby they deliver at health centres with adequate numbers of trained midwives.

"We have tried to eliminate economic barriers for the poor, so they too can access safe reproductive services. The gap between the rich and the poor has thus been reduced in healthcare services," he said. "Our goal of increasing the strength and capacity of midwives means they are like civil servants now — well trained, well respected and well paid." Bunheng, a gynaecologist by training, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Backbone

Much of Cambodia's progress to date has been attributed to investments in health services that give the poor access to quality healthcare services including reproductive and maternal health, as well as an army of trained midwives in rural areas. The midwives "provide the backbone" to the health workforce for mothers and their children, said Lene Christiansen, UNFPA's Cambodia representative. Cambodia's health care system was rebuilt entirely after the destruction of facilities and personnel by the Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s.

Following the 1993 national elections, the government

began rebuilding the healthcare system with assistance from international non-government organizations. But it was in 2005, as Cambodia battled one of the world's highest maternal mortality ratios, that the government reviewed the midwife system and revamped the curriculum, expanded training, increased pay and gave incentives, offering midwives \$10 for a live birth at a hospital and \$15 in a health centre. The government focused on bringing more midwives into the system, training them and deploying them to rural areas where maternal and newborn deaths were the highest.

Social realities

Traditional birth attendants were encouraged to work with trained midwives, and the midwives could take the civil services exam for a higher qualification and pay scale. "I became a midwife because my family encouraged me, and the government gave me a scholarship," said Heng Sokna, Yeng's midwife. "Midwives are respected by the community, and I feel useful helping other women," she said.

In 2010, the government rolled out a Health Equity Fund funded partly by aid agencies that enabled the poor to pay for services, including safe deliveries in health centers. Funded fully by the government now, it covers more than 3 million poor Cambodians, or about a fifth of the population. The drive to reduce the maternal mortality rate continues across the Asia-Pacific region as countries struggle to reduce deaths of women from complications related to pregnancy and childbirth due to social, cultural and political realities.

An estimated 85,000 mothers died in 2015 from childbirth in the region, UN figures show. The 2014 State of the World's Midwifery report estimated well-trained midwives could help avert about two-thirds of all maternal and newborn deaths, with UNFPA now supporting midwifery programs in more than 100 countries. — Reuters

Smoking to be stubbed out on Thai beaches

BANGKOK: Smokers who flout a smoking ban on 20 of Thailand's most famous tourist beaches will face a \$3,000 fine or up to a year in prison. Thai authorities have said. The ban, which comes into force in November, follows a clean-up of nearly 140,000 cigarette butts from a 2.5 kilometer stretch of the famed Patong beach in Phuket island province. Its introduction coincides with Thailand's peak tourist season and will be enforced in visitor hotspots including Krabi, Koh Samui, Pattaya, Phuket and Phang Nga.

"These beaches are among the most beautiful in Southeast Asia, and the aim is to keep them that way," Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Governor Yuthasak Supasorn said in a statement on Monday. Smokers will have to use designated areas with proper waste disposal for cigarette butts, he added. Those caught lighting up on the beach could face jail or a 100,000 baht (\$3,000) fine, according to TAT. The edict is the latest effort to rein in Thailand's free-wheeling tourism industry. The sector is a crucial pillar of Thailand's economy, catering to more than 30 million travelers per year. — AFP

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WHAT'S ON

Al-Mulla Exchange celebrates 149th and 150th shows in style

Al-Mulla Exchange crossed a milestone when they conducted their 149th and 150th show at American International School in Maidan Hawally. To celebrate this momentous occasion, Al-Mulla Exchange arranged to enthrall customers with the music and songs of the Bollywood yesteryears often referred to as the golden years in Hindi music.

To render the famous songs, Al-Mulla Exchange got to Kuwait Kavitha Paduval, the daughter of acclaimed film playback singer Anuradha Paduwal. Accompanying her were the singers Ansh Menon and Srikanth Nair. The show which was aptly titled "Ajeeb Dastan Hai Yeh" transported customers to old memories and they relished the nostalgia of the famous songs being rendered.

The 149th show on Friday October 13th was in the presence of the Chief Guest Samir Patel, CEO of Commercial Real Estate Company KSCP. The Chief Guest on Saturday October 14th was Kapil Kumar, Head of Project Finance at National Bank of Kuwait.

The musical concert played to a full audience on both the days. "Al-Mulla Exchange always provides the music lovers the opportunity to enjoy the beautiful songs. We feel very engaged with Al-Mulla Exchange," said some attendees thanking Al-Mulla Exchange Company for organizing such programs.



GDES student artwork qualifies for semifinals of 2017 Adobe Design Achievement awards

Artwork created by a student from the American University of Kuwait (AUK) has qualified for the semifinals of the 2017 Adobe Design Achievement Awards. Shaikha Al-Ofan, a student in the Department of Art and Graphic Design at AUK, was selected as one of the 642 semifinalists, out of a total of 2444 entrants, who have had their artwork enter the semifinals.

Al-Ofan's submission to the competition featured a set of three posters, each representing her interpretations of imagery traditionally associated with the Gulf region, which she created in a Digital Imaging course offered by Professor Joo Won Lee, Assistant Professor of Art and Graphic Design. "I have always believed in the great artistic potential of our students. This achievement is a proof of my belief. I look forward to the continued maximization of the potentials for our students' further success," Lee expressed.

The Adobe Design Achievement Awards is considered to be one of the most leading digital design competitions, and it is organized by Adobe Systems Incorporated and sponsored by

acclaimed global design institutions, such as the International Design Council. Ofan's collection of posters, which she collectively called Gulf Culture, has been selected and displayed at the 2017 AUK President's Art Exhibition.



Embassy of India's holiday notice

The Indian Embassy shall remain closed on Thursday, October 19, 2017 on the occasion of the festival of 'Deepavali'. However, emergency consular services will be rendered by the Mission.

NAFO-Kuwait celebrates 'Onam 2017'

National Forum (NAFO-Kuwait) celebrated "Onam 2017" on Friday at the Indian Community School, Khaitan. The celebrations kicked off at 10.30am with the lighting of lamp by guest of honor Kavalam Sreekumar, NAFO officials and senior ladies of NAFO. A meticulously crafted Onapookalam by NAFO families set the perfect start for the festivities on Onam day early morning itself.

The function started off with national anthems, followed by a prayer song by Sreela Raviprasad and Sreeranjini Ajay, Acting General Secretary of NAFO, Anish Nair, by briefly indicating the significance of Onam, welcomed the gathering. Sibi US, Second Secretary (Labor) from Indian Embassy was the chief guest. The event was attended by several prominent dignitaries, delegates of co-organizations, members of media fraternity and NAFO well-wishers.

The day's cultural programs commenced with a graceful "Thiruvathirakali" by NAFO Ladies', with allusive gestures and rhythmic footwork and under the background of lyrical music, choreographed by Preethi Rajeev captured the whole audience. Unique musical event "Ragamanjari" by acclaimed classical singer Kavalam Sreekumar was the highlight of the celebrations.

Chief Guest, Sibi US, in his inaugural address congratulated and thanked NAFO for organizing such events of heritage, such as Onam, aimed at nurturing unity and harmony among the community beyond region and religion. NAFO President, ON Nandakumar, in his message mentioned the importance of Onam celebration in humanizing love and brotherhood beyond caste, creed or religion. He informed the gathering about NAFO's recent socio-welfare activities supporting the poor and needy community members in Kuwait and India. NAFO Patron, Vijay Karayil, Advisory



Board member, B S Pillai, Ladies' Wing Chief Coordinator, Jayalakshmi Promod - all of them in their felicitation messages highlighted the joyful feelings, memories and timely relevance of NAFO activities to attain a world of equality and social justice following the foot path of Acharya Bharatha Kesari Mannathu Padmanabhan.

Kavalam Sreekumar was honored with a ponnada and a NAFO memento. Chief guest Sibi was honored by presenting a memento as a gesture of respect for his commendable contributions rendered to Indian diaspora within the short span of his diplomatic services in Kuwait. The platform of this year's Onam function also witnessed bidding of farewell of two NAFO senior members, P K Sasidharan and Radhakrishnan Thampy who were presented with mementos as an admiration of valuable

contributions to NAFO.

Elegant compering by Anamika Anilkumar flawlessly guided the gathering from the beginning to the end. NAFO Vice-President and event co-convenor, Sreekumar Pillai, proposed vote of thanks. A delicious Onasadya which was served to all attendees.

The afternoon session of event was continued with group dance, group songs, solo dances, solo songs and brilliant instrumental music by talented NAFO kids, and elders added contemporary flavor to the cultural events. The program committee headed by TKV Pradeepkumar (Convenor), Promod Menon and Sreekumar Pillai (Co-conveners) professionally coordinated the event with the support of NAFO Advisory Board, Executive Committee, Ladies' Wing and General Committee. The event concluded at 03:30 pm.





Witherspoon was sexually assaulted by director at 16

The actress, now 41, has spoken out about the experiences of some women in Hollywood following the accusations of sexual harassment and assault made against film producer Harvey Weinstein and insists there are "ugly truths" that have to be confronted. Reese decided to speak out about what happened to her when she was just a teenager at the Elle Women in Hollywood event in Beverly Hills on Monday night and admitted that the incident still haunts her now. Addressing the audience, the Oscar winner bravely said: "I have my own experiences that have come back to me very vividly and I find it really hard to sleep, hard to think, hard to communicate a lot of the feelings that I've been having about anxiety, honest, the guilt for not speaking up earlier ... [I feel] true disgust at the director who assaulted

me when I was 16 years old and anger at the agents and the producers who made me feel that silence was a condition of my employment." The 'Big Little Lies' star insists it wasn't an "isolated incident" but she now feels much "less alone" after hearing accounts of similar behaviour from her peers. She said: "I have just spoken to so many actresses and writers, particularly women, who have had similar experiences and many of them have bravely gone public with their stories. That truth is very encouraging to me and everyone out there in the world because you can only heal by telling the truth."

Harry Judd smoked strong skunk in school

The 31-year-old singer - who is the drummer in the band McFly alongside Tom Fletcher, Dougie Poynter and Danny Jones - experimented with marijuana when he was at boarding school and he continued to use the drug into his late teens and 20s. Harry always thought weed was relatively harmless but he believes his drug use contributed to his bouts of anxiety. Speaking about his anxiety struggles on ITV show 'This Morning' yesterday, the 'All About You' hit-maker said: "I had a very happy childhood, I can't for one minute complain. Very, very happy. I joined the band and when I was 17 and I was a confident guy, and everything was great. But it was when I was about 19 when things started to turn for me and I did start to suffer with anxiety." Revealing when he first tried the drug, he said: "It wasn't actually in school, it was actually in the school holidays. But that's the thing with marijuana you've got different forms of marijuana, and I stumbled across the stronger sort." And Harry admits his cannabis use increased when he was living with the rest of McFly and he had "no one" around to challenge his actions. He said: "Then I joined the band and I remember the first time in the band house I was tentatively



checking whether they had smoked before. And I remember thinking I had left home, and I have left school and thinking 'I am a free man, I can do what I want.' No one was looking over me. I very quickly felt dependent on skunk. And I remember growing up being told 'You can't get hooked on weed.' But within a month or so, that was it, that was me every night."

Sinitta to become a full-time teacher to kids

The 'So Macho' singer has Magdalena, 12, and Zac, 11, with her ex-husband Andy Willner, and while she thinks her latest plan is "crazy", the 53-year-old star is looking forward to keeping her children "happy" at home. She is quoted by the Daily Star newspaper as saying: "I've made a crazy decision to start home-schooling my two children. I can keep them happy and home and raise them right." In August, Sinitta admitted "most of the time" she cannot help her kids with their homework because it is in French as they attend a French school. When asked if she helps with the additional work, she replied: "Sometimes - though most of the time I can't, as it's all in French! I get really moved when I see

them happily chatting away in French to others. Their confidence is inspiring." It doesn't look as though Sinitta will have to teach her kids much about healthy eating as they are already big fans of eating plenty of vegetables. She recently said: "It's important they understand that healthy eating doesn't mean boring food. My children love dips and crudites: a wonderful way to fill them up with a variety of raw vegetables like broccoli, cauliflower, courgettes, carrots, radish and celery." The 'Toy Boy' singer - who previously dated Brad Pitt - also admitted she has had "lots of fun" being a parent.



Gomez wants sister to grow up being a leader



The 'Bad Liar' hitmaker gave her four-year-old sibling Gracie a pep talk beside the sea on Monday as she encouraged her to be "fearless" and use her voice to make a difference when she grows up because the "truth" will inspire others. Taking to her Instagram account, the 25-year-old singer uploaded a short black-and-white video of her talking to Gracie as the youngster said: "I'm not scared." To which Selena replied: "I know because you're fearless, right? You're not scared of anything, right?" before giving her youngster sister an encouraging high five. She accompanied the sweet clip with the caption: "I will forever let my sister know she is strong, bold and beautiful. She will be raised to know her voice matters. She is going to understand the importance behind being a leader and inspire others by her truth." Selena's inspiring words come just months after

the pop star underwent a kidney transplant after her organs started shutting down as a result of her battle with Lupus. She was rushed into hospital in May and placed on a kidney transplant list after the autoimmune disease mistakenly attacked her kidneys, but she managed to have the surgery a few weeks later after she found a willing donor in her friend Francia Raisa. The 'Hands To Myself' hitmaker first revealed she'd been diagnosed with Lupus in 2015 and, one year later, took time out from her pop career to deal with "anxiety, panic attacks and depression" that the life-threatening illness had also caused. As well as Gracie, Selena also has three-year-old sister Tori, who will no doubt receive the same pep talk when she's slightly older and can understand her words of wisdom.

Hough makes up her own workout routines



The 29-year-old actress often attends exercises classes, such as CorePower Yoga and spin sessions, as well as training with fitness experts Simone De La Rue and Tracy Anderson, but the 'Safe Haven' star will also call on her dance knowledge and make up her own regimes to stay fit. Speaking about her exercise plan to Health.com, the blonde-haired beauty said: "I do, but I change it up. It's not one specific trainer who does everything. I work with a trainer at Body by Simone or one at Tracy Anderson, or I'll do SoulCycle or CorePower Yoga with different trainers. I'm a dancer, so I remember different combinations, so I'll sometimes take what I've learned in classes and make my own workout." However, the star - who is married to Brooks Laich - has admitted she is not always "Miss Positive perfect girl" and often has days when she cannot be bothered to work out because she suffers with endometriosis, which is a condition where cells similar to the one in a woman's womb collect in other areas of the body. The 'Dancing With The Stars' professional explained: "Oh my gosh, totally. And that's the thing - I do try to stay as positive as possible, and people always comment on that, but I also work at it. It's not that I'm, like, Miss Positive perfect girl, wake up and everything's sunshine and rainbows."

Lawrence has been 'degraded' by Hollywood executives

The 27-year-old actress has opened up about the shocking lows she was subjected to when beginning her career, including forced to strip and stand next to "much, much thinner" other women in an attempt for her to be shamed into losing weight. Speaking about her career at Elle's 2017 Women in Hollywood bash, which took place at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles, California, on Monday, the 'moth-

er!' star said: "When I was much younger and starting out, I was told by producers of a film to lose 15 pounds in two weeks." During this time a female producer had me do a nude line-up with about five women who were much, much, thinner than me. We are stood side-by-side with only tape on covering our privates. "After that degrading and humiliating line-up, the female producer told me I should use the naked photos of myself as inspiration for my diet." He said he didn't know why everyone thought I was so fat, he thought I was 'perfectly f***able.' I let myself be treated a certain way because I felt I had to for my career." But the 'Passengers' actress believes "every human" should be treated with "respect" they deserve and shouldn't be forced to do things to please other people. She explained: "I'm still learning that I don't have to smile when a man makes me uncomfortable. Every human being should have the power to be treated with respect because they're human." And Jennifer has admitted she now has an "understanding" of the entertainment industry, but she used to find her celebrity status "overwhelming". Speaking previously, the 'The Hunger Games' star said: "Now I have an understanding, I have a patience with it. Also I get time off from it, I think at first it was really overwhelming and I was like 'Is this what it will be like for the rest of my life?'"



Elton John to end Vegas residency

Elton John, one of the major musical draws to Las Vegas, will end his residency at Caesar's Palace next year, the casino announced Monday. The British pop legend will on May 19 close "The Million Dollar Piano," his show since 2011 at the casino's Colosseum theater in which he performs his hits to an elaborate visual display that includes dozens of video screens. Announcing the close of the residency, Caesar's Palace said John will have performed 207 shows. It was his second resi-

deny at the casino after his 243-show "The Red Piano" from 2004 to 2009. John returned to the Vegas residency last week after canceling dates earlier this year due to a bacterial infection he contracted while touring South America. There were no indications of lingering health concerns for the 70-year-old, who since the infection has gone on to tour Europe and Australia. With a string of chart-topping hits reaching back 40 years, the "Rocket Man" remains one of the highest-grossing musicians in the world both on the live circuit and in record sales, with a new box-set due for release next month. Las Vegas residencies-often with ornate stage set-ups as there is no need to take the show on the road-are major income generators for veteran artists, with Jennifer Lopez recently extending her concerts into 2018.



George Saunders is the bookies' favorite for Man Booker prize



Author George Saunders of the United States with his book 'Lincoln in the Bardo' during a photocall for the 2017 Man Booker Prize for Fiction, in London.



Author Mohsin Hamid of Britain and Pakistan with his book 'Exit West'.

American author George Saunders is the bookmakers' favorite to win the prestigious Man Booker Prize for fiction yesterday with his novel of the afterlife, "Lincoln in the Bardo." Six novels are contending for the 50,000 pound (\$66,000) prize, including Saunders' book set in a Washington graveyard, where President Abraham Lincoln visits the body of his 11-year-old son in 1862. Two other American authors are in the running: Paul Auster for his quadruple coming-of-age story "4321," and Emily Fridlund for her story of a Midwest teenager, "History of Wolves."

The other Booker finalists are Scottish novelist Ali Smith's Brexit-themed "Autumn;" British-Pakistani writer Mohsin Hamid's migration saga "Exit West;" and "Elmet," debut British novelist Fiona Mozley's story of a fiercely independent family under threat. The prize, subject to intense speculation and a flurry of betting, usually brings the victor a huge boost in sales and profile.

The winner will receive the prize from Prince Charles' wife Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, during a ceremony at London's medieval Guildhall.

The panel of judges eliminated several high-profile books that had been widely expected to feature among the finalists, including Zadie Smith's "Swing Time," Colson Whitehead's "The Underground Railroad" and "The Ministry of Utmost Happiness" by previous Booker winner Arundhati Roy.

Founded in 1969 and originally open only to writers from Britain, Ireland and the Commonwealth, the Booker expanded in 2014 to include all English-language authors. The first American winner was Paul Beatty's "The Sellout" last year. The change spurred fears among some British writers and publishers that Americans would come to dominate a prize whose previous winners include Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Margaret Atwood and Hilary Mantel. Prize organizers said 30 percent of the 144 books submitted by publishers for consideration were American, a figure slightly down from last year.



Author Emily Fridlund of the United States with her book 'History of Wolves'. — AP photos

Romance is dead in TV's newest dating shows

Television has been playing matchmaker for decades with hit series like "The Dating Game," "Blind Date" and "Married at First Sight". Now it is taking couples straight to the divorce courts. The next big trend in dating shows is uncoupling, according to analysts at MIPCOM, the world's top entertainment trade show, held every year at Cannes on the French Riviera. Having tried to salvage something from the wreckage in cathartic shows like "One Night with My Ex" from Britain's Channel 5 earlier this year, producers are now going for the nuclear option. Two new much-discussed French formats have a radical solution to marital discord— instant divorce.

Couples who take part in "The Break Up" and "Divorce for the Better"—clips of which were shown on Monday—have to agree to divorce, before what is left of their relationship is tested to see if it is worth saving. Both shows urge the couples to embrace the single life again, sending them out on dates and throwing divorce parties for them. The test is to see "if they can forget their marriage", said Virginia Mouselier, a trends expert at The Wit, a media database.



Radical solution to marital discord— instant divorce

Love of a good woman
In "The Break Up" couples must come together at the end of their trial separation to watch an excruciating "movie of their marriage" before deciding whether or not to tear up their divorce papers. Those women who decide to go it alone could try their luck on another new show, "Bi the Way", which posits that some might have been happier with another girl. The show claims that "one out of four women under 25 is bisexual" and tests the theory by pairing contestants off with people they meet in blind chatroom sessions.

Even more radical is the new Danish show "Pregnant with a Stranger", which liberates three single women looking for a man to have a baby with from the messy business of hav-

ing to live with one. Its producers brought together a team of psychologists and sociologists to help the women create a "new type of family". Few relationships have less of a chance of survival as celebrity ones, and a new British series plays on the idea that some of these starry love matches may have been only for the cameras. ITV's "Celebrity Showmance" puts highly unlikely celebrities together and challenges them to con social media users than their romance is for real.

Sing like a donkey

"The couple with the highest number of likes and comments wins," Mouselier said. The same company has come up with another much-hyped show to test couples called "Bromans", where a group of modern himbos are transported back in time to a Roman gladiator school with their girlfriends. However bad marriages can be, they surely have nothing on the horror of having to spend a weekend locked in the office with your least favorite colleagues.

That is the premise of the new American series "Inhuman Resources", which is being billed as the first "corporate adventure show", with workmates forced to bed down together and perform often humiliating tasks in the hope of building friendships and team spirit. Talent shows, however, continue to have a stranglehold on television schedules, with Mouselier calling them "the king of genres at the moment".

The new British series "Change Your Tune" turns the "Voice" format on its head by looking for contestants who sing like donkeys. The winner of the show, which will air on ITV next year, is the one whose voice has improved the most after intensive coaching. The BBC meanwhile has come up with a sing-along show called "All Together Now" where the singer who gets the most people to join in wins. But China's CCTV is more concerned with the future of game shows rather than cosy traditions from the past. Its spectacular new format "AI Mission" pits the very best human athletes and brains against artificial intelligence. — AFP

long show called "All Together Now" where the singer who gets the most people to join in wins. But China's CCTV is more concerned with the future of game shows rather than cosy traditions from the past. Its spectacular new format "AI Mission" pits the very best human athletes and brains against artificial intelligence. — AFP

A spectator sport for the TV superfan: 'Binge racing'

For a special breed of TV superfans, this isn't streaming. This is a gusher. Behold the spectator sport known as "binge racing," defined as plowing through a streaming-network series' full season in less than 24 hours after the release of those episodes.

Sure, any viewer may speak of bingeing on a chosen show, by which they may mean watching several episodes in two or three sittings. That's not this! Binge racing is an extreme sport, a test of eyeball stamina and derriere endurance, and a testament to ultimate devotion. It also confers bragging rights for those who manage to complete this marathon.

Netflix, which from its start defied TV's age-old practice of parsing out episodes week after week by, instead, making all of them available at once, has taken special notice of the binge-racing trend among its subscribers. "We've seen it increasing year after year," says Brian Wright, Netflix's vice president of Original Series. "I equate it to wanting to be the first to see a new 'Star Wars' film or lining up to get the latest Harry Potter book."

Where did the term come from?

"We wanted language for that superfan who watched it all in one sitting," he says, "and 'binge racing' was bubbling up on social media. It was an organic thing." During the same period when the total number of memberships doubled, the number of same-day binge racers went from 200,000 in 2013 to more than 5 million so far this year.

While most binge racers only take the challenge occasionally - when a certain special series demands a single big gulp - one US viewer has binge-raced 36 times so far this year, Netflix says. According to Netflix numbers-crunchers, West Virginia can boast the nation's highest number of binge racers, as computed by the percentage of binge racers among the state's total Netflix subscribers. Right behind are Michigan, Maryland, Delaware and Indiana. (Sorry, Alaska and Hawaii - you come in last.)



Lauren Graham, left, and Alexis Bledel in a scene from "Gilmore Girls: A Year In The Life," currently streaming on Netflix. — AP

Globally, the United States is the binge-racing runner-up to world champ Canada, with Denmark, Finland and Norway rounding out the International Top Five. (Similarly, these figures are computed by the percentage of binge racers among each country's number of customers.) Wright hastens to say no judgments are tied to Netflix's data.

The numbers "speak to a certain level of excitement around certain titles, and they also speak to consumer control - people can design their own viewing experience," he says. "Binge racing reflects a certain kind of fervor and love. But someone who takes his time to watch the episodes isn't any less of a fan."

So what are the Netflix program rankings for binge racing nationally? "Gilmore Girls: A Year in the Life" holds the top spot, followed by "Fuller House," "The Ranch," "Marvel's The Defenders," "The Seven Deadly Sins," "Trailer Park Boys," "Santa Clarita Diet," "F is for Family," "Orange is the New Black" and "Stranger Things." (Netflix notes that this ranking has no relation to overall viewership, which it doesn't divulge.)—AP

Japan's blind piano maestro plays it by ear

Blind since birth, virtuoso Japanese pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii puts his global success down to a wide range of experiences outside music—and listening to how the conductor breathes. "I love sport, I love swimming, skiing," the 29-year-old maestro told AFP in an interview. "The more I experience, the more positive things it brings me as a musician."

Despite his blindness, Tsujii—or "Nobu" as he is known—

has risen to become a star of the international classical music scene, playing in more than 160 concerts around the world in locations such as London's Royal Albert Hall and Carnegie Hall in New York. He has played with the Saint-Petersburg Mariinsky Orchestra, the London Philharmonic and will be giving his first major recital in France later this month. An elegy he wrote for the victims of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami in Japan got 13 million views on YouTube.

Born in Tokyo, Tsujii's love of music started at the age of eight months, when his mother played him a CD by Polish composer Chopin. "I wiggled my legs in time to the music," he said. He began tinkling on a toy piano at the age of two and real music lessons started at four. He learned to read sheet music via braille but many compositions were not accessible via this method so he learned to play by ear, from memory.

"It is good at the beginning to be faithful and precise but afterwards I tried to interpret (the music) and that is very important, difficult and deep," he said with infectious enthu-

siasm. A very rare example of a blind pianist at such a high level, Tsujii said he is inspired by the sensations provided by nature and other art forms. "From a very young age, my mother gave me experiences outside of music. She would take me to museums and describe the drawings or paintings she liked. She would take me to a firework display and describe the colours," he said.

Tsujii's main musical influence is the "delicate, elegant, romantic" Chopin, whose patriotism he admires. "He had extremely strong feelings for his country, Poland," said Tsujii, adding that he was also drawn to Beethoven, Debussy and Ravel. A joint-winner of the prestigious Van Cliburn gold medal, Tsujii has refused to let his disability get the better of him. While others musicians carefully watch every move of the conductor, Tsujii says he listens to the orchestra leader's breathing to follow the rhythm. — AFP



Japanese blind pianist Nobuyuki Tsujii answers questions during an interview at a studio in Tokyo.



Nobuyuki Tsujii plays the piano. — AFP photos

Art 'detectives' probe what lies beneath a Fragonard

For decades, she was thought to have started out as a man. But a sketch uncovered at an obscure Parisian auction in 2012 triggered groundbreaking research that revealed the original painting beneath Jean-Honore Fragonard's "Young Girl Reading" to be a woman gazing outward. "The drawing pointed out this likely inaccuracy," said Michael Swicklik, senior conservator at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, adjusting his magnifying glasses to examine the luminous 250-year-old portrait of a girl in a bright lemon dress absorbed in her book.

Swicklik was part of a trio of experts who used techniques akin to those NASA deployed on its Mars rovers to dispel any doubt the work belonged to a boldly experimental series by a young Fragonard, just coming into his own two decades before the French Revolution. There is no significant record from the period of the artist's legendary "Fantasy Figures," created around 1769, which Paris Louvre senior curator Guillaume Faroult described to AFP as "one of the absolute masterpieces in the history of painting."

Even less was known about "Young Girl Reading," whose profile view had relegated her to the periphery of the series. When the painting was restored in 1985, experts erroneously concluded a man lay beneath based on x-ray imaging. But today, researchers have many more tools at their disposal, and the National Gallery's team was able to confirm suspicions aroused by the newly discovered sketch of the series.

"That we could actually then re-examine the painting through these new techniques and prove that it was inaccurate and how inaccurate it was, and actually simulate what it looked like, was very exciting for a conservator," Swicklik said, gesturing at the unframed painting in the museum's

conservation studio as colleagues around him worked on other gems.

Shrouded in mystery

The fantasy figures portray members of Fragonard's social circle dressed in extravagant masquerade style and looking out in engaging, theatrical poses. Fragonard, known for highly decorative, veiled eroticism in works like "The Swing," highlighted more minute details here in the women than the men, using the back of his paintbrush to evoke collar creases.

The girl's profile view had relegated her to the margins of the series, despite the similar dress, light source and frenetic brushstrokes applied "alla prima" (wet on wet paint) with virtuosic ease and agility. But the sketched vignette matching the portrait showed the subject facing the viewer. "It was not a painting about which we imagined making further discoveries," said Yuriko Jackall, the museum's 18th century French painting expert who enlisted the help of Swicklik and senior imaging scientist John Delaney.

Fragonard "seems to have made one composition and left it alone for a while, and then come back to it several months or maybe a few years later," explained Jackall. "Why did Fragonard make a change like this? Was this because the model rejected the painting and so the painting remained unsold? Was it that the initial painting was almost like a figure study? We are not totally sure."

Going in blind

Working like a team of detectives, Delaney, Jackall and Swicklik studied a tiny cross-section taken from the painting in the 1980s—the traditional way of observing paint layers—



This file photo taken on September 28, 2017 shows 'Young Girl Reading' by Jean-Honore Fragonard on an easel at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

Groundbreaking research revealed original painting beneath



along with three different types of scientific imaging, without ever touching the work. "You start off this research not knowing what you're looking for," said Delaney as he demonstrated a scan of the canvas mounted on a mobile easel at the museum's chemical imaging lab.

"But you collect many different kinds of information—the canvas weave, the pigment types, the style of the painting, and then you start to see strange things," Delaney and co-researchers developed a pair of custom-built tools: a high sensitivity near infrared hyper spectral imaging camera and an x-ray fluorescence (XRF) imaging sensor. They also used techniques known as diffuse reflectance imaging spectroscopy (RIS) and reflectance transformation imaging (RTI), along with high-resolution color photography.

Combined with four sets of carefully calibrated lights, the technologies produced more than 750 highly detailed images of the painting in very narrow wavelength ranges that helped create a realistic simulation of the original composition. During XRF imaging spectroscopy, mercury analysis clearly revealed the outlined "ghost" of the underlying woman, along with her plumed headdress adorned with pearls.

on which the artist had sketched out 18 distinct thumbnail-sized portraits that corresponded to paintings associated with the fantasy figures. In addition to unlocking the mystery of "Young Girl Reading," the sketches also dispelled some long-held assumptions.

Beneath all but the girl's underlying composition, Fragonard made inscriptions that for the first time associated the portraits with names, though it is still unclear whether they identify patrons or the sitters themselves. The annotations named previously unidentified portraits for some, revealed mistaken identities for others and left out paintings long considered part of the series.

What had been celebrated as an iconic image of Enlightenment philosopher Denis Diderot—a ruthless art critic—is now associated instead with writer Ange Gabriel Meusnier de Querlon. These and other related findings raise more questions than they answer. Four of the 18 works sketched out are still unknown. Yet more discoveries possibly await after Jackall curated the first known exhibition entirely devoted to the fantasy figures, running until December 3 at the National Gallery. — AFP

The sketch is key

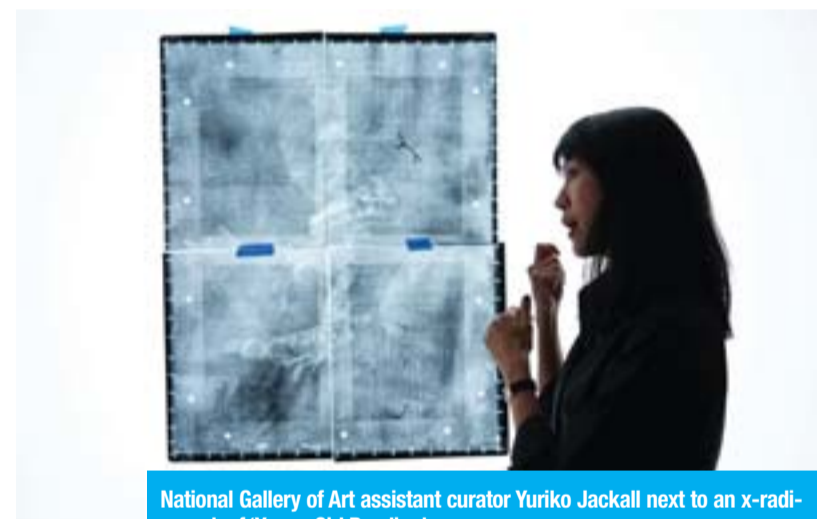
At the heart of the research was a faded sheet of paper



National Gallery of Art senior conservator of paintings Michael Swicklik speaks during an interview with AFP.



National Gallery of Art senior imaging scientist John K. Delaney showing images of 'Young Girl Reading' by Jean-Honore Fragonard.



National Gallery of Art assistant curator Yuriko Jackall next to an x-ray photograph of 'Young Girl Reading'.

VidCon returning to Amsterdam to aid budding video stars

Move over Johnny Depp or Angelina Jolie. Today's kids no longer want to be Hollywood movie stars. Instead the world of online video beckons. And aiming to help young vloggers and YouTubers to capitalise on a growing market, VidCon Europe announced yesterday it will return to Amsterdam next year for the second time—for the only European edition of its hugely popular VidCon US staged annually in Anaheim, California.

"If you're between the ages of 10 and 20 what is the number one career when asked what do you want to be when you grow up? The number one thing is an online video star," VidCon chief executive Jim Louderback told AFP. In April, Amsterdam became VidCon's first foray out of the United States. Every year tens of thousands flock to the annual get-together in California, which since its launch eight years ago has become a hot venue for those in the driving seat of an online revolution.

The second edition of VidCon Europe will be held in the Dutch capital from March 22-24, 2018, and organizers are confident they will attract more than the 3,000-plus fans who flocked to the city this April. But the focus is changing with less emphasis this time on helping fans to meet their online crushes. "VidCon Europe 2017 will be more of a learning, educational and inspirational event," said Louderback.

The aim will be to help those already online or targeting a career on YouTube to "develop their skills, build bigger audiences, their communities and make better videos. In the movie industry you have all these gatekeepers that keep you from being able to become a movie star," said Louderback.

"With online video everybody can create a video and post it. They're not all going to be good. But you don't have to be in one of these centers of movie-making to be able to rise to the top, and find your audience." During the three-day event more than 1,000 emerging and established vloggers will conduct workshops on how to cash in online success, work with brands and produce high-quality content. — AFP

Plans for London's historic India Club cook up storm

Plans to renovate a historic and beloved Indian restaurant in central London are causing a stir, pitting the developers against high profile defenders, including intellectuals, Anglo-Indian businessmen and lawmakers from both countries. The India Club, a restaurant and bar on the Strand near London's West End, is trying to use its storied history to block proposals by owners Marston Properties to turn the seven storey building into an upmarket boutique hotel.

"This is a very historic place, we haven't changed anything," Yadgar Marker, the club's current director, told AFP during a recent lunchtime dosa-and an Indian pancake-and various curry dishes flew out the kitchen. "Even these tabletoys are from the early '50s... It's like a museum," he said.

The club was set up in its current location by Krishna Menon, India's first High Commissioner to Britain, in the early 1950s, and counted Jawaharlal Nehru, the country's inaugural prime minister, among its founding members, Marker said. It has served as a meeting place for writers, intellectuals and politicians, Marker wrote earlier this month to Westminster Council, the local authority in charge of planning decisions. Marston Properties submitted its application on September 8 to Westminster Council to partially demol-

ish and extend the building. It currently houses a bakery and convenience store on the ground floor and the India Club and Hotel Strand Continental on the upper levels.

Heritage status?

Marker, who has run the club and hotel for the last 20 years, said he was "quite surprised" to learn of the plans in an email from the company. With their seven-year lease set to expire in 2019, he fears it will mean the end of the club. The club has applied for the building to receive protected status from Historic England, which recommends which sites of cultural value the British government should designate.

A spokesman for the public body confirmed it had visited the club earlier this month, and would make a decision on whether to recommend listing it by January 19, 2018. Simon Marshall of Marston Properties told AFP it was cooperating with Historic England "to establish the true heritage links of this building." He said the company had commissioned its own independent historical research into the club. "The extent of (the) heritage links... are not in fact particularly clear," he added. Marshall stressed no final decision had been made to redevelop building.

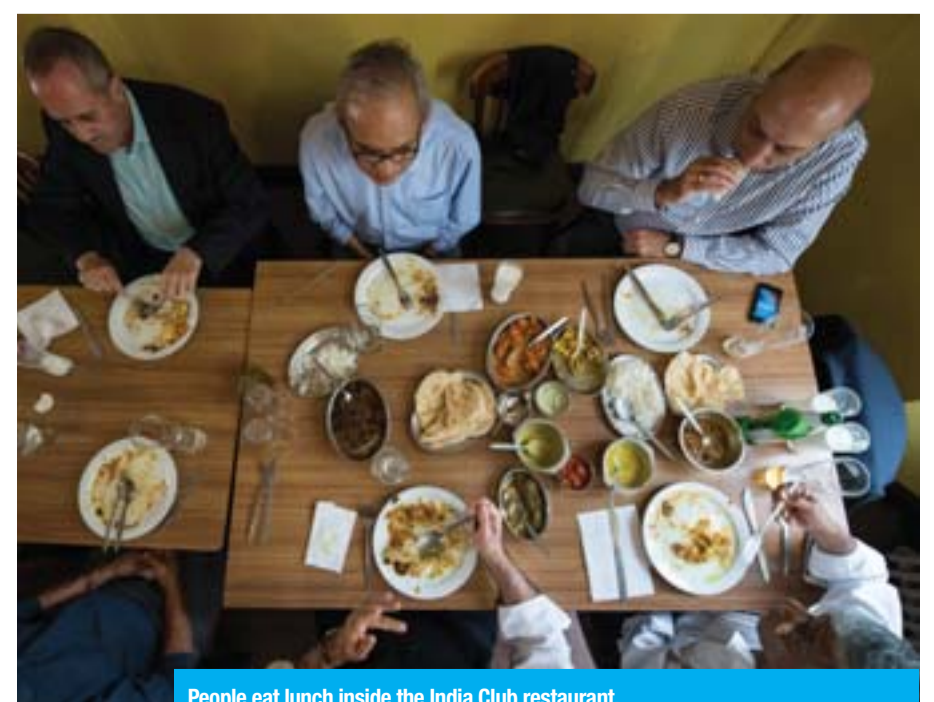
Cultural 'cleansing' of London

Loyal longtime customers have been voicing their support. A petition launched by the club had garnered over 14,000 signatures by Monday. "It means the world to generations of Indians," said Kalyan Thapa, a patron since the 1960s, as he ate with friends there on Monday. "You can't knock it down and erase history."

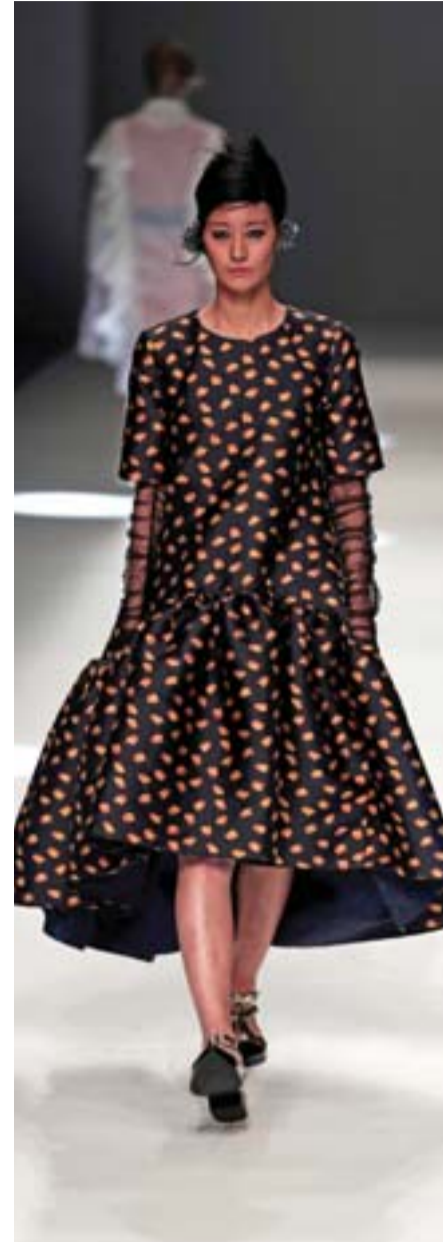
High profile fans including sculptor Anish Kapoor, writer Will Self and Indian lawmaker Shashi Tharoor, have also leapt to its defense, writing letters of support that Marker has sent on to Westminster Council. "I think the loss of the club would constitute another step-up in the social, ethnic and cultural 'cleansing' of central London's commercial environment," Self said. "Already, smaller and more diverse businesses are being lost from the West End in droves, it creates an arid, aseptic environment in which every cubic foot of space feels commoditized." — AFP



A staff member exits the kitchen as people eat lunch inside the India Club restaurant in London. — AFP photos

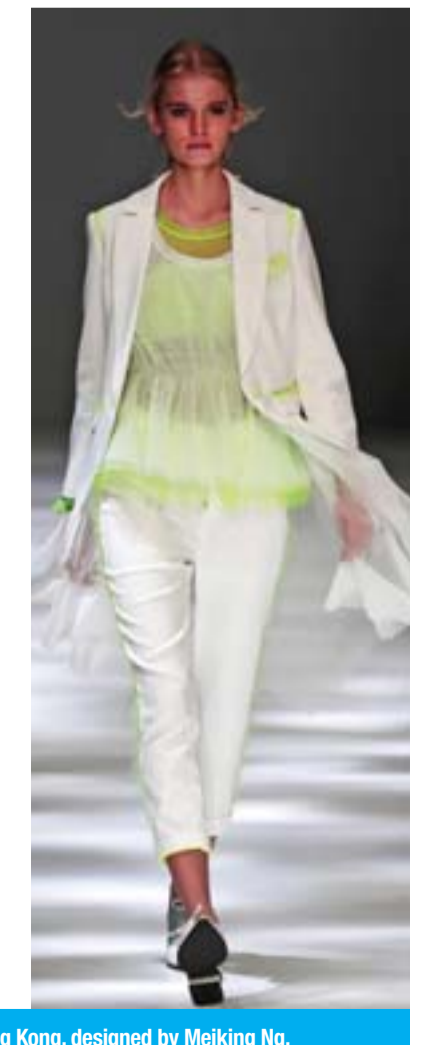
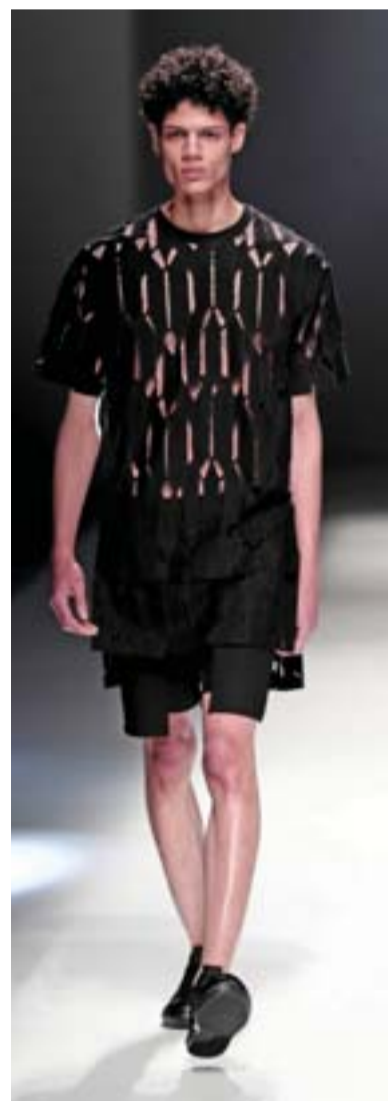


People eat lunch inside the India Club restaurant.



Amazon Fashion Week Tokyo

Models display the creations of HEAVEN PLEASE+ from Hong Kong, designed by Yi Chan and Lary Cheung, as part of the Amazon Fashion Week Tokyo 2018 spring/summer collection in Tokyo. — AFP



Models display the creations of HARRISON WONG from Hong Kong, designed by Harrison Wong.

Models display the creations of MEIKING NG from Hong Kong, designed by Meiking Ng. — AFP photos

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2017



Indian dancers take part in the Diwali Festival at Trafalgar Square in London. The Diwali Festival brings together thousands of Hindus, Sikhs and Jains with people from other communities in celebration. — AP

Grim store sales cast shadow on 'festival of lights'

This close to India's glittering festive season, the cash register at Neha Tandon's clothes store should be working overtime as revelers snap up elegant saris for Diwali celebrations and lavish wedding parties. But the traditional spending sprees have not transpired this festive season, the first since a sudden recall of India's high-value banknotes sent shockwaves through Asia's third-largest economy.

"Demonetisation" caused months of crippling cash shortages that hit businesses hard and economists concede it contributed to dragging on India's growth, which hit a three-year low of 5.7 percent in the first quarter of the financial year. Retailers say consumers remain scared of parting with their cash and blame that upheaval, and subsequent economic reforms from Prime Minister Narendra Modi, for their festive sales woes. "Since demonetisation, there has been less cash around. But even that aside, the Modi government is so volatile people are afraid to spend," said Tandon at her boutique in Delhi, where just one woman was browsing the racks of saris less than a week from Diwali.

The Confederation of All India Traders, the body representing 60 million retailers, says pre-festival sales are down 40 percent compared to last year's \$4 billion Diwali bonanza.

Since then, Modi has overhauled India's tax system and cracked down on corruption, flagship reforms many argued were necessary but slowed the economy. The timing could not be worse for traders, who rely on consumers spending big on clothes, jewelry and gifts to lavish on friends and family ahead of Diwali, the biggest celebration of the year for India's one billion Hindus dubbed the "festival of lights". "I've never seen it this bad. We've been here 40 years and trust me, this is not normal," Tandon said.

Traditional spending sprees have not halted this season

confederation, said there was no hope of a last-minute rebound with some marketplaces "absolutely deserted". "Usually at this time, it's impossible to move in the markets. But this year it's certainly not like that. This is the worst Diwali in a decade for traders," he said. Luxury items have borne the brunt of the austerity this season, with sales of wristwatches, formal wear and jewelry plunging.

But the penny pinching is also being felt in other industries usually booming during the festive season. In a normal year Bengali Sweet Center, a traditional confectioner, might pre-

Scared to spend

Some flashier shopping malls reported stronger sales over the weekend, but smaller outlets say the damage has been done. Praveen Khandelwal, the general secretary of the traders



Indians buy lanterns and lamps from roadside stalls ahead of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights in Mumbai.

pare up to 5,000 boxes of Indian sweets for corporate clients preparing gifts. This year, those orders have nosedived to just 60 boxes, said owner Sriyansh Jain.

Fireworks vendors, who sell more during Diwali than any other time, are also facing a dismal year with crackers banned in Delhi to curb the capital's horrendous air pollution. The depressing holiday sales cap off a tough year for retailers, who have been buffered in the wake of Modi's economic reforms and attribute the disruption with the gloom consumer climate. The cancellation of more than 80 percent of India's rupee banknotes, a move designed to undercut the black market, wiped out cash reserves and threw businesses into chaos.

Short-term pain

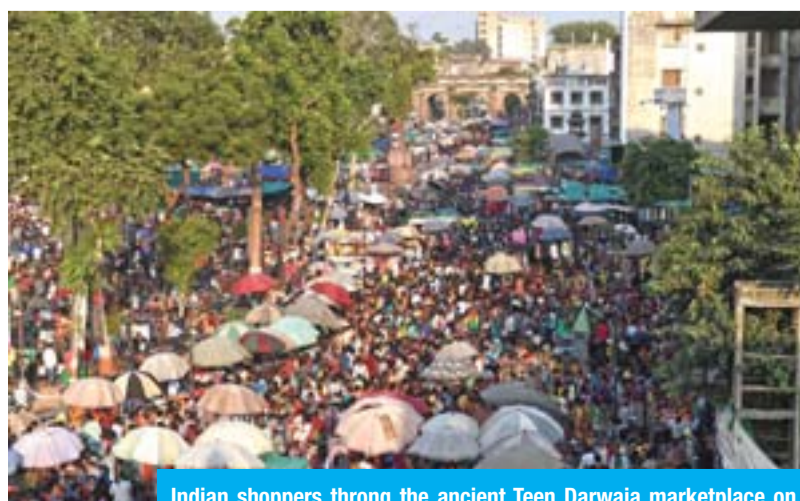
Eight months later Modi followed up with the biggest tax overhaul in a generation — replacing more than a dozen state and national levies with four different rates of between five and 28 per cent. Retailers complained they were not ready for

the massive shake up, with some sectors striking as others scrambled to work out what to charge under the new tax regime. Economists had long argued such steps were vital if the country of 1.25 billion people is to continue creating jobs for its ever-growing population.

These two policies were singled out last month when the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development downgraded India's growth forecast for the year to 6.7 percent, down 0.6 point from their June outlook. The Modi government has promised the short-term pain would bear fruit down the line. But such overtures offer little comfort for retailers staring down the barrel of a record-bad year. "The mood is really down. People are more cautious about spending," said fashion retailer Sunit Nanda, nervously looking around his quiet shop in Delhi. "But these next few days are critical for our business, so I hope things pick up." — AFP



An Indian artist works on an idol of the Hindu Goddess Lakshmi (L) and Kali (R) at a workshop in Hyderabad. — AFP/AP photos



Indian shoppers through the ancient Teen Darwaja marketplace on the last Sunday ahead of the Hindu festival 'Diwali' in Ahmedabad.



An Indian potter stacks earthen lamps in an oven as he makes them ahead of Diwali festival in Allahabad.