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Speaker refutes rumors of Cabinet resignation

Decision on early retirement delayed till next week

By B Izzak

MoH denies any spike in scabies cases

KUWAIT: Health Ministry Undersecretary Dr Mustafa Redha denied press reports published today of hundreds of cases of scabies in Kuwaiti hospitals. The reported 200 scabies patients in Adan Hospital and 70 in Jahra Hospital "is totally false", Redha told KUNA late yesterday. He however confirmed that cases of scabies in Kuwait "did not exceed their normal rate".

Redha also assured Kuwait has enough scabies medicine in storage.

"The ministry is following the developments related to infectious and communicable diseases in the area very closely, and takes into consideration the availability of necessary vaccinations," he said. Ministry officials will hold a news conference at Adan Hospital today morning.

Notably, Saudi media reported that cases of scabies among students in Makkah have reached 2,762, according to health officials in the holy city. They said 2,156 cases were discovered in schools while 506 were detected in homes. The officials said as many as 77 medical teams are fighting the disease to prevent it from spreading to other areas. A number of schools in Makkah have remained closed since the scabies was first detected on March 25. — Agencies

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem denied yesterday that the government has resigned, describing social media reports on the issue as "rumors". Social media reports said Prime Minister HH Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and several ministers have resigned, but government sources immediately denied the reports, saying that the prime minister is on an official vacation.

Among the ministers rumored to have also quit along with the premier are Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan, State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh, Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

The speaker said that some of the ministers mentioned were in fact in the Assembly attending committee meetings, adding things are running normally. Ghanem called on Kuwaitis not to heed rumors on social media and reiterated that the Cabinet has not resigned.

Meanwhile, the Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee delayed its decision on the early retirement draft law until Monday after the government and the pensions agency expressed reservations. Ghanem, who attended the meeting, said the committee is heading towards consensus on the issue and hoped that a final agreed decision will be taken next week.

Rapporteur of the panel MP Saleh Ashour told reporters that the government rejected the three proposals made by a foreign company, which conducted a comprehensive study on the issue. He said the company said Kuwaiti employees can retire after 30 years in service without additional financial costs and can still get full benefits. The company made two other proposals that allow employees to retire earlier, but by losing some of the financial benefits. These scenarios will cost the pensions agency up to KD 2.2 billion annually for more than 25 years.

The government however proposed that employees who wish to retire early should pay from their salaries to the pension agency, but



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

the proposal was not accepted by the committee, Ashour said. He said that if the government does not submit a proposal in writing on Monday, the committee will vote on its proposals for the National Assembly to debate the bill next week.

News in brief

33% illegals benefit from amnesty

KUWAIT: Informed security sources said the number of expats who corrected their residency status since the start of the grace period on Jan 22 until April 9 reached 51,500 - 33 percent of the total expats in violation of the residency law. They said 32,000 violators left the country without paying fines, with the possibility of being able to return to the country. Meanwhile 19,500 expats paid fines and remained in the country, with KD 1.170 million collected in total. Sources called on the remaining of violators - whose numbers are over 100,000 - to hurry and correct their status before the amnesty expires in two weeks' time (on April 22). — Al-Anbaw

Typhoons to provide Qatar security

DOHA: UK Typhoon fighter jets bought last year by Qatar will be delivered in time to help provide security for the 2022 World Cup, Britain's ambassador in Doha said yesterday. "We expect that the Typhoon will be ready for the World Cup," Ajay Sharma told reporters at his residence in the Qatari capital. In December, Qatar signed an \$8 billion deal with Britain for 24 Typhoon jets. At the same time, the two countries agreed to create a Joint Operation Squadron using both of their air forces. It is this joint flight group that will provide air security for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar. — AFP

Abu Dhabi opens oil auction

ABU DHABI: Abu Dhabi's state energy company said yesterday it had opened its first auction for exploration contracts, offering six major oil and gas blocks as it looks to expand output. Successful bidders will gain access to untapped reserves estimated to hold billions of barrels of oil and trillions of cubic feet of natural gas. Abu Dhabi's National Oil Company (ADNOC) said. "The licensing strategy represents a major advance in how Abu Dhabi unlocks new opportunities and maximizes value from its hydrocarbon resources," the statement said. Bids will be accepted for the six blocks - four onshore and two offshore until October. — AFP

Riyadh wants to cut off Qatar

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia has plans to dig a canal the length of its border with Gulf rival Qatar, to turn the peninsula into an island and further isolate it, Saudi media have said. "The project is to be funded entirely by Saudi and Emirati private sector investment - under full Saudi authority," Sabq Online Newspaper reported on Monday. The planned "Salwa Canal" is to be dug by Egyptian companies, benefiting from the "Egyptian experience" in widening the Suez Canal, adding 60 km to the Saudi coastline. The canal would measure 15-20 m deep and 200 m wide, allowing for the passage of merchant ships. — AFP

Trump welcomes Qatari Emir in from the cold

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump welcomed the Emir of Qatar to the White House yesterday, barely one year after alleging his government funded terrorism at a "high level". Drawing a line under a spat that called into question the future of a key US air base in the Gulf state, Trump hosted Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in the Oval Office. "He's a friend of mine" Trump said effusively. "He's a great gentleman."

A year ago the picture was very different. Trump had followed the lead of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in taking a hard line against Qatar, saying the country

needed to scale back ties with Iran and stop funding extremism. Qatar's neighbors had also been infuriated by its willingness to host dissidents from across the Gulf and to allow broadcasts critical of them by Doha-based Al Jazeera. Trump had initially supported an economic blockade on Qatar, but aides - mindful of the pivotal role that the Al Udeid Air Base outside Doha plays in US Middle East operations - have since convinced him to take a more moderate approach.

The emir said Trump "has been very helpful in supporting us during this blockade", and thanked the American people for being "very supportive". "We do not and we will not tolerate people who fund terrorism. We are cooperating with the United States of America to stop funding of terrorism around the region." Trump praised Qatar's military purchases, saying they buy "a lot of equipment from us, a lot of military airplanes, missiles". — AFP



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump shakes hands with Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani in the Oval Office of the White House yesterday. — AFP

France and Saudis agree to curb Iran 'expansionism', ink deals worth \$18bn

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday that France agreed with Saudi Arabia on the need to curb Iranian "expansionism" in the Middle East, while also announcing a conference to boost humanitarian support for Yemen, where Riyadh is waging a bombing campaign. Speaking alongside Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman at a press conference as he wrapped up a three-day official visit, Macron called for "greater efforts to limit Iran's ballistic activity and regional expansionism". "This strategic vision means reducing all the projects of expansionist political Islam which

could feed other forms of terrorism and destabilize the region," Macron said of Riyadh's regional rival.

On Yemen, where Saudi Arabia has led an international military coalition since 2015 and waged a blockade that has sparked widespread condemnation, Macron stressed the need for "respect for international humanitarian law". "We will continue to be extremely vigilant on this point," he said, while adding: "It is obvious that we will not tolerate any ballistic activity that threatens Saudi Arabia."

After a trip which has seen France and Saudi sign up for major cultural exchanges as well as discussions of war in the Middle East, companies from both countries signed draft deals worth a total \$18 billion. The memoranda of understanding cover sectors including petrochemicals, water treatment, tourism, health, agricultural and cultural activities, the French-Saudi business forum said in a statement.

Continued on Page 11



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron welcomes Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman upon his arrival at the Elysee Presidential Palace for a meeting yesterday. — AFP

Former presidents embroiled in Comoros passport scandal

MORONI, Comoros: Two former Comoros presidents are suspected of embezzling millions of dollars from a scheme that sold passports to foreigners to finance development in the Indian Ocean island nation. A parliamentary report compiled in December and seen by AFP accuses Ahmed Abdallah Sambi and Ikililou Dhoinine of involvement in systematic fraud and calls for criminal action against the pair. "The courts must take up cases of embezzlement of public funds and conspiracy in which presidents and their associates are implicated," the report said.

The scandal dates back to 2008 when Comoros launched a program, in cooperation with the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait, to give citizenship to stateless individuals from the Gulf known as bedoons. In return, Comoros - an archipelago between Mozambique and Madagascar and one of the world's poorest countries - was expected to receive significant investment from the oil-rich nations. The initial deal agreed that 4,000 bedoon families would become naturalized Comorians in return for \$200 million to be used for major infrastructure projects.

Over the following years, almost 48,000 passports were issued under the program, according to data collected by the parliamentary inquiry - but just a handful were issued to bedoons. However more than 6,000 passports were sold "outside the legal channels", the report said. Comoros-issued passports entitle holders to visa-free travel to several major economies including

Continued on Page 11



MORONI: A man holds Comorian passports on Monday in the capital. — AFP

Kuwait calls for international effort in fight against terror

Five counter-terror meetings held in Kuwait

NEW YORK: Kuwait said it hosted five international counter-terrorism meetings over past two years, which was part of the Gulf state's responsible endeavors in joining hands with international partners to fight so-called Islamic State (IS). Terrorism "is still posing a great danger in many parts of the world, and is threatening international peace and security," Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi told a Security Council Arria Formula session.

The session - 'Enhancing synergies between UN and regional and sub-regional organizations to address nexus between terrorism and transnational organized crime,' was co-organized by Kuwait, Peru, France and Cote d'Ivoire. Al-Otaibi called for an international effort to address terrorism, as well as tackling root causes which promote hatred and violent extremism, with the objective of boosting peaceful co-existence among faiths.

He noted terrorist groups like IS, Al-Qaeda, Boko Haram and Al-Shabaab were restructuring their field

operations depending on assets they have. These groups, said Al-Otaibi, were funding their terrorist operations through transnational organized crime including drugs and weapons, and human trafficking, as well as money laundry. "This affirms the solid relationship between terrorism and transnational crime, which required us to coordinate national, regional and international efforts." Kuwait, he said, approved a law countering money laundry and terrorism financing.

This law, he added, established preventive measures to ban use of money generated by illegal or criminal actions. Al-Otaibi said the Security Council affirmed solid relationship between terrorism and transnational crime. The Security Council, he said, also called for boosting international cooperation, border security, information exchange and capacity-building of member countries to address this relationship. Kuwait, said Al-Otaibi, was ready to host an international conference by end of this year amidst growing threats by foreign terrorists. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi addresses Security Council Arria Formula session. — KUNA

Three co-op board members submit their resignations

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Three Mangaf co-op board members yesterday submitted their resignations to the MSAL undersecretary. The three resigning members - the deputy chairman, treasurer and secretary - blamed 'deteriorating administrative and financial circumstances' for their actions. They also said that the co-op had received several warnings and suffered many losses that the board tried to cover up and

pass during a voting session.

Nurses' allowances

Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah yesterday received delegations from KMA, KDA, KPA and KNA to discuss a number of demands and proposals they made, in addition to the latest developments in each field. KNA Chairman Banar Nashmi Al-Enezi said KNA discussed nurses' duty and specialization allowances as well as amendment of the nurses' payroll. He added that the minister promised to study the demands with the CSC.

Retirement list

The Municipality made lists of the names of senior officials who have been in service for over 32 years pending referring them to retirement, said informed sources, noting that the first list includes 30 names.

KPC, EQUATE settlement

KPC plans to reach a settlement with

EQUATE Petrochemicals Company to cut \$10 million in claims it made in the period of 2011 to 2015, said informed sources, noting that the marketing and planning department had succeeded in reducing those claims.

Capital slaughterhouse

Kuwait Livestock Trade and Transport Company (Mawashi) CEO Osama Boodai said that the capital slaughterhouse and cattle market in Rai will soon open. He added that the project had cost KD 16 million, fully paid by Mawashi as part of its commitment to provide the best services and products. Boodai added that the new slaughterhouse is located over an area of 94,000 sq m and will include an administrative building, offices, stores, a department store, restaurant, cafe, catering service kitchen, cattle market, cattle auction spaces, barns, loading and unloading areas, warehouses and fridges, a mosque, parking space for 400 vehicles plus many other facilities.

Mol honors Warba Bank

KUWAIT: Mol Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Affairs Major General Fahad Al-Showayye recently honored Warba Bank for its remarkable contribution during the 2018 GCC Unified Traffic Week held this year. The motto of this year's event is 'Your Life is A Trust.' The aim of the program is to promote awareness on traffic regulations and protecting lives. Speaking on the occasion, Warba's Strategic Planning Group and Seasonal Communication Executive Manager Ayman Salem Al-Mutairi expressed his joy with the honor, noting that Warba Bank is keen on taking part in activities that would benefit citizens and protect their safety.



Kuwait elected board member in Arab Labor Organization

CAIRO: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh said yesterday Kuwait has been elected as a board member in Arab Labor Organization (ALO) for the 2018-2020 term. Al-Sabeeh, also State Minister for Economic Affairs, made her remarks on the sidelines of the third day of the 45th session of the Arab Labor Conference in Cairo. She expressed hope her country becomes a main factor in implementing sustainable develop-

ment goals, and attaining Arab people's aspirations and hopes.

Meanwhile, Al-Sabeeh mentioned a Gulf ministerial meeting was held earlier to discuss house maids' issue, adding the participants agreed to take immediate actions to resolve it. The meeting decided to launch and implement an automated system between labor-sending countries and GCC-member States, she said.

Such an important measure would alleviate various burdens on Gulf citizens, she said. Al-Sabeeh also stressed the importance of launching the system fast and fixing the recruitment's price with the sending countries. Measures and procedures regarding the system are due for approval ahead of the Geneva meetings, slated for late May, said the Kuwaiti minister. Kuwait is keen on implementing sustainable development's items, particularly the ones related to women issues, she said. Kuwaiti



CAIRO: Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh speaks to the press on the sidelines of the Arab Labor Conference. — KUNA

women gained all their rights and reached advanced positions inside and outside the country, added Al-Sabeeh. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday praised Kuwait's bilateral relationship with Lebanon. Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah made his remarks while meeting with the Commander of the Lebanese Armed Forces General Joseph Aoun and his accompanied delegation. The two sides discussed subjects of joint interest and exchanged talks on a number of issues, the defense ministry said in a press statement. The meeting was attended by Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff Lt Gen Mohammad Al-Khuder. — KUNA

Startups in Kuwait

Investment and startups



By Attorney Fajer Ahmed

Figuring out how to fund a startup can be very difficult at times. The phrase often repeated is "You need money to make money", although true, how you get that money can be as important as what you do with that money, and having a solid legal structure can assist you with figuring out what are the best opportunities for your startup. Since I work with startups very often, I have decided to do a startup series of articles. This is part two in the series and will focus on investment for startups.

Question: What are my best options for raising money?
There are many options for raising funds for startups, here are a few of the popular ones, including the pros and cons for each:

Type of Funding	Definition	Advantages	Disadvantages
Seed	Just like a plant, it is the beginning of the life of the startup. This is usually provided by family and friends.	Very easy to access. Can come from a very supportive environment.	Usually is not structured properly legally. We are more likely to give a family member a large amount of our company without thinking through the valuation of the company.
Crowdfunding	A product or a service is offered in return for money. Technically you are selling a product or a service before you launch that product or service.	Can be a great marketing tool.	There is no legal structure for crowdfunding in Kuwait.
IPOs - Initial Public Offering	You can offer shares of the company to the public.	No one controls the shareholder. Capital is raised quickly.	Legal structure in Kuwait for public shareholding companies is not efficient for small companies.
Angel investment	When a person or a small group of people invest with their own money in a startup. This usually happens in the early stages also.	Can be a very supportive and mentoring relationship.	Just like at seed level they will ask for a large amount of shares.
Venture Capitalist Firms	Are professional investors that invest in startups.	They add a lot of value to the company as they are usually reputable companies.	The deal takes months to complete, and the VC firms may have many conditions in order to invest.

Question: What should I keep in mind before approaching investors?

1. Know your options: Consider all the options mentioned above and understand that you can work with more than one, or be open to more than one option.
2. Know what you will do with the money: It is important for investors to know where the funds are going and how will the funds help the company expand.
3. Know when to ask: Something that you would need to consider is the timing. Timing is vital. Usually investors want to provide funds in the first few years of a startup because the potential for growth is much larger than an already well established company and therefore the returns are much larger.
4. Have a solid legal structure: Investors wouldn't want to invest in companies unless they know what the structure of the company is and that includes all the shareholders, the type of shares they have and their rights.
5. Register your intellectual property rights: This is very important, make sure you have trademarked your logo, and if you have an innovation then you have patented that innovation, copyright any designs, that you own all the websites you are using and so on. A mistake that startups do all the time is think that they need to copyright their source code, you do not need to do that. Don't give it to anyone and make sure no one has access to it.
6. Know what the investor will be wanting: Know how your investor is expecting their returns, this will help you negotiate!
7. Prepare for Due Diligence: Usually investors will ask for Due Diligence. Due Diligence is an investigation where the investor digs really deep into the company to see if it is worth investing in, this will be from an accounting side and a legal side. Lawyers that are conducting due diligence will usually look for red flags such as any cases against the company, any debts or legal obligations on the company, any contracts signed that might put the company at risk in the future.

To read part one of the special series 'Startups in Kuwait', check out the Legalese section on the KuwaitTimes.net website (<http://news.kuwaittimes.net/website/shareholder-agreements-startups-in-kuwait/>)

For more questions or comments, email: info@ftl-legal.com

Local

Kuwait seals KD 47 million power plant upgrade deals

Minister stresses self-employment in the Arab world

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Ministry of Electricity and Water has signed a pair of contracts worth KD 47 million (\$141 million) dealing with upgrading fuel reception and control systems in the Doha West and Sabiya power plants. The first deal, signed by Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rashidi, entails renovation work on fuel reception systems in the Doha West power station, at an individual cost of KD 41 million (\$123 million), the ministry said in a statement.



Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rashidi speaks during the event. — KUNA

The project, with a set timeframe of 30 months, also includes replacing dilapidated fuel pipelines, in addition to setting up early detection systems to prevent gas and hydronic radiant leaks that prove injurious to the pipelines, the statement added. Similarly, the second deal, which costs KD 6 million (\$18 million), involves overhauling Fuel Gas Conditioning (FGS) systems in Sabiya power plant over a time period of 36 months, it noted.

Meanwhile, a seawater desalination project using reverse osmosis technology in Doha West power plant, worth KD 116.7 million (\$384.7 million), has been 76 percent completed, Al-Rashidi, who also serves as Minister of Oil, revealed. He pointed out that the project continues to run on schedule and will be completed no later than November 29, enabling the plant to churn out 60 million gallons of water per day. The minister went on to put Kuwait's current water production capacity at more than 620 million imperial gallons, foreboding "peak water demand" during the summer.

Self-employment

In another development, Kuwait's Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said yesterday it is significant to disseminate and spur self-employment and entrepreneurship in Arab societies. Speaking to reporters after chairing a meeting of the council tasked with overseeing a bank

account allocated for financing small and medium-sized enterprises in Arab countries, the minister underscored that all types of backing and finance should be provided to Arab entrepreneurs. The meeting is part of an annual joint gathering of Arab financial and monetary organizations, finance ministers and central banks' governors, concluded in the Dead Sea today. A congenial investment environment is of paramount significance to the diversification of economic resources and the promotion of the private sector, he emphasized.

The bank account allocated for financing small and medium-sized enterprises in Arab countries, is an initiative that was launched by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2009 with the main goal of stimulating and bankrolling enterprises in Arab countries. Al-Hajraf represented the State of Kuwait in the meetings that were also attended by Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Mohammad Al-Hashel. The meetings mainly focused on common programs, budgets and previous resolutions. — Agencies

Educational Opportunities Expo

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Principal of Al-Raja' school for boys Ahmed Al-Ghareeb stressed the special education department's belief in special education school students resuming their university education. Speaking during the first Educational Opportunities Expo organized under the auspices of the special education director Salman Allafi at Al-Raja' school, Ghareeb stressed that the expo provides senior students with a chance to closely examine the possible opportunities they might have at Kuwait University and PAAET, as well as a number of private colleges and universities in Kuwait.

Inedible food items

Ahmadi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer food and nutrition inspection teams confiscated and destroyed 56 kilos of inedible food items and filed four citations. Ahmadi inspection manager Jeza Al-Daihani said that his teams closed down a warehouse in Fahaheel, destroyed 50 kilos of inedible food items, filed two citations and issued 10 warning notices. Mubarak Al-Kabeer inspection manager Abdullah Ahmed Abbas said Sabah Al-Salem teams inspected a number of

stores and co-ops in Adan, where 6 kilos of food items were destroyed, two citations were filed and one warning notice was issued.

First-aid training

The Martyrs Bureau's family Care and Guidance Department yesterday organized a first-aid training course for martyrs' families, said department manager Ashwaq Al-Arada, noting that this course comes within a number of training courses the bureau holds to provide martyrs' families with due care.

Teacher's symposium

Within the activities of the 43rd educational conference organized by Kuwait Teachers Society (KTS), a symposium titled 'Teacher Professional Development, Facts & Aspirations' was headed by KTS Chairman Mutee' Al-Ajmi and included lecturers Dr Bader Al-Omar (KU), ALT Supervisor General Salah Dabsha (MoE) and Dr Heba Ahmed from the World Bank.

Amending article 51

Chairman of the Private Sector Employees Union Saud Rashid Al-Hejailan stressed what he described as abuse against telecommunication employees will not be taken lightly. He also urged lawmakers to be up to their responsibilities and vote for amending article 51 of the private sector labor act to calculate indemnities effective from the date of recruitment and not from 2010, and include all citizens still in service and those who had resigned.

KFSD participates in Dubai international exhibition

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate is participating in the Dubai international exhibition for government achievements that is being held under the patronage of Sheikh Mohammad bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, UAE Vice President, Prime Minister and Dubai ruler from April 9 to 11. The KFSD delegation is headed by the supervisor of fire accidents investigations Lt Col Sayyed Hassan Al-Mousawi, head of the study and analyses of causes of fire Lt Col Ali Bu-Rabee, head of service devel-

opment Afrah Al-Faraj, head of projects implementation Mashaal Al-Hamad, acting head of wired and wireless systems Maj Ibrahim Al-Shuwaiker and Captain Sayeed Hamza Al-Mazidi from the PR and info department.

'National identity'

Acting Director General of KFSD Major Gen Khalid Al-Tarkeet attended the closing ceremony of the training course to boost "national identity" in the presence of the director general of the Public Authority for Sports that was held for fire, defense, interior and national guard personnel.



KUWAIT: KFSD carried out an exercise at the storage building of Salam hospital in Bneid Al-Qar. Al-Hilali Center participated in the exercise.

Kuwait Times

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Lightning fills the sky spectacularly as a storm passes through Kuwait on Thursday. —KUNA

Preparatory and ministerial meetings for 29th Arab Summit kick off in Riyadh

Palestinian cause - the most crucial and central issue

RIYADH: The Preparatory and Ministerial Meetings of the 29th Arab Summit, due on April 15, began in the Saudi capital yesterday. The sessions, scheduled on April 10 until 12, started with a meeting for the Permanent Representatives and Senior Arab officials in preparation for the Foreign Ministers meeting, held before the summit. Delivering his speech to the meeting, Jordanian permanent representative to the Arab League Ambassador Ali Al-Ayed said that the various political, security, and military developments facing the Arab countries should be met with a cooperative political stance and diplomacy.

The Palestinian cause is the most crucial and central issue for the Arab world, said Ambassador Al-Ayed whose country held the presidency for the previous Arab summit. He affirmed that Jordan and Arab partners would work on measures to express their utter refusal for the US decision to move the American embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, an act seen as a threat to the peace process in the Middle East.

Ambassador Al-Ayed also touched on the recent Israeli aggression against the people of the Gaza Strip, saying

that international law and norms granted rights for protesters to express their views especially if the people were under internationally recognized occupation. On the attack which recently struck the Syrian city of Douma, Ambassador Al-Ayed said that it was one of the most sorrowful events in Arab history, indicating that the attack was part of similar crimes perpetrated against the innocent people of Syria. He called for an international investigation on the attack, stressing the importance of bringing those behind it to justice.

The Jordanian diplomat also condemned the ballistic missile attacks launched from Yemeni territory towards Saudi Arabia by the Houthis. On his part, Saudi representative and Foreign Ministry undersecretary for international affairs Abdulrahman Al-Rassi said that the current situation engulfing the Arab region especially in Syria and Yemen required a solid stance amongst Arab brethren to overcome challenges. The situation in Palestine will remain as a priority for the Arab world, affirmed the Saudi official who indicated that the Palestinians have the right to an independent

state with Jerusalem as its capital. Al-Rassi added that the Palestinians also have the right to determine their own destiny and there will be no peace in the region unless justice prevails. Assistant Minister for Arab World Affairs Aziz Al-Daihani headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the preparatory meeting. After the opening session, closed meetings were held to discuss the draft agendas and topics related to the forthcoming Arab summit.

The meeting for the Permanent Representatives and Senior Arab officials was preceded by a session following up on the implementation of the final communique of the 28th Arab Summit held in Jordan. Representatives from Jordan, Mauritania, Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, and Sudan attended the meeting. Today, a session for senior Arab officials will be held in preparation for the ministerial economic and social affairs meeting tomorrow.

The vital topics

Vital topics, pertaining to the status quo of the Arab region and joint Arab cooperation, will be forwarded to

tomorrow's Foreign Ministers meeting held ahead of the 29th Arab Summit on April 15 in Saudi Arabia, said a Kuwaiti diplomat yesterday. Speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the Preparatory and Ministerial Meetings of the Arab Summit, Kuwaiti Assistant Minister for Arab World Affairs Ambassador Aziz Al-Daihani said that 18 articles - focusing on issues such as the Palestinian cause, the Syrian crisis and others - were reviewed yesterday.

He indicated that topics related to joint Arab cooperation were also discussed during the preparatory meetings. Al-Daihani said that the participants took the chance to laud the Kuwaiti efforts at the UNSC as a non-permanent member, affirming that Kuwait helped to highlight prominent issues such as the Syrian and Yemen crises as well as the situation in Libya. The Kuwaiti diplomat called for efforts to come up with resolutions that will contribute to the welfare and development of the Arab world. The preparatory meetings will continue until April 12. —Agencies

Criminal detectives investigating deadly fire; woman killed

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives are investigating a fire in which an Indian was killed and her husband was taken to Babbain Burns Center in critical condition. Police, firemen and paramedics responded to a call and the fire was put out, but the woman succumbed to her injuries. Police have suspicions about the possibility of foul play as there was a smell of kerosene in the flat.

Soldier hits police patrol

A National Guard soldier who was showing off in a car without license plates in Riqqa collided with a police patrol car and injured the driver as he was being chased, until they reached Sabahiya, where he was arrested after his tire blew. A police patrol noticed the plate-less car with tinted windows, so they asked the driver to pull over, but he didn't, so a chase ensued at high speed and ran all red lights.

Fight on WhatsApp

The Criminal Court sentenced a broadcaster and her boyfriend to two years in jail on charges of exchanging insults and threats during a "fight" on WhatsApp. The court confiscated the phones of the suspects.

Detectives hunt driver

Detectives are looking for a driver who stole a shipment of supplies instead of delivering it to a cooperative society. The legal representative of a company lodged a complaint against an Egyptian driver who delivers food supplies and baby milk to cooperatives, saying he took the goods and disappeared. —Al-Rai

KIB sponsors the 6th Ideal Mother Award

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) sponsored the 6th Ideal Mother Award for the fourth consecutive year. The award was organized by Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center, under the patronage of the President of the Kuwait Foundation for Disabled Children, Sabeeka Al-Jasser, to honor mothers of disabled children both locally and across the region.

On his part, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, congratulated the winners of this year's award, saying: "Each year, KIB is committed to sponsoring this award, as it recog-

nizes the effort and hard work of parents of children with disabilities. This rings especially true for mothers, who not only nurture their children, but also push them to overcome their disabilities, helping them to channel their energies to play an active role in their community."

Najia added that KIB's leading social responsibility program features a wide range of initiatives that serve people with disabilities. Additionally, the Bank provides easily accessible banking services, and accordingly redesigned six of its branches in order to accommodate the needs of customers with special needs, including those who are visually impaired and deaf. It is worth noting that KIB is dedicated to participating in events involving people with disabilities to help them overcome obstacles and assist in effective participation and inclusion, thereby benefiting the entire nation.



Health awareness program

KUWAIT: The National Guards Medical Department yesterday organized an Open Day health awareness program at the National Assembly where employees were subjected to some medical tests. In this regard, the National Guards Medical Services Manager Colonel Anwar Taqi Hussein said that the aim of organizing such an event is to create awareness on disease prevention and early detection - as well as briefing the employees about the danger of chronic diseases and the benefits of living a healthy lifestyle, taking exercises and having healthy diets.



Local

Canadian trade mission organizes workshop, education health expo

CIHEA connects partner organizations and potential clients

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A 24-member delegation from Canadian International Health Education Association (CIHEA) organized a one-day trade workshop in Kuwait. The event, in collaboration with the Canadian Embassy in Kuwait, was held at the Sheraton Hotel and attended by students and faculty members from various medical organizations and Kuwait University's Faculty of Medicine.

Martine Moreau, Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait, welcomed the delegates, stressing its importance in strengthening their grasp of the education and medical field. "I am very happy to welcome the delegation comprising mostly of medical specialists, people from academia and educators. They are here to help us in efforts to strengthen our bilateral cooperation in the field of medicine and education. Students from Kuwait and patients from this part of the world are most welcome in our institutions, bearing in mind the world-class excellence and brilliancy of Canadian institutions.

Kuwait wants the best for its citizens. Canadian expertise can really help in many ways, enhancing health services and providing even better outcomes," she said.

The delegation was headed by Andrew Padmos, Chief Executive Officer of Royal College and the head of CIHEA. "CIHEA provides mutual assistance to connect with partner organizations and potential clients in countries like Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE. We have representatives here from the organizations under CIHEA. We have with us members from faculty of medicines, from schools that train health professionals, and we have hospitals, associations and companies covering a wide range of sectors in health and education," he said.

"We want to connect to the people of Kuwait and the people involved in the medical and education fields. My organization, the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, has had a relationship with the Kuwait Institute of Medical Specialization (KIMS) for three years to help them expand their specialization. The

idea is to help, strengthen and enhance residency training done by KIMS. We have a responsibility to oversee the training of Kuwaiti physicians after they graduate," Padmos added.

The group had a brief meeting with Mustafa Al-Redha, undersecretary at the health ministry. Tammy Ames, Counselor, Commercial Department, said the delegation held a brief meeting with Redha and relayed interest in renewing cooperation with Canadian investors and businesspeople. "They already have knowledge about Canada's strengths, but for us it's a matter of re-stressing our expertise and what else we can do. Canadians are not very good in bragging or waving our flags, but today we are actually doing this to encourage Canadians to try out opportunities in Kuwait and vice versa," she said.

Ames said the mission was able to understand the importance of GCC and particularly Kuwait. "I told the delegation how important healthcare is to many Kuwaitis. This particular mission is broad and diverse, but also a lot of opportunities



KUWAIT: Canadian International Health Education Association poses with Martine Moreau, Canada Ambassador to Kuwait at Sheraton Hotel yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Zayyat

were uncovered. This is just the beginning of even more opportunities for both sides," she said. Some Kuwaiti doctors and pro-

fessors made a presentation on the future of medical education in Kuwait, where it stands today and where it is heading.

News in brief

Kuwait-Vietnam trade

KUWAIT: Kuwait-Vietnam trade exchange amounted to \$500 million in 2017, a Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) member said yesterday. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a meeting with a visiting Vietnamese delegation, Fahad Al-Joan said both sides are willing to promote and develop bilateral economic and trade relations. He pointed to a Kuwaiti oil project in Vietnam as a positive and encouraging beginning for this Gulf country's investment there. There are agreements between both countries for the future expansion of Kuwait's direct investment in Vietnam, thus contributing to bolstering the sharing of technical and educational experience, he added. He spoke highly as "promising" of investment in Vietnam in several sectors, primarily industry, agriculture and tourism. Pointing to oil investments, he said Kuwait has 150 fuel stations in Vietnam, a figure which is predicted to hit 300 in the future. — KUNA

MILSET board meeting

KUWAIT: The International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (MILSET) confirmed its keenness to hold its regular board meeting this year in Kuwait. Speaking to KUNA, head of MILSET's Asian office Dawood Al-Ahmad said that MILSET Chairman Roberto Hidalgo accompanied by MILSET Vice-President and regional head of the Office of MILSET Asia, Adnan Al-Meer and Honorary President John Claude have honored former Ministers of Education in Kuwait. He pointed out that Dr Masaed Al-Haroun, Dr Rashid Al-Hamad, Nouriya Al-Sabeeh and Abdulaziz Al-Jarallah were honored on the sidelines of the "Kuwaiti Youth Success" Conference organized by MILSET's Asian office in collaboration with the Arab Planning Institute and the Ministry of Youth. Al-Ahmad said that the "Kuwaiti Youth Success" Conference focused on the issue of enhancing the participation of Kuwaiti youth in science and technology programs and highlighting their achievements through various sessions including economic, scientific and cultural fields. — KUNA

Sporadic rain in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Some areas of Kuwait are witnessing sporadic rains. The rains are expected to continue until tomorrow evening, the Kuwait Meteorological Department's meteorologist said yesterday. Abdulaziz Al-Qarawi said in a statement to Kuwait News Agency that the amount of rain that fell in various parts of the country has ranged between 2-4 mm so far. He added that weather maps, satellite images and radar indicate that Kuwait was affected by Sudan's seasonal low pressure, accompanied by a relatively moist air mass, which helps to multiply clouds with rain and sometimes thunderous. — KUNA

The 9th SCPD meeting

KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, also Chairman of the Supreme Council of Planning and Development (SCPD) yesterday presided over the 9th meeting of the SCPD for the first session 2018. The meeting reviewed a memorandum on restructuring the state administrative apparatus, rationalizing expenditure and promoting government performance, for producing an efficient, and highly professional body, that can function as an organizer and a monitor for achieving the "Kuwait 2035" vision. The memo stresses the need to bolster the role of the private sector within the framework of a strategy of digitalization and knowledge economy. Meanwhile, the council recommended no merge of the Central Agency for Information Technology (CAIT) with the Communication and IT Regulatory Authority (CITRA) for the difference in the powers of terms of reference of each. — KUNA

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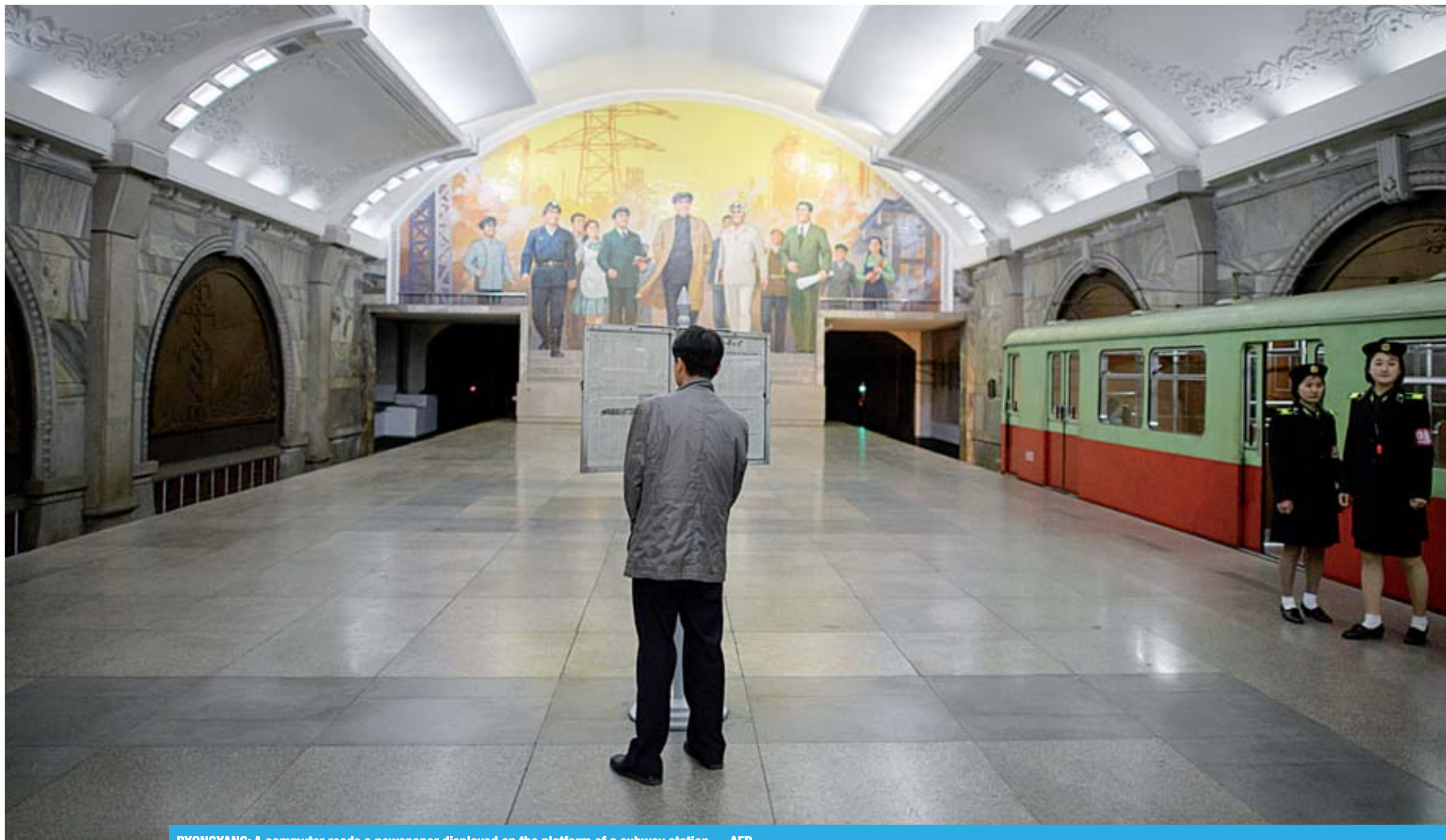


Israel ministers defend soldiers rejoicing in shooting Palestinian

Indian Railways says accidents fall amid safety crackdown

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PYONGYANG: A commuter reads a newspaper displayed on the platform of a subway station. —AFP

Kim makes official mention of talks

The first between a sitting US president and a N Korean leader

SEOUL: North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un has acknowledged the prospect of talks with the US, state media reported yesterday, in his first official mention of dialogue with Washington ahead of a planned summit with President Donald Trump. Trump agreed last month to a landmark summit with the nuclear-armed North but with no specific dates or venue set, there had been questions over Pyongyang's intention to participate.

On Monday, Kim discussed the "the prospect of the DPRK-US dialogue" with party officials, the state KCNA news agency said, referring to the North by its official acronym. He delivered a report "on the development of the recent situation on the Korean peninsula", including the separate summit with South Korea to be held later this month, it said. In a growing rapprochement on the Korean peninsula, Kim is scheduled to meet the South's president Moon Jae-in for a rare inter-Korean summit on April 27.

Trump has also agreed to meet Kim to discuss denuclearisation as soon as next month. The summit would be the first between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader. But the North remained publicly silent for weeks after its leader's invitation to talks was first delivered to Trump by South Korean officials.

This fuelled concerns in Washington that Seoul had

overstated the North's willingness to negotiate over its own nuclear arsenal, even as officials scrambled to prepare for the prospective meeting. Kim's remarks on Monday break that public silence, although he did not specifically refer to a summit with Trump. They follow media reports that North Korean officials have privately told their US counterparts Kim is ready to discuss denuclearisation. Trump said Monday he planned to meet Kim in "May or early June". "I think there will be great respect paid by both parties and hopefully there will be a deal on denuclearisation," he said.

Diplomatic activity

At Pyongyang metro stations Tuesday, commuters crowded around newspaper stands displaying the pages of the Rodong Simmun, the official organ of the ruling

Workers' Party, to read the news. The paper filled its front page with KCNA's report, along with pictures of Kim chairing the politburo meeting.

Detailed coverage of Monday's meeting—held two days before the annual session of North Korea's rubber-stamp parliament—is unusual and could indicate Kim's desire to project an image of a functioning political system to the outside world, an analyst said. "Kim Jong Un has been shifting from the military-dominated emergency system to a normal party-dominant system," said Professor Yang Moo-jin at the University of North Korean Studies. "North Korea is striving to improve ties with the South and the United States to end its status as a pariah country and establish itself as a normal state."

Pyongyang's frenetic diplomatic activity marks a stunning turnaround after a year of high tensions which

saw the North carry out nuclear and missile tests, further isolating the regime and triggering a fiery war of words with Trump. Kim sent a high-profile delegation to the Winter Games in the South in February, before making his international debut last month with a visit to Beijing—his first overseas trip since taking power in 2011.

The North's foreign minister Ri Yong Ho arrived in Moscow on Monday after stopping in Beijing. He also paid a visit last month to Sweden, which acts as a diplomatic go-between for Washington and Pyongyang. If the Kim-Trump summit does take place, many remain skeptical about the whether a meeting between the two notoriously unpredictable leaders can succeed. It is scheduled to take place without the months of groundwork that usually precedes such meetings.

No specifics have yet emerged concerning the date or venue, with a third country such as Mongolia or Sweden reportedly under consideration to host the talks. Beyond that, a detailed agenda for the talks will need to be set. Washington's long-held stance is that it will not accept a nuclear-armed North Korea. That means it wants to see "complete, verifiable, and irreversible" denuclearisation—a very high bar. The North has previously demanded the withdrawal of US troops based in the South. —AFP



The North remained silent for weeks

Protesters descend on stadium ahead of IPL match

NEW DELHI: Protesters burned merchandise and jostled with police outside a cricket stadium in Chennai yesterday, demanding Indian Premier League matches be cancelled as the southern city reels from a water crisis. Hundreds of demonstrators, some wearing black t-shirts and waving black balloons, gathered near the venue shouting slogans ahead of the Chennai Super Kings' match against Kolkata Knight Riders.

Police tried to force protesters on to buses outside the stadium in Chennai, the capital of Tamil Nadu state, where the Kings are to play their first home match since a two-year ban for illegal gambling was lifted. The drought-prone state has witnessed mounting protests in recent weeks over a disputed accord with neighboring Karnataka on how to share water from the key Cauvery river, a hot-button issue in southern India.

"We want all seven IPL matches in Chennai to be cancelled until our demands are met. We will also ask the spectators to boycott the match," said one protester sporting a black T-shirt. The state government had recommended IPL games be moved out of Chennai because of the protests but said they would provide security if they went ahead. "Around 4,000 police personnel will stand guard around the ground. We have covered all bases to make sure that nothing goes wrong," a Tamil Nadu police spokesman said.

The Chennai stadium is scheduled to host the IPL



CHENNAI: Indian members of the Tamil ethnic group burn match tickets outside the MA Chidambaram cricket stadium during a protest against the Indian Premier League (IPL) amid ongoing demonstrations over water rights. —AFP

matches between April 10 and May 20. The Super Kings have also told the sellout crowd that they will not be allowed to take mobile phones, bags or other electronic devices into the ground. Some state politicians and activists have lashed out at the Board of Control for Cricket in India for holding IPL matches in the state at a time when sentiments were running high. Tamil cinema superstar Rajinikanth has also weighed in on the controversy, urging fans to support the protesters. "If they (organizers) don't cancel the matches, at least they should allow players and spectators to wear black badges," he said. —AFP

Turkey flies three suspected Gulenists from Gabon

ISTANBUL: The Turkish spy agency has flown three suspected members of the movement blamed for the 2016 failed coup back to Turkey from the African state of Gabon in a covert operation, state media said yesterday. As part of a secret mission carried out by the National Intelligence Organization (MIT), the men were brought back to Turkey on a private plane from Libreville, the state-run Anadolu news agency reported.

The suspects are accused of belonging to the group of US-based preacher Fethullah Gulen who Ankara says orchestrated the bloody July 15 coup bid two years ago, aimed at unseating President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Ankara calls his group the Fethullah Terror Organisation (FETO) but Gulen insists he runs a purely peaceful movement and denies any link to the failed plot. The latest MIT swoop comes on the heels of the controversial expulsion of six alleged Gulen group members from Kosovo in a similar operation. Gulen's group had built up huge influence in Turkey but also abroad—notably in Africa, the Balkans and Central Asia—in particular through an education network.

In the Gabon operation, one of the suspects was a school principal in Libreville and an education coordinator of Gulen schools operating across Kenya. The second suspect was also a school principal, while the third was director general of Gulen schools in Gabon and steered the group's money transfers from Europe to Africa, according to Anadolu. The news agency reported some high-ranking Gulen movement members were detained on March 23 in a raid by the Gabon security forces. But there was no immediate information on Libreville's role in the operation.

Gabon is ruled by President Ali Bongo Ondimba, the son of Omar Bongo Ondimba who governed the oil-rich nation for more than 41 years until his death in 2009. Ali Bongo Ondimba held talks with Erdogan in Ankara in 2015. In March, five teachers and a doctor, all Turkish nationals alleged to be Gulenists, were flown back to Turkey from Kosovo in a hugely contentious operation carried out by the Pristina interior ministry and MIT.

The operation sparked a crisis in Kosovo, with both the prime minister and president protesting that they were not informed. The government said its intelligence agency had brought back from abroad a total of 80 suspected members of the Gulen movement, without elaborating further on the countries. Erdogan has vowed to hunt down Gulenists inside and outside Turkey, saying on Monday: "We will never allow those vile people to walk freely." —AFP

International

FBI agents raid offices of Trump's personal lawyer

President angrily denounces raid on 'good man' Cohen

WASHINGTON: A furious Donald Trump blasted the investigation led by special counsel Robert Mueller as a "disgrace" and a "witch hunt" Monday after FBI agents raided the New York offices of the president's longtime personal lawyer Michael Cohen. Agents seized files relating to Cohen's work, which included making a \$130,000 payment before the 2016 election to an adult film actress who says she had a tryst with the Trump a decade earlier.

Cohen's own attorney Stephen Ryan said agents were working in part on the request of Mueller, the independent prosecutor investigating links between Russia and the Trump campaign. At the White House, Trump angrily denounced the raid on "good man" Cohen. "It's a disgraceful situation. It's a total witch-hunt. I have been saying it for a long time," he told reporters. "It's an attack on our country in a true sense. It's an attack on what we all stand for."

The raid came as Mueller's probe intensifies its focus on Trump's inner circle. Mueller's team is examining possible collusion between Trump's campaign and Moscow, as well as allegations of corrupt behavior by Trump campaign lieutenants and of White House efforts to obstruct the investigation. So far, 19 people have been indicted, including the chairman of Trump's campaign and his former national security advisor.

Trump accused Mueller of overseeing a biased investigation staffed by Democrats, "a pure and simple witch-hunt." But the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, Adam Schiff, said it was a Trump-appointed prosecutor who had sought the search warrant, which was in turn approved by a judge. "That's no witch hunt. That's the rule of law," Schiff tweeted. "As Trump floats firing Mueller, all Members must speak out - or stop feigning devotion to the Constitution." The special counsel is also probing a \$150,000 payment Ukrainian billionaire steel

magnate Victor Pinchuk made during the US presidential campaign to Trump's foundation for the American real estate developer to give a 20-minute speech via video link, according to The New York Times.

Mueller in firing line?

After having turned over what he called a million pages of documents, Trump said the investigation is "now getting ridiculous. They found no collusion whatsoever with Russia." "This is the most biased group of people, these

people have the biggest conflicts of interest I've ever seen. Democrats all, or just about all," the president added.

Asked if he wants to fire Mueller, Trump replied: "Many people have said you should fire him. Again they found nothing and in finding nothing that's a big statement," he said. "So we'll see what happens." The veteran prosecutor, a former FBI director, is seeking to inter-

view Trump, but has not said the president is a target in the investigation. The raid on Cohen though takes the probe close to the Oval Office. Cohen has been Trump's personal lawyer and confidant for years, helping him on real estate and personal matters, as well as informally advising him since he became president. He is also known as a rough-and-tumble "fixer" for Trump, dedicated to protecting his boss's interests.

Raid tied to alleged affair

Porn actress Stormy Daniels says that Cohen's surreptitious payment aimed to keep her quiet about her earlier relationship with Trump. The attorney representing the stripper-real name Stephanie Clifford-said his client had faced "death threats" over the case. "The amt of courage and fortitude that my client @StormyDaniels and her fami-



WASHINGTON, DC: US President Donald Trump speaks about the FBI raid at his lawyer Michael Cohen's office, while receiving a briefing from senior military leaders regarding Syria, in the Cabinet Room. —AFP

ly have shown over the last 6 weeks has been remarkable," Michael Avenatti tweeted.

"It takes special people to withstand death threats, turmoil and personal attacks, all in the interest of a search for the truth. #gratitude #justice." The Washington Post reported that Cohen is under examination for possible bank fraud and campaign finance violations. Clifford is

among several women who claim to have had affairs with Trump in the past and were pressured or paid to keep quiet about them.

Last month, Clifford told 21 million TV watchers that she had unprotected sex with Trump after meeting with him at a celebrity golf tournament in Lake Tahoe, California in July 2006. —AFP



It's a total witch-hunt



Mexico reviews cooperation with US over 'blatant' tension

MEXICO CITY/PHOENIX: Mexico said Monday it is reviewing its cooperation with the United States over "blatant" tension with Donald Trump's administration following his decision to deploy the National Guard to the border. Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto has ordered all federal government departments to re-evaluate bilateral cooperation, his office said-a review Foreign Minister Luis Videgaray said was a direct response to recent tension.

Trump has stoked anger in Mexico by ordering thousands of National Guard troops to the border and attacking the Mexican government on Twitter over its supposed failure to stop an influx of drugs and undocumented migrants into the United States. Videgaray said the areas under review would include the vital issues of trade and security, among them the two countries' extensive cooperation to fight international drug trafficking.

A veiled warning

"Given the current climate and the very public and blatant differences we currently have with the government of the United States, President Enrique Pena Nieto will be making decisions," Videgaray told Mexican radio network Formula. He said the president had not yet decided to suspend or reduce cooperation in any area. But he left the possibility open, with a veiled warning to Trump.

"We are entering an evaluation phase, and it must be an ongoing evaluation of the facts as they stand," he said. "Trump's rhetoric and tone... do matter, they do affect the relationship, and we can't remain immobile forever." The latest rise in US-Mexican tension began with days of angry tweets from Trump over a caravan of more than 1,000 Central American migrants crossing Mexico toward the United States.

A visibly offended Pena Nieto gave a national address Thursday after Trump announced his decision to deploy the National Guard to the border, warning his American counterpart that "threatening attitudes and a lack of respect" were



MEXICO CITY: Central American migrants taking part in the "Migrant Via Crucis" caravan which originally planned to reach the US border, are welcomed by other migrants as they arrive at the Casa del Peregrino shelter near the Guadalupe Basilica. —AFP

out of line. Mexico also summoned US Ambassador Roberta Jacobson over Trump's contested comment that women in the caravan were being "raped at levels that nobody has ever seen before." She is due to meet with Mexican officials yesterday. Trump also threatened to axe what he called Mexico's "cash cow," the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), over the caravan. Last year, Washington triggered a renegotiation of that deal, which also includes Canada, after Trump called it a "disaster" for the United States. Those negotiations are ongoing.

Despite the spike in tension, Trump said a new deal was "fairly close," while Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said there was an 80 percent chance of reaching a preliminary agreement by the first week in May. Relations between the two countries have been tense since Trump won election in 2016 with a campaign heavy on anti-Mexican

rhetoric and promises to build a border wall. Pena Nieto has twice canceled plans to visit Washington over Trump's insistence that Mexico pay for the wall.

'Toys, not guns'

Some 20 busloads of migrants from the caravan meanwhile arrived in Mexico City. Carrying their meager belongings in plastic bags, some 600 migrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua arrived at a shelter and then went to pray at the nearby shrine to the Virgin of Guadalupe, Mexico's patron saint. Organizers of the migrant caravan announced last week the group would no longer try to travel to the US border en masse. The caravan-a yearly event that activists say is mainly about raising awareness of the perils migrants face, not crossing the border-will end its activities this week with a series of rallies and meetings in the Mexican capital. —AFP

With a handshake, Kenya finally leaves behind divisive poll

NAIROBI: It was a handshake that drew a line under Kenya's bruising election, left many people bewildered and swung open the starting gate for the 2022 presidential race. After months of insults during a deadly and divisive election, the two heirs of Kenya's most powerful political dynasties, President Uhuru Kenyatta and his rival Raila Odinga stood side by side, shook hands and pledged reconciliation.

Even in a country used to the political game of thrones, where betrayals are commonplace and bitter rivals forge alliances almost overnight, the gesture on March 9 stunned the nation. "This is clearly Odinga's attempt to move on. Obviously Kenyatta would favor that as well," said Nic Cheeseman, a professor at Birmingham University in central England, of the mystery-shrouded rapprochement.

Kenya's presidential election in August plunged the country into turmoil, after Kenyatta's victory was annulled by the Supreme Court, citing flaws in the process, which ordered a re-run.

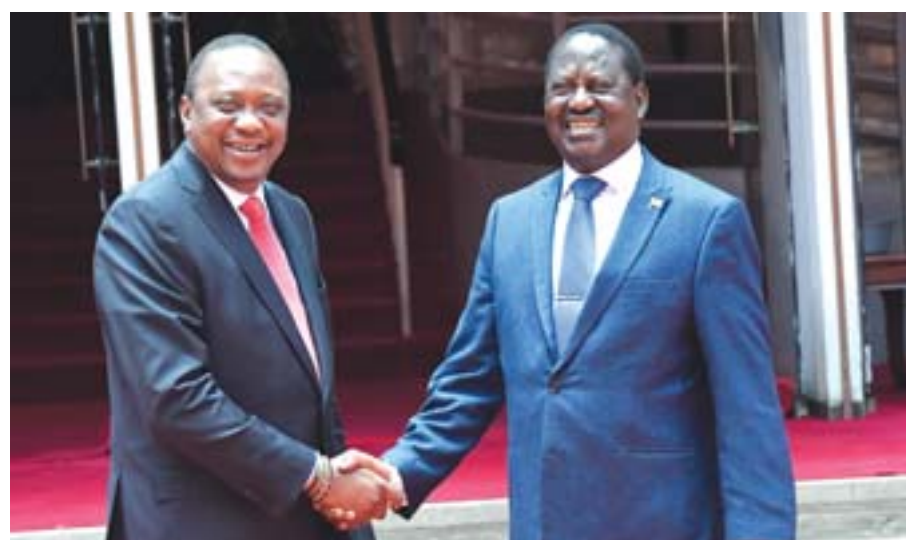
Kenyatta, 56, subsequently won an October re-run after Odinga, 73, boycotted the election which he said would not be free and fair. Protests and political violence left at least 92 dead during the election period, mostly at the hands of police, according to rights groups.

The handshake, which came after Odinga held a mock swearing-in ceremony in January, has brought an end to the vitriolic attacks between the rivals. But it has also shaken politicians, whose eyes are already fixed on the next presidential race, due in 2022. The National Super Alliance (NASA), a powerful coalition of opposition rivals which formed ahead of the 2017 poll, has been thrown into disarray by Odinga's decision. His fellow leaders said it took place without consultation with them.

Raila's risk

However several questions loom over the deal struck between Odinga and Kenyatta. No concrete details have been released about its goals-in particular, whether the president agreed to any substantial reforms of the election process, civil society or halting attacks on the judiciary. "It's really only a Christmas present with nice paper and a ribbon, but we don't know what is inside," said Tom Wolf, chief analyst at the Ipsos polling institute.

"By throwing away all his hostility towards Uhuru and the Jubilee (ruling party) government, by shaking hands, Raila is taking a risk as to whether his followers,



NAIROBI: In this file photo taken on March 9, 2018 Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta (L) and National Super Alliance (NASA) coalition opposition leader Raila Odinga shake hands after addressing a press conference at Harambee house office. —AFP

whether (ethnic) Luo or others, will go along with it." Media speculation has been rife about possible benefits Odinga has secured for himself. "If he is seen to have made a deal that helps him personally but doesn't do anything for the country, I think that will affect his legacy," said Cheeseman.

With the 2017 electoral saga behind Kenya, the unexpected reconciliation has seen headlines turn to the 2022 election,

and politicians setting themselves up for the next battle-including some of Odinga's NASA allies who are now vowing to go it alone. While the 2017 poll was widely seen as Odinga's last, analysts say nothing can be ruled out. "I wouldn't be surprised at all to have (Odinga's) name being discussed as a possible coalition partner for people come the next election," said Cheeseman. He said the opposition is now facing a period of great instability. —AFP

Daughter in nerve agent poisoning leaves hospital

LONDON: Yulia Skripal, who was poisoned with a nerve agent in the English city of Salisbury along with her Russian ex-spy father, has been discharged from hospital, an official said yesterday. "This is not the end of her treatment but marks a significant milestone," Salisbury hospital's deputy chief executive Christine Blanshard said, adding that the 33-year-old Russian had asked for privacy.

She said that while Sergei Skripal, 66, is "recovering more slowly than Yulia, we hope that he too will be able to leave hospital in due course". The pair were found collapsed on a bench in the southwestern city of Salisbury on March 4 in what British authorities have said was attempted murder by the Russian state. Western allies backed Britain but Moscow strongly denied any involvement, prompting a furious international row.

Countries around the world expelled more than 150 Russian diplomats in response, prompting Moscow to launch its own expulsions. There were initially fears that the Skripals would not recover, but last week hospital and police officials said they were both improving. In a short statement issued through police last week, Yulia Skripal said: "I woke up over a week ago now and am glad to say my strength is growing daily."

She said she had found the incident "disorientating", without providing any further details on the attack. The following day, the hospital said her father was also "improving rapidly and is no longer in a critical condition". The BBC reported that Yulia had been discharged on Monday and was moved to a secure location. In a tweet, the Russian embassy in London said: "We congratulate Yulia Skripal on her recovery. "Yet we need urgent proof that what is being done to her is done on her own free will."

'Responded exceptionally well'

Police have said they believe the Skripals came into contact with the nerve agent at Sergei Skripal's front door. The former Russian military officer was recruited by British intelligence in the 1990s and later charged with treason in his own country. However, he was pardoned in 2010 and moved to Britain as part of a spy swap between the United States and Russia. His daughter was visiting at the time of the poisoning, the first offensive use of a nerve agent in Europe since World War II.

British scientists have identified the chemical as the Soviet-designed Novichok, although the international Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) has yet to verify this. A police officer among the first at the scene in Salisbury was also hospitalized, but was released on March 22. Blanshard said nerve agents work by attaching themselves to particular enzymes in the body, which then stop the nerves from functioning, leading to sickness and hallucinations.

"Our job in treating the patients is to stabilize them, ensuring that they can breathe and that blood can continue to circulate," she said in a televised statement. "We then needed to use a variety of different drugs to support the patients until they could create more enzymes to replace those affected by the poisoning. "We also used specialized decontamination techniques to remove any residual toxins. "Both patients have responded exceptionally well to the treatment we've been providing. But equally both patients are at different stages in their recovery." — AFP

International

Malaysia to vote next month in closely fought general election

Najib still tipped to win due to BN's firm grip

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysians will go to the polls next month, officials announced yesterday, with the long-ruling and scandal-tainted ruling coalition facing one of its toughest ever challenges from veteran ex-leader Mahathir Mohamad. Prime Minister Najib Razak's Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, which has been in power for six decades, has seen its popularity wane in recent years, a slide further compounded by a multibillion-dollar scandal surrounding state fund IMDB.

Najib is still tipped to win due to BN's firm grip on Malaysia's weakened institutions, and what critics claim are efforts by the government to rig the election through gerrymandering and other forms of cheating. But he faces a tough challenge from Mahathir, 92, who was Malaysian premier for over two decades but has come out of retirement to take on his former protege Najib at the head of the opposition.

The poll date announced by the election commission-May 9—sparked fury among the opposition who claimed a weekday election was deliberately chosen to keep turnout low, favoring Najib. It is the first time in almost 20 years that a Malaysian election has been set for a weekday. "I am very, very angry," opposition candidate Maria Chin Abdullah said. "This move by the election commission is obviously to ensure victory for the ruling party."

Najib is under pressure from allies in his United Malays National Organization (UMNO), the main coalition party, to score an emphatic victory after the gov-

ernment lost the popular vote in at the last election in 2013. Voters had become increasingly disillusioned over recurring graft scandals, divisive racial politics in the multi-ethnic country, and the rising cost of living.

Massive financial scandal

The IMDB scandal has only added to Najib's woes. Billions of dollars were allegedly looted from the fund in an audacious campaign of fraud and money-laundering which is being investigated in several countries, and it is claimed that large sums ended up the personal bank accounts of Najib. Najib, who has been prime minister since 2009, and the fund deny any wrongdoing.

The 64-year-old has so far weathered the scandal by sacking critics in government and launching a crackdown that has seen opponents arrested on various charges. His prospects at the election have been helped by a robust domestic economy while he has vowed to protect the country's Muslim majority, a key vote bank for BN.

As the polls approached, the government has taken steps critics say are desperate efforts to cling on to power—the BN-dominated parliament voted to redraw constituency boundaries in a manner analysts say favors the ruling coalition. MPs also voted in favor of a law banning "fake news" that could see offenders jailed for up to six years, which some fear could be used to crack down on dissent.

Victory is however less certain due to the comeback

Voters had become disillusioned



KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak (C) addresses supporters before launching his coalition's election manifesto ahead of the upcoming polls during a National Front coalition or Barisan Nasional rally. — AFP

of Mahathir.

In a stunning volte-face, he was named the prime ministerial candidate in the opposition coalition Pact of Hope, which is filled with parties he crushed during his time in power. Mahathir has long championed the Malay cause and the opposition hopes he can win over

Muslim voters disillusioned with BN, to bolster their support base of urban voters and ethnic minorities, particularly the Chinese. The government lost a two-thirds parliamentary majority, needed to amend the constitution, in the 222-seat parliament at the 2008 election and is hoping to win it back. — AFP

News in brief

B'desh protests continue

DHAKA: Hundreds of university students across Bangladesh blockaded roads yesterday in a third day of protests against what they say are discriminatory quotas for government jobs. Students took to the streets in Dhaka and elsewhere despite assurances from the government that it would review the controversial quota system. The mass protests roiling campuses across the country have been among the biggest faced by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in her decade in power. At Dhaka University—where more than 100 were injured in clashes with police in recent days—students vowed to stage sit-ins until the government reform the quota system. "We'll continue our agitation until the authorities accept our demands," said Rahat, one of the roughly 500 students camped out at the university's main square. The protest was largely peaceful, with no repeat so far of the tear gas and rubber bullets fired by police to disperse crowds. — AFP

'Duterte did not buy data'

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's election victory in 2016 did not rely on information bought from anybody and his campaign team did not hire political consultancy Cambridge Analytica, his spokesman said yesterday. The Britain-based Cambridge Analytica is at the centre of a controversy over harvested personal data about users of Facebook, which was used to target voters in the US presidential election and Britain's 2016 referendum on European Union membership. A report last week in the South China Morning Post newspaper said that Cambridge Analytica's parent firm, Strategic Communications Laboratories (SCL), had made the claim that it helped put Duterte in office. But presidential spokesman Harry Roque said that was far from the case and Duterte's win was "fair and square". He said his then campaign treasurer and current finance minister, Carlos Dominguez, had assured him no transactions had taken place with Cambridge Analytica. — Reuters

Sri Lankan corporals jailed

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan police have arrested two army corporals for their suspected involvement in anti-Muslim riots in the central highlands district of Kandy last month, police said yesterday. It was the first arrest of serving soldiers for the worst sectarian violence since 2014. It was not immediately clear if any more senior officers are suspected. At least two ex-military officials have also been arrested. Mosques, Muslim homes and businesses were destroyed as Buddhist mobs ran amok for three days early last month in Kandy, a district previously known for its diversity and tolerance. An officer at the police spokesman's office said 342 suspects have been arrested. The corporals were arrested on Monday. — AFP

Churches shut in China

BEIJING: Chinese authorities have torn down "two or three" crosses adorning Christian churches in one county because they were "illegally built", state media quoted an official as saying yesterday. The officially atheist ruling Communist Party has tightened restrictions and oversight of religious practice in China under President Xi Jinping, carrying out a controversial cross demolition campaign in east China's Zhejiang province. The central government had also approved "two or three" crosses of churches in Yichuan county, in central Henan province, to be torn down, a religious affairs official surnamed Zhang said, according to the state-run Global Times newspaper. "The parishes were illegally built without permission from the government, so we demolished their crosses," the paper reported Zhang as saying. "Activities in the illegally built parishes will be prohibited." Zhang denied the removals targeted Christianity, and the report did not specify the denominations of churches that were impacted. — Reuters

Azerbaijan strongman to cement power

BAKU: Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev is set to secure a fourth consecutive term today in snap polls boycotted by the oil-rich nation's main opposition parties. Aliyev's electoral win is widely seen as a foregone conclusion with the downtrodden opposition unable to mount a serious challenge to his authoritarian rule boosted by the steady influx of petrodollars into his government's coffers. Opposition parties in the tightly-controlled Caucasus nation said that the conditions to hold a democratic election are not in place and accused authorities of preparing to rig the vote. They have also denounced Aliyev's surprise—and unexplained—decision to hold the vote six months ahead of schedule as aimed at shortening the campaign period and hampering the opposition's efforts to prevent vote rigging.

"People are denied the freedom of expression and assembly, media are stifled and the opposition oppressed in Azerbaijan," the leader of the opposition Popular Front party, Ali Kerimli, said. "This is a travesty of an election, everyone knows that Aliyev will simply make up the results." The executive secretary of the Republican Alternative Movement (ReAL), Natig Jafarli, said that "the opposition was not given a possibility to hold a normal campaign." "All previous

elections in Azerbaijan were falsified and held with blatant violations of the electoral law. These elections will not be an exception," he said.

The ReAL's leader, Ilgar Mammadov, was arrested in 2013 just before he was expected to stand for president and has remained in prison since then. The ruling Yeni Azerbaijan party on its part has rejected the opposition's criticism, insisting the vote will be free and fair. "The snap vote has been called in full compliance with the requirements of the law, it will be well organized and democratic," the party's deputy executive secretary, Bahar Muradova, told AFP. "Those who call themselves the opposition have chosen a strange tactics of a boycott," she said. "It is irresponsible that they put themselves outside the electoral process."

'Hidden wealth'

Aliyev, 56, was first elected president in 2003, after the death of his father Heydar Aliyev, a former KGB officer and communist-era leader who had ruled Azerbaijan with an iron fist since 1993. He was re-elected in 2008 and 2013 in polls that were denounced by opposition parties as rigged. In 2009, Aliyev amended the country's constitution so he could run for an unlimited number of presidential terms, in a move criticised by rights advocates who say he could become a president for life.

In 2016, Azerbaijan adopted controversial constitutional amendments, extending the president's term in office to seven years from five. The changes drew criticism from the Council of Europe constitutional law experts as



BAKU: In this file photo taken on November 6, 2005 Azeri President Ilham Aliyev comes out from a voting booth, as he votes at the parliamentary election. — AFP

"severely upsetting the balance of powers" and giving the president "unprecedented" authority. Cementing his family's decades-long grip on power, the president last year appointed his wife Mehriban Aliyeva as first vice president.

Aliyev's "goal appears to be a political environment in which the Aliyev dynasty is unchallenged," a US diplomatic cable carried by whistle-blowing organization WikiLeaks said in 2009. Supporters have praised the Aliyevs for turning a republic once thought of as a Soviet backwater into a flourishing energy supplier to Europe. But critics argue they have crushed the opposition and used their power to amass a fortune that funds a lavish lifestyle for the president

and his family.

"For decades, the Aliyevs have been appropriating Azerbaijan's national riches, they have amassed an immense hidden wealth," Khadija Ismayilova, an anti-corruption crusader, said. "They cling to power to continue looting the country's resources," said the award-winning journalist who spent 17 months in jail in 2014-2016 after she exposed official graft. In 2010, The Washington Post wrote about lavish property worth \$75 million (60 million euros) in Dubai in the names of the president's son Heydar—who was a schoolboy at the time—and his daughters Arzu and Leyla. Aliyev has denied accusations of rights abuses and corruption. — AFP

Indian Railways says accidents fall amid safety crackdown

NEW DELHI: Deaths and injuries from train collisions or derailment in India more than halved to 254 people last fiscal year from a year ago, railways data showed, amid attempts to improve its shoddy safety record through mega investments and recruitments. The state-run Indian Railways shared the data with Reuters days after an incident in which the brakes on a 22-coach train carrying hundreds of passengers failed, letting it run freely in reverse for about 13 km.

The railways has suspended several officials since the incident, and its chairman acknowledged that turning around the culture and image of a government behemoth that employed 1.3 million and ran around 22,000 trains daily was going to take time, despite the safety success seen in 2017/18. The number of deaths and injuries last fiscal year ending March 31 was the lowest in at least 18 years for which data was provided. The worst was in 2002/02, when 1,400 people were killed or injured. The figure in 2016/17 was 607, the data show.

"Safety is an end result. We need to focus on maintenance, and that also includes looking after the people," Ashwani Lohani, who was brought in to helm the department last August after a spate of accidents led to a top-level shake-up, told Reuters in



BIHAR: This photo taken on April 7, 2018, shows Indian social activist, founder of Sulabh International and Brand Ambassador of Swachh Rail Mission Bindeshwar Pathak inspecting the waiting room painted with Mithila or Madhubani paintings inside Madhubani railway station in Madhubani, Bihar state. — AFP

his office on Monday. "We have a tremendous inherent strength of our people ... But I don't have a magic wand."

The railways is in the midst of a \$130 billion, five-year modernization plan and is hiring nearly 90,000 people over the next few months to mainly

fill positions left vacant by retirees. Lohani said the world's fourth-biggest rail network was trying to make it easier for all levels of employees to approach top officials via WhatsApp or other media so that grievances can be addressed immediately and human error can be minimized. — Reuters

International

Israel ministers defend soldiers rejoicing in shooting Palestinian

31 Palestinians have been killed since late March

JERUSALEM: Two Israeli right-wing ministers yesterday defended soldiers after a video appearing to show them shoot a Palestinian and rejoice in it spread widely on social media and news sites. The video comes at a highly sensitive time for Israel's military, which has faced mounting criticism over its use of live fire on the Gaza Strip border, where 31 Palestinians have been killed since late March as mass protests have led to clashes.

Israel's military said the incident in the video "apparently" dated back several months, adding that it "will be thoroughly investigated". Senior Palestinian official Hanan Ashrawi said the video showed what Palestinians have long alleged regarding soldiers' actions on the Gaza border, "but nobody has been listening". The shooting in the video appears to take place along Gaza's border with Israel. Voices can be heard discussing opening fire on what seems to be Palestinians posing no immediate threat near the fence.

A shooter then appears to open fire on one, knocking the person to the ground. "Wow. What a video! Yes! That son of a bitch," one of the voices behind the camera says in Hebrew. Israeli Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan downplayed the actions of those in the video that began to spread widely on Monday night. "We are going overboard with this video," said Erdan, from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party. "It doesn't show gunfire at everyone, but at a terrorist who approaches the barrier in an unauthorized zone coming from an area controlled by Hamas terrorists," he told public radio. "I am convinced that everything is OK," he added, while also speaking of a "human reaction" by the soldiers confronted with a "tense situation".



It 'will be thoroughly investigated'

'Time for world to see'
Education Minister Naftali Bennett of the far-right Jewish Home party also justified the behavior depicted in the video. "Judging soldiers because they are not expressing themselves elegantly while they are defending our borders is not serious," Bennett told army radio. It was not possible to determine whether the person shot in the video died. Israeli newspaper Yediot

Aharonot reported that the video was recorded in December. "We have been complaining about this, but unfortunately nobody believes it unless an Israeli source documents it," Ashrawi said.

"The issue of sniper fire is not something new at all, but it is time for the world to see and to believe what we have been saying all along." Mass protests along the Gaza border beginning on March 30 have led to clashes in which Israeli forces have killed 31 Palestinians and wounded hundreds of others. There have been no Israeli casualties. Israel has faced criticism over its use of live fire, while the European Union and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres have called for an independent investigation.

Israel says its forces only open fire to stop attempts to damage the fence, infiltrations, bids to carry out attacks and at those seeking to harm soldiers. It accuses Hamas, the Islamist movement that runs the Gaza Strip and with whom it has fought three wars since 2008, of seeking to use the protests to carry out violence. Palestinians say protesters are being shot while posing no threat to soldiers.

Man slaughter case

For Israelis and Palestinians, the video was a reminder of another one from March 2016 that showed



GAZA CITY: Palestinians gather on April 9, 2018 at the site of protests on the Israel-Gaza border east of Gazy City. —AFP

an Israeli soldier shooting dead a prone Palestinian assailant. Caught on video by a human rights group and spread widely online, it showed the 21-year-old Palestinian lying wounded on the ground, shot along with another Palestinian after stabbing and wounding a soldier, according to the army.

Some 11 minutes after the initial shooting, Israeli soldier Elor Azaria shot him in the head without any apparent provocation. Azaria was convicted of

manslaughter after a trial that captivated Israel and highlighted deep divisions in public opinion between those who denounce the shooting and others who say it was justified.

Top military brass strongly denounced Azaria's actions, but right-wing politicians, including Netanyahu, called for him to be pardoned. Azaria was initially sentenced to 18 months in prison, but his sentence was later reduced to nine months. —AFP

No Russia-German pipeline plan without Ukraine role: Merkel

BERLIN: German Chancellor Angela Merkel said yesterday that plans for a controversial second underwater pipeline to bring gas from Russia could not go forward without Ukrainian involvement in overland transit. After months of tension with eastern neighbours and the European Commission over the so-called Nord Stream 2 project, Merkel's concession to Kiev's grave concerns marks a striking shift in policy.

"A Nord Stream 2 project without clarity about the Ukrainian transit role is not possible," Merkel said, after talks in Berlin with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko. The German leader said the pipeline plans, which have long thrown a wrench in bilateral ties, had played a big role in their discussions. Merkel, who had previously called Nord Stream 2 a purely "economic project", admitted yesterday there were "political factors that must be taken into account".

She added that in her talks with Poroshenko, "I listened closely to the concerns of Ukraine". "The fact is that we cannot allow that, with Nord Stream 2, Ukraine would have no significance at all any more with regard to gas transit," Merkel told reporters at a joint press conference. She noted that while there would "always be dependence on Russian gas", Ukraine relied heavily on income from transit fees.

'Extremely unreliable partner'

In an interview with German business daily Handelsblatt on Monday, Poroshenko urged Berlin to abandon plans to build Nord Stream 2, saying it would enable an "economic and energy blockade" against Ukraine and blasting it as "political bribe money for loyalty to Russia". The pipeline as planned would double the amount of Russian gas arriving in the European Union's most powerful economy via the Baltic Sea—without transiting Ukraine—by late 2019. Authorities in Germany issued the final permits needed for construction of Nord Stream 2 on its territory and in its waters to begin last month, although other nations' green lights are still needed. But "the Ukrainian transit pipeline is much cheaper and can be modernized cheaply and easily," Poroshenko insisted in the Handelsblatt interview. He accused Russia of being an "extremely unreliable partner" in



MESEBERG: German Chancellor Angela Merkel (4L) talks to German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas (2L) ahead of a meeting yesterday on the first day of the German government retreat at the state "Schloss Meseberg" palace. —AFP

energy provision, pointing to state-owned energy firm Gazprom's refusal to pay Ukraine billions of euros after shutting off gas supplies in the middle of winter. Ukraine has also urged sanctions against former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder over his vocal support of the Russian government and \$500,000-a-year job on the board of Russian state-owned oil giant Rosneft, calling him "(Russian President Vladimir) Putin's most important lobbyist".

'Question our solidarity'

Gazprom accounts for around one third of Europe's gas supply. Less and less gas has arrived via Ukraine in recent years, part of Moscow's conflict with its former satellite which saw Russia annex the Crimean peninsula in 2014 — prompting EU sanctions in response. The project has also proved a bone of contention within Germany itself.

A rare cross-party alliance of high-ranking German politicians from Merkel's Christian Democratic Union, the

environmentalist Greens and pro-business Free Democrats warned in February against allowing Nord Stream 2 to go ahead. It would "split the EU politically and call into question our solidarity with Poland, our Baltic neighbors, Slovakia and Ukraine, but also Sweden and Denmark," they wrote.

During a visit to Berlin in February, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki cautioned that a single gas producer-Russia-must "not be allowed to have a monopoly and force its prices on the European Union". During their press conference, both Merkel and Poroshenko denounced repeated violations of a ceasefire in eastern Ukraine, with Merkel calling progress in reducing tensions "limited". The armed conflict between the Ukrainian army and Russian-backed rebels has claimed more than 10,000 lives since its outbreak in 2014. Kiev and the West accuse Russia of supporting the separatists by deploying troops and arms, which Moscow denies despite evidence to the contrary. —AFP

'Fast life': Anti-gang campaigner battling London crime wave

LONDON: A former drug dealer working for an anti-gang charity, Abdi has found himself on the frontline of a battle against London knife crime—with two recent stab wounds to prove it. Since being released from prison last year, the 26-year-old has helped recruit young Londoners into a program to prevent them falling in with gangs and getting sucked into knife crime.

"I just tell them: 'Bro, there are two options you can either go to the grave or cop a 35-year sentence'. It is no way out," he told AFP in an interview at a workshop in the capital earlier this month before being injured in a stabbing last weekend. "It is a facade and a mentality we want to change," he said. Abdi was stabbed on Saturday while out with friends in north London, weeks after a previous stabbing when on his way to work—the assailants went for his throat but struck his knuckles instead. But even he once found a life of crime all too tempting.

"Every inner city boy in London would want the fast cars, the girls, the expensive clothes. The nice life innit!" said Abdi, speaking at an event at Queens Park Rangers' football stadium, Loftus Road, in west London. "How many boys in the country that want that lifestyle. But you just

got to work hard. Nothing comes easy. The things I am saying now I used to hear from older people," he said. "What I am doing now is targeting young boys before they even go to that lifestyle," said Abdi, who wore a bandage on his hand from a previous stabbing.

Knife-related crimes rose by 23 percent in London last year and a spate of stabbings and shootings have left more than 50 people dead this year, pushing the murder rate higher than New York's. Home Secretary Amber Rudd on Monday blamed the crack cocaine trade and vowed to do "whatever it takes" to curb violent crime, including more funding for youth programs and stricter laws.

'I am going to win'

Abdi works for Key4Life, an organization set up in 2012 after nationwide riots the previous year that aims to create solutions to help reduce youth offending and gang warfare. He works as a mentor alongside 24-year-old Anthon Dinnall, who was in prison for robbery, touring public housing estates to identify young men at risk of getting involved in gangs.

Key4Life's founder Eva Hamilton calls them her "disciples". Abdi-born in England to Somali parents—said he may not be living the "fast life" and earning the money he was when he was selling drugs but he finds the work rewarding. "I am helping people who are in the position that I was five years ago," he said. "I am just telling them 'boys you look at me you don't want that lifestyle you don't want drugs convictions you don't want to go down that route,'" he said. "People not being born in this country are getting arrested and I say to them: 'Did your mother and



LONDON: Anthon Dinnall (R), and Abdi, mentors at anti-gang charity Key4Life, pose for a photograph in west London. —AFP

father come the whole way to this country so you could sell drugs and fail in life? ... No, they came here so you could prosper and progress in a country like this!" Abdi's first encounter with Key4Life was when volunteers from the organization came to visit him in prison. "It is only right I show them the same loyalty they showed me," he said.

Abdi described the euphoric feeling of returning to Brixton Prison, where he was held for the final part of his three-year sentence, as a free man helping prisoners. "There was no more me being a prisoner being told what to do, when to shower, what to wear, when to eat," he said. "It made me feel like you know what I am someone in society, I am not going to let the system beat me. I am not going to lose, I am going to win." —AFP

Italian football hooligan turns pro-Russian separatist

LUGANSK, Ukraine: Speaking Russian with a strong Italian accent, Andrea Palmeri attracts attention in Lugansk, the separatist-held province in eastern Ukraine. "I converted to the Orthodoxy, but I always pray in Italian," the far right-wing hooligan turned pro-Russian fighter said after making the sign of the cross as he entered a Russian Orthodox church.

"Fate sent me here to Lugansk," he said of the de-facto capital of one of two self-proclaimed republics by Ukrainian separatists. Palmeri was the leader of an ultras group aligned with the football team in Lucca, central Italy, but the gang's neo-fascist views and violent activities saw him facing a jail sentence at home. He fled the country and arrived to fight with the pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine—alongside several hundred other Europeans, according to Kiev authorities.

"The Serbs were the first who came... Then the Italians, then the French appeared," said Palmeri, whose upper right arm is covered with a tattoo of the Russian national symbol of a double-headed eagle. Palmeri claims he was the first Italian to join the Russian-backed rebels in 2014, but has now been followed by some 30 compatriots.

Many of those have since been killed, he said, in a conflict that has dragged on for four years and cost more than 10,000 lives. Kiev and its Western allies accuse Russia of supporting the separatists by deploying several thousand regular Russian troops into Ukraine, a charge that Moscow denies, admitting only the presence of Russian volunteers and off-duty soldiers.

Palmeri said he had made the decision to go to Ukraine after watching Russian TV news, which described authorities in Kiev as neo-Nazis and broadcast false reports that Russian-speakers were being exterminated. Palmeri, who was married to a Russian woman at the time, said he "couldn't stay at home" when he saw what was happening in Ukraine. He described the war as a battle "between liberalist and Russian values" fought by parts of Europe, America and the Russian state.

'Real war not interesting'

In his native Italy, Palmeri faced five and a half years in jail over accusations of violent crimes and was put under house arrest. But he managed to escape and fled the country even though his passport had been confiscated, the Italian local newspaper Il Tirreno reported. Then he reappeared thousands of kilometres to the east of Europe. But the untried Italian militant was quickly forced to come to terms with the realities of conflict during the freezing Ukrainian winter.

Under the nom de guerre Italia, Palmeri took part in fighting for several months until his feet succumbed to frostbite during the battle for the town of Debaltseve, a key railway hub, in 2015. "Real war is not as interesting as in the movies. You are scared all the time there... You cannot sleep for two or three days, you are constantly under fire," he said. And Palmeri's involvement in the violence has only aggravated his problems with Italian justice, which he says is now pursuing him for being a mercenary. "We are not terrorists or mercenaries, I consider myself as a volunteer," Palmeri said, while declining to provide details on the source of his income in war-scarred Lugansk. He does not want to return to his native country for fear of being re-arrested, and regrets being separated from his seven-year-old son.

Instead he has built—with the help of "Italian investors"—a bakery in Alchevsk, an industrial town near Lugansk, which he hopes to open in the coming weeks. "When I arrived here, I certainly did not expect I would never be able to go back home," he said. —AFP

Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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Rights in poorer nations must be upheld as Thai firms go abroad

Thailand's businesses and its government must do more to protect the rights of vulnerable people abroad, analysts and activists said, after a landmark case filed by Cambodian farmers in a Bangkok court against a Thai sugar firm. It is the first time plaintiffs from another country have filed a class-action lawsuit against a Thai company in a Thai court over its operations outside Thailand. The two plaintiffs represent about 3,000 people who say they were forcibly removed from their homes and land in five villages in Oddar Meanchey province in Cambodia's northwest, to make way for a Mitr Pohl sugarcane plantation between 2008 and 2009.

As cross-border investments in the region increase to tap resources, markets and cheaper labour, cases such as these will become more common because of differences in legislation and inadequate protections for workers and residents, experts said. "This is about ensuring that Thai companies respect human rights in the countries they operate in, and holding them accountable for violations," said Sor Rattanamee Polka at the Community Resource Centre, which is representing the plaintiffs. "There is no Thai law against irresponsible outbound investment, and countries like Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar do not have proper frameworks for environmental and social impact assessments. We had no choice but to file a suit," she said.

The plaintiffs are asking for their land to be returned and 4 million baht (\$130,000) in total compensation, she said. Mitr Phol, the Thai sugar producer, said it had received temporary concessions in compliance with all local and national laws, and had assurances from the Cambodian government that the areas had been processed "legally and transparently". Mitr Phol said it had withdrawn from the project in 2014, and that it had recommended that the Cambodian government return the land to the "affected communities". The case, filed last month, is set to begin on June 11.

Not binding

Cambodia awarded large economic land concessions to foreign companies - mainly from China, Vietnam, South Korea and Thailand - to operate mines, power plants and farms in order to spur economic growth and alleviate poverty. Such deals, which covered more than a tenth of the country's surface area by 2012, have displaced more than 770,000 people since 2000, rights lawyers say. Following protests and pressure from rights groups, Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen announced a moratorium on new concessions in 2012, and promised to review old ones.

But activists say the reviews did not lead to significant changes, and that even when concessions were cancelled, the land was often retained by the government. In the case of Mitr Phol, the villagers first filed a complaint with the Bonsucro sugarcane sustainability initiative, and then the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) of Thailand, a government agency. After a two-year investigation, the NHRC said rights violations had occurred, and Mitr Phol was directly responsible. It asked Mitr Phol to pay compensation in line with the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

But the NHRC's powers are limited, Sor said, and the Cambodian farmers did not get compensation or their land back. "The NHRC can issue recommendations, but these are not binding. Filing cases is an option, but it is always a challenge to go through the judicial system," Angkhana Neelapajit, a member of the NHRC, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The NHRC has received more than a dozen complaints about Thai overseas investments, particularly in Southeast Asia, related to their impact on the environment and people, she said.

Negative impacts

In response to the NHRC's recommendations, the Cabinet issued resolutions in 2016 and 2017, calling for Thai investors to respect and protect the rights of local people, and to prevent adverse impacts on the environment and to livelihoods. Last year, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said the government intended to implement the UN guiding principles in a policy plan being drafted in consultation with rights groups.

But the region has proven to be a "laggard" in adopting an enforceable regional human rights system, said David Pred, co-founder of advocacy group Inclusive Development International. "We shouldn't hold our breath waiting for governments to adopt one. But that need not stop people from pursuing justice for business-related human rights violations in the national courts of the countries where the companies are domiciled."

Thai outbound investment in 2017 totalled about \$20 billion, according to the country's investment board, much of it going to Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. But investors are backing projects "with little regulation and often with disregard for the human and environmental rights impacts", according to a report from the UN Working Group on Business and Human Rights published in November. "Negative impacts commonly include destruction of livelihoods, land grabs, and forced eviction," it said. —Reuters

Cartoon for the Soul



Lula arrest leaves Brazil stumbling

The imprisonment of ex-president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has given already chaotic Brazil another push down an ever more unpredictable future. His arrest on Saturday took place against a backdrop of impassioned speeches, crying supporters, demonstrations and tear gas fired by riot police. It was not the picture of a country at ease with itself. "The climate of polarization and radicalization... worries us all," warned Public Security Minister Raul Jungmann.

With six months to go before a presidential election, Lula's imprisonment for corruption has created ever deeper divisions. He is the frontrunner, according to polls, yet is hated just as much as he loved, known alternately as "warrior of the Brazilian people" and simply "bandit". Some ask whether an election without such an outsized player can be considered fair. "Brazil is going through a democratic crisis, a crisis that reveals that the political and judicial systems are exhausted and under huge tension," said Christophe Ventura, at the Institute of International and Strategic Relations in France.

Volatility

Lula's almost certain exit from the elec-

tion has sent the other candidates scrambling. His own Workers' Party is in the lurch, since he is by far their most popular figure. He'll keep on being a candidate, even from behind bars - and hoping to get out - but it's clearly a risky strategy. "The imprisonment of Lula symbolizes the end of an era,"

Brazil has a former president been imprisoned on such a controversial conviction," he said.

The Supreme Court could change a law in a vote this week that would effectively win Lula's release. If that happens it would signal "total uncertainty and volatility in Brazilian political life," Ventura said. Adding to the tension, the head of the army, General Eduardo Villas Boas, made a call last week that appeared to demand Lula's imprisonment - a rare and, some say, disturbing intervention into politics by a top officer. It comes at a time when the army is playing an

Army playing an ever higher profile role

ever higher profile role after President Michel Temer ordered the military to take

over security in Rio de Janeiro, where police struggle to cope with violent crime.

Corruption war

A big driver of instability in Brazil is a four-year war on corruption known as

Race for 'cocaine of the sea' driving species to extinction

The dried fish parts don't look like much to the novice eye, but the totoaba swim bladders discreetly displayed in this shop in Guangzhou, China sell for up to \$20,000. Half a world away, off the coast of Mexico, poachers battling each other for this "cocaine of the sea" are using drug cartel-like tactics to get it - pushing two species toward extinction and leaving ordinary fishermen fighting to survive. The lucrative black market for totoaba swim bladders - prized in Chinese traditional medicine for their purported healing and beautifying properties - have turned the Gulf of California into a battleground, crisscrossed by armed poachers, Mexican navy vessels and environmental activists patrolling with pirate flags.

The casualties of this war include not only the critically endangered totoaba, but also the world's smallest porpoise, the vaquita marina - of which just 30 remain, according to scientists - and local fishermen caught in the middle. Mexican authorities say the vaquita has been virtually wiped out by totoaba fishing, because it gets stuck in the same kind of net. Known as the "panda of the sea" for the distinctive black circles around its eyes, the porpoise has become a cause celebre for the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio and Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim.

Three years ago, the Mexican government declared a ban on fishing in a 1,300-sq-km area off the coast of San Felipe, a fishing community that depended on the industry for 70 percent of its economy. "They want to make San Felipe a ghost town," said Omar Solis, a shrimp farmer who bought a catamaran and is now trying to reinvent himself as a pleasure cruise operator for tourists. Solis, 42, warns other ex-fishermen will likely end up as totoaba poachers. "They're pushing us into it whether we want to or not. It means risking your life, but if you don't have any money, what else can you do?" he said.

Cartel crosshairs

Flying a black flag with a white skull, activists from the US environmental group Sea Shepherd patrol the waters off San Felipe night and day in a camouflaged ship, using sonar and radar to find poaching boats and their nets. It can be a dangerous hunt: Poachers have been known to open fire on Sea Shepherd drones, and the authorities say they are operating increasingly like Mexico's powerful and brutal drug cartels. "They go to sea, armed, and there are shootouts between rival groups," a Mexican marine deployed to the zone told AFP.

Since February, Sea Shepherd has carried armed soldiers and police aboard its ships, for the activists' protection. Authorities say poachers fillet the totoaba at sea, stash the swim bladders in hidden compartments and toss the bodies back into the water. Then they ship their haul in small quantities - the same strategy used by drug cartels. Mexican authorities have begun using the same tactics they use against cartels: Tapping phones and following the money trail to pick apart the organization.

"It's highly likely" the poachers are funded by drug cartels, said Joel Gonzalez, an official with Mexico's prosecutor for environmental crimes. Fishermen in San Felipe confirm as much. "It's the same mafia, the same corrupt networks and the same trafficking routes" for drugs and totoaba, said one, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Silk-lined boxes

In the faraway city of Guangzhou, in a shop on a busy street, a soft-spoken saleswoman shows an undercover AFP reporter her collection of dried totoaba swim bladders, fetched from a storeroom upstairs and carefully laid out on a wooden table. The prices range from 20,000 yuan (\$3,160) to 130,000 yuan (\$20,500). "We can give you a display case with a ribbon and gold silk setting," she says. Totoaba is reputed to rejuvenate the skin and heal a host of ailments, from arthritis pain to discomfort during pregnancy. But it has become so rare that most customers just display it in their homes, "because it is a prized item," the saleswoman says. In all, her collection of eight dried totoaba pieces is worth \$80,000.

'We have nothing'

Back in San Felipe, the leader of the local fishermen, Sunshine Rodriguez, recently went on hunger strike for 10 days to protest the government's blanket ban on fish nets - even though only one kind of net is responsible for killing the vaquita, according to the fishermen. Manuel Galindo, an oceanographer with 37 years' experience, agrees: He



Dried swim bladders of totoaba fish (distinguished by two long tentacles) are seen, which despite an international ban on trade, are still available at a traditional medicine shop in Guangzhou on March 1, 2018. —AFP

says only the thick nets used to fish totoaba can kill the vaquita.

The real reason the porpoise is dying out, he says, is that too many dams have been built on the Colorado River, in the United States. That has reduced the flow of water it deposits into the Gulf of California, increasing the salinity of the vaquita's waters, reducing the temperature and disrupting its food supply. The vaquita is adapted to a very specific environment, and those conditions "don't exist anymore," says Galindo, a retired professor at the Autonomous University of Baja California.

San Felipe's fishermen are also struggling to survive in their new environment. About 200 of them have abandoned the town and set up an improvised camp on a remote beach with no running water or electricity - one of the only places they are now allowed to fish. "We've had to flee all the way this place, where we're cold, where we have nothing," says Maria de la Paz Alcantar, 60, cooking lunch for the fishermen as two little girls play in the tangled nets on the sand. —AFP



The M/V John Paul DeJoria docks at San Felipe bay in the Gulf of California in Baja California on March 7, 2018, as part of the Sea Shepherd Conservation Society's operation 'Miliagro IV' to save the critically endangered vaquita porpoise. —AFP

Sports

Richards homers, helps pitch Padres over Rockies 7-6

Godley's seven shutout sends Arizona to victory at San Francisco

DENVER: Left-hander Clayton Richard hit a three-run homer to help post his first win of the season, and Padres relievers Craig Stammen and Brad Hand retired nine consecutive Rockies to protect a one-run lead Monday night as San Diego defeated Colorado 7-6 in Denver. Back-to-back, two-out homers by Richard and Carlos Asuaje in the fourth boosted the Padres to a 6-1 lead. Jose Pirela doubled home Eric Hosmer with the Padres' final run in the fifth. The Rockies narrowed the gap on Chris Iannetta's three-run homer off Richard in the fourth and Carlos Gonzalez's disputed two-run homer off Padres reliever Jordan Lyles in the sixth. Richard (1-1) got credit for the win despite allowing four runs on five hits, including Iannetta's homer, with three walks and three strikeouts in five innings.

NATIONALS 2, BRAVES 0

Max Scherzer threw a two-hitter and struck out 10, and Howie Kendrick hit a two-run double in the first inning as Washington defeated visiting Atlanta in the series opener. The victory snapped a five-game losing streak for Washington, which got swept by the New York Mets this past weekend. Atlanta had won four out of five coming into this series and was the top offensive scoring team in the majors after this weekend's games. The Braves scored 62 runs in their first nine games but could not do much against Scherzer, who did not issue a walk.

ASTROS 2, TWINS 0

Justin Verlander worked seven shutout

innings in Houston's win at Minnesota. Verlander (2-0) recorded nine strikeouts against just one walk while allowing four hits. The game's only runs scored on a J.D. Davis single in the sixth inning and a Marwin Gonzalez double in the eighth. Houston right-hander Chris Devenski emerged from the bullpen and needed just one pitch to snuff a bases-loaded, one-out threat in the Twins' eighth, inducing a 6-3 double play from Rosario to preserve the lead. Ken Giles got the final out in the ninth for his first save.

batters. Seattle's Marco Gonzales (1-1) lasted just 2 1/3 innings and allowed four runs and eight hits.

BREWERS 5, CARDINALS 4 (10 INNINGS)

Orlando Arcia's bases-loaded walk with one out in the top of the 10th inning lifted visiting Milwaukee to a win over St. Louis. It was the fourth free pass handed out in the inning by Greg Holland (0-1), making his Cardinals debut after being signed on Opening Day. Matt Albers (2-0) got the win despite allowing Dexter Fowler's game-tying sacrifice fly in the ninth.

DIAMONDBACKS 2, GIANTS 1

Zack Godley pitched seven shutout innings and Paul Goldschmidt tripled in the middle of a two-run first inning, sending Arizona to a victory at San Francisco. Coming off a four-hit, one-run outing over seven innings in a 6-1 win over the Los Angeles Dodgers on April 3, Godley (2-0) was just as strong against the Giants, again allowing four hits but this time no runs in the outing. He struck out nine and did not walk a batter. The Giants finally broke through against reliever Yoshihisa Hirano in the eighth after a lead-off double by Brandon Crawford, who came around to score on an infield out by Gregor Blanco.

INDIANS 2, TIGERS 0

Temperatures may have been below freezing for most of the night, but that didn't stop Cleveland ace Corey Kluber



Liriano made his second strong start

ROYALS 10, MARINERS 0

Jakob Junis allowed one hit in seven scoreless innings, and Mike Moustakas homered as the Kansas City rolled to a victory against visiting Seattle. Moustakas went 3-for-5 with three RBIs for Kansas City, which racked up 13 hits. Drew Butera and Alcides Escobar had two RBIs apiece for the Royals. Junis (2-0) gave up his lone hit with one out in the seventh inning. He struck out three, walked two and hit three



DENVER: Starting pitcher Clayton Richard #3 of the San Diego Padres throws in the first inning against the Colorado Rockies at Coors Field on Monday in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

from heating up against visiting Detroit. Kluber (1-1) tossed eight dominant innings to lift the Indians. He fanned 13 batters, the most strikeouts he has ever recorded against the Tigers, walked one and allowed just two hits. Andrew Miller threw a hitless ninth inning for his first save. Francisco Liriano (1-1) made his second strong start of the season for the Tigers, going six innings and allowing two runs, three hits,

three walks and striking out four.

PHILLIES 6, REDS 5

Nick Williams belted a pinch-hit home run with two outs in the bottom of the eighth inning to lift host Philadelphia past Cincinnati. Williams' blast landed 417 feet from home plate. Rhys Hoskins and Scott Kingery each homered for the Phillies. Tucker Barnhart hit a home run for the Reds. — Reuters

Kuwaiti shooters excel in Arab shotgun tourney

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi lauded the level the Arab Shotgun Shooting Tournament in Morocco had shown, adding that a notable improvement in the technical level among shooters of both genders was evident.

Eng Al-Otaibi dedicated the achievements to HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, government and people.



Kuwait shooting continued its excellent performance, as after the trap national team was able to win five various medals in its competition, the skeet national team won the men's individual gold medal through shooters Abdelaziz Al-Saad, followed by Qatar's Rashid Hamad and UAE's Seif bin Futais was third. In the women's Skeet Eman Al-Shamma took gold while Afrah Adel took silver and Bahrain's Mariam Al-Hassani came third.

In the teams competition Kuwait's team of Abdallah Al-Rashidi, Abdelaziz Al-Saad and Mansour Al-Rashidi won the silver medal as gold went to Qatar while Bahrain ended in

third place. The women's skeet team won first place and the gold medal with shooters Eman Al-Shamma, Afrah Mohammad and Sheikh Al-Rashidi, Qatar was second and Bahrain third.

In the double trap competition team event Kuwait won first place and gold medal with its team of Ahmad Al-Affasi, Saad Al-Mutairi and Jarrah Al-Shuwaier. Second place went for Qatar and third went for Morocco.

The double trap individual gold medal went for Kuwait's Ahmad Al-Affasi while second went to Wissan Khalil from Lebanon and third went to Oman's Hussein Al-Shuhoumi.

AUB offers Visa cardholders two chances to attend FIFA World Cup

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) has announced the launch of its campaign in cooperation with Visa, the global leader in digital payments, which will give Visa cardholders the chance to win one of two fully paid trips to either attend the quarter finals or the semifinal matches of the 2018 FIFA World Cup, which will be held in Russia from the 14 June to 15 July 2018. Each prize will cover all trip expenses to include the winner as well as one accompanying person.

Customers are automatically eligible to enter the draw upon using their Visa credit cards issued by AUB in Kuwait locally or abroad during the campaign period, which began on 1 March and which will until the 12 April 2018. The prize draw will take place on the 19 April 2018. The more customers use their AUB Visa credit cards in their purchases, the more chances they have of winning one of these memorable prizes. AUB's Head of Branches Amer Najem said, "There are millions of football fans around the world. It is part of our commitment to engage with our customers and share their interests and passion. We are pleased to be able to provide this special opportunity for the winners who will travel to Russia and attend the matches."

Najem added, "We are proud to collaborate with our strategic partner Visa, the exclusive payments provider for the 2018 FIFA World Cup (tm), and provide the chance for AUB's customers to attend the 2018 FIFA World Cup matches in Russia, and become part of such



an exciting experience." For more information on AUB's products and services, customers are invited to visit any of the Bank's branches, or call the telebanking service 'Hayakom'.

KGL participates in International Day of Sport for development, peace

KUWAIT: KGL sponsored the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace on April 6, which was held at the Kuwait Sports Club in Kifan.

The event was organized by Olympian Balsam Al-Ayoub and her organization Balsam International who invited the Kuwaiti society to participate in this event, especially since this day was named by a United Nations resolution to be an international day of sport for development and peace.

The company is constantly providing support to the sport and humanitarian initiatives, keeping true to its belief in the development of social activities, which have a positive impact on the Kuwaiti society and the youth; celebrating this day in Kuwait also reflects Kuwait's interest in developing its youth's social and developmental skills.

The celebration was also attended by specialized social organizations, international organizations, voluntary groups, and interested societal individuals who showcased their activities and role in supporting the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace, along with members of KGL and a number of public figures, businessmen and ambassadors, among which were, the Ambassador of the United States of America, the British Ambassador, the Ambassador of Australia, the Ambassador of France and Ambassador of South Africa to Kuwait, to encourage all participants to do more for the future of community development and peace on earth.

"The announcement of April 6 as the International Day of Sport for Development and Peace is an opportunity for international institutions and private sector companies to highlight their role in supporting and developing society", said Dr Ali Dashti, Vice Chairman of KGL Logistics.

Dr Dashti also encouraged all par-

ticipants in any Corporate Social Responsibility activity, to support sports initiatives and events due to their enormous return to communities, be it physical or behavioral. Dr. Dashti also mentioned that, nowadays, physical activities and sports are an essential part of our lives especially with the progress of technology that is making our lives more comfortable and sedentary.

Dr Dashti stressed the need to support and sponsor sports activities, which should be an integral part of the state officials' efforts to in the development of the Kuwaiti youth, and the belief in the importance of community development and peace on earth, a message we learned from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad; thereby developing the potential of individuals, communities and nations, and promoting rapprochement and peace among nations.

For his part, Yousef Dashti, Vice Chairman of the Kuwait and Gulf Link Transport Company said that naming such a day every year makes sport and physical activity accessible to everyone, with the concerted efforts of all governments, organizations, companies and institutions and the United Nations, making sport an essential part of education, development, community, health and peace, hoping to make use of sports activities to help create a world in which everyone enjoys peace, health and prosperity.

The International Day of Sport for Development and Peace was set on April 6, as a result of a resolution adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2013, in which the United Nations called on international, regional, national and society, including non-governmental organizations and the private sector, and all other stakeholders to utilize sport for development and peace.



Ambassadors of the United States, Britain, France, Australia and South Africa with Dr. Ali Dashti and Balsam Al-Ayoub.

Sports



Semenya smashes Budd record as controversy persists

New Zealand's Ratcliffe hurls 69.94m to take hammer gold

GOLD COAST: Caster Semenya smashed Zola Budd's long-standing South African 1,500 metres record at the Commonwealth Games yesterday as her dominance on the track continued to be dogged by controversy off it.

Semenya, who has elevated levels of male sex hormones, made her move on the last lap, overtaking Kenya's Beatrice Chepkoech on the final bend and accelerating away to win in 4min 07.1sec. The 27-year-old's victory by more than two seconds sliced 1.1sec off Budd's 1984 South African record and earned Semenya her first Commonwealth medal, to go with her swathe of Olympic and world titles over 800m. It was a victorious moment for Semenya, who called for assistance for an exhausted rival lying on the track before setting off for a lap of honour wrapped in the national flag.

"I want everyone to know that South African athletes are here to stay. I'm proud to be a South African. We are a great nation and we want to display that to the world," she said.

But Semenya has long endured scrutiny over her hyperandrogenism and this week, Australian 800m runner Brittany McGowan raised familiar concerns. "It's a tough one. It's tough for a lot of women in the 800m, 400m and 1500m at the moment to compare ourselves and be judged by our governing bodies on those times," McGowan reportedly said.

Semenya's emphatic win comes with her future again clouded after the Court of Arbitration for Sport suspended the IAAF's hyperandrogenism regulations, which now look set to be changed.

However, she is now eyeing the world record in the

800m, in which she will be hot favourite when the heats start tomorrow. Semenya's appearance raises new questions at the Games, whose first transgender athlete, New Zealand weightlifter Laurel Hubbard, dramatically injured herself mid-competition on Monday and later said her career may be over.

OLDEST TO YOUNGEST

Elsewhere, Botswana's Isaac Makwala did press-ups on the track after winning the 400m in 44.35sec. Grenada's Lindon Victor won the decathlon and New Zealand's Julia Ratcliffe shed tears of joy after she hurled 69.94m to take hammer gold.

Jamaican debutant Ronald Levy outstripped former Olympic bronze-medallist Hansle Parchment to win the 110m hurdles in 13.19, while Kimberly Williams and Shanieka Ricketts formed another Jamaican one-two in the triple jump. In the pool, Australia rounded off a golden meet with a haul of six victories, while Taylor Ruck, 17, finished with a record-equaling eight medals when she anchored Canada to silver in the women's 4x100m medley relay. The oldest competitor in the Games' history, as well as a girl thought to be the youngest, both drew attention as they took part in shooting and table tennis respectively.

Bob Pitcairn, a 79-year-old former pilot who once foiled the hijacking of a passenger plane, came a respectable eighth of 16 in the Queen's Prize Pairs finals fullbore shooting. Just as impressively, 11-year-old Anna Hursey completed her stunning table tennis debut when she bowed out of the women's singles against



GOLD COAST: South Africa's Caster Semenya competes in the athletics women's 1500m final during the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games at the Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast yesterday. — AFP photos

Malaysia's Alice Chang Li Sian.

"Nothing phases her," said Hursey's coach Stephen Jenkins, praising the Cardiff schoolgirl's unflappable nature. English diving star Tom Daley suffered a setback when he withdrew from the individual 10 metres platform, citing a hip problem following surgery last year. Daley, the 2010 and 2014 individual winner, who suffered concussion in the build-up to the Games, will

still dive in the synchronised platform with his partner Dan Goodfellow. Australia's Cameron Meyer won cycling's men's time trial ahead of England's Harry Tanfield and Hamish Bond of New Zealand—a double Olympic rowing gold medallist. Katrin Garfoot won the women's time trial and bronze went to England's Hayley Simmonds, who took up cycling to get in shape and has now ended up with a Commonwealth medal. — AFP



Botswana's Isaac Makwala (L) reacts as he crosses the finish line to win the athletics men's 400m final during the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games at the Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast yesterday.



GOLD COAST: New Zealand's Julia Ratcliffe holds her national flag after winning the athletics women's hammer throw final during the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games at the Carrara Stadium on the Gold Coast yesterday.

Gold rush points to bright future for Aussie swimming

GOLD COAST: Spine-tingling wins in the final-night medley relays at the Commonwealth Games yesterday crowned a spectacular showing in the pool for Australia that has raised hopes for future Olympic success. Bronte Campbell, preferred to elder sister Cate for the freestyle anchor leg, overhauled Canada's Taylor Ruck to seal a thrilling victory in the 4x100m medley in Games record time.

"It's pretty unreal, it's very rare that I get a swim in the medley relay at all," Bronte said as the Commonwealth swimming competition wrapped up on the Gold Coast.

"We knew Canada was going to be really strong, but I'm just glad that the girls set me up and we did a good job in the end." Olympic champion Kyle Chalmers then reeled in England's Ben Proud in a super-charged final lap to win the men's medley relay by just nine hundredths in the final event of the six-day meet.

It left the host nation alone at the top with 21 golds on the able-bodied swimming medal tally, well ahead of England and South Africa, both on six golds. Australia also won seven more golds in the para swimming events for a combined team tally of 73 medals.

Australia have not lost in the pool at a Commonwealth Games since going down to Canada at Edmonton in 1978. Mitch Larkin was Australia's most successful swimmer with five golds in five events, including a backstroke sweep, while Chalmers won four titles—three in relays, but had to settle for silver in the 100m free, the event he won at the 2016 Rio Olympics. The Campbell sister and rising teen star Ariarne Titmus finished with three golds and a silver.



GOLD COAST: Australia's (gold) Bronte Campbell, Emily Seebohm, Georgia Bohl and Emma McKeon pose with their medals and flag after winning the swimming women's 4x100m medley relay final during the 2018 Gold Coast Commonwealth Games at the Optus Aquatic Centre in the Gold Coast yesterday. — AFP

'GREAT TEAM'

"We've got such a great team," said Larkin, looking ahead to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "We just swam through our skin, we held our nerve, showed up in those pressure situations. We've had some tough years," he added. "But it sets us up with some great confidence heading into next year and hopefully on to 2020."

Australia's head coach Jacco Verhaeren pointed to a greater number of personal and season-best times as justification for his move to bring the selection trials closer to the Games competition in line with other major nations.

"Our aim was to make Australia proud and show Australia what we're made of and we succeeded in that," said the Dutchman, who used statistics to support his optimism.

"We're hitting about a 65-percent rate in terms of personal best times, season best times, and that's a very good score," he told reporters. "That's double the Rio Olympics."

Verhaeren plans to put his swimmers through a training camp in tropical north Queensland ahead of the Pan Pacific competition in Tokyo this August—and use it as a preparation blueprint for the Tokyo Olympics. The Commonwealth gold rush has given Australian swimming a boost after a 10-medal haul in Rio that featured just three golds with a new generation of swimmers, headed by Olympic champions Chalmers and Mack Horton at the forefront. "It's great to win this amount of medals," Verhaeren said.

"But in doing that you need performances and medals—and from what I can see the people love it, so we love it too." — AFP

Games debutant, 79, who foiled plane hijack

BRISBANE: Being the oldest Commonwealth Games competitor in history at age 79 would be life-defining for most people, but not Bob Pitcairn: as a commercial airline pilot he foiled a hijacking.

Just weeks shy of his 80th birthday, the Canadian and his team-mate came a respectable eighth of 16 in the Queen's Prize Pairs finals fullbore shooting yesterday in Brisbane.

It might have been Pitcairn's Games debut this week, but the focus was just as much on his heroic past as his record-breaking present. In 1974, Pitcairn was flying a Boeing 737 domestic CP Air flight carrying 120 passengers from Montreal when a hijacker armed with a knife made his move, repeatedly attacking a crew member and demanding they fly to Cyprus.

Fresh from training weeks earlier for just this type of emergency, Pitcairn kept his cool and attempted to confuse the attacker, convincing the agitated man that they needed to stop in the Canadian city of Saskatoon to refuel.

By the time they landed, the hijacker had given up on his plan and Pitcairn escorted him on to the tarmac and into the waiting hands of

police. He was sentenced to seven years in prison. "I felt sorry for my crew, all of them were traumatised from that," Pitcairn said yesterday, reliving the incident.

"I wore it fairly well, but being captain of the airplane you have to, it's your job. The lady who was hurt by him, she never flew again. That's the tragic part of it, people lost their jobs over fear."

"I wish I could do it all over again and it not happen. The big thing is to get the airplane on the ground and take away the matter from the people, you've got to separate them (hijackers) from your passengers."

"We did all that and as a result we had a good ending." Asked by AFP if the traumatic experience had changed him as a person, Pitcairn, who retired as a commercial pilot in 1998, replied with a smile: "No, it's just me."

"I'm a happy guy, not too much bothers me. I've had 43 years of flying—10 years military and 33 at the airline. Lots of stories in my job and I transferred all the skills I had into shooting." That means not getting flustered under pressure. "I don't get too excited and if I get in trouble I dig my way out of it," he said. "It's no different being in an airplane with an emergency—you've got to resolve it. Shooting is a natural extension of all of my life."

Pitcairn, who just missed out on a spot at the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester, goes into the Games record books having overtaken previous oldest competitor Doreen Flanders. The English lawn bowler took part at Glasgow 2014 a few weeks after her 79th birthday. — AFP

Sports

Westbrook triple as Thunder seal playoff spot, Spurs through

Cavaliers keep alive their hopes with a 123-109 win over New York Knicks

LOS ANGELES: Paul George scored 27 points and Russell Westbrook bagged a triple-double as the Oklahoma City Thunder overcame an 18-point deficit to clinch a playoff berth with a 115-93 victory over the Miami Heat on Monday. Westbrook finished with 23 points, 18 rebounds and 13 assists in a dynamic performance which assured the Thunder of a postseason berth and kept them in the hunt for home-court advantage in the first round.

The Thunder improved to 47-34 with the win, leaving them level on wins in the Western Conference standings with fourth-placed Utah, who have played a game fewer. George and Westbrook were backed by Carmelo Anthony, who finished with 11 points, while Jerami Grant contributed 17 off the bench as the Thunder overcame a determined Miami side.

Josh Richardson led the scoring for the Heat with 18 points while Hassan Whiteside had 16. The defeat saw Miami slide back to seventh place in the Eastern Conference, a half-game ahead of Washington.

George said the Thunder would now aim to finish with a win in front of their home fans today, when they host the Memphis Grizzlies. "It feels great. We've got one more to go, we're heading in the right direction," George said.

"It's what we wanted. We wanted to come off the road trip 2 & 0 and we did that. We've got one more to close it up at home and get ready for these playoffs."

SPURS STREAK CONTINUES

The Thunder were joined in the playoffs by the San

Antonio Spurs, who sealed their 21st consecutive appearance in the postseason with a 98-85 win over the Sacramento Kings.

The Spurs advanced after strong performances off the bench, with Manu Ginobili chipping in with 17 points and Rudy Gay 18 points.

It remains to be seen where San Antonio will start in the playoffs however, with the Spurs one of four teams locked on 47 wins heading into the final rounds of the regular season. New Orleans were the other team to clinch on Monday, with the Pelicans trouncing the Los Angeles Clippers 113-100 at the Staples Center on the back of a 28-point display from Anthony Davis.

Elsewhere Monday, Kevin Love and LeBron James combined for 54 points as the Cleveland Cavaliers kept alive their hopes of snagging third place in the Eastern Conference with a 123-109 win over the New York Knicks.

With just one regular season game remaining, the Cavaliers will likely need to

defeat New York again today if they are to have any chance of sneaking past the in-form Philadelphia 76ers for the third seeding. The Sixers will be assured of third if they win their two remaining games against Atlanta and Milwaukee.

However, Cleveland's win on Monday handed them the tie-breaker over the Sixers, meaning that should Philadelphia slip up against the Hawks on Tuesday or the Bucks on Wednesday, the Cavs will finish third.

Whichever team sits in third has a potentially easier route to the Eastern Conference finals, with a series against the injury-hit Boston Celtics likely in the second



MIAMI: Dwyane Wade #3 of the Miami Heat passes the ball against Russell Westbrook #0 of the Oklahoma City Thunder on Monday at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. — AFP

round. Love, who led the Cavs scoring with 28 points and grabbed five rebounds, said the team was finding form at the right time. "Heading into the playoffs we always want to get better, and we feel like we've done that," Love said after Monday's road win at Madison Square Garden.

"It just felt like we moved the ball a little bit better. For 48 minutes it felt like we did a good job of that. A lot of contributions, a lot of guys playing well, it's always fun to play Madison Square Garden." James finished with 26 points and contributed 11 assists in a comfortable win for the 2016 NBA champions. —AFP

Asia Cup shifted to UAE over India-Pakistan cricket row

KUALA LUMPUR: Cricket's Asia Cup has been moved from India to the United Arab Emirates over Pakistan's refusal to cross the border, as relations simmer between the arch rivals, the Asian Cricket Council said yesterday.

The biennial event was due to be held in India in September, sparking protests from the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) who called for the event to be relocated. "This year's Asia Cup is moved out of India to UAE and will be held from September 13-28," Sultan Rana, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) development and event manager, told AFP.

India has suspended bilateral cricket ties with Pakistan since the 2008 attacks in Mumbai, which New Delhi blamed on militants based across the border. However India has continued to square off with Pakistan in international events like the 2016 Asia Cup in Bangladesh, the World Twenty20 at home and the 2017 Champions Trophy in England.

The Asia Cup has been marred by strained Indo-Pak relations since its inception when the UAE hosted it in 1984. Two years later, India pulled out of the event in Sri Lanka, while Pakistan refused to send its team to India when it hosted the cup in 1991.

With Pakistan and India unable to host, Bangladesh held three straight Asian Cups from 2012 to 2016. Rana said six Asian teams will compete in the 50-over Asia Cup. "India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan are the five top teams while, there will be a qualifying round to select the sixth team," said Rana, a former Pakistan first class player.

Meanwhile, the ACC Emerging Asia Cup was also jeopardised earlier this month when India refused to send their team to Pakistan to compete. "Emerging Cup will now be hosted jointly by Pakistan and Sri Lanka in December this year," said Rana. India will play its Emerging Cup matches in Sri Lanka. — AFP

S Africa fast bowler Morkel joins Surrey

LONDON: South Africa great Morne Morkel has joined Surrey on a two-year contract ahead of the new English county season, the club announced yesterday.

The towering fast bowler retired from international cricket this month after helping South Africa seal their first home Test series victory over Australia since their apartheid-enforced exclusion. Morkel, 33, took 309 wickets in 86 Tests at an average of 27.66 and was a member of the South Africa side that topped the International Cricket Council's Test rankings in 2012.

He will now be available to play for Surrey, whose headquarters are at The Oval in south London, in all forms of the game as a Kolpak-registered player until the end of the 2019 English season.

Home success stepping stone to winning abroad: Sharma

MUMBAI: India's excellent record at home is under-appreciated but it is an important stepping stone to winning matches abroad, batsman Rohit Sharma told Reuters in an interview. Under talismanic captain Virat Kohli, India won nine consecutive test series dating back to 2015 before the 2-1 series loss in South Africa in January halted their juggernaut.

The stellar run firmly cemented India's place on top of the world test rankings but the bone of contention has been that out of the nine, six came at home while two of the away victories were in Sri Lanka with the other in West Indies. "It's just a general perception of people that we have to win away games. As long as you are playing the game, you have to win everywhere," the 30-year-old Sharma said at an event to launch the new AlphaBounce Beyond shoe by Adidas.

"It doesn't matter where you win. People obviously find it more interesting to write something different when it comes to overseas victories. Yes overseas victories are important but you have to win at home first then you win overseas."

"It is important for us to win every game, in every country. Any country we go to play we have to try and win." With trips to England and Australia pencilled in for later in the year, critics believe 2018 will be the real test for Kohli's men in the longest format.

Often hailed as the next big thing to come out of Mumbai since Sachin Tendulkar, Sharma is an automatic choice in the limited-overs side and the only batsman to score three one-day international double centuries.

His batting form in whites, however, pale in comparison. Since registering two centuries in his first two tests - against West Indies in 2013 - he managed his third against Sri Lanka at home in November.

"There are challenging tours that are coming up which we have to do well in," said Sharma, who averages a shade under 40 in 25 Tests. "If you look at the South Africa tour, we almost won the first test match and won the third. We are competing really hard as a team even outside India. "Things will fall in place. There are certain things we need to improve as a

"It is a real honour that Surrey have asked me to join their club after my retirement from international cricket," Morkel said in a club statement. "I've got fond memories of playing at the Kia Oval (with South Africa) and am looking forward to settling into London with my family for the summer, making new friendships with team-mates and hopefully great memories on and off the field."

Alec Stewart, Surrey's director of cricket, added: "Following his retirement from international cricket I am very pleased that Morne has signed for Surrey for at least the next two years. "He has had an outstanding career with South Africa and is a player that will add enormous strength and experience to our squad. His appetite to continue playing and most importantly performing was very evident from our very first conversation." The former England captain added: "He sets exceedingly high standards for himself and for our young bowlers to have the opportunity to train and play alongside Morne can only help to develop their own games. "We look forward to welcoming Morne and his family to the Kia Oval for the start of the season." — AFP



Rohit Sharma

group. I am sure we can take the learning from what happened in South Africa with us when we go to England."

CAPTAINCY

The right-handed batsman also leads India in limited-overs matches in the absence of Kohli and recently skippered them to victory in last month's Twenty20 triseries in Sri Lanka, also featuring Bangladesh.

"The experience has been ... a great learning curve," said Sharma, who has led the Mumbai franchise to three Indian Premier League titles. "Whatever time I have spent captaining for Mumbai, that experience really helped me while leading the national team." For Sharma, most things are similar when it comes to leading an Indian team or captaining the Mumbai side in the popular Twenty20 league. "Things are not very different when you lead a franchise or a national team," he said. "All you need to do is train your mind according to that. The only difference is that players from different countries come and play during the IPL while the national team players are from your own country. — Reuters

Simmons, Jokic sweep Players of the Week awards

DENVER: Australian Ben Simmons and Serbian Nikola Jokic were announced as the NBA Players of the Week on Monday, the first time two international players have swept the awards in four years.

The 21-year-old Philadelphia 76ers forward Simmons averaged 18.5 points, 10 rebounds and 8.8 assists in his team's four wins last week to secure the Eastern conference award and further make his case for Rookie of the Year honours.

The big Denver Nuggets forward Jokic narrowly missed averaging a triple double en route to the Western conference honour, averaging 23 points, 10.3 rebounds and nine assists as his team went 3-0 to keep their playoff hopes alive. Simmons, who sat out all of last season with a broken foot, has played a key role for the overachieving 76ers, who have won 14 straight matches and sit third in the conference with two games left to play in the regular season.

Yet the ambitious Australian said on Monday he had his eyes on an even bigger prize than the Player of the Week or even Rookie of the Year honours. "Championships," Simmons said. "I want to be the Defensive Player of the Year... MVP. There's a lot of accolades I want to get, but I ultimately want to win a ring." It is the second time the 23-year-old Jokic has won the award this season after also doing so in the week ending Nov. 12. Monday marks the first time two international players have won the awards in the same week since Montenegro's Nikola Vucevic won it for the Eastern conference's Orlando Magic and the US Virgin Islands' Tim Duncan for the Western conference's San Antonio Spurs during the 2013-2014 season. The award is the latest sign of the impact players from outside the U.S. are having on the New York-based league, with a record number of international players expected to compete in the playoffs when they tip off on April 14.

The playoff-bound 76ers and Utah Jazz have the most foreign athletes on their rosters, with each team sporting seven players. —Reuters



Morne Morkel

Sports

Bayern Munich wary of 'last dice roll' for Sevilla

Lewandowski is just one yellow card from a ban

MUNICH: Arjen Robben says Bayern Munich can take nothing for granted against Sevilla in today's home quarter-final after the Spaniards already dumped Manchester United out of the Champions League.

Bayern have one foot in a seventh European semi-final in nine years after earning a 2-1 away win at Sevilla in last week's first leg. However, Sevilla have already given a clear demonstration of how dangerous they are away from home in Europe. After a goalless draw in Seville in the last 16, they dumped Jose Mourinho's United out with a 2-1 win at Old Trafford last month with French striker Wissam Ben Yedder netting both goals. Robben warns Bayern must be on their guard, especially given their history of elimination by Spanish teams in the knock-out phases in each of the last four seasons.

"We need to be careful," warned Robben. "It's the last roll of the dice for Sevilla and they will give it their all. "Everyone is talking about the semis, but if we win, then we can talk about that.

"A 2-1 win away from home is always great, but it's not the same as 5-0 against Besiktas (in the last 16). "They (Sevilla) did brilliantly in Manchester and we know we have to perform." Bayern head coach Jupp Heynckes

expects Sevilla to attack from the first whistle in Munich.

"They will certainly go on the offensive," said Heynckes. "If you lose 2-1 at home, you have to take the initiative and that is certainly what Sevilla will do. "They have to take risks and score two goals in our stadium.

"They are a team who press really well, but we know what we can do. "We're in a good mood, we're hungry and our big goal is to reach the semi-finals." The Bavarian giants have been merciless recently at the Allianz Arena, demolishing both Hamburg and Borussia Dortmund 6-0 in the last two home games.

Heynckes said Boateng is fit despite a bruised foot. The Germany centre-back picked up the knock when Bayern were confirmed Bundesliga champions for the sixth straight season with a 4-1 win at Augsburg on Saturday. However, Heynckes said both left-back David Alaba, back

in training after a back injury, and midfielder Arturo Vidal, who has a knock, are unlikely to play. Bayern have reason for optimism about going into the draw for the semi-finals on Friday. Sevilla are winless in their four games since winning at Old Trafford and crashed to a 4-0 league defeat at



'We need to be careful,' warned Robben



MUNICH: Sevilla's Argentinian defender Gabriel Mercado (L) and Sevilla's midfielder Roque Mesa (R) react during the final team training at the stadium in Munich, southern Germany, yesterday, on the eve of the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second football match between Bayern Munich and Sevilla. — AFP

in training after a back injury, and midfielder Arturo Vidal, who has a knock, are unlikely to play. Bayern have reason for optimism about going into the draw for the semi-finals on Friday. Sevilla are winless in their four games since winning at Old Trafford and crashed to a 4-0 league defeat at

Vigo on Saturday. Pressure is mounting on head coach Vincenzo Montella after some ropey defending at Vigo.

"The impossible things might become possible if you believe-and I still believe," said Montella ahead of the Munich match. —AFP

PSG seem set to bet on unproven Tuchel

PARIS: Thomas Tuchel is not a big-name coach, he has won few trophies and has never managed a squad of stars, but French and German media agree that he will probably succeed Unai Emery at Paris Saint-Germain.

The German website SportBuzzer reports that the 44-year-old Bavarian has already signed a two-year contract. In France, the sports daily L'Equipe quibbled over the details, saying it is "premature to say the deal is signed" but "it's only a question of timing", probably at the end of the season.

Emery appears to be merely biding his time in the PSG hotseat after the crushing elimination from the Champions League at the hands of Real Madrid. Tuchel's modest playing career peaked early with a handful of matches for Stuttgart Kickers in the German second division in 1992-93. He went on to coach Mainz and Borussia Dortmund, winning the German Cup after succeeding the highly successful Jurgen Klopp. Tuchel was recommended to the camp of emir Tamim ben Hamad al Thani by the Qatari consul to Germany, L'Equipe reported. He would be the first German to lead PSG.

Tuchel has been without a club since his tumultuous departure from Dortmund in May 2017 after a series of public disagreements with the club's chief executive.

Bayern Munich tapped up Tuchel recently as a possible successor to 72-year-old Jupp Heynckes, who insists he will not stay. But Tuchel "was already signed with a club," said Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge. This interest from big clubs shows Tuchel's standing despite his lack of trophies. That German Cup run included a 3-2 victory over Bayern Munich in a crazy semifinal.

He also led Dortmund to second behind Bayern in the Bundesliga in 2016. Tuchel is famed for his passion for tactics. Niko Kovac, who manages Eintracht Frankfurt, the losing team in last year's German Cup final, called Tuchel a "chorus master" and praised his "genius for playing different systems week after week."

Tuchel also has a reputation for man management, especially with younger players, and attracted attention at Dortmund for the spectacular way he developed such rising stars as Ousmane Dembele, now at Barcelona, US



Thomas Tuchel

international Christian Pulisic and Julian Weigl. But Tuchel reportedly had difficulties with veteran players he wanted to phase out. This profile as a tactician and demanding, even authoritarian, coach calls to mind Pep Guardiola who works at Manchester City for the Emiratis, the great regional rivals of the Qataris, and is poised to add the Premier League title to his collection of titles.

DRESSING ROOM OF DIVAS

Guardiola has won the Champions League. Tuchel has never progressed beyond the last eight of the trophy PSG's owners most covet. Emery arrived in Paris with three Europa League titles but remains the man responsible for the "Remontada" when PSG blew a 4-0 lead against Barcelona, losing the second leg 6-1 last March. One reason offered for Emery's difficulties in Paris is a lack

of experience handling a squad of stars. Tuchel had Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, a star with a big ego in Dortmund who is now at Arsenal, but PSG has a dressing room full of divas. Neymar's entourage reportedly pushed for Luis Enrique, the former Barcelona coach who won the Champions League with the Brazilian in his team in 2015. Meanwhile veterans such as Thiago Silva, and the Italian playmaker Marco Verratti, have let it be known that they favoured the return of Carlo Ancelotti, who managed the Paris club from 2011 to 2013. SportsBuzzer says Tuchel is already working on what he needs to do at PSG. But history suggests he won't have much time to show he can do better than Laurent Blanc who took PSG to the Champions League quarter-finals in 2015 and 2016 and was fired in June 2016. For PSG, Tuchel represents another long-odds bet, but the prize, for both sides, remains huge. — AFP

Veteran Argentine scout on the lookout for the new Messi

BUENOS AIRES: Ramon Maddoni points to a skinny, swirling orange-shirted figure on the field, jinking one way, then the other, a ball at his feet: "Look at this kid, he's a 'fenomeno'."

Maddoni is in the business of discovering the latest 'fenomeno', the next Messi, a new Maradona-players that quicken the pulse of the soccer-mad Argentine public. As night falls on Club Social Parque on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, youngsters aged 6-12 patter up and down on concrete courts, the ball skidding between their quick-moving feet. Parents crowd around the door of the complex waiting to pick up their children from the academy where Maddoni puts them through their paces.

Founded 70 years ago, Parque represents the heart and soul of its lower middle class neighborhood, the same talent factory that produced Maradona and a host of other stars of world soccer.

A 77-year-old legend among talent scouts, Maddoni is head scout at Parque and the Boca Juniors club's childrens division. He likes to recite the list of his "finds"-a long string of names familiar to fans of the game the world over: Carlos Tevez, Juan Riquelme, Fernando Redondo and Esteban Cambiasso are among the more than 100 stars that he has discovered and set on the path of international

stardom. Shouts go up as someone scores a goal on the concrete court. The scout smiles, and stops his reverie to point something out about one of the young players. "You saw that other guy, the little blonde fella? He's got something. But we have to explain to him how to stand back and play faster." Maddoni proudly describes his club as "a seedbed that never runs out. But still, even the most gifted have to learn."

LYNX EYED

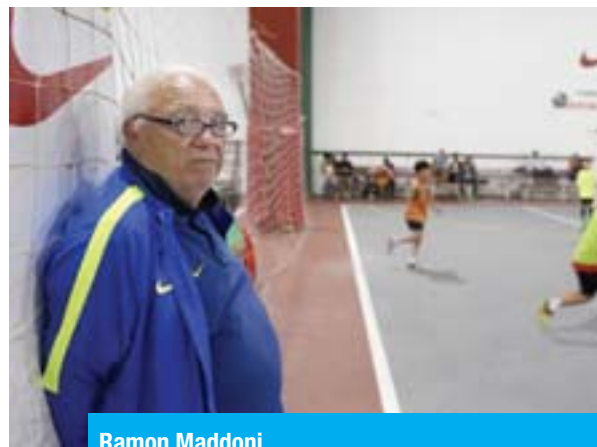
With thick-framed reading glasses that emphasize his eyes, his gray hair combed straight back, Maddoni has been an ever present figure on the sidelines of the Parque and Boca Juniors childrens' division teams for the past 24 years. He says he was hired in person by the club's then-president, Mauricio Macri, now Argentina's head of state.

Parque is his home, where he is greeted each day like one of the soccer Gods he has created. Arms reach out to enfold him in a brotherly hug every step of the way into the club complex. He pauses on the side of the concrete court, where the little long-haired boy with the orange shirt dribbles past three other boys in green shirts and thumps the ball into the net.

SCHOOL OF CHAMPIONS

His work, the work of seeing a spark of talent in a youngster and turning it into a sporting gem, "saved my life, at 37, when I was suffering depression because I was going through a divorce". It made him quit poker and betting on horse races, and, in some way, turned him into a hunter. What saved him was a conversation he had with the father of another Argentine star, Sergio "Checho" Batista, a member of the 1986 World Cup winning team, who convinced him to be a scout for the club.

He left his work as a meat buyer and took up coaching kids full-time, starting at Argentinos Juniors, Maradona's first club. Then he came to Boca. It may not have the



Ramon Maddoni

glamor of Barcelona's famous La Masia academy, but, by some counts, it has turned out at least 40 international stars nonetheless.

Maddoni admits he gets a kick out of watching how the raw talent he discovers can eventually be sold for stratospheric transfer fees. "I saw (former Barcelona and Villarreal star Juan) Riquelme at the age of eight. I went to Fuerte Apache for Tevez. The transfer cost 20,000 pesos (\$900)!" Former Manchester United and Juventus star Tevez has cost a total of \$97 million in transfer fees in his career, and a one-year stint with Chinese club Shanghai Shenhua reportedly made him the world's highest-paid player on a weekly salary of \$899,000. Maddoni says the secret to his success at turning up soccer gold time after time is simple: "I realize immediately if a kid is good, or not. By the way he turns, how he moves with the ball." Maddoni passes down a corridor where the walls are crammed with the jerseys his players have gifted him. —AFP

Japan coach vows to build on 'world-class' technique

TOKYO:

Japan's newly appointed national football manager Akira Nishino said yesterday the Blue Samurai have world-class technique and vowed to build on their organised playing style ahead of the World Cup.

Japan appointed the 63-year-old veteran coach on Monday after sensationally dumping Vahid Halilhodzic only two months before the tournament in Russia. "(Japan) have had a lot of world-class aspects in terms of technique," Nishino told reporters in his first public remarks since the appointment. "The team can compete in a well-organised, disciplined way," Nishino said. "It is so important to build that strength," he said, adding: "We will not seek what we don't have but further improve what we have been building." Nishino will have only 70 days with the Blue Samurai before they play their first match against Colombia in a tough World Cup pool that also includes Poland and Senegal.

Nishino boasts an impressive array of domestic silverware and masterminded one of Japanese football's proudest moments: beating a Brazil side containing Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos 1-0 at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics. A former international midfielder who won 12 caps for his country, Nishino is best known for his stint at the helm of Gamba Osaka, which he steered to the team's first Asian Club Championship in 2008.

This earned them the biggest match in their history, a World Club Cup semi-final clash with a powerful Manchester United side featuring Cristiano Ronaldo, Ryan Giggs and Wayne Rooney, which they lost in a 5-3 thriller. The tournament in Russia will be the sixth successive World Cup appearance by the Blue Samurai, who made it to the last 16 in 2002 when Japan co-hosted the tournament with South Korea and again in 2010. — AFP



Akira Nishino

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE			
Real Madrid v Juventus	beIN SPORTS HD 1	21:45	
Bayern Munich v Sevilla	beIN SPORTS HD 2	21:45	

13 Semenya smashes Budd record as controversy persists



14 Westbrook triple as Thunder seal playoff spot, Spurs through



15 Veteran Argentine scout on the lookout for the new Messi



Roma dump Barca out of CL

Manolas sent Roma through to semi-finals



ROME: FC Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi (L) vies with AS Roma's Italian forward Stephan El Shaarawy during the UEFA Champions League quarter-final second leg football match between AS Roma and FC Barcelona at the Olympic Stadium in Rome yesterday. — AFP

ROME: Kostas Manolas sent Roma through to the semi-finals of the Champions League after an incredible 3-0 victory over Barcelona at the Stadio Olimpico yesterday saw them overhaul a 4-1 first-leg deficit and advance on away goals. The superb Edin Dzeko set the ball rolling in the sixth minute, and after Daniele De Rossi converted a penalty 13 minutes after the break to get the home fans believing, Manolas glanced home a brilliant header with eight minutes left to send the

Roma supporters into raptures and leave Barca wondering what had hit them. Just as they were at the Camp Nou, Roma were aggressive from the off, and Dzeko gave the home side a deserved lead after just six minutes, brilliantly bringing down De Rossi's clipped through ball, holding off Samuel Umtiti and poking the ball past Marc-Andre ter Stegen. Patrik Schick had the best chances to double Roma's lead before half-time on his Champions League debut, but continued

the poor form in front of goal that has blighted his club-record move from Sampdoria. He sent two glorious headed chances wide, the first from a vicious 13th-minute Aleksandar Kolarov corner. The second, just before the half-hour mark was even more glaring, a free header on the penalty spot that should have hit the target. He was however unlucky not to control Radja Nainggolan's mishit shot when it flashed to him in the area just two minutes

later. Roma started the second half as they started the first and got their reward in the 58th minute when Edin Dzeko was chopped down by Gerard Pique and De Rossi slotted home the spot-kick. Eusebio Di Francesco's side smelled blood, and with the raucous crowd urging their team they tore into wobbling Barca. De Rossi flashed a header wide in the 69th minute, and 10 minutes later it looked like Ter Stegen had saved the away side's skin with an incredible close-range stop from

Stephan El Shaarawy. However with just seven minutes left Manolas met another fizzing Kolarov corner with an unsavable header, sparking wild celebrations on and off the pitch. Barca finally came out of their shells as Roma tried to hold on to the result, but the hosts held on brilliantly to see the result out and go through to the semis for the first time since 1984, when they lost the final at home to Liverpool, yesterday's other victors. — AFP

Guardiola sent off as Salah sends Liverpool into s-finals

MANCHESTER: Mohamed Salah ensured Liverpool's return to the Champions League semi-finals for the first time in a decade as a 2-1 win at the Etihad Stadium yesterday took them through 5-1 on aggregate and ended Manchester City's European dream for another season. On a night of high frustration for free-spending City, manager Pep Guardiola was sent off at half-time for taking his furious protests towards Spanish referee Antonio Mateu Lahoz too far. City led the quarter-final, second leg 1-0 on the night at that stage after Gabriel Jesus's second-minute opener, but the hosts felt aggrieved after Leroy Sane had a second goal wrongly disallowed just before the break. Salah ensured there was to be no stunning comeback when he coolly chipped home his 39th goal of the season 11 minutes into the second half before Roberto Firmino sealed a comprehensive aggregate triumph for the five-time winners.

Guardiola admitted beforehand that his side needed the "perfect" performance and the hosts got the perfect start as they opened the scoring after just 117 seconds. Liverpool were unhappy at Mateu Lahoz in what was to be the start of a controversial night for the Spaniard when Virgil van Dijk claimed he had been pushed by Raheem Sterling in the lead-up to the goal. The referee was unmoved, though, and with the Dutchman out of position, Fernandinho's through ball found Sterling and his low cross was swept home by Jesus. Liverpool fans would have been forgiven if memories of their 5-0 defeat at the Etihad Stadium earlier this season came flooding back. City were helped significantly that September afternoon by a first-half red card for Sadio Mane and the home fans were screaming for the Senegalese to be dismissed again on 14 minutes for a late challenge on Nicolas Otamendi. However, Mateu Lahoz settled for a yellow card and a booking for City goalkeeper Ederson, who rushed from his goal to push Mane persistently in retaliation. Salah had been an injury doubt after limping off in the first leg, but Liverpool were unable to spring the Egyptian free in the first 45 minutes as City peppered the visitors' box with crosses without finding the final touch. Bernardo Silva saw a deflected effort spin just wide and then rattled the post with a

deflected long-range strike. The turning point came seconds later when Sane turned into an empty net after Loris Karius's punch came back off his own player James Milner. Mateu Lahoz wrongly ruled the goal out for offside, sparking City and, in particular, Guardiola's anger. Liverpool could have delivered the knockout blow even before the break had Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain managed to maintain his balance instead of firing high and wide after rounding Ederson. Guardiola ran onto the field to pull his protesting players away from the official before embarking on his own rant at Mateu Lahoz that saw him watch the second half from the stands. City understandably failed to maintain the intensity of their first-half display in a third huge game in six days after also blowing the chance to win the Premier League in a thrilling 3-2 Manchester derby defeat on Saturday. Unsurprisingly it was Salah who got the decisive away goal and in some style. Just like his opener in the first leg, Salah followed up after Ederson had denied Mane with a wonderfully-judged chipped finish past the despairing Otamendi in the 56th minute. City were condemned to a third straight defeat for the first time in Guardiola's near two-year reign 13 minutes from time when Otamendi was caught in possession and Firmino slotted in off the far post to the delight of the Liverpool fans gathered behind Ederson's goal. — AFP



MANCHESTER: Liverpool's English midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (R) tackles Manchester City's English midfielder Raheem Sterling during the UEFA Champions League second leg quarter-final football match between Manchester City and Liverpool, at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England yesterday. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018

18 Air passengers grounded in strike-hit Germany, France



19 Confused Iranians flock to empty exchangers after currency fix



21 KFH launches debit card cross border campaign with Visa



AJMER: An Indian woman arranges earthen pots for sale in Ajmer in the western Indian state of Rajasthan yesterday. —AFP

Boubyan Bank posts KD 12.6m Q1 net profit

Al-Majed: Good start in 2018 will bring more successes

KUWAIT: Boubyan Bank has announced KD 12.6 million in net profits for Q1 2018, at a growth rate of 18 percent compared with the comparative period of the past year, while the earning per share amounts to 5.27 fils compared with 4.47 fils for the comparative period of 2017.

Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed, the Bank's Vice-Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, commented on such positive results by stating that such an increase in the bank's profits for the first quarter of this year would be a good start for a new year where the bank would seek to continue scoring more successes in retail or corporate banking.

He added: "It is no secret that achieving good growth rates at the beginning of any financial year is very important since it represents a strong motive for everyone towards more hard work and more successes. Our success is attributed to the Grace of Allah, the Almighty, in the first place, then to the efforts of our human resources, the trust of our shareholders and customers which helped us continue our journey towards achieving good growth rates which highlight the success of our strategy and plans to expand in the local market."

Al-Majed stated that all of the Bank's main indicators showed that the Bank witnessed a remarkable growth until the end of the first quarter where the total assets increased to KD 4.2 billion at a growth rate of 15 percent while the operational revenues increased to hit KD 3.4 billion at a growth rate of 16 percent in addition to the increase in customers' deposits by 12 percent, amounting to KD 3.5 billion.

He further added that the total equity of the bank increased to KD 367 million compared with KD 344 million last year and that there was a notable increase in the financing portfolio up to KD 3 billion with a growth rate of 13 percent in addition to the continuous growth of the bank's customers' base.

Al-Majed stated as well that the market share, in financing, increased generally to approximately 8.14 percent in the meantime, while Boubyan Bank's share of the retail finance increased specifically to approximately 11 percent. Besides, the bank recorded outstanding growth rates in the corporate credit portfolio which stood at 12 percent. This was achieved by attracting a number of operational companies known for their financial and economic creditworthiness while continuing to maintain the highest standards of credit quality, studying and diversifying risks.

Expansion and services

On the other hand, Al Majed stressed that the bank would continue opening new branches after reaching 40 branches, and he added: "In line with our domestic geographical expansion to be closer to our clients, we are continuing our investment in e-services and e-banking

products which placed us ahead of other local banks. We are doing that in order to cater for the various needs of our clients."

"Customer service has always been our recipe for success, as we have always taken into account that all our customers are special and that they deserve the best because meeting their aspirations and ambitions should be up to the level of their expectations when they chose us.", Al-Majed emphasized.

In this context, he stressed that Boubyan Bank continued being at the top of the pyramid of customer service in Kuwait, supported by earning two awards from Service Hero, the international consumer-driven customer satisfaction index, namely, the First Place Award in Customer Service as a Country Winner atop all economic sectors in Kuwait, for the third time, in addition to being named the 2017 Best Islamic Bank in Customer Service for the eighth year in a row since 2010.

Al-Majed added: "The confidence of our customers was well-placed, and this was fruitful as it contributed to earning these two special awards in Kuwait". He further stressed that the bank would continue at that remarkable level of customer service.

CSR and HR

Al-Majed stated that the first quarter of this year marked a number of activities and events organized by the bank as a part of its corporate social responsibility to support the youth as well many other segments of the society. The most prominent of such events was Kuwait Coffee Festival, held for the first time in Kuwait, in addition to sponsoring several sports events.

"Boubyan Bank gives a special attention to its human resources as a part of the bank's approach being a developed and modern bank keeping up with international and regional changes through its young management, and the Consumer Banking Group, which comprises mostly of youths, testifies to this. The bank is known for placing the youth in leading roles, and this has further helped Boubyan Bank earn the award for the "Replacement and Nationalization of Manpower in Kuwait". The award is given on an annual basis by the Council for the Ministers of Labor for the best GCC institution", Al-Majed concluded.



Adel Abdul Wahab Al-Majed

Huawei six-country Mideast roadshow kicks off in Kuwait

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Huawei, a leading global ICT solutions provider, kicked off a six-country roadshow across the region in Kuwait on Monday. Under the theme 'Leading New ICT, The Road to Digital Transformation', the roadshow puts the spotlight on advanced ICT technologies that are driving digital transformation in Kuwait and helping to achieve the country's development agenda in key sectors.

Held for the first time in the Middle East, the New ICT Roadshow 2018 will be a collaborative platform that will bring together leading Huawei experts from the region who will share their insights into technical topics and best practices in multiple fields, such as all-cloud network, cloud-managed campus, convergent campus, all-flash storage, and Intelligent Video Surveillance (IVS).

Huawei will gather enterprise leaders across a number of key verticals including Safe City/Public Safety, Utilities and Oil & Gas. The roadshow will include several keynotes, solution exhibition and technology workshops that cover Campus Networks, Data Centers, and Video Surveillance by Huawei experts. The initiative is designed to support regional governments to achieve their national vision agendas, and enable them to build better connected, intelligent ecosystems.

Digitalization

"Digitalization is transforming both business models and personal lifestyles and this change is happening at a lightning speed", said Alaa ElShimy, Managing Director & Vice President, Huawei Enterprise, Middle East.

Kuwait Times spoke to Elshimy, on the sidelines of "New ICT - The Road to Digital Transformation" roadshow.

Kuwait Times: What is the purpose of this roadshow, and what are you showcasing today?

Shimy: Today we are talking about the industry in general and industry trends. It is not only about ICT but about our life. Because we believe that ICT is shaping the way we live (smart cars, robotics, smart roads, etc) and this is what we are showing today for our Kuwaiti customers. We are talking about how Huawei is shaping the industry globally and how to bring these values to our partners in Kuwait, where this is the first roadshow across all the Middle East countries.

KT: How are you helping authorities in Kuwait achieve their national agendas?

Shimy: When we look at the national agenda in Kuwait, it is not only of the government, but also includes the private sector. We are discussing different industries - oil and gas, cities, healthcare, education, etc. So we are mapping different solutions and applications from ICT technology and business to enable this vision in all industries included in the strategy for the country.

The major opportunity for businesses and the public sector is becoming part of the ecosystem that facilitates smart city evolution. Developers, engineers, manufacturers and others stand to benefit from the burgeoning platform for innovation and creativity. IoT and cloud computing will nurture an innovative society led by public and private sector companies trying to find unique solutions for citizens. Public sector initiatives will rely on private sector input, as well as talent nurturing, training, and research.

Smart government

KT: What new ICT technology is the most important for



KUWAIT: Alaa ElShimy, Managing Director & Vice President, Huawei Enterprise, Middle East, speaks during the roadshow. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait to implement today?

Shimy: Smart government is a great choice for Kuwait to implement. It is going to make a very big difference in how much time and effort you will spend. The consequences will be linked to each other - showing your ID will connect the ministries with each other in a database with all your information. You can get any service online from home.

About oil and gas industry, the market is very competitive globally. In the US they are reducing the cost of production. The Middle East is a role player - where oil and gas companies and investors are in urgent need to use the latest information technologies and management processes to reduce costs and ensure safe operations. Against this backdrop, innovative ICT plays an important role in the digital transformation of the oil and gas industry. Vision and determination from governments around the world create safe and smart havens for their people.

KT: What are the biggest challenges that organizations face when implementing new technologies?

Shimy: The biggest fear is about people losing jobs when technology is used to reduce cost, and replacing manpower with artificial intelligence. A number of jobs will not exist, but on the other hand, new jobs are created to find qualified people to work in the new technologies that have been implemented. It is not only in the Middle East, but it is a globally fear. The new jobs that will be created will bring more values in a more efficient way. The technology will reduce costs but it will also increase efficiency.

Jobs generation

KT: You mentioned that new jobs will be available in the future. What knowledge should the next generation learn?

Shimy: The next generations must focus on four main majors and education providers must consider them. The majors are artificial intelligence, mathematics, data science and programming.

KT: What progress has Huawei made in Campus Network and Cloud Data Center, and how is it different to what is available in the market today?

Shimy: Globally, there are more than 300 million cameras collecting data. If you want to collect this data in a normal standard computer, you will have poor performance. But if you have a switch and cloud computing and an AI chip, then you will get the best result for any images, video or anything that you will add to the system. You will get the best performance for any AI application you have.

By leveraging key technologies, we can have in-depth and comprehensive detection and control on pipeline reliability and security, and improve the pipelines' operating efficiency to the greatest extent. With the support of new ICT technologies and by combining professional capability, we can advance the development of new-generation digital pipelines characterized by an unprecedented level of smartness.

Boubyan Bank's Key Financial Indicators In KD Million

Indicator	Q1 2018	Q1 2017	Growth
Net profits	12.6	10.7	18%
Operational revenues	34.2	29.4	16%
Customers' deposits	3,527	3,144	12%
Financing portfolio	3,013	2,671	13%
Assets	4,210	3,673	15%

Business

Air passengers grounded in strike-hit Germany, France

Lufthansa cancels 800 scheduled flights

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Tens of thousands of air passengers were stranded yesterday as aviation giants Lufthansa and Air France were hit by strikes that crippled traffic at several major European airports.

Germany's biggest carrier Lufthansa was forced to cancel 800 out of 1,600 scheduled flights, including 58 long-haul flights, as German public sector workers including ground crew and airport firefighters walked out between 5:00 am and 6:00 pm (0300 and 1600 GMT). Yesterday's "warning strike" hit Germany's biggest airport Frankfurt as well as other regional hubs such as Munich, Cologne and Bremen.

Other airports such as Hamburg, Leipzig and Hanover were hit with knock-on effects. Half of the flights at Munich were delayed or cancelled according to the union Verdi, reported national news agency DPA.

Beyond airports, local transport, kindergartens, rubbish collection and hospitals were also affected as civil servants walked out to demand a 6.0-percent pay raise for the 2.3 million people working for Germany's federal, state and local governments. "Warning strikes" lasting a few hours are a familiar ploy by worker representatives ahead of sector-wide talks on pay and conditions.

When if not now

Given the country's economic strength, "when if not now should there be significant pay increases for workers, including those in the public sector?" asked Verdi leader Frank Bsirske in an appearance at Frankfurt airport.

"We're determined to achieve this." But the ADV airport operators' association accused unions of "lacking all proportionality" with the strike disrupting tens of thousands of journeys—90,000 at Lufthansa alone—and whose costs they said would run into the millions.

Travellers had plenty of notice of upsets to their plans, avoiding scenes of chaos at Frankfurt airport, but some could not avoid travelling yesterday.

Sybille Metzler, who was due to travel to Amsterdam for a meeting, turned up at the hub despite warnings from the operator that her flight had been cancelled. "I know, but I wanted to see if I can still get there, because it won't work with the train," the 41-year-old management accountant told AFP.

Some passengers who faced disruption were understanding of the walkout.

"It's fair enough. Hope they get it," said Porsche service manager Ashley Gillham, 40, of the strikers' pay demands—despite having to switch to rail for part of her journey from New Zealand via Frankfurt to Mallorca. "It's not a big deal, we would have been waiting at the airport for five hours anyway" for a connecting flight, she said. "This way we get to have a beer at 8:00 am," Gillham joked.

Sixth walkout at Air France

In unrelated industrial action in France, air traffic was also severely disrupted as the country's biggest airline Air France was forced to cancel one in four flights, in the sixth round of strikes launched by its employees since February. Around 65 percent of long-haul flights will depart as planned, the carrier said, with higher proportions on schedule among medium- and short-haul services from Paris and other French airports.

The group said the strikes between February 22 and April 11 were estimated to cost 170 million euros (\$210 million). But several Air France unions have called for further days of industrial action in April as they also seek a 6.0-percent pay raise.



People stand in the departure hall during a strike at the airport in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, yesterday. —AFP

Managers say the company is not growing solidly enough to justify such salary boosts, which they reckon would cost 240 million euros per year. Air France's labor woes come at the same time as disruption for

French state rail operator SNCF Workers are staging repeated walkouts in a bid to scare the government off a planned reform to the national icon and to the special status its employees enjoy. —AFP

Egypt plans deep cuts in energy subsidies, to raise food subsidies

CAIRO: Egypt plans to cut fuel subsidies by a quarter and nearly halve those for electricity in the financial year starting in July, but will raise food subsidies slightly, a government document said, in a move that would reduce budget costs by \$2.4 billion. Cutting subsidies to reduce pressure on government spending is one of the country's main goals as it pushes forward with reforms to revive an economy that has struggled since a 2011 uprising. It is also a condition of a \$12 billion deal Egypt signed with the International Monetary Fund in 2016.

Egypt aims to reduce subsidies on fuel to 89.075 billion Egyptian pounds (\$5.05 billion) from 120.926 billion pounds in the 2018/19 fiscal year, according to the document.

It will also reduce electricity subsidies by almost half, bringing them down to 16 billion Egyptian pounds from 30 billion pounds, the statement said. Last summer, Egypt raised fuel and electricity prices by 50 and 42 percent respectively, sending inflation shooting up.

The country aims to increase food subsidies by 5 percent, to reach 86.175 billion pounds from 82.177 billion pounds, according to the same document. Egypt supports about 68.8 million citizens through 20.8 million subsidy cards that grant each citizen 50 pounds monthly to buy essential goods.

The government submitted a 2018/19 budget draft to parliament last month and expects it to be ratified before the start of the new fiscal year. —Reuters

Jet Airways rules out Air India bid

MUMBAI: Jet Airways yesterday became the latest major Indian airline to rule out a bid for debt-laden national carrier Air India in a new blow to the government's privatization plans. The announcement came just days after rival IndiGo pulled out of the race to acquire Air India's operations meaning the government now has no clear frontrunner in the sale campaign.

"We welcome the government move to privatize Air India. It is a bold step," Jet Airways' deputy chief executive, Amit Agarwal said in a statement emailed to AFP. "However, considering the terms of offer in the information memorandum and based on our review, we are not participating in the process," he added.

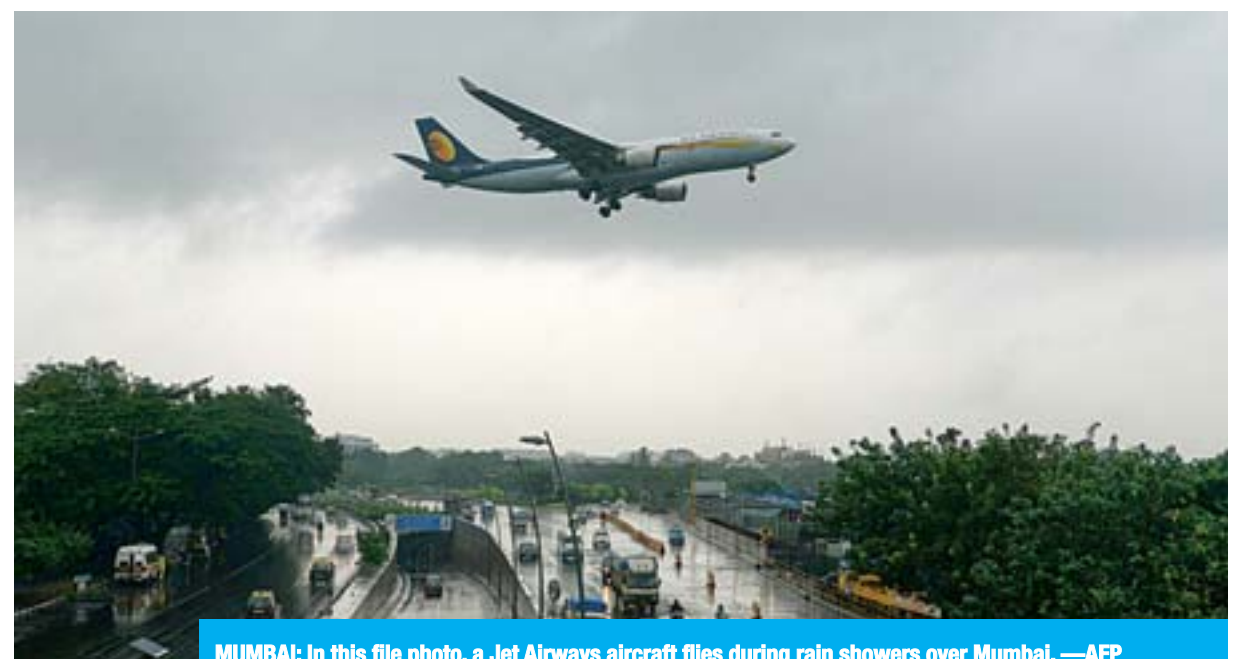
Once the country's monopoly airline, Air India has slowly lost market share to new low-cost private players in one of the world's fastest-growing airline markets. Air India ran losses for nearly a decade after a botched merger in 2007 and has debts of around \$7.67 billion according to government figures.

It has received \$5.8 billion in bailout funds from the government but needs even more working capital to turn it around, experts say. The Indian government recently said it wanted to sell a 76 percent chunk of the struggling carrier. It released bid documents on what would be one of the country's highest-profile asset sales in

Norway's wealth fund should not expand to private equity, says govt

OSLO: Norway's \$1 trillion sovereign wealth fund, the world's largest, should not be given permission to invest in unlisted companies, the Finance Ministry said in recommendations to parliament yesterday, rejecting the fund's own advice.

The fund invests Norway's oil and gas revenues into stocks, bonds and property abroad, and is one of the world's biggest shareholders with stakes totaling 1.4 percent of all listed companies. "Unlisted equity investments



MUMBAI: In this file photo, a Jet Airways aircraft flies during rain showers over Mumbai. —AFP

decades showing it wants the prospective buyer to take on all of Air India's operations.

IndiGo, India's largest airline, withdrew on Friday, saying it was interested only in Air India's international routes and not its domestic operations. India has the

would challenge the management model based on transparency, low management costs, and a limited degree of active management," the Finance Ministry wrote in its annual white paper on the fund to parliament.

The fund has argued that investing in unlisted shares, primarily via private equity, could help improve its balance between risk and return, naming Uber and Airbnb Inc among missed opportunities due to the current restrictions.

"We are concerned about the reputation of the fund. Openness is very important for the fund's legitimacy, its trust," Finance Minister Siv Jensen told reporters. "It is very likely that the lack of (public) information in those types of investments would be problematic."

The fund already has permission to take stakes in companies that have a clear intention to list, which it can still exploit, the ministry said. The Re-Define think-tank, which has previously called for the fund to invest in private equity, said parliament should overrule the minority center-right government. "For a fund with the

world's fastest-growing passenger airline industry, expanding at an annual rate of around 20 percent. About 100 million of its 1.25 billion people took to the skies in 2016 and airlines have embarked on huge purchases of new jets in expectation of new growth. —AFP

large size and long-term horizon of Norway's Oil Fund, it is important to be able to invest in economic opportunity and growth, whether they are captured by listed securities or not," said Re-Define Managing Director Sony Kapoor.

In November the fund recommended to drop oil and gas stocks from its equity benchmark index to reduce Norway's exposure to oil price fluctuations, a proposal that sent energy stocks lower at the time. The finance ministry said yesterday it would present its assessment of the proposal in the autumn of 2018.

The Finance Ministry said it would consider whether to allow the fund to take direct stakes in unlisted renewable energy infrastructure projects, but only as part of the fund's present environmental mandate. Those investments amounted to 75 billion crowns (\$9.59 billion) at end-2017, said the white paper. "The assessment will be based on the same requirements for transparency, return and risk that apply to other investments in the fund," said Jensen. —Reuters

Ousted Deutsche Bank boss to score 9m-euro payoff

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Former Deutsche Bank chief executive John Cryan can expect a payoff of around 9.0 million euros (\$11.1 million) after he was unwillingly shunted out of his post, internal rules at the lender show. When a board member leaves before their contract is up, "the severance payment, as a rule, is two annual compensation amounts," based on pay for the previous financial year and expected pay for the current year, Deutsche's 2017 annual report says.

Cryan took home a salary of 3.4 million euros in 2017, while there had so far been no indication of his pay this year. That could give him the right to around 6.8 million euros in severance pay plus the 1.9 million euros the bank reported in his retirement account.

The Frankfurt institution declined yesterday to comment on Cryan's "golden parachute".

He is set to leave the bank at the end of the month—well in advance of the end of his contract in May 2020 — after supervisory board chairman Paul

Achleitner pushed through over the weekend a replacement, 47-year-old career Deutsche banker Christian Sewing.

A former finance director at UBS, Cryan waived any bonus payment for 2017 after the bank booked its third annual loss in a row. In an interview with newspaper Frankfurt Allgemeine Zeitung yesterday, Achleitner said Cryan had "rendered great service" to Deutsche Bank. The British CEO neutralised the worst legal threats hanging over Deutsche from the financial crisis, in part by paying billions in fines and compensation, and cut operating costs.

And he strengthened Deutsche's capital foundations with an 8-billion-euro (\$9.8 billion) share issue last year and floated asset management division DWS on the stock market in March, "setting the scene for a successful future," Achleitner said. Nevertheless, "his weak point was the speed at which the board took decisions and then pushed through their implementation." Deutsche has yet to return to profitability, while the share price has slumped more than 50 percent in the past two years—around 30 percent since the start of this year alone. News of Sewing's appointment briefly pushed the shares up on Monday morning, but yesterday saw the bank at the bottom of the DAX index of blue-chip German shares, losing 1.1 percent to trade at 11.36 euros by midday (1000 GMT). —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.418960	0.426460
Czech Korune	0.006578	0.015878
Danish Krone	0.045604	0.050604
Euro	0.364450	0.371950
Georgian Lari	0.123967	0.123967
Hungarian O.001096	0.001286	
Norwegian Krone	0.034573	0.039773
Romanian Leu	0.062379	0.079229
Russian ruble	0.004966	0.004966
Slovakia	0.008928	0.018928
Swedish Krona	0.031901	0.036901
Swiss Franc	0.307496	0.318496
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.223930	0.235930
New Zealand Dollar	0.213900	0.223400
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.231351	0.240351
US Dollars	0.296600	0.301000
US Dollars Mint	0.297100	0.301000
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003190	0.003774
Chinese Yuan	0.046271	0.049771
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036221	0.038971

Indian Rupee	0.004090	0.004740
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002720	0.002900
Korean Won	0.000271	0.000286
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073821	0.079821
Nepalese Rupee	0.003000	0.003170
Pakistan Rupee	0.002500	0.002790
Philippine Peso	0.005680	0.005980
Singapore Dollar	0.223850	0.233850
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001605	0.002185
Taiwan	0.010164	0.010344
Thai Baht	0.009275	0.009825
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.790982	0.799482
Egyptian Pound	0.014232	0.019950
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000202	0.000262
Jordanian Dinar	0.419500	0.428500
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000148	0.000248
Moroccan Dirhams	0.023294	0.047294
Omani Riyal	0.774721	0.780401
Qatar Riyal	0.078305	0.083245
Saudi Riyal	0.079100	0.080400
Syrian Pound	0.001274	0.001494
Tunisian Dinar	0.121850	0.129850
Turkish Lira	0.069106	0.079406
UAE Dirhams	0.080444	0.082144
Yemeni Riyal	0.000977	0.001057

Business

Confused Iranians flock to empty exchangers after currency fix

Govt sets new rate for dollar to arrest rial slide

TEHRAN: Confused and frustrated Iranians flocked to exchange offices yesterday after the government fixed a new rate for the dollar, only to find there were none to buy. On Ferdowsi Street in central Tehran, home to dozens of banks and currency exchanges, many had hoped to find much cheaper dollars than the day before.

Overnight, the government had announced it was fixing the rate at 42,000 rials per dollar in a bid to arrest a slide in the currency, which has lost more than a third of its value against the greenback in six months. But all along Ferdowsi Street, exchangers were turning hundreds of people away or had signs up saying: "We have no dollars to sell", while rate boards showed blank spaces for US and European currencies.

"Last night on TV I heard it's 42,000 so I came here to buy some for my son who is overseas. I've checked every exchanger but I couldn't find any dollars," said Tahmoore Faravahar, a 71-year-old retired oil sector worker. A day earlier, some reported dollars selling at a record-high rate of 60,000 rials-pushed up by fears over tensions with the United States and a difficult political and economic situation at home.

"The truth is that the people can't trust the word of the government that their money will be safe," said a trader who sold currency on the street and asked to remain anonymous.

"People don't have hope in the political and economic situation in this country. People are confused and just want to keep their money safe by turning it into dollars." One exchange office said it was never clear when the central bank would deliver dollars for them to sell.

"I don't know why they haven't come yet today," he said in the early afternoon. "But the new rate is good. The price was not normal these last few days."

'Everything is down'

Another street trader said the recent currency speculation was driven by the fact that people had few other options to make cash. "If you look at the market, everything is down except the dollar. Real estate is down, the retail sector is down. People need income so it's a good idea to buy and sell dollars and make some money," he said.

"Last night, the government lowered the price and some people had a heart attack, but

it won't stay like this." He said exchangers would find ways to fiddle the system to get around the new fixed rate, even though Vice-President Eshagh Jahangiri warned this would be considered smuggling.

"Just like the smuggling of drugs, no one has the right to buy or sell it... If any other exchange rate is formed in the market, the judiciary and security forces will deal with it," Jahangiri warned on state television.

Some said this had only created fear and confusion. "I want to sell some dollars but no one wants to buy them because the market is not safe," said a man in his forties, who did not give his name. "The exchanges are worried about the situation because the government says it is smuggling if they sell above the new rate, so no one wants to sell," he said.

Meanwhile, for the many journalists covering the scene at Ferdowsi Street yesterday, there was another, unexplained phenomenon. "There are so many police here, but no one has asked us anything," said one local reporter. Other media, including AFP reporters, said it was the first time they had been left to work without even being asked for their papers or being told to move on.



TEHRAN: Iranians walk past a currency exchange shop in the capital Tehran yesterday. Iran took the drastic step of fixing the rate of its currency against the dollar in a bid to arrest a slide that has seen it fall by a third in six months. — AFP

Journalists have felt less pressure since President Hassan Rouhani came to power in 2013, but police routinely hassle reporters and

stop them filming in public. "It's like a dream," said one journalist as police walked past his video camera without batting an eye. — AFP

US-China trade threats likely to slow growth

LONDON: Trade tensions between the United States and China are likely to have an adverse impact on global growth even if the threatened tariffs are never imposed. Conflict between the world's two largest economies is creating significant uncertainty for businesses that threatens their global supply chains and future investment plans.

Senior US officials have emphasized the tariffs are only a proposal at this stage and could be averted by a settlement between the two countries. But the disjunction between hardline rhetoric and aggressive tariff proposals on the one hand and reassurance to investors and businesses on the other has whipsawed the financial markets. Equity indices and commodity prices have alternated between selloffs and rallies as traders try to estimate the probability tariffs will be imposed.

Investment hit

In reality, the direct economic damage done by tariffs would be fairly small, though the impact on some firms and sectors would be more concentrated. Bilateral trade of around \$700 billion between the two countries represents only a small percentage of the gross domestic production of the United States (\$19 trillion) and China (\$11 trillion).

But the threat of tariffs will have a much more damaging and chilling impact on investment decisions that depend on global supply chains - even if the import taxes are never actually imposed. For multinational businesses considering the location of new manufacturing facilities, the threat of tariffs is likely to cause at least an additional pause before the project is given the go-ahead.

If decisions are delayed, the result will be a slowdown in investment, at least in the short term, with negative implications for growth. US officials have indicated it could take six months or more to reach a final decision on tariffs which implies an extended period of damaging uncertainty.

Supply chains

The damage will extend well beyond decisions on the location of new automotive plants and semiconductor factories. Most major construction projects and manufacturing systems depend on raw materials and

components that cross international borders at least once and in some cases multiple times. Raw materials, components and finished goods generally have to be ordered many months or even years in advance.

Projected costs depend on estimates of the price of items ordered now, but which may not arrive and clear customs until many months in the future, when they could be liable to new tariffs.

Every business relying on items from one of the countries engaged in a potential trade war must calculate the risk the items will be unavailable or significantly more expensive and make contingency plans accordingly.

Even if a truce is declared in the current trade spat, it has raised major questions about the future direction of trade and investment policies. Since 1947, the broad thrust of international economic policies has been towards greater openness to trade and investment, led by the United States. Successive rounds of trade negotiations have lowered average tariff barriers and tried to control non-tariff barriers on trade and investment to create a more predictable environment for business.

Officials conducted eight successful rounds of multinational trade negotiations between 1947 and 1994 under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. In addition, there have been several ambitious attempts to liberalize regional trade, notably the European Union and the North American Free Trade Agreement, as well as a dense network of bilateral free trade agreements.

Protectionism has never been far from the surface but the broad trend has been in the direction of greater liberalization. The liberalization thrust has seemed to run out of momentum in recent years with the failure to conclude a new round of global trade negotiations.

The tariff war now threatens to send the process into reverse. Proponents of tariffs have made explicitly clear they want to revive US manufacturing by cutting global supply chains and re-nationalizing them. This marks a major change in the direction of the international economic system and could upend corporate strategies that have been based on global supply chain management. — Reuters

China's Xi renews pledges to open economy, cut tariffs this year

BOAO/BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping promised yesterday to open the country's economy further and lower import tariffs on products including cars, in a speech seen as an attempt to defuse an escalating trade dispute with the United States. While most of the pledges were reiterations of previously announced reforms, which foreign businesses complain are long overdue, Xi's comments sent stock markets and the dollar higher on hopes of a compromise that could avert a trade war.

Xi said that China will sharply widen market access for foreign investors, a chief complaint of the country's trading partners and a point of contention for US President Donald Trump's administration, which has threatened billions of dollars in tariffs on Chinese goods. "President Xi's speech appears to have struck a relatively positive tone and opens the door to potential negotiations with the US in our view. The focus now shifts to the possible US response," economists at Nomura said. "But of course actions speak louder than words. We will keep an eye on the progress of those opening-up measures."

The speech at the Boao Forum for Asia in the southern province of Hainan had been widely anticipated as one of Xi's first major addresses in a year in which the ruling Communist Party marks the 40th anniversary of its landmark economic reforms and opening up under former leader Deng Xiaoping. Xi said China would raise the foreign ownership limit in the automobile, shipbuilding and aircraft sectors "as soon as possible", and push previously announced measures to open the financial sector. "This year, we will considerably reduce auto import tariffs, and at the same time reduce import tariffs on some other products," Xi said. He also said "Cold War mentality" and arrogance had become obsolete and would be repudiated. His speech did not specifically mention the United States or its trade policies, which have been assailed by Chinese state media in recent days. Vice Premier Liu He had already vowed at the World Economic Forum in January that China would roll out fresh market opening moves this year, and that it would lower auto import tariffs in an "orderly way". Chinese officials have been



BOAO: Journalists watch a screen showing a live image of China's President Xi Jinping as he delivers a speech during the opening of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) Annual Conference 2018 in Boao, south China's Hainan province yesterday. — AFP

promising since at least 2013 to ease restrictions on foreign joint ventures in the auto industry, which would allow foreign firms to take a majority stake. They currently are limited to a 50 percent stake in joint ventures and cannot establish their own wholly owned factories.

Tesla's Chief Executive Elon Musk has railed against an unequal playing field in China and wants to retain full ownership over a manufacturing facility the company is in talks to build there. "This is a very important action by China. Avoiding a trade war will benefit all countries," Musk tweeted after Xi's speech. Foreign business groups welcomed Xi's commitment to reforms, including promises to strengthen legal deterrence on intellectual property violators, but said the speech fell short on specifics. "Ultimately US industry will be looking for implementation of long-stalled economic reforms, but actions to date have greatly undermined the optimism of the US business community," said Jacob Parker, vice president of China operations at the US-China Business Council.

Easing of tension

Jonas Short, head of the Beijing office at Everbright Sun Hung Kai, said the market was cheered by Xi's speech because it was framed in more positive terms which could ease trade tensions, but he voiced caution about promised reforms. "China is opening sectors where they already have a distinct advantage, or a strangle-

hold over the sector." Short said, citing its banking industry, which is dominated by domestic players. Xi's renewed pledges to open up the auto sector come after Trump on Monday criticised China on Twitter for maintaining 25 percent auto import tariffs compared to the United States' 2.5 percent duties, calling such a relationship with China not free trade but "stupid trade".

Analysts have cautioned that any Chinese concessions on autos, while welcome, would be a relatively easy win for China to offer the United States, as plans for opening that sector had been under way well before Trump took office. But Vice Commerce Minister Qian Qiming said at the forum yesterday that China's economic reforms were driven by domestic factors and not due to external pressures. Xi also said China would speed up opening up of its insurance industry, with Shanghai Securities News citing a government researcher after the speech saying foreign investors should be able to hold a controlling stake or even full ownership of an insurance company in the future.

Trump's move last week to threaten China with tariffs on \$50 billion in Chinese goods was aimed at forcing Beijing to address what Washington says is deeply entrenched theft of US intellectual property and forced technology transfers from US companies. Chinese officials deny such charges, and responded within hours of Trump's announcement of tariffs with their own proposed commensurate duties. — Reuters

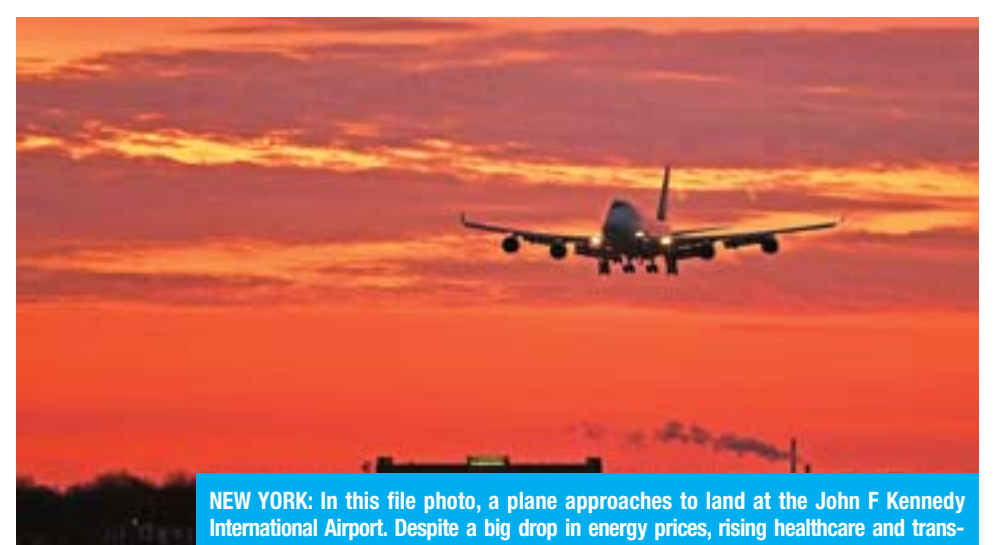
Services, food boost US producer prices in March

WASHINGTON: US producer prices increased more than expected in March, boosted by rising healthcare and food costs, pointing to a steady buildup of inflation pressures. The Labor Department said yesterday its producer price index for final demand rose 0.3 percent last month after increasing 0.2 percent in February.

That lifted the year-on-year increase in the PPI to 3.0 percent from 2.8 percent in February. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the PPI gaining 0.1 percent last month and rising 2.9 percent from a year ago. A key gauge of underlying producer price pressures that excludes food, energy and trade services rose 0.4 percent last month, advancing by the same margin for a third straight month.

The so-called core PPI increased 2.9 percent in the 12 months through March, the biggest increase since August 2014, after climbing 2.7 percent in February.

The dollar pared losses against a basket of currencies after the data while prices for US Treasuries fell. The broad-based increase in wholesale prices supports views that inflation will pick up this year. Economists believe that a tightening labor market, weak dollar and fiscal stimulus in the form of a \$1.5 trillion tax



NEW YORK: In this file photo, a plane approaches to land at the John F. Kennedy International Airport. Despite a big drop in energy prices, rising healthcare and transportation costs fed a surge in US wholesale prices in March, pointing to stronger pressures on inflation, the Labor Department reported yesterday. — AFP

cut package and increased government spending will push inflation toward the Federal Reserve's 2 percent target this year.

The US central bank's preferred inflation measure, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index excluding food and energy, increased 1.6 percent in February after being stuck at 1.5 percent for four straight months.

The Fed increased interest rates last month and forecast two more rate hikes this year. Last month, the price of services increased 0.3 percent, rising by the same margin for a third consecutive month. Services accounted for 70 percent of the increase in the PPI last

month. They were boosted by a 0.4 percent rise in the cost of outpatient care. Overall, the cost of healthcare services rose 0.3 percent in March. Those costs feed into the core PCE price index.

There were also increases in the cost of airline tickets, and cable and satellite subscriber services. But the cost of wholesale apparel, footwear and wireless communications services fell last month. Prices for goods rose 0.3 percent, after slipping 0.1 percent in February. They were lifted by a 2.2 percent jump in wholesale food prices. That was the biggest increase since April 2014 and followed three straight monthly declines. — Reuters

UK supermarket Iceland pledges no palm oil in its own-brand products

LONDON: British supermarket chain Iceland said on Monday it would remove palm oil from its own-brand food by the end of 2018 as part of efforts to stem deforestation in Indonesia and Malaysia and help species under threat of extinction. Iceland, which trades from 900 stores and which specializes in frozen food, said cutting palm oil would lower demand for the edible vegetable oil by more than 500 tons a year.

"Until Iceland can guarantee palm oil is not causing rainforest destruction, we are simply saying 'no to palm oil'," Iceland managing director Richard Walker said in a statement.

"We don't believe there is such a thing as 'sustainable' palm oil available to retailers, so we are giving consumers a choice about what they buy." The company said it had already removed palm oil from half of its own-brand products. Indonesia has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world, mainly due to clearing for palm oil and other plantations or mills. In the last half century more than 74 million hectares of

Indonesian forest - an area twice the size of Germany - have been logged, burned or degraded, according to environmental group Greenpeace. The rapid expansion has also resulted in a loss of habitat for many species, including Bornean orangutans, which are among the world's most imperiled great apes.

"It's a real wake up call to the industry to say you need to clean up," Alison Kirkman, a press officer with Greenpeace UK, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

She said companies needed to work towards a clean palm oil supply chain, and drop traders causing deforestation. The \$62 billion palm oil industry has been plagued by concerns about deforestation and rights abuses in countries such as Indonesia, the world's biggest producer. Palm oil is used in products from snacks and soaps to cosmetics and bio-fuels. In January, privately-owned Iceland pledged to eliminate plastic packaging from its own-brand products by the end of 2023 - a first by a major British grocer. — Reuters

Business

Wall St up as Xi soothes trade war fears

NEW YORK: Wall Street opened higher yesterday after Chinese President Xi Jinping promised to cut import tariffs, soothing investor concerns about rising US-China trade tensions. Ten of the 11 major S&P sectors were higher, with technology and energy stocks leading the gainers. The three major US indexes were all up more than a percent with all 30 Dow components in the positive territory.

In his first public comments since the trade dispute with the Trump administration started, Jinping vowed to open the country's economy and said China would raise the foreign ownership limit in automobile, shipbuilding and aircraft sectors "as soon as possible".

His comments buoyed global markets, which have been under pressure as China and the United States threatened each other with billion in tariffs and investors feared that protectionist measures would hit global economic growth.

Energy stocks gained as oil broke above \$70 a barrel on easing trade war fears between the world's two largest economies. "The expectation was this could have gone one of two ways: he could have been aggressive about US tariffs or been conciliatory and it feels like he's more conciliatory," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at Wunderlich Securities in New York.

Shares of major US automakers such as General Motors, Ford, Fiat Chrysler and Tesla were up between 2

percent and 3 percent following Xi's comments.

At 9:54 am ET the Dow Jones industrial average was up 317.16 points, or 1.32 percent, at 24,296.26.

The S&P 500 was up 28.34 points, or 1.08 percent, at 2,641.5 and the Nasdaq Composite was up 70.79 points, or 1.02 percent, at 7,021.14. US stocks will face a major test in coming weeks as first-quarter earnings pour in. Big banks such as JPMorgan Chase, Citigroup and Wells Fargo will kick off the earnings season with their results on Friday. Analysts expect quarterly profits for S&P 500 companies to rise 18.5 percent from a year ago, which would be the biggest gain in seven years, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S.

Facebook Inc shares erased premarket gains and were marginally down ahead of CEO Mark Zuckerberg's testimony before US lawmakers yesterday and today.

The CEO is expected to strike a conciliatory tone in an attempt to blunt possible regulatory fallout from the privacy scandal engulfing his social network. Shares of Nvidia rose 4 percent after Morgan Stanley raised the stock to "overweight".

Verifone Systems shares rose 52 percent after the company agreed to be taken private for \$2.28 billion. Advancing issues outnumbered decliners on the NYSE for a 5.99-to-1 ratio on the upside and on the

Nasdaq for a 3.68-to-1 ratio favoring advancers.

The S&P 500 index showed two new 52-week highs and no new lows, while the Nasdaq recorded 20 new highs and 12 new lows.

Russia stocks slip

Russian assets extended Monday's slide as investors digested the new round of US sanctions targeting the country's tycoons. The ruble plunged more than 4 percent against the dollar to its lowest since late-2016. Speaking at the Boao Forum for Asia in Hainan province, Xi vowed to open China's economy further, protect intellectual property of foreign firms and he criticized a "Cold War mentality" as obsolete, in his first public comments since the trade dispute with US President Donald Trump's administration erupted. Xi's comments prompted a largely positive reaction in financial markets, which have been rattled over the past week on fears the tit-for-tat US-China tariffs will escalate into a full-scale trade war that would threaten global growth. European markets followed Asia with solid gains. Germany's DAX rose 0.8 percent, France's CAC 40 0.51 percent and Britain's FTSE 100 0.59 percent.

"It goes back to the fact that there is still uncertainty on trade wars and even if we get a slight indication that it won't be the worst case scenario, the mar-

ket reacts positively," he said, while predicting ongoing trade tensions throughout 2018.

Oil markets rose sharply on hopes that the trade dispute may be resolved without greater damage to the global economy. Brent crude futures climbed more 2 percent to \$70.12.

After trading flat for most of the day, the euro surged when European Central Bank policymaker Ewald Nowotny told Reuters that the central bank could stagger the process of raising euro zone interest rates by first lifting its sub-zero deposit rate back toward positive territory. The euro rose 0.4 percent to \$1.2378 and left the dollar down across most major currencies aside from the Japanese yen.

The yen, which traditionally rises in times of market stress, fell versus both the dollar and euro. The dollar rose to as high as 107.245 before giving up some of those gains. Safe haven bond prices including 10-year Treasuries initially dropped as risk appetite recovered. Gold rose 0.2 percent. The Australian dollar, which has fallen in recent weeks because of the economy's exposure to global trade flows, gained against the dollar, as did Asian currencies including the Chinese yuan.

"Xi explicitly did not continue the trade war rhetoric so this is going to be risk-friendly and the market will be relieved," said Kit Juckes, a macro strategist at Societe Generale. — Reuters

Turkey's lira hits new record lows amid economy fears

ISTANBUL: Turkey's embattled currency the lira yesterday plunged to new lows against the dollar and the euro, with investors fearing strong growth was masking the risks of high inflation and overheating.

Turkish authorities last month reported strong growth of 7.4 percent in 2017 but inflation remains in double figures and concerns have mounted over the current account deficit. The lira is now trading above four to the dollar and five to the euro for the first time ever and analysts fear the pressure on the currency is far from over.

Yesterday it hit a new record high of 4.13 to the dollar, a loss of 1.4 percent in value on the day. Against the euro it was trading at a new record of 5.10, down 1.8 percent on the day. In the last month alone the lira has lost 8.0 percent in value against the dollar and 8.5 percent against the euro.

Economists say that with crucial 2019 elections on the horizon the government is more concerned about stoking growth than controlling inflation but this is spooking markets. Erdogan has repeatedly called on the central bank nominally independent to cut interest rates to boost growth. He argues lower rates will help reduce inflation, a posi-



ISTANBUL: This picture in Istanbul shows a display of foreign exchange rates against Turkish liras as people change their money at Istiklal avenue. —AFP

tion that flies in the face of economic orthodoxy. Fears were amplified last week when rumours flew that Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek—an ex Merrill Lynch economist trusted by markets—was on the verge of resigning. But this was denied and Simsek remains in his job.

"Not only the government's resolve to keep the elevated level of growth... but also the consistent call for lower interest rates will likely keep the currency pressurized," said economists at QNB Finansbank in a note to clients. Since the failed coup bid of July 2016, the lira has lost over 43 percent in val-

ue against the dollar. Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin told reporters in a briefing at the weekend that Erdogan wanted lower rates to boost industry and acknowledged the central bank may not share this view. "He believes that lowering interest rates will help boost the Turkish economy, help the small and medium companies and help bring more investment. He has been clear about this." "Some others, the central bank, may have a different point of view but they make their own decision and the president makes his own comments," Kalin said. —AFP

Sterling basks at 2-week highs but risks grow

LONDON: Sterling hit a two-week high yesterday as firm risk appetite and a top policymaker's comment that the Bank of England should not delay an interest rate hike boosted bets in a market that is already long in the British currency. Markets see an 80 percent probability of a rate hike in May and the latest comments and strong housing survey data this week offered further encouragement.

Ian McCafferty, one of two policymakers on the nine-member Monetary Policy Committee who voted for a rate rise last month, told Reuters in an interview that wage growth might prove stronger than most of his colleagues thought, adding to pressure on inflation that is running above the BoE's target. "The pound remains bid due to the global backdrop, seasonal demand and McCafferty's comments," said Neil Jones, head of hedge fund sales at Mizuho Bank Ltd.

Sterling edged higher after McCafferty's interview was published and hit a day's high of \$1.4170 against a

broadly sturdy dollar. Against the euro, it strengthened to 87.08 pence.

The British currency has rallied more than 1.5 percent in the last three trading sessions. Market watchers say a successful break above the \$1.4252 line would put sterling on track to test a 2018 high of \$1.4346 hit in late January. Its gains against the struggling euro have been even more pronounced. Sterling has strengthened 1 percent so far this month after a 2 percent rally in March.

"This an interesting level technically ... recent data and positioning seem to be weighing on the euro," said John Marley, head of FX strategy at Infinity International, a currency risk management firm.

April tends to be a strong month for the British currency, according to recent analysis by strategists at Bank of America Merrill Lynch. They said dividend payments by UK companies have helped sterling to rally every April for the last 14 years.

The BoE raised rates for the first time in more than a decade in November and a recent string of strong data including house price data on Monday have virtually sealed the case for a second rate increase in May. But positioning is already long according to various survey data and poll forecasts and therefore the market may be vulnerable to a selloff if a correction materializes or data surprises on the downside. —Reuters

Eurozone borrowing costs hold steady ahead of heavy day for supply

LONDON: Eurozone borrowing costs held near recent lows in early trades yesterday, kept low by an expected wave of redemptions from maturing bonds. The Netherlands, Austria, and Germany are all scheduled to hold auctions yesterday, while Ireland is expected to launch its new 15-year benchmark. However, because money is flowing back into investor pockets' from maturing bonds, yields were a touch lower on the day.

Germany's 10-year bond yield, the benchmark for the bloc kept near recent lows at 0.495 percent, down 1 basis point on the day. "Investors are quite hopeful and not really concerned with any supply indigestion," said DZ Bank Strategist Christian Lenk.

"If you take into account the very strong redemption

and coupon payments due in the next few weeks, the market should stay well-supported."

Commerzbank estimates that around 60 billion euros of European government bonds mature this week and only about 13 billion euros of supply is available to counter this.

"Another factor boosting demand for European governments bonds has been data from the Japanese Ministry on Monday which showed a switch in Japanese investors from US treasuries to European government bonds," DZ Bank's Lenk said. European Central Bank policymaker Ewald Nowotny gave a speech yesterday, expressing confidence in the eurozone's economy, but reiterating the ECB needed to start normalization now.

"Now I think it is time for a gradual normalization of monetary policy. This normalization requires a delicate balancing of measures as well as careful sequencing in time," said Nowotny.

Later yesterday, fellow ECB governor Ignazio Visco is scheduled to speak. Elsewhere, Chinese leader Xi Jinping promised to lower import tariffs and take measures to widen market access to foreign investors, helped soothe market jitters over an escalating US-China trade row.

US 10-year Treasuries fell on the news, pushing their yields up almost 2 basis points to 2.80 percent. —Reuters

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report									
At 02:00 PM Previous Day									
Global Stock Indices									
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %				
Dow Jones	23,932.76	23,979.10	46.34	▲	0.19	-2.99			
NASDAQ	6,915.11	6,950.34	35.23	▲	0.51	0.68			
S&P 500	2,604.47	2,613.16	8.69	▲	0.33	-2.26			
Financial Times	7,194.75	7,238.60	43.85	▲	0.61	-5.84			
DAX	12,261.75	12,376.26	114.51	▲	0.93	-4.19			
CAC 40	5,263.39	5,292.33	28.94	▲	0.55	-0.38			
Swiss	8,687.08	8,733.76	46.68	▲	0.54	-6.91			
Nikkei 225	21,678.26	21,794.32	116.06	▲	0.54	-4.26			
Topix	1,725.88	1,731.94	6.06	▲	0.35	-4.71			
Hang Seng	30,229.58	30,728.74	499.16	▲	1.65	2.71			
Straits Times	3,449.96	3,466.38	16.42	▲	0.48	1.86			
MENA Stock Indices									
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %				
Kuwait	6,603.51	6,633.44	29.93	▲	0.45	2.96			
Saudi Arabia	7,975.45	7,958.58	-16.87	▼	-0.21	10.37			
Dubai	3,082.13	3,089.80	7.67	▲	0.25	-8.54			
Abu Dhabi	4,665.24	4,711.84	46.60	▲	1.00	6.07			
Bahrain	1,287.41	1,287.96	0.55	▲	0.04	-3.33			
Qatar	8,936.77	9,007.23	70.46	▲	0.79	4.85			
Oman	4,827.89	4,787.46	-40.43	▼	-0.84	-5.32			
Lebanon	1,182.79	1,182.35	-0.44	▼	-0.04	2.98			
Jordan	2,230.81	2,214.30	-16.51	▼	-0.74	4.89			
Egypt	17,410.59	17,684.37	273.78	▲	1.57	15.92			
Morocco	12,912.01	12,910.38	-1.63	▼	-0.01	4.21			
Tunisia	7,140.61	7,062.91	-77.70	▼	-1.09	13.67			
Global Currencies Exchange Rate									
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar	
Kuwait Dinar		12.3898	3.3179	2.6913	2.3436	3.1712	355.04	4.2872	
Saudi Riyal	0.08071		0.2678	0.2172	0.1892	0.2560	28.66	0.3460	
US Dollar	0.30140	3.7343		0.8112	0.7064	0.9558	107.01	1.2922	
Euro	0.37157	4.6036	1.2328		0.8709	1.1786	131.94	1.5933	
Sterling Pound	0.42669	5.2866	1.4157	1.1482		1.3532	151.52	1.8296	
Swiss Franc	0.31534	3.9070	1.0462	0.8485	0.7390		111.99	1.3519	
Japanese Yen	0.00282	0.0349	0.0093	0.0076	0.0066	0.0089		0.0121	
Australian Dollar	0.23325	2.8900	0.7739	0.6276	0.5466	0.7397	82.82		
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate									
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound	
US Dollar		0.30140	3.7343	0.3742	3.6273	0.3831	3.6576	17.5980	
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.3179		12.3898	1.2417	12.0348	1.2711	12.1354	58.3875	
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08071		0.1002	0.9713	0.1026	0.9795	4.7125	
Bahraini Dinar	2.6721	0.80537	9.9784		9.6924	1.0237	9.7734	47.0233	
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08309	1.0295	0.1032		0.1056	1.0084	4.8515	
Omani Riyal	2.6101	0.78670	9.7471	0.9748	9.4678		9.5469	45.9334	
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08240	1.0210	0.1023	0.9917	0.1047		4.8114	
Egyptian Pound	0.0568	0.01713	0.2122	0.0213	0.2061	0.0218	0.2078		
Global Interest Rates									
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year				
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.25	1.75	2.00	2.25	2.50				
US Dollar	1.73	1.89	2.33	2.47	2.70				
Euro	-0.42	-0.40	-0.36	-0.32	-0.24				
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.51	0.76	0.87	1.04				
Swiss Franc	-0.80	-0.78	-0.73	-0.64	-0.52				
Australian Dollar	1.63	1.84	1.79	1.77	1.82				
Japanese Yen	-0.04	-0.05	-0.04	0.02	0.12				
Global Bond Yields									
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year					
United States	2.29	2.61	2.79	3.02					
Europe	-0.59	-0.10	0.49	1.15					
United Kingdom	0.86	1.16	1.40	1.79					
Commodities									
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %				
Kuwait Oil	65.87	66.29	0.42	▲	0.64	3.64			
Brent	68.00	69.38	1.38	▲	2.03	1.35			
West Texas	63.41	63.39	-0.02	▼	-0.03	4.65			
Gold	1335.87	1336.74	0.87	▲	0.07	2.49			
Silver	16.45	16.49	0.04	▲	0.25	-3.04			

Business

KFH launches debit card cross border campaign with Visa

Bank offers customers once in a life time travel experience

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched a debit card cross border campaign in partnership with Visa, the global leader in digital payments, that confers splendid benefits on customers as part of the bank's efforts to continually offer customers a wide spectrum of rewards and sought-after benefits that meet their aspirations, while emphasizing the pioneering position of the bank as a world leading Islamic financial institution.

Customers who use KFH Visa debit card abroad for a minimum of KD 100 in a month for purchases & cash withdrawals are eligible to earn chances to enter a monthly draw to win a unique 6 days trip to London in a private jet for every winner and their companion, in addition to accommodation in a 5-star hotel premium suite, luxury car with chauffeur service and KD 2000 cash credit for enjoying a unique shopping experience. The campaign is valid from March till end May 2018. Every KD 1 spent internationally gives customers three chances to enter the 3 monthly draws to be held in April, May and June. There will be three draw events in total with 1 draw in each month wherein 2 winners will be selected for each draw of the campaign.

Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani expressed his thanks to Visa in recognition of their support to enhance the features and benefits of the Bank's cards to customers, while emphasizing the Bank's commitment to

an improved and superior customer service, indicating KFH's strategy revolves around embracing technological innovation and utilizing it for the best interest of customers especially that technology is paramount to superior customer service.

Mandani's statement was made on the sidelines of launching Visa debit card cross border campaign at KFH Headquarters in the presence of KFH Group General Manager Retail Banking, Fadi Chalouhi, Group Deputy General Manager Cards, Nimer Yasin and

right track and will continue working tirelessly to exceed our customers' expectations," Mandani added. He pointed out that KFH has recently launched Visa Signature credit card with enhanced benefits to customers as part of its efforts to continually expand its products and services to meet the modern lifestyle needs of its customers.

The "KFH" Visa Signature credit card offers customers a unique experience for enjoying a world of exclusive privileges, luxury and convenience that are carefully selected and tailored to suit their lifestyle.

The "KFH" Visa Signature credit card uses 'Visa payWave', technology that lets customers wave their card or mobile device in front of a secure reader at checkout, instead of swiping it or handing it to a cashier. The KFH Visa Signature credit card comes with a world of special privileges in rewards, travel, dining, shopping, concierge and protection services with the highest standards of comfort and safety levels.

"KFH" Visa Signature credit cardholders are eligible to get up to 3 percent cashback on their monthly spends. They can enjoy unlimited free access to more than 900 airport lounges worldwide. Customers simply present their Card at the Lounge Key program participating lounge and enjoy complimentary access. Furthermore, the card offers comprehensive multi-trip travel insurance for customers and their family when they travel outside Kuwait with travel insurance coverage of up to



Bank services generate positive resonance in market

Visa Country Manager for Kuwait, Amit Vij.

"We are glad that Visa is our partner and we will continue the collaboration especially after our campaigns generate a highly positive resonance in the market and among customers. We have further efforts that are coming into play. Customers will see a paradigm leap in our business, services and rewards program. I'm very happy that we are on the



KUWAIT: Waleed Mandani, Fadi Chalouhi, Nimer Yasin and Amit Vij launching KFH Debit card cross border campaign.

\$500,000. With KFH Visa Signature credit cardholders will also get special offers at over 900 of the world's most prestigious hotels with the Visa Luxury Hotel Collection.

Amit Vij, Country Manager - Kuwait, Visa said: "This partnership with Kuwait Finance House is allowing us to make everyday payments as effortless and inclusive as possible, while offering a wide array of benefits to enhance the experience of our customers. At Visa, we are committed to accelerating the adoption of digital payments within the coun-

try, and tailoring our services to better suit the needs of our customers and their lifestyles.

This partnership is a testament to the shared vision of Visa and KFH in offering secure and all-encompassing cashless solutions to everyday consumers, both domestically and while travelling abroad. We are positive that this campaign will resonate with our cardholders, and encourage them to take full advantage of the benefits that a Visa card brings."

Battered by US sanctions, Russian markets stay under pressure

MOSCOW: The ruble touched its weakest since late 2016 before recovering a small part of recent losses as a sell-off of Russian assets, triggered by more US sanctions, extended into yesterday with the reaction from local authorities still muted. The United States on Friday imposed sanctions against 17 senior government officials plus seven oligarchs and 12 companies they own or control, sparking an investor exodus.

Designed to punish Moscow for its alleged meddling in the 2016 US presidential election and other "malign activity," their spread far beyond the targeted companies. The ruble slid to 63.95 versus

the dollar, its weakest since early December 2016, and eased to 78.77 against the euro, a level last seen in early April 2016. It later edged up from lows as the price of oil, Russia's main export, rose.

Bonds took a hit as well. Yields on 10-year OFZ treasury bonds, which move inversely to prices, rallied to 7.55 percent, a level last seen in late 2017. They came under added pressure from a proposal by two US congressmen to impose sanctions on holders of Russian debt.

Rapid moves on the bond market, where OFZ treasury bonds have recently been in strong demand among foreigners thanks to their relative-

ly high returns, prompted the finance ministry to cancel its weekly OFZ auction for the first time since 2015. "The trajectory of Russian assets is expected to be extremely volatile and dependent on incoming news," Rosbank, a subsidiary of Societe Generale, said.

JP Morgan's EMBI+ bond index for Russia, which tracks returns from trading a number of Russian bonds fell sharply to 824.1, a level last seen in late 2016, from around 861 before the sanctions.

Bouncing off lows

The Russian government said it would minimize the fallout from the US sanctions and dismissed sharp falls as short-term volatility, saying time was needed to adjust to the new curbs. As oil prices headed higher, Russian assets rebounded but remained more volatile than usual. Brent crude

futures rose 1.8 percent to \$69.86 per barrel. The ruble was at 62.62 against the dollar as of 1353 GMT, still down 3.3 percent. Versus the euro it weakened 3.6 percent to 77.35. Analysts said the sell-off could provide investment opportunities after the dust settled. The ruble-traded MOEX share index was 3.8 percent higher at 2,170 after falling 8.3 percent on Monday.

Shares in EN+ Group, which is on the sanctions list and manages tycoon Oleg Deripaska's aluminum and hydropower assets, were up 7 percent on the London stock exchange after plummeting 54 percent in the two preceding days. Shares in Rusal, the world's second-biggest aluminum producer and also on the sanctions list, were up 5.2 percent on the Moscow Exchange after losing more than 34 percent of their value in the two trading days.

"While the general backdrop remains uncer-

tain and the threat of further sanctions is unclear, we believe the Russian market is near a temporary floor," Alfa Bank said in a note.

"We note that the fundamentals surrounding the Russian market remain mostly unchanged and that Russian equities still provide among the healthiest dividend returns globally. We would thus ignore the current jitters and buy into the current weakness, particularly with dividend season almost upon us."

The economic impact of the new sanctions was also unclear and analysts said it was too early to revise forecasts. "We tend to believe that the impact on economic growth ought to be fairly limited given that Russia has already deleveraged, and economic policies of recent years ensured stabilization and de-risking of the domestic economy," Renaissance Capital analysts Oleg Kouzmin and Daniel Salter said in a note. — Reuters

For the first time ever: Get up to KD 1,300 cashback from Chevrolet Alghanim

KUWAIT: In its continuing efforts to provide the best value to its customers, Chevrolet Alghanim will offer customers up to KD 1,300 cashback throughout the month of April, allowing them to take advantage of the exclusive offer to own one of the vehicles in its best line-up of globally acclaimed cars.

Providing the highest standards of performance in their class, sleek and recognizable designs as well as advanced technological features and safety standards, everyone will find what they're looking for at an exclusive offer. With its unique monthly offers, Chevrolet Alghanim continues to meet the needs of every segment of the population, from families, young drivers to sports enthusiasts and those looking for a vehicle that reflects their unique lifestyles. The 2018 Equinox provides customers with standard features that raise the bar for base models. The car's 1.5-liter Turbo engine delivers 178 horsepower and is equipped with keyless entry, keyless engine start, LED tail lamps, 17-inch aluminum wheels, Chevrolet's MyLink system with a 7-inch touchscreen, as well as many enhanced safety features that include a rear sensor and four airbags.

The Malibu, considered the most connected and technologically advanced Malibu ever, packs a number of features tailored around customers' needs and desires such as an all-new 2.5L engine with best-in-class horsepower (186hp), the MyLink infotainment system with Apple CarPlay feature, Push Start Engine and Keyless Entry, rear-park support as well as 17-inch wheels.

The Trailblazer comes with a 3.6-liter V6 engine tuned to offer better performance and improved fuel economy, which produces 275 horsepower, the most powerful in its class. Inside, the Trailblazer boasts a newly designed dashboard and front console with a contemporary feel, enhanced by soft-touch materials and contrast stitching. The car ensures maximum comfort in its front sports design, LED headlamps, remote vehicle and AC starter, as well as a 7-inch MyLink touchscreen with Apple CarPlay feature. Known to empower drivers with an exhilarating performance, the Chevrolet Tahoe comes with the best in class standard features such as a 5.3-liter V8 engine with active fuel management, direct injection and variable valve timing, generating among the strongest horsepower in its class of 355 hp. Best in its class, the Tahoe provides a consumption of 10.2

km/l, and is equipped with front corner assist system and rear park assist, rear camera, six airbags as standard, 18" aluminum wheels, remote vehicle starter, and an 8-inch MyLink touchscreen with Apple CarPlay feature.

As for the king of the desert, the Silverado comes in a 4.3L or a 5.3L engine. It is coupled with standard features such LED fog lamps, 17-inch wheels, 8-inch Chevrolet MyLink touchscreen display, rear-view camera, front and back chrome bumpers, and optional features such as keyless engine and AC start, remote locking tailgate and automatic seat adjustment. With its exclusive offer for the month of April, the 2018 Camaro is poised to challenge the sports coupes in the world with its 3.6-liter V6 engine that produces 355HP and 284 Nm of torque, as well as four BREMBO sports brakes, 20-inch wheels and an 8-inch MyLink touchscreen with Apple CarPlay feature.

Award-winning customer experience

Chevrolet Alghanim Service Center provides a hassle-free and easy experience to customers. Professionally-trained Service Advisors start by checking the vehicle to provide requirements, time and cost estimates for needed services.

The service center was designed and built after detailed studies and research for best practices in car servicing, implementing the best standards of advanced technology, services and equipment needed to ensure vehicles are taken care to ensure longevity, safety and customer satisfaction.

Chevrolet complete care

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons benefit of the Chevrolet Care Program, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance for 4 years.

Customers can take advantage of the limited summer offer to own the car of their dreams by visiting any of Chevrolet Alghanim showrooms at the following locations: Shuwaikh, Al Rai (Safat Alghanim), Sharq, Fahheel and Ahmadi.

Indonesia's Lion Air buying 50 Boeing 737s in \$6.2bn deal

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Lion Air is buying 50 Boeing 737 MAX 10 airplanes in a deal valued at about \$6.2 billion, the firms said yesterday, as the carrier looks to cash in on a transport boom in the Southeast Asian nation. The new single-aisle plane is the latest incarnation of Boeing's 737 MAX series, which can accommodate between 130 and 230 passengers and fly up to 3,850 nautical miles (7,130 kilometers), the companies said in a statement.

The order—the largest to date for the MAX 10 — was valued at \$6.24 billion, although multi-plane deals tend to end up costing carriers less than list prices. The firms said the newest plane, which is to be delivered from 2020, "will be the most fuel-efficient and profitable single-aisle jet in the aviation industry". "We signed this deal because we're anticipating a growing numbers of passengers in the coming years and so we can increase the amount of our national and international flights," Lion's president director Edward Sirait told AFP.

The low-cost carrier, which started less than 20 years ago with just one plane, stunned the sector in 2013 when it announced two of



This file photo taken aboard a new Airbus A320 of Indonesia's premier service Batik Air shows founder of Lion Air Rusdi Kirana posing for a photograph on the aisle of a new Airbus A320 during the inaugural flight from Jakarta to Batam. — AFP

the world's largest aircraft orders in a monster \$46 billion deal. At the time.

Lion agreed to buy 234 medium-haul A320 jets worth some \$23.8 billion from European aerospace giant Airbus, after a \$22.4 billion deal for 230 Boeing planes. Currently, the airline flies to nearly 80 mostly domestic destinations with international routes including Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, China, and Saudi Arabia.

Founded in 1999 by brothers Kusnan and Rusdi Kirana, Lion Air is the first private low-cost airline in Indonesia, a sprawling archipel-

ago nation that has struggled with a spotty air safety record. Some carriers, including Lion and national carrier Garuda, have on occasion been placed on travel blacklists over their lax safety standards.

With some 260 million people, Indonesia is the world's fourth most populous nation with more than 17,000 islands and is home to Southeast Asia's biggest economy. The country has a burgeoning middle class which is keen to abandon travel by bus, ferry and train and instead take to the skies for holidays and family visits. — AFP

Gulf Bank announces winner of first salary account quarterly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced that the winner of its first quarterly Salary Account draw, for a cash prize of KD 25,000, was Ali Jamal Mohammed Al-Hawaj. The announcement was aired live on the "Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout & Al-Ansari" program at Kuwait Pulse (88.8 FM), on Monday.

The salary account offer is tailored for Kuwaiti customers, allowing them to benefit from a number of unique offers when they transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank. The Bank's salary account gives new customers the opportunity to either receive a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are fully eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy a one year free of charge Visa or MasterCard credit card, as well as a chance to apply for a loan up to KD 70,000, or a consumer loan up to KD 15,000.

Existing and new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the quarterly draws and have the

chance to win valuable cash prizes, including three quarterly prizes of KD 25,000, in addition to Kuwait's largest salary prize of KD 250,000 in the last draw.

The draw dates are scheduled as follows:
* The prize of KD 25,000 on 9 July 2018
* The prize of KD 25,000 on 8 October 2018
* The grand prize of KD 250,000 on 7 February 2019



Technology

Ubisoft aims to rack up five billion players with Tencent deal

Ubisoft aims for a tenfold surge in its global playing audience

MONTREUIL: Fresh from winning a long corporate battle, French video game powerhouse Ubisoft is aiming for a tenfold surge in its global playing audience after securing a partnership with Chinese internet giant Tencent. "Within ten years, Ubisoft wants to reach five billion players" who have taken up the challenge of at least one of its games, compared with the 500 million it has now, chief executive Yves Guillemot said in an interview.

Speaking at the company's offices in Montreuil, just east of Paris, Guillemot made no secret of savoring his victory against Vincent Bolloré, the French chairman of Vivendi who has a long history of corporate raiding. In 2015 Vivendi began acquiring shares in the publisher of hit titles like "Assassin's Creed" and "Far Cry", threatening the Guillemot family's control of Ubisoft since they no longer owned a majority stake.

But last month Vivendi bowed out, selling its 27.3 percent stake in a two-billion-euro deal that saw Tencent, a digital giant whose market values rivals that of Facebook, come in. "As soon as they expressed their desire to leave, we brought them a solution, with partners who wanted a stake," explained Guillemot, who nonetheless said the battle with Vivendi had an upside.

"With our strategy for creating value, we proved that we didn't need anyone, and that they were not going to bring any added value," he said. When the deal was signed "there were some nice parties here", Guillemot said, though he was in the US at the time.

Good balance

Tencent, which operates China's ubiquitous WeChat messaging platform, is the country's leader in social

media and gaming, claiming one billion clients. Guillemot said China had an "incredibly vibrant" PC gaming market, and huge potential for smartphone gaming. Ubisoft had already signed a deal with Tencent last year to develop "Might and Magic: Era of Chaos", which has generated Chinese sales of more than \$100 million.

"We also signed an agreement to develop our Ketchapp mobile games on WeChat. We think it will add 100 million players for Ketchapp games," he said. Ubisoft is also betting on the growing popularity of e-sports, hoping to organize more live gaming competitions. "The goal is to be in the top five of the most-watched games," with titles such as "Rainbow 6", "For Honor" and "Just Dance", Guillemot said.

And the five-year deal with Tencent, which got no seats on the Ubisoft board and said it would not raise its stake, offers some protection from further shareholder battles, after Vivendi and before that Electronic Arts in 2004. For its part, the Guillemot family has no plans to gain a blocking minority by increasing its own 18.5 percent stake, with voting rights of 23 percent. "We want most of all a good balance between our

different shareholders, one that stays stable over the long term," he said.

Broad horizons

The company's ambitious target of five billion players is also based on both hardware and software innovations that are expected to sweep through the industry. "In ten years, handsets will be much more powerful," with smartphones capable of exceeding current standalone gaming consoles like PlayStations, Guillemot said. And with more people



MONTREUIL: CEO of French video game publisher Ubisoft, Yves Guillemot, poses during a photo session in his office at the Ubisoft headquarters in Montreuil, outside Paris. —AFP

playing via cloud computing, Ubisoft will be able to deliver its games to TVs, mobile phones or even self-driving cars.

"It's going to make our games available on the majority of screens," Guillemot said. "The trick will be to create games that are adapted to these new technologies, with themes that speak to everyone." Ubisoft is also basking in the strength of its lineup, with "Far Cry 5", the latest in the immersive blockbuster shooter

series, this month becoming the fastest-selling title in the franchise.

The company said it had pulled in \$310 million from sales in the first week alone, and has now sold more than 40 million copies of "Far Cry" overall since the first installment was launched in 2004. But Guillemot said his first order of business will be to get out of the office, giving himself a few days of vacation after some fast-paced months. —AFP

“The goal is to be in the top five”

Alphabet unit to start Toronto smart-city tech pilot in summer

TORONTO: Alphabet Inc's urban innovation company Sidewalk Labs hopes to break ground on its first ever smart-city project in Toronto in 2020, and begin testing some of the proposed technologies this summer, its chief executive told Reuters. This is the first time a timeline has been publicly disclosed for the project designed to increase land efficiency, cut costs and conserve energy in one of the world's priciest housing markets as development struggles to catch up with a rapidly growing population.

Government-backed agency Waterfront Toronto in March 2017 requested proposals to develop a 12-acre (4.86 hectares) environmentally friendly mixed-use area that would add jobs and be affordable for all ages and income brackets. That was the first part of the planned revitalization of about 800 acres of industrial wasteland to the east of the city's downtown on Lake Ontario.

Sidewalk Labs was chosen in October based on a proposal that included autonomous vehicles, a thermal grid that does not use fossil fuels, low-cost modular buildings with flexible uses, and robotic delivery and waste-management systems. The company settled on Toronto after searching for sites across North America, Europe and Australia to create a smart city.

A development plan is expected to be approved by the Sidewalk and Waterfront Toronto boards by the end of 2018, and the first residents could move in as early as 2022, CEO Dan Doctoroff said in an interview. The timeline is subject to government approvals and other processes that Sidewalk expects to spend most of 2019 working through, Doctoroff said. "Quayside will be a prototype for a broader opportunity," Doctoroff said. "What we're trying to do, no one has really succeeded in doing. Thus far, I've been thrilled with the way things have gone ... but I'm not sanguine about the challenges."

Other smart city projects have largely failed because of budgets, the involvement of too many parties, and the use of public resources on development with no immediate benefits for the broader population. Corporate access to personal information is a growing concern. Sidewalk Labs has faced growing scrutiny over its plans to put sensors and cameras all over Quayside.

Doctoroff said Sidewalk Labs would destroy non-essential information, only retain data that would improve the quality of life, and not sell them to advertisers. Third parties must adopt privacy policies developed for the plan, he added. Most of the technology will be sourced from several other companies, Doctoroff said. "It's possible we might invest in (some of) them to encourage them or potentially to fund some of those things, but that will be a smaller percentage."

Sidewalk has invested \$50 million for testing and engagement this year. It will lease a new waterfront office in summer, where it will showcase some Quayside technologies, he said. Sidewalk will have a better idea by year-end whether its partnership with Waterfront Toronto could extend to the broader eastern waterfront, he said. Some technologies can be effective in Quayside's limited area, but others including mobility, energy and building systems need larger economies of scale to be effective, Doctoroff said. Sidewalk Labs has been approached by others to do similar projects elsewhere but is focused on Toronto for now, Doctoroff said. "We've got to get it right here." —Reuters

Psych! Colleges teach phishing lesson by targeting their own

COLUMBUS: Thousands of university students and employees targeted by email phishing schemes this year have taken the bait. Fortunately, they were duped not by real scammers, but by their own schools - in simulations meant to make them more adept at spotting real threats. When Ohio State University did its first student-focused phishing in January - a strategy also used in the corporate world - over 18 percent of the recipients clicked through.

The University of Alabama at Birmingham's employee-focused phishing awareness campaign snagged over 7,000 people in March, or about a quarter of the recipients. Ohio State sophomore Ezequiel Herrera, who prides himself on quickly responding to messages, was caught off guard twice by the fake phishing emails. The first time, he said, he felt proud his school was taking that kind of educational action. The second time left him frustrated. "I was sort of like, 'Wow, I'm really, really bad,'" Herrera, 19, said with a smile. Since then, he said, he has become more cautious while scrolling through emails from unfamiliar senders.

The faux phishing messages mimic emails about financial aid, holidays, resetting passwords or other topics but contain signs of potential fraud, such as generic greetings, requests for urgent action or information, spelling errors, and senders from unfamiliar domain names. Recipients who click links in the emails are redirected to tips about

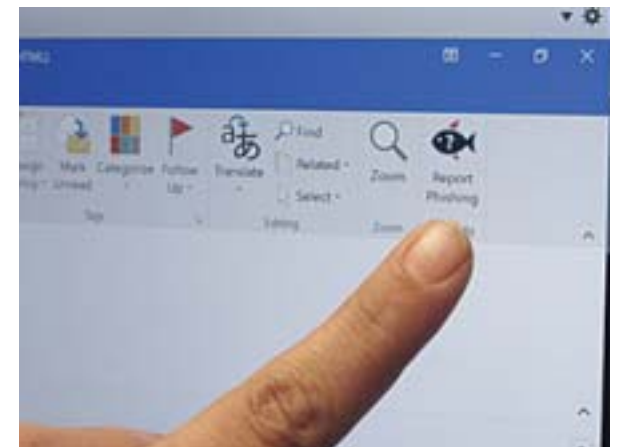
good cybersecurity habits and how to spot and report real attempts at stealing passwords or other sensitive information.

"A phishing simulation helps people understand the role that they play in managing security - that it's not up to their IT support or the help desk or whoever that they can sort of blindly walk along," said Helen Patton, Ohio State's chief information security officer. "A lot of what makes an organization secure is what happens between an individual and their keyboard or their phone." Patton talks about it like a digital vaccination, helping protect individuals and the broader campus community against cyberattacks that could cost far more than the phishing simulations.

Just last month, US prosecutors accused a group of Iranians of hacking the computer systems of about 320 universities in the US and abroad to steal billions of dollars' worth of science and engineering research that was then used by the government or sold for profit. Prosecutors said spear-phishing emails were used to target over 100,000 professors, but they didn't publicly identify those individuals or their schools.

Ohio State has used phishing simulations for employees since 2016. Officials won't disclose exact results for security reasons but say responses have improved since the early rounds when, for example, a message about a second-floor printer was clicked by people in facilities that didn't even have a second floor. In a hurried, tech-reliant culture in which so many people exchange so much information at their fingertips on smartphones and other devices, Patton said, the battle is getting people to slow down.

The practical, experiential training of fake phishing has proved more effective compared than slideshows, webinars or other common types of training that can get stale, said Joanna Grama, who directs the cybersecurity program at the higher education technology association EDUCAUSE. The risk, of course, is that folks will feel tricked, so it's



COLUMBUS: A security analyst points to a button that Ohio State University email users can click to report suspected phishing messages in Columbus. —AP

important that the training be educational, not punitive, Grama said.

At Alabama-Birmingham, one faculty member decried the phishing simulation as a waste of time, but most responses were positive, said Curt Carver, the university's vice president for information technology, who recalls first hearing about the concept of self-phishing over a decade ago. Some people report the messages as suspicious, and others send replies like "Ha, you got me!" or "Didn't get me this time!" A few, he said, expressed interest in making it more of a game, wanting to gauge how well they detect phishing attacks compared with others. "They've realized ... they can be a hero, they can be a person that helps protect everybody else," Carver said. —AP

Korean in top spot as Drone Racing World Cup takes off in Bali

DENPASAR: South Korean drone pilot Choi Joon-weon topped the Drone Racing World Cup leaderboard Sunday as his aerial device zipped past the competition in the season-opener on Indonesia's tourist island Bali. Choi beat Indonesian Axel Mario who took second place while another Korean pilot Rhee Jun-ghi came third.

It was the first of 24 events in the third annual World Cup, which sees participants race sporting drones that weigh under one kilogram and have at least three power-driven propellers. Choi fought off competition from 47 other pilots from nine countries in a series of races held at the Niti Mandala Renon Park in Denpasar, Bali's capital, from Friday to Sunday. "I was quite nervous competing with international pilots. This is my best achievement," Mario said. The opening leg of the World Cup, run by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI), was the first international air sports event hosted by Indonesia, and there were few spectators. But organizing committee chairman Asha Wadya Saetan was upbeat, saying Indonesia is ready to host more international air sports.

"Bali is a tourist magnet so the pilots can have a nice holiday here besides racing," he said, adding that the youngest pilot competing in Bali was 10 years old while the oldest was 60. Usually considered the preserve of hobbyists, drone racing is aiming to go mainstream and is "one of the fastest growing air sports in the world", FAI President Frits Brink said in a statement. There were 16 events in last year's World Cup and nine in 2016. A total of 435 pilots from 37 countries participated in 2017, which saw Switzerland's Dario Neuenchwander crowned champion. Shenzhen in China is due to stage the second event on May 11-13 while Pilep in Macedonia will host the finals on October 13-14. Germany, France, Slovakia, Portugal, South Korea, Brazil, Finland, Bulgaria and Spain are among the 19 countries due to host World Cup races this year. —AFP



DENPASAR: A pilot holds his drone as he prepares to race during the FAI Drone Racing World Cup event in Denpasar on Indonesia's resort island of Bali. —AFP photos

Apple says all its facilities now powered by clean energy

NEW YORK: Apple Inc on Monday said it had achieved its goal of powering all of the company's facilities with renewable energy, a milestone that includes all of its data centers, offices and retail stores in 43 countries. The iPhone maker also said nine suppliers had recently committed to running their operations entirely on renewable energy sources like wind and solar, bringing to 23 the total number to make such a pledge.

Major US corporations such as Apple, Wal-Mart Inc and Alphabet Inc have become some of the country's biggest buyers of renewable forms of energy, driving substantial growth in the wind and solar industries. Alphabet's Google last year purchased enough renewable energy to cover all of its electricity consumption worldwide.

Costs for solar and wind are plunging thanks to technological advances and increased global production of panels and turbines, enabling companies seeking to green their images to buy clean power at competitive prices. "We're not spending any more than we would have," Lisa Jackson, Apple's vice president for environment, policy and social initiatives, said in an interview. "We're seeing the benefits of an increasingly competitive clean energy market." —Reuters

Health

Force feeding burdens obese Mauritanian girls with diabetes

Heavier girls deemed beautiful to find a husband

NOUAKCHOTT: When Souadou Isselmou was made to eat buckets of porridge as a child in southern Mauritania, she hated it so much she would hide food under her armpits and throw it in the toilet. "I tried to stick it in my abaya (loose-fitting robe)," she said, fiddling with her beaded bracelets. "Sometimes I got caught, but I still managed to get rid of some food." When she was seven, her parents started feeding her two buckets of porridge and couscous per day "so men would want to marry me".

"I married my cousin at the age of 13, and had my first child a year later," she said at a friend's home in Nouakchott, the Mauritanian capital. Isselmou's case is far from uncommon. Heavier girls are deemed more beautiful and likelier to find a good husband in the West African country, say activists. The practice of force feeding is known as gavage - a French term used to describe fattening up geese to produce foie gras, a delicacy produced from their enlarged livers.

It can leave young girls with diabetes, hypertension or heart disease for life, said Youma Mohamed, a rights activist. Girls of around eight can weigh 140 kg (300lb) after force feeding, putting a huge strain on their hearts and jeopardizing their health. Young women can tip the scales at 200 kg. Now in her forties, Isselmou has type 2 diabetes, which is associated with obesity and lack of exercise. Her parents used to give her zrik - a drink made of milk, water and sugar - so she would digest food faster, she recalled.

"My mother would cook an entire sheep in oil and butter, and I had to eat it all within a week," she said, adding that she felt so heavy that she could barely walk after four months of the diet. "I didn't fit into any of my clothes."

Desirable

The tradition is closely linked to child marriage because it accelerates puberty and makes younger girls appear more womanly, according to rights group Equality Now. "Mauritanian men often see large girls and women as more desirable," said Aminetou Mint Moctar, head of Association des Femmes Chefs de Famille, a local women's rights charity.

"They take it as a sign of wealth and that a girl will make a good wife," she said in emailed comments. While drought has left many families short of food to fatten girls, some are turning to "chemical gavage", with girls buying drugs such as corticoids - steroid hormones - to get bigger and increase their chances of marriage, activists said. "These are pills meant for animals, which can be even more dangerous than eating too much food," said Mint Moctar, whose organization has called for force feeding to be criminalized. "But you will see gavage in the rainy season, when meat and milk are plentiful."

Although gavage still exists in rural areas, it is now less widespread in cities as working women need to be mobile so "they aren't as interested in putting on weight", said Mohamed. "Having a job and earning an income allows them to stand up to their families and make their own decisions," she said. Although Isselmou says her parents had her best interests at heart, she never force fed her two daughters. "It's their bodies, not mine," she said.—Reuters



MAURITANIA: Women cooking meat in Mafoundou village, Gorgol province, Mauritania.—Reuters

“ I had to eat it all within a week ”

World's hottest chili pepper gives man 'thunderclap' headaches

PARIS: Doctors issued a chili warning yesterday after an American man who ate the world's hottest pepper was struck by excruciating "thunderclap" headaches. The 34-year-old man's symptoms began with dry heaves "immediately after participation in a hot pepper contest where he ate one Carolina Reaper," in 2016, said an article published in medical journal BMJ Case Reports.

The man then developed intense neck and head pain, and for several days experienced brief but intense "thun-

derclap" headaches. Each lasted several seconds. After seeking emergency care, tests for various neurological conditions came back negative. In the end, doctors diagnosed him with a temporary brain condition called "reversible cerebral vasoconstriction syndrome" (RCVS), characterized by the temporary narrowing of blood vessels to the brain.

It was the first reported case of a patient being diagnosed with RCVS after eating a chili pepper, the authors said. Often accompanied by "thunderclap" headaches, the condition usually occurs as a reaction to certain prescription medications, or after taking illegal drugs. "It was a big surprise to everyone," said doctor Kulothungan Gunasekaran of the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit, one of the authors of the article that warns of the dangers of playing with chili fire.

World's hottest chili pepper

The man's symptoms cleared up by themselves and a follow-up CT scan five weeks after the event showed that his arteries had returned to their normal width. Eating cayenne pepper has previously been linked to heart attacks, the study authors said. "We would recommend the general public be cautious when eating chilli peppers and to seek medical attention straight away if you develop symptoms like this," Gunasekaran warned.

For those who dare, the Carolina Reaper has a fruity, sweet taste with a hint of cinnamon and chocolate undertones, as well as being extremely hot, according to the website of Guinness World Records. Last year it named the Carolina Reaper—a cross between Sweet Habanero and Naga Viper chillies—as the hottest pepper on Earth. It is grown by a producer in South Carolina. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE

248 33 199

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What's On

Kuwait Autism Center honors winners of Holy Qura'an competition



By Faten Omar

The Kuwait Autism Center held a ceremony yesterday to honor the winners and participants of the fifth and sixth competition of the Holy Qura'an for the Autism class. The ceremony was held under the patronage of Dr. Shafeeq Al-Awadi, Director-General of the General Authority for Disability Affairs and Dr. Fouad Al Omar, the sponsor of the competition on behalf of his late mother Sharifa al-Subeeh.

The sponsors of the competition aimed to encourage and reward students with autism who memorized the Qura'an. The committee was from the Kuwaiti Society for Islamic Sciences chaired by Dr. Ahmed El Nisf. The competition developed during the years, where the number of participants reached 109 students from 17 different institutions that serving the children of people with autism. The ceremony was attended by the parents of the winners and participants, as well as their teachers, the jury and the guests.



KNES students participate in sports challenge

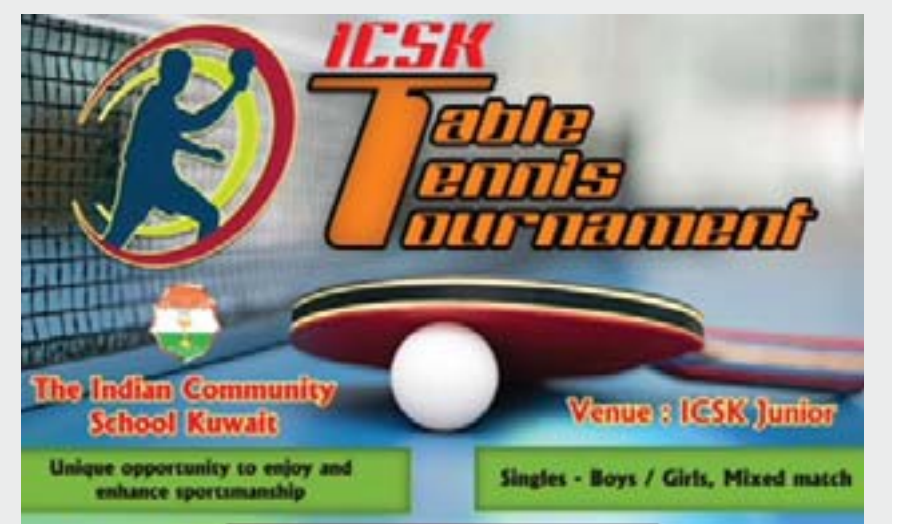
The Early Years children of Kuwait National English School recently participated in a Sports Challenge day. The children were split into teams and competed in a variety of fun games. The games were designed to help build both their small and large motor skills but the games were not the challenge. The challenge was to participate as a team and also to show support and good sportsmanship to the other teams.

We are very proud of our children, as they did not concentrate on winning or losing but showing their joy for the activities, their friends and their opponents. At Kuwait National English School, we believe that challenging and competing are good skills to build, but more importantly is the positive attitude they display no matter what. On this day, the children showed themselves to be what we consider the most important quality in athletics 'good sportsman.'



ICSK conducts table tennis tournament

It is with great joy that The Indian Community School, Kuwait announces its first ever table tennis tournament for students of all schools in Kuwait. Sports lovers can avail this unique opportunity to enjoy and enhance sportsmanship to win attractive prizes. Tournament will be conducted at the Indian Community School, Junior on April 13, 2018 from 3 pm to 7 pm and on April 14, 2018 from 8 am to 12 noon. Matches will be conducted under different categories for boys and girls with singles / doubles / mixed doubles for Under 12, 14 & 17 age groups.



Invitation

You are cordially invited to another session of our series about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) tomorrow at 7 pm. In this class, we will explore how Joseph's brothers, after agreeing to throw him in a well, convinced their father to allow them take him, how they treated him once they left their neighborhood, and how

they executed their plot. We will also discuss in brief the difference between bi'ir and jubb, both of which are commonly translated as a well. Finally, we will examine Joseph's reaction to his brothers' deed, what Allah (SWT) revealed to him during his ordeal, and what happened next, eliciting a lot of important lessons to implement in our daily lives. Come and learn more about the life and times of Prophet Joseph (AS) in a relaxed, encouraging and supportive atmosphere.

TV



00:00 Dead Again In Tombstone
01:50 The Bodyguard
03:30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Out Of The Shadows



00:45 River Monsters
01:40 Cats 101
02:35 Swamp Brothers
03:00 Swamp Brothers



00:35 The Durrells
01:25 Top Of The Lake
02:25 Holly City
03:20 Doctors



00:00 Evil Up Close
01:00 Evil Up Close
01:55 Killers: Behind The Myth
02:50 It Takes A Killer



00:05 Nightcap
00:30 Another Period
00:55 This Is Not Happening
01:20 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper

16:30 Friendszone
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends
17:45 Disaster Date



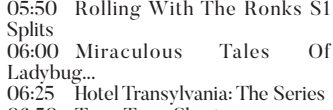
00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 The Next Great Magician
02:10 Risking It All



00:45 A Crime To Remember True Conviction
01:40 Stella
03:30 Holly City
04:25 Death In Paradise



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermore Chronicles

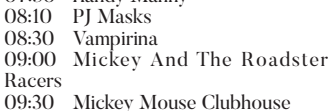


06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
06:25 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Tangled: The Series

19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 Jessie
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 Tangled: The Series



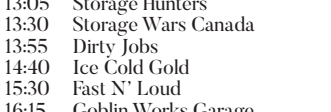
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster



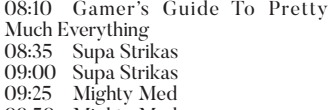
00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street



00:15 Gear Week
01:05 Fast N' Loud
01:50 Goblin Works Garage
02:35 Cuban Chrome



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermore Chronicles



06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Lab Rats
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Marvel's Spider-Man



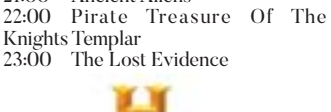
00:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
00:55 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 El News
02:50 Botched



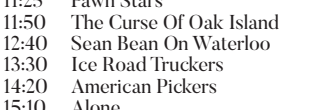
00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street



00:00 Ancient Discoveries
01:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
02:00 The Universe
02:50 Ancient Aliens



00:20 Forged: Iron & Fire
00:45 Pawn Stars
01:15 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers



00:15 Poh & Co.
00:45 David Rocco's Dolce India
01:10 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia



08:30 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
09:00 Croatia's Finest
09:25 Croatia's Finest
09:55 Mega Food



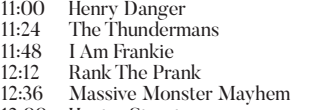
00:10 Yukon Gold
01:00 Wicked Tuna
02:00 Air Crash Investigation
03:00 I Am Rebel



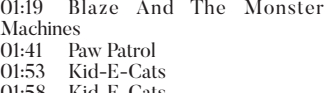
00:20 Desert Lions
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Bite, Sting, Kill
02:50 Monster Fish



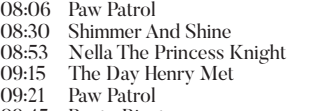
00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club



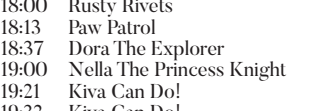
00:06 Max & Ruby
00:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:40 Kiva Can Do!



01:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:41 Paw Patrol
01:53 Kid-E-Cats
01:58 Kid-E-Cats



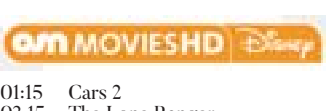
00:40 Krazy Planet
01:55 Dinofroz Return To The Past World
03:35 Twiggson Ties The Knot



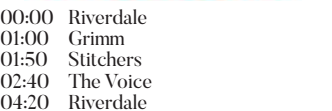
00:40 Splash
02:35 Miss Peregrine's Home For Peculiar Children



00:30 How Do They Do It?
00:55 Food Factory USA
01:20 Extreme Engineering



01:15 Road To Sangam
03:00 Road To Sangam
03:55 Koffee With Karan



00:00 Project Runway
01:00 Project Runway
02:00 Grey's Anatomy



01:15 Growing Up And Other Lies
02:55 My Bakery In Brooklyn
04:40 Big Mommas: Like Father, Like Son



01:00 Bone Tomahawk
03:25 The Beat Beneath My Feet
05:05 It Boy



00:30 Krazy Planet
01:55 Dinofroz Return To The Past World
03:35 Twiggson Ties The Knot



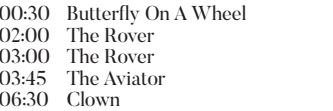
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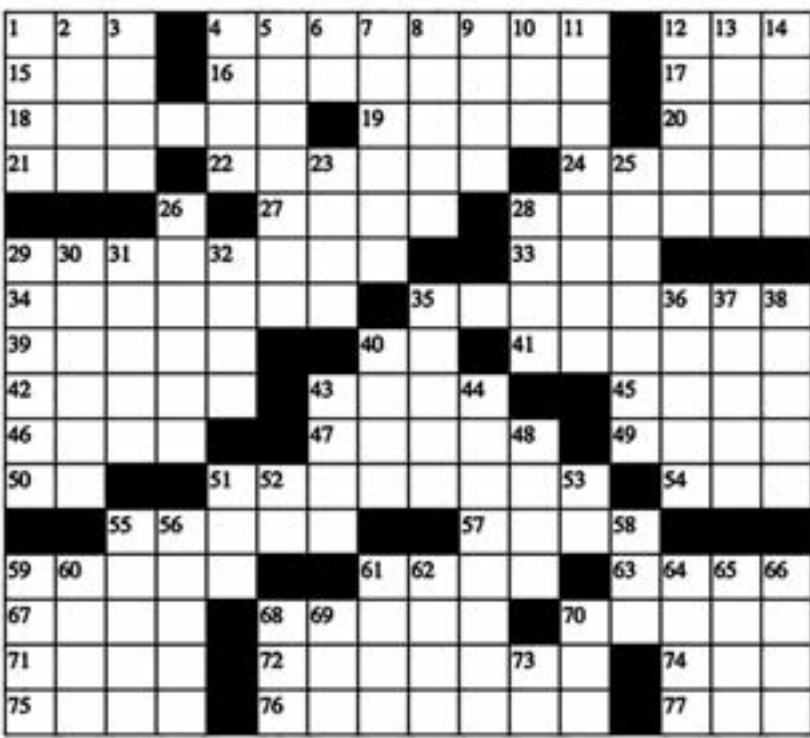
01:15 Road To Sangam
03:00 Road To Sangam
03:55 Koffee With Karan



00:00 Project Runway
01:00 Project Runway
02:00 Grey's Anatomy

Stars

CROSSWORD 1881



ACROSS

1. A fatal disease of cattle that affects the central nervous system.
4. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
12. (Scotland) A small loaf or roll of soft bread.
15. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
16. Any of various long-legged, long-necked, long-billed birds of South and Central America.
17. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
18. Relating to or characteristic of a tribe.
19. A state of extreme happiness.
20. Mythical bird of prey having enormous size and strength.
21. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
22. Involving the entire earth.
24. Spread or diffuse through.
27. The elapsed time it takes for light (or radio signals) to travel between the Earth and a celestial object.
29. (law) The party to whom something is assigned (e.g., someone to whom a right or property is legally transferred).
33. A form of entertainment that enacts a story by a sequence of images giving the illusion of continuous movement.
34. Dyed with henna.
39. State of disgrace resulting from detestable behavior.
41. Dried grape.
42. The basic unit of money in Sri Lanka.
45. The back side of the neck.
46. The universal time coordinated time on board the spacecraft.
47. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
49. A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
50. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
54. A pass between mountain peaks.
57. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
59. Characterized by dignity and propriety.
63. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
67. A doctor's degree in music.
71. A slender double-reed instrument.
72. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
74. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
75. Port city in northwestern Belgium and industrial center.
76. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
77. An associate degree in applied science.

DOWN

1. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
2. A deep orange-red variety of chalcid.
3. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
4. A narcotic that is considered a hard drug.
5. An Italian game similar to tennis.
6. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
7. A disorderly crowd of people.
8. Enthusiastic approval.
9. A barrier consisting of a horizontal bar and supports.
10. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
11. An early Christian church designed like a Roman basilica.
12. Found along western Atlantic coast.
13. Using the voice.
14. A genus of temperate and arctic evergreen trees (see spruce).
23. Owed and payable immediately or on demand.
25. Any mechanical or electrical device that transmits or modifies energy to perform or assist in the performance of human tasks.
26. A stately court dance in the 17th century.
28. South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
30. Induce to have sex.
31. Old or New World straight-billed game bird of the sandpiper family.
32. Willing to face danger.
35. A Dravidian language spoken in south central India.
36. (Old Testament) The second patriarch.
37. An oral antibiotic (trade name Cipro) used against serious bacterial infections of the skin or respiratory tract of urinary tract or bones or joints.
38. The sound of a bell rung slowly to announce a death or a funeral or the end of something v.l.
40. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
43. Studies intended to provide general knowledge and intellectual skills (rather than occupational or professional skills).
44. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
48. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
51. A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
52. A monarchy in northwestern Europe occupying most of the British Isles.
53. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
55. (Greek mythology) The husband of Medea and leader of the Argonauts who sailed in quest of the Golden Fleece.
56. Having help.
58. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
60. The lowest brass wind instrument.
61. Large genus of tropical shrubs or herbs some of which yield fibers of mucilaginous substances.
62. Marked by lack of intellectual depth.
64. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
65. A wine bottle made of leather.
66. Type genus of the Anatidae.
68. An accountant certified by the state.
69. Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
70. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
73. Before noon.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You will be the one looked to for common sense and steady pace for a group endeavor. Work, achievement and ambition are highlighted in your chart as a new year unfolds. Keep yourself open to the lighter moments in life, stop to breathe and smile. You focus on the entire concept; not the details just now, those will come later. Concentrate on sharpening your foresight, what is ahead will require cool, deliberate planning and execution. Apply past lessons to the present for a good view. You may be able to understand the problems of others better than your own. Work on this! Experimenting with new mystic and spiritual ideas may hold your interest for some time. Your world will become more stable as you continue your journey.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

It might be best to keep your thoughts to yourself today; other people are thinking they know best. You could feel stunted or not able to come across the way you would like; your normally boisterous nature will struggle with this. Group settings are not for you as they all appear to be a tangled mess. You may just want to get out and about and walk or exercise. You should be clearing away old debts, resentments and paperwork at this time. You will find that someone is very grateful to you for a deed done long ago. You will be able to take care of a private matter. A nice person will offer you a shoulder to lean on this evening. Let yourself smile. Laugh and make it a point to get others to laugh.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You could be confronted about a very touchy subject by someone who is critical of you in general; a heated quarrel could result. This could throw you into a disturbing tailspin. You could have an opportunity to gain valuable insight into those you work with. You will be perceived as stylish and poised by a group you attend later today. You will discover an elusive answer to a tricky problem you have been trying to solve for sometime. Spiritual exploration will be rewarding during this cycle. You are surrounded by well wishes and encouragement regarding a new, innovative project. An old friend may stop by unexpectedly; a nice dinner with excellent conversation will characterize the evening as you reminisce and laugh.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You would love an amorous encounter; this is a strong energy surrounding you. You may have dramatic ambitions to cure what ails the globe or you could be longing for a true love that is a true match. Perhaps you have thought of someone off and on for years and this drives your heart's desire; you may not even care where it comes from, you just want to be adored. A break from repetition and monotony will bring a chance to gain understanding. Someone will help you with something you no longer want to tend to. This cycle brings results from a project you poured yourself in to a while back. You will enjoy acquiring beautiful new things. You feel a bit hyper; put your feet up tonight and let your mind wander to comforting things.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have a deep need to call the shots, even if they are not yours to call. It looks as though your newest most important new interest could be learning more about investing in the stock market or real estate. Your acute sense of planning and making things happen could be applied to a group interest. You will be drawn into studying the purpose for humanity, the reason we come to the earth. A certain person will help you find some of the elusive answers you seek, if not you could be in a phase that supports acceptance and belief that you will find those answers at the right time. You may be called on to make choices for someone who can't. You will feel loved and understood throughout much of this month; this will give you the confidence you need.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your personal relationships will enjoy the positive energy of the cycle you just entered. Send your thanks heavenward as this new year holds many changes that will signal the foundation for a harmonious tone for a long time. One of your strengths is empathy you know what people are thinking and needing and it will be strongly felt this afternoon. A certain group could approach you for your suggestions and insight into a new project; beware. Remember that just because someone asks for your opinion doesn't mean they truly want it. Stay where you are domestically for now until you are sure of the changes you think you want to make. Relax with someone you have kept your guard up with, you could be pleasantly surprised.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your spirits are high and your smile genuine. Around you is an energy of accomplishment and completion; this could pertain to work or personal relationships and projects. You will enjoy being recharged by the positive vibes of coworkers or friends. You have a high respect and sentiments for the military or police departments when you work on something to help a fallen one. You could discover a new recipe that is not only tasty but healthy! You will contribute greatly to a large account or endeavor where there are children or animals involved. It would be best not to push yourself too hard at this time. You have risen to the challenges of the day with great success, now pay attention to what you need and fulfill them tonight.



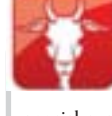
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may have gotten up on the wrong side of the bed this morning when you feel dread for being around people today; you could think about ways to avoid work as you sip on your morning beverage. A surprising person will challenge your thinking on a sensitive situation; remember, there's often more to a situation than we can see. Best not to place that large, and very important, order today; check your chart again tomorrow regarding this when you might find the unique supplies you seek. Someone new could invite you to a dinner meeting. With your help, work will be productive once again. Later you may want to set aside some time to see why a certain person never showed up. Positive changes for you much sooner than you think.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

A long lost friend may contact you via social media; the energies are strongly indicated for this type of activity and you could hear from more than one! Neighborhood gatherings create a close knit community, perhaps there are safety concerns. An important aspect of this cycle is that you want your feelings known and will not back down or keep your thoughts to yourself on certain matters. The gift of gab may help you with an over-cautious customer or friend when they truly need to listen. A need for sound, common sense advice will send a friend to you in an upset state; you could have trouble giving good advice. You are appreciated and admired for your thoughtful ways; you never meet a stranger you don't like.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are focused on how things work and who is calling the shots. Intuition and other spiritual gifts are working overtime; figure out how to deal with this special cycle you have entered and you will be rewarded. You want to know more about the forbidden, that which is off the beaten path. You seem to have found yourself among the new ideas and theories you seek to study. You may feel compelled to focus on your savings and investments. There will be new information regarding a certain person you have been thinking of. Try to keep your feet planted firmly on the ground later today. Someone may question your motives. Go for a brisk walk or bike ride this evening with someone who is like-minded.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You may feel like just keeping to yourself except for the welcome presence of a sweetheart or those who get you. Your emotions may feel stunted. If you feel restless and stressed out, think about how short-lived these feelings were last time; you'll get past this. Your surroundings are not a comfortable fit; you will discover changes that will take time but are worth waiting for. You could decide to change some plans immediately; someone will completely agree. Obstacles will be present, but so will the ways around them and in a very surprising place. Late in the evening you will read something that affects the way you think; spiritual, religious and mystic questions speak to you now.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Try to remember how impulsive decision making has turned out before; do you really need to make a large purchase now you could feel as though you are going up against everyone when you state certain opinions. You feel confidence in doing something a new way and may find that someone challenges your thinking. Don't be afraid to stand your ground, especially if this concerns you and not them. You may find yourself dealing with a person who is a control freak; the energy today is one of keeping to yourself and tending to your own business. Try not to let your feelings get hurt when someone inadvertently overlooks you. You love to help people and will want to jump in on a new volunteer project when you hear of it this evening.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Thanksgiving (U.S.)

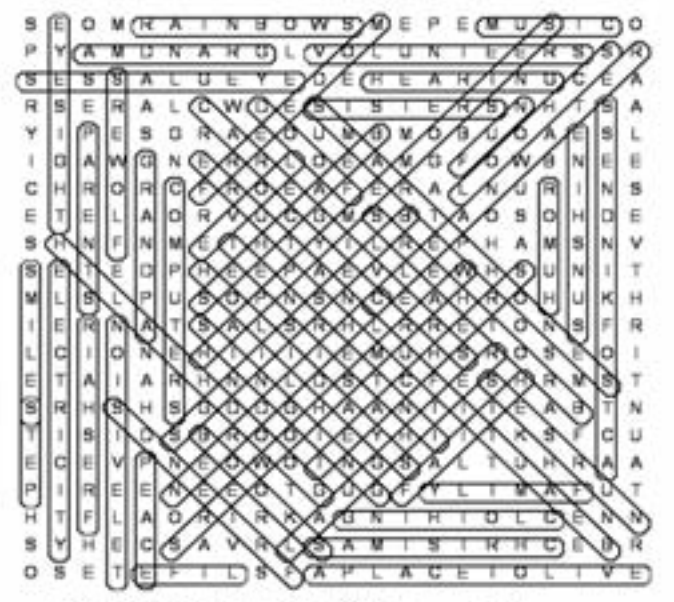
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 26 letters spell a popular Thanksgiving Day event.



- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ANNUAL | GRAVY | RELATIVES |
| AUTUMN | HARVEST | REUNION |
| CELEBRATION | HOLIDAY | SQUASH |
| CORN | LONG WEEKEND | STUFFING |
| CRANBERRY | MASHED POTATOES | SWEET POTATO |
| FEAST | MEAL | THURSDAY |
| FESTIVAL | NOVEMBER | TRADITION |
| FOOD | PARADE | TRAVEL |
| FOOTBALL | PILGRIMS | TURKEY |
| FRIENDS | PLYMOUTH | WAMPANOAG |
| GATHERING | PUMPKIN PIE | YAMS |

Yesterday's Solution

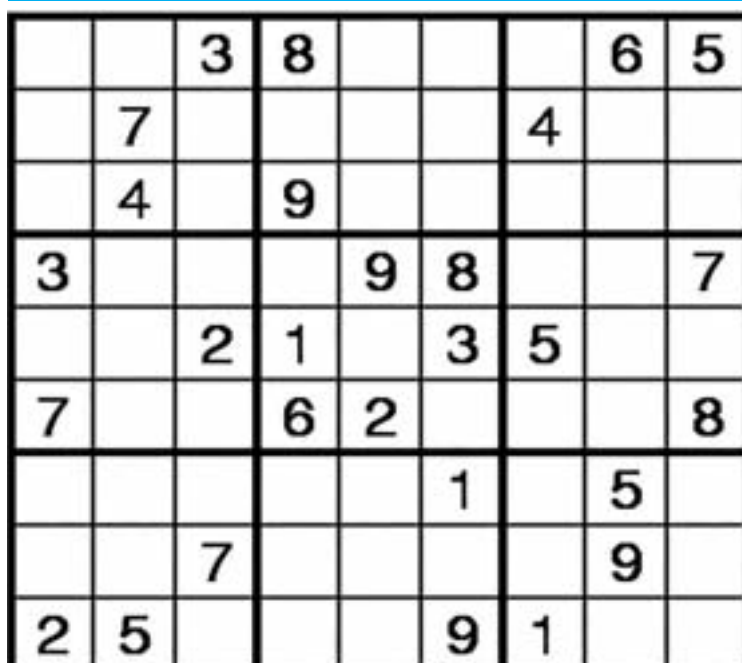
Thankful For...



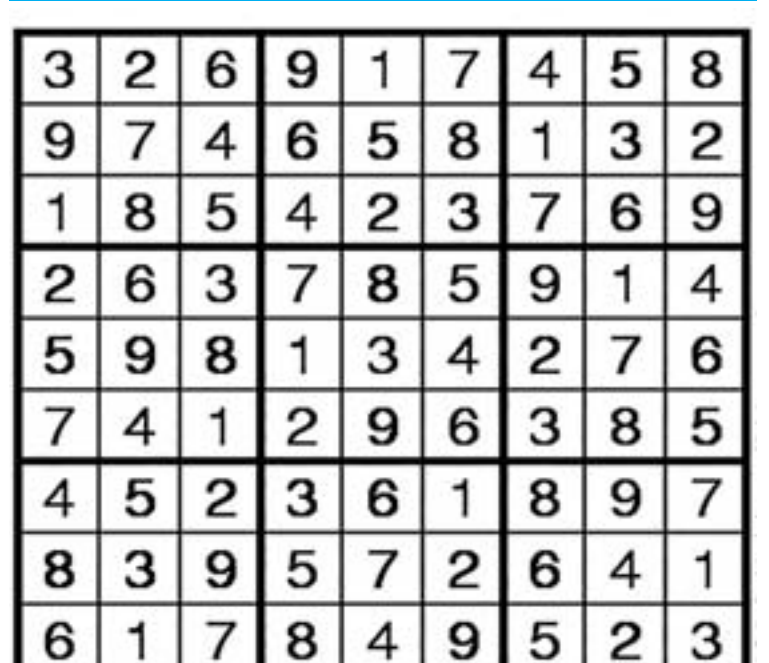
- | | | | |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|--------------|
| ACTS OF KINDNESS | ELECTRICITY | GRANDMA | PETS |
| A PLACE TO LIVE | EYEGASSES | HAPPY MEMORIES | RAINFOWS |
| BEACHES | EYESIGHT | HEARING | SCHOOL |
| BEAUTIFUL NATURE | FAITH | HOLIDAYS | SINGING |
| BLESSINGS | FAMILY | HUMOR | SISTERS |
| BOOKS | FLOWERS | INTERNET | SMART PHONES |
| BROTHERS | FOOD | LAUGHTER | SMILES |
| CARE GIVERS | FREEDOM | LIFE | SUNSHINE |
| CHILDREN | FRESH AIR | LOVE | TEACHERS |
| CHRISTMAS | FRIENDS | MUSIC | TELEVISION |
| CLEAN WATER | FUN | NURSES | TRAVELERS |
| CLOTHING | GOOD HEALTH | PARENTS | WARM SHOWERS |
| COMPUTERS | GRANDMA | PEACE | |

The hidden message is: SOME PEOPLE ARE ALWAYS GRUMBLING BECAUSE ROSES HAVE THORNS; I AM THANKFUL THAT THORNS HAVE ROSES.

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Classifieds

Wednesday, April 11, 2018

Kuwait Times
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 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times at times south easterly wind to southerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that

BY DAY: Partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh southerly wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on.

WEATHER WATCH			Thunder Rain	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 10/04/2018 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	30 °C	25 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	31 °C	21 °C		
ABDALY	29 °C	21 °C		
BUBYAN	----- °C	26 °C		
JAHRA	34 °C	23 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	29 °C	22 °C		
SALMIYAH	27 °C	24 °C		
AHMADI	27 °C	25 °C		
NUWASIB	32 °C	21 °C		
WAFRA	32 °C	20 °C		
SALMY	32 °C	21 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	04/11	Partly cloudy to cloudy causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery later on	33 °C	21 °C	S-SE	20 - 50 km/h
Thursday	04/12	Unstable causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	33 °C	21 °C	SE-NW	15 - 50 km/h
Friday	04/13	Partly cloudy	32 °C	20 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Saturday	04/14	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	33 °C	21 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 35 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:05
Sunrise	05:26
Zuhr	11:49
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:12
Isha	19:30

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	31 °C
MIN. Temp.	20 °C
MAX. RH	73 %
MIN. RH	32 %
MAX. Wind	SE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

FOR RENT

FOR COMPANIES
SABAH AL SALIM

2 BEDROOMS FULLY FURNISHED
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 ELECTRICITY/ 24/7 SECURITY &
 MAINTENANCE)
 MONTHLY RENT: KD425 - KD450

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 Email: LEASING@THEBRIDGE.CO.COM

Airlines

American Airlines	22087425
Kuwait Airways	22087426
Jazeera Airways	171
Jet Airways	177
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
22418064/5/6	
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516



Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 11/4/2018				Departure Flights on Wednesday 11/4/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	JZR	176	Dubai	13:40
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	JZR	124	Bahrain	14:30
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	15:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	673	Dubai	15:05
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	QTR	8512	Doha	15:25
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:25
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:40
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:45
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	KAC	775	Riyadh	15:50
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KAC	283	Dhaka	15:50
FEG	931	Alexandria	03:15	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	PAL	669	Manila	16:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	KAC	563	Amman	16:10
KAC	796	Madinah	03:50	KAC	619	Doha	16:10
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:40
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:40
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	FDK	802	Damascus	16:55
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	QTR	1073	Doha	17:15
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	266	Beirut	17:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:40
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	KAC	361	Colombo	17:45
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	SYR	342	Damascus	18:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	KAC	343	Chennai	18:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	JZR	538	Cairo	18:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
BAW	157	London	07:10	JZR	184	Dubai	18:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	JZR	608	Hyderabad	18:40
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	WAN	115	Bahrain	18:50
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	381	Delhi	18:50
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	FDB	064	Dubai	19:10
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	JZR	554	Alexandria	19:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	QTR	1081	Doha	20:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:05
IRC	6552	ABD	09:50	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
KIS	6032	Mashhad	10:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	NIA	162	Cairo	20:40
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	20:50
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	KAC	357	Kochi	21:00
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	KAC	1543	Dubai	21:20
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	DLH	624	Bahrain	21:30
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	QTR	1089	Doha	22:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	KAC	411	Bangkok	22:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:15	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:35	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	798	Taif	12:45	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:35
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	383	Delhi	22:40
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:50
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:20	UAE	860	Dubai	23:00
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40	KAC	795	Madinah	23:05
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	ICV	675	Hong Kong	23:10
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
KAC	618	Doha	14:15	PIA	240	Sialkot	23:35
				WAN	337	Alexandria	23:45



CHANCE THE RAPPER HAS 'A LOT' OF MUSIC IN THE PIPELINE

Chance the Rapper has been working with "a lot" of people on new music. The 24-year-old rapper - whose real name is Chancelor Jonathan Bennett - refuses to say whether he's working on a new album, but says he has plenty of songs set for release featuring the likes of Young Thug and Childish Gambino (Donald Glover). Speaking on Beats 1 on Monday he said: "I never really have like a big, drawn-out plan for how things was gonna go. I'm more in like a collaborative frame of mind. "So I've been talking to this artist Francis and the Lights, we working on something. Me and Thug been, you know, making songs forever, we got so many songs, so we've been talking about dropping something together. "Same with Donald Glover, Childish Gambino ... I got a lot of people, I've just been making songs." Chance hasn't released any new content since 2016's 'Coloring Book', but he previously teased his collaborations with Childish Gambino. Asked about

whether he's been working with Donald, he said: "We perpetuated that rumor for a long time without recording anything. We did link up in Atlanta and record some tracks and... they're amazing." And it's not just the 'Redbone' hitmaker Chance has been working with recently, as he's also teased that he may feature on some of Kanye West's new songs this year. Asked whether he had any part in 'All Day' hitmaker's new music, Chance said at an event held at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art: "Uhhh... I guess!" Kanye, 40 - who has four-year-old daughter North, two-year-old son Saint and two-month-old daughter Chicago with Kim Kardashian West - suffered a torrid year in 2016, with the rap star having to cancel part of his 'Life of Pablo Tour' after he was committed to a hospital with symptoms of hallucinations and paranoia. However, he's back to work and most recently was reported to have been working Drake.

CASH'S MOST PERSONAL SONGS LEFT OFF ALBUM



Johnny Cash's most personal letters were left off the album 'Johnny Cash: Forever Words'. The late music icon's son, John Carter Cash, 48 - who is a country musician in his own right - produced the star-studded record featuring new music by the likes of Chris Cornell, Kacey Musgraves, Rosanne Cash, Kris Kristofferson, Willie Nelson, Brad Paisley and Elvis Costello. The tracks were put together from unpublished poems, love letters and lyrics the legendary singer/songwriter left behind when he died at the age of 71 in 2003. However, John says he was very protective of what should make it into the hands of the public. Speaking on National Public Radio (npr), John said: "He [Johnny] always felt deeply. A lot of that made it into paper. At the end of his life, he had some 2,000 pieces of paper or more that were in his office that were left

behind. "Out of those there were 60 or 70 that were unpublished works that were just beautiful. "And then there were things that were so personal that there was no way I would ever hand them out to the public." One of most personal on the album is the song 'To June This Morning', a letter Johnny wrote to his wife, June Carter Cash, which was interpreted by real-life couple Ruston Kelly and Kacey Musgraves. On how he picked the artists for the record, John said previously: "Determining the artist for each song was truly a matter of the heart. "I picked the artists who were most connected with my father, who had a personal story that was connected with Dad. "It became an exciting endeavor to go through these works, to put them together and present them to different people who could finish them in a way that I believed that Dad would have wanted."

Mensa pulls out Lipa tour after breaking leg

Dua Lipa's support act Vic Mensa has been forced to pull out of her tour after breaking his leg. The 24-year-old rapper was due to open for the 'One Kiss' singer on the UK leg of her tour, which kicks off at O2 Apollo in Manchester on Saturday but after attempting to rehearse with the injury, he has caused further damage making it impossible for him to perform. Announcing the gutting news to his UK fans on Twitter, Vic wrote: "I want to extend my sincerest apologies to all my fans in the UK. "I broke my foot in the last couple of weeks and have been trying to push it so I can perform the tour with Dua Lipa but I've injured it even more in the process. "I have so much love for England and I can't wait to see you again. "Thanks so much for inviting me out Dua have an amazing run (sic)" The 'New Rules' singer retweeted his announcement and wished him a swift recovery, adding: "Sad news but wishing you a super speedy recovery. Big love xx (sic)" Dua still has hip-hop star Col3trane joining her for the run, which includes one of her biggest UK shows to date at London's Alexandra Palace next Friday. Meanwhile, the 22-year-old pop star recently opened up about how she constantly feels on a high when she's performing on stage or in the studio. Dua - who is currently working on her follow-up to her self-titled debut album - told lofficielusa.com: "During the day, I'm like, God I'm so exhausted today. Then I go on stage, and I'm like, That show was so amazing! And I just jump back onto cloud nine. "All the adrenaline hits and I'm seeing the finish line for this album and I'm already working on the next."



Jessica Brown Findlay tried the pie for new role



Jessica Brown Findlay tried potato peel pie for her role in new movie 'The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society'. The 28-year-old actress plays Elizabeth McKenna in the British historical drama, which is based on the novel of the same name by Mary Ann Shaffer and Annie Barrows, which is inspired by American author Shaffer's trip to Guernsey in the Channel Islands. During filming, Jessica decided it was only right to taste the dish mentioned in the title but she didn't enjoy the pie prepared on set, however, she had it again when it had been cooked to a different recipe and found it to be "lovely". The pie was created during the Nazi occupation of Guernsey during World War II when food and ingredients were in short supply and it was originally made with just a potato, the usually discarded peel, a beet and milk. The dish is still cooked to this day but with more ingredients. Speaking at the world premiere of the movie in London on Monday night she told BANG Showbiz: "I tried the pie on

set but it wasn't nice at all. However, I tried it more recently and it was lovely." The film's director Mike Newell wouldn't even eat a mouthful of the pie because it looked and sounded so unappetizing to him. He said: "I didn't try it, I don't want to try it because it has no flavor." Jessica's co-star Lily James also walked the red carpet at the premiere and admitted she was so excited to get to tell the book's story on the big screen because the five-year Nazi occupation which took place between 1940 and 1945 is such an important period of the island's history. Lily, 29, said: "I feel so passionate about this story and about Guernsey and about the people. These people have been through so much, this history that they've had that some people aren't even aware of - being occupied and surviving. It's a story I think people should see and should learn about." "The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society" premiere was also attended by fellow cast members Michiel Huisman and Glen Powell.

Joaquin Phoenix: I'm uneasy with compliments

Joaquin Phoenix feels "uneasy" with compliments. The 43-year-old actor is often hailed as one of the most talented performers in Hollywood, but Joaquin has admitted that praise isn't something that sits comfortably with him. The 'Her' star said: "It makes me feel a little bit uneasy. "I just want to keep making movies ... if people think that I should and they want to support that then I'm really appreciative." Joaquin plays a traumatized veteran who tracks down missing girls for a living in his latest movie, 'You Were Never Really Here'. And the actor - who has developed a reputation for taking on quirky roles - has revealed what drew him to the part. Speaking to Showbiz411, he explained: "I don't really know what it was. It may be there was just something about Lynne [Scottish Director Lynne Ramsey who wrote and directed the film] when she talked about it that had meaning to me. "I felt like there was something really mysterious about the character and the journey that I couldn't figure out. It wasn't



like it was there on the page. But there were hints of things which I wanted to dig in with Lynne and explore the possibilities. I don't really know exactly why, but that's close." Meanwhile, Joaquin previously admitted to feeling insecure about his acting talents, despite the praise he's received over the years. He confessed: "I've never had a moment where I've thought, 'Great, I got this!' "Every time you make a movie, if you're working with a great filmmaker, you're going to be immediately confronted with your flaws."

Dean Morgan's 'ribs cracked' in stunt with Johnson

Jeffrey Dean Morgan was injured when Dwayne Johnson landed on top of him for a stunt. The 51-year-old actor plays Agent Russell in 'Rampage' and is involved in a fight scene with Dwayne's character, Davis Okoye, and joked that when Dwayne landed on top of him, he heard the "wind come out of him and his ribs crack". He said: "Dwayne's got a lot of energy so you got to bring it, but kind of going nose-to-nose with him makes you realize, 'I'm a small human being.' I'm as tall as he is, about, but my God, he's built like a huge freezer and he feels like it. We did a stunt at one point in the movie and if you see it you'll know exactly what I'm talking about: he landed on top of me and I was supposed to be unconscious and it made a sound come out of my body that I didn't know I could possibly make. Like real high, the wind came out of me and the ribs cracking and then he started giggling. I'm like, 'Great, we're going



to have to do it again." And Jeffrey really enjoyed working with Dwayne because he can "make fun of himself". Speaking on Good Morning America, he added: "Because he is able to make fun of himself a little bit, I think that it makes us love him. I mean, he's obviously huge and a big muscly dude, but I think ... it helps so much if the action star can be relatable. It's kind of who he is in real life. No one does what he does ... in this world of action, which has kind of propelled him to the top of this world."



Hayley Atwell won't rule out Marvel return

Hayley Atwell "won't rule out" reprising her Marvel role. The 36-year-old actress portrayed Peggy Carter in a number of the superhero movies including 'Captain America: The First Avenger' and would be up for returning to the role one day. She said: "Because it's a genre-specific superhero piece, I'm sure anything could happen. It's such a huge world. I do think there's something in the completion of the fact that they're doing their back-to-back Avengers at the moment, which will complete an era, so I can't see how that would be. But that's what's remarkable about Marvel is they keep going. Each film tends to further what they're doing, so I wouldn't rule it out." Hayley is known for playing

good characters in her movies but says it is not something she "sets out" to do. She told Parade magazine: "I don't set out to choose characters that are role models. The current character I'm playing at the moment [in Dry Powder in London] is a sociopath and a narcissist. She's a brilliant mathematician and I absolutely adore playing her. She's unapologetic and ruthless. I think my job as an actor is just to be a custodian to a character, to present a character rather than educate an audience and go, 'This is what you should think or feel.' It just so happened that that was the part that I got with Peggy Carter, the script that they created for me, and I inhabited it based on what I felt the script was asking me to do." — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features



Jared Leto at The Museum of America, a one-of-a-kind pop-up museum promoting Thirty Seconds to Mars' new album. — AFP photos



Jared Leto performs for fans on Hollywood Blvd promoting Thirty Seconds to Mars' new album.

ACTOR JARED LETO ROAD TRIPS ACROSS US TO PROMOTE NEW ALBUM



Jared Leto performs for fans on Hollywood Blvd promoting Thirty Seconds to Mars' new album.



Jared Leto at The Museum of America, a one-of-a-kind pop-up museum promoting Thirty Seconds to Mars' new album.



Jared Leto rides the Sunset strip on top of a tour bus promoting Thirty Seconds to Mars' new album.

It was a mad dash of "planes, trains and automobiles" for Oscar-winning actor and Thirty Seconds to Mars singer Jared Leto as he promoted his band's latest album with a five-day cross-country road trip from New York to Los Angeles. Leto hitchhiked in the cold rain and rode a crowded long-haul Greyhound bus as he promoted his rock band's fifth studio album, "America," which was released last week on Interscope Records, a label of Vivendi SA's Universal Music Group.

Leto, 46, did it all while performing his songs. He also documented the nearly 2,800-mile (4,500 km) trek and said he used it to connect with everyday Americans along the way. "I don't ever use that dirty word for myself - celebrity - but it was very grounding," Leto told Reuters. "And I think it just reminds you that we're all connected, that we all have our challenges, that we all have our dreams." Leto said his journey taught him that despite the current political polarization of the United States, he found a sense of shared purpose among

Americans. "I think the most eye-opening thing right now, that at a time of such instability that there's so much community, so much we have in common, such unity," he said.

"I think that would surprise people, especially if you live outside the country," Leto added. "I saw a lot of kindness, a lot of generosity. It was inspiring." The actor, who won an Oscar for his role as an HIV-positive transgender woman in 2013 drama "Dallas Buyers Club," is also directing a documentary, "A Day in the Life of America," in which he explores

the lives of different Americans on US Independence Day, July 4, 2017. It was not Leto's first trip across the United States. "I had done it when I was a kid as an art school dropout and I headed to L.A. to become a director," said Leto, who caught his first big break in Hollywood on the mid-1990s cult teen TV drama "My So-Called Life" as a moody high school heartthrob. "I had a backpack on and a couple of hundred bucks and it changed my life, so it was fun to go back and take that journey again," he said. — Reuters



The world has gone crazy for the love story of Prince Harry and divorced mixed-race actress Meghan Markle. — AFP

TV goes royal 'crazy' in run-up to Harry and Meghan marriage

Republicans might like to look away from their television screens for the next six weeks. An avalanche of royal documentaries is set to flood schedules across the world in the run-up to the marriage of Britain's Prince Harry and the American actress Meghan Markle next month. "The world has gone crazy for the royal wedding," said Nick Bullen, the king of British royal TV, who has nearly nine hours of programs in the pipeline for National Geographic, America's Fox network and Britain's ITV. Rival shows such as "Invitation to a Royal Wedding", about the behind-the-scenes planning for the big day, are among a raft being snapped up by buyers at MIPTV, the world's top TV market in Cannes, France. "Kate and William was big," said Bullen, referring to the 2011 wedding of the second in line to the throne to the Duchess of Cambridge. "But the Meghan factor has been huge. This is now an American story, one of their own, an American princess," he added. "The last American to marry into the royal family was Wallace Simpson and look what happened there. That was quite a big world story." Markle is like nothing the British royal family has ever seen before, Bullen told AFP. "We now have a divorced mixed race actress. She is beautiful, clever and opinionated. She is bringing something to the House of Windsor that has been missing for an awful long time. She is making the Windsors feel relevant to an audience that hadn't considered them before."

New young and black fans

African, black and ethnic minority audiences are now relating to the royals in a way they never did before, said the head of Spun Gold films. That comes on top of "the whole new generation who have been brought to the royals" through the runaway success of "The Crown", Netflix's number one series, Bullen insisted. His company's history of the family, "The Royal House of Windsor" was also a big surprise hit on the online platform, showing the curiosity they now spark

with young audiences. "The Queen's Wikipedia page has reported record traffic after 'The Crown' as viewers check the plot with the facts," he added.

Bullen, whose company won a BAFTA award for its documentary on the Queen's 90th birthday, said for royal programs to work they had to have real insight. "We don't make toadying TV, some people have. But in a world of fake news you need truth at the heart of it, and if you have that you have a hit show." But he admitted that the Palace had to be kept aside "to keep making these programs. We keep them in the loop. You have to play with a very straight bat."

'Relaxed and funny' Queen

Among the other new royal docs being previewed at Cannes is a highly unusual and unexpectedly touching portrait of the Queen. "The Queen's Green Planet" reveals her lifelong passion for trees, with a "relaxed and funny" monarch taking the naturalist Sir David Attenborough on a tour of the gardens of Buckingham Palace. The pair, both 91, were born within three weeks of his each other, and have a wonderful screen chemistry, director Jane Treays told AFP.

"They laughed and were quite playful with each other. They have known each other a long time and because of that, we see quite surprising things like her real passion for trees. "She has spent her life planting trees, and so have her ancestors. It was very beautiful and touching to see how she relates to them, and how much they mean to her. She has a particular love of some London plane trees planted by Queen Victoria", her great-great-grandmother. The film, made by ITN to highlight the Queen's bid to build a network of global protected forests, will be broadcast in Britain on April 16.

In one hilarious moment, the Queen reveals that her huge collection of new varieties of plants came from people who were unsure of what to get her. "I've been quite difficult to give presents to," she quipped, "so they've said, 'Oh, let's give her a plant.'" — AFP

Look cool and feel fresh with the latest Summer collection from Centrepont

Centre point's Summer 2018 collection promises to keep you looking cool and feeling fresh this season.

Stylish Summer looks for women

Think Pink! It's all about looking pretty in shades of pink for women this summer. Other fashion colours that are also prominent in this season's collection are ice-cream pastels such as lilac, melon and mint green, complemented by the classic clean summer shades of red, black, white, blue and sand.

Whether you've unleashed your inner girl power or if you would like to feel ultra-feminine, Splash is dialling up the details with tied bow straps, cascades, ruffles, sheer layering, off-shoulders, and tiers. Whilst for Barbie girls of all ages a selection of official licensed Barbie fashion items will also be launching in-store. Shoemart's summer collection offers an explosion of colours to complement any outfit. From bright psychotropic designs through to classic black and white styles - shoes come in a range of heels, sandals, sneakers and more - with matching bags and accessories.

Stylish Summer looks for men

If you missed out on the opportunity to live the 90s, you're in luck as they are set to make their return with Splash's reworked 90s theme for men. The theme can be found in coloured and badged sets, taped tees, embroidered polos and ringer tees. This season brighter is better with tie-dye, bleach splatter denim, coloured truckers, and wide leg denim coming together to create impactful, fashionable looks for every occasion. To finish off the outfit in style, Shoemart delivers on a range of footwear, from basic brown and black dress shoes through to brighter sneaker styles in electric blue and green.

Summer styles for trendy tots & teens

Combining casual designs and sporty silhouettes, this fun collection offers trendy pieces in vibrant colour spectrums and combinations for girls and boys. The collection is inspired by the sunny times, travel and fun-filled adventures captured in the latest trends in kids' fashion. The collection delivers a cool aura to your little one's wardrobe. For girls the summer themes include - tropical summers, fruit baskets, fun paradise and doodle sketching. As bright as the summer sun, this collection features vivid blues, yellows & pinks, an assortment of pastel colors, a sprinkle of glitter and just a touch of lively greens. The entire collection comprising of sun dresses, skirts, shorts, joggers, jumpsuits and t-shirts is designed in soft and light cottons suitable for summer. The boys' ensemble is a cornucopia of colors, patterns and combinations



of tropical and typographic prints. Handsome young men can pick from Havana & Cuban inspired looks for the beach, wave rocker themes and all-time favorite cartoon character styles which are available across T-shirts, denim shirts, trousers, shorts, dungarees and swim wear. The collection brings in summery light cottons, linens and a mix of denims; in shades of blue hues with a touch of pastel yellows, reds & greens, to complement their summertime adventures.

Summer collection from lifestyle

Lifestyle brings you a selection of tasteful and elegant new Summer inspired products from Fiorelli, GUESS, V1969 Charlotte Reid and Sasha. The summer collection from Lifestyle is inspired from classical patterns and motifs from Renaissance/Baroque periods in shades of beige, gold and ivory. Whilst for those searching for a more earthy look, Enchanted

Forest and Bloom Yard are nature inspired collections comprising florals and blooms in bold vibrant brown, burgundy, black and gold. Fiorelli showcases its recently launched collection consisting of basic brown, nude and black stylish summer bags supplemented with mustard-yellow trendy purses. Whilst in contrast V1969 and GUESS reveal vibrant collections focused around bright red, black and white. Charlotte Reid presents a line of edgy bags from totes to satchels, clutches and backpacks in taupe, black, beige and white. Whilst the Sasha line is for every woman out there looking to get back to basics with different kinds of handbags in shades to complement every wardrobe - perfect for the office.

The Centrepont Summer collection is now available across all stores located at Al Rai, Avenues, Salmiya, Fintas, Jahra, Fahaheel, Sulaibikhat, Kuwait City, Khaitan and Hawally.

Director Toback won't be charged with sex crimes in LA

Director James Toback, accused of sexual assault and harassment by about 40 women for abuse over the course of decades, will not face charges in Los Angeles, prosecutors said Monday. The office of Los Angeles District Attorney Jackie Lacey provided AFP with evaluations of accusations brought by five women concerning alleged from 1978 to 2008, indicating that the claims were being rejected mostly because of the statute of limitations. One of the alleged victims, identified anonymously as Jane Doe 5, accuses the 73-year-old of

having "rubbed his groin on her leg until he ejaculated" during an interview in 2008, according to the documents. But "the victim did not appear for the scheduled interview with our office," Lacey's team added. Another would-be litigant, Jane Doe 4, said Toback masturbated four times over several hours by rubbing against her leg during a 1993 interview at The Beverly Hills Hotel. But the "victim reports that the touching was never skin to skin and that she was in fear of the suspect," the prosecutor's report said. Jane Doe 3 also indicated she "complained of



fear." She found herself alone with Toback in 2008 when she had been expecting to simply accompany him to a film projection. He allegedly also rubbed against her leg. — AFP

A Saudi man walking past tombs carved into rose-coloured sandstone in Madain Saleh.



Desert ruins of Al-Ula: Saudis revive forgotten past



A tomb at Madain Saleh.



An aerial view of the Qasr Al-Farid tomb (The Lonely Castle) carved into rose-coloured sandstone in Madain Saleh.



Inscription on rose-coloured sandstone in the Nabataean archaeological site of Al-Hijr.

Trudging up a caramel-hued cliff pocked with ancient tombs, guide Bandar al-Anazi gazed at the stunning view: a windswept desert landscape of pre-Islamic ruins at the center of Saudi-Franco preservation efforts. Al-Ula, an area rich in archaeological remnants, is seen as a jewel in the crown of future Saudi attractions as the austere kingdom prepares to issue tourist visas for the first time-opening up one of the last frontiers of global tourism. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman is set to sign a landmark agreement with Paris yesterday for the touristic and cultural development of the northwestern site, once a crossroads of ancient civilizations.

"All of Al-Ula is an open air museum," Anazi said during a media tour just days before Prince Mohammed's trip, revealing a patchwork of rock-cut tombs containing niches for burials. "There is so much history here still waiting to be discovered." The tombs, some containing pre-Islamic inscriptions and drawings such as hunting scenes, are a legacy of the Nabataean artistic tradition. The chiseled rock art forms could help unravel the mysteries of millennia-old civilizations on the Arabian Peninsula. The area, roughly the size of Belgium, served as an important way station and bedouin watering hole on the trade route linking the Arabian Peninsula, North Africa and India.

It is home to the kingdom's first UNESCO World Heritage Site, Madain Saleh, built more than 2,000 years ago by the Nabataeans. "Every day something new is being discovered," Jamie Quartermaine, an expert from the Britain-based Oxford Archaeology group, told AFP. "The potential is endless. Look behind you," he said, pointing at ancient animal art depictions engraved on a rocky spur inside an Al-Ula hotel resort.

'Gift to the world'

A helicopter tour of the area revealed a desert landscape that appeared like the top of a foamed latte, dotted with heritage sites and towering maze-like rock formations. The Saudi-Franco partnership is in part aimed at preserving the site from further erosion and vandalism it has faced. At one archeological site called Al-Khuraiba, Anazi pointed at a bereft cistern. Photos taken by French explorers Jaussen and Savignac, who visited the area in the early 20th century, showed the same cistern once featured the statue of a deity.



A Saudi man walking near ancient tombs at the Khuraiba archaeological site near Saudi Arabia's northwestern town of Al-Ula. — AFP photos



Foreigners walking next to a date farm amidst sandstones in the Khuraiba archaeological site near Saudi Arabia's northwestern town of Al-Ula.



A Saudi man standing at the entrance of a tomb at Madain Saleh.



An aerial view of carved rose-coloured sandstone mountains, known as "The Dancers".



Saudi men visiting the Khuraiba archaeological site.



A Saudi man visiting the Khuraiba archaeological site.

Lifestyle | Features



“ All of Al-Ula is an open air museum ”

Rose-coloured sandstone in Madain Saleh, a UNESCO World Heritage site, near Saudi Arabia's northwestern town of Al-Ula.

The walled city of Al-Ula, with tightly packed mud-brick and stone houses that were inhabited until modern times, sits decaying under the scorching sun. But before a preservation plan is launched in collaboration with France, all archaeological treasures need to be accounted for, said Amr Al-Madani, head of the Royal Al-Ula Commission. A massive two-year surveying program began in March, which includes scanning via helicopters, satellites, drones and a remote sensing technology called Lidar, he told AFP.

“This is a significant undertaking incorporating all levels of survey from aerial survey down to ground checking,” said Quartermaine. A Franco-Saudi deal to develop Al-Ula calls for the creation of a dedicated agency modeled on the lines of the French museums agency, which spearheaded the establishment of the Louvre museum in Abu Dhabi. At least one large museum is planned to be built in Al-Ula. Gerard Mestrallet, the former CEO of French electric utility company Engie, has been appointed special envoy of French President Emmanuel Macron for Al-Ula. Al-Ula is expected to fully open up to global tourists within three to five years, launching the site as what Saudi officials describe as “a gift to the world”.

‘Pride in our past’

Al-Ula is among a hidden trove of Saudi archaeological treasures. Archaeologists last year used Google Maps to find hundreds of stone “gates” built from rock in a remote Saudi desert, which may date back as far as 7,000 years. They also discovered evidence of 46 lakes believed to have existed in Saudi Arabia's northern Nefud desert, which experts say has lent credence to the theory that the region swung between periods of desertification and a wetter climate.

Tourism is one of the centerpieces of the blueprint to prepare the biggest Arab economy for the post-oil era. Al-Ula's hotel infrastructure is currently inadequate, with only two facilities with a capacity of 120 rooms. But the project is about reviving the glory of Saudi Arabia's ancient past. There is currently scant information in Saudi history textbooks about Al-Ula. “This is about national pride in our own past,” Anazi said. — AFP



A journalist taking a photo of a tomb at Madain Saleh.



A man standing outside of the Qasr Al-Farid tomb (The Lonely Castle) carved into rose-coloured sandstone in Madain Saleh, a UNESCO World Heritage site, near Saudi Arabia's northwestern town of Al-Ula.



Carved rose-coloured sandstone in Madain Saleh.



Tombs at Madain Saleh, a UNESCO World Heritage site, near Saudi Arabia's northwestern town of Al-Ula.



An aerial view of the Qasr al-Farid tomb (The Lonely Castle) carved into rose-coloured sandstone in Madain Saleh.

Macron shows bare-breasted Liberty to Saudi prince at Louvre

French President Emmanuel Macron likes to pepper his diplomacy with symbolism and gestures. By taking Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for a tour of the Louvre, was he making a point about political freedom? Macron spent an hour on Sunday night taking his Saudi visitor around one of the highlights of the current Paris cultural diary: a new exhibition by the revolutionary 19th-century French painter Eugene Delacroix.

The two men later dined together at a restaurant at the museum, spending two hours in talks that were expected to have covered wars and crises in the Middle East, as well as sources of friction between the leaders. “The president wanted to host him for a private dinner at the Louvre, a top French cultural destination, on the occasion of the launch of the Delacroix exhibition,” an aide to Macron told reporters on Monday.

Delacroix was “known notably for the famous painting of Liberty Leading The People,” the aide stressed. To underline the point further, Macron later tweeted a picture of him and Prince Mohammed in front of the giant canvas. The giant oil painting was a risky choice for the heir to the ultra-conservative Saudi royal family that until recently banned mixed-gender concerts and imposes a strict body-covering dress code on women.

Liberty is depicted as a bare-breasted woman holding the French tricolore. But the deeper message is highly political: Liberty is shown heading over the barricades in an image inspired by the July Revolution of 1830 that saw protesters overthrow the inept ruling French royal, Charles X. “It's an allegorical and revolutionary painting that promotes the republic,” Francois Gere, a historian who is head of the French Institute for Strategic Analysis, told AFP. He added that the Louvre visit was in keeping with Macron's intellectual approach to diplomacy and stressed a message about France's cultural power as well as political reform to the 32-year-old Saudi visitor.

Prince Mohammed, considered the de facto leader of the oil-rich kingdom, has begun a series of social reforms



A handout picture provided by the Saudi Royal Palace on April 9, 2018 shows French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (right) standing outside Le Louvre museum in Paris. — AFP photos



A handout picture shows French President Emmanuel Macron (second right) and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (right) looking at paintings at Le Louvre museum in Paris.

to spread a more moderate version of Islamic law in his country. The Delacroix painting “is the action of the people, it's about liberty and the union of all the classes around that. It's saying ‘you're a reformer, you want to transform your society, I'll show you something that might interest you.’” Gere added.

‘French idea’

A source in the Saudi delegation said the visit was proposed by Macron's office after Prince Mohammed cancelled a proposed trip to Marseille for a different cultural event. The tour of the Louvre chimed with one of the main themes of his three-day trip to France, the source added, which is increasing cultural cooperation between the two

countries that will see them work on a new Saudi orchestra and opera. “What communicates the idea of cultural cooperation better than the Louvre?” the source told AFP on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media.

“It is only a natural venue for such a meeting,” he added. “It shows an impeccable French touch in terms of the soft power that France is famous for.” Since his election last May, Macron has deftly marshaled symbols and gestures to reinforce his diplomacy and raise his profile internationally during his wide travels around the world. Russian President Vladimir Putin was given a tour around an exhibition at the Versailles Palace last May that marked 300 years of Franco-Russian friendship, while US

President Donald Trump was wowed with a military parade and dinner up the Eiffel Tower in July.

In January, Macron arrived in China bearing the gift of a French Republican Guard horse for his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. And during a trip to London at the start of the year, he announced that France was prepared to transport the Bayeux Tapestry, a more than 1,000-year artwork, to Britain as a gesture of friendship. But like the Delacroix exhibition visit, there was another, less friendly interpretation: the tapestry depicts the successful invasion of England by a French king after a famous 1066 battle. — AFP

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11, 2018



A picture shows an aerial view of carved rose-coloured sandstone mountains in the desert of Al-Ula in northwestern Saudi Arabia. Al-Ula, an area rich in archaeological remnants, is seen as a jewel in the crown of future Saudi attractions as the austere Kingdom prepares to issue tourist visas for the first time-opening up one of the last frontiers of global tourism. — AFP (For the full story and more pictures about the desert of Al-Ula see page 30-31)

JINGLE BELLS: JAPAN'S UNUSUAL STATION MUSIC

Minoru Mukaiya is one of the world's most played musicians, with millions of people across Japan listening to his songs every day—but most of them don't even notice. Mukaiya is a composer of "Hassha Merodii" or "train departure melodies", short jingles that whisk commuters on their way at some of the world's busiest stations. Almost no one would know his most famous track by name, a catchy electronic ditty broadcast for departures from platforms three and four at Tokyo's Shibuya station—the world's third busiest—but millions have it on their brains for hours after their commute.

Asked how many train jingles he has created, the 61-year-old former keyboard player with the jazz-fusion band Casiopea pauses. He has lost count and an assistant rushes over with a list. "170? What? I wrote 170," he says, exploding with laughter. "That can't be right!" "Hassha Merodii" is so common now in Japan that locals are unfazed when the sharp twang of an electronic keyboard or an organ's trill spills out of a loudspeaker but tourists are often thrilled. Nevertheless, Mukaiya's work has attracted a cult following.

He has more than 34,000 Twitter followers, performs the ditties at concerts to thousands of screaming fans and is now banned from playing at Ginza station the epicenter of Tokyo swank—after a live show there sparked pandemonium. Fans tell him the music is "good for their health, for their work, for walking. It warms them up" after a hard commute to the office, Mukaiya told AFP in an interview in his music room. "I want them to be happy."

'Mountain train'

"Hassha Merodii" started when train operators were looking for ways to make their stations stand out and came up with the idea of a catchy jingle. The songs are capped at seven seconds—the "dwell time" train operators have to cram people into packed commuter trains and still, famously, run on time. A spokesman for the JR East train company told AFP they were introduced "to prevent passengers from dashing onto the train". But despite the short timeframe, Mukaiya says that each ditty packs in a story. In Japan's ancient capital Kyoto, "we have a deep respect for culture, so the song sounds more respectful of Japanese culture," he explained, sandwiched between musical instruments and computer screens.

The rapturous crescendo and rising pitch in Shibuya station's departure song, on the other hand, is a nod to the train's uphill journey to the next platform. "The Toyoko line used to be up the stairs on a very high level. But now the Toyoko line has moved to the subway, and the journey from Shibuya to the next station is a very steep slope," he says. "So I thought the departure song... needs to make it feel like the mountain train." Other jingles nod to local history. The station at Takadanobaba, the home to popular anime series Astro Boy, pays homage to the cartoon with a jingle version of the show's theme tune. And Osaka station features a soundbite of "I guess I really do love you", one of the region's most famous songs. One of the distinguishing features of Mukaiya's work is that the individual tunes at each station along a line can be combined to form a coherent song.

'Science fiction world'

The jingles have allowed Mukaiya to combine his two passions, music and trains. His interest in railways was first kindled as an eight-year-old when Japan's first ever Shinkansen bullet train glided into Tokyo Station a week before the 1964 Olympics. "I thought that this is a kind of science fiction world," he said. Two decades later, he released one of the world's first train simulator video games for fellow enthusiasts, amassing a huge following and nabbing the attention of industry stalwarts like PlayStation. The game was so realistic that train operators around the country started asking Mukaiya to design something similar to teach their conductors and drivers.

He even designed a life-sized mock-up of a train conductor's compartment—complete with control panel—that occupies pride of place in his office. Staring out to an imaginary platform, he rings a bell—confirming the train is clear to leave—and assumes his position at the wheel, watching the monitor above for the traffic light to turn green before taking off. When the train pulls into the next station he walks back over to the carriage door, grinning. A makeshift platform projected from overhead, the number 10 appearing at his feet. He has lined up the train doors with the platform exit perfectly.—AFP



(From left) Delphine Arnault, French luxury group LVMH Chairman and Chief Executive Officer Bernard Arnault and Iliad Group founder and vice-president Xavier Niel speak as they attend the launch of LVMH's "Maison des startups" at 'Station F' in Paris.—AFP

Luxury goods giant LVMH shares soar on Q1 growth

French luxury empire LVMH yesterday saw its share price soar over five percent on the Paris stock exchange after it reported strong global growth for the first three months of 2018. The group, which owns the Dior and Louis Vuitton fashion houses as well as the Moët & Chandon champagne brand and high street make-up powerhouse Sephora, reported global revenue of 10.9 billion euros (\$13.44 billion) from January to March.

That constituted an increase of 10 percent compared to the same period of 2017, while organic growth stood at 13 percent, a statement from LVMH said Monday. The strong earnings prompted the group's share price to surge 5.0 percent in yesterday's trading. The first quarter results consolidated the group's record year sales in 2017, when profits passed the five-billion-euro mark. Performance in early 2018 was also strong across the LVMH house, with the watches and jewelry group recording organic revenue growth of 20 percent and perfumes and cosmetics seeing 17 percent growth, LVMH said. Among the brands that did exceptionally well were megastar Rihanna's make-up line Fenty, which features matte lipsticks in mustard yellow, lapis lazuli blue and rainforest green, and eyebrow king Benefit.

And while high street fashion brands like Sweden's Hennes and Mauritz have suffered badly in recent years from the growth of online shopping, luxury goods makers like LVMH appear to be thriving in the digital age. "Online sales grew rapidly all over the world," LVMH said, describing the start of the year as "buoyant... albeit marked by unfavorable exchange rates and geopolitical uncertainties". ING Research described LVMH's results for the start of 2018 as "strong... with broad based growth across its divisions". Paris-based Invest Securities meanwhile said LVMH had made a "jump start" to the year. — AFP



Japanese musician Minuru Mukaiya playing electronic music on a piano at his workplace in Tokyo. — AFP photos



Japanese musician Minuru Mukaiya posing with a train simulation unit at his workplace in Tokyo.