

Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan wishes 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 Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Cabinet members, heads of states around the world, Kuwaitis, expatriates and our valued readers Eid Mubarak! Kuwait Times will not be published on September 2, 3 and 4, 2017. Our next issue will hit newsstands on Tuesday, September 5, 2017.

Eid Mubarak

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PILGRIMS THROG MOUNT ARAFAT FOR PEAK OF HAJJ



An aerial view shows pilgrims gathering on Mount Arafat on Arafat Day yesterday, which is the climax of the hajj pilgrimage — AFP (See Page 11)

MOUNT ARAFAT, Saudi Arabia: Their palms facing the sky, around two million Muslims gathered yesterday on Saudi Arabia's Mount Arafat for the highlight of the hajj pilgrimage, one of the world's largest annual gatherings. With temperatures pushing 40 degrees Celsius under the desert sun, the faithful climbed the hill east of Makkah where Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) gave his last sermon some 14 centuries ago.

The second day of the hajj - a five-day pilgrimage which all Muslims must perform at least once in their lifetime if physically and financially able - is dedicated to prayer and reflection. "I came up here last night and prayed, took pictures and called my family and friends," said Maolana Yahia, 32, who made the trip from Indonesia.

Helicopters flew around the area as the pilgrims converged from dawn on the Mount Arafat plain and the hill known as Jabal Al-Rahma, or Mount of Mercy. Forming a sea of white, the pilgrims ascended the hill and took up positions to pray on rocks already heated by the morning sun. On the concrete pathways linking the plain to the hill, hundreds of thousands of devout Muslims invoked God, as others rested in makeshift tents or on sheets along the side of the road.

Sheikh Saad Al-Shathri, a senior Saudi cleric, delivered a midday sermon denouncing terrorism and violence against civilians.

"Sharia came to preserve the security of nations and cultivate benevolence in (people's) hearts," he said, referring to the Islamic legal and moral code derived from the teach-

ings of the Holy Quran and the traditions of the Prophet (PBUH). He urged pilgrims to set aside politics during the haj and come together with fellow Muslims. "This is no place for partisan slogans or sectarian movements which have resulted in great massacres and the displacement of millions," he said.

Men and women from nearly every country in the world gathered side by side, some crying on their neighbor's shoulder. An elderly Syrian pilgrim sitting on the hilltop shouted out, "Oh God, take revenge on the oppressors". Others assembled around him responded, "Amen". Awfa Nejm, from a village near Homs, said: "We ask God to protect Syria and its people and return it to the way it was before."

Twenty-seven-year-old Amin Mohammed from Nigeria said he was praying for peace in his country. Noura Sulieman, a pilgrim from the Philippines, said she'd been to the hajj many times before and was here again to pray for her family. "I came here to Arafat to pray for my family, for my daughter, and my son, and all my family, and all the Philippines Muslims, and all Muslims in all countries," she said. "God willing, Allah will accept our pilgrimage."

In the evening, the pilgrims were to travel to Muzdalifa where they spent the night before taking part in a symbolic stoning of the devil. Saudi Arabia says it has deployed more than 100,000 security personnel to keep pilgrims safe. At the foot of Mount Arafat, mobile barriers have been installed to control the movement of the crowds. — Agencies

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Local Spotlight

PRIVATE EDUCATION



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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no less than those of foreign teachers in other Gulf countries. The school is bound by a contract with the foreign teacher. This contract determines the rights and duties of the teacher with the school, but when the school does not abide with labor laws or the contract, it is normal for teachers to leave, because they refuse to give up their rights.

Unfortunately, new teachers become aware of the role of wasta in Kuwait and how it helps to make their stay easier, for instance for getting their civil IDs and obtaining a car and driving license. Another important thing for new teachers is the possible ignorance of laws protecting their rights if they fall victim to a school that does not respect labor laws. They find it difficult to hire lawyers, especially since all laws here are in Arabic, a language many don't speak or understand.

There are some schools in Kuwait with poor academic international recognition by international bodies, and this for many teachers is an unpleasant surprise, especially when they come to Kuwait with their children.

Many schools have crowded classrooms, although there are rules against this, but then it's all about business and not preserving the quality of education. It is very tiring for any teacher and lack of support by the management makes the teacher feel alienated and vulnerable.

The ministry of education must periodically meet with foreign teachers and discuss their issues of concern in order to protect them from possible exploitation and ensure that they do not leave the country.

I think it would also be a great idea if the ministry met with parents - both locals and expats - to know their concerns, issues and frustrations regarding the skyrocketing fees.

I know that there are some excellent schools in Kuwait that work to maintain their reputation, but it is necessary to ensure all schools abide by the laws issued by the ministry of education. The goal of education is to look after children and prepare them for the future. We have a duty to protect foreign teachers to protect the country's reputation.

Private schools admit many Kuwaiti and expat children every year, and while parents take the lead in choosing the best school for their kids, no one seems to think much about the key element in the educational process - the teacher. The foundation of a good education is a good teacher, and this has been an unresolved issue for years. Does anyone think about the foreign teachers here?

A new school year is round the corner, and of course, for all expat parents, this is an issue of concern. After all, they are the ones who pay the school fees, which are not getting cheaper. At the end of the day, no matter what school your kid goes to, school uniforms, books and stationery are things you need to buy, affecting your budget. In fact, sending kids to any school in Kuwait is becoming a financial burden on all families. The school management plays a role in facilitating this issue and should make best efforts to make it easier for all.

It is clear in Kuwait that sending kids to schools to get a good education is not easy, so some expatriates now prefer to send their children to their home countries, which means breaking up the family. The ministry of education has set a ceiling for salaries at private schools - though tuition fees continue to rise unabated.

Since life is not cheap here, there is talk about the departure of some good teachers from Kuwait to other Gulf countries. This should be taken seriously, because it relates to the quality of education. Some claim that foreign teachers leave for neighboring countries because of low wages, which is a baseless claim. The salaries of teachers in private schools in Kuwait are

in my view

WHAT WILL THE LAMBS EAT ON EID?



Athoob Al-Shuaibi

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Vegans in Kuwait suffer a lot of sarcasm and disdain from some members of the society. We're often kidded about our dietary restrictions, especially around the holy holiday of Eid Al-Adha, when Muslims are required to sacrifice an animal, typically a sheep or goat, and give part of the meat to the poor.

When I adopted veganism, I kept it a secret for a long time for fear of verbal harassment and annoyingly endless questions. After the matter was revealed, I was accused of forbidding what God allowed us to eat. Some commented in a slightly gentler manner, saying I have deprived myself from the pleasures of the world. Then they thank God that they are not "insane" like me.

As a Muslim vegan, I prefer to abstain from meat, milk and eggs for health and ethical reasons. But certainly, I never uttered a prohibition. In the tale of the

When I adopted veganism, I kept it a secret for a long time for fear of verbal harassment and annoyingly endless questions. After the matter was revealed, I was accused of forbidding what God allowed us to eat.

Prophet Jacob (PBUH), which is mentioned in the Holy Quran; "All food was lawful to the Children of Israel, except what Israel made unlawful for himself before the Taurat (Torah) was revealed. Say "Bring here the Taurat (Torah) and recite it, if you are truthful", (Verse 93 - Al-Omran). Israel is the other name of Prophet Jacob (PBUH). He preferred to refrain from eating camel meat after getting ill.

I'm not trying in this article to convince any of you to convert to veganism. But, I just want to highlight the types of sparring, ridiculing on the pretext of laughter, as well questioning a vegan's religious beliefs.

Eid Al-Adha sees the slaughtering of sacrificial animals is a religious ritual in accordance with Islamic law, which calls for the slaughterer to say "Bismillah" (in the name of Allah) before he uses a very sharp knife to slaughter. The slaughtering shouldn't be done in sight of any other animal. Then the meat gets divided among the needy, neighbors and family members, with the owner only taking a humble amount of it. This is a festivity to mark the day Allah sent down a lamb to Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) before he sacrificed his son Ismail (PBUH), subjected to the rules of Allah.

Muslim vegans may not slaughter a sheep but we still adhere to the pillars of our faith and distribute charity to the needy. We don't need to slaughter or eat a lamb to prove our faith.

The question is - what will vegans eat on Eid Al-Adha? Perhaps a block of tofu! Happy Eid Al-Adha to all of you!

Photo

o f t h e d a y



Sheep for sacrifice are sold in the tens of thousands around the Gulf region in the days leading up to Eid Al-Adha. Muslims who can afford it will sacrifice a sheep, goat, lamb and distribute at least one third of the meat to those in need. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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Local rescue team saves people, vehicles stranded in Kuwait's deserts

By Nawara Fattahova

When Mohammed Saif Al-Hajri got stuck in a remote place for an entire day and the battery of his hearing aid ran out before someone rescued him, the idea of forming a voluntary rescue team came to his mind. Along with four other members, Hajri formed the Kuwait Rescue Team (Sabah's Falcons) in 2014, the first and only such team in Kuwait. From then till today, the team has rescued and helped hundreds of people in all parts of Kuwait.



More volunteers are joining the team, which has become popular. "Kuwaiti youth like to volunteer and help people, so more people are joining our team. We numbered around 60 members within the second year, and this shot up to 350 during three days of June 2016, when we were looking for a missing boy. Everybody wanted to help. We finally found him dead, unfortunately, and informed the police. The volunteers then left, as they had joined for this mission only," Hajri told Kuwait Times.

Currently, the team consists of 21 members who are available daily. "Some members left as they went to study abroad. Others left after their vehicles got damaged, as rescue operations consume great power from the vehicle and may damage it, especially when pulling heavy vehicles out of the sand," he explained.

All members are volunteers and they pay everything from their own pockets. "We are glad to help people and receive their appreciation and thanks. But we also need support, as we are not only volunteering our time. We have many expenses, especially when our vehicles get damaged, besides fuel, towing equipment and others. Also, we just opened an office for members to gather, from our own resources," said Hajri.

"This year, we received our first and only form of support from the Ahl Al Kuwait Foundation. We appreciate it, and hope that

companies will support us by at least providing towing equipment, as these quickly wear out. Also, we accept any volunteer who would like to join us, but he has to own a 4x4 vehicle and be ready to fix it if it gets damaged," he said.

The team receives between 15 to 20 calls for help daily. "Some people call us directly asking for help, but presently, about 90 percent of the calls come from the interior ministry. We cooperate with the operations center that includes police, fire department and medical emergency workers. Sometimes the police also support us with helicopters - depending on the case," Hajri said.

Ahmad Saleh, Deputy Team Leader, spoke about some rescue operations. "In Ramadan, we received a call from a family asking for help to find their elderly father who got stuck in mud in the desert. The old man didn't have a smartphone and couldn't send his location, but from his description, we succeeded in finding him after two hours, and we had iftar with him," he smiled.

"A few months back, we rescued two Western students who got lost in the Subbiya desert. It was late after midnight, but we found them after a few hours. Also, another elderly man got lost near Boubyan and he was diabetic, but we found him after more than three hours and saved him," noted Saleh.

The team provides a service that is unique not only in Kuwait,





but in the wider Gulf region. "We have a sign language interpreter for the deaf and dumb. They can contact us through video calls. We provide this service to other GCC countries as well, as we cooperate with some NGOs there," Hajri said.

The Kuwait Rescue Team has participated in various local and international activities, and has a GCC rescue license. "Our team played an awareness role during our participation in the folk festival held at heritage village near the border. We gave advice to visitors, and at the same time we were ready to rescue any vehicle stuck in the sand," he added.

Member Mohammed Al-Rabia said the work of the volunteers has had some negative effects. "One of the members who was working in the army was fired from his job due to repeatedly leaving work to rescue people. Also, some members are married and have disabled children or family members, which consumes their time, yet they still take out time to help people calling our team," he said. The team never fails to respond to calls. "We have even pulled out heavy vehicles of the fire department or the police. But not all calls for help are serious. Some people call us to help them fix their cars or change flat tires. We do it for women, but men inside city limits should be able to change their flat tires. Once I responded to a call from a healthy young man who had a flat tire,

but he didn't know how to change it. I didn't change the tire, but instead I taught him how to do it. He thanked me profusely," concluded Hajri.

Mobile number of the deaf and dumb interpreter:
98808767,

The team's account on :
Instagram: Kuwait.rescue.team
Twitter: Kwrescueteam
Snapchat: rescue.team



Local rescue time, led by Mohammed Saif Al-Hajri, has rescued hundreds of people stranded in remote areas of Kuwait's deserts. The team works with the Ministry of Interior and offers a service for hearing and sight impaired.

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BANGLADESHI EXPAT

WATCHES OUT FOR HIS COMMUNITY

By Ben Garcia

Reports about mistreated, harassed and unpaid housemaids regularly make the headlines in Kuwait. But a Bangladeshi social worker told Kuwait Times abuse and mistreatment often can be found in other professions beyond domestic labor, especially among the lowest skilled classes.

"The sad thing is that the plight of Bangladeshis is not taken seriously in Kuwait," Mohd Abdul Rouf Mowla rued.

Mowla is the president of the Bangladesh Awami League's Kuwait Central Committee which is connected to the party of Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. Mowla is also the president of an expat media forum in Kuwait, whose members are linked to media organizations in Bangladesh. He works at the Ministry of Electricity and Water. He has three children - the eldest is 25 years old with an MBA degree in

are stuck and accept whatever comes their way. When you see a Bangladeshi sweeping the road in this extreme weather, remember it's not only a job, but a struggle to survive. They need money and food to survive, but no one seems to care," Mowla told Kuwait Times.

"For instance, Bangladeshis working in cooperatives are not paid. In fact, they are the ones paying their sponsors so that they (sponsors) can live like kings. They don't get paid more than KD 60 - that is if they are paid at all," he said. "The embassy does not care about our condition. But I

call the Kuwait Times news desk and they normally send reporters to cover and highlight our issues. Only if they are published most of the time stories about Bangladeshi workers are heard; they will act only if they are highlighted in the media, if they aren't they won't bother," he said.

Mowla is an editor of a monthly Marulekha magazine and secretary general of Bangladesh Journalist Union-Kuwait. "I started helping Bangladeshis in Kuwait as a social worker when I saw the need for it - in 1982 to be precise. After the war, our government stopped sending domestic



Mohd Abdul Rouf Mowla

Advocating for those who cannot protect themselves, Bangladeshi social worker draws media attention to his countrymen's problems

Bangladesh. The other two are with him in Kuwait and are studying at Jabriya Indian School. His wife is a part-time makeup artist and hair-stylist in Kuwait.

"The Bangladeshi government as well as Kuwaiti employers should be concerned about workers' conditions, but no one bothers, and that's why abuse and mistreatment is tolerated and accepted," Mowla said. "Have you ever wondered about the condition of some Bangladeshi workers in Kuwait?" he added. According to him, the depressing truth is that few people, if not all, care about their conditions. "No one cares if they are being paid their salaries on time, have humane accommodation or get one meal a day at least," he lamented.

"Although many are mistreated, they continue to work as they have been victimized by illegal visa traders to pay for the work visa to enter Kuwait - up to KD 2,500. How can one pay back such a huge amount in just two years with a monthly salary of KD 60? So, unfortunately, they

hope with this article, we will be able to raise awareness of this issue and force them to act. We want our government to see the plight of our people and not turn a blind eye towards their misfortunes. I think we deserve better treatment," he reasoned.

Mowla also regularly goes to the embassy to report labor cases. Kuwait Times has quoted him and sometimes sourced him in many of our labor protest articles. Take a look at these two stories about labor protest by Bengalis recently.

They are covered by Kuwait Times because there are people like Mowla who cares and never stopped sharing information about Bangladeshi community in Kuwait. (<http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/bangladeshi-workers-back-work-3-day-sit-protest/>) and (<http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/bangladeshi-workers-stage-sit-protest/>).

"I need help especially in calling the attention of our Embassy or most of the time in order for the company to listen (to workers demand); normally I

helpers to Kuwait. Later, only male workers were allowed, who are now suffering from relentless abuse and mistreatment," he said.

Mowla started working in Kuwait in 1977 and has been a "savior" for many of his compatriots. As social worker, he has worked and extended help to many and some of them were unforgettable undertaking. "When I am free I usually visit our poor compatriots and give some food to them. I usually got 'thank you' messages after the help and after solving their problems. I only got satisfaction, I feel like I am very fulfilled especially if their cases are resolved. I love what I am doing and will continue to do so as long as I am still capable and alive," he concluded.

KUWAITI LEADERSHIP, TOP OFFICIALS EXCHANGE EID AL-ADHA GREETINGS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah both exchange greetings on the advent of Eid Al-Adha.

In his cable to His Highness the Amir, His Highness Sheikh Nawaf congratulated His Highness Sheikh Sabah on the advent of the blessed occasion, wishing him and the Kuwaiti people everlasting joy and prosperity. His Highness the

Crown Prince received a cable from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah who expressed similar sentiments to His Highness Sheikh Nawaf.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf exchanged other greeting cables with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanim, Chief of the Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of

the KNG Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, senior state officials, Sheikhs, ministers, members of the diplomatic corps, in addition to citizens and residents. —KUNA

FUEL PRICE HIKE HAS NO IMPACT ON TRAFFIC JAM

KUWAIT NEEDS TO BOOST TRANSPORT INFRASTRUCTURE: EXPERTS

KUWAIT: The government decision one year ago to cut the subsidy for fuels, thereby raising their prices, was meant, in part, to ease the traffic congestion but the problem remains virtually the same. There must be other ways to tackle the problem such as building new roads or expanding the existing ones, and improving the mass transport service, traffic experts agree.

To hike the petrol price is unlikely to prevent an employee from going to work or holidaymakers from using the roads, said Saud Al-Naqi, chairman of the Public Authority for Roads and Transportation.

"The price hikes can only affect the personal budgets of individuals, so we need short-term and long-term solutions that could integrate to bring about a change," he told KUNA.

"It is the responsibility of the Ministry of Public Works to expand the roads and build new ones in the short run while the Ministry of Interior is responsible for enforcing the traffic laws and educate motorists on the best practices in driving. The long-term solutions including building new cities equipped with all facilities, colleges and government services in order to alleviate pressure on main roads leading to the capital city,"

Al-Naqi added. On his part, Dr Bader Al-Matar, chairman of Kuwait Society for Traffic Safety, said the decision to hike the petrol prices failed to ease the traffic congestion due to lack of quality mass transportation systems.

"To discourage owners of private cars, whether citizens or expatriates, from using the roads, we need to have attractive public transport services such as the metro and city buses," he argued.

"Kuwait has nearly two million cars used individually on a daily basis; this number could be replaced by an effective and attractive mass transport system," Dr. Al-Matar recommended.

Asked on the tendency to purchase fuel-efficient cars, he said using of such type of the four-cylinder cars as nothing to do with the government decision to raise the petrol prices. "The decision had no virtual impact on the auto market because some expatriates working in Kuwait, not citizens, tended to buy this kind of cars before the decision," he explained.

Dr. Al-Matar noted that his society pinned hope that the decision would ease the traffic congestion through reducing the number of daily trips for private cars from four trips, but in vain. Similarly, the decision had no impact on

taxis because it coincided with raising the taxi fares, he added.

Regarding the fuel sales, the decision has had an apparent impact. Statistic of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) show that the sales of the ordinary unleaded Super (95 Research Octane Number or RON) petrol (marked by gold color) in 2016-2017 stood at 2.4 billion liters, reflecting a 28 percent decline from the 3.3 billion liters the previous year.

Similarly, the sales of Ultra (green) 98 RON petrol went down by 29.4 percent from 97.1 million liters in 2015-2016 to 68.6 million liters in 2016-2017.

To the contrary, sales of the cheaper Premium (red) 91 RON petrol skyrocketed from 731.4 million liters in 2015-2016 to 1.6 billion liters in 2016-2017, a 127.4 percent increase.

Petrol sales drop

The total sales of car fuels declined by 0.8 percent from 4.18 billion liters in 2015-2016 to 4.15 billion liters in 2016-2017, according to the KNPC figures received by KUNA. The auto market was not affected by the decision. Demand for cars with 8-12 cylinders is the same as before, the prices too, according to the Union of Automobile Agents (UAA).

Soon after the decision came into force, motorists shifted from the Super 95 RON and the Ultra 98 RON fuels to the Premium 91 RON fuel; this could have negative impacts on engines in the long run, the UAA pointed out.

The majority of expatriates who plan to buy cars prefer the 4-6 cylinder types to the 8 cylinder ones. Similarly, the expatriate motorists heavily use the Super 95 RON fuel.

On September 1, 2016, the new fuel prices came into force; they are 85 fils/ltr for Super 95 RON fuel - 25 percent increase compared to the old prices, 105 fils/ltr for the Premium 91 RON - a 40 percent increase, and 165 fils/ltr for the Ultra 98 RON - an 80 percent increase.

The cabinet approved the decision in early August last year as part of a package of carefully calculated economic reforms aiming to rationalizes subsidy and offset the budget deficit.

Still, the fuel price rates are the lowest when compared with those in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states and beyond.—KUNA



HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

AMIR HEADS TO US ON OFFICIAL VISIT

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation will leave for the US today on an official visit. During his stay in Washington, His Highness the Amir will have official talks with US President Donald Trump on Thursday (September 7).

The announcement comes a day after Trump spoke with Saudi King Salman and urged an end to a months-long diplomatic dispute with Qatar. HH the Amir has led mediation efforts to resolve the row, which began in early June when Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt cut political and trade ties with Qatar. — Agencies

TRUCK FALLS OFF NUWASEEB BRIDGE, DRIVER SERIOUS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A truck recently fell off a bridge along Nuwaseeb highway and the driver was seriously injured and rushed to hospital, said security sources. The sources noted that this was not the first time a truck fell off that same bridge.

Job opportunities

MP Faisal Al-Kandary said that small projects provide new job opportunities for the youth and encourage them to seek jobs outside the public sector. In this regard, Al-Kandary urged Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs, Khaled Al-Roudhan to help the youth and work on finalizing the mobile food trucks chart that has been long awaited by young entrepreneurs.

Education conference

Kuwait is scheduled to host the Arab Ministers of Education Conference towards the end of September, said informed sources noting that through Minister of Education and Higher Education, Dr Mohammed Al-Fares, Kuwait is exerting major efforts to keep Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) director to succeed the latter Dr. Abdullah Mohareb. The sources added that Kuwait's candidate for the position is MOE's assistant undersecretary, Dr Soud Al-Harbi. In a related matter, MoE urged the CSC to postpone using fingerprint checking in and out of systems in various departments and schools until preparations were completed and the devices were installed, said informed source. MoE Undersecretary Dr Haitham Al-Athari had accordingly contacted CSC in addition to the finance ministry to provide the needed budget.

Eid sacrifices

MSAL's charity department Acting Manager Falah Al-Fadhli announced that 22 charity organizations had applied to take part in the Eid sacrifices project to distribute those sacrifices locally and abroad by the fourth day of the Eid.



KUWAIT: A file picture shows the heavy traffic on the airport road. Experts suggest that there must be new ways to tackle the problem such as building new roads or expanding the existing ones and improving the mass transport service to tackle the growing traffic problem in Kuwait.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A view from the Scientific Center shows the sun set over the horizon leaving a shimmering array of colors over Kuwait's skyline yesterday.—KUNA

KUWAIT PILGRIMS PERFORM HAJJ WITHOUT ANY HASSLE

WARNING AGAINST UNLICENSED SLAUGHTER

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Pilgrims from the State of Kuwait are performing Hajj rituals without any hassle due to the coordination between Kuwaiti and Saudi authorities, said Kuwaiti Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri yesterday.

Al-Jabri, also Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, said he hoped this situation will continue for Kuwait's Hajj mission, stating that the Saudi authorities were keen on facilitating rituals for all those performing this great Islamic ritual. Al-Jabri said that the Kuwaiti pilgrims had safely and easily moved to Mina and that this Hajj season was hassle-free and successful thanks to the efforts exerted by the government of the custodian of the two holy mosques, King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz.

Meanwhile, the official took the chance to congratulate the leadership of Kuwait and its people on the advent of the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. Pilgrims from all around the globe headed yesterday to Mount Arafat to perform Hajj's most important ritual. They will leave the vicinity of Mount Arafat at around sunset, heading to Muzdalifa to spend the night there.

Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Mohammed Polyclinics Manager



Mohammad Al-Jabri

of MOH primary healthcare, Dr Rehab Al-Watyan said that 42 polyclinics would be open during the Eid vacation and 25 of them will work 24/7. Al-Watyan explained that Mahmoud Hajji Haidar, West Salmiya, Salam, Salwa, Rumaithiya Specialized, Southern Sabah Al-Salem and Bayan clinics would be open in Hawally health zone while five would be open in the Capital health zone including Ehqaqi, Yarmouk, Al-Sager Specialized, Kaifan and Dopha clinics.

Further, Al-Watyan said nine polyclinics would be open in Farwaniya including West Farwaniya, South Ferdous, South Ardhya, South Jleeb, Andalus, Rabiya, Farwaniya, Abdullah Al-Mubarak

and Sabah Al-Nasser. She added that 14 polyclinics would be open in Ahmadi including Adan, Reqqa, West Sabahiya, Khairan, Benaider, Fahaheel, New Ali Sabah Al-Salem, Wafra, Dhaher, Fintas, Hadiyya, West Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Abo Fateera and Sabah Al-Ahmed.

Finally, Al-Watyan said that seven polyclinics would be open in Jahra including Al-Qassr, Al-Waha, Al-Abdali, South Sulaibiya, Saad Al-Abdullah 2 and Kabad.

Transfer

MEW Undersecretary Mohammed Boshherhir recently made a sudden decision to transfer the consumers affairs director Salem Al-Qosoba to the communications department despite requests made to him against such a decision.

Warning on slaughtering

Kuwait Municipality strongly warned that inspections teams would be deployed in various governorates and all concerned are requested to cooperate with EPA in monitoring the street vendors and unlicensed butchers who might slaughter sacrifices outside slaughterhouses officially licensed by the municipality. It also warned that strict penalties may be imposed on defaulters as rigorous as deportation.

Crime

Report

TRIO HELD WITH HUGE CACHE OF FAKE DOLLAR, DINAR NOTES

KUWAIT: Two citizens and a Syrian were arrested recently with the possession of a huge cache of counterfeit currencies in US dollar and Kuwaiti dinar. The culprits were preparing to exchange the fake banknotes worth \$1 million and KD 50,000 in the local market, said security sources. They noted that the suspects also possessed highly sophisticated minting machines for counterfeiting currencies. The suspects were caught red-handed while forging money in a Salmiya apartment. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Drug dealers arrested

A citizen was recently arrested in Mubarak Al-Abdullah area with the possession of chemical drugs, said security sources noting that a female citizen who had been reported missing for the last 50 days was found with him. The sources said that both suspects seemed drugged and that the girl claimed that he had blackmailed her and made her elope from her sister's house. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress. Another citizen was also arrested recently with the possession of drugs, said security sources. According to the sources, the suspect attempted to escape when he was stopped at a checkpoint by the police. But his vehicle collided into a lamppost and he was overpowered.

Truck driver nabbed

An Egyptian truck driver was recently arrested with the possession of 80,000 illicit pills he had hidden in his truck, said security sources.

Liquor seized

Farwaniya detectives arrested an Asian expat with the possession of 200 bottles of imported liquor which he had prepared to sell during the Eid holidays, said security sources. —Al-Rai/Al-Anbaa

International

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HOUSTON: A car gets towed while men walk in the flooded waters of Telephone Rd. in Houston, Texas.—AFP

MONSTER STORM HARVEY CAUSES EXPLOSION AT CHEMICAL PLANT OPERATORS ORDER EVACUATION WITHIN 1.5 MILES OF THE PLANT

HOUSTON: Two explosions were reported at a flooded Texas chemical plant near storm-battered Houston yesterday, just as the region began its slow recovery following Harvey's onslaught. Operators at the Arkema Inc facility said the Harris County Emergency Operations Center notified them at approximately 2 am CDT, of "two explosions and black smoke" rising from the plant in Crosby, a town about 25 miles northeast of Houston. Arkema warned that "a threat of additional explosion remains," and urged people to stay out of the evacuation zone.

The Harris County Fire Marshal's Office in a later tweet confirmed "a series of chemical reactions at the @Arkema_Inc Crosby facility," which manufactures organic peroxides that can combust if not cooled to proper temperatures. The incident confirmed the fears of operators who had already ordered the evacuation of an area within 1.5 miles of the plant, which operators had said was at risk of exploding due to a "critical issue" triggered by monster storm Harvey's torrential rains.

The Harris County Sheriff's Office said one deputy had been taken to the hospital after inhaling fumes from the plant, with nine others driving themselves there "as precaution." In a later tweet the sheriff's office said company officials said "the smoke inhaled by 10 deputies near plant in Crosby is believed to be a non-toxic irritant." But Arkema also said in a

statement that "exposure to organic peroxides may cause eye, skin and/or respiratory irritation. The smoke may also contain organic peroxide degradation products, including hydrocarbons and alcohols."

The company said those products could cause eye, skin or respiratory irritation as well as nausea, drowsiness or dizziness, and urged residents within the 1.5-mile evacuation area to turn off their air conditioners to avoid potential smoke exposure.

Pence visits

East of the explosion site rural areas of Texas were drenched as Harvey headed eastwards, with the city of Port Arthur especially hard hit. Vice President Mike Pence was to visit Texas Thursday to meet victims of the torrential rains and assess damage. Louisiana authorities scrambled to safeguard their state from Harvey, whose onslaught evoked painful memories of Hurricane Katrina's deadly strike 12 years ago—but New Orleans escaped with minimal rain. Officials believe at least 33 people have been killed in the storm, and expect the toll to rise further—although many of those missing may simply have no phone or access to power. More than 30,000 people have found refuge in shelters across the Lone Star State, from the giant Houston convention center to small churches, according to the head of the Federal Emergency Management

Agency (FEMA), Brock Long.

In Houston, where Mayor Sylvester Turner issued a nighttime curfew to aid search efforts and thwart potential looting, the two major airports had reopened on a limited basis, signaling a slow return to normality. The National Hurricane Center downgraded Harvey to a tropical depression late Wednesday, but warned life-threatening flood conditions remain in southeast Texas and southwest Louisiana.

A few pops

At least a quarter of Harris County, which includes Houston and Crosby, is still under water. Crosby resident John Villarreal, 45, told AFP he learned of the Arkema incident after leaving his home—situated about a mile from the facility—to survey flooding in the neighborhood when he saw "a lot of smoke, and you could see the flames in the smoke." "We could hear a few pops," he said. "I would call it like an aerosol can in a fire type deal." Villarreal—who spent five years working at the plant making organic peroxide approximately two decades ago—said he and many neighbors did not evacuate the area because "there was really no clear direction" from authorities concerning potential risks of staying.

He is currently sheltering 10 family members and neighbors whose homes were flooded as Harvey for days pummeled the region

with record rainfall. Despite the explosion risks Villarreal said he had wanted to stay in Crosby to assist elderly neighbors in the event of emergency. "We're all invested heavily in this area so we're doing the best we can to not let the worst happen," he said.

Life post-Harvey

Even as Houston got a first glimpse of life after Harvey, the city of Port Arthur was pummeled by torrential rains—making it almost impossible to reach despite the best efforts of volunteer rescuers. So far, parts of Texas have seen more than 50 inches of rain, while in Louisiana, the top total 18 inches so far was increasing. Harvey first slammed onshore as a Category Four hurricane Friday night before unloading on Texas.

As a tropical storm it then made its second landfall just west of the Louisiana town of Cameron early Wednesday with maximum sustained winds nearing 45 miles per hour. Heavy downpours were expected to stop on Thursday, though "life-threatening" flooding was to continue in southeastern Texas and southwestern Louisiana. While New Orleans appeared to have dodged a bullet, Harvey's arrival served as a somber reminder—coming just one day after the 12-year anniversary of Katrina, which ravaged the vulnerable city famous for its jazz music and cuisine. —AFP



MAKKAH: Muslim worshippers, pray at Namirah mosque near Mount Arafat, also known as Jabal al-Rahmah (Mount of Mercy), where the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) is believed to have given his final sermon ahead of the climax of hajj.—AP/AFP photos

IRAN HAJJ PILGRIMS TORN BETWEEN JOY, BITTER MEMORIES

MAKKAH: Reza from Iran is torn between the joy of taking part in this year's annual hajj pilgrimage to Islam's holiest sites and bitter memories of the 2015 stampede that killed hundreds of his compatriots. Iranian pilgrims stayed away from the 2016 hajj after regional rivals Saudi Arabia, custodian of the sites in the west of the kingdom, and Iran failed to agree on arrangements and logistics.

Arrangements for the hajj, a religious duty which devout Muslims must accomplish at least once in their lifetime, are thorny and security paramount for the two million pilgrims who throng Islam's holiest sites in western Saudi Arabia. In 2015, a human river of pilgrims was performing the final major rite of the hajj, the "Stoning of the Devil", near Makkah when a stampede killed hundreds of Muslims from across the world.

Riyadh issued a death toll of 769, while figures compiled from foreign officials in more than 30 countries gave a tally of around 2,300 dead. Tehran reported the largest number of stampede victims, with 464 Iranians among the dead. "They were murdered, they (Saudi authorities) didn't help them," said Reza, a 63-year-old former oil company official, seated in the lobby of a Makkah hotel. But Reza said that new security measures now left him feeling safer.



"Everything is clear this year," he said, speaking in English. "They've taken more security measures otherwise we would not have come," he said. And "the hajj leaders of Iran have given us instructions and times" for the rituals, to avoid any repeat of the 2015 disaster. Iranian authorities say more than 86,000 Iranian pilgrims are taking part in this year's hajj, each equipped with an identity bracelet in case of any accident.

The "made-in-Tehran" bracelets can be connected to smartphones, allowing access to information on the hajj. Iran lambasted Saudi Arabia in the months following the stampede, condemning its organization of the hajj and questioning the kingdom's very right to serve as custodian of Islam's holiest places.

'Holy sites for all'

In January 2016, Sunni-dominated Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran broke off diplomatic ties after angry Iranian protesters stormed Saudi diplomatic missions over the kingdom's execution of a prominent Shiite cleric. Tehran and Riyadh stand on opposing sides in several regional disputes, including the conflicts in Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, as well as this year's Gulf diplomatic crisis between Qatar and a Saudi-led Arab bloc.

But a breakthrough accord on Iranian pilgrims taking part in this year's hajj was struck in March after several months of negotiations during which the two Gulf states traded bitter recriminations. "It was a conflict between two countries,

Iranians wanted to come here," said Mohammed, a 38-year-old engineer from the city of Arak, southwest of Tehran. Mohammad was at the doomed 2015 hajj and said some of his acquaintances had died in the stampede, while he himself had lost consciousness but survived.

According to Fariba Adelhkhah from the research and study centre of France's Sciences Po University, Iran could not have stopped its citizens from making the pilgrimage to Mecca for much longer. "The travel ban could not last long. Could politics call into question a religious duty? That question was at the centre of a debate in Tehran," said Adelhkhah. "The Iranian government did not want to take responsibility for prevent-

ing their citizens again from going to Makkah," she said. At Reza's hotel filled with Iranian pilgrims in Makkah's bustling Al-Aziziya neighborhood, the consensus was that lifting the ban on travel for the hajj was the right thing to do. Dressed in a black chador, Mariam, an English-language teacher from Babol in northern Iran, said holy shrines should be open to all Muslims "and Saudi Arabia cannot ban any country". "I wish that one day all Muslim countries will be able control the holy shrines, not just Saudi Arabia," she said. Custodianship of the Muslim holy places is a key plank of the Saudi monarchy's claim to legitimacy, and the Saudi king's official title is "Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques," in Makkah and Madinah.—AFP



INSIDE THE BRUTAL WORLD OF I COAST'S MICROBE CHILD GANGS

ABIDJAN: Vieux-Pere runs his fingers through his patchy hair as he remembers escaping being lynched. "The locals caught me and hit me everywhere, I still have scars on my skull," he says. "That's why I can't get my hair right," he says with a laugh. For nearly 10 years the 24-year-old was in a "microbe" gang, the name residents have given to the youth gangs who rob, attack and sometimes kill to get by in Ivory Coast's economic capital Abidjan. Hundreds of youngsters—some as young as 10 — are in the gangs, according to the charity Indigo, which has helped about 40 former members reintegrate into society.

Hated as much as they are feared, the gangs sprang up in poor areas of Abidjan's densely populated Abobo suburb during the decade of civil unrest in Ivory Coast between 2002 and 2011 that split the country in two. The rising violence led to the appearance of child soldiers, who became the first "microbes", or "germs". Public anger against their marauding has sometimes boiled over. After mobs of

residents lynched a number of gang members, a microbe leader was tortured, beheaded and burnt in 2015.

Vieux-Pere, who only goes by his nickname, says he was never afraid because he liked to fight. He left school at the age of seven. "I saw people fighting and I liked it a lot, I wanted to join them," he says, sitting in the shadow of a youth centre in Abobo. "I found myself with the strongest guys in Abobo and I was proud. I liked their way of life. Peace to their souls—they are all dead," he said, quoting some of their gang nicknames: Dragon, Gongo...Vieux-Pere left his family home after fighting with his father over his gang membership. He slept on the streets for two years before finding a small house "with a mattress" in Abobo for 15,000 CFA francs a month (\$27, 22 euros).

The 'Air France' gang

He joined the microbe gang "Air France" in 2008 and spent most of the next decade robbing people on the streets, often at knifepoint or threat-

ening his victims with his fists. "Very quickly, I had to fight the boss, Ismael, to win my place and show I was not afraid," he says, pointing to a large scar on his elbow from one of the gang leader's machete blows. There were about 40 adolescents in the gang, which operated mostly at night. "We met in the evening with the group and left with our machetes in our backpacks," he says.

"Sometimes we rented gbakas (private minibuses) to take the whole gang. We attacked everyone." But Vieux-Pere says he never killed anyone. "Those of us who killed are now dead." He was nearly killed himself when a gang raid on one of Abidjan's biggest markets went wrong. His medical care was paid for by "his guys" with the spoils from the raid, in accordance with the gang's rules. "As soon as we stole the money we kept half of it for the gang in case of a hard blow, to pay bail-or for partying," he said.

A new life

Vieux-Pere became leader of Air

France in 2015 after his predecessor died in prison. "Ismael entrusted me with the jail before he went to prison. They saw that I was man enough," he says. But the new gang leader dreamed of a better life. On his birthday on March 12, 2016, he quit Air France with two friends. "I didn't feel happy anymore. I was making money but I always asked the question: 'What if I attacked my parents like I attacked the others?'" Thanks to a microbe reintegration program by Indigo, the young man now hopes to set up a car parts business.

"We all want to start a new life," he said of the charity's 40 reformed microbe gang members. Illiterate, he has been going to night classes for reading and writing for a month. He has found a little work scrap metal dealing and working at a junkyard, and is even back in touch with his family. But he still lives in the small house with another former member of Air France. "The gang is dead," he said. "Some left after I did. I don't know what became of the others."—AFP



TAL AFAR: A Brazilian-made EE-9 Cascavel armored vehicle and a US-made Humvee, belonging to the Hashed al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization) paramilitaries, are seen towed on a trailer departing the northern city of Tal Afar.—AFP

IRAQ ANNOUNCES MAJOR VICTORY OVER IS JIHADISTS

BAGHDAD: Iraq declared yesterday that its forces had retaken the northern city of Tal Afar and the surrounding region in another major victory over Islamic State group jihadists. Tal Afar was the last major population centre in northern Iraq still under jihadist control and its loss deprives IS of what was once a key supply hub between its territory in Syria and Iraq. "Our happiness is complete, victory has arrived and the province of Nineveh is now entirely in the hands of our forces," said a statement from the office of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

After 12 days of fighting, Abadi announced that Tal Afar had "regained its place in the national territory". The full recapture of Nineveh province comes weeks after Iraqi forces backed by a US-led coalition ousted IS from its capital Mosul, three years after the jihadists declared a self-styled "caliphate" straddling Iraq and war-torn Syria.

IS has lost much of the territory it controlled in the two countries and

thousands of its fighters have been killed since late 2014, when the coalition was set up to defeat the group. IS fighters in Iraq now control only the city of Hawija and a few areas in the desert along the border with Syria.

Shiite enclave

IS jihadists overran Tal Afar, a Shiite enclave in the predominantly Sunni province, in June 2014. The city lies around 450 kilometers northwest of the capital Baghdad and about 70 kilometers west of Mosul, Iraq's second city. At the time Tal Afar had a population of around 200,000, but officials said when the battle to recapture the city was launched on August 20 that it was unknown how many remained. The deputy commander of the US-led coalition, British Major General Rupert Jones, has said the fall of Tal Afar would spell the end of IS in northern Iraq.

"The liberation of this city, and the remainder of Nineveh province, will essentially end ISIS's military presence

in northern Iraq," Jones said, using another acronym for IS. Officials have said the capture of Tal Afar would make it even more difficult for the jihadists to transport fighters and weapons between Iraq and Syria. Authorities had accused the approximately 1,000 jihadists believed to be in the city when the operation was launched of using civilians as human shields during Iraqi and coalition air strikes.

Progress in Tal Afar was far more rapid than in Mosul, which fell to Iraqi forces only after a grueling nine-month battle that began in October 2016. IS has also suffered major losses in Syria, where US-backed fighters have retaken more than half of the group's de facto Syrian capital Raqa. Iraqi authorities are now expected to launch a new offensive against IS in their stronghold of Hawija, a town in Kirkuk province around 300 kilometers north of Baghdad. But the battle for Hawija is expected to be more complicated because of its location.—AFP

IRAN COMPLYING WITH NUCLEAR DEAL

VIENNA: Iran remains in compliance with the 2015 nuclear deal, a UN atomic watchdog report showed yesterday, even as growing tensions between Tehran and Washington threaten to torpedo the landmark agreement. US President Donald Trump has vowed to "dismantle" the "disastrous" accord between Iran and six major powers curtailing Tehran's atomic activities in exchange for sanctions relief. While US sanctions imposed over Iran's nuclear work remain suspended, Washington has ramped up others related to Tehran's support for "terrorism", its ballistic missile program and its human rights record.

Iran says this contravenes the "spirit" of the deal, an accusation fired back by Trump at Tehran because of the Islamic republic's funding and supplying of armed groups "across the region". The 2015 accord covered only Iran's nuclear activities and the latest International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) quarterly report, seen by AFP, showed that these remained in compliance. Its stock of low-enriched uranium—used for peaceful purposes, but when further processed for a weapon—did not exceed the agreed limit of 300 kilograms, the report said.

It added that Iran "has not pursued the construction of the Arak... reactor"—which could give it weapons-grade plutonium—and has not enriched uranium above low purity levels. Iran's stock of heavy water, a reactor coolant, remained below the ceiling of 130 tons throughout the previous quarter, with Iran exporting 19.1 tons. Iran has previously inched above an agreed ceiling of 130 tons. The plant producing the heavy water was shut for maintenance earlier this year and has now restarted, the IAEA said.

Trump is due in October to certify to Congress whether Iran is sticking to the nuclear deal. In July he told the Wall Street Journal he "would be surprised if they were in compliance". The Guardian this week cited former officials and analysts as saying that the White House is pressuring US intelligence services to produce a justification to declare Iran in violation. As well as the United States the hard-fought agreement also includes China, Russia, Britain, France and Germany.

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday there is "no alternative" to the deal. With much of Iran's dismantled nuclear equipment still physically in Iran albeit under IAEA monitoring—Tehran has warned that it can ramp up its program again within days. This would give Trump a second nuclear crisis to add to the standoff over North Korea.—AFP

EU'S BARNIER SAYS NO 'DECISIVE PROGRESS' IN BREXIT TALKS

BRUSSELS: EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier warned yesterday that the European Union and Britain had made no substantial breakthroughs in talks this week, with the key financial settlement a major stumbling bloc. The latest, third round of talks concluded with Barnier and his British counterpart David Davis both underlining remaining differences despite time running out on achieving a comprehensive divorce deal. "This week provided useful clarifications... but we did not get any decisive progress on the central subjects," Barnier told a joint press conference with Davis in Brussels.

The officials did take a slightly more positive tone than when they began Monday, when Barnier said, to a grim-faced Davis, that Britain must start negotiating "seriously". Davis yesterday was more upbeat, although he reiterated his call for the European side to show more flexibility, especially on the divorce bill the UK must pay as a price for leaving the bloc. Britain's Brexit settlement is estimated at up to 100 billion euros in Brussels but at 40 billion, according to reports in London.

"The EU has made a claim on the UK taxpayer, undoubtedly a large number, on the basis of what it says are our legal obligations. The proper approach to this is to go through it line by line," Davis said. "We are a country which meets its international obligations," Davis added firmly. For his part, Barnier, said "EU taxpayers at 27 (member states) should not pay for obligations taken at 28."

"The UK in July recognized it had obligations beyond the Brexit date but this week, the UK explained that its obligations will be limited to its last payment before exit," Barnier said. The EU has longstanding commitments, agreed to by Britain as a member state, in for example loans for Ukraine or to the African Development Bank, and London could not simply walk away from them, he added.

Some progress on Ireland

The European Union says there must be "sufficient progress" in three key areas-EU citizen rights, Northern Ireland's border and the exit bill-before it will consider post-Brexit arrangements. EU leaders will review the talks in October to see how far they have got and whether it is possi-



BRUSSELS: United Kingdom's Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, David Davis, second left, sits with his team during a meeting with European Union Chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, fourth right, and his team during the third round of negotiations on Brexit talks at EU headquarters in Brussels. — AP

ble to take up London's demand for negotiations on a free trade deal. Davis reiterated that the two strands should be discussed in parallel since they are part and parcel of Brexit overall, but Barnier insisted again that the divorce deal must be agreed first.

He said highly sensitive discussions on the fate of Northern Ireland's border with the Irish Republic were "fruitful" with "substantial progress" achieved. But with all the other topics still blocked, Barnier added: "We are from having sufficient progress to recommend that (EU leaders) launch talks about the future relationship." Britain is on a countdown to leave the

EU by the end of March 2019, following last year's shock referendum vote. To avert a messy exit, British and EU officials have agreed to meet each month for four days in Brussels leading up to the October review. The talks take place against a backdrop of deep political uncertainty in Britain, with the opposition Labour Party now backing a "soft" Brexit whereby the country remains in the EU's customs union and single market for a transition period. Prime Minister Theresa May has said she wants Britain unequivocally out of both but her position has been crippled since a June election gamble backfired and she lost her parliamentary majority. —AFP

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POLICEMAN STABBED IN STOCKHOLM, SUSPECT ARRESTED

STOCKHOLM: A Swedish policeman was stabbed in a bustling Stockholm square yesterday, with nothing to indicate it was a terror attack, police said. "A police officer has been stabbed in the back and the neck," inspector Ronnie Tellberger said, saying the assailant attacked him from behind. The suspect was arrested at the scene, a witness said. The motive for the attack was not immediately clear. "There's nothing to indicate at

this point that this was terror-related," Stockholm police spokesman Lars Bystrom said. "As I've understood things, it seems this was totally unprovoked," he said.

The attack comes almost five months after an Uzbek asylum seeker deliberately ploughed a truck into shoppers in central Stockholm, killing five people including an 11-year-old girl. Yesterday's incident occurred around 10:30 am

near a subway exit in Medborgarplatsen Square in the Sodermalm neighborhood. "A preliminary enquiry has been opened into attempted murder," Stockholm police said in a statement. The police officer was taken to hospital, but was released several hours later, Bystrom said. The witness said the attack "happened so quickly, there was barely time to notice anything," but that he saw police arrest a man at the scene. —AFP



PARIS: Royal fans for the late Diana, Princess of Wales, cut a cake outside Kensington Palace in London. — AP

BRITAIN REMEMBERS DIANA'S SHOCK DEATH

'20 YEARS AGO, THE WORLD LOST AN ANGEL'

LONDON: Fans and friends of Diana, princess of Wales, were marking 20 years since her death yesterday as Britain looked back on the day when the shocking news broke that she had been killed in a Paris car crash. She was just 36 at the time, with her death triggering an unprecedented outpouring of grief across Britain. She died along with Dodi Fayed, her wealthy Egyptian boyfriend of two months, and his driver Henri Paul who was trying to shake off paparazzi photographers.

Two decades on, Britain has still not forgotten. "20 years ago today, the world lost an angel," pop star Elton John, a friend of Diana's who worked with her to raise awareness about AIDS, said on Instagram next to a picture of the two of them. Well wishers laid flowers and candles outside Kensington Palace, her London residence where her sons Princes William and Harry now live. A couple in Union Jack clothing were the first to arrive on Thursday morning at the palace gates and hundreds filed past during the day.

"I don't think there's anyone else like her now, she was a one off... She was electric, she was just dynamite," said Ian, a receptionist from Hertfordshire, north of London, and one of those who came to pay their respects. Overnight, a handful of people had braved the rain in Paris to visit the Pont de l'Alma tunnel where her car smashed into a pillar at 12:23 am on August 31, 1997, ending the life of the world's most famous woman.

Diana was "revolutionary," said Sian Croston, a 17-year-old student from London who was visiting the gold-leaf Flame of Liberty monument that stands above the underpass and has become something of a shrine to the princess. "She changed

the royal family forever. "She will always be the people's princess," she said, using an epithet coined at the time by Prime Minister Tony Blair. Linda Bigelbach, a 61-year-old US tourist from Minnesota, recalled: "I remember her wedding day and I remember the day she died."

'All of us lost somebody'

In London, William and Harry, who were 15 and 12 respectively when she died, were spending the day privately after greeting well-wishers outside the palace on Wednesday. Earlier in the day, they had walked through the White Garden, a space within the palace grounds created this year to evoke memories of Diana's image and style. They also met with representatives of the charities she supported, including those helping AIDS sufferers and children in need. Speaking to one group, Harry said his mother's death had affected everyone. "All of us lost somebody," the 32-year-old said.

The flowers piled up in front of the palace alongside heartfelt handwritten messages and photos remembering Diana, with the two brothers placing bouquets handed to them by several members of the public. "I was so sad," recalled a tearful Lena Pettersson, a cleaner who had travelled from Sweden to pay her respects. "She cared about people, she was very special. Her sons are continuing her work, they are just like her." Virgin founder Richard Branson, a friend, said Diana was an "incredible woman" whose "unique way with people" made a huge difference to the causes she championed. "She inspired so many others with her compassion and humanity," he said. —AFP

GERMAN CASE AGAINST AUSCHWITZ MEDIC, 96, TO BE THROWN OUT

BERLIN: German prosecutors called yesterday for the case of a 96-year-old former Nazi medical orderly at the Auschwitz death camp to be thrown out because he is deemed unfit for trial. Hubert Zafke had faced 3,681 counts of being an accessory to murder at the concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Poland. But concerns over his mental and physical health led to repeated postponements of the trial, which began in February 2016 in the northeastern lakeside town of Neubrandenburg.

The prosecutors' move Thursday effectively ends proceedings against one of the last defendants accused of crimes at Auschwitz. A court spokesman said that the presiding judges would approve the motion "in the short term". Stefan Urbanek, a spokesman for the regional prosecutor's office, said in a statement that medical evaluations in March and July this year had found the wheelchair-bound Zafke "unfit to stand trial".

"The experts reached this conclusion after having diagnosed dementia in October 2015, leading to a determination that Zafke could only stand trial on a limited basis," Urbanek said. "Now the dementia has reached a severity that the defendant is no longer able, inside and outside the courtroom, to reasonably assess his interests or coherently follow or give testimony." Urbanek said prosecutors were required by law after receiving this independent medical evaluation to submit a motion to dismiss the case.

Thomas Walther, a lawyer for two co-plaintiffs, sons of a woman murdered at Auschwitz, criticized the state's handling of the case but acknowledged that the prosecutors' motion to end the trial "complied with the rule of law". Proceedings against Zafke, a farmer's son who joined the Nazi party's elite police force the Waffen-SS at age 19, had already been halted last October following complaints that the judges were biased.

Train carrying Anne Frank

The charges against Zafke focused on a one-month period in 1944 when 14 trains carrying prisoners-including the Jewish teenage diarist Anne Frank-arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau. Frank, who arrived in Auschwitz with her parents and sister, was later transferred to another camp, Bergen-Belsen, where she died in March 1945, just two months before the Nazis were defeated. After World War II, a Polish court in 1948 sentenced Zafke to a four-year jail term from which he was released in 1951.

But during his first questioning by German prosecutors in 2014, he denied ever having worked at Auschwitz. In later depositions, he acknowledged his presence but said he was unaware of the gas chambers and crematoria at the death camp until after the end of the war. The International Auschwitz Committee, which represents Holocaust survivors, had previously sharply attacked Germany's handling of the case, saying the court was hurtling "between sloppy ignorance and complete disinterest" in a resolution. Some 1.1 million people, most of them European Jews, perished between 1940 and 1945 in Auschwitz before it was liberated by Soviet forces. More than 70 years after the prosecution of top Nazis began in Nuremberg, Germany has been racing against time to try the last cogs in the Third Reich's killing machine.

Zafke was the fourth former concentration camp worker in the dock in the latest series of trials, following John Demjanjuk in 2011, Oskar Groening in 2015 and Reinhold Hanning last year-all convicted of complicity in mass murder. All were tried using a new standard of evidence: that it was sufficient to work at a death camp to be prosecuted, even without proof of a link to specific deaths. Those cases were hailed for providing a degree of catharsis for aged survivors, even if they shed little new light on the Holocaust. —AFP



SEOUL: This handout photo provided by South Korean Defense Ministry in Seoul shows South Korean F-15K fighter jets and US F-35B stealth jet fighters flying over South Korea during a joint military drill aimed to counter North Korea's latest missile test. — AFP

US HEAVY BOMBERS, JETS IN SHOW OF FORCE AGAINST NORTH KOREA

S KOREA, US CONDUCT AIR INTERDICTION EXERCISE

SEOUL: US heavy bombers and stealth jet fighters took part in a joint live fire drill in South Korea yesterday, intended as a show of force against the North after its latest missile launch. "South Korean and US air forces conducted an air interdiction exercise in order to strongly cope with North Korea's repeated firing of ballistic missiles and development of nuclear weapons," the South's air force said in a statement.

Two B-1B "Lancer" bombers from Guam and four F-35B stealth jet fighters from the Marine Corps' Iwakuni Air Base in Japan conducted the drill, with four South Korean jet fighters also taking part. B-1B overflights of the peninsula from Guam, a US territory in the Pacific, infuriate the North, which cited them when it announced a plan to fire a salvo of missiles towards the island. It was one of the moves that saw tensions spiral this month, along with a new set of UN Security Council sanctions, US President Donald Trump's apocalyptic warning to rain "fire and fury" on Pyongyang, and culminating with the North firing a missile over Japan on Tuesday.

China yesterday condemned "destructive" calls for further sanctions, warning Japan, the US and Britain that diplomacy was needed to avert a crisis. Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said sanctions alone "cannot fundamentally resolve the issue", amid reports the three countries were pushing for new restrictions on North Korean oil imports and foreign workers.

"The current situation on the Korean peninsula is not a screenplay, it's not a computer game. It is a real situation that directly bears on the security of the people on the peninsula and the whole regional peace and tranquility," she said. On a visit to Japan yesterday, British Prime Minister Theresa May said London and Tokyo would work together to pressure North Korea "including by increasing the pace of sanctions" against Pyongyang.

Frustrated Trump

The UN Security Council has already imposed seven sets of sanctions on Pyongyang, the most recent of which were passed earlier this month, but the measures have done little to quell Kim Jong-Un's nuclear missile ambitions. In response to the latest missile launch, a frustrated Trump took to Twitter to condemn Pyongyang, saying "the US has been talking to North Korea, and paying them extortion money, for 25 years. Talking is not the answer!"

Yesterday's live fire drill took place at the Pilsung shooting range in Gangwon province, some 150 kilometers south of the Demilitarized Zone dividing the two Koreas. A South Korean air force spokesman said it was separate from the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian (UFG) joint exercises, which wrapped up yesterday. Tens of thousands of South Korean and US troops took part in the largely computer-simulated exercise that ran for two weeks in the South.

The annual drills are viewed by nuclear-armed Pyongyang as a highly provocative rehearsal for invasion, and it always meets them with threats of strong military counteraction. A US Forces Korea official told the Yonhap news agency that Washington had avoided sending bombers to Korea during the UFG exercises "in hopes that the reduced scale would send a positive signal to North Korea and the region", but Pyongyang had responded with a series of provocations.

The North's state media called Tuesday's Hwasong-12 intermediate range missile flight over northern Japan "a part of the muscle-flexing" against the war games. Leader Kim Jong-Un called for more launches into the Pacific, the KCNA news agency said. North Korea says it needs nuclear weapons to protect itself against the US and analysts say Pyongyang has made rapid strides in its ballistic technology in defiance of seven sets of United Nations resolutions. In July it conducted two successful ICBM launches which appeared to bring most of the US mainland into range. —AFP

CULTURAL EXCHANGE PROGRAMS FEAR VISA CUTS FROM TRUMP ORDER

MINNEAPOLIS: Officials who run a popular language and cultural immersion program in the north woods of Minnesota are warning that potential changes in visa rules could make it hard for them to hire enough instructors. The Minnesota program's alert is part of a larger push by cultural exchange programs nationwide to draw attention to the possible impact of President Donald Trump's "Buy American, Hire American" executive order.

Christine Schulze, executive director of Concordia Language Villages, wrote a letter this week urging alumni and other supporters around the country to contact their congressional representatives and ask them to ensure that international exchange programs are excluded from Trump's order. The Wall Street Journal reported this week that the Trump administration is considering major reductions in J-1 visas for cultural exchange programs as it implements the executive order.

Trump signed the order in April on a trip to Kenosha, Wisconsin. It's aimed mainly at ensuring that highly skilled technology jobs go to Americans rather than foreigners with H1-B visas who will work for less, and strengthening "buy American" requirements for government purchases. But it may ultimately affect other categories of workers, too, such as foreign college students who take summer obs in the US.

Concordia Language Villages, a program of Concordia College in Moorhead, gathers more than 10,000 people a year from all 50 states and more than 40 countries to camps near Bemidji and other sites in northern Minnesota as either staff or students. That includes nearly 200 people on J-1 visas. Students, known as "villagers," include young people and adults. Besides seasonal programs at various locations, the program also offers seven year-round, architecturally authentic "villages" near Bemidji that represent cultures speaking Finnish, French, German, Russian, Norwegian, Spanish and Swedish.

Grave mistake

"These staff offer language and cultural skills that ensure top quality instruction" in an immersion setting, Schulze said in her letter. "The international staff are vital members of the Concordia Language Villages community and help us provide an incomparable educational opportunity for thousands of young people in the state of Minnesota and across the country on an annual basis."

Concordia Language Villages is making its appeal as part of a broader initiative by the Alliance for International Exchange, a national umbrella group for cultural exchange programs.

Schulze said she had met in recent days with alliance staff and member organizations in Washington about their next steps. The alliance said a number of cultural exchange programs are at risk if the Trump administration curtails privately funded J-1 visa programs, including categories for camp counselors, summer work travel, au pairs and others. "We believe this is a grave mistake - elimination of these programs would have a negative impact on local communities, employers, and families nationwide, while dramatically weakening our public diplomacy efforts," said Ilir Zherka, executive director of the alliance, in an action alert to its member groups and supporters. —AP



MARYLAND: President Donald Trump waves as he steps off Air Force One as he arrives at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland. —AP

RAINS IN PAKISTAN LEAVE EIGHT DEAD

KARACHI: Monsoon rains in Pakistan's port city of Karachi left at least eight people dead in flood-related mishaps, officials said yesterday. The destruction came on the heels of days-long downpours in neighboring India that especially caused havoc in Mumbai. The heavy downpour in Karachi flooded streets and disrupted normal life in

Pakistan's largest city. People in some areas were seen wading through waist-high water.

Karachi Mayor Wasim Akhtar said authorities were working to help those affected by the rains. Pakistan's largest Edhi ambulance service said it transported the bodies of eight people to hospitals who were either electrocuted

or killed by collapsing walls. According to Pakistan's meteorological department, rains will continue for three days in various parts of Sindh province, where authorities closed schools as a precaution.

Windstorms and rains were also expected in southwest Baluchistan and eastern Punjab provinces. The meteor-

ological department in an alert said rains were also expected in the capital Islamabad and in Pakistan's portion of Kashmir. Rains regularly trigger floods in South Asian nations during monsoon season, which runs from June through September. In Mumbai, the rains halted public transport and caused flights to be diverted earlier this week.—AP



MUMBAI: Rescuers work at the site of a building that collapsed in Mumbai, India.—AP

MUMBAI BUILDING COLLAPSE KILLS 18 AFTER HEAVY RAINS

DEADLY HOUSING COLLAPSE SHINES LIGHT ON POOR CONSTRUCTION

MUMBAI: At least 18 people died yesterday when a building collapsed in India's financial capital Mumbai following heavy rains that have wreaked havoc in many parts of South Asia. A dozen others were pulled from the rubble of the four-storey residential building, which gave way around 8:40 am in the densely populated area of Bhendi Bazaar. It was the most recent deadly housing collapse to strike the teeming metropolis—shining a spotlight on poor construction standards in the Asian country—and came after flooding in the city killed 10 people.

"Eighteen people have died. Another 12 have been admitted to hospital," Vijay Khabale-Patil, a spokesman for Mumbai's civic authority, said. Officials estimated that up to 40 people could have been caught up in the disaster. Khabale-Patil said rescue operations would go on into the evening. Ambulances rushed the injured to the nearby J.J. Hospital in the south of the city while locals joined a 43-member National Disaster Response Force team in picking through piles of debris in a desperate hunt for survivors.

Building collapses are common in Mumbai, especially during the monsoon season from late June to September, when heavy rains lash the western

Indian city, weakening poorly built structures. Severe downpours caused flooding and chaos across Mumbai and the neighboring region of Thane on Tuesday although waters had receded by late Wednesday. Bhendi Bazaar, a scruffy colonial-era market, is one of Mumbai's most historic districts and officials said the collapsed building was 117 years old. It had been marked for demolition as part of a \$600 million redevelopment project that is replacing hundreds of ramshackle, decades-old low-rise buildings with around a dozen glitzy new tower blocks.

Living in fear

Distraught residents said they rushed to the scene of the collapsed structure after hearing a loud crash. "There was a huge noise and we all came running," Naseem Mogradia, who lives two lanes away, said. Shahid Khan, 52, said he didn't know whether his friend and seven family members who lived on the ground floor were alive or dead. "I am just trying to help with rescue operations," he said. Mumbai has been hit by several deadly building collapses in recent years, often caused by shoddy construction, poor quality materials or ageing buildings.

Millions are forced to live in cramped,

ramshackle properties because of spiraling real estate prices and a lack of housing for the poor. Activists say housing societies, private owners and builders often cut corners to save on costs. Rent control acts mean landlords cannot afford to maintain buildings while poor people choose to remain in homes even after they have been declared unsafe because they have nowhere else to go. "Most of the buildings in Bhendi Bazaar are old and dilapidated. We always live in fear that they will collapse during monsoons," 63-year-old Mohammed Shaikh said.

In July, 17 people including a three-month-old baby died when a four-storey building gave way in the northern suburb of Ghatkopar. In 2013, 60 people were killed when a residential block came crashing down in one of Mumbai's worst housing disasters. Yesterday officials in Mumbai said the death toll from floods in and around the city were expected to rise above 10 as the waters receded. "We are still on the lookout for more missing persons and the number may go up," Santosh Kadam, spokesman for disaster control in Thane, said. More than 1,200 have been killed in India, Nepal and Bangladesh in devastating floods this monsoon season.—AFP

TROUBLED INDIAN HOSPITAL SAYS 217 CHILDREN DIED IN AUGUST

LUCKNOW: Death continues to haunt a government hospital in north India that came under fire earlier this month after dozens of babies died within two days. Dr. P.K. Singh, the head of the BRD Medical College in Gorakhpur city, said Wednesday that at least 217 children died there in August alone due to a variety of reasons including an annual encephalitis outbreak. Singh added that 42 children have died in the last 48 hours. Seven of the deaths were from encephalitis while the others were attributed to other medical complications.

The hospital found itself in the middle of a media storm earlier this month when 33 children died there Aug. 10 and 11 around the same time as a disruption in the oxygen supply. A team of experts from New Delhi later said that the interruption was not responsible for the deaths, but there was fury in India over how the hospital let oxygen run out. "Increase in fatality is because of seasonal infection," Singh said, explaining the deaths.

"There is no shortage of oxygen or medicine in the hospital. Children died only because of medical complication not because of medical negligence." It's well-known that encephalitis wreaks havoc in the area every year during the monsoon season. Experts say this year, fatalities from encephalitis are expected to be high because of excessive rains and flooding across eastern Uttar Pradesh and particularly the area in and around Gorakhpur. The city is 250 kilometers southeast of Lucknow, state capital of Uttar Pradesh.

Medical experts say the government continues to be taken by surprise and unprepared for what is now an annual cycle of disease and death. "Any layman can tell you that in view of flooding, the cases of vector-borne diseases are likely to go up. But what shocks me is that the administration has taken no preventive step," said Dr. R.N. Singh, a local expert who has worked with encephalitis patients for years. "There is no attempt to prevent spread of communicable diseases." Indian hospitals have been routinely criticized for poor management, widespread corruption and outright negligence.

Encephalitis has killed more than 4,000 children and sickened nearly 25,000 since 2010 in Uttar Pradesh. Some of the children who died had the brain-swelling condition. Acute encephalitis syndrome causes patients to suffer from fever, vomiting, headaches and brain function issues such as confusion, trouble speaking and coma along with seizures. The condition can leave surviving children paralyzed and mentally impaired. Outbreaks can be timed every year to the monsoon season that runs from June through September.—AP



UTTAR PRADESH: In this file photo, a child receives treatment at the state-run Baba Raghav Das Medical College Hospital in Gorakhpur, Uttar Pradesh, India.—AP

US AIR STRIKE KILLS 13 CIVILIANS IN AFGHANISTAN

PULI ALAM, Afghanistan: Thirteen civilians from the same family were killed and another 15 wounded in a US air strike on Taliban fighters in eastern Afghanistan, Afghan authorities said yesterday. US Forces-Afghanistan said it has launched an investigation into the incident which an Afghan official said also killed more than a dozen insurgents hiding in a house in Dasht-e-Bari village in volatile Logar province near Kabul on Wednesday.

It comes days after Afghan officials said the country's own air force killed up to 13 civilians in separate strikes targeting a Taliban base in the western province of Herat. "In the operation the US forces came under the attack by the Taliban and foreign forces returned fire and forced the Taliban insurgents to hide in the civilian houses nearby," Saleem Saleh, a spokesman for the Logar provincial govern-

nor, said. "Then the foreign forces called in air support and bombed the civilian house which led to civilian casualties."

Saleh said the victims were from the same family and most of the dead were women and children. "I heard two big bangs and when I went out of my home I saw the building which was bombarded was totally destroyed," Nazar Khan Kochi said. "We pulled out the dead bodies from the rubble and debris and buried them. "It was a very painful day for us," he said, describing the incident as a "massacre" and adding no Taliban were among the dead.

Photos showed dead women and children wrapped in shrouds as relatives prepared to bury them. Logar provincial police spokesman Shahpoor Ahmadzai confirmed the number of casualties. The US is the only foreign force currently carrying out air

strikes in Afghanistan. The US military said it has launched an official probe into the incident which comes three weeks after a US air strike allegedly killed 11 civilians in neighboring Nangarhar province—charges the Americans have vehemently denied.

"United States Forces-Afghanistan takes all allegations of civilian casualties seriously and is working with our Afghan partners to determine the facts surrounding this incident (in Logar)," it said in a statement. Ordinary Afghans have borne the brunt of the grinding conflict which began in October 2001, with record high civilian deaths this year. In the first half of the year, 1,662 civilians were killed and more than 3,500 injured, with deaths in Kabul accounting for nearly 20 percent of the toll, according to a UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan report published last month. —AFP

17 ROHINGYA DROWN FLEEING MYANMAR

COX'S BAZAR: Bangladesh coastguards yesterday found the bodies of 17 Rohingya, many of them children, who drowned when their boats capsized as they fled violence in Myanmar that has forced at least 18,500 to seek refuge across the border. Officials in Bangladesh say growing numbers of Rohingya are trying to cross the Naf river that divides the two countries in rickety boats ill-equipped for the rough waters as they become increasingly desperate to escape.

The International Organization for Migration said Wednesday that at least 18,500 Rohingya had crossed into Bangladesh since fighting erupted in Myanmar's neighboring Rakhine state six days earlier. One coast guard official who asked not to be named said the migrants were travelling on "rickety inland fishing boats" unsuitable for the choppy seas around Bangladesh. On Wednesday, the bodies of two Rohingya women and two children washed up in Bangladesh after their boat capsized.

Officials said two more boats capsized yesterday, killing at least 17 people, many of them children. Photographs from the scene showed the bodies of several small children lined up on the ground, covered with sheets. One survivor said the small, overcrowded boat he was travelling on had been tipped over by huge waves near where the Naf river opens out into the sea. "Nobody knew how to navigate the sea waters. When huge waves tilted the boat, we panicked," said Shah Karim.

Bangladesh under pressure

The Naf river that divides the two countries is narrow in places, but the Rohingya are increasingly crossing where the river is wider, or even venturing out to sea, after Bangladeshi authorities intensified border patrols. Bangladesh is already home to an estimated 400,000 Rohingya, a mainly Muslim stateless minority that rights groups say has long faced persecution in Myanmar. Most live in squalid and increasingly overcrowded camps in the coastal area of Cox's Bazar, and Dhaka has made clear it does not want more to come in. —AFP



MYANMAR: In this photo, Myanmar Border Guard Police (BGP) officers travel in a wooden boat operated by Rohingya Muslim men at Tin May village in which Myanmar government and military claim the existence of alleged Muslim terrorists in Buthidaung, Rakhine State, Myanmar. — AP



RAWALPINDI: A Pakistani anti-terrorism court official, center, announces the verdict for ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto's murder trial at Adyala Prison in Rawalpindi. — AFP

MUSHARRAF DECLARED FUGITIVE IN EX-PM BHUTTO'S MURDER TRIAL COURT ACQUITS FIVE MEN ACCUSED IN ASSASSINATION

RAWALPINDI, Pakistan: A Pakistan court yesterday branded former military ruler Pervez Musharraf a fugitive in ex-prime minister Benazir Bhutto's murder trial, but acquitted five men accused of being involved in the 2007 assassination. The verdicts are the first to be issued since Bhutto, the first female prime minister of a Muslim country, was killed in a gun and suicide bomb attack nearly a decade ago, sparking street violence and plunging Pakistan into months of political turmoil.

Former president and military ruler Musharraf is alleged to have been part of a broad conspiracy to have his political rival killed before elections. He has denied the allegation. He was charged with murder, criminal conspiracy for murder, and facilitation for murder in 2013, in an unprecedented move against an ex-army chief, challenging beliefs the military is immune from prosecution. But he has been in self-imposed exile in Dubai ever since a travel ban was lifted three years later.

The anti-terrorism court in Rawalpindi ruled he had "absconded", a court official said outside, saying it had also ordered the confiscation of his property. The court acquitted five men who had been accused of being Taliban militants involved in the conspiracy to kill Bhutto. They were set to walk

free nearly 10 years after they were first arrested, though a defense lawyer said it was not yet clear when they would be released. However the judges found two police officers guilty of "mishandling the crime scene", the court official said.

The police officers-Saud Aziz, who was chief of Rawalpindi police at the time, and senior officer Khurram Shahzad—are now the only two people to have been convicted over Bhutto's assassination. Shahzad was accused of hosing down the crime scene less than two hours after the assassination took place—an act the United Nations described in a report into the assassination as "fundamentally inconsistent with Pakistani police practice". Aziz was accused of both giving Shahzad permission to hose down the scene, and of refusing to allow an autopsy of Bhutto's body to go ahead.

They were each been sentenced to 17 years imprisonment and fined 500,000 rupees (\$4,700), according to a court order. Musharraf's government blamed the assassination on Pakistani Taliban chief Baitullah Mehsud, who denied any involvement. He was killed in a US drone attack in 2009. In 2010, the UN report accused Musharraf's government of failing to give Bhutto adequate protection and said her death could have been prevented. —AFP

CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY CONGRESS SET FOR OCT 18

BEIJING: China will convene its 19th Party Congress on October 18, state media said yesterday, a key meeting held every five years where President Xi Jinping is expected to receive a second term as the ruling Communist Party's top leader. More than 2,300 delegates will discuss the country's accomplishments since the previous gathering and elect the new members of the party's top leadership, according to the party's official mouthpiece the People's Daily.

The congress will decide a new line-up for the all-powerful Politburo Standing Committee, the group of seven politicians who run the world's second largest economy. At the meeting, Xi is widely expected to consolidate his grip on power, solidifying his position as China's most powerful ruler in a generation. "The spirit of President Xi Jinping's important speeches will be carried out at the Congress," the People's Daily said. There has been speculation that Xi's name will be immortalized in the party's constitution, alongside the country's two most powerful former leaders, Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping.

The People's Daily article added that the meeting would discuss a strategy for building a "moderately prosperous society," the goal of Xi's banner campaign to eliminate poverty nationwide by the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party in 2021. The new slate of committee members is traditionally seen as indicating Xi's most likely successor after he steps down, expected in 2022. But the president has thus far delayed anointing an heir, spurring speculation that he will try to stay in office beyond that year.

Xi ally

Doing so would violate the unofficial rule set by Deng that general secretaries stay in office no longer than 10 years. The concept allows different party factions to dominate at different times, and seeks to prevent the emergence of a despot. Five of the current seven PSC members are expected to retire at the Congress, and many experts believe Xi and his number two, Premier Li Keqiang, are locked in a struggle to fill the vacancies with their own supporters.

Fifty-three-year-old Sun Zhengcai, the youngest member of the 25-person Politburo, was considered a favorite for promotion to the standing committee before he was abruptly replaced as party chief in the southwest city of Chongqing this July. His successor, former Xi aide Chen Miner, is considered a trusted ally of the president. Chen's promotion has "smashed" expectations that Sun would be promoted to the standing committee, Chen Daoying, an associate professor at Shanghai University of Political Science and Law, said in July. The promotion, Chen said, was part of a campaign by Xi to dismantle the system of political succession established by his direct predecessor Hu Jintao and former premier Wen Jiabao, who have maintained considerable influence even in retirement. After coming to power in 2012, Xi launched a much-publicized anti-graft campaign aimed at tackling endemic corruption within the party—an initiative that has been accused of being used to eliminate the president's political enemies. — AFP



TOKYO: British Prime Minister Theresa May, left, and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, right, shake hands during a joint press conference at the state guest house in Tokyo.— AP

UK, JAPAN TO HIKE 'PACE OF SANCTIONS' AGAINST N KOREA

BRITISH PM ATTENDS SECURITY MEETING IN JAPAN

TOKYO: Britain and Japan will step up the pace of sanctions against nuclear-armed North Korea after its "outrageous" firing of a missile over Japan, British Prime Minister Theresa May said yesterday. "We condemn North Korea in the strongest words possible for a reckless act which was a clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolutions," May told a press briefing during an official visit to Japan.

"In response to this illegal action, Prime Minister (Shinzo) Abe and I had agreed to work together and with others in the international community to strengthen pressure against North Korea including by increasing the pace of sanctions."

Britain wants new United Nations sanctions against North Korea that would target guest workers sent mostly to Russia and China, and whose wages are a source of revenue for Pyongyang. Last week, Japan expanded its own sanctions against the North, after a similar US move. May pointed to the key role China plays as the North's chief ally. "Now we need to ensure it's not just words of condemnation, but that action is taken, and China does have a particular position in this," May said. "They have leverage on North Korea, and I believe we should be encouraging China to exercise that leverage."

Earlier yesterday, Beijing slammed a report that suggested the US, Japan and Britain were planning fresh punitive measures against the North, saying calls for sanctions were "destructive" and that those measures alone "cannot fundamentally resolve the issue". May's comments come after she attended Japan's top security meeting yesterday, reportedly only the second foreign leader to attend a meeting of the National Security Council after Australia's then-prime minister Tony Abbott in 2014. The Council,

which was created at the end of 2013, consists of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and key ministers.

Like-minded partner

Before the meeting, May described Japan as "the UK's closest security partner in Asia" and a "like-minded partner". "We must work together to enhance our collective response to the threats to the international order and global peace and security," she said. "That must include confronting the threat that North Korea poses and ensuring that this regime in North Korea stops its aggressive acts." The UN Security Council on Tuesday unanimously condemned North Korea over the launch of the missile, which flew over Japanese territory before crashing into the Pacific, but it stopped short of issuing fresh punitive measures against the regime. Earlier yesterday, May visited a naval base on the outskirts of Tokyo with Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera before attending a business forum and the security meeting. My visit "gives a sign of the growing cooperation and partnership that we have on defense", May said of the naval base tour. Japan's defense ministry yesterday said it would request its largest-ever annual budget to beef up its missile defense systems in the wake of the North Korean launch.

May arrived in Japan Wednesday with an eye to soothing Brexit fears and pushing ahead on early free-trade talks with the world's number three economy. She is to meet Emperor Akihito on Friday before leaving. Earlier this year, Britain and Japan signed a defense logistics treaty that allows both country's forces to share equipment, facilities and services. — AFP

PYONGYANG SENTENCES FOUR S KOREAN JOURNALISTS TO DEATH

SEOUL: Pyongyang has sentenced four South Korean journalists to death for book reviews that insulted the North, state media said yesterday. The Chosun Ilbo and the Dong-A Ilbo, both of them conservative newspapers, reviewed the new Korean edition of "North Korea Confidential", a book by two Seoul-based British journalists first published in 2015. The work details the growing role of the market in daily lives in the North, where South Korean television dramas are circulated on the black market, and fashion items and hairstyles from the South are copied.

Those caught in possession of DVDs or USBs containing South Korean TV dramas can bribe their way out of any trouble, it says. For the Korean edition the book has been re-titled "Capitalist Republic of Korea", in a play on the North's official designation as a democratic republic, and its cover replaces the red star in the North's coat of arms with a dollar sign. By reviewing the book, newspapers "committed a hideous crime of seriously insulting the dignity of the DPRK" as part of a "sordid

smear campaign", the North's Central Court said. The papers had the "temerity" to carry a picture of the book cover, it added in a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency. "They have reached the state of slandering and insulting even the inviolable name of our country and its national emblem," it said. One journalist from each newspaper, and the presidents of both publications were sentenced to capital punishment, it said.

"The criminals hold no right to appeal and the execution will be carried out any moment and at any place without going through any additional procedures," it added. No penalty was specified for the books' authors, former Economist correspondent Daniel Tudor, and James Pearson, who writes for the Reuters news agency. Tudor has not been to North Korea since publication and is understood not to have plans to go again. It is not the first time Pyongyang has declared a death sentence on South Korean citizens. — AFP



SEOUL: A Korean edition of the book 'North Korea Confidential' is displayed in a bookstore in Seoul.—AFP

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Lifestyle

www.kuwaittimes.net

Castle brings fantasy to life for Brazilian wannabe wizards

Sheep are seen at a livestock market in Kuwait City on August 30, 2017 ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid Al-Adha or the 'Feast of Sacrifice' which marks the end of the annual pilgrimage or Hajj to the Saudi holy city of Makah and is celebrated in remembrance of Abraham's readiness to sacrifice his son to God. Cows, camels, goats and sheep are traditionally slaughtered on this holy day. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft have tea in a castle in the mountain city of Campos do Jordao, some 180 km from Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos



A student of the School of Magic and Witchcraft walks in a corridor in a castle in the mountain city of Campos do Jordao.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft gather outside the castle.

Castle brings fantasy to life for Brazilian wannabe wizards

'A childhood dream to become part of the magical universe'

At a castle, a werewolf growls in a cage while a wizard casts spells to try to calm the beast down. Not to worry-it's just a normal day at Brazil's magic school. The werewolf is an actor in costume and the spells presumably wouldn't work in the face of a real mythical beast. But anyone entering the Magic and Witchcraft School near Sao Paulo must leave disbelief at the castle gate. Although inspired by the world of the "Harry Potter" books and films created by JK Rowling, where lucky children go to study at the magical school Hogwarts, the Brazilian version says its curriculum has a definite local flavor.

From its founding in 2015, "the idea was to adapt, not to copy exactly, the feel of Hogwarts", said Vanessa Godoy, 27, who is behind the idea in Campos do Jordao, located about 125 miles (200 kilometers) from Sao Paulo. Clients at the school-which oper-

ates for occasional four-day sessions-are all fans of the Harry Potter series. But since copyright laws limit what Godoy and her fellow wizards can do, they wave the creative magic wand and use Brazilian folklore to fill the gaps.

"We have our own stories. We get into a lot of the mythology because Brazil is a very magical country," she said. Hogwarts-style classes are offered in Potions and Elixirs, Witchcraft and History of Magic, and of course there are dances, contests and a tournament based on quidditch, the high-paced game played on flying broomsticks in Rowling's novels. But there are also things you'd only learn in Brazil, like the use of hairs from an indigenous mythical character known for protecting forests and scales from a siren if you want to activate a magic wand.

'Childhood dream'

Learning these supposed secrets is not cheap: the four-day session at the castle-a real castle which normally is used as a hotel-costs 2,650 reais, or more than \$800. Clients range from five to 65 years old, with the majority being around 25. They're judges, models, teachers, nurses and students, but all sharing a passion for the Potter phenomenon. "When we enter the castle, it's as if the world outside no longer exists," says Zerzil Ferreira, a 29-year-old doctor. "We abandon the 'Muggle' world and immerse ourselves in the magical world and it's all real," he said, referring to the people in the books who are not part of the wizarding world.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft gather outside a castle in the mountain city of Campos do Jordao.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft attend classes in a castle in the mountain city of Campos do Jordao.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft gather outside the castle.

Going to the course fulfilled "a childhood dream to become part of the magical universe," he said. About 100 people took part, all divided into Hogwarts-style houses named Tigers, Serpents, Squirrels and Eagles, with points kept during the various contests and a champion house crowned at the end. The Quidditch-type game is the most popular. The sport in theory requires real flying broomsticks, but the terrestrial version devel-

oped by fans in the United States instead has competitors running around chasing several balls while holding a broomstick between their legs.

Resisting the sirens

Staff at the school—all of them actors—really seem spellbound, since they must stay in their roles 24 hours a day, but students take it seriously too. "To be here, you need to enter into the character. You are a student and you are learning to be a wizard. You need to respect the teachers and rules. This makes the experience more real," said Renie Santos, 22, who created the popular YouTube channel *Expresso de Hogwarts*.

"The students give a lot. A big part of the sense of immersion is thanks to them," Godoy agreed. That dedication becomes clear during the module on dealing with sirens, which the professor for Care of Magical Creatures warns are apt to seduce—and then devour—the over-curious. Students then meet Nyx, who swims in the castle swimming pool, and are enchanted. Despite the warnings, one wants to invite her to a dance, the other wants to swim with her and one woman asks for a kiss. Luckily no one actually gets devoured. But the four days are over and it's time for the temporary magicians to re-enter the real world. — AFP



A student of the School of Magic and Witchcraft holds a potion in a castle.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft walk past a 'mermaid' in charge of the magical creatures class, in a castle in the mountain city of Campos do Jordao.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft copy their homework



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft prepare for an exam in the castle's great hall.



Students of the School of Magic and Witchcraft attend classes in a castle.



Models strike poses for the 'A Nasty Boy Magazine' editorial photoshoot at Chevy View Estate in Lagos.



A model strikes a pose for the "A Nasty Boy Magazine" editorial photoshoot.



Publisher of "A Nasty Boy Magazine" Richard Akusan, poses during the editorial photoshoot at Chevy View Estate in Lagos.

'A Nasty Boy' tests Nigeria's masculinity

Make no mistake-Nigeria's "A Nasty Boy" is not a gay online magazine. In a country where homosexual acts can be punished with 14 years in prison, this provocative website featuring photos of men in mini-skirts is simply "pushing the boundaries and exploring masculinity". Richie Akuson, the 23-year-old founder, makes up for what he lacks in years with confidence and audacity. Even in "bum shorts"-the local name for hot pants.

"Last year, I challenged myself-walking through Abuja with silk shorts," he told AFP. "People insulted me loudly, they were making insulting comments, it was quite a painful experience." He decided to recount his experience in Bella Naija, the country's leading digital lifestyle magazine where he worked at the time as fashion editor. His article, titled "Why I Wore Bum Shorts Around Abuja For a Day!", provoked a fierce online debate. The comments flooded in-many to accuse the young provocateur of exhibitionism, others to congratulate him for his principled stand against convention.

'Huge, huge ego'

"I was surprised by the reactions, and I thought that we really need to debate these issues, to debate around what is masculinity in Nigeria," he said. His site's first online posts, published last February, were at best baffling to many in a country where everything associated with homosexuality is seen as an affront to religion. Androgynous male models

wearing make-up were pictured posing on a beach in Lagos, oozing sex appeal. Another article was illustrated by men sporting oversized Afro-style wigs and towering on high heels, lifting their denim mini-skirts.

The images are undoubtedly provocative, but never sordid, and their quality is on a par with the major fashion magazines on sale in Europe and North America. Richie claims that Nigerian men typically have a "huge, huge ego", and that his work is intended to hold up a mirror. "Nigerian men are always on edge to protect what they define to be masculinity: you have to be strong," he said. "No compassion for others, and a lot of money. The paradox is that it makes them very fragile at the end, behaving like bullies."

Having scandalized many with his initial web offering, Richie now plans to launch a print magazine to extend his brand. In a shoot for an upcoming online feature, he handed out outfits to his four androgynous models-two men, two women-in an understated Lagos hotel room decorated with floral pattern wallpaper. He said he wanted to "transcend existing genres". But not by the hotel pool, which would be far too public. "Can you put this dress on?" he asked a young man with close-cut hair and a slim face. Abstrakt, a 21-year-old Nigerian singer who describes himself on Instagram as a "model and madman", resents being pigeon-holed and wore a T-shirt emblazoned with the words "to be honest, I'm not normal".

And even if he was not overly enthused by the prospect of wearing a skirt, he did it anyway-"for fashion". "And you... can you put on this men's blazer?" Richie asked a pretty young woman with long braided hair that reached down to her back.

'I love controversy'

She wore the dark green velvet garment, created by a celebrated Nigerian designer, with neither bra nor trousers-but with tights to preserve her modesty. "I love controversy, I've always been a rebel at heart," said the woman, Ajoke Animashaun, a law student and model. "In Nigeria we are so conservative. Girls have to be well dressed, be pretty, have their nails done... but I don't!"

For many women, painted nails are simply a matter of preference. Not in Lagos, where going unpainted is seen as an almost revolutionary feminist statement. Wole Lawal, a 22-year-old professional model, traded in his leather boots

bought in London for baggy multicoloured trousers at Richie's request. Like Nigeria's king of Afrobeat Fela Kuti, Lawal went shirtless for the shoot, joking that the hotel room's fierce air conditioning was freezing on his bare skin. "Nasty Boy allows men to show the other side of who they are," he said, in a deep voice, his face shimmering with glitter paint. "(It's) an opportunity to know how it feels to be a woman... and I would say it's quite tough." — AFP



This file photo shows US model Kendall Jenner posing as she arrives for the screening of the film 'Mal de Pierres (From the Land of the Moon)' at the 69th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France.

This file photo shows US model Kendall Jenner posing as she arrives for the screening of the film '120 Beats Per Minute (120 Battements Par Minute)' at the 70th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

KENDALL JENNER NAMED FASHION ICON OF THE DECADE

Ten years ago, model Kendall Jenner was 11 years old. Next week, she will be named Fashion Icon of the Decade. Jenner, the half-sister of Kim Kardashian, will receive the honor on September 8 at New York Fashion Week. It is handed out by the fashion website Daily Front Row. Jenner is one of the models of the moment, along with sisters Bella and Gigi Hadid. And she has 83 million followers on Instagram. Social media lit up with commentary on the news. Not everyone thinks the 21-year-old deserves the award.

"Oh please! What about @NaomiCampbell or @CindyCrawford you know real models who got to the top due to hard work not who mummy is. Pathetic," Twitter user Ginger Winger wrote. Jenner has strutted her stuff on the world's catwalks for the top labels in the business but she is also known for the TV reality show "Keeping Up with the Kardashians."

Jenner is the daughter of Kris Jenner, the widow of lawyer Robert Kardashian, and Caitlyn Jenner, formerly known as Bruce Jenner. The program has followed the lives of the Kardashians and Jenners for 12 seasons. Kim, Khloe and Kourtney Kardashian are Jenner's half-sisters. With their reality show, cosmetics lines, video games, clothing-and general mastery of marketing and social media-the Kardashians are said to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars. — AFP

Curtain's up: Fall decor takes the style stage

Theatrical silhouettes. Stirring colors. Compelling patterns. This fall, we're seeing decor that confidently takes the spotlight, and the story's got something for everyone. "It's like midcentury modern has met Sophia Loren," laughs New York-based interior designer Elaine Griffin, describing some of the season's hottest styles. "French and Italian Art Deco influences abound in decor that's soulful, shapely and voluptuous."



Photo provided by AllModern.com shows their Nolan stool .

Textures and layers

At Manhattan's Kip's Bay Show House in late spring, Joan Dineen combined luxe textural platinum, honey and mink tones with flashes of mineral hues. She played with scale, placing a hefty, cream-colored sofa laden with pillows and faux fur next to an iceberg-shaped metallic coffee table and a delicate rattan bistro chair. Other designers, like Richard Mishan and Kirsten Kelli, layered their rooms with a melange of pattern, texture and color.

Hammered metals, glossy lacquers and polished glass shared space with plush wools and interesting woods, all punctuated by eye-catching wall art or coverings, and statement lighting. The minimalism of past seasons has given some ground to this new "maximalist" style characterized by layers of pattern, color and texture. In its more casual iteration, it exudes a boho vibe that's welcoming and lived-in - piles of books; patterned throws; curated accessory collections and gallery walls.

"Say hello to homes that are full of life," says Claire Bingham about the look she explores in her new book "A Beautiful Mess: Celebrating the New Eclecticism" (teNeues, 2017). Christian Lacroix's Au Theatre Ce Soir wallpaper collection includes a dream-like collage of fanciful creatures and flora, and another

pattern features a digital rendering of decouped vintage Aztec prints. Griffin notes that "the simpler silhouettes become, the more details become important." "Look for dense textures like heavy velvets," she says, "and modern elements like channel and square tufting. Extravagant combinations of materials and finishes within one piece, and an emphasis on the circle and curve." "Moroccan and Moroccan-inspired rugs are becoming part of the rug vernacular, inspiring sleeker versions in streamlined flat weaves and overdyed patchworks," Griffin says.

Global to glam

Asian, African and Middle Eastern motifs remain popular, evoking the well-traveled lifestyle. But you'll see lots of glamour, too. Facets, highly-polished metals, tropical motifs, faux fur, velvet and Deco patterning bring sophistication into a space, especially when color is used thoughtfully.

Modern Scandinavian and farmhouse styles still have sturdy legs, with their focus on comfort and easy living. Layla Faye's '60s-era wallpaper and fabric prints are fresh and fun. Target's Modern by Dwell Magazine collection includes a round, blond-wood coffee table with white metal trim, and several mod rugs. IKEA's new Veberod storage collection features pieces made of steel, plywood and canvas.

Traditionalists will be pleased to see the return of small florals as an alternative to contemporary oversize blooms. Pottery Barn's got a dinnerware and glassware collection in vintage prints, and Morris & Co. has introduced updated versions of William Morris' iconic patterns. Warm woods like walnut and oak are main players in virtually every furniture collection, and are also being used as paneling. Look for trims in warm metals, especially brass. Neal Beckstedt clad his space at Kip's Bay in oak veneer, bringing it to within about a foot of the ceiling. Then he applied a thick band of teal lacquer the rest of the way, to show-stopping effect.

Thrill-seeking

"We're experimenting with dynamic motion, layering and sculptural elements to animate our textiles," says Tamalyn Shea of Modra Studio in La Jolla, California. Artists there depicted South Pacific sea life, Amazonian plant formations, and wave patterns on Kenya's Lake Turkana, printing them in mineral hues, atmospheric colors, and dusty tones on velvet and linen. It's a wall covering and textile collection balancing the organic with the avant-garde.

Dramatic forms are being explored by furniture designers, too. At this spring's Architectural Digest Design Show in New York, Brooklyn studio MFGR showed a pierced, blackened steel screen depicting the constellations over the equator, and an ebonized ash credenza with natural ash doors honed into a fractal pattern.

Patrick Weder showed a beefy, marble-topped table on a stack of steel and bronze triangles, while This Lexik had a brutalist woven cube made of strips of resin-wrapped cotton. J.M. Szymanski forged blackened steel into playful side tables that had one balled foot, or a section of a leg missing. He's made a coffee table with a heavy, ultra-clear glass top filled with fine iron powder; place magnetic objects on top, and the powder shifts about like a black desert in the wind. Theater for the living room.



Photo provided by MODRA Studio Textiles and Wall coverings shows their Turkana pattern on curtains.

Bold, earthy color

"Emerald is definitely the 'it' color of the season," says Griffin. "It's a perfect anchor for the other jewel tones that are trending." Look for greens and blues, from moss to teal, peacock to ink. Also mustard, chartreuse, chrome yellow and cream, and fruity hues, like deep plum, cherry and berry.

Dark walls are returning, say designers - slate blue, navy, even brown. They're being contrasted with jewel tones - rather than white or ivory - in trims and furnishings. And black is back. PPG, Olympic Paints and Glidden's 2018 Color of the Year choices were Black Flame, Black Magic and Deep Onyx. The companies said the colors reflect classic modernism. — AP



This undated photo provided by MODRA Studio Textiles and Wall coverings shows their Amazon pattern on a pillow.



This undated photo provided by MODRA Studio Textiles and Wall coverings shows their Turkana pattern on curtains.



Photo provided by Stephen Kent Johnson shows Neal Beckstedt's space at the Kip's Bay Show House in New York. — AP photos

Like Destiny's Child, Fifth Harmony survives after the storm

It's been a year of transition for Fifth Harmony: The pop stars parted ways with member Camila Cabello, switched management teams, negotiated a new contract with their label and won greater creative control of their brand. Luckily the newly-minted quartet, who released their third album last week, had the fairy godmother of girl groups to guide them through the tumultuous times: Destiny's Child alum Kelly Rowland.

"We were advised by THE Kelly Rowland," Dinah Jane, 20, said with reverence. "She just told us to, like, let the music speak for itself ... and just know your worth, believe in yourself and just be there for each other. So we've definitely honed into that. And for her to advise that, like, that says a lot because, you know, she's gone through the same things." "And she said that she was really proud of us," beamed Normani Kordei, 21. Destiny's Child went through similar changes before settling on the final and most famous formation, the trio of Rowland, Beyonce Knowles and Michelle Williams.

Stronger than ever

Fifth Harmony said they looked to the "Bootylicious" hitmakers when deciding to fill the spot left by Cabello, who exited in December to pursue a solo career. "We kept referencing that while we were in the moments of that whole thing happening. ... Like people, teams or whatever, suggesting, 'Oh maybe we get a fifth member?'" Lauren Jauregui, 21, recalled. "Like no, dude. If we're going to do this, it's the four of us. Period." "It's been us. It will be us," echoed Kordei.

The group doubled down on that decision during Sunday's MTV Video Music Awards, where a stand-in fifth member was quickly tossed from the stage as they began to perform. The dance-heavy performance, which came two days after the release of their new album, was well-received and boosted sales of the single "Down." The girls also won best pop video for the song's video, which features rapper Gucci Mane. Naming their third album after the group drives the point home - though they've downsized, they feel stronger than ever. "(The album) is more edgy and mature, of course, but the most harmonious we've ever been," Jane said. They say they are most comfortable now

because they're in the driver's seat. They pushed for more creative control with their labels, Epic Records and Simon Cowell's Syco imprint, and sought legal counsel to gain ownership of the Fifth Harmony trademark.

Chart success

"When we hired our lawyer, Dina LaPolt, that's when our real transformation began because she really informed us about our business and informed us about our rights as artists," Jauregui said. "And we really, I feel, gained this sort of inner power that we didn't have before and this control and ownership of our music, of our brand, of our business." Fifth Harmony was formed on the US version of "The X Factor" in 2012. In 2015 they released their full-length debut, "Reflection," finding chart success with the upbeat hit, "Worth It." They reached greater heights with the slick and sexy song "Work from Home" - the lead single from last year's "7/27" - peaking at No. 4 on the Billboard Hot 100 chart.

But behind closed doors, the girls were struggling. "There are just so many crazy things that happen behind-the-scenes. So many honestly horrific situations that happen and we had to step up and say, 'You know what? We demand the respect that we deserve,'" recalled Ally Brooke, 24. "We need to write on this album. We need to be part of that process and that's exactly what we did." "Fifth Harmony" delivers more of the group's signature provocative pop/R&B sound along with an eclectic mix of messages.

The women writhe on motel beds and showcase saucy parking lot dance sequences in the video for "Down." They touch on politics and encourage inclusivity in the uplifting album-closer "Bridges." And they issue a stern warning to those who misjudge them in the darker, F-bomb fueled "Angel," produced by Justin Bieber collaborator Poo Bear and grungy EDM star Skrillex. "Honestly it's a breath of fresh air," said Kordei of the group's new dynamic. "We're just so grateful and we thank God, like, literally every single day." "Even in those times where the storm was really, really heavy and we didn't know if it was going to end ... now I recognize what goodness actually feels like." — AP



This file photo shows Dinah Jane, from left, Ally Brooke, Normani Kordei, and Lauren Jauregui of Fifth Harmony at the MTV Video Music Awards in Inglewood, Calif. — AP photos



Visitors look at a Frog King sculpture during the preparations of the autumn exhibition 'Pumpkin Royal' at the horticultural exhibition 'ega' (Erfurt Garden Construction Exhibition) in Erfurt, central Germany. — AP

MADONNA MOVES TO LISBON TO HELP SON DAVID BECOME A FOOTBALL STAR

US pop star Madonna has moved to Lisbon so her 11-year-old son David can join the youth academy at top football club Benfica, local media reported yesterday. "Madonna is no longer a tourist, she now lives in Lisbon," the weekly magazine Visao said, republishing several pictures taken from her Instagram account of the 59-year-old singer visiting Portugal over the last couple of months.

Madonna has been staying in a Lisbon hotel after buying a house in the bucolic village of Sintra, 30 kilometers northwest of the Portuguese capital. The 19th century building was put up for sale for 7.5 million euros (\$9 million) and could take about six months to renovate, according to Visao.

David Banda, who Madonna adopted from Malawi in 2006, has joined the Benfica training center in the Lisbon suburb of Seixal, Correio da Manha reported. The club accepted the boy after his first test in the spring and he will stay at the academy until he starts the school year at a French high school in Lisbon, Correio da Manha said, citing a source close to Benfica. Rumors about a possible move began when Madonna was spotted at the school in May. Banda is one of four children Madonna has adopted from Malawi after she adopted twin girls in February. She has also has two biological children. Madonna is not the first international celebrity

to move, or have a second home, in the Portuguese capital. Movie stars John Malkovich, Monica Bellucci and Michael Fassbender have all had homes in Lisbon. — AFP



Madonna and her son David

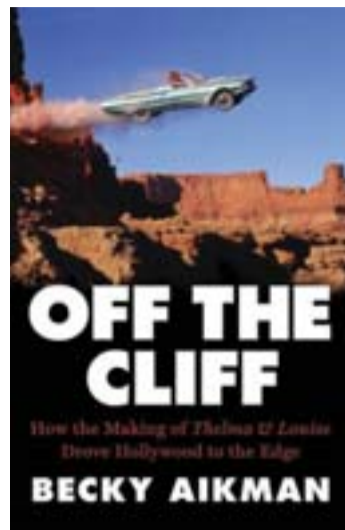
Bruce Springsteen extends Broadway run after tickets sell out

Bruce Springsteen on Wednesday announced he would extend a run of intimate Broadway shows into 2018 after fans quickly snatched up tickets. "The Boss," one of the music world's top touring attractions who is famous for his marathon shows before packed arenas, will play five concerts a week at the 960-seat Walter Kerr Theatre starting on October 3. As tickets went on sale and sold out Wednesday, Springsteen said that his residency would run through February 3 -- more than two months longer than originally planned.

The 67-year-old "Born in the USA" songwriter had hoped to root out scalpers who are endemic at high-profile shows-by embracing a new fan verification program of ticket giant Ticketmaster. Under the plan, recently embraced as well by Taylor Swift, fans need to sign up in advance for a code to buy tickets. Nonetheless, ticket resale sites on Wednesday were already offering seats to Springsteen shows on Broadway for thousands of dollars. — AFP



This combination photo shows screenwriter Callie Khoury posing with her Oscar for best original screenplay for 'Thelma and Louise' at the 64th Annual Academy Awards in Los Angeles on March 31, 1992, left, and Khoury at the Disney/ABC Winter 2014 TCA Press Tour on Friday, Jan. 17, 2014 in Pasadena, Calif. — AP photos



This cover image released by Penguin Press shows, 'Off the Cliff: How the Making of Thelma & Louise Drove Hollywood to the Edge,' by Becky Aikman.



In this Aug 18, 2017 photo, actress Geena Davis poses for a photo in New York.

Did 'Thelma & Louise' move the needle for female-led films?

When Geena Davis and Susan Sarandon clasped hands, stepped on the gas and flew over the canyon ridge in that memorable ending to "Thelma & Louise," many in Hollywood believed they were launching more than that turquoise Thunderbird. It was 1991, and the expectation - or at least the hope - was that they were also launching a new era for women in movies, an era in which it would be easier to get films made with meaty female lead roles, and in which female filmmakers would find it easier to get work. It didn't happen, says Thelma herself.

"It hasn't changed at all," says Davis, who in the intervening quarter-century has become an activist for diversity in Hollywood, focusing especially on gender bias. "We never seem to get any momentum going." In fact, she says, things actually haven't gotten better since the 1940s. "Our research shows the ratio of male to female characters in film has not changed since 1946," Davis said in an interview, referring to studies by the nonprofit research group she launched, the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media.

So what about "Wonder Woman," the mega-hit that has shattered glass ceilings, turned Gal Gadot into a superstar and earned the top global haul for a live-action film directed by a woman? Davis remains skeptical. "Look, there was 'Hunger Games,' there was 'Frozen,' even 'Star Wars' with a female lead... and now 'Wonder Woman.' You figure, 'We're done!'" she says. "But we have to wait for the data. It's been a quarter-century since 'Thelma & Louise' and nothing's changed. I know it WILL change, but to say this is the exact moment - well, you'll have to prove it to me."

Also in the skeptical camp: screenwriter Callie Khouri. Her tale of that fateful journey from Arkansas to the Grand Canyon by Thelma, a timid housewife with a chauvinist husband, and Louise, a hard-bitten waitress with a painful secret, was Khouri's debut screenplay. And she won the Oscar - the first solo screenwriting Oscar awarded to a woman for an original work in 60 years. But a turning point for women? "Yeah, that didn't happen," says Khouri, with bitter humor. "I'm still waiting." The rise of "Wonder Woman," she says, feels like a "tiny little crack" in the ceiling. But, she adds: "You know, it's been a little daunting to see how slowly things actually do change. I can tell you that I, for one, am so sick of the

conversation. Why haven't things changed for women? I mean, don't ask US!"

Wildly frustrating

Twenty-six years after "Thelma & Louise" landed on the cover of Time because of the gender conversation it launched - was it feminist or fascist, inspiring or outrageous? - the film still resonates, and remarkably so, says author Becky Aikman, whose "Off The Cliff," released this summer, takes a deep dive into the unlikely story of a film that defied the odds merely by getting made. But it was clearly an anomaly, not a launching point, the author says. "I wanted to see how this one made it through the wormhole, in part because it hasn't happened before or since," Aikman says. "A lot of people thought at the time, 'Wow, this movie is so successful, we've got to have more movies like this!' And then no one did it, which is wildly frustrating, and just shows how entrenched the point of view of Hollywood is ... that even a very successful movie didn't seem to get people in positions of power to say we should do more like it."

The uphill struggle for women in Hollywood - onscreen and behind the camera - has been the subject of numerous studies, including several in recent weeks. Most research has been about films for adults, but the Geena Davis Institute has lately been looking at family-oriented films. In a yet-unreleased report, the institute analyzed, using technology developed in partnership with the University of Southern California's Viterbi School of Engineering, the 50 top-grossing 2016 family films. It found, among other things, that male characters outnumbered females by 2 to 1, and male characters had twice the screen time and speaking time.

Behind the camera

"If you want to change the world, you can change it overnight in the mind of a child," says Madeline Di Nonno, the institute's CEO, who shared the data with the AP. "Geena pioneered this field of research because she was watching programming with her young daughter, and was concerned about

what she saw." Davis says with a laugh that now, when she watches movies and TV with her three kids, "They'll turn to me before I even say anything and say, 'Yeah, I noticed that.'" In another recent study, the Viterbi School's SAIL Lab (Signal Analysis and Interpretation) analyzed language of 7,000 characters and 53,000 character interactions in 1,000 film scripts. It found that women had about 15,000 interactions, or "dialogues," while men had over 37,000. Women portrayed just over 2,000 characters, while men portrayed almost 4,900.

Yet another study, from USC's Annenberg School for Communication and Journalism, found that behind the camera, women directors are still a rarity: In the top 100 films of 2016 there were only five female directors out of 120, including co-directors. In a statistic that remains ever striking, only one woman has won the Oscar for directing in the awards' 89-year history: Kathryn Bigelow for "The Hurt Locker."

Khouri's experience is instructive. Her Oscar aside, "It still took 10 years before anybody would let me direct anything - I was trying, every day of that 10 years," she says. She eventually directed "Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood" in 2002, then was frustrated to find herself typecast as a director of female-oriented films. "I never really understood why I was only ever sent things about women bonding through their tears," she says. "Nobody wants to be put in a box." "Besides," Khouri adds, "I never thought of 'Thelma' as a particularly soft movie." (The film has a shooting death, attempted rape, armed robbery, and of course, suicide - though Khouri intended the ending as a metaphor.) She later turned to television, creating "Nashville." But despite her struggles to build on the momentum of "Thelma & Louise," Khouri can point to a clear silver lining - well, besides that statuette on the mantel. "Honestly, here we are, 26 years later, talking about this movie," she says. "So, I win." — AP

From Bullock to DiCaprio, a look into stars' Harvey relief giving

A pair of Oscar winners, Sandra Bullock and Leonardo DiCaprio, are leading the way in stars' donations to relief efforts for those affected by Hurricane Harvey in Texas and Louisiana, but they're not alone. Numerous other celebrities have pledged sizable amounts to charities.

Here's a list of stars who have publicly pledged to donate:

- Sandra Bullock, \$1 million to the American Red Cross
- Leonardo DiCaprio, \$1 million to the new United Way Harvey Recovery Fund
- The Kardashian family, \$250,000 each to the American Red Cross and the Salvation Army

- Country singer Chris Young, \$100,000 to the American Red Cross
- D.J. Khaled, \$50,000 to the American Red Cross
- The Chainsmokers, \$30,000 to the American Red Cross
- Kevin Hart, \$25,000 to the American Red Cross
- Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson, \$25,000 to the American Red Cross
- Jennifer Lopez, \$25,000 to the American Red Cross
- Alex Rodriguez, \$25,000 to the American Red Cross
- Wendy Williams, \$25,000 to the American Red Cross. — AP



This file photo shows actress Sandra Bullock arrives at the premiere of "Our Brand is Crisis" in Los Angeles. — AP photos



In this file photo, actor Leonardo DiCaprio arrives at the Vanity Fair Fair Oscar Party in Beverly Hills, Calif.

BECOME OBSESSED WITH **CLAFOUTIS,** **A CUSTARDY FRUIT PANCAKE**

By Elizabeth Karmel

This summer, I became obsessed with making clafoutis - big baked custardy fruit pancakes. If you look up the definition of clafoutis, it is referred to as a tart or fruit covered with flan. But, I think the taste and texture is more like a big thick crepe or custardy pancake.

Regardless, they are delicious for breakfast served with maple syrup or for dessert with a sprinkle of powdered sugar. Truthfully, it is almost as good the next day sliced and eaten straight from the fridge. My good friend Bob Blumer suggested that I call the recipe "James and the Giant Peach Pancake."

The first time I ever had clafoutis, I was living with a French family in the Loire Valley for the purpose of learning to speak French. The family didn't speak English, so it was the perfect place to practice my French. If I wanted anything, I had to say it in French. Meals were full of chatter and my brain sometimes hurt from thinking and speaking in a foreign language but the food was the trade-off. It was simple, rustic and good.

One Sunday, the "Madame" of the family bought fresh cherries at the market, and decided to make the classic "clafoutis aux cerises." It smelled and looked divine and I couldn't wait to taste it. It came to the table still a bit warm and she cut big wedges for each of us. I saw a big ripe cherry gleaming up at me and took a big bite. and crunch! I almost broke my tooth in two. No one

had bothered to tell me that Madame made her clafoutis in the traditional way without pitting the cherries. Literally, the pitfall of rustic country cooking. Nonetheless, I fell in love with clafoutis.

The custardy batter is like a crepe. And, like my crepe batter, I love putting everything in a blender and blending away. I also have found that you can make the batter in advance, leave it in the blender container - a to-go smoothie cup from your blender set is the perfect size. I add citrus zest, vanilla extract and a bit of cognac to the batter to deepen the flavor and make it a little more complex. My no-nonsense French country Madame probably wouldn't approve of the fancy touches to her simple dessert but the extra flavors (and pitting the cherries) makes a world of difference.

About an hour before dinner, you can melt 2 tablespoons of butter in a deep-dish pie pan, arrange your fruit in the hot butter in the bottom of the pan. Re-mix the batter in the blender cup for a few seconds and pour over the fruit. In 40-50 minutes, your clafoutis will be ready to come out of the oven. Let it rest at least 15-20 minutes or up to 2 hours before slicing. Otherwise, the custard is too hot and too loose to cut. I let mine cool on a rack so the air will rotate around the pie pan. Serve with maple syrup or a dusting of powdered sugar.



SUMMER PEACH CLAFOUTIS

Ingredients

Servings 8
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter
 3 large peaches, cut into thin slices
 1 handful of fresh cherries, pitted
 1 cup of half-and-half
 Zest of one whole orange fresh
 1 tablespoon cognac
 1/2 cup granulated white sugar
 3 large eggs
 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
 1/2 cup all-purpose flour
 1/4 teaspoon fine-grain sea salt
 Maple syrup or powdered sugar, for serving (optional)

Preparation

Heat the oven to 400 degrees. Add butter to a deep-dish pie pan. Place the pan in the pre-heated oven and let butter melt and cook until slightly caramelized but not burnt. Meanwhile, prep the fruit: Remove the stems, pit the cherries and cut in half, if using. Peel and slice peaches and place in a pattern in the bottom of the pie dish in the hot butter. Place the cherry halves in between the peaches, if using. Blend the wet ingredients: Combine the half and half, zest, cognac, sugar, eggs, and vanilla in a blender and process until the batter is smooth, about 10 seconds. Add the flour and salt and pulse until just incorporated. At this point, you can refrigerate and re-mix just before using. Pour the batter over the fruit. Bake until set, puffed, and light golden brown around the edges, about 40-45 minutes. Remove when a knife inserted in the center comes out clean. Place the skillet on a wire rack and let cool for 20 minutes (the Clafoutis will deflate). Serve with maple syrup and or dust with powdered sugar. Cut into wedges. Store leftovers in an airtight container in the refrigerator for up to three days. Eat cold, room temperature or reheat in a 300 F oven until warmed through. — AP

HONEY-GLAZED CORNISH HENS

Ingredients

Servings: 8
Start to finish: 1 hour 20 minutes (Active time: 30 minutes)
2 tablespoons plus 2 teaspoons rendered chicken fat (schmaltz) or extra-virgin olive oil, divided use
1/2 cup honey
2 teaspoons freshly ground black pepper
2 medium yellow onions, thinly sliced
8 Cornish hens or 2 roasting chickens (about 4 pounds each)

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a small saucepan, melt 2 tablespoons of the chicken fat with the honey and pepper. Remove the glaze from the heat and set aside. Divide the onions among the bottom of two large baking dishes or roasting pans. Rub the hens all over with the remaining chicken fat, then season all over with salt. Place the hens on top of the onions (four in each pan; they should not be crowded), using roasting racks if desired. Roast the hens until they are golden brown and just about cooked through, about 25 minutes. Remove from the oven and brush each hen with the reserved honey glaze. Increase the oven temperature to 425 degrees F and bake the hens until the chickens are deeply browned and the juices from the hens run clear, an additional 5 minutes. Set aside to rest for 10 minutes before serving.

SAUTEED CABBAGE

Ingredients

Servings: 8
1 bunch scallions
3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
2 garlic cloves, chopped
1 pound Savoy cabbage, cored and thinly sliced (about 8 cups)
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1/4 cup water
Chop scallions, reserving white and dark green parts separately.

Preparation

Heat the oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat. Add the scallion whites and garlic and cook until fragrant and lightly browned, about 3 minutes. Add the cabbage, salt, and pepper and saute until the cabbage begins to release its juices, about 1 minute. Add water and cover, and cook until the cabbage is wilted, about 3 minutes. Add the remaining scallion and cook, uncovered, until the water has evaporated and the cabbage is tender, about 2 more minutes.

BAKED APPLES

Ingredients

Servings: 8
1/2 cup coconut oil or dairy-free butter substitute, melted
1/4 cup packed light brown sugar
1/2 cup raisins
4 baking apples

Preparation

Preheat the oven to 350 F. In a small bowl, combine coconut oil, sugar, and raisins, and set aside. Core the apples. Slice the top off each apple, approximately 1/4-inch from the top, and, using an apple-corer, small knife, or spoon, gently hollow the two apples. Be sure to leave about a 1/2-inch-thick shell. Fill the hollowed apples with the sugar mixture. Place stuffed apples in a greased baking dish and bake until the apples are slightly browned, tender, and cooked throughout, about 25 minutes. Spoon the liquid at the bottom of the pan over the apples before serving. — AP



DIG INTO HONEY-GLAZED CORNISH HENS WITH CABBAGE AND APPLES

Though the disco ball drops in January, the shofar blows in September, marking the beginning of the new year for Jewish communities across the globe. Observed as one of the holiest days of the year, Rosh Hashanah is a special two-day celebration of what's to come. Like the ceremonial blowing of the shofar (a ram's horn), the holiday is marked by many traditions such as candle-lighting, special greetings and prayers, and foods and dishes that hold special meaning for the coming year.

And since we are The Culinary Institute of America - where food is life - we're here with a new family-favorite recipe to ring in the new year, with some special ingredients that help set the tone for happy and healthy months ahead.

Honey-glazed Cornish hens with sauteed cabbage and baked apples is a fresh take on foods commonly found on your Rosh Hashanah table. The honey infuses sweetness into the new year and, paired with savory schmaltz, adds a sticky glaze atop the crisp poultry skin. Served alongside sweet, baked apples - another holiday table tradition - and tender cabbage, this meal is sure to start your family's year off with lots of luck and a full belly.

Schmaltz, which is simply rendered chicken fat, is a common ingredient in traditional Jewish cooking as a substitute for dairy-filled butter. Though it can be found in the kitchens of grandmothers the world over, schmaltz is gaining in popularity for its savory flavor among those who eschew dairy products.

Schmaltz can be purchased in some specialty markets, but it's a cinch to prepare with ingredients you may already have.

In fact, you've likely made it before and just discarded it! (A tragedy.) One common way to "make" schmaltz is to slowly render chicken skin over low heat until it gives up its clear fat - the schmaltz. Another option is to skim the bright yellow fat from the top of homemade chicken stock - also schmaltz! When hot it is a liquid, but stored in the refrigerator, the fat will become solid and scoopable. Every time you use it in place of butter or oil, your house will smell like chicken soup.

We've used Cornish game hens for this recipe, because they are perfect for individual servings at a holiday dinner. But this glaze will work perfectly with whatever poultry you prefer, like roasting chickens, turkey, or even duck. Of course, the cooking times will vary, so just roast the meat as you would normally, adding the glaze for the last 5 or 10 minutes. You can drizzle some of the leftover glaze over a platter of sliced meat, if you like.

Roasted meats and baked apples make the perfect sweet and savory combination. You'll want to choose apples that stand up well to baking, like Cortland, Golden Delicious, Jonagold and Granny Smith. Granny Smith is a great choice for this recipe, since it's a little tart, which will help balance out the sweetness of the honey-glazed hens. Of course, you want your new year to be sweet, not sour, so choose wisely.

Friday Times

FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2017

Travel



Kaohsiung: Taiwan's blossoming cultural city





Resident monks and nuns provide guided visits to Foguangshan

Spring is in the air in Kaohsiung; well, metaphorically anyway. Taiwan's second largest city is reinventing itself from an industrial port to a cultural hub. Warehouses by the harbor are morphing into galleries and theatres. World-class architecture is sprouting along the shore, from a beautiful public library to a spectacular concert venue that, when ready, should be among the best in Asia.

Access to these waterfront gems is provided by a sleek Spanish-designed light-rail line, launching in phases. Less conspicuous but no less significant, 'culture buses' are introducing sightseers to the many relics of the city's distant and recent past. The cultural calendar is packed full of exciting new festivals, and young chefs are injecting fresh ideas into southern Taiwanese cooking.

Kaohsiung - a city of wide streets (some of the widest in Taiwan), long river parks and a thriving LGBT scene - will have even more to be hopeful about, as it awakens to its full potential and embraces a world of possibilities. Here are some of our picks for what to see and do in Kaohsiung as it continues to blossom into one of Asia's most exciting urban centers.

Cultural renewal

The art-meets-industry formula works well at Pier-2 Art District. This ever-evolving collection of dozens of old warehouses is stuffed with boutiques, galleries, cafes and performance venues that line two sweeping boulevards by the port where ships are docked. The focus leans towards fashion, lifestyle, and other cultural bric-a-brac, though you will see some contemporary art and Pop Art-type sculptures decorating the lawns and walkways. Beyond the furthest warehouses are old train tracks overgrown with flowers where people fly kites and watch the sunset.

Known worldwide for its research on Austronesian art, Kaohsiung's Museum of Fine Arts houses an impressive collection by Taiwan's contemporary indigenous artists. Paintings, sculptures, and installations demonstrate a mastery of different styles and media, which renders the works not only

interesting as art, but also as vehicles for shattering stereotypes of tribal people. Stellar works by non-indigenous artists from southern Taiwan are shown in a different gallery.

Ancient and modern spirituality

A ten-minute sail away from Kaohsiung is

Cijin Island, where you can spend a day exploring fishing villages, swimming in the South China Sea, and gorging on seafood. A long strip of park hugging the west coast makes for delicious breeze-in-your-hair cycling. Cijin Tianhou Temple, founded in 1673, is Cijin's spiritual heart and Kaohsiung's oldest Mazu temple.

Foguangshan, the centre of Buddhism in southern Taiwan, is 45 minutes' drive from downtown Kaohsiung. Founded in 1967 by Master Hsing Yun, proponent of Humanistic Buddhism, the immense complex is home to English-speaking monks and nuns who will show you around and enrich your understanding of Buddhism.

You can also wander among the halls, shrines and gardens on your own. For contrast, the sensational-looking Buddha Memorial Center - added in 2011 - has faux-antique pagodas, a giant golden Buddha statue and a small but interesting museum of Buddhist artefacts.

Foodie scene

Kaohsiung has excellent seafood as it is the distribution point for fruits of the ocean from all of southern Taiwan. Everything is available, from an invigorating bowl of fish soup to a superfluous feast of marine creatures savored with whisky, Kaohsiungers' drink of choice. Seafood restaurants are called haichan dian, literally, 'sea produce shop'.



Odd Pop Art sculptures adorn the grounds at Pier-2 Art District

The city's new light rail system will connect the major cultural sights



A growing number of young chefs and restaurateurs in the city are working to modernize southern Taiwanese cuisine, while shining a spotlight on local produce. Gien Jia takes inspiration from the European kitchen when cooking Taiwanese ingredients. A sim-



ple plate of vegetables comes grilled with plum butter on the side; bottle gourd and chicken salad is dressed with a flying fish sauce; and fresh local shrimp meets native bacon inside ravioli.

All classic Taiwanese delicacies, whatever their town of origin, are on offer in Kaohsiung - braised pork over rice, oyster omelettes, soup dumplings, scallion pancakes and ice

treats of all persuasions. You will find these and much more in the sensory cacophony known as the night market. Of the dozen or so in Kaohsiung, Ruifeng Night Market is the local favorite. Everything seems to happen all at once here: fairground games, hawking of clothes and sundries, someone singing, though food - the variety is dizzying - still remains the focus.

Festivals galore

The Kaohsiung Spring Arts Festival, inaugurated in 2010, is an extravaganza of music, theatre and dance, with a carefully curated mix of genres - classical and contemporary, conventional and experimental, Taiwanese and Western. Performers hail from Asia, the Americas and Europe; shows are held in the city's top-notch theatre and concert venues, and also outdoors, and in libraries and restau-

rants - a reflection of the organizers' ambition to (literally) take the arts to all corners of Kaohsiung. The festival runs from February to July, with the bulk of the action happening between April and June.

March see the exhilarating Megaport Festival, a multi-stage outdoor music event at Pier-2 Art District. Over two full days, more than 80 rock, punk, electro and metal bands - mostly Taiwanese with some Hong Kong and Japanese acts thrown in - play to screaming fans from all over the island and neighboring regions.

Listening and literature

Many of Kaohsiung's most exciting live music, film and literary events take place in sultry lounges and brooding alley cafes that offer a killer cup of joe (or shot of absinthe).

Understated Marsalis is one of Taiwan's finest jazz bars, while R.Ruyo Deli Cafe and Ruh Cafe are both hotspots for indie, experimental and techno sounds. In Our Time hosts jazz and indie gigs inside an old warehouse. Among the hottest book-and-bean addresses are Cafe Strada, jokingly known as the cradle of Kaohsiung's literati, and Takao Books, the city's most active organiser of literary events. Kaohsiung's taste-makers often hang out at Hsiao Ti Cafe in sleepy Yancheng District, where the 1970s Japanese coffee house decor, the owner's stories of the area's golden age and the free breakfast (available before 10am) are the draws.

Weird and wonderful

Ti-nli-o Stone Temple is the work of a few hundred Southeast Asian migrant workers who were, as the story goes, taken in by the temple's abbot when the construction project that hired them went awry, leaving them stranded in Taiwan. To thank the monks, the men fashioned this fantastical-looking temple out of seashells, coral and stones. The main deity here is the Taoist goddess Cundi Bodhisattva, whose statue and those of other gods line wavy corridors evoking Barcelona's Park Gaell.

You may have seen 'Manhattan-henge' - a big golden sun setting between silhouettes of New York's skyscrapers. An equally spectacular solar phenomenon occurs in Kaohsiung thanks to its gridded layout. 'Kaohsiung-henge' occurs twice a year, for two or three days around late January and mid-November. During these magical days, the city looks like nothing else - tower cranes on the horizon, gold spilling on the boulevard and everything sublimated for a few brief moments by the apparent closeness of the sun. The most ideal viewing spots are streets with an east-west orientation, such as Qingnian 1st Road in Lingya District. (www.lonelyplanet.com)





Aries (March 21-April 19)

You will be extremely busy today. There will be many times where you will have to supply a solution to a particular problem. Be prepared to work hard. This is not a great time to attempt to plan a noon break with friends as you may find yourself less conversational. It would be good to walk or visit a pet or music store, if possible. Transferring your concentration to a lighthearted arena would do wonders for your energy level and enthusiasm as you return to the work expectations. Take care to examine all aspects of your work or dealings today-there is success! A long-awaited dialogue with an older person may take place later. You enjoy keeping up-to-date with the news regarding your friends, relatives or neighborhood events.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today is a fine day . . . Your work benefits from your total concentration. This may be a good thing as you will be able to forget about personal plans for a while and relax your expectations of the day. Surprises happen all day long and, you are able to finish what you start in the work world. The noon break is fun with co-worker friends and somewhere in the visit there is talk of metaphysics, horoscopes and telling fortunes. You are also interested in the subject of writers and teachers that talk about self-help techniques. You might spend time in a bookstore after work for a short while. Young people want some of your time this afternoon and you enjoy their company. Later this evening you will want to have a camera handy. Happy birthday!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Whether you are working in a place of business or at home, your attention is in getting things completed. If you find yourself working within a group today, you will be productive. You expect praise for your good works but this may not come on your time schedule so-do not push. Emotions and feelings of those around you may be very clear allowing you to know what is expected of your energies and your time. If you have things you want to accomplish that might be a separate interest from the people you are with-set reasonable time limits before obligating yourself to new projects. This is a good time to use your writing skills as you can communicate with real originality. Learning ways to release the restlessness is beneficial to your health.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You waste few words when you describe or give instructions. You could be in a hurry, so if someone has a lot of difficulty in understanding what you want, be wise with your response. You have a natural sense of organization and come across as disciplined and careful, perhaps a little too sober. An inner vision, coupled with the ability to see the big picture, may find you working as a go-between with others. You could even have a special gift for spanning the generation gap, bringing older and younger spirits together. A love of animals, children, older people and the needy, is a lifelong trait that is visible today. It is easy for you to work with people in authority. There are opportunities for outdoor activity with friends this afternoon.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Opportunities may go against your own sense of security and you may feel it is best not to take chances. This is a tough call when it comes to business and some compromise is perhaps the best way to a workable solution. Your career, practical vision and skills are of central importance to you now. You feel there is a waste of time if there is no organization and your actions are deliberate in this area of your life. Your reputation and image are a source of concern and you do everything you can to make them solid. You appear perhaps more charming and refined than usual this evening as people gather to celebrate or just simply gather together away from the workplace. Putting your best foot forward may take on a greater importance this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your work or career is in true harmony with the rest of your life. Much can be accomplished. You could gain from subordinates or young people just now as information or help is available for whatever you want to complete. You make your way through ideas and concepts, and you have a good ability to communicate and express them to others. Reading or attending a lecture on law, politics, education, travel or religion may be part of your day, which is productive. Your creative side is showing this afternoon when you help a friend decorate or update an old look. Your home environment, friends and surroundings in general become simplified and receive encouragement. Things may seem almost magical in the way they work out in your favor.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Self-sacrifice and an understanding attitude on your part could have far-reaching effects on your own life-path and career during this time. You have improved your working abilities and higher-ups are taking note. This may mean that you are working more efficiently with others and this helps you to achieve bigger and more encompassing goals. Outer circumstances are favorable and it should be easy for you to push forward with regard to developing your career. You will have no problem moving up the professional ladder. Now is the time when personal insight into your most secret and psychological self may be possible. There is the possibility of new visions or sudden insights into your self-image or into your beliefs and dreams.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your idea of where you want to be in this life and where you really are with your goals are very close. You are progressing well with your goals and you will want to set some new goals soon. Do not be afraid that present goals will be forgotten as you begin to look into toward the future-they will soon be realized. This is a time of good fortune-when things open up in a very natural way for you. Situations are within your reach and it is easy to see which path is the one for you to take. Opportunities to improve and enlarge your friendships are available to you now. You may find yourself wanting to do almost anything today. This is a good time to project your image. Give yourself more credit for the original ways you handle family matters.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Go with the flow today. Trust in your own instincts. Your ideas are just as good, if not better, than someone else's ideas. Take a chance-try out your new ideas-you will have a feeling of accomplishment. Perhaps you are improving or updating a piece of technical equipment or some new computer software. Your perseverance pays off, particularly when you stop occasionally for a break or two-all work and no play, etc. A person that you were close to in the past may contact you this afternoon. An earnest effort in letting go of hard feelings can free you to move forward. This person has something special to offer you. This is a day of good surprises, opportunities, money and romance. A new game fills your evening hours.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Investigating and examining results and statistics find you at your mental best. Your analytical abilities are at a high. This can be an expansive, creative and successful time-a time you may remember with much fondness. You are your warm, loyal and generous self today and others follow your example as you deal with the public and interact with others in the workplace. Your need for admiration and appreciation will certainly be met as you entertain and visit with friends this afternoon. Others could seek you out for your psychological insight and understanding. This could be a time to make changes in your environment. Any work toward creating a balance in your life will be beneficial. Good vibes are present all week long.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You will make practical decisions concerning group issues today. A supervisor or higher-up is listening to your intelligent summations about how things should be run. You have a natural sense of what the public wants. You are always making new discoveries. Clear decisions affecting others are requested and triumphant. You have a great appreciation of how your life is going and this afternoon you will be able to enjoy the company of a good friend. You will both enjoy talking about what each of you has accomplished. Perhaps you will even be evaluating and reassessing your plans for the future. Life, like a good painting, has to be looked at occasionally to really appreciate the true essence. Friends may visit this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Money, money, money-it seems to occupy your mind much of this day. You could be applying for a loan or looking to purchase a vehicle or home and there is almost a feeling of static electricity in the air. Easy does it, meaning, have more confidence. If you really need this new item to make your life work better, it will be yours! Be aware, however, that time and process may not meet with your own idea of how things should move along. Do not let these thoughts occupy your time-you will want to be attentive to your work. You are valued for your ability to make practical decisions and you could find yourself representing co-workers in sensitive issues. Clear decisions affecting others could be made by higher-ups as a result of your input.

COUNTRY CODES

Afghanistan	0093	Kuwait	00965
Albania	00355	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Algeria	00213	Laos	00856
Andorra	00376	Latvia	00371
Angola	00244	Lebanon	00961
Anguilla	001264	Liberia	00231
Antigua	001268	Libya	00218
Argentina	0054	Lithuania	00370
Armenia	00374	Luxembourg	00352
Australia	0061	Macau	00853
Austria	0043	Macedonia	00389
Bahamas	001242	Madagascar	00261
Bahrain	00973	Majorca	0034
Bangladesh	00880	Malawi	00265
Barbados	001246	Malaysia	0060
Belarus	00375	Maldives	00960
Belgium	0032	Mali	00223
Belize	00501	Malta	00356
Benin	00229	Marshall Islands	00692
Bermuda	001441	Martinique	00596
Bhutan	00975	Mauritania	00222
Bolivia	00591	Mauritius	00230
Bosnia	00387	Mayotte	00269
Botswana	00267	Mexico	0052
Brazil	0055	Micronesia	00691
Brunei	00673	Moldova	00373
Bulgaria	00359	Monaco	00377
Burkina	00226	Mongolia	00976
Burundi	00257	Montserrat	001664
Cambodia	00855	Morocco	00212
Cameroon	00237	Mozambique	00258
Canada	001	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Cape Verde	00238	Namibia	00264
Cayman Islands	001345	Nepal	00977
Central African Republic	00236	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Chad	00235	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Chile	0056	New Caledonia	00687
China	0086	New Zealand	0064
Colombia	0057	Nicaragua	00505
Comoros	00269	Niger	00227
Congo	00242	Nigeria	00234
Cook Islands	00682	Niue	00683
Costa Rica	00506	Norfolk Island	00672
Croatia	00385	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Cuba	0053	North Korea	00850
Cyprus	00357	Norway	0047
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Oman	00968
Czech Republic	00420	Pakistan	0092
Denmark	0045	Palau	00680
Diego Garcia	00246	Panama	00507
Djibouti	00253	Papua New Guinea	00675
Dominica	001767	Paraguay	00595
Dominican Republic	001809	Peru	0051
Ecuador	00593	Philippines	0063
Egypt	0020	Poland	0048
El Salvador	00503	Portugal	00351
England (UK)	0044	Puerto Rico	001787
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Qatar	00974
Eritrea	00291	Romania	0040
Estonia	00372	Russian Federation	007
Ethiopia	00251	Rwanda	00250
Falkland Islands	00500	Saint Helena	00290
Faroe Islands	00298	Saint Kitts	001869
Fiji	00679	Saint Lucia	001758
Finland	00358	Saint Pierre	00508
France	0033	Saint Vincent	001784
French Guiana	00594	Samoa US	00684
French Polynesia	00689	Samoa West	00685
Gabon	00241	San Marino	00378
Gambia	00220	Sao Tome	00239
Georgia	00995	Saudi Arabia	00966
Germany	0049	Scotland (UK)	0044
Ghana	00233	Senegal	00221
Gibraltar	00350	Seychelles	00284
Greece	0030	Sierra Leone	00232
Greenland	00299	Singapore	0065
Grenada	001473	Slovakia	00421
Guadeloupe	00590	Slovenia	00386
Guam	001671	Solomon Islands	00677
Guatemala	00502	Somalia	00252
Guinea	00224	South Africa	0027
Guyana	00592	South Korea	0082
Haiti	00509	Spain	0034
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Sri Lanka	0094
Honduras	00504	Sudan	00249
Hong Kong	00852	Suriname	00597
Hungary	0036	Swaziland	00268
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sweden	0046
Iceland	00354	Switzerland	0041
India	0091	Syria	00963
Indian Ocean	00873	Taiwan	00886
Indonesia	0062	Tanzania	00255
Iran	0098	Thailand	0066
Iraq	00964	Toga	00228
Ireland	00353	Tonga	00676
Italy	0039	Tokelau	00690
Ivory Coast	00225	Trinidad	001868
Jamaica	001876	Tunisia	00216
Japan	0081	Turkey	0090
Jordan	00962	Tuvalu	00688
Kazakhstan	007	Uganda	00256
Kenya	00254	Ukraine	00380
Kiribati	00686	United Arab Emirates	00976



00:45 Treehouse Masters
01:40 Biggest And Baddest
02:35 Gator Boys
03:25 Whale Wars
04:15 Whale Wars
05:02 North America
05:49 Untamed & Uncut
06:36 Swamp Brothers
07:00 Swamp Brothers
07:25 Gator Boys
08:15 Treehouse Masters
09:10 Biggest And Baddest
10:05 North America
11:00 Gator Boys
11:55 Whale Wars
12:50 Whale Wars
13:45 Biggest And Baddest
14:40 North America
15:35 Untamed & Uncut
16:30 Treehouse Masters
17:25 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
18:20 The Vet Life
19:15 Biggest And Baddest
20:10 Gator Boys
21:05 Deadliest Snakes Of South Africa
22:00 The Vet Life
22:55 Wild Iberia
23:50 Untamed & Uncut

03:00 Finding Bigfoot
03:50 Destroyed In Seconds
04:15 Destroyed In Seconds
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Risking It All
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
07:50 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Science Of The Movies
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
12:00 Finding Bigfoot
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Risking It All
14:30 Kenny The Shark
14:55 Dick 'n' Dom Go Wild
15:20 Destroyed In Seconds
15:45 Destroyed In Seconds
16:10 Science Of The Movies
17:00 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
17:50 Superhuman Showdown
18:40 Mythbusters
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Destroyed In Seconds
20:45 Destroyed In Seconds
21:10 Dynamo: Magician Impossible
22:00 Superhuman Showdown
22:50 Finding Bigfoot
23:40 Destroyed In Seconds



00:25 EastEnders
00:55 Holby City
03:20 Benidorm
04:10 New Tricks
05:05 EastEnders
05:35 Carters Get Rich
06:00 Holby City
06:55 EastEnders
07:25 Father Brown
08:15 Casualty
09:10 The Musketeers
10:05 The Musketeers
11:00 The Musketeers
11:55 EastEnders
12:25 Holby City
13:20 The Moonstone
14:10 Father Brown
14:55 EastEnders
15:25 The Musketeers
16:20 The Musketeers
17:15 The Musketeers
18:15 Casualty
19:05 The Moonstone
20:00 Top Of The Lake
21:00 Paula
21:55 Benidorm
22:45 Carters Get Rich
23:10 Uncle
23:40 The Moonstone



00:05 Lip Sync Battle
00:30 The Half Hour
00:55 The Half Hour
01:20 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
01:45 Chappelle's Show
02:12 Live At The Apollo
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
04:15 Sweat Inc.
05:05 Bondi Ink.
05:55 Hungry Investors
06:50 Disaster Date
07:15 Disaster Date
07:40 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
08:30 Framework
09:20 Bondi Ink.
10:10 Catch A Contractor
10:35 Catch A Contractor
11:00 Ridiculousness
11:25 Ridiculousness
13:05 Disaster Date
13:55 The It Crowd
14:20 The It Crowd
14:45 Impractical Jokers UK
15:15 Impractical Jokers UK
15:45 Lip Sync Battle
16:08 Lip Sync Battle
16:55 Impractical Jokers
17:20 Impractical Jokers
17:45 Impractical Jokers
18:10 The It Crowd
18:35 The It Crowd
19:00 The Jim Gaffigan Show
19:23 Key And Peele
19:47 Kroll Show
20:10 Workaholics
20:33 Workaholics
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The President Show
22:00 Live At The Apollo
22:50 Show Me The Funny
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:30 The Perfect Murder
01:20 I Am Homicide
02:10 Murder Comes To Town
03:00 Evil Online
03:48 Beauty Queen Murders
04:36 Beauty Queen Murders
05:24 Beauty Queen Murders
06:12 Beauty Queen Murders
07:00 A Crime To Remember
07:50 A Crime To Remember
08:40 A Crime To Remember
09:30 A Crime To Remember
10:20 The Locator
10:45 The Locator
11:10 Evil Online
12:00 Beauty Queen Murders
12:50 Beauty Queen Murders
13:40 Beauty Queen Murders
14:30 Beauty Queen Murders
15:20 The Locator



00:05 Destroyed In Seconds
00:30 Risking It All
01:20 Weather Top Tens
02:10 Track Me If You Can

15:45 The Locator
16:10 Murder Chose Me
17:00 Blood Relatives
17:50 Blood Relatives
18:40 Blood Relatives
20:20 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
21:10 Grave Secrets
22:00 Forbidden: Dying For Love
22:50 Evil Lives Here
23:40 Jonben?: An American Murder Mystery



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 The Hive
05:50 The 7D
06:00 Jessie
06:25 Jessie
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 The Zhuzhus
07:20 Elena Of Avalor
07:45 Bunk'd
08:10 Stuck In The Middle
08:35 Bizaardvark
09:00 Austin & Ally
09:25 Austin & Ally
09:50 Good Luck Charlie
10:15 Good Luck Charlie
10:40 Alex & Co.
11:05 Lolirock
11:30 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
11:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
12:00 Rolling With The Ronks
12:15 Hank Zipzer
12:40 Dog With A Blog
13:05 Star Darlings
13:10 Good Luck Charlie
13:35 Austin & Ally
14:00 Jessie
14:25 Lolirock
14:50 The Zhuzhus
15:15 Whisker Haven Tales With The Palace Pets
15:20 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
15:45 Elena Of Avalor
16:10 Liv And Maddie
16:35 Princess Diaries
18:25 Alex & Co.
18:50 Best Friends Whenever
19:15 Sunny Bunnies
19:20 Liv And Maddie
19:45 Mako Mermaids
20:10 Jessie
20:35 Cracked
20:40 Bizaardvark
21:05 Austin & Ally
21:30 Stuck In The Middle
21:55 Tsum Tsum Shorts
22:00 Bunk'd
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 Henry Hugglemonster
00:15 Calimero
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Zou
01:05 Loopdidoo
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 Calimero
01:50 Zou
02:05 Art Attack
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
02:40 Loopdidoo
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:10 Art Attack
03:35 Loopdidoo

03:50 Calimero
04:05 Art Attack
04:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:45 Zou
06:00 Zou
06:15 Calimero
06:30 Loopdidoo
06:45 Henry Hugglemonster
07:00 Sofia The First
07:25 Goldie & Bear
07:50 The Lion Guard
08:15 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:40 Doc McStuffins
09:05 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
09:30 PJ Masks
09:45 Miles From Tomorrow
10:10 Little Mermaid
10:35 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
11:00 PJ Masks
11:25 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
11:50 Goldie & Bear
12:15 Sofia The First
12:40 Miles From Tomorrow
13:10 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
13:35 PJ Masks
14:00 My Friends Tigger & Pooh
14:30 The Lion Guard
14:55 Harry And Bip
15:00 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
15:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
16:00 Sofia The First
16:25 Goldie & Bear
16:50 Doc McStuffins
17:15 The Lion Guard
17:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
18:05 PJ Masks
18:35 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:05 Sofia The First
19:35 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
20:05 The Lion Guard
20:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:00 Goldie & Bear
21:25 Doc McStuffins
21:50 Harry And Bip
22:00 Little Mermaid
22:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
22:55 PJ Masks
23:20 Zou
23:45 Loopdidoo



00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:05 What On Earth?
01:50 How Do They Do It?
02:12 How Do They Do It?
02:35 Impossible Engineering
03:20 Fast N' Loud
04:05 Running Wild With Bear Grylls
04:50 Gold Rush
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Last Chance Hospital
07:30 Cooper's Treasure: The Hunt For A Secret Fortune
08:15 Deadliest Catch
09:00 How Do They Do It?
09:25 Kings Of The Wild
10:10 Treasure Quest: Snake Island
10:55 Last Chance Hospital
12:25 How Do They Do It?
12:47 Fast N' Loud
13:32 Sacred Steel Bikes
14:17 Street Outlaws: New Orleans
15:02 Sacred Steel Bikes
15:47 Sacred Steel Bikes
16:35 Sacred Steel Bikes
17:25 Sacred Steel Bikes
18:20 Sacred Steel Bikes
19:15 Sacred Steel Bikes
20:10 How Do They Do It?
20:35 How Do They Do It?
21:00 Fast N' Loud: Demolition Theatre
22:40 Street Outlaws: New Orleans
23:30 Deadliest Catch



06:00 Milo Murphy's Law
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Mech-X4
07:15 Right Now Kapow
07:40 Gravity Falls
08:05 Marvel's Ant-Man
08:10 K.C. Undercover
08:35 Milo Murphy's Law
09:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
09:25 Supa Strikas
09:50 Supa Strikas

10:20 Kickin' It
10:45 Kickin' It
11:10 Mighty Med
11:35 Mighty Med
12:00 Lab Rats
12:30 Lab Rats
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 Pair Of Kings
13:45 Pair Of Kings
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Pair Of Kings
14:40 Pair Of Kings
15:05 Robin Hood
16:35 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
16:50 Kirby Buckets Warped
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Gravity Falls
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Milo Murphy's Law
18:35 Disney11
19:00 Disney11
19:25 K.C. Undercover
19:50 Marvel's Ant-Man
19:55 Milo Murphy's Law
20:20 Mech-X4
20:45 Kirby Buckets Warped
21:10 Walk The Prank
21:35 Marvel's Ant-Man
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:05 Famously Single
00:55 Famously Single
01:50 E! News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story
03:20 Celebrity Style Story
03:50 Botched
04:40 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 La Clippers Dance Squad
06:55 E! News
07:10 La Clippers Dance Squad
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
11:05 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
12:00 E! News
12:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
13:10 Life Of Kylie
13:35 Life Of Kylie
14:05 Life Of Kylie
14:30 Life Of Kylie
15:00 E! News
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Botched
17:05 Botched
18:00 Botched
19:00 E! News
20:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
21:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
22:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
23:00 E! News
23:15 Botched



00:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
00:30 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
01:00 Smollett Eats
01:30 Smollett Eats
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Chopped
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:25 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
06:50 Anna Olson: Fresh
07:15 The Kitchen
08:05 The Pioneer Woman
08:30 The Pioneer Woman
08:55 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
09:25 Siba's Table: Fast Feasts
09:55 Cooking For Real
10:25 Cooking For Real
10:55 The Kitchen
11:45 Bake With Anna Olson
12:10 The Pioneer Woman
12:35 The Pioneer Woman
13:00 Siba's Table
13:30 Siba's Table
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives

14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Chopped
16:00 The Kitchen
17:00 Cooking For Real
18:00 Chopped
19:00 Iron Chef America
20:00 Luke Nguyen's United Kingdom
20:30 Luke Nguyen's United Kingdom
21:00 Reza, Spice Prince Of Thailand
22:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
23:00 Chopped



00:00 Don't Tell The Bride
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
03:25 Diana And The Paparazzi
04:20 Royal Stories
04:45 Royal Stories
05:15 Couples Come Dine With Me
06:05 Don't Tell The Bride
07:05 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
08:00 Diana And The Paparazzi
09:00 Royal Stories
09:30 Royal Stories
10:00 Couples Come Dine With Me
10:50 Don't Tell The Bride
11:50 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Don't Tell The Bride
15:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
16:00 Diana: The Day The World Cried
16:55 Tonight At The London Palladium
17:50 Couples Come Dine With Me
18:45 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
21:00 Diana: The Day The World Cried
21:55 Tonight At The London Palladium



00:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
01:00 Clash Of Warriors
02:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
02:50 Ancient Aliens
03:40 Bible Secrets Revealed
04:30 How 2 Win
05:20 America: The Story Of The U.S.
06:10 The Universe
07:00 Clash Of Warriors
08:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
09:00 Ancient Aliens
10:00 Bible Secrets Revealed
11:00 How 2 Win
12:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
13:00 Clash Of Warriors
14:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
15:00 Ancient Aliens
16:00 Bible Secrets Revealed
17:00 The Universe
18:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
19:00 Clash Of Warriors
20:00 The Universe: Ancient Mysteries Solved
21:00 Ancient Aliens
22:00 The Lost Evidence



00:20 How The World Made America
02:00 Ax Men
02:50 Storage Wars: Best Of
03:15 American Pickers
04:05 Pawn Stars
05:00 Mountain Men
06:00 Hunting Hitler
06:50 Time Team
07:40 101 People Who Made The 20th Century
08:30 Ronnie O'Sullivan's American Hustle
09:20 Swamp People
10:10 Ax Men

WORD SEARCH

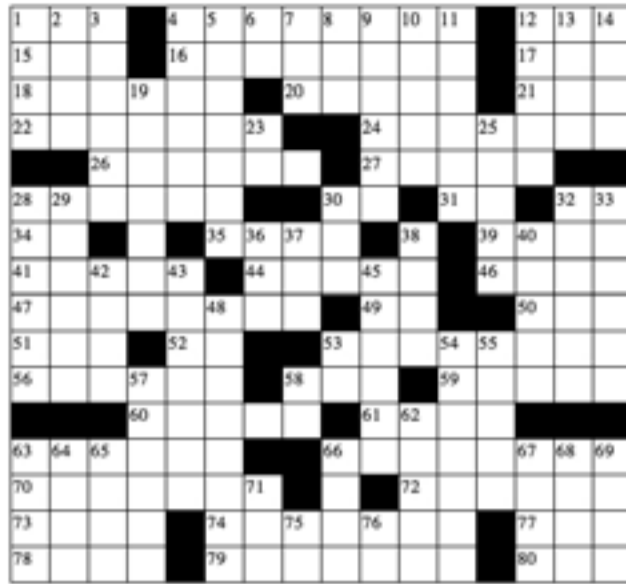
Real Estate 2

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell a common Real Estate phrase.



- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| ACREAGE | DEBT | LANDLORD | SELLER |
| AMENITIES | DEFAULT | LEASE | SHOW HOME |
| APARTMENT | DOWN PAYMENT | LISTING | SOLD SIGN |
| APPRAISER | EQUITY | MARKET | SUBDIVISION |
| ASSESSOR | EVICTION | MORTGAGE | SUBLET |
| BANK | FLIP | PARCEL | SURVEY |
| BROKER | FLOOR SPACE | PHOTOS | TENANT |
| BUYER | FOR SALE SIGN | PRINCIPAL | TITLE |
| CLOSING | FORCLOSURE | PROPERTY TAX | TOWNHOUSE |
| COMMISSION | HIGH RISE | PUBLIC AUCTION | VALUE |
| CONDO FEES | INSPECTION | RENT | VIRTUAL TOUR |
| CONTRACTOR | INTEREST RATE | ROW HOUSE | ZONING |

CROSSWORD 1701



ACROSS

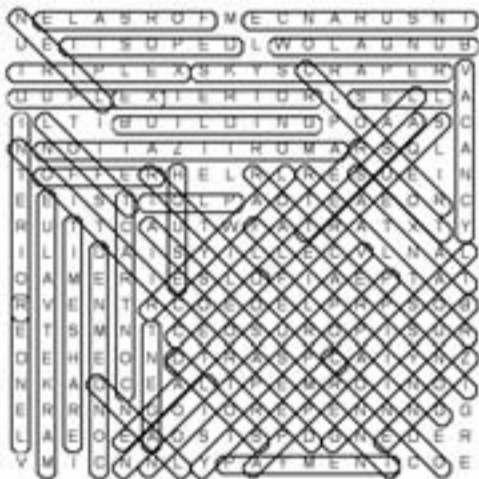
1. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
4. Relating to or of the nature of or having a mouth or mouthlike opening.
12. A proinflammatory cytokine that is produced by white blood cells (monocytes and macrophages).
15. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
16. Pour water on.
17. A pointed tool for marking surfaces or for punching small holes.
18. Any of several low-growing Australian eucalypts.
20. A game in which darts are thrown at a dartboard.
21. A master's degree in business.
22. Discover or determine the existence, presence, or fact of.
24. Hiding from view.
26. The opening of a subject to public discussion and debate.
27. Of or relating to or involving an area.
28. A kind of sedan chair used in India.
31. A radioactive gaseous element formed by the disintegration of radium.
34. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
35. A slender double-reed instrument.
39. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
41. Acute abdominal pain (especially in infants).
44. Jordan's port.
46. Shrubby Japanese tree having pale pink blossoms.
47. Small genus of trees or shrubs of New Zealand and New Caledonia.
49. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
50. A doctor's degree in education.
51. Belonging to or on behalf of a specified person (especially yourself).
52. A state in midwestern United States.
56. An azure blue semiprecious stone.
59. Make less active or intense.
60. Antiquity that has survived from the distant past.
61. A French abbot.
63. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
70. An annual publication including weather forecasts and other miscellaneous information arranged according to the calendar of a given year.
72. A deficiency of red blood cells.
73. The act of scanning.
74. Any of various types of cabbage.
77. A unit of pressure.
78. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
79. A festival featuring African-American culture.
80. An enzyme that catalyzes the oxidation of many body compounds (e.g., epinephrine and norepinephrine and serotonin).

DOWN

1. Fabric dyed with splotches of green and brown and black and tan.
2. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
3. Any seed plant yielding balsam.
4. A range of mountains (usually with jagged peaks and irregular outline).
5. United States golfer (born in 1939).
6. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
7. Used in combination to denote the middle.
8. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
9. Covered with paving material.
10. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
11. Of less size or importance.
12. Of or relating to a speaker of the Tamil language or the language itself.
13. The compass point that is one point north of northwest.
14. Emblem usually consisting of a rectangular piece of cloth of distinctive design.
19. A city in southeastern Germany famous for fairs.
23. Half the width of an em.
25. Valuable fiber plant of East Indies now widespread in cultivation.
29. Lack of normal muscular tension or tonus.
30. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
32. Of the most contemptible kind.
33. Boas and pythons.
36. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
37. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
38. Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
40. Ritual hand movement in Hindu religious dancing.
42. City in northern Austria on the Danube.
43. Of or relating to or characteristic of Chile or its people.
45. A Japanese cheer of enthusiasm or triumph.
48. (football) The person who plays tailback.
53. A public promotion of some product or service.
54. Small genus of deciduous West Indian trees or shrubs.
55. A poplar that is widely cultivated in the United States.
57. A university town in east central Illinois adjoining Champaign.
58. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
62. God of wealth and love.
64. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
65. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
66. The compass point that is one point north of northeast.
67. (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
68. Wife of Ramachandra.
69. Black honeycreepers with yellow feathers around the tail.
71. The sound made by corvine birds.
75. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
76. The azimuth of a celestial body is the angle between the vertical plane containing it and the plane of the meridian.

Yesterday's Solution

Real Estate 1



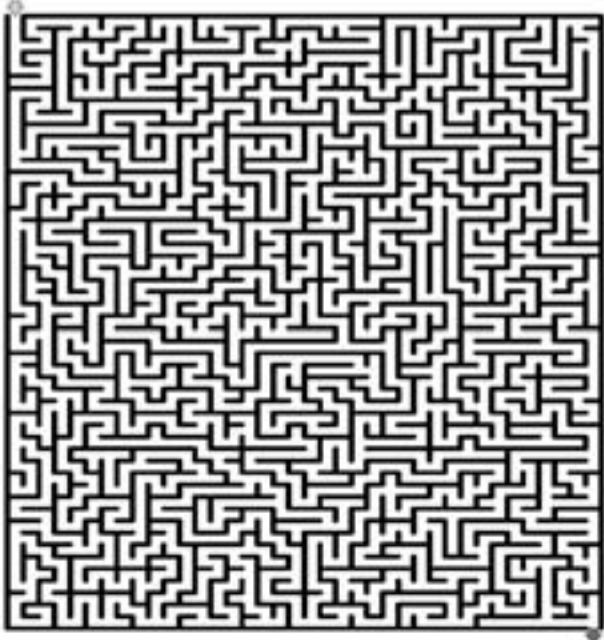
- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|
| AGENT | CONTRACT | INTERIOR | REALTOR |
| AMORTIZATION | CREDITOR | LAND | SELL |
| APPRAISAL | DEED | LAWYER | SKYSCRAPER |
| ASSESSMENT | DEPOSIT | LENDER | SOLD |
| ASSET | DEPRECIATION | LIEN | SQUARE FOOTAGE |
| BUILDING | DUPLEX | LOAN | TAXES |
| BUNGALOW | EXTERIOR | LOFT | TIMESHARE |
| BUYING | FLIPPING | MARKET VALUE | TOUR |
| CLOSER | FOR SALE | OFFER | TRIPLEX |
| COLLATERAL | HOUSE | PAYMENT | VACANCY |
| CONDEMNED | INSPECTOR | PLOT | VALUATION |
| CONDO | INSURANCE | PROPERTY | ZONE |

The hidden message is: MULTIPLE LISTING SERVICE

Yesterday's Solution



CHALLENGING MAZE



Daily SuDoku

3	5			8
	4	9	1	2
		5		
		6	3	5
4				6
	1	2	4	
			5	
	4	3	6	2
2				3
				7

Yesterday's Solution

5	4	3	2	1	7	9	6	8
7	2	1	6	8	9	4	3	5
9	6	8	3	4	5	2	7	1
8	9	6	1	5	3	7	2	4
4	5	7	8	6	2	3	1	9
1	3	2	7	9	4	8	5	6
2	8	9	5	3	1	6	4	7
6	7	5	4	2	8	1	9	3
3	1	4	9	7	6	5	8	2



MONROE, Louisiana: Phlebotomist Elaine Matthews takes blood from JoAnna Farris, a freshman nursing major, during LifeShare Blood Centers Hurricane Harvey blood drive at ULM in Monroe, La, Wednesday. LifeShare Blood Centers collected donations that will go to restore dwindling supplies at blood banks in areas affected by the storm. — AP

TED: PHONES AND DRONES TRANSFORMING HEALTHCARE

ARUSHA, Tanzania: In the developing world, basic healthcare is often a challenge-let alone expensive medical screening or tests for easily treatable, preventable illnesses. TEDGlobal, an annual conference devoted to “ideas worth spreading” taking place in Tanzania this week, heard of new technologies that could revolutionize healthcare for the poor.

Algorithms to detect diseases

Infectious diseases are fast being overtaken by afflictions such as cancer as the biggest health problem in Africa, where some countries have only one pathologist per one million people. Sierra Leonean roboticist David Sengeh believes training more specialists is not enough, and is working with his team at IBM Africa on artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms that can predict a cancer’s progression. AI software can be trained with a database of images to detect color changes inside the cervix that point to patients at high risk for cervical cancer, which can be treated if caught in time, but which kills 60,000 women in Africa a year.

Addressing a similar problem, Pratik Shah of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has developed a system to use simple cellphone or camera pictures-instead of expensive MRI or CT scans-to identify biomarkers that point to oral cancer. He told AFP that while AI systems typically need tens of thousands of data points to function, he has found a way to use only 50 images to train algorithms to identify a specific disease.

“We believe our approach could be used to massively reduce the amount of data an AI algorithm currently consumes, and empower physicians to diagnose patients using simple images,” he said. Both Shah and Sengeh are new members of the TED Fellows Program which aims to spread the ideas of young innovators.

‘Eye-phones’ and mobile hearing

More than 1.1 billion people worldwide live with hearing loss-half of which is preventable, according to the World

Health Organization. American ear surgeon Susan Emmett said most of these are in low and middle-income countries where traditional hearing tests are a challenge. Malawi, for example, has only two ear surgeons and 11 audiologists. Emmett is currently testing South African-developed mobile screening technology in rural Alaskan communities that has replaced the need for an audiologist, permanent equipment and a soundproof room.

The technology, costing 10 times less than traditional solutions, involves noise-isolating headphones and an adaptor attached to a mobile phone used to examine a patient’s ears. Another speaker, Kyle DeCarlo, who is deaf, wishes the world would be more concerned with giving the deaf access to language rather than sound. He has developed a semi-transparent surgical mask so that deaf patients can read the lips of their doctors in hospitals.

The audience was also shown a video by eye surgeon Andrew Bastawrous who won a Rolex Award in 2016 for Peek, an “eye-phone”, or smartphone app he developed for use in Kenya, which uses a low-cost clip-on device to take images of the back of the eye to test sight.

Drone blood delivery

In Rwanda, a system launched last year to fly blood via drones from a central distribution center to hospitals around the hilly nation has saved numerous lives, said robotics entrepreneur Keller Rinaudo, whose company Zipline runs the system. The drones, which drop boxed packs of blood slowly to the earth via a paper parachute, now deliver 20 percent of blood supply outside the capital Kigali. In one case a 24-year old woman bleeding out after childbirth was saved after several emergency flights in a row delivered more blood than is contained in one human body-which was all transfused into her.

Last week, Tanzania’s health ministry announced they would use the same technology to deliver a variety of medical products from four distribution centers via drone in what is set to be the largest autonomous delivery system anywhere in the world. — AFP

AUSTRALIA BARS ‘WORLD’S NO.1 ANTI-VAXXER’ FROM ENTRY

SYDNEY: An American who describes himself as the “world’s #1 anti-vaxxer” has been barred from entering Australia, officials said yesterday, in a further crackdown on the anti-immunization movement after outbreaks of preventable diseases. Kent Heckenlively had outlined plans to travel to Australia in December as part of a “Dangerous Science” tour to promote his books and detail efforts to push for a five-year moratorium on childhood vaccines in the US. His proposed trip came amid efforts by Canberra to boost child vaccination rates, including a “no jab, no pay” law to block parents who refuse to vaccinate their offspring from accessing some government benefits.

Immigration Minister Peter Dutton said Heckenlively, who wrote “I am the world’s #1 anti-vaxxer” in an online blog, would be blocked from the country. “Kent’s not got any travel plans to Australia because we’re not going to allow him to come here,” he told Sydney commercial radio station 2GB. “These people who are telling parents that their kids shouldn’t be vaccinated are dangerous people... it’s clear to me that it’s not in our national interest that he should come here.” — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
 د. فهد علي المخيزيم
 Consultant Pediatrician استشاري أطفال
 M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 4817
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light to moderate south easterly wind changing to south westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 30 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

BY DAY: Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 31/08/2017 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	42 °C	32 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	28 °C		
ABDALY	48 °C	30 °C		
BUBYAN	38 °C	29 °C		
JAHRA	48 °C	28 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	41 °C	30 °C		
SALMIYAH	39 °C	33 °C		
AHMADI	39 °C	34 °C		
NUWAISIB	43 °C	28 °C		
WAFRA	47 °C	26 °C		
SALMY	47 °C	26 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	09/01	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas and some scattered clouds will appear	46 °C	28 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	09/02	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming at night	45 °C	29 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h
Sunday	09/03	Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming at night	45 °C	27 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h
Monday	09/04	Very hot	47 °C	27 °C	VRB-NW	12 - 35 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:03
Sunrise	05:25
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:11
Isha	19:30

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	26 °C
MAX. RH	52 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	S 32 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Shabnam daughter of Imran Ali holder of Indian passport: H2426595 and Civil ID: 279102001734 has changed my name to Shabnam Imran Ali, hereinafter in all my dealings and documents.
(C 5342)
31-8-2017

FOR SALE

Expat leaving Kuwait, selling household furniture and kitchen appliances. Everything is less than 2 year old and in excellent condition. Please contact on 66491539. Salwa, block 12, street 6.
(C 5341)
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PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaheel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

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India Q1 economic growth slips to 5.7%

MACRON FACES BIGGEST TEST YET OVER DECISIVE REFORM

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HOUSTON: This aerial photo shows the Flint Hills Resources oil refinery near downtown Houston. — AP

HARVEY KNOCKS OUT MORE US REFINERIES

HURRICANE SENDS PUMP PRICES UP, CAUSES SHIFT IN GLOBAL OIL FLOWS

DALLAS: Hurricane Harvey is sending pump prices higher for US motorists and causing temporary shifts in the flow of oil and gasoline around the world after taking down a huge chunk of US refining capacity.

It will be days or even weeks before the energy sector in the southeast Texas Gulf Coast is back to normal operations as it deals with flooding in the aftermath of Harvey, which has been downgraded to a tropical storm. The region from Corpus Christi, Texas, where Harvey made landfall, to the Louisiana state line accounts for about 3 percent of the US economy and is a crucial export market for oil and chemicals. Wednesday brought news that the nation's biggest refinery, which was already running below half-speed, had begun a complete shutdown. The Motiva Enterprises plant in Port Arthur, Texas, run by a unit of the state-owned oil company of Saudi Arabia, was the latest domino to fall among Gulf Coast refineries.

More than one-fifth of US refining capacity has been shuttered, according to S&P Global Platts. With that, gasoline futures headed higher for a third straight day. They had climbed 10 cents to \$1.88 a gallon Wednesday. Retail gas prices climbed, too, up 2 cents a gallon on Wednesday and 7 cents in the past week, to a national average price of \$2.42 per gallon, according to Gasbuddy.

"In terms of product price increases, it might get worse before it gets better," said Rob Smith, an energy analyst with IHS Markit. It could take two weeks or longer before big refineries in the Houston area can recover from a record-setting deluge and resume normal operations. That assumes they didn't suf-

fer serious damage, which is still unknown.

Harvey isn't the first big storm to hit the refinery-rich Gulf Coast, but the oil industry has undergone big changes since the last major interruption from Hurricane Ike in 2008.

The so-called shale revolution has led to a surge in oil production in the US, increasing the nation's exports of crude oil and gasoline to Mexico and other places in Latin America, and diesel to Europe.

When the US can't produce enough gasoline or diesel to meet export demands, other regions are forced to look for replacement supplies "and the backfill has to come from further away," said Richard Joswick, an analyst with S&P Global Platts. "It has to come from Asia even."

The result will be higher prices, but it should be just a one- or two-week problem, Joswick said. Patrick DeHaan, an analyst for GasBuddy, predicts that US gasoline prices will top out around \$2.50 or \$2.55 a gallon, an increase of up to 20 cents since Harvey hit, with bigger spikes closer to the Gulf.

The recovery from Harvey will mimic the storm's path from west to east. Flint Hill Resources' refinery in Corpus Christi, where Harvey made landfall as a Category 4 hurricane, could begin to restart - a process that takes days - as early as Wednesday. Other refineries in the area are likely to do the same later this week.

"It takes some time to start up a refinery under normal circumstances, and it wouldn't be surprising if they run into hiccups," said Smith, the HIS Markit analyst. "It could be a week if not longer before Corpus Christi is at normal operations."

Exxon, Shell and other companies have reported to Texas regulators that some of their storage tanks and other facilities near Houston were damaged by the torrential rains and flooding. Most of the reports seem to indicate relatively minor damage, but still it could be days before crews can assess matters and make repairs. Even once the refineries are running, pipelines and ports are needed to carry their gasoline, diesel and other

fuels to consumers.

A major pipeline supplying the East Coast with gasoline remains shut down - partly because with refineries closed, there is nothing to ship, but also because of damage in at least three areas. Another pipeline that carries crude from the big Permian Basin field in Texas to Houston-area refineries is also closed. Other sectors are also slowly emerging from Harvey's mess. — AP

HARVEY TO COST TEXAS \$58 BILLION IN LOSSES

PARIS: Economic losses in Texas from Hurricane Harvey, which is still pounding the water-logged US state with rain, will be some \$58 billion (49 billion euros), disaster analysts in Germany said yesterday.

If that estimate holds, it would make Harvey the world's 9th most expensive natural disaster since 1900, according to the Center for Disaster Management and Risk Reduction Technology (CEDIM) in Karlsruhe, Germany. It would also push the yearly economic loss from earthquakes, floods, tsunamis, cyclones and other natural cataclysms past \$100 billion for the 8th year in a row.

"The damage is extensive at around \$58 billion, and is over 90 percent due to flooding," said James Daniell, senior risk engineer at CEDIM, and head of its Forensic

Disaster Analysis Group.

The estimate carries uncertainty range from \$41 billion to \$80 billion. "Depending on the next couple of days, we may see this estimate rise, as it only includes Texas at this point," he told AFP.

The total "flooded exposure"-the value of all the capital stock inundated by water, whether five centimetres or five metres-in the affected area was estimated at \$267 billion. Other calculations of total economic loss have been considerably lower. German insurance giant Hannover Re's initial figure for damages was \$3 billion, while JP Morgan estimated the insurance sector could be out \$10-20 billion. Disaster risk specialists Enki Holdings, based in Savannah, Georgia, put the total tab at above \$30 billion. — AFP

UZBEKISTAN MAY LET CITIZENS BUY HARD CURRENCY OPENLY

ALMATY: Uzbekistan plans to allow its citizens to buy and sell foreign currency at banks and exchange bureaus from early September, two banking sources told Reuters yesterday.

The measure would be a potentially decisive step on the path towards full convertibility of the country's sum currency, helping open up Central Asia's second-biggest economy to badly needed foreign investment. Foreign companies have so far largely stayed out of the resource-rich nation of 32 million because decades-old regulations there force most businesses to sell foreign currency at a knockdown official rate while buying it at a much more costly one. In a nod to a more

reform-minded economic agenda under President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, who took office in December, the former Soviet republic this month abolished a rule obliging exporters to sell a quarter of their hard currency revenue to the state.

It had earlier allowing a limited number of banks and companies to deviate from the official exchange rate in deals. Allowing full convertibility of the currency, aligning the official and market rates and lifting restrictions that force ordinary Uzbeks to buy foreign currency from the black market would be the final steps in the foreign exchange reform.

Authorities have not said when this would happen, but two Uzbek bankers

told Reuters banks were preparing to start retail foreign exchange operations in early September. Both sources were involved in the preparation process.

The two sources said, however, that instead of selling cash foreign currency, Uzbek banks would deposit it into special cards issued to customers. One of the sources said the banks would quote the dollar slightly above the black market rate, currently about 7,700 sums per dollar. The official rate is 4,210.

The second source provided no figures. A central bank spokesman said yesterday a decision on cash convertibility had not yet been made. The central bank this week issued a regulation under which it plans to provide sums in

cash to banks and exchange bureaus so they can buy foreign currency from individuals.

But the document does not mention sales of foreign currency or provide any timeline and exchange rate guidance. With individuals in Uzbekistan, a major exporter of cotton and gold, having been effectively barred from holding cash foreign currency, a black market for it has thrived.

With its economy having remained closed, the mostly Muslim nation has struggled to create jobs for its quickly growing population, and millions of Uzbeks have become migrant laborers, most of them working in Russia. —Reuters

INDIA'S FIRST QUARTER GDP GROWTH SLUMPS TO 5.7%

CONTROVERSIAL NOTE BAN DRAGS FURTHER ON ECONOMY

NEW DELHI: India's growth slumped to 5.7 percent in the first quarter of the financial year, official data showed yesterday, below predictions as a controversial banknote ban dragged further on the economy. The figures released by the Central Statistics Office were lower than the 6.1 percent recorded in the previous quarter, and less than forecast by many analysts in one of the world's fastest growing economies.

The slowdown bodes ill as India—a nation of 1.25 billion—tries to absorb tens of thousands of new jobseekers into the economy every month. The official growth figures “undershot our, and market expectations, by a considerable degree”, Aditi Nayar, principal economist at rating firm ICRA, told AFP.

It also underscores India's lag behind regional rival China, whose economy expanded at 6.9 percent over the same period. “At 5.7 percent, it's a big disappointment,” Madan Sabnavis, chief economist at CARE Ratings, told AFP.

“This is the lowest growth we've seen in the past couple of years and going to even 7.0 percent for this financial year will be a big challenge.” In February, the government had forecast GDP growth of between 6.75 percent and 7.5 percent for 2017/18. But in a survey released August, the government warned of looming forces threatening to drag on growth, including appreciation of the Indian currency and the roll out of a national goods and services tax (GST).

Last year, India's economy clocked 7.1 percent for the first quarter. But since then Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rolled out two large economic reforms—the GST, and the snap withdrawal of most of India's high-value banknotes from circulation. Some economic disruption from the GST was expected this quarter, as businesses prepared for the onset of the new tax regime from July 1. But experts say Modi's sudden decision in November to withdraw all 500 rupee (\$7.50) and 1,000 rupee notes from circulation was still dragging on economic growth.

The shock move rendered 86 percent of India's currency void and caused a severe currency shortage, putting the brakes on consumer spending in a country dependent on cash transactions. Modi defended the so-called demonetization as a necessary strike against corruption, arguing it would boost tax revenues and root out those hoarding cash to avoid paying their dues. But it was blamed for poor growth figures of 6.1 percent in the first three months of this year. —AFP



CHENNAI: This file photo taken on June 1, 2016 shows Indian laborers unloading sacks of onions from a truck at a wholesale market in Chennai. India's growth slumped to 5.7 percent in the first quarter of the financial year, official data showed yesterday below predictions as a controversial banknote ban dragged further on the economy.—AFP

SAAB PICKS ADANI AS PARTNER FOR INDIA FIGHTER JETS DEAL

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's Saab will tie up with India's Adani Group to bid for a contract to make fighter aircraft in India, an aerospace consultant aware of the proposed partnership told Reuters yesterday.

The partnership will compete with US defense giant Lockheed Martin in a two horse-race to equip the Indian military with single-engine jets to be produced locally under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's “Make-in-India” initiative. The Saab-Adani partnership would be aimed at producing planes under India's new “strategic partnership” policy, said Ratan Shrivastava, an independent New-Delhi-based consultant and adviser at India's industry lobby group FICCI.

The partnership will likely be announced today, Shrivastava said. Saab declined to comment. Saab President and Chief Executive Hakan Buskhe will host a media event in New Delhi on Friday, Saab said in a press invitation issued on Wednesday. It did not give details.

There was no immediate comment from Adani, which is a \$12 billion group with businesses ranging from energy and logistics to real estate and defense. Shares in Adani Enterprises Ltd, a group company, rose yesterday after the news of the planned Saab tie-up and were trading about 2.7 percent higher. Saab shares were up 1.8 percent.

Under India's new defense partnership policy, a foreign aircraft maker will collaborate with an Indian firm to develop a world-class indigenous aeronautical base that India has struggled to build for decades.

Lockheed has already picked India's Tata Advanced Systems as its local partner to produce its F-16 fighter planes that will compete with Saab's Gripen aircraft. —Reuters

News

in brief

Carrefour shares plunge 12% on profit warning

PARIS: Shares in Carrefour plunged by more than 12 percent on the Paris stock exchange yesterday after the French supermarket group's first-half results came in lower than expected and it warned that full-year profits would fall by around 12 percent. At around 0725 GMT, Carrefour's shares were showing a loss of 12.3 percent at 17.10 euros, while the overall market was higher. The plunge in Carrefour's share price dragged down the rest of the retail sector, with shares in rival group Casino down by more than 5.0 percent.

Galleries Lafayette, online retailer La Redoute partner

PARIS: French luxury department store Galleries Lafayette and online retailer La Redoute said yesterday they plan to join forces to create a new leading player in the market for fashion and home furnishings. “Galleries Lafayette Group, via its holding company Motier, announces its intention to acquire a 51-percent shareholding in La Redoute and to own 100 percent in the future,” the two groups said in a joint statement. “The combination of the two businesses with their iconic brands would allow the creation of a new leading omni-channel retail group specialised in fashion and home furnishings, with French roots and international outreach,” it said.

Colas buys Miller McAsphalt to boost presence in Canada

PARIS: French road builder Colas, a subsidiary of construction giant Bouygues, said yesterday it plans to boost its presence in Canada by buying Ontario-based firm, Miller McAsphalt, for around Can\$1 billion. Colas said in a statement that its Canadian unit had “signed a share purchase agreement for the acquisition of 100 percent of the equity interest in the Miller and McAsphalt group.” The Miller and McAsphalt group, with a workforce of 3,300 and average annual sales of Can\$1.3 billion (\$1.0 billion, 865 million euros), was “a major player in road construction and in bitumen distribution in Canada, with a particularly strong presence in Ontario,” the statement said.

Macy's and Best Buy expand same day delivery service

NEW YORK: Macy's and Best Buy are expanding their same-day delivery as they aim to become more competitive with online leader Amazon. In separate announcements, Best Buy says it will be expanding to 27 metropolitan markets from 13 starting next week. That number should reach nearly 40 cities by the winter holidays. Macy's Inc. says it will be offering same-day delivery to 15 additional markets for a total of 33 markets. Macy's is working with startup Deliv, backed by United Parcel Service, while Best Buy is working with two partners including its original partner Deliv to handle the deliveries. Macy's fee for the service is \$8, while Best Buy has lowered its fee to \$5.99 per order from \$14.99.

CHINA CONSTRUCTION BANK PROFITS RISE

SHANGHAI: China Construction Bank, one of the country's "big four" financial institutions, reported a moderate first-half profit rise and improving asset quality as a government crackdown on bad debt kicked in. The bank's earnings were posted Wednesday night, hours after China's three other big state-owned lenders announced similar results for January-June, which they credited to the de-leveraging campaign and stabilizing economic fundamentals.

China Construction Bank (CCB) earned a profit of 138.34 billion yuan (\$21.0 billion) in the first half, up 3.7 percent year-on-year, it said in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange, where it is listed. That marks a slight improvement on the 1.1 percent increase reported in the first half of 2016. CCB added that its non-performing loans (NPL) ratio was 1.51 percent in the period, down from 1.52 percent in the second half of 2016, and 1.58 percent in the six months before that.

China's banks, which have generally reported flat results in recent years, have benefited this year from faster-than-expected 6.9 percent economic growth in the first half. They have said bottom lines were further bolstered by the government campaign launched earlier this year to cut mounting debt and dispose of bad loans. CCB said it reviewed and tightened up its lending policies and "continuously enhanced its credit structure" during the period.

"In the first half of the year, the banking industry was overall stable with more reasonable growth rate of assets, and the risks were within control," CCB said. While noting a "complex and grim business environment" worldwide, the bank expressed optimism for the future, saying the Chinese and global economies were expected to strengthen. — AFP

BUMPY BREXIT RISK DOES NOT JUSTIFY RECORD LOW RATES: BOE

CARDIFF: The Bank of England should not keep interest rates at their record low as an insurance policy against the risk of a "bumpy Brexit" and it needs to start raising borrowing costs now, BoE policymaker Michael Saunders said.

Saunders, one of two BoE rate-setters who have voted recently for a rise in bank rate, said in speech yesterday that the central bank risked being rushed into sharper rate hikes in future, potentially hurting growth, if it did not start to ease the economy off its near-zero rates now.

"We do not need to be putting the brakes on so much that the economy weakens sharply," he told an audience in Cardiff. "But, our foot no longer needs to be quite so firmly on the accelerator in my view." Britain's economy has shown one of the weakest growth rates in the Group of Seven nations so far this year as the fall in the value of the pound pinched the spending power of consumers.

But at the same time the Brexit hit to sterling has pushed up inflation above the BoE's 2 percent target, leading to the split among the central bank's rate-setters.

Earlier this month, they voted 6-2 to keep rates at 0.25 percent and the BoE warned that Brexit was weighing on the economy. But Saunders, in his speech, said there should be no automatic implications for rates if Brexit does not go smoothly, something which could push down the value of the pound further.

That could add to inflation which Saunders said was already likely to hit roughly 3 percent soon.

He repeated Governor Mark Carney's comments last year that the Bank was "not indifferent" to the level of the pound, but he said there was no particular level that worries the Bank.

Inflationary pressures

Saunders also said the economy was likely to "not be too bad" in the coming quarters, saying there had been a marked improvement in Britain's export performance since the pound's sharp fall last year.

There was little or no slack left in Britain's economy and domestically generated inflation pressure - largely through higher wages - was likely to rise, Saunders said. The pound has fallen further against a range of currencies over the last month, with the fall against the euro particularly acute. Saunders said this in part reflected perceptions of improved economic growth in other European economies. — Reuters

EUROZONE INFLATION RISES, JOBLESS RATE AT 8-YR LOW

GERMAN UNEMPLOYMENT RATE HOLDS RECORD LOW

BRUSSELS: Eurozone inflation rose closer to the European Central Bank's 2.0 percent target in August confirming a tentative economic recovery in Europe, official EU figures showed yesterday.

The fresh data will reinforce hopes that, despite uncertainty and the unknowns of Brexit, the eurozone is emerging from the worst of the financial crisis that began in 2008. Consumer prices in the 19-nation single currency area rose 1.5 percent, bolstering speculation that the ECB will roll back its crisis-fighting easy money policies as the euro area recovery picks up speed.

"In all, the data suggests that the ECB's strong policy support is becoming less necessary," said Capital Economics analyst Jennifer McKeown. The ECB has set interest rates at record lows, offered cheap loans to banks and embarked on a 2.3-trillion-euro bond buying stimulus scheme in a bid to boost growth and push inflation upwards.

It is currently scheduled to buy 60 billion euros in bonds a month until the end of this year, and analysts expect the bank to begin gradually winding down the scheme, known as quantitative easing (QE), next year. Closely watched core inflation, which strips out volatile energy prices, was flat at 1.2 percent, which is higher than the far lower rates seen for the past few years.

The data will "support the case for the ECB to taper its asset purchases next year, but it probably won't announce its plan until next month," analyst McKeown said. The jobless rate in the 19-nation single currency area meanwhile remained stable at 9.1 percent, the lowest level since February 2009, the Eurostat statistics agency said. Joblessness edged up in France and Italy last month, but fell in Germany, the eurozone's economic powerhouse.

The highest unemployment rates were in struggling

Greece, at 21.7 percent, and Spain at 17.1 percent, very high but well off much worse figures seen in past years.

Unemployment across the 28-nation EU was meanwhile stable at 7.7 percent in June, the lowest rate for the bloc since December 2008.

Unemployment in Germany held at record lows in August, official data showed yesterday, as a general election looms in September where Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives are widely expected to win. Joblessness in Europe's largest economy stood at 5.7 percent this month, in seasonally-adjusted figures from the Federal Labor Agency (BA).

"Strong growth in employment continues and companies' demand for new workers remains high," BA chief Detlef Scheele said.

In absolute terms, the number of people unemployed fell by 5,000 to 2.532 million in August in seasonally-adjusted terms. Unadjusted figures-which are less representative of underlying trends-showed a slight rise in unemployment this month, however, adding 0.1 percentage point month-on-month to 5.7 percent.

In concrete terms, the unadjusted jobless total increased by 27,000 to 2.545 million. The jobless count typically increases over the summer as students graduate from school, university or vocational training and register as jobseekers. Most economists expect a run of solid economic growth in Germany to continue towards the end of the year, keeping unemployment in check.

During her reelection bid, Merkel has bet on the good times continuing, vowing to achieve full employment-or an unemployment rate of around 3.0 percent-by 2025. Germans vote on September 24, with the chancellor's centre-right Christian Democratic Union enjoying a comfortable lead in opinion polls. — AFP

CHINA MANUFACTURING GROWTH PICKS UP, SERVICE INDUSTRY SLIPS

HONG KONG: Chinese manufacturing activity picked up pace in August, according to an official survey indicating a crucial component of the world's second-biggest economy is holding firm.

The data released yesterday showed the monthly factory purchasing managers' index rose to 51.7 from 51.4 in July. The index is based on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 indicate expansion. It's the 13th straight month the PMI has posted an expansion, according to the data compiled by the Federation of Logistics & Purchasing released through China's official statistics website.

Output rose and overall new orders expanded but export orders grew at a slower pace, according to the survey's sub-indexes, indicating that domestic demand was strengthening at the expense of global demand.

A separate index measuring non-manufacturing activity fell for a second month, slipping to 53.4 from 54.5 previously, reflecting slowing momentum in China's services sector.

Economists will also look for the release today of the private Caixin/Markit manufacturing PMI to get a more comprehensive picture of the economy. The federation's survey is focused more on large, state-owned companies while the Caixin index is weighted more to smaller, private enterprises, and the two don't always move in the same direction.



QINGDAO: A worker walks by engine parts at a production base of China Shipbuilding Industry Corporation (CSIC) Diesel Engine Co Ltd in Qingdao in east China's Shandong province. — AFP

The latest numbers follow trade data released earlier in August showing that growth in both exports and imports slowed from July, in a discouraging sign for demand.

Forecasters expect China's economic growth to slower this year as bank lending controls aimed at slowing rising debt levels start to take hold. — AP



SPRINGFIELD: Hundreds of supporters of President Donald Trump lined Kearney Street in Springfield, Mo., trying to get a glimpse of President Trump's motorcade before he spoke at the Loren Cook Company on Wednesday. — AP

TRUMP PUSHES TAX OVERHAUL TO 'BRING BACK MAIN STREET'

PLAN TO EASE CRUSHING TAX BURDEN ON MIDDLECLASS AMERICANS

SPRINGFIELD, Mo: President Donald Trump launched his fall push to overhaul the nation's tax system by pledging Wednesday that the details-to-come plan would "bring back Main Street" by reducing the crushing tax burden on middle-class Americans, making a populist appeal for a proposal expected to heavily benefit corporate America.

Trump said his vision for re-writing the tax system, a key campaign pledge, would unlock stronger economic growth and benefit companies and workers alike. He promised it would be "pro-growth, pro-jobs, pro-worker and pro-American."

True to form for the president, Trump dangled the prospect of the "biggest ever" tax cut and warned that without it, "jobs in our country cannot take off the way they should. And it could be much worse than that." Trump, who rarely travels to promote his policy agenda, chose to debut his tax overhaul pitch before employees at a manufacturing plant in Springfield, Missouri, a community known as the birthplace of Route 66, one of the nation's original highways, and one known as America's Main Street.

"This is where America's Main Street will begin its big, beautiful comeback," the president declared. After eight months without any major legislative victories and after a significant defeat on health care, Trump and Republican congressional leaders face mounting pressure to notch some significant achievements before next year's midterm elections. But the tax overhaul effort already is facing political headwinds.

The White House and Republican lawmakers have not finalized details of the plan, and the push comes as Congress returns to face an intense September workload filled with must-do items such

as raising the debt limit, funding the government and providing assistance for the Harvey recovery effort.

While the White House has been designing a tax plan aimed at appealing to Republicans, Trump sought to cast the effort in bipartisan terms. He called on members of both parties to work with him on a "once-in-a-generation opportunity to deliver real tax reform for everyday hard-working Americans."

Comeback?

"I am fully committed to working with Congress to get this job done - and I don't want to be disappointed by Congress, do you understand?" Trump said. "Do you understand? Congress. I think Congress is going to make a comeback."

The president used the official White House event to inject an overtly political message aimed at Missouri Democratic Sen. Claire McCaskill, a top Republican target in next year's midterm elections.

"We must lower our taxes, and your senator, Claire McCaskill, she must do this for you. And if she doesn't do it for you, you have got to vote her out of office," Trump said, drawing out each of the last five words for emphasis.

Even before Trump took the stage, Democrats eagerly laid down their own markers for what the tax plan should look like. Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer outlined a series of conditions, telling reporters the tax cuts should not go to the wealthiest 1 percent of Americans. He added that the plan should not increase the budget deficit and should be written by both parties - not just Republicans like the GOP's failed health care effort. "If the president wants to use populism to sell his tax plan, he ought to consider actually putting his

money where his mouth is" and cut taxes for the middle class, not the richest Americans, Schumer said.

The Trump administration released a one-page set of goals in April for its tax overhaul, followed by a joint statement in July with congressional leaders. In an interview with the Financial Times last week, Gary Cohn, a top Trump economic adviser, said the White House and Republican leaders had agreed on a "good skeleton" for the plan, and said the tax-writing committee in the House would be drafting legislation while the White House tries to sell it.

Cohn, who recently publicly denounced the president's response to the racial violence in Charlottesville, Virginia, traveled to Missouri with the president and was standing to the side of the stage. But he was not among a number of administration officials whom Trump publicly thanked in his opening remarks.

The White House played down the omission, saying White House staff members typically aren't recognized in prepared remarks, only Cabinet members. Trump said he would like to see the top corporate tax rate drop from 35 percent to 15 percent. But it's not clear that the top rate will go that low in the plan or what kind of tax break a typical taxpayer would see.

With his promises to the middle class, Trump is essentially betting that the benefits of tax cuts for businesses will flow directly to workers, rather than ending up in the pockets of top executives and wealthy investors. His administration has asserted that high corporate tax rates primarily hurt workers, since companies can stash their money overseas in countries with lower tax rates. — AP

US CONSUMER SPENDING UP IN JULY; JOBLESS RATE LOW

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending increased in July at the fastest pace in three months, while incomes grew by the largest amount since February, both encouraging signs for future economic growth. Consumer spending rose 0.3 percent in July, the best showing since April, the Commerce Department reported yesterday. It followed 0.2 percent advances in both May and June. Incomes in June grew 0.4 percent, the best showing since February. The strength came from a strong 0.5 percent rise in wages and salaries, reflecting the healthy 209,000 gain in employment in July.

The report suggests that Americans are feeling confident enough to boost their spending, which accounts for 70 percent of the country's economic activity. A key inflation gauge favored by the Federal Reserve posted a tiny 0.1 percent increase in July. Over the past 12 months, it is up just 1.4 percent, still well below the Fed's 2 percent target.

Inflation has been running below the Fed's target for five years and has fallen farther from the 2 percent mark since early this year. Fed Chair Janet Yellen has blamed the slowdown on temporary factors, but minutes of the Fed's July meeting showed a growing concern that the slowdown in price increases might reflect developments that are more long-lasting. The Fed raised a key interest rate in March and June of this year and signaled that it expected to hike rates one more time in 2017. The Fed next meets in September. But private economists believe the central bank will hold off on any further hikes until they see signs that inflation has resumed rising.

Thursday's spending report showed a strong 0.6 percent increase in purchases of durable goods such as autos and a solid 0.5 percent rise in demand for non-durable goods such as food and clothing. Spending on services such as utilities and doctor's visits rose 0.2 percent.

The government reported Wednesday that the overall economy, as measured by the gross domestic product, grew at a solid 3 percent rate in the April-June quarter, the best quarterly growth rate in two years. The government had initially reported GDP growth at a slower 2.6 rate in the second quarter but that figure was revised higher in large part because of a stronger gain in consumer spending.

The report on incomes and spending showed that the saving rate in July slipped to 3.5 percent of after-tax income, the lowest level since it stood at 3.2 percent last December.

Jobless claims

More Americans applied for unemployment benefits last week, but the numbers remained low and consistent with a healthy job market.

THE NUMBERS: The Labor Department said yesterday that 236,000 people filed claims for jobless aid, up from 235,000 a week earlier. The less volatile four-week average slipped by 1,250 to 236,750, the lowest since May. The number of Americans collecting unemployment checks fell slightly to 1.94 million, down 9.5 percent from a year ago.

THE TAKEAWAY: Unemployment claims are a proxy for layoffs. They have come in below 300,000 for 130 straight weeks, the longest such stretch since 1970 when the population was much smaller. The low level suggests that companies are confident enough in the economy to be hanging onto staff.

KEY DRIVERS: The US economy looks solid. The unemployment rate is at a 16-year low, and employers last month added a robust 209,000 jobs. The August jobs report comes out Friday. Economists expect that the economy generated 180,000 new jobs and that unemployment stayed at 4.3 percent. — AP



SAN JOSE: A flyer advertises job openings with Big 5 Sporting Goods during a job fair in San Jose, California yesterday, the Labor Department reports on the number of people who applied for unemployment benefits a week earlier. — AP



SAN JUAN: Demonstrators march to protest austerity measures in San Juan, Puerto Rico on Wednesday. —AP

HUNDREDS OF PUERTO RICANS DECRY AUSTERITY MEASURES

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico: Hundreds of Puerto Ricans took to the streets of the island's capital on Wednesday to protest austerity measures as anger builds over an unrelenting economic crisis that has hit the working class especially hard. Protesters clutched posters decrying austerity measures including new taxes, increases in utility bills and looming furloughs and cuts to a public pension system facing nearly \$50 billion in liabilities.

"They're taking advantage of us poor workers. We did not steal. We are not corrupt," read one poster held up by 70-year-old Eva Feliciano, a retired government worker who said she sometimes cannot afford to buy the groceries she and her husband need. Protesters shielded themselves from a blazing sun as meteorologists warned of a heat index that could reach 110 degrees. The crowd converged at the offices of a federal control board created by US Congress last year to oversee Puerto Rico's finances. The board earlier this week sued Gov. Ricardo Rossello for refusing to implement measures including a 10 percent cut to a public pension system that officials say is running out of money and furloughs that are supposed to go into effect today.

Puerto Ricans have joined the governor in rejecting the board's demands. "The measures that are being approved affect everyone in Puerto Rico," said Luis Pedraza, leader of a union that represents some 20,000 workers in the public and private sector. He warned that if people don't protest, they will be hit with additional measures to generate more money for bondholders demanding payment amid multi-million-dollar defaults as Puerto Rico tries to restructure a portion of its \$74 billion public debt.

Joining the protest were dozens of workers from the island's public power company who launched a 24-hour strike that forced the agency to temporarily close its offices. Among them was 39-year-old Christian Garcia, who said his family has cut back on TV, internet and grocery shopping amid the crisis.

Nearby, several retired police officers held up posters demanding the government pay their pensions in full. Currently, police officers and teachers in Puerto Rico do not receive Social Security and depend solely on the crumbling public pension system. Diego Figueroa, who retired in 2003 after working 35 years at the island's police department, defended the creation of the federal control board and said it is sorely needed.

"It is lifting the veil on millions of acts of corruption committed against the people of Puerto Rico," he said, referring in part to previous administrations that borrowed millions of dollars to cover ballooning deficits. "We demand respect for a people that is suffering."

The island of 3.4 million people is struggling with a 10 percent unemployment rate and a decade-long recession that has sparked an exodus of nearly 450,000 people to the US mainland. — AP

MACRON FACES BIGGEST TEST YET OVER DECISIVE REFORM

REFORM PLAN EXPECTED TO FOSTER GROWTH, CUT JOBLESSNESS

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron faces his biggest test yet with yesterday's release of a divisive pro-business labor reform that he hopes will foster stronger growth and reduce the country's stubbornly high unemployment rate by revolutionizing the way the French work.

But the high-stakes move comes just as his popularity is sinking, and unions and political opponents have already called for street protests and strikes in what could be an unusually hot autumn for the recently elected president. His plans to reform the labor market to make it more flexible were at the heart of Macron's election campaign. However, opponents fear it will weaken hard-won worker protections that have become globally synonymous with the much-envied French lifestyle.

Foreign investors and France's European neighbors are watching Macron's plan closely - almost as closely as the French workers it will directly affect. France is the No. 2 economy in the eurozone, but its chronic 10-percent unemployment has long weighed on the region's growth.

The labor overhaul is the central pillar in Macron's promises to create jobs and make his country more globally competitive after repeated failed efforts at reform. Macron said that changing labor rules was but one "instrument" to attain something larger, "the freeing up of energies." "And through this freeing up, we do away with our sham of recent years: that of a country tough on the weak but that vaunts equality and fraternity, of a country cosseted by rules ... which considers itself a country of liberty," the president said in a lengthy interview with the newsmagazine *Le Point*, published on Thursday. "We must see things as they are: We are the only major economy of the European Union which

hasn't vanquished mass unemployment in more than three decades," Macron said. The details of the plan, to be disclosed later in a list of decrees, will determine how far the reform will change the country's stringent labor rules. One measure is expected to cap the financial penalty for companies sued for firing employees. Other changes aim at simplifying negotiations process between employers and employees.

A big question is how much the reform will reduce the power of national collective bargaining, which has long dominated French labor relations - the reason French unions are so influential despite relatively low union membership. The plan is expected to give businesses more flexibility to define internal working rules instead of being bound by sector-wide rules.

Left-wing opponents fear it will hand too much power to profit-focused bosses, while some conservatives fear it

won't go far enough. Government spokesman Christophe Castaner said Wednesday more than 100 meetings with unions and employers organizations were held to prepare the reform.

He acknowledged the government expects some measures to be contested but said the reform aims at being "ambitious" - not reaching a consensus.

Pierre Gattaz, president of France's main employers' organization, Medef, said on BFM television this week: "We have been awaiting this plan for decades." The reform's success depends heavily on how many unions oppose it. Philippe Martinez, leader of the hard-left CGT, one of France's major unions, has called for protests and strikes Sept. 12, but some others are waiting to see the detail in the decrees. "They want to make us believe that ... it's the only solution to reduce unemployment, but that's a lie of the government," Martinez told RTL radio this week. —AP



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron (center) waits for leaders at the Elysee Palace in Paris. —AP

FITCH HANDS VENEZUELA RATING A DOWNGRADE

NEW YORK: Ratings agency Fitch on Wednesday lowered Venezuela's rating to "CC," amid concerns its default risk has increased after new US financial sanctions. US President Donald Trump on Friday imposed new sanctions on Venezuela that seek to restrict access to foreign capital. Caracas desperately needs capital as its inflow of cash has been hit by low oil prices.

Trump banned US trade in new bonds issued by the government or its cash-cow oil company PDVSA. That could choke off access to New York debt markets and substantially raise the likelihood of Venezuela being forced into default. Fitch said default is likelier given the new sanctions. Until now its rating for Venezuelan debt was "CCC." Maduro's government - which has faced months of deadly mass protests - has been accused of hijacking state institutions and moving ever deeper into autocratic rule. According to Fitch, Caracas reserves have decreased by \$1.2 billion since the beginning of the year and are currently at \$9.8 billion.

In July, SP Global Ratings warned of default risk in Venezuela, due to deteriorating economic conditions. In October and November, Venezuela and PDVSA have to pay about \$3.8 billion in debt maturities. Separately in Washington Wednesday, the US administration condemned Venezuela's plans to have its all-powerful new Constituent Assembly try unidentified opposition representatives for alleged treason for supporting the new US sanctions. —AFP

BERTELSMANN BOOKS STRONG H1, RAISES PENGUIN STAKE

FRANKFURT: German media and publishing group Bertelsmann confirmed its full-year objectives yesterday, reporting a strong first half crowned with a deal to increase its stake in publisher Penguin.

Bertelsmann said in a statement that its net profit reached 502 million euros (\$597 million) between January and June, a 4.1-percent increase on the same period in 2016.

Operating, or underlying profit stood at 1.1 billion euros, slightly lower than last year, while revenues grew 2.1 percent to 8.1 billion euros. Chief executive Thomas Rabe said the group had reached a deal with Britain's Pearson to expand its stake in publisher Penguin Random House, set for completion in the fourth quarter. "Bertelsmann will possess a strategic three-quarters majority in the world's largest trade publishing group - the best possible conditions for successfully further developing this core business," Rabe said.

Elsewhere within the group, Bertelsmann said its subsidiary RTL had increased its share of German television audiences and its digital revenues had surged over the first half.

It also hailed the global success of subsidiary Fremantle Media's TV series, *American Gods*.

For the full year, the group was "confident about operating performance", expecting "higher revenues, continued high operating profitability, and group profit of over a billion euros," chief financial officer Bernd Hirsch said. —AFP

INDIANS SWEEP YANKEES, WHO



PHILADELPHIA: Atlanta Braves' Nick Markakis (left) leaps away from a tag attempt by Philadelphia Phillies catcher Jorge Alfaro and scores during the third inning of the first baseball game of a doubleheader on Wednesday. —AP

NEW YORK: Trevor Bauer and Ryan Merritt shut down the Yankees' offense, leading the Cleveland Indians to a doubleheader sweep that damaged New York's chances to win the AL East. Bauer (14-8) won his career-best seventh straight decision, Jose Ramirez tied his big league high with four hits and the Indians took advantage of Gary Sanchez's passed ball in a two-run first inning that stood up for a 2-1 win in Wednesday's opener. Yandy Diaz hit a two-run single in a four-run first inning against rookie Jordan Montgomery (7-7) in the second game, and Edwin Encarnacion, Yan Gomes and Francisco Lindor added home runs in a 9-4 blowout that completed a three-game series sweep and extended the Indians' winning streak to seven games. Defending AL champion Cleveland has won 16 of 20, opening a 7 1/2-game lead over second-place Minnesota in the AL Central and moving a season-high 20 games over .500 at 76-56. Cody Allen struck out three of four batters for his 22nd save in 25 chances. Jaime Garcia (1-2) gave up two runs, six hits and three walks in five-plus innings. Merritt (2-0) began 16 of 22 batters with strikes, allowing one run and five hits in 5 1/3 innings.

ANGELS 10, ATHLETICS 8

Mike Trout went 4 for 4 with a homer

and scored four times in his return to the lineup, Albert Pujols connected twice and Cliff Pennington hit a go-ahead grand slam in the seventh inning to rally Los Angeles past Oakland. Pujols drove in four runs and scored three. His two homers moved him into a tie with Jim Thome for seventh place on the career list at 612. Trout had a triple and two singles for the Angels, who erased a five-run deficit and won their third straight. They remained a game behind Minnesota for the second AL wild card.

Trout snapped an 0-for-17 slump that marked the second-longest hitless skid of his career. He missed the previous two games as a precaution with a stiff neck after crashing into the outfield wall Sunday trying to make a catch. Matt Olson and Bruce Maxwell homered as the Athletics put up a season-high eight runs in the fourth to build an 8-3 lead. But the Angels scored two in the fifth and five in the seventh, capped by Pennington's first career slam. Chris Hatcher (0-2) walked Luis Valbuena to load the bases with two outs before Pennington launched his third home run of the season. Cam Bedrosian (4-3) worked a scoreless inning and Blake Parker got four outs for his fourth save.

DIAMONDBACKS 6, DODGERS 4

Paul Goldschmidt homered for the third straight game and Robbie Ray struck out 10 in 6 2/3 innings as Arizona handed Los Angeles its first four-game losing streak of the season. Adam Rosales and Chris Herrmann also went deep for the Diamondbacks, who have won six straight and eight of nine to pull three games ahead of Colorado for the top NL wild card. They'll send Zack Greinke to the mound Thursday looking to become the first team to sweep a series from the Dodgers this year.

Ray allowed four hits and walked two. The left-hander topped 10 strikeouts for the seventh time this season. Fernando Rodney pitched a perfect ninth for his second save in two nights and 34th in 39 tries. Hyun-Jin Ryu (5-7) lasted just four innings, giving up six runs and eight hits in his first loss since June 5. He had gone 2-0 in six starts since returning from the disabled list. The Dodgers trailed 6-0 but got a solo homer from Curtis Granderson in the seventh and scored three in the eighth, two on Yasiel Puig's single. Los Angeles had been the only team not to lose four straight this season. The Dodgers have dropped consecutive series for the first time since April.

ORIOLES 8, MARINERS 7

Welington Castillo went 4 for 4 with a homer and three RBIs and Jonathan Schoop singled in the go-ahead run in the eighth inning as Baltimore beat Seattle for its season-high seventh straight victory. Schoop, Mancini and Craig Gentry also homered for the Orioles, who completed their first three-game sweep of Seattle since 2012. In this one, Baltimore fell behind 6-2 in the third inning before coming back. Mitch Haniger homered and hit two doubles for Seattle, which completed an arduous 12-game East Coast trip with five straight defeats. After winning two of three in Tampa Bay and Atlanta, the Mariners went 1-2 at Yankee Stadium and came up empty against the sizzling Orioles.

After Baltimore went up 7-6 in the sixth on a bases loaded sacrifice fly by Manny Machado, Seattle pulled even in the eighth when Haniger connected off Brad Brach (4-4). In the bottom half, Castillo singled off Christian Bergman (4-5) and went to second base on a sacrifice bunt before being replaced by pinch-runner Caleb Joseph. Tim Beckham then hit a liner to short, and Joseph was called out on a relay to second. But a replay overturned the call, and Schoop followed an intentional walk to Machado with a single to center off Marc Rzepczynski. Zach Britton pitched the ninth for his 13th save.

STAGGER INTO RED SOX SERIES

RANGERS 8, ASTROS 1

Andrew Cashner pitched eight strong innings, Mike Napoli hit a three-run homer and Texas beat Houston in a game relocated to Florida because of Hurricane Harvey. A crowd of 6,123 - up from 3,485 the previous night for the opener of a three-game series at Tropicana Field - watched Cashner (8-9) limit the AL West leaders to three hits, one after the second inning. Napoli's homer off Dallas Keuchel (11-3) capped a six-run fourth inning for the Rangers, who've won two straight following a three-game skid. Houston's third loss in four games was overshadowed by the announcement earlier Wednesday that the Astros will return to home after Thursday's finale to face the New York Mets this weekend. After an unscheduled day off, the Astros will play a doubleheader Saturday and afternoon game Sunday against the Mets.

NATIONALS 4, MARLINS 0

Stephen Strasburg tossed a complete game six-hitter and also homered, Wilmer Difo added a home run and Washington beat Miami to complete a three-game sweep. Washington, which has won four in a row, extended its lead in the NL East to 15 games over the Marlins. Miami, which had won 13 of 16 prior to arriving in Washington, had not dropped three in a row since July 14-16. The Marlins had no answer for Strasburg (11-4), who struck out eight. Strasburg threw 110 pitches. It was Strasburg's second complete game in 179 starts and his first since Aug. 11, 2013, against Philadelphia.

Strasburg is 1-1 with a 0.86 ERA in three starts since returning from a disabled list stint for right elbow nerve impingement. Miami left-hander Adam Conley (6-6) made it through the first four innings unscathed before Strasburg launched the first pitch of the fifth to right-center for his second home run this season and third of his career.

RED SOX 7, BLUE JAYS 1

Mitch Moreland had a pinch-hit homer and drove in four runs, Hanley Ramirez added a solo blast and Boston beat Toronto to complete a three-game sweep. Rick Porcello (9-15) allowed one run in 6 2/3 innings as the AL East-leading Red Sox moved 5 1/2 games ahead of the second-place New York Yankees, who were swept in a doubleheader by Cleveland. New York and Boston begin a four-game series at Yankee Stadium on Thursday. Ramirez connected for the second straight game as the Red Sox improved to 8-1 in Toronto this season. Boston is 10-3 overall against the Blue Jays with six meetings remaining at Fenway Park in September. Pinch-hitting for Chris Young against right-hander Tom Koehler (1-7), Moreland hit a second deck drive in the seventh, his 18th. It was the third pinch-hit homer of Moreland's career.

BREWERS 6, CARDINALS 5

Domingo Santana and Jonathan Villar homered in the sixth inning, and center fielder Keon Broxton made a leaping catch over the wall for the final out. Corey Knebel pitched the ninth for his 30th save. Chase Anderson (8-3) gave up two hits - both homers - in six innings, three earned runs, struck out six and walked two to improve to 4-0 in nine starts at Miller Park this season. Santana hit his 22nd homer of the season and Villar's was his 10th, giving Milwaukee a franchise-record nine players with at least 10 homers in a season. Carlos Martinez (10-10) allowed 10 hits, six runs - three earned - and struck out seven in 5 2/3 innings.



WASHINGTON: Washington Nationals' Jayson Werth breaks his bat as he grounds out in the fourth inning of a baseball game against the Miami Marlins at Nationals Park on Wednesday. —AP

CUBS 17, PIRATES 3

Kyle Schwarber hit two home runs, Ian Happ and Anthony Rizzo also went deep and Chicago pounded Pittsburgh. Chicago tied a season high for runs set against Philadelphia on Saturday and banged out 20 hits to match its highest total since May 12, 2014, at St. Louis. The Cubs (72-60) outscored the Pirates 27-5 in a three-game sweep and moved 12 games above .500 for the first time this year. They also remained 3 1/2 games ahead of Milwaukee for the NL Central lead. Javier Baez became the first Cubs player in seven years to steal home. Jose Quintana (5-3) held Pittsburgh to three runs in six innings. He retired 14 in a row after giving up two runs in the first and also had an RBI single. Ivan Nova (11-12) lasted just three innings in his shortest outing of the year.

TWINS 11, WHITE SOX 1

Jose Berrios pitched seven scoreless innings, Brian Dozier had four hits and Eddie Rosario homered twice as Minnesota defeated Chicago. Berrios (12-6) tied a career high with 11 strikeouts, including seven of the last nine batters he faced. He walked one and gave up just four hits to win his seventh straight start at Target Field. The Twins, with a slim lead for the second AL wild card, ran their August record to 19-10 - the most wins in the majors this month. Mitch Garver and Ehire Adrianza each had three hits for the Twins. Adrianza tripled twice and drove in four runs, while Garver scored three runs and was a home run short of the cycle. Derek Holland (7-14) gave up five runs in five innings. In six career starts at Target Field, he's 0-5 with a 7.98 ERA.

METS 2, REDS 0

Rafael Montero took a one-hitter into the ninth inning, and New York held on for a victory that extended its dominance over Cincinnati. Montero (3-9) allowed only Joey Votto's single through the first eight innings.

The Reds loaded the bases with one out in the ninth on two hits and an intentional walk to Votto. A J. Ramos fanned Adam Duvall and Scooter Gennett for his 26th save in 28 chances. Jose Reyes, Wilmer Flores and Kevin Plawecki doubled in the first inning for a 2-0 lead against Homer Bailey (4-7), setting up the Mets' 12th victory in their last 15 games at Great American Ball Park. The Mets had won 14 straight against the Reds overall since 2014, a streak snapped by Cincinnati's 14-4 win Tuesday night.

TIGERS 6, ROCKIES 2

Justin Verlander struck out nine over six commanding innings and aided his own cause by driving in his first career run. Verlander (10-8) allowed one run and three hits. His only mistake was a curveball that Charlie Blackmon hit for a solo homer in the sixth. Verlander ignited the offense with an RBI single in the second. Nicholas Castellanos added a solo homer and James McCann sealed the game with a three-run shot in the fifth to help Tigers take two of three from Colorado. The Rockies finished August with a 12-15 record - their first losing month of the season. They saw their lead for the second NL wild card shrink to three games over Milwaukee. Chad Bettis (0-2) struggled with his control in his fourth start since returning from treatment for testicular cancer. He allowed five runs in five innings.

RAYS 5, ROYALS 3

Logan Morrison, Steven Souza Jr. and Adeiny Hechavarria homered to help Tampa Bay beat Kansas City for its latest series victory. The Rays took two of three from the slumping Royals and have won three consecutive series. The Royals lost 18 of 28 games in August, including six of seven to end the month. Morrison, born in Kansas City, has four homers, eight RBIs and six runs in the first six games of Tampa Bay's road trip. He hit his 33rd homer in the fifth against Jason

Vargas (14-9). Souza hit his 29th earlier in the inning, snapping a 3-all tie. Vargas, an All-Star this season, is 2-6 with a 7.20 ERA over his past 10 starts. Jake Odorizzi (7-7) allowed three runs and four hits over five-plus innings. Alex Colome earned his major league-leading 40th save in 45 chances. Whit Merrifield hit a three-run homer for the Royals.

PADRES 5, GIANTS 0

Travis Wood homered and pitched into the fifth inning, Jose Pirela also went deep and San Diego blanked San Francisco. Wood hit a solo shot in the third and Pirela added one of his own in the sixth as the Padres defeated the Giants for the ninth time in 12 games. After Pirela's homer, reliever Kyle Crick's wild pitch scored Wil Myers, putting the Padres up 3-0. Austin Hedges' RBI single made it 4-0. Wood's pitch count reached 97 through 4 1/3 innings and he was pulled. Craig Stammen (2-2), the first of four San Diego relievers, worked 1 2/3 clean innings for the win. Brad Hand got four outs for his 14th save as the bullpen retired 14 of 16 batters. Giants lefty Ty Blach (8-11) went 5 2/3 innings, allowing two runs and five hits.

BRAVES 9, PHILLIES 1, First game BRAVES 5, PHILLIES 2, Second game

David Freitas lined a go-ahead RBI double for his first career hit, Ender Inciarte had three hits and Atlanta beat Philadelphia to complete a doubleheader sweep. Julio Teheran (9-11) allowed one run and five hits, striking out eight in 6 1/3 innings. Inciarte was 3 for 5 with one RBI after going 5 for 5 with four RBIs to lead the Braves to a 9-1 victory in the opener. Philadelphia's Game 2 starter, Mark Leiter Jr. (2-4), allowed three runs and nine hits in 6 2/3 innings. Braves starter R.A. Dickey (9-8) struck out nine over eight innings in Game 1. Freddie Freeman hit a two-run homer off Jerad Eickhoff (4-8) in the first. —AP

MORE DRAMA IN BOSTON, MORE PRESSURE IN OHIO

NORTON, Massachusetts: Adam Scott was a surprise arrival to the Dell Technologies Championship for the second event in the FedEx Cup playoffs. He was planning to skip the opening two playoff events, and thus end his season, because his wife was expecting their second child in Australia. Their son was born a little earlier than expected, and Scott was on his way to the scene of his first PGA Tour victory. So much has changed since he won the inaugural event at the TPC Boston as a sponsor's exemption in 2003.

It started as the Deutsche Bank Championship and gave all proceeds to the Tiger Woods Foundation. It became a FedEx Cup playoff event in 2007. It received a new title sponsor this year. And it has been five years since Woods has played. He finished third and surpassed \$100 million in career earnings. What hasn't changed is that the tournament still starts Friday and ends on Labor Day, and it still delivers big moments.

This is where Vijay Singh outlasted Woods and Scott in the final group to reach No. 1 in the world for the first time in 2004. It produced a pair of memo-

orable 62s in the final round - Charley Hoffman in 2010 when he won, Jordan Spieth in 2013 that earned him a pick in the Presidents Cup at age 20. Rory McIlroy is the defending champion and twice a winner on the TPC Boston in the last five years. The PGA Tour heads west to the Cambia Portland Classic, while a number of PGA Tour players who were not in the FedEx Cup playoffs have gone to Ohio to try to save their jobs in the start of the Web.com Tour Finals.

Dell Technologies Championship

The first FedEx Cup playoff event either raised the bar or whet the appetite for the rest of the PGA Tour's postseason. Jordan Spieth did what he always seems to do by holing an 18-foot par putt on the 17th hole. And then Dustin Johnson did what Spieth always seems to do by making an 18-foot par putt on the 18th hole. And then Johnson did what Spieth can't - blast a 341-yard drive that set up a wedge to 4 feet for birdie to win in a playoff.

It was a wonderful duel between two of the biggest stars in golf. Next up is the Dell Technologies Championship,

where McIlroy last year rallied from six shots behind with a 65 to beat Paul Casey. The top 100 players remaining were eligible - four players are absent due to injury - and the top 70 advanced to the third playoff event in two weeks outside Chicago. Two players just outside the top 70 are worth noting. One is Scott, who is at No. 73 and at least has a chance to extend his season. The other is Bubba Watson at No. 72, who was outside the top 100 last week and now has a chance to join Phil Mickelson and Charley Hoffman as the only players to advance beyond the second event all 11 years of the FedEx Cup. At the top of the standings are Johnson and Spieth, and no one would mind seeing another duel like last week.

Cambia Portland Classic

Right when the LPGA Tour has an intriguing battle on its hands, it gets put on hold. LPGA rookie Sung Hyun Park won last week in Canada, which put her in range of catching So Yeon Ryu in the points race to win LPGA player of the year. Park already has rookie of the year sewn up. Ryu is playing at Columbia Edgewater this week. Park is not. Brooke

Henderson is the two-time defending champion and will have a chance to become the first player to win three in a row at Portland. Annika Sorenstam had a chance at the hat trick in 2004 and finished two shots behind when the tournament was only 54 holes.

Nationwide Children's Hospital Championship

Hunter Mahan never played on the Web.com Tour when he came out of Oklahoma State in 2003. He never expected to play one at this stage in his career - six victories, seven US teams, nearly \$30 million in earnings. But for Mahan, it's the only game in town. And he's not alone. This is the start of the Web.com Tour Finals, the new version of Q-school. Instead of six rounds, players have four tournaments to finish among the top 25 on a money list from these tournaments to get their PGA Tour cards back. Ben Crane is also playing the Web.com Tour Finals, along with 17 other past PGA Tour winners, a list that includes Stuart Appleby, Matt Jones and Ken Duke. One high finish is usually all it takes to secure enough money for a PGA Tour card. —AP

AIBA FEUD SPILLS OVER INTO WORLD CHAMPS RING

LAUSANNE: Punches are flying in and outside the ring at the amateur boxing world championships in Germany this week as a bitter power struggle rages for control of the historic Olympic sport. In one corner in Hamburg is Wu Ching-Kuo, the embattled Taiwanese president of ruling body the AIBA and an influential member of the International Olympic Committee. The opposite corner is crowded with the majority of the governing body's executive committee who have joined forces to establish a temporary administration. They are out to KO Wu, who has led the Lausanne-based AIBA since 2006.

Wu's opponents want to oust him from power, and seize control of the organization in what the current AIBA boss has compared to "a military coup". Their main gripe is that Wu has left the sport facing bankruptcy, placing the AIBA in peril. They claim the "AIBA is not in a position to repay" debts totalling 15 million Swiss francs. "Wrong!" says Wu, who contests that the AIBA's finances are in fact "healthy" with "16mn Swiss francs in the bank".

The rebels, led by Italian Franco Falcinelli and Pat Fiacco of Canada, attempted to force through an urgent management shake-up in the Swiss courts. A ruling this month rejected their request, saying the matter would have to wait for a proper hearing in September. The legal action came after Wu's executive committee passed a motion of no-confidence in him at a meeting in Moscow in July. Wu claims he is being targeted because of his attempt to reform the AIBA and specifically singled out former executive director Ho Kim of South Korea for seeking "revenge" after his ousting over allegations of financial wrongdoing.



AIBA President Wu Ching-Kuo

Wu insists he is "the legitimate president" and said he had written to IOC chief Thomas Bach to explain the situation, pinning Ho as a main plotter. Bach was a noticeable absentee from the championships, all the more so with the event being held in his native Germany. The IOC explained that "the circumstances which AIBA currently faces are not the right environment for a visit of the IOC President to this year's championships". Careful to avoid an accusation of taking sides in the internecine conflict, the IOC added: "Such a visit could be interpreted by either side as a statement of support".

'Dodgy dealings'

At Sunday's opening ceremony Wu's rivals met with international federation members who according to a statement were "surprised and concerned" about the AIBA's plight. Wu had a very different take, claiming "I received lots of support" from his talks with the federations. The disputing parties are set to clash again in the ring at an extraordinary congress scheduled for November.

But here again it's a case of warring

press releases. The provisional executive board have announced the congress will take place on November 12 in Dubai, while Wu says: "They've got no right to decide where the congress will be held, it's going to be in Lausanne." When Wu succeeded Pakistan's Anwar Chowdry 11 years ago at the helm of amateur boxing he set about cleaning up a sport associated at the time with questionable practices.

"When Wu arrived it seemed as though things were going better. Under Chowdry there were some very dodgy dealings and it was known that medals could be bought at that time," confided an IOC member who wished to remain anonymous. "It's hard to understand the reasons for this current crisis. Has Wu been careless or too ambitious over investments? Or is it revenge of ousted former officials?" he added. Whatever the causes the AIBA feud is an embarrassment for the IOC at a time when in the wake of the crippling FIFA corruption scandal, it is pursuing widespread reform of international federations, with none more enshrined in the Olympic family than amateur boxing. —AFP

MALAYSIA WIN 145 GOLDS TO BECOME SEA GAMES CHAMPS

KUALA LUMPUR: Host Malaysia won 145 gold medals at the Southeast Asian Games to emerge as overall champion for the first time in 16 years, making it a double celebration as it ushered in its 60th anniversary of its independence from British rule. The medal bounty exceeded Malaysia's record of 111 golds in the 2001 games that it last hosted. Prime Minister Najib Razak announced a public holiday on Sept. 4 to mark the country's outstanding performance during the games closing ceremony late Wednesday.

Thailand, which topped the medals standings in four of the last five games, placed second this time with 72 gold. Vietnam had 58, Singapore 57, Indonesia 38, Philippines 24, Myanmar 7, Cambodia 3 and Laos 2. The sultanate of Brunei and East Timor failed to win any gold in the region's largest multi-sports event. The biennial Games, which started in 1959, embraces a wide range of sports, many that are on the Olympic program. It also includes sports distinct to the region such as the martial art pencak silat, sepak takraw which is played with a rattan ball, and Thai kickboxing muay thai.

Malaysia's medal haul was a big jump from the 62 golds it won at the 2015 edition in Singapore, but it isn't surprising as host countries can tailor the program to match their strength. In 2007, Thailand took 183 out of 477 golds on home soil and in 2011, host Indonesia finished with 182 out of 554. While the games were hailed as a success, Malaysia's organization and some results attracted controversy. Indonesia raised questions over the results in the pencak silat competition after two Malaysians won gold in the men's artistic doubles. Indonesia team manager Edhy Prabowo alleged that the duo, who had lost many times to Indonesia, were awarded an unfairly high score. There was a gaffe by Malaysia in printing the Indonesian flag upside down in a souvenir guidebook for the games. The error made the red-and-white Indonesian flag resemble Poland's and caused anger in Indonesia, where "shameonyoumalaysia" became the most popular hashtag on Twitter. Malaysia was quick to apologize for the "unintentional" mistake and said it would reprint the guide books.

In athletics, a Malaysian woman was criticized after she overtook a Vietnamese competitor to win the gold medal in a women's race walk event by apparently running near the finish line. The next SEA Games will be contested in the Philippines in 2019. —AP

BOND OF BROS AS ANDERSON THRIVES ON FAMILY MATTERS



NEW YORK: Kevin Anderson, of South Africa, returns a shot from Ernests Gulbis, of Latvia, during the second round of the US Open tennis tournament on Wednesday. — AP

NEW YORK: If Kevin Anderson reaches the US Open last 16 today, he'll give a hat tip to his younger brother, whose dreams of also making it as a professional were shattered by injury. The 31-year-old South African won't have to go too far to celebrate with sibling Greg, who now works as a tennis academy director in nearby Connecticut. "We grew up together and spent thousands of hours practicing," Anderson told AFP on Wednesday after making the third round with a 6-3, 7-5, 6-4 victory over Ernests Gulbis of Latvia.

Greg, younger by 18 months, played on the third-tier Futures tour after college in the United States but injuries ended his hopes of going further. However, he always hits with his big brother when he comes to the US Open. "We keep it pretty casual. He had aspirations to become a professional but a pretty big injury put him behind

the curve ball," said Anderson. "It was really tough for him but we have a hit here. He has a great eye for the game and always follows my progress. I value his opinion and input."

Anderson, born in Johannesburg but a permanent resident of the United States, enjoyed his best Grand Slam performance in New York in 2015 when he reached the quarter-finals, knocking out Andy Murray on the way. On Friday, he faces world number 61 Borna Coric who made the third round by stunning fourth-seeded German Alexander Zverev. Anderson, seeded at 28, is 2-0 against Coric but would have taken a 0-4 losing record against Zverev into Friday's third round had the young German prevailed against the 20-year-old Croatian.

Three of those losses came this year but Anderson insisted he would have been happy to tackle the beanpole

German again. "I have had more success against Borna but I would have liked to have had the opportunity to play Alexander again," he said. "I could have looked to up my level but that opportunity will have to wait." Zverev, the highly regarded trailblazer of the "Next Gen" expected to succeed the likes of Roger Federer, Rafael Nadal, Novak Djokovic and Murray, has flattered to deceive at the Slams.

In 2017, his best run was to the last 16 at Wimbledon after a third round exit in Australia and first round loss at Roland Garros. Yet, on the tour, the German has taken five titles, including majors in Rome and Montreal, beating Djokovic and Federer respectively in the finals. "Maybe there's more pressure at the Slams," said Anderson, who has made at least the last-16 of all four majors. "But I'm sure he'll figure it out." — AFP

SHAPOVALOV: FROM DAVIS CUP VILLAIN TO US OPEN SENSATION

NEW YORK: Denis Shapovalov became the youngest man in 10 years to reach the US Open third round Wednesday and credited his breakthrough to being defaulted from a Davis Cup tie for firing a ball into an umpire's eye. The 18-year-old Canadian qualifier stunned French eighth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 6-4, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), a victory which followed a win over Rafael Nadal in Montreal earlier in August. He goes on to face Britain's Kyle Edmund today for a place in the last 16.

However, it will be a match-up which brings back painful memories of the pair's meeting in the Davis Cup in February when Shapovalov was defaulted for hitting a ball at umpire Arnaud Gabas. The Canadian youngster was fined \$7,000 for the incident even though it was deemed to be unintentional. Despite the official escaping serious injury, Shapovalov was disqualified and Britain won the tie.

But he believes the controversy has helped fire him into the tennis headlines for the right reasons. "I've been working extremely hard on it. It's definitely helped me mature," said the world number 69. "I continue to apologize for my actions. It's something I have to live with. But for me it's in the past and I'm a different person and a different player now. So it's a completely new match." Shapovalov is the youngest man in the third round of a Grand Slam since Bernard Tomic at the 2011 Australian Open and at the US Open since Donald Young in 2007. — AFP

JET-LAGGED LIN FEARED DOZING OFF ON COURT

SHANGHAI: Badminton legend Lin Dan was so jet-lagged from a European trip that he feared falling asleep on-court at China's National Games, and fuelled retirement speculation by saying it was likely his last appearance in the event. Regarded as the best badminton player of all time, the 33-year-old nicknamed "Super Dan" is at China's so-called mini Olympics just days after losing the final of the World Championships in Scotland.

After failing to win a sixth world crown on Sunday in Glasgow, Lin hinted that it might be his last tilt at the world title. Back in China, the two-time Olympic champion said: "This should be my last National Games. I have played at the Games for 20 years." The tattooed Lin, who has fallen from the summit to fourth in the world rankings, was pushed all the way by little-known Sheng Xiaodong before struggling to an 18-21, 21-15, 21-7 first-round victory in the men's team event in Tianjin on Wednesday. "Just now I'm afraid of falling asleep on the court" the jet-lagged Lin was quoted as saying by Xinhua news agency afterwards. "But this is a problem facing all of my teammates of the national team who just took part in the World Championships. We have to overcome it." — AFP

SHARAPOVA BATTLES ON, ZVEREV, KYRGIOS CRASH

NEW YORK: Former world number one Maria Sharapova battled back Wednesday to reach the third round of the US Open while next-generation rising stars Alexander Zverev and Nick Kyrgios crashed out. Sharapova, who downed second-ranked Simona Halep in her first Grand Slam match after a 15-month doping ban, defeated Hungary's 59th-ranked Tímea Babos 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-1 at Arthur Ashe Stadium. "It wasn't my best tennis," Sharapova said. "It was scrappy tennis but sometimes those kind of matches are a lot of fun and this was one of those days."

The 30-year-old Russian, who next faces Russian-born US teen Sofia Kenin, tested positive for meldonium at the 2016 Australian Open, her most recent Grand Slam appearance until this week. "Every day I have the chance I have to play at the US Open is a special day and I'll look forward to the next one," 146th-ranked Sharapova said. Sharapova, whose five Grand Slam titles include the 2006 US Open, played only one Open tuneup match after a forearm injury but wore down Halep and Babos to prove she's a threat for a deep run, with Latvian 16th seed Anastasija Sevastova her top-ranked potential semi-final obstacle.

Fourth seed Zverev, whose five ATP titles this year include a win over Roger Federer in this month's Montreal final, fell to 61st-ranked Croatian Borna Coric 3-6, 7-5, 7-6 (7/1), 7-6 (7/4). The 20-year-old German had been the highest-ranked player in his half of an injury-hit Open draw. "It's upsetting because the draw is pretty open in the bottom part," Zverev said. "I felt like I should have been the favorite there. I just played a very, very bad match, so it's unfortunate."

Coric, who faces South African Kevin Anderson for a last-16 berth, was one point from a fifth set before winning five in a row to force the deciding tie-breaker. "I was just thinking to keep the points shorter," Coric said. "And yeah, I was a little bit lucky." Zverev's ouster left US 10th seed John Isner the top-ranked player in his draw quarter and Croatian



NEW YORK: Maria Sharapova of Russia celebrates after defeating Tímea Babos of Hungary in their second round Women's Singles match on Day Three of the 2017 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center on Wednesday in the Flushing neighborhood of Queens borough. — AFP

fifth seed Marin Cilic the best in his half of the draw. Wimbledon runner-up Cilic, the 2014 US Open winner, reached the third round by beating Germany's Florian Mayer 6-3, 6-3, 6-3.

'Arm is totally dead'

Kyrgios, the 14th seed and former top-rated obstacle in Federer's quarter-final path, hurt his right shoulder in a 6-3, 1-6, 6-4, 6-1 first-round loss to 235th-ranked fellow Aussie John Millman. "Early in the third set I hit one serve and I never felt the same after that," Kyrgios said. "Something didn't feel right in my arm." Kyrgios, 22, dropped eight of the last nine games. "Nick's shoulder deteriorated as the match went on," Millman said after his first US Open triumph. "It's a victory but slightly hollow."

Austrian sixth seed Dominic Thiem ousted Aussie Alex de Minaur 6-4, 6-1, 6-1. Thiem is the highest-ranked rival on the Federer and Nadal side of the draw. Canadian 18-year-old qualifier Denis Shapovalov defeated French eighth seed Jo-Wilfried Tsonga 6-4, 6-4, 7-6

(7/3) to book a third-round date with Britain's Kyle Edmund. "It's a dream come true for me," Shapovalov said. Shapovalov became the youngest man in the third round of a Grand Slam since Bernard Tomic at the 2011 Australian Open and at the US Open since American Donald Young in 2007.

Muguruza breaks 'curse'

Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza reached the US Open third round for the first time by beating China's 92nd-ranked Duan Ying-Ying 6-4, 6-0. "I had like a curse and I broke it finally. I'm so happy," Muguruza said. "I just put the heart on the court. I knew I had to be all the time fighting for the ball and in the end I won."

Beating Slovakian Magdalena Rybarikova to reach the last 16 would put the third-seeded Spaniard atop a fight for world number one that was trimmed to six women when Danish fifth seed Caroline Wozniacki lost to Russia's Ekaterina Makarova 6-2, 6-7 (5/7), 6-1. — AFP

WHAT IS DRIVING STUNNING TRANSFER SPENDING?

PARIS: A record-breaking transfer window has seen the likes of Paris Saint-Germain, Manchester City and Barcelona spend hundreds of millions of euros so far on new players. With all the major European leagues except Spain closing for business on Thursday, AFP Sport takes a look at how, and why, clubs are splashing such large amounts of cash.

Foreign investment

The close season's two biggest spenders so far have been Manchester City, taken over by Abu Dhabi's Sheikh Mansour in 2008, and Paris Saint-Germain, who have been the beneficiaries of Qatar's billions, fronted by Nasser Al-Khelaifi, since 2011. The exact worth of these two men is hard to calculate, as they come from wealthy royal families and are in essence representatives of their oil- and gas-rich countries. But both have piled money into their respective clubs.

City have been one of Europe's biggest spenders since stunning the Premier League with a 42-million-euro signing of Robinho on transfer deadline day in 2008, while PSG rocked the entire football world by paying a world record of 222 million euros (\$264 mil-

lion) to sign Neymar from Barcelona this summer.

The money does not just come from the Middle East though - Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich started the new breed of billionaire foreign owners when he bought Chelsea in 2003. The Chinese are starting to take a slice of European football too. Businessman Li Yonghong took out a 300-million-euro loan to buy AC Milan, but was still able to spend 40 million euros on signing defender Leonardo Bonucci from Juventus in July.

Political statements

The most stunning move of the close season came when PSG paid Neymar's release clause to prise the Brazilian playmaker away from Barcelona. The move came after the start of a diplomatic crisis in June that saw countries including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar and impose trade and travel bans. For Qatari Khelaifi to spend 222 million euros on Neymar, plus a possible 180mn on Monaco youngster Kylian Mbappe, sent a "strong signal to the world of sport" and is a "challenge" to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, according to political analyst Andreas

Krieg of King's College London.

TV billions

The Premier League is football's bastion when it comes to producing eye-popping figures, and its £5.14-billion (5.59 billion euros) TV rights deal has given English top-flight clubs extremely deep pockets. The last deal was agreed in 2015, and saw Sky pay £4.2bn for five of seven TV packages, with BT Sports buying the other two. That groundbreaking agreement was worth 71 percent more than the previous rights deal in 2012. BT announced after the auction in 2015 that it would be paying £7.6 million for each live game.

TV rights for Spain's La Liga went for a comparatively small three-year deal worth 2.65 billion euros, while rights for France's Ligue 1 are worth 748.5 million euros a year. The bumper deal for the Premier League has had two clear effects - clubs in other European leagues now know that they can hold out for much larger transfer fees when English sides bid for their players, while moves between Premier League teams are becoming more and more expensive. — AFP



Renato Sanches



Serge Aurier

MAN CITY EYE SANCHEZ AS DEADLINE DAY HOTS UP

LONDON: Manchester City were reported to have upped their bid for Arsenal forward Alexis Sanchez yesterday as a record-breaking transfer window sped towards a dramatic conclusion. British media reported that having seen a £50 million (\$64.4 million) offer for Sanchez rebuffed, City had returned with a second bid of £55 million plus add-ons.

Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur completed moves for Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Serge Aurier respectively as record Premier League spending soared above £1.2 billion. Paris Saint-Germain's sensational 222 million euros (\$264 million) capture of Neymar from Barcelona earlier this month has sent transfer fees skyrocketing across the continent. In addition to Brazilian icon Neymar, PSG are also poised to wrap up a deal for 18-year-old Monaco wunderkind Kylian Mbappe.

The French teenager is expected to join on a season-long loan before signing for 180 million euros next year in a move designed to prevent PSG falling foul of UEFA's Financial Fair Play regulations. Barcelona have already spent 105 million euros, ris-

ing to 145 million euros, to prise France starlet Ousmane Dembele from Borussia Dortmund. But Liverpool continue to resist Barca's attempts to lure Neymar's Brazil team-mate Philippe Coutinho to Camp Nou, having rejected three offers for the playmaker. Liverpool and Arsenal, who may need to replace both Oxlade-Chamberlain and Sanchez, have been linked with Monaco winger Thomas Lemar. However, with deadline day clashing with a round of World Cup qualifying matches, Lemar spent Thursday preparing for France's game against the Netherlands at Stade de France. Liverpool are reported to have spent £35 million on Oxlade-Chamberlain, who is believed to have signed a five-year contract. The 24-year-old England midfielder is thought to have rejected a new contract offer from Arsenal and an approach from Chelsea, both of whom were prepared to pay him more money.

Swansea swoop for Sanches

"I know my choice might come as a surprise to many and the decision to leave was tough after being a part of the club for so many years," Oxlade-Chamberlain said in a Twitter post. "But I feel that this move is right for the next stage in my ongoing development." Oxlade-Chamberlain follows Mohamed Salah, Andy Robertson and Dominic Solanke through the door at Anfield, while Naby Keita will arrive from RB Leipzig next year in a club-record deal worth over £48 million.

Making room for the new arrivals, Belgian striker Divock Origi has joined Wolfsburg on a season-long loan. Spurs are believed to have paid £23 million to sign controversial Ivorian right-back Aurier from PSG. Aurier, 24, received a two-month suspended prison sentence last year for assaulting a police officer and was banned by PSG for directing a homophobic slur at former coach Laurent Blanc. In an appeal to Spurs' supporters, he said: "This is a fresh start for me and I will do everything to make the Spurs fanbase, which is huge and diverse, proud of me." — AFP



Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain

PREVIEW

FRANCE GHOSTS FIRE KANE WORLD CUP DREAMS

LONDON: Memories of the chasing England were given fresh in Harry Kane's mind as he contemplates his side's path to the World Cup. England are on course to secure a ticket to Russia ahead of today's qualifier against Malta in Ta'Qali, but recent friendly games have laid bare the extent to which they trail behind the global elite. In June, the brilliance of Mbappe and Dembele enabled France to weather the mid-game dismissal of Raphael Varane and beat England 3-2 at Stade de France, but rather than being cowed, Kane was inspired.

"I don't think it's daunting," the Tottenham Hotspur striker told reporters at England's St George's Park headquarters this week. "At the end of the day, we only lost 3-2. I know they were down to 10 men for the majority of the second half. I don't think we're that far away. We're a little bit behind at the minute. France are an extremely good team with a lot of good players to choose from, but so are we. The most important thing for us now is to qualify for the World Cup and we can do that by winning the next two games. If that's done and dusted then we can really start preparing." — AFP

PREVIEW

PERFECT GERMANY OUT TO SECURE WORLD CUP TICKET

BERLIN: Joachim Loew's world champions Germany head to Prague for today's World Cup qualifier against the Czech Republic focused on preserving their 100 percent record. The match is Germany's first international of a season which finishes with the World Cup final. Having won all six qualifiers so far in Group C, victory at Prague's Eden Arena will leave Germany on the verge of confirming their place at Russia 2018 before hosting Norway in Stuttgart on Monday, when they could qualify if results elsewhere go their way.

Winger Serge Gnabry is out of both games with an ankle injury, while Juventus midfielder Sami Khedira sat out Wednesday's training with a knee knock. Few German fans will need reminding that the team's last heavy defeat in qualifiers came ten years ago in Prague when Loew's men were humbled 3-0. However, the Czech Republic were beaten by the same scoreline when the sides met in Hamburg last October with two goals by Thomas Mueller. — AFP

CHINA REMAIN IN WORLD CUP HUNT

SHANGHAI: Gao Lin was the hero for China with a late penalty to seal a nervy 1-0 win over Uzbekistan to keep their faint World Cup hopes just about alive yesterday. Hosts China needed to win the penultimate group-phase clash to stay in the hunt for a play-off spot for Russia 2018 and Gao stepped up with just six minutes left to grab victory. Marcello Lippi's men head to Qatar on Tuesday for their final must-win match and will hope other results go their way so they can grab an unlikely third-place play-off spot in Group A.

It was a bitter, late blow for Uzbekistan, who are chasing their first World Cup appearance. But they too are still in the reckoning as Group A goes down

to Tuesday's final round of matches when they welcome South Korea to Tashkent. Roared on by a capacity 55,000 home crowd desperate to see China stay in contention for just their second World Cup finals appearance, Lippi's side dominated an uneventful first half.

The hosts should have gone ahead inside five minutes in Wuhan, but attacking midfielder Wu Lei - dubbed the "Chinese Maradona" - scuffed his close-range shot wide. Shanghai SIPG star Wu was a constant threat, blazing off target and then just failing to latch onto a tantalising through ball. The Uzbeks were a rare attacking force, but the few times they did get the ball into the home box it sparked panic in

China's shaky-looking defense.

The best chance of the first half came on 37 minutes and again it was the home side who wasted a golden opportunity when Zhang Xizhe skipped through the visitors' defense. But the Beijing Guoan midfielder fired too close to Ignaty Nesterov and the Uzbek goalkeeper smothered the chance. Zhang and Wu held their heads in their hands. Knowing that the draw was similarly of little use to them in their bid to reach Russia, Uzbekistan emerged for the second half with more intent. And they had their first real opportunity of game 10 minutes into the second period when veteran Server Djeparov shot wildly over from around the penalty spot. — AFP

SYRIA STAY ALIVE, END QATAR W CUP HOPES

HONG KONG: Omar Khrbin struck twice as Syria notched up a 3-1 win over Qatar that ended the 2022 World Cup hosts' hopes of qualifying for next year's finals while ensuring their own attempt to reach Russia stays alive for at least one more game. Qatar will become the first hosts in the post-World War Two era to make their debut appearance at the World Cup on home soil after a disappointing campaign that has seen them amass just seven points out of nine games so far.

Al Hilal striker Khrbin gave Syria the lead in the seventh minute when he struck from outside the area, but 10 minutes before the break Ali Assadalla levelled for the Qataris as they sought the win required to keep their slim hopes alive. Nine minutes after the restart, however, Khrbin ensured those chances were dismissed completely when he smashed his shot past Saad Al Sheeb, beating the goalkeeper at his near post with a fierce shot. Mahmoud Al-Mawas scored five minutes into injury time for Syria to put the result beyond doubt. — Reuters

SOUTH KOREA HOPES HIT BY 10-MAN IRAN

SEOUL: South Korea were held to a frustrating scoreless draw by 10-man Iran in Seoul yesterday when a win would have seen the home side qualify for next year's World Cup. Already qualified Iran played the majority of the second half in front of a capacity crowd at the Seoul World Cup Stadium a man down after Saeid Ezatolahi's red card but extended their undefeated record in Asia's Group A to nine matches.

With China upsetting Uzbekistan 1-0 at home, South Korea could not breach Iran's defense to clinch their ninth consecutive World Cup finals berth in front of more than 63,000 fans. South Korea have a two-point lead over third-placed Uzbekistan in Group A, and will need to avoid defeat against the Uzbeks in Tashkent on Tuesday to book their ticket on the plane to Russia.

South Korea and Iran traded few chances in the opening half. Tottenham Hotspur's Son Heung-Min took a free-kick from just outside the box in the 17th minute, but his low shot rolled off the leg of an Iranian player and out of play. Midfielder Jang Hyun-Soo almost headed one in for the hosts two minutes later, but saw his attempt bounce just wide of the gaping Iranian net. — AFP



SEOUL: South Korea's Choi Chul-soon (left) fights for the ball with Iran's Vahid Amiri during their World Cup Group A qualifying football match at the Seoul World Cup Stadium yesterday. — AP



SAITAMA, Japan: Australia's Tom Rogic competes for the ball with Japan's Yosuke Ideguchi (right) and Makoto Hasebe during their World Cup Group B qualifying football match yesterday. — AP

JAPAN SECURE WORLD CUP BERTH WITH AUSTRALIA WIN

SAITAMA, Japan: Takuma Asano and Yosuke Ideguchi were on target as Japan beat Australia 2-0 at home yesterday to qualify for their sixth successive World Cup. Asano steered home a left-foot volley four minutes before half-time and Ideguchi sealed the victory with a stunning long-range strike after 82 minutes as Japan became the fourth team to reach next year's finals in Russia. The result dealt a major blow to Australia's chances of being one of the two automatic qualifiers from Group B after their first defeat in the final round of Asian qualifiers.

The Asian Cup holders get a second bite at the cherry at home to Thailand on Tuesday when they need to better Saudi Arabia's result against Japan in Jeddah on the same night. Japan survived a scare after 38 minutes in Saitama when a Mathew Leckie shot deflected off Maya Yoshida against post before Asano struck a psychological blow shortly before the break.

Yuto Nagatomo whipped in a cross from the left and Asano ghosted in to beat goalkeeper Mat Ryan from close range. Australia threw on veteran Tim Cahill after 70 minutes to try and inject some spark and his industry almost brought an equalizer for fellow substitute Tomi Juric. But Japan effec-

tively ended Aussie hopes when Ideguchi cut inside to slam a right-foot shot past Ryan from distance for his first international goal. "I was looking for a chance and Yuto put in a great ball," said Asano of his opening goal. "That's my job - to try and pinch goals and I'm always ready to give everything for Japan."

Japan had never beaten Australia in a World Cup qualifier in seven previous attempts but the Socceroos - bidding to reach their fourth straight finals and fifth overall - rarely threatened in a disjointed performance. "This is for the wonderful fans and for the people of Japan," cried Japan's under-fire coach Vahid Halilhodzic, whose team have an unassailable 20 points from nine games in Group B.

Australia and Saudi Arabia have 16 points but the Saudis have a better goal difference. Ideguchi, meanwhile, appeared lost for words after a wonder strike that looks like sparing Halilhodzic the sack - at least for now. "Luckily it hit the target," he said sheepishly. "I'm just glad it helped us get the win and hopefully I can keep working to get myself picked for the World Cup." Brazil and Japan's Asian rivals Iran have already qualified for next year's World Cup, alongside tournament hosts Russia. — AFP

Sports



Sharapova battles on while Zverev, Kyrgios crash **45**



SAITAMA, Japan: Japan's Hotaru Yamaguchi (right) and Australia's Massimo Luongo battle for the ball during their World Cup Group B qualifying football match yesterday. — AP

Japan book ticket to Russia