

5 Conocarpus tree: Harmless plant or legitimate threat?



9 'Braid-chopping' cases add panic to trauma in Kashmir



23 Mugabe removed as WHO goodwill envoy after outrage



14 Warriors come unglued, Cavs flat against Magic



Tillerson woos Gulf allies in push to undercut Iran

Top US diplomat demands Iranian militias leave Iraq

Amir meets Sudan president



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives at Bayan Palace yesterday visiting Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir. The talks reviewed bilateral ties and means of promoting them in all fields for broadening cooperation between the two sister countries and achieving expectations of their people for mutual interests. The leaders also discussed issues of common interest. — KUNA

RIYADH/DOHA: Top US diplomat Rex Tillerson pursued efforts to curb Tehran's influence in talks with his country's Gulf allies yesterday, demanding that Iran pare down its involvement in Iraq as the fight against the Islamic State group draws to a close. The question of Iranian influence in the region - including in Iraq and Qatar - is at the center of Tillerson's visit to Riyadh and Doha, which comes just weeks after President Donald Trump refused to certify the Iran nuclear deal and declared an aggressive new strategy against Tehran.

The US secretary of state appears focused on boosting Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia's clout in Iraq, where Shiite forces backed by Tehran are fighting in the north, as part of a wider regional battle for influence that extends from Syria to Yemen. "Certainly Iranian militias that are in Iraq, now that the fighting against (the Islamic State group) is coming to a close, those militias need to go home," Tillerson said at a press conference in Riyadh. "All foreign fighters need to go home."

The Popular Mobilisation Forces (PMF) - powerful paramilitary units dominated by Iranian-trained Shiite militias - have been part of the fight against IS and continue to battle different factions in Iraq. But Tillerson's remarks were also aimed at Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards (IRGC) and their foreign operations wing, the Quds Force, according to a senior US



RIYADH: US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is received by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud in the Saudi capital yesterday. — AFP

official. "The position of the Iraqi government and the position of our government is that there should be a single Iraqi security force answerable to the Iraqi state," the official said on condition of anonymity. "What happens to the PMFs is they go home or they integrate into the Iraqi security forces."

Tillerson sat in on the first meeting of a joint Saudi-Iraqi coordination council in Riyadh yesterday, which Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-

Abadi hailed as an "important step toward enhancing relations". Saudi Arabia cut ties with Iraq in 1990 following Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, but Riyadh and Baghdad have rekindled diplomatic and commercial relations this year.

Tillerson told the Saudi king and Abadi that the event highlighted the improving ties between the longtime rivals and showed "the

Continued on Page 11

News in brief

Egypt agro ban lifted

CAIRO: Kuwait, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates have agreed to lift a ban on imports of Egyptian agricultural products, Egypt said yesterday, as the country works to step up exports to narrow its budget deficit. The series of bans were said to have been on concerns over pesticide residues. The three Gulf countries had banned various agricultural imports from Egypt, including pepper, lettuce and onion, earlier this year. Egypt has asked an agricultural quarantine body to advise on shipments and warn of exporters who violate agreed-upon international standards, an Egyptian agriculture ministry statement said.

Fines for discarding butts

KUWAIT: The municipality warned motorists against flinging cigarette butts out of their vehicles or stubbing them out on pavements, parks or in public places, adding that violators will be fined up to KD 200. The Capital municipality emergency team leader Zaid Al-Enezi said article 1 of the municipality services law 9/1987 stipulates that discarding cigarette butts on pavements, streets, squares, yards, parking lots, parks and public places is punishable with fines ranging from KD 5 to KD 200.

Facebook post leads to arrest

JERUSALEM: Israeli police mistakenly arrested then released a Palestinian who posted "good morning" in Arabic on Facebook after software mistranslated it as "attack them", police and a media report said yesterday. According to a report in Haaretz newspaper, the Palestinian man posted a picture of himself leaning against a bulldozer at the Israeli settlement of Beitar Illit, where he works, in the occupied West Bank. Along with the picture, an Arabic phrase meaning "good morning" was also posted. Facebook's translation software interpreted the post to mean "attack them" in Hebrew and "hurt them" in English.

Saudis deny visit to Israel

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday denied that any of its officials had visited Israel, after Israeli media reported that a senior prince had made a secret diplomatic trip there. "Reports of a secret visit to Israel by a Saudi official which have appeared on some media are unfounded," a spokesman for the Saudi foreign ministry said. "Saudi Arabia has always been transparent as regards contacts and visits" to foreign countries, the spokesman said in a statement carried by the official SPA news agency.

Saudis crave revival of night out at movies

RIYADH: The lights go out, the projector whirrs and entertainment-starved Saudis sink into plush seats to soak up an experience they have been denied for decades - a trip to the cinema. The rare movie night this week in Riyadh was a precursor to an expected formal lifting of the kingdom's ban on cinemas, long vilified as vulgar and sinful by religious hardliners. Following a decree allowing women to drive, authorities have hinted cinemas would soon be permitted as part of ambitious reforms for a post-oil era that could shake up the austere kingdom's cultural scene.

"Cinema is like the soul of Saudi society," said Faisal Alharbi, director of "National Dialogue", one of three short films screened to an audience packed into the capital's King Fahd Cultural Centre. "It makes people see reality, a reflection of their own lives on screen." The cavernous hall was segregated by gender at the free screening - the latest in a series of shows since July.

A food truck hawking grilled burgers was parked outside and the audience was offered servings of Arabic coffee in thimble-sized plastic cups. Once the



RIYADH: Saudi women attend the "Short Film Competition 2" festival on Oct 20, 2017 at the King Fahd Culture Center. — AFP

ban ends, medical student Sultan expects cinemas with all the trappings of the modern movie experience, including vending machines churning out popcorn and cotton candy. "I expect the movie theatres will be crowded all the time," the 19-year-old audience member told AFP.

Reviving cinemas would represent a paradigm shift

in the kingdom, which is promoting entertainment as part of a sweeping reforms plan dubbed "Vision 2030", despite opposition from conservatives. Hardliners, who see cinemas as a threat to cultural and religious identity, were instrumental in shutting them down in the 1980s.

Continued on Page 11

More than 1.1bn 'invisible people' lack identification

WASHINGTON: More than 1.1 billion people worldwide officially don't exist - going about their daily lives without proof of identity. The issue leaves a significant fraction of the global population deprived of health and education services. Among these "invisible people" - many of whom live primarily in Africa and Asia - more than one third are children susceptible to violence whose births have not been registered, the World Bank's "Identification for Development" (ID4D) program recently warned.

The problem is particularly acute in geographical areas whose residents face poverty, discrimination, epidemics or armed conflicts. Many families are also simply not informed about the importance of birth registration - and the consequences of non-registration, which can include the denial of basic rights and benefits, or an increased likelihood of marrying or entering into the labor force underage. These children can also fall victim to human trafficking.

And even if parents are aware of the need to declare a birth, costs can be crippling. As a result, millions of children in Africa and Asia first encounter the administration only once they reach school age. But birth certificates are often needed to enroll in school or take



Rohingya Muslim children, who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh, play football at the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh yesterday. — AP

national exams. And in many countries, births of children born out of wedlock or as a result of rape are sometimes deliberately concealed for fear of discrimination. — AFP (See Page 6)

Opposition MPs warn govt over key laws, citizenship

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MPs yesterday reviewed the main issues that need to be debated and approved in the National Assembly's new term opening tomorrow and warned the government over its failure to cooperate with them. MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain, who hosted the meeting of 13 lawmakers, said the meeting insisted that seven important issues should be tackled in the first month of the new term.

These include reducing the duration of preventive detention (to just 48 hours from 10 days now), early retirement, scrapping the petrol price hike, the Kuwaiti army law and the municipal council and the anti-corruption authority legislation, Babtain said. Other major issues that opposition lawmakers want to be resolved include amending the electoral system, the cybercrime law, audiovisual law, judiciary independence law and a legislation calling to shield the National Assembly against dissolution, he said.

Continued on Page 11

Local

Amir receives Ghanem, parliamentary delegation

MPs brief His Highness on IPU mission



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and members of the parliamentary caucus which took part in the 137th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and members of the parliamentary caucus which took part in the 137th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and members of the parliamentary caucus who participated in the 137th Inter-Parliamentary Union's General Assembly in Saint Petersburg.

His Highness told the delegation that he was personally proud of them, urging them not to pay attention to what has been written and said about their mission, saying that those

critical remarks are driven by "jealousy." Parliament Speaker Ghanem replied by saying "on behalf of myself and members of the delegation, we extend our thanks and gratitude for Your Highness' support during our mission."

"I have explained to Your Highness details and background of the mission and when some doubted our work, we resorted to Your Highness' wise directives upon which we have always relied," Ghanem added. He went on to say "Your Highness' precious message has given us tremendous

support especially when it comes from a wise person as Your Highness at the right time to prove a stance of a country and a nation and this is the most precious accolade one can be honored for, not for me personally but for the entire parliament." He pointed out "there is no nation that has got a wise leader like Your Highness appreciates what you have done... we extend our thanks, appreciation and respect to Your Highness." His Highness replied by extending his pride and thanks for such men "like yourselves" who have stood

firmly in front of the entire world. Ghanem and his delegation later met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as well. Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, while His Highness the Crown Prince also received His Highness Prime Minister. — KUNA

Gulf Bank congratulates ArabNet on successful conference

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank concluded its Gold Sponsorship of the 2017 edition of the ArabNet Kuwait conference. The Bank congratulates the organizers on a successful second edition of the event, which took place at the Arraya Ballroom - Courtyard Marriott over 17 and 18 October 2017.

The conference was held under the patronage of Khaled Al-Roudhan, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs. During the event, Roudhan visited the stand out Gulf Bank booth themed 'Investing in Entrepreneurs and Innovation' and was briefed on the Bank's latest product, WISE Investments.

The conference was attended by a wide cross section of government entities, private sector companies, digital commerce businesses, social media companies, several of Kuwait's start-ups and entrepreneurial ventures, as well as youth in Kuwait. During the event, a number of panel discussions took place on ad-tech, investment and innovation, digital commerce, as well as a Startup battle and Ideathon competition, and tech exhibition fair.

Throughout the conference, Gulf Bank staff at the booth answered questions about how to finance startup companies and further business ideas. Bank staff also gave demonstrations of the WISE investment platform, a cost efficient, simple, transparent way to invest in



KUWAIT: Gulf Bank's team, CEO of ArabNet Omar Christidis, and Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan pose for a photo at Gulf Bank's booth.

global markets.

Commenting on ArabNet Kuwait, Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager at Gulf Bank said: "As social media penetration in Kuwait is amongst the highest in the world, and digital commerce here is booming, the ArabNet conference offered a unique opportunity to address those topics and discuss their impacts. Moreover, Gulf Bank's sponsorship of this year's ArabNet conference was great way for us to support young, bright entrepreneurs."

During the conference, Qatami noted: "The venue was filled with energy and our staff spoke with countless people looking for answers and advice on funding for their ventures and growing their businesses. There was also great interest in WISE Investments, our recently launched digital investment platform which is simplifying investing in global markets and offers customized scenarios based on each customer's risk attitude and goals. We thank the organizers for this edition of the ArabNet Kuwait conference and we look forward to next year's edition."

Meshari Shehab, Assistant General Manager for Priority and Wealth Management at Gulf Bank, was one of the judges for the Startup competition on Tuesday, 17 October. The Bank extends its congratulations to the winner of the Startup competition, Orddr which is a business to business platform for the food industry in Kuwait. The Bank wishes them success at the regional MENA competition.

Additionally, Tareq Al-Saleh, Assistant General Manager for Investments, represented the Bank as a speaker on the new trends and innovation panel on Wednesday, 18 October. During his discussion, he elaborated how Gulf Bank delivered Kuwait's first cutting-edge digital investment platform - WISE Investments and how it works.

The conference featured over 30+ leading global and regional companies, allowing guests to share insights on the latest trends, applications, and technologies and offered entrepreneurs opportunities to connect with the digital world.

ArabNet is a leading events, media and



Meshari Shehab, Assistant General Manager for Priority and Wealth Management at Gulf Bank, participates as a judge for the Startup Competition.



Tareq Al-Saleh, Assistant General Manager for Investments at Gulf Bank, speaks during the new trends and innovation panel.

research company focused on digital business and entrepreneurship in MENA. ArabNet organizes major annual conferences in Beirut, Riyadh, Dubai, and Kuwait; publishes news

and analysis of the digital sector on its online news portal and print 'ArabNet Quarterly' magazine; and creates original research reports about the region's digital industry.

Sheraton Hotel Kuwait holds EU education exposition

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A two-day EU educational expo 'QSEduEx' commenced yesterday at Sheraton Hotel Kuwait. Adel Al-Masaad, Assistant Undersecretary of Administrative and Financial Affairs at the Ministry of Higher Education, inaugurated the QSEduEx Autumn - International Higher Education Exhibition, in the presence of ambassadors, university and school heads. German Ambassador to Kuwait Karl Bergner lauded the organizers, saying that he was happy to be part of the expo with other EU member countries including.

"As you can see, here we are united in our efforts to win more students from this part of the world," Bergner said. "We want to increase awareness on EU education and no tuition fees at EU universities. State universities are free, English is also the medium of instructions in German universities. We have a strong focus on applied sciences. If you study in Europe you have access to a vast network of universities and companies. It is an added advantage if you study in Europe, you just have to apply for the



KUWAIT: Students attend the EU educational expo 'QSEduEx.' — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

scholarship."

The QSEduEx expo which ends today saw the participation of 12 countries from around the world including the US, UK, Australia, Germany, the Netherlands, Belgium, France, Ireland, Italy, Lebanon, United Arab Emirates and Kuwait. European universities offer various academic disciplines from political sciences, engineering to arts and business. EU universities are keen on accepting students from Kuwait and foreign students including masters and PhD levels, with English-taught programs.

Massad said, "QSEduEx is a very important event for Kuwait. It has the ability to uplift and improve the human resource

skills of the country which will directly improve the economy. The exhibition has done a brilliant job in being able to promote local and international higher education institutions. I urge the youth and their parents to visit the expo and use this opportunity, which has been created for them to their maximum benefit."

Sadiq Ahmed Khan, a managing director from the organizing company said, "QSEduEx provides the perfect opportunity for school students (grade 10-12) to meet and discuss their future path with various prestigious local and international colleges and universities. This is a great opportunity for parents to come with prospective students to secure their future."



Local

Legalese

Visa regulations for dependents

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Even as practicing lawyers in Kuwait, we are well aware of the confusion that may arise because of the continuously changing visa regulations, even more so for women who are accompanying their spouses to Kuwait. Many women come to Kuwait to support their working husbands and therefore have no access to information that their husbands may otherwise have access to at their work. I have answered some questions regarding visas for dependents.

Legalities

Q: I am a non-Kuwaiti working in the private sector - I want to know the legalities of sponsoring my wife and children and bringing them to Kuwait?

Fajer: I thought I will start with this general question as it seems that it is simpler for a man to sponsor his wife. Ministerial decree no. 3384/2016 provides specific requirements for this purpose - the salary needs to be a minimum of KD 450 for a non-Kuwaiti man to bring his family to Kuwait. This applies to both public and private sector expats.

Q: I am a female expat working in Kuwait - can I sponsor my husband?

Fajer: Unfortunately, a female expat cannot sponsor her husband or her children above 21 years of age. Only parents and children under 21 can be sponsored by a female expat. This is surprising to me, as ministerial decree no. 640/1987 does not mention that only a male can sponsor his wife, but instead is general, stating that spouses can sponsor - unfortunately, this is not applicable in Kuwait.

Dependent visa holder

Q: I am a dependent visa holder as my husband is my sponsor - does this permit me to work in Kuwait?

Fajer: As a dependent visa holder, you need to transfer your residency from 'dependent' to 'work'. To apply for the new residency, you need to submit the following documents:

1. Application form for residency transfer (to be signed by the former and the new sponsors).
2. Two personal photos (light blue background - 6x4).
3. Original civil ID.
4. A certificate of health insurance.
5. A certificate of criminal status.
6. Work permit (to be issued by the Public Authority for Manpower).
7. Original signature approval of the new sponsor.
8. A form of personal photo.
9. Prescribed fees.
10. Original passport.

If you ever have confusion about the requirements and the documents that you need, I would suggest that you visit the shuoon (Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor) office closest to you and inquire about the administrative side of things. I want to also make it clear that even though unlike other countries there are no clear laws on visas and whether married women can volunteer, start a business or work part-time in Kuwait, I see no complications with such women volunteering or working with their artistic skills, as in taking/selling photos or having an exhibition of artworks, writing poetry etc. I hope the above was clear.

Should you have any questions or concerns, or you require a consultation, please email me at ask@fajerthelawyer.com.

World Bank optimistic towards Kuwait's economic reforms

WASHINGTON: Director of the World Bank in Kuwait Dr Firas Raad has expressed optimism about the reform measures taken by the Kuwaiti government, especially in the field of improving the practice of business.

In a statement yesterday, Raad said that the discussions between the Ministries of Finance and Education in Kuwait, the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the sidelines of the World Bank's annual meetings were "good and constructive" during which he reviewed the most important challenges facing the State of Kuwait.

He referred to the World Bank Group strategy announced by World Bank Group President Jim Yong Kim, which is based on

supporting economic growth that guarantees all sectors of the society, enhancing the ability of societies to cope with natural disasters and emerging crises and investing in human capital, especially in health and education.

Turning to the crisis of oil prices decline after 2014, which prompted oil producing countries to address it, Raad stressed that economic growth in Kuwait has not slowed significantly, ranging between two and three percent in 2015 and 2016 and this is due to continued expenditure in big capital projects.

Raad said that the World Bank's estimates in 2017 show that growth will slow because of the agreement between the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and other countries to cut oil production, however, he anticipated growth to rise in the two coming years to about 5.3 per cent by 2019 and return to what it was in 2015.

Raad stressed the need to take the necessary measures in the medium and long term to diversify sources of income in Kuwait, pointing out that the developmental vision of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah aims to diversify sources of economy and rely on the private sector to create jobs for Kuwaitis. "We are optimistic about the measures cur-

rently being taken by the government, both on the financial side and on the structural and economic side," he said.

In terms of improving the business environment, Dr Raad said that the Kuwaiti government has made a lot of achievements last year, including the establishment of the Kuwait Business Center (one window integrated management) under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, saying such step deserves "thanks and appreciation." He expressed the hope that the annual Doing Business report issued by the World Bank at the end of this month will include Kuwait's achievements.

On the other hand, Dr Raad spoke about the international conference to be hosted by Kuwait for the reconstruction of liberated areas in Iraq in early 2018 in line with its principles of supporting the Iraqis and due to its supportive humanitarian mission as a center for humanitarian action. He said that the World Bank is working with the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) and the Iraqi government to take the preparatory steps to organize this conference, which reflects the noble and humane direction of Kuwait's leadership, government and people towards the brothers in Iraq. — KUNA

Kuwait's inflation up 0.53 percent in September

KUWAIT: Average domestic inflation climbed 0.53 percent in September, as compared to the same month last year, said the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) yesterday. The index for the first main group (food and beverages) went up by 0.65 percent, compared to the same month in 2016.

The figure of the second main group (tobacco, narcotics) was up by 2.06 percent on annual basis and rose on monthly

Increased fees on expats part of health reform program: Minister

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi stressed that increasing health service fees for expatriates was necessary as part of a comprehensive health reform program. Harbi added that the nature of doctors' jobs and duties might make it difficult to impose the fingerprint system on them, because this might affect the healthcare procedures and requirements needed for patients. Harbi also stressed that it is hard to nationalize medical, nursing and technical jobs in the near future.

On another health concern, the Capital health zone director Dr Fatima Al-Asoumi said the new Amiri Hospital would be completed by mid-2018. She noted that the current Amiri Hospital's casualty department is being expanded to include 13 extra beds and develop its recovery rooms. "Expansion will be done in three phases, of which the first one is already completed and will be opened soon," she added, noting that work on the second phase will commence in three weeks and the third would commence after three months.

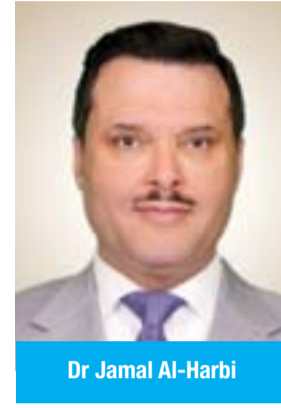
Fuel prices

Responding to local press reports published yesterday about Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) request to restudy prices of all fuel types pending increasing them, KPC yesterday issued a statement explaining that its role was only to review prices and that a committee was responsible for monitoring international

oil prices to use them as references in determining the prices of fuels in local markets. KPC also stressed that it reviews these products' international prices monthly, then reports the study results to the committee entrusted with restudying all government-provided subsidies at the finance ministry.

Gas consumption

Minister of Oil and Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq said Kuwait consumed 229 billion cubic feet of gas during the summer months (April-September), an increase of 14 billion cubic feet compared to the same period last year. Marzouq stressed that the highest consumption rates were in July with 41.666 billion cubic feet consumed, compared to 37.2 billion cubic feet in the same period of the previous year. Marzouq explained that Kuwait's consumption of gas in the same period of 2015 was 208.5 billion cubic feet, which jumped to 214.6 billion cubic feet in 2016 and 229 billion in 2017. Notably, Kuwait has signed three contracts with British Petroleum, Shell and Qatar Gas to import 2.5 million tons of liquefied natural gas annually for four years (2016-2020).



Dr Jamal Al-Harbi

Kuwait abides by OPEC's oil output quota

KUWAIT: Kuwait has affirmed its adherence to the crude oil output quota as set by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Organization (OPEC), estimated at 2.75 million barrels per day. Jamal Jaafar, Chief Executive Officer of Kuwait Oil Company (KOC), said yesterday that the company is committed to the production share, as decided by OPEC, estimated at 2.75 million barrels per day, indicating that there "is no necessity to hike the (crude) production."

KOC's output capacity is forecast to reach 3.65 million barrels per day by 2020, Jaafar said in a statement, adding that the company production of non-associated gas has currently reached 210 million cubic feet and would exceed 500 million cubic feet in January. Jaafar was speaking at a ceremony organized by Schlumberger company, specialized in oil fields' services, on the occasion of employing Kuwaiti citizens. Maan Razzouqi, the head of the North Middle East at Schlumberger, said the company hired 20 nationals, adding that it planned to employ many Kuwaitis during this year. — KUNA

14 armed men attack port guards

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Fourteen men attacked officers at the Mina Abdullah refinery pedestrian gate with sharp objects. Interior Ministry said that while the security men were manning the gate, they found a laptop with an employee, which is not allowed in the premises. The employee later returned with 14 men and they attacked the guards. Investigations are underway.

Swindling

Public prosecution plans to refer an actor to court for trial on a swindling case against a Kuwaiti woman. The girl lodged a complaint against the actor stating that they met in 2012 and he convinced her to get married, so she gave him her student aid allowance of a total of KD 4,800. He disappeared with the money and lured into taking another loan two years later worth KD 10,000. Later, the actor's friend who took advantage of the situation made fake promises and kept withdrawing money from the victim's account using her ATM card for six months. On protesting, he threatened her with fake pictures. Police arrested both the actor who was jailed for 21 days and his friend, and they were later released on bail. The other man was re-

arrested and is being held at the criminal detectives department.

Suicide

A Jordanian woman was rushed to hospital following an attempted suicide in her Farwaniya apartment. The girl suffered from psychological problems after she was terminated from an ad agency, then a dispute took place with her family members, after which she used a sharp object to stab herself in the left hand. The girl was taken to hospital and faces charges of attempted suicide.

Legal trouble

A Kuwaiti man was arrested by Hawally police for being wanted for a debt of KD 1,350. He told police that he had taken a loan for his girlfriend who could not make the payment in due time causing him legal trouble.

Electronic crimes

A citizen claiming to be a member of the ruling family was arrested by criminal detectives for electronic crimes and debt. Several complaints were filed against a ruling family member who lured people with business deals. Detectives arrested him in Jabriya and found out that he was an imposter and was wanted to serve a jail sentence. He was sent to concerned authorities.

Hashish found

Thirty eight grams of Hashish were found in an inspection yard in Nuwaiseeb customs. The hashish was removed and a case was filed.

Organized by **Kuwait Times** In cooperation with **Embassy of Canada to the State of Kuwait**

150 CELEBRATE #CANADA150

CELEBRATE CANADA STUDENT ART COMPETITION
October 8th Till November 9th, 2017

HELLO ARTISTS
Welcome to the Student Art Competition.
We hope you are ready to produce beautiful paintings and win valuable prizes.
The theme of your painting is **CELEBRATE #CANADA150**
Awe-inspiring scenery, vibrant cities and a welcoming atmosphere all make Canada a popular tourist destination. As the largest country in North America, Canada is a vast land encompassing majestic mountains, spectacular coastlines, virgin forests, spacious prairies and Arctic tundra. While much of the nation is of British and French descent, Canada is home to a mosaic of multicultural communities.
Good Luck To You..

Sponsored by

- Competition is open to students from (6 - 9 years) (10 - 13 years) (14 years and above) and students with special needs.
- The competition is open to all schools in Kuwait (Government and Private)
 - 10 winners from each category will receive valuable prizes.
 - All participants will receive a certificate of appreciation.
 - All schools participating in the competition will receive a certificate of appreciation.
- Any school or individuals interested in participating are welcome to visit the office of Kuwait Times and collect the drawing sheet.
 - Drawing sheets will be given to schools FREE of charge.
 - Only drawing sheets provided by the Kuwait Times will be permitted for use in the competition.
- You may use any drawing material such as color pencils, paint or crayons.
All entries are non-returnable, and will be the property of Kuwait Times ©

* For more information and updates please visit Ktimes Compet TimesComp kuwaittimescompetition

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Local

Huawei holds opening ceremony for its 'Seeds for the Future' program

In partnership with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs

KUWAIT: Huawei Technologies, a leading global ICT solutions provider, held yesterday the official opening ceremony of its groundbreaking national educational program 'Seeds for the Future'. The talent program, held in Kuwait for four consecutive years, was launched in a strategic partnership with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs. The program will enable 10 exceptional thinkers from universities across Kuwait and the world to participate in an educational ICT trip to China for 14 days to receive cutting-edge technology training in a cross-cultural environment.

The program aims to advance ICT skills among Kuwaitis and empower them to be at the forefront of innovation by bridging the gap between academic knowledge and hands-on experience acquired at Huawei's own state of the art technology labs, research and development center and practical training facilities at Huawei Headquarters in Shenzhen, China. They will benefit from interactions with Huawei staff and live demonstrations of the latest technologies such as 5G, big data and cloud computing.

Investment

Commenting on this year's program, Mohamad Diab, Huawei Technologies Kuwait General Manager of Sales and Business Development stated: "Seeds for the Future is an investment in our common future. ICT skills are an enabler of the economic transformation that Kuwait is seeking to deliver and we remain committed to working hand in hand with the government, public authorities, industry partners and other stakeholders to instill world-class ICT skills in the local community. I thank the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs for their ongoing support as we collaboratively work to unleash the potential of the Kuwaiti youth and empower the



Shafiq Al-Sayed Omar



Mohamad Diab

next generation leaders."

Also commenting on 'Seeds for the Future,' Shafiq Al-Sayed Omar, Assistant Undersecretary of the Youth Projects Sector at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs said: "This partnership comes within the framework of the agreement signed with Huawei Technologies earlier this year, aimed to contribute in putting Kuwait on the global map of talent, enhance local ICT expertise and create an innovative overall envi-



KUWAIT: Officials and students pose for a group photo at the event.

ronment, in line with the Ministry's vision. It is imperative that we strengthen the role of the public and private sector to create benefits for Kuwaiti young men and women."

He added: "We are delighted to partner up with Huawei on such a forward thinking educational program that I am confident would serve as an impetus for skills-building, knowledge transfers and career development. We welcome industry initiatives that help shape the future of the Kuwaiti youth and wish the participating students every success as they embark on such an exceptional educational and professional journey." Omar stressed that the Ministry applies an open door policy, actively building bridges with the private sector to ensure the empowerment of the Kuwaiti youth.

Training

The opening ceremony, attended by senior officials from the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, media representatives and senior Huawei executives, saw the selected students kick off their ICT training experience at Huawei Innovation and Training Center. Their educational journey will be followed by a trip to Beijing from 30 October to 13 November 2017 to immerse into the Chinese language and culture before heading off to Huawei's HQ in Shenzhen, where they will learn about the latest innovative technologies, including cloud computing, Software-Defined Networking (SDN), Big Data, and Internet of Things (IoT).

'Seeds for the Future' is open to high achieving recent graduates or senior Kuwaiti students in Engineering, Business, Finance, Accounting and Economics who have a GPA score of 3.0 or above.

The selection process was conducted through a toss. The shortlisted candidates underwent interviews with the Huawei Team of Judges to select the brightest minds who will become the leaders of innovation of tomorrow.

'Seeds for the Future' is Huawei's flagship global CSR program that aims at driving innovation and social impact through education. Since its inception in 2008, the program has offered training programs to more than 3,000 students globally and has facilitated knowledge transfer with over 100 partnerships with universities from around the globe. This year alone, the program will see 1,000 students from 95 different countries travel to China to learn about the latest innovations, participate in start-up activities and network with world-class ICT practitioners as we enter a new digital era.

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KIB gold sponsor of 6th Tmkeen Youth Empowerment Symposium

KUWAIT: Within the framework of its ongoing support of youth-based activities, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently provided its gold sponsorship to this year's 6th Tmkeen Youth Empowerment Symposium. The symposium will take place from the 23rd to the 25th of October and will be held at the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center.

The symposium is a national event held annually in Kuwait, and aims at developing the skills and abilities of today's youth. The symposium, which hosts a number of notable international and local figures from major companies in the field of business, aims at promoting entrepreneurship amongst local youth. This year's edition features workshops which will introduce several methods of successful business management, which are set to be presented by several highly respected experts and industry specialists.

On this occasion, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, said: "KIB's sponsorship of this event reflects its unwavering commitment towards supporting initiatives and activities that inspire young entrepreneurs to showcase their talents and ideas. We believe that



Nawaf Najia

youth are the true drivers of a country's progress, and thereby warrant our full support. For that reason, we are committed to providing a supportive, nurturing environment to help them play this key role in developing the country

and building a brighter future for Kuwait." Najia also added that KIB continuously strives to nurture the abilities and skills of youth across all fields. Additionally, the Bank is dedicated to engaging closely with youth in all their different activities, initiatives and occasions; thereby providing them with apt opportunities to exchange experiences and expertise to improve their skills and develop their ideas across a variety of specialties.

It serves to note that KIB's sponsorship of the symposium comes as part of the Bank's leading social responsibility program, which comprises a diverse number of initiatives and activities that serve a multitude of segments in the local community. KIB continues to devote special attention to supporting the youth segment, as it considers youth to be a main pillar in the development of the community. The Bank strongly believes that youth are the driving force of the country's development, propelling the country forward through their ability to deliver constant improvement and progress.

Nazaha signs MoU with Education Ministry

KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) counselor Abdulrahman Nemash Al-Nemash signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding with Minister of Education Dr Mohammed Al-Faris. The memorandum aims to raise social awareness on hazards of corruption, Nemash said.

He said that Nazaha believes in the importance of protecting future generations from dangers of corruption, therefore

it seeks to co-operate with the Ministry of Education through applying new educational programs.

These programs focus on spreading values of integrity and transparency among students and teachers, and help in building a more conscious generation to face corruption and reduce its negative impacts on society.

The counselor has praised Dr Faris' keen desire to sign the memorandum, which he considers as a top priority on his ministry's agenda. This is the second of a series of memorandums Nazaha intends to sign with State institutions in the near future, Nemash noted. He hoped that these memoranda would help in implementing its objectives in protecting civil community and raise public awareness toward dangers of corruption. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Chairman of Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority counselor Abdulrahman Nemash Al-Nemash (right) and Minister of Education Dr Mohammed Al-Faris shake hands after signing the agreement. —KUNA

Local

Conocarpus tree: Harmless plant or legitimate threat?

Ill-advised methods blamed for tree's negative effects



KUWAIT: A gardener trims the branches of a Conocarpus tree in a park in Kuwait City. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Though some value the positive environmental traits and qualities of the Conocarpus tree, there are individuals who voiced their concerns over planting it near populated areas due to the destructive power of tree's roots. Several individuals and experts' argued for and against the Conocarpus, leading to a debate on whether the tree was a harmless plant or a legitimate threat.

On their experiences, Kuwaiti nationals Fatima Al-Najdi and Khaled Mubarak said that the Conocarpus trees, which they planted near their houses, had spread roots all over the place, leading to property and infrastructural damages. Najdi and Mubarak said that the competent authorities must work on measures to prevent Conocarpus planting near populated areas due to the unpredictable behavior of the trees' roots.

No evidence

While controversies are rising against the Conocarpus, these arguments are still based on claims and statements with no scientific evidence. In this context, researcher at the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), Dr. Hani Al-Zalzala explained the nature of the Conocarpus' roots, saying that they grow horizontally to trace water sources.

The roots benefit from the soil's moisture for movement, said Dr. Zalzala, adding that the toughness of the roots could easily penetrate solid objects, creating holes, which damaged steel water pipes and concrete infrastructure. Planting the tree is not the problem itself, the ill-advised methods and locations in which the Conocarpus trees were planted had led to the current dilemma, said Dr. Zalzala who pointed out that uprooting the plant was no simple task, it should be done in cooperation with the concerned authorities or else the consequences will be grave.

Landscape improvement

The Conocarpus tree is a plant species belonging to the family Compositaceae, said the official, adding that the tree was brought to Kuwait in 1988 to be used for various purposes. He went on saying that "In a short period of time, the Conocarpus had a clear effect on the

development and improvement of the landscape in the State of Kuwait." Dr. Zalzala added that the Conocarpus growth exceeded many other known species because it could withstand harsh environmental conditions such as high and low temperatures. Also arguing for the benefits of tree, the deputy director at the General Authority for Agriculture and Fisheries Affairs, Ghanim Al-Sanad, said that the Conocarpus are good for the environment and climate. The trees help to stabilize temperatures, improve photosynthesis, reduce noise pollution, and holds off dust.

Tree brought in 1988 to improve Kuwait's landscape



On the other, Sanad said that there was no way to prevent the Conocarpus trees roots from penetrating manmade structures like service lines and other vital facilities. However, he affirmed the Kuwaiti authorities were committed to grow the trees in a way that would not harm the infrastructure or decrease water resources.

Health hazard

Commenting on the health hazard allegations reportedly caused by the tree, Sanad warned of accepting information without any scientific evidence or knowledge. The arguments over the Conocarpus is not only limited to Kuwait, some countries in the region have taken a decision to outright banned the trees from being planted near houses and other infrastructures, which puts things into perspective. Qatar has been aware of the serious effects of the tree on the urban environment and banned it from being planted near houses in 2010 after roots caused damages to infrastructure.

The same case in Iraq, where the authorities in the city of Basra imported Conocarpus from Kuwait in an effort to spread greenery in the area, but in similar fashion, the trees was also banned from being planted near populated areas. Back to Kuwait, the Municipal Council recommended in 2014 to stop planting trees in urban areas close to the ground services. The council launched an awareness program to display the correct way and places to plant this tree. With all these facts, the debate on the Conocarpus status quo might continue in Kuwait until a solid solution, based on scientific facts, was founded. —KUNA

Honda Alghanim, partners with INJAZ to develop youth's skills



KUWAIT: In its continued commitment to support the youth of Kuwait, Honda Alghanim partnered with INJAZ Kuwait, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting knowledge and professional experience among the youth through programs focused on skills and career development. Honda Alghanim will host these programs from October 2017 to October 2018, enabling students to become part of the Honda Alghanim team, gaining experience, developing their skills and learning more about the automotive sector and its complementary divisions, such as sales, after sales, marketing and more.

The partnership with INJAZ Kuwait comes as part of Honda's philosophy 'Power of Dreams,' which reflects the belief that dreams should be combined with skill in order to be achieved. Founder Soichiro Honda was fond of saying, "If you can dream it, you can build it. If you use your imagination and pair that with sound and innovative engineering, you can achieve what other people can only dream about."

As part of its sponsorship, Honda Alghanim will host all of the organization's programs throughout the year. The programs focus on creating a platform from which students can acquire the skills they need to pursue success in entrepreneurship. The programs will include "Head Start Work Readiness", "Steer your Career at University" and "The Company Program", with the main objective being to take the company created by the youth to compete in Kuwait and on a regional level.

Honda Alghanim will also focus on providing participating students with the opportunity to learn more

about entrepreneurship and acquire the knowledge and skills to pave the way to their desired future career. The Honda Alghanim team will volunteer in INJAZ programs, which include entrepreneurship programs in which participants will be acquainted with the "Power of Dreams" philosophy and motivated to achieve their dreams.

Earlier in the month, Honda Alghanim extended its support to initiatives engaging youth talents through its "Engineered for Better" Graffiti Event, gathering eight teams of university students in a competition to express their vision of the event's title and translate it into a graffiti wall.

Customers can take any of these cars on a test drive by visiting one of the two Honda Alghanim showrooms located in Al-Rai and Shuwaikh. The Honda Alghanim showroom in Al-Rai area operates from 9:00 am to 10:00 pm, Saturday to Thursday, and from 9:30 am until 10:00 pm on Fridays. The Shuwaikh showroom operates from 9:00 am to 10:00 pm. The cars' service center waiting lounge offers entertainment and comfort for customers, digital satellite TV, free wireless internet and relaxing massage chairs. The service center, located in Al-Rai, operates seven days a week, from Saturday to Thursday from 8:30 am to 8:30 pm, and from 10:00 am to 8:00 pm on Fridays.

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What else?



Raqqa is wiped of 'off the face of the earth'

Mystery 'braid-chopping' cases add panic to trauma in Kashmir

Page 9

Page 7



This file photo taken on Sept 24, 2016 shows children from the Suri tribe posing in Ethiopia's southern Omo Valley region near Kibbish. — AFP

1.1 bn 'invisible people' lack ID

Significant fraction deprived of health and education services

WASHINGTON: More than 1.1 billion people worldwide officially don't exist—going about their daily lives without proof of identity. The issue leaves a significant fraction of the global population deprived of health and education services. Among these "invisible people"—many of whom live primarily in Africa and Asia—more than one third are children susceptible to violence whose births have not been registered, the World Bank's "Identification for Development" (ID4D) program recently warned.

The problem is particularly acute in geographical areas whose residents face poverty, discrimination, epidemics or armed conflicts. Vyjayanti Desai, who manages the ID4D program, said the issue arises from a number of factors, but cited the distance between people and government services in developing areas as major. For populations near the Peruvian Amazon, for example, traveling to an administrative service can take some five days of transit by boat, according to Carolina Trivelli, Peru's former development minister.

Many families are also simply not informed about the importance of birth registration—and the consequences of non-registration, which can include the denial of basic rights and benefits, or an increased likelihood of marrying or entering into the labor force underage. And even if par-

ents are aware of the need to declare a birth, costs can be crippling, said Anne-Sophie Lois, representative at the United Nations in Geneva and director of the children's aid organization Plan International. As a result, millions of children in Africa and Asia first encounter the administration only once they reach school age. But "birth certificates are often needed to enroll in school" or take national exams, Lois said.

Deliberate concealment

The political climate also discourages many families from allowing themselves to be officially identified. "People fear to be identified from one ethnic group or from one nationality," said Trivelli. "The government has sometimes—sadly—preferences for some groups rather than another." And in many countries, births of children born out of wedlock or

as a result of rape are sometimes deliberately concealed for fear of discrimination. In China, avoiding birth registration was also deliberate for years for fear of repercussions due to the one-child policy.

Beyond being barred from attending school, these children can fall prey to violence ranging from forced labor for boys to early marriage for girls, denounced by UNICEF in a 2013 report. These children can also fall victim to human trafficking. "The legal invisibility of unregistered children makes it more likely that their disappearance and exploitation will go unnoticed by authorities," Lois said.

Protecting personal data

To combat this immense problem, organizations are patiently working on the ground to identify these "invisi-

ble" people. Digital technologies have provided a tremendous boost, Lois said, as a way to "increase registration, provide legal documentation of vital events and produce statistics that are complete and accurate." Trivelli said it also helps that "technology is getting lighter—you can go to the people with very small devices" to gather biometric data on the ground.

Plan International, which launched the campaign "Every Child Counts" in 2005, has contributed to the registration of more than 40 million children in 32 countries. The organization developed a digital strategy: Village leaders can download a mobile app capable of notifying the government of births and deaths in their villages. "Digital birth registration systems not only provide children with a legal identity but also provides governments with a continuous source of information through the collection of data," Lois said. "This allows them to plan effectively for all services that a child needs, including vaccination programs and education." The World Bank recognizes, however, that centralized identification systems could expose vulnerable groups to risks linked to misuse of their personal data. "We are very cautious," Desai of ID4D emphasized. "To have a legal framework in place that protects privacy and personal data is key." — AFP



Over 1.1 billion people 'do not exist officially'

Blogger's death casts a shadow over murky Malta

VALLETTA: Daphne Caruana Galizia posted two items last Monday on her popular blog, one ridiculing Malta's opposition leader for having rounded shoulders, the other denouncing a senior government official as a "crook". A typical morning's work done, she set off in her white Peugeot 108 to run an errand, but barely made it past her front gate before a bomb tore through the car, throwing it into an adjacent field and killing her instantly.

Her death shocked Malta, the smallest nation in the European Union, which has been engulfed by a wave of graft scandals, including accusations of money laundering and influence peddling in government—all of which have been denied. Caruana Galizia exposed many of these cases and was loved by her readers as a fearless, anti-corruption crusader. Critics saw her as a muck-raking fantasist.

Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, her main target, promised everything would be done to find her killers, but friends and family have low expectations that anyone will be brought to justice, seeing murky powers behind a very professional hit. "She had to be done away with because she couldn't be bought off," said Manuel Delia, a blogger who described the 53-year-old Caruana Galizia as his mentor. "She was a polemicist, a provocateur and a critic. She was unique in Malta." A trail-blazing journalist, Caruana Galizia was one of Malta's first political columnists in the 1990s at a time when its newspapers were staid and male-dominated.

The confines of established media frustrated her and in 2008 she set up her blog—Running Commentary—a one-woman operation which drew up to 400,000 page views a day, matching the volumes recorded on the websites of the largest dailies. She sometimes posted more than 30 items a day, mixing caustic commentary with tabloid gossip and

detailed graft allegations, supplied by what she called her "network of spies". "The blog allowed her to express herself exactly as she wanted and expose abuse wherever she saw it," said Petra Caruana Dingli, a friend of the slain writer.

Tribal politics

Much of the criticism was leveled against Muscat and his leftist Labor party, which won power in 2013 after a nearly quarter of a century of uninterrupted rule by the conservative Nationalist Party, itself tainted by corruption scandals. Malta, a rocky archipelago 100 km south of Sicily with a population of 430,000, has no major soccer clubs or religious divisions. Instead, people define themselves by their politics, and Caruana Galizia was seen in the Nationalist camp. She denied being in anyone's camp, but said Labor was turning Malta into a mafia state—something the party rejects. "She was a fierce Labor critic, but definitely not a fair critic," said Glenn Bedingfield, a Labor parliamentarian.

"She made very personal attacks over the way we looked, the way we dressed. She used to ridicule anyone associated with the Labor Party camp. She was not kind. She hurt a lot of people." She could also shake the party to its core. Last year, in the so-called Panama Papers, she found Muscat's chief of staff and one of his ministers had Panama-registered companies. She said they created the firms to hide bribes. They denied wrongdoing. This year, she said she had proof Muscat's wife also owned a Panama-based company that allegedly received \$1 million from Azerbaijan, which has growing commercial ties with Malta.

She denied the accusations, as did Muscat, who instigated an investigation. Magistrates heard evidence from Caruana Galizia, but have yet to release their findings. Muscat called snap elections for June, saying he wanted a fresh mandate to prevent political uncertainty from damaging the economy, the strongest performer in the European Union. Critics such as Caruana Galizia say the economic success is fuelled by schemes such as selling Maltese passports to foreigners, or handing out licenses that have turned Malta into the online gambling capital of Europe. The government says these initiatives are legitimate, and voters returned Muscat to office with a stable majority.



VALLETTA: Flowers and tributes lay at the foot of the Great Siege monument in Valletta, Malta which has been turned into a temporary shrine for Maltese journalist and blogger Daphne Caruana Galizia. — AFP

Legal woes

Stunned by his victory, Caruana Galizia halted work on her blog for a month to spend time with her three sons and take care of her much loved house and garden. She returned in the summer with a surprise new target—Adrian Delia who was looking to become leader of the Nationalist Party (NP). Some NP supporters saw it as a betrayal and vilified her in social media. "People called her a hag, a slut, a witch," said her friend Caruana Dingli. "It took its toll, but she carried on regardless." Going where newspapers feared to tread, Caruana Galizia accused Delia of drawing money from a London-based prostitution racket. He denied this and filed five libel suits.

Caruana Galizia received 36 libel suits in the past nine months alone, including 19 from a property developer, while the economy minister persuaded the courts to freeze her bank account to ensure she could pay up if she lost a case against him. "The libel suits were part of a wider strategy to shut her up," said Corinne Vella, one of Caruana Galizia's three sisters. "They seemed to be designed to eat up her time and money." Caruana Galizia came from a well-to-do family and her husband was a successful lawyer. Besides her blog, she also edited a glossy magazine and wrote newspaper columns. She was confident she would win the Malta libel suits, where, in any case, maximum damages total 11,647 euros (\$13,728). — Reuters

International

Russia accuses US-led coalition of 'barbaric' bombing of Raqqa

Raqqa wiped of 'off the face of the earth'

MOSCOW: Russia accused the US-led coalition in Syria yesterday of wiping the city of Raqqa "off the face of the earth" with carpet bombing in the same way the United States and Britain had bombed Germany's Dresden in 1945. The Russian Defense Ministry, which has itself repeatedly been forced to deny accusations from activists and Western politicians of bombing Syrian civilians, said it looked like the West was now rushing to provide financial aid to Raqqa to cover up evidence of its own crimes.

Major-General Igor Konashenkov, a spokesman for the Defense Ministry, said in a statement that around 200,000 people had lived in Raqqa before the conflict in Syria, but that not more than 45,000 people remained. US-backed militias in Syria declared victory over Islamic State in Raqqa, the group's capital, last week, raising flags over the last jihadist footholds after a four-month battle. "Raqqa has inherited the fate of Dresden in 1945, wiped off the face of the earth by Anglo-American bombardments," said Konashenkov.

Most of the German city was destroyed in Allied bombing raids just before the end of World War Two. Though he said Russia welcomed Western promises of financial aid to rebuild Raqqa, Konashenkov complained that numerous Russian requests for the West to give humanitarian aid to Syrian civilians in other parts of the country had been rejected in previous years. "What is behind the rush by Western capitals to provide targeted financial help only to Raqqa?" said Konashenkov.

"There's only one explanation - the desire to cover up evidence of the barbaric bombardments by the US

air force and the coalition as fast as possible and to bury the thousands of civilians 'liberated' from Islamic State in the ruins." The US-led coalition says it is careful to avoid civilian casualties in its bombing runs against Islamic State in both Syria and Iraq, and investigates any allegations. It has previously denied killing civilians in air strikes on Raqqa, saying its goal is "zero civilian casualties."

Meanwhile, US-backed militias said they captured Syria's largest oil field yesterday, pressing their assault against Islamic State in the east of the country. The Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) said they took Al-Omar field on the eastern bank of the Euphrates river in the early hours. "Our forces managed to liberate the fields without notable damages," said Lilwa Al-Abdallah, spokeswoman for the offensive in Deir Al-Zor province. The jihadists holed up in buildings in a nearby district, where the SDF was trying to hunt them down, she said.

With US-led jets and special forces, the SDF has been battling in Deir Al-Zor bordering Iraq. The alliance of Kurdish and Arab militias has focused on territory east of the river, which bisects the oil-rich province. The Syrian army, with Russian air power and Iran-backed militias, has been waging its own separate offensive against Islamic State, mostly to the west of the river. The US-led coalition and the Russian military have been holding deconfliction meetings - to prevent clashes between planes and troops - though the two offensives have sometimes come into conflict.

Islamic State has lost vast territory across Syria, and has now come under attack in its last footholds in



US-backed militias seize key oil field



RAQQA, Syria: Photo shows a general view of heavily damaged buildings in Raqqa, after a Kurdish-led force expelled the Islamic State group from the northern Syrian city. —AFP

a strip of the Euphrates valley and the desert in Deir Al-Zor. The SDF declared victory over the jihadists in their former headquarters in Raqqa city this week. SDF fighters would now move to the frontlines in Deir Al-Zor, speeding up the battle in eastern Syria. Last month, the Kurdish-led militias captured a major natural gas field upstream of yesterday's advance. Al-Omar oil field lies some 10 km north of the town of Al-Mayadin, which government troops and their allies took earlier this month.

The town had turned into a major base for Islamic State militants after the US-backed offensive drove them out of Raqqa. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Islamic State fighters who had withdrawn from the oil field mounted a counter-attack overnight against government forces. The militants made some gains around Al-Mayadin, the Britain-based monitor said. But a Syrian military source denied this, saying there was no significant attack and fighting raged on at the same pace. —Agencies

Gabon students angry at sex-for-grades pressure

LIBREVILLE: In Gabon, they're called "sexually transmitted grades"-when university teachers use the threat of giving low marks in order to coerce female students into providing sexual favors. "He started coming on to me. I began refusing him, refusing and refusing... until the day when he gave me zero for my main piece of work," Melanie said, speaking on condition of using a pseudonym. Another student said that she was forced to switch courses after she rejected the advances of a teacher who had "made my life hell."

Like many people around the world, female students at Libreville's Omar Bongo university have followed the saga of sexual harassment surrounding Hollywood mogul Harvey Weinstein. These young women may lack the media draw of glamorous actresses who are stepping into the TV lights-but they have tales of male power and sexual intimidation that are hauntingly familiar. Sexual coercion at university and high schools has for decades fed the "kongossa", as the rumor mill is known in this central African state.

But they rarely make the public eye. Student leader Franck Matoundou said he had brought the problem of sexual predation to the attention of the educational authorities. Responding to AFP, university administrative staff point to the difficulty of clearly proving cases of sexual harassment by teachers. They also argue that students should lodge formal complaints through their department heads. "If there is incontestable proof that a teacher is guilty, that person must answer for their actions," a spokesman for the ministry of higher education. "If this really happens, it is unacceptable and the government condemns such behavior," the official added.

Gabonese law provides for charges of sexual harassment by "any person occupying a hierarchical post" and President Ali Bongo himself has denounced a problem "that is growing in scale and which demotivates competent people." Yet not a single teacher has been tried over the sex-for-grades bribery, according to official sources including the state prosecutor. "I understand it if people don't dare to file a complaint," said a teacher, aware that students fear reprisals and complicity among educational staff.

Gossip

Valery Mimba, head of the Iberian Studies department, says the problem of sexual harassment "does exist," although hearsay and scandal-mongering make it hard to assess the scale of the phenomenon and deal with it. "When you want to give better grades to certain students, people will immediately think they have slept with the teacher," he says.

Some academics also say the teaching staff are also exposed to sexual blackmail from students in exchange for good grades. "Somebody offered to sleep with me to raise her average mark," a departmental head said, asking not to be named. Another teacher said he turned down a bribe of 150,000 CFA francs (about 230 euros / \$270) from a student wanting to obtain a master's degree. Stigma and taboo provide fertile grounds in which both sexual harassment and rumors thrive in Gabon's higher education.

Some activists are calling for a specialized channel to put in place that would help to break the silence and let victims speak out. "Proposals from students are welcome," said the representative of the ministry of higher education, adding that the only reason for inaction has been the absence of tangible evidence. —AFP

Xi's eyes and ears in Beijing: Red-armband army of 'volunteers'

BEIJING: While Chinese President Xi Jinping and his cohorts chart the nation's future at their leadership conclave in Beijing, his citizen army of red-armed foot soldiers are keeping an eye out for trouble outside. Stationed on street corners, in front of shops and outside bars, civilians with armbands labeled "Public Security Volunteer" have deployed across the capital as the Communist Party holds its crucial five-yearly gathering. The formalized neighborhood watch patrols come out in full force during special events like the congress, which is being held mostly behind closed doors and will likely hand Xi a second five-year term when it ends on Tuesday.

The civilians are just one piece of the comprehensive security apparatus for the conclave: from black-uniformed guards who stand sentry on pavements to identification checks at subway stations. While they see themselves as providers of a public service, their presence is a reminder of the scrutiny that the Communist authorities maintain over citizens. "We're in the business of improving people's quality of life," said Ma Shuying, a 60-year-old party member who was patrolling the area underneath a bridge in Beijing's city centre.

Ma arrived at her spot at 7:00 am on the opening day of the congress on Wednesday, ready to look out for trouble. In her 17 years as a member of the patrol, Ma has witnessed few incidents, she said, because "Beijing is so safe." "We're more here to give community members a sense of security," she beamed, undeterred by the grey smog and light rain. "People see us and feel that they're being taken care of. And when government officials see us during important political events, they know that we're supporting their work."

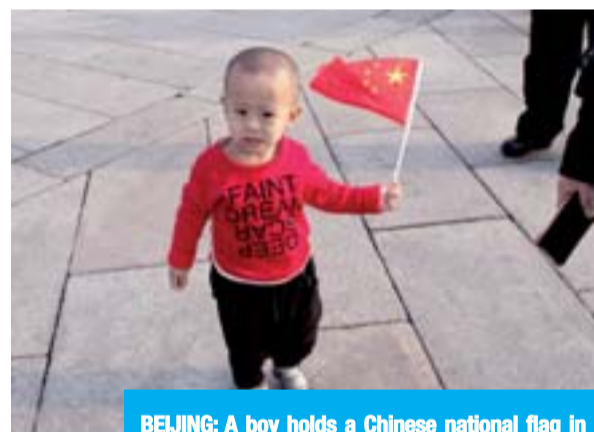
Dama duties

There are 850,000 registered public security volunteers in Beijing, the city announced this summer, organiz-

Free but in ruins, uphill struggle to rebuild Raqqa

BEIRUT: The Islamic State group's former Syrian stronghold Raqqa has been captured, but it lies ruined, littered with explosives, and lacking electricity or running water for residents desperate to return. Aid groups and the United Nations say clearing and rebuilding what was once the jihadist group's de facto Syrian capital will be a massive, expensive effort, and it could be months before life resumes. Four months of fierce fighting including heavy US-led coalition air strikes has collapsed multi-storey buildings and left others torn apart by heavy artillery and gunfire. The United Nations estimated in September that up to 80 percent of the city could be uninhabitable, and Raqqa's basic infrastructure is now virtually non-existent.

"In the previous months, local sources reported... a severe shortage of food, medicine, electricity, safe drinking water and basic commodities," said Linda Tom, spokeswoman for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. "The presence of water-borne diseases and of unburied corpses were also reported, posing



BEIJING: A boy holds a Chinese national flag in Tiananmen Square during the Communist Party's 19th Congress in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

ing under neighborhood tags like the "Fengtai Persuaders," the "Chaoyang Masses" and the "Xicheng Dama." (In Chinese, "dama" is a colloquial term used to describe ram-bunctious elderly women who congregate in loud groups, dance in public squares and mind other people's business.) Despite their striking "volunteer" armbands, many of the patrollers approached by AFP appeared not to be serving the people for free.

One middle-aged woman standing outside a subway station looked up from her phone long enough to say that it was "company policy" not to speak to reporters. Another two armband-wearers who were helping to direct traffic in a busy commercial district appeared bewildered when asked whether they were volunteers. "We're working," said a woman who looked harried as she pointed a driver to a parallel parking spot.

"They just gave us these armbands to wear." Even Ma, who also handles Communist Party affairs on her neighborhood committee, earns 3,000 yuan (\$450) a month for performing her duties. These range from telling people about their retirement benefits to helping them rid their homes of mice. "All my neighbors know me," she said. "It gives me a warm feeling inside." Several other volunteers declined to be interviewed, either because they were "on duty" or were concerned that a foreign journalist would not lend "positive energy" to their vocation. —AFP

a grave public health risk," she said. Running water has been out for months, and just a few water boreholes remained in use before the last phase of the battle for the city. There is no electricity supply at all, with the grid damaged by fighting and the generators that had provided two hours of power a day out of fuel.

There are also no functioning medical facilities in the city, and schools have long since closed, non-governmental organizations say. "Substantial investment will be required to reconstruct the city's destroyed homes, health facilities and schools, and to remove unexploded mines, before people can safely go home," said aid group Save the Children. "The military offensive in Raqqa may be coming to an end, but the humanitarian crisis is greater than ever," the group's Syria director Sonia Khush said in a statement.

'It'll take some time'

Before Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011, some 220,000 people lived in Raqqa, a population that swelled in the early years of the war as people displaced from elsewhere settled there. But the city has been gradually emptied of its population, with some fleeing during IS rule and others escaping as the attacking Syrian Democratic Forces battled to capture the city. Around 270,000 people have been displaced by the fight for Raqqa, but they will be unable to return until the city is cleared of explosives, which IS has regularly laid across territory under its control. —AFP

News in brief

11 sentenced to death

CAIRO: An Egyptian criminal court has confirmed death sentences for 11 men and handed down life sentences to 14 others over charges including attempted murder of policemen. The court ruling Sunday by Judge Mohammed Nagy Shehata - known for his severity - can be appealed. Five of those sentenced to death were tried in absentia. The suspects were referred to court in 2015, more than a year after the military ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi. Authorities later banned Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood group and thousands of its members were referred to courts over numerous charges.

11 killed in Ethiopia

ADDIS ABABA: Regional officials in Ethiopia say 11 people were killed in clashes in the restive Oromia region as the country continues to experience anti-government protests that at times lead to ethnic violence. The Oromia and Amhara regional states spokesmen yesterday issued statements after a week of unrest in Oromia that reportedly caused major business disruptions and the burning of several vehicles and properties in various locations. Addis Arega, spokesman of the Oromia region, said in a Facebook post Sunday that eight ethnic Oromos and three Amharas were killed in the Buno Bedele zone of the Oromia region.

11 die at construction site

TANJUNG BUNGAH: Eleven people, mostly foreign workers, were killed in a landslide at a construction site on Malaysia's Penang Island, officials said yesterday, as anger mounted among residents at the accident. Huge mounds of earth slipped off a hillside Saturday morning and buried the men as they worked on two apartment blocks of affordable housing on the island, which is popular with tourists. Authorities initially said that 13 foreign workers and a Malaysian supervisor were trapped under the mud and rubble at the site in Tanjung Bungah, north of Penang's historic capital George Town.

Australia fishing tragedy

SYDNEY: Australian police divers have recovered the bodies of two fishermen from a sunken trawler and were searching for four others missing since the boat capsized nearly a week ago. The commercial fishing trawler with seven on board sank in rough seas off the coast of central Queensland state on Monday. Rescuers have been scouring the waters near Middle Island, north of the town of Seventeen Seventy, but just one crew member has been found alive. Ruben McDornan was rescued by a passing catamaran after treading waters for several hours in heavy seas without a life jacket, Queensland's Courier Mail reported. McDornan told rescuers he had heard his crewmates trying to get out of the trawler's cabin. Two bodies were recovered late Saturday after the boat "Dianne" was located by sonar lying on the seabed at a depth of 30 meters, Queensland Police said. The identities of the pair have not been confirmed.

International

Catalonia weighs options
as Madrid ups the stakes

Catalan government denounces fully-fledged coup

BARCELONA: Catalonia's separatists were planning their response yesterday after Spain took drastic steps to stop the region from breaking away by dissolving its separatist government and forcing new elections. Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont and his regional executive who sparked Spain's worst political crisis in decades by holding a banned independence referendum on October 1 - will be stripped of their jobs and their ministries taken over under measures announced Saturday by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy.

"Yesterday there was a fully-fledged coup against Catalan institutions," said Catalan government spokesman Jordi Turull. "What happens now, with everyone in agreement and unity, is that we will announce what we will do and how," he told Catalunya Radio. Rajoy has taken Spain into uncharted legal waters by moving to wrest back powers from the semi-autonomous region, which could see Madrid take control of the Catalan police force and replace its public media chiefs.

The move sparked outrage among separatists, with nearly half a million taking to the streets of regional capital Barcelona and Puigdemont declaring Rajoy guilty of "the worst attack on institutions and Catalan people" since the dictatorship of Francisco Franco. Among other repressive measures, Franco—who ruled from 1939 until 1975 took Catalonia's powers away and banned official use of the Catalan language. Though Catalans are deeply split on whether to break away from Spain, autonomy remains a sensitive issue in the northeastern region of 7.5 million people, which fiercely defends its language and culture and has previously enjoyed control over its policing, education and healthcare.

Rajoy said he had no choice but to force Puigdemont out as he refuses to drop his threat to declare independence after a referendum that had been declared unconstitutional.

Responding to accusations of a "coup", Foreign Minister Alfonso Dastis retorted: "If there is a coup d'etat, it is one that has been followed by Mr Puigdemont and his government." He told BBC television: "What we are doing is following strictly the provisions of our constitution." Spain's Senate is set to approve the measures by the end of next week. Rajoy's conservative Popular Party (PP) holds a majority in the upper house, while other major parties also back his efforts to prevent a break-up of the nation.

What now?

In a crisis that has sent jitters through one of Spain's most important regional economies and rattled the stock markets, Rajoy has ordered fresh elections to be called within six months of the Senate hearing, which would see polls held by mid-June at the latest. Separatist parties of all political stripes, from Puigdemont's conservatives to the far-left, have dominated the Catalan parliament since the last elections in 2015, holding 72 seats out of 135. Ahead of a meeting of Catalan parties Monday to set a date and agenda for a crucial session of the regional parliament to debate next steps, Turull insisted on RAC1 radio that elections were "not on the table". Political analysts warn Rajoy faces a serious struggle to impose control over the unruly region.

Potential scenarios include Catalan civil servants and police refusing to obey orders from central authorities. "The basic problem is that you have to govern Catalonia with the active opposition of a large part of the population," analyst Jose Fernandez-Albertos said. Asked if Puigdemont will be arrested if he shows up for work, Dastis tried to strike a reassuring tone. "We are not going to arrest anyone," he told the BBC, dismissing the idea of the army having to be brought in



BARCELONA: People hold pro-independence Catalan Esteladas flags as they gather for a demonstration yesterday in Barcelona, to support two leaders of Catalan separatist groups, Jordi Sanchez and Jordi Cuixart, who have been detained pending an investigation into sedition charges. —AFP

to enforce order. But he warned that if Puigdemont's government keeps trying to give orders, "they will be equal to any group of rebels trying to impose their own arbitrariness on the people of Catalonia."

Europe leaders back Madrid

National police said two young people had been charged after physically assaulting police at Saturday's Barcelona protest, which saw some 450,000 separatists flood the streets shouting "freedom" and "independence". Puigdemont says 90 percent backed a split from Spain in the referendum,

but turnout was given as 43 percent as many anti-independence Catalans stayed away.

Polls suggest the wealthy region is evenly split over independence, with separatists saying it pays too much into national coffers but their opponents arguing it is stronger as part of Spain. Madrid has received vocal backing from European leaders, with EU parliament chief Antonio Tajani stressing that neighbors would refuse to recognize Catalonia if it unilaterally declared independence. "It is not by degrading nationhood that we reinforce Europe," he told Italian newspaper Il Messaggero. —AFP

Spain dissolves
separatist govt

'Merkel understood nothing': AfD's fury

COTTBUS: Chancellor Angela Merkel hails from Germany's ex-communist East, yet it is here where the anger against her runs deepest and the far-right protest party AfD has celebrated its strongest gains. The electoral success of the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany, which scored 12.6 percent in September 24 elections, stunned much of the country. But in Cottbus, located in the Lusatia coal mining region near the Polish border, many cheered the strong result for the party whose battle cry is "Merkel must go".

In the city of 100,000 people that is dominated by drab Soviet-style tower blocks, the AfD even beat the chancellor's conservatives, more than doubling its national result by attracting 26.8 percent of the vote. The list of grievances against Merkel is long if you listen to Klaus Gross, 67, a former army officer of the Soviet-allied regime who became a sales representative after Germany's 1990 reunification. "First we had the policy of rescuing the euro, then renewable energy with all these wind turbines everywhere," he said, pointing to a green energy push that unsettles many in a region dependent on massive open-pit coal mines.

"Then the shut-down of nuclear power plants, overnight," he went on, referring to the 2011, post-Fukushima decision to shutter Germany's nuclear reactor fleet. "And then finally the refugees", he added, pointing to Germany's mass influx of more than one million asylum seekers since 2015, which has become Merkel's key political liability, even within her own conservative bloc. "Who asked us if this was what we wanted?", Gross fumed. "Much of the population has been ignored by Merkel and her people!"

'Like a pop star'

In a restaurant near the Cottbus city centre, local AfD candidate Marianne Spring-Raeumschuessel was approached by a couple aged in their thirties. "We voted for you!", the young woman whispered to her. "You're right!" "They have celebrated me like a pop star around here," said Spring-Raeumschuessel, a former businesswoman aged in her 70s. She spoke with glee about the fact Merkel's reduced majority has forced her into tough coalition talks with two smaller parties, predicting that "it will not work".

The fact that the chancellor said, after scoring her party's worst result since 1949, that she had done nothing fundamentally wrong, showed that "Mrs Merkel understood nothing". Wolfgang Horbenz, 76 and a former power plant mechanic, said the establishment parties must once more take the people seriously and that the AfD "has a future as long as the other parties refuse to change their policies from top to bottom".

Money 'wasted' on refugees

Cottbus, 120 kilometers southeast of Berlin, boasts some historic homes from its early 20th century days as a flourishing textile industry hub—but since the Cold War era it is dominated by residential blocks made from prefabricated concrete slabs. Gerd Loesky, a 73-year-old retired home decorator, lives in one of them. What galls him is the mass arrival of Syrian, Iraqi and Afghan refugees over the past two years, he said, telling AFP: "It bothers me that they come here ... and that money is wasted on them."

Horbenz, the mechanic, conceded that "we do not have many", with the town hall putting the number of migrants in Cottbus at around 3,000. He said locals "do not want a situation like what I saw in the Ruhr basin" the industrial heartland of western Germany that attracted large numbers of Turkish and other foreign-born laborers from the 1960s. Eastern Germany still lags behind the west in income and wealth, and heavily-indebted Cottbus has long had to scrimp on fixing its roads and bridges or investing in its schools or kindergartens. —AFP

Surviving 'the corridor': CAR's treacherous road of bandits

BOSSEMBELE: "Finally in Bangui, and without incident," said Evelin Bokassa, a truck driver from the Central African Republic (CAR) who has just arrived in the landlocked capital city after completing a treacherous five-day journey from the west coast of Cameroon. He has driven along what's known as "the corridor"—winding, dangerous roads, full of bandits and thieves, that act as the main supply route to Bangui, on the southeastern side of the country.

Years of neglect have left many of the roads in ruins and outbreaks of inter-communal violence between different ethnic and religious communities have made the route even more perilous. "You arrive at a checkpoint, you need 2,000 to 3,000 CFA francs (3 to 4.50 euros, \$3.60 to \$5.40) Why? We do not understand. It is harassment!" said Bokassa, whose surname he shares with Jean-Bedel Bokassa, a military dictator who ruthlessly ruled CAR for 13 years.

Evelin started this most recent journey in the coastal city of Douala, the commercial and economic capital of Cameroon. Transporting 30 tons of goods, including palm oil, sacks of grain and five goats along the 1,500-kilometer route, he slaloms between potholes and past the hulks of overturned, rusting trucks, long since abandoned. With no bus service, about 20 passengers have also paid 5,000 francs (seven euros) for the privilege of travelling on top of the goods in the truck to reach Bangui—their T-shirts and hats reddened by dust kicked up from the road.

Two UN vehicles—one at the front, the other at the back—guard a convoy of vehicles as the trucks make their way along unkept, bendy roads. For years now, UN peacekeepers in military vehicles have been escorting convoys transporting vital aid and food into CAR, as many drivers are reluctant to cross the border due to the instability. Only trucks carrying UN goods will be guarded if they break down, but most of the dozens of trucks making the journey are carrying a mix of commercial goods. The drivers know that if they get into problems, they are on their own.

Hoping for protection

"I'm stuck," said Idriss, a 27 year old Cameroonian driver, whose truck broke down close to the town of Bossembele,



BOSSEMBELE: Residents walk next to trucks lined up in a car park of Bossembele in the Central African part of the Douala-Bangui corridor. The 'corridor' is the only supply road to Bangui, the isolated capital in the heart of Central Africa. —AFP

on the main road between Cameroon and Bangui. "I'm afraid that villagers will arrive with weapons and threaten me," he said while leaning against his vehicle, complaining that even if UN forces see him, they might not stop. It is 6:00 pm and soon night will fall—meaning the risk of robbers grows.

After some time UN peacekeepers from the Bangladeshi contingent of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) arrive in an armored vehicle and assess the broken-down truck. Idriss is lucky because his trailer is stamped "UN", so they will guard him overnight until a tow arrives—albeit in silence, as they don't share a common language to communicate. Further along the route, in a ditch on the side of the road, villagers armed with shotguns and machetes have surrounded another broken-down truck. "They are there to offer to protect the vehicle," said Evelin as he drove past the truck. "But the same villagers will return to steal his

goods if the driver refuses to pay them 10,000 to 15,000 francs (15 to 23 euros)."

Taxes

The truck drivers often complain about having to pay bribes. In Beloko, in CAR next to the Cameroon border, an armed group called the FDPC (the Democratic Front of the Central African People) has blocked the road with a barricade and demands a "tax" from each truck driver while UN peacekeepers look on. The FDPC is one of a number of armed groups that has fought the Central African Republic government and also other rebel groups in the former French colony over the last decade.

"It's 2,000 francs or they kill you," said Thierry, a CAR driver. In another town, Binenge, local villagers have also constructed a small wooden barrier to block the road, demanding drivers pay 1,000 francs to pass. —AFP

Italy regions vote
on autonomy bid

MILAN: Voters in the northern Italian regions of Lombardy and Veneto were voting yesterday in referendums on autonomy, against the backdrop of Catalonia's push for independence from Spain. The consultative votes are only the beginning of a process which could over time lead to powers being devolved from Rome. Secessionist sentiment in the two wealthy regions is restricted to fringe groups with little following.

Nonetheless, with both regions expected to vote in favor of the principle of greater autonomy, analysts see the referendums as reflecting the pressures that resulted in Scotland's narrowly-defeated independence vote, Britain's decision to leave the EU and the Catalan crisis. The level of turnout will have a critical bearing on the significance of the results. In Veneto, it has to pass 50 percent for the result to be considered valid. There is no threshold in Lombardy but low

voter participation would weaken the region's hand in any subsequent negotiations with the central government.

New powers

European Parliament chief Antonio Tajani yesterday took care to distinguish between Catalonia's chaotic independence referendum, deemed illegal by Madrid, and the votes in Italy. "First of all these two referendums are legitimate, that was not the case in Catalonia," he told the Rome daily Il Messaggero. "In Spain, it is not about autonomy, but a proclamation of independence in defiance of the rule of law and against the Spanish constitution." He said Europe should "fear" the spread of small nations: "It is not by degrading nationhood that we reinforce Europe. Lombardy, which includes Milan, and Veneto, which houses Venice, are home to around a quarter of Italy's population and account for 30 percent of its overall economic output.

With dynamic economies and lower unemployment and welfare costs than the Italian average, both regions are large net contributors to a central state widely regarded as inf-



SALZANO, Italy: Photo shows a vaporetto, a taxi boat, a gondola and merchandise transport boat at the Canal Grande. A referendum in the Italian regions of Lombardy and Veneto, both ruled by rightwing party Northern League, to ask for more fiscal autonomy and more powers to decide how to allocate financial resources. —AFP

ficient at best. "Our taxes should be spent here, not in Sicily," says Giuseppe Colonna, an 84-year-old Venetian. Veneto president Luca Zaia says 30 billion euros (\$35 billion) are

wasted every year at a national level and fiscal rebalancing will be a top priority for him and his Lombardy counterpart Roberto Maroni if the votes go their way. —AFP

International

Abe sweeps to resounding victory in Japan's election

Small new liberal CDPJ vying for top opposition spot

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling bloc was headed for a big win in yesterday's election, exit polls showed, bolstering his clout and potentially reenergizing a push towards his cherished goal of revising the post-war, pacifist constitution. Abe's Liberal Democratic Party-led (LDP) coalition was set to win 311 seats, keeping its two-thirds "super majority" in the 465-member lower house, an exit poll by TBS television showed. Public broadcaster NHK also said the ruling bloc was closing in on a two-thirds majority, although some other broadcasters had the ruling bloc slightly below the two-thirds mark.

A hefty win raises the likelihood that Abe, who took office in December 2012, will have a third three-year term as LDP leader next September and go on to become Japan's longest-serving premier. It also means his "Abenomics" growth strategy centered on the hyper-easy monetary policy will likely continue. Final official results are expected today. The US-drafted constitution's Article 9, if taken literally, bans the maintenance of armed forces. But Japanese governments have interpreted it to allow a military exclusively for self-defence.

Backers of Abe's proposal say it would just codify the status quo. Critics fear it would allow an expanded role overseas for the military. The LDP's junior partner, the Komeito, is cautious about changing the constitution, drawn up after Japan's loss in World War Two. Several opposition parties favor changes, but don't agree on details. Amendments must be approved by two-thirds of each chamber of parliament and then by a majority in a public referendum. "Nothing about the

process (of revising the constitution) will be easy," said Tobias Harris, an analyst at Washington-based consultancy Teneo Intelligence. "But we'll be hearing a lot about it."

'National crisis'

Abe had said he needed a new mandate to tackle a "national crisis" from North Korea's missile and nuclear threats and a fast-aging population, and to approve his idea of diverting revenue from a planned sales tax hike to education and child care from public debt repayment. He called the poll amid confusion in the opposition camp and an uptick in his ratings, dented earlier in the year by suspected cronyism scandals. Abe has backed US President Donald Trump's tough stance towards North Korea that all options, including military action, are on the table. Trump is to visit Japan Nov 5-7 to reaffirm the leaders' tight ties. Abe's move had seemed risky after Tokyo

Governor Yuriko Koike, often floated as a possible first Japanese female premier, launched her conservative Party of Hope.

The Party of Hope absorbed a big chunk of the failed main opposition Democratic Party. But voter enthusiasm soon waned despite its calls for popular policies such as an exit from nuclear power and a freeze on the planned sales tax rise. Koike did not run for a lower house seat herself - she was in Paris for a climate change event yesterday - and failed to say whom her party would back for prime minister. "It's an extremely tough election result," Koike said on NHK public TV. "We had sought to put policies first. But we ended up with a very tough outcome, so I deeply apologize for that."



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister and ruling Liberal Democratic Party leader Shinzo Abe puts rosettes by successful general election candidates' names on a board at the party headquarters in Tokyo yesterday. —AFP

A new Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ), formed by liberal former DP members, was vying with Koike's party for the top opposition spot - the TBS exit polls

had the CDPJ beating out the Party of Hope - although both will have just a sliver of the LDP's presence if forecasts prove accurate. —Reuters



Trump to visit Japan Nov 5-7

'Braid-chopping' cases add panic to trauma in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: A wave of brutal, deadly panic has swept Indian-administered Kashmir after more than 100 women said they were victims of attackers who chopped off their hair. Despite suggestions the cases may have been fabricated or fuelled by hysteria, the consequences have been all too real. One 70-year-old man has been killed by vigilantes since the alleged incidents started a month ago, and there are near-daily reports of groups attacking suspected so-called "braid-choppers".

Authorities have avoided confirming or denying the accounts of women from across the Himalayan region, which bears deep mental scars from a decades-old uprising against Indian rule. Groups armed with iron rods and knives patrol the capital Srinagar and other towns after dark looking for suspects. Five people were wounded Wednesday when Indian soldiers opened fire on a stone-throwing crowd who thought troops were protecting a braid-chopper.

On Friday, police said they rescued a "mentally challenged" man accused by a mob that was trying to set him ablaze and run him over with a tractor. At least a dozen police and soldiers have been beaten up. Police initially said the hair-chopping was self-inflicted. Now they are offering a 600,000 rupee (\$9,250) reward for information leading to the capture of suspects, but they also want the victims to take lie-detector tests. In Muslim-majority Kashmir most women have long hair kept under a scarf when in public.

The details of the alleged attacks are often mysterious and difficult to verify, while witnesses are hard to find. Tasleema told how she was going to fetch vegetables in storage when she was attacked. Her husband, Mohammad Rauf Wani, heard a scream and found his wife unconscious on the floor with six inches of her hair spread out next to her. "I don't understand how it happened," Wani told AFP, holding his wife's severed braid. "Just as I turned after opening the door someone tried to strangle me from behind. I saw his face covered by a black mask, I saw his eyes. Then I don't know what happened," Tasleema said.

Void increases panic

Most of the women were alone and have told relatives they suspect a spray was used to knock them unconscious before their braids were cut. Most were under 18 and come from poor families, according to police. In a region where



SRINAGAR: Kashmiri resident Tasleema (right), and the victim of a 'braid chopping', reacts as a man displays her hair, which was chopped off in an attack, in the Batamaloo area of Srinagar. —AFP

any incident can become highly politicized, the vigilantes have seized on the void created by the lack of an official explanation or the arrest of suspects. Videos of angry relatives accusing police and soldiers while brandishing cut braids have been widely shared on social media.

Doctors at Kashmir's only psychiatric hospital said they have not been called in to study the cases. "Some people are making it out as mass hysteria, but in my experience, given the manner in which it is happening I don't think this is so," said Mohammad Maqbool Dar, head of psychiatry at Srinagar's government medical college. He said it was possible there were "odd cases" of hysteria. Some separatist leaders and residents have accused "government agents" of staging the attacks to spread fear and divert attention from the campaign for an independent Kashmir or merger with Pakistan.

Senior police worry that the hair-chopping allegations could cause wider unrest in the region, which is suffering deep trauma from the separatist insurgency and the Indian counter-insurgency campaign that have left tens of thousands dead. According to a 2015 study by the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) group, about 1.8 million adults - 45 percent of Kashmir's adult population, and mostly

women-suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder and other mental health problems. Outside Tasleema's house, scores of residents protested, shouting anti-government and anti-police slogans after news spread of her braid-chopping. Some residents accuse police of staging hair-chopping as psychological operations-or "psy-ops"-to prevent political protests.

"We have so much human intelligence that I don't need any psy-ops," Kashmir's inspector general of police, Munir Ahmed Khan said. Similar braid-cutting assaults were reported in the northern Indian states of Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and around New Delhi in July.

Authorities there treated the incidents as crimes but brought in psychiatrists as well to investigate. "Here the situation is different," police chief Khan said. "There are forces who will exploit it (braid-chopping) to the hilt. Pakistan will use this situation, that is my worry," Khan said. The under-pressure Kashmir government says only that the "motives behind these attacks" are being investigated. Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti said in recent Twitter comments that braid-chopping was an attempt "to create mass hysteria and undermine the dignity of the women in the state." —AFP

Indonesia fumes as head of military denied US entry

JAKARTA: Indonesia intends to send a diplomatic note to the US secretary of state and summon Washington's deputy ambassador in Jakarta to explain why the head of its military was denied entry to the United States, Indonesian officials said yesterday. Armed Forces Commander General Gatot Nurmantyo was about to board a flight on Saturday when the airline informed him that the US Customs and Border Protection had denied him entry, military spokesman Wuryanto told a news conference in Jakarta.

Nurmantyo was going to the United States at the invitation of General Joseph F Dunford Jr, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff, to attend a Chiefs of Defense Conference on Countering Violent Extremism being held in Washington on Oct 23-24, Wuryanto said. It was not clear

why he was stopped from entering the United States, Wuryanto said, adding that the general did not have any problem during his visit to the United States in February 2016.

"We've asked for clarification to the US, to the Department of State as well as the embassy in Jakarta and until now we're still waiting for that clarification," Indonesia's Foreign Affairs Minister Retno Marsudi said. The ministry's spokesman Armanatha Nasir earlier said Indonesia's embassy in Washington was to send a diplomatic note to the US secretary of state demanding explanation for the incident.

The ministry will also summon the US deputy ambassador in Jakarta today to seek explanation, Nasir said, adding that the ambassador is presently not in Indonesia. The US embassy in Jakarta said

in a statement it was in touch with Nurmantyo's staff to facilitate his travel, but did not explain further. "US Ambassador Joseph Donovan has apologized to Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi for any inconvenience to General Gatot," the embassy wrote. "We remain committed to our Strategic Partnership with Indonesia as a way to deliver security and prosperity to both our nations and peoples."

Nurmantyo has frequently courted controversy in Indonesia because of his actions and what analysts perceive as his political ambitions. The general promotes the notion that Indonesia is besieged by "proxy wars" involving foreign states and even a renewed communist threat. Indonesian President Joko Widodo said this month that the armed forces should stay out of politics and ensure their loyalty is only to the state and the government. Indonesia, the world's biggest Muslim-majority country, generally enjoys good ties with the United States although in the past ties between the two countries' armed forces have been strained by alleged rights abuses involving Indonesia's military. —Reuters



Indonesia's Military Chief General Gatot Nurmantyo

Taleban attacks 'a show of strength'

KABUL: A spate of deadly Taleban attacks targeting Afghan forces this week was a show of strength against Donald Trump's new strategy, and signaled a push to strike security bases rather than cities, analysts said. In three of the four ambushes since Tuesday, militants used bomb-laden Humvees to blast their way into targets, seeking to demoralize war-weary security forces, and steal weapons and vehicles to fuel their insurgency.

It marks a change in focus from recent years when the Taleban fought to control and hold provincial capitals, such as the northern city of Kunduz, which briefly fell to the militants twice in the past 24 months. "(The Taleban) want to be showing their potency after the summer unveiling of the Trump policy of staying on with larger forces," said Vanda Felbab-Brown, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

"They haven't tried to hold provincial capitals... they are not wasting their assets on that." Militants have launched several devastating assaults on security forces already this year, including an attack on a base in northern Mazar-i-Sharif in the spring in which at least 144 people were killed. But this week stands apart for the number of attacks on security forces in such a short time-five in as many days with around 150 military, police and civilians killed-and coming after the US and Afghan forces have stepped up their own offensives.

Two separate attacks on mosques-one of which was claimed by the Islamic State group-took the overall death toll to around 200 for the week. In August, Trump announced that American forces would stay in Afghanistan indefinitely, increasing attacks on insurgents and deploying more troops. Following his announcement the US has dramatically ramped up airstrikes, with more bombs and missiles dropped in September than in any month since October 2010. A recent flurry of drone strikes in the lawless region near the border with Pakistan's tribal areas has also seen dozens of militants killed.

This week's attacks are the Taleban's response, a spokesman said, calling it "a clear message... The enemy who thought they had scared us with the new Trump strategy have now been given a lesson". The attacks also came after talks between Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China at the start of the week seeking ways to end the Taleban's 16-year insurgency. "I think the Taleban wanted to send a very strong message that it prefers to fight rather than talk and that it has the ability to fight very well," said analyst Michael Kugelman, of the Wilson Center in Washington.

Loss of morale

The message has proved devastating: hundreds killed and wounded over a bloody few days that left military bases and police headquarters destroyed or severely damaged. The deadliest attack was on a police compound in the city of Gardez, where Taleban militants detonated three explosive-packed vehicles including a Humvee. At least 60 people were killed in the blasts and ensuing battle, officials said. The militants also attacked a police headquarters in Ghazni twice, and detonated a suicide bomb on Afghan police trainees in Kabul that killed 15. Attacking security targets kills three birds with one stone: it allows the Taleban to deflect criticism over civilian casualties, devastate Afghan forces, and steal equipment.

The Taleban has acquired "dozens" of armored Humvees and pickup trucks in recent years, defense ministry spokesman Mohammad Radmanesh said. "The Humvees and other military vehicles are stronger than ordinary ones and you can load a lot of explosives in it," General Abdul Wahid Taqat, a former intelligence chief said. "I would think that could be pretty demoralizing for Afghan forces knowing that their own weaponry is being used against them by the enemy," Kugelman said. Such erosion of morale can be lethal, as officials have previously pointed out. —AFP

Analysis

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION'S NEW GOODWILL AMBASSADOR...



Deadliest ever bombing highlights Somalia weakness

Last weekend's truck bombing in Mogadishu killed at least 358 people, making it the deadliest in Somalia's history, an attack that analysts say underscores the fragility of the internationally-backed government. With Somalia's security forces disorganized and riddled with corruption, and deepening suspicion between central and regional governments, the Oct 14 blast highlights the al Qaeda-aligned Shabaab's ability to exploit state weakness and prosecute asymmetric war to deadly effect.

Shabaab gains?

Militarily, the situation has been largely static in recent months. Evicted from the capital in 2011, the Shabaab has maintained its control in many rural parts of central and southern Somalia. "There have been no recent strategic gains" on either side, says Roland Marchal, a researcher at Sciences Po in Paris - neither for the Shabaab nor the Somali army, backed by African Union troops and an increasingly active US military.

"On the surface at least, what we see is stagnation," says Matt Bryden, founder of the Nairobi-based Sahar Research thinktank, who points out that the Shabaab has proven resilient, able to replace commanders and fighters killed by US air strikes. The International Crisis Group (ICG), however, said Friday that Shabaab has recently regained control of several areas outside Mogadishu, including Barire, a strategically significant town on a major road 45 km from the capital. "Averting attacks in Mogadishu is ever harder when surrounding districts revert back to Shabaab control," the ICG says.

Weak security

The Shabaab's intelligence network allows it to exploit flaws and weakness in the security apparatus. For example, the recent Shabaab gains around Mogadishu were, the ICG says, permitted by the withdrawal of government forces in a row over unpaid salaries. Attempts to establish new security checkpoints at the city's gateways have also been subverted, as happened last Saturday, when the truck, though packed with explosives, was waved through by officers. "We know from past experience that they've been able to infiltrate security forces, or to put their own people in government uniforms," says Bryden.

Also significant: the bombing last weekend came days after both the country's defense minister and army chief resigned, without explanation. The simultaneous departure weakened President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, a situation used by Shabaab to its advantage. "It is not that the Shabaab is very strong, it is that the others are really weak," Marchal says.

Fractured government

Federalism in Somalia has existed on paper since 2004, but only began to take shape five years ago. There are now five federal regional states, not including Somaliland which claims independence and does not recognize the central government. Relations between Mogadishu and the regions are fraught, as each struggles for a greater share of power and seeks foreign allies.

Security stakes are high because if the embryonic national army is only deployed in and around the capital, and the 22,000 AU troops secure outlying urban centers, then it is left to regional militias to fight the Shabaab in the bulk of the country. Recently, the diplomatic crisis pitting the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia against Qatar "has aggravated such friction," says ICG.

Some federal regional states have taken sides with Riyadh and Abu Dhabi to the dismay of Mogadishu, which has sought to remain neutral in a bid to maintain the substantial it receives from both sides. Marchal deplors the "chaos brought by the Gulf crisis, where any federal president, under the pretext of receiving funding, makes ill-judged foreign policy declarations".

What next?

"Unless the government shifts its posture and engages with the federal member states so they become partners in fighting Shabaab, instead of trying to fight both Shabaab and the federal member states, I don't think we're going to see very much progress," says Bryden. ICG says political opponents could seek to take advantage of the latest crisis to bring down the president. It urges him to "work quickly to improve relations with federal states" and resolve quarrels over distribution of resources. Otherwise, analysts warn, the only winner will be the Shabaab. —AFP

Paid 'vacation' for some dissidents

Hu Jia, a well-known Chinese dissident who lives in Beijing, says he had hoped to go to the southeastern city of Xiamen for his government-sponsored holiday, but state security officials said no. "They told me I had to go to a more isolated place this time," he told Reuters by phone from Yunnan province in far southwestern China, a popular destination renowned for its scenery and the culture of its ethnic minority groups.

Rights groups say that Hu is one dozens of activists and dissidents detained, placed under tighter monitoring or "vacationed" by authorities, during the week-long congress of the ruling Communist Party which began on Wednesday in Beijing. President Xi Jinping is expected to tighten his grip on power at the gathering, which is only held once every five years.

For his enforced holiday, Hu and his two government minders jointly decided on the destinations. Hu suggested the ancient town of Dali in Yunnan for the first stop, and the public security agents accompanying him chose the second and third stops in the southwest region, Guiyang - the capital of the mountainous province of Guizhou, and the coastal city of Beihai in Guangxi province.

Hu estimated the whole trip for the three of them will cost close to 10,000 yuan (\$1,510), all paid for by the authorities. He said that his minders tried to save money by choosing basic hotels and travelling between the three cities by bus. He will fly back to Beijing on Oct 28, just after the congress ends. "You can go see the sights, but state security goes with you everywhere," Hu said.

Reuters was unable to independently verify the accounts of Hu and other dissidents interviewed for this

story. China's public security ministry did not respond to a faxed request for comment on the detention of activists, and the use of "vacations." China rarely explains its treatment of dissidents other than to say that those charged are criminals who harmed social stability and that all people in China are treated equally before the law. It is not unusual for Chinese authorities to heighten monitoring and detention of dissidents before important political events, especially people with high profiles who are known to speak out against the party and state.

Truck Driver

In addition to the enforced vacations, some activists have also been detained, placed under supervision at home, or warned about posting critical messages online in the weeks ahead of congress, according to the Hong Kong-based group Chinese Human Rights Defenders. The group also said it had documented 14 cases of detention of activists in recent weeks. In one case, Wu Kemu, a truck driver from Xuancheng city in the central province of Anhui, was called in by the police for a talk on Oct 11 and has not been released since, his wife Fang Liangxiang told Reuters by phone yesterday.

"They will not say when he will be released. They just told me to wait at home for him," she said, adding that she expected the detention was related to critical things Wu had said about the government on the popular instant messaging platform WeChat. No one answered the phone on Saturday at the Xuancheng city detention centre where Fang says Wu is being held. It is unclear if the total number of detentions, arrests or "vacations" this year is greater

than at the time of previous major events or how many of the cases are directly related to the congress.

Some activists say that the authorities prefer enforced vacations rather than detentions as they can make dissidents both inactive and inaccessible to foreign journalists over sensitive periods. Locking people up can attract more attention. Hu, a pro-democracy activist and campaigner for those with HIV/AIDS, was sentenced to three-and-a-half years in jail for subversion in 2008, and said he has been under regular state surveillance since his release. "The first thing I did was go for a run up in the mountains by Dali, because I knew the state security agents could not run with me," he said, adding that the agents were "not the running type". "It felt like being briefly free from prison," he said.

Hu said that state security agents had shown him a list of people who would not be allowed to stay in Beijing over the 19th Party Congress, including Liu Xia, the widow of Nobel Peace Prize winner Liu Xiaobo. Liu Xia has been under effective house arrest in Beijing since her husband won the Nobel Prize in 2010. After his death in July, even the sporadic communications she's had with friends have been nearly entirely severed, two of them told Reuters. The public security ministry did not respond to a request for comment on Liu Xia's situation. Some activists make their own travel plans to avoid the authorities. Wu Lihong, an activist from Wuxi city in Jiangsu province who for over a decade has been protesting pollution in Lake Tai in eastern China, told Reuters that Chinese state security had called him last week saying they were coming to take him for a forced vacation. —Reuters

Returning Rohingya may lose land, crops under Myanmar plans

Rohingya Muslims who return to Myanmar after fleeing to Bangladesh are unlikely to be able to reclaim their land, and may find their crops have been harvested and sold by the government, according to officials and plans seen by Reuters. Nearly 600,000 Rohingya have crossed the border since Aug 25, when coordinated Rohingya insurgent attacks on security posts sparked a ferocious counteroffensive by the Myanmar army. The United Nations says killings, arson and rape carried out by troops and ethnic Rakhine Buddhist mobs since late August amount to a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya.

Civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has no control over the military, has pledged that anyone sheltering in Bangladesh who can prove they were Myanmar residents can return. Reuters has interviewed six Myanmar officials involved with repatriation and resettlement plans. While the plans are not yet finalized, their comments reflect the government's thinking on how Suu Kyi's repatriation pledge will be implemented.

Jamil Ahmed, who spoke to Reuters at a refugee camp in Bangladesh, is one of many Rohingya who hope to go back. Describing how he fled his home in northern Rakhine state in late August, Ahmed said one of the few things he grabbed was a stack of papers - land contracts and receipts - that might prove ownership of the fields and crops he was leaving behind. "I didn't carry any ornaments or jewels," said the 35-year-old. "I've only got these documents. In Myanmar, you need to present documents to prove everything."

The stack of papers, browning and torn at the edges, may not be enough, however, to regain the land in Kyauk Pan Du village, where he grew potatoes, chilli plants, almonds and rice. "It depends on them. There is no land ownership for those who don't have citizenship," said Kyaw Lwin, agriculture minister in Rakhine state, when asked in an interview whether refugees

who returned to Myanmar could reclaim land and crops.

Despite his land holdings, Myanmar does not recognize Ahmed as a citizen. Nearly all the more than 1 million Rohingya who lived in Myanmar before the recent exodus are stateless, despite many tracing their families in the country for generations. Officials have made plans to harvest, and possibly sell, thousands of acres of crops left behind by the fleeing Rohingya, according to state government documents reviewed by Reuters.

Myanmar also intends to settle most refugees who return to Rakhine state in new "model villages", rather than on the land they previously occupied, an approach criticized in the past by the United Nations as effectively creating permanent camps. The government has not asked for help from any international agencies, who are calling for any repatriation to be voluntary and to the refugees' place of origin.

'Ownerless' Crops

The exodus of 589,000 Rohingya - and about 30,000 non-Muslims - from the conflict zone in northern Rakhine has left some 71,500 acres of planted rice paddy abandoned and in need of harvesting by January, according to plans drawn up by state officials. Tables in the documents, reviewed by Reuters, divide the land into paddy sown by "national races" - meaning Myanmar citizens - or "Bengalis", a term widely used in Myanmar to refer to the Rohingya, but which they reject as implying they are illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

Kyaw Lwin, the state minister, confirmed the plans, and said there was a total of 45,000 acres of "ownerless Bengali land". Two dozen combine harvesters operated by officials from the agriculture ministry will begin cutting stalks this month in areas under military control. The machines will be able to harvest about 14,400 acres according to official calculations contained in the plans. It is unclear



A Rohingya Muslim woman, Rukaya Begum, who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh, holds her son Mahbubur Rehman and her daughter Rehana Bibi after the government moved them to newly allocated refugee camp areas near Kutupalong in Bangladesh yesterday. — AP

what will become of the remaining crop, but officials told Reuters they would try to harvest all the paddy, recruiting additional labor to harvest manually if necessary.

An acre of paddy in Myanmar typically makes more than \$300 at market, meaning the state will gain millions of dollars worth of rice. The harvested rice will be transported to government stores, where it would either be donated to those displaced by the conflict or sold, Rakhine state secretary Tin Maung Swe told Reuters by phone. "The land was abandoned. There is no one to reap that, so the government ordered to harvest it," he said.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) deputy Asia director Phil Robertson, said the government should at least guarantee that the rice would be used for humanitarian support and not for profit. "You can't call a rice crop 'ownerless' just because you used violence and arson to drive the owners out of the country," he said.

'Model Villages'

Many refugees are fearful to return and are sceptical of Myanmar's guarantees.

Those who do decide to cross back into Myanmar will first be received at one of two centers, according to government plans reviewed by Reuters, before mostly being relocated to model villages. International donors, who have fed and cared for more than 120,000 mostly Rohingya "internally displaced persons" (IDPs) in supposedly temporary camps in Rakhine since violence in 2012, have told Myanmar that they will not support more camps, according to aid workers and diplomats.

"The establishment of new temporary camps or camp-like settlements carries many risks, including that the returnees and IDPs could end up being confined to these camps for a long time," said U.N. spokesman Stanislav Saling in an emailed response. Satellite imagery shows 288 villages, mostly Rohingya settlements, have been fully or partially razed by fires since Aug. 25, according to HRW. Refugees say the army and Buddhist mobs were responsible for most of the arson. The government says Rohingya militants and even residents themselves burned the homes for propaganda. —Reuters



A buck silhouetted at sunset bellows yesterday near the village of Gorodilovich, some 300 km north of Minsk. — AFP

Tillerson woos Gulf allies...

Continued from Page 1

great potential" for further cooperation. He noted the August reopening of a major border crossing and the resumption of direct flights between Riyadh and Baghdad. "Both represent the beginning of what we hope will be a series of even more tangible actions to improve relations and strengthen cooperation on a host of issues," he said. "Your growing relationship between the kingdom and Iraq is vital to bolstering our collective security and prosperity and we take great interest in it."

History, religion and lots of politics stand in Tillerson's way, but both the Saudi king and the Iraqi prime minister appeared optimistic about the prospects. "We are facing in our region serious challenges in the form of extremism, terrorism as well as attempts to destabilize our countries," King Salman said. "These attempts require our full attention. ... We reaffirm our support for the unity and stability of our brother country of Iraq." Abadi expressed pleasure with "the thriving relations between our two brotherly countries". "We are open and we want to move away from the past," he said. "The region cannot tolerate any further divisions. Interference in the internal affairs of other state should stop."

Tillerson's visit, his third to the region as secretary of state, comes nearly five months after Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt cut ties with Qatar and imposed an embargo on Doha, accusing it of supporting terrorism and cozying up to Iran. Qatar denies the charges and has rejected their terms for a settlement. Tillerson, a former chief executive of energy giant ExxonMobil, declined to take sides in the Gulf crisis, after



DOHA: Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani meets Tillerson at the Prince's Sea Palace residence in the Qatari capital yesterday. — AFP

an unsuccessful attempt to resolve the dispute during a trip to the region in July.

"The United States maintains very strong relationships with all the countries involved in the Qatar dispute, including Qatar, and the United States intends to maintain those very strong, positive important relationships," Tillerson said in Riyadh. "They're important for it being resolved anytime soon. They're important from an economic standpoint."

Trump had initially appeared to support Saudi Arabia in isolating Qatar but has since called for mediation, predicting a rapid end to the crisis. Tillerson however indicated there had been little progress before he arrived at Riyadh's King Salman airbase on Saturday. "I do not have a lot of expectations for it being resolved anytime soon," he said in an interview with financial news agency Bloomberg. "There seems to be a real unwillingness on the part of some of the parties to want to engage."

The State Department has said the conflict

in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and Iran back warring parties, will also figure in Tillerson's talks in the Gulf. But on the Qatar crisis, Tillerson's goal will be to try to persuade the two sides to at least open a dialogue. Simon Henderson, a veteran of the region now at the Washington Institute of Near East Policy, said the disputing parties do not want to lose face. "Tillerson will say: 'Come on kids, grow up and wind down your absurd demands. And let's work on a compromise on your basic differences'," he said.

Kuwait has tried to serve as a mediator, with US support, but the parties have yet to sit down face-to-face. During his trip Tillerson is also to visit New Delhi in order to build what he said in a recent speech could be a 100-year "strategic partnership" with India. Tillerson will stop in Islamabad to soothe Pakistani fears about this Indian outreach, but also pressure the government to crack down harder on Islamist militant groups. — Agencies

Opposition MPs warn...

Continued from Page 1

Babtain said invitations were sent out to 23 lawmakers but some of them could not attend, adding that the MPs expressed readiness to discuss these issues with anyone. He said that there will be no political stability except through cooperation to approve the abovementioned legislation, adding that they were not interested in clashing with the government in the Assembly. He warned that if the government continues to behave in the same way it did in the first term, there will be collisions. Regarding grillings, Babtain said it was decided to deal with each grilling separately, but criticized the way the government has been behaving to protect any minister facing questioning.

Saudis crave revival of...

Continued from Page 1

Saudi Arabia's highest-ranking cleric warned in January of the "depravity" of cinemas, saying they would corrupt morals.

But authorities appear to be shrugging off the threat, with some comparing Saudi Arabia's reform drive to a fast-moving bus - either people get on board or risk being left behind. Saudi Arabia in recent months has organized concerts, a Comic-Con pop culture festival and a mixed-gender national day celebration that saw people dancing in the streets to thumping electronic music for the first time.

A ban on cinemas does not make sense in the age of YouTube, filmmakers say. Saudi films have been making waves abroad, using the Internet to circumvent distribution channels and sometimes the stern gaze of state censors. "Wadja", by Saudi female director Haifaa Al-Mansour, made history in 2013 after it became Saudi Arabia's first Academy Award entry. The film depicts the dream of a 10-year-old girl to get a bicycle just like the boys in her conservative neighborhood.

This year, the country is again vying for an Oscar with the film "Barakah Meets Barakah", the kingdom's first romantic comedy which premiered at the Berlin International Film Festival. "Without cinemas, the country's rich artistic talent will die," Hisham Fageeh, the film's lead actor, told AFP. "Saudis need a nuanced cultural identity outside the prism of religion."

The government is yet to officially announce a date for ending the ban, but

Opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri meanwhile said he will back the grilling against the state minister for Cabinet affairs and the planned grillings against the ministers of oil and social affairs and labor. He charged that administrative and financial violations have been committed in a number of departments under the state minister, adding that the minister of social affairs does not respect court rulings.

Meanwhile, MP Abdullah Fahhad warned the government against its failure to fulfill promises to return citizenships revoked from a number of opposition figures over three years ago. Fahhad said an understanding was reached with the government to return the citizenships, and failing to fulfill the pledges could lead to serious consequences. MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said that the issue of a Cabinet reshuffle is on the table and called for dealing with it seriously, but admitted that a Cabinet reshuffle is in the hands of HH the Amir and the prime minister.

already the hashtag "cinemas opening in Riyadh" is gaining traction on social media, as memes swirl online showing people imagining booking their cinema tickets. The expected reform stems partly from an economic motive to boost domestic spending on entertainment as the kingdom reels from a protracted oil slump.

Saudis splurge billions of dollars annually to see movie shows and visit amusement parks in the neighboring tourist hubs of Bahrain and Dubai. Without cinemas, investment in films is unlikely to flourish and the depiction of society will not move beyond the foreign portrayal of Saudis as extremist or culturally primitive, filmmakers say. "Cinemas will make us feel human," said Ali Kalthami, co-founder of C3 Films and Telfaz11, which provides comedy videos on YouTube.

Kalthami's film "Wasati", or moderate in Arabic, is based on a real-life event in the mid-1990s when a group of ultraconservatives disrupted a play at a Saudi university. The film was screened for one night earlier this year at the same theatre where the play was shut down. Back at King Fahd Cultural Centre, Alharbi's "National Dialogue" was watched by a rapt audience.

The film addresses the social dilemma of young Saudis struggling to find the right match. It dramatizes an encounter in the streets between an unrelated man and a woman, both checking each other out without talking. They appear to like each other, but in the film's denouement the man rejects the woman, judging her to be immoral after she lifts her veil to give him a glimpse. Alharbi said the film intended to promote dialogue between the genders - and the screening did just that. As the lights came on, the raucous crowd of men erupted into cheers. They were vigorously booted by the female audience. — AFP



Saudi women arrive to watch Saudi short movies at the King Fahd Culture Center in Riyadh. — AFP

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Sports

Bayern wait on Mueller for Leipzig double-header

BERLIN: Bayern Munich are waiting to hear if stand-in captain Thomas Mueller can play in this week's double-header against RB Leipzig after the Germany star suffered a hamstring injury. Mueller lasted just ten minutes of Saturday's 1-0 Bundesliga win at ten-man Hamburg. He came off the bench at half-time, set up Corentin Tolisso's winning goal on 52 minutes and then went off injured three minutes later. "I have a problem with my right hamstring," he glumly told reporters with a scan on Sunday set to reveal the injury and if the Germany forward will be sidelined. Bayern face tough back-to-back fixtures against RB Leipzig. They face RB away on Wednesday in the second round of the German Cup, then host Leipzig on Saturday at the Allianz Arena in a mouth-watering Bundesliga clash. Bayern are level on 20 points with Bundesliga leaders Borussia Dortmund, but second on goal difference, with RB Leipzig just one point behind in third. —AFP

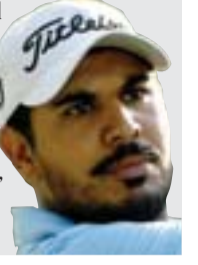


Volvo Ocean flotilla leaves Alicante

ALICANTE: New Zealand's Olympic champion Peter Burling and the rest of the crew on board the seven boats in the Volvo Ocean race embarked on a gruelling eight-month round the world odyssey from Alicante yesterday. The Volvo flotilla set sail at 1200 GMT destined for their first port of call at Lisbon with Spanish boat Mapfre and the Chinese entry Dongfeng in early command. Burling, who has won the America's Cup and a gold in the 49er class at the Rio Olympics, is with Team Brunel. Ahead of them is an 83,340km (45,000) nautical miles 11-stage journey with an expected finish in The Hague around June 25 next year. Briton Dee Caffari is the only female skipper and the sole one to choose a 50-50 male/female crew aboard Turn the Tide on Plastic. Caffari's United Nations-backed yacht is up against not only Team Brunel, Mapfre and Dongfeng but also Team AkzoNobel, skippered by Kiwi Brad Jackson, a three-time winner in his six previous participations. —AFP

India's Bhullar clinches commanding win in Macau

HONG KONG: India's Gaganjeet Bhullar held his nerve to complete a wire-to-wire victory and lift his eighth Asian Tour title at the Macau Open yesterday. Bhullar had seen his four-shot lead reduced to one in round three but on Sunday, he drained five birdies on the front nine and won by three shots despite a nerve-jangling double bogey on 16. The 29-year-old fired rounds of 64, 65, 74 and 68 for an aggregate score of 13-under 271, lifting his first Asian Tour trophy of the year. Bhullar's fellow Indian Ajeetesh Sandhu and Filipino Angelo Que shared second place at par-71 Macau Golf and Country Club, while Taiwan's Hung Chien-Yao was alone in fourth. Sandhu was gunning for his third title in a row after he claimed his maiden Asian tour victory in Taiwan this month and triumphed on the Japan Challenge Tour a week later. Bhullar, the 2012 champion in Macau, bogeyed his opening hole on Sunday before he stormed ahead with birdies on two, three, four, seven and nine to turn in 31. — AFP



Kuwait grabs more medals on final day of HH the Crown Prince tourney

KSSC is keen to organize shooting tournament every year



By Abdellatif Sharara

KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronized the closing ceremony of the tournament and was represented by Commerce and Industry Minister, Acting State Minister for Youth Affairs Khalid Nasser Al-Roudhan. The ceremony was also attended by Acting Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi and Kuwait Shooting Sport Federation board members. In his closing speech Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi welcomed the representative of HH the Crown Prince, adding that KSSC, is keen to organize this tournament each year as it is revered by all Kuwait shooters, as the tournament witnessed the participation of shooters from UAE Shooting Association besides 300 shooters from the club, National Guard and military. Al-Otaibi lauded what HH the Crown Prince has given Kuwait shooting, adding that "since the start of Kuwait shooting sport HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf cared for this tournament as support and encouragement of

shooters, adding that we at the shooting club are happy to organize this tournament as it declares the start of the new 2017/2018 shooting season". Al-Otaibi spoke of the achievements KSSC in the past season, and one notable achievement was lifting the suspension of the shooting sport in Kuwait in a historic ruling by the Court of Arbitration for

those tournaments. Engineer Al-Otaibi said Kuwait shooters participated in the "Popular Heritage" and opened the shooting range at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage village, while in June 2016, the Jahra branch was opened, then in April 2017 the shooting range was opened at Sabahiya Youth Centers in Cooperation with the Public Authority for Sports. Al-Otaibi thanked the political leadership headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister and government, adding that if it was not for their support, none of the achievements would have been achieved. Minister Al-Roudhan spoke to journalists following the ceremony and lauded the achievements of the KSSC particularly at the Olympic level. He said that he was satisfied towards the attention given to up-rising shooters of both genders, and thanked its chairman and board members. Results of the final day of competition were as follows: **50 M Rifle 3 Positions:**



Al-Roudhan lauds KSSC achievements

Sport (CAS). He said our shooters won two Olympic medals in Brazil 2016, along with many medals that our shooters won during the HH the Amir Cup that was held in Italy, the Asian Championship in Kazakhstan and World Cup in Moscow, as Kuwait shooters collected 9 gold medals, 5 silver and 3 bronze during



Mohammad Abdelrahman, Abdallah Al-Harby, Khalid Al-Subaie. **50 M Pistol Men:** Saad Al-Ajmi, Hamad Al-Namshan, Ali Al-Subaie. **Skeet - Men:** Abdallah Al-Rashidi, Mansour Al-Rashidi, Abdelaziz Al-Faihan.

Trap - Men: Abdelrahman Al-Faihan, Talal Al-Rashidi, Tami Al-Rashidi. **Olympic Archery:** Abdallah Taha, Mohammad Hader, Bader Saleh. **Compound Archery:** Abdallah Malallah, Amer Al-Hajiri, Salem Zaid Al-Saeed.

Japan's Murata stops N'Dam to win world title

TOKYO: Japan's Ryota Murata beat champion Hassan N'Dam by technical knockout yesterday to capture the World Boxing Association middleweight title. The 2012 Olympic champion avenged a controversial points loss to the Frenchman earlier this year with a convincing display in Tokyo, inflicting heavy punishment on N'Dam who failed to come out for round eight. "I'm not crying," joked Murata after bursting into tears on seeing the referee wave the fight over, making him only Japan's second middleweight world champion-and first in 22 years. "I was surprised at the way the fight finished but I knew he was feeling the pace and wanted to finish the job quickly," added the 31-year-old, proudly cradling the WBA "regular" world belt. "We were both pretty tired so it's a bit lucky he stopped. But there was no way I was going to lose that fight." Gennady Golovkin remains the association's "super" champion and also holds the WBC, IBF and IBO titles. "Boxing lovers will know there's a stronger middleweight champion than me out there," said Murata, referring to the unbeaten Kazakh. "I'll try my best to beat him." Their last meeting in May ended acrimoniously after N'Dam won a split decision, even though Murata had largely dominated the fight and knocked his opponent down. Two of the judges were suspended for six months while WBA president Gilberto



TOKYO: Japan's Ryota Murata waves to spectators after defeating France's Hassan N'Dam in their rematch for the WBA world middleweight boxing title in Tokyo, yesterday. Murata became the new world champion. — AP

Mendoza apologised to Murata, saying there were "no words to repair the damage". N'Dam started the sharper of the two yesterday as he looked to score early points. The former WBO champion's gold gloves frequently found Murata's chin in the first two rounds. But Murata wobbled the Cameroon-born champion with a right hook in the fourth, and another savage right in the sixth triggered sustained pressure which eventually took its toll on N'Dam. Murata improved his professional record to 13 wins against one loss. "After the first

couple of rounds, I had no more strength left," said the 33-year-old N'Dam, who asked his trainer to untape his gloves after being caught with more stinging blows in the seventh round. "I had nothing left in my arms, nothing in my legs." N'Dam slipped to 36-3 with his defeat. "I wanted to continue but my team decided that it wasn't worth taking more punches," he added. "Murata put me under more pressure than last time and threw more punches. I congratulate him and hope we can fight a third time." — AFP

Exhausted Justin Thomas puzzled by 'bizarre' CJ Cup win

JEJU: Justin Thomas shot nine-under par in the opening round of the inaugural CJ Cup and said yesterday it was "bizarre" he won three days later still on the same mark. Thomas shot a 63 in benign conditions in the first round and made the Nine Bridges course look ridiculously easy. It could not have been more different over the next three days as the wind whipped ferociously around the slopes of South Korea's tallest mountain Hallasan-the gorgeous setting on Jeju Island for the US PGA Tour's first-ever event in the country. Thomas was astounded that he finished on nine-under par and that it was still good enough to get him into a playoff against Marc Leishman. "It's bizarre that that happened," he told AFP. "I never would have guessed it, especially after the first round. But it really was so, so difficult out there, especially the last two days when it was cold and hitting into the wind: your ball just goes nowhere." Thomas's third-round 70 in brutal winds was the only time after the first round that he broke par again and he reckoned after that round "for a fact, I played better than I did on Thursday." He said people watching on TV might think players were hitting bad shots and putting poorly. But without being there it

was impossible to imagine the degree of difficulty. "I mean, I hit a seven-iron on 128 yards on one hole today," he said yesterday. A big hitter like Thomas could normally launch that around 180 yards. "The wind is just so strong and with all the trees and it bounces around and swirls a lot," he said. "The hardest thing was putting. The gusts when it picks up or dies, you just have to time it so perfectly. It was so difficult." The exhausted 24-year-old cracked a smile after beating Leishman on the second playoff hole in his final event of the autumn swing. "I am so excited to not do anything from now on," he said, looking forward to a break after a schedule of nine events in the past 11 weeks-the past two in Asia. "I have officially nothing left in the tank." Thomas will rise to a career-high number three in the world when the new rankings are published today. He had already joined Jack Nicklaus, Tiger Woods and Jordan Spieth as the only players to win five times in a season, including a major, before the age of 25 when he won the Dell Technologies Championship before the CJ Cup. With three wins in his last seven events and six in the last 12 months Thomas has earned his break. — AFP

Sports

Astros down Yankees in Game Seven, set World Series clash with Dodgers

Gattis opened scoring with solo homer off Yankees

LOS ANGELES: The Houston Astros defeated the New York Yankees 4-0 yesterday to book a Major League Baseball World Series showdown with the Los Angeles Dodgers. After fending off elimination in game six on Friday, the Astros won the best-of-seven American League Championship Series four-games-to-three to reach the World Series for the second time in club history. Evan Gattis and Jose Altuve homered for the Astros, who had won the first two games of the series at home before dropping three straight in New York. Charlie Morton pitched five strong innings for the Astros, who were swept by the Chicago White Sox in their only prior World Series appearance, back in 2005 when they played in the National League.

"So far we have one more series to get the ultimate prize," said Astros Manager AJ. Hinch, whose team opens the World Series in Los Angeles on Tuesday. "But there's two teams left standing, and I don't care what cities they're from, one of them is from Houston."

Gattis opened the scoring with a solo homer off Yankees starter CC Sabathia in the fourth inning. Altuve's homer in the bottom of the fifth sparked a three-run frame against Yankees relief pitcher Tommy Kahnle, who also surrendered a two-run double to Astros catcher-and former Yankee-Brian McCann. Relief pitcher Lance McCullers pitched the final four innings and kept the Yankees at bay to seal the victory.

"These guys came out throwing strikes, quality

strikes," Hinch said. "They executed a great game plan." Morton gave up only two hits with one walk and five strikeouts. After taking the loss in game three in New York, Morton attacked the strike zone early, needing only 28 pitches over the first three innings. That included 22 strikes. He retired the side in order in the top of the fourth. But after Gattis' homer in the bottom of the

fourth, Morton needed some help preserving the one-run margin in the top of the fifth-when the Yankees' Greg Bird led off with a double.

Bird reached third on a wild pitch walk to Aaron Hicks. He tried to score on Todd Frazier's ground ball to third, but Astros third baseman Alex Bregman charged to collect the ball and delivered a spot-on

throw to McCann, who made the tag to retire Bird.

Verlander named Most Valuable Player of ALCS



FOUR MORE TO WIN
Pitcher Justin Verlander, traded to the Astros by the Detroit Tigers on August 31, was named Most Valuable Player of the ALCS after notching two wins — including in Friday's game six to fend off elimination. "Although our offense kind of floundered a little bit early in the series, we still managed to win baseball games," Verlander said. "And later in the series our bats came alive and we won games with our offense and pitching." "We've got four more wins to win a World Series," Verlander added, "and I do not regret my decision to come here." Yankees starter Sabathia, who pitched six scoreless innings in the Yankees' game-



HOUSTON: Houston Astros manager A.J. Hinch and Jose Altuve hold the championship trophy after Game 7 of baseball's American League Championship Series against the New York Yankees Saturday. — AP

three triumph, stranded five base runners over the first three innings and didn't make it out of the fourth.

Aaron Judge, the rookie slugger who emerged as a star for the Yankees in his first major league season, made another stellar outfield catch to deny the Astros an early run. But when he came to the plate

with a runner on in the top of the eighth McCullers struck him out. "There are things we need to get better on, and that will be a focus," Yankees manager Joe Girardi said. "I'm extremely proud of this group, what they've accomplished up to this point, but I think there's more." — AFP

Stamkos, Kucherov extend streaks as Lightning rout Penguins

TAMPA: Steven Stamkos and Nikita Kucherov extended their season-opening points streaks to nine games and the Tampa Bay Lightning beat the two-time Stanley Cup champion Pittsburgh Penguins 7-1 on Saturday night. Stamkos had a goal and three assists, and Kucherov had two goals and an assist. They are the first teammates to start the season with nine-game streaks since St. Louis' Pavol Demitra and Doug Weight in 2001-02. Andrei Vasilevskiy, coming off a 43-save blanking of Columbus on Thursday night, lost his bid for second straight shutout bid on Jake Guentzel's goal with 1:42 to play. Vasilevskiy finished with 28 saves. Yann Gourde, Brayden Point, Anton Stralman and Mikhail Sergachev also scored to help the Lightning improve to 7-1-1. Penguins star Sidney Crosby received both minor and misconduct penalties during the opening 1:36 of the game. Backup goalie Antti Niemi, 0-3 in three starts, stopped 25 shots.

GOLDEN KNIGHTS 3, BLUES 2, OT

William Karlsson scored at 4:36 of overtime to help Vegas win for the sixth time in seven games to open its inaugural season. Reilly Smith and Colin Miller scored in the second period for the Golden Knights. Malcolm Subban stopped 37 shots before being helped to the dressing room by two trainers with 9:10 remaining in regulation after stretching out on a wide shot by Jaden Schwartz. Oscar Dansk stopped 10 of the 11 shots he faced in his NHL debut, making key stops at the end of regulation and in overtime. Magnus Paajarvi and Alex Pietrangolo scored for St. Louis, and Jake Allen — fifth on the franchise wins list (94) — finished with 19 saves. With 5:08 left in the third, Schwartz fed a wide-open Pietrangolo, who fired a slap shot past Dansk to tie the score 2-2.

KINGS 6, BLUE JACKETS 4

Anze Kopitar broke a tie with 2:14 left with his second goal of the game and Los Angeles beat Columbus to remain the only NHL team unbeaten in regulation. At 6-0-1, Los Angeles is off to the best start in franchise history. Kopitar also had an assist, Dustin Brown added a goal and three assists, and Jake Muzzin had a goal and two assists. Trevor Lewis, Drew Doughty also scored for the Kings, and Jonathan Quick stopped 32 shots. Nick Foligno, Oliver Bjorkstrand, Matt Calvert and Sonny Milano scored for Columbus, and Sergei Bobrovsky made 26 saves.

BLACKHAWKS 4, COYOTES 2

Lance Bouma scored on a rebound with 4:24 left in the third period. Corey Crawford stopped 27 shots and Chicago kept Arizona winless. The Coyotes have been playing better lately, but their only point is an overtime loss to Vegas the second game of the season. Patrick Kane and Richard Panik each scored and Jonathan Toews had a pair of assists for Chicago, which had lost three of four. Tommy Wingels added an empty-net goal after having a penalty shot wiped away upon review. Clayton Keller had his NHL rookie-best sixth goal of the season and Christian Fischer also scored for the Coyotes, who dropped to 0-7-1 with a long road trip next. Domingue stopped 24 shots.—AP

Muguruza demolishes Ostapenko at WTA Finals

SINGAPORE: Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza served warning of her intention to win both the WTA Finals and the year-end world number one crown when she crushed Jelena Ostapenko in straight sets yesterday.

The freshly crowned WTA player of the year was far too solid for an erratic Ostapenko, winning 6-3, 6-4 in 85 minutes to open her campaign at the eight-woman season finale in Singapore.

Muguruza, who is playing her third consecutive WTA Finals and reached the last four in 2015, gained in strength to take control of her opening White Group round robin match. The Spanish world number two stuttered at the finishing line when she was broken when serving for the match. But she regrouped to eventually serve it out in the 10th game. Muguruza, 24, said she was pleased to overcome the late jitters. "I wanted to win so badly and she was just not giving me anything," she told reporters. "I waited for my moment, where I served and tried to take control. It went well." Muguruza, who was number one for four weeks until she was replaced by Simona Halep earlier this month, is one of seven players who can finish the year on top of the rankings by winning in Singapore.

Ostapenko's high-voltage game was spectacular at times, as shown by her 16

winners in the first set. But 10 unforced errors sabotaged her chances against a ruthless opponent and she never recovered. "I'm not very pleased because I was making a lot of unforced errors and couldn't really get used to the court and feel my game," Ostapenko said. Earlier in White Group, in the tournament's opening match, Karolina Pliskova made an explosive start when she beat 37-year-old Venus Williams 6-2, 6-2 in 73 minutes.

The Czech world number three, playing in her second consecutive WTA Finals, overwhelmed a sluggish Williams, who is back in the elite tournament for the first time since 2009. Even though she did not make it out of the group stage a year ago, Pliskova said the experience helped enormously.

"I think I had quite an advantage from that she (Williams) was not playing for the last few years in WTA Finals," Pliskova said. "I don't know how she felt but I think I was trying to take that advantage that I was here last year." The match was an anticlimax for Williams and an early blow to her bid to be crowned the world's number one for the first time in 15 years.

Williams said she was confident of rebounding from the defeat. "Yeah, I have been in this position before," she said. "I felt like I returned well today. I just didn't execute as well during the point." — AFP



SINGAPORE: Garbine Muguruza of Spain hits a return against Jelena Ostapenko of Latvia during the WTA Finals tennis tournament Singapore yesterday. — AFP

Gasol, Grizzlies build big lead, beat Warriors

MEMPHIS: The Golden State Warriors fell to the Memphis Grizzlies 111-101 on Saturday night in a game that saw Stephen Curry and Kevin Durant ejected. Curry scored 37 points but sat out the first half of the fourth quarter with five fouls. Durant didn't like a no-call either, and as Curry and Durant made their way toward the tunnel Durant was seen apparently flipping off a fan. Marc Gasol led Memphis with 34 points and 14 rebounds. The Grizzlies led almost the entire game and by as many as 19 points in the second half.

MAGIC 114, CAVALIERS 93

Orlando ended a 17-game losing streak against Cleveland and LeBron James with a win. Nikola Vucevic scored 23 points and the Orlando Magic stunned the Cavaliers, who trailed by as many as 37 points. The skid was the longest in Magic history to one team, just as the winning streak was Cleveland's best against an opponent. The Magic hadn't beaten Cleveland since Nov. 23, 2012. Vucevic, 26, played for the Magic in that game against Cleveland five years ago and scored 10 points in a 108-104 win.

HEAT 112, PACERS 108

Goran Dragic scored 23 points to lead Miami to a win over Indiana. James Johnson's two free throws with 11 seconds left provided the final margin for the Heat, who withstood the Pacers' fourth-quarter comeback. Dion Waiters

finished with 19 points and Kelly Olynyk scored 13 points for Miami, which played without injured center Hassan Whiteside. Victor Oladipo scored a game-high 28 points for the Pacers, who also played without center Myles Turner due to a concussion.

PISTONS 111, KNICKS 107

Detroit completed a comeback from a 21-point deficit as Tobias Harris scored 12 of his 31 points in the fourth quarter to lift Detroit past New York. Porzingis led all scorers with 33 points, but most of his damage was done in the first half. The 7-foot-3 forward made his first seven shots, 8 of 10 shots by halftime before it changed with Tolliver. Andre Drummond, who collected 21 points and 11 rebounds for his first double-double of the season, blocked Porzingis' final shot. Reggie Jackson finished a 14-point night by scoring seven points in the final two minutes, including the tiebreaking 3-point play with 1:41 seconds.

ROCKETS 107, MAVERICKS 91

James Harden scored a season-high 29 points. Eric Gordon chipped in 18 and Houston defeated Dallas in its home opener at the Toyota Center. This is the 11th time the Rockets have started a season 3-0. The last was in 2014-15, when Houston started 6-0. With four players out-including rookie guard Dennis Smith Jr.-for their first meeting against divisional rival Houston, the Mavericks (0-3) were undermanned from the beginning. Yogi Ferrell also scored 19 points for Dallas.

SPURS 87, BULLS 77

LaMarcus Aldridge had 28 points and 10 rebounds, and San Antonio scored 23 points off of turnovers in a victory over Chicago. The Spurs, who are playing without last season's leading scorer Kawhi Leonard, led by as many as 17 points in the fourth quarter. Robin Lopez scored 16 points for the Bulls, who are without a handful of key players because of injury or suspension while in the midst of a

rebuilding effort. Justin Holiday scored 15 points for Chicago.

RAPTORS 128, 76ERS 94

Ben Simmons has had a perfect start to his NBA career. The Australian has had double-doubles in each of his first three NBA games, but Philadelphia has lost all three, including last night to Toronto. While Simmons scored 18 points, grabbed 10 rebounds and added eight assists, the Raptors got 30 points from DeMar DeRozan to start the season with two straight wins. Nothing has changed in the new season for the Sixers, a young developing team. Simmons joined Oscar Robertson as the only NBA players to start their careers with at least 10 points and 10 rebounds and five or more assists in their first three games.

CLIPPERS 130, SUNS 88

Blake Griffin scored 29 points and DeAndre Jordan added 13 rebounds as Los Angeles remained undefeated with a victory over Phoenix. Alex Len scored 15 points and Devin Booker added 13 as the Suns struggled on the second night of back-to-back games. Tyson Chandler grabbed 14 rebounds. Phoenix fell to the Lakers on Friday night in a high-scoring affair and is now 0-3 on the season. Griffin shook off a slow start and was in sync by the third quarter. Clippers fans started an "MVP" chant while Griffin stepped to the free throw line in the second half of the home opener.

NUGGETS 96, KINGS 79

Paul Millsap had 18 points and nine rebounds in his first game in Denver and the Nuggets rebounded from a disappointing loss to the Jazz to beat Sacramento. Kenneth Faried also scored 18 points and grabbed eight rebounds, and Gary Harris had 17 points for Denver. Rookie De'Aaron Fox led the Kings with 18 points. Sacramento didn't score 20 points in a quarter until getting 27 in the fourth. — Reuters

Sports

Kalou saves Hertha with second penalty attempt

Freiburg climbed out of the bottom three to 15th

BERLIN: Ivory Coast veteran Salomon Kalou rescued Hertha Berlin with a penalty at the second attempt in yesterday's 1-1 draw at Freiburg in the Bundesliga. Hosts Freiburg took the lead on 52 minutes when the video assistant referee (VAR) confirmed Christian Guenter had been fouled in the penalty area and Janik Haberer drilled home from the spot.

At the other end, Kalou fired his first penalty effort over the bar on 77 minutes after Berlin midfielder Arne Maier was brought down in the area. However just four minutes later, Kalou took his chance to make amends by converting a spot kick after a second penalty was awarded to Berlin. The VAR spotted Hertha's Davie Selke had been fouled in the area and ex-Chelsea striker Kalou made no mistake this time. "I said to our manager, 'I think we're jinxed' after Salomon missed the first penalty, but then he had the balls to take the second one and convert it," said Hertha coach Pal Dardai.

With time almost up, both teams had clear chances. Hertha's Austria international Valentino Lazaro forced Freiburg goalkeeper Alexander Scholow into a reflex save with ten minutes left. Then a freekick by Freiburg's Julian Schuster was palmed onto the crossbar by Berlin goalkeeper Rune Jarstein just before the

final whistle. The point was Hertha's second in their last four games to go 11th while Freiburg climbed out of the bottom three to 15th at the expense of Hamburg, who lost 1-0 at home to Bayern Munich on Saturday.

Bayern are level with leaders Borussia Dortmund on 20 points, but stay second on goal difference after Corentin Tolisso scored their winner while Hamburg's Gideon Jung was sent off on 40 minutes for fouling Kingsley Coman. Dortmund threw away a two-goal lead in Saturday's 2-2 draw at Eintracht Frankfurt as goals by Nuri Sahin and Maximilian Philipp were cancelled out by Sebastien Haller and Marius Wolf Earlier yesterday, Cologne and Werder Bremen remain in the relegation places

after their goalless draw. Cologne's Claudio Pizarro, the highest scoring foreign striker in the Bundesliga's history, picked up an injury before kick-off and the 39-year-old had to sit out the home clash against his former club. Both sides had several chances - Cologne shaded the shots on goal with 18 compared to Bremen's 13.

"It's difficult, that was something for vegetarians - it wasn't meat or fish, so it's hard to know where to start," said Cologne coach Peter Stoeger. "The guys have everything, there was passion. "We can moan as much as we want, but there were enough chances." —AFP



Pizarro, the highest scoring foreign striker



FREIBURG: Berlin's Per Ciljan Skjelbred, left, and Freiburg's Florian Niederlechner clash during the German Bundesliga soccer match between SC Freiburg and Hertha BSC in Freiburg, Germany, yesterday. — AP

N Zealand stun India by 6 wkts in first ODI

MUMBAI: Century-maker Tom Latham and Ross Taylor inspired New Zealand to a thrilling six-wicket win over India in the first one-day international at Mumbai's Wankhede Stadium yesterday. The batsmen put on a 200-run partnership as the Kiwis successfully chased down 281 to stun the hosts after Indian captain Virat Kohli had hit a century of his own.

Left-hander Latham smashed 103 off 102 balls, including eight fours and two sixes, while Taylor made 95 off 99 as New Zealand won with six balls to spare, finishing on 284-4. The visitors' run chase got off to a poor start with opener Colin Munro falling for 28 before Kiwis captain Kane Williamson walked shortly afterwards on a paltry six. When Martin Guptill was sent packing by Hardik Pandya in the 18th over for 32 New Zealand were at 80-3 and looking like they were heading for a heavy defeat. But Latham and Taylor had other ideas and put on a superb 200-run fourth-wicket partnership that lasted 187 balls. Taylor, who hit eight fours, was dismissed in the penultimate over with New Zealand needing just one run to win.

The right-hander was caught out before Henry Nicholls came in and smashed a four to secure the tourists' victory. Earlier, Kohli scored his 31st ODI century in his 200th match as India made 280-8 after winning the toss and opting to bat first. The Indian captain smashed 121 off 125 balls including nine fours and two sixes. — AFP



MUMBAI: New Zealand's Tom Latham plays shot during their first one-day international cricket match against India in Mumbai, India, yesterday. — AP

Bishoo puts West Indies in control

BULAWAYO: Leg-spinner Devendra Bishoo pricked Zimbabwe's bubble of optimism yesterday as his five-wicket haul put the West Indies in charge of the first Test at Queens Sports Club.

Zimbabwe came into the two-match series in a buoyant mood following the return of Brendan Taylor and Kyle Jarvis to their ranks, and carried it through the opening day when they dismissed the West Indies for 219.

But Bishoo's 5 for 79 on the second day was like a bucket of cold water on Zimbabwe's spirits as they were bowled out for 159, with Hamilton Masakadza's 42 the top score. "There were way too many soft dismissals, and the boys are upset with themselves. That wasn't how we wanted to play," said Zimbabwe's batting coach Lance Klusener.

"We've got a second bite at the cherry, but it won't be easy to bat out there." With Zimbabwe bowled out in just 61.3 overs, the West Indies began their second innings after tea and reached stumps on 88 for one, giving them an overall lead of 148. Kraigg Brathwaite led the way with an unbeaten 38, while Kyle Hope registered a career-best 32 not out in his fourth Test.

The hosts made a positive start in reply to West Indies' 219 all out, with openers Masakadza and Solomon Mire moving their overnight total from 19 to 44 without loss.

But from 91 for one Zimbabwe slipped to 139 for seven as Masakadza felt for a Bishoo delivery and edged behind. Brendan Taylor reverse-swept the legspinner to slip and Sikandar Raza holed out to long-off. Shannon Gabriel finished off the innings with the wicket of Chris Mpofu on the stroke of tea, leaving the tourists with a sense of satisfaction. — AFP



EAST LONDON: South African bowler Dane Paterson throws the ball during the 3rd ODI match at the Buffalo Park, in East London, yesterday. — AFP

Markram shines on debut as South Africa complete sweep

EAST LONDON: Aiden Markram scored a half-century and took two wickets on his one-day international debut as South Africa completed a clean sweep of their three-match series against Bangladesh with a crushing 200-run victory at Buffalo Park yesterday.

Markram contributed 66 from 60 balls as South Africa posted 369 for six from their 50 overs, with Faf du Plessis (91 from 67 balls) and Quinton de Kock (73 from 68) also in the runs.

Du Plessis retired hurt with a lower back strain and has been withdrawn from the two-match Twenty20 International series that starts in Bloemfontein on Thursday as JP Duminy takes over the captaincy duties. Bangladesh slipped to 61 for five in reply and were eventually all out for 169 as Markram claimed two for 18, including the wicket of Shakib Al Hasan (63 from 82), who provided the lone score of note for the visitors. — Reuters

Inter end Napoli winning streak in stalemate

MILAN: Inter Milan ended Napoli's winning streak in Serie A with a goalless draw despite a hard-fought top of the table clash in Naples on Saturday. Napoli—who suffered Champions League disappointment at Manchester City this week—now have 25 points from nine games to maintain their two-point advantage on second-placed Inter.

Champions Juventus and Lazio—joint third on 19 points—have a golden opportunity to narrow the gap on Sunday when they take on Udinese and Cagliari respectively. Napoli had been on a winning streak in 13 Serie A games going back to last season. But they came up against a stubborn Inter, chasing a first win in Naples in 20 years, and who underlined their title credentials in front of 50,000 spectators at the San Paolo Stadium.

Both teams had their goalkeepers to thank for the point with Inter's Samir Handanovic and Napoli's Pepe Reina pulling off some fine saves. "These players must be complimented," Inter coach Luciano Spalletti told Mediaset Premium after the match.

"Today we played a very good game, which could have been even better. Napoli were very strong, they did incredible things. Handanovic did what he needed to do. Reina also seemed good to me on a couple of occasions. We have suffered and we are keeping this (title race) close" Napoli had more possession in the first half but little to show as Handanovic kept out a quickfire double from Jose Callejon and Dries Mertens. Reina also denied Inter's Mauro Icardi and Borja Valero just before the break.

Napoli ran out of steam in the second

half showing signs of fatigue after their European travels. Inter with no European commitments looked fresher, but Napoli earned the two best chances with Piotr Zielinski's long range volley on 84 minutes and a Mertens effort six minutes later both cleared.

"The feeling I have is that the team have more motivation in the league than Europe," conceded Napoli coach Maurizio Sarri. "Tonight we played with great determination for 95 minutes, in Manchester only for 55."

"I think it's a sub-conscious thing. If in our minds we feel more competitive in Serie A than in the Champions League, that might be a difficult thing to shake off. "We don't have that much of a chance to go all the way in Europe, but we do want to put in a great tournament performance." Both Napoli and Inter take on teams from Genoa next week. Napoli play at Genoa with Inter hosting local rivals Sampdoria, who earlier Saturday crushed struggling Crotona with a five-goal blitz to move fifth. Sampdoria, who have a game in hand, were three goals up by half-time.

Gianmarco Ferrari headed in after three minutes against his former club. Fabio Quagliarella converted a penalty on 11 minutes after Arlind Ajeti dragged down Duvan Zapata, with Gianluca Caprari tapping in a third before the break.

Polish pair Karol Linetty and substitute Dawid Kownacki added two more for good measure in a five-minute spree from 71 minutes as Sampdoria kept their perfect home record. "We're going through a good run of form, even if we know there are always going to be high and lows in a campaign," said Sampdoria coach Marco Giampaolo. — AFP

Guangzhou retain China league title

GUANGZHOU: Luiz Felipe Scolari's rampant Guangzhou Evergrande won the Chinese Super League (CSL) for the seventh time in a row yesterday and with two games to spare. In what is expected to be the decorated Brazilian coach's last season in charge, Guangzhou scored twice in three minutes in the first half as they thrashed Guizhou Zhicheng 5-1 at home. Scolari, whose contract is up at the end of the season after two successful years in southern China, was banned from the bench as his side romped to the victory they needed to wrap up the CSL title once more. Under the 68-year-old Scolari, who took over from the Italian Fabio Cannavaro in 2015, Guangzhou have cemented their place as the best team in China.

They went out of the Asian Champions League in the quarter-finals to domestic rivals Shanghai SIPG, but they have once more dominated the CSL. Guangzhou suffered a minor wobble when Brazilian international Paulinho left for Barcelona in August, but Andre Villas-Boas's Shanghai—the nearest challengers in the CSL—failed to capitalise.

The home fans came to see a coronation yesterday and Gao Lin headed home unmarked at a packed Tianhe Stadium to start the party on 15 minutes. Two minutes later Guangzhou were 2-0 up as Guizhou made a mess of things in defence and another Brazilian, the forward Alan, waltzed through the non-existent backline.

The visitors pulled a goal back midway through the first half but Guangzhou's prolific Brazilian striker Ricardo Goulart put the game out of sight with a deft header in the 52nd minute that bounced off a Guizhou player and into the net. — AFP

13 Japan's Murata stops N'Dam to win world title

14 Astros down Yankees in Game Seven, set clash with Dodgers

14 Muguruza demolishes Ostapenko at WTA Finals



Arsenal thrash Everton to pile pressure on Koeman

LIVERPOOL: Everton dropped into the bottom three of the Premier League after Arsenal came from a goal down to earn an emphatic 5-2 victory at Goodison Park yesterday.

It all started so well for the hosts as Wayne Rooney curled a stunning 12th-minute opener into the net to give his side the lead—the strike coming almost 15 years to the day since a 16-year-old Rooney announced himself to the world with a remarkably similar goal against the same opposition.

Despite trailing, Arsenal dominated from then on, mustering 17 shots on goal in the first half alone, one of which was Nacho Monreal's equaliser from close range five minutes before the break.

Arsenal continued on the front foot after the interval and took the lead in the 53rd minute via the head of Mesut Ozil.

Idrissa Gueye was dismissed 15 minutes later after collecting a second yellow card, before a

goal from Alexandre Lacazette in the 74th minute and late strikes from Aaron Ramsey and Alexis Sanchez, coming either side of an Oumar Niasse consolation, capped a victory that moves Arsenal up to fifth but piles the pressure on under-fire Everton boss Ronald Koeman.

The match could not have got off to a better start for Koeman as Rooney, deployed in a deeper role, picked up a loose ball before curling it past the despairing dive of Petr Cech to send Goodison into raptures.

However, with Ozil orchestrating things for the Gunners, it was only a matter of time before the visitors restored parity, with Jordan Pickford keeping them at bay for much of the first period.

The pressure told as Monreal reacted quickest to another Pickford save to level, before Ozil got on the scoresheet himself with a well-timed header on the end of a pinpoint Sanchez cross.

Any chance of an Everton fightback got much harder with Gueye's dismissal for two needless challenges—the fourth dismissal in the last five meetings between these two sides—with the Toffees falling apart in the final 22 minutes. Lacazette finished off a sweeping counter to make it 3-1, before Ramsey had all the time in the world to make it four in the 90th minute.

There was still time for Niasse to capitalise on some poor Arsenal defending to salvage some pride, before Sanchez got the goal his all-action display deserved, inciting boos from all around Goodison as the Everton faithful grow more impatient with Koeman. — Reuters

Kane scores twice as Tottenham beat Liverpool 4-1 in PL

LONDON: Harry Kane scored twice for Tottenham Hotspur in a 4-1 victory over an abject Liverpool team on Sunday that left the Merseyside club's Premier League title hopes in tatters. Kane struck early in each half, book-ending goals from Son Heung-Min and Dele Alli, with Mohamed Salah netting in reply in front of a record Premier League crowd of 80,827 at Wembley that included the great Diego Maradona.

Spurs move level on points with second-place Manchester United, five points below leaders Manchester City, while Liverpool's sorry defensive display left them a yawning 12 points off the pace in eighth place. It was a second galling defeat against a supposed title rival for Liverpool, following their 5-0 capitulation at City in early September, and they have now won just one of their last six league games. They were unrecognisable from the team that had crushed Maribor 7-0 in the Champions League on Tuesday, their travails summed up by a catastrophic defensive display from Dejan Lovren, who was taken off in the 31st minute. Liverpool's defeat—their first in 10 league

games against Spurs—also saw them become only the sixth team to have conceded over 1,000 goals since the Premier League was launched in 1992.

With Liverpool out of the League Cup and their hopes of reaching the Champions League last 16 in the balance, it leaves manager Jurgen Klopp facing some uncomfortable questions two years into his Anfield tenure. His opposite number, Mauricio Pochettino, redeployed the 3-5-2 system he had used in the 1-1 draw at Real Madrid in mid-week, but with illness restricting Eric Dier and Ben Davies to the bench, Serge Aurier started at left wing-back. Kieran Trippier came into the team on the other flank and within four minutes he had an assist to his name.

The former Burnley man's lofted pass was misjudged by Lovren and with Joel Matip slow to react, Kane stole in, hooked the ball inside the advancing Simon Mignolet and rolled it into the net.

Lovren's nightmare continued eight minutes later as he woefully mistimed an attempt to head away a long throw from Spurs goalkeeper Hugo Lloris, allowing Kane to canter into the space behind him.

The England striker found Son with a brilliant cross from the right and the Spurs number seven used the inside of his left foot to plant a first-time shot past the exposed Mignolet.

It was almost 3-0 moments later as Son chested down Christian Eriksen's through ball and slammed a shot against the Liverpool bar. Liverpool reduced the arrears against the run of play in the 24th minute when Jordan Henderson's pass from deep released Salah to trundle a right-foot shot past Lloris and in off the left-hand post.

But Spurs continued to find space behind Lovren—Son's toe-poke blocked by Mignolet after he was cleverly freed by Alli—and in the 31st minute Klopp brought the Croatian's torment to an end. Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain came on and the ensuing reshuffle meant Emre Can dropped to right-back, where he was quickly found wanting. His untidy foul from behind on Alli gave Spurs a free-kick in first-half stoppage time and when Eriksen's delivery was headed away by Matip, Alli thumped a volley into the bottom-left corner. — AFP

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Business

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2017

19 Geely Auto Group formally opens state-of-the-Art R&D center**20** Mercedes-Benz E 300 Cabriolet arrives in Kuwait**21** PR chief urges stronger 'nation brand' to take Egypt forward

XIANGHE: A man walks past sculptures outside Xianghe Robot Industry Port during a tour arranged by the press center for the 19th Communist Party Congress in Xianghe county in China's Hebei province yesterday. — AFP

China says jobless rate lowest in years

Employment faces challenges amid economic reforms

BEIJING: China's unemployment rate has hit its lowest point in multiple years at 3.95 percent by the end of September, but employment still faces challenges as the economy pushes ahead with structural reforms, China's labor ministry said yesterday.

The ministry of human resources and social security said in a statement that 10.97 million new jobs had been created in China from January to September this year, a growth of 300,000 compared with the previous year. The figure represents having essentially fulfilled the ministry's year-end target, the ministry said in a pre-prepared statement given to reporters.

Despite being ahead of schedule, Yin Weimin, head of the ministry, told reporters that "raising the capacity to employ workers overall still faces large pressures."

"We need to create 15 million jobs per year," Yin said, singling out China's more than 8 million new university graduates that enter the job market each year as one group in need of additional employment. Yin also said the low unemployment rate in the face of an overall slowdown in the economy was largely due to the new internet economy and entrepreneurship, adding that the ministry would actively support startups to help them "thrive".

From 2015 to 2020 every one percent increase in GDP is expected to equal roughly 1.8 million new jobs, Yin said. Premier Li Keqiang said in March that China added 13.14 million new urban jobs in 2016 and aims to add another 11 million this year while keeping the registered unemployment rate below 4.5 percent.

The labor ministry's announcement was made as part of a once-ever-five-years congress of the ruling Communist Party, which opened last Wednesday and runs until Tuesday. At the congress, the Party sets broad policy directions and reshuffles top leaders. As China's economy slows, Beijing has made increasing efforts to stave off mass unemployment that may spark social unrest.

China's official unemployment rate has remained generally stable as economic growth has dipped to a 26-year low and the government forges ahead with ambitious plans to cut back on industrial capacity. Many analysts say, however, that the government figure is an unreliable indicator of national employment conditions as it measures only employment in urban areas and also

doesn't take into account the millions of migrant workers that form the bedrock of China's labor force.

On an annual basis, the official unemployment rate was last below 4 percent in 2001, when it was 3.6 percent, according to data from the National Bureau of Statistics. The rate ended 2016 at 4.02 percent after not budging from 4.1 percent from 2010-2015. The government has said that some sectors, especially those targeted by capacity cuts, such as coal and steel, still show signs of unresolved employment challenges.

The ministry of human resources in April said that China would need to resettle about half a million workers that lose jobs in the coal and steel sectors this year and will speed up development of a "black list" system for firms with wage arrears. — Reuters

Cashing out: The end of Hong Kong's historic trading floor

HONG KONG: In its heyday in the 1980s, more than a thousand brokers dressed in signature red blazers made deals on the trading floor of the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, in what was a raucous, competitive bear pit. But as electronic and internet services burgeoned, brokers drifted away to corporate offices. With just a handful of traders remaining, the historic hall will close at the end of the month. The cavernous red-carpeted space with its circular rows of cubicles and giant digital screens showing stock movements stands largely empty as its last occupants pack up their belongings.

"Advances in electronic trading and technology have made our work much more convenient, but now it lacks the communal atmosphere that has given me many memories," said Christopher Cheung, a lawmaker representing the financial services sector who used to trade on the exchange floor.

Under British rule, Hong Kong transformed into a commercial and financial hub, becoming a gateway between China and the rest of the world as the mainland opened up its economy from the late 1970s.

In 1986 the city's four separate stock exchanges merged into one and the trading floor opened. Part of the Hong Kong Exchange (HKEX) building in the bustling Central district, it hummed with energy as brokers

exchanged gossip, gesticulated wildly and yelled into telephones.

Market information spread quickly and clients would call in for the latest news, Cheung remembers. But despite apparent chaos, Cheung says there was a "culture of trust". On slower days, traders played cards and snacked on peanuts.

Cheung's company Christfund Securities still has one employee working on the floor in case his office's computers crash, he said. The Shu sisters, who run Wader Securities, share Cheung's nostalgia. "When there was a rally on, it was a sheer joy to work," Shu Yee-har, one of the three siblings, told the South China Morning Post. "It was much better than staying in the office."

Emotional farewell

An early form of electronic trading was introduced in 1993, triggering a major shift away from face-to-face deals. Three years later brokers were able to trade away from the hall as terminals were installed in their own offices. From 2000 they could offer services online, after the exchange invested HK\$300 million (\$38 million) in cutting-edge technology. More brokers drifted away from the communal hall and the handful of firms that remained mostly used it as an affordable and conveniently located office space.

When AFP visited, there were around 10 traders on the floor, with the surrounding desks and archaic-looking paper printers gathering dust. The brokers still bantered and bemoaned plunging stocks and there was an occasional ripple of excitement.

One trader, who gave her name as Cheung, said she was "walking away with a torn heart" as she prepared to pack her belongings into a small suitcase, carrying a bouquet of flowers given to her by a fellow broker.



HONG KONG: In this picture taken on October 19, 2017, Cheng (right), a trader who has worked on the floor since 1994, hugs a colleague as she prepares to leave on her last day of work at the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. — AFP

Having worked on the floor since 1994 she will now be based in a company office.

She said a handful of brokers had written to the government in a bid to keep the space open for trading, to

no avail. "I will miss the freedom here. Who wants to face their boss every day?" she told AFP. HKEX said the hall would be remade into an exhibition and event space as part of wider renovations to the building. — AFP

Business

KFH wins 'Islamic Bank of the Year 2017 - Global' award from the Banker

Bank CEO Al-Nahedh receives awards

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) won "Islamic Bank of the Year 2017 - Global" Award from the Banker Magazine, an international financial affairs publication owned by The Financial Times. The bank also won "Islamic Bank of the Year 2017 - Middle East" and "Islamic Bank of the Year 2017 - Kuwait" Awards from the same magazine.

KFH received the award on the sidelines of the Meetings of the IMF and World Bank 2017 held in Washington- USA. Group Chief Executive Officer at KFH, Mazin Al-Nahedh stated on receiving the awards, that the awards culminate the bank's efforts in offering highest standards of Islamic financial services in different geographies in the world. The awards confirm KFH's pioneering position in the Islamic finance industry worldwide. They are an impetus for further achievements and success towards better addressing the customers' needs and ambitions.

He added that KFH attaches great importance to the service quality and integration among group banks. KFH managed to offer an integrated system of techni-

cal, financial, and banking services. The bank has vast experience in balancing sharia requirements with the latest banking technology.



Leadership in the field of Islamic banking

He emphasized KFH's leadership in the field of Islamic banking, since it was the first Islamic bank in the world, the Middle East and in Kuwait, and high-

lighted the bank's fruitful efforts in expanding in various markets. Al-Nahedh stressed the importance of operating as per strategy and plans in all markets, while focusing on the local market, indicating that all of KFH's global success would have never been possible without the solid platform and high level of professionalism.

It is noteworthy that KFH has been selected for the awards by The Banker after expert editorial team judge the awards based on the entries supplied by banks. Judges look at a wide range of criteria, from both the bank's core financials such as Profits, ROW, and ROA through to improvement year on year. Innovation is also a key indicator for judges so elements such as innovative products, customer services and initiatives also go a long way towards the application.

The Banker Magazine was established in 1926 and is the leading monthly finance title of the Financial Times Group. For over 85 years the Banker has been the leading journal of record for the world's banking community.



Al-Nahedh receiving the awards

Monks and nuns make big business in France

CHANTELLE, France: After prayers at the Chantelle Abbey in Allier, central France, a marketing meeting between the abbey's nuns and their employees discusses the latest orders for its on-site soap and cosmetics products, the delivery destination: Germany. The community of Benedictine sisters has been manufacturing cosmetics since 1954, after two sisters, a chemist and a mathematician, began the practice.

Body lotions, shower gels and moisturizers are among the products made in the abbey's own laboratory, where the nuns acknowledge they must now make time for prayer and business.

"A company, must develop or it dies," said Mother Pascale, dressed in a veil and scapular while supervising production. "We have needed to develop, to make more turnover and to modernize our clientele," she added, sounding more business executive than spiritual leader.

For the Benedictines, manual labor is imperative to respect the rule of Saint Benedict, which dates back to the sixth century. As long as it is not during the hours of prayer, the sisters can work on the products, from conception to packaging.

Even Sister Marie-Suzanne, at the age of 97, and dean of the abbey, is involved in the work.

But in order to meet the demand, the abbey has hired some 10 non-religious employees to help with the production. "The purpose is not to look for money to grow rich. We are not planning to do a stock listing! But to make a living with a reasonable margin," said Mother Pascale. Sold in monasteries, boutique shops and on the internet, the abbey even has a Facebook page—the cosmetics are mainly created from natural products and generated one million euros (\$1.2 million) in sales last year.

Much of the money is used to renovate and repair the 7th century abbey's many beautiful, yet old, ramparts and monastic buildings. "We live in beauty but the renovations are expensive. We have redone the roof, and the rooms we live in... but it never ends," sighed the abbess.

Expanding businesses

The market for abbey-made products is far from unique to France, and is at least as developed in Germany and to a lesser extent in Britain. Across France, some 250 to 300 communities



CHANTELLE: Nuns of the Saint-Vincent abbey and their non-religious employees attend a working meeting at the abbey in Chantelle. —AFP

dedicated to prayer sell products or services. From biscuits to jam and honey, to gluten-free products and organic vegetables, men and women of the cloth have expanded into a variety of businesses.

The Abbey of St Wandrille, founded in 649, restarted the production of monastic beer last year with great success. The community has sold more than 100,000 bottles in less than a year, more than half on site. The Grande Chartreuse monastery, in Isere, has experienced even greater success marketing its alcohol.

It distills a liqueur, created from a mix of 130 plants, that has a natural green color—the exact recipe only known by two of the abbey's monks. The business now employs 58 people in its factory in Voiron and had some 17 million euros in sales in 2015.

Citeaux Abbey, in Burgundy, known for its washed rind cheese made from cow's milk, posted 1.2 million euros in sales last year. Much of the cheese is sold on-site but also in places as far away as Dubai, Montreal and Tokyo.

"Fifteen days ago, I received a call from a company that helps businesses in difficulty," explained

Father Jean-Claude. "I told him: Yes, I have a problem. We produce 120,000 cheeses a year, but we have demand for more than 160,000!"

'Look for the Lord'

To protect the image of their products and avoid unfair competition, more than 200 communities have formed an association and created the "Monastic" mark to certify the authenticity of products from monasteries. But despite the growth of some of their businesses, some analysts argue that many monasteries lack opportunities to expand.

"The vast majority of communities have modest productions because the place of the work remains very limited," said Marie-Catherine Paquier, author of a thesis on the purchase of monastic products.

The total market for "Made in Abbeys" products is estimated to be 75 million euros a year, she said. If the market expands, business-minded nuns and monks may increasingly have to reconcile spirituality with potential profitability. Mother Pascale at Chantelle recognizes it could pose a problem, but insists: "The priority, is to look for the Lord". —AFP

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the second largest in terms of assets, announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Wael Mohammad Awni Ibrahim
2. Anita Bukharey
3. Basel Ahmad Abdulkareem Al Ibrahim
4. Wasmeya Jasem Abdulatif al Rjaib
5. Muhammad Maqsood Bashir Ahmed

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a Quarterly Draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers Daily and Quarterly Draws, wherein the Quarterly Draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.

Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

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

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

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

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.698
Indian Rupees	4.660
Pakistani Rupees	2.874
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.967
Nepali Rupees	2.931
Singapore Dollar	224.330
Hongkong Dollar	38.783
Bangladesh Taka	3.694
Philippine Peso	5.887
Thai Baht	9.172

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	80.814
Qatari Riyal	83.235
Omani Riyal	787.032
Bahraini Dinar	804.700
UAE Dirham	82.509

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.950
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.075
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.216
Tunisian Dinar	123.610
Jordanian Dinar	427.450
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.019
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.635

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	302.850

Euro	357.820
Sterling Pound	403.240
Canadian dollar	244.470
Turkish lira	83.310
Swiss Franc	311.250
Australian Dollar	239.250
US Dollar Buying	301.650

GOLD	
20 Gram	249.070
10 Gram	127.450
5 Gram	64.570

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	302.500
Canadian Dollar	242.060
Sterling Pound	402.500
Euro	357.870
Swiss Frank	297.040
Bahrain Dinar	802.860
UAE Dirhams	82.752
Qatari Riyals	83.572
Saudi Riyals	81.527
Jordanian Dinar	427.936
Egyptian Pound	17.180
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.970
Indian Rupees	4.668
Pakistani Rupees	2.871
Bangladesh Taka	3.716
Philippines Peso	5.899
Cyprus pound	18.000

Japanese Yen	3.695
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.928
Malaysian Ringgit	72.590
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	46.275
Thai Bhat	10.130
Turkish Lira	83.270

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.392866	0.402866
Czech Korune	0.005901	0.017951
Danish Krone	0.044177	0.049177
Euro	0.352286	0.361286
Georgian Lari	0.135000	0.135000
Norwegian Krone	0.0234173	0.039373
Romanian Leu	0.081730	0.081730
Russian ruble	0.005268	0.005268
Slovakia	0.009039	0.019039
Swedish Krona	0.033239	0.038239
Swiss Franc	0.301943	0.312943
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.229082	0.241082
New Zealand Dollar	0.205378	0.214878
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.235000	0.244000
US Dollars	0.299000	0.303420
US Dollars Mint	0.299500	0.303420

Asia	
Bangladesh Taka	0.003303
Chinese Yuan	0.044249
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036839
Indian Rupee	0.004294
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018
Japanese Yen	0.002608
Korean Won	0.000258
Malaysian Ringgit	0.067914
Nepalese Rupee	0.003024
Pakistani Rupee	0.002688
Philippine Peso	0.005795
Singapore Dollar	0.218075
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001630
Taiwan	0.010014
Thai Baht	0.008793

Arab	
Bahraini Dinar	0.796984
Egyptian Pound	0.014380
Iranian Riyal	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000207
Jordanian Dinar	0.422896
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000156
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021978
Omani Riyal	0.780853
Qatar Riyal	0.078964
Saudi Riyal	0.079740
Syrian Pound	0.001285
Tunisian Dinar	0.118681
Turkish Lira	0.077506
UAE Dirhams	0.081098
Yemeni Riyal	0.000985

Business

Geely Auto Group formally opens state-of-the-Art R&D center

Group investment reaching 6.2 billion RMB



HANGZHOU BAY, China: Geely Auto Group's new flagship research and development center was formally opened earlier yesterday. The new state of the art facility its home to nearly 7000 full time engineers and spans over 275,000 square meters of land in Geely.

As part of the opening celebrations, Geely Auto announced its INTEC technology brands. This new INTEC technology brands are a package of five leading technologies including safety technology, internet connectivity, engine technology, interior environment technology, and driver aids. INTEC were designed around a 'humanizing smart car technology' concept where the technology was developed to give the owner and occupants a greater level of safety and convenience whilst in transit.

G-Safety

For Geely, a five-star crash score is not the beginning or end of safety; the company has put G-Safety systems as the core of full car development. "G-Safety" is built from the exterior inwards, including a precise security identification system, driver assist system, information management and safety warning systems, collision warning system, accident alarm system, and emergency contact system. "G-Safety" provides occupants with a complete set of passive and active safety systems. Currently the technology has been integrated in the Boyue, Emgrand GL, and other generation 3.0 Geely cars. For pedestrians and cyclist outside the car, Geely has also developed a four level "Pedestrian protection System" that includes a detection, warning, avoidance, and injury reduction system.

G-Netlink

Geely's self-developed G-Netlink system allow drivers to use interface with their vehicles through a myriad of different ways: from remote control via app allowing drivers to lock or unlock their vehicles, start the vehicle, turn on heating or cooling etc. At the same time this system provides in-car WiFi and Apple CarPlay and Android Auto systems. The G-Netlink system has already been integrated into Geely's 3.0 generation of vehicles and can achieve autonomous driving under certain conditions. This technology has provided people with more turning Geely Auto Group from a traditional manufacturer to a travel solutions enterprise.

G-Power

Geely's G-Power range of engines are primarily light weight alloy engines that make full use of second generation turbo and fuel injection technologies to push G-Power to the forefront of world-class powertrain systems and will continue to give consumers a more efficient, more powerful and more frugal engine systems. Geely's full range of 1.0TD, 1.4TD and brand new 7DCT engines will be introduced into the G-Power range in the coming years.



Geely Auto launches new INTEC tech brands

G-Blue

G-Blue focuses on the development of healthy car interiors, bringing healthy environments into the vehicles and shutting out pollution. G-Blue is also a development standard where Geely Auto aims to bring 'clean' materials into its interiors to avoid having poor quality materials in the vehicles.

G-Pilot

G-Pilot has been developed to meet future market demands guided by the evolution of intelligent drive technology. A 10-year roadmap has been planned for G-Pilot, starting with the GC9 model in 2014 which is expected to achieve a high degree of autonomous driving after 2020, and by 2024 G-Pilot is expected to reach new heights.

Geely Research Institute

Geely Research Institute is a world leading research and development center; the center was built with 6.2 billion RMB of investment and is fully capable of designing and developing complete vehicles, including parts, new energy vehicle technologies, powertrain, testing facilities and qual-

ity centers. The new center is based in Hangzhou Bay, between Hangzhou City and Ningbo City, just 80km from Geely Auto Group's headquarters in Hangzhou.

Geely Auto Group CEO and President, An Conghui commented: "Geely Auto Group has always invested heavily into its research and development capacity. The arrival of INTEC technologies showcases our ability to develop new technologies and our foresight in long term development strategies. At the same time, it also demonstrates that we are a technology driven company, putting consumer's thoughts and requirements at the forefront of research and development to give the end user a better, more efficient experience and to push forward automotive technologies."

As China's first privately owned Chinese auto group, Geely Auto Group has already gained over 20 years of automotive research and development which has pushed Geely to develop four global R&D Centers in Hangzhou, Ningbo, Gothenburg, Sweden and Coventry, UK with over 10,000 engineers from over 30 different nationalities including nearly 3000 foreign engineers. Geely Auto has also registered over 14,000 patents throughout its development story. Over the past two years Geely Auto has entered into a period of high speed growth under its 'Making Refined Cars For Everyone' brand promise which has led to the creation of the Geely GC9, Bo Yue SUV, Emgrand GS and Emgrand GL models, all of which have become the benchmark vehicles in their respective segments. In the first four months of 2017, Geely Auto has sold 365,308 vehicles with a growth of over 94 percent making it the fastest growing auto manufacturer in China.

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Optimism on US tax reforms pushes dollar higher

The Fed's Chairwoman Janet Yellen portrayed an optimistic outlook on the US economy and for price growth in the months to come, suggesting the footprint of the recent hurricanes will likely moderate economic growth temporarily and should be followed by a rebound by year end. She restated that the persistence of undesirably low inflation this year has been a surprise. Although, she expects inflation to begin its northern momentum as the effects of temporary factors such as falling prices for consumer cell-phone services begin to fade. As for market expectations, markets are skeptical on Yellen's outlook for future interest rates as FED members are not on the same page. The Fed fund futures show only a 70% chance of one rate hike in 2018, while the FED's dot plot indicate 3 rate hikes.

Reports from all twelve FED districts noted that the pace of growth expanded between modest to moderate across the US in September and October despite the inflow of hurricanes that caused major disruptions in some areas and sectors. Still, the economy seemed to have weathered down the storms better than anticipated. As always, one major theme continues to disappoint, "wage growth". Several districts reported difficulty in finding qualified workers across many sectors. Even the tightest labor market in years did little to heat up inflation. The Fed described the increase in wages and the cost of materials as modest. The main theme is that the Central Bank is on the road to hike a third time this year in December and the recent hurricanes were just a slight depressor for an economy now in its ninth year of growth making it one of the longest expansions ever.

Trumpflation may reemerge after the Senate accepted a budget plan that would allow them to advance with the tax remodel without the backing of Democrats. Despite having control of the government, Republicans have been unable to create a legislative achievement, setting further pressure on officials to succeed in passing a tax bill. As for Europe, politics continues to dictate market trajectory as the standoff between Spain's central government and Catalonia escalates. The Spanish government has enough backing to disband Catalonia's parliament and hold new elections in January to try to resolve the regional government's push for independence.

On the currency front, the dollar index began the week on a strong footing after slightly hawkish remarks from the FED's Chairwoman, positive data on the US economy and a report that indicated President Donald Trump favored

a hawk to head the Federal Reserve. On Wednesday, the dollar index lost ground after the housing report came in frail. However, the downward momentum was short lived due to renewed hopes for a major tax reform after the Senate approved a budget blueprint for 2018. The index began the week at 93.156 and closed on Friday at 93.701.

The euro extended its losses on Monday as the unclear political environment around the EU continues to diminish sentiment. The EUR/USD recovered all its losses it incurred at the start of the week and entered into positive territory on Wednesday as politics faded from the headlines, while taking advantage from the dollar's pull back. The EUR/USD closed its weekly session at 1.1783 down by 0.20 percent for the week. The pound sterling was under pressure the entire week on both fronts, politically and economically. After the release of the inflation and labor report, the GBP/USD persisted downhill. The GBP/USD lost 0.69 percent of its value last week.

Safe haven currencies like the Japanese Yen and Swiss Franc remained the weakest currencies for the week on resilient global risk appetite and a stronger US dollar. The yen and Swiss Franc lost 1.41 percent and 0.90 percent respectively versus the greenback this week.

In the commodities complex, oil prices surged on Monday through Wednesday as reports of clashes between Iraqi troops and Kurdish armed forces near Kirkuk sent WTI and Brent higher. Meanwhile, government data showed a larger-than-expected drop in US crude inventories. Brent crude was last trading near the \$57 level.

Manufacturing

The New York Fed reported that the general manufacturing conditions in the state of New York soared to a three-year high of 30.2 in October, up by 5.8 points from the preceding month and topped market expectations for a reading of 20. The index was enhanced despite some of the key components actually worsened, like new orders, which fell to 18 from 24.9 and the average work week index came in at zero. On the positive front, the shipments index rose 11 points to 27.5 the highest level since October 2009 and the employment index showed the sturdiest reading since March 2015, while the change in hours worked remained constant.

Looking at the six-month outlook, firms remained optimistic about future conditions with the index for future business conditions rising by six points to 44.8 and the employment is expected to increase modestly. The dollar's recent

depreciations is part of the story, but domestic demand played a roll too. The overall message from this and other surveys is that the industrial sector remains resilient.

Moving on to the Philadelphia region, the manufacturing state improved to a five months high for the current month. The Philly FED claimed the index was elevated by 4.1 points to 27.9. The sub-component that trails the number of employees soared to an all-time high of 30.6 from 6.6 seen last month and expectations for hiring over the next six months burst to the highest level in 33 years. Growth in the industry isn't just stable, it's accelerating, and businesses surveyed by the local bank remained bright on the future outlook.

Import prices

The price for foreign goods shipped to the US peaked to the highest level in 15 months, suggesting inflation could pick up in the near term following months of sluggish readings. The rise is attributed to rising petroleum and food costs for the month of September. Last month, prices for imported petroleum increased 4.5 percent after rising 5.0 percent in August. Food prices surged 1.8 percent, the largest gain since July 2016. The cost of imported goods rose 0.7 percent m/m, while core prices gained 0.3 percent m/m. Over the past 12 months the import price index has risen 2.7 percent. The data should further reinforce the FED's case for one last rate hike before the year ends. Inflation has been one of the most closely watched measures this year since price growth has broadly remained cool despite strength in the labor market.

Hurricanes impact

Recent Hurricanes in the US subdued the housing market, especially in the southern states last month, while a decline in building permits raised fears that the housing market recovery is stalling. The Commerce Department said housing starts dove 4.7 percent m/m, the lowest since September 2016 and building permits fell 4.5 percent m/m. The problem is that even before the storms struck, residential construction had almost deteriorated this year due to lack of land and skilled laborers as well as rising costs for building materials. The latest figures from the housing market may introduce a downward pressure on the third quarter of this year.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30220
The USDKWD opened at 0.30220 yesterday morning.

Corporate earnings drive markets more than before

By Hayder Tawfik

As most developed stock markets hit new highs, alarm bells have started ringing from all directions. Market commentators, politicians, some pundits and some respected portfolio managers and economist have recently joined the crowd. Whenever markets or stock prices hit new highs, there is always a concern. Using simple probability theory, the higher it goes the weaker the momentum becomes and the bigger the likelihood of small correction or may be consolidation. When these take place, sector rotation, asset reallocation are followed.

Obviously, there are lots of reasons why stock indices hitting new highs. Some are related to good market fundamentals such as attractive valuation, equity supply and demand, ample liquidity and corporate earnings. Others are related to the economic fundamentals and monetary policy. Since 2008 when most central banks in the developed economies lowered rates to near zero or negative in some places like the eurozone, mountain of liquidity were followed that have been supporting the world financial assets. Most of this liquidity did not go into production and economic activity but into the world financial markets.

Added to this ample liquidity has been corporate cash mountain that has been used for buy backs and increasing dividends for most big companies. At present, some of this liquidity might be reduced by increase in economic activity and business spending. Central banks have not drained money out of the system at some time in the future they will be starting some form of tighter money supply. Going forward equity investors should focus on company earnings if they want to achieve good performance. Ultimately, the performance of a stock price follow earnings and profitability and not just liquidity. Most stock market indices are expensive on historic basis but taking into account the level of interest rates, inflation and

global liquidity and based on forward valuation, they still seem attractive. The key question for investors how the market will transit itself once those supporting factors reverse themselves.

Encouraging

There are some encouraging signs that companies are back on reporting profits again, although might not be very much but they have come out of the profit recession they have faced over the past few years. Good example of this is US corporates. According to Bloomberg, the US S&P 500 operating earnings per share rose over 8% in the third quarter from a year prior. This renewed profitability should provide support for equity markets going forward. Although rising wages that is caused by higher inflation and more rates rises might put profit margin at risk. If these new developments are accompanied by stronger global economic growth then it might be acceptable to see stronger revenues to offset any decline in margins and provide support for earnings.

Corporates and individuals tax reform in the US once passed will be great boost for corporate earnings and profitability. Depending on which sector, the cut in taxes should benefit most companies apart from those ones that already pay low tax rates. A low rate of tax of 10% should boost earnings by at least 12 percent. US stock markets are starting to discount the chances of tax cuts into some specific sectors and individual companies too. Current analyst estimates for US corporates earnings is to rise by 10 percent in 2018. This seems quite optimistic but it is possible as the economic cycle turns to be more growth orientated. I believe that earnings momentum will accelerate for some certain sectors, such as high technology, mining, retail, banking and industries. Equity investors should be more active in those sectors and position themselves to take advantage of these earnings trends next year. Technology sector is one of most attractive from fundamental valuation standpoint, as the sector has higher margins than any of the other major stock market sectors and revenue growth forecasts are quite strong.

Overall, I am quite encouraged by the signs and optimistic for the next couple of the years. Also, I believe that stock markets will successfully transition to an earnings-driven rather than led by ample liquidity that supplied by most central banks. A gradual rise in US interest rates might create a headwind for the US equity market, but investors should focus on the sectors that could benefit from the growth, inflation and interest rate environment that I expect to happen in the coming years. @Rasameel



Business

Mercedes-Benz E 300 Cabriolet arrives in Kuwait in time for driving season

Ground-breaking technologies take open-air motoring to new heights



KUWAIT: Mercedes-Benz E 300 Cabriolet has arrived in Kuwait in time for top-down driving season. Now on display at A.R. Albisher & Z. Alkazemi Company, the Authorized General Distributor in Kuwait, the open four-seater combines puristic, sensuous design with high long-distance comfort, and a classic fabric soft top which melds a rich tradition of open-air elegance with innovations in driving enjoyment.

Complete with the latest technology, the E 300 includes comprehensive smartphone integration with a wireless charging and key function, a widescreen cockpit and the latest assistance systems. Its 2.0L - L4 engine and comfortable suspension systems ensure a sporty and luxurious driving experience. On request the Cabriolet can be equipped with the AIRCAP electric draught-stop system and the AIRSCARF neck-level heating system - to enhance comfort when driving with the roof down. For the first time, the Cabriolet is also available with 4MATIC all-wheel drive.

"Retaining the E-Class Coupe's intelligent light-weight construction in aluminium hybrid design, the E 300 Cabriolet ensures optimum protection and high structural safety in all driving conditions," said Mr. Mohammed Abdul Rahman Albisher, Director of Abdul Rahman Albisher & Zaid Alkazemi Company.

"Specially developed for cabriolets, the fully automatic climate control system offers an unnoticeable transition between closed and open top driving, for maximum climate comfort and maximum driving enjoyment in every season," added Michael Ruehle, Chief Executive Officer, Abdul Rahman Albisher & Zaid Alkazemi Company.

The new Cabriolet is the fifth and youngest member of Mercedes-Benz's E-Class family, which has been renewed entirely within the space of one year. At the same time, the brand with the star is continuing its tradition of high-caliber cabriolets with a classic fabric soft top.

When the soft top is up, the E-Class Cabriolet has a silhouette similar to that of the E-Class Coupe and

displays the same expressive proportions. The close ties between the two models are likewise apparent in the puristic design with the emphasis on surfaces with clean lines and sensuous forms.

Scintillating and Sporty Exterior

A striking front section with a low-positioned diamond radiator grille and centrally located star, LED High Performance headlamps (or optional high-resolution MULTIBEAM LED headlamps), a drawn-out bonnet with powerdomes and fully retractable side windows underline the dynamism of the Cabriolet. The tautly-stretched soft top with window flows harmoniously into the muscular-looking rear. Its elongated, sensuously sculpted shoulders and two-piece, extremely slim LED tail lamps emphasize the sporty character of the four-seater. In addition to this, the tail lamps exude a brilliance reminiscent of the glow given off by a jet engine. As a new feature, the tail lamps also put on a special light show for the driver when they approach or leave the car.

With the roof open, the harmony between exterior and interior design becomes apparent, uniquely accentuating the high-quality details. A visual entity comprising anodized, polished aluminium (AMG Line in matt aluminium) is created by the trim frame on the A-pillar and front windscreen along with the shoulderline trim strip and a wide trim finish that surrounds the soft-top compartment. The third brake lamp with clear-lens cover is harmoniously integrated into this frame.

Suspension that is 15 millimeters lower than that of the Saloon likewise emphasizes the luxuriously sporty

character of the E-Class Cabriolet. The car thus demonstrates its sporty credentials even with the standard 17-inch tires.

Premium-class fabric soft top

The fabric soft top is available in the colors dark brown, dark blue, dark red or black. A fully automatic acoustic soft top comes as standard. Its multi-layered structure with sophisticated insulation reduces wind and driving noise, which makes it easy for the occupants to hear each other talk, even when driving at high speed. The soft-top structure has an equally positive effect when it comes to climate comfort and makes the Cabriolet suitable for use all year round.

Derived from the S-Class Cabriolet, the soft top also meets high quality standards in terms of durability and operation. It can be fully opened and closed in 20 seconds when travelling at a speed of up to 50 km/h. After opening, it folds down quietly and precisely and is stored in the soft-top compartment in the boot.

Car on display at A R Albisher & Z Alkazemi



Interior - sophisticated style and sporty luxury

The upper section of the dashboard appears to be hovering and rests against generously proportioned trim elements which flow sensuously into the front doors. The exceptionally high-quality materials and finish emphasize the car's sporty, stylish character and exude outstandingly high-class appeal.

Two optionally available high-resolution 12.3-inch displays (31.2 cm, 1920 x 720 pixel resolution) - a unique selling point in this segment - merge beneath a shared glass cover to create a widescreen that appears to be floating in thin air but nevertheless

blends smoothly between the upper and lower sections of the cockpit. The driver can choose from three different styles for the virtual instruments in the instrument cluster: "Classic", "Sport" and "Progressive".

The driver has multiple options for operating the instrument cluster, multimedia system and other functions: touch controls in the steering wheel for finger-swipe control, a touchpad that recognizes handwriting and the Controller in the center console, LINGUATRONIC voice control and direct-access buttons, e.g. for controlling the air conditioning and for convenient activation and deactivation of certain driver assistance systems.

Larger and more luxurious

Compared with its predecessor, the new E-Class Cabriolet has grown in length, width and wheelbase: with a vehicle length of 4826 mm, a vehicle width of 1860 mm and a height of 1428 mm, the new E-Class Cabriolet is by far the larger model. The principal beneficiary of the wider track, with 1605 mm at the front (+67 mm) and 1609 mm at the rear (+68 mm), is the driving dynamics. Its considerably larger "footprint" benefits passengers in the rear in particular. On each of the four high-quality seats - which all feel like individual seats in their own right - the driver and all passengers will be able to enjoy true comfort even on long journeys

Suspension: sporty, agile and comfortable

The suspension on the new E-Class Cabriolet is designed to offer agile driving pleasure as well as a highly comfortable ride. Comfort-tuned AGILITY CONTROL suspension with an amplitude-dependent damping system, which is 15 millimeters lower than the Saloon's suspension, is fitted as standard.

The new E 300 Cabriolet is now available at A.R. Albisher & Z. Alkazemi Company's Shuwaikh Showroom. Call 24950000 to book a test drive, or visit the showroom.

Wall Street Week Ahead

Recent hurricanes take toll on quarterly earnings

SAN FRANCISCO: After raging over the southern United States and Puerto Rico, remnants of hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria are now dampening US corporate profits. While the deadly storms in August and September slammed insurers who are now on the hook for billions of dollars in damaged property, many retailers, manufacturers and banks are also feeling the pain.

Over half of S&P 500 companies reporting third-quarter results in recent weeks, including Harley-Davidson, Delta Airlines and Costco, have said on conference calls with investors that the storms harmed their businesses to some degree, according to a Thomson Reuters analysis. "We estimate the impact of the hurricanes accounted for approximately 1.5 to 2 percentage points of Harley-Davidson's retail sales decline during the quarter," the motorcycle maker's Chief Financial Officer, John Olin, told investors on Tuesday after reporting a decline in quarterly profit per share.

The hurricanes were part of the worst Atlantic hurricane season in over a decade, destroying or damaging homes, businesses and public infrastructure, killing over 200 people and paralyzing normal economic activity. Senior executives of at least 48 S&P 500 companies have told investors on quarterly conference calls that their businesses had been negatively affected by the storms. At least 12 companies,

including US Bancorp and Abbott Laboratories, also said their businesses were hurt by a September earthquake that killed 369 people in Mexico, a major market for US firms.

American International Group has estimated pre-tax losses of about \$1 billion each from Harvey and Irma, up to \$700 million from Maria and additional catastrophe losses, including Mexico's earthquake, of about \$150 million. Travelers Cos Inc said on Thursday it recorded \$700 million in catastrophe losses from the destruction wrought by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma, although its quarterly profit fell less than Wall Street feared.

The lingering effect

S&P 500 companies on average are expected to have increased their non-GAAP earnings per share by 4.2 percent in the third quarter, the slowest growth in a year, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S.

Excluding insurers, which are expected to have suffered a 63.3-percent decline in quarterly profits, S&P 500 earnings are expected to be up 6.9 percent. The lingering effects of Hurricanes Harvey and Irma hobbled activity at factories in September and blunted a rebound in US industrial production, the Federal Reserve said on Tuesday. Still, the storms have not stopped the stock market's record advance. Up 15 percent in 2017, the benchmark S&P 500 is trading at 18 times expected earnings, a multiple not seen since 2002, according to Thomson Reuters Datastream.

The S&P 500 property and casualty index on Friday hit a record high, more than recovering from a selloff that coincided with the Harvey's destruction. Many investors believe that insurers will raise premiums to make up for losses, and that those higher pre-

miums will become permanent. Dover Chief Executive Robert Livingston said overtime and other related expenses to get back up to speed had cost the manufacturing company as much as 2 cents per share in the quarter after Harvey forced it to close its Texas factories for four or five days.

Hand tool maker Snap-On said the storms cost it about \$8 million in sales in Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico. "Timing of both further disruption and rebuilding are unclear," Snap-On Chief Executive Nicholas Pinchuk told analysts on Thursday.

Waiving late fees and increasing reserves for customer credit cost PayPal Holdings about 1 cent per share in the past quarter, leaving its non-GAAP EPS at 46 cents.

Procter & Gamble on Friday said it had to suspend operations along the Gulf Coast due to the hurricanes and in Mexico because of the earthquake. Some companies, including Constellation Brands, said the hurricanes had only a minor negative on their results. For others, the storms will mean new business.

With 600,000 homes in Texas and Florida in need of re-roofing, shares in building materials firms USG Corp, Owens Corning and Eagle Materials Inc have jumped between 17 percent and 30 percent since just before Harvey struck Texas. Home Depot has surged 9 percent since the end of August on bets that homeowners repairing damage will spend more at its stores.

"They were hurricanes of a massive size that caused significant disruption to labor forces and spending," said Phil Blancato, head of Ladenburg Thalmann Asset Management in New York. "But it's a pendulum, early on it has an impact, but as the rebuild gets going and there's an inventory ramp-up, I think it swings back the other way." —Reuters

Iraq hikes southern oil output to make up for Kirkuk losses

BAGHDAD: Iraq said it hiked southern oil production by 200,000 barrels per day on Saturday to compensate for a halt in pumping in Kirkuk province because of its conflict with the Kurds.

"Basra Oil Company (BOC) started to pump an extra 200,000 bpd from the south and center" in addition to the 2.2 million barrels exported daily, Oil Minister Jabbar Al-Luaybi said in a statement. He said the move was to compensate for the loss of exports from the oil-rich northern province of Kirkuk which Iraqi security forces retook from Kurdish fighters in a military operation this week.

The arrangement would continue "until exports from the north return to normal", Luaybi said, adding it would not violate Iraq's OPEC commitment to stick to a lower output quota. Before the conflict, the Iraqi Kurds were exporting an average of 550,000 bpd via a pipeline through Turkey, half of which was pumped from the Kirkuk fields where production has halted.

At the opening of the Baghdad International Fair on Saturday, Saudi Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih hailed what he called "the new Iraq, on the ambitious road to prosperity and growth while strengthening its relations with the world". Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi took part in Riyadh along with 10 of his ministers in a meeting of the two countries' coordination commission, according to Iraq's ambassador to the Saudi kingdom, Roshdy Al-Ani. —AFP

Business

Deutsche Bank awards NBK Gold 2016 USD and Euro STP Excellence in Kuwait

Exceptional quality in processing dollar, euro-denominated payments

KUWAIT: NBK has been awarded by Deutsche Bank the prestigious USD Gold STP Excellence Award 2016 and Euro Gold STP Excellence Award for leadership and excellence in global electronic payments 2016. The awards recognize NBK's exceptional quality in processing USD and Euro-denominated payments, as well as the highest rate of Straight Through Processing (STP) overall. A delegation from Deutsche Bank presented the award to NBK recently. At the award ceremony held at NBK's head office, Deutsche Bank representatives congratulated NBK being the only Bank in Kuwait to receive this award.

Nassif A Chehab, Head of Financial Institutions at NBK said: "We are pleased that we maintain our position among others as the leading bank in electronic payments in Kuwait and continuously achieve the highest standards of correspondent banking emphasizing the prominent standing of NBK and Kuwait's banking sector among the leading global banks."

NBK maintained consistency throughout the high volume of remittances during the year whilst observing international standards of payments quality and compliance. This achievement maintains NBK's position within the top tier of institutions Deutsche Bank works with globally. Deutsche Bank is NBK's correspondent for USD and euro payments emanating from commercial and customer remittance payments. The Straight through Processing (STP) award is given to a select few international banks each year to highlight their impeccable achievements in processing outgoing payments.

The award emphasizes and underpins NBK's commitment towards its customers and its credibility assuring fast and efficient payment services with funds reaching the counterparty around the globe as efficiently and quickly as possible.

NBK continues to collectively enjoy the highest credit ratings from the three international rating agencies: Moody's, Fitch Ratings and Standard and Poor's. The Bank's ratings are supported by its high capitalization, prudent lending policies, and its disciplined approach to risk management, in addition to its highly recognized and very stable management team. NBK also maintains its position among the 50 safest banks in the world for the twelfth consecutive year.

NBK Group has the widest banking presence in 4 continents worldwide. NBK's international presence spans many of the world's leading financial centers including London, Paris, Geneva, New York and Singapore, as well as China (Shanghai). Meanwhile, regional coverage extends to Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Lebanon, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq and Turkey.



Nassif A Chehab



All-new 2018 Chevrolet Equinox has arrived in Kuwait!

KUWAIT: Chevrolet Alghanim introduces the all-new 2018 Chevrolet Equinox to its rich lineup! This marks the Equinox's very first presence in the region after amassing great success in the other markets since its introduction in 2005.

The 2018 Equinox provides customers with a powertrain that balances performance, efficiency and capability. All-New 2018 Equinox will be available with 2 Turbo engines, 1.5 Liter that delivers 170HP and 2.0 Liter delivering a 252HP, 352 nm of torque and paired to GM's all-new 9-speed automatic transmission.

Key features:

- The new Equinox's expressive exterior has a lean, muscular skin echoing the global Chevrolet design cues and sculpted shapes seen in the new Malibu.
- The interior takes advantage of the Equinox's all-new architecture to offer new elements such as available denim-style seat fabric which blends high style with high durability. More safety features include the New Safety Alert Seat, and the New Low-Speed Forward Automatic Braking.
- The Equinox offers exceptional fuel efficiency, with a combined 12.3km per liter, helping you go further for less.
- It incorporates the latest in weight reduction technology, that contributes to vehicle balance and efficiency.
- The 2018 Equinox is available in All Wheel Drive, with an AWD disconnect feature that promotes fuel efficiency when the rear axle is not needed.
- Chevrolet's 7- and 8-inch MyLink infotainment systems, designed to support Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.
- Panoramic reinforced rooftop.
- A standard feature is the ability to change speeds.
- Switchable AWD system that enhances efficiency by disconnecting from the rear axle when not needed.
- LED headlamps and taillamps.
- Extensive aero development in the wind tunnel for fuel-efficient on high-speed roads.
- Standard noise reduction feature.
- Leather front seats with a ventilation feature.
- Unique kneeling rear seat that enables a flat rear load floor and maximum cargo space.

Safety features:

The all-new Equinox's expanded safety features are rooted in a stronger body structure and a range of available advanced driver safety assistance features, which



include folding pedal set when colliding. Other safety features include Rear Parking Assist, Rear Cross Traffic Alert, Lane Change Alert with Side Blind Zone Alert and external mirrors with signal lamps. The advanced active safety features also include the New Low-Speed Forward Automatic Braking, radar- and camera-based adaptive technologies that can provide alerts to potential crash threats such as the New Forward Collision Alert with Following Distance Indicator, New Lane Keep Assist with Lane Departure Warning, New Rear Seat Reminder and the IntelliBeam headlamps that offer automatic high-beam control.



AUB tops Arab universities as per QS University rankings

BEIRUT: The 2017/2018 edition of the QS Arab Region University Rankings has placed the American University of Beirut (AUB) in the first position among 1,000 universities in the Arab world. This is the first time that AUB holds this position. AUB has ranked second to King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals in the three previous editions of this regional ranking, which started in 2014/2015.

"This remarkable accomplishment is a matter of pride for all - students, faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of AUB - and it could not have been achieved without the collective effort, hard work, and determination of each and every member of the AUB community in the pursuit of excellence," said AUB Provost Dr Mohamed Harajli.

In addition to ranking top overall, AUB has ranked among the top ten on five of the nine indicators: employer reputation (1st), web impact (5th), academic reputation (7th), papers per faculty (8th), and citations per paper (8th). In the remaining four indicators, AUB ranked among the top 40.

AUB has improved its rankings from the previous year on seven of the nine indicators, and maintained its status on the other two indicators. The climb in ranking was most significant in the areas of international faculty

(up by 25 spots from last year's ranking), international students (16 spots), faculty-student ratio (14 spots), and faculty with PhD (11 spots).

Regionally, AUB was followed by King Fahd University of Petroleum and Minerals, King Saud University, King Abdulaziz University, and United Arab Emirates University as per the QS Arab Region University Rankings. The American University in Cairo and the American University of Sharjah were ranked 6th and 8th, respectively. Saudi Arabia had nine universities ranked among the top 50 while Egypt, Lebanon, and the United Arab Emirates were each represented by seven universities among the top 50.

"While rankings are certainly not everything, we were quite pleased to learn that AUB was appropriately ranked as the finest university in the Arab world by the detailed and well-balanced QS ratings," AUB President Dr. Fadlo R. Khuri said. "The results further cement the belief among many that AUB is indeed the finest university in the Arab world, yet there is much work to do if we are to be where we need to be, clearly recognized as one of the 100 finest universities in the world," he concluded.

The methodology for the QS University Rankings for the Arab Region retains key indicators of the global university rankings while considering a set of performance metrics carefully tailored for the area, adapting to reflect regional priorities and challenges. Nine indicators were used in this QS regional ranking method, with the following weights of the total score: academic reputation (30 percent), employer reputation (20 percent), faculty-student ratio (20 percent), web impact (10 percent), papers per faculty (5 percent), citations per paper (5 percent), percent of faculty with PhD (5 percent), percent of international faculty (2.5 percent), and percent of international students (2.5 percent).

CBK announces winners of 'Al-Najma Account'

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the daily draw on "Al-Najma Account" yesterday at the Bank's Head Office to select 5 winners to win a cash prize of KD 7000 for each. The draw was held in the presence of Abdulaziz Ashkanani, representative of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The following names were announced as winners of the prizes:

- Mohammad Ahmad Abu Al-Ainani
- Sagdah Mohamed Ali
- Mdain Najem Mesmar
- Asaad Hasan Al-Talfah
- Mohammad Azim Atap Chan

Al-Najma Account allows its customers to win a daily prize of KD 7000 which is the highest daily prize in Kuwait. In addition, the Account offers quarterly draws that provide customers with opportunity to get their dreams turned to reality by winning great prizes starting from KD 100,000 for the first quarter escalating thereafter by KD 50 thousand for each quarter to reach KD 250,000 in the last quarter. Customers can enjoy additional benefits including obtaining ATM card and a credit card against the customer's account along with enjoying all other banking services.

The Bank congratulates all the lucky winners and draws their attention that the cash prizes will be credited into their accounts with the Bank. Further, the Bank appreciates the Ministry of Commerce & Industry's significant role and its continuous cooperation and effective supervision on the draw that was smoothly & transparently organized.

ME PR chief urges stronger 'nation brand' to take Egypt forward on the world stage

KUWAIT: A leading Middle East PR strategist says Egypt needs a comprehensive and clearly defined nation branding strategy to fulfill its true potential as an investment destination, regional economic and political powerhouse, and tourism hotspot.

Sunil John, the founder & CEO of ASDA's Burson-Marsteller, part of the global Burson-Marsteller network and a WPP company, lauded the country's existing destination brand, "Egypt, Where it All Begins" but said it was only one part of the overall nation brand.

Delivering his keynote presentation, 'Nation Branding in Times of Adversity,' John told delegates to the 2017 Narrative PR Summit, held at Four Seasons Hotel Cairo at Nile Plaza on October 17, that 'Where It All Begins' was a superb bit of branding. "It's clever, sophisticated and, crucial for a destination brand, based on truth." "But there is much more to do if Egypt is to capitalize on its many strengths," John said. "According to Brand Finance, Egypt's brand value and ranking has actually slipped over the past year, from 55th to 57th, even as the economy and tourism recover."

John said that Egypt has cultural, political and diplomatic heft that is not being fully realized, adding that the nation could raise its profile through hosting major events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup. "There's absolutely no reason that Egypt can't host an Olympics or a World Cup, or a major Expo like Dubai is doing in 2020," he said.

Brand truths

A successful brand would capitalize on Egypt's 'brand truths', one of which is scale, said John. "This is the most populous Arab country. And it boasts the third biggest economy in MENA, and the second biggest in Africa. When it comes to branding this nation, Egypt has to think big - really big." John warned that Egypt's story is currently being told by others, and that the country needed to take back control of its narrative. The best way to do this would be through a comprehensive nation branding exercise that goes far beyond tourism potential.

He cited work by the nation branding expert, Simon Anholt, which breaks down an effective brand into six pillars: investment, exports, governance, investment & immigration, culture & heritage, people, and tourism. While tourism is being successfully tackled, John said, a unified strategy including the other pillars would reap dividends for the country.

"In 2008, Egypt enjoyed one of the highest GDP growth rates in the world, at 7 per cent," John told delegates. "Immediately after the Arab Spring, however, in 2011, this plunged to 2 per cent, where it stayed for years. The past couple of years has seen something of a rebound, to 4.3 and 4.4 per cent in 2015 and 2016, and that corresponds with a return of confidence in Egypt's economy, and, this year, a recovery in tourism figures."

He added that other factors to underpin Egypt's global brand would be its position at the heart of Arab culture, through literature, cinema, music and art; and, as home to Al-Azhar, the country was in a leading position to dominate the global conversation on moderate Islam, he said.

John said that with 65 per cent of the population being under 35, it was essential that Egypt used its brand positioning to harness investment, internally and externally, that can unlock its youth dividend. He said investing in education and technology-based industries would prepare youth for, and provide, the jobs of the future. He concluded: "The public and private sectors must come together to forge the Egypt brand, which has the potential to be one of the strongest in the world."



Sunil John

Technology

Ooredoo Kuwait, first to launch Apple Watch Series 3 in Kuwait

Device available on Shamel installment plan

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced the exclusive launch of the Apple Watch 3 Series. The device is sold exclusively at Ooredoo and is available to current and new customers on any Shamel installment plan. Customers who purchase any of the current iPhone 8 plans can add KD5.3 per month on their installment plan.

Ooredoo has always been the pioneer in providing its customers with the latest technologies and is proud to be the first to introduce this device in Kuwait. This is a continuation to its ongoing efforts to enrich customers' lives by providing them with the latest developments in the field of telecommunications technology.

The Apple Watch 3 Series has many exciting features which will connect our customers more than ever, especially with the high speed of the dual-core S3 chip nestled inside of the Apple Watch Series 3. The Apple Watch Series 3 includes many features such as LTE connectivity, 16GB of storage space, a GPS and altimeter which are ideal for sports activities and it is also swim proof. It also includes 40 million songs and has music and radio streaming.

Customers can purchase the watch from Ooredoo branches and experience the enhancement available in Kuwait. For more information, please visit any of Ooredoo branches or authorized dealers and be the first to enjoy this new privilege in addition to our



Exciting features that help connect customers faster

online shop: shop.ooredoo.com.kw

Ooredoo Customers can enjoy the offers on the iPhone 7 and iPhone 8 at an incredible price with Shamel. They can get the iPhone 8 for KD35 monthly and enjoy Shamel's many benefits which include unlimited local minutes, 500GB internet, and 3 Ooredoo Passport

packs. The new iPhone 8 devices boast a number of powerful features, making this Apple's best iPhone to date. The iPhone 8 introduces an all-new glass design, a better camera, the smartest, most powerful chip ever in a smartphone, wireless recharging, and augmented reality experiences which have never been introduced before.

The iPhone 8 comes in two varieties: iPhone 8 and iPhone 8 Plus. They come in two capacities: 64GB and 256GB. The iPhone 8 devices are available in three colors: gold, silver, and space gray. The new devices come with the iOS 11, Apple's latest operating system, which introduce major performance and interface enhancements. Additionally, the update comes with powerful upgrades to your most-used features—Messages, Maps, Photos, and more.

Ooredoo continues to provide customers with offers on the iPhone 7 which is available at KD15 monthly and includes an array of benefits such as unlimited Ooredoo minutes, 100 local minutes, 5GB 4G+ internet, and the ability to carry over unused internet to the next month.

Apple Watch Series 3 متوفرة الآن مع شامل



Ipsos introduces new online access panel in Kuwait

KUWAIT: In an effort to expand its coverage, Ipsos MENA, has introduced a new online access panel in Kuwait. Kuwait is the country in the MENA region as part of Ipsos Interactive Services (IIS). The other seven are Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan and Morocco. As of today, the MENA online panel is comprised of over half a million panelists in total.

The new service in Kuwait was launched early July and in the span of two months, Ipsos managed to grow a panel size of 8,000 people. IIS develops and manages the largest online panels in MENA, in a cost-effective way, giving it access to a vast pool of respon-

ents. These online panels operate swiftly due to their automated processes and real-time monitoring. "In our consistent efforts to provide our clients with cutting-edge tools and methodologies; we are pleased to introduce the first online panel in Kuwait. The Online Panel will bring the flexibility of quicker delivery timelines as well as cost-effectiveness," says Amir Fahim, head of Ipsos in Kuwait, Qatar and Bahrain, in a statement.

"As the industry-leading company in the Middle East, it is our prerogative to stay on top of latest trends by creating innovative techniques, that come in line with our strategy to move to digital, to better service our



clients. I am confident that this move will be a step in the right direction for the market research industry in MENA," adds Joseph Habre, CEO of Ipsos IIS-Operations in MENA.

Nissan to unveil new ambulance and electric delivery vehicle

YOKOHAMA, Japan: Nissan will unveil two new fully customized vehicles at the Tokyo Motor Show to improve city mobility: the new Paramedic Concept and the all-electric e-NV200 Fridge Concept.

Packed with new technologies and features, the new Paramedic Concept will be Nissan's fifth-generation ambulance and builds on the success of the previous versions, which are sold exclusively in Japan. The next-generation ambulance is based on Nissan's NV350 Caravan, providing better comfort for the patient and a better work environment for paramedics and drivers.

The company will also lift the lid on its solution to urban delivery challenges and launch a modified, all-electric Nissan e-NV200 Fridge Concept. The Fridge Concept's compact size will make it easier to park in urban environments, where large delivery trucks are often prevented from stopping. Equipped with an additional battery pack in the cargo space to power a refrigeration unit, the Nissan e-Fridge will be able to store chilled foods.

"Our fifth-generation ambulance will offer enhanced features that will make a real difference to people's lives," said Ashwani Gupta, senior vice president of the Renault-Nissan LCV Business Unit. "The new Paramedic Concept contains vital life-saving equipment to respond to emergencies, often in remote areas.

"Meanwhile, the e-NV200 Fridge Concept will create huge value for commercial users - generating more business, as well as reducing the cost of ownership. With zero emissions, it'll be perfect for busy urban environments where larger vehicles are often prohibited."

Other unique elements packed into the new ambulance include Nissan's industry-leading Intelligent Around View Monitor and



technology to reduce the spread of germs.

The ambulance also carries a lithium-ion auxiliary battery that supports life-saving medical equipment when patients are in remote areas or in need of emergency assistance. It also contributes to CO2 reduction, as well as external and internal noise reduction.

Nissan plans to start sales of the ambulance in Japan in fiscal year 2018 and aims to double annual sales of the ambulance compared with the previous model.

Also featured at the Tokyo Motor Show will be the NV350 Caravan, which was launched in Japan in the summer. Intelligent Emergency Braking, Vehicle Dynamic Control with traction control system functions and Hill Start Assist, previously available only on some two-wheel-drive van grades, are now standard on all NV350 Caravan van models. In addition, Intelligent Around View Monitor has been installed for the first time in vehicles of this class in Japan.

Einstein's theory of happy living emerges in Tokyo note

JERUSALEM: A note that Albert Einstein gave to a courier in Tokyo, briefly describing his theory on happy living, has surfaced after 95 years and is up for auction in Jerusalem.

The year was 1922, and the German-born physicist, most famous for his theory of relativity, was on a lecture tour in Japan. He had

recently been informed that he was to receive the Nobel Prize for physics, and his fame outside of scientific circles was growing. A Japanese courier arrived at the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo to deliver Einstein a message. The courier either refused to accept a tip, in line with local practice, or Einstein had no small

change available. Either way, Einstein didn't want the messenger to leave empty-handed, so he wrote him two notes by hand in German, according to the seller, a relative of the messenger. "Maybe if you're lucky those notes will become much more valuable than just a regular tip," Einstein told the messenger, according to the seller, a resident of the German city of Hamburg who wished to remain anonymous. One note, on the stationery of the Imperial Hotel Tokyo, says that "a quiet and modest life brings more joy than a pursuit of success bound with constant unrest." — AFP

Apple hit with trademark lawsuit over iPhone X 'animoji' feature

NEW YORK: A Japanese software company is suing Apple Inc in a U.S. court over the trademark for the term "animoji", alleging the US technology company stole the name to use on a feature of its iPhone X.

Tokyo-based Emonster kk sued Apple in federal court in San Francisco, saying it holds the US trademark on the term animoji and that Apple's use of the word is a "text-book case" of deliberate infringement. An Apple spokesman declined to comment.

Apple's animoji feature allow users to animate the facial expressions of emojis

using facial recognition technology. It will be included on the iPhone X which is scheduled for release in November.

Phil Schiller, Apple's chief marketing officer, touted the animoji feature during the iPhone X launch event on Sept. 12, calling it a "great experience" for communicating with family and friends.

Emonster chief executive Enrique Bonansea launched an animated texting app in 2014 called Animoji and registered a trademark on the product name, according to the lawsuit.

Apple had full knowledge of Emonster's app because it is available for download on Apple's App Store, the lawsuit said. "Apple decided to take the name and pretend to the world that 'Animoji' was original to Apple," Emonster said in the complaint.

Emonster said it is seeking unspecified money damages and a court order blocking Apple from using the term while the lawsuit is pending. Investors see the iPhone X, which will sell for \$999, as an opportunity for Apple to refresh a smartphone lineup that had lagged the competition in new features.

The iPhone X has wireless charging, an infrared camera and hardware for facial recognition, which replaces the fingerprint sensor for unlocking the phone. — Reuters

Venezuelans use bitcoin 'mining' to escape inflation

CARACAS: Inside a locked room in an office building in Caracas, 20 humming computers use their data-crunching power to mine bitcoins, an increasingly popular tool in the fight against Venezuela's hyperinflation.

In warehouses, offices and homes, miners are using modified computers to perform complex computations, essentially book-keeping for digital transactions worldwide, for which they earn a commission in bitcoins.

While practiced worldwide, Bitcoin mining is part of a growing, underground effort in Venezuela to escape the worst effects of a crippling economic and political crisis and runaway inflation that the IMF says could reach 720 percent this year.

Having no confidence in the bolivar and struggling to find dollars, many Venezuelans, who are neither computer geeks nor financial wizards, are relying on the bitcoin — currently valued around \$6,050, or other virtual currencies. Caracas office worker Veronica says her boss installed the 20 machines in early 2015. "These are machines that bring in \$800

a month (more than 26 million bolivars)," says Veronica, who refused to give her full name because of fears of arrest.

Bitcoin mining consultant Randy Brito estimates that about 100,000 Venezuelans are "mining," although it is impossible to have an exact figure because many are protecting themselves by using servers in foreign countries. Brito said the boom in these virtual transactions began in 2014, when Venezuela's economic crisis intensified as a result of the collapse in the price of oil, which accounts for 96 percent of the country's revenue.

"Whoever buys bitcoins with bolivars earns money by increasing the price of the bitcoin against the dollar, and escapes inflation," Brito told AFP.

Not without risk

Venezuela is something of a mining hotspot because the electricity needed to run the power-hungry computers is so heavily subsidized as to be almost free. Thus "it is very profitable to 'produce' bitcoins," said economist Asdrubal Oliveros.

Tempted by the money made by her boss, Veronica has taken the plunge at home, buying a machine for \$2,280 online from China.

"A friend took another and a boy I know bought 20," said Veronica. "People are buying machines like crazy." They set the machines up in another woman's house, as many miners do to spread the power consumption and avoid attracting the attention of the state intelligence service Sebin, whose agents regularly raid buildings when they notice a suspicious surge. — Reuters



HONG KONG: This file picture taken on February 28, 2014 shows a man talking on a mobile phone in a shop displaying a bitcoin sign during the opening ceremony of the first bitcoin retail shop in Hong Kong. — AFP

Health

The ultra-personal therapy: Gene tumor boards guide cancer care

Panels decides best treatment for cancer patients

SAN DIEGO: Doctors were just guessing a decade ago when they gave Alison Cairnes' husband a new drug they hoped would shrink his lung tumors. Now she takes it, but the choice was no guesswork. Sophisticated gene tests suggested it would fight her gastric cancer, and they were right. Cancer patients increasingly are having their care guided by gene tumor boards, a new version of the hospital panels that traditionally decided whether surgery, radiation or chemotherapy would be best.

These experts study the patient's cancer genes and match treatments to mutations that seem to drive the disease. "We dissect the patient's tumor with what I call the molecular microscope," said Dr Razelle Kurzrock, who started a board at the University of California, San Diego, where Cairnes is treated. It's the kind of care many experts say we should aim for - precision medicine, the right drug for the right person at the right time, guided by genes. There are success stories, but also some failures and many questions:

"Will gene-guided care improve survival? Does it save money or cost more? What kind of gene testing is best, and who should get it? "I think every patient needs it," especially if cancer is advanced, said Kurzrock, who consults for some gene-medicine companies. "Most people don't agree with me - yet. In five years, it may be malpractice not to do genomics." Few people get precision medicine today, said Dr Eric Topol, head of the Scripps Translational Science Institute. "The only thing that's gone mainstream are the words."

How it works now

If you have a cancer that might be susceptible to a gene-targeting drug, you may be tested for mutations in that gene, such as HER2 for breast cancer. Some breast or prostate cancer patients also might get a multi-gene test to gauge how aggressive treatment should be. Then most patients get usual guideline-based treatments. If there's no clear choice, or if the disease has spread or comes back, doctors may suggest

tumor profiling - comprehensive tests to see what mutations dominate. That's traditionally been done from a tissue sample, but newer tests that detect tumor DNA in blood - liquid biopsies - are making profiling more common. The tests cost about \$6,000 and many insurers consider them experimental and won't pay.

Gene tumor boards analyze what the results suggest about treatment. They focus on oddball cases like a breast cancer mutation in a colon cancer patient, or cancers that have widely spread and are genetically complex. The only options may be experimental drugs or "off-label" treatments - medicines approved for different situations. But as tumor profiling grows, it's revealing how genetically diverse many tumors are, and that oddball cases are not so rare, said Dr John Marshall. He heads the virtual tumor board at Georgetown Lombardi Comprehensive Cancer Center that also serves cancer centers in Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Michigan and Tennessee.

Experts match treatments to the mutations



"There is a little bit of faith" that testing will show the right treatment, but it's not a sure thing, said Dr. Lee Schwartzberg, who heads one participating center, the West Cancer Center in Memphis. Dr. Len Lichtenfeld, the American Cancer Society's deputy chief medical officer, is optimistic yet wary. Drugs that target BRAF mutations work well for skin cancers called melanomas, but less well for lung or colon cancers. "Just because a mutation occurs it doesn't mean that drug is going to work in that cancer," he said.

Lucky cases

When it does, results can be dramatic. Cairnes' cancer was between her stomach and esophagus, and had spread to her liver, lungs and lymph nodes. Tissue testing found 10 abnormal genes, but on the liquid biopsy only EGFR popped out as a good target. Two drugs aim at that gene but aren't approved for her type of cancer. A tumor board advised trying both - Erbitux and Tarceva, the drug her husband also had taken.

'Damage done'

The WHO boss had faced mounting pressure to reverse the decision, including from some of the leading voices in global public health. "The Mugabe appointment, coming at the end of (Tedros's) first 100 days, was a misstep," the director of the Global Health Institute at Harvard University, Ashish K Jha, told AFP in an email shortly before the WHO decision was announced. "Reversing will actually be a strong sign that the leadership listens and is willing to be responsive to views of the global public," he added. The US ambassador to the United Nations during Barack Obama's administration, Samantha Power, tweeted: "Tedros will surely revoke terrible apptmt of Mugabe as goodwill ambassador, but damage is done. The only person whose health 93-yr Mugabe has looked out for in his 37 year reign is his own." —AFP



MADISON: Doctors, pharmacists, geneticists and others meet to discuss how to best treat cancer patients at the University of Wisconsin Carbone Cancer Center in Madison, Wis. —AP

Within two weeks, she quit using pain medicines. After two months, her liver tumor had shrunk roughly by half. There are signs that cancer may remain, but it is under control. She feels well enough to travel and to take care of her granddaughter. "I'm very, very grateful to have a targeted therapy," Cairnes said. "I cannot expect a better outcome than what we're seeing right now," said her doctor, Shumei Kato.

What studies show

But is gene-guided treatment better than usual care? French doctors did the first big test, with disappointing results. About 200 patients with advanced cancer were given

whatever their doctors thought best or off-label drugs based on tumor profiling. Survival was similar - about two months. Another French study, reported in June, was slightly more encouraging on survival but exposed another problem: No drugs exist for many gene flaws. Tests found treatable mutations in half of the 2,000 participants and only 143 got what a tumor board suggested. Some doctors worry that tumor boards' recommending off-label treatments diverts patients from research that would benefit all cancer patients. For example, the American Society of Clinical Oncology's TAPUR study tests off-label drugs and shares results with their makers and federal regulators. —AP

WHO revokes appointment of Mugabe

GENEVA: The head of the World Health Organization yesterday reversed his decision to name Zimbabwe's President Robert Mugabe as a goodwill ambassador, following widespread uproar. "Over the last few days, I have reflected on my appointment of HE President Robert Mugabe as WHO Goodwill Ambassador for (Non-communicable diseases) in Africa. As a result I have decided to rescind the appointment" the head of the UN agency, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said in a statement. Tedros, who took charge of WHO in July, said he had "listened carefully" to those who condemned the decision and spoken to the Harare government. "We have concluded that this decision is in the best interests of the World Health Organization." Tedros had announced the appointment earlier this week during a speech in Uruguay, where he praised Zimbabwe as "a country that places univer-

sal health coverage and health promotion at the centre of its policies to provide health care to all". But activists, public health experts and key WHO donors like Britain, Canada and the United States swiftly denounced any prospective role for Mugabe, saying Zimbabwe's healthcare system has collapsed under his 37 years of authoritarian rule. Tedros said yesterday his goal was "to build political leadership and create unity around bringing health to all."

Maternal deaths prompt calls for action in Zambia

LUSAKA: The birthday of twins Karen and Kelly Junior will always be tinged by sadness as it also marks the day their mother died in childbirth—a tragic occurrence of increasing public debate in Zambia. Their mother, Karen Kalengele, 33, was admitted to the Medcross hospital in Lusaka, one of the country's most prestigious private medical facilities, on March 18 to give birth. Her labor was slow and, as she was expecting twins, doctors chose to perform a Caesarean section. It was apparently successful but, soon after the birth, her husband Kelly Chuunga, 45, was informed of her death. "We were with my sisters in a room where the babies had been brought and we were busy taking pictures while my wife was dying on the operating table," Chuunga, a finance manager said. For any explanation, he relies on a death certificate that concludes his wife succumbed to a pulmonary embolism—a sudden blockage of an artery in the lungs. "I don't know

whether it was negligence or it was an accident. It has left me with a lot of questions I don't have answers to," he said, adding he didn't want to pursue a legal case against the hospital.

No-one at Medcross was reachable for comment when contacted by AFP. The reluctance to discuss or complain about cases of maternal death in Zambia has been challenged recently by the death of 29-year-old journalist Sithembile Zulu, who worked for the government-run Daily Mail. She died in September after giving birth to a girl in Lusaka, prompting an outcry in the media and triggering widespread demands for better understanding of maternal deaths. Health Minister Chitalu Chilufya ordered an investigation into the case, saying he was "deeply shocked by the turn of events... every death of a mother is one death too many."

The risks of childbirth are higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other part of the world, with 547 deaths per 100,000 births, according to the United Nations. But Zambia is far from the worst nation affected, with 224 deaths per 100,000 births—compared to 1,360 in Sierra Leone and 814 in west African powerhouse Nigeria. "The maternal mortality rate in Zambia is still very high, though we have managed to reduce it," said gynaecologist Samson Chisele, vice president of the Medical Association of Zambia. "We are implementing action to try to get it to less than 100 per 100,000 by 2021." —AFP

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248 33 199

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
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What's On

BSK hosts awards evening



The annual Awards Evening for the Year 7-11 students at The British School of Kuwait (BSK) took place in lavish style in the Al Baraka Ballroom at the Crowne Plaza Hotel, as parents and staff celebrated the many and varied achievements of the school year 2016-17 in the presence of BSK Chairman Sadiq Al-Mutawa and BSK Founder Madam Vera Al-Mutawa MBE. This is a very special year in the history of BSK, which can trace its modest beginning back to 1978 when it was a nursery based in Madam Vera's home. Becoming the Sunshine Kindergarten and then growing over the years until now, in its 40th Ruby Anniversary Year, BSK is Kuwait's premier school. The delight on Vera's face was plain to see as she was presented with a ruby vase and large bouquet of red roses by the Head Students and their Deputies, whilst in the background played the soulful "Ruby" by Ray Charles. This was a fitting start to an evening to honor the wonderful students Vera has dedicated her life to educating.

Following restructuring of the management system in the Secondary Phase, BSK is fortunate in this academic year to have two Head Teachers. The Middle Phase Head Teacher, Nicholas Smith, welcomed parents, staff and students, before delivering his Annual Report, including recent developments and plans for further improvement. He reviewed Middle Phase developments which included: Academics with the planned cross-curricular enrichment day, Extracurricular Successes in the prestigious Young Musicians of the Gulf competition in Bahrain, and Sporting Successes both within Kuwait and at the British Schools of the Middle East competition, also in Bahrain, where both their U13 and U15 teams produced outstanding performances.

Emma Bowie, the Higher Phase Head Teacher intro-

duced her speech by recounting the examination achievements of our Year 11 to Year 13 students. Parents were delighted to learn that BSK's June 2017 examination results at IGCSE and GCSE were yet again outstanding, with 95 percent A-C and 60 percent at A-A. AS Level were just as impressive with 97 percent A-E and all-time bests at BSK of 81 percent A-C and 65 percent A-B. A Level results were also highly commendable with a 75 percent pass rate at A-B. She informed parents and guests that, once again, many Year 13 students had decided to pursue their degree courses in Britain, with destinations including Durham University, the University of Warwick, the University of Bristol, University College London and the University of Edinburgh. Other Year 13 graduates opted to pursue their studies elsewhere, their destinations including the USA, Canada, Australia, Italy, India and Pakistan.

The Guest of Honor was Patricia L. Fietz, Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of the United States of America. Her mesmerizing speech really connected with the young audience, as she recounted her childhood when she visited Europe during a family holiday. She was fascinated by the number of languages spoken as she travelled from country to country, which sparked a passion that saw herself become fluent in numerous languages as she knew she was destined for a life in diplomacy. "Grasp every moment; make the most of every opportunity" she encouraged the students.

In both the Middle and Higher Phases prestigious Subject Awards went to the top student in each subject in each year group, many of whom achieved near to 100 percent in their final examinations. The Roll of Honor for the Middle Phase was read by Alya Muflihi the Assistant



Head Teacher, and by Simon Amura, the Higher Phase Assistant Head Teacher.

The Awards Evening also honored over 250 students who achieved Excellence Awards in 2016-17. The Rolls of Honor were read by the Middle Phase Coordinator Sylvain Kerzerho, Assistant Middle Phase Coordinator Miss Sophie Ali, the Upper Department Coordinator Miss Hannah Glendinning and the Sixth Form Department Coordinator, Dr Clifford Cheung.

The BSK String Orchestra, under the baton of Galina Bojilova, served up a feast of music including the rousing Death or Glory by R.B. Hall as the Award Winners entered the ballroom and An Irish Melody during the interlude. Vivian Sequeira wowed the audience with her prize-win-

ning rendition on violin of the first Movement of the Kabalevsky Violin Concerto, accompanied by Miss Emily Jeffcott on piano.

The final student awards of the evening were the much coveted Head Teachers' Awards. Five such awards were conferred, to one student from each year. The role of honor was Luaidh Williams, Reem Abdulredha, Soha Adour, Farah Badr and Edward Burgan.

BSK Principal, Paul Shropshire, rounded off the evening by proposing a vote of thanks, congratulating the students on their great successes and looking ahead to another year of hard work and exceptional achievements. The evening closed with the students and parents enjoying a buffet dinner.

Malabar Gold and Diamonds raffle draw



The raffle draw winner of 'Win up to 100 Kilos of Gold' campaign, Vimal Raj receives the prize 1/4 kg of gold from Afsal Khan, Zonal Head, Malabar Gold and Diamonds, in the presence of officials from Malabar Gold and Diamonds during an event conducted at Indian Central School, Abbasiya, Kuwait.

Jumeirah Hotel launches Discover America Week with a special menu

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa invites guests to experience a culinary journey around the states during "Discover America Week 2017" in collaboration with the United States Embassy of Kuwait. The activity will be taking place in the resort's premium restaurant, Pepper Steakhouse, showcasing a customized menu of American specialties from Saturday October 21st to Wednesday October 25th.

Director of Public Relations and Communications, Carol Roncoletta, said: We are excited to collaborate with the United States Embassy of Kuwait to bring the diverse American cuisine to our resort. We welcome our guests to experience this culinary journey with us and capture the authentic taste of America."

The various tastes of America can be enjoyed in the award-winning restaurant, Pepper Steakhouse, where an American guest chef will be creating a special menu of American dishes alongside the hotel's Executive Chef and Pepper's culinary team. The customized menu



starts with homemade cornbread and assorted dips for starters, a choice of red apple and walnut salad in lime vinaigrette dressing, Hickory Smoked Tomato Soup, Seafood Chowder and slowly roasted pot chicken with caramelized onions followed by a Lemon Sorbet for the intermediate course. The main course features smoked or grilled American prime beef with sweet potato puree and roasted vegetables on the side. Guests will end their meal on a sweet note with a selection of mini pies. Concluding the series of events, the luxurious resort will host a closing night where guests are welcome to a

special BBQ Night on the beach and poolside, with a live performance by the American rock band Touch N' Go on Wednesday, October 25th.

Discover America is an annual event focusing on the US-Kuwait collaboration in innovation, education and food. Recently, this special week took place in Jumeirah Etihad Towers in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. In Kuwait, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa is proud to lead the continuation of the Discover America Week in the frameworks of its brand promise to embrace cultural connection and cultural diversity to enrich its guest experiences.

Learn tools, techniques that impact your team's accountability

Most people have a personal drive to be successful and achieve great results for themselves. However, we do not work in isolation. Everyone must take ownership to ensure a team is successful. In a two-day workshop Joanna Thumiger will help you learn and access all the tools to impact your team's accountability from the 30th to the 31st of October 2017, in Burgan Meeting Room at the Hilton Resort Kuwait.

In this lively and interactive program, Joanna Thumiger will inspire leaders to build a great team that takes ownership, and is accountable for the overall

results. She will provide attendees with tools and techniques to work well with every team member, and drive their performance.

Day 1 will help attendees identify what a high performing team looks like, a leader's role in such a team, the challenges of teamwork and how to build a cohesive team. Day 2 will focus on the accountability for performance, the tools for accountability and engagement of your team.

Joanna Thumiger is an international trainer, executive coach and business mentor with a wealth of experience in both the training field and in leading teams across the globe, a certified trainer and qualified practitioner in the DISC, MBTI, Hogan, LEA and Harrison Assessments and the winner of the Australian Young Retailer of the Year.

The Knowledge Club 2017 series is organized by Vigor Events and Co-Organized by ALGAS Events Company. Members of the Knowledge Club this year include Hadi Clinic as Gold Member, Warba Bank and Kout Food Group as Silver Member and media support from the International Advertising Association Kuwait.

ICSK - Khaitan observes Healthy Food Week

Establishing healthy habits in the early years provides children a strong foundation for good health and well-being throughout their lives. To inculcate this, tiny tots of ICSK Khaitan observed 'Healthy Food Week' from the 8th to the 12th of October 2017. This is an annually observed event to improve the health and wellness of the students and to make them aware the link between nutrition, physical activity and learning.

Children brought various food items according to the given schedule. They decorated the class rooms aesthetically with charts and banners. While enjoying variety of salads and steamed food items, students were learning the importance of healthy food. Teachers insisted on not to skip the break-



fast as it is the food that has long term health benefits. They also told that by not skipping breakfast we can reduce obesity, high blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes. Diversified activities organ-

ized by the students were appreciated by one and all. Parents were also involved enthusiastically and provided a great support to make the food week a great success.

TV



01:30 The Last Rescue
03:15 Compadres
04:55 Beyond Redemption
06:25 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part II



00:45 Treehouse Masters
05:02 Rugged Justice
05:49 Rugged Justice
06:36 Night



00:00 EastEnders
00:35 Kat & Alfie: Redwater
01:25 Luther
02:20 Unforgotten



00:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
01:00 Homicide Hunter
02:00 Measuring Evil: Britain's Worst Killers



00:05 Russell Howard's Stand Up Central
00:30 Russell Howard's Stand Up Central
00:55 The Alternative Comedy Experience

22:25 The Alternative Comedy Experience
22:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:15 Tosh.0



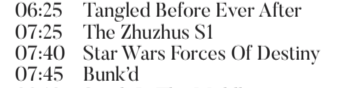
00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:45 Kids Do The Craziest Things



00:30 Alaska Haunting
01:20 Haunted Towns
02:10 American Monster
03:00 Chandra Levy: An American Murder Mystery



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles



00:00 Henry Hugglemonster
00:15 Calimero
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Henry Hugglemonster



00:20 Street Customs 2008
01:05 Gold Rush: The Story So Far
01:50 Gold Rush
02:35 What On Earth?



00:00 Disney11
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Marvel's Spider-Man
07:15 Right NOW Kapow

Tyler Henry
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 So Cosmo
06:55 El News



00:00 Bakers vs. Fakers
01:00 Siba's Table
01:30 Dirty Table
02:00 Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy



00:10 Guess This House
01:00 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase



00:00 Ancient Discoveries
01:00 Decoding The Past
02:00 How The States Got Their Shapes

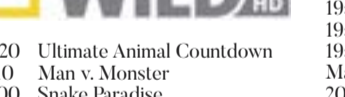
11:50 Duck Dynasty
12:15 Duck Dynasty
12:40 Counting Cars
13:05 Counting Cars



00:45 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
01:10 Route Awakening
01:40 Cruise Ship Diaries
02:35 Miguels Tropical Kitchen



00:10 Wicked Tuna
01:00 Future China 2049
02:00 Seconds From Disaster
02:30 Seconds From Disaster



00:20 Ultimate Animal Countdown
01:10 Man V. Monster
02:00 Snake Paradise
02:50 Ultimate Animal Countdown

11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:00 Breadwinners



00:02 Max & Ruby
00:24 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:34 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:45 The Day Henry Met



00:05 Teaching Mrs Tingle
02:00 Resurrecting The Champ
04:00 Cold Mountain
05:00 The Imitation Game



01:25 Snow Dogs
03:10 James And The Giant Peach
04:35 Hercules (1997)
06:10 Frankenweenie



00:10 Adventures Of A Pizza Guy
01:40 Barbershop 2: Back In Business
03:30 Hello Carter

08:30 A Country Called Home
10:00 The Quiet Hour
11:35 The Age Of Adaline
13:35 Alex Of Venice



00:15 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest
02:00 The Adventures Of The American Rabbit
03:30 A.R.C.H.I.E.



00:40 Kicking And Screaming
03:15 Planes, Trains And Automobiles
04:50 Up Close And Personal
06:55 Rocky



00:30 Rise Of The Machines
01:20 Rise Of The Machines
02:10 You Have Been Warned
03:00 Mythbusters



00:15 Teaching Mrs Tingle
02:00 Resurrecting The Champ
04:00 Cold Mountain
05:00 The Imitation Game



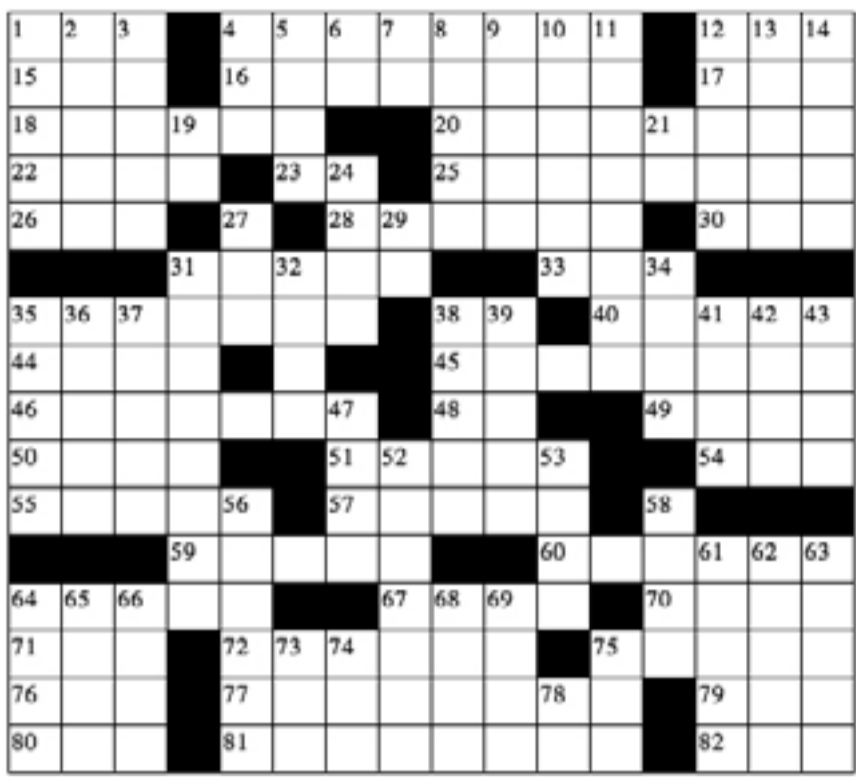
00:00 Who Lives Here?
01:00 Who Lives Here?
02:00 Along For The Ride
02:30 Along For The Bride



00:20 Cake Boss
00:42 Cake Boss
01:05 My Big Fat Fabulous Life
01:50 This Is Life With Carissa Cupido

Stars

CROSSWORD 1742



ACROSS

- 1. Counting the number of white and red blood cells and the number of platelets in 1 cubic millimeter of blood.
4. The levorotatory form of dopa (trade names Bendopa and Brocadopa and Larodopa).
12. A sudden loss of consciousness resulting when the rupture or occlusion of a blood vessel leads to oxygen lack in the brain.
15. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.
16. A cooking utensil of parallel metal bars.
17. An ugly evil-looking old woman.
18. Separate or cut with a tool, such as a sharp instrument.
20. Extraordinarily good.
22. Advanced in years.
23. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
25. A person with a record of successes.
26. An unabridged dictionary constructed on historical principles.
28. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
30. The capital and largest city of Japan.
33. Take something away by force or without the consent of the owner.
35. A festival featuring African-American culture.
40. Little known Kamarupan languages.
44. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
45. Gentian of eastern North America having clusters of bristly blue flowers.
46. Pertaining to forces or mental processes outside the possibilities defined by natural or scientific laws.
48. (Sumerian) Goddess personifying earth.
49. Rock that in its molten form (as magma) issues from volcanoes.
50. A state in the western United States.
51. The ending of a series or sequence.
54. (usually followed by ~ of) Released from something onerous (especially an obligation or duty).
55. A projection at the end of a piece of wood that is shaped to fit into a mortise and form a mortise joint.
57. A member of an American Indian peoples of NE South America and the Lesser Antilles.
59. A resident of Iowa.
60. Valuable source of caviar and isinglass.
64. The state prevailing during the absence of war.
67. Any competition.
70. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
71. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
72. A small drum with one head of soft calfskin.
76. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
77. Lacking general education or knowledge.
79. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located adv.
80. Used of a single unit or thing.
81. Suffering the misfortune of shipwreck.
82. The rate at which red blood cells settle out in a tube of blood under standardized conditions.

DOWN

- 1. Tropical American tree producing cacao beans.
2. Water accumulated in the bilge of a ship.

- 3. Any system of principles or beliefs.
4. Infectious disease caused by a species of chlamydia bacterium.
5. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
6. A state in New England.
7. A doctor's degree in optometry.
8. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
9. Any of various herbaceous plants of the genus Atriplex that thrive in deserts and salt marshes.
10. An excited state of agitation.
11. (physics) The point of maximum displacement in a periodic system.
12. Perennial having hollow cylindrical leaves used for seasoning.
13. (of an arrow) Equipped with feathers.
14. (informal British usage) Aggravation or aggression.
19. A public promotion of some product or service.
21. A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
24. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
27. A city in north central Morocco.
29. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
31. Not having or producing echoes.
32. Surrealist Spanish painter (1904-1989).
34. Shout loudly and without restraint.
36. Disposed of as useless.
37. Of or relating to the former Indo-European people.
38. Someone who bakes commercially.
39. Any of a group of heavenly spirits under the god Anu.
41. An emotion experienced in anticipation of some specific pain or danger (usually accompanied by a desire to flee or fight).
42. (New Testament) Disciple of Jesus.
43. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
47. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
52. Tropical American prostrate or climbing herbaceous perennial having an enormous starchy root.
53. A French abbot.
56. Of or associated with or requiring the use of the mind.
58. (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
61. An edict of the Russian tsar.
62. United States computer entrepreneur whose software company made him the youngest multi-billionaire in the history of the United States (born in 1955).
63. Typical geese.
65. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
66. An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
68. A sensation (as of a cold breeze or bright light) that precedes the onset of certain disorders such as a migraine attack or epileptic seizure.
69. A pouch in many birds and some lower animals that resembles a stomach for storage and preliminary maceration of food.
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
74. A bachelor's degree in naval science.
75. An infection of the sebaceous gland of the eyelid.
78. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.

Yesterday's Solution

Grid for Yesterday's Solution crossword puzzle with filled-in letters.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Making peace with the past is essential and it's the only way you can get the future you want. People who cannot help themselves play a big role in your life now—a neighbor needs a cup of sugar, a friend gives birth, etc. Although there is much activity with others today, there will still be some solitude where you can think and recuperate your own energies.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Endurance and muscle-tone exercises will keep you feeling good physically and mentally. Consider a routine day that includes exercise. Perhaps a friend would like to join you in this process. There is a bout of philosophy or even a little religion now that could have an enormous effect on your future.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are favored today. Good luck and positive actions are in the forecast. Overall, this is a good day. Romance and other things that tug at the heart-strings come your way. This is a great time to deepen or seal a love relationship.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Money matters come up today—all is positive. Perhaps a friend or family member remembers to repay a loan. Sometime today you could be composing music or creating poetry—you enjoy whistling a creative tune.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Improvement in relationships is most satisfying. A person with whom you are interested in continuing a relationship seems to want the same as you: go slow. Harmony and beauty are deeply satisfying and you gain a great deal of joy by watching nature, attending religious ceremonies, watching others, viewing art, etc.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today is the best time to begin a new habit—perhaps a diet. Radical changes in self-care are available. Cutting through the unessential and superficial and getting to the core in matters of food and health are most important at this time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Visiting a nearby tourist attraction may be where your energies are best enjoyed. Lovers, children and other people or things dear to your heart are emphasized at this time. Economize on this adventure—you will still have lots of fun.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You are likely to feel the push or urge to increase your family or to pop the marriage question at this time. There is a greater than usual emphasis on emotional security where you are likely to want to put down roots somehow.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You can acquire a deeper spiritual understanding if you look at religious practices of other lands. This is a marvelous time for writing. Put your ideas or your story on paper. This period gives you the opportunity to work on a plan.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Faith, optimism and a yearning to explore new horizons are some of the focal points in your life at this time. A plan is developing and the subjects of travel and education come to mind. These are great ways to stretch your horizons and open new doors of opportunity.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Your outward seriousness and no-nonsense approach to things are obvious to all. This deliberate sense of responsibility comes across and is central to your personality. Everything is run through your checkpoint to see if it holds up and can pass the test.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Family, home and the other roots in your life give you a sense of mission. There are growth and gain through these things. This is a fruitful period for real-estate investments, particularly if you do not take on too much at one time.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Spiders 1

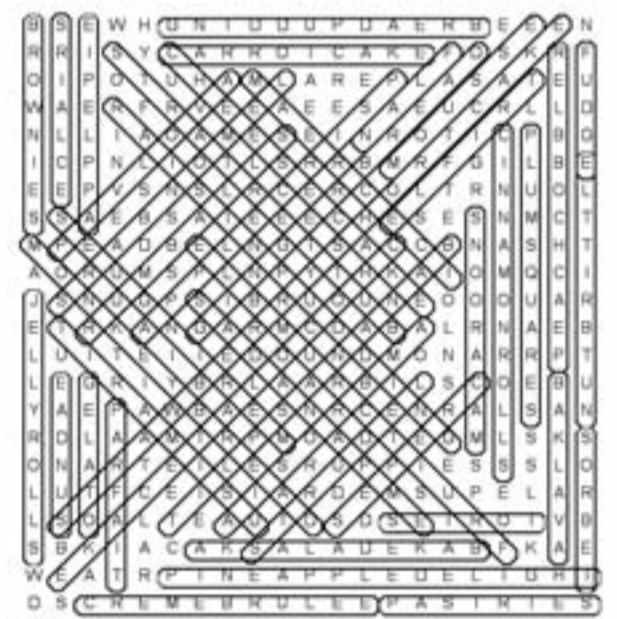
Find and circle all of the spider species and anatomy words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- ABDOMEN, BLACK WIDOW, BOOK LINGS, BRAZILIAN WANDERING CAMEL, CARDINAL, CHELICERAE, CLAWS, EIGHT LEGS, ESOPHAGUS, EXOSKELETON, EYES, FANGS, FISHING FUNNEL WEB, GIANT HUNTSMAN, GOLDEN HUNTSMAN, GRASS, HEAD, HEART, INTESTINE, LICHEN, MIRROR, MOUSE, OGRE FACED ORCHARD, PEACOCK, PELOPOUS, PIRICAN, VENOM, RED WIDOW, WATER, SETAE, SILK GLAND, SILKHENGE, SPINNERETS, TARANTULA, TEXAS RECLUSE, THORAX, TRAPDOOR, VENOM, VIOLIN, WEBS, YELLOW GARDEN, YELLOW SAC.

Yesterday's Solution

Delicious Desserts



- AMBROSIA, APPLE CRISP, APPLE PIE, BAKED ALASKA, BACLAVA, BANANA SPLIT, BREAD PUDDING, BROWNIES, BUTTER TARTS, CARROT CAKE, CHEESE CAKE, CHOCOLATE CAKE, CINNAMON ROLLS, CREME BRULEE, CREAM PUFFS, ECLAIRS, EMPANADAS, FLAN, FRUIT CRUMBLE, FUDGE, GELATO, GINGERBREAD, ICE CREAM, JELLY ROLLS, LEMON BARS, MACAROONS, MERINGUES, MONKEY BREAD, Mousse, NUT BRITTLE, PAFRITS, PAVLOVA, REACH COBBLER, TRIFLE, PINEAPPLE DELIGHT, PLUM SQUARES, RUM BALLS, SUGAR STRAWBERRY SHORT CAKE, STROGEL, SUNGEE, TAMARISU, TIRAMISU, TRIFLE.

The hidden message is: WHEN YOU ARE FEELING STRESSED, A SOLUTION IS "STRESSED" SPELLED BACKWARDS.

Daily SuDoku

4x4 grid for Daily SuDoku puzzle with numbers.

Yesterday's Solution

4x4 grid for Yesterday's Solution SuDoku puzzle with numbers.

Lifestyle | Gossip

Corey Feldman arrested for marijuana possession

The 46-year-old actor was charged with one count of possession of marijuana and a traffic charge after being arrested by officers from the Mangham Police Department in Louisiana on Saturday. Mangham Police Chief Perry Fleming told The News-Star that Corey will have to pay a fine and he was released after being charged. Richland Parish Sheriff Gary Gilley said that some other people in Corey's entourage are facing other

charges and were booked into the Richland Parish Jail for the night. Corey was due to perform at the Live Oaks Bar and Ballroom in Monroe as part of his 'Heavenly US Angelic Tour' but the performance was axed. However, he took part in a meet and greet with fans at the venue. A message on the Live Oaks' Facebook page stated: "Due to unforeseen circumstances, the Corey Feldman show has been canceled. We would

like to apologize for the cancellation. He will still be coming to hangout and it's totally free.. share this post please guys!! (sic)." Meanwhile, Corey recently announced that he plans to "shed some light" on sexual harassment scandals in the wake of the allegations made against Harvey Weinstein. The former child star has previously claimed he was sexually abused by an unnamed Hollywood producer as a teenager, and in a

lengthy rant on Twitter, he insisted he is working on a way to seek "actual justice" after having his career "shut down" by those who didn't believe him. Whilst 'The Goonies' actor has still yet to name the producer who he claims harassed him, he has said he's "glad" people are coming forward to shame 65-year-old Harvey Weinstein, who stands accused of sexually harassing over 40 women in a 30-year period.



Paloma Faith raising her child as gender neutral

The 36-year-old singer and her French boyfriend Leyman Lahcine welcomed their first child in December and Paloma has revealed that they want the tot to just "be who they want to be". She told the Sunday Mirror: "I'm loving being a mum. I want two or three kids in all and they'll be gender neutral. I just want them to be who they want to be." Paloma is not the only star to raise their child as gender neutral; last year

Russell Brand revealed that he and his wife Laura Gallacher refuse to impose a gender identity on their daughter Mabel. Speaking before the tot was born, he said: "We don't know the gender. I may not even impose a gender upon it, let the child grow up and be whatever the hell it is." And earlier this year, he added that Mabel's birth has made him reevaluate gender identity. He said: "Now that I have these very important women in

my life I have re-evaluated the way that I unconsciously looked at gender, because now I've got a daughter I think 'wow, I don't necessarily need to dress her in clothes that are indicative of her gender'. "Why would you? I've become quite sensitive to that and aware of it. "I think you have to evolve because it's quite an abrupt and sudden change, one minute you don't have a baby and then suddenly there is a new relative who lives in your house, not a moderate or minor relative like an uncle, a full-on person who is dependent on you. "When I first saw my daughter I felt like some latent part of myself got switched on in that moment, something to do with my own femininity and fathomless love that I had previously speculated upon but not accessed."



Mel C wants to star in another musical



The former Spice Girls singer has previously tread the boards in both 'Blood Brothers' and 'Jesus Christ Superstar' and though she's busy with her music at the moment, she'd like to get back on stage at some point. She said: "I released an album a year ago so we did some live shows. And I am just about to start work on another [record]. "[Would I do theatre again?] Quite possibly yeah. Musical theatre is a big love of mine. Hope there is some more in the future but I am concentrating on my music at the moment." While the 43-year-old singer may have shunned attempts to get the Spice Girls back together for their 20th anniversary, she insists the door isn't completely closed on a reunion in the future. She told BANG Showbiz: "It might happen one day. There are no plans at the moment but who knows." Mel recently admitted to feeling money-related pressures once she found fame and fortune as part of the Spice Girls. In particular, she felt guilty about her own success having been raised in a household in which "money was tight". The singer, who was known as Sporty Spice during her time with the chart-topping girl group, told 'In Conversation With': "I was so young and it's a huge responsibility. "It's not about money. It's about feeling like you have to take care of all of these people. And you just feel like you want to be taking care of yourself."

Adele offered £20m for a year-long residency Vegas

Bosses at The Wynn hotel are reportedly so keen to sign the star up that they have offered her £380,000 per show. A source told The Sunday: "The days of entertainers coming to retire at Vegas are a thing of the past. "In the last few years, we have seen massive stars performing on the strip and every major hotel wants to say they have the biggest star as their resident. Caesars Palace had Mariah Carey, Planet Hollywood has Britney Spears, and we want Adele. "Even at half a million dollars a show we are confident we would make a healthy return." Although Adele was forced to cancel one of her Wembley dates during the summer after damaging her vocal cords, Wynn bosses are not concerned

about Adele potentially having to cancel any of her Vegas shows. The insider explained: "Adele is a professional, and knows her own ability. And we are happy to be flexible in negotiations if it's needed in order to bring her on board." Meanwhile, Adele revealed during her 'Adele Live' tour in March that she was planning to take an extended break from touring in order to focus on having another baby. She said at the time: "I'll see ya later, I'll see ya on the other side. In a couple of years when I'll be back, you won't be able to get rid of me. I'm going to go and have a baby." The 29-year-old singer already has four-year-old son Angelo with her husband Simon Konecki.



Niall Horan isn't ready for kids

Although the 24-year-old singer's One Direction bandmates Louis Tomlinson and Liam Payne each have a son, Niall insisted he is not broody just yet. Speaking to The Sun on Sunday's Fabulous magazine, he said: "Some people are like that - some people want kids. Louis loves kids. He's got, like, seven brothers and sisters or something and he's brilliant with them, so that was a no-brainer. "Same with Payno - he's always loved kids. So do I, but I don't particularly want one right now. I'm fine where I am." And Niall, who has been linked to Selena Gomez, Ellie Goulding, Lily Collins and

Olympia Valance also insisted he doesn't have time for love. When asked if he has ever been in love, the star - who has just released his debut solo album 'Flicker' - said: "Yeah. What I think love is anyway. Well, if you listen to this album you'd think so, yeah. But not right now. I think I'm all right where I am. "I doubt there would be time now I'm going on tour. I don't know. I'm not gonna say no: if it happens it happens. I'm only 24, so I don't really need to worry about stuff like that at the minute." Meanwhile, Niall insisted One Direction - who are currently on hiatus - will get back together in the future. He said: "I wouldn't stick a date on it, but it's a no-brainer really, isn't it? We'd be stupid not to. "I can see it, definitely. I think we all can. It's the most rewarding thing we've ever done, the biggest part of our lives, so we'd be silly not going back to it, especially with the way we finished it. To come back potentially to that again would just be great craic."

Delevingne became a model to escape her issues

The 25-year-old model-turned-actress believes that her career as a model provided her with a way of avoiding her problems but acting has forced her to deal with them. She told Australia's Stellar magazine: "Modelling came at a time in my life where I wanted to please people. "I was just doing things to run away from my own problems. I wasn't dealing with things that were going on emotionally. That's why I ended up being unhappy. "Being an actor helped me reflect on my own emotions, be able to express them more, be in the moment." Meanwhile, Cara recently spoke out about disgraced movie producer Harvey Weinstein, revealing that she was left "powerless and scared" after a terrifying encounter. In a lengthy post on Instagram, Cara wrote: "When I first started to work as an actress, I was working on a film and I received a call from Harvey



Weinstein asking if I had slept with any of the women I was seen with in the media. It was a very odd and uncomfortable call...i answered none of his questions and hurried off the phone but before I hung up, he said to me that if I was gay or decided to be with a woman especially in public that I'd never get the role of a straight woman or make it as an actress in Hollywood. "A year or two later, I went to a meeting with him in the lobby of a hotel with a director about an upcoming film. The director left the meeting and Harvey asked me to stay and chat with him. As soon as we were alone he began to brag about all the actresses he had slept with and how he had made their careers and spoke about other inappropriate things of a sexual nature."

Lifestyle | Gossip

Kris dubbed her daughter Kim as a 'blessing'



The 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' star turns 37 on Saturday, and in order to ring in her special day, her mother Kris has taken to social media to share a series of touching tributes to show how "proud" she is of her daughter. Posting a throwback photo of herself with a baby Kim, Kris wrote on Instagram: "Happy birthday to my beauty @kimkardashian!! You are beautiful inside and out, the most loving mommy and wife,

incredible business woman and loyal friend. You are such a blessing, and I am grateful to God for giving me you as a daughter. I love you! Mommy. Xo #ProudMama #HappyBirthdayKim (sic)" And 61-year-old Kris also took to Twitter to share the same caption, which she spread across three separate tweets. As of the time of writing, the rest of Kim's famous family - including sisters Kourtney and Khloe Kardashian, and

half-sisters Kendall and Kylie Jenner - have yet to pay tribute to their sibling on social media. Kim - who has four-year-old daughter North and 22-month-old son Saint with her husband Kanye West - hasn't been having the most fantastic birthday, however, as on Friday she became the victim of vandalism when an unnamed man allegedly broke into three cars in the driveway of her Bel-Air home. The intruder was met by armed

security who have been stationed at the home since Kim was robbed at gunpoint in Paris, France, last year, and is believed to have "scampered away" after being met by the guards. Fortunately, no-one was hurt in the alleged incident, and police are now on the lookout for the suspect, who is thought to have stolen a phone belonging to a member of Kim and Kanye's staff from inside one of the vehicles.

Alec Baldwin is 'semi-obsessed' with death



The 59-year-old actor - who has daughter Ireland, 21, with ex-wife Kim Basinger, and Carmen, four, Rafael, two, and Leonardo, 12 months, with spouse Hilaria - admits becoming a father again late in life has made him reflect on his own mortality. He said: "You know what I think about now? I think about how much time I have left. I mean, there's men dying in their sixties. I mean, maybe they weren't the healthiest of men... I'm not going to say I'm obsessed with death, but I'm semi-obsessed with death." Alec admitted he used to envy the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio, who has won widespread critical acclaim for his work, in particular in collaboration with Martin Scorsese, but has now realized that personal fulfillment is more important than career satisfaction. He said: "How blessed is Leo? To make those movies with Marty? I mean, what a great life he's having. But at the same time, and I'm not saying this with any judgment, Leo is single and has no kids. That's the distinction. We should end with that. To not confuse career with life. My career was not what I wanted it to be in many ways. There are times it has been. '30 Rock' was great. This Trump thing is great. I've had moments in the theatre. But my life is great. I found a woman 26 years younger than me who was dumb enough to marry me, that was her only flaw. I just want to be grateful for my life and not to worry about my career. Whatever happens, happens." After splitting from first wife Kim in 2000, the 'Saturday Night Live' star admitted he wasn't satisfied with anyone else he dated. He told GQ magazine: "I can only think of a crass analogy. Let's say there's a girl over there and she's a 25-year-old nymphomaniac gymnast who speaks five languages and has a billion dollars in the bank and she says she wants to sleep with me."

Scherzinger was struck with tonsillitis in South Africa



The 39-year-old singer was in the African country filming for the judges houses segment of UK talent competition 'The X Factor' when she started to feel "pain" in her throat, and had to be treated in the on-set clinic before being sent to see a doctor. A source said: "Nicole had a lot of pain in her throat, and that was very worrying for her as a singer. She battled through filming but on the last day it got too much and she agreed she needed to see a doctor. It was very frightening, especially as she was thousands of miles from home. It was a very frightening experience for her and her team, especially as she was thousands of miles from home at the time." The medical emergency reportedly put filming on hold for four hours, but luckily the former Pussycat Doll was given the all clear by medical professionals. The insider added to 'The Sun' newspaper: "Luckily, she returned to the hotel to finish her scenes that day. Nicole had to get the all-clear from doctors as she had a trip for UNICEF the next day." Nicole is yet to speak about her tonsillitis on social media, despite previously claiming site like Twitter and Instagram are "important". She said: "Social media is really important. I don't do it enough! I wish I was better at it. I'm not a big fanatic, as some people are, it's more for the millennials. I just feel like there's not as much mystique anymore." Nicole believes

the Internet offers a "great way" for celebrities to connect with their fans, but warns that people need to set "boundaries" and be aware of how they "represent" themselves online. She added: "It's also a great way to connect with your fans directly, but I think there is a danger that maybe you can overstep your boundaries. You have a responsibility to uphold how you represent yourself."

Johansson organizing benefit in Puerto Rico



The 32-year-old actress has recruited her 'Avengers' cast mates including Robert Downey Jr, Chris Evans and Mark Ruffalo to help her raise funds for those affected by the devastating natural disasters in Puerto Rico. The stars will get together for a special reading of Thornton Wilder's 'Our Town' on November 6, which will be directed by Kenny Leon, and will benefit the Hurricane Maria Community Relief and Recovery Fund. In a press release, Scarlett said: "The struggle faced by Puerto Rican residents since their island was ravaged by Hurricane Maria is terribly heartbreaking and has left many feeling hopeless and helpless. It is a great privilege to be able to participate in whatever way I can, to provide some relief to those that are struggling to access even the most basic of human needs in the aftermath of this disastrous event. Please help me and my co-stars in coming together for a one-time-only extraordinary evening to raise lifesaving funds for a devastated community and to help celebrate the true meaning of community with this unique reading of a great American classic." The full line-up of stars expected to attend the event has not yet been announced, but it is believed more friends of the 'Ghost in the Shell' actress will join in. The reading will take place in Atlanta's Fox Theatre, and tickets will go on sale today. Prices start at \$89 per ticket, with

the most expensive VIP packages selling for \$1,000. Meanwhile, Puerto Rico native Ricky Martin recently said he was "fighting" to help those affected by the disaster. He said: "What you see on television doesn't do justice to the reality of Puerto Rico. We are still dealing with 4 million US citizens who still have no power, no medicine, no baby formula, no diapers after 15 days since this happened."

Carrie Fisher's family will honor her on her birthday



The late star - who passed away after suffering a cardiac arrest on December 27 2016 - would have been celebrating her 61st birthday on Saturday, and she is still at the front of the minds of her family, including brother Todd Fisher and daughter Billie Lourd. Todd said: "You can be sure that Billie and I will have a moment in reflection on Carrie's day." Todd, 59, also used his sister's special day to praise her for being "an amazing inspiration" to so many people. He added: "I remember all the great things that she said and the example that she set for so many other women. I see people almost every day that come up to me and hug me and tell me what an amazing inspiration that she was, as a survivor and a woman who stood up for what she believes in. It's amazing how many people recognized her for that. Carrie was truly a great example in that category - is a great survivor, a great woman who stood up for what she believed in and spoke out clearly and so articulately like nobody I ever saw." The 'Star Wars' icon's tragic passing was made all the more difficult for her family by the death of her month Debbie Reynolds just one day later, and Todd believes there has been a "substantial change" to the planet now that the two stars are no longer here. — Bangshowbiz

Jimmy Kimmel has said son is 'healthy and happy'

The 49-year-old talk show host and his wife Molly McNearney welcomed their second child into the world six months ago, and were devastated to learn he had to undergo life-saving heart surgery after doctors discovered he had a congenital heart defect. But Jimmy - who also has three-year-old Jane with his spouse, as well as daughter Katie, 26, and son Kevin, 23, with his former wife Gina - has now shared an adorable photo of Billy to celebrate him turning six months old, and has revealed the tot is doing well following his surgery. The 'Jimmy Kimmel Live!' host wrote on social media: "Young Billy is six months old today. He is healthy and happy and we are all very grateful for your prayers, good wishes, thoughts and support of @ChildrensLA and children's hos-

pitals in your area. (sic)" It isn't the first health update Jimmy has given surrounding his son either, as he recently joked that the tot was doing amazing things beyond his age such as "juggling". He said: "He's doing great. Young Billy made his first visit to our office today. He's juggling. He's translating Flaubert from French into English. He's really an amazing kid. No - he smiles. That's pretty much it. He is very interested in ceiling fans. He likes those a lot. I could get him to pay the same amount for Netflix just to watch ceiling fans." And Jimmy also shared another update last month, where he said his son was "doing well". He said: "Billy is doing well. He's right there! He's got to have another operation soon, but he's doing well. He seems to be strong. He pulls hair, that's for sure!" Billy



has to undergo two more surgeries in the coming months, and Jimmy has admitted he's nervous for the procedures and wants to get them "over with". He added: "He has

to have two more open heart surgeries. We would like to get them over with and not have to think about it all the time, but it could definitely be worse."

Chinese propaganda film faces stiff competition from celebrities



In this Saturday, Oct 21, 2017 photo, a woman walks past an advertisement featuring teen idol Lu Han, also known as China's Justin Bieber in Beijing, China.



Residents wait near security personnel resting near a billboard featuring a popular actor. — AP photos



A magazine featuring Chinese President Xi Jinping with the headline "China becomes strong" is placed next to a magazine with popular Chinese actress Fan Bingbing at a news stand.

When the propaganda film, "The Founding of an Army," hit theaters in China recently, the reaction wasn't quite what the ruling Communist Party might have hoped for. Instead of inspiring an outpouring of nationalism and self-sacrifice for the state, it was roundly mocked for trying to lure a younger audience by casting teen idols as revolutionary party leaders.

Viewers more used to seeing the idols play love interests in light-hearted soap operas responded to the film by projecting "modern-day romantic narratives on the founding fathers of the nation," said Hung Huang, a well-known social commentator based in Beijing. "It was hilarious." While China's resurgent Communist Party once pushed its policies on an unquestioning public, it now struggles to compete for attention with the country's booming entertainment industry and the celebrity culture it has spawned.

"Chinese people are increasingly ignoring party propaganda and are much more interested in movie stars, who represent a new lifestyle and more exciting aspirations," said Willy Lam, an expert on Chinese politics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. President Xi Jinping, who will cement his authority with his expected endorsement to a second five-year term at this week's national party congress, has placed a priority on stamping out too much Western influence in Chinese society in part so the party can dictate the values the youth should embrace.

Out of touch

Authorities have responded by taking aim at everything from gossip websites to soap opera story lines to celebrity salaries. Instead of selfish, rich stars, the state is promoting performers who are all about patriotism, purity

and other values that support the party's legitimacy. The results have at best been mixed and at worst ham-fisted and out of touch. One problem is that the party's values often clash with what young Chinese want to watch, according to Hung. Among the more popular shows watched by Chinese youth are those that center on palace intrigue, martial arts fantasies, high school romances or single, independent women. "While the government could once dictate to young people what they should value and how they should lead their lives, they find themselves completely without the tools to do that now," she said. In the 1970s, the state was able to promote people seen as paragons of youthful devotion and selflessness, but Hung said that no longer works because young Chinese - like their counterparts in the West - now prefer to follow celebrity gossip and have the tools with which to do so. Just this month, teen idol Lu Han, also known as China's Justin Bieber, announced he had a girlfriend, triggering a flood of shares, responses and 4 million "likes" within a few hours that briefly crashed the country's popular Weibo microblog service. A recent commentary in The Global Times, a party newspaper with a nationalistic stance, railed against such celebrity worship, saying China had now surpassed the West in that regard.



Mocked for casting teen idols as revolutionary leaders

pollution. But it has gained new traction since Xi came to power in 2012 and officials began a wide-ranging crackdown on perceived societal ills from corruption to dissent to - now - entertainment. "Xi Jinping has been advocating a revision to traditional, Confucian moral standards," Lam said. "The definition of what is vulgar or morally problematic has been inflated and expanded so that it has become all-encompassing." Shows about the pursuit of great

wealth and luxury that used to be tolerated under Xi's predecessor, aren't anymore. The government has demanded that broadcasters "resist celebrity worship" and limit the air time dedicated to film and TV stars. "The party does not want these entertainment programs to compete with news programs and 'morality shows,'" said Jian Xu, a Chinese media research fellow at Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia.

One example of a state-approved show is "Touching China," which honors people who have "touched the nation with their tenacity, bravery and wisdom." The government has also tried to shape celebrities into party-sanctioned role models. Thanks to their wholesome image and uplifting, patriotic lyrics, the TFBoys, China's first home-grown boy band, have risen to fame because of "political opportunities" they've been given, Xu said. The band is pursued by adoring fans and has performed twice on the coveted Lunar New Year gala hosted by state broadcaster China Central Television; it has also been promoted by the Communist Youth League.

Stars deviating from the party's image of purity and moral acceptability, however, have been punished. In a high-profile drug crackdown in 2014, authorities publicly chastised a succession of celebrities caught using drugs, including Jackie Chan's son, Jaycee Chan, and singer Li Daimo, forcing them to apologize on state television.

Beijing may struggle to win over young Chinese, but it won't stop its carrot-and-stick approach to regulating the industry. "The government's method of punishment and praise is very obvious: If you work with me, you will reap the benefits, if you don't, you won't. If you're a good boy, you get candy, if you don't, you won't," Xu said. — AP

South Korea church scandals under the spotlight in film

Catholic corruption and sex abuse allegations have made global headlines for years. Now a new film shines a spotlight on scandals at South Korea's vast and politically powerful Protestant churches. South Koreans are enthusiastic religious believers, with 44 percent practicing or considering themselves religious, according to state data. Protestants are the largest group, followed by Buddhists and Catholics.

The country is home to several of the world's biggest "megachurches", with hundreds of thousands of members, while conservative evangelical church groups boast millions of followers and enormous political lobbying power. Many star pastors build enormous personal fortunes and often pass control over their churches to their own children in a generational power transfer. But corruption or sex scandals involving evangelical leaders make frequent headlines, as do court battles over lucrative congregations. The plot of "Romans 8:37", which had its premiere at the current Busan International Film Festival in South Korea, centres on the struggle between two powerful pastors for control of a fictional evangelical church, along with its vast wealth and political influence.

Charismatic young preacher Joseph Kang accuses his aged, conservative predecessor Reverend Park of embezzling millions of dollars from church coffers to bribe politicians. But Kang soon becomes a target of personal attacks by Park's followers, who accuse him of fraud and other crimes during services to try to force his resignation.

Each side sets up teams to discredit their opponent and sway public opinion via the media, with no tactic left

untried, including mutual allegations of embezzlement, bribery, faked credentials, sexual abuse, even heresy. But few question the integrity of the church as the mud fight rages. Kang's campaign eventually suffers a major blow after female followers accuse him of sexual abuse, and congregation elders decide to keep the scandal under wraps "for the sake of the church".

Jesus, Inc.

The plot is loosely based on true stories involving South Korean churches, says director Shin Yeon-Shick, himself a lifelong Christian. "Personally this was such a painful movie to make," he said. "I felt really heavy at heart." Some church members have expressed discomfort at this film, but I think we need to confront this reality and the pain we deserve to suffer for being part of this system," he told AFP, criticizing what he called a "cartel" of churches in the country and a culture of impunity.

In one high-profile real world case, a founder of the Yoido Full Gospel Church—a Seoul megachurch with more than 500,000 followers—was convicted this year for forcing the church to buy company shares from him at inflated prices, causing it to incur losses of \$13 million. Some South Koreans mock religious leaders as "managers of Jesus, Inc.", and Shin said many churches in the country do not promote the self-reflection and introspection essential for spiritual growth.

To his mind the issue is also deeply rooted in South Korea's culture of collectivism, which Shin said meant "people are rarely given a chance to think individually and independently, or to express their own opinion". "So they want to belong to whatever is the biggest and most powerful to feel safe—whether it's a megachurch or a big company," he added, "and try to ignore the suffering of individuals in the name of protecting the establishment". The film takes its title from a Biblical passage in which St Paul addresses the issues of sin and salvation through Jesus. "One should be on God's side," Pastor Kang's father says at one point. His son, he adds, "thought God was on his side". — AFP



A visitor walks out of Jim Thomson's outlet in Bangkok.

Documentary claims to have solved legendary mystery of the 'silk king'

A new documentary is set to stir fresh debate over one of Asia's most enduring mysteries: What happened to Jim Thomson, Thailand's legendary silk king. The former American intelligence officer turned textile tycoon went for a walk in the Malaysian jungle 50 years ago and never returned. Despite a massive search, no trace of Thomson was ever found. One of the most prominent Westerners in Asia had simply vanished.

Theories abound: He was killed by a tiger; he got lost and perished in deep forest; he disappeared himself as part of a political intrigue. Those behind the documentary say they have new evidence that Thomson was killed. Their film, "Who Killed Jim Thomson," premiered Oct. 20 at the Eugene International Film Festival in the US state of Oregon. "There's been all sorts of theories and mostly silly theories, but I'm hoping that this will put some closure to, you know, the whole story," said Barry Broman, the film's producer.

Out of the blue

The filmmakers, from Adventure Film Productions, said they got their break out of the blue: An old contact approached them with a tale of a death-bed confession. They eventually found a second source whose information dove-tailed with the first. Their conclusion: Thomson was slain by rebels from the Communist Party of Malaya who grew suspicious after he arrived in the jungle and began requesting a meeting with the party's secretary-general, at the time Malaysia's most-wanted man. Rather than vacationing, the filmmakers said, Thomson was on what turned out to be a final, fatal mission.

Broman, who has decades of Asia experience as a pho-

tographer, US marine and diplomat, said the conclusion is unequivocal: "Jim was never going to be found. He was murdered." The filmmakers acknowledged the murder theory's not new, but they believe their version is more substantial. While some of the film's conclusions are plausible based on what is known about Thomson's life, there is nothing definitive given that it relies on second-hand information from relatives of those allegedly involved and leaves many questions unanswered.

During World War II, Thomson was a highly decorated operative with the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA. After the war, he was stationed in Thailand with the OSS and chose to make his home there after turning businessman and founding his silk firm in 1948. Thomson helped revive the Thai silk industry and his company has since grown into one of Thailand's flagship luxury brands. His former Bangkok home, once the site of legendary parties, is now a museum filled with his fabulous collection of Asian art and antiques. Both have become must-see attractions for the millions of tourists who visit Thailand each year.

'I still have questions'

The company declined to comment on the new claims about the fate of its founder. Thomson had a \$1.5 million a year business by 1967, when the Vietnam War was in full swing with Thailand playing an essential role, hosting bases from which the US Air Force bombed communist-controlled areas of Indochina. — AP



In this November 1966 file photo, American businessman Jim Thomson views a Buddha statue in Bangkok, Thailand. — AP photos



This undated handout from Romans 8:37 released on October 20, 2017 shows an image from the film "Romans 8:37".

Lifestyle | FEATURES

Film Review

'Thor: Ragnarok' takes him to funny heights

In the stand-alone films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe Thor always seemed to get the short end of the stick. The Thor films were never as popular as Iron Man, and didn't gain steam like Captain America. They were perhaps a little too serious and a little too dull - none of which was the fault of star Chris Hemsworth, whose performances in the role have been so seamless and charming that he almost doesn't get enough credit.

But "Thor: Ragnarok" has been touted as a different take on the God of Thunder. Marvel Studios and The Walt Disney Co. signed up a voice-y director in New Zealand's Taika Waititi, whose riotous vampire mockumentary "What We Do In The Shadows" displayed a unique comedic sensibility. They took away Thor's hammer, gave him a haircut, added some Led Zeppelin and told the set designer the more neon rainbows the better. The results are pretty decent, though perhaps not the total departure that had been hyped.

The bones of the story are preposterous as ever. It turns out Thor has a long lost older sister, Hela (Cate Blanchett), who his father Odin (Anthony Hopkins, who appears to have shot for about two hours) locked away because she was so dangerous.

An event happens that releases Hela to the world. She's really strong, like stronger than Thor strong, and really angry and basically punches Thor into another dimension and she heads off to Asgard to take the throne.

The movie literally splits in two at this point. Poor Blanchett, who has gone full vamp as Hela, is good as always but how lame it must be to be in the "fun" Thor movie and have to play one of the



most blandly written villains ever. While she's off waging her deathly serious takeover, Thor gets to join an irreverent comedy sideshow on the planet Sakaar - a sort of wasteland at the end of the universe run by a Grade-A weirdo who calls himself Grandmaster, played, fittingly, by Jeff Goldblum.

It's this section that is pretty amusing and where Waititi's irreverence really gets to shine with pratfalls and witty writing. It's no surprise that this is right up Goldblum's alley, but the real delight is Hemsworth who knows just how to subvert the Thor character without turning him into a total mockery. He's a real comedic talent, which audiences got a taste of in "Ghostbusters." And Tessa Thompson is fantastic as Valkyrie, a hard drinkin' fighter with a secret past she'd rather forget.

I imagine "Thor: Ragnarok" is one that might improve on subsequent viewings, when you have a chance to relax with the jokes divorced from the pressure of juggling the silly/serious plot.

But it's a fairly flawed movie on the whole with egregious tonal shifts. Some of the gags go on too long with the Hulk with too little payoff and sometimes it seems as though there's a mandate that every 25 minutes there will be a big fight no matter what. One particular army of the dead sequence seemed like it could have been lifted from a "Pirates of the Caribbean" movie - which is not the most flattering comparison.

While Waititi's energy and wit is apparent in the film, it still feels as though he had to operate from the same Marvel "base flavor" and was allowed on occasion to sprinkle a few of his own original toppings on. "Thor: Ragnarok" is the most fun of the Thor movies by a long shot, but it is still very much a Thor movie for better or worse. "Thor," a Walt Disney Studios release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "intense sequences of sci-fi violence and action, and brief suggestive material." Running time: 130 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four. — AP



Not the total departure that had been hyped



Vocalist, and director of the Turas program, Linda Ervine poses for a photograph in her office in Belfast.

As politicians bicker, Gaelic blossoms



Participants take notes as Caoimhe Ni Chathail takes an Irish language singing class.

In the heart of a Protestant area of east Belfast, a group of students belt out a traditional Irish song as part of their weekly Gaelic language practice. At the Skainos Community Centre, there is little sign of the bitter political dispute over a language associated more with Catholic Irish nationalism. "It's massively growing," teacher Caoimhe Ni Chathail told AFP. She is part of the "Turas" (Journey) project which connects people from Protestant communities to their own history with the Irish language.

After the choral practice, the biggest class of beginners the 31-year-old has ever seen take their place at the centre, which is decorated with Gaelic-language posters such as "Mionna Na Bliana" - which depicts the months of the year. The creation of an Irish Language Act is the main obstacle standing between Catholic Irish republicans Sinn Fein and the Protestant, pro-British Democratic Unionist Party in negotiations-ongoing since March-to form a power-sharing government in Belfast.

Enthusiastic vocalist and former English teacher Linda Ervine, director of the Turas programme, said Gaelic "has been used in a political sense to represent one particular viewpoint". While Gaelic is the first official language of the Republic of Ireland, in Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom, it is only an officially-recognised minority language.

The last census in 2011 found that almost 11 percent claimed some familiarity with Gaelic; 3.7 percent claimed they could speak, read, write and understand it.

However, just 4,130 people, 0.2 percent of the population, said it was their main language-fewer than those who said Polish and Lithuanian. Paul Lynas, a retired public servant who has been attending classes for just over three years, said he did not care about any political associations. "Protestants who came from Scotland, many of them would have spoken Scots Gaelic and Protestants have always been involved in Gaelic," he told AFP. "I really don't see it as anything revolutionary."

Gaelic revival

The school provoked a mixed response from the Protestant Unionist community when it opened in a local Methodist church in 2011. "Some people left the church... and we've had some verbal abuse on Facebook," Ervine said. Since then, the project has flourished with classes mushrooming from one per week to 13. More than 160 students ranging from beginners to experts, children to adults take part in the free singing lessons, group chats and classes.

A couple of pensioners set up near two friends in their 20s, while a young girl in a beige hooded sweater sits next to a distinguished-looking middle-aged man in a dark suit and red tie as he takes down notes. The revival of interest in the Gaelic language is reflected in the education system. In 2014/2015, some 5,256 primary school children were enrolled in an Irish-language curriculum, double the number of a decade earlier. Ervine, said: "They expect this number to double within the next 15 years." — AP

Former US presidents take stage at hurricane benefit concert

All five of America's living former presidents took the stage Saturday at a benefit concert in Texas to raise money for victims of the hurricane-ravaged southern United States and Caribbean. Former presidents Barack Obama, George W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George H.W. Bush and Jimmy Carter appeared together onstage at Texas A&M, praising Americans for their willingness to help fellow citizens and urging them to do more. The effort by the three Democrats and two Republicans has raised over \$31 million from 80,000 donors for the victims of hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria, George H.W. Bush's office said.

"All of us on this stage here tonight could not be prouder of the response of Americans. When they see their neighbors and they see their friends, they see strangers in need, Americans step up," Obama said. "Let's all work together and make America still a greater volunteer nation," said Carter, making an apparent play on President Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan. The Georgia native said that Habitat for Humanity, a nonprofit he's worked with for 36 years, would build 6,000 homes in hard-hit areas. It's raised \$20 million of the \$100 million sought, he said.

And "I too am here to urge you to give to this fine fund, and I want to thank all the volunteers," the younger Bush said. "There's still work to do," Clinton said. "It can be a new beginning if we just do what we ought to do and prove that the heart of America, without race or religion or political party, is greater than our problems."

'We need each other'

Former first ladies Barbara and Laura Bush both attended the event, as did vice president Dick Cheney, ex-secretary of state James A. Baker, Senator Ted Cruz and Texas Governor Greg Abbott.

Lady Gaga gave a surprise performance at the concert, announcing that she would make



Former US Presidents, Jimmy Carter, George HW Bush, George W Bush, Barack Obama and Bill Clinton attend the Hurricane Relief concert in College Station, Texas. — AFP photos

a \$1 million donation and that a "mental health and emotional trauma surviving program" would be set up for hurricane survivors.

"Pain is such an equalizer. And in a time of catastrophe, we all put our differences aside and we come together, 'cause we need each other, or we can't survive," she said. Lee Greenwood opened the concert and served as master of ceremonies for the event, titled "Deep From the Heart: The One America Appeal," which also featured artists including The Gatlin Brothers, Yolanda Adams, Robert Earl Keen and Sam Moore.

Trump did not attend the concert, but praised the effort in a video message released earlier, terming it a "wonderful" and "vital effort." "As we begin to rebuild, some of America's finest public servants are spearheading the One America Appeal," said Trump, whose administration's response to the heavy storm damage in Puerto Rico has drawn fire. "Melania and I want to express our deep gratitude for your tremendous assistance," he said. Ticket-sale receipts were to benefit organizations in Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico and the US Virgin Islands. — AFP



Singer Lady Gaga performs during the Hurricane Relief concert.



Former US Presidents, Jimmy Carter, George HW Bush, George W Bush, Bill Clinton, and Barack Obama listen to the National Anthem.

Lifestyle

MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2017



A Lebanese child plays with dolls as men and women behind her practice yoga during the special "108 Sun Salutations" event in the capital Beirut's Martyrs Square. — AFP

With weekly flight, remote **St Helena** extends welcome

The Gates of Chaos, Lot's Wife, Old Woman's Valley, Man and Horse Cliffs. These are the names of places on St Helena, an otherworldly Atlantic Ocean island far from anywhere whose British-ruled population of just over 4,000 is reaching out to the world. Charles Darwin, astronomer Edmond Halley and Napoleon Bonaparte are a few of the luminaries who spent time on St Helena over the centuries, though the deposed French emperor would rather have been elsewhere, confined as he was in exile until his 1821 death at Longwood House, which was prone to damp and rat infestations.

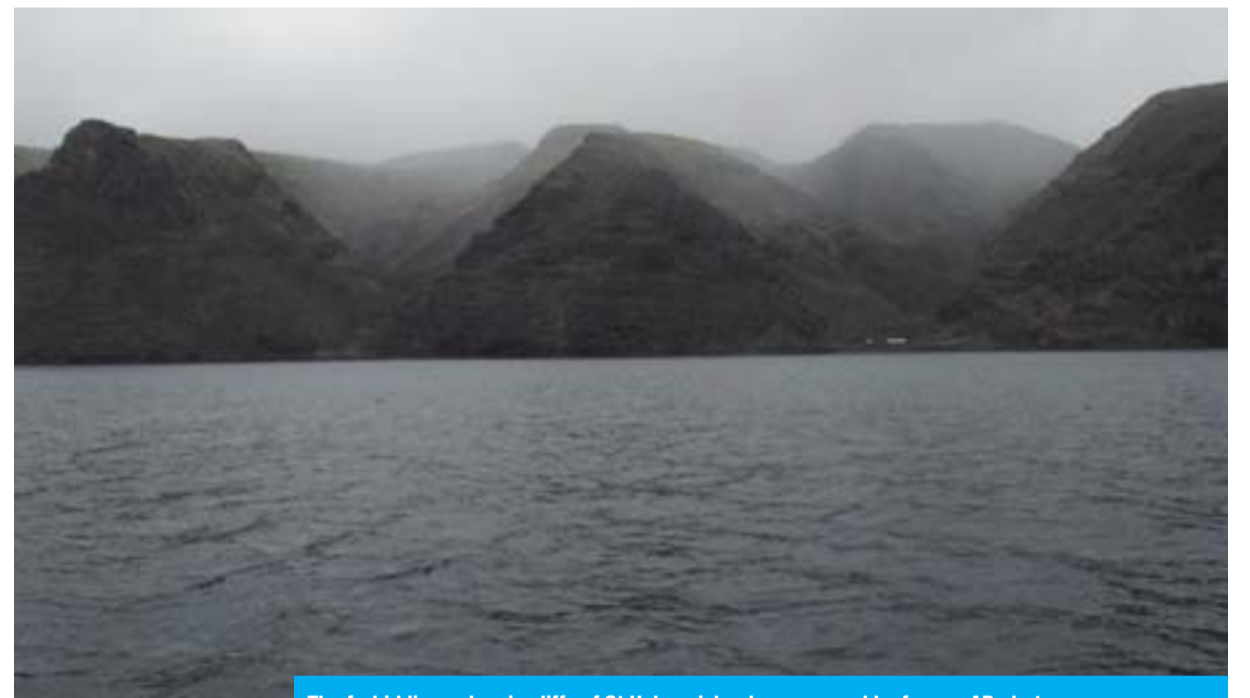
Now a new airport, condemned last year by British taxpayers as a boondoggle after dicey wind conditions were discovered, has opened to regular traffic (a single weekly flight from South Africa) that islanders hope will boost tourism and the sagging economy of what was once a linchpin of the British Empire. The airport is a gamble, but tourists with time and money will experience the sense of stepping into history on an island that until recently was only

reachable by boat and lies about 1,900 kilometers from Africa and even further from South America. The coat of arms of Britain's East India Company, the trading behemoth that helped to build the British Empire, adorns the arched entrance to the capital, Jamestown. The commercial brands that are so familiar in other parts of the world haven't made it to this rugged island. The island only got its first cellular telephone network in 2015. The Saints, as islanders are known, speak English with a strong accent that is sometimes hard to understand.

"You don't need to peel many layers. You'll find we're more rogues than saints," said Basil George, an elderly guide with a spry step who escorted visitors around downtown Jamestown. The capital is something of an architectural oddity, jammed into a narrow valley floor with one main road up the middle. One stop on his tour is what is said to be the oldest Anglican church in the southern hemisphere. Skirting the island offshore, the visitors, including an Associated Press journalist, surveyed forbidding



Tourists will experience the sense of stepping into history



The forbidding volcanic cliffs of St Helena island are covered by fog. — AP photos

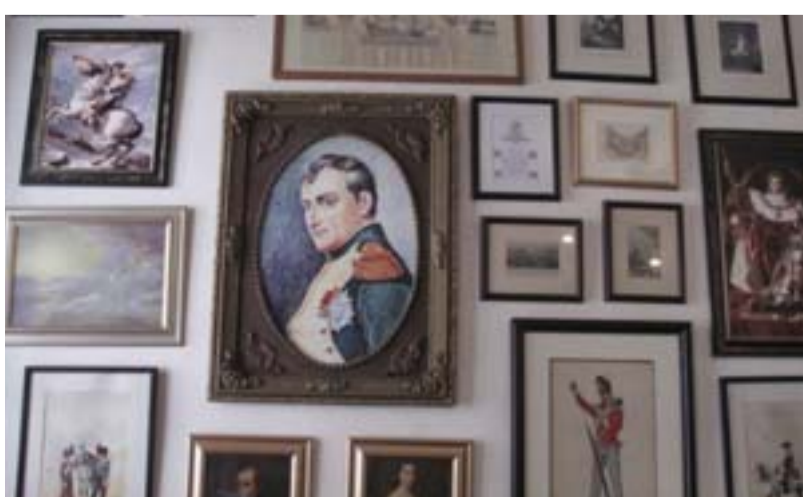
volcanic cliffs, as well as a humpback whale and brown noddy seabirds nesting in the crags.

Critical way station

Anthony Thomas, owner of the Sub-Tropic Adventures diving company, told his guests about the lore associated with the giant walls of rock 180 meters or so high: a couple whose car accidentally rolled over the cliff edge, spilling them to their deaths, and a boy who suffered a similar fate after stepping over a fence to retrieve a ball. Current affairs on St Helena include a petition against the introduction of a law allowing same-sex marriage, and the question of whether a jury trial can be fair on an island where everybody knows just about everybody. A reported 1,000 ships a year used to anchor at St Helena, which was uninhabited when the Portuguese discovered it in 1502 and became a critical way station for trading

vessels traveling between Asia and Europe. That role diminished after the 1869 opening of the Suez Canal offered a shortcut to intercontinental shipping. The British used the island as a prison for Napoleon and for rebellious Zulu king Dinuzulu Cetshwayo, thousands of Boer prisoners from South Africa at the beginning of the 20th century and, in the late 1950s, three leaders from Bahrain, then under British control.

Other notable events include the dispatch of settlers to St. Helena after the Great Fire of London in 1666, the use of the island as a base for British anti-slavery patrols and the 1941 sinking of a British vessel at anchor off Jamestown during World War II. A memorial to the 41 people from the RFA Darkdale "who have no grave but the sea" sits on the waterfront. Through this historical sweep, the Saints have lived mostly by modest means, some learning how to build their own homes or fashion harpoons out of broom handles. — AP



Several images of Napoleon Bonaparte are shown in this collection of framed pictures on a wall in the Consulate hotel in Jamestown.



People walk through the arched entrance to Jamestown.



Visitors stand outside Longwood House where Napoleon Bonaparte lived during his exile until his death in 1821.