

Activist denounces anti-expat campaign



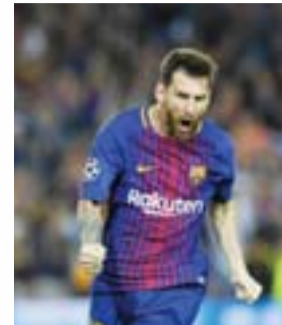
Israel leader endorses independent Kurdish state



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REGIONAL DISPUTE HURTING GCC ECONOMIES: MOODY'S

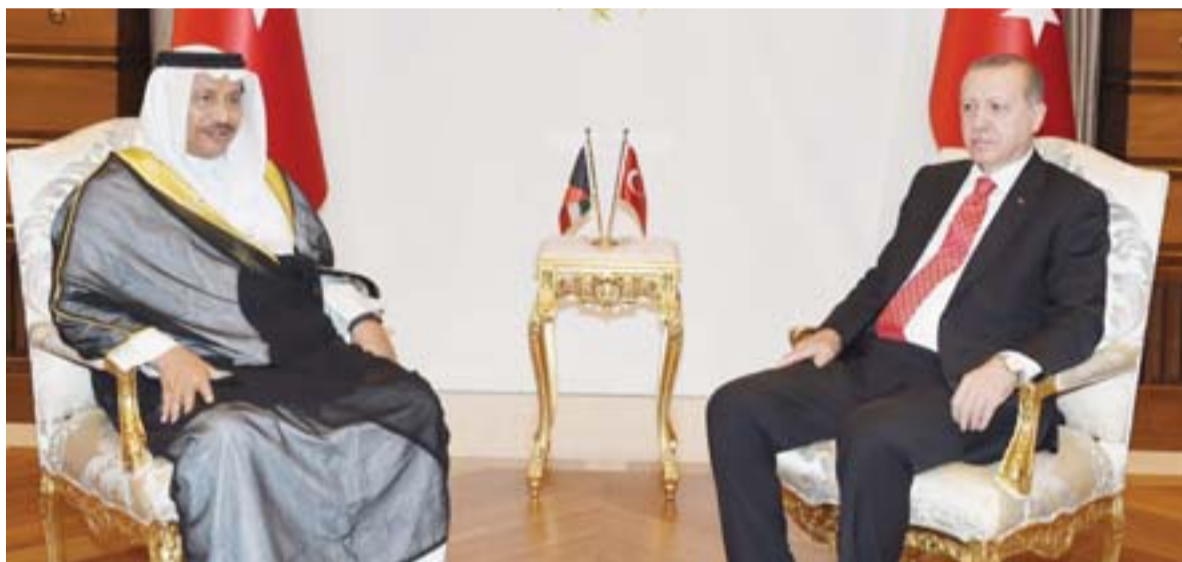
'BUSINESS AS USUAL' FOR QATAR'S \$300BN SOVEREIGN FUND



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High Tide 04:29 & 19:12
Low Tide 11:03

KUWAIT'S PM, TURKISH PRESIDENT HOLD TALKS

ANKARA: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday met with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the Presidential Palace in Ankara. Emerging from the meeting, His Highness the Premier said that he handed over a written message from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to President Erdogan - dealing with means of boosting bilateral relations and issues of mutual concern. His Highness the Premier indicated that the meeting touched on regional and international issues.



ANKARA: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Ankara yesterday. — KUNA

The Kuwait premier, accompanied by a delegation of ranking officials, arrived in Ankara yesterday. The delegation was received at the airport by Turkish Minister of Economy Nihat Zeybekci and Kuwaiti diplomats. Kuwait, which views Turkey as a key economic partner, has always sought to deepen the bonds with Ankara, enhancing commercial exchanges and creating new joint investment opportunities. His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak confirmed that his talks with Turkish leaders would tackle means of cementing the bilateral relations and cooperation at diverse levels. — KUNA

DUBAI: A boycott of Qatar by a Saudi-led bloc of Arab states is hurting the economies of all the countries involved, with Bahrain and Qatar the most affected, Moody's Investor Service said yesterday. The row has translated into a credit negative for the entire six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) - Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar, Moody's said in a report.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt on June 5 severed diplomatic ties and imposed economic sanctions on Qatar, accusing it of backing radical Islamist groups. Doha has denied the charges. "The severity of the diplomatic dispute between Gulf countries is unprecedented, which magnifies the uncertainty over the ultimate economic, fiscal and social impact on the GCC as a whole," said Steffen Dyck, Moody's vice president.

Qatar faces large economic, financial and social costs stemming from related travel and trade restrictions, it said. The impact on Qatar so far has been most acute for trade, tourism and the banking sector. Sizeable capital outflows in the vicinity of \$30 billion flowed out of Qatar's banking system in June and July, with further declines expected as GCC banks opt not to roll over their deposits, Moody's said.

It estimates that Qatar used \$38.5 billion-equivalent to 23 percent of its GDP to support the economy in the first two months of sanctions. Moody's said it does not expect that Qatar will have to borrow from the international

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KUWAIT INVESTING IN OIL PROFITS

GOVERNMENT BACKS RENEWABLE ENERGY

SAUDIS URGED TO REPORT ON EACH OTHER'S ACTIVITY

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has urged its people to report subversive comments spotted on social media via a phone app, a move denounced by a human rights watchdog as "Orwellian". The appeal, announced on a Twitter account run by the Interior Ministry late on Tuesday, coincides with an apparent crackdown on potential government critics and a call by exiled opposition figures for demonstrations.

"When you notice any account on social networks publishing terrorist or extremist ideas, please report it immediately via the application #We're-all-security", it said, referring to a mobile phone app launched last year to enable civilians to report traffic violations and burglaries. Hours later, the public prosecutor tweeted a section of the kingdom's terrorism law which states: "Endangering national unity, obstructing the Basic Law of governance or some of its articles, and harming the state's reputation or status are terrorist crimes."

Exiled Saudi critics have called for demonstrations tomorrow to galvanize opposition to the royal family and prominent clerics, intellectuals and activists, including prominent Islamist cleric Sheikh Salman Al-Awdah, have been detained this week, activists say. Activists circulated lists of people detained on social media showing the number had risen to around 30, including some with no clear

Continued on Page 11

KUWAIT: Kuwait is investing in oil and gas revenues to achieve His Highness the Amir's vision to turn the country into a regional financial and commercial hub, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh said yesterday. Such a pioneering role is carried out through implementing the government's national development plans, including diversifying the Kuwaiti economy's production base, Al-Sabeeh added.

She made her remarks in a speech

marking the launch of "Mapping the oil and gas industry to the Sustainable Development Goals: An Atlas" at the UN House, aka (also known as) Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's Building. Since its independence, Kuwait has linked the oil industry to the sustainable development goals, and also harnessed its resources to enhance infrastructure and social development, said the minister.

Continued on Page 11



KUWAIT: Photo shows an external view of the facade of the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait, in the capital Kuwait City. The 284-room Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait is located within the new, two-tower Burj Alshaya development. The hotel features 217 guest rooms plus 67 suites. The Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya is part of a growing collection of Four Seasons hotels and resorts in the Gulf region, including award-winning hotels in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Qatar, and three properties in the United Arab Emirates. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

HISTORY OF SYRIA'S WAR AT RISK

YOUTUBE MOVES TO REIN IN VIOLENT CONTENT

BEIRUT: Syria's civil war has been one of the modern world's most brutal conflicts and one of its most heavily filmed. Hundreds of thousands of amateur videos uploaded to YouTube document every heartbeat of the war over the past seven years, from momentous events like cities under bombardment to intimate scenes like a father cradling his dead children.

Syrian activists fear all that history could be erased as YouTube moves to rein in violent content. In the past few months, the tech giant has implemented new policies to remove material considered graphic or supporting terrorism, and hundreds of thousands of videos from the conflict suddenly disappeared without notice. Activists say crucial evidence of human rights violations risks being lost - as well as an outlet to the world that is crucial for them.

Activists are rushing to set up alternative archives, but they also recognize nothing can replace YouTube because of its technological infrastructure and global reach. "It is like we are writing our memoirs - not in our own book but in a third party's book. We don't have control of it," said Hadi Al-Khatib, co-founder of the Syrian Archive, a group founded in 2014 to preserve open source evidence of crimes committed by all sides of the Syrian conflict.

Based on his database and review of around 900 groups and individuals, Al-Khatib said some 180 channels connected to Syria were shut since June, when YouTube began using machine learning protocols to sift through videos on the site for objectionable content. Working with YouTube, Al-Khatib's group secured the return of about 20 channels, salvaging about 400,000

videos. But about 150,000 videos remain in jeopardy, pending a decision from YouTube, which is still reviewing whether to reinstate them, he said.

"Nothing is lost forever yet," Al-Khatib said, speaking from Berlin. "But this is very dangerous, because there is no alternative for YouTube." YouTube, which is owned by Google, says it will correct any videos improperly taken down and that it is in dialogue with the activists on a solution. But many activists fear a repeat or a permanent loss. The shutdowns were chilling for a community that had just celebrated a possible precedent for Syria when the International Criminal Court in August issued an arrest warrant based on video evidence for a Libyan military commander.

Continued on Page 11

MOROCCO'S TOURISTS MAKE TRACKS ON 'DESERT EXPRESS'

BOUARFA: Edouard Kunz knows time-keeping is important but the former Swiss watch precision mechanic admits that James Bond's Oriental Desert Express in remote eastern Morocco never runs on schedule. The train, made famous in the 2015 Bond movie 'Spectre', trundles tourists between the town of Oujda and the former mining city of Bouarfa along a 350-kilometre-long stretch of desert.

"It takes between eight and 12 hours to make the trip, sometimes even more," says Kunz, 70, who is

known as Edi, blaming sandstorms for frequent delays. His passion for trains put him in the driver's seat more than 10 years ago when he persuaded Morocco's National Office of Railways to let him run a tourist train on a disused railway line. The track that runs near the border with Algeria was originally built nearly 100 years ago when Morocco was a French protectorate. It was part of an ambitious project, the Mediterranean-Niger railway, to link the sea to inland Africa.

Continued on Page 11



OUIDJA: Photo shows the Oriental Desert Express train en route from Oujda to Bouarfa in northeastern Morocco. — AFP

150 FILS

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32 PAGES





KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh.

CROWN PRINCE MEETS STATE OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah waves before his departure to Turkey yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT PLAYS VITAL ROLE IN REGIONAL STABILITY: TURKEY PREMIER OFF TO ANKARA ON OFFICIAL VISIT

ANKARA: Kuwait, under the leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, plays a vital role in maintaining regional security and stability, said Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim yesterday. In an exclusive interview, Yildirim indicated that the visit by Kuwaiti Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah will contribute to the development of ties as desired by both Kuwaiti and Turkish leaderships as well as people.

Bilateral relations are strong and both countries are eager to pursue more cooperative venues, said Yildirim who revealed that there were more than 40 signed agreements and memos between the two nations. He indicated that cooperation in the defense domain is one of the sectors that his country was eager to develop with Kuwait.

He added that regional challenges required such solidarity among world countries. Yildirim called for expanding the volume of commercial exchange with Kuwait, increasing the number from \$1.2 billion in 2016 to \$5 billion in the near future. The Turkish official also commended the increasing number of Kuwaitis seeking his country as a touristic destination, revealing that some 95,000 Kuwaitis visited Turkey since the beginning of this year.

The number will hopefully increase as Turkey issued a policy last August to offer Kuwaitis free-visa admission to the country for periods between 90 and 180 days, indicated Yildirim. Kuwaitis have also heavily sought real-estate properties in Turkey which is a positive sign for both economies, said the top Turkish official who hoped to further boost relations in the future.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and his accompanying delegation left yesterday for Turkish capital Ankara on a state official visit. He is accompanied by First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Anas Khaled Al-Saleh, Minister of Commerce and Industry in addition to Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudan, Head of Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) delegation Abdullah Al-Humaidi, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and senior officials and the Foreign Ministry, His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan, National Guard, Investment Promotion Authority, General Authority for Investment and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi. — KUNA

KUWAIT TO TAKE ARAB ACTION TO NEW HORIZONS IN UNSC: JARALLAH ARAB FMS WELCOME KUWAIT'S HOSTING OF IRAQ CONFERENCE

CAIRO: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah stated that his country's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council would be a great chance to Kuwait to work on a larger scale to defend Arab causes. Speaking at the 148th regular ministerial session of the Arab League Council in Cairo on Tuesday, Jarallah said that the situation in the Palestinian territories and the unrest in Syria, Yemen, Libya and Iraq have become major international issues. However, the Iranian interferences in Arab domestic affairs and the terrorism are still representing serious menaces to security and stability of the Arab region, Jarallah lamented.

He thanked Arab countries for their trust and support to Kuwait's election to the two-year term in the UNSC, which will start in January 2018. He pledged that Kuwait would do all in power to best represent Arab countries and defend their interests and causes as well as to cement international peace and security.

On the situation in the Palestinian territories, Jarallah expressed sympathy with Palestinian people over the continued Israeli violations. He stressed that Kuwait is committed to push for the implementation of the UNSC No. 476 and 478 of 1980 and No. 2334 of 2016 which demand Israel, in its capacity as an occupying force, to stop its aggressions against the occupied East Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque.

He pointed out that Kuwait would host an international conference on the sufferings of Palestinian children under the Israeli occupation 12-13 November, 2017. On the efforts to resolve the six-year Syrian civil conflict, the Kuwaiti official said that his country backs the UN special envoy to Syria's efforts to broker a compromise deal among warring parties that could pave the way for a political transition as per Geneva I conference outcome.

He pointed out that the Arab region is undergoing humanitarian disasters due to the ongoing crises. "This situation requires from us as we gather at this Arab house to contain and address these crises," he argued.



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah attends the 148th regular ministerial session of the Arab League Council in Cairo. — KUNA

Yemeni crisis

On Yemen, Jarallah noted that the crisis there entered its fourth year amid a failure to reach a peaceful solution to call a halt to the conflict which tore the Arab country apart. "To return Yemen to status quo ante, Yemeni parties have to resume negotiations as soon as possible to reach a political settlement with the legitimate government as per the UNSC resolutions No. 2140 of 2014 and 2216 of 2015 and the Gulf Cooperation Council initiative and its executive mechanisms," he clarified.

On the recent developments in Iraq, Jarallah expressed delight for the Iraqi army victories over the so-called Islamic State (IS) group and the liberation of all the areas previously controlled by the terrorist group. He noted that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah agreed on Kuwait's hosting of an international conference for rebuilding Iraqi cities affected by the terrorist acts.

Meanwhile, Jarallah stated that despite Kuwait's efforts to create communication channels for dialogue between Arabian Gulf countries and neighboring Iran with a view to enhancing regional security and stability, the Islamic Republic continued its interferences in domestic Arab affairs.

"The region's countries still suffer from these interferences, the latest of which took place in my country in what is known as 'Al-Abdali case' which impacted Kuwait's efforts to

revive dialogue between GCC states and Iran," he said. He also reiterated his call to the Islamic Republic of Iran to accept international arbitration to settle its dispute with the United Arab Emirates over the three UAE islands occupied by its forces. Jarallah warned against the growing threat of terrorism. He reaffirmed Kuwait's full support to the international efforts to rid the world of the evils of this scourge.

Rebuilding Iraq

Arab Foreign Ministers welcomed Kuwait's hosting of an international conference to rebuild areas in Iraq that were liberated from terrorists. His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called Iraqi Prime Minister Haidar Al-Abadi following the liberation of Mosul, and offered to host the international conference, which Kuwait said might be held during the first quarter next year. The foreign ministers meanwhile called on importance of supporting Arab governments, namely Iraq's, to cope with growing needs of displaced persons. They called for rebuilding the liberated areas in Iraq and to involve the private sector until the return of the displaced to their homes. They proposed an Arab League-sponsored international conference to discuss the internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside the Arab countries. They approved a plan to support the IDPs in Arab countries to improve their living conditions. — KUNA

GLOBAL OIL PRODUCTION CHOICES BEYOND JMMC JURISDICTION: MINISTER

KUWAIT: The Joint OPEC-Non-OPEC Ministerial Monitoring Committee (JMMC) has no authority over executive decisions to continue lowering global oil production, Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water Essam Al-Marzouq said yesterday.

In a joint press conference with Venezuela's Oil Minister Eulogio del Pino, Marzouq - who chairs the committee - said that it was too early to take a decision whether to continue to reinforce or deepen the production decrease. He indicated the current production rate will continue to be implemented until March of 2018.

OPEC's ministerial committee might consider recommendations made by the JMMC as long as it was backed by solid data and numbers, said the minister who stressed that there were no decisions yet to deepen the production cuts.

In regards to del Pino's visit to Kuwait, Marzouq said that it was within the JMMC's efforts to exchange views on the status quo of the global market and the production cut decision. The meeting with del Pino also touched on the recent natural disasters in the US which had an effect on global crude markets, added Minister Marzouq.

The JMMC is composed of three OPEC members - Kuwait, Algeria, and Venezuela - and two non-OPEC countries, Russia and Oman. Its next meeting will be on September 23, said Al-Marzouq who indicated that the committee will discuss reports and recommendations regarding the global prices during the event.

The Kuwaiti Minister noted that other OPEC nations such Libya and Nigeria might be invited to discuss the possibility of lowering their production to meet demand for a stable market. Countries not part of the current production cut deal might also be asked to join the current efforts, said the minister.

Meanwhile, Minister del Pino said that he had visited several countries in the past 15 months to ensure that the deal would hold. He lauded Kuwait's strong leadership and desire to keep the market stable. Del Pino affirmed that he would continue to meet with OPEC counterparts to make sure that all involved parties commit to the deal, adding that it was important not to spread false news and rumors that might compromise the whole effort.

At the December meeting, 11 non-OPEC oil producers cooperated with the 13 OPEC member countries in a concerted effort to accelerate the rebalancing of the global oil market through an adjustment in combined production of 1.8 million barrels per day. — KUNA



Essam Al-Marzouq

KUWAITI, AUSTRALIAN OFFICIALS DISCUSS COUNTERTERRORISM COOPERATION

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Security Bureau Chief Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah discussed with Australia's official in charge of counterterrorism Paul Foley issues related to combating terrorism and strengthening bilateral cooperation. In a statement yesterday, Sheikh Thamer stressed out Kuwait's efforts with the international community to counter terror and dry up its sources. The meeting was attended by the Australian Ambassador to Kuwait Warren Hauck and Assistant Director of the counterterrorism Department for the Middle East and Africa at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Bred Jung. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Security Bureau Chief Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-Sabah meets with Australia's official in charge of counterterrorism Paul Foley. — KUNA

UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY SESSION TO DISCUSS SECURITY: AMBASSADOR

NEW YORK: The 72nd session of the UN General Assembly next week will discuss several security topics and other prominent regional and international issues, said Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. The Kuwaiti delegation will be headed by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah during the meeting on September 20, Otaibi said yesterday.

This session will see the participation of over 130 leaders and primes ministers, said the ambassador. He added that US President Donald Trump and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres would hold a high-level meeting on reforms in the UN. The session will focus on the recent developments in Syria, Yemen, Palestine, and Iraq, while it will also discuss the rising tension in the Korean Peninsula and the attacks on Myanmar's Muslims, Ambassador Otaibi noted. Other topics will include counterterrorism, achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, he said. Meanwhile, he noted that the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah will be meetings with other foreign ministers to discuss boosting cooperation on topics included in the UN Security Council's agenda. Kuwait is set to be a non-permanent member in the council for the term 2018-2019.



Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi

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The Municipal Council's building.

GOVT-APPOINTED MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEMBERS RESIGN

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Six Municipal Council members resigned from the council yesterday for unknown reasons, said informed sources. The members, who were all appointed by the government, are Ali Al-Moussa, Ahmad Al-Fadhalah, Meshaal Al-Jowaisry, Mohammed Al-Mojel, Osama Al-Otaibi and Mansour Al-Khorainej. They resigned after a meeting with Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri. The sources said that some council members have started removing their personal effects from their offices at the Municipal Council's building as the council's tenure will conclude within a month. The sources added that temporary committee comprising of members representing various ministries might run the council for over three months.

Alibaba

Minister of Commerce and Industry and Acting Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan yesterday discussed means of enhancing cooperation with deputy board chairman of

China's Alibaba company Bryan Yang. A joint statement issued yesterday said that the ministry delegation, currently on an official visit to China, met Yang at Hangzhou and briefed the Chinese side on investment opportunities in Kuwait. The statement explained that Alibaba Group is the world's largest electronic trading company and that Alibaba plans at becoming the first electronics trading company in history to do one billion dollars' worth of transactions. The Kuwaiti delegation also explained the custom exemptions and other incentives foreign investors get in Kuwait. The total number of active buyers from Alibaba Group, which was established in 1999 and specialize in retail sales in China, is 466 million. The total number of active vendors is over 10 million and the company makes 57 million deliveries on daily basis.

Fine

A local judge yesterday fined a court order notification representative with KD 100 for failing to do his job duties in notifying a defendant of the case filed against him.

ACTIVIST DENOUNCES ANTI-EXPAT CAMPAIGN, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

'WE CANNOT BE A HUMANITARIAN CENTER AND PRACTICE RACISM'

By Staff Reporter

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti human rights activist demanded measures to be taken against those who spread hate speech in light of the increasing wave of xenophobic rhetoric in the official and unofficial domains as of late.

"Immigrant workers suffer from racist governmental decisions and lawmakers' statements regarding [Kuwait's] demographic structure," said Khalid Al-Humaidi, Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Society for Human Rights (KRCS). "These remarks and measures violate international charters." He mentioned allocating the new Jaber Hospital for Kuwaiti patients only, increasing public health fees collected from expatriates and introducing new conditions for dependency visas as "human rights violations," and refused the notion that foreigners are using up resources or taking opportunities away from nationals.

Humaidi's remarks, published by Al-Rai yesterday, came at a time in which anti-expatriate sentiments are dominating the political scene and have been on the rise socially as well. The oil and social affairs ministers have especially come under fire in parliament over claims of expatriates' hiring in the public and petroleum sectors at a time in which more than 14,800 Kuwaitis remain unemployed as of April 20, 2017 according to Central Statistical Bureau figures.

Though Kuwaitis make up around 73 percent of manpower in the public sector, their numbers in the private sector are at a modest 4.5 percent. When comparing the disparity in the private sector between the average monthly



KUWAIT: This file photo shows Asian housemaids wait at an office for domestic workers at a commercial complex in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

salary of Kuwaiti manpower (KD 1,402) and the average monthly salary of foreign labor (KD 269), it becomes easier to understand from a financial standpoint why privately-owned companies rely heavily on foreign laborers.

This heavy reliance on the cheaper foreign manpower is often blamed for causing an imbalance in the state's demographic structure: nearly 70 percent out of Kuwait's population of around 4,481,000 are foreigners. The government has failed for years to formulate an effective way to drive national labor away from the more lucrative, less demanding public sector job and towards the more challenging, less rewarding private sector job. Meanwhile, national manpower in the public sector are expected to increase after a recent Civil Service Commission decision to 'Kuwaitize' jobs in state departments by 85 to 100 percent within five years.

Unproductive workers

Most of the criticisms regarding the increase in the number of foreign laborers are based on the idea that Kuwait's labor market has a surplus in 'unproductive workers.' However, Humaidi does not agree with this notion and believes that all foreigners living in Kuwait should be treated equally. "Immigrant workers should not be handled according to interest, or categorized as 'useful' or 'non-useful' workers," he said, notably choosing to avoid the widely-used Arabic term 'wafed,' which roughly translates to 'newcomer,' to refer to expatriates. "The 'citizen and noncitizen' perspective is a form of racial discrimination that is not appropriate with Kuwait's status as a humanitarian center."

"As long as there is racially-charged discrimination against immigrants, we might as well call for deporting all workers without discrimination," Humaidi argued ironi-

cally. "This could be the best way to protect their rights instead of the repeated instigations against them, and to avoid damaging Kuwait's reputation as a country that mistreats its immigrant community."

Administrative deportation is another form of human rights violations that expatriates in Kuwait are subjected to, and which violates the international law, according to Humaidi. "Some workers were deported after they protested not being paid for three months by companies contracted with state departments," he said.

Around 13,000 expatriates were deported during the first half of this year, according to KRCS statistics, with an average of 86 persons a day. The society also detected 56 cases of racism practiced against foreigners and reported in the local media from January through June, including 37.5 percent committed by National Assembly members and 26.8 percent by the Interior Ministry.

"We believe that these procedures do not provide any solutions, but instead feed more hate sentiments among nationals towards immigrant laborers," Al-Humaidi argued. He also referred to the 'Best and Worst Places for Expats in 2017' report which was released recently by InterNations' Expat Insider, and ranked Kuwait in the bottom three for the fourth consecutive year.

"What is happening to immigrants in Kuwait makes the problem even more complicated instead of solving it, especially since the world is watching what is happening here," he said. "This puts us in an embarrassing situation. We cannot be a humanitarian center and practice racism towards expatriates at the same time."

ZAIN DONATES 3,000 CAMERAS FOR MOSQUES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is preparing a tender to supply, install and maintain surveillance cameras in mosques, Quran houses and administrative buildings, said assistant undersecretary for mosques affairs Dawood Al-Assousi, noting that the tender will cover over 1,500 of the ministry's facilities. Assousi said that around 750 out of the total of 3,000 cameras donated by Zain had been installed in mosques and that the remaining will be installed within two months.

Bedoon students

MP Nasser Al-Doussary said that Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Mohammad Al-Fares informed him that he will stop transferring bedoon students to schools in Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Ahmedi, and that he will meet with his undersecretary and the assistant undersecretary for public education to set an immediate plan to have them registered in schools close to their houses. Fares has also promised to solve the problem of overcrowded classes in Sabah Al-Ahmed by opening new classes.

Agreements

The National Assembly's office yesterday referred a number of draft laws concerning agreements and memorandums of understanding that the government had presented to the parliamentary foreign affairs com-

mittee for discussion pending voting on passing them, said informed sources. The proposals include economic ones for GCC states and a protocol on amending an agreement with India to prevent double taxation, the sources added. The proposals also include legal and judicial agreements with Egypt and security cooperation with Iraq.

Expenses

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh said that the foreign affairs, defense, higher education and health ministries spent a total of KD 2.21 billion on their expenses abroad up to March 2017. Responding to a parliamentary inquiry, Saleh explained that the foreign ministry spent KD 654 million on Kuwaiti embassies abroad, defense ministry spent KD 217 million on its military offices abroad, ministry of higher education spent KD 259 million on scholarships abroad while the health ministry spent KD 1.8 billion on overseas treatment. Meanwhile, Saleh said that the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) was facing various impediments causing delay in some public-private-partnership projects. Saleh explained that the obstacles include delay in receiving approvals from monitoring apparatuses such as the fatwa and legislation department and the audit bureau, especially since special advisors were appointed for each project. He added that another reason was the delay in approving some projects' feasibility studies.

Crime

Report

Passenger arrested with 4,000 illicit tablets

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An Egyptian man was arrested at Kuwait International Airport while attempting to smuggle 4,000 illicit tablets and was sent to Drugs Control General Department.



KUWAIT: Drugs found with a passenger arrested at Kuwait International Airport yesterday.

Hawally thief detained

Hawally criminal detectives arrested an Arab man who broke into vehicles and stole their owners' belongings from inside. The man was placed under surveillance then was arrested. Police found some of the stolen material with him. The man was linked to more than 25 thefts

and seven other felonies. He was sent to concerned authorities.

Crackdowns

Head of the emergency team at Farwaniya Municipality Ahmad Al-Shareeka said a campaign was carried out in Khaitan that resulted in confiscating and destroying 160 kg of expired foodstuff. Meanwhile, head of emergency team at the Capital Municipality Zaid Al-Enezi said that encroachments on state property were removed during a recent crackdown such as steel and wooden fences in seven buildings, while 18 unlicensed billboards were removed, seven motorcycles were confiscated and 19 workers ticketed for practicing professions while using unlicensed vehicles.



Kuwait Municipality workers remove an unlicensed billboard during a recent campaign.

Kuwait Times

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* This campaign is limited to participants in Kuwait only. Ministries and their departments, companies and NGOs cannot enter the festival.
* Kuwait Times' employees, spouses and their second-degree relatives also cannot participate.

In Brief

AMIR SENDS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to the Yang di-Pertuan Agong of Malaysia Sultan Muhammad V of Kelantan. His Highness expressed his sincere condolences and sorrow over the death of Sultan of Kedah Abdul Halim Muadzam Shah. He prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow his mercy upon the late Sultan and place him in his heaven, and inspire the Malaysian royal family with patience and solace. —KUNA



KFSD READY FOR HEAVY RAINS

KUWAIT: An official from the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) stated yesterday that the department has activated emergency plans in preparation for the heavy rains and flooding that might occur during the winter season. The plan includes the installation of water pumps and the supply of small boats, hoops, life jackets, and rescue ropes, said the Director of Central Operations Brigadier Tariq Al-Sabti in a press statement. —KUNA



JAZEERA FLIGHT INCIDENT

KUWAIT: Proper procedures were carried out over the ongoing probe into the Al-Jazeera aircraft (flight 787) collision with a radar-equipped balloon, said Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) yesterday. In a press release, the DGCA said that the incident, occurred on August 27, did not result in major damages to the aircraft, which landed safely. The statement indicated that the independent team, tasked with the probe, would continue to look into the matter to determine what have happened. — KUNA



Photo of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwait City's skyline pictured during twilight. —KUNA

KUWAITI PROVIDES FOOD PARCELS TO ROHINGYAS IN BANGLADESH



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Mercy International, part of the Association for Social Reform, launched a campaign to distribute around 4,000 food parcels to some 16,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, said an official yesterday. Mercy International's Indian subcontinent bureau Chief Mohammad Al-Qassar said via phone that aiding Myanmar's Rohingya minority was a humanitarian duty which Kuwait would gladly participate in.

He indicated that the Rohingyas, who are escaping persecution in Myanmar, are in desperate need for aid considering their current dire situation. As a nation eager for truth and justice, Kuwait will stand by the Rohingyas "who are abused and massacred by the Buddhist majority in their country," said Qassar who called on all components of Kuwaiti society to aid their fellow Muslims in Myanmar. He urged people to donate to the campaign through Mercy International headquarters all over Kuwait or through the committee's website.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation announced yesterday that they are working together to deliver relief aid and assistance to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. KRCS Chairman of the Board Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said that the society was keen on collaborating with other international partners to help the Rohingya Muslims. In the upcoming days, the KRCS and associates will launch a campaign in support of the Rohingyas escaping persecution from the Buddhist majority in Myanmar. In the previous weeks, some 300,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Rakhine State in Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). — KUNA



KUWAIT: Members of the capital commission in the Municipal Council met yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT TO SPECIALIZE PLOTS FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

KUWAIT: The capital commission in the Municipal Council on yesterday approved a plan to allocate plots of land in the country's governorates for young Kuwaiti entrepreneurs to display their products and promote their ventures. Dr Hassan Kamal, member of the committee, said in a statement to journalists that the commission

recommended forming a team to specify the locations and work out permits' mechanisms. The State of Kuwait adopts a strategy aimed at encouraging young businesspersons and enterprises. Authorities have recently invited such businesspersons to erect kiosks at the public schools, as part of this approach. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently celebrated the graduation of the fourth batch of Communications Department employees from CBK Academy in Faiha.



AMMAN: Jordanian Prime Minister Dr Hani Al-Mulki meets with Kuwaiti National Industries Group Holding's chief Saad Al-Saad. — KUNA

KUWAITI GROUP INVESTS \$2.5 BILLION IN JORDAN

AMMAN: The Kuwaiti National Industries Group Holding has investments worth \$2.5 billion in Jordan, said the chairman on Tuesday. Jordanian Premiership, in a statement, quoted Saad Al-Saad as saying that the group has plans to expand the businesses in the kingdom.

Minister Dr Hani Al-Mulki, who hosted a delegation of the group headed by Saad, as pledging to provide it with all necessary facilities to grow its investments in the country.

The Kuwaiti group, established in 1961, seeks to expand its projects in various sectors in the country. — KUNA

The statement quoted Jordanian Prime



KUWAIT: An artist's rendition for the Shagaya renewable energy project's site. — KUNA photos



Environment Public Authority's Director Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah tours Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Complex.

RENEWABLE ENERGY: FROM OIL ALTERNATIVE TO ECONOMIC PROJECT

KUWAIT: Thanks to collective inter-agency effort to materialize the vision of Kuwait's political leadership, solar and wind energies have become a tangible reality after Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Complex went operational. The complex has been hooked to the national power grid recently, thus adding nearly 23 million kilowatts per hour in the first six months to the country's generating capacity. Kuwait's attempts to tap into renewable energy sources date back to the 1980s; projects in this sector came to the fore in the national economic development plan in 2010 under the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for covering 15 percent of the demand for electricity from renewables through 2030. Based on an oil price of \$45 per barrel, the vision aims to save up to \$2.5 billion a year that would be spent on electricity generated from fossil fuel. The Ministry of Electricity and Water, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) and Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) worked together to turn renewable energy from competitors to oil - the main source of national income, into an investment project with high economic and environment returns.

Located in the western area of Kuwait, Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Complex opens new horizons for private investors in the coming stages, thus promoting innovation in this field, Chairman of the Complex Dr Salem Al-Hajraf said. "The Complex consists of two power-generating plants - one solar and the other wind," he said.

"The total output of clean energy from the Complex amounts to 23 million kw/h in the first six months equivalent to the power

produced from 40,000 barrels of oil worth KD 600,000 (some \$1.9 million)," he revealed. "The unconventional energy is highly cost-effective. The energy production of the Complex costs in the first six months only KD 400,000 (nearly \$1.3 million), so the difference between the cost of conventional and unconventional energy prices is KD 160,000 or \$500,000," Dr Hajraf stated.

Tapping into clean energy saved environment from 15,000 tons of carbon dioxide that could be emitted from fossil fuel in this period, he noted. "The three-phase Complex is a pioneering project, jointly developed by KISR and KNPC in collaboration with the ministry. Its construction works started in 2013. When its final phase is complete in 2030, the Complex will spare up to 12.5 million barrels of oil a year or 3-4 percent of the total oil consumption," he added. With a total population of 4.4 million people, Kuwait consumes 350,000 barrels of oil per day, valued at \$15.7 million, to generate electricity and desalinate seawater. The power generated from the Complex will grow from 20 megawatts in the current first phase to 50 megawatts in 2018, 1,000 megawatts in 2020 and 2,000 megawatts in the third phase in 2025.

Undersecretary of the Ministry of Electricity and Water Engineer Mohammad Bushehri projected the domestic demand for oil to expand to one million bpd by 2035 when the country's population will grow to 5.5 million. He said the total power generating capacity of the country amounts to 16,700 megawatts, noting that the electrical load this summer has hit 13,800 megawatts, which forced tapping into the potentials of alternative energy. — KUNA



Solar panels to produce energy for schools.



An example of renewable energy used domestically.



Another example of renewable energy used domestically.



Wind power harnessed at Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Complex.



Solar panels at Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Complex.



Renewable energy is harnessed to provide schools with electricity.



Workers are seen at the project's site.



Shocked residents return to Irma-ravaged Florida Keys

N KOREA TO BOOST WEAPONS PROGRAMS AFTER SANCTIONS



NEW DELHI: Indian Muslims hold placards and shout slogans during a protest against the persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, in New Delhi, India. — AP

AS ROHINGYAS FLEE, SUU KYI SKIPS UN SUMMIT

‘CLEARANCE OPERATIONS’ SET OFF A WAVE OF VIOLENCE

COX’S BAZAR: With Myanmar drawing condemnation for violence that has driven at least 370,000 Rohingya to flee the country, the government said yesterday its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, will skip this month’s UN General Assembly. Suu Kyi will miss the assembly, which opened Tuesday and runs through Sept 25, in order to address domestic security issues, according to presidential office spokesman Zaw Htay.

Her appearance at last year’s General Assembly was a landmark: her first since her party won elections in 2015 and replaced a military-dominated government. Even then, however, she faced criticism over Myanmar’s treatment of Rohingya, whose name she did not utter. Members of the ethnic group are commonly referred to as “Bengalis” by many in Myanmar who insist they migrated illegally from Bangladesh. Suu Kyi is not Myanmar’s president — her official titles are state counselor and foreign minister but she effectively serves as leader of the Southeast Asian nation. Zaw Htay said that, with President Htin Kyaw hospitalized, second Vice President Henry Van Tio would attend the UN meeting. “The first reason (Suu Kyi cannot attend) is because of the Rakhine terrorist attacks,” Zaw Htay said. “The state counselor is

focusing to calm the situation in Rakhine state. There are circumstances. The second reason is, there are people inciting riots in some areas. We are trying to take care of the security issue in many other places. The third is that we are hearing that there will be terrorist attacks and we are trying to address this issue.”

The crisis erupted on Aug 25, when an insurgent Rohingya group attacked police outposts in Myanmar’s Rakhine state. That prompted Myanmar’s military to launch “clearance operations” against the rebels, setting off a wave of violence that has left hundreds dead and thousands of homes burned — mostly Rohingya in both cases. Zaw Htay said of 471 “Bengali” villages in three townships, 176 are now completely empty and at least 34 others are partially abandoned. He said there had been at least 86 clashes until Sept. 5, but none since then.

“What that means is, when the security forces are trying to stabilize the region, they have succeeded to a point,” he said. The government blames Rohingya for the violence, but journalists who visited the region found evidence that raises doubts about its claims that Rohingya set fire to their own homes. Many of the Rohingya who flooded into refugee camps in Bangladesh told

of Myanmar soldiers shooting indiscriminately, burning their homes and warning them to leave or die. Others said they were attacked by Buddhist mobs.

‘Take their nationals back’

Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate who lived under house arrest for many years under a military junta that ultimately gave way to an elected government, has faced a torrent of international criticism and pressure since the crisis erupted. On Tuesday, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called the killing of Muslims a political disaster and called Suu Kyi a “brutal woman.” UN human rights chief Zeid Ra’ad al-Husseini said the Rohingya were victims of what “seems a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” Bangladesh has been overwhelmed with the massive influx of Rohingya, many of whom arrived hungry and traumatized after walking for days through jungles or being packed into rickety wooden boats.

Before Aug 25, Bangladesh had already been housing some 500,000 Rohingya refugees who fled earlier flashes of violence including anti-Muslim riots in 2012. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has pledged to help the new arrivals, but

demanding that Myanmar “take their nationals back.” With two pre-existing camps packed beyond capacity, the government said it would provide 2,000 acres for a new camp in the border district of Cox’s Bazar. Many of the new arrivals were staying in makeshift settlements along roads and in open fields.

Basic resources were scarce, including food, clean water and medical aid. Dozens of foreign diplomats and aid agency officials were set to meet Rohingya refugees yesterday near the Kutupalong refugee camp, according to Kazi Abdur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner in Cox’s Bazar district. “A humanitarian crisis is going on here,” he said. The diplomats “will visit camps, talk to them, see their condition. We need to work together during such a serious crisis.” Two human rights groups have accused the UN Security Council of ignoring the crisis.

“This is an international peace and security crisis” and there is no excuse for the Security Council “sitting on its hands,” Louis Charbonneau of Human Rights Watch said Tuesday alongside representatives from Amnesty International at the UN headquarters The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the world’s largest Muslim body,



NAYPYITAW: In this file photo, Myanmar’s State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi delivers an opening speech during the Forum on Myanmar Democratic Transition in Naypyitaw, Myanmar. — AP

urged Myanmar to allow in UN monitors so they can investigate what it alleged was systematic brutality against the Rohingya. The UN Human Rights Council approved an investigative mission earlier this year, but Myanmar in June refused to allow it to enter. An envoy’s visit in July was met with protests. The ethnic Rohingya Muslim minority has faced decades of discrimination persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar, where they are denied citizenship despite centuries-old roots in the country. — AP

EUROPE MUST SEIZE BREXIT WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY, SAYS JUNCKER

STRASBOURG: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker declared in a flagship speech yesterday that “wind is back in Europe’s sails” after last year’s shock Brexit vote, an act he warned Britain would regret. In his annual State of the Union address, Juncker urged the bloc to seize a “window of opportunity” and use the momentum from its recent economic recovery to become more deeply integrated than ever before. Defying the eurosceptic trends that drove Britain to become the first country to decide to leave the EU, Juncker outlined a vision of a bigger eurozone and passport-free Schengen area, under the aegis of a single EU president.

The former Luxembourg prime minister also painted a picture of a Europe that would sign new trade deals around the world, although he made no mention of any such pact with Britain after it jumps ship. “The wind is back in Europe’s sails,” Juncker told the European Parliament in Strasbourg, in an unrepentantly federalist speech that mixed English, French and German. “We have now a window of opportunity but it will not stay open forever. Let us make the most of the momentum, catch the wind in our sails.” Juncker called for the leaders of the remaining 27 countries to hold a special summit in Romania on March 30, 2019

— the day after Britain’s departure, to “sail away from the harbor.”

‘You will regret it’

Juncker did not utter the word “Brexit” until the very end of his 80-minute speech, saying only that “we will regret it”—and then adding “you will regret it too” when British eurosceptics in the chamber jeered him. “We will move forward—because Brexit is not everything, because Brexit is not the future of Europe,” the veteran politician added. British eurosceptic leader Nigel Farage, who is a Euro-MP, responded to Juncker: “Thank God we’re leaving—you’ve learnt nothing from Brexit.”

British Prime Minister Theresa May’s office said she had not watched the speech, but added that “the EU will of course want to make its plans going forward” and that Britain wanted a “successful and prosperous Europe.”

The 62-year-old Juncker has two years left in office as head of the EU’s powerful executive to ensure that his legacy is not limited to Brexit. While he admitted that when he gave his 2016 speech the EU was “battered and bruised by a year that shook our very foundations,” this year he struck a far more optimistic tone. With all 28 EU countries back in growth after years of economic crisis, and the populist

surge of Brexit and the election of US President Donald Trump at bay for now, Juncker said there were reasons to be cheerful. He called on the bloc to seal trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand by the end of his mandate, and push for pacts with Mexico and South American countries.

Juncker proposed an elected “single president” to lead the EU, merging his job as head of the European Commission and the president of the European Council of member states, currently held by Donald Tusk. That idea ran into immediate opposition from Denmark and the Netherlands, while Tusk tweeted that the focus should be on “real pressing problems.”

More Europe

Juncker’s speech was full of calls for “more Europe,” especially his suggestion that Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia should all finally become full members of the Schengen zone. The eurozone should meanwhile be expanded beyond its current 19 countries, in line with the EU’s treaties that say all states must join the single currency, he said.

Juncker furthermore backed French President Emmanuel Macron’s call for a pan-European finance minister to help firefight



STRASBOURG: European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, left, kisses vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans before delivering his State of the Union speech at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. — AFP

future crises, although he was against Macron’s proposal for a eurozone parliament. The calls for more integration come despite the need to heal a deepening split with eastern European countries that resist such plans. Juncker took a swipe at Poland and Hungary—which have been at odds with Brussels over democratic standards—saying EU countries should not be allowed to breach the “rule of law.”

Turkey was also in his crosshairs as he ruled

out EU membership “for the foreseeable future” because of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s post-coup attempt crackdown, and urged Ankara to free detained journalists. Juncker also attacked the “scandalous” conditions for migrants in Libya, with which the EU is working to try to stop Mediterranean crossings, and called for more solidarity with states like Italy that are on the frontline of Europe’s migration crisis. — AFP

ISRAEL ENDORSES INDEPENDENT KURDISH STATE



AKRA: Iraqi Kurds wave Kurdish flags and hold torches as they gather to show support for the upcoming independence referendum and to encourage people to vote in the town of Akra, some 500 kilometers north of Baghdad. —AFP

JERUSALEM: Israel supports the establishment of a Kurdish state, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday, as Kurds in Iraq gear up for a referendum on independence that lawmakers in Baghdad oppose. Israel has maintained discreet military, intelligence and business ties with the Kurds since the 1960s, viewing the minority ethnic group-whose indigenous population is split between Iraq, Turkey, Syria and Iran-as a buffer against shared Arab adversaries.

On Tuesday, Iraq's Kurdish leader Massoud Barzani said he would press ahead with the Sept 25 referendum despite a vote by Iraq's parliament rejecting it. "(Israel) supports the legitimate efforts of the Kurdish people to achieve their own state," Netanyahu said, in remarks sent to foreign correspondents by his office. Western powers are concerned a plebiscite in Iraq's semi-autonomous Kurdish region - including the oil-rich city of Kirkuk - could divert attention from the war against Islamic State militants.

Netanyahu said Israel does however consider the Turkey-based Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) a

terrorist group, taking the same position as Turkey, the United States and the European Union. An Israeli general told a conference in Washington last week that he personally did not regard the PKK, whose militants have been fighting Turkey for more than three decades, as a terrorist group. Netanyahu, who is due to address the UN General Assembly on Sept 19, voiced support for "the Kurds' aspirations for independence" in a speech in 2014, saying they deserve "political independence".

His latest remarks appeared to be a more direct endorsement of the creation of a Kurdish state. But they will cut little ice in Baghdad, which has no diplomatic relations with Israel and has strong ties with Israel's arch-foe Iran. Iraq's neighbors-Turkey, Iran and Syria-oppose the referendum, fearing it could fan separatism among their own ethnic Kurdish populations. Kurds have sought an independent state since at least the end of World War One, when colonial powers divided up the Middle East after the collapse of the multi-ethnic Ottoman Empire. —Reuters

ISRAEL RULING ON ARMY SERVICE FOR RELIGIOUS SPARKS ANGER, DEBATE

JERUSALEM: An Israeli Supreme Court decision that could force ultra-Orthodox citizens to serve in the army like their secular counterparts sparked anger from religious leaders yesterday and reignited a sensitive political debate. Tuesday's decision strikes down a law exempting ultra-Orthodox men engaged in religious study from military service, saying it undermines equality. The decision raises the possibility that they could be forced into service, a highly contentious proposition with political implications.

The court however suspended its decision for one year to allow for preparations for the new arrangement-which also provides the government with the opportunity to pass a new law. Ultra-Orthodox political parties and their allies in government are likely to draft new legislation that could seek to override the court ruling and keep the exemption in place. The ultra-Orthodox parties form a key part of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition and have often acted as king-makers in Israeli politics.

Around 10 percent of Israel's eight million people are considered ultra-Orthodox. Health Minister Yaakov Litzman, whose ultra-Orthodox United Torah Judaism alliance is part of Netanyahu's coalition, accused the court of seeking to topple the coalition. He called the ruling "one of the worst, most wretched judicial decrees that will enter the long history of persecutions of the Jewish people," ultra-Orthodox newspaper Hamodia reported. Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, said "the Supreme Court is totally cut off from our (Jewish) heritage and tradition."

The issue is part of a decades-old debate over whether young ultra-Orthodox men studying at seminaries should perform mandatory military service like the rest of Israel's Jewish population. After reaching age 18, men must serve two years and eight months, while women must serve for two. In 2015, lawmakers passed legislation extending their exemption from duty, reversing a law passed the previous year that would have seen it expire.

Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion initially granted the exemption in the early years of the state founded in 1948, which at the time involved only 400 students. The ultra-Orthodox are however today among the fastest-growing segments of Israel's population, with projections that they could account for one-quarter of the total by 2050.

'Not just for suckers'

They oppose serving for a variety of reasons, with the most extreme believing a Jewish state is not allowed before the coming of the Messiah. Others argue that yeshiva study is just as important to Israel as military service or that ultra-Orthodox soldiers would be confronted with salty language and other unreligious behavior. Yair Lapid, the head of the centrist Yesh Atid party who pushed to remove the exemption as part of the previous government in 2014, welcomed the court's decision as a victory of "values."

Lapid, now in the opposition, also criticized Netanyahu, saying the prime minister could not continue to avoid the issue and that "conscription is for everyone, not just for the suckers who don't have a party in the coalition." Israeli media reported that the ultra-Orthodox parties were to meet on Wednesday to plot a way forward after the decision. But many analysts said it was unlikely to provoke a coalition crisis, with Netanyahu having sided with the ultra-Orthodox parties on a range of issues recently.

A decision in June to scrap a deal to allow women and men to pray together at the Western Wall provoked heavy criticism of Netanyahu, who was accused of abandoning reform efforts for political gain. The ultra-Orthodox parties bitterly opposed the deal for mixed-gender prayer at the site in Jerusalem, the holiest where Jews are allowed to pray, since it violates their strict interpretation of Jewish law. "Let's put matters in proportion. This is not a political earthquake, not at this stage," political columnist Ben Caspit wrote in Israel's Maariv newspaper. "Almost nobody has the energy for elections at the moment." —AFP



ALEPPO: People ride bicycles in what was once a rebel-controlled area in Aleppo, Syria. — AP

AFTER HELPING RETAKE ALEPPO, RUSSIA SEEKS TO REBUILD IT

MOSCOW PROVIDES STUDENTS WITH BACK-TO-SCHOOL PACKAGES

ALEPPO: Flicking through before-and-after photos of Aleppo's Umayyad mosque on his phone, the city's mufti Mahmoud Akkam said he initially wanted the celebrated landmark to be restored by fellow Syrians. But when Ramzan Kadyrov, the strongman chief of Russia's Chechnya region, offered to repair the damage that the ancient mosque sustained in ferocious clashes four years ago, Akkam felt he could not say no. "He was very persistent," Akkam said, "and since we are of the same religion and he understands us, we accepted."

Kadyrov is a fierce loyalist of Russian President Vladimir Putin, but has also sought to present himself as an influential figure for Muslims worldwide. A fund named after his father Akhmat has already transferred the estimated \$14 million needed to fund the mosque's restorations. If it is not enough, "they will transfer more," Akkam told journalists on a tightly controlled tour of Aleppo organized by Russia's military to tout the city's resurgence.

Syria's second city was battered by four years of fighting between rebels in the east and government forces in the west, until an evacuation deal at the end of 2016 brought it under regime control. One of the bloodiest frontlines was Aleppo's Old City, a UNESCO-listed world heritage site featuring the ancient covered market, centuries-old citadel, and famous Umayyad mosque. Clashes in April 2013 reduced the

mosque's minaret, which dates back to the 11th century, to an unrecognizable pile of blocks.

Retake, rebuild

Russia has been a decades-long ally of Damascus and stuck by its side when the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad broke out in 2011, before devolving into a civil war that has killed over 330,000 people. In September 2015, Moscow began carrying out air strikes that have allowed Syrian troops to retake swathes of territory-including Aleppo. Now that it is back under government control, Russia appears keen to help rebuild it. Aleppo's skyline features massive posters of Assad against a backdrop of the ancient citadel. The cacophony of honking and buzz of shoppers in some neighborhoods sounds like that of any metropolis, but much of the city's east still lies in silent ruin. Analysts say Syria's financial institutions are not in a position to fund reconstruction and nations that have called for Assad's ouster are unlikely to help. Allies like Russia and Iran have stepped in to fill the void.

Syria signed a memorandum of understanding on Tuesday with Tehran for the provision of five gas units to help generate electricity and restore power to Aleppo. And yesterday, Moscow said it will send some 4,000 tons of building materials and construction equipment to Syria to help "rebuild vital infrastructure for settlements freed from terrorists". The delivery-

including 2,000 tons of metal water pipes and hundreds of kilometers of high-voltage cables-was being transported by train to a port in southern Russia for onward shipment to Syria.

A long-time ally

Asked whether the West was helping rebuild Aleppo, deputy governor Faris Faris said Europe "only gave us militants to kill Syrian people." "We will have to rebuild ourselves, with government help. Without European help," he said. And Akkam said UNESCO had not done enough for the city's heritage whereas Chechnya's Kadyrov "extended his help at a very difficult time." The pro-Putin leader has helped rebuild Russia's largest mosque, but his fund has been criticized as "the least transparent organization" by opposition paper Novaya Gazeta.

Officials also appeared keen to brandish Moscow's help in restoring Aleppo's Al-Furqan school and providing Syrian students there with back-to-school packages. "Russia has been here for a long time," said deputy provincial governor Hamid Kino. Russian forces were providing security for aid convoys and helping transport families displaced from Aleppo's outskirts back into their battered hometowns, he said. "Every day people come back to those towns. Some have their own cars, but for others, we find buses while the Russians bring Kamaz trucks for people's belongings," Kino said. —AFP



KABUL: Afghan security personnel stand guard at a road block after an explosion near the Afghan cricket stadium in Kabul. — AFP

SUICIDE BOMBER KILLS THREE NEAR KABUL CRICKET STADIUM

KABUL: A suicide bomber blew himself up near a cricket stadium in the Afghan capital Kabul yesterday, killing three people including a policeman and wounding five others, police said. The attacker detonated the bomb after he was stopped at a security checkpoint by suspicious police as he walked towards the Alokozay Kabul International Cricket Ground where a match was under way. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, the latest in a series of deadly assaults in the city.

"The security forces by sacrificing themselves have prevented the attacker from reaching the crowd (inside the stadium) and creating a catastrophe," police spokesman Basir Mujahid said. Two of the wounded were police officers. Several ambulances were seen speeding away from the scene, apparently taking the injured to hospital, an AFP reporter said. Scores of police blocked the road leading to the stadium where the sixth match of the Shpageeza Cricket League season between the Boost Defenders and Mis Ainak Knights was under way.

The competition started Monday. Hundreds of spectators could be heard from outside the stadium as firefighters washed down the area where the bomber

had blown himself to bits. Afghanistan Cricket Board spokesman Farid Hotak said the match was briefly interrupted and "all players and cricket board officials are safe". The last major attack in Kabul happened on August 29 when a suicide bomber blew himself up outside a bank days before the Eid festival, killing five people and injuring several others.

Yesterday's assault came hours after eight Afghans expelled from Germany arrived in Kabul after Berlin resumed deportations of Afghan asylum-seekers. It had suspended the process when a huge truck bomb tore through the city's highly fortified diplomatic quarter on May 31, killing around 150 people and wounding hundreds more. The latest group represented the sixth wave of repatriations of Afghans from Germany since December under a disputed Afghan-European Union deal aimed at curbing the influx of migrants.

Berlin has argued that it can safely repatriate people to Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan, even as Taliban and Islamic State militants terrorize much of the country. "They told me that there is no problem in your country and you can live there so you can't stay here (Germany) anymore," Mohammad Jamshidi, one of the deportees, said. —AFP

GOING TO SCHOOL IN BALKANS, SEGREGATED BY ETHNICITY

PALAJ, Kosovo: Benjamin, an ethnic Albanian, and Luka, an ethnic Serb, are young neighbors who share a school but meet only on the football pitch. One boy is taught that Kosovo is independent and the other that it is a Serbian province. In the former Yugoslavia, especially Bosnia, Kosovo and Muslim-dominated areas of Serbia, schooling is often determined by ethnic affiliation. "In the long term this will cause social damage and political instability," said education specialist Dukagjin Pupovci, warning that Serb pupils in Kosovo risked living "outside reality".

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008, a decade after a war between its ethnic Albanian pro-independence rebels and Belgrade forces. Although more than 110 countries now recognize Kosovo's sovereignty, the ethnic Serb minority in the former province does not and is backed by Serbia and Russia. In Palaj, on the outskirts of Kosovo's capital Pristina, a slim majority of its 400 inhabitants are ethnic Serbs who call the village Crkvena Vodica ("Holy Water").

They share a school with the local Albanian community, but the name of the establishment changes according to class ethnicity. In the morning, when the school hosts around 50 young Serbs, it is called "Dostoj Obradovic" after an 18th century Serbian writer and philosopher. But in the afternoon, when some 80 Albanians take to their desks, it is known as "Fazli Graiqevci" in honour of an Albanian education activist. Benjamin, a Barcelona fan, meets Real Madrid supporter Luka only when playing football.

"Everyone speaks his own language. When we do not understand each other we speak

using our hands," 11-year-old Benjamin told AFP. Luka, 12, said there were rarely any problems, and if they do occur, "we solve them by ourselves, we don't call our parents or teachers".

No politics, no problems

While their parents often speak each other's language, a legacy of the former Yugoslavia, the two young boys do not. Benjamin can learn

English and French at school, while Russian is the preferred second language for Serbs. "We are like two trains arriving from different directions and meeting only briefly at the same station," said physics teacher Sejdi Preniqi. This is above average integration for schools in Kosovo, where the two ethnic groups typically learn on completely different premises, with the Serb system and its teachers funded by Belgrade. —AFP



PALAJ: A Kosovo Albanian student cleans a blackboard at an elementary school in the village of Palaj. — AFP

MADURO ACCEPTS TALKS OFFER WITH VENEZUELA OPPOSITION

CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Tuesday his government was prepared to meet the opposition for talks, offering a glimpse of a breakthrough in a political standoff marked by months of deadly protests. Maduro made the surprise announcement in a televised cabinet meeting in Caracas. He told his ministers he would accept to undertake talks brokered by Dominican Republic President Danilo Medina and ex-Spanish premier Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero.

"Zapatero and President Medina know very well that I have been a promoter of this dialogue and I accept this new day of dialogue," Maduro said. Maduro appointed influential Caracas politician Jorge Rodriguez as his representative at the talks, and said he would leave for the Dominican Republic "in the next few hours." The opposition announced in turn that it held an exploratory meeting yesterday with the Dominican president. However, it insisted it did not mean it was the beginning of formal talks with the government.

"The time for symbolic gestures is over," the opposition coalition

Democratic Unity Roundtable said. "To enter into serious negotiation, we demand immediate actions that demonstrate a real willingness to resolve the national problems and not to win time," it said. Oil-rich Venezuela is facing a growing economic crisis that has caused shortages of food and medicine as it faces the prospect of default to its Russian and Chinese creditors. Maduro had to weather falling oil prices and a wave of opposition protests that left 125 people dead between April and July.

Latest attempt

Medina and Zapatero will hope their efforts to find a solution in Venezuela are more fruitful than those of the Vatican and the Union of South American Nations who brokered the last meeting between the two sides in October last year. Those talks broke up a month later with the opposition accusing the government of failing to adhere to earlier agreements to free political prisoners and prepare elections. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed his "full support" for the initiative, stressing



CARACAS: This file photo shows Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, right, speaking next to former president of Spanish government Jose Luis Rodriguez Zapatero, left, and former president of Dominican Republic Leonel Fernandez, center, at the end of a meeting in the Presidential Palace in Caracas.—AFP

that the Venezuelan crisis requires a "political solution based on dialogue."

International powers accuse Maduro of dismantling democracy by taking over state institutions in order to resist opposition pressure for him to quit, amid an economic crisis that has caused shortages of food and medicine. They accused him of a blatant power grab in July after the formation of a Constituent Assembly packed with his allies which superseded the opposition-dominated national assembly. The opposition had refused to participate in the election of members of the Constituent Assembly, but decided to contest regional polls set for October.

Earlier, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian raised the possibility of a resumption of talks in the Dominican Republic. In a statement published after his meeting with Venezuelan Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza Montserrat, Le Drian welcomed what he called "good news," expressing hope the move would "result very quickly in concrete gestures on the ground." French President Emmanuel Macron said last week that he considered Maduro to be "a dictator"—AFP

SHOCKED RESIDENTS RETURN TO IRMA-RAVAGED FLORIDA KEYS

MORE THAN 60 KILLED BY STORM, AT LEAST 18 IN US

ISLAMORADA: Evacuees from Hurricane Irma were early yesterday returning to the Florida Keys, where sunrise will give them a first glimpse of devastation that has left countless homes and businesses in ruins. Categorized as one of the most powerful Atlantic storms on record, Irma claimed more than 60 lives, officials said. At least 18 people died in Florida and destruction was widespread in the Keys, where Irma made initial US landfall on Sunday to become the second major hurricane to strike the mainland this season.

A resort island chain that stretches from the tip of the state into the Gulf of Mexico, the Keys are connected by a bridges and causeways along a narrow route of nearly 100 miles. "I don't have a house. I don't have a job. I have nothing," said Mercedes Lopez, 50, whose family fled north from the Keys town of Marathon on Friday and rode

out the storm at an Orlando hotel, only to learn their home was destroyed, along with the gasoline station where she worked.

"We came here, leaving everything at home, and we go back to nothing," Lopez said. Four families from Marathon including hers planned to venture back yesterday to salvage what they can. The Keys had been largely evacuated by the time Irma barreled ashore as a Category 4 hurricane with sustained winds of up to 130 mph. Initial damage assessments found 25 percent of homes there were destroyed and 65 percent suffered major damage, Federal Emergency Management Agency administrator Brock Long said.

'Sailboat in our backyard'

Authorities allowed re-entry to the islands of Key Largo,

Tavernier and Islamorada for residents and business owners on Tuesday. The extent of the devastation took many of the first returnees by surprise. "I expected some fence lines to be down and some debris," said Orlando Morejon, 51, a trauma surgeon from Miami as he hacked away at a tree blocking his Islamorada driveway. "We were not expecting to find someone else's sailboat in our backyard."

A boil water notice was in effect for the Keys late on Tuesday, while its airports remained closed to commercial flights. Several major airports in Florida that had halted passenger operations resumed with limited service on Tuesday, including Miami International, one of the busiest in the United States. All 42 bridges in Monroe County, which includes the Keys, were deemed safe and one of two washed out sections of US 1 Roadway was now navigable, the county said on its Twitter account.

At the end of Islamorada, roughly the halfway point of the Keys, police at a checkpoint turned around returning residents seeking to travel farther south and waved through utility crews, law enforcement and healthcare workers. Authorities said they were barring re-entry to the remainder of the Keys to allow more time to restore electricity, water, fuel and medical service. US officials have said some 10,000 Keys residents stayed put when the storm hit and may ultimately need to be evacuated.

Across Florida and nearby states, some 5.8 million homes and businesses were late on Tuesday estimated to be still without power, down from a peak of 7.4 million on Monday. Florida's largest utility, Florida Power & Light Co, said western parts of Florida might be without electricity until Sept. 22. The state's largest city, Jacksonville, in its northeastern corner, was still recovering from heavy flooding yesterday.

While damage across Florida was severe, it paled in comparison with devastation wrought by Irma in parts of the Caribbean, which accounted for the bulk of the hurricane's fatalities. It destroyed about one-third of the buildings on the Dutch-governed portion of the eastern Caribbean island of St. Martin, the Dutch Red Cross said on Tuesday. Irma was a post-tropical cyclone late on Tuesday as it drifted north as it brought rain to the Mississippi Valley, the National Hurricane Center said. It hit the United States soon after Hurricane Harvey, which plowed into Houston late last month, killing about 60 and causing some \$180 billion in damage, mostly from flooding.—Reuters



FLORIDA: A beachfront home shows damage from Hurricane Irma in Vilano Beach, Florida.—AFP

SPAIN PROSECUTORS THREATEN TO ARREST CATALAN MAYORS

MADRID: Spain's state prosecutor yesterday ordered a criminal probe of Catalan mayors who cooperate with an October 1 independence referendum deemed illegal by Madrid and threatened to arrest those who do not comply. The prosecutors' office ordered the mayors who have agreed to help stage the vote be summoned to court as official suspects and if they do not appear to "order their arrest," according to a copy of the ruling obtained by AFP.

Catalonia's pro-separatist government has asked the wealthy northeastern region's 948 mayors to provide facilities for polling stations for the plebiscite. So far over 700 mostly smaller municipalities have agreed to participate. The ruling comes a day after prosecutors ordered police in Catalonia to seize ballot boxes, election flyers and any other item that could be used in the referendum.

Prosecutors have already launched an official complaint against Catalan president Carles Puigdemont and members of his government over their referendum plans, accusing them of civil disobedience, misfeasance and misappropriation of public funds—the latter carrying jail sentences of up to eight years. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's conservative government has vowed to do everything in his power to stop the referendum.

It argues Spain's 1978 constitution stipulates that regional governments cannot call an independence referendum. Spain's Constitutional Court has suspended a referendum law that was fast-tracked through Catalonia's regional parliament last week but the Catalan government has vowed to go ahead with the vote nonetheless. The court has since 2015 declared regional independence referendums to be unconstitutional.

Economic worries

Catalan authorities routinely ignore the court's decisions as they do not recognize its legitimacy. Catalonia, which is roughly the size of Belgium and accounts for about one-fifth of Spain's economic output, and already has significant powers over matters such as education and healthcare. But Spain's economic worries, coupled with a perception that the region pays more in taxes than it receives in investments and transfers from Madrid, have helped push the cause of secession from the fringes of Catalan politics to centre stage. Adding to the rise in separatist sentiment was a 2010 ruling by the Constitutional Court striking down parts of a 2006 autonomy charter which granted new powers to Catalonia and recognized it as "a nation." —AFP

AMID NORTH KOREA CRISIS, MATTIS FOCUSES ON US DOOMSDAY ARSENAL

WASHINGTON: As North Korea flaunts its new nuclear muscle, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis is spotlighting the overwhelming numerical superiority of America's doomsday arsenal. Yesterday he is dropping in on ground zero of American nuclear firepower: Minot Air Force base in North Dakota, home to more than 100 land-based nuclear missiles as well as nuclear bomb-toting aircraft. He also will receive briefings at Strategic Command, whose top officer would command nuclear forces in war.

The visits were scheduled before a recent series of North Korean nuclear and missile tests, but they give Mattis a chance to highlight what the Air Force touts as an always-ready fleet of land-based missiles and B-52 bombers equipped to deliver nuclear devastation to nearly any point on the globe in short order. Minot and Strategic Command headquarters at Offutt Air Force Base in Nebraska also are timely backdrops for a related political message:

The Trump administration intends to press ahead with a multibillion-dollar modernization of the entire nuclear arsenal. The Pentagon is in the midst of an in-depth review of nuclear weapons policy, but it seems already clear that upgrading the Cold War-era nuclear force is a foregone conclusion. Last month the Pentagon signaled its intentions by awarding two key contracts. One was to Northrop Grumman and Boeing, totaling nearly \$700 million, for further development of an intercontinental ballistic missile, or ICBM, to replace the Minuteman 3.

The other was to Lockheed Martin and Raytheon for \$1.8 billion to work on a new nuclear-armed, air-launched cruise missile. The Air Force also is proceeding with development of a next-generation nuclear-capable bomber, dubbed the B-21 Raider, and the Navy is building a new fleet of strategic nuclear submarines. How this fits into the broader defense budget in coming years is unclear. Kingston Reif, a nuclear policy specialist at the Arms Control Association, says his analysis of budget figures suggests that the total cost over 30 years could approach \$1.5 trillion, when adjusting for inflation.

"The current approach exceeds what is necessary for deterrence and assumes that the United States will maintain a nuclear arsenal like the one it has now for decades to come," Reif said, noting the Obama administration had determined that the nuclear arsenal could be cut further without sacrificing security. Air Force Secretary Heather Wilson said on Monday that there is no practical alternative to modernizing the force. "At some point, stuff just breaks," she said, referring to the Minuteman 3, which was first deployed in 1970. "The materials just are not able to be maintained anymore."



WASHINGTON: In this file photo, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis listens on Capitol Hill in Washington, while testifying before the Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on the Pentagon's budget.—AFP

Easily targeted, not easily destroyed

Mattis in recent weeks has all but dismissed the idea - he himself raised it in congressional testimony two years ago - that the country might be better off eliminating the ICBM fleet. In June, the Air Force finished reducing the number of Minuteman 3 missiles by 50 to a total of 400, the lowest since 1962. But Mattis appears to have been persuaded by the argument that keeping ICBMs deployed in underground silos sprinkled across the western Great Plains is key to deterrence because an attacker would have to use hundreds of weapons to destroy all 400 launch facilities.

"It's going to soak up a lot" of an enemy's arsenal, he said last month, referring to the Minuteman launch sites in North Dakota, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Nebraska. Because these are fixed sites known to an adversary, they are easily targeted, although perhaps not easily destroyed. Minot hosts the 91st Missile Wing, which operates one-third of the nation's 400 Minuteman 3 missiles, as well as the 5th Bomb Wing, which flies nuclear-capable B-52 bombers.

Minot in recent years was at the center of trouble in the ICBM force, including lapses in morale, training, performance and management. The Air Force has made an effort since 2014 to correct those weaknesses, which had accumulated over a period of years, with little attention from Congress. Mattis himself has been something of a nuclear skeptic. Pentagon leaders usually are cheerleaders for the nuclear establishment, in part because it has been at the heart of US security strategy for many decades and in part because it is politically unpopular to question the way that establishment manages the nuclear force.—AP

News

in brief

Two bodies recovered after boat collision off Singapore

SINGAPORE: Divers yesterday recovered the bodies of two seamen who went missing after their dredger collided with a tanker off Singapore and rescuers were hunting for three still missing. The accident around the busy Singapore Strait occurred just weeks after a deadly collision involving a US warship in the same area. After the latest collision in the early hours, the Dominican-registered dredger capsized, leaving four Chinese members of crew and one Malaysian missing. Seven other sailors were rescued. A major rescue effort was launched involving almost 30 boats from Singapore and neighboring Indonesia, and five Singapore Air Force aircraft.

Amnesty calls for ban on pellet shotguns in Kashmir

SRINAGAR: Amnesty International yesterday reiterated its call for a ban on pellet-firing shotguns used by Indian forces in Kashmir to quell civilian protests. In a report the rights group said it had interviewed 88 people whose eyesight had been damaged by the metal shot from the pump-action guns. Two of the victims had been completely blinded. "The injuries and deaths caused by this cruel weapon bear testimony to how dangerous, inaccurate and indiscriminate it is," Akar Patel, executive director at Amnesty International India, said in a statement.

Romania rescues 150 migrants in Black Sea

MEDIA, Romania: Romanian authorities said yesterday they had rescued more than 150 migrants in the Black Sea, the fifth such incident since August amid rising fears that a new migrant route to Europe is opening up. Authorities said 153 people including 53 children and 51 women, many from Iraq, had been on board the vessel when conditions turned choppy off Romania's eastern coast in the night from Tuesday to yesterday. "The sea had been very agitated, with waves of up three meters. These people were in a very dangerous situation and risked either drowning or seeing their boat sink," Cristian Cicu, a spokesman for the Constanta coast-guard, said.

Violence erupts in Haiti over national budget

PORT-AU-PRINCE: Protesters brought parts of the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince to a standstill Tuesday, setting vehicles alight and damaging local businesses in violent demonstrations against the government's budget plans. "These little thieves in Parliament voted for this budget to help the government exploit the people," said protester Marco Paul Delva, standing by a barricade of flaming tires near the legislature. Traffic in the center of Port-au-Prince and on key routes around the city ground to a halt after protesters threw stones and tires across roads. The protest took police by surprise and they were unable to intervene in some blocked-off areas.

Seattle mayor quits after fifth sexual abuse claim

LOS ANGELES: The mayor of the US Pacific Northwest city of Seattle quit Tuesday after his younger cousin became the fifth man to accuse the politician of sexual abuse. Ed Murray, 62, who had already confirmed he would not be seeking a second term, will step down effective of 5:00 pm yesterday. "While the allegations against me are not true, it is important that my personal issues do not affect the ability of our city government to conduct the public's business," he said in a statement. Joseph Dyer, a 54-year-old dialysis technician, said Murray forced him into sex for about a year while the two shared a bedroom in the New York home of Dyer's mother when the alleged victim was 13.

US kills six in Shabaab air strikes in Somalia

WASHINGTON: US forces in Somalia conducted three air strikes on Islamist Shabaab targets yesterday, killing six fighters with the Al-Qaeda linked group, the US military said. The pre-dawn operation occurred in southern Somalia about 160 miles south of Mogadishu. The strikes were conducted under powers President Donald Trump gave the Pentagon in March that lets the military take counter-terrorism actions—whether airstrikes or ground raids—when it deems them necessary to support the Somali government. "In coordination with the federal government of Somalia, US forces conducted three precision air strikes in Somalia against al-Shabaab, killing six terrorists," the US military's Africa Command said in a statement.—Agencies

ANGER AS SINGAPORE GETS 1ST FEMALE PRESIDENT WITHOUT A VOTE

SINGAPORE: Singapore got its first female president yesterday, but the milestone was overshadowed by criticism that her selection was undemocratic after she was handed the job without a vote.

without an election. What a joke. "I will call her President Select from now on," said Joel Kong on the networking site, while some posts were marked with the hashtag #NotMyPresident

President for everyone

Halimah was a member of parliament for the ruling People's Action Party for nearly two decades before resigning to contest the presidency. She addressed the concerns about the selection process after being named president-elect. "I'm a president for everyone. Although there's no election, my commitment to serve you remains the same," she said.

She also insisted her status as Singapore's first female president was "not just tokenism", in a speech to a cheering crowd while wearing orange, a color supposed to symbolize unity. "Every woman can aspire to the highest office in



SINGAPORE: Singapore's new president-elect Halimah Yacob, center, addresses supporters at the nomination centre in Singapore.—AFP

the land when you have the courage, determination and will to work hard," she said. Singapore's head of state has limited powers, including vetoing senior official

appointments. But an establishment figure has always held the role and there are rarely tensions with the government. Authorities decided to allow only candi-

dates from the Malay community to put themselves forward for the presidency to foster harmony in the city-state of 5.5 million people which is dominated by ethnic Chinese, and give more opportunities to minorities. Halimah is the first Malay president of Singapore for almost five decades.

But the decision to limit candidates to one race had caused concern, including among Malays, as it was seen as positive discrimination that ran counter to the city-state's traditional meritocratic principles. Five people had originally put their names forward for the presidency and the government had scheduled an election for September 23. Two were quickly eliminated as they were not Malay. The two others, Malay businessmen, were disqualified on Monday as their companies were smaller than required by strict new eligibility rules introduced last year.



MANILA: This file photo shows Philippine National Police (PNP) Director General Roland dela Rosa, left, and Commission on Human Rights Commissioner Chito Gascon, right, taking their oaths at the start of a senate inquiry into a spate of extrajudicial killings in Manila.—AFP

PHILIPPINE LAWMAKERS ATTACK RIGHTS COMMISSION, CHIEF JUSTICE

MANILA: Philippine lawmakers have moved to cut the budget of the nation's human rights commission to \$20 and impeach the Supreme Court chief justice in what critics yesterday labeled part of a slide towards dictatorship under President Rodrigo Duterte. The twin votes in the House of Representatives added to a growing climate of fear that Duterte is determined to silence anyone critical of his war on drugs, which has claimed thousands of lives and led rights groups to warn of a crime against humanity.

justice, Maria Lourdes Sereno, has been another critic of the drug war. She wrote Duterte a letter last year expressing concern over him publicly naming seven judges as being involved in the drug trade, warning it made them vulnerable to being killed.

Duterte responded by threatening to declare martial law if Sereno continued to interfere in his drug war. Should the entire house endorse the justice committee's findings against Sereno, the Senate would convene as an impeachment court. The Senate still has to review and endorse the vote to slash the rights commission's budget. The Senate is also dominated by Duterte allies, but it has proved more independent than the lower house and it could still overrule the moves against the rights commission and Sereno.

Path to dictatorship

Nevertheless, critics warned of authoritarian rule under Duterte—a self-described socialist who has repeatedly praised late Filipino dictator Ferdinand Marcos and Russian President Vladimir Putin. "This leads us on a direct path to dictatorship," Senator Francis Pangilinan, leader of the Liberal Party, the country's main opposition group, said in response to Tuesday's vote. Teodoro Casino, a former House member representing the left wing Bayan Muna party, expressed similar sentiments when commenting on the move against Sereno.—AFP

N KOREA TO BOOST WEAPONS PROGRAMS AFTER SANCTIONS

NORTH'S FOREIGN MINISTRY CONDEMNS NEW MEASURES

SEOUL: North Korea vowed yesterday to accelerate its weapons programs in response to "evil" sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council following its latest and most powerful nuclear test. The respected 38 North website in the US raised its estimate for the yield from the explosion, which Pyongyang says was a hydrogen bomb small enough to fit onto a missile, to around 250 kilotons—more than 16 times the size of the device that devastated Hiroshima in 1945.

The detonation, Pyongyang's sixth nuclear blast, prompted global condemnation and came after it carried out two intercontinental ballistic missile launches in July that appeared to bring much of the US into range. The UN Security Council unanimously imposed an eighth set of sanctions on the North Monday, banning it from trading in textiles and restricting its oil imports, which US President Donald Trump said was a prelude to stronger measures.

The resolution, passed after Washington toned down its original proposals to secure backing from China and Russia, came just one month after the council banned exports of coal, lead and seafood in response to the ICBM launch. The North's foreign ministry condemned the new measures "in the strongest terms", calling them a "full-scale economic blockade" driven by the US and aimed at "suffocating" its state and people. It was "another illegal and evil" resolution on sanctions "piloted by the US", it said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency. "The DPRK will redouble the efforts to increase its strength to safeguard the country's sovereignty and right to existence," the ministry said, using the abbreviation for the North's official name. But the South's unification ministry described the statement as "the most low-key form of response from North Korea to UN Security Council resolutions".

Seoul conducted its first live-fire exercise of its new long-range Taurus missile in response to the nuclear test, its Air Force said. The German air-to-surface weapon was capable of precision strikes on key North Korean facilities even if launched from the central part of the South, it added. The US and its allies argue that tougher sanctions will pile pressure on North Korea to negotiate an end to its weapons programs but experts are skeptical.

US President Donald Trump said the latest measures were a "very small step not a big deal" that must lead to tougher measures. "Those sanctions are nothing compared to ultimately



SEOUL: Members of the Korean Veterans Association hold up banners during a rally demanding the re-deployment of US tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea to cope with North Korea's nuclear threat in Seoul.—AFP

what will happen," Trump said, but added that it was "nice to get a 15 to nothing vote".

Radioactive gas

The North says it needs nuclear weapons to protect itself from "hostile" US forces and analysts believe Pyongyang's weapons program has made rapid progress under leader Kim Jong-Un, with previous sanctions having done little to deter it. Government estimates of the yield from its sixth nuclear test vary from South Korea's 50 kilotons to Japan's 160, but 38 North, which is linked to Johns Hopkins University in the US, raised its estimate to "roughly 250 kilotons", in line with upward revisions for the magnitude of the resulting tremor.

South Korea's Nuclear Safety and Security Commission said yesterday it had collected a small amount of xenon-133 — a radioactive isotope of the inert gas that does not occur naturally—that was "linked to the latest nuclear test". But the commission said in a statement it was "unable to confirm what type of nuclear test was conducted". Washington had initially sought a full oil embargo and a freeze on the foreign assets of leader Kim Jong-Un in response to the blast, but dropped them following strong oppo-

sition from China and Russia. The new resolution instead bans trade in textiles, cuts off natural gas shipments to North Korea, places a ceiling of 2 million barrels a year on deliveries of refined oil products and caps crude oil shipments at current levels. Retail petrol prices in the North jumped earlier this year, with some analysts suggesting the authorities were stockpiling in the expectation of a ban. According to the US mission to the United Nations, the North imports around 8.5 million barrels a year of oil and oil products, 4 million as crude and 4.5 million in refined form—which includes substances such as petrol and diesel.

It added that the North's textile exports averaged \$760 million a year. The UN resolution also barred countries from issuing new authorizations to North Korean workers sent abroad. There are almost 100,000 of them, according to the US mission, earning more than \$500 million a year for the regime. Under the measure, joint ventures with North Korean entities are prohibited, while governments are authorized to inspect ships suspected of carrying banned cargo from the country, but must first seek the consent of the vessels' flag state.—AFP

GERMANY RESUMES AFGHAN DEPORTATIONS

KABUL: Eight Afghans expelled from Germany arrived in Kabul yesterday as Berlin resumed deportations of rejected asylum seekers from the war-torn country months after suspending the process when a huge truck bomb hit the Afghan capital. Germany put the controversial expulsions on hold after a sewage tanker packed with explosives detonated near the German embassy in Kabul's diplomatic quarter on May 31, killing around 150 people and wounding hundreds more.

The latest group represented the sixth wave of repatriations of Afghans from Germany since December under a disputed Afghan-European Union deal aimed at curbing the influx of migrants. In Berlin, Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere defended the latest

deportation, saying that "all eight persons have been convicted of serious crimes", without specifying the offences. De Maiziere said that Germany would stick with its policy of returning to Afghanistan convicted criminals, people feared by police to be planning an attack, and those who refuse to cooperate with authorities or give their names.

After arriving at Kabul airport on a charter flight, the eight deportees were escorted by police to a car park where an official registered their names. Some of the men carried small backpacks while others had no luggage at all. "They told me that there is no problem in your country and you can live there so you can't stay here anymore," Mohammad Jamshidi said before getting into a taxi. Reza

Rezayi said he was deported after his wife accused him of beating her.

"Despite having a witness, I couldn't prove it in the court because Europeans only listen to the lies of women," Rezayi said. The International Organization for Migration confirmed the arrival of "eight returnees". Twelve had been scheduled to arrive on Wednesday, according to Islamuddin Jurat, a spokesman for Afghanistan's refugees and repatriations ministry. "We don't know if there was a last minute change in the schedule or some of them were taken back," Jurat said.

Uncertain future

The men face an uncertain future in a country struggling with high unemployment, a weak economy and masses of refugees being ejected from Pakistan and Iran, as well as hundreds of thousands of others uprooted by war. A hundred Afghans have now returned to the country after their asylum applications were rejected by the German government, according to official data. Chancellor Angela Merkel has been battling to bring down the numbers of asylum seekers after the arrival of more than one million migrants—mainly from Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan—hoping to find refuge in 2015 and 2016.

While Germany granted safe haven to most people from war-torn Syria, Berlin has argued that it can safely repatriate people to Kabul and other parts of Afghanistan, even as Taliban and Islamic State militants terrorize much of the country.

Jamshidi, one of the deportees, said that "in every corner of Europe the priority is given to the people of Syria." "They need only three months to get registered but Afghans can be deported after years of staying in Germany." The latest deportation comes as Merkel's conservative alliance maintains a strong lead in the polls ahead of Germany's general election on September 24.—AFP



LONDON: In this photograph, former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed, center, his wife Laila Ali, left, and British lawyer Amal Clooney look on after Nasheed arrived at Heathrow airport in London.—AFP

CLOONEY RAISES FRESH FEARS FOR EXILED MALDIVES LEADER

COLOMBO: Human rights lawyer Amal Clooney yesterday raised fresh fears for the safety of her client, former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed, after an official vowed to have him arrested and deported. The London-based lawyer said she was "very concerned" about remarks by Male's ambassador-designate to Colombo, that he would have the exiled leader arrested if he set foot in Sri Lanka.

Clooney, who is married to Hollywood star George Clooney, had successfully petitioned a UN body which ruled in late 2015 that Nasheed was wrongfully convicted on a terrorism charge earlier that year and sentenced to 13 years in prison. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention also ordered the government of President Abdulla Yameen immediately to free Nasheed and pay him compensation, a demand rejected by the Maldives.

Nasheed travelled to London in January last year on prison leave for medical treat-

ment and has since then remained in self-imposed exile. He travels frequently to Sri Lanka to meet fellow dissidents. The new Maldivian envoy to Sri Lanka, Mohamed Hussain Shareef, told a local television station Monday that he would have Nasheed arrested in Colombo should he visit and would deport him. "If a Maldivian authority requests me to detain and return Mohamed Nasheed back to the Maldives, I will," Shareef said. "It's very simple. They have to say, this is an individual who we are seeking. I'll even go out to the street myself and do it." Clooney said Nasheed should not be returned to the Maldives to serve his prison sentence.

"Any attempt by a Maldivian diplomat to detain president Nasheed in Sri Lanka would constitute a violation of international law as well as Sri Lankan criminal law," she said according to a statement mailed to AFP by Nasheed's party.—AFP



KABUL: An Afghan refugee, center, deported from Germany is registered by an IOM member after arriving at the international airport in Kabul.—AFP

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Focus

BANGLADESHIS PITCH IN TO AID FLEEING 'MUSLIM BROTHERS'

By Nick Perry, Sam Jahan

Sajeed Hassan is spending his school holidays volunteering in a kitchen that provides hot meals to Rohingya refugees, joining an army of ordinary Bangladeshis pitching in as aid agencies struggle to cope with an overwhelming tide of desperate civilians. Some 370,000 refugees have flooded into Bangladesh in the last two and a half weeks fleeing violence in Myanmar, a Buddhist-majority country where the Muslim Rohingya minority has suffered decades of persecution.

Aid agencies have warned of an unfolding humanitarian crisis in predominantly Muslim Bangladesh, an impoverished nation of 160 million which is still reeling from devastating floods. But ordinary citizens have turned out in droves to help their "Muslim brothers". At the makeshift kitchen in his uncle's front yard near the border town of Teknaf, Hassan works alongside about a dozen volunteers packaging hot meals of rice and lentils, stirring bubbling cauldrons of meat stew over open fires. "They are Muslims, and they are coming from another country, that's why we are helping," Hassan, 12 said. "They have come from far away, and they are suffering."

The Rohingya have centuries-old ties to the Chittagong region over the border in Bangladesh, and images on social media purportedly showing abuses against the Muslim minority have stoked immense sympathy here. "Sometimes they come to my restaurant, eat, and then let us know they don't have any money," said Abdul Khalek at his simple roadside stall with a tarpaulin roof and mud floor. "But I don't mind. It is a duty from a Muslim brother to another to help in distress."

Bangladesh already hosted at least 300,000 Rohingya refugees in squalid camps along its border with Myanmar before this latest influx, offering sanctuary for more than three decades to civilians fleeing violence and persecution in neighboring Rakhine State. But this fresh wave is unprecedented in its magnitude, pushing conditions at the camps to the absolute limit. Charities are warning of an unfolding humanitarian crisis as Bangladesh pushes for a diplomatic solution to close the floodgates.

Prices soaring

At the congested market near Kutupalong refugee camp, where children bang on the windows of passing cars pleading for food, Bangladeshis are helping out with whatever meagre resources they have. Some of these freelance relief efforts are shambolic, with tremendous crushes and children knocked down as donated supplies are tossed from moving trucks. As the crisis enters its third week, patience is also running thin among some Bangladeshis living near the border, where many earn little. Prices for food and other staples have soared in local markets, which have become choked with chronic traffic and large numbers of beggars. Kuilla Mia, a tea seller working a street corner amid a chaotic swirl of refugees, said he had nothing to spare.

"I would like to give them a discount, but I cannot because the price of sugar is high," he said. Bangladeshis who initially ordered border guards to turn back newcomers before the effort became futile has been praised for taking on the burden despite its own pressing challenges as one of the region's poorest countries. The plight of the Rohingya, who are reviled and denied citizenship in Myanmar, has particularly roused emotion across the Islamic world.

On Tuesday, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina toured Kutupalong, one of the biggest camps, where she was seen consoling a young Rohingya boy. "I can't hold back the tears in eyes as I look at this scene... Why should people suffer such pain?" she said, according to private news portal bdnews24.com. Bangladesh authorities have said they will register all new arrivals, setting up booths in the camps to collect fingerprints and family information. Hasina wants the Rohingya returned to what she has labelled their "ancestral homeland" in Myanmar. "Myanmar has created the problem and it will have to resolve it," she told parliament on Monday.

Dhaka has pointed to a deal with Yangon in 1992 that saw more than 236,000 Rohingya repatriated as "members of Myanmar society". Mohammad Hussain, a lentil vendor, said he was giving away what he could, but Bangladeshis alone could not be expected to care for all the refugees. "If aid doesn't arrive from abroad, then these people will be in serious danger," he said. But for young Hassan, the experience has been moving. "I feel great helping them, and I want to do more," he said. — AFP

SLOWLY SLIDING
TO THE DARK SIDE ...



FROM INDIA TO MALAYSIA, ROHINGYA FACE HARDSHIP, UNCERTAINTY

Recent violence in Myanmar has driven hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh. But Rohingya have been fleeing persecution in Buddhist-majority Myanmar for decades, and many who have made it to safety in other countries still face a precarious existence. Some are barred from working or feel unwelcome in unfamiliar lands. Still, many say they are relieved to be safe. Here are four countries where Rohingya have established settlements in recent years:

Malaysia

There are some 56,000 Rohingya refugees registered with the UN refugee agency in Malaysia, with an estimated 40,000 more whose status has yet to be assessed. Obtaining a UN refugee card generally protects people from arrest. They live on the fringe, unable to legally work because the country - like Thailand and Indonesia - doesn't recognize asylum seekers or refugees. Most scrape by on dirty or dangerous jobs that are shunned by most Malaysians. Most live in squalid shantytown settlements, cramped low-cost flats or isolated houses where they work on construction sites, restaurants, factories and plantations.

They have no access to free health care and state-run schools. But for many, even living on the margins of Malaysian society is an improvement from what they faced in Myanmar. "Only my younger brother and one older brother are still alive" in Myanmar, said Muhammad Ayub. "The rest have been killed." He has lived for four years in a small shanty settlement on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur that includes a small mosque and a school teaching children the Quran. He works odd jobs when he can get them, and said that if Myanmar ensures the safety of Rohingya, "I will surely go back."

Another Rohingya who has been in the Southeast Asian country for six years, Ibrahim Mohamad Hussein, said he worried about the fate of his relatives who are among some 200 people still living in his village in Myanmar. "They have increased the military presence. No one is allowed in or out," he said. They have "no food, no work. It's hard for them." Earlier this year, Malaysia started a pilot project to let Rohingya refugees with UNHCR cards work to prevent them from being exploited as cheap labor. But officials said the response was poor, as most Rohingya did not want to leave their communities to work in plantations or factories far away.

Malaysia has been cautious of being swamped by an influx of migrants. In 2015, boats carrying Rohingya and Bangladeshi refugees were pushed back into international waters by the Malaysian and Thai navies. But Malaysia and Indonesia later took more than 1,600 of the refugees in. On Monday, Malaysian officials said they were bracing for a possible new influx of Rohingya amid the renewed violence in Myanmar and pledged that anyone arriving by boat would be treated humanely. New arrivals would be given water, food and medical aid, before being handed over to the Immigration Department, said Malaysia Maritime Enforcement Agency Director-General Zulkifli Abu Bakar.

Nepal

Only about 250 Rohingya live in Nepal since anti-Muslim riots erupted in Myanmar in 2012, according to the UN refugee agency, which offers them education and medical support. The refugees live in a ramshackle camp carved out on a slope on the outskirts of the capital, Kathmandu. Their huts of tin, bamboo and plastic sheets are connected by narrow stone steps. There is also a large communal hut, where children study the Quran each day before school and men gather to dis-

cuss the latest news from Myanmar received in phone calls from family.

"Just five days back, I heard my uncle was hacked to death in the village," one refugee, Rofique Aalam, said Sunday. He has been in Nepal for two years. "Fortunately, I also heard that my father, mother, brother and sister safely made it across to Bangladesh." Most Rohingya in Nepal work as day laborers, masons or plumbers. They don't get paid regularly, and also have trouble with language barriers, they said.

But they live in peace, and local businesses and social workers have donated tin

Analysts say Prime Minister Narendra Modi is walking a tightrope between Bangladesh, an ally now besieged by hundreds of thousands of new Rohingya arrivals, and his Hindu-nationalist power base at home. Modi made no mention of the Rohingya crisis during a visit last week to Myanmar, but later said through the Foreign Affairs Ministry that India was concerned about the violence and wanted Myanmar to show restraint. That delayed response followed pointed appeals from Bangladesh for help.

The Indian government is also facing a backlash over its order last month for states

Myanmar. "The talk of government sending us back is very frightening," said Rohingya refugee Hameed Ul Haque. "I want to tell the government: Instead of sending us back to Myanmar to die, please kill us. At least we will get a proper burial here."

Hyderabad's Muslim population and some of its leaders have rallied to their cause and demanded they be allowed to stay. Aid groups are helping the new arrivals to secure identity cards from the UNHCR, a process which takes about three months. "There is no question of sending the refugees back without ensuring their safety," Telangana state's Deputy Chief Minister Mohammed Mahmood Ali told a rally Sunday in Hyderabad. "This is not an issue of Muslims alone. This is a humanitarian problem."

United States

The Rohingya who have made it as refugees to the United States find a warmer welcome and a more stable life. Only 54 arrived in 2010 and were resettled. By 2016, that number reached 2,276, according to the State Department, though so far this year it was just 1,027. Hitay Lwin Oo, a Rohingya man who arrived in 2004, helps others as they come in to Utica, New York, where he owns the Golden Burma grocery store. While Rohingya can be ostracized by other groups in their home country, Lwin Oo said people from the many different tribes of Myanmar get along once they immigrate to the US. "They are happy here, they have no danger in their lives, no more trouble," Lwin Oo said. His own son is a Marine, his eldest daughter is studying to be a nurse, and his other two daughters are still in school.

Starting from scratch can be hard, but nonprofit agencies help families get apartments to rent. They usually can find minimum-wage jobs cleaning offices, cutting grass at golf courses, manufacturing windows or doing other work. Their kids start school, and quickly learn English. "Arrivals in the United States have a much, much better situation than any other part of the world," Penn State professor Wakar Uddin, a Rohingya advocate who arrived decades ago as a student.

"These people have suffered so much in their life... they have never dreamed of this kind of life," he said, noting that those resettled in Springfield, Colorado, are happy to work physically challenging 12-hour shifts in meat factories, earning low wages. "They worked much harder in their country and didn't even have one meal a day." In total, the US has resettled 7,362 Rohingya since 2010, with the largest group of about 1,000 in Chicago and others are in California, Indiana, Georgia and other states. — AP



BALUKHALI: A Rohingya Muslim boy, who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh, stands near a newly built shelter at Balukhali refugee camp, Bangladesh yesterday. Recent violence in Myanmar has driven hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh.

sheets and bamboo for them to build their makeshift homes. "We have not had any problems with the local people or the authorities. They are helpful," Aalam said. Still, many dream of going back to Myanmar. "Nobody wants to live in a foreign land far from everything we know," said Mohammad Iyer, who fled four years ago with his five children and wife after he was attacked.

India

Rohingya in India face an uncertain future, with the Hindu-nationalist government threatening to deport them back to Myanmar. There are some 40,000 Rohingya living in clusters around the country, including in the northern Jammu region in Kashmir, the capital of New Delhi and the southern city of Hyderabad. But only 16,500 have been registered with the UN refugee agency.

to prepare to deport illegal immigrants, including Rohingya. The Supreme Court is expected to hear the government's arguments for the order at a court hearing on Monday. Even if Rohingya are allowed to stay in India, their lives are far from secure. In Hindu-dominated northern city of Jammu, where more than 6,000 Rohingya live in squalid temporary shelters of burlap and plastic sheets, the city's business community recently announced a campaign to "identify and kill" Rohingya, but then called it off after the government announced its deportation plans.

"They have no right to be in the region," said Rakesh Gupta, president of the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry. More than 2,100 kilometers to the south in the city of Hyderabad, another 4,000 Rohingya live in constant fear of being evicted from their makeshift shelters of tarp stretched across bamboo poles and sent back to



BALUKHALI: Rohingya Muslims, who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh, performs ablution before offering afternoon prayers at Balukhali refugee camp, Bangladesh yesterday. — AP photos

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BUNDESLIGA BOSS WANTS SHORTER TRANSFER WINDOW

BERLIN: The Bundesliga looks set to follow the example of England's Premier League by voting to shorten the transfer window, with German Football League (DFL) chief Reinhard Rauball proposing changes. Germany's 36 professional clubs are set to hold a vote at their general assembly in December and Rauball wants the Bundesliga clubs to agree to close the transfer window before the season starts. Last week, the English Premier League clubs voted to shut the 2018 close-season window before the start of the 2018-19 campaign in a move that sparked approval across the European game. Now Rauball is hoping the German clubs will do the same. Currently, the season in Germany starts in mid-August and the transfer window closes on the last day of the month, which can unsettle squads with players coming and going with fixtures already underway. —AP

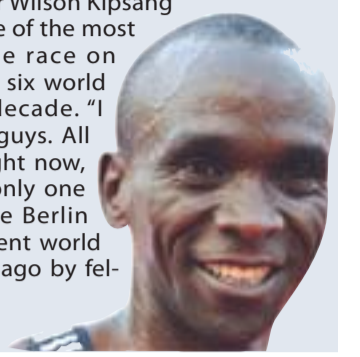


CELTIC CHARGED BY UEFA OVER PITCH INVASION

LONDON: European football's governing body UEFA has opened disciplinary proceedings against Celtic following a pitch invasion during their Champions League tie against Paris Saint-Germain. A supporter raced onto the Parkhead pitch late in the first half on Tuesday with the hosts 3-0 down and darted towards 18-year-old superstar Kylian Mbappe. He aimed a fresh-air kick at the former Monaco striker but failed to make contact before being whisked away by stewards. Celtic have been charged with a count of "field invasion" and will have their case heard by the UEFA Control, Ethics and Disciplinary Body on October 19, a UEFA statement said. Celtic have already been fined 11 times in less than six years over fan behaviour issues ranging from pro-IRA chants to fireworks, crowd disturbances and illicit banners. PSG have also been charged after their fans were accused of breaking seats at Celtic Park and will have their matter addressed at the same hearing as Celtic. Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers expressed his frustration with Tuesday night's incident and said the Parkhead club would take its own action. —AFP

KIPCHOGE THE MAN TO BEAT IN BERLIN

NAIROBI: Olympic marathon champion Eliud Kipchoge claimed yesterday to be the man to beat at this month's Berlin marathon as he aims to set a new world record. The 32-year-old Kenyan will line up against compatriot and former world record holder Wilson Kipsang and Ethiopian great Kenenisa Bekele in one of the most competitive fields in recent years. The race on September 24 is over a flat course where six world records have been broken in the last decade. "I expect a stiff competition from the two guys. All three of us are at the top of our game right now, but at the end of the race there will be only one winner," Kipchoge told AFP ahead of the Berlin race. He said he intends to beat the current world record of 2:02:57 set in Berlin three years ago by fellow Kenyan, Dennis Kimetto. —AFP



FORMULA ONE

STREET-FIGHTER HAMILTON OUT FOR SINGAPORE STING

SINGAPORE: Lewis Hamilton will aim to plunge a dagger into Sebastian Vettel's world title ambitions by upsetting his expected march to victory in Singapore two weeks after ruining Ferrari's anniversary celebrations at Monza. Hamilton is distinctly second favourite against his title rival at the twisting, turning and stifling hot Marina Bay street circuit, which plays to Ferrari's strengths and where Vettel has won four of the nine races.

But an unexpected victory for the Mercedes driver, who edged to the front of the standings by just three points with his wire-to-wire win in Italy, would set alarm bells ringing at Ferrari. The Italian team will be smarting after Hamilton's crushing triumph at their home circuit this month-spoiling their 70th anniversary party, and earning boos on the podium from irate fans.

Another disappointment on Sunday in Singapore, the 14th of 20 races and the unofficial start of the title run-in, would deflate optimism of Ferrari's first world title in a decade. Ferrari's downforce is a key weapon at the 23-corner street circuit, whose lack of long straights traditionally nullifies Mercedes' high-speed advantage and puts overtaking at a premium.

Mercedes chief Toto Wolff said the German marque faced a difficult weekend but he will take heart from the fact that in five of the last seven seasons, the winning driver in Italy also took the chequered flag in Singapore. "So far this year, we have seen the pendulum swing according to circuit type. On the surface, Singapore is the kind of circuit that should favour both Ferrari and Red Bull," said Wolff.

"Both have shown strong performance on low-speed circuits demanding maximum downforce, and we have found life more difficult at those places in 2017."

HEART AND PASSION

But Wolff added: "We have made good progress in understanding what we need to do in order to get the most from the chassis... It's a weekend when every part of the team needs to be at its best if you wish to score a strong finish."



SPA-FRANCORCHAMPS: This file photo taken on August 26, 2017 shows Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (R) celebrating his pole position next to second placed Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel after the qualifying session at the Spa-Francorchamps circuit in Spa ahead of the Belgian Formula One Grand Prix. — AFP

"We will aim to put all the pieces of the puzzle together and finish strongly," Hamilton's blistering form in qualifying this year, which saw him take a world-record 69th pole position in Monza, also gives Mercedes a chance. All but two of the races in Singapore have been won from pole and Hamilton is on a roll, having won three of the last four grands prix.

The three-time world champion Hamilton, who penned a poetic tribute to mark 20 years since the death of Princess Diana, was also moved to wax lyrical about his performances behind the wheel. "I definitely feel like I have found more heart and passion within myself in the last three or four races," he said at Monza.

"Silverstone was an empowering weekend and that has kind of sparked a forest fire in me and that is hopefully reflecting in my driving. "While I feel like I always drive with my heart-my heart is really the engine, the power and the force behind what I do-my mind is like the rudder, and I feel like it has been steering me in the right direction."

Red Bull's Daniel Ricciardo will also approach the weekend with confidence after reaching the podium on his last three trips to Singapore. "(It's) one of our best chances of a win in the second half of the season," said the Australian, who won in Azerbaijan and lies fourth in the standings. — AFP

F1 BOSS TELLS 'SPECTACULAR' SINGAPORE TO STAY FRESH

SINGAPORE: Formula One chief Chase Carey challenged the "spectacular" Singapore Grand Prix to keep improving yesterday as he made positive noises about striking a new deal to retain the glittering night race.

Carey refused to discuss talks about the future of the street race, which snakes past the city's landmarks and skyscrapers and is in the final season of its second five-year contract. But Carey, speaking at the All That Matters conference ahead of Sunday's Singapore Grand Prix, was highly complimentary of the event, suggesting that F1 is unwilling to let it go.

"I think it's great," the F1 chief executive and chairman said of Singapore, which was the first race he attended after America's Liberty Media sealed its deal to take over the sport last year. "Last year was the first time I was here and I thought it was spectacular. You can never rest on your laurels, so I think you've got to continue to find ways to make it

fresh, make it new, so I think we have to continue to work. If you're standing still, you're going backwards."

"But I think Singapore, with such a spectacular skyline and the setting for that race, I think is something that will always capture people's imagination." Discussions over Singapore continue as the longstanding grand prix in neighbouring Malaysia, which has been cut for cost reasons, prepares for its final race in two weeks' time.

'DEAL OF THE DAY'

Carey said Singapore, which is known for its pop concerts and entertainment alongside the race, had been "ahead of the curve" in the drive to broaden the F1 experience beyond racing. "We're actively engaged with our partners here. It's our goal to try and reach a new deal that enables us to continue. We're proud of the race here, we have a good relationship," he said. — AFP

ENGLAND TO PLAY ALL BLACKS IN 2018 AFTER FOUR-YEAR WAIT

LONDON: England will face the All Blacks for the first time in four years in the stand-out fixture of next year's autumn Test series as they build towards the 2019 Rugby World Cup. Eddie Jones's side will also face the two other southern hemisphere giants, Australia and South Africa, as well as Japan, giving a good gauge of their strength in the run-up to the four-yearly showpiece in Japan. Due to a quirk of the international fixture list, England have not played New Zealand since 2014 — a frustrating hiatus that led to aborted attempts to arrange a match this autumn.

In 2014 England lost four times to the All Blacks, including a three-Test series in New Zealand. They last beat their rivals in 2012. England, second in the international rankings behind the All Blacks, have won 19 of their 20 Tests under head coach Eddie Jones, facing all major nations except Steve Hansen's All Blacks during that run. "We

will have to work hard and be smart in what we do to bridge the gap between us and the All Blacks," said Jones, who wants England to be the world's top team going into the World Cup.

"The 2018 series is incredibly important for England as we build towards the World Cup," he added. "We want to win that series 4-0 and we will need to play extremely well to beat four very good teams over a four-week period. "The series will give us a really good indicator of where we are as a squad a year out from the World Cup and gives us a real focus on what we have to do over the next 12 months to be ready for that series and win."

England will host South Africa at Twickenham Stadium on November 3 in the first match of the 2018 series. They play the All Blacks on November 10, Japan on November 17 and Australia on November 24. — AFP



GULF BANK CONGRATULATES ASHKANANI FOR WINNING SECOND POSITION AT PORSCHE MOBIL 1 SUPER CUP

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank congratulates Zaid Ashkanani, winner of second position at the Porsche Mobil 1 Super Cup 2017 Monza, which took place in Italy earlier this month. Competing under MRS-GT racing, with Kuwait and the Kuwaiti flag prominently displayed on his car, he completed the 14 laps in 27:52:53.

Ashkanani was received by senior management at Gulf Bank's head office to congratulate him on his accomplishment. Hailing the success achieved by this young Kuwaiti, Ms Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager of Corporate Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We are extremely proud of the success achieved by Zaid Ashkanani. His thrilling second place finish at the Porsche Mobil 1 Super Cup Monza fills us with a sense of pride. He and his family have been loyal Gulf Bank customers, and we have watched his dedication and determination over the years. Seeing him make an impact on the international scene is a great moment for all of Kuwait. We wish Zaid all the best in his racing career and we look forward to his next accomplishments."

Ashkanani said: "It was my goal of the season to finish on the podium. At times we had some bad luck, but the team and my family never stopped believing in me. I also thank Gulf Bank for welcoming me and recognizing my achievement."

Ashkanani began his career at the Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East in 2012 and has since taken part in several exciting rounds of Porsche Super Cup, Porsche GT3 Cup Challenge Middle East, Porsche Carrera Cup, GP3 Series, ADAC Formel Masters, as well as the British Formula Ford Championship. Now in its 25-year, the Porsche Mobil 1 Super Cup is organized by Porsche AG and to ensure all competitors have the same chance to win, all racers compete in identical vehicles based on the sev-



enth generation of the 911 GT3 Cup. The Porsche Super Cup is part of the FIA 1 World Championship and takes place at 21 different racing circuits around the globe. It is always one of the most competitive and thrilling of the worldwide Porsche one-make series. Youth empowerment forms an important part of Gulf Bank's corporate social responsibility strategy and supporting youth has always been one of the Bank's core values. The Bank also gives special importance to sports and maintaining healthy lifestyle, something which is clearly reflected in its initiatives and activities it conducts or sponsors.



Sports

Germany's legend
Matthaeus slams
Ribery tantrum



Emery warns
five-star PSG can
only get better



THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2017

LAKERS TO RETIRE KOBE BRYANT'S 2 JERSEY NUMBERS IN DECEMBER Page 13



LIMA: International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach (C) poses for pictures with Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo (L) and Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti during the 131st IOC session in Lima yesterday. The IOC meeting in Lima confirmed Paris and Los Angeles as hosts for the 2024 and 2028 Olympics, crowning two cities at the same time in a historic first for the embattled sports body. — AFP

IOC SAYS YES TO PARIS IN 24 AND LA FOR 28

LIMA: This was one of those rare Olympic moments where everyone walked away a winner. Paris for 2024. Los Angeles for 2028. And the International Olympic Committee for transforming an unruly bidding process to lock down its future by choosing not one, but two Summer Olympics hosts at the same time.

The IOC put the rubber stamp on a pre-determined conclusion yesterday, giving Paris the 2024 Games and LA the 2028 Games in a history-making vote. The decision marks the first time the IOC has granted two Summer Olympics at once. It came after a year's worth of scrambling by IOC president Thomas Bach, who had only

the two bidders left for the original prize, 2024, and couldn't bear to see either lose.

Both cities will host their third Olympics. The Paris Games will come on the 100th anniversary of its last turn - a milestone that would have made the French capital the sentimental favorite had only 2024 been up for grabs.

Los Angeles moved to 2028, and those Olympics will halt a stretch of 32 years without a Summer Games in the United States. In exchange for the compromise, LA will grab an extra \$300 million or more that could help offset the uncertainties that lie ahead over an 11-year wait instead of seven.

Doing away with the dramatic flair that has accompanied these events in years past, there were no secret ballots and no dramatic reveals to close out the voting. Bach simply asked for a show of hands from the audience, and when dozens shot up from the audience, and nobody raised their hand when he asked for objections, this was deemed a unanimous decision.

A ceremony that has long sparked parties in the plazas of winning cities - and crying in those of the losers - produced more muted, but still visible, shows of emotion. Paris bid organizer Tony Estaguent choked up during the presentation before the vote.

"You can't imagine what this means to us. To all of us. It's so strong," he said. Later, Paris mayor Anne Hidalgo stood by Bach's side and dabbed away tears as the vote was announced and the IOC president handed the traditional - but now unneeded - to she and LA mayor Eric Garcetti. One read "Paris 2024," and the other "Los Angeles 2028."

But there was no real drama. As if to accentuate that, the LA delegation wore sneakers to the presentation. (Were going to skip neckties, too, but changed their minds late.) Bid chairman Casey Wasserman said the footwear "reflects who we are, and the unique brand of California-cool that we will bring to the 2028 Games." — AP

MESSI, INIESTA TURN BARCA GLOOM INTO PARTY MOOD

BARCELONA: When Barcelona's Andres Iniesta was serenaded off the pitch on Tuesday following a vintage display in a 3-0 win over Juventus that was only rivalled by Lionel Messi, it was easy to forget the gloom that had gripped the Nou Camp two weeks ago.

The club had been left red-faced by the failure to sign top targets Philippe Coutinho and Angel Di Maria when the transfer window shut and the squad looked weakened following the world record departure of Neymar to Paris St Germain.

A resounding 5-1 aggregate Spanish Super Cup defeat by arch rivals Real Madrid added to the sense of despondency. Tuesday's stunning opening Group D display against last season's Champions League finalists, however, showed that Barca are still in safe hands as long as the old guard of Messi and Iniesta remain at the club and are fit and firing.

Barca captain Iniesta, 33, struggled for large parts of last season as injuries took their toll but he rolled back the years against Juve with a seamless display that recalled the days when Pep Guardiola was manager and Barca dominated in midfield.

The veteran ran the usually solid Italian champions ragged throughout the game and capped the display with a pinpoint pass to Messi for the Argentine's second goal, Barca's third, earning him a warm reception when he was substituted late on.

"It's important to play a lot of minutes but the key is looking after yourself properly," said Iniesta, who is out of contract at the end of the season. "When the team functions well we all play better. We struggled a bit at first as is normal in European games but we just needed a bit of patience and then we began to control the game."

The Juve clash, a repeat of last season's quarter-final tie won by the Italians and the 2015 Champions League final in which Barca triumphed, was one of

the most eagerly anticipated fixtures in Europe this week. But the match began in a subdued atmosphere, while outside the Nou Camp opponents of the board campaigned for a motion of no confidence in president Josep Maria Bartomeu.

Once Iniesta and Messi had finished outclassing Juventus, however, there was a party mood inside the ground, with little signs of any rebellion. Iniesta's display was only upstaged by Messi, who ended his hoodoo against Juve keeper Gianluigi Buffon with lethal strikes either side of halftime, scoring for the seventh time in three games.

He also had a shot cleared off the line which was turned in by Ivan Rakitic for the second goal and hammered the post in the second half. He was a constant threat and at times freely danced past the visiting defence, torturing a helpless Juve rearguard.

"I have the feeling that whenever Leo picks the ball up something is going to happen, anything can happen, and it's always good for us," said Barca coach Ernesto Valverde. "Leo scored an extraordinary goal and blew the game open. He is one of the best players in the history of the game." — Reuters



CAMP NOU: Barcelona's midfielder from Spain Andres Iniesta (L) vies with Juventus' forward from Argentina Paulo Dybala during the UEFA Champions League Group D football match FC Barcelona vs Juventus at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Tuesday. — AFP

AMLA, PERERA LEAD WORLD XI T20 WIN OVER PAKISTAN

LAHORE: Sri Lanka all-rounder Thisara Perera hit a towering six off the penultimate ball to steer the World XI to a thrilling seven-wicket win over Pakistan in the second Twenty20 yesterday. Perera made a whirlwind 19-ball 47 not out with five sixes, while Hashim Amla finished not out 72 off 55 balls to help the World XI overhaul a 175-run target and level the three-match series 1-1 before a packed Gaddafi stadium in Lahore.

That left the series intriguingly placed with the final match on Friday, also in Lahore. Pakistan had registered a 20-run win in Tuesday's first match, which marked the return of international cricket to Pakistan.

Left-hander Perera went on a rampage as the visitors needed 33 off the last two overs, smashing two sixes off the 19th over bowled by Sohail Khan before sealing the match in the last over.

Amla, who scored his seventh international Twenty20 half-century, was the steadier of the two, with two sixes and five fours as he helped Perera add 69 runs for the fourth wicket off just 35 balls. That partnership lifted the World XI after they lost Tamim Iqbal (23), Tim Paine (10) and skipper Faf du Plessis (20).

"It was a very happy day," said Perera. "Hash (Amla) told me to stay till the last moment because we can catch up. I listened to him and we did really well. It's a habit for me to be in the situation like this. This is a dream

come true for me playing in this World XI. Thanks to Pakistan's fans for coming out in good numbers."

Pakistan captain Sarfraz Ahmed gave credit to the visitors. "World XI deserves the credit," said Ahmed. "Amla and Perera kept it till late and did it. Our bowlers are young and this is an occasion for them to learn how to bowl in such situations."

"We were also a little sloppy in the field. The score was good enough but if the execution was better in defending, we would have pulled it off."

Pakistan had scored 174-6 in their 20 overs. Babar Azam (45), Ahmed Shehzad (43) and Shoaib Malik (39) had good starts but none of them went on to score big, as Pakistan found it tough going on a slow and low pitch after winning the toss.

Opener Fakhar Zaman fell for 21 in the fifth over before Shehzad and Azam steadied the innings with a 59-run stand for the second wicket. Malik hit two sixes in the last over before holing out off the last delivery of the innings.

During his 23-ball knock Malik became the leading run scorer for Pakistan in Twenty20 international cricket, overhauling Umar Akmal's aggregate of 1,690 runs in 88 matches by two runs.

He now has 1,692 in 88 matches. Perera (2-23) and West Indian spinner Badree (2-31) were the main wicket takers for the visitors. — AFP



CUPERTINO: Apple CEO Tim Cook, right, and Jonathan Ive, Chief Design Officer shows the new iPhone X in the showroom after the new product announcement at the Steve Jobs Theater on the new Apple campus on Tuesday in Cupertino, Calif. — AP photos

APPLE LAUNCHES \$999 IPHONE X

NEW APPLE WATCH TURNS COMIC BOOK FANTASY INTO REALITY

CUPERTINO, Calif: Apple Inc on Tuesday rolled out its much-anticipated iPhone X, a glass and stainless steel device with an edge-to-edge display that Chief Executive Tim Cook called "the biggest leap forward since the original iPhone."

The launch contained few surprises, with leaked details on the phone and other products including an updated Apple Watch proving largely accurate. But the iPhone X's \$999 price still raised eyebrows, and its Nov 3 ship date prompted questions about possible supply constraints ahead of the holiday season. Investors and fans have viewed the 10th-anniversary iPhone launch as an opportunity for Apple to refresh a smartphone lineup that had lagged the competition in new features. Last year the company's revenue declined when many consumers rejected the iPhone 7 as being too similar to the iPhone 6. The new Apple Watch for the first time will be able to make calls and access the internet without the customer carrying an iPhone—a major upgrade that one analyst predicted would more than double watch sales. The iPhone X has wireless charging, an infrared camera and hardware for facial recognition, which replaces the fingerprint sensor for unlocking the phone. The home button is also gone, and users instead tap the device to wake it up.

Apple normally ships new products within a week or two of announcing them, though the company said the later date was consistent with earlier guidance to investors. "It's great to have a product but we'd have liked it sooner rather than later, more like the beginning of October or mid-October," said Kim Forrest, senior equity research analyst at Fort Pitt Capital Group in Pittsburgh.

Apple shares closed down 0.4 percent. They had traded as much as 1 percent higher during the launch event before reversing course. The shares are up almost 40 percent on the year. Tim Ghriskey, chief investment officer of Solaris Asset Management in New York, said he was not worried about the ship date and liked the new phones features, but also flagged a lack of surprises.

"It's sell on the news," he said. "They didn't talk about the evolution of Apple beyond the iPhone and into artificial intelligence." The screen on the iPhone X is about the size of the current iPhone 7 plus, though the phone is smaller. It features richer colors thanks to a new screen technology called OLED that other vendors are also rolling out. But in an embarrassing moment for Apple Senior Vice President Craig Federighi, the face ID unlocking did not work on his first attempt during the on-stage presentation.

Phones at many prices

Apple executives also stressed the phone's capabilities in augmented reality, in which digital images are overlaid on the real world. But their remarks suggested that the phone does not have the full panoply of 3D-sensor chips that some had expected. Wireless carriers in the United States, whose fierce battle for customers could tempt them into renewing the practice of subsidizing phones, immediately began to offer discounts. T-Mobile US Inc said customers on a payment plan can trade in their iPhone 6 or newer and receive up to \$300 off over 24 months.

Sprint Corp CEO Marcelo Claure promised in a tweet: "Find a better monthly price & we'll credit the difference via prepaid card." AT&T Inc and



CUPERTINO: Apple CEO Tim Cook shows new Apple Watch Series 3 products at the Steve Jobs Theater on the new Apple campus on Tuesday.

Verizon Communications Inc, the dominant mobile carriers in the United States, have not yet disclosed their pricing plans.

Apple also introduced the iPhone 8 and iPhone 8 Plus, which resemble the iPhone 7 line but have a glass back for wireless charging. The company said it was working on a new device, called the AirPower, that would charge all newer Apple products. The wireless charging uses a standard called Qi, also used by Samsung Electronics Co Ltd, which will likely solidify that

technology as the industry standard. The new phones all feature Apple's first proprietary graphics processor, which provides greater speed, improved cameras and some features for augmented reality apps.

The company had previously used graphics chips from Imagination Technologies Group Plc, which put itself up for sale earlier this year after Apple said it would make its own technology.

Apple is moving to design more of the internal components of the iPhone, squeezing some

suppliers but giving Apple control. The cheapest of the iPhone 8 models have 64 gigabytes of memory, up from 32 gigabytes in previous models, and will sell for \$699 and \$799. Apple also noted that for budget-conscious shoppers, there is now a \$349 iPhone SE, similar to the iPhone 5.

The bump-up in memory for the new phones should help suppliers of memory chips, and Apple is now angling to own a piece of the memory-chip business being sold by Toshiba Corp.

The new Series 3 watch will cost \$399 and support a range of third-party apps. Apple has never released numbers on watch sales, but analyst Gene Munster with Loup Ventures forecast the company would sell 26 million in 2018. Also featured at the launch event was an upgraded Apple TV that will support the high-resolution display known as 4K and will feature more programming options as Apple steps up efforts to cut content deals and produce its own shows.

Flashy new campus

Cook opened the event at the Steve Jobs Auditorium on Apple's new campus with a tribute to company co-founder and former CEO Jobs, who died in 2011. The Apple building itself was considered to be Jobs' final product, and Cook spent a few minutes boasting about the design, energy-saving features and public spaces at the new campus, including a flagship Apple Store. The theater, never before open to the public, features an expansive glass-enclosed lobby, with two massive white stone staircases leading down to the auditorium. Inside, the decor is similar to that of Apple's stores, with hard maple flooring and tan leather seats. — Reuters

FACEBOOK TO CLAMP DOWN ON WHO CAN CASH IN ON ADS

COLOGNE, Germany: Facebook has tightened its rules on who can make money from advertising on its network, responding to criticism that it is too simple for providers of fake news and sensational headlines to cash in. The world's largest social network implemented the new standards with immediate effect to make it clearer which publishers can earn money on Facebook and with what content. The new standards coincided with an appearance by Chief Operating Officer Sheryl Sandberg in Germany, one of Facebook's toughest critics on hate speech and safeguarding privacy.

Facebook, together with Alphabet's Google, accounts for around two fifths of internet advertising, which is forecast by consultancy Zenith to grow by 13 percent to \$205 billion this year - overtaking television as the biggest channel for companies to pitch their wares to consumers.

Marketing executives have criticized Facebook for failing to ensure that the digital ads distributed to its more than 2 billion active users reach their intended audience.

It has also drawn criticism from major advertisers for inflating its audience figures and not adequately tracking ads, which were

sometimes placed alongside content detrimental to the brands being promoted.

Yesterday, Facebook said it would seek accreditation from the Media Ratings Council, a US non-profit organization, for audience measurement services. "We take very seriously our responsibility to earn and maintain the trust of people in businesses," Sandberg told dmexco, a major digital marketing gathering in Cologne. "We hear their concerns about safe environments, about standards, about measurement, and this is critical to us," she said. "We're working hard to roll things out that give you more control over where your ads run, and more knowledge about where your ads run, before, during and after campaign."

Community standards

To make money on Facebook in future, content creators and publishers will have to comply with its so-called community standards, which seek to ensure that content is authentic, not offensive and adheres to its guidelines. Those publishing content flagged as misinformation or false news may be ruled ineligible to profit from Facebook, as would creators of clickbait and sensationalism, according to the rules seen by Reuters.

Facebook's guidelines for monetization give broad definitions of content that would be disallowed - including "family entertainment characters engaged in violent, sexualized, or otherwise inappropriate behavior."

Also covered are depictions of death, casualties and physical injuries in tragedies such as natural disasters; and content that is incendiary, inflammatory, demeaning or disparaging towards people or groups. Facebook said it will provide post-campaign feedback to advertisers that clearly identifies the publishers that ran their ads. Facebook will also step up its monitoring of hate speech, adding 3,000 content reviewers to nearly double the size of its existing team, Senior Vice President for Global Marketing Solutions Carolyn Everson said in a blog post. "As soon as we determine that content has breached our community standards, we remove it. With a community as large as Facebook, however, zero tolerance cannot mean zero occurrence," she said.

Germany has led the way in demanding action on hate speech. Its parliament passed a law in June to introduce fines of up to 50 million euros (\$60 million) for social media networks if they fail to remove hateful postings promptly. — Reuters

NO MILK, SUGAR: VENEZUELAN'S LOSE PRIZED ICE CREAM TO CRISIS

MERIDA: The Coromoto ice cream parlor had it all - chocolate and vanilla for sure, though also garlic, avocado and even octopus sorbets... but the things you can't find in Venezuela any more, like milk and sugar, means the landmark has had to close for good. When Manuel Da Silva first opened its welcoming yellow doors in 1981, the Heladeria Coromoto offered its clients the tried and trusted - vanilla, strawberry, chocolate and coconut flavors.

Until one day, Manuel tried out an avocado sorbet on his customers. "It was a success!" says Jose Ramirez, Manuel's son-in-law who now runs the business. "He had a crazy idea and he started to invent, to try things with meat, with fish," says Jose. He might have stopped at chipi-chipi, a small Caribbean mollusc, but Manuel was clearly not a man to hold back on a hunch. New flavors followed when he experimented with garlic as well as onion flavored ice cream.

Soon Manuel's imagination knew no limits and the number of wacky flavors, and his reputation, grew. "People were coming to try some strange things," said Luis Marquez, a young local in the mountain town of Merida who grew up coming to the Coromoto. In 1991, just a decade after opening and a world away from plain old

vanilla, the Heladeria Coromoto got an entry in the Guinness Book of Records for providing the most flavors of any ice cream parlor in the world-at the time, 386.

But Manuel, a Portuguese immigrant, continued to innovate and play with people's tastebuds. Black bean ice cream soon followed, chilli, beetroot... up to a staggering 860 flavors. The shop quickly became a key attraction in Merida, an Andean city of 450,000 which is also known for having the world's highest cable-car ride, 4,765 meters above sea-level. Now it comes highly recommended in tourist guides such as Lonely Planet and TripAdvisor. But Venezuela's deepening economic crisis since the collapse of crude oil prices in 2014 meant it became an ordeal to source raw materials over the last few years. "For years we have been suffering from shortages and we buy on the black market. We cannot get products from our traditional suppliers," said Jose, 56. Up to now, Jose has always managed to scrape by. "But the situation got more complicated this year..."

As many Venezuelans battle hunger and malnutrition because of an economic and political crisis, some will see it as another beautiful thing that has gone in a country dazed from months of often violent protests that killed 125 people. — AFP

APPLE TAKES SHINE OFF GLOBAL STOCKS RALLY

NEW YORK: The S&P and the Dow opened little changed yesterday, but the Nasdaq Composite was pulled lower by a 1 percent fall in Apple's shares on concerns about the new iPhone X's hefty price tag and delayed shipping.

The three major Wall Street indexes hit record highs on Tuesday as the market closed higher for the second straight day. The indexes have been hitting record highs this year as they bounce back from periodic setbacks caused by turmoil in Washington, questions over US interest rate hikes, doubts about the Trump administration's

ability to push through its pro-business reforms, and lately, tensions over North Korea.

"The slight weakness we're seeing this morning is after a two-day rally. The fundamentals and technicals, however, remain strong," said Peter Cardillo, chief market economist at First Standard Financial in New York. At 9:37 am ET (1337 GMT), the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 7.76 points, or 0.04 percent, at 22,126.62 and the S&P 500 was down 1.74 points, or 0.07 percent, at 2,494.74. The Nasdaq Composite was down 13.77 points, or 0.21 percent, at 6,440.51. "There are concerns over the bull run, which is on several hope factors. But the list of worries is still there ... That would dampen the prospect of

a stronger stock market," Cardillo said. Six of the 11 major S&P sectors were lower, with financials leading the decliners. The energy index was up 0.65 percent as oil prices rose after the International Energy Agency said a global surplus of crude was starting to shrink. Apple's shares were down 1.08 percent at \$159.17. Centene rose about 6 percent after the health insurer said it would buy privately held Fidelis Care for \$3.75 billion.

Western Digital fell more than 3.75 percent after Toshiba agreed to focus on selling its chips unit to a group led by Bain Capital and SK Hynix, but did not rule out a deal with other bidders. Nordstrom gained 5.8 percent after a source

said the Nordstrom family has selected private equity firm Leonard Green & Partners to help take the high-end retailer private.

Declining issues outnumbered advanced on the NYSE by 1,266 to 1,195. On the Nasdaq, 1,308 issues fell and 954 advanced. The pan-European STOXX 600 dipped 0.1 percent as weakness in chipmakers was compounded by a drop in miners. Chipmakers have been the best-performing among Europe's tech stocks this year, accounting for a large chunk of the sector's outperformance. AMS shares have gained 165 percent year-to-date.

"The economics of the Apple announcement are interesting because it will really test this theory that inflation is going to be weak," said Mike Bell, global markets strategist with JP Morgan Asset Management in London.

"With the iPhone coming in around \$1,000 it will be interesting to see how healthy demand is. If it's relatively healthy I think it shows that there is still quite a lot of pricing power for US companies and consumers have confidence."

Meanwhile, China stocks edged up yesterday to hover near 20-month highs as robust economic growth and hopes of further reforms bolster investors' confidence, even as regulators tap the brakes on riskier types of credit. Both the blue-chip CSI300 index and the Shanghai Composite Index ended up 0.1 percent, at 3,842.61 points and 3,384.15 points, respectively. Consumer and real estate firms led the gains, while banking stocks weakened. After languishing for nearly two years, China's stock market has come alive in recent months thanks to strong corporate

profit and economic growth, rekindling the interest of investors burnt by a mid-2015 crash. An index tracking investor confidence rose to 58.6 points, the highest level since January 2016, as investors were more optimistic about economic conditions both at home and abroad, according to the China Securities Investor Protection Fund.

China's economy has defied expectations for a slowdown this year, with early fears that a debt-crackdown will knock output eclipsed by a sustained construction boom and resurgence in global growth. Also supporting the market, margin financing-money investors borrow from brokerages to purchase stocks has risen in the past two weeks to the highest level this year, according to UBS Securities, reflecting improving risk appetite.

UBS strategist Gao Ting said that although policymakers remained focused on reducing financial risks, "the recent strength of the RMB against the USD points to lower risk to domestic liquidity from capital outflow." Indeed, the yuan's surge this year has helped increase foreign purchases of Chinese equities. Net purchases of mainland A-shares via the "Stock Connect" scheme increased for five months in a row to 27 billion yuan (\$4.14 billion) in August, while foreign holdings under the Qualified Foreign Institutional Investor (QFII) scheme jumped 18 percent in the second quarter.

Most Asian stock markets were higher yesterday after US shares rose on encouraging jobs data while worries about North Korea and twin hurricane disasters eased. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 rose 0.5 percent to 19,879 points and India's Sensex was up 0.3 percent at 32,242.41. —Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Wednesday 13 September 2017. Index: Price index, Weighted Index, KXS 15. Trades: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes sections for Oil & Gas, Basic Materials, Industrials, Consumer Goods, Health Care, Telecommunications, Banks, Insurance, Investment Instruments, Technology, Parallel Market.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. Global Stock Indices: Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, Financial Times, DAX, CAC 40, Nikkei 225, Hang Seng, Straits Times. MENA Stock Indices: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia. Global Currencies Exchange Rate: Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, Australian Dollar. MENA Currencies Exchange Rate: US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Emirates Dirham, Egyptian Pound. Global Interest Rates: 1-week, 1-month, 3-month, 6-month, 1-year. Global Bond Yields: United States, Europe, United Kingdom. Commodities: Kuwait Oil, Brent, West Texas, Gold, Silver.



'CLOUD' IS THE FUTURE AND POWER OF BUSINESSES

'HUAWEI CONNECT 2017' CAPTURES ATTENTION OF HIGH TECH-SAVVY PEOPLE

By Ben Garcia and Agencies

SHANGHAI-CHINA/KUWAIT: The biggest conference of the year 'HUAWEI CONNECT 2017' organized by Huawei, a China based-giant global information and communications technology (ICT) solutions provider, has captured the attention of international high tech-savvy people, including many companies as they successively trumpeted several huge announcements during three-day event. Held at the New International Expo Centre in Shanghai, the international attracted around 27,000 people from various part/provinces of China including Beijing and from various countries around the world. According to Huawei, attendees included mainly professionals, leaders and analysts who are all hungry of many technological advancements/innovations, including the Huawei vision to building one of the five global clouds to power the future of business.

With a commitment of spending \$500 million in the next five years to support digital transformations around the world, Huawei's enterprise service strategy is focused towards positioning Huawei as an industry cloud enabler across diverse industries.

"Cloud is the most needed technology for governments and enterprises," said rotating CEO, Guo Ping, Huawei. "Huawei is very committed to building a cloud platform to support customer business needs and innovation. Our business model is not to monetize user data. We do not develop applications or touch the data in our public clouds. We provide technologies and services to help users monetize their data," he added.

Digitization strategy

At the event, Huawei launched "Connection+Cloud", the dual drivers of its digitization strategy and enterprise network solutions for smart connection of everything. The strategy and solutions help enterprises accelerate their transformation to the cloud by providing comprehensive network connections, and network management that is more intelligent in all scenarios, such as access, WAN, data center, and interconnection.

The company also took the opportunity to release six new innovations into the market, discussing solutions designed to help enterprises with digital transformation. They included innovations in hardware, software, data, connection, architecture, and hybrid cloud.

The major focus was on the Huawei Cloud, which the company described as the cornerstone of the intelligent world. Huawei believes that with the development of technologies, societies are experiencing a tangible Matthew Effect when it comes to innovation. Because of this, clouds around the world will begin to converge, becoming more and more centralized. The result will be a small collection of global clouds, powered by the biggest companies on the planet. Huawei is committed to developing one of those clouds with a number of partners.

"Increasingly, innovation will take place in the cloud," said Joy Huang, Vice President of Huawei's IT Product Line. "Huawei Cloud is committed to being an enabler of the intelligent world, delivering continuous innovations



Alaa Elshimy

of technologies and capabilities that help customers succeed in their digital transformation." Huawei also released the new-generation intelligent cloud hardware platform - Atlas. Positioned for scenarios such as public cloud, artificial intelligence (AI), and high-performance computing (HPC), Atlas rides on the advantages of key technologies. The suite includes heterogeneous resource pooling and intelligent orchestration to deliver new levels of hardware resource utilization and adapt more flexibly to service demands. As the result of Huawei's Boundless Computing strategy, the Atlas platform makes Huawei well positioned to steer the infrastructure resource pool revolution.

Huawei enterprise network products and solutions have been widely used in more than 100 countries and regions around the world and are accelerating enterprises' digital transformation based on Smart Connection of Everything. To date, 197 of the Fortune Global 500 companies, and 45 of the top 100 enterprises have chosen Huawei as their partner for digital transformation.

Huawei revealed its latest enterprise service strategy designed to support companies undergoing cloud transformation. Huawei is committed to becoming an industry cloud enabler and a strategic partner to customers across diverse industries by investing \$500 million in the development of cloud-based professional services, a cloud platform and cloud ecosystem. This will provide customers with end-to-end cloud transformation service solutions enabling them to build, use, and manage their cloud platforms effectively.

Smart services for enterprise cloud transformation

Sun Maolu, President of Technical Service Department for Huawei Enterprise Business Group, said: "With the emergence of a 'Cloud Only' era, Huawei is adopting a long term cloud transformation service strategy to support our enterprise customers in their journey to the cloud. Our services strategy centers on the concept of 'Grow with the Cloud' and becoming an industry cloud enabler. More specifically, Huawei's enterprise services will focus on four key areas including cloud innovation, creating a digital platform, supporting smart operations and enabling businesses.

To drive this strategy forward, Huawei will continue to increase its investment in the



Joe Kelly

development of service solutions and Global Service Centers (GSC), as well as tools, platforms and verification labs for professional services. In the next five years, we will also focus on research and development of industry clouds, increasing our annual investment by more than 50 percent. In addition, to meet enterprise demand for ICT talent in the cloud era, Huawei will provide a new certification scheme to train ICT architects, ICT developers and industry-specific ICT experts. By 2021, it is estimated that more than 150,000 cloud and industry-specific ICT professionals will have been certified by Huawei."

End-to-end industry cloud transformation solutions

As enterprises embrace cloud transformation, they will face a new set of challenges across strategy, planning, requirement analysis, business integration, application system evaluation, technology selection, roadmap design, deployment, operations & maintenance (O&M) management, and information security.

According to Xu Jingbin, Director of IT Technical Service Department for Huawei Enterprise Business Group: "With a track record of industry cloud solution delivery, Huawei works closely with our partners to develop end-to-end industry cloud transformation services that cover consulting, assessment, planning and design, migration, disaster recovery (DR), security, and O&M. As business continuity is critical during complex cloud migration, Huawei provides a sophisticated migration process with 4 stages and 17 steps, and professional migration tools developed in-house, which have helped more than 1,000 customers migrate their businesses to the cloud smoothly and efficiently."

Artificial intelligence

On the sidelines, Kuwait Times also spoke to several Huawei senior officials including Alaa Elshimy, managing director of Huawei's Enterprise Business Group in the Middle East region in which he explained some of the innovations/advancements they unveiled during the conference. "We are happy in our several big announcements in the conference; we are now recognized as one of the top five big cloud players globally in the coming 3-5 years; the second one is incorporating artificial intelligence (in smart cities) in the enterprise seg-



Guo Ping

ments; some of them are appearing in robots. For example, in the coming years, shopping trolley will not be pushed by human shoppers any more. The trolley will follow the shopper instead. The trolley can be commanded as well; and while the trolley is moving around, it has the capacity to stop or go whenever humans or anything is about to block his way. Those are just examples of artificial intelligence that will be in the market pretty soon," Elshimy said.

He said the products are ready but they are now in the process of finalizing how and what applications could be used for these products. "Self-driven cars are already there, they are launched, it is in the testing process, and they are improving it, and to improve, they are using Huawei technology. So the applications are being studied to make the product available to the masses. We are working with several companies in manufacturing cars so that self-driven car will be ready soon," he added.

Asked if the technology advancement now should be blamed for lack of jobs for people. "I don't think so. Centuries ago, they invented electricity and the light bulb, they said, it's bad; now, they are the most important invention ever. So I believed the same, this time, technology is blamed but time comes it will be understood," he explained.

Elshimy said that challenges facing now is the affordability and priorities but for the competency and manpower issues, the region is so rich. "We should really pay attention to the technology being offered today," he said.

Biggest market

While the biggest market of Huawei is still the home-country China, the second biggest market of Huawei is the European region followed by the Middle East. "If we look at the other players, they are not rated well and some of them are closing down especially in the SMB segments. It is mainly because the shift of users. Before we sell and use hardware but nowadays, it was completely reversed to software; we are focusing in all; in the cloud area we have a complete portfolio for the second year in a row. We are ahead of Apple now," he said.

Success story

Joe Kelly, Huawei Senior Technology Spokesperson, treated the Middle East media group with the success story and growth of

Huawei during a visit to its headquarters in Shenzhen-China. He said the continued rise of Huawei can be attributed to the entire team of company's 180,000 people who are collaboratively working hard to share their experiences/expertise for the company's continued growth and success. "We increased our investment in the Research and Development department (R & D) last year to \$16 billion. In 2016, Huawei's revenue grew by \$75.1 billion," he said. The media group had also the privilege of visiting the OpenLab at its headquarters in Shenzhen. Huawei launched a new, integrated partner program that will include all of the company's global solution partners. To facilitate this, in 2017, Huawei is investing \$250 million in partner programs, including \$70 million in co-marketing. The new Huawei Solution Partner Program incorporates independent software vendors, independent hardware vendors, systems integrators, and consulting partners.

The number of Huawei OpenLabs, innovative spaces in which Huawei and partners can collaborate and test new solutions, has grown from five to 16. By 2020, there will be 24 OpenLabs. Additionally, over 100 solutions have been released by Huawei Solution Partners, and are now available in the Huawei Marketplace. The new program announced will bring together all solution partners previously working with Huawei in separate programs run by its Enterprise Business Group, Carrier Business Group, and the Products and Solutions unit.

Pipe strategy

Huawei follows a 'pipe strategy' in which the company focuses on the flow of data - transmission, storage, distribution, and display. Huawei builds business-driven ICT infrastructure; at the same time, it works with a trusted ecosystem of solution partners who make innovative use of the infrastructure. To support this ecosystem, Huawei remains committed to investing in partner enablement, training, and go-to-market success.

HUAWEI CONNECT 2017 is all about platforms and ecosystems, focusing on practical application and hands-on experience. This year's event brings together members of the vast global ICT ecosystem in an interactive exhibition hall over 20,000 square meters in area, 30 percent larger than last year. Over 60 sponsors, 10 industry organizations, and 130 joint solution partners are participating in the exhibition, and around 1,000 partners have joined Huawei at the event. Major partners in attendance include SAP, Accenture, China soft International, HGST, Intel, Microsoft, Centern, and Infosys. They will jointly showcase their latest progress and best practices in ICT technology, and participate in a broad range of activities during the event, including keynotes, booth exhibitions, sponsor events, and technical sessions.

HUAWEI CONNECT 2017, Huawei's flagship event for the global ICT industry, is held at the Shanghai New International Exhibition Centre from September 5-7. The theme is Grow with the Cloud. Huawei will be exploring how to realize new growth through digital transformation together with its customers and partners at this global platform for open collaboration.

XEROX LAUNCHES 29 CONNECTKEY ENABLED PRINTERS IN KUWAIT

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: On the sidelines of the largest product launch by Xerox in Kuwait, Kuwait Times interviewed Pui Chi Li, head of Marketing for the Middle East and Africa region of Xerox's Developing Markets Operations, on Tuesday at Jumeirah Beach Hotel.

Answering queries, Li explained that the company built a leading a workplace revolution where it launched 29 ConnectKey enabled printers and multifunction devices with simple and secure on-the-go capabilities, cloud connectivity, access to productivity boosting features and apps. "The event today is part of an international roadshow, where we have launching events in many countries and Kuwait is our first stop in the Middle East," she said. The aim of the roadshow is to engage with the customers and help them familiar with the new offerings and new products.

Li pointed out, "Xerox is going to launch 29 ConnectKey in the market; it is very significant for us. The latest technology will be demonstrated in the event to show people how it works." "The process of getting a work done



Pui Chi Li

has moved from the desktop to your pocket. We have built a portfolio of true workplace assistants tightly connected to the mobile and cloud technology environment that accommodates this evolution. Information flows easily from the device to cloud repositories like Dropbox, Office 365 or Google Drive. Mobile workers can print wirelessly from any computing device," she explained.

The new ConnectKey portfolio transforms

traditional printing devices into smart, connects workplace assistants that reflect the evolving needs of today's businesses. Personalized workflows, one-touch access to the cloud and multi-layered security features are the new print, copy and fax technology.

Li told Kuwait Times that the new products can be controlled by many users via a touchscreen that comes with many languages and can be customized automatically by the need of the workplace or the person at work. "The new printer has the capability to translate and that can be edited and printed by an app in smart devices. The multi-touch experience now finds its way to the printer or multifunction printer you'll depend on to get work done quickly and easily. Download apps directly from the Xerox App Gallery, and customize your interface to keep the apps you use most front and centre," Li added. She affirmed that security is a top priority for every business and with Xerox everyone can work without worries, where the four-point approach to security ensures comprehensive and all-encompassing protection for all system components and points of vulnerability. It offers protection from



Xerox delivers new technology with its ConnectKey printers and transform the workplace. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

unauthorized access to devices; keeps confidential communications and information safe with encryption and image overwrite; audits device access attempts and protects both data and device from malicious intent.

Li said, "According to statistics, there is a high demand for smart devices in Kuwait market, making a good opportunity to run this

kind of campaign. We have been working with Al-Ghanim for more than 14 years now. And we will continue to work with Al-Ghanim and all these new products are available in their showrooms," she said. Twelve roadshow events will be held in the Middle East and Africa region and 25 internationally. Its next stopover is Dubai.

CHOLERA CASES COULD HIT 850,000 IN YEMEN

GENEVA: The cholera epidemic tearing through Yemen, exacerbating the already dire humanitarian situation in the war-ravaged country, could impact 850,000 people by the end of the year, the Red Cross warned yesterday. The outbreak "has reached colossal proportions," said Robert Mardini, the International Committee of the Red Cross's Near and Middle East director. The collapse of Yemen's infrastructure after more than two years of war between the Saudi-backed government and Shiite rebels who control the capital Sanaa has allowed the

country's cholera epidemic to swell to the largest in the world.

The speed at which cholera is spreading in Yemen has slowed some in recent months, but the deadly waterborne disease is far from contained. "In July we said we feared it would reach 600,000 cases by the end of the year. Now we have reached 647,000 suspected cases already," Mardini said. "We are now projecting in the worst-case scenario to reach 850,000 by the end of the year," he said, stressing that "it is not under control. It is not contained."

The World Health Organization said earlier this week that 2,065 people had so far perished from the disease. "The pace was slowing down a bit, but over the past week it went up again," Mardini said, pointing out that there are still around 4,700 suspected cases being registered in the country every day. The numbers are all the more tragic in light of the fact that cholera is usually an easily preventable disease. "It is the worst health crisis for a preventable disease in modern times," Mardini told a conference on the sidelines of the UN Human Rights Council.

WHO has warned that the disease has spread rapidly due to deteriorating hygiene and sanitation conditions, with millions of people cut off from clean water across the country. Less than half of health facilities in the country are functioning, many health workers have not received salaries for nearly a year, and less than 30 percent of the medicines needed in Yemen are reaching the country, Mardini said. More than 8,400 people, including civilians and combatants, are believed to have died in Yemen's civil war, according to UN estimates. — AFP

PROGRESS ON GLOBAL POVERTY AND DISEASE AT RISK: GATES

FUNDING CUTS COULD LEAD TO MILLIONS OF DEATHS

LONDON: Proposed United States budget cuts could put in jeopardy great progress in reducing global poverty and disease and lead to 5 million more deaths from AIDS alone, the philanthropist Bill Gates warned yesterday. Gates, whose Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is a major provider of global health and development funding, said there was currently "more doubt than usual about the world's commitment to development".

A global health report by the foundation, co-authored by the Gates and the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation at the University of Washington (IHME), analyzed progress against diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis. It also tracked rates of poverty, maternal and infant death, access to contracep-

tion, sanitation and other development issues. Forecasting good and bad future scenarios, it found millions of lives hanging in the balance.

In a telephone briefing about the findings, Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft Corporation, said remarkable progress had been made in recent decades but that shifting priorities, instability and potential budget cuts could lead the world to turn away, jeopardizing the gains. HIV, which currently infects almost 37 million people worldwide, is an "iconic example", Gates said, "because the world really did step up with an incredible level of generosity which has meant (annual) AIDS-related deaths have fallen by almost a half since the peak in 2005." The Gates IHME analysis, called the Goalkeepers report, fore-

cast that a 10 percent cut in global donor funding for HIV treatment could mean more than 5 million extra deaths by 2030.

Under budget proposals from US President Donald Trump released in May, US funding for global health programs including efforts on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria would see a 24 percent cut to about \$6.5 billion for 2018. But opposition Democrats and many of Trump's fellow Republicans have blasted his plan, saying they will reject it. Congress, not the administration, controls US spending. Gates said his foundation is working hard to secure continued US government funding for global health and development and remained hopeful the proposed cuts will not be approved. — Reuters



SOUTH BEND, Indiana: In this file photo, Dr Sheena Zent replaces a filling for a patient in South Bend, Ind. — AP

CHEW ON THIS: DENTAL COVERAGE GIVES PROTECTION WITHIN LIMITS

WASHINGTON: Don't forget about your teeth when you start considering 2018 insurance needs later this fall. The annual sign-up window for many types of health insurance also is a good time to think about dental coverage. Many employers offer a chance to sign up for it during their open enrollment period for benefits. Dental protection also can be purchased with private Medicare Advantage coverage or through the Affordable Care Act's public marketplaces. There's a big market for it. About 74 million Americans have no dental coverage, according to the National Association of Dental Plans. That's around 23 percent of the population, or more than double the percentage that lacks health insurance. Here are some things to consider when shopping for dental plans.

pay only \$1,500 or less annually for care per person. After that, the customer has to pick up the rest of the cost. Coverage for a kid's braces also may be limited to a maximum lifetime payment of \$1,000 per person, depending on the plan.

Why are there limits?

Dental coverage is designed to encourage people to get regular care that keeps tooth decay and other costly problems from developing. "The idea is you pay more out of pocket if you let things go south," said Evelyn Ireland, executive director of the National Association of Dental Plans. If the insurer covered more, then premiums would rise, and that might dissuade people from getting regular dental checkups, Ireland said. The dental plans association estimates that more than 90 percent of patients do not hit their plan's annual maximum. However, research suggests that some people start avoiding care before they reach their plan's limits due to the costs they face even with coverage, said Marko Vujicic, chief economist for the American Dental Association's Health Policy Institute.

Should I bother buying coverage?

The answer can depend on whether you expect to need more than basic care and if your dentist offers a discount program. Patients can use tax-advantaged health savings or flexible spending accounts to cover dental bills. Consider how your projected expenses compare with the monthly premium you'd pay for coverage and whether you have the resources to handle an unexpected bill of \$1,000 or more. Monthly premiums can top \$50 for a family plan, which is much less than a typical health premium. Your employer likely will pay some of that for any plan purchased through work. — AP

People lack dental coverage

The main reason is limits on government health programs. Medicare provides health coverage for people who turn 65, but the federal program offers no dental option unless you buy it through privately-run Medicare Advantage plans. Likewise, dental coverage is spotty for adults in Medicaid, the federal-state health insurance program for the poor. Shoppers also cannot use tax credits to help pay for most adult dental coverage sold on the ACA's marketplaces or exchanges.

What should I expect?

You won't have to pay for preventive care like teeth cleanings. Your insurer also will grab the bill for the occasional X-ray. Coverage tends to shrink from there. Basic work like cavity fillings might come with co-insurance, which requires you to pay a certain percentage of the bill. That co-insurance may be as high as 50 percent for major work like crowns or dentures. Many plans also

WORLD LAGS BADLY ON TARGETS TO SLASH TB, HIV AND OBESITY

PARIS: Not a single country, out of nearly 200 reviewed, was on track to meet the UN target of eliminating new tuberculosis infections by 2030, according to a global health review published yesterday. At the same time, less than five percent of countries were likely to reach the UN goal of reducing suicides, road deaths and child obesity by that date, and only seven percent would likely eliminate new HIV infections. Overall, only a fifth of 37 health-related targets set under the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, are likely to be met, said the review carried by The Lancet medical journal. "A number of targets remained out of reach for most countries," the authors wrote.

Under the review, funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, more than 2,500 researchers from around the world scored the health progress of 188 countries, and projected their trajectory to 2030. The projections "underscore the need for dramatic, if not unprecedented, acceleration of progress to improve health outcomes, reduce risk exposure, and expand essential health services for all countries," the authors said. They team found "considerable inequality" between projections for rich and poor countries.

High-income countries were forecast to meet 38 percent of the UN's health-related targets, compared to three percent for low-income states. They also were not dealing with the same problems. Poor countries fared poorly on maternal mortality, child stunting, malaria and environmental risks that affected rich nations less. But when it comes to lifestyle problems, many high-income countries, including the United States,



AGARTALA: This file photo shows an Indian tuberculosis patient posing as he sits in a bed at a government hospital in Agartala on World Tuberculosis Day. — AFP

fared poorly on measures for suicide, alcohol abuse and homicide.

China improving, US not

Looking to the future, the review said efforts to eradicate malaria and reduce deaths of infants and pregnant women were among the most promising, with more than 60 percent of countries projected to meet UN goals for all three. "On the basis of current trends, Kazakhstan, Timor-Leste, Angola, Nigeria and Swaziland were

projected to have the largest overall improvements," the team said in a statement.

This was driven by cuts in child mortality and better access to health care, family planning and birth assistance. Countries expected to lose ground-considering trends for child obesity and alcohol abuse-included Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Serbia and Ukraine. The report named China and Cambodia among middle- and low-income countries deserving of "recognition for improving their citizens' lives". — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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AM MOVIES ACTION

01:15 Flight World War II
02:50 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
04:35 The Darkest Hour
06:10 Warcraft: The Beginning
08:15 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:45 Treehouse Masters
01:40 Bad Dog
02:35 Snake Sheila
03:00 Snake Sheila
03:25 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet

BBC FIRST

00:40 Doctors
01:10 EastEnders
01:40 Poldark
02:40 Last Tango In Halifax

CRIME & INVESTIGATION NETWORK

00:00 Escaping Polygamy
01:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories
02:00 My Haunted House
03:00 Stalked By A Ghost

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 Inside Amy Schumer
00:30 Inside Amy Schumer
00:55 Broad City
01:20 Broad City

18:35 Key And Peele
18:59 Brotherhood
19:22 Ridiculousness Arabia
19:46 Ridiculousness Arabia

Discovery Family

00:05 Destroyed In Seconds
00:30 Alaska Gold Diggers
01:20 Don't Drive Here
02:10 Animal Nation With Anthony Anderson

ID

00:30 American Monster
01:20 Evil Online
02:10 I Am Homicide
03:00 Sin City Justice

Disney HD

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

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 Inside Amy Schumer
00:30 Inside Amy Schumer
00:55 Broad City
01:20 Broad City

21:25 Stuck In The Middle
21:50 Sunny Bunnies
21:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir

Disney Junior

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

Discovery Channel HD

00:20 Wheeler Dealers
01:05 Harley And The Davidsons
02:35 X-Ray Mega Airport
03:20 Fast N' Loud

X HD

06:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
06:25 Disney11
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Right Now Kapow

E! HD

00:05 Second Wives Club
00:55 Second Wives Club
01:50 El News
02:50 Celebrity Style Story

03:20 Celebrity Style Story
13:05 Counting Cars
13:20 Ozzy And Jack's World Detour
14:20 Mountain Men

food network

00:00 Chopped
01:00 Food Network Star Kids
02:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
03:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives

ITV CHOICE

00:10 Don't Tell The Bride
01:30 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase

HD

00:00 America: The Story Of The U.S.
01:00 Clash Of Warriors
02:00 America's Book Of Secrets
02:50 Ancient Aliens

HD HISTORY

00:20 Counting Cars
00:45 Counting Cars
01:10 Forged In Fire
02:00 The Curse Of Oak Island

12:40 Counting Cars
13:05 Counting Cars
13:20 Ozzy And Jack's World Detour
14:20 Mountain Men

NAT GEO people HD

00:15 The Food Files
00:45 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
01:10 Fish Of The Day
01:40 City Chase Marrakech

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

00:10 Rare
01:00 Inside Combat Rescue: The Last Stand
03:00 Nazi Megastructures
04:00 Rare

NAT GEO WILD HD

00:20 Valley Of The Wolves
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Incredible Fangs
02:50 Secrets Of The Wild

nick HD

00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig

10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

nick jr.

00:04 Max & Ruby
00:27 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:38 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:49 The Day Henry Met

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

00:10 Rare
01:00 Inside Combat Rescue: The Last Stand
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NAT GEO WILD HD

00:20 Valley Of The Wolves
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Incredible Fangs
02:50 Secrets Of The Wild

AM MOVIES HD FAMILY

00:20 Inspector Gadget
01:45 The Sorcerer's Apprentice
03:35 Zootropolis
05:25 Toy Story

AM MOVIES COMEDY

01:35 Meet Dave
03:15 Daddy's Home
04:55 Ride Along 2

06:50 Boychoir
08:35 Oleanna
10:10 Man In The Moon
11:55 Jappeloup

AM MOVIES HD KIDS

00:10 Ducktales: The Movie
01:30 Outback
03:05 The Adventures Of Don Quixote
04:45 The Happy Cricket

AM MOVIES HD

00:30 Get Rich Or Die Tryin'
02:25 The Legend Of Zorro
04:35 Gridiron Gang
06:40 Last Knights

Discovery SCIENCE

00:30 How Do They Do It?
00:55 Food Factory
01:20 Hacking The Wild
02:10 NASA'S Unexplained Files

STAR WORLD HD

00:00 Married At First Sight
01:00 Married At First Sight
02:00 Bones
03:00 Bones

TLC HD

00:20 My 600 Lb Life: Where Are They Now?
01:05 The Day I Almost Died
01:50 My Extreme Excess Skin

AM MOVIES FESTIVAL

01:15 correspondence
03:20 Man In The Moon
05:05 Land Of Mine

FASHION



Ralph Lauren waves beside one car from his collection in The Garage at the conclusion of the Ralph Lauren fashion show during Fashion Week, Tuesday in Bedford, NY. — AP/AFP photos



Ralph Lauren races out of Manhattan into fall fashion

American fashion royalty Ralph Lauren raced into fall 2017 by inviting Diane Keaton, Jessica Chastain and Katie Holmes to his garage to watch a stunning runway show inspired by his passion for rare automobiles. The 77-year-old designer, who will next year celebrate the 50th anniversary of his iconic fashion house, transported fellow designers, celebrities and editors 40 miles (64 kilometers) north of Manhattan to Bedford on the penultimate day of New York Fashion Week.

There in his private garage, models sashayed down the runway sweeping past four of his priceless automobiles parked in the center watched by guests lounging on black leather banquettes before a private dinner. Sculpted patent leather and high-gloss silk were signature materials for the Ralph Lauren woman of fall 2017. Colors were black and silver, with pops of bright red, yellow and electric blue. Unusually giving a slew of interviews ahead of the show, it marks the third season running that Ralph Lauren has invested in the see-now, buy-now instant fashion that has scared off certain other houses.

It was the first collection since the appointment of Patrice Louvet as chief executive officer, replacing Stefan Larsson who stepped down after little over a year, following disagreements with Lauren on how to position the clothing line in the fast-changing retail universe. In July, the firm reported a net income of \$59.5 million in earnings through July 1, up from a loss of \$22.3 million in the year-ago period. The corporation announced plans in April to move into a more cost-effective e-commerce platform, closing its flagship Polo store on New York's Fifth Avenue and saving \$140 million in annual expenses.

Tuesday's fast-paced show opened with the exhilarating roar of a sports car engine, starring supermodels of the moment Kendall Jenner in black and yellow, and Bella Hadid in a Ferrari red tulle gown. Mimicking trends seen elsewhere on the catwalk this season-albeit with most others unveiling collections for spring/summer 2018 — there was delicate grey check, houndstooth and plaid for day wear.



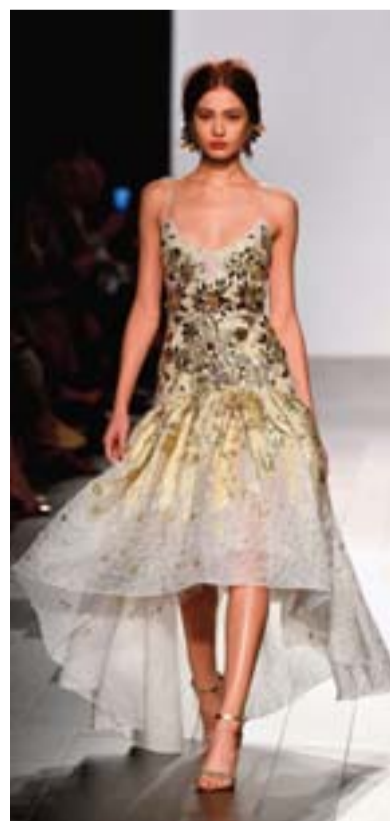
FASHION



'Wear-now difficult'
 There were splashes of bright yellow, and off-the-shoulder black zipped up leather. His men's Purple Label collection, unveiled at the same time, melded timeless black-tie-evening elegance with RL monogrammed down jackets, and sweaters and coats from the racing world. Ferrari red was picked out in a patent trench and a silk tuxedo jacket for women. There was a stunning Ferrari yellow tulle gown-skirts to the ground paired with a black leather biker jacket. Lauren walked out in a boiler suit for a standing ovation, lovingly giving his wife a kiss and hugging Keaton, before gesturing to all his guests to follow him into a dinner of lobster salad and burgers.
 Continuing past two runway-to-retail collections, all looks from the show will be instantly accessible to consumers globally online and in flagship stores such as New York, London, Paris, Hong Kong, Tokyo. "It's wonderful if you can do it. The scheduling is not easy," the designer told Women's Wear Daily in a pre-show interview of his switch to instant fashion-a switch that Tom Ford has since reversed. "Wear-now is difficult. It's proven difficult for many people, and it's not easy for me, either. But I thought it was interesting and I'm trying it. But the clothes are the most important thing."
 Tuesday's collection evoked the spirit of a modern, timeless woman in the self-made billionaire's distinctive silhouette. A mantra of his is: "Fashion is over quickly. Style is forever." In notes to accompany the show, the designer said he saw his car collection one of the finest in the world-as "moving art." "My women's collection for fall 2017 connects the elements of the speed, style and beauty of these handcrafted vehicles with the very modern, yet timeless spirit of the clothes," he said. "There is a sleekness, an innate sexiness and power to shapes." — AFP



Models walk the runway for the Ralph Lauren Collection 2017 show in his garage in Bedford.

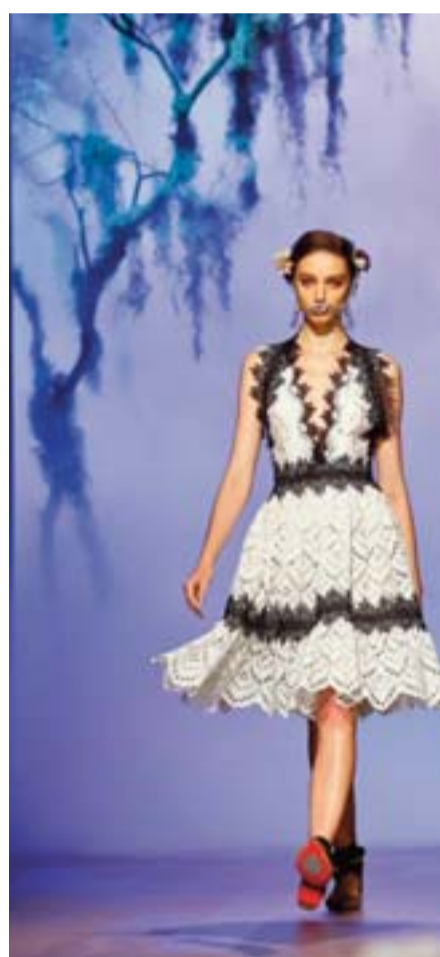
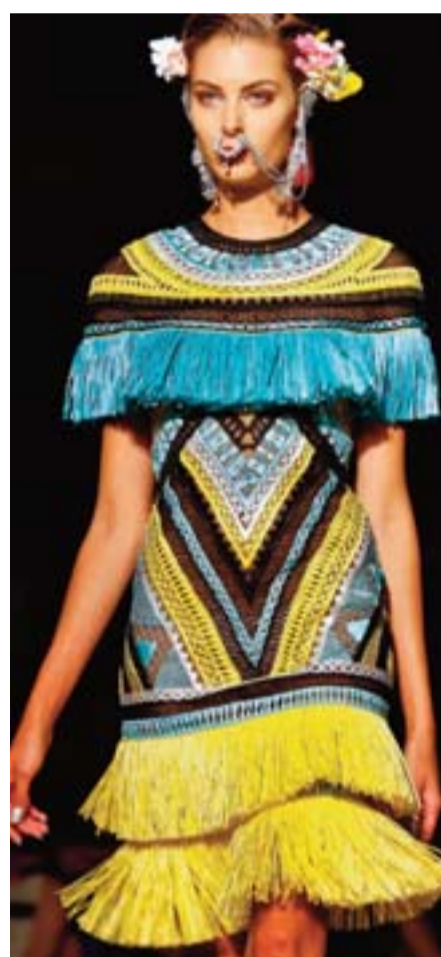
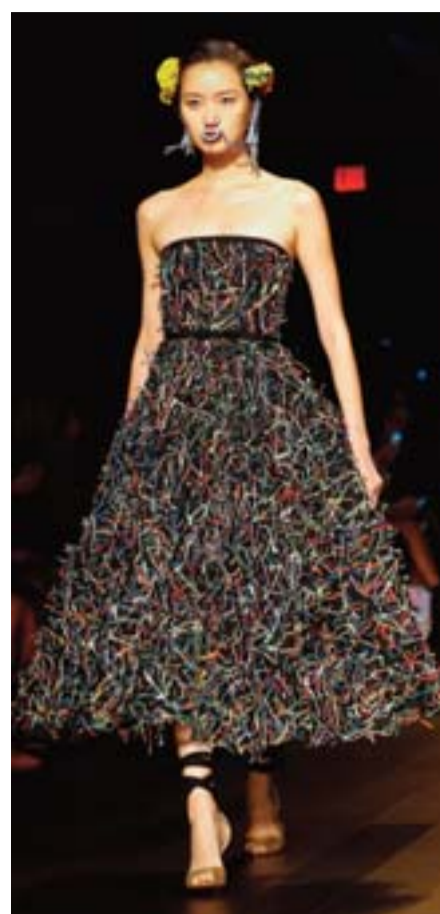


Models walk the runway for the Badgley Mischka fashion show during September 2017 - New York Fashion Week: The Shows at Gallery 1, Skylight Clarkson Sq.

FASHION



Fashion designer Naem Khan acknowledge applause after unveiling his latest collection during Fashion Week in New York. — AP photos



Fashion from the Naem Khan collection is modeled during Fashion Week.

No bride's dress? No problem: Guard couple tie knot in Irma

Lauren Durham had a poofy white dress and plans for an intimate beach wedding on the second weekend of September. Instead she got married in fatigues, with no makeup, in a vast hangar filled with rescue vehicles and paramedics just hours before she would rush into a hurricane to try to save her fellow Floridians. She and her fiancé, Michael Davis - both of them senior airmen with the Air National Guard - were deployed indefinitely to assist with the rescue. They let their out-of-town guests know they'd probably miss their own wedding and headed to the Orange County Convention Center to wait out the hurricane with hundreds of other relief workers before being sent into the state's most devastated regions.

They were eating breakfast with some friends Sunday morning, and one said, "Hey, why don't you guys get married during the hurricane?"

Durham said: "It started out as a joke, and it just kind of unfolded. And it turned out to be really great." Dozens of people - some longtime friends from the service, some strangers from across the country who came to assist with the rescue efforts - set up folding chairs. A few found tuxedo T-shirts to wear, despite the closure of all the stores in town for the storm. Someone came up with a bouquet of orange flowers. Their best friend in the Guard happens to be a notary and officiated.

They don't think they'll be able to come up with a cake, but that's OK: "We have plenty of snacks. MREs do have Kitkittles in them, so we're pretty excited," Durham said. Her wedding dress had already been purchased - waiting for her at home. "It was a big poofy flowy princess gown," she said, then gestured down at her fatigues. "But, you know, I love wearing this uniform, so

this works." Durham, 24, and Davis, 26, met right out of high school, and have been together for five years. Davis has served for eight years, Durham for three.

They're not quite sure how their families will feel when they find out they got married in front of a rack of rubber rescue boats. "I think it will be quite a surprise for them," Durham said, "but I think they'll understand, it was very, very impromptu." It never occurred to either to try to beg off duty for their wedding. "Service before self," Davis said, and it will be a great story to tell their kids one day. As she gave her name to reporters, Lauren Durham, she forgot to add the "Davis." She giggled and pointed to the Durham embroidered on the chest of her camouflage. "I'll have to get new name tapes." — AP



Dawnetta Heinz poses with her wedding dress in Omaha.



Arianna Pro, left, displays a photo of her in the wedding dress of Dawnetta Heinz, right, in Omaha, Neb.

NEBRASKA WOMAN LENDS HER WEDDING DRESS TO BRIDES ON A BUDGET

A Nebraska woman is lending her wedding dress to brides on tight budgets instead of letting it gather dust in her closet. Dawnetta Heinz started sharing her dress a month ago with brides who can't afford to buy one, the Omaha World-Herald reported. The strapless dress with a beaded bodice has already been borrowed by two other brides, and at least eight others have expressed interest.

Heinz said she bought the dress on sale for \$550 at an Omaha bridal shop. She offered it on a Facebook classified ad page for free, and within 48 hours a dozen women inquired about borrowing it. She said she's faced financial hardships and even homelessness in her life, so she's glad to help any woman who can't fit a dress into her wedding budget. Heinz and her husband are now personal trainers in Omaha.

Valarie Fitzgerald, 28, wore the dress for her wedding last month. She and her husband were planning a courthouse wedding because of their tight budget, but after finding out she was able to wear Heinz's dress, a friend helped Fitzgerald plan a decorated outdoor wedding. "I felt amazing," Fitzgerald said. She said she loves the sisterhood of the shared dress, and by wearing it she felt a bond with Heinz and with women who will wear it in the future. "I can't wait to see how far this dress goes," she said. — AP



Arianna Pro, left, displays in Omaha, Neb a photo of her in the wedding dress of Dawnetta Heinz, right, during her vow renewal ceremony which took place in San Francisco. — AP photos



Chinese artist Liu Bolin takes part in a performance with a "Galerie Party" set, created by designers Gaelle Gabillet et Stephane Villard, during an event to mark the 40th anniversary of the Pompidou Centre in Paris. — AFP

A diva remembered: Key points in the life of **Maria Callas**

Maria Callas died 40 years ago but her status as one of opera's greatest stars remains undiminished, with new releases of CDs and exhibitions planned to mark the anniversary. Here are some of the turning points in the life of "La Divina", drawn from archives of AFP's reporting on the woman whose voice and style forever marked the world of opera.

Maria Kalogeropoulou blossoms into a diva

On August 2, 1947, the curtain falls on the last act of Ponchielli's "La Gioconda" in Verona, Italy. The standing ovation that follows hails the arrival of Maria Callas as a new star. She was born Sophia Cecilia Anna Maria Kalogeropoulou on December 2, 1923, in New York, her family name later shortened to Callas. Educated in Greece, she started performing at the age of eight. In Verona she meets Giovanni Battista Meneghini, a wealthy industrialist who is passionate about opera. Twenty-eight years her senior, he becomes her impresario and then

husband in 1949.

In 1954 she loses around 30 kilos (66 pounds) and transforms into the ultimate diva, taking top parts in the most well-known operas. An AFP correspondent wrote at the time of her death in 1977 that Callas reminded opera that it is also theatre, and that the "long lines of paunchy and plump singers that come along to push out a tune on center stage are no longer acceptable".

The Rome scandal

On January 2, 1958, Callas opens the Rome season with "Norma" in the presence of Italy's president, Giovanni Gronchi. But at the end of the first act, she says she has lost her voice and refuses to continue. The temperamental diva is accused of being capricious as there had been whistles during one of her arias. But she insists to the media: "As you could see, I could no longer speak." Two weeks later in Paris, it is a star "exhausted and worn out" that an AFP journalist interviews in the morose

atmosphere of a private room at the famed restaurant Maxim's. "I suffered a lot that evening in Rome," she says.

Onassis, her great love

In 1959 Callas leaves Meneghini to embark on a passionate nine-year affair with shipping tycoon Aristotle Onassis. "Late at night one could see him, with Callas, in an Athens taverna where, having taken off his jacket and undone his tie, he showered the orchestra with gold and broke, as is Greek custom, piles of plates," AFP reported at the time. Their idyll ends in 1968 when Onassis leaves Callas to marry the widowed Jackie Kennedy.

Curtain call

Callas turns her back on opera in 1965. On February 20 she triumphs in "Tosca" in Paris, with an AFP journalist describing the public's passion for a singer "more sensitive than ever, even if she sometimes lacks range". "The moment she appeared in the church in the first act, in a pink dress wrapped in a large deep-orange scarf, her arms full of flowers, the applause was such that it drowned out the music and the first lines were inaudible," the report says.

During a performance on May 29, she falls ill. On July 5, "despite the advice of her doctor," she takes to the stage for the last time in London, with Queen Elizabeth II in the audience.

A final tour

In 1973 Callas undertakes an international tour of recitals. In Paris, AFP wrote, "bouquets rained onto the stage," accompanied by standing ovations and cries of "Viva Maria", even if the critics were "less enthusiastic". "If the technique, the musicality of the voice are not in question, the high notes are judged as particularly painful."

Her last breath

Callas dies at her Paris home on September 16, 1977, aged 53, having suffered a heart attack. "I have just seen her on her bed," says Michel Glotz, her former artistic director, in an AFP report. "It was the image itself of 'La Traviata' as she performed it in 1956 at Milan's La Scala. There was not a line on her face. It seems like she was just resting." — AFP



A file picture taken circa 1970's shows Opera soprano Maria Callas giving autographs to fans in Paris.



This file picture taken on May 23, 1964 shows Opera singer Maria Callas performing in Vincenzo Bellini's "Norma" in Paris.



This file photo taken on May 16, 1964 shows American singer Maria Callas arriving at the Opera de Paris. La Seine Musicale displays an exhibition about Callas from September 16. — AFP photos



A file picture taken on January 5, 1966 of US Greek-singer soprano Maria Callas, being applauded by the audience of the Odeon theater in Paris during the premiere of "The Barber of Seville", presented by the Metropolitan Opera of New York.



This photo shows Italian flutist Andrea Griminelli (left) and Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli (center) as they and The Lucca Philharmonic Orchestra are conducted by robot 'Yumi' for the first time at The Teatro Verdi in Pisa. — AFP photos

ROBOT 'CONDUCTOR' STEALS THE SHOW FROM ITALY'S TOP TENOR

Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli's voice soars to the rafters of the Tuscan theatre, but all eyes are on the orchestral conductor beside him—a robot with an apparent penchant for Verdi. The concert in the heart of Pisa is a world first, with two mechanical "arms" conducting live music at the grand finale of the first International Festival of Robotics. The Swiss-designed YuMi sweeps its baton skywards with one hand, while the other curves around in a caress that spurs on the strings as the operatic "La Donna E' Mobile" ("Woman Is Fickle") reaches its climax.

But music lovers beware: YuMi can conduct set pieces, but cannot improvise, react or interact with the musicians. "It was extremely difficult to train," says Andrea Colombini, the conductor of the Lucca Philharmonic Orchestra which performed with Bocelli and soprano Maria Luigia Borsi on Tuesday. YuMi, designed by robotics leader ABB, was taught to mimic Colombini's gestures. The maestro said the automaton was far more sophisticated than its "rival" Asimo, the white four-foot (1.2-metre) robot designed by Honda which conducted the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in 2008. "We're not talking about Asimo's limited up-and-down, one-arm movement..."

YuMi is extremely flexible and its arms have the same mobility as mine," he told AFP. YuMi does not stand, however: It sits on a pedestal that gives it the support it needs to move its long arms.

'Just an arm, not the brain'

It's not a particularly friendly looking robot, and Colombini acknowledged that they did not get on at first. "It was not love at first sight. At the start I kept getting wound up because it kept getting stuck, and when the robot gets stuck it takes 25 to 30 minutes to reset it," he said. "It took a long time," he added: Training YuMi to perform six minutes of music "took 17 hours of work." Borsi looked apprehensive as she stood in her shocking pink concert gown, waiting for the robot to begin directing the classic soprano aria "O Mio Babbino Caro" ("Oh My Beloved Father") by Puccini. The effect is somewhat odd: the

musicians watch for the first baton stroke and gamely follow it throughout the aria, but the traditional vitality of a human conductor-keeping tempo with the whole body, even through the breathing-is missing.



This photo shows musicians of The Lucca Philharmonic Orchestra as they are conducted by robot 'Yumi' for the first time at The Teatro Verdi in Pisa.

Bocelli, who is visually impaired, had to remember the tempo YuMi had been taught down to the second. Any unprogrammed "accelerando" or "rallentando" would have been disastrous, as he had no way to get the conductor to follow his lead. "There's no way it could replace the sensitivity and emotion of a conductor, because a robot has no soul. It's just an arm, not the brain, not the heart," Colombini said. Later, when the conductor himself takes to the stage, his whole body sways and thrusts—and the difference is startling. "There's not much room unfortunately for improvisation, you have to go with the robot," says American violinist Brad Repp, who took part in the concert. "It's a cool effect... but there's no way this could be the future," he said. — AFP