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conspiracy theories

Nuclear issue

By Badrya Darwish
badrya_d@kuwaittimes.net

What a jinxed situation. It is so ironic and tragic that I've started believing that the dispute with the Philippines is jinxed. The minute we advance in resolving the dispute, new reports surface that irritate the Philippine president and he takes harsh measures against sending Filipino workers to Kuwait.

Incident after incident - all of them highly attention-grabbing - led to the dispute. A Filipina who allegedly committed suicide on New Year's Eve was the sister of a famous social media personality in the Philippines, who immediately shared her tragic story and ignited the ire of Manila. Her suicide was only one of many cases, but it captured the attention of the government due to her brother's celebrity status.

Then the body of the gruesomely murdered Joanna Demafelis was found in a freezer in Maidan Hawally. This triggered the halting of the deployment of all OFWs to Kuwait and especially domestic helpers, though her sponsors were not Kuwaitis and fled to the Levant. Then negotiations started and both sides came to a tentative agreement and news even came that President Duterte might come in late April or early May to sign a deal.

Now look what has happened. A few days ago, embassy staff filmed themselves rescuing a Filipina helper from a home, alleging she was beaten and tortured. We don't know the truth. But why was the rescue mission videotaped and shared on social media? Was it an accidental video and posting? Or does it have its own agenda?

Of course this infuriated the Kuwaiti people and the government. Because legally, the Philippines Embassy broke diplomatic protocols, and also, helping a maid abscond is against the law in Kuwait. But I'm sorry guys - I'm not defending either the Filipinos or our foreign ministry. In all fairness, let me ask you this: If this girl wanted to leave, would she have been allowed to leave the house? Some houses might allow it, but many will not. And I'm sorry, but no one in this country is a slave.

And let's not let this incident overshadow the main problem - which is the failure to protect the rights of workers in Kuwait. This problem has been building for decades. Why till now is there no proper system to protect domestic workers in Kuwait? Is this a nuclear issue that cannot be resolved? This has tarnished Kuwait's reputation. No one wants to send workers to Kuwait. Recently I visited recruitment offices in Hawally and all of them had the same thing to say - countries are shunning away from sending workers to Kuwait.

Now Ramadan is coming and everyone needs extra helpers - even restaurants which cater for iftar and suhoor. But without these workers, it will be a state of chaos. So let's calm down and fix this problem once and for all.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday strongly blasted the Philippines Embassy in the country for allegedly helping Filipina maids claiming to be abused by their local employers to flee, and also harshly criticized the foreign ministry for not taking strong action. MPs insisted that the embassy's actions have breached all diplomatic norms and called on the foreign ministry to expel the Philippines ambassador and other diplomats involved in the allegations.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told reporters that he was informed by the foreign ministry that it plans to take action against the embassy, which has requested some time to amend its position. "I'd like to stress that everything that could undermine Kuwait's sovereignty, dignity and reputation by linking the country to anomalous and bizarre incidents, as well as the unprovoked escalation by the Philippine side, will be addressed by the foreign ministry," he vowed. Ghanem warned that there would be a reaction to the Philippine side's unjustified and irresponsible conduct, which included breaches of international laws in general and the Vienna Convention in particular.

According to parliamentary sources, the foreign ministry has already said it will declare the ambassador persona non grata if he does not hand over the Filipinos



Marzouq Al-Ghanem

accused of helping the maids escape from their employers' homes. Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah also said that the ministry is planning to take action, without providing details.

Meanwhile, police arrested two Filipinos allegedly involved in "rescue" operations and charged them with abduction. The two were arrested in Kuwait airport's parking area. Their cars were also seized. The interior ministry said in a statement that the duo, during interrogations, "confessed to the crime in addition to other



Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei

similar offenses that had been committed in various areas of the country".

MP Yousef Al-Fadhlah said in a statement he has asked the National Assembly to assign its foreign relations panel to investigate the actions of the Philippines Embassy in the country, describing it a total breach of diplomatic practices. He said that the committee should be given one month to prepare its report on the probe. Fadhlah demanded that the committee should summon

Continued on Page 11

Call for panel to vet expat licenses rejected; MP files to grill Sabeeh

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday rejected a proposal calling to set up a higher committee to supervise the issuance and renewal of driving licenses of expatriates. In a response to the proposal by MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei, the minister said the committee will complicate the procedures for issuing driving licenses to millions of foreigners in the country. He added that issuance of driving licenses to expatriates is governed by a set of ministerial decisions issued to regulate the procedures. A large number of MPs as well as activists and government officials blame expatriates for the menacing traffic problem in the country.



Saleh Ashour



Hind Al-Sabeeh

Meanwhile, MP Saleh Ashour yesterday carried out his threat and filed to grill Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and State Minister for Economic Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh, who recently survived another grilling. Ashour filed the grilling on the basis of three main issues: Misusing the law to dissolve non-governmental organizations and cooperative societies, failing to enforce necessary policies to restructure the demographics of the state and failing to apply development plans to bolster the country's economy.

Continued on Page 11

57 killed in Kabul blast; Amir sends condolences

KABUL: An Islamic State suicide bomber killed at least 57 people including women and children and wounded 119 outside a voter registration center in the Afghan capital Kabul yesterday in the latest attack on election preparations. The assaults underscore growing concerns about security in the lead-up to legislative elections scheduled for Oct 20, which are seen as a test-run for next year's presidential poll.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-



KABUL: An Afghan reacts at the site of a suicide bombing outside a voter registration center yesterday. — AFP

Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on the deaths in the bombing. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Afghan president. There were anguished and angry scenes at Isteqal Hospital where many of the

Continued on Page 11

Four British pilgrims killed in Saudi crash

RIYADH: Four British pilgrims were killed and 12 others injured in Saudi Arabia when their bus collided with a fuel tanker, officials said yesterday. The crash occurred on Saturday near the western Saudi town of Al Khalas while the pilgrims were on their way to the holy city of Makkah. "The royal

embassy of Saudi Arabia in London is working with (Britain's) Foreign Office to issue emergency visas immediately to both the relatives of the four pilgrims who died as well as to families of the 12 British pilgrims who were injured," the embassy said in a statement. "The injured have been taken to a hospital in Makkah where everything possible is being done to care for them."

The statement said 17 British pilgrims were aboard the bus. "My sincere sympathies and thoughts are with the families of the four British pilgrims who tragically died in a coach crash in the kingdom on Saturday and for the

pilgrims who were injured," Saudi ambassador to Britain, Mohammed bin Nawaf, tweeted. "Our prayers are with these families at this tragic time."

In a brief statement, a spokesman for the British Foreign Office said: "We are supporting the British families of those who have died and those injured following a serious road traffic accident". The director of Blackburn-based Hashim Travel Gulfraz Zaman called the incident "horrendous" and "very distressing". "If you see the remains of the bus, there's just the metal frame of it that's left," he told the BBC. "It's very upsetting - especially the people that

have passed away," he added. "Our thoughts are with the families".

Every year, millions of Muslims flock to Makkah and Madinah further south, Islam's second holiest site, to carry out the annual hajj pilgrimage or the umrah. In Jan 2017, a two-month old baby was among six British nationals killed in a road accident in Saudi Arabia while they were traveling to Madinah, according to British officials. In 2015, around 2,300 worshippers performing hajj were crushed to death in a stampede, in the worst disaster ever to strike the annual pilgrimage. — Agencies

News in brief

Ramadan likely from May 17

KUWAIT: The holy month of Ramadan is expected to begin on Thursday, May 17, Kuwaiti astronomer Adel Al-Saadoun said yesterday. He noted that the crescent might not be visible in Kuwait and could only be seen by telescope, while the inhabitants of the Maghreb region (in northern Africa) will be able to see the crescent clearly. Muslims fast in Ramadan from dawn to dusk, in line with the Islamic doctrine. Eating, drinking or smoking at public places is prohibited by Kuwaiti law. — KUNA

Saudis down Houthi missile

RIYADH: Saudi air defenses yesterday intercepted a ballistic missile fired by Yemeni rebels at the kingdom's southern border city of Najran, which set a farm ablaze, state media said. "Saudi forces were able to intercept (the missile)," the Saudi Press Agency said, citing the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed Houthi rebels. "But the shrapnel scattered over residential areas and caused a fire at a farm belonging to a citizen, without causing any injuries." The missile was launched from Saada, the Houthi stronghold in northern Yemen, the coalition was cited as saying. The coalition said another missile crashed in a Saudi desert yesterday, without specifying a location, adding it caused no damage. Yesterday's strikes are the latest in a series of rebel bombardments on Saudi territory. — AFP

Saudis issue drone restrictions

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's interior ministry yesterday instructed drone enthusiasts to obtain permission to fly the devices until regulations were finalized, a day after security forces shot down a recreational drone near the king's palace in Riyadh. Amateur online videos of heavy gunfire in the capital's Khozama district on Saturday sparked fears of possible unrest in the world's top oil exporter. A senior Saudi official told Reuters there were no casualties when the drone was shot down and that King Salman was not in the palace at the time. An Interior Ministry spokesman said a law for the use of drones was in its final stage and called on users to obtain the necessary police clearance to use the devices "for particular reasons in permitted locations", state news agency SPA reported. — Reuters

UAE: Qatari jets intercepted plane

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates said yesterday that Qatari fighter jets narrowly avoided a UAE passenger flight over neighboring Bahrain, the latest in a series of such claims. The UAE General Civil Aviation Authority said the incident took place at midday yesterday and the captain of the flight with 86 passengers onboard had "to make a quick maneuver to avoid collision". "Qatari jets chased the UAE passenger plane and came close to it leaving just seconds before collision... a very dangerous and unsafe approach which endangered the lives of passengers," the authority said in a statement. — AFP

Local

Amir commends municipality workers' efforts in carrying out vital projects

His Highness receives Minister Roumi, Municipality Director General

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi and Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfohi.

During the meeting, they presented to His Highness a report about the most vital and future projects and the progress achieved in ventures that contribute to the development of the local economy. His Highness the Amir has praised the role of Kuwait Municipality, workers and personnel carrying out those projects. The meeting was attended by Acting Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir received Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Prime Minister received Sheikh Meshal in a separate meeting.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulation to the new Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables.—KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah reads a report about Kuwait Municipality projects during his meeting with Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi and Director General of Kuwait Municipality Ahmad Al-Manfohi. — Amiri Diwan photo



KUWAIT: The United States' Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman visited Kuwait Times yesterday and met with Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Armenians mark 100 years of republic with cultural dances

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The 100-year celebration of the Republic of Armenia will be celebrated by Armenians the whole year round, and they have arranged several activities to mark this special occasion. Armenian Ambassador to Kuwait Manvel Badeyan told Kuwait Times, adding that the celebration is the biggest to date because of the centennial.

"The celebration usually takes place on May 28, but because it is a huge event, we will have yearlong celebrations. We are a country with a rich history spanning generations. We have been an empire and a kingdom. In the framework of this event, we are planning a number of cultural events in Kuwait. The first one was organized last week - the painting exhibition 'Color of Friendship' at Al-Babtain Library. We believe culture is a language of peace. Also, we are going to bring folkdance ensembles and a harmonic orchestra in cooperation with the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters. We are also bringing contemporary arts, and classical concerts will also be held," he said. He added that cultural exchange is very important

even in time of peace and stability. The 1918 Republic of Armenia barely lasted two years. It was, however, a historic political entity - the first expression of Armenian sovereignty since 1375. Its efforts led to the establishment of a Soviet Armenian republic, which, in turn, allowed for an independent Armenia upon the collapse of the USSR 70 years later. Although much can be said to criticize the policies of 1918 Yerevan, some things were also salvaged and put in place in spite of the heavy and harsh circumstances of the time.

The embassy also announced that direct flights to Armenia will be launched in June. "The number of visitors from Kuwait and the Middle East is growing rapidly. So, in order to cater and serve passengers, we will have direct flights by June this year from Kuwait by Wataniya Airways," he said. The ambassador lauded several bilateral agreements signed between Kuwait and Armenia including for trade and economic cooperation, medical cooperation and culture and educational exchange. "We are organizing mutual visits of ministers and officials of both countries. Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh visited Armenia and signed several agreements including labor deals," he said.

Trade balance between the two countries is not very promising compared to other European countries, but he is hoping to open many opportunities in the coming years, especially since many agreements have been signed and the upcoming agreements will help strengthen cooperation. "There are many obstacles for strengthening bilateral ties and improving our trade balance - number one is a lack of adequate transportation of goods from our side. We



KUWAIT: Armenian Ambassador to Kuwait Manvel Badeyan speaks with Kuwait Times. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

do not have direct flights - we have a long way to go. There are many opportunities between us, and this is the reason why we are now trying our best to secure opportunities around us," he said.

"We have many agricultural products that we would like to market in Kuwait, along with medical, healthcare and IT - we need to showcase all these to Kuwaitis. Again, the main obstacle is transportation, but we are working on it now," he said. Some products that are already marketed in Kuwait include textiles and shoes. In the area of tourism, Armenia has continued to enjoy the respect of the Kuwaiti people. "We have the best places to offer in terms of tourism. We are thankful that the number of tourists is growing - direct flights would not be possible without customers. So with this new route, it means a lot," he added.



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi meets with Co-chairman of the Egyptian-Kuwaiti Cooperation Council Mohammad Al-Sager. — KUNA

Al-Sisi touts 'time-tested' ties with Kuwait

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi said yesterday that Egypt and Kuwait are tied with time-tested and distinguished relations at all levels. While meeting with visiting Co-chairman of the Egyptian-Kuwaiti Cooperation Council Mohammad Al-Sager, Sisi said the council plays a significant role in the promotion of bilateral economic relations. Presidential Spokesman Bassam Radhi said in a statement. During the meeting, the Egyptian president expounded on his

country's recent moves to launch economic reforms, provide an attractive investment atmosphere and promote business environment, the spokesman added. Sisi reiterated Egypt's resolve to wipe out any obstacles that could bug Kuwaiti investors, while underscoring the private sector's weighty role in cementing bilateral economic and trade cooperation. The spokesman quoted Sager as extolling relations between both sisterly countries as "firm and peculiar."

He highly acclaimed Egypt's historical role in supporting Kuwait and the region, and safeguarding Arab security and stability, the Egyptian presidential spokesman noted. Sager pointed to Kuwaiti investors' interest in boosting their investments in Egypt thanks to its remarkably improving investment atmosphere.—KUNA

Science base of development: Foreign minister

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah stressed the importance of science as one of the most important aspects of joint action with various countries and base of development, security and peace.

This came during Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled's opening speech at the annual meeting of The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA), organized by Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS), yesterday. Such meetings promote cooperation in the fields of scientific research and strengthen links between scientists and young researchers as they develop scientific relations between Kuwait, Arab countries and Germany, he said. This forum, which has a wide participation of research and academic institutions in Kuwait, provides the opportunity to meet with their counterparts in the Arab countries and Germany in order to support research projects and encourage education in applied sciences and humanity.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled expressed hope the forum would generate close partnerships between scientists, as he also praised KFAS's efforts in supporting science and encouraging international cooperation in science and research.

Meanwhile, KFAS Director General Dr



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah speaks at the annual meeting of The Arab-German Young Academy of Sciences and Humanities (AGYA).—KUNA

Adnan Shihab-Eldin, said in a speech that the forum which concludes on April 25, with participation of 48 Arab and German AGYA members and administrators, will discuss the annual reports of the AGYA activities and future projects. The academy aims to establish a community of distinguished Arab and German researchers at early age of their academic career and present some innovative projects to the academy, he said.

The strategy of the academy aims to enhance the cultural environment possible and to draw attention to youth to invest their energies as well as support research between local scientific institutions and the world's largest specialized

scientific research centers.

German Deputy Director General, International Cooperation in Education and Research Federal Ministry of Education and Research Dr Frithjof A Maennel said that their presence in the forum shows the importance of science and scientific research carried out by both parties.

The forum is a very important opportunity to identify partners in the Gulf region, especially in Kuwait, he said. The Academy has made progress and a significant contribution to the scientific science since 2013 as the academy succeeded in attracting many young researchers, he added.—KUNA



A general view of people in attendance.

Kuwait's policy based on non-intervention in states' affairs

KUWAIT: Kuwait's foreign policy is largely based on non-intervention in states' domestic affairs, resolving conflicts and respecting the UN charter, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah affirmed yesterday. These components have earned Kuwait admiration from all states of the globe, paving way for acquiring a permanent seat in the Security

Council between 2018-2019, with support from up to 188 states, said Jarallah, in a lecture during the sixth session of Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute. He praised His Highness the Amir's efforts in mapping out the foreign policy, setting its broad lines particularly with respect of cementing the bonds with the other GCC countries.

The deputy minister also lauded His Highness for elevating level of the relations with peace-loving nations, thus drawing states' admiration of the country's transparent and credible foreign policy. Moreover, His Highness has been playing an instrumental role at the humanitarian level, securing aid for stricken nations, thus earning him the UN designation the 'humanitarian leader' as well the title for Kuwait as the 'humanitarian center.' — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah (left) speaks in a lecture during the sixth session of Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Diplomatic Institute.

Local

Three arrested with 125,000 Captagon pills prepared for sale

2,700 suspicious tablets found with passenger at airport

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: The Drugs Control General Department (DCGD) arrested three persons with possession of a large quantity of Captagon tablets. An undercover source tipped the DCGD about a 29-year-old bedoon man having Captagon for sale. A warrant was obtained and the suspect's house was raided. He was arrested with his partner, also a bedoon, following stiff resistance. Officers found 25,000 Captagon pills. Both said they got the drugs from an ex-convict citizen. The citizen was arrested in Kabb, and an unlicensed firearm and 100,000 pills were found with him. He said he brought the pills from a neighboring country. In a separate case, a female customs inspector arrested an Asian man who had hidden around 2,700 tablets suspected of being narcotics.



No injuries in two fires

the Capital, Shuhada, Salmiya and backup fire stations responded to an emergency call reporting the blaze. The fire was put out without injuries, Kuwait Fire Service Department (KFSD) said in a statement.

Three fire stations responded to a call about a fire in a Sharq building. Firemen found the fire was in a women's salon, and smoke had engulfed the eight-storey building, in addition to the basement. Residents were evacuated as the fire was being put out. No injuries were reported.

Graduation

The interior ministry's assistant undersecretary for border outlets affairs Maj Gen Mansour Al-Awadhi attended the graduation ceremony of a number of specialized courses for new officers who were appointed at the airport security.

Swindling

Jabriya detectives are interrogating an Egyptian man and his mother, as he is accused of swindling a female citizen, Al-Rai reported. The victim claimed she gave the suspect KD 50,000 for a project, but he instead sent the money to his home country and bought two apartments there. The young citizen and her mother lodged a complaint against the Egyptian who convinced her of entering a project, so she took a KD 50,000 bank loan and gave the money to him, only for him to disappear. Detectives located the suspect and arrested him. He said he received the money and gave it to his mother, who said she transferred the money to Egypt and bought two

apartments. Both suspects said they cannot return the money immediately, because they need time to sell the apartments.

Mugging

A citizen told Jabriya police he was beaten by two unidentified persons after being lured by a woman to an apartment, as she had called him and asked him to donate prayer rugs. When he went to the flat, he was met by the woman and two men, who closed the door and demanded KD 150. When he refused, one of the men hit him with a metal object and the other sprayed him with a liquid. He was also Tasered, before he was able to escape. The victim went to the police, who accompanied him to the apartment where the two men, both homosexual, and the Iranian woman were arrested.

Fight

Hawally police broke up a fight in a cafe after a detective in the area witnessed it. The detective was on routine patrol when he saw two men fighting and using sticks and sharp objects, so he called the police. When they arrived, they found out that one of them was wounded in the head. The injured man was taken to hospital, then both citizens were charged with exchanging blows. But they both refused to divulge what the fight was about.

Under the influence

A citizen who was under the influence of drugs was arrested by police, who found two passports on him with the same data. The arrest was made in Fintas, as the driver was driving erratically. When he was searched, drugs and the passports were found on him. He is being interrogated before being sent to the Drugs Control General Department.



KUWAIT: This picture released by the Interior Ministry shows drugs found with three suspects who were arrested yesterday.

Banned tobacco

Meanwhile, Customs General Department detectives foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of banned tambae tobacco through Shuaiba port. The deputy head of customs' detectives said authorities were tipped about the shipment. The illicit substances were in 850 large bags with 30 small pouches in each of them.

No injuries

Fire broke out in the Athletics Federation's building and spread over 2,000 sq m in Shamiya. Firemen from



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah met with the United Kingdom's Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport yesterday.

Lawyer accuses trio of helping Indian maid flee

A Saleh

KUWAIT: A lawyer filed a complaint at Salwa police station accusing three Indians of helping an Indian housemaid flee her sponsor's house. The suspects claimed to be working for the Indian Embassy in Kuwait. The lawyer added that the suspects barged into the house

claiming to be embassy staff and that they had come to free their compatriot. A break and entry and assault case was filed.

Industrial plots closed

Public Authority for Industry's (PAI) Director Abdul Kareem Taqi issued a decision closing down 26 industrial plots after the users failed to pay overdue fees, said informed sources, noting that Taqi urged all sectors to be very strict in collecting state fees. Meanwhile, Taqi announced that the Shadadiya Industrial Area will be ready in Nov 2019 and stressed that basic features of the area including streets and infrastructure will start materializing by November.

will start depositing them in deserving employees' bank accounts soon. Shehab's statements came in response to reports about a strike staged by a number of authority employees in protest of their allegedly unpaid bonuses.

Charity law

Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Development Hind Al-Sabeeh said a new law for charity work is being prepared with more regulations to organize charity activities. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Kuwait Society for Hearing Disabilities' first forum held under the title of 'Sign Language Serving the Deaf', Sabeeh said that the ministry's previous regulations and resolutions had helped develop charity work in Kuwait and earned Kuwait international recognition as a humanitarian center for its role in serving the needy and distressed people worldwide. Sabeeh added that the new law is being prepared in collaboration with NGOs and that it would be later referred to the parliament.

Housing problem

Second constituency nominee for the Municipal Council elections Muhahel Al-Khaled said the previous council had done its part with regards to the housing problem and managed over four years to provide enough land for over 100,000 housing units. Khaled added that the previous councilmembers worked on passing government projects that will help turn Kuwait into a financial and commercial hub, and also worked on providing the private sector with all its needs.

Fifth Ring Road development starts Sunday

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Director of the Public Authority for Roads and Land Transport Ahmad Al-Hessan announced that the first phase of developing the Fifth Ring Road will be launched on Sunday, April 29, 2018, and explained that the project includes building two intersections between Doha Spur and the Fifth Ring Road and two bridges between the spur and the Sixth Ring Road to help achieve more flexible traffic flows.

Illegal fishing

Following reports of illegal fishing using full gear in Kuwait Bay during the night, the Environment Public Authority (EPA) announced that in collaboration with the environment police, some fishermen were spotted and fined for violating article 108 of the environmental protection law. EPA added that the boats used were also confiscated.

Bonuses

The Public Authority for Manpower's deputy director for financial and human resources Kholood Al-Shehab denied media reports about not paying excellent performance bonuses and stressed that the amounts are ready and that the authority

Kuwait Times

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Local

Zain participates in awarding winners of 'Company Program' competition

As part of its strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait



KUWAIT: Waleed Al-Khashti awards winners of 'Most Innovative Product' category for schools and universities.



KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, awarded the winning teams of the 'Most Innovative Product' category for university and high school students at the INJAZ Company Program Competition as part of its strategic partnership with INJAZ Kuwait.

Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti awarded 'Biotensils' team from Kuwait National English School for winning the "Most Innovative Product" category prize for high school students, as well as 'Portage' team from Algonquin College for winning the same category for university students.

Zain's participation in the competition came in line with the company's strategic partnership as an Innovation Partner with INJAZ, and in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, which aims at contributing to the development of the youth and education sectors.

INJAZ's 'Company Program' competition aims at encouraging students, from across Kuwait's universities and high schools, to come forward with their innovative ideas and print a positive change in the society. The competition includes a number of phases, and educates students to make use of business opportuni-

ties, launch products, create an added value, and becoming young entrepreneurs. Zain Kuwait and Zain Group employees took part in mentoring the students during the training period.

Zain continues its strategic partnership with INJAZ, through which the company seeks to support and inspire the youth from across Kuwait's universities and schools. Through their partnership, Zain and INJAZ organize a number of educational initiatives all year long to foster the energies of Kuwait's youth and support them to further develop and prosper.

INJAZ Kuwait was founded in 2005, as a non-profit,

non-governmental organization, driven by Kuwait's private sector. Through strategic partnerships with Kuwait's business and education sectors, and with the help of qualified and dedicated volunteers, INJAZ delivers educational programs on entrepreneurial and leadership skills aimed at inspiring and educating future generations. INJAZ Kuwait is operated by INJAZ Al-Arab.

Since 2005, INJAZ-Kuwait reached over 40,000 students, through 3,000+ volunteers at 60+ schools and universities to provide students with knowledge and experience that will assist them in their personal and career development.

US Department of State's Report on Human Rights Practices in Kuwait for 2017 - Part I

Kuwait is a constitutional, hereditary state ruled by the Al-Sabah family. While there is also a democratically elected parliament, His Highness the Amir holds ultimate authority over most government decisions. The last parliamentary election was held in November 2016 and was generally free and fair with several members of the opposition winning seats. Civilian authorities maintained effective control over the security forces.

The most significant human rights issues included allegations of torture of detainees; political prisoners; restrictions on freedom of speech, including criminalization of criticism of government officials and defamation of religion; long-term movement and assembly limits on a stateless population referred to as Bedoon; trafficking in persons; criminalization of male same sex sexual activity; and reports of forced labor, especially among foreign workers.

The government took steps in some cases to prosecute and punish officials who committed abuses, whether in the security services or elsewhere in the government. Impunity was a problem in corruption cases.

Section 1. Respect for the integrity of the person, including freedom from:

a. Arbitrary Deprivation of Life and Other Unlawful or Politically Motivated Killings

There were no reports that the government or its agents committed arbitrary or unlawful killings.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of disappearances by or on behalf of government authorities.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The constitution and law prohibit torture and other cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment, but there continued to be reports of torture and ill-treatment by police and security forces during prolonged detention of persons in cases relating to terrorism, and against detained members of minority groups and noncitizens.

Several persons claimed police or Kuwait State Security (KSS) force members beat them at police checkpoints or in detention. In July a foreign national in long-term detention in the Kuwait Central Prison reported he was beaten by prison personnel, and diplomatic representatives confirmed the prisoner was denied medical treatment for his injuries for at least 11 days following the incident. The government stated it investigates complaints against police officers and that disciplinary action is taken when warranted. Disciplinary actions resulted in fines, detention, and some officers being removed from their positions or terminated. The government did not make public all the findings of its investigations or all punishments it imposed. In one publicized case, the Court of Misdemeanors in March sentenced a police officer to one month in jail for illegally detaining and physically abusing an innocent citizen. Although government investigations do not lead to compensation for victims of abuse, the victim can utilize government reports and results of internal disciplinary actions to seek compensation via civil courts.

Prison and Detention Center Conditions

According to the Parliamentary Committee Report on Central Prison Conditions, the prisons lacked the minimum standards of cleanliness and sanitation, were overcrowded, and suffered from widespread corruption in management leading to drug abuse and prisoner safety issues. An international organization that visited the Central Prison corroborated some of the findings of the report.

Government authorities were investigating a February attack by another inmate on former member of parliament (MP) and opposition leader Musallam Al-Barrak, who had been convicted in 2015 on charges of insulting His Highness the Amir. The attack prompted a review by parliament of the prison system, and the inmate accused of attacking the former MP reportedly committed suicide.

Physical Conditions: The Central Prison has a capacity of 2,302 inmates. Approximately 3,634 inmates were housed there. Cells in the male prison held four to 12 persons and cells in the female prison held six to eight; inmates reportedly lived in moderately overcrowded conditions. Although the

total capacity of the women's prison was not reported, both prison authorities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that have visited the facility mentioned overcrowding at the women's prison, which currently houses 192 inmates. A nursery complex was provided for female inmates with children less than two years old. Officials stated the prison was not designed to accommodate prisoners with disabilities as, by law, any convict with a significant disability cannot be held in the Central Prison.

The number of inmates at the deportation center at Talha was close to 400 on an average day. Observers reported that up to 800 inmates could be housed in the facility for short periods of time. They also reported some overcrowding at the deportation center and poor sanitation as a consequence of the aging facility. Noncitizen women pending deportation were kept at the Central Prison due to lack of segregated facilities at the deportation center.

The Parliamentary Committee Report on Central Prison Conditions indicated there was discrimination between prisoners according to national origin and citizenship status. Bribery of prison workers and poor supervision resulted in a black market trading in drugs, cigarettes, cellphones, electronics, as well as makeshift weapons. Some prisoners complained of having cells raided by unidentified masked men.

Administration: There were some reports of corruption and lack of supervision by the administration of the prison and detention center system. While inmates lodged complaints against prison officials and other inmates, no information was available on the resolution of these complaints.

Independent Monitoring: The Ministry of Interior permitted independent monitoring of prison conditions by some non-governmental observers and international human rights groups and required written approval for visits by local NGOs. Authorities permitted staff from the International Committee of the Red Cross and the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) to visit the prisons and detention centers. The government also allowed local NGOs to visit prisons upon approval from the ministry. The Kuwait Society for Human Rights and the Kuwait Association for the Basic Evaluation of Human Rights were allowed to visit prisons during the year. A government official stated that local and international NGOs visited prisons approximately 70 times during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest or Detention

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention. There were numerous reports, however, that police made arbitrary arrests, principally as part of sustained action against persons in the country illegally, regardless of their actual residency status.

Role of the police and security apparatus

Civilian authorities maintained effective control over security forces, and the government has effective mechanisms to investigate and punish abuse and corruption.

Police were generally effective in carrying out core responsibilities. There were reports some police stations did not take criminal complaints seriously, especially those of foreigners, and of citizen and noncitizen victims of rape and domestic violence. Alleged crimes perpetrated by nationals against nonnationals rarely led to prosecution. Many cases reached an informal resolution through cash settlement. In cases of alleged police abuse, the district chief investigator is responsible for examining abuse allegations and refers cases to the courts for trial.

Arrest procedures and treatment of detainees

A police officer generally must obtain an arrest warrant from a state prosecutor or a judge before making an arrest, except in cases of hot pursuit or observing the commission of a crime. There were numerous reports of police arresting and detaining foreign nationals without a warrant, primarily as part of the government's action against unlawful residents. The courts usually do not accept cases without warrants issued prior to arrests. Authorities generally informed detainees promptly of the charges against them and allowed access to their lawyers and family members. There were cases of detainees, especially those held for drug crimes, who were detained for periods of one to two weeks, and who were unaware of the charges against them and not allowed access to an attorney.

Diplomatic representatives observed that in some detention cases, authorities permitted lawyers to attend legal pro-

ceedings but did not allow direct contact with their clients. Detainees were routinely denied access to their lawyers and translators in advance of hearings. Defendants who do not speak or understand Arabic often learned of charges against them after the trial as they did not have access to a translator when the charges were pressed against them. The law provides the detained person the right to a prompt judicial determination of the detention's legality. If authorities file charges, a prosecutor may demand a suspect to detention for an additional 10 days for a misdemeanor and 20 days for a felony. Prosecutors also may obtain court orders for up to six months' detention pending trial. There is a functioning bail system for defendants awaiting trial. The bar association provides lawyers for indigent defendants; in these cases defendants do not have the option of choosing which lawyer is assigned to them. Defendants in drug cases were usually held incommunicado for several days while their case was under investigation. The Ministry of Interior investigates misdemeanor charges and refers cases to the misdemeanor courts as appropriate. The undersecretary in the Ministry of Interior is responsible for approving all administrative deportation orders.

Arbitrary Arrest: There were reports that police arbitrarily detained nonnationals during raids, including some who possessed valid residency permits and visas.

Pretrial Detention: Arbitrary lengthy detention before trial sometimes occurred. Authorities held some detainees beyond the maximum detention period of six months. The total staff of 600 judges and 300 prosecutors at the Ministry of Justice was reported as being inadequate to handle cases in a timely manner and was the main cause of delays in processing cases.

Excessive detention at the government-run Talha Deportation Center, in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, where there are no maximum time limits on detention prior to deportation, was also a problem, particularly when the detainee owed money to a citizen or was a citizen from a country without diplomatic representation in the country to facilitate exit documents. Detainee's Ability to Challenge Lawfulness of Detention before a Court: Detainees, and those convicted by a court, were able to challenge their detention. Criminal lawyers reported that defendants were able to challenge their detention successfully, particularly in cases involving drug and alcohol use, by showing violation of the legal process by law enforcement officers at the time of arrest, resulting in acquittals in court.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

The law and the constitution provide for an independent judiciary, and the government generally respected judicial independence and impartiality. The Supreme Judicial Council nominates all prosecutors and judges and submits nominees to the Amir for approval. Judges who were citizens received lifetime appointments until they reached mandatory retirement age; judges who were noncitizens held one to three-year renewable contracts. The Supreme Judicial Council may remove judges for cause. Noncitizen residents involved in legal disputes with citizens frequently alleged the courts showed bias in favor of citizens. While no legal provisions prohibit women from appointment as judges and public prosecutors, the only path to those positions is through work in the prosecutor's office.

Under the law questions of citizenship or residency status and various provisions of immigration law are not subject to judicial review, so noncitizens arrested, for example, for unlawful residency, or those whose lawful residency is canceled due to an arrest, have no access to the courts. The law subjects noncitizens charged with noncriminal offenses, including some residency and traffic violations, to administrative deportations that cannot be challenged in court; however, noncitizens charged in criminal cases face legal deportations, which can be challenged in court.

Trial procedures

The constitution provides for the presumption of innocence and the right to a fair public trial, and the judiciary generally enforced this right. The law forbids physical and psychological abuse of the accused. Under the law defendants also enjoy the right to be present at their trial, as well as the provision of prompt, detailed information on charges

against them. There were cases where non-Arabic speaking defendants did not understand the charges against them due to language barriers and restrictions on communication between lawyers and their clients. Defendants were not always provided with interpreters as required by law. Criminal trials are public unless a court decides "maintenance of public order" or the "preservation of public morals" necessitates closed proceedings. The bar association is obligated upon court request to appoint an attorney without charge for indigent defendants in civil, commercial, and criminal cases, and defendants used these services. Defendants have the right to adequate time and facilities to prepare a defense. The public did not have access to most court documents. The Ministry of Justice is required to provide defendants with an interpreter for the entire judicial process, but in practice this did not always occur.

Defendants have the right to confront their accusers, to confront witnesses against them, and to present their own witnesses, although these rights were not always respected in practice. Defendants cannot be compelled to testify or confess guilt. Defendants have the right to appeal verdicts to a higher court, and many persons exercised this right.

Under the new domestic labor law, domestic workers are exempted from litigation fees. If foreign workers had no legal representation, the public prosecutor arranged for it on their behalf, but with little or no involvement by the workers or their families. When workers received third-party assistance to bring a case, the cases were often resolved when the employer paid a monetary settlement to avoid a trial.

Political prisoners and detainees

There were several instances of persons detained for their political views. Throughout the year the government arrested several individuals on charges such as insulting the Amir, insulting leaders of neighboring countries, or insulting the judiciary. While authorities arrested and released some individuals after a few days, they held others for weeks or months pending trial. During the year sentences for insulting or speaking out against the Amir or other leaders on social media ranged from a few months in prison to up to 10 years.

Civil judicial procedures and remedies

The law provides for an independent and impartial judiciary by individuals or organizations in civil matters regarding human rights violations, but authorities occasionally did not enforce such rulings for political reasons. Authorities also occasionally used administrative punishments in civil matters, such as instituting travel bans or deportations. Individuals were able to appeal adverse domestic court decisions to international human rights bodies if they chose to do so.

f. Arbitrary or Unlawful Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The constitution and the law prohibit such actions, and the government respected these prohibitions. Cybercrime agents within the Ministry of Interior, however, regularly monitored publicly accessible social media sites and sought information about owners of accounts, although foreign-owned social media companies denied most requests for information. In 2015 the government passed a DNA law requiring all persons entering the country, including citizens and noncitizens, to submit DNA samples for security purposes. In October the Constitutional Court ruled that the DNA Law was unconstitutional on the grounds that it violated the constitution's articles on personal liberty, leading to the immediate revocation of the law.

The law forbids marriage between Muslim women and non-Muslim men and requires male citizens serving in police or the military to obtain government approval to marry non-nationals. Nevertheless, the government offered only non-binding advice on such matters and generally did not prevent marriages between Muslims and non-Muslims. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the country's diplomats were prohibited from marrying noncitizens. The government may deny a citizenship application by a bedoon resident based on security or criminal violations committed by the individual's family members. Additionally, if a person loses citizenship, all family members whose status derives from that person also lose their citizenship and all associated rights.

— To be continued in tomorrow's issue

Local

Amir eager to care for talented young people: Minister Sabeeh

His Highness patronizes Kuwait innovation competition for students' research and projects



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh (third from right) and other officials pose with winning students from Kuwait during the ceremony.



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh and Sheikhha Fadla Al-Saad Al-Sabah listen to a presentation by Saudi contestants.



Participants from Kuwait.



Participants from Bahrain.



Participants from Qatar.



Contestants from Oman are honored during the ceremony.



Sheikha Fadla Al-Saad Al-Sabah poses with children at the event.



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh delivers her speech.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's patronage of the Kuwait innovation competition for students' research and projects showed his keenness on supporting creative and talented youth, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh said.

His Highness the Amir's patronage embodied his interest in assimilating creativity among Kuwaiti girls, Al-Sabeeh, also minister of state for economic affairs, said. She also lauded the initiative of Sheikhha Fadla Al-Saad Al-Sabah to hold this important scientific competition. She pointed out that the competition is meant to support the country's efforts to improve education, promote creativity, develop competencies and create a knowledge economy. Coordinator of the initiative Aisha Al-Holi said that contest was divided into levels, one for the secondary school students and other for the intermediate school students. Kuwait won the first place in the intermediate schools category on a research about recycling cooling and heating devices and Oman won the secondary schools category for the production of safe insecticide, she noted. —KUNA

Maroon is..
VISIONARY, AMBITIOUS, COURAGEOUS..
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The American University of Kuwait received its Institutional Accreditation from the Private Universities Council (PUC), Ministry of Higher Education in the State of Kuwait, and has a Memorandum of Understanding and Cooperation with Dartmouth College (Hanover, New Hampshire - USA).

CONDOLENCES

The Chairman, Board Members,
Management and Staff of

**NATIONAL INVESTMENTS COMPANY
K.S.C.P.**

Wish to extend their
heartfelt condolences to

Mr. Habib Neamatullah
Officer Payroll – HR & Training Department

On the sad demise of

His Father

"May his soul rest in peace, and may the Almighty grant solace and strength to the bereaved family members during this time of grief"

Kuwait backs Arab water cooperation

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait has always been eager to promote and consolidate water cooperation among Arab, mainly Gulf, countries, a senior Kuwaiti official said yesterday. There are serious steps on the part of Gulf countries to launch water connectivity; including relevant regulatory resolutions, Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Ministry of Electricity and Water Mohammad Bushehri told a news conference to announce the Third Arab Water Conference due in Kuwait on May 2-3.

"We are now in the process of launching the first stage of water connectivity; chiefly on the bilateral basis," he added. Inter-Gulf water linkage is primarily meant to diversify water sources, involving Red Sea water, given that Gulf countries often hinge upon Arabian Gulf water desalination, he remarked. The conference will draw delegations from 22 Arab countries, together with nine UN agencies. The conferees are expected to consider 44 scientific working papers and attend nine sessions that focus on, inter alia, water, climate, food and energy. —KUNA



Iran vows to resume nuclear enrichment if US ditches deal

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Suicide revives concerns about Japan's immigration detention

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MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistani Kashmiri girls shout slogans during a protest calling for justice following the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir, in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan controlled Kashmir. —AFP

Child rape case heightens Hindu-Muslim divide

8 Hindu men on trial for rape, murder of Muslim girl

JAMMU: The internet is being cut for hours on end in Jammu as authorities try to halt protests that have grown in the Kashmir winter capital since the rape-murder of an eight year old girl opened a new front in India's Hindu-Muslim divide. With near daily protests held across the country over the brutal killing, Jammu police say the digital clampdown is to halt the spread of "rumors" that inflame tensions.

Much damage has already been done in the city. Eight Hindu men are on trial for the rape and murder of the Muslim girl, or for trying to destroy evidence. On the streets, Muslims are demanding justice while Hindu radicals say the inquiry is biased. Threats have been made and state politicians forced to resign. "Hang the real guilty," read banners carried by about 100 mainly Hindu protesters on a Jammu road on Friday. The group were demanding a new investigation into the events in Kathua district about 60 kilometers from Jammu.

According to police the girl was drugged, held captive in a Hindu temple for five days, repeatedly raped and then killed. They say the killing in January

was part of a plot to drive the girl's Muslim nomad community, the Bakarwal, out of the region. Activists for the girl "have made a big fuss so that innocent men are put behind bars," said Rajinder Abrol, a lawyer who took part in the Jammu protest by Hindus. In an illustration of the communal distrust that permeates the region, Deepak Kamora, an insurance company employee who was among the protesters, accused Muslims of taking part in drug dealing and "terrorist" activities.



Girl drugged, held captive in a Hindu temple for 5 days

Jammu powder keg

Hindu radicals see the murder charges as part of a conspiracy against them. Muslim activists say the murder

is new proof of their persecution in the Hindu-majority region. While Jammu and Kashmir as a whole is Muslim majority, the Jammu region in the south is Hindu-dominated.

"They call Jammu the 'City of Temples' but they are changing it, they are replacing temples with mosques," said Kamora. Before the eight were charged, a group of Hindu lawyers tried to stop police entering a court in Kathua to register charges in the rape case.

Kirity Bhushan Mahajan, head of the lawyers group in the district, told AFP the events had been twisted. The controversy over the protest was "a conspiracy aimed at upsetting community harmony in the region". "We do not support the rapists. We do

not know who the guilty people are," he added, criticizing the police investigation.

The Jammu powder keg is so primed however that India's Supreme Court ordered police protection for the family of the girl, who have taken their cattle into the Kashmir hills. Their lawyer says he has received death threats and their house is also under armed guard. Talib Hussain, a lawyer and activist for the Muslim nomads who has led protests to demand faster action in the rape case, said Hindu-Muslim relations are at their lowest point since the deadly 1948 partition of India.

Hussain accuses Hindu nationalists, particularly the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) — the powerful ideological group behind Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government — of manipulating the Hindu protests. Two BJP ministers in the Kashmir state government resigned after they took part in protests in support of the accused rapists. Muslims in Jammu say they have no reason to trust the national government. "The Hindu fundamentalists are putting people against Muslims," said Hussain.—AFP

Iraqi shrine tablets offer blessings, cures and a living

KERBALA: For pilgrims, the clay tablets from Iraq's Shiite Muslim Kerbala shrine are a blessing, an aid to prayer, even a cure for sickness. For local families, they are all that, and also a business. The tablets, known as "turbah" or soil in Arabic, come in many shapes - round, square, lozenge, half-circle - with various inscriptions, often praising Imam Hussein, Prophet Mohammad's (PBUH) grandson who is buried in the city. But they are all pressed from the same sand dug up around the site, 100 km south of Baghdad, where the imam was killed with most of his companions and many of his family in the 7th century, after he rose up against Umayyad Caliph Yazeed.

Pilgrims - who press the palm-sized tablets to their foreheads when prostrated in prayer - buy the turbah from a small band of local craftspeople and dealers. "My family of eight children live from this business, and our income vary with the seasons," said Um Ahmed, 45, who inherited a small turbah workshop from her father. She had been working there since her childhood. "We work from morning to afternoon with a break in the middle, we make 15,000 to 20,000 Iraqi dinars (\$13-17) a day net."

Um Ahmed uses copper moulds to hold the muddy mix of sand and water, and engraved steel plates to stamp the holy inscriptions on the tablets after they have dried in the sun. The sand is highly cohesive with a low salt content and filtered for impurities. She makes up to 50 engraved tablets a day, and sells them for 250-500 dinars to wholesalers.

Turbah trade flourishes during high pilgrimage seasons to the golden-topped shrines of Hussein and Abbas, the imam's half brother and companion



BAGHDAD: Antique peddlars display their goods as they are spread in a street in the centre of the Iraqi capital Baghdad. —AFP

who was also killed in Kerbala. Millions of Shiites from Iraq, Iran, Pakistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Lebanon and beyond flock every year to Kerbala to commemorate Ashura, or Hussein's martyrdom, and Arabaeen, the 40th day of mourning, and other religious occasions.

Ashura falls in September this year. Most pilgrims pick up the tablets from stalls around the shrines. "It

is my first visit to Kerbala," said Shabnam, a young Iranian woman, buying prayer stones to bring home as gifts. "They are for prayers, and for curing the ill. The soil of Kerbala is the burial place of Imam Hussein." A range of turbah - some connected to electronic counters to keep track of how often they are pressed during prayer - are also on sale on ebay, with prices rising to \$15.—Reuters

A nude gunman kills four in US

WASHINGTON: A nude gunman shot dead four people and injured at least four more in the early hours of yesterday at a restaurant on the outskirts of Nashville, Tennessee, police said. The Metropolitan Nashville Police Department said in a statement that the shooting occurred at a Waffle House restaurant in Antioch, a suburb southeast of Nashville, at 3:25 am. "A patron wrestled away the gunman's rifle. He was nude & fled on foot. He is a white man with short hair," the statement added. A following statement named 29-year-old Travis Reinking, of Morton, Illinois—a village located some 450 miles north of Antioch—as a person of interest. Police said the suspect arrived in a car registered to Reinking. They added the gunman, who had shed his coat, was last seen walking on Murfreesboro Pike, where the 24-hour diner is located.

Local media citing police on the scene reported the gunman was armed with an AR-15 assault rifle—a weapon commonly used by mass shooters in the US, where debate over gun control is fierce and shootings are all-too-frequent. Reports added at least one victim was taken to Vanderbilt University Medical Center, located in Nashville itself. AR-15 rifles were used to kill 58 people in Las Vegas last October, while Florida school shooter Nikolas Cruz in February opened fire on his former high school with an AR-15 style rifle, killing 17 students and staff members. In the wake of the Florida massacre, student survivors launched a gun control campaign—drawing hundreds of thousands to demonstrations—and businesses including Walmart and Dick's Sporting Goods took measures to restrict access to assault weapons and firearms in general. However, Congress is sitting on its hands when it comes to the issue. Meanwhile, an ABC News/Washington Post poll published Friday suggested that support for a ban on assault weapons has risen sharply in the past few months. Sixty-two percent of those polled said they support a nationwide ban on the sale of assault weapons, up from 50 percent in mid-February and 45 percent in late 2015.—Agencies

International

Iran threatens to 'vigorously' resume enrichment if US ditches nuclear deal

Tehran warns of further 'drastic measures'

NEW YORK: Iran warned yesterday it is ready to "vigorously" resume nuclear enrichment if the United States ditches the 2015 nuclear deal, and said further "drastic measures" are being considered in response to a US exit. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in New York that Iran is not seeking to acquire a nuclear bomb, but that its "probable" response to a US withdrawal would be to restart production of enriched uranium a key bomb-making ingredient. "America never should have feared Iran producing a nuclear bomb, but we will pursue vigorously our nuclear enrichment," added Zarif, who is in the United States to attend a UN meeting on sustaining peace.



Trump sets May 12 deadline for the Europeans to 'fix' deal

US President Donald Trump has set a May 12 deadline for the Europeans to "fix" the 2015 agreement that provides for curbs to Iran's nuclear program in exchange for relief from financial sanctions. Zarif's comments marked a further hardening of rhetoric following a warning earlier this month from Iranian President Hassan Rouhani that Washington would "regret" withdrawing from the nuclear deal, and that Iran would respond within a week if it did. The fate of the Iran deal will be a key issue during French President Emmanuel Macron's state visit to Washington beginning Monday, followed by talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in Washington on Friday.

Zarif said the European leaders must press Trump to stick to the deal if the United States "intends to maintain any credibility in the international community" and to abide by it, "rather than demand more." The foreign minister also warned against offering any concessions to Trump. "To try to appease the president, I think, would be an exercise in futility," he said. European leaders are hoping to persuade Trump to save the deal if they, in turn, agree to press Iran to enter into agreement on missile tests and moderating its regional influence in Yemen, Syria and Lebanon.

No one-sided deal

If the United States buries the deal, Iran is unlikely to stick to the agreement alongside the other signatories - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia, said the foreign minister. "That's highly unlikely," he said. "It is important for Iran to receive the benefits of the agreement and there is no way that Iran would do a one-sided implementation of the agreement." European diplomats have argued that the deal could be

salvaged without the United States, with a view to bringing Washington back in the fold at a later time, possibly under a new administration. "The United States under the Trump administration has done everything it could to prevent Iran from benefiting from this agreement," Zarif charged. The foreign minister warned of "drastic measures" under discussion in Iran. Zarif declined to specify, pointing to "what certain members of our parliament are saying about Iran's options."

Despite the threats of a tough response to a US pullout, Zarif also left open the possibility of diplomatic action during a 45-day period to formally notify the withdrawal. "Whether other things can be done during those 45 days ... is a hypothetical question that needs to be addressed at that time," said Zarif. A decision by Trump to walk away, he warned, would send a message to all governments "that you should never come to an agreement with the United States, because at the end of the day, the operating principle for the United States is, what's mine is mine, what's yours is negotiable." —AFP



TEHRAN: An Iranian military truck carries missiles during a parade on the occasion of the country's annual army day in Tehran. President Hassan Rouhani said during the parade that Iran 'does not intend any aggression' against its neighbors but will continue to produce all the weapons it needs for its defense. —AFP

Inside the mission to rid the world of chemical weapons

RIJSWIJK: Michael Barrett has an old-fashioned flip phone. But when his hotline rings, he has three hours to ready equipment for experts on a dangerous mission to probe if toxic weapons have been unleashed-again. As appalling images of panicked children and adults apparently victims of poison gas or cruel nerve agents go viral, the labs and the equipment store of the world's global chemical arms watchdog hum with activity. Tucked away in a small industrial zone in the Dutch suburb of Rijswijk, the two-storey building, with about 20 staff, has been key to the two decades of painstaking work by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons

(OPCW) to eliminate the world's toxic arms stockpiles. It was here that the team, now in Syria waiting for access to Douma where either chlorine or sarin gas were allegedly used on civilians on April 7, began their mission. As the clamor grows for answers, any samples they collect will be sealed and brought back here, under a strictly monitored chain of custody, for further analysis and verification. A former soldier, Barrett has spent 21 years at the OPCW since its first beginnings, training and equipping those who volunteer to travel to the world's most toxic hotspots. He's even deployed himself.

"Of course you get nervous, if you don't there's something wrong," said the now 61-year-old, who in recent years has seen the timeline for preparing for missions getting "shorter and shorter." From carbon-impregnated protection suits to elephant-sized rubber boots to cover shoes, sophisticated detectors, satellite phones and medical kits bristling with vials of antidotes to the world's deadliest nerve agents, all the equipment has to be checked and double-checked. "Can you imagine if you had a respirator, a gas mask, and the valve was in the wrong way?" said Barrett wryly, principal logistics technician and team leader for the equipment store, as he gave AFP an exclusive tour.

'Onerous, noble task'

Amid political claim and counter-claim about chemical weapons use in Syria, where chlorine gas and mustard gas have both been proven to have been used, as well as the unleashing of a rare nerve agent last month in the sleepy British town of Salisbury, the focus here remains on protecting the team and preserving the integrity of science. No detail can be overlooked. Even a pinprick hole in a glove could prove fatal if a deadly nerve agent seeped through the skin to attack a person's nervous system. VX, the deadliest nerve agent ever invented, can kill within 20 minutes. Despite some 7,000 official missions - 10,000 if you count training missions - in 21 years, it is a source of pride that no team member has ever been affected by a chemical weapon. This dangerous and methodical work by the OPCW, which has around 400 staff, has succeeded in eliminating some 96 percent of the world's toxic arms stockpiles. A feat which won it the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013. —AFP

News in brief

Modi to visit China

BEIJING: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit China later this week for an informal meeting with President Xi Jinping, as efforts at rapprochement gather pace following a testing year in ties between the two giant neighbors. The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councilor Wang Yi, said the two will meet on Friday and Saturday in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. Wang was speaking after meeting Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in Beijing. "This year, under the guidance of our leaders, the China-India relationship has realized good development and shown a positive momentum," Wang said. Modi has sought to re-set ties after disputes over issues including their disputed border with Tibet and other issues. —Reuters

Dozens of bodies found

QAMISHLI: Dozens of bodies, including those of jihadists and civilians, have been found in a mass grave in the former Islamic State group stronghold of Raqa in Syria, a local official said on Saturday. The former de facto "capital" of the group in northern Syria, Raqa saw the jihadists ousted by the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces in October 2017. Nearly 50 bodies had already been recovered from the mass grave, which could contain up to 200 bodies. Abdallah Al-Eriane, a senior official with Raqa Civil Council now running the city, said. —AFP

Nicaragua protests flare

MANAGUA: A Nicaraguan journalist was shot dead Saturday while filming a confrontation between demonstrators and the police, amid a wave of protests against the government which have left 11 people dead. Miguel Angel Gahona was killed by a suspected sniper in the city of Bluefields, on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, local media reported. "We believe a sniper fired the shot, it wasn't the young people... The only people who were armed were the police and riot police," his colleague Ileana Lacayo told television station Canal 15. Since protests erupted on Wednesday—the biggest in President Daniel Ortega's 11 years in office—journalists have reportedly faced attacks, been temporarily detained and had their work equipment stolen. Meanwhile, four independent television outlets were taken off air on Thursday, although only one currently remains closed. —AFP

9 die in 'anti-terror' raid

MOSCOW: Nine people suspected of plotting an attack in Russia were killed in a shootout with security forces in Dagestan, the country's National Anti-Terror Committee has said. The "anti-terrorist" operation was launched Saturday in Derbent, Dagestan, after police received a tip off over a group hiding in the city, who allegedly planned to commit an "attack" on May 1, traditionally a holiday in Russia, according to a statement from committee. "Nine outlaw have been neutralized following brief exchanges of fire" with law enforcement, it said. A Special Forces officer was wounded during the operation. Dagestan, which lies immediately east of Chechnya, has seen a number of attacks in recent years, with several assaults against police claimed by the so-called Islamic State group. —AFP

Three Shiites lead field for Iraq election

BAGHDAD: An incumbent prime minister, his ousted predecessor and a paramilitary chief instrumental in defeating the Islamic State group are the three favorites vying for Iraq's premiership. Since Sunni dictator Saddam Hussein was toppled in the US-led invasion of 2003, the constitution has vested key powers in the prime minister, a post reserved for the majority Shiite population.

Under a system of checks and balances designed to avoid a return to dictatorship, the winner of the May 12 parliamentary elections will have to form alliances with other Shiite, Sunni Arab and Kurdish lists to secure a majority. Two of the favorites topping the lists were among the architects of victory against IS, which in 2014 seized a third of Iraq's territory in a lightning offensive. The incumbent prime minister, 66 year-old Haider Al-Abadi, took over the reins from Nuri Al-Maliki in September 2014 at the high watermark of the security crisis.

The fightback which allowed Abadi to declare Iraq's victory over the jihadists in December, has silenced critics of his lack of military experience. An engineering graduate and holder of a doctorate from the University of Manchester in Britain, Abadi is from the same Dawa party as his predecessor Maliki.

He owes his position to the support of the marjaiya, the supreme council of Iraq's Shiite clerics, and to an international consensus. "He is acceptable to all foreign stakeholders, from the Iranians, to the Americans (and) the Saudis," said Fanar Haddad, a senior research fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute.

Military credentials key

As the official head of Iraq's military, Abadi has bolstered morale by drafting in foreign trainers, who have helped professionalize tens of thousands of soldiers. Under his watch and backed by a US-led international coalition, the army has banished IS from all its urban strongholds in Iraq, leaving jihadists largely confined to areas close to the Syrian border. The Iraqi military has also pushed back the Kurds in the north's oil-rich Kirkuk province, bolstering Abadi's status as frontrunner going into the election. "He has a popular base which transcends confessional and ethnic lines.

He offers a narrative as a statesman and he is not tarnished by corruption," said Iraqi political scientist Essam al-Fili. Haddad said: "Abadi remains the single strongest contender but not strong enough to win anything close to a majority." His main contender is Hadi al-Amiri—a leader of Hashed al-Shaabi, a paramilitary network that played a pivotal role in defeating IS. Amiri comes from Diyala province and is a statistics graduate from Baghdad University. He fled to Iran in 1980 after Saddam executed top Shiite cleric Ayatollah Mohammed Baqr Al-Sadr.

The 64-year old is widely viewed as Tehran's favored candidate. He fought alongside Iranian forces in the Iran-Iraq war of 1980 to 1988 as part of the Badr organization, and he only returned from exile after Saddam's ouster. During Maliki's 2010-2014 term as premier, Amiri was a lawmaker and then transport minister, but he was blocked in a bid to head the interior ministry by an American veto. The paramilitary chief ditched his civilian clothes in favor of military fatigues in 2014, to rally efforts against an ascendant IS. At the battlefield, he operated alongside his old friend Qassem Soleimani, who runs the foreign operations wing of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards. —AFP

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International

Trump's travel ban faces US Supreme Court showdown

Conservative-majority court to issue ruling by end of June

WASHINGTON: The first big showdown at the US Supreme Court over President Donald Trump's immigration policies is set for Wednesday when the justices hear a challenge to the lawfulness of his travel ban targeting people from several Muslim-majority countries. The case represents a test of the limits of presidential power. Trump's policy, announced in September, blocks entry into the United States of most people from Iran, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Yemen. Chad previously was on the list but Trump lifted those restrictions on April 10.

The high court has never decided the legal merits of the travel ban or any other major Trump immigration policy, including his move to rescind protections for young immigrants sometimes called Dreamers brought into the United States illegally as children. It has previously acted on Trump requests to undo lower court orders blocking those two policies, siding with him on the travel ban and opposing him on the Dreamers.

Trump's immigration policies - also including actions taken against states and cities that protect illegal immigrants, intensified deportation efforts and limits on legal immigration - have been among his most contentious. The conservative-majority Supreme Court is due to hear arguments on Wednesday on the third version of a travel ban policy Trump first sought to implement a week after taking office in January 2017, and issue a ruling by the end of June. The lead challenger is the state of Hawaii, which argues the ban violates federal immigration law and the US Constitution's prohibition on the government favoring one religion over another.

"Right now, the travel ban is keeping families apart. It is degrading our values by subjecting a specific set of people to be denigrated and marginalized," Hawaii Lieutenant Governor Doug Chin said in an interview. The Supreme Court on Dec 4 signaled it may lean toward backing

Trump when it granted the administration's request to let the ban go into full effect while legal challenges played out. In another immigration-related case, the justices on April 17 invalidated a provision in a US law requiring deportation of immigrants convicted of certain crimes of violence. Trump's administration and the prior Obama administration had defended the provision.

'Politically correct'

Trump has said the travel ban is needed to protect the United States from terrorism by Islamic militants. Just before the latest ban was announced, Trump wrote on Twitter that the restrictions "should be far larger, tougher and more specific - but stupidly that would not be politically correct!" The challengers have argued the policy was motivated by Trump's enmity toward Muslims, pressing that point in lower courts with some success by citing statements he made as a candidate and as president.

As a candidate, Trump promised "a total and complete shutdown of Muslims entering the United States." The Justice Department argues Trump's statements as a candidate carry no weight because he was not yet president. The policy's challengers also point to views he has expressed as president, including his retweets in November of anti-Muslim videos posted by a far-right British political figure.

In a court filing last week, US Solicitor General Noel Francisco, representing Trump in court, said those retweets "do not address the meaning" of the travel ban policy. Francisco cited Trump statements complimentary toward Muslims and Islam, including in a May 2017 speech in Saudi Arabia. In defending the ban, the administration has pointed to a waiver provision allowing people from targeted countries to seek entry if they meet certain criteria. The State Department said that as of last month



WASHINGTON: Second amendment supporters protest while holding a President Trump and American flag in front of the Washington State Capitol during 'March For Our Rights' pro-gun rally in Olympia, Washington. —AFP

375 waivers to the travel ban had been granted since the policy went into effect on Dec 8.

Some former Republican senators and officials who served in Republican former President George W Bush's administration have signed onto legal briefs asking the high court to invalidate the ban. "I think the travel ban is a terribly misguided policy that appeared to be motivated more by a political intention of the president than by any real national security need," John Bellinger, the State Department's top legal advisor during the Bush administration, said in an interview. The arguments in the case follow US missile strikes this month in one of the targeted

countries, Syria, after Trump's administration blamed President Bashar al-Assad for a chemical weapons attack on Syrian people near Damascus.

"Lots of people have pointed out the hypocrisy of the president on the one hand being willing to bomb Syria and on the other hand being unwilling to accept refugees and immigrants from that country who are trying to escape," lawyer Omar Jadwat of the American Civil Liberties Union, which challenged the travel ban in a separate case in Maryland, said in an interview. Venezuela and North Korea also were targeted in the travel ban but those restrictions were not challenged in court. —Reuters



Hawaii leading the legal challenge to travel ban policy

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News in brief

Jordan MP, family die

AMMAN: A Jordanian MP, his wife and three of his children were among eight people killed late Saturday when their car collided with a winch truck, a security source said. The truck's driver and his assistant were also killed in the crash on the desert highway south of Amman, along with MP Mohammad Amareh, his wife, three children and his brother-in-law, the source said Sunday. Parliament speaker Atef Tarawneh expressed his sorrow at the loss of Amareh, a 53-year-old former army colonel from the southern Jordanian city of Maan. Tarawneh decided to cancel a parliamentary session that was slated for Sunday, with a new date set for Monday, a statement said. Jordan has a dire road safety record, with 750 people killed in 2016, nearly 150 more than the previous year. —AFP

Israel dismisses allegation

JERUSALEM: Israel's defense minister said yesterday a Palestinian scientist shot dead in Malaysia was a rocket expert and "no saint", but dismissed suggestions by Hamas that Israel's Mossad spy agency assassinated him. Two men on a motorcycle fired 10 shots at Fadi Al-Batsh, an engineering lecturer, in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday, killing him on the spot, the city's police chief, Mazlan Lazim said. Hamas, an Islamist militant group that rules the Gaza Strip, said one of its members had been assassinated in Malaysia. Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said Mossad had been behind past attempts to kill Palestinian scientists, and the attack on Batsh "follows this sequence." Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said it was likely that Batsh was killed as part of an internal Palestinian dispute. "We heard about it in the news. —Reuters

Suicide bombers kill 3

KANO: Two suicide bombers killed three Muslim worshippers in a mosque in a northeast Nigerian town still being rebuilt after virtual destruction by Boko Haram in 2014, sources said yesterday. The bombers, a man and a woman, detonated their explosives inside the mosque during morning prayers on Saturday in the town of Bama in Borno state. The pair "blew themselves up in a mosque while people were praying, killing three people," said Baba Shehu Gulumba, Bama local government chairman. A senior military officer in Bama confirmed the death toll, adding that nine people were also injured. "Some of the injured are in a critical condition and may hardly make it. They have been transferred to Maiduguri for better medical care," said the military officer, who asked not to be named. —AFP

14 Maoist guerillas killed

NEW DELHI: At least 14 suspected Maoist guerillas were killed yesterday in a gunfight in India's western state of Maharashtra, police said, yet another violent clash in the country's longest-running conflict. Police said nearly 100 rebels were intercepted in a remote forest in Gadchiroli district roughly 900 kilometers east of Mumbai, and ordered to surrender. But the guerillas opened fire, sparking a battle with special police units that lasted hours, Maharashtra police said. "We are continuing with search operations in the area. So far we have recovered 14 bodies," the state's head of anti-Maoist operations, Sharad Shelar said. The police suffered no casualties. The Maoist insurgency began in the 1960s, inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, and has cost thousands of lives in almost daily incidents of violence. —AFP

Armenia political turmoil deepens

YEREVAN: Armenia's political turmoil deepened yesterday with the detention of anti-government protest leader Nikol Pashinyan, shortly after Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian stormed out of talks with him on the tenth day of mass rallies against his rule. Pashinyan and two other opposition politicians "were detained as they were committing socially dangerous acts", the prosecutor general's office said in a statement. Armenian police earlier denied opposition MP Sasun Mikaelyan's report that Pashinyan had been arrested. As a lawmaker, Pashinyan is protected by parliamentary immunity and cannot be arrested without the approval of fellow MPs. Yesterday morning, Sarkisian stormed out of talks with Pashinyan, accusing him of "blackmail". The televised meeting between the premier and Pashinyan lasted only a couple of minutes before the premier walked out.

"I came here to discuss your resignation," Pashinyan, the leader of the opposition Civil Contract party, had told the prime minister in front of the cameras. "This is not a dialogue, this is blackmail, I only can advise you to return to a legal framework... Otherwise you will bear the responsibility" for the consequences, replied Sarkisian, a former military officer. "You don't understand the situation in Armenia. The power is now in people's hands," Pashinyan hit back. Sarkisian said the Civil Contract party "can't speak on behalf of the people", having scored only 8 percent in recent parliamentary election, before he walked out of the meeting room in Yerevan's Marriott hotel.

'Step up pressure'

Pashinyan then vowed to "step up pressure" on Sarkisian to force him to resign and called on police officers to "lay down arms and join in the protests". But instead security forces intervened using stun grenades and began dispersing the crowd in Yerevan's suburban Erebuni district. The EU del-



YEREVAN: Journalists and opposition supporters stand outside the hotel where Armenia's anti-government protest leader Nikol Pashinyan meets with Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sarkisian who left shortly after the televised meeting began yesterday. —AFP

egation to Armenia issued a statement expressing "concern" over the rapidly unfolding crisis. "The European Union reiterates that it is crucial that all parties show restraint and responsibility and urgently seek a negotiated solution," the statement said.

Opposition supporters have criticized the 63-year-old leader over poverty, corruption and the influence of powerful

oligarchs. After Pashinyan's detention, thousands of protesters gathered in Yerevan's Republic Square outside the government's headquarters, which were cordoned off by riot police. Dozens of people were detained, an AFP journalist reported from the scene. Pashinyan had earlier announced the "start of a peaceful velvet revolution" in the landlocked South Caucasus nation of 2.9 million people. —AFP

Past presidents, family, friends bid farewell to Barbara Bush

HOUSTON: Past presidents, family and friends came together Saturday to bid a tearful farewell to Barbara Bush, the matriarch of one of America's most prominent political dynasties, at her funeral in Texas. Bush, who died Tuesday aged 92, was wife to the 41st US president and mother to the 43rd. She was remembered for her friendship, her wit and her strength. The invitation-only service at St Martin's Episcopal Church in Houston was attended by four former presidents: George HW Bush-Barbara's husband of 73 years-their son George W Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, as well as other former senior officials.

First Lady Melania Trump attended but her husband President Donald Trump did not, with the White House saying his decision to stay in Washington was taken "to avoid disruptions due to added security." "My thoughts and prayers are with the entire Bush family," the president wrote on Twitter, saying he planned to watch the funeral ceremony. "It was my honor to travel to Houston to

give my respects to Barbara Bush," Melania Trump said in a statement.

"My sincerest thoughts and prayers continue to be with George HW and the entire Bush family." The public had the opportunity to pay their respects to Barbara Bush at a visitation the previous day. "Barbara Bush filled our lives with laughter and joy," her son Jeb, a former Florida governor and presidential candidate, said during the service. "She was our teacher and role model on how to live a life of purpose and meaning," he said. "Mom got us through our difficult times with consistent, take-it-to-the-bank, unconditional but tough love."

'Strong, fun and feisty'

Known for her trademark faux pearls-which Jeb mentioned in his eulogy-and tart comments about life in and out of Washington, Barbara Bush was in many ways a figure more popular among ordinary Americans than her high-flying husband and sons. She met her husband-to-be at age 16 when she was a schoolgirl and he was a student at an elite Massachusetts preparatory school, and they married in 1945 while he was on leave from wartime service. Bush made history as one of just two women to be wife and mother to US presidents. Abigail Adams, who died in 1818, was the other. "She was smart, strong, fun and feisty," said Susan Baker, wife of George HW Bush's secretary of state and chief of staff James Baker.

And she was "a remarkable and selfless companion to her beloved husband George. It



HOUSTON: The remains of former first lady Barbara Bush are carried from St Martin's Episcopal Church following her funeral service in Houston, Texas. —AFP

was extraordinary how she managed their rambunctious household in 29 different homes in 17 cities," Baker said in her eulogy. Bush was her husband's companion and advisor as they traveled the world, moving multiple times as he rose from Texas oilman to congressman, US ambassador to the United Nations and envoy to China, director of the CIA and eventually to the vice presidency and the White House.

But she made a point of avoiding direct involvement in politics, and the posturing that comes with it-gaining a reputation for tough-

ness, wry humor and straight talking. Having undergone heart surgery in 2009, she was treated for years for Graves' disease, a thyroid condition. As her health failed in recent days, she was moved into comfort care at her home in Houston. Barbara Bush is survived by five children, 17 grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren. She lost a sixth child-daughter Robin-to leukemia as a toddler. She was buried at the George Bush Presidential Library in College Station, Texas, US media reported Saturday evening. —AFP

International

Suicide revives concerns about Japan's immigration detention

At least eight detainees die in detention facilities

TOKYO: The suicide of an Indian man being held at an immigration detention centre in Japan has sparked a hunger strike among detainees and revived concerns about conditions. Deepak Kumar was found dead on April 13 after apparently hanging himself in the shower at the Ushiku facility, northeast of Tokyo. At least eight detainees, including Kumar, have died in immigration detention facilities since 2010, according to a tally by the Japan Association for Refugees (JAR), an NGO.

Kumar's death prompted a hunger strike, with around 70 people at the Ushiku facility refusing food by Friday, according to an official, and reports that people held at other centers were also protesting. Around 1,000 people are held in immigration detention centers around Japan, according to JAR, and there have long been concerns about conditions, with a series of deaths raising questions about medical access and oversight. Last year, a Vietnamese man died in the Ushiku facility after having a stroke, and in 2014 two

detainees, an Iranian and a Cameroonian died there. "One death in ten years is too much," said Eri Ishikawa, chair of JAR's board.

"But in reality, in these three to five years, every year there has been an incidence of death among detainees," she said. Authorities deny that detainees are being mistreated or neglected. "We respect their human rights," said Daisuke Akinaga, an official at the Ushiku facility. "We try to listen to them and meet their requests. For example, there was a complaint about cold inside the facility and we improved the situation," he said. "Applications for provisional release are a different story. They have to go through proper procedures."

Calls for reform

Detainees at the facilities are generally facing deportation, but many are seeking asylum and can file for provisional release while their claims are being processed. Kumar appears to have committed suicide after learning that his

provisional release request had been denied, said Kimiko Tanaka, 65, a long-time activist. "His provisional release request had been turned down in March, but he only learned about it on April 12, according to a detainee who was sharing a room with him," she said.

Kumar's brother Sanju said that the family was devastated, and was calling for an investigation. "There was no reason for him to commit suicide, he was a courageous man and had a fighting spirit," he said from Ludhiana, in India's Punjab state. "He called me a day before his death and was in a good mood. He promised to call again in five days." "We don't believe the authorities and demand that his death be investigated," he added. Activists and rights group have long urged reforms to the immigration detention system, including ending the practice of long-term detention, improving medical access and allowing independent oversight. They also criticize the government's stringent rules on granting refugee status. Last year just 20

people out of nearly 20,000 applicants received asylum. The government says most applicants are economic migrants, but activists and the UN say Japan imposes onerous evidence requirements that can be impossible to meet, even for those in real danger.

Tanaka said Kumar had applied for asylum, though it was unclear on what grounds. "The man was detained almost the entire year after he arrived in Japan as a political refugee," she said. "We have to once again realize the mercilessness of Japan's immigration law and the refugee recognition law." Detainees allege that if they complain about medical problems to guards, they are simply handed sleeping pills or anti-anxiety medication. "We are concerned that around 20 percent of the detainees are given medication like sleeping pills," Ishikawa said. "There is no independent mechanism to monitor the situation." A migrant detained under a deportation order can be held indefinitely, a situation Tanaka described as deeply damaging.—AFP

Five years of agony: Bangladesh factory disaster survivors still await justice

SAVAR: The pain of waiting 10 hours with her leg crushed by bodies under the rubble of the Rana Plaza factory was hell for Nilufer Begum. But the five-year wait for justice has been just as agonizing. Bangladesh on Tuesday marks the fifth anniversary of one of the world's worst industrial disasters, a building collapse that killed more than 1,130 workers and spotlighted the Western clothing brands benefiting from the country's low wages. But there is mounting anger this anniversary over the glacial pace of the court case against those arrested in the aftermath of the tragedy. The weight of three bodies and rubble crippled Begum's right leg on April 24, 2013.

The 38-year-old has had to undergo operations which have cost twice the \$3,500 compensation she received, forcing her to borrow from relatives and charities. "I am counting the hours to my death. The muscles in my leg are wasting away. My kidneys are failing," Begum, who now runs a grocer's store near the factory ruins said. More than 2,000 injured workers from the nine-storey complex, which collapsed like a pack of cards, have similar stories.

Many have spent all their compensation on medical bills, according to ActionAid Bangladesh.

Begum says the slow wait for justice is the only thing that keeps her going. "None of us wanted to enter the factories that day," she recalled. "They forced us to work despite pillars that crumbled the day before. Five years have passed and no one has been tried or punished." "The building owner is having a great time in jail. All the other accused are out on bail. The factory owners and the managers who threatened to fire us if we didn't work are free," said the tearful mother of an 11-year-old boy. "So many of us have lost limbs or been crippled. But now everyone has forgotten us and the disaster," she added.

Rana Plaza's collapse triggered international outrage. European and US clothing brands—including Primark, Mango and Benetton—were pressured to improve pay and conditions at the Bangladesh factories which employ some four million workers with wages starting at \$65 a month, among the world's lowest. Groups which oversee safety upgrades say Bangladesh factories have improved. The 20 reported accidents last year was the lowest in recent years.

A group representing more than 100 European brands still warned however that "major life-threatening safety concerns remain" among the 4,500 textile plants. The work to improve conditions has been faster than the trial of Rana Plaza owner, Sohel Rana, and nearly 40 others—including factory officials and government inspectors who were charged with murder. Rana was jailed for three years last August for failing to declare his personal wealth to Bangladesh's anti-graft commission. He also faces the murder charges.

Proceedings are dragging on and prosecutors say a verdict could take five more years. Prosecutor Mizanur Rahman blamed repeated adjournments. No witness has yet given evidence. "Some witnesses have already gone missing," he said. Union leaders said the painfully slow pace of the trial has "created a climate of impunity". "We thought the Rana Plaza disaster would help workers to unionize and hold protests for improved rights. But the opposite has happened," said Mohammad Ibrahim, a top labor activist. Ibrahim said garment factory owners use "local goons", the police and the government to crackdown on any hint of protests.

Owners' XXL influence

Garment manufacturers have an outsized influence given the \$30 billion of textile exports account for some 80 percent of Bangladesh's total. Ibrahim was one of the 41 leaders detained in December 2016 when thousands of workers staged protests for higher wages. He said he received a death threat from police. "Some 1,700 workers were fired and none got back their job," he said. "The garment owners have become more powerful since the disaster."

Whistleblower journalist Nazmul Huda was feted after the disaster for being the lone reporter to write and broadcast about the crumbling pillars at Rana Plaza before the collapse. His film is key evidence now. But Huda is now seeking ways to flee the country after he was detained for 42 days and charged with "inciting" workers' pay protests. "The police took me away in a car, blindfolded. I was cuffed and dangled on a rod in the car. Then, they beat me with sticks," he told AFP. "They hit me on my head and ears with gun butts. I barely can hear in my right ear," he said.—AFP

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HISTORIC KOREAN SUMMIT SET FOR APRIL 27



Can Macron's US visit save the Iran deal?

French President Emmanuel Macron seems, as much as any world leader, to have developed some kind of rapport with his American counterpart Donald Trump. But will their apparent bond prove productive as European capitals struggle to save the Iran nuclear deal from Trump's impulsive wrath? The idea will be tested today when the young French leader begins a state visit in Washington, and European diplomats have a lot invested in what seems a tricky task.

There is not much time. Trump is due to decide by May 12 whether talks with Paris, Berlin and London on tougher anti-Iran measures have advanced far enough. If he feels the "flaws" in the 2015 deal have not been adequately repaired, he may decide to withdraw his support, opening the way for renewed US sanctions that could torpedo the whole accord. Europe would see this as a disaster, both in terms of the deal itself - a central plank in their non-proliferation strategy - and in terms of relations with Washington.

If anyone can talk down Trump, it might be Macron, who has better relations with the White House than his British and German counterparts Theresa May and Angela Merkel. Paris was the first European ally to suggest tougher measures against Iran's ballistic missile programs to "supplement" the nuclear deal - but will that suffice? Trump also wants to reform the agreement itself to end the so-called "sunset clauses" that would allow Iran to progressively restart parts of its nuclear program after 2025. But the West cannot unilaterally reopen the text. Iran has said the deal is final and warned it is ready to relaunch its nuclear program - which the West alleges is designed to produce an atomic bomb - if it fails.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters in New York on Saturday that Iran is not seeking to acquire a nuclear bomb, but that its "probable" response to a US withdrawal would be to restart production of enriched uranium - a key bomb-making ingredient. In addition, the agreement was the fruit of months of intense diplomacy between Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States - under EU auspices.

Only Trump wants to rip it up. "It's a dialogue of the deaf," complained one European envoy. A US diplomat acknowledged that getting Trump to buy in will be the "trickiest" part of the problem. British, French and German representatives have been in deep talks with the US State Department's head of policy Brian Hook on what a supplemental deal would look like.

'He hates the deal'

But the representatives complain privately that, despite progress with their American counterparts, they have no idea whether they are close to an agreement that the mercurial president would accept. To appease Trump, European capitals are working on a document that would amount to a political engagement to prevent Iran from returning to the nuclear path after the 2015 deal starts to expire. The Europeans could even call such a statement a new "deal," if it convinces the US leader to stay within the terms of the original and "true" agreement.

Therein lies the rub. "He hates the deal," another European diplomat acknowledged. All Hook can say is that once he comes to terms with his European partners, it will be up to Trump, in consultations with his hardline new National Security Advisor John Bolton, to decide. "If we can reach an agreement, then that will be presented to the president by the secretary of state and the NSA, and then he will make a decision on whether he wants to remain in the deal or stop waiving sanctions," Hook said. "We always have to prepare for any eventuality, and so we are engaged in contingency planning because it would not be responsible not to engage in it."

The appointment of Bolton, an avowed Iran hawk, fueled Europe's pessimism, as did the nomination of CIA director Mike Pompeo to become the next US secretary of state. But Pompeo, who has always talked tough on Iran, played down the significance of the May 12 deadline in his Senate confirmation hearing. "I want to fix this deal. That's the objective," he told US lawmakers concerned that he might push for war. "If there is no chance to fix it, I'll recommend to the president we do our level best to work with our allies to achieve a better outcome and better deal. Even after May 12th, even after May 12th, there's still much diplomatic work to be done."

No Plan 'B'

As the deadline looms, even some of the more hawkish Washington pundits - critics of the deal when it was signed - have begun to suggest that the return of US nuclear-related sanctions could be postponed until a new fixed date. But if all the talk fails and Trump follows his clear inclination to tear up the "terrible deal," there appears to be no Plan B, at least from Europe. "Anyone who wants to blow up the Iran deal has first to tell us what he will do if Iran relaunches its uranium enrichment program," France's ambassador to the United States Gerard Araud tweeted in exasperation. After Macron's visit, there is only one from Merkel, whose chemistry with the US leader appears more toxic than productive, and then the ball in Trump's hands. —AFP

Kim heralds more economic reforms

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's promise to build "socialist economic construction" in his nuclear-armed but impoverished and isolated country could herald more Chinese-style economic reforms, according to analysts - but he will never explicitly say so. Alongside the declaration Saturday that the North had completed the development of its nuclear arsenal and no more atomic or missile tests were needed, Kim proclaimed that the "new strategic line" for the ruling Workers' Party would be "socialist economic construction".

The three words appeared a total of 56 times in the report by the official KCNA news agency on Kim's speech and the subsequent party decision. It has a long way to go. For a time after the Korean War the North was wealthier than the South, benefitting from a Japanese colonial decision to concentrate industrialization there as it had more mineral resources and more hydroelectric power potential than the largely agricultural southern end of the peninsula.

But that situation reversed as the North - long considered one of the most state-controlled economies in the world - suffered from decades of economic mismanagement, worsened when the demise of the Soviet Union ended the financial support that had helped to plug the gaps. Average incomes were less than one-twentieth of those in the South in 2016, according to the most recent statistics available from Seoul - Pyongyang itself does not publish figures even for GDP growth.

The situation has been improving as Pyongyang quietly allows the market to play a greater role in its economy under Kim. It recorded its fastest expansion in 17 years in 2016, according to the Bank of Korea, the South's central bank - although that is threatened by recent UN Security Council sanctions imposed on sectors such as coal, fish and textiles over its weapons programs.

Socialism with North Korean characteristics?

Kim intends to pursue "essentially the Chinese-style economic program he is busily implementing", said Andrei Lankov of Korea Risk Group. "Economic reforms which are not going to be called economic reforms." In neighboring China and nearby Vietnam, Kim has two examples of Communist parties that have embraced capitalism without threatening the rule of the one-party state-even reinforcing their positions by delivering increasing prosperity.

Deng Xiaoping's "Reform and Opening" in the 1980s started a decades-long economic boom that propelled China from a lumbering backwater to the world's second-largest economy and a crucial driver of global growth. Beijing calls it "Socialism with Chinese characteristics", and officials have long pressed Pyongyang to follow its example. In public, Kim is having none of it. At the Workers' Party congress in 2016 the first such meeting for 36 years - he pointedly decried "the filthy wind of bourgeois liberty and 'reform' and 'openness' blowing in our neighborhood".

But in practice he has brought in changes. Under what

sold in the informal, technically illegal "jangmadang" markets to be found in every North Korean town.

Even so the North cannot produce enough food to adequately feed its people there is an annual shortfall of around one million metric tonnes, according to experts, with more than 40 percent of the population undernourished - and there is no enough electricity to light its cities. Lankov predicted more investment in infrastructure, industrial reforms including more autonomy for SOEs and greater rights for managers to retain profits, along with further agricultural development, "essentially privatization of the land". Kim "hopes that he will achieve sustainable economic growth, improving living standards," he told AFP. "They don't care about lifestyles, they just care about the amount of calories."

Science and education

On his trip to China last month - his first overseas journey since inheriting power from his father in 2011 - Kim visited an exhibition in the Beijing tech hub of Zhongguancun showcasing recent innovations by the Chinese Academy of Sciences. "We can grasp the mightiness of China," he wrote in the visitors' book, according to KCNA, and he told the Workers' Party that the North needed to boost science and education to build "a scientific and technical power and a talent power".

Chinese tech firms Alibaba and Tencent are among the biggest companies in the world, and Koh Yu-hwan, professor of North Korean Studies at Dongguk University, said Pyongyang wanted to "quickly adopt the fourth industrial revolution" - the transformation wrought by digital technology - "so its economy can take a leap". But the North remains a closely-controlled society, and one where the authorities cannot declare an about-turn in economic policy. Kim is pro-business, Lankov said. "Unlike his father or his grandfather he has no sentimental attachment nor ideological commitment to the socialist model."

But while Khrushchev denounced Stalin and Deng criticized Mao, Kim could not do the same with his legitimacy resting in large part on his family heritage. "You cannot change much in the ideology because you cannot say that your father or grandfather was wrong." —AFP

'Socialist economic construction' new mantra



Pyongyang calls the Socialist Corporate Responsible Management System, factory managers have told AFP that once they have satisfied the quotas allocated to them by the state, they are free to buy and sell from suppliers and to customers of their choice, at prices negotiated between them. State-owned enterprises (SOEs) can set up subsidiaries in other areas of business - the national airline Air Koryo has diversified into fields such as taxis and soft drinks.

That also effectively allows independent entrepreneurs to set up operations under SOEs' wings, to seek a level of protection in a system that remains murky and subject to arbitrary change. Agriculture, too, has also been reformed, with members of co-operative farms cultivating plots of their own of almost 100 sq m, growing produce that is

Turkey economy: Trigger and key factor in election

Turkey's economy, the fastest growing in the G20 but haunted by an uncertain long-term outlook, is key to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's decision to call snap polls and will also be decisive for the outcome. Turkey recorded stellar growth of 7.4 percent in 2017 but the data has failed to douse fears over the underlying health of the economy which is marked by double-digit inflation, a wide current account deficit, a weak currency and high corporate debt.

The economy has generally been a trump card for Erdogan in his 15 years in power, with the Turkish strongman crediting himself with rescuing the country from the chaos that brought it to near financial meltdown in the 2000-2001 crisis. By bringing the polls forward one-and-a-half-years to June 24, Erdogan wants to snare another five years in power with the economy at its peak before any downturn sets in, analysts say.

And with both unemployment and inflation at over 10 percent, Turkey's opposition will also be looking to capitalize on nascent economic discontent at the polls. "There was no way to sustain this pace (of growth) until November 2019," Atilla Yesilada, country advisor at Global Source Partners in Istanbul told AFP, adding that the economy was "going too fast for its own good".

'Vulnerabilities building'

No visitor to Istanbul or other major Turkish cities can miss the frenetic pace of construction activity, with buildings being restored and built from scratch at every street corner. The government is pursuing massive new infrastructure projects, from a giant new Istanbul airport due to open later this year to a Suez-style shipping canal parallel to the Bosphorus. But markets have been troubled by reports that two major Turkish companies are seeking debt restructuring, in a sign ambitions may have been stretched too far.

Dogus Group, whose interests range from Garanti Bank to the meat restaurants of a famous Turkish butcher known as Salt Bae, and Yildiz Holding, the owner of the Godiva and McVitie's confectionary brands, have asked banks for restructuring of billions of dollars in debts, reports have said. "The economic data have all been very strong, so far. But it's clear that this is causing vulnerabilities to build," said William Jackson, senior emerging markets economist at Capital Economics in London. He told AFP that of particular concern was the double digit inflation and the widening of the current account deficit, a measure of how much Turkey is borrowing from abroad.

Charles Robertson, global chief economist at Renaissance Capital, argued that the problems in Turkey's economy were not acute enough to cause Erdogan problems at the elections. "Unemployment remains at an acceptable level and as so many Turks keep some savings in foreign currency even lira weakness is not that painful for the middle classes," he told AFP.



Turkish pedestrians and workers walk through a market area in the Eminonu district of Istanbul on April 20, 2018. —AFP

'Previous rallies short lived'

The Turkish lira had lost almost 10 percent of its value against the US dollar since the start of the year ahead of Erdogan's election announcement, making it one of the worst performing emerging market currencies in the world. But his ending of uncertainty on snap polls - the subject of speculation for months - gave the lira one of its strongest rallies in recent times on Wednesday and it has since kept most of its gains.

Jackson of Capital Economics said he was "not sure this can be sustained", given the size of the current account deficit which leaves Turkey dependent on foreign capital inflows that could

slow and pressure the currency. Previous rallies of the currency when uncertainty was lifted "were short lived and the broad trend for the lira has been down", he said. Up until 2013 there were fewer than 2 lira to the dollar but ahead of Erdogan's announcement it topped 4 to the dollar for the first time.

Keenly watched will be a meeting of Turkey's central bank on Wednesday, with the nominally independent institution under relentless pressure from Erdogan to cut rates to boost growth but markets wanting a tighter policy to douse down inflation. "For the rally to get legs, the central bank should hike rates - but Erdogan is an obstacle to this," said Robertson. —AFP



A Kuwaiti woman and her daughter light lamps spelling out Earth Day yesterday. April 22 is observed as Earth Day every year to raise ecological awareness. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Call for panel to vet expat licenses...

Continued from Page 1

This is the third grilling to be filed by lawmakers within the past two weeks, with the other two against the prime minister and the oil and electricity minister. Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told reporters the three grillings will be placed on the agenda of the May 1 regular session and debated in the same session. Asked if this could cause tense relations with the government and lead to dissolving the National Assembly, Ghanem said dissolving the Assembly is the sole decision of HH the Amir, but "from protocol meetings with the Amir, I can see no dissolution of the Assembly".

In his grilling, Ashour said the minister has dissolved 28 NGOs and cooperative societies, some of which have been reinstated by the courts, which means that the minister has misused her powers. He accused her curbing public freedoms in forming NGOs and by dis-

solving them without a valid legal reason. The grilling also charged that the minister has failed to devise reasonable policies to amend the demographic structure, which is dominated by expatriates.

It charged that the minister has failed to confront visa traders who have tarnished the image of the country abroad, adding that a study by the Assembly showed that as much as 73 percent of expatriate workers are impacted negatively by visa traders. It added that the study shows that a majority of the 1.3 million non-skilled expatriate laborers are victims of visa traders. According to the Public Authority for Civil Information, 39 percent of expat workers have education levels below the primary stage and 35 percent have lower than intermediate education.

The lawmaker said the minister has failed to take any action to resolve this complicated and sensitive issue, and although she claimed that more than 7,200 visa traders were referred to court, only 560 traders were in fact referred. The lawmaker also claimed that the minister has placed obstacles in the path of appointing more Kuwaitis in the private sector, saying that over 28,000 Kuwaitis migrated from the private sector to the public sector last year.

MPs demand expulsion of Filipino...

Continued from Page 1

representatives of the foreign and the interior ministries to hear their testimonies on the matter. The lawmaker described as shocking videos posted on social media about Filipinos whisking away Filipina maids out of their employers' homes, "as if the embassy is a state

within a state", and called for countering such practices that undermine Kuwait's image abroad.

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei lashed out the foreign minister and warned him that "if he does not take measures to safeguard the dignity of Kuwaitis, he will be held politically responsible and grilled". He described the Philippines Embassy action as "a flagrant interference in Kuwait's internal affairs", adding that the foreign minister and the ministry staff should have immediately expelled the Philippines ambassador after the videos were posted. MP Humoud Al-Khudair said the government should not accept any explanation from the embassy and should immediately start taking the necessary legal actions.

57 killed in Kabul blast...

Continued from Page 1

victims were taken, with relatives criticizing the Afghan government for failing to protect their loved ones. "Our patience is running out. This government should take responsibility for the lives of all these innocent people lost every day," a man called Hussain, whose cousin was wounded in the blast, told AFP. "Nobody will go to vote anymore."

The health ministry gave the latest toll for the attack, which was claimed by the Islamic State group via its propaganda arm Amaq. "They are civilians, including women and children," interior ministry spokesman Najib Danish said earlier. The center in a heavily Shiite-populated neighborhood in the west of the city was also being used by people to register for national identification certificates, which they need in order to sign up to vote.

"I found myself covered in blood, with dead people - women and children - around me," said Ali Rasuli, who had been standing in a queue outside the center when he saw a "fireball" in front of him. He was taken to hospital with leg and abdominal wounds. Sheets of paper and passport-sized photos lay scattered amid shattered glass and pools of blood on the street near badly damaged cars - grim evidence of the force of the blast.

"This senseless violence shows the cowardice and inhumanity of the enemies of democracy and peace in Afghanistan," US ambassador John Bass wrote on Twitter. NATO and the United Nations also condemned the bombing. The last major attack in Kabul was on March 21 when an IS suicide bomber blew himself up in a crowd celebrating the Persian New Year holiday and killed at least 33 people.

Ariana TV showed angry crowds shouting "Death to the government!" and "Death to the Taliban!" A wounded

man in a hospital bed wept as he told the network: "I don't know where my daughters are. God damn the attackers!" A witness to the attack named Akbar told Tolo TV: "Now we know the government cannot provide us security: we have to get armed and protect ourselves."

Elsewhere, a roadside explosion in the northern province of Baghlan yesterday killed six people, including three women and two children. President Ghani condemned both attacks as "heinous". Afghanistan began registering voters on April 14 for the long-delayed legislative elections. Officials have acknowledged that security is a major concern because the Taliban and other militant groups control or contest large swathes of the country.

Afghan police and troops have been tasked with protecting polling centers, even as they struggle to get the upper hand against insurgents on the battlefield. Militants on Friday launched rockets at a voter registration center in the northwestern province of Badghis, killing a police officer and wounding another person. Officials blamed the Taliban for the attack. On Tuesday gunmen attacked a voter registration center in the central province of Ghor, kidnapping three election workers and two policemen. Taliban militants released the five on Thursday.

Over the next two months, authorities hope to register up to 14 million adults at more than 7,000 polling centers for the parliamentary and district council elections. Officials have been pushing people to register amid fears a low turnout will undermine the credibility of the polls. Since the Persian New Year attack a tense calm had permeated the Afghan capital as people brace for the Taliban's launch of its customary spring offensive.

The Taliban are under pressure to take up Ghani's peace offer made in February but so far the group has given only a muted response. Some Western and Afghan officials expect 2018 to be a particularly bloody year. General John Nicholson, the top US and NATO commander in Afghanistan, told Tolo TV last month that he expected the Taliban to carry out more suicide attacks this fighting season. — Agencies

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Sports

Kipchoge and Cheruiyot celebrate Kenyan double at London Marathon

Mo Farah breaks British marathon record

LONDON: Olympic champion Eliud Kipchoge stormed to his third London Marathon title yesterday to complete an impressive Kenyan double after Vivian Cheruiyot beat the heat to win the women's race. Kipchoge, 33, saw off the challenge of Ethiopia's Tola Shura Kitata and home favourite Mo Farah to win his third race in the British capital in four years in a time of 2hrs 04min 17sec, finishing more than half a minute in front of Kitata (2:04:49), with Farah third (2:06:21).

Cheruiyot, 34, timed her run perfectly to win the women's event in a time of 2:18:31 ahead of compatriot Brigid Kosgei (2:20:13), and Ethiopia's Tadelech Bekele (2:21:40).

The race was the warmest London Marathon on record, with a high of 23.2 degrees Celsius (73.8 degrees Fahrenheit), beating the previous mark of 22.7 degrees Celsius set in 1996. Kipchoge joined compatriot Martin Lel and Mexican Dionicio Ceron as the only men to win London three times.

After previous victories in 2015 and 2016, the Kenyan took a ninth career win over 26.2 miles (42.195km), but missed his two-year-old course record. "I came to London to run a beautiful race and today I ran a really beautiful race," said Kipchoge. "Thank you, London."

The Kenyan led the way with Ethiopian great Kenenisa Bekele and last year's winner Daniel Wanjiru of Kenya also in the mix.

FARAH 'KNACKERED'

Farah was at the back of the lead group despite twice making a mess of picking up his water bottle at the designated drink stations. The British track great, who won gold in the 5,000 metres and 10,000m at the past two Olympic Games, admitted his second full marathon had taken its toll in a race where there was a world record pace at the halfway point.

"I am knackered," said the 35-year-old, who broke the British marathon record. "The guys went for it, they were on for world record pace, so it was do or die. I went with it and hung in as much as I could."

"It's so different to the track. It's incredible. It's different pain, different training but I've really enjoyed it. I gave it all, 110 per cent as I normally do." Cheruiyot took advantage of failed attempts to break Paula Radcliffe's 15-year-old world record by last year's winner Mary Keitany and runner-up Tirunesh Dibaba.

In unusually warm conditions, first Dibaba and then Keitany dropped off the pace, allowing the 2016 Olympic 5,000m gold medalist to claim victory.

After nine miles Keitany and main rival Dibaba were 25 seconds ahead of Radcliffe's time. But Dibaba was soon reduced to a walking pace to leave Keitany with only her two male pacemakers for company.

Keitany, looking for a fourth win in London, also started to slow down as it became apparent Radcliffe's record of two hours 15 minutes 25 seconds would not

“ I didn't want to race against anybody ”



LONDON: Elite men's race winner Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge (L) and elite women's race winner Kenya's Vivian Cheruiyot pose during the trophy ceremony of the 2018 London Marathon in central London yesterday. — AFP

be threatened. "The reason it was so good for me today was because I started slowly. I didn't go with the faster group because the faster group was quicker than I was at the start," Cheruiyot told the BBC.

"I didn't want to race against anybody, I wanted to

race alone. So I raced like that." Britain's David Weir won the men's wheelchair race for the eighth time after a thrilling sprint finish. The 38-year-old pipped Switzerland's Marcel Hug into second place, with Daniel Romanchuk of the United States third. — AFP

Boult's jaw-dropping IPL catch leaves cricket world in awe

NEW DELHI: Trent Boult left the cricket world stunned with his fielding brilliance after taking a sensational catch hailed as the "greatest ever" during an Indian Premier League match. New Zealand's Boult, playing for Delhi Daredevils in the lucrative Twenty20 tournament, leapt airborne on the deep square leg boundary to pouch one-handed a shot by Virat Kohli, skipper of the Royal Challengers Bangalore, that appeared to be heading for six.

The wrong-handed diving effort by the left-arm paceman-completed just millimetres inside the boundary rope-left Kohli in disbelief and sent social media into a frenzy.

"I was stunned when he took it, that's a brilliant catch. It happens in the IPL especially," Kohli said after his team went on to win the match on Saturday night. "Good to see. That's a catch when you look back, you don't feel bad about getting out," Kohli added of his dismissal that came off the

bowling of Harshal Patel.

"I think we could quite easily have just seen the Greatest EVER catch," tweeted the former England captain Michael Vaughan. Commentator and former England Test batsman David Lloyd termed it a moment of "magic" while England and Rajasthan Royals all-rounder Ben Stokes wrote on Twitter: "Don't think you can even describe that as a catch... that's something different."

The match will also be remembered for AB de Villiers' unbeaten 90 off 39 balls that led Bangalore to a six-wicket win at M Chinnaswamy Stadium. The South African batsman hit 10 fours and five sixes to pulverise the Delhi bowlers, for whom Boult returned figures of 1-33. The IPL is now in its 11th season with 60 matches over 51 days.

There is \$8 million in prize money at stake including \$4 million for the winning team. The final takes place on May 27 in Mumbai. — AFP



BANGALORE: Delhi Daredevils fielder Trent Boult (C-L) celebrates with his teammates the catch dismissal of Royal Challengers batsman and captain Virat Kohli for 30 runs during the 2018 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match. — AFP

Khan beats Lo Greco in 39 seconds on British return

LIVERPOOL: Amir Khan's first bout in a British ring for five years saw him knock out Canada's Phil Lo Greco in a mere 39 seconds on Saturday. The 31-year-old British boxer had not fought anywhere for two years since being beaten by Saul 'Canelo' Alvarez in Las Vegas in May 2016. And the 2004 Olympic silver medalist wasted little time in sending Lo Greco tumbling with a quick one-two punch combination inside the opening 30 seconds. Khan then pinned Lo Greco to the ropes before the super-welterweight contest ended moments after it had started.

Victory left Khan on course for his long-awaited showdown with British rival Kell Brook, who was among those watching at ringside on Saturday. "I have been out the ring for two years but I was still in the gym working hard, I have never taken a day off. I wanted to prove a

point coming back-I was trained to fight for 12 rounds, I had to make some changes and Phil lo Greco is a dangerous opponent," Khan told the BBC. "Enjoy my victory. Khan's back. I was a little nervous, but I am back with a big bang. I want to become a world champion this year or next year." Khan, however, added: "I want to fight the best guys. If it means going up a division I will."

As for a bout with Brook, Khan, most famous recently for his 'jungle' appearance in the British television show 'I'm A Celebrity, Get Me Out of Here', said: "That fight is something I am not rushing and not running away from. I will fight Kell Brook and beat Kell Brook. Kell Brook has been living off my name for a long time. I am a stronger fighter, a better fighter."

"I'm not a fighter to run away." But an unimpressed Brook said: "He doesn't want the fight, he just ran off. "Amir, all the fans want the fight, I want the fight, he can go in the jungle and chase stars but when he gets in there with me, I'll make him see stars."

Meanwhile, Carl Frampton delighted his Belfast home crowd with a unanimous points win over fellow former multiple world champion Nonito Donaire. All that was at stake was the World Boxing Organisation's interim featherweight belt, not a fully-fledged title. But by coming out on top by a margin of 117-111 on all three judges' scorecards, the 31-year-old Frampton kept himself on

course for a bout with the winner of next month's International Boxing Federation title fight between Lee Selby and Josh Warrington.

WBO champion Oscar Valdez could also lie in wait for the 31-year-old Frampton, a former world title holder at both super-bantamweight and featherweight. Prior to Saturday's bout-which just carried on past midnight local time (2300 GMT) — Northern Ireland's Frampton had rated Donaire, a seven-time world champion across four separate weight classes, as the most "accomplished fighter I have ever faced".

But the 35-year-old Filipino did not appear to be at his very best in Belfast, although he did rock Frampton with several solid punches in the 11th round of 12. "Nonito Donaire was dangerous from start to finish. I stuck to the game plan and at times my boxing was beautiful," Frampton told BT Sport as he looked forward to having a world-title shot at Belfast's Windsor Park—best known as the home ground of Northern Ireland's football team. "There is only one thing on my mind at the moment—a world title fight at Windsor Park and I can't wait to get there." Frampton, who split from promoter Barry McGuigan last year, before ditching Shane McGuigan, Barry's son, as his trainer, added: "In the 11th round I was definitely hurt but I survived it and that's what champions do. — AFP

Sexton eyes European club triumph after Grand Slam glory

DUBLIN: Johnny Sexton was all smiles as he refused to say which side he'd prefer to face in next month's Champions Cup final after helping Leinster book their place in the Bilbao showdown with a thumping defeat of Scarlets at Lansdowne Road on Saturday. Munster, Leinster's bitter Irish rivals, face French club Racing 92

Sexton's former side-in Sunday's second semi-final in Bordeaux. But the Leinster captain, who scored 18 of the Irish province's points in a resounding 38-16 win over Scarlets, jokingly dismissed the enquiry. "Do you expect me to answer that?" he replied, with a laugh. "I'll just give whoever (qualifies) a team talk now! They're both quality teams, no matter who plays it's going to be a very tough

game." Fly-half Sexton, the on-field tactical mastermind as Ireland completed a Six Nations Grand Slam earlier this season, added: "Racing were champions a couple of years ago in France and Munster, if we play against Munster it will be a very special game for all of us. "Racing more so for me than the rest of us. It's going to be a tough game no matter who we play."

It is likely to be tougher than Saturday's semi-final, where Leinster dismantled a Scarlets side who headed across from Wales buoyed by having beaten the same opponents in last season's Pro 12 semi-final in Dublin. This time around, three-times European champions Leinster ruthlessly dominated from start to finish.

"I said on Friday that we'd find out in the game if we learnt from last year's defeat, and we did," said Sexton, one of five Leinster try-scorers on Saturday that also included former Wallaby back-row Scott Fardy.

"We looked like a different team to the one that played in that semi-final last year," the Ireland playmaker added. "We are, in many ways—a lot of players who didn't play last year made a big difference today." "We've been

underdogs and won, we've been favourites and lost...I don't think we're that much better than Scarlets, we just took our chances." Scarlets coach Wayne Pivac had no complaints regarding a result that ended the west Wales side's hopes of a first appearance in European club rugby union's showpiece final in emphatic fashion. "Leinster played very, very, well, as hard as it is to take, you have to say they were very good," conceded Pivac, long touted to succeed fellow New Zealander Warren Gatland as coach of Wales.

"They were the better side, it was a mix of how well they played and how well we didn't play," he added. Both Pivac and Scarlets captain Ken Owens were impressed by Leinster's clinical game-plan.

"They were very direct, they looked after the ball in contact, and once they were into our 22 they were very clinical," Pivac said. "In the game of feet and inches, they won." Wales hooker Owens added: "They are one of, if not the best side around at executing a game plan. You could see they learnt lessons from the defeat last year...they dominated the game pretty much. — AFP

Warriors join Dragons at top of NRL after win

SYDNEY: The New Zealand Warriors ended St George Illawarra's winning start to Australia's National Rugby League season and joined the Dragons at the top of the standings with a 20-12 win in Auckland this weekend.

The Warriors, missing Kiwi Test scrum-half Shaun Johnson, saw off a Dragons second half comeback in registering a four-tries-to-two win. Warriors half Mason Lino, promoted for the injured Johnson, put in another outstanding performance in his second start of the season. Elsewhere, Melbourne Storm put their rivals on notice that their title defence is back on track after beating the Broncos 34-20 in Brisbane. Storm stand-off Cameron Munster further pushed his claims for Queensland State of Origin selection with a strong performance.

Storm Test fullback Billy Slater was in everything in a stunning two-try performance that would have had Queensland coach Kevin Walters licking his lips. The South Sydney Rabbitohs put in their most dominant performance of the season, hammering the Canberra Raiders 42-22, but English Test star Sam Burgess potentially faces yet another suspension.

Returning from a two-week suspension, Burgess was immense against Canberra, running 203 metres with four offloads and six tackle busts and setting the tone for the win. However a 59th-minute high tackle on Aidan Sezer saw him placed on the referee's report. Another suspension potentially beckons, with the weight of two prior incidents already this year likely to count against him at the judiciary.

The Sydney Roosters ground their way to a 6-0 win over Canterbury and did so without captain Jake Friend, who was concussed in making an attempted tackle. Shaun Kenny-Dowall went from villain to hero as the Newcastle Knights pulled off a stunning 22-20 victory over the fourth-placed Wests Tigers. But the win could come at the cost of star scrum-half recruit Mitchell Pearce suffering a pectoral injury that could see him sidelined for months. — AFP

Sports

Aussie Simmons gets NBA triple double as 76ers beat Heat

Dynamic duo dominates as Pelicans sweep Trail Blazers

MIAMI: Australian Ben Simmons became the first rookie since 1980 with a triple double in an NBA playoff game, helping spark the Philadelphia 76ers over Miami 106-102 on Saturday.

Simmons scored 17 points, grabbed 13 rebounds and passed off 10 assists while J.J. Redick had 24 points to lead seven double-digit scorers for the Sixers, who seized a 3-1 edge over the Heat in their best-of-seven opening round series.

Simmons became the first rookie since Magic Johnson to manage a triple double in a playoff game and at 21 is the third-youngest to accomplish the feat after Johnson and Cleveland's LeBron James.

He's also the first 76er with a playoff triple double since Charles Barkley in 1991. And it came in a game where he was involved in a second-period scuffle.

After Philadelphia's Robert Covington inflicted a hard foul upon Miami's Goran Dragic, the Heat's James Johnson took issue and shoved Covington, which prompted Simmons to confront Johnson as coaches and players entered to contain the melee.

Simmons received a personal foul for his trouble while Covington and Johnson were hit with technical fouls. "I'm shocked that we won this game," 76ers coach Brett Brown said. "We really didn't have a right

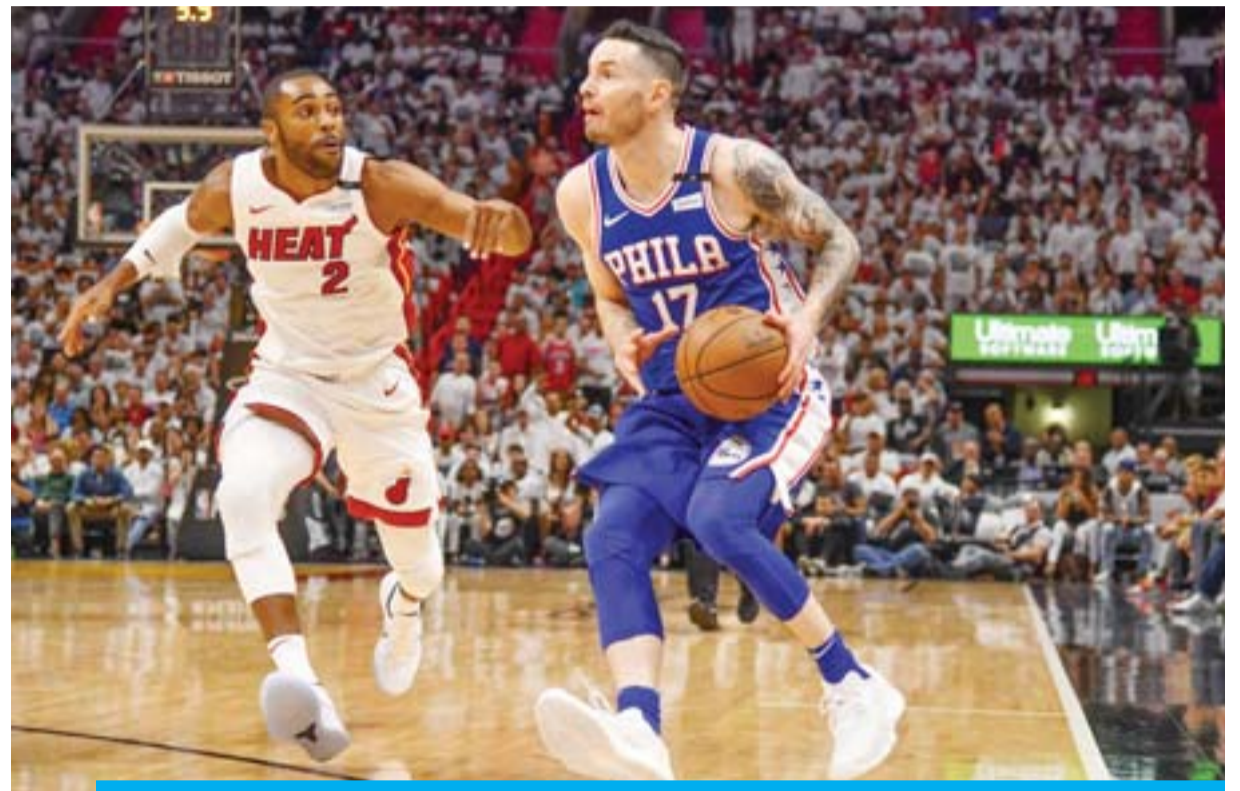
to win the game."

Joel Embiid, a 7-foot Cameroonian center, added 14 points, 12 rebounds and five blocked shots for the 76ers in his second game back after an orbital bone fracture around his left eye. He missed the first two games of the series but returned wearing a protective facial mask. Dwyane Wade came off the Miami bench to score a game-high 25 points, but the Heat face elimination in game five Tuesday at Philadelphia.

Elsewhere, Anthony Davis and Jrue Holiday combined to post one of the greatest duo performances in NBA history as the New Orleans Pelicans beat Portland 131-123 to sweep the Trail Blazers from the playoffs.

Jrue Holiday, who finished with 41 points, nailed an 18-foot pull-up jumper that gave the Pelicans a six-point lead with 40 seconds remaining in the win.

Rajon Rondo added 16 assists and Davis also had 11 rebounds and three blocks for New Orleans. The Pelicans upset of the Trail Blazers moves them into the second round for only the second time since the NBA returned to the city 16 years ago. C.J. McCollum led Portland with 38 points. Al-Farouq Aminu scored 27, Damian Lillard added 18 points and Jusuf Nurkic had 18 points and 11 rebounds. —AFP



MIAMI: JJ Redick #17 of the Philadelphia 76ers looks to score in the first quarter against the Miami Heat during Game Four of Round One of the 2018 NBA Playoffs at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. — AFP

“ I’m shocked that we won this game ”

Iniesta says ‘emotional’ final may be his last for Barca

MADRID: Andres Iniesta hinted he may have played his last final for Barcelona after they crushed Sevilla 5-0 to win the Copa del Rey on Saturday. Barcelona captain Iniesta said he would reveal his future plans “this week” as the 33-year-old weighs up an offer from China that would take him away from his boyhood club.

There was no sign of age catching up with the Spaniard at the Wanda Metropolitan where Iniesta capped a sublime performance by scoring Barca's fourth goal. He looked tearful as he departed to a standing ovation in the second half, from some Sevilla fans too, before hoisting the Copa del Rey trophy aloft. “This week I will make my decision public but we will always have days like today,” Iniesta said.

Asked if this was his last final with Barcelona, Iniesta added: “It's a possibility. In a few days I'll make it public and nothing more. Today is a very special and emotional day.”

The top sponsor of China club Chongqing Dangdai Lifan told the state-run Xinhua news agency Saturday he was “positive” they would sign Iniesta, who had earlier this year also been linked with fellow Chinese Super League outfit Tianjin Quanjian.

“I will say what the decision is this week,” said Iniesta. “I think it's a little clear but we will see.” Lionel Messi scored in between a first-half double for Luis Suarez as Barcelona ran riot to secure their fourth Copa del Rey triumph in as many years. Philippe Coutinho converted a late penalty to make it 5-0.

INDIVIDUAL BRILLIANCE

But Iniesta was the man of the moment, his fourth goal a moment of individual brilliance after a superb shimmy left Sevilla goalkeeper David Soria helpless to save the finish. “Today he played a match as such a high level, it seemed that he was 25 years old,” Sevilla coach Vincenzo Montella said. “It would be difficult to find another player to replace him.”

Barcelona coach Ernesto Valverde said: “When I was a player I would have given my right arm to do what he and Messi do. It's a stroke of good luck to have him.”

This was the sixth time Iniesta has won the Copa del Rey, adding another trophy to a remarkable collection that already includes eight La Liga titles, three Champions League crowns and a World Cup. He will win a ninth La Liga title if Barcelona beat Deportivo La Coruna next weekend.

“It was a great night in all ways, on a collective and personal level,” Iniesta said. “We will try to add the League to leave a good taste in people's mouths. It is a day of many emotions and I am very happy.” Barca defender Jordi Alba said: “It has been and is a pleasure to share a changing room with him today, he is number one in his position and as person. “The decision that he takes should be respected because he deserves it. But the day Iniesta leaves is the day we will all cry. We will miss him.” —AFP

A's lefty Manaea pitches first no-hitter against Boston in 25 years

OAKLAND: Sean Manaea pitched a no-hitter as the Oakland Athletics beat the red-hot Boston Red Sox 3-0 Saturday night at Oakland Coliseum. Manaea (3-2) tossed the 12th no-hitter in franchise history, finishing the milestone with 108 pitches and facing three above the minimum. He was mobbed by his teammates after completing the seventh no-hitter in the Oakland era as “Celebration” by Kool and the Gang blared. “Oh man, my heart was beating out of my chest, and I was trying to do everything I could [to stay calm],” Manaea told Braden in a postgame interview. The effort also marked Manaea's first career complete game. The Red Sox were no-hit for the 12th time in team history and first time since April 22, 1993. The Red Sox dropped to 17-3 and saw an eight-game winning streak stopped.

INDIANS 4, ORIOLES 0

Mike Clevinger (2-0) pitched his first career shutout and Jose Ramirez went 3-for-4 with a homer as Cleveland cruised over host Baltimore at Camden Yards. Clevinger (2-0) was terrific while allowing just two hits in his first career complete game. The right-hander struck out three and walked two in throwing 107 pitches. Yonder Alonso and Yan Gomes also went deep for Cleveland, which won for just the second time in five games. Orioles right-hander Chris Tillman (0-4) served up the three homers and gave up four runs and eight hits in six innings. Tillman struck out five and walked one as Baltimore lost for the seventh time in eight games.

PHILLIES 6, PIRATES 2

Rhys Hoskins drove in four runs, including three on a go-ahead home run in the sixth inning, as the Philadelphia Phillies defeated the Pittsburgh Pirates in Philadelphia. Hoskins added a run-scoring single in a three-run eighth inning as the Phillies beat the Pirates for the third time in three days. Sean Rodriguez homered for Pittsburgh, which lost for the fifth time in its last six games. Aaron Nola (2-1) got the win for the Phillies, allowing two runs and six hits in seven innings. He struck out nine and did not walk a batter. Michael Feliz (0-1) took the loss in relief, coming in with two runners on base and allowing Hoskins' home run. Closer Hector Neris, who got the final out of the eighth inning, pitched a scoreless ninth for his fourth save.



OAKLAND: Sean Manaea #55 and Jonathan Lucroy #21 of the Oakland Athletics celebrates after Manaea pitched a no-hitter against the Boston Red Sox at the Oakland Alameda Coliseum in Oakland, California. The Athletics won the game 3-0. — AFP

CARDINALS 4, REDS 3

St. Louis catcher Yadier Molina hit his sixth homer of the season to break a tie in the seventh inning and Paul DeJong and Dexter Fowler also homered as the Cardinals beat the reeling Cincinnati Reds at Busch Stadium. Molina homered off Jared Hughes (0-2) as the Cardinals regained the lead after Cincinnati tied the game with three two-out runs in the top of the seventh. The Cardinals (12-8) have won all six games against the Reds this season, extending their head-to-head streak to 10 games. Rookie Jordan Hicks (1-0) retired the final batter of the seventh inning and went the rest of the way for his first major league victory. Hicks' fastball has averaged 99 mph, the highest in the majors, according to Fangraphs.com.

RAYS 10, TWINS 1

C.J. Cron homered twice and drove in four runs and Blake Snell tossed seven solid innings to help Tampa Rays record a blowout victory over visiting Minnesota at Tropicana Field. Denard Span went 2-for-5 with three RBIs for the Rays, who have won four of their past five games. Daniel Robertson also homered and Joey Wendle went 3-for-4 as Tampa Bay was an impressive 7-for-9 with runners in scoring position. Cron doubled his homer total for this season while notching his ninth career multi-homer game.

BREWERS 6, MARLINS 5

Jesus Aguilar ended a 13-pitch at-bat with a walk-off solo homer in the ninth inning as Milwaukee rallied to defeat visiting Miami. Aguilar, who had entered the game as a defensive substitution in the top of the ninth, led off the frame and battled reliever Junichi Tazawa (0-1). It was Aguilar's first homer of the season, an opposite-field shot to right-center. He was the first batter Tazawa faced in the game. Miami was led by rookie center fielder Lewis Brinson, who slugged a three-run home run. Brinson, who entered this series batting just .131 with no homers and one RBI, has three homers and six RBIs in this series, which culminates on Sunday.

TIGERS 12, ROYALS 4

Nicholas Castellanos and Miguel Cabrera drove in three runs apiece as the Detroit Tigers rolled over the struggling Kansas City Royals. Castellanos had three hits, including his first homer this season. Cabrera supplied two hits, walked twice and also scored twice as the Tigers won for the fifth time in six games. Winning pitcher Mike Fiers (2-1) allowed four runs (two earned) on 10 hits in 5 1/3 innings. Royals ace Danny Duffy (0-3) gave up six runs on 10 hits in 4 2/3 innings for the Royals, who have lost 10 of their last 11 games. — Reuters



Gulf Bank honors its soccer team

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank celebrated the triumph of its football team, who were recently crowned champions of the Kuwait Banking Club Football Tournament for the seventh time, after beating Boubyan Bank 2-0 in an exciting final match held at Sabah Al-Salem Stadium of Al-Arabi Club.

The celebration, which was attended by Tony

Daher, CEO of Gulf Bank, Mrs Salma Al Hajjaj, General Manager Human Resources at Gulf Bank and a number of senior management and employees of the Bank, was held in recognition of the team's great efforts and outstanding performance throughout the tournament period that allowed them to take home the trophy. Post tournament, The Kuwait Banking Club also presented the members of the Gulf Bank's football team with medals to acknowledge their efforts, and honored he 'best goalkeeper of the tournament', Ahmed Abdullah, and 'player of the tournament', Meshal Menahi

The league was organized under the patronage of

Majed AlAjeel, the President of the Kuwait Banking Association, and the final game was attended by the Chairman of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Banking Club Fadhel Al-Mandi, Chief Executive Officer of Gulf Bank, Tony Daher, General Manager of Human Resources at Gulf Bank, Mrs Salma Al Hajjaj, Executive Chairman of Boubyan Bank Abdullah Al-Tewajjri, General Manager of Boubyan Bank Walid Al-Yaqout, as well as leaders of the banking sector.

Gulf Bank is committed to supporting its football team members, and encourages all its employees to take part in sport activities to cultivate team spirit and to lead active and healthy lives.

Sports

Barcelona hammer Sevilla to win 30th Copa del Rey

Suarez scored his 31st and 32nd goals of the season

MADRID: Lionel Messi and Luis Suarez inspired Barcelona to what will surely be the first part of a domestic double this season as they thrashed Sevilla 5-0 on Saturday to win the Copa del Rey. Messi had scored once and Suarez twice before even the half-time whistle had blown at the Wanda Metropolitano, with the sublime Andres Iniesta and Philippe Coutinho later compounding Sevilla's humiliation. Barca's exhilarating display earns them their 30th triumph in this competition and fourth in a row, having reached the final in each of the last five years.

But, despite hugs and high-fives at the end, the real celebrations will be put on ice until next Sunday, when victory over Deportivo La Coruna will confirm Ernesto Valverde's side as La Liga champions too. Even a clean sweep of the domestic trophies, perhaps polished by La Liga's first ever unbeaten season, will not eradicate the lingering disappointment from Barca's Champions League exit to Roma.

But this performance, as easy on the eye as it was emphatic, will certainly serve as a counter-point to those that believe Valverde's team have been efficient, rather than exciting this season, and overly reliant on Messi. "Winning the Cup does not hide the disappointment in Rome," Suarez said after the match. "But at the beginning of the season anyone would have signed for a double."

Messi was, of course, superb again on Saturday but this was not a one-man show. Suarez scored his 31st and 32nd goals of the season while Iniesta delivered one of those effortless displays, in which at times he

was virtually unplayable.

If this is to be the 33-year-old's last Barca final before departing for China, it was a fitting farewell, with only goalkeeper Jasper Cillessen absent from the 10-man huddle that engulfed the Spaniard following his shimmying fourth.

By the time Coutinho converted his penalty in the 69th minute, Barca were simply sharing the goals around. For Sevilla, defeat was always the most likely scenario but this was a whitewash. Sitting eighth in La Liga, even Europa League qualification now looks an outside bet and there may be repercussions for coach Vincenzo Montella and some of his players in the summer.

"Barcelona has been superior in everything, they have extra-terrestrial players," Montella said. "I'm very sorry for the fans who

have been fantastic, sorry for the disappointments. I have seen crying in the dressing room but tomorrow, we have to work."

Amid ongoing political unrest between Catalonia and the Spanish government, Barca fans whistled during the national anthem before kick-off, with king Felipe VI watching on. Their jeers, however, were drowned out by the chants of Sevilla supporters. When the first goal arrived it came from a long Cillessen punt downfield as Coutinho found himself free behind the Sevilla backline and squared for Suarez to stab home.

Iniesta hit the bar with a rasping shot from distance and soon they were two up, Jordi Alba keeping the ball alive with a backheel that Messi slammed into the roof

of the net. Messi could have had a second were it not for an incorrect offside call and then a cynical foul by Sergio Escudero, for which he was lucky only to receive a yellow card.

Both mattered little, however, as Messi set Suarez free in the 41st minute, and the Uruguayan slid a third under David Soria. It was another one-two, with Messi again the pivot, that released Iniesta in the second half

often fail him. Most famously of all, Salah missed a series of one-on-ones with Real Madrid goalkeeper Keylor Navas as Roma bowed of the Champions League at the last 16 to the side that would go onto win the competition in 2016.

MASTERFUL KLOPP

"In Roma he was amazing. Every game he created a lot of chances, but sometimes missed," said Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola, who suffered from Salah's new found confidence in front of goal as he scored in each leg of Liverpool's 5-1 aggregate thrashing of the Premier League champions in the quarter-finals. "This season I think the way Jurgen Klopp wants to play is perfect for him. I think Jurgen is a master to buy players with what he really needs for the way he wants to play."

Pallotta agrees that Klopp's system of a fluid front three also including Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane is what has brought the best out of Salah, who had to feed off the target man figure of Edin Dzeko at Roma. "He's obviously had an incredible year. I think the coach there has clearly figured out how best to utilise him, using him in a different position I would say to Roma because you've got Dzeko in the middle." Despite Liverpool's heroics against City in the last eight, they were upstaged by Roma for performance of the round. The Serie A side overturned a 4-1 first leg deficit to beat Barcelona on away goals by shutting out Lionel Messi and a former Liverpool favourite Luis Suarez in a famous 3-0 second leg win.

However, a record of losing their last three Champions League games on the road—conceding eight goals in the process—doesn't bode well ahead of a visit to fortress Anfield. Salah matched Suarez's Premier League record of 31 goals in a single campaign on Saturday and stopping their former team-mate over two legs may prove a step too far for Roma in their first appearance in the last four since they lost to Liverpool in the 1984 final. —AFP



MADRID: Spain's king Felipe VI looks at Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Andres Iniesta kissing the trophy after the Spanish Copa del Rey (King's Cup) final football match Sevilla FC against FC Barcelona at the Wanda Metropolitano stadium in Madrid. Barcelona won 5-0. — AFP

of the net. Messi could have had a second were it not for an incorrect offside call and then a cynical foul by Sergio Escudero, for which he was lucky only to receive a yellow card.

Both mattered little, however, as Messi set Suarez free in the 41st minute, and the Uruguayan slid a third under David Soria. It was another one-two, with Messi again the pivot, that released Iniesta in the second half

as the midfielder's dummy-shot left Soria scrambling and an open net for the midfielder to finish into.

Resigned to their fate, Sevilla's fans sang to the end, even as Coutinho despatched a penalty to make it five after the ball had struck Clement Lenglet on the arm. All that was left was for Iniesta's substitution to be given a standing ovation before the captain hoisted the trophy, perhaps for the final time. — AFP

Salah to take centre-stage at Liverpool

LONDON: Roma know the threat posed by Mohamed Salah more than most having sold the free-scoring Egyptian to Liverpool for an initial 42 million euros (£37 million, \$52 million) just 10 months ago.

But that may not help the Italians much as they become the latest side to face the gauntlet of Anfield on a European night in tomorrow's Champions League semi-final, first leg as Salah has blossomed into a goalscoring machine very few saw coming at the start of the season.

Salah's then club record price tag was questioned at the time of the deal coming just two years after he failed to make an impression in the Premier League with Chelsea. Now, though, it looks like an incredible bargain as Salah has netted 41 goals in 46 games to take Liverpool back to the last four of Europe's premier club competition for the first time in a decade.

"It wasn't like a lot of other teams than Liverpool were banging down the door," Roma's American co-owner James Pallotta told the BBC's World Football programme. "I think today a lot of teams are kicking themselves in the head that they didn't take a closer look at him."

In a nomadic career since moving to Europe as a 19-year-old, Salah was known for his pace and dribbling ability in spells at Basel and Fiorentina either side of a short time at Chelsea before moving to Roma.

However, the capability he has shown time and again this season to keep a cool head in front of goal used to so

Arsenal give Wenger reason to smile with West Ham hammering

LONDON: Arsenal responded to Arsene Wenger's decision to bring his 22-year reign as manager to a close at the end of the season by thumping West Ham 4-1 in a subdued atmosphere at the Emirates yesterday.

Wenger, 68, had come under growing pressure to go from disgruntled supporters having failed to win the Premier League for 14 years before announcing his decision to leave on Friday. And despite players and the club's hierarchy promising that Wenger would be given a grand send off, there was little sign of tributes to a man who is by a distance Arsenal's most successful ever manager with three Premier League titles and a record seven FA Cups to his name. However, four second-half goals from Nacho Monreal, Aaron Ramsey and two late strikes from Alexandre Lacazette ensured Wenger was able to celebrate a comfortable victory on a gloriously sunny Sunday afternoon in the British capital.

In his programme notes Wenger reiterated his plea for the fans to get behind the team for the rest of the season with Arsenal still in with a chance of qualifying for next season's Champions League via the Europa League.

But there were only sporadic chants of "there's only one Arsene Wenger" from the home support, whilst, continuing a trend in recent home games, empty seats could be seen around the Emirates. Arsenal are on course to finish lower than ever under Wenger in the Premier League as they remain in sixth, six points adrift of Chelsea. However, Wenger can still sign off leaving the club in the Champions League by winning the Europa League, where Arsenal host Spanish giants Atletico Madrid in the first leg of their semi-final on Thursday. "My love and support for Arsenal will last forever and I urge our fans to stand behind the team so we can finish on a high," said Wenger in his programme notes. Wenger had named a strong side with only Petr Cech, Jack Wilshere and Mesut Ozil missing from the expected XI to face Atletico in midweek. — AFP



Mohamed Salah

Bayern must be fearless against Real: Robben

BERLIN: Arjen Robben says Bayern Munich can ill afford to show Real Madrid any fear if they want to avoid a second-straight Champions League exit against the Spaniards. Bayern host Real at Munich's Allianz Arena in Wednesday's blockbuster semi-final, first leg, in a repeat of last year's quarter-final.

Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice in each leg of the 2017 quarters, after Bayern had failed to capitalise on their chances at home, as Real won 6-3 on aggregate.

"Last year we did not do well in the home game and played with a bit of fear," said Robben. "That should not happen on Wednesday. We'll be ready. They can also be vulnerable and we can go into the game with our heads high."

A year ago, Bayern lost the first-leg 2-1 in Munich, then went down 4-2 away. In Munich, Arturo Vidal scored early for Bayern, but then failed to convert a penalty with the Germans controlling the game and Real on the ropes. However the match turned as Ronaldo netted two second-half goals and Bayern had Javi Martinez sent off for a second booking.

Bayern went down fighting in the return, losing 4-2 away having played extra time with a man down after Vidal was sent off late on and Ronaldo wrapped up his hat-trick.

The Germans face a daunting task again. Madrid have won their last five matches against Bayern, scoring 13 goals and conceding four in the process, and are bidding to win the Champions League for the third straight season.

It is easy to understand any nervousness in Bayern's ranks facing superstar Ronaldo. Real's goal-machine has hit seven goals in his last three appearances against Bayern and the Portugal superstar has scored 15 goals in the Champions League this season alone.

Real had no match this weekend, but Bundesliga champions Bayern warmed up with a 3-0 win at Hanover. Thomas Mueller and Robert Lewandowski both came off the bench to score second-half goals.

This season, Bayern fancy their chances against Real. Lewandowski, their top-scorer who was injured for last season's first leg against Real, has hit 39 goals, compared to Ronaldo's 42, in all competitions in 2017/18. — AFP



ABK to send 2 lucky Visa cardholders to FIFA World Cup

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) in collaboration with Visa rewarded two lucky ABK Visa cardholders with all-inclusive packages to attend the semi-final world cup match in Russia through its lat-

est spend-and-win campaign, which ended on 31st March 2018. Held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, the draw took place at ABK's Head Office.

The winners of the campaign were:

- Meshari Yousef Haji
- Reem Eid Falah

The two lucky winners received one package respectively, with each package including two Emirates flight tickets, accommodation for two for the duration of 4 nights/5 days, in addition to 2 FIFA World Cup semi-final game tickets and one ABK Visa Prepaid card loaded with \$450.

ABK will continue to hold similar campaigns to encourage greater customer engagement and participation in the years ahead.

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Everton v Newcastle United	22:00	beIN SPORTS	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Athletic de Bilbao v Levante	22:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Genoa v Hellas Verona	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 4	

13 Kipchoge and Cheruiyot celebrate Kenyan double at London Marathon



14 A's lefty Manaea pitches first no-hitter against Boston in 25 years



15 Barcelona hammer Sevilla to win 30th Copa del Rey



MONACO: Princess Charlene (L) and her husband Prince's Albert II of Monaco (2nd R) stand with Spain's Rafael Nadal (2nd L) as he holds the winner's trophy and Japan's Kei Nishikori (R) following their final match in the Monte-Carlo ATP Masters Series tournament on April 22, 2018, in Monaco. — AFP

Nadal wins record 31st Masters title

Greatest player to ever step foot on clay court

MONTE CARLO: Rafael Nadal romped to a record-extending 11th Monte Carlo Masters title by brushing aside an outclassed Kei Nishikori in yesterday's final to retain the world number one ranking. The 31-year-old saw off Nishikori 6-3, 6-2 to become the first man to win a single tournament 11 times in the Open era with his 76th ATP Tour title.

Nadal's 31st Masters title is also an outright record, pulling him out of a tie with Novak Djokovic. The 16-time Grand Slam champion's era of utter dominance on clay looks unlikely to end any time soon after Nadal took his run of consecutive sets won on the surface to 36.

The Spaniard will next set his sights on an 11th Barcelona Open victory next week, and it is hard to

see anyone preventing him from extending his record number of 10 French Open titles at Roland Garros at the end of the clay-court season.

He was pushed by Japan's Nishikori early on and fell a break down, but roared back against an opponent who already appeared beaten midway through the first set. It was still an excellent week for former world number four Nishikori, who only returned from a four-month absence with a right wrist injury in January and will rise from his current ranking of 36 to the brink of the top 20.

Nadal got on the board with a strong service hold, before quickly putting Nishikori under pressure as a flicked passing shot brought up break point. But the Spaniard missed a forehand up the

line by a matter of millimetres, with Nishikori clinging on after an 11-minute game that left him looking physically exhausted.

But that hold showed Nadal, who first won the event in 2005, that his opponent was up for the fight. The top seed was even displaying rare signs of nerves, and Nishikori broke for a 2-1 lead with a backhand up the line after a Nadal double fault.

But he failed to build on that glimmer of an opening, double faulting himself on break-back point. That costly error knocked the early aggression out of the 28-year-old's groundstrokes, and Nadal sped through the next two games to take command of the first set.

Nishikori forced a break point in the seventh game

but fired long with the court wide open as Nadal kept his nose in front. He struggled a little to serve out the opener, but although Nishikori saved one set point with an exquisite backhand volley, Nadal clinched it on the second with a punch of the air celebrating a pair of blistering forehands.

Nishikori was staring down the barrel of defeat at the start of the second set, but staved off a break point to hold serve. But the last rites had long been written, and Nadal broke to 15 in each of the Japanese's next two service games to close on victory. The greatest player to ever step foot on a clay court secured his 24th Masters title on the surface with a venomous backhand that flew past the hapless Nishikori. — AFP

Chelsea face Man Utd in FA Cup final

LONDON: Chelsea booked an FA Cup final showdown with Manchester United as Olivier Giroud tormented Southampton again with a sublime strike in yesterday's 2-0 win at Wembley.

Giroud has made a habit of scoring against Southampton and the France forward was their nemesis in a one-sided semi-final. Opting to select Giroud instead of Alvaro Morata proved a shrewd move by Chelsea manager Antonio Conte as the former Arsenal star produced a tremendous piece of skill to break the deadlock early in the second half. Giroud has feasted on Southampton this season, scoring twice to spark Chelsea's 3-2 win last weekend and also netting a late equaliser against them for Arsenal in December.

His fourth goal for Chelsea since his January signing was followed by a late header from substi-

tute Morata, setting up a heavyweight final against United at Wembley on May 19. That will be Chelsea's last chance to win major silverware at the end of a troubled season.

Chelsea's 13th FA Cup final appearance will be a repeat of the 2007 showpiece, when Jose Mourinho's men won 1-0. The Blues, back in the final after losing to Arsenal in May, last won the competition in 2012 and are bidding to lift the trophy for the eighth time. Winning the FA Cup might not be enough to convince either Conte or Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich that their two-year partnership should be extended.

Conte has spent much of the season complaining about Chelsea's failure to back his transfer plans, while several of his players are believed to be unhappy with his demanding training sessions and intense personality. The Blues face a tough task to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish in the Premier League as they trail fourth placed Tottenham by five points.

Against that backdrop, winning the Cup would at least provide an uplifting conclusion to a frustrating campaign. For Southampton, the focus returns to their desperate battle to avoid relegation, with just four games left to climb out of the bottom three. There were a significant number of empty seats in

the Southampton end of the stadium and the stay-away fans were vindicated by their struggling team's lacklustre display.

They had little chance of a famous Cup upset with Eden Hazard at his stylish best. Hazard threatened with a fierce strike that flashed just over from 25 yards. Then the Belgian embarked on a surging run from deep in his own half before slipping a pinpoint pass to Willian, who cut back inside and blasted against the crossbar.

Giroud was warming to the task of giving Southampton another headache and he went close to breaking the deadlock with an acrobatic volley before half-time.

Chelsea's dominance was finally rewarded in the 46th minute. Cesc Fabregas lofted a pass towards Hazard and he controlled brilliantly in mid-air before slipping the ball through to Giroud. There was still work for Giroud to do and he side-stepped three defenders with surprising grace, his nimble foot-work giving him just enough space to slot home from close-range.

Hazard was virtually unstoppable and he scythed through again before curling just wide. Southampton's Charlie Austin appealed in vain for a penalty after Giroud left his arm out to block the forward's header.—AFP

City power past Swansea in search of records

MANCHESTER: Champions Manchester City kept their Premier League title party rolling with a thumping 5-0 win over Swansea City yesterday as Kevin De Bruyne scored one of the goals of the season.

Swansea stayed 17th, four points above the relegation zone after 34 matches, while City move on to 90 points, still hoping to beat league records for the most points, wins and goals in a season.

Raheem Sterling set up David Silva for the opening goal after 12 minutes, with the England winger netting the second four minutes later from close range after Fabian Delph cut the ball across.

De Bruyne made it three after the break with a thunderous effort, Bernardo Silva grabbed the fourth by following up after Lukas Fabianski tipped Gabriel Jesus's penalty on to the post, and Brazilian Jesus headed home the fifth late on. — Reuters

Business

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Chinese fishermen drawing a net as they catch fish at the Qiandao lake in Zhejiang province. On a clear sunny morning in eastern China, the surface of Qiandao Lake boils with tens of thousands of thrashing carp as they are swept into the nets of fisherman like Ye Zhiqing. — AFP

Saudi reforms could bring big FDI inflows

Now Aramco IPO, portfolio investment, FDI promise glut

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's inclusion in global equity indexes and the planned privatization of oil company Aramco are expected to bring big inflows of overseas money into the kingdom next year. This should help Riyadh rebuild its financial reserves and fund investment plans after the 2014 plunge in oil prices that cut export earnings and deprived the banking system of funds.

Reversing the trend would shift the outlook for an economy which shrank last year for the first time in nearly a decade. The interest rate swaps market, which bankers use to hedge against future fluctuations in money flows, has begun to reflect these expectations in recent weeks. The one-year riyal IRS has sunk below the one-year US dollar IRS for the first time since the global financial crisis at the start of this decade - a bet that the Saudi money market will be flush with funds in 12 months' time. "It's quite a change-before, the issue was a shortage of liquidity. We now face a situation in which we're about to have too much liquidity," said Hans-Peter Huber, chief investment officer at Riyadh Capital, a top Saudi investment bank. "Massive inflows are to be expected over the next two years." The one-year IRS spread was a negative 12 basis points on Thursday. Before the oil price plunge, the spread hovered around plus 60 bps, and it soared to a peak of 203 bps in 2016 during Saudi Arabia's liquidity crunch. The inflows are

likely to boost foreign reserves. The central bank's net foreign assets have slid to \$480 billion from a peak of \$737 billion in August 2014, raising concern about Riyadh's long-term ability to support its currency. Ehsan Khoman, head of regional research for Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, said they could rebound by \$30-40 billion before the end of 2019. Capital inflows may also supply enough money in the banking system to support a pick-up of private investment and a gradual economic recovery in the next few years. "The worst is probably behind us in terms of economic activity," said Garbis Iradian, chief Middle East economist for the Institute of International Finance, a global financial industry association.

Aramco

Officials predict the sale of a 5 percent stake in Saudi Aramco will raise \$100 billion. It was planned for late 2018 but after delays in preparations, bankers now expect early 2019. Meanwhile, MSCI is expected to decide to add Saudi Arabia to its emerging market index in June, with the change taking effect in stages from next year. FTSE Russell decided last month to upgrade Riyadh to emerging market status. This will attract portfolio funds. Saudi Arabia could see \$30-45 billion of portfolio inflows in the next two years if it reaches the same level of foreign ownership in stock

markets as the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, according to investment bank EFG Hermes. This month Riyadh took another step towards boosting fund inflows by listing \$54.5 billion worth of local currency government bonds on its stock exchange. That makes it easier for overseas investors to buy and trade them. In addition to Aramco, Riyadh has slated dozens of enterprises and assets for privatization in the next few years, aiming to raise \$200 billion. Bureaucracy and legal uncertainties have stalled the program, but it may start to move ahead later this year. Khoman estimated privatizations other than Aramco could create a total \$30-35 billion of capital inflows in the next five years, assuming necessary legal changes were made such as lifting ownership ceilings on non-listed entities.

Foreign direct investment in industries which Riyadh is just starting to develop, such as tourism, technology, logistics and infrastructure, could also become significant. Khoman said inward FDI flows, \$7.4 billion in 2016, could at least double in the next few years.

Risks

There are risks to the outlook. The most recent forecasts for the Saudi economy assume Brent oil, now at \$74 a barrel, will average at least \$60 this year. If it drops much below that level, the government might have to resume

drawing down foreign reserves heavily to pay its bills. This could scare away some foreign investment and perhaps cause Riyadh to further postpone the Aramco sale.

Many analysts think Aramco is more likely to raise \$50-75 billion, significantly lower than the government's \$100 billion estimate. Foreign investors are expected to buy most of the stake, but it is unclear how much of their money will be added to foreign reserves. More than half may be allocated to the Public Investment Fund, Riyadh's top sovereign fund, for reinvestment abroad, Iradian said.

One wild card is the money which private Saudi citizens transfer abroad; if this increases because of political or economic instability, it could offset much of the fund inflows. Bank for International Settlements data shows private Saudi deposits at banks abroad jumped \$18 billion in 2017.

"The November 2017 crackdown on alleged corruption among the kingdom's elite may have accelerated the pace of capital outflows," Iradian said.

But Huber predicted the central bank's main policy challenge next year would be absorbing excess funds from the banking system, to prevent them from destabilizing markets. "When oil prices were high before 2014, authorities focused on controlling excess liquidity. They will be back to doing that again," he said. —Reuters

Beijing welcomes Mnuchin visit for crunch trade talks

BEIJING: Beijing yesterday said it would welcome a visit from US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, who said he was considering a trip to the Chinese capital to hold talks on the trade dispute seen as a threat to the global economy. Tensions between the world's two largest economies have cast a shadow over the gathering of finance ministers in Washington, with concerns a trade war could undercut the global recovery.

Mnuchin had said Saturday during the spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in the US capital that "a trip is under consideration". The Chinese Commerce Ministry yesterday welcomed the move. "China has received the information that the US side wish to come in Beijing in order to conduct economic and trade consultations. China welcomes this."

US President Donald Trump last month approved steep tariffs on tens of billions of dollars of Chinese imports,

while Beijing has slapped duties on key US agricultural exports and has threatened to do likewise for the sensitive American soybean industry. Among 18 bilateral meetings with his counterparts this week, Mnuchin said he had met with Chinese central bank chief Yi Gang. While the meeting with Yi did not focus on trade with China, Mnuchin said he remains "cautiously optimistic" about the issue. "The discussions were really around the governor's actions at the PBOC and certain actions they've announced in terms of opening their markets which we very much encourage and appreciate," Mnuchin said. He also confirmed that the United States now supports a \$13 billion capital increase for the World Bank in tandem with a set of reforms, including reducing lending to wealthier countries—a move widely seen as targeting China. "I look at this as a package transaction... we support a capital increase on the World Bank along with the associated reforms that they're talking about making," Mnuchin said, adding that he was hopeful Congress would approve the increase.

IMF meeting

The gathering of world finance ministers began with heightened anxiety about the potential damage a US-China trade war could do to the economic recovery but ended Saturday with a door open to negotiations.

International Monetary Fund chief Christine Lagarde, who has been urging countries to avoid damaging protectionism, said this weekend's spring meeting had "made progress towards dialogue."

The heated trade rhetoric comes at a delicate moment, as Washington and Beijing are both seeking to address North Korea's nuclear program—which Pyongyang said Saturday it would largely scale back. The IMF's governing committee in a statement at the conclusion of the ministerial meeting highlighted the risks presented by "increasing trade and geopolitical tensions." Lagarde in recent weeks has repeatedly urged member countries to steer clear of protectionism and warned the uncertainty around trade disputes could choke off investment, a key drivers of the current recovery.

"My key concern...is to help in the process of resolving those issues before they escalate to a point where they would hamper growth and stability," she told reporters at the conclusion of the meeting. The IMF projects global growth of 3.9 percent this year and next but warns that the risks are tilted to the downside.

'Cautiously optimistic'

Mnuchin differed markedly from his counterparts, saying the risk to global growth was from unfair trade practices, rather than the trade tensions. But his announcement

of a possible China trip could reduce the heat in the dispute. While the timing of his visit to Beijing is unclear, and he did not provide details on the topics to be discussed, he said "a trip is under consideration."

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"The discussions were really around the governor's actions at the PBOC and certain actions they've announced in terms of opening their markets which we very much encourage and appreciate," Mnuchin said.

In his statement to the International Monetary Fund, Yi also warned that "an escalation of trade frictions caused by unilateral actions" posed a risk to the global economic outlook and called on countries to use "rules-based" multilateral organizations to resolve differences. But he said China was committed to a series of reforms similar to those called for by the United States, including lower tariffs and protections for American technology. "China will vigorously push forward the reform and opening-up of the financial sector, significantly relax market access restrictions, create a more attractive investment environment, strengthen the protection of intellectual properties and actively expand imports," Yi said. —AFP

Business

QF and Ooredoo Group to launch major new collaboration initiative

MoU to support young people, community development

DOHA: Sheikhha Hind bint Hamad Al-Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation (QF), and Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Group Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo, have signed a pioneering Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that will see the two entities work together to benefit young people and communities around the world.

By leveraging their joint resources and talent, the two organizations will deliver a major social impact by supporting development programs for young people and offering workshops and initiatives to drive youth enterprise in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia.

Together, QF and Ooredoo Group will deploy QF's research and development resources and Ooredoo's international network of young consumers to develop original content and new digital experiences, with a particular focus on the next generation. There will be a particular focus on engaging and deploying young Qatari leaders aiming to make a global impact.

Commenting on the agreement Sheikhha Hind bint Hamad Al-Thani, Vice Chairperson and CEO of Qatar Foundation, said: "We are delighted to be partnering with Ooredoo Group on a range of exciting initiatives through this agreement. Young people are the single most important investment in our future, and at Qatar Foundation we are committed to providing our students with the knowledge, confidence, and skills they need to grow as global citizens.

"Young people need to be engaged, equipped, and empowered, and this collaboration will serve as a platform to provide additional learning and internship opportunities, as well as real-world work experiences, to the men and women at Education City. This in turn will help create



Sheikha Hind bint Hamad Al-Thani and Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

a highly competent and diverse workforce that is fully supported to serve the needs of our country and beyond."

As part of the agreement, Ooredoo Group will offer internships to QF university students, providing appropriately qualified students with exciting opportunities in relevant departments at Ooredoo Group. Together, the entities will also champion a range of business and entrepreneurship competitions, workshops, and events driven or initiated by young people.

Additionally, there will be arrangements made to pro-



vide the Ooredoo community with access to QF institutions to engage in volunteer opportunities, while encouraging Education City students to actively participate.

Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Group Chief Executive Officer, Ooredoo, said: "This is a visionary collaboration that brings together two leading organizations to create new opportunities and new inspiration for communities around the world, and particularly for the next generation. Our partnership with QF will give us access to data and studies, as well as conduct in-depth market research, that will enable us to better cater to our 160 million customers across our footprint."

"Complementing the mobile and business services we

offer in our different markets, Ooredoo continues to look for opportunities to enrich people's digital lives in their communities. This collaboration will help us further enhance the data experience for consumers and businesses alike and offer them innovative content and the latest technologies based on their needs," he added.

Furthermore, the MoU will see relevant Ooredoo executive committee members and other official spokespeople participate in future speaking engagements across QF campuses and schools. The partnership will also allow for the provision of support to better understand Ooredoo markets and customers, as well as leverage expertise to assist Ooredoo with policy development.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

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

The lucky winners are:

1. Makram Fakhri Seeden Yousef
2. Othman Kamel Sayed Mohammad Alqattan
3. Mohd Abdullah Alshehaddah
4. Zeria Asaf Fahad Al-Fadhly

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

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



World Bank shareholders back \$13bn capital increase

WASHINGTON: The World Bank's shareholders yesterday endorsed a \$13 billion paid-in capital increase that will boost China's shareholding but bring lending reforms that will raise borrowing costs for higher-middle-income countries, including China. The multilateral lender said the plan would allow it to lift the group's overall lending to nearly \$80 billion in fiscal 2019 from about \$59 billion last year and to an average of about \$100 billion annually through 2030.

"We have more than doubled the capacity of the World Bank Group," the institution's president, Jim

Yong Kim, told reporters during the International Monetary Fund and World Bank spring meetings in Washington.

"It's a huge vote of confidence, but the expectations are enormous." The hard-fought capital hike, initially resisted by the Trump administration, will add \$7.5 billion paid-in capital for the World Bank's main concessional lending arm, the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development.

Its commercial-terms lender, the International Finance Corp, will get \$5.5 billion paid-in capital, and IBRD also will get a \$52.6 billion increase in callable capital.

Lending reforms

The bank agreed to change IBRD's lending rules to charge higher rates for developing countries with higher incomes, to discourage them from excessive borrowing. IBRD previously had charged similar rates for all borrowers, and US Treasury officials had complained that it was lending too much to China and other bigger emerging markets. US Treasury Secretary Steven

Mnuchin said earlier yesterday that he supported the capital hike due to the reforms that it included. The last World Bank capital increase came in 2010. The current hike comes with cost controls and salary restrictions that will hold World Bank compensation to "a little below average" for the financial sector, Kim said.

He added that there was nothing specific in the agreement that targeted a China lending reduction, but he said lending to China was expected to gradually decline. In 2015, China founded the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, and lends heavily to developing countries through its government export banks. The agreement will lift China's shareholding in IBRD to 6.01 percent from 4.68 percent, while the US share would dip slightly to 16.77 percent from 16.89 percent. Washington will still keep its veto power over IBRD and IFC decisions.

Kim said the increase was expected to become fully effective by the time the World Bank's new fiscal year starts on July 1. Countries will have up to eight years to pay for the capital increase. The US contribution is subject to approval by Congress.—Reuters

Australian govt under pressure over bank revelations

MELBOURNE: The Australian government came under fresh pressure yesterday over its reluctance to hold a judicial inquiry into the banking sector which has exposed widespread misconduct and regulatory shortcomings. Minister for Finance and Revenue Kelly O'Dwyer was the latest cabinet member to express a change of heart about the Royal Commission investigation, which she previously opposed as an "inquiry looking for something to inquire about".

She told state broadcaster the ABC that the powerful independent inquiry would in fact benefit customers, and credited the centre-right government

for its establishment. Customers would "benefit from the action we have taken, they will benefit from the Royal Commission," she said. She was asked nine times during the interview on the "Insiders" program if the government regretted not establishing the Royal Commission sooner, but failed to answer each time.

Labor's shadow finance minister, Jim Chalmers, told the ABC the government's response showed that it was from "another planet". "They've learnt absolutely nothing from all of the scandalous revelations that we've heard over the last little while in the Royal Commission," he said.

The Royal Commission heard explosive testimony last week, including admissions that some customers had been charged for financial advice for a decade after they had died, and that others had been deliberately charged for no service.

The coalition government under Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull established the Royal Commission in November, following 18 months of campaigning from the opposition Labor and Greens parties over a series of scandals at the country's top banks.

Treasurer Scott Morrison, who previously called demands for a Royal Commission a "populist whinge" among other dismissive epithets, has also come out strongly in support of its work amid a daily barrage of revelations of bank wrongdoing. The government has unveiled plans to significantly increase penalties for corporate malfeasance and is now considering whether to extend the commission's one-year mandate for another year, which could take it into the 2019 election.

Turnbull's Liberal Party, the senior partner in the ruling coalition with the Nationals, has a wafer-thin majority in parliament and has trailed the Labor Party in opinion polls on a two-party preferred basis for more than two years. The government's signature policy proposal of tax cuts for businesses is going to be a harder sell in light of the inquiry's revelations.

At least two crossbenchers, whose support could be vital if the government is to succeed in cutting the business tax rate from 30 percent to 25 percent, have raised concerns about rewarding businesses in such circumstances.—Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.806
Indian Rupees	4.630
Pakistani Rupees	2.602
Srilankan Rupees	1.933
Nepali Rupees	2.902
Singapore Dollar	230.250
Hongkong Dollar	38.311
Bangladesh Taka	3.593
Philippine Peso	5.793
Thai Baht	9.679

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	80.210
Qatari Riyal	82.644
Omani Riyal	781.445
Bahraini Dinar	798.990
UAE Dirham	81.946

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	0.000
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.039
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.208
Tunisian Dinar	126.080
Jordanian Dinar	423.910
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.005
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.227

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	300.700
Euro	371.670
Sterling Pound	426.390

Canadian dollar	238.080
Turkish lira	74.520
Swiss Franc	315.860
Australian Dollar	234.090
US Dollar Buying	299.500

GOLD

20 Gram	260.520
10 Gram	133.180
5 Gram	67.430

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer Selling Rate

US Dollar	300.250
Canadian Dollar	239.550
Sterling Pound	430.780
Euro	373.130
Swiss Frank	293.050
Qatari Riyals	798.475
UAE Dirhams	82.150
Saudi Riyals	83.380
Jordanian Dinar	80.960
Egyptian Pound	424.760
Sri Lankan Rupees	16.971
Indian Rupees	1.921
Pakistani Rupees	4.578
Bangladesh Taka	2.598
Philippines Peso	3.602
Cyprus pound	5.766
Japanese Yen	17.875
Syrian Pound	3.795
Nepalese Rupees	1.585
	2.867

Malaysian Ringgit	78.085
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	48.175
Thai Bhat	10.605
Turkish Lira	73.815

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY Europe	SELL
British Pound	0.416922	0.424422
Czech Korune	0.006662	0.015962
Danish Krone	0.045813	0.050813
Euro	0.364970	0.372470
Georgian Lari	0.137752	0.137752
Hungarian 0.001133	0.001323	
Norwegian Krone	0.034581	0.039781
Romanian Leu	0.064312	0.081162
Russian ruble	0.004907	0.004907
Slovakia	0.008942	0.018942
Swedish Krona	0.031749	0.036749
Swiss Franc	0.302951	0.313951

Australasia

Australian Dollar	0.223081	0.235081
New Zealand Dollar	0.211117	0.220617

America

Canadian Dollar	0.230714	0.239714
US Dollars	0.296900	0.301300
US Dollars Mint	0.297400	0.301300

Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003194	0.003778
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Chinese Yuan	0.046357	0.049857
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036599	0.039348
Indian Rupee	0.004104	0.004745
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002718	0.002898
Korean Won	0.000271	0.000286
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073397	0.079397
Nepalese Rupee	0.003003	0.003173
Pakistan Rupee	0.002495	0.002785
Philippine Peso	0.005671	0.005971
Singapore Dollar	0.224254	0.234254
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001607	0.002187
Taiwan	0.010327	0.010507
Thai Baht	0.009262	0.009812

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.790777	0.800277
Egyptian Pound	0.014250	0.019968
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000202	0.000262
Jordanian Dinar	0.419925	0.428925
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000154	0.000254
Moroccan Dirhams	0.023329	0.047329
Omani Riyal	0.775500	0.781160
Qatar Riyal	0.078387	0.083327
Saudi Riyal	0.079180	0.080480
Syrian Pound	0.001275	0.001495
Tunisian Dinar	0.121442	0.129442
Turkish Lira	0.068809	0.079109
UAE Dirhams	0.080526	0.082226
Yemeni Riyal	0.000978	0.001058

Business

NBK Money Market Report

Dollar gains as trade war fears ease and Brexit talks escalate

Trump signals readiness to participate in trade talks

KUWAIT: In a sign of the emerging softer rhetoric in international trade negotiations, President Trump indicated the possibility of the US re-joining the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), a trade pact from which the US withdrew in early 2017. The US President and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Wednesday they had agreed to intensify trade consultations between the two longtime allies, with an aim to expand investment and trade between their countries. "President Trump and I agreed to start talks for free, fair and reciprocal trade deals," Abe said at a joint news conference with Trump.

Looking at the debt and equity markets, US treasury yields gained momentum last week as the prospect of trade wars eased in the market. The 10-year US treasury yield reached 2.96 percent, a 4 year high when it started the week 2.82 percent only. The earnings season in has weighed in on US equities as IT shares slipped reversing the gains of the Dow Jones index in the beginning of the week.

Globally, the tensions escalated between the EU and the UK as EU officials are set to reject a potential UK solution to the crucial issue of what happens to the Irish border after Brexit. Even though the UK hasn't submitted a formal proposal, it has indicated that the bloc's solution for maintaining an invisible boarder should apply to the whole of UK. Yet the European Commission is said to oppose it and only wants to offer that special status to Northern Ireland. The result is a mounting pressure on Prime Minister Theresa May to try and keep the UK in the EU's customs union after Brexit.

On the currency front, the dollar index opened the week on a strong footing reaching 89.850 before retreating towards mid-week following Trump's remarks of the "currency devaluation game" that China and Russia are playing. However, soft economic

data from the UK and EU along with the increasing tensions in Brexit talks pushed the dollar to a weekly gain of 1.00 percent and closing the week at 90.477.

The Euro started the week with a bearish move and reached a low of 1.2250. The single currency had a volatile week and reacted to weak inflation data, the complications of the Brexit talks and the reduced concerns of trade wars. The recent trend in inflation supports the case for a dovish ECB and possible extensions in the QE program. The currency closed the week at 1.2284.

The cable had the biggest loss amongst the major currencies with a 2 percent decrease in the exchange rate last week. The currency was mainly affected by weak retail sales, lower than expected wage growth and lower inflation. Yet, the increased uncertainty on the Brexit negotiations with the EU sent the Sterling Pound plunging by 100 points. The pair closed the week at 1.4001. The Japanese yen traded in a narrow range, but as global tensions eased the safe haven retreated against the US dollar and reached a high of 107.73. The pair closed the week at 107.63.

US retail sales accelerates

Consumers have finally bounced back in March by buying more cars, furniture and appliances. Pushing US retail sales to grow 0.6 percent in March, up from a 0.1 percent drop in February and comfortably surpassing the 0.4 percent forecast by analysts. This was the first month of growth since November, ending a three month slide that had been the longest slump in three years. Analysts are attributing some of the increase in retail sales to the effect of the tax reforms in the country.

US housing market

US new-home constructions rose by more than forecast in March backed by a rebound in

multi-family starts. The figure came at 1.32 million annualized against an anticipated figure of 1.27 million, indicating a tighter job market and increasing confidence to purchase big-ticket items supporting construction. Factory output expanded at a 3.1 percent annualized rate in the first quarter following a 5.5 percent pace of the final three months of 2017, the strongest back-to-back period in six years. Manufacturing makes up 75 percent of total industrial production and accounts for about 12 percent of the economy.

UK economic data

Data showed average weekly earnings in three months to February were 2.8 percent higher than a year before. The rate is unchanged from a month before, and a two and a half year high, but below economists' forecasts of an increase to 3 percent. Albeit a positive reading, being lower than the CPI reading of 2.9 percent, is raising questions about whether it justifies a rate hike from the Bank of England. Meanwhile, unemployment in the latest three month period unexpectedly fell to 4.2 percent, the lowest unemployment rate since the three months to May reading of 1975.

Inflation figure in Britain dropped from 2.7 percent to 2.5 percent for the month of March. The negative figure caused the cable to depreciated nearly 100 basis points versus the US dollar. The pull back in inflation may not prevent the central bank from increasing interest rates in May, yet the market dropped the probability of a hike from 88 percent to 55.7 percent.

Eurozone inflation

Annual inflation rate was 1.3 percent in March and up from 1.1 percent in February, yet lower than the market's expectation of 1.4 percent. This is the second month in a row where



inflation has been revised down between the flash and the final release. Inflation in March was pushed up by the rise in services prices (services inflation went from 1.3 percent to 1.5 percent) due to Easter, which this year was earlier than in 2017. This affected transport services and package holidays in particular. Unprocessed food price inflation also reverted back into positive territory as the base effects from the bad weather at the beginning of last year that pushed up fruit and vegetable prices washed out.

China's GDP

In China, economic expansion held up amid robust consumer spending, underpinning global growth and giving authorities room to purge excessive borrowing, while the industrial sector showed signs of modest slowdown. Industrial production rose by 6 percent lower than the forecasted 6.3 percent, while GDP grew by 6.8 percent in-line with the market's expectations.

Japan's inflation

The consumer price index (CPI) increased 1.1 percent year on year in March, slowing from 1.5 percent in February. The slowdown in headline inflation was largely due to the ongoing normalization in fresh food prices. Indeed, fresh food prices dropped 4.8 percent monthly in March, decelerating the over-year-ago comparison to 6.3 percent yearly from 12.4 percent in February and 12.6 percent in January. As such, the BOJ's preferred measure of core inflation, excluding fresh food and energy products, remained stable at 0.5 percent yearly in March.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30015
The USDKWD opened at 0.30015 yesterday morning.

GM continues work to reduce counterfeit parts in Middle East

KUWAIT: As part of General Motors' ongoing efforts to highlight the dangers of purchasing counterfeit parts, the American automotive manufacturers working with a number of anti-counterfeit and consumer protection bodies in Kuwait. Through its Customer Care and Aftersales division, GM and its longstanding Kuwait dealers, Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive and Mohammad Saleh & Reza Yousuf Behbehani Company, are conducting workshops about the detection of counterfeit parts, including GM and ACDelco wholesale parts as well as ACDelco locally made batteries in the Middle East.

Supporting the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Customs, and the Financial Crimes Combating Department in Kuwait, the sessions will highlight how to identify genuine ACDelco and GM products from fake parts, and provide key tools to distinguish the differences.

Often presented as a more economical option in favor of authentic products, fake parts frequently have a higher cost, and not just financially. Fake parts can lead to mechanical problems, breakdowns, accidents, and personal injury. The removal of counterfeit parts in the market will benefit the large number of motorists in Kuwait.

With over 1.9 million vehicles, Kuwait has the third highest number of vehicles place in the GCC after Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. According to a recent survey conducted by leading market research company Frost and Sullivan about the Kuwait automotive component industry landscape, the market is worth approximately \$1.2 billion.

Opportunity

Mohammed Al-Fayyad, Director -Customer Care and Aftersales, General Motors Middle East, commented: "Working with Kuwait's consumer protection bodies provides a valuable opportunity to help eradicate dangerous counterfeit parts in a key Middle East market. General Motors develops a diverse range of genuine GM and ACDelco wholesale-parts of the highest quality - our priority is ensuring that our customers are protected, and provided with premium products adhering to our exacting standards."



"The auto components market in Kuwait is vast and General Motors is committed to minimizing the chances of customers unknowingly purchasing low quality and potentially dangerous fake parts," Al Fayyad added.

General Motors has consistently worked with authorities across the Middle East to combat the production and sale of counterfeit parts. In 2017, in the United Arab Emirates, some 158,400 ACDelco fake spare parts were discovered in a joint operation between the Department of Economic Development - Ajman and Ajman Police; General Motors was closely involved from the moment of the first raid right through to the destruction of the parts. In addition, law enforcement agencies and Customs in

Saudi Arabia, also in cooperation with General Motors, previously seized more than 50,000 ACDelco counterfeit products.

Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive was the first General Motors distributor appointed in the GCC, founded in 1948. Mohammad Saleh & Reza Yousuf Behbehani Company is also one of the top five oldest distributors in the network, starting out in 1963. Combined, the two distributors run eight stores, providing customers' access to genuine, high grade ACDelco and GM wholesale parts in Kuwait. General Motors spareparts obtained from the distributors are also available from a variety of retailers in the country.

Trump's \$100bn tariff dilemma: Hit Wal-Mart or Apple Store?

WASHINGTON: US consumers may be about to directly feel the effects of the trade fight started by US President Trump with China and other countries this year when a new list of Chinese imports to be taxed is announced in coming days. After imposing import tariffs on solar panels and washing machines in January, Trump moved to levy steel and aluminum in March along with about \$50 billion in other goods.

After China responded with a list of US goods that would be subject to tariffs, Trump raised the stakes on April 4 by directing the US Trade Representative to consider \$100 billion in additional levies.

But a Reuters analysis of Chinese imports shows that to quickly reach \$100 billion worth of goods to tax, Trump may have to target cellphones, computers, toys, clothing, footwear, furniture and other consumer goods, prompting price rises at US retailers. "There is no way to avoid consumer products when you're thinking about how to hit \$100 billion worth of imports coming from China," said Hun Quach, vice president of international trade for the Retail Industry Leaders Association which represents US retailers.

How much the new tariffs would hit wallets depends on variables that make calculating the impact of the tariffs on individual products hard to measure. Companies can absorb some of the costs, and some companies can shift production in China to other countries, cutting the final bill for America's shoppers.

After washing machines imported by LG Electronics' were hit with a 20 percent tariff in January, the company raised US prices by about \$50 per machine, or 4 percent to 8 percent.

LG opted to absorb part of the tariff cost, which was imposed at a time when construction was already well underway on its new US factory that will begin producing washers in late 2018, avoiding US tariffs. Companies with complex supply chains, mainly those in high technology industries, can also change how their internal costs are charged among subsidiaries to lower their tariff bill. Trump's first round of import tariffs deliberately left most consumer electronics untouched, but out of the \$506 billion in US imports from China last year, finding another \$100 billion to tax without hurting US shoppers will not be easy.

The USTR could quickly find \$100 billion but at the cost of targeting three broad categories of consumer electronics - cellphones at \$44 billion, computer equipment at \$37 billion, and voice, image and data recorders at \$22 billion. US supply chains would also be hurt as many consumer electronics products depend on the export of American semiconductors, software and other inputs to China for assembly before being imported back to the United States.

US allies South Korea, Japan and Taiwan also supply cellphone parts for companies like Apple Inc, including displays, cameras and fingerprint scanners, and would feel the impact. "You end up shooting yourself in the foot, shooting your allies in the foot, and maybe you wound China's big toe," said Chad Bown, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics. Orders have already been placed

Trump could get a quarter of the way to \$100 billion in goods taxed by levying toys, games and sporting goods, categories with little US content that totaled about \$25.5 billion from China in 2017. —Reuters



Business

Finally home, Bundesbank's gold goes on show

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: All that glitters is definitely gold in a new exhibition at Germany's central bank that lifts the veil on the nation's massive reserves of the precious metal, partly to reassure skeptics that the prized ingots are really there. Europe's top economy and export powerhouse has the world's second-largest gold reserves after the United States, but for decades almost none of the roughly 3,400 tonnes of yellow metal, worth a staggering 117 billion euros (\$145 billion) today, could be found on German soil.

To keep the gold safe from a possible Soviet invasion during the Cold War, as well as for other historical reasons, the bars were instead stored in the treasuries of central banks in New York, London and Paris. But growing public pressure spurred the Bundesbank to bring half its reserves home, a feat it completed last year through a series of cloak-and-dagger shipments from the Federal Reserve, the Bank of England and the Banque de France.

The bullions are now kept under lock and key in a secret location in the bank's basement in Frankfurt—except for the eight bars on display at its Money Museum as part of the exhibition "Gold, Treasures at the Deutsche Bundesbank", which runs until September.

"We're doing this to show citizens that the gold bars are here, to show transparency," Bundesbank board member Carl-Ludwig Thiele told reporters, standing next to the gleaming 12-kilo (26-pound) bars in glass display cases. "We want there to be trust in the Bundesbank central bank as an institution, and in the reserves of the Bundesbank. And you can only win trust through transparency."

'Where's the gold?'

The bank has attributed its gold repatriation efforts largely to a changed geopolitical context.

But some say the real impetus came from criticism from politicians and members of the public in recent years, who wondered aloud whether the Bundesbank was keeping close enough tabs on the nation's riches abroad. The grumbles mounted during the eurozone debt crisis, which sent investors fleeing for safe havens like gold.

Among the loudest critics was eurosceptic Peter Boehringer, now a member of parliament for the far-right AfD party, who launched a "Bring home our gold" campaign that made national headlines.

"Especially during the years of the financial and sovereign debt crisis, the Bundesbank was confronted with the desire for detailed information about the gold," said Thiele.

"It even went so far that some questioned whether the gold holdings at home and abroad were real."

In 2013, the Bundesbank unveiled a plan to bring home half its 270,000 ingots. In the eyes of 63-year-old Bernhard Loederbusch, one of the visitors at the museum, it was the right decision. "If you own something, you should have it at home. All it takes is for a conflict to erupt abroad and before you know it the gold is gone," the former banker told AFP, after poring over the rare coins also on display.

'Money, power, greed'

Today, 1,710 tons of gold are kept in

Frankfurt, with just over 1,200 tons remaining in New York and around 430 in London. The Bundesbank last year brought back the last of its stash stored in Paris, saying that since both countries share the euro currency, having gold in French vaults would be of little use to Germany in a crisis when the metal would need to be quickly converted into liquidity.

But bank officials say keeping the rest of the German treasures overseas makes sense as the Fed is home to the number one reserve currency and London is the world's leading gold trading centre.

Germany, which had no gold at all after World War II, accumulated its riches in the post-war years known as the "economic miracle", when its exporting prowess saw it run up large trade surpluses with other nations.

Under the Bretton Woods system, which allowed countries to convert surpluses into gold at a fixed rate of \$35 per ounce, it built up huge stockpiles of gold. US president Richard Nixon abandoned the system in 1971, as the dollar's value plummeted against the yellow metal.

While gold today is no longer as vital to the financial system as it once was, it remains "an anchor of stability", the ultimate safe harbor in uncertain times, the Bundesbank says. To Germans, whose national consciousness is still scarred by the hyperinflation of the Weimar Republic in the 1920s, the tangibility of gold is key to its enduring appeal.

Loederbusch said seeing the gold up close was "impressive". "It embodies everything: money, power, greed. This is what people were killed for, what wars were fought over. Gold is fascinating." — AFP



FRANKFURT, AM: This file photo shows the gold "general medal" dated 1871 at the Exhibition "Gold, Treasures at the Deutsche Bundesbank" at the German Money Museum of the Deutsche Bundesbank in Frankfurt am Main, Germany. — AFP

Global carmakers gear up for China's auto show

BEIJING: Global carmakers will show off their latest models at the Beijing Auto Show this week, days after China unveiled plans to shift gears in the world's biggest car market by lifting foreign ownership restrictions. Industry giants such as Volkswagen, Daimler, Toyota, Nissan and Ford will be among the companies seeking the limelight in a country where 28.9 million vehicles were sold in 2017, a three percent increase from 2016.

Although sales lost steam compared to the previous year, foreign automakers are still eager to win bigger slices of a huge market as they face increasing competition from domestic companies that are investing in electric and self-driving vehicles.

And the Beijing Auto Show is their chance to display their new models to Chinese car enthusiasts. The event "is becoming the largest in the industry... No one can ignore China," said Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer, director of the Center for Automotive Research, based in Germany.

This year's auto show could be dominated by "political" topics, he said. The specter of a trade war between Beijing and Washington worries auto executives as it could bring their plans for China to a screeching halt.

But Beijing announced on Tuesday that it will liberalize foreign ownership limits in the sector, a move seen as a possible olive branch to President Donald Trump, who has complained about China's rules for the industry. China currently restricts foreign auto firms to a maximum 50 percent ownership of joint ventures with local companies.

But the changes will end shareholding limits for new energy vehicle firms as soon as this year, followed by commercial vehicles in 2020 and passenger cars in 2022. So far the news has been greeted with caution by the world's automakers: Daimler, the parent company of Mercedes, said it would "monitor



JAKARTA: A model poses next to a Mitsubishi Xpander during the 2018 Indonesia International Motor Show in Jakarta on Saturday. — AFP

developments in regulations closely" while Volkswagen said it would "carefully analyse" the changes.

On the floor of the giant China international exhibition centre, auto executives may offer a more detailed take. "They have a decision to make: do they want set up production facilities in which they have a bigger share, or do they want expand their current JV or try to purchase shares back from their current partner," said Bill Russo, a managing director at Gao Feng Advisory Group, noting most would find it difficult to restructure their current joint ventures. Russo noted the policy could be a positive for companies like Tesla which has so far resisted taking a Chinese joint venture partner.

Cheaper homemade SUVs

President Xi Jinping has also pledged a "substantial" reduction in tariffs on imported cars by the end of 2018 — a boon for high-end brands, even if the volumes concerned remain limited at the moment.

China charges a 25 percent import levy on vehicles, with luxury cars being hit especially hard by additional taxes. The US's 2.5 percent tariff rate is low in comparison, though it ticks

up to 25 percent for pickup trucks.

Trump has railed against China's car tariffs. Foreign brands control more than half of China's car sales, many of which are made in the country through their joint ventures, thus not subject to import duties. But their market dominance is being challenged in the growing SUV segment, where Chinese brands take 60 percent of the market.

While China's booming car market saw some hiccups last year in certain categories, SUV sales were hot, growing by more than 10 percent, according to Russo.

SUVs were once the gas-guzzling symbol of America, but unfortunately for foreign carmakers, many local brands have learned how to produce the hulking cars on the cheap.

Chinese consumers have found their pocketbooks often prefer the cheaper homemade brands which have launched a slew of models. Local carmaker Changan is pumping out the CS 75. Great Wall Motors makes the popular Haval. And Geely is selling upwards of a hundred thousand Tiggo. "Foreign carmakers have been presented with more competition over the past two years, coming from more affordably priced SUVs produced by the local carmakers," said Russo. — AFP

Mining firms from China to Canada watch as Greenland holds election

COPENHAGEN: With melting ice expanding access to the Arctic, investors from China to Canada are watching Greenland's election for signs of the political will to get a flagging mining program on the island back on track. Greenland is hoping rising commodity prices can help attract foreign investment and get its fragile economy up to speed to realize a long-term goal of independence from Denmark.

Hope about a possible mining boom in Greenland after it achieved self-rule from Denmark in 2009 faded in a morass of red tape and a commodity price slump around five years ago. It left the economy reliant on fishing and grants from Denmark. But with the country's sole producing mine starting up last year — a ruby pink sapphire mine operated by Norway's LNS Group — and Canada's

Hudson Resource's anorthosite project due to begin operations this year, locals are again hoping more investments will follow.

Improved access to and from the Arctic island as the ice melts, and a more favorable investment climate, would go some way to alleviate the barriers to business of perpetual winter darkness and temperatures reaching as low as minus 50 Celsius. With that in mind, a central theme for the new government elected on Tuesday will be to decide whether it wants to shift focus away from Denmark and strengthen economic and diplomatic ties with other countries, including China.

Chinese interest in Greenland comes after Beijing laid out its ambitions to form a "Polar Silk Road" by developing shipping lanes opened up by global warming and encouraging enterprises to build infrastructure in the Arctic. The main contenders to lead the next government are Prime Minister Kim Kielsen of the social-democratic Siumut party and Sara Olsvig of the left-wing Inuit Ataqatigiit party (IA).

The most recent poll shows that the two parties are likely to continue working together in a coalition. "A new government led by Kielsen and Siumut but without IA will create more openness towards attracting investments, including from China," said Rasmus Leander Nielsen, assistant professor at the

University of Greenland in Nuuk.

"IA is more skeptical. They want mining activity, but have more emphasis on the environment," Nielsen said. Demokratterne, Greenland's third biggest party, and the new Nunatta Qitormai party are also pro-mining.

Chinese investment

Greenland, whose capital Nuuk is closer to New York than the Danish capital Copenhagen, is more than three times larger than the US state of Texas. But with a population of just 56,000, it is the most sparsely populated nation on earth. It has shortlisted a Chinese consortium to expand three airports, causing concern in Denmark which has given its ally the United States wide military access — just one of many sources of friction as independence rhetoric sharpens. China's Shenghe Resources is already partnering with Greenland Minerals and Energy to develop a rare earth and uranium project. Ironbark Zinc has asked state-owned China Nonferrous Metal Mining Group to help it finance and develop a zinc and lead project.

But development in the mining sector has so far been slowed by a lack of infrastructure and by heavy red tape, observers say. Assistant professor Nielsen said he would consider the uranium project dead if IA formed a government without Siumut. — 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	24,664.89	24,462.94	-201.95	▼	-0.82	-1.04		
NASDAQ	7,238.06	7,146.13	-91.93	▼	-1.27	3.52		
S&P 500	2,693.13	2,670.14	-22.99	▼	-0.85	-0.13		
Financial Times	7,328.92	7,348.17	39.25	▲	0.54	-4.16		
DAX	12,567.42	12,540.50	-26.92	▼	-0.21	-2.92		
CAC 40	5,391.64	5,412.83	21.19	▲	0.39	1.89		
Swiss	8,833.18	8,807.80	-25.38	▼	-0.29	-6.12		
Nikkei 225	22,191.18	22,162.24	-28.94	▼	-0.13	-2.64		
Toxic	1,750.18	1,751.13	0.95	▲	0.05	-3.65		
Hang Seng	30,708.44	30,418.33	-290.11	▼	-0.94	1.67		
Straits Times	3,598.73	3,573.38	-25.35	▼	-0.70	5.01		
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	8,277.14	8,261.35	-15.79	▼	-0.19	14.54		
Dubai	3,082.09	3,079.51	-2.58	▼	-0.08	-8.55		
Abu Dhabi	4,706.56	4,682.47	-24.09	▼	-0.51	7.01		
Bahrain	1,301.40	1,301.06	-0.32	▼	-0.02	-2.28		
Qatar	9,196.62	9,155.55	-41.07	▼	-0.45	7.90		
Oman	4,759.65	4,761.05	1.40	▲	0.03	-6.66		
Lebanon	1,137.53	1,137.53	0.00	-	0.00	-0.96		
Jordan	2,185.96	2,174.08	-11.88	▼	-0.54	2.78		
Egypt	17,781.02	17,935.78	154.76	▲	0.87	18.39		
Morocco	12,941.94	12,974.23	32.29	▲	0.25	4.72		
Tunisia	7,132.92	7,161.37	28.45	▲	0.40	13.55		
Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwaiti Dinar		12.3775	3.3146	2.6969	2.3658	3.2297	356.81	4.3186
Saudi Riyal	0.08079		0.2678	0.2179	0.1911	0.2609	28.83	0.3489
US Dollar	0.30170	3.7343		0.8137	0.7138	0.9744	107.65	1.3029
Euro	0.37079	4.5895	1.2290		0.8777	1.1981	132.29	1.6019
Sterling Pound	0.42268	5.2318	1.4010	1.1393		1.3655	150.76	1.8251
Swiss Franc	0.30963	3.8324	1.0263	0.8347	0.7323		110.44	1.3372
Japanese Yen	0.00280	0.0347	0.0093	0.0076	0.0066	0.0091		0.0121
Australian Dollar	0.23155	2.8661	0.7675	0.6243	0.5479	0.7479	82.62	
MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30170	3.7343	0.3741	3.6270	0.3831	3.6572	17.6000
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.3146		12.3775	1.2400	12.0219	1.2699	12.1220	58.3361
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08079		0.1002	0.9713	0.1026	0.9794	4.7131
Bahraini Dinar	2.6731	0.80647	9.9821		9.6953	1.0241	9.7760	47.0462
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08318	1.0296	0.1031		0.1056	1.0083	4.8525
Omani Riyal	2.6101	0.78746	9.7468	0.9764	9.4668		9.5456	45.9374
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08249	1.0211	0.1023	0.9917	0.1048		4.8124
Egyptian Pound	0.0568	0.01714	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	2.19	2.44			
US Dollar	1.74	1.89	2.35	2.51	2.76			
Euro	-0.42	-0.40	-0.36	-0.32	-0.24			
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.53	0.75	0.85	1.02			
Swiss Franc	-0.80	-0.78	-0.73	-0.65	-0.51			
Australian Dollar	1.64	1.86	1.82	1.82	1.88			
Japanese Yen	-0.04	-0.04	-0.03	0.02	0.12			
Global Bond Yields								
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year				
United States	2.46	2.80	2.96	3.15				
Europe	-0.54	-0.02	0.60	1.27				
United Kingdom	0.83	1.16	1.49	1.89				
Commodities								
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %			
Kuwait Oil	69.69	69.59	-0.10	▼	-0.14	8.93		
Brent	75.38	75.34	-0.02	▼	-0.03	11.01		
West Texas	68.31	68.21	-0.10	▼	-0.15	11.49		
Gold	1334.72	1334.72	0.00	-	0.00	2.41		
Silver	17.11	17.11	0.00	-	0.00	0.94		

Business

United Real Estate Company issues KD 60m bond with a 5-year tenure

KAMCO acts as sole manager and arranger for issuance

KUWAIT: United Real Estate Company (URC) issued a KD 60 million bond with a five-year tenure, with KAMCO Investment Company (KAMCO) acting as the Sole Manager and Arranger for the debt securities issuance.

The bond is comprised of two tranches: KD 32.15 million fixed interest bonds with an interest rate of 5.75 percent, paid quarterly in installments; and KD 27.85 million floating interest bonds with an interest rate set at the discount rate declared by the Central Bank of Kuwait plus 2.50 percent paid quarterly in installments.

In their joint press release, URC and KAMCO said that the bond received a 'BBB' rating, a

higher rating than URC's previous bond rating of 'BBB-' in 2013, both rated by Capital Intelligence Ratings (CI). The issuance is also the first Kuwaiti Dinar denominated bond in 2018. The issued bonds were in strong demand from institutions and high net worth individuals. CI's higher credit rating and the demand for quality issues by the investors is reflected in URC's bond issuance, one of the largest issuances in the local and regional market.

Tariq AbdulSalam, URC Chairman, said, "The high demand on this bond issuance reflects investors' confidence in URC, particularly in the company's management team and overall strategy."

He added that the company will use the bond issuance proceeds to close existing bonds and finance other company activities.

On his part, Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, CEO of KAMCO, expressed his pride in the effort and cooperation portrayed by all involved parties who played a pivotal role in successfully completing this bond issuance. He added that this transaction marks yet another milestone that will pave the path for additional real estate company issuances that will strengthen the local and regional debt markets.

Sarkhou said, "At KAMCO, we believe in the importance of our role in enhancing and supporting the private sector; and promoting the



Tariq AbdulSalam



Faisal Mansour Sarkhou

growth of Kuwait's economy. As acting managers and arrangers, we are pleased with the successful results of URC's issuance. We look forward to managing more bond and sukuk issuances through our Investment Banking team, who have spared no efforts in delivering the best possible outcome for all our valued clients."

URC and KAMCO expressed their gratitude to the Capital Markets Authority for its support, commitment and cooperation towards enhancing the financial services industry. The two companies also praised the crucial role of the trusted investors, who were the driving force behind the successful outcome of this transaction.

Triple your allowance with NBK

KUWAIT: NBK offers the most valuable rewards to its loyal customers for their continued trust. Students can transfer their allowance to NBK and enter for a chance to win KD 400. Kuwaiti students who transfer their allowance to NBK will get a chance to win KD 400, added to their allowance, in the NBK Al-Shabab daily draw.

The NBK Al-Shabab daily draw is a new and exciting opportunity for youth of Kuwait to win big. New and existing Al-Shabab account holders will be entered into a draw, with a prize of KD 400 awarded daily from 1 May to 31 May 2018.

"NBK works to build lasting relationships with the younger generation and to that end provides special offers and rewards tailored to their needs and lifestyle," explained Muna Al-Fahed, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait.

NBK's Al-Shabab account is available to students between the ages of 15 to 23 years old who are attending college or university. Benefits of Al-Shabab include instant discounts up to 50 percent when customers use the NBK Al-Shabab Prepaid Cardholders for

purchases at shops, restaurants and entertainment venues in Kuwait.

Customers can also avail the popular Tap & Pay service, either through their card, stickers or wearables, allowing them to pay for small purchases up to KD 10 without having to use a pin code.

"Al-Shabab Account offers a range of services and rewards that suit the young generation's needs and lifestyle. The account offers advanced and easy to use services. For example, Al-Shabab account holders receive a free Al-Shabab Prepaid Card when they transfer their student allowances," Al-Fahed added.

Al-Shabab Prepaid Cardholders enjoy many great offers. For instance, on the last weekend of each month, Al-Shabab prepaid card customers are entitled to a 50% discount on Talabat.com. They also receive 50 percent exclusive discount on weekend movie tickets at Cinescape and 15 percent off on bowling and birthday parties at Cozmo Bowling. NBK encourages students to develop strong financial skills including crafting personal budgets, saving and planning for the future.



Muna Al-Fahed

Motul at the heart of 2018 MotoGP action

KUWAIT: MotoGP, the highest-revving, fastest, most-exciting motorcycling championship in the world has roared back into life with Qatar and Argentina races and Motul will once again be at the heart of the action. 24 riders, 12 teams, 6 different manufacturers and 24,000 horsepower will line up for the 2018 MotoGP season, and the always-present thrills and sometimes-present spills will be seen this year at 19 races across 15 different countries across the globe. The calendar has increased this year with the addition of the Thailand Grand Prix in Buriram.

Motul will once again be title sponsor of four races through the season starting with the second round, the Gran Premio Motul de la Republica Argentina (April 8th in Termas de Rio Hondo), then Motul TT Assen (1st July in the Netherlands), Motul Grand Prix of Japan (21st October at Twin Ring Motegi) and rounding off an action-packed championship with the Gran Premio Motul de la Comunitat Valenciana (18th November in Valencia, Spain).

Motul will again partner with three teams, the two factory teams Suzuki MotoGP and Aprilia Racing Team Gresini, as well as Yamaha satellite team Monster Yamaha Tech3. Leading the way in testing in Thailand and Qatar, and making himself favorite for victory, is 2017



Rookie of the Year Johann Zarco from Yamaha Tech3. All three Motul supported teams will use special experimental engine oils which have been developed by Motul experts, in collaboration with Suzuki, Yamaha, and Aprilia's engineers and engine builders, specifically to respond to the extreme conditions and restraints presented by MotoGP competition. They will also all use products from Motul's comprehensive MC Care Range.

Motul is supporting those teams in international competitions such as: 24 Hours of Le Mans (cars and motorcycles), FIA World

Endurance Championship, Super GT, Drift, Pikes Peak, Japanese championship Super Formula, Blancpain Endurance Series, Dakar, Tour Auto, Le Mans Classic, MotoGP, World Superbike, World MX, FIM Endurance World Championship, IOM TT, MOTUL FIM Ice Speedway Gladiators World Championship, Roof of Africa and score of others.

Al-Sayer Engineering, a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding is the authorized distributor for Motul in Kuwait. Technologically leading products from Motul lubricants will be available for customers at Al-Sayer Engineering's wide network of five centers for tires, oils and paints as well as in authorized dealers, co-ops, garages and Auto-repair shops across the State of Kuwait.



Flydubai announces direct flights to Helsinki

KUWAIT: Dubai-based carrier flydubai has announced during the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) the launch of direct flights to Finland's capital, Helsinki. The daily service from Dubai International (DXB) to Helsinki-Vantaa Airport (HEL) will start from 11 October 2018, flydubai becomes the first UAE national carrier to operate direct flights to Finland and the first airline to offer a year-round service between Dubai and Helsinki.

Speaking at ATM, Hamad Obaidalla, Chief Commercial Officer of flydubai, said: "flydubai will be the first UAE national carrier to offer direct flights to the capital of Finland. We remain committed to opening up previously underserved markets and to providing more travel options to fly to Dubai and beyond."

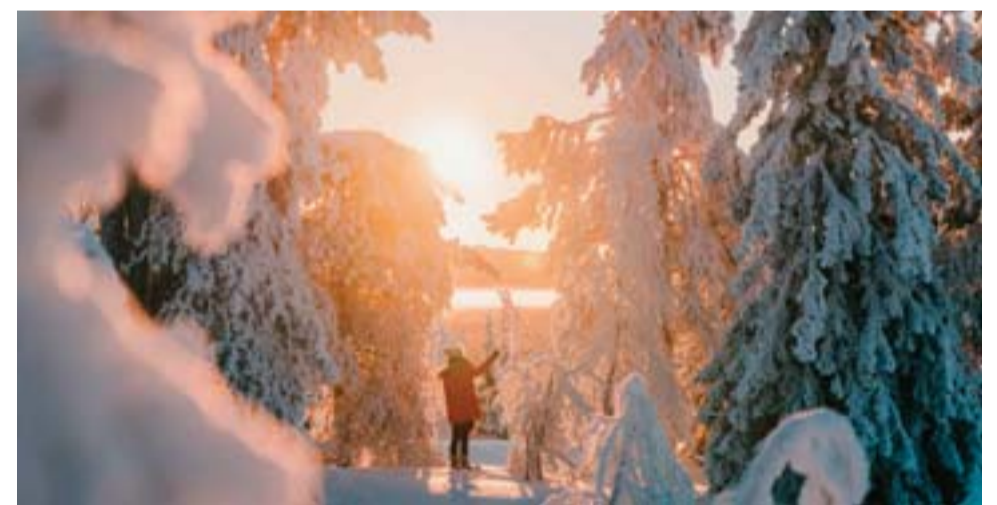
Arabian Travel market is the largest travel exhibition in the Middle East. This year, flydubai is participating at ATM for eighth time, showcasing its new Business and Economy Class offering available onboard its Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft.

Jeyhun Efendi, Senior Vice President Commercial Operations at flydubai, added: "Helsinki is the 10th destination we announced this year as we open up destinations for passengers from across our network. We are confident that the high level of our service and the comfort of our new aircraft with a flat-bed in Business Class will make flights between Dubai and Helsinki a popular choice for passengers."

Enhanced travel experience

To offer passengers more comfort and an enhanced travel experience, the carrier will operate the new route on its brand-new Boeing 737 MAX 8. The new cabin offering features a flat-bed in Business Class and in addition to the extra space and privacy, passengers can sleep comfortably during their flight. Economy Class offers new RECARO seats, which are designed to optimise space and comfort so passengers can sit back, relax and enjoy their flight. flydubai also offers exceptional inflight entertainment with a full HD, 11.6-inch screen, featuring a wide selection of movies, TV shows, music and games in English, Arabic and Russian. In addition, the Boeing Sky interior with its gently-sculpted sidewalls and its smooth-flowing lines provides passengers with a more relaxing travel environment.

Thierry Aucoc, Senior Vice President, Commercial at Emirates, said: "This new route



is an exciting development for Emirates, flydubai, Finland and the UAE. "Through our partnership with flydubai, passengers from destinations on Emirates' network such as Shanghai, Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong, Thailand or Delhi, can easily connect to Finland with one stop in Dubai. We look forward to witnessing flydubai's success in Finland."

Emirates will codeshare on the Helsinki route and as part of the Emirates flydubai partnership, passengers from the hundreds of destinations spanning six continents in over 80 countries, including from Far-East and India, will have an opportunity to travel to Helsinki via Dubai. For bookings under the codeshare, Emirates passengers will receive complimentary meals and the Emirates checked baggage allowance on flights operated by flydubai in Business and Economy classes.

Teemu Ahola, Account Manager - Asia & Middle East at Visit Finland, said: "We are thrilled for this route opening and looking forward to our cooperation with flydubai. Last year the registered overnights from UAE increased by 30 percent in Finland and we are hoping to break the record in 2018."

He added: "Finland is a great destination

both in summer and winter. The pleasantly cool and endless summer days with the mid-night sun create a perfect setting for either a relaxing family holiday or an action-packed itinerary with activity options ranging from golf and sailing to canoeing and hiking in the pure nature. Winter season in Finland is a wonderful for people in search for unique experiences such as husky and snowmobile safaris, ice driving experiences and viewing the Northern Lights. Finland is also home to the one and only Santa Claus."

Finland is popular both as a winter destination, offering a unique opportunity to watch the Northern Lights and visit Santa Claus's home in Lapland, and as a summer destination, with its numerous lakes and forests. Helsinki is perfect for a short break, with a variety of sightseeing attraction including the UNESCO heritage site Suomenlinna, a fortress island which is a 20 minutes ferry ride from the city.

Flydubai's route network in Europe includes 27 points in Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Greece, Italy, Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Turkey and Ukraine.



Al-Tijari announces winner of Al-Najma new prize program

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the first weekly draw of Al-Najma prize given account for KD 5,000, where Shafiqur Rahman Habibur Rahman was announced as the lucky winner. The draw was conducted in the pres-

ence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Latifa Al-Jeean. Al-Najma Account was recently revamped by adding several benefits to the prize program through which now the account provides its customers the chance to win the biggest annual cash prize offered by a bank in

Kuwait and over the globe as much as KD 1 million and half (KD 1,500,000) so that customers' dreams can easily turn to reality. The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000 and monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 for which the draw will be held on 1st July 2018 in addition to the grand prize (the biggest prize in the world) of KD 1,500,000 for which the draw will be held in January 2019.

Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

Now CBK existing customers can open Al-Najma Account through Al-Tijari Online and enter all draws without visiting the bank branch. However, CBK non-customers can submit account opening application via the bank's website where the bank's sales unit will call them to arrange visit to the customers to complete the account opening formalities.

ence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Latifa Al-Jeean. Al-Najma Account was recently revamped by adding several benefits to the prize program through which now the account provides its customers the chance to win the biggest annual cash prize offered by a bank in

Technology

Ooredoo and Huawei discuss 5G, IoT and AI



KUWAIT CITY: Ooredoo Kuwait attended a special series of presentations organized by strategic partner Huawei. The "Ooredoo Huawei Mobile Kuwait Congress 2018" held at Huawei's Head Office in Kuwait last week, was attended by Ooredoo's Technology and Strategy Departments, and included in-depth discussions and live demonstrations on the latest industry trends and innovative technologies.

As part of the event, the two partners discussed the future generation of mobile internet 5G Network,

the Internet of Things, and Artificial Intelligence, trends that are dominating the worldwide discussion of mobile telecommunication. The Internet of Things is projected to have substantial leading growth by the year 2020. The technology is expected to play an integral part in a variety of sectors, such as health-care, transportation, and services sector.

In a statement to the press, Ooredoo lauded the commitment and dedication of Huawei to provide the best solutions and technologies. The company



expressed its pride in having worked alongside such a reputable partner with strong international presence. Ooredoo is eager to adopt the latest technologies to bring the most advanced solutions in the industry to the Kuwaiti market.

Ooredoo further underscored the deep ties between Ooredoo and Huawei, whose role was instrumental on various projects to bring the best mobile internet solutions to different segments of customers in Kuwait. This stems from Ooredoo's



vision to enrich customers' lives through telecommunication and supports its digital transformation strategy. The leading telecom provides a diverse portfolio of services to individuals and companies, ranging from fixed to mobile, prepaid to postpaid.

AT&T chief: Merger would boost value of Time Warner

WASHINGTON: AT&T chief Randall Stephenson defended his company's planned mega-merger with Time Warner, arguing in court that the combination would enhance the value of the media-entertainment giant in a sector being roiled by Big Tech. Stephenson is the final defense witness in the antitrust trial in which the US government is seeking to block the \$85 billion tie-up.

He testified that the group which operates pay TV and wireless networks would boost the value of Time Warner's programming and other content by giving it wider distribution. "It's not really that complicated," Stephenson said in US District Court in Washington, during the highest-profile antitrust trial in decades. "The value of a content company is a function of how many people watch it."

The chief executive said Time Warner's content, which includes the Turner cable channels including CNN, Cartoon Network and the premium HBO channel are "underutilized" and would benefit from AT&T's broad networks that deliver programs over wired and wireless networks. Stephenson said AT&T's strategy revolves around getting more people to watch video on mobile devices, and that to do that, "we concluded we needed to own content."

He echoed comments from Time Warner CEO Jeff Bewkes, who testified a day earlier that the media group has difficulty competing with Silicon Valley giants which can use customer data to offer better programming as well as targeted advertising. Stephenson said by some measures the Time Warner operations have already been overtaken by online platforms like Netflix and Amazon, each of which have more than 100 million video customers.

'Vertical integration'

A combined AT&T and Time Warner would better compete by developing "vertical integration" — controlling the production of content as well as its delivery, according to Stephenson. "Netflix is investing billions of dollars in original content," he said. Because internet services track people's viewing habits, he said, "they can use that data to formulate what content to deliver."

Similarly, he said a merged AT&T and Time Warner could better compete with Google and Facebook, which use mountains of data about users that help them formulate targeted messages. He said television advertisers are shifting more to digital services and that "we would like to compete for their ad dollars." With better ad revenues, Stephenson said AT&T could keep a lid on subscription prices, contrary to the government's argument that the tie-up would lead to higher prices. "To the extent that you can generate higher yields in advertising, the less you have to charge subscribers," he testified under questioning from attorney Daniel Petrocelli.

Price pressure 'absurd'

Asked about the government's claim that the merger would cause a rise in prices for Turner content, Stephenson called the argument "absurd" because the channels have an interest in being on all platforms. He maintained that if the merger goes ahead, AT&T would set up separate business units for the content and delivery systems, so that deals could be made with rival pay TV systems.

"We have a lot of experience serving customers that are also our competitors," he said. Under cross-examination from Justice Department lawyer Craig Conrath, Stephenson acknowledged that AT&T has raised prices in recent years, but attributed that to higher content costs. "As more competitive products enter the marketplace it's getting harder and harder to pass those costs on," he said.

He also conceded that Amazon and Netflix don't have the same vertical integration that AT&T would have because their content passes over "somebody else's broadband service." The US Justice Department is seeking to block the deal announced in 2016 by AT&T, one of the largest pay TV and telecom operators, with the media-entertainment powerhouse Time Warner. The trial — which began last month in Washington before Judge Richard Leon and may end next week, with a decision several weeks later — is seen as a test for the traditional media sector in the face of rising power of tech firms. —AFP

Anonymous Asian Twitter accounts sparks bot fears

HONG KONG: It has been jokingly referred to as "Botmageddon". But a surge in new, anonymous Twitter accounts across swathes of Southeast and East Asia has deepened fears the region is in the throes of US-style mass social media manipulation. Maya Gilliss-Chapman, a Cambodian tech entrepreneur currently working in Silicon Valley, noticed something odd was happening in early April. Her Twitter account @MayaGC was being swamped by a daily deluge of follows from new users.

"I acquired well over 1,000 new followers since the beginning of March. So, that's approximately a 227 percent increase in just a month," she told AFP. While many might delight in such a popularity spike, Gilliss-Chapman, who has previously worked for tech companies to root out spam, was immediately suspicious. The vast majority of these new accounts contained no identifying photograph and had barely tweeted since their creation. But they all seemed to be following prominent Twitter users in Cambodia including journalists, business figures, academics and celebrities.

She did some digging and published her findings online, detailing how the vast majority of accounts were recently created in batches by unknown operators who worked hard to hide their real identities. She wasn't alone. Soon prominent Twitter users in Thailand, Vietnam, Myanmar, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Sri Lanka noticed the same phenomenon—a surge in follows from anonymous, recently created accounts, adopting local sounding names but barely engaging on the platform, as if lying in wait for someone's command.

'Organic users'?

While Facebook has received the lion's share of international opprobrium in recent months over allegations it has been slow to respond to people and state actors manipulating its platform, Twitter has also faced accusations it has not done enough to rid the platform of fake users.

Most bots are used for commercial spam. But they have been deployed politically in Asia before. During the 2016 Philippines presidential election, there was a surge of organised bots and trolls deployed to support the man who eventually won that contest, the firebrand populist Rodrigo Duterte. And after Myanmar's military last year launched a crackdown against the country's Rohingya Muslim minority, there was a wave of accounts that cropped up supportive of the government on Twitter, a platform that until then had very few Burmese users.

With elections due in Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia in the next two years, many hit by the Twitter follow surge in Asia are asking whether the

Ericsson shares fly as Swedish telecom giant caps losses

STOCKHOLM: Swedish telecoms firm Ericsson posted improved first quarter results Friday, as it presses a massive cost-saving drive that has prompted thousands of jobs cuts. Investors welcomed the news, with Ericsson's share price jumping nearly 17 percent of the Stockholm stock exchange in Friday trading. Ericsson reported an 80 million euro (\$99 million) loss for the first three months of 2018 — a major improvement from the 1.13 billion euro loss of the same period last year.

"The improvements in the quarter are encouraging," the statement said, adding that it had raised its gross margin from 19 percent to 36 percent. "However, more work remains to be done. We have confidence in the strategic direction laid out and remain fully committed to our long-term targets." The company in July



PARIS: In this file photo taken on January 08, 2018, a French homeless checks his twitter account on his mobile phone, at the Sainte-Marthe square. —AFP

Silicon Valley tech giants are doing enough to stop fake accounts before they are given their marching orders. So far Twitter has found nothing untoward. A spokesperson for the company said engineers were "looking into the accounts in question and will take action against any account found to be in violation of the Twitter Rules".

A source with knowledge of the probe said they believe the accounts are "new, organic users" who were likely being suggested prominent Twitter users across Asia to follow when they sign up. "It's something we're keeping an eye on, but for now, it looks like a pretty standard sign-up/onboarding issue," the source said. But many experts have been left unconvinced by such explanations. "Are there really this many new, genuine users joining Twitter, all with the same crude hallmarks of fake accounts?" Raymond Serrato, an expert at Democracy Reporting International who has been monitoring the suspicious accounts said.

'Like a cancer'

The issue of fake users is hugely sensitive for Twitter because a crackdown could severely dent its roughly 330 million audience—the company's main selling point. In a 2014 report to the US Securities and Exchange Commission, Twitter estimated some 5-8.5 percent of users were bots. But Emilio Ferrara, a research professor at the University of Southern California, published

research last year suggesting it could be double that: 9-15 percent.

Last week Pew Research Center released a report analysing 1.2 million English language tweets which contained links to popular websites. Two-thirds of the tweets came from suspected bot accounts. Twitter Audit Report, a third party company that scans people's followers using software to estimate how many are fake, suggests as many as 16 million of Donald Trump's 51 million followers are not real people.

Jennifer Grygiel, an expert on social media at Syracuse University, New York, said the US presidential election has provided a blueprint for others to copy. "Bad actors around the world have really followed the potential of social media to influence the political process," she said. Twitter, she said, is a minnow compared to Facebook's more than two billion users. But it can still be influential because many prominent opinion formers such as journalists, politicians and academics have a major presence on the platform.

"If you can get information within this population, then you've scored," she said. Serrato, from Democracy Reporting International, said the fake accounts could still pose a threat even if they are currently inactive. "The accounts can be used at a later date to amplify certain tweets, hijack hashtags, or harass people," he said. Grygiel used a more blunt metaphor. "The risk is the accounts are sitting there like a cancer," she said. —AFP

2017 launched a major restructuring drive that has seen nearly 18,000 jobs cut, the statement said.

Some 3,000 of the layoffs were made in the first three months of this year. Ericsson, once a market leader in the mobile phone industry, saw its earnings slump year after year following the meteoric rise of smartphone giants in the United States and Asia. But it has fought on against the odds, adapting to the rapidly shifting market by focusing its attention on research and development of new technologies for telecoms equipment.

'Complete confidence'

"Our efforts to improve efficiency in service delivery and common costs are starting to pay off," CEO Borje Ekholm said in the statement. "We continue to increase our R&D investments in networks to lead in 5G," added Ekholm, who took over at Ericsson in January 2016. Ericsson is also investing in cloud technology, and in telecoms systems for self-driving vehicles.

Speaking to Swedish news agency TT, Ekholm also said he had "complete confidence" his firm would achieve its target of cutting 10 billion kronor (963 million euros, \$1.2 billion) in costs in the current half.



"Ericsson has been optimistic about its future for some time but this is the first time we actually see it in its reported numbers," Joakim Bornold, an economist at investment bank Nordnet, told AFP. "Improvements are due to the cost programme and not increasing revenues. It's a clear sign that the reconstruction is on the right track," he added.

Ericsson was founded in 1876 as a repairs workshop for telegraph instruments, and started making phones in 1878, according to its website. In 1956, it created its first mobile phone—which weighed 40 kilos and was the size of a suitcase. It wasn't until 1987 that Ericsson built its first handheld mobile, named the HotLine Pocket, a boxy-looking black phone with bright orange keys and a pull out antenna. In 1999, Ericsson released the iconic, ultra-slim T28 model, which weighed just 83 grams and had a phonebook capacity for 250 contacts as well as a ringtone composer function. —AFP

Health

Holey cow! Evidence surfaces of Stone Age veterinary 'surgery'

Hole appears painstakingly carved into the animal's head

PARIS: A hole in the skull of a Stone Age cow was likely made by humans about 5,000 years ago, probably by a primitive veterinarian or trainee surgeon, scientists said. The hole appears to have been painstakingly carved into the animal's head, but whether it was an operation to save the cow or practice for surgery on humans, was not clear, a duo of anthropologists reported in the journal Scientific Reports.

Either way, the puncture does seem to represent the earliest known example of veterinary "trepanation"—the boring of a hole into the skull, they said. "There are many Neolithic (human) skulls in Europe which bear the marks of trepanation. But we have never seen it in animals," co-author Fernando Ramirez Rozzi of France's CNRS research institute told AFP. The Neolithic era was the closing chapter of the Stone Age—a time when prehistoric humans, hunter-gatherer nomads until then, first tried their hand at cultivating crops and building permanent villages.

The cow skull comes from an archaeological site in western France, inhabited by a Stone Age community between 3,400 and 3,000 BC. Bone fragments scattered around the camp showed that cows were the main source of food, along with pigs, sheep, and goats. It was thought at first that the matchbox-sized hole was made when the cow was gored by a horned rival in a fight.

But on closer inspection with high-definition scanners, the team found no splintering or fractures consistent with such a strong blow. The puncture was too regular to have been the work of a gnawing pest, nor did it appear to have been made by a tumor or infectious disease, such as syphilis or tuberculosis, as the skull showed no other signs of sickness.

Dead or alive?

Religious ritual also seemed an unlikely explanation, as the skull was thrown away with the rubbish.

Cut- and scrape marks were found around the hole, said Rozzi—similar to those seen on Neolithic human skulls into which holes had been bored. "I believe that the evidence of trepanation is indisputable," the researcher added. "It is the only possible explanation."

But why would a Stone Age human operate on an animal? "There are two possible explanations," according to Rozzi. "Either they were treating the cow, or they were practicing on it before trying their hand at surgery on humans."

The first option seemed unlikely, he added, given that cows were in such abundance. The team could not determine whether the hole was made while the cow was still alive, or after it died. The bone, however, had not started regrowing around the hole, which showed the cow either did not survive the operation, if there was one, or was cut post-mortem. —AFP

“ We have never seen it in animals ”



This handout picture released on April 18, 2018 by the CNRS shows 3D reconstruction of cow skull showing internally and externally the hole produced by trepanation. — AFP

Organic tampons, cups no safer against toxic shock

TAMPA: Organic cotton tampons are often advertised as safer alternatives, but a study Friday said they are not better than regular tampons at preventing toxic shock syndrome. Menstrual cups can also raise the risk of toxic shock, and should be boiled in between uses, said the report in Applied and Environmental Microbiology, a journal of the American Society for Microbiology. Women have long been advised to change tampons

regularly to avoid the risk of toxic shock syndrome, a rare but life-threatening condition that arises from a bacterial infection. Symptoms may include fever, vomiting, rash, muscle aches and organ failure. In recent years, a number of new female hygiene products have hit the market, including tampons made from organic cotton and menstrual cups that can be rinsed between uses.

To see how they measured up, researchers tested 11 kinds of tampons and four menstrual cups in the lab to study their effect on growth of a pathogen called Staphylococcus aureus, and also toxic shock toxin 1 (TSST-1) production. They inserted the tampons and cups into plastic bags, injected a liquid and a trace of bacteria isolated from a patient who had toxic shock in 2014, then sealed the bags and left them for eight hours.

They found it didn't seem to matter what kind of material was in the tampon, rather it was the amount of air in

between the fibers that seemed to raise the risk of bacterial growth. "Our results did not support the hypothesis suggesting that tampons composed exclusively of organic cotton could be intrinsically safer than those made of mixed cotton and rayon," said Gerard Lina, professor of microbiology at University Claude Bernard, in Lyon, France. "We observed that space between the fibers that contributes to intake of air in the vagina also represents the major site of S. aureus growth and TSST-1 production."

Meanwhile, menstrual cups seemed to allow even more bacteria to grow than tampons, again likely due to the additional air involved. At least one case has been documented in scientific literature of a woman coming down with toxic shock after using a menstrual cup. "Over the years, it was postulated that perhaps if tampons were made from natural materials, toxic shock would be averted. —AFP

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What's On

Hardee's names winner of 'Go Large' campaign

Hardee's Kuwait named the first winner of "Go Large" campaign out of four winners weekly, with a 2018 Chevy Camaro. When the 1st winner (Ahmad Al-Shatti) was asked about whether he expected to win, he said his joy of winning is beyond description. He said he thought it is a prank, until Hardee's Restaurants Marketing Manager Rafeeq Al-Ayyat confirmed he had in fact - just won a car.

Al-Shatti said "I have been Hardee's patron for years, and I always order the chicken fillet, and this order is my lucky one today".

Hardee's Regional Marketing General Manager in Kuwait, Iraq and Kurdistan Rafeeq Al-Ayyat said such campaign strengthens Hardee's customers loyalty and their love for its products. It is also a reward for all Kuwait Hardee's lovers, as everybody has the opportunity to win. The next three will see the draw for 3 camaro cars and 12 Iphone X.

He said the major success Hardee's restaurants are making is due to customers support, and is being accepted by large number of people. He said all Hardee's Kuwait restaurants use high quality Kuwaiti and Saudi meats that are slaughtered in compliance with Islamic Shareeah. Al-Ayyat said Hardee's relies on achieving the difficult formula which is a quick service with the highest quality possible especially in Kuwait, because the customer's understanding of quality is higher than in any other country.

"Hardee's train and qualify its employees to present the highest of quality levels besides having advanced tools and supplies in order to be at par with the best developments in the international market. He said American's and Hardee's slogan is quality and this is what we are working to achieve as the major goal of company workers is to gain customers confidence" Al-Ayyat said.



The Symphony Style Hotel to host Kuwait Times' students' art competition

By Ben Garcia

The Symphony Style Hotel - committed to a clean and green environment - will host the awards night of Kuwait Times' students' art competition. Students and parents who will be attending the awards night will be treated to the best of the hotel's hospitality. Peter Schuler, Symphony General Manager, said the company believes in giving back to the community. "We like the concept and idea of the clean and green painting competition. We believe that as a hospitality industry member, we want you to know that we are responsible business owners. We think of people, we think of community and we think of the planet we live in. Small changes start always with small actions. This is a great opportunity to showcase the best of our hotel's hospitality, services and products," he said.

According to Schuler, the hotel promotes and offers a green, clean and safe environment. "We are a 'GreenKey' certified hotel," he said. "In the hotel itself, our visitors can enjoy an indoor garden with food and coffee. The place is very serene and relaxing," he said.

Symphony Hotel is proud of its various Responsible Business initiatives. "For RB alone, we have a dedicated team of 15 employees to carry out the plans and programs in various areas. We organize beach cleanup activities, tree planting and switching off electricity during the annual Earth Hour. We also have green patrols to save water and energy consumption. We distribute sprout pencils in guest suites to encourage people to patronize a greener environment. We also replaced the straws in the hotel with paper straws during April in celebration of the Earth Day 2018.

The hotel enjoys a 77-80 percent occupancy rate and is fortunate to be located in the best spot in Kuwait. "Symphony Style Hotel



Kuwait is designed to reflect a distinctive character of local culture and this is what makes us unique in our offerings," he said. On expansion plans, the general manager said the hotel wants to focus more on development to stay ahead of its competitors. "We have various strengths - the hotel is unique. We are proud to say that Symphony Hotel is located in one of the best locations that a hotel in Kuwait can have. All the rooms of Symphony Hotel enjoy a sea view, which is unique to us only," Schuler said.

"We are enhancing our services and have upgraded most of our products and services to make every moment matter and leave an exceptional impact on our guests - this is our aim and objective. We lately introduced a spe-

cial birthday party room for kids and a dedicated teen hub, in addition to our newly conceptualized 'Chococafe Garden', which is a new indoor cafe that offers a tempting menu of snacks in a green and flowery garden all year around," he added.

Peter Schuler was appointed in 2015 as the General Manager of the iconic Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait and brought with him 20+ years of rich hospitality experience he gained working in nine different countries, mostly from the luxury Radisson family. Schuler brings to this landmark long and extensive operational and administrative hospitality skills obtained throughout his professional career years.



are pleased to celebrate the successful conclusion of INJAZ Kuwait's Company Program, which is INJAZ-Kuwait's flagship programs and the most popular among students. We seek to reward ambitious youth who aspire to establish their own private businesses in the future, to be tomorrow's pioneers and business leaders. I would like to congratulate the winning teams for their exceptional performance. They have established themselves and their businesses in a leading position to compete, both locally and regionally."

"In the past years, INJAZ Kuwait has fully dedicated its efforts to making a difference in the lives of Kuwait's youth by investing in their positive energy and encouraging them by ensuring that they are equipped with the

knowledge and understanding of entrepreneurship and financial literacy through INJAZ Kuwait's educational programs. Our organization has a long term impact that plays a vital role in outlining the student's futures as entrepreneurs and their roles as tomorrow's leaders ultimately creating a more prosperous Kuwait." "Over the years, the on-going support of our partners and volunteers who contribute their time, efforts and knowledge helped train and guide students from Kuwait's high schools and universities. I would like to give a special thanks to all those who have supported our journey to inspire and educate generations to come. If it wasn't for your belief in our program we would not be where we are today," Al-Mutairi concluded.

TIES announcement

You are cordially invited to our Tafseer class (Divine Wisdom from the Last Testament) today at 7:00 pm. In this class, we will focus on Surat At-Talaaq (Divorce), verses 9 and 10. We will discuss some prophetic narrations

urging us to adhere to the Noble Qur'an, our responsibility towards that Divine Scripture, its different names and descriptions, what they imply, and the benefits of adhering to it. We will also share some prophetic narrations for us to fear Allah (SWT), what that implies, and the consequences of unrepentantly disobeying Allah (SWT). Finally, we will examine why Allah (SWT) describes the true believers as people of superior understanding and discretion.

Khalifa Al-Qattan's Young Artists Art Exhibition

Under auspices of Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah and with the attendance of Roqayya Hussein on her behalf, artist Lidia Al-Qattan and engineer, Jalila Al-Qattan, the

11th Khalifa Al-Qattan's Young Artists Art Exhibition was recently opened at Al-Shaheed Park under the title of 'Our Gulf Is One'. Speaking on the occasion, Engineer Al-Qattan said the exhibition was annually held in appreciation for the legacy of artist Khalifa Al-Qattan who had been known of encouraging all arts and artists, especially young ones and beginners. She added that the expo includes over a 100 paintings and that winners would be honored with special certificates of appreciation. She also noted that the expo started in 2004, on the first anniversary of Khalifa Al-Qattan's death on June 27, 2003 to commemorate him.



KALPAK presents Othello

Kuwait witnessed a spectacular rendition of world famous playwright, William Shakespeare's Othello in Malayalam by KALPAK, an initiative of a group of theatre lovers to promote theatre, culture and art, recently. Othello was the result of 3 months of penance by almost 35 actors, art lovers and many more well-wishers from across places. When hard work, dedication, creativity and expertise came together, Othello, surely had to make an impact like Kuwait had never seen before. In spite of being miles away from their homeland and the limitations of living in a foreign country, KALPAK celebrated its 29th year of formation in style. Despite all the ups and downs, which are always part of a big show, the team, backed up by astounding settings, exhibited a show that the ever welcoming audience of Kuwait would never forget.

The skillful touch of Sujathan on a 70-foot long stage, an eye-catching setting that made the onlookers' jaw drop, 11 dif-

ferent massive backdrops and 18 scenes on an open stage were what Othello had to offer at Indian Central School, Kuwait. When Othello and Cassio made their grand entries on horse backs, it added more pomp and glory to the already captivating show. It was staged on Friday and Saturday, with about 5000 people watching characters from the Shakespearean drama come to life.

When a group of professionals, like Babuji Bathery (Director), Kalaratnam Sujathan (Stage Designer), Poojapura Shashi (Costume) and Alex Sunny (Light), joined hands, Othello set a new standard. Shashi Kozencherry and Johnny Kunnil, the assistant directors, Mustafa Ambadi, the Music Director, Paurnami Sangeeth, the choreographer, Udayan Anchal and Manoj Mavelikara behind the background scores, all played their roles well to make this show worth watching. Sibi A.V.R did the light mixing with Varghese Paul in charge of sound mixing.

Shaiju Pallipuram, Pradeep Vengola, Sijo Valiaparambil, Tina Teresa, Paurnami Sangeeth, Sneha Merin, Chandran Puthoor, Joseph Kannankara, Valsan George, Pramod Menon, Lijo Jose, Joemon Naatakam, Aksha Joemon, Ajith, Baptist, Tommy, Sreejith, Sinu, Santosh, Maxi, Ramesh and Freddy were among the actors who were part of this play.



INJAZ honors students of 'Company Program'

INJAZ Kuwait has successfully concluded its annual Company Program Competition (CPC). The award ceremony for the winning student companies was held at Salwa Sabah Al Ahmed Hall, Marina Hotel on 21 April 2018, in the presence of INJAZ Kuwait representatives, judges, partners, sponsors, school representatives, and representatives from the local media. During this year's Company Program Competition, 21 student companies were featured with a total of 200 participating students from private and public schools and universities competing for the "Best Student Company of 2018" award.

During the ceremony, the winners of the Company Program Competition were announced. Gulf Bank of Kuwait sponsored the "Best Student Company of 2018" award. The winners in the university category went to "Be You", while "Re-al" claimed the prize for the high school category. The two winning companies will be representing Kuwait in the INJAZ Al-Arab regional competition, which will be held in Kuwait this year. The 'Most Innovative Product' award, which was sponsored by Zain, was given to "Portage" in the university category and to "Biotensils" in the high school category. Finally, the 'Student Company with the Best Social Impact' award sponsored by Alghanim Industries, went to "Be You" for the university category and "Biotensils" for the high school category.

Laila Al-Mutairi, INJAZ Kuwait CEO, expressed her happiness as she congratulated the winners of the competition saying, "We

TV



01:15 San Andreas Quake
02:45 My Stepdaughter
04:15 Crossfire
06:00 This Means War
07:40 Kung Fu Yoga
09:30 911 Nightmare
11:00 Bad Company
13:00 Lost & Found
14:35 This Means War
16:15 Knight And Day
18:15 Operation Chromite
20:10 Eagle Eye
22:10 Phone Booth
23:40 Rollerball



00:45 Wild Australia
01:40 Mekong: Soul Of A River
03:25 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
04:15 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
05:02 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
06:36 Swamp Brothers
08:15 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
09:10 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
10:05 North America
11:00 Swamp Brothers
11:28 Swamp Brothers
11:55 The Vet Life
12:50 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
13:45 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
14:40 North America
15:35 Untamed & Uncut
16:30 Weird Creatures With Nick Baker
17:25 Expedition Mungo
18:20 Man-Eating Super Croc
19:15 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
20:10 Swamp Brothers
20:38 Swamp Brothers
21:05 Expedition Mungo
22:00 Man-Eating Super Croc
22:55 North America
23:50 Untamed & Uncut



00:55 Trauma
01:50 Line Of Duty
02:55 Orphan Black
03:45 Orphan Black
04:30 Doctors
05:00 Death In Paradise
06:00 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Call The Midwife
07:55 Father Brown
08:45 The Coroner
09:35 The Coroner
10:25 Doctors
10:55 Doctors
11:30 EastEnders
12:00 Father Brown
12:50 Call The Midwife
13:45 Doctors
14:15 Doctors
14:45 EastEnders
15:15 Death In Paradise
16:15 Father Brown
17:05 Call The Midwife
18:00 Father Brown
19:00 Death In Paradise
20:00 Cold Feet
20:50 Silent Witness
21:45 Death In Paradise
22:45 Trauma
23:35 Father Brown



00:00 Warren Jeffs: Prophet Of Evil
01:55 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
02:50 The Zodiac Killer: Case Closed?
03:45 Warren Jeffs: Prophet Of Evil
05:15 The First 48
06:00 Cold Case Files
07:00 It Takes A Killer
07:20 The First 48
08:05 Cold Case Files
08:50 Homicide Hunter
09:35 The First 48
10:30 Cold Case Files
11:25 Crimes That Shook Britain
12:20 Cold Case Files
13:15 Leah Remini: Scientology And The Aftermath
14:10 The First 48
15:05 Cold Case Files
16:00 Homicide Hunter
17:00 Deadly Wives
18:00 Deadly Wives
19:00 Deadly Wives
20:00 The First 48
21:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
22:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
23:00 Crimes That Shook Australia



00:05 Russell Simmons Presents: The Ruckus
00:30 Another Period
00:55 John Oliver's New York Stand Up Show
01:45 South Park
02:10 South Park
02:35 Another Period
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.O
03:50 South Park
04:15 Nathan For You
04:40 Key And Peele
05:05 Catch A Contractor
05:30 Disaster Date
05:55 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:20 Comedy Central Presents Comedy Salawert
06:50 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
07:40 Lip Sync Battle
08:05 Key And Peele
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Nathan For You
09:45 Lip Sync Battle
10:10 Catch A Contractor
10:35 Friends
11:00 Key And Peele
11:25 Disaster Date
11:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:15 Friendszone
12:40 Key And Peele
13:05 Friends
13:30 Friends
13:55 Nathan For You
14:20 Workaholics
14:45 Disaster Date
15:10 Friends
15:35 Key And Peele
16:00 Nathan For You
16:30 Friendszone
16:55 Friends
17:20 Friends
17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Hillbillies For Hire
18:35 Hillbillies For Hire
19:00 Friends
19:25 Friendszone
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends

20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 Why? With Hannibal Buress
22:00 Teachers
22:25 Graves
22:50 Nathan For You
23:15 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



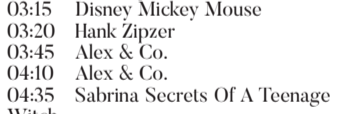
00:30 Ultimate Survival
01:20 How It's Made
01:45 How It's Made
02:10 How It's Made
02:35 How It's Made
03:00 How It's Made
03:25 How It's Made
03:50 Kids Do The Craziest Things
04:15 Kids Do The Craziest Things
04:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
05:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
06:20 How It's Made
06:40 How It's Made
07:00 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:25 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:50 Ecopolis
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Tanked
10:20 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
11:10 Kids Do The Craziest Things
11:35 Kids Do The Craziest Things
12:00 How It's Made
12:25 How It's Made
12:50 Finding Bigfoot
13:40 Ali-As Superchargers
14:05 Ali-As Superchargers
14:30 Ecopolis
15:20 How It's Made
15:45 How It's Made
16:10 David Baddiel On The Silk Road
17:00 Ecopolis
17:50 Tanked
18:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 World's Toughest Expeditions With James Cracknell
20:20 Ali-As Superchargers
20:45 Ali-As Superchargers
21:10 How It's Made
21:35 How It's Made
22:00 Ultimate Survival
22:50 World's Toughest Expeditions With James Cracknell
23:40 Ali-As Superchargers



00:45 A Checklist For Murder
01:40 Home Alone
02:35 Ghost Brothers
03:30 Ghost Stalkers
04:25 Bride Killers
05:20 The Perfect Murder
06:10 Shadow Of Doubt
07:00 Who On Earth Did I Marry?
07:25 Shadow Of Doubt
08:15 Blood Relatives
09:10 Evil Online
10:05 Murder Comes To Town
11:00 I Am Homicide
11:55 Shadow Of Doubt
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:45 Evil Online
14:40 Murder Comes To Town
15:35 Obsession: Dark Desires
16:30 Shadow Of Doubt
17:25 Blood Relatives
18:20 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 Evil Online
20:10 Murder Comes To Town
21:05 Gone
22:00 Casey Anthony: Killer Mom?
22:55 Jodi Arias: From Lust To Murder
23:50 Murder Chose Me



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermore Chronicles
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



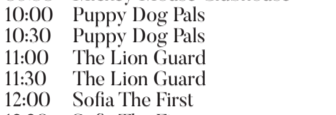
00:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Lab Rats
06:50 Gravity Falls
07:15 Marvel's Spider-Man
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
08:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
08:35 Supa Strikas
09:00 Supa Strikas
09:25 Mighty Med
10:20 Phineas & Ferb
11:10 Lab Rats
12:00 Right Now Kapow
12:25 Two More Eggs
12:30 Right Now Kapow
12:55 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:45 Gravity Falls
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Gravity Falls
14:40 Pair Of Kings
15:30 Lab Rats
15:55 Two More Eggs
16:00 DuckTales
16:25 DuckTales
16:50 Mech-X4
17:15 Star Vs The Forces Of Evil
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Gravity Falls
18:35 Right Now Kapow
19:00 DuckTales
19:25 DuckTales
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Kickin' It
20:20 Kickin' It
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:10 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas & Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug...
22:50 LoloRock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 Calimero
01:50 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Art Attack
02:30 The Hive
02:40 Loopdidoo
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:10 Art Attack
03:35 Loopdidoo
03:50 Calimero
04:05 Art Attack
04:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:00 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Loopdidoo
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster
06:15 Calimero
06:30 PJ Masks
07:00 Trulli Tales
07:30 Jungle Junction
07:50 Handy Manny
08:10 PJ Masks
08:30 Vampirina
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:00 Puppy Dog Pals
10:30 Puppy Dog Pals
11:00 The Lion Guard
11:30 The Lion Guard
12:00 Sofia The First
12:30 Sofia The First
13:00 PJ Masks
13:30 PJ Masks
14:00 P-King Duckling
14:30 Vampirina
15:00 Puppy Dog Pals
15:30 Sofia The First
16:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
16:30 Doc McStuffins
17:00 PJ Masks
17:05 PJ Masks
17:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:00 The Lion Guard
18:30 Puppy Dog Pals
19:00 Trulli Tales
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Vampirina
20:30 PJ Masks
21:00 Trulli Tales
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 P-King Duckling
22:30 Puppy Dog Pals
23:00 Miles From Tomorrow
23:30 PJ Masks



00:10 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
04:50 Tracey Ullman's Show
05:15 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
06:15 Guess This House
07:10 The Chase
08:05 Ant & Dec's Saturday Night Takeaway
09:30 Tracey Ullman's Show
09:55 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
11:00 Guess This House
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Guess This House
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Britain's Brightest Family
16:30 Britain's Brightest Family
16:55 Sheland
17:55 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Britain's Brightest Family
21:25 Britain's Brightest Family
21:50 Sheland
22:50 Coronation Street
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



00:15 Gear Week
01:05 Blue Collar Backers
01:50 Railroad Australia
02:35 Outback Truckers
03:20 Street Outlaws
04:05 Buying Alaska
04:27 Buying Alaska
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 Storage Hunters
06:00 Garage Gold
06:23 Dallas Car Sharks
06:45 Storage Hunters
07:10 Storage Wars Canada
07:35 Buying Alaska
07:57 Buying Alaska
08:20 Garage Gold
08:45 Dallas Car Sharks
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 Blue Collar Backers
10:45 Railroad Australia
11:30 Outback Truckers
12:20 Garage Gold
12:43 Dallas Car Sharks
13:05 Storage Hunters
13:30 Storage Wars Canada
13:55 Dirty Jobs
14:40 Ice Cold Gold
15:30 Blue Collar Backers
16:15 Railroad Australia
17:05 Outback Truckers
17:50 Buying Alaska
18:15 Buying Alaska
18:40 Dirty Jobs
19:25 Ice Cold Gold
20:15 Street Outlaws
21:00 Jungle Gold
21:50 Gold Rush: White Water
22:40 Gold Divers
23:30 Buying Alaska
23:53 Buying Alaska



00:20 Milwaukee Blacksmith
00:45 Pawn Stars
01:10 Battle 360
01:40 Ice Road Truckers
02:50 Storage Wars
03:15 Storage Wars
03:40 Battle 360
04:55 Pawn Stars
05:20 American Pickers
06:00 Ice Road Truckers
06:50 Milwaukee Blacksmith
07:15 Pawn Stars
07:40 Storage Wars
08:05 Storage Wars
08:30 Battle 360
09:20 Ice Road Truckers
10:10 Alone
11:00 Milwaukee Blacksmith
11:25 Pawn Stars
11:50 Storage Wars
12:15 Storage Wars
12:40 Battle 360
13:30 Ice Road Truckers
14:20 Battle 360
15:10 Alone
16:00 American Pickers
16:50 Storage Wars
17:15 Storage Wars
17:40 Battle 360
18:30 Ice Road Truckers
19:20 Milwaukee Blacksmith
19:45 Pawn Stars
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 WW2 Treasure Hunters
21:50 James Nesbitt: Disasters That Changed Britain
22:40 Milwaukee Blacksmith
23:05 Pawn Stars
23:30 Ice Road Truckers

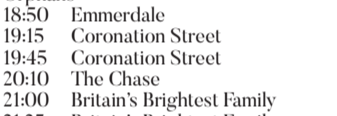


00:45 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
00:45 United Plates Of America
01:10 Lucky Chow
01:40 Stepping Out
02:05 A Taste Of South Africa
02:35 Lucky Chow
03:00 Lucky Chow
03:30 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
04:25 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
05:20 Miguel's Feasts
05:45 Miguel's Feasts
06:15 John Torode's Korean Food Tour

04:35 Botched
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 WAGS Miami
06:55 El News Middle East
07:25 WAGS Miami
08:20 WAGS Miami
09:15 WAGS Miami
10:10 El News Middle East
10:40 Celebrity Style Story
11:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
13:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 El News Middle East
15:30 Celebrity Style Story
16:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
17:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
18:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
23:00 El News Middle East
23:15 Revenge Body With Khloe Kardashian



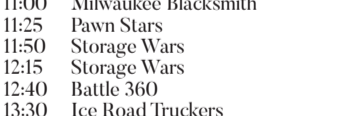
00:10 Paul O'grady's Animal Orphans
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19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Britain's Brightest Family
21:25 Britain's Brightest Family
21:50 Sheland
22:50 Coronation Street
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



00:20 Bandits Of Selous
01:10 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
02:00 Killer Dragons
02:50 Animal Fight Club
03:45 Philly Undercover
04:40 The Naked Superhero
05:35 Killer Dragons
06:30 Animal Fight Club
07:25 Philly Undercover
08:20 The Naked Superhero
09:15 World's Weirdest: Animal Taboo
10:10 Photo Ark
11:05 Animals Gone Wild
12:00 Shark Men
12:55 Africa's Hunters
13:50 Animal Fight Club
14:45 Animals Gone Wild
15:40 Killer Seals
16:35 World's Weirdest Pets
17:30 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
18:25 Killer Seals
19:20 Animals Gone Wild
20:10 Killer Seals
21:00 World's Weirdest Pets
21:50 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
22:40 Killer Seals
23:30 Shark Men



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 Rabbids Invasion
04:12 Rabbids Invasion
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 The Loud House
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
06:36 Harvey Beaks
07:00 Breadwinners
07:24 Get Blake
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Rabbids Invasion
08:36 The Loud House
09:00 Regal Academy
09:24 Winx Club
09:48 100 Things To Do Before High School
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 School Of Rock
11:00 Henry Danger
11:24 The Thundermans
11:48 I Am Frankie
12:12 Rank The Prank
12:36 Massive Monster Mayhem
13:00 Hunter Street
13:24 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
13:48 Teen Marty
14:00 Teen Marty
14:12 Harvey Beaks
14:36 Breadwinners
15:00 Sanjay And Craig
15:24 Rabbids Invasion
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
16:36 The Loud House
17:00 Teen Marty
17:12 Teen Marty
17:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
17:48 Hunter Street
18:12 Henry Sanger
18:36 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
20:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:00 Harvey Beaks
21:24 Breadwinners
21:48 Get Blake
22:12 Sanjay And Craig
22:36 Rabbids Invasion
23:00 The Loud House
23:24 Regal Academy
23:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles



00:06 Max & Ruby
00:29 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:39 Kiva Can Do!
00:50 The Day Henry Met
00:56 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:41 Paw Patrol
01:52 Kid-E-Cats
01:57 Kid-E-Cats
02:02 Shimmer And Shine
02:25 Nella The Princess Knight
02:37 Paw Patrol
02:59 Max & Ruby
03:22 Dora The Explorer
03:46 Sunny Day
04:08 Nella The Princess Knight
04:30 Shimmer And Shine
04:53 Wallykazam!
05:17 Zack & Quack
05:27 The Day Henry Met
05:32 The Day Henry Met
05:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
06:00 Rusty Rivets
06:37 Dora The Explorer
07:00 Nella The Princess Knight
07:21 Kiva Can Do!
07:32 Kiva Can Do!
07:44 Blaze And The Monster Machines
08:06 Paw Patrol
08:17 Paw Patrol
08:29 Shimmer And Shine
08:52 Nella The Princess Knight
09:15 Paw Patrol
09:38 Rusty Rivets
10:01 Wallykazam!
10:24 The Day Henry Met
10:29 Bubble Guppies
10:53 Team Umizoomi
11:16 Kid-E-Cats
11:21 Shimmer And Shine
11:44 Sunny Day
12:06 Max & Ruby
12:30 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
12:40 Kiva Can Do!
12:51 The Day Henry Met
12:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:20 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:42 Paw Patrol
13:54 Kid-E-Cats
13:59 Kid-E-Cats
14:05 Shimmer And Shine
14:27 Nella The Princess Knight
14:39 Paw Patrol
15:01 Max & Ruby
15:24 Dora The Explorer
15:47 Sunny Day
16:09 Nella The Princess Knight
16:31 Shimmer And Shine
16:53 Wallykazam!
17:17 Zack & Quack
17:28 The Day Henry Met
17:32 The Day Henry Met
17:38 Blaze And The Monster Machines
18:00 Rusty Rivets
18:11 Paw Patrol
18:35 Dora The Explorer
19:00 Nella The Princess Knight
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23:25 Sunny Day

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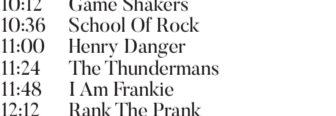
00:10 Wicked Tuna
01:00 Genius
02:00 Genius
03:00 Taiwan's Toughest
04:00 Wicked Tuna
05:00 Mystery Files
06:00 Nazi Attack On America
07:00 Car SOS
08:00 Apocalypse: The Second World War
09:00 Mystery Files
09:30 Mystery Files
10:00 Living Free With Kimi Werner
11:00 Taiwan's Toughest
12:00 Mega Factories
13:00 Stalking Hitler's Generals
14:00 Surrender
15:00 Car SOS
16:00 Fight Club Asia
17:00 Taiwan's Toughest
18:00 Mega Factories
19:00 Car SOS
20:00 Fight Club Asia
20:50 Taiwan's Toughest
21:40 Mega Factories
22:30 Car SOS
23:20 Surrender



00:20 Bandits Of Selous
01:10 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
02:00 Killer Dragons
02:50 Animal Fight Club
03:45 Philly Undercover
04:40 The Naked Superhero
05:35 Killer Dragons
06:30 Animal Fight Club
07:25 Philly Undercover
08:20 The Naked Superhero
09:15 World's Weirdest: Animal Taboo
10:10 Photo Ark
11:05 Animals Gone Wild
12:00 Shark Men
12:55 Africa's Hunters
13:50 Animal Fight Club
14:45 Animals Gone Wild
15:40 Killer Seals
16:35 World's Weirdest Pets
17:30 Dr. K's Exotic Animal ER
18:25 Killer Seals
19:20 Animals Gone Wild
20:10 Killer Seals
21:00 World's Weirdest Pets
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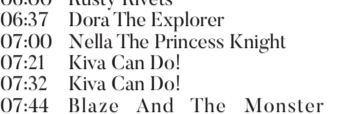


00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 Rabbids Invasion
04:12 Rabbids Invasion
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 The Loud House
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
06:36 Harvey Beaks
07:00 Breadwinners
07:24 Get Blake
07:48 Sanjay And Craig
08:12 Rabbids Invasion
08:36 The Loud House
09:00 Regal Academy
09:24 Winx Club
09:48 100 Things To Do Before High School
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 School Of Rock
11:00 Henry Danger
11:24 The Thundermans
11:48 I Am Frankie
12:12 Rank The Prank
12:36 Massive Monster Mayhem
13:00 Hunter Street
13:24 Nicky, Ricky, Dicky & Dawn
13:48 Teen Marty
14:00 Teen Marty
14:12 Harvey Beaks
14:36 Breadwinners
15:00 Sanjay And Craig
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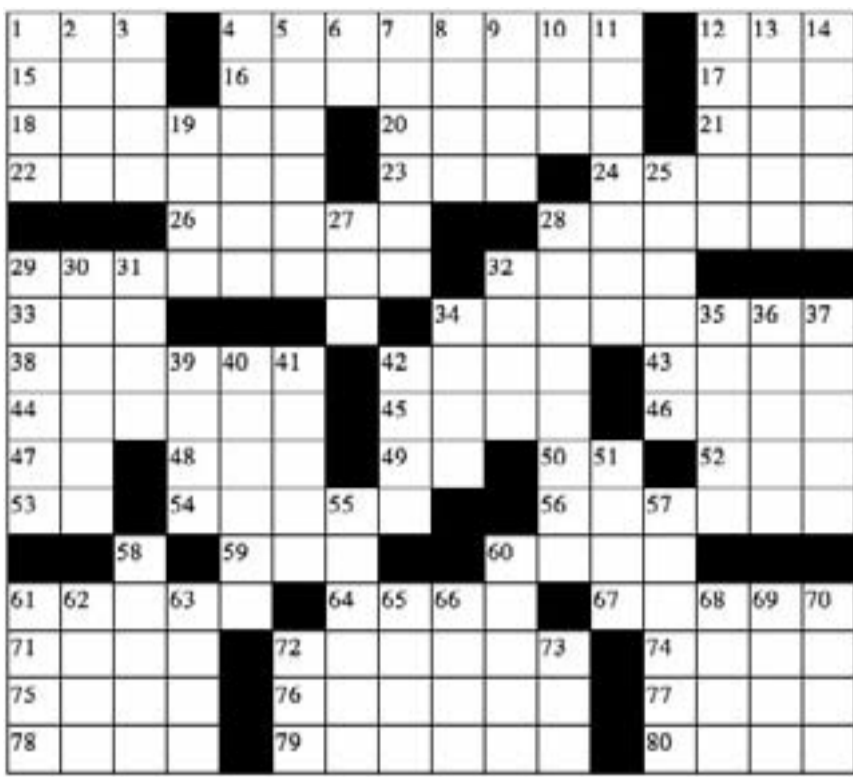
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Stars

CROSSWORD 1890



ACROSS

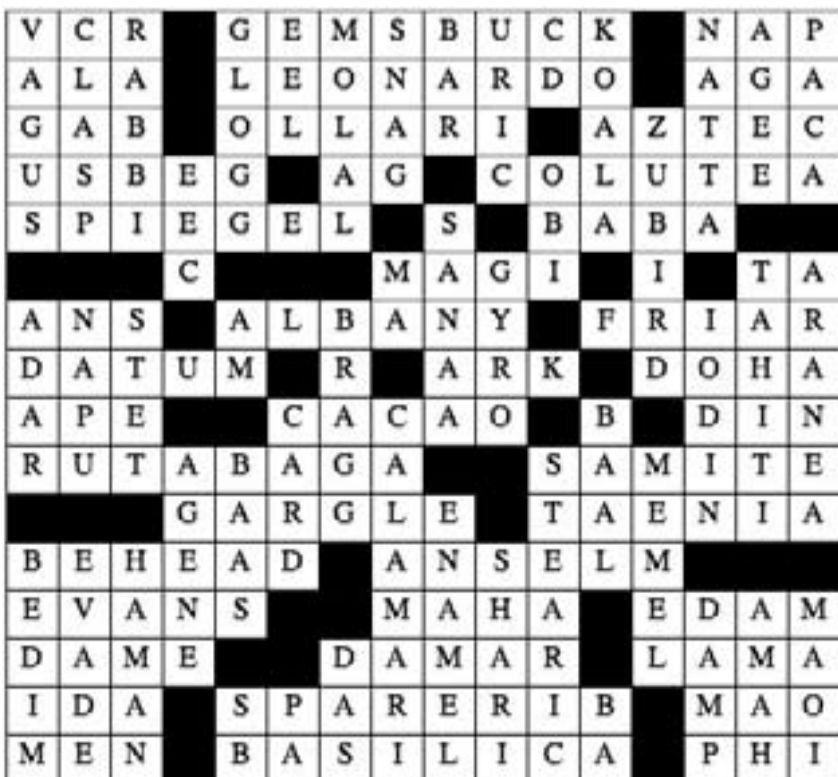
11. An audiotape recording of sound.
4. Having great material or monetary value especially for use or exchange.
12. The compass point that is one point east of due south.
15. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
16. The sudden occurrence of a violent discharge of steam and volcanic material.
17. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
18. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
20. An emblem (a small piece of plastic or cloth or metal) that signifies your status (rank or membership or affiliation etc.).
21. A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
22. A large fleet.
23. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
24. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
26. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
29. (physiology) Of nerves and nerve impulses.
33. A boy or man.
38. Small Indian lettuce of northern regions.
43. A fraudulent business scheme.
44. A steep artificial slope in front of a fortification.
45. Relating to the Urdu language.
46. (prefix) Within.
47. A state in New England.
48. Primitive predaceous North American fish covered with hard scales and having long jaws with needle-like teeth.
49. Unknown god.
50. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
52. The universal time coordinated when an event is received on Earth.
53. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
54. Jordan's port.
56. Large family of bark-boring or wood-boring short-beaked beetles.
59. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
61. Found along western Atlantic coast.
64. Distinctive and stylish elegance.
67. A master's degree in literature.
71. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
74. (legal terminology) The Latin word for wife.
75. Largest known toad species.
76. (Greek mythology) One of the three Graces.
77. Excavation in the earth from which ores and minerals are extracted.
78. A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
79. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
80. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.

DOWN

1. Evergreen tree of eastern Asia and

- Philippines having large leathery leaves and small green-white flowers in compact cymes.
2. The sixth month of the civil year.
3. Russian physicist (1895-1971).
4. Included seven times in every 19 years.
5. Requiring secret or mysterious knowledge.
6. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
7. Pleasantly (even unrealistically) optimistic.
8. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
9. The capital and chief port of Qatar.
10. (of roads) Made of logs laid down crosswise.
11. A biological unit consisting of a nucleus and the body of cytoplasm with which it interacts.
12. A shade of brown with a tinge of red.
13. A United States youth subculture of the 1950s.
14. Enthusiastic approval.
19. Serving as or forming a base.
25. Traveling on horseback.
27. Used of a single unit or thing.
28. A river in central Brazil that flows generally northward (with many falls) to join the Tocantins River.
30. A breast-shaped mass of padding worn in a brassiere.
31. A federally sponsored corporation that insures accounts in national banks and other qualified institutions.
32. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
34. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.
35. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
36. A genus of Pyralidae.
37. Give expression or emotion to, in a stage or movie role.
39. Kamarupan languages spoken in northeastern India and western Burma.
40. An industrial city in southern Poland on the Vistula.
41. A chock or bar wedged under a wheel or between the spokes to prevent a vehicle from rolling down an incline.
42. South American shrub or small tree having long shining evergreen leaves and panicles of green or yellow flowers.
51. (trademark) A tinne luncheon meat made largely from pork.
55. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
57. Make lighter or brighter.
58. God of the underworld.
60. (Greek mythology) The Titaness who was mother of Helios and Selene and Eos in ancient mythology.
62. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
63. South African term for 'boss'.
65. (prefix) Indicating difference or variation.
66. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
68. A monocotyledonous genus of the family Iridaceae.
69. A large number or amount.
70. A tall perennial woody plant having a main trunk and branches forming a distinct elevated crown.
72. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
73. A light touch or stroke.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You're overwhelmed with desire for change; be careful here as all of your well-laid plans could fall apart if you don't gain control of this wish. Cosmic and earthly timing on this clash could disrupt your career path or current job. A new phase affects your emotional side; you find yourself longing for a stable home and family life. New fun things to occupy your off time bring rewards; make sure your new habits are good ones as they could be with you awhile. You feel stunted when trying to explain something to a new coworker; tread softly here to avoid saying something offensive. A window of opportunity to make changes around the home opens soon; be patient! Take time to figure out what you want to do and the best way to do it.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Visiting new areas and meeting new people contribute to your learning experience. These activities create positive energy. Spending time with like-minded people is instrumental in bringing good results. Entering a new phase brings your own good qualities to the fore; remember that appreciating yourself is one of the most important gifts you can give to yourself. Fondness of an elder person or someone in authority grows. Your emotions run high as you work to create new beginnings and habits. Important discussions with family or friends could unfold later. You have an urge to make impulse choices and decisions; slow down and consider what's right. Your time is your own this evening as you settle in for a good book or movie.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You're able to look at the whole big picture, not just the immediate situation but from the beginning to eternity. Petty issues or disagreements seem so unimportant you barely notice what would have gotten on your last nerve before. Spiritual enlightenment and expansion are prominent; this cycle creates loving energy that seems to grow! Remember to keep your beliefs intact and not permit yourself to fall into new ones too quickly. Someone who knows of your questions helps you with a few answers you're happy to receive. You're reminded that solutions must be learned through trial and error. You sense someone you know is in trouble but you can't put your finger on exactly who this is. Tonight, you consider your hopes and dreams.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're on the side of the underdog, the one less believed in and it pays. A general good, positive feeling penetrates any dark clouds or obstacles that come your way. Someone shocks you by coming to your defense; wonders happen every day, you know! You stumble upon some information that brings something to your attention; think before you act. Your emotions flare and become difficult to reign in when confronted with a sticky topic. Remember, not everyone means to offend you! You could feel that you can't do anything right; someone doesn't like your beliefs or ethics. You appear to be out of touch but are by no means out of the loop; you're in a prime position to teach someone that it's not at all wise to judge a book by its cover.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, your temper joins with impulsive vibrations surrounding you now. Not the time to buy spontaneously; emotional spending is strongly indicated but you can prevent this with forethought if you choose. New starts, clean slates, all manner of fresh beginnings are indicated within the newest cycle you have entered. There's a spring in your step as you progress toward growth and evolution in your life and soul. You could feel stubborn energy noticeably lessening; you come to understand the process of advancing your journey. Your heart is with the underdog when you learn of a new situation at work. As you read and review material remember not to collapse yourself into new views too quickly. Take a thoughtful look at the night skies this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

There could be objection to your beliefs or practices; let your spirit be calm as you control a tendency to say whatever you think. Being offended by backward thinking people is a waste of your energy. Communicating isn't easy for you at this time and it could be that this could save an ugly confrontation. Several you spend time with agree with you and lend their support. You may find yourself attending a large lunch or dinner like a pot luck affair. Your passions run high but beware jumping into a negative situation out of pride; refusal to adjust your attitude could break something that can't be repaired. You enjoy a clear sense of direction, timing and efforts; the harder you work and plan the better your circumstances for now and far into the future.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You make no secret of your feelings and could lash out at someone for no reason. Your tendency is to be impulsive and hot headed just now. Your emotions are running high and you can't seem to slow down long enough to see what the problem is; you could be in the process of forming new habits so make sure they're good ones; they could be around for a while. The mood to forgive is strongly indicated and you accept this in silence; you'll figure out more at a later date. You could experience joy on your road to discovery of deep spiritual enlightenment, just remember to hold judgements until you have a chance to consider things. Your progress toward your goals is firmly in place, now you just have to keep doing your part to reach the end.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A new acquaintance puts you off when you get a shady vibe from them; you later investigate and learn you're exactly right to mistrust this person. An old coworker shows up looking for employment; this person is known for being a great asset. You may turn down an opportunity to make extra money for reasons only you know. You're not shy about letting your feelings be known. During the new cycle you've entered you'll find support and encouragement regarding the changes you're making in your life. You re-examine all aspects of your life all the way from beginning to end; pay attention to what you see and learn for future decisions. Tonight, the opposite sex is drawn to you, as though through a positive chemical reaction.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

An ongoing problem with someone younger explodes in an unpleasant clash. Someone who normally supports you disagrees. Your entering a period that creates spur of the moment choices and actions; while spontaneity can be exhilarating, jumping the gun on important matters can be devastating, so be careful. You sense your habits shifting, moving more to the center with nothing overdone or overindulged in. Someone complains about your methods and tries hard to make a certain point! You could choose to go even further away from tradition just to prove that you can. Don't let what someone else thinks about your lifestyle mean too much; after all, you absolutely know you're a far stronger person than that, don't you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Intuition is stronger than usual and you don't like what it's telling you; relax, things are not as bad as you think. You change your appearance by trying a new hairstyle or color or possibly a new wardrobe. Poetry, art, the finer things in life bring joy to your day. You're beginning to see yourself in a new light; give yourself a pat on the back for effecting change. You're known for your looks and untraditional beliefs and ideas. People who know you like you. You make no secret of how you feel about a certain issue and are quick to jump into a situation without thinking; you need to work on reigning this in before you get into big trouble! All facets of spiritual existence grasp your interest as you indulge in a new, very telling book.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

All areas of mystic mysteries occupy your thoughts and actions now. Be careful not to collapse yourself into any beliefs until you get deep understanding of all the aspects they contain. Let your intuition be your guide as you become still and listen. There seems to be easy answers as you begin your studies; you have the energy to move forward with an open mind. Your sense of forgiveness dominates and you completely let something painful pass away. You could encounter challenges from those you don't agree with your journey; we're all entitled to our own opinions, aren't we? You have the ability to step back from confrontations. You receive an invitation for an outing this evening from a person you would be wise to avoid.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your need for sexual attention is prominent; your emotions are lifted by this type of attention. You want to be in the driver's seat and guide the situation; you don't get to make the choices you want. You have specific ideas about some investment opportunities; go in, research then act accordingly. Intuition is strong and very clear; listen to this gift of the spirit when making up your mind about something personal. You long to know more about the mysteries of life; the cosmos holds many intriguing lessons and paths for you now. When you call on your unseen gifts they're available, ready and willing; just ask. You could remember a forgotten bill or appointment as you relax and let your mind clear with a loved one later this evening.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Types of Music 2

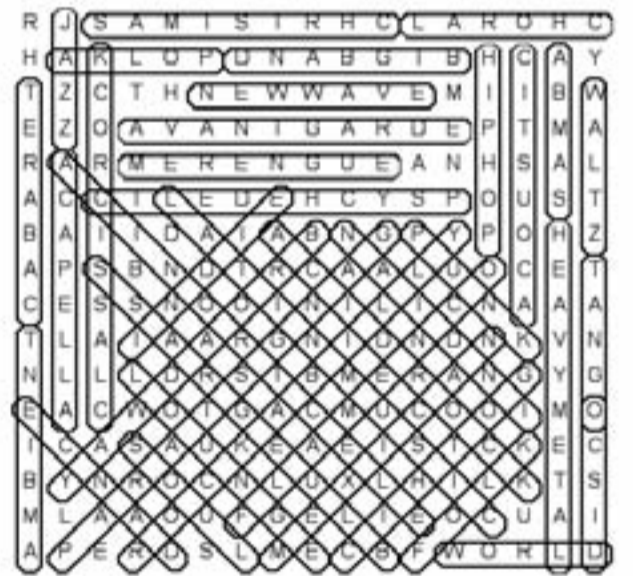
Find and circle all of the different types of music that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 15 letters spell an additional type of music.



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| ACID JAZZ | CLASSICAL | GYPSY | REGGAE |
| AFRICAN | COUNTRY | IRISH | ROCK AND ROLL |
| ALTERNATIVE | DOO WOP | MAMBO | SALSA |
| BEBOP | ELEVATOR | MARIACHI | SURF |
| BLUES | EUROPOP | MIDDLE EASTERN | SWING |
| BOLLYWOOD | EXPERIMENTAL | NEW AGE | TECHNO |
| BOSSA NOVA | FOLK ROCK | NEW ORLEANS | TRIP HOP |
| BRAZILIAN | FUNK | OPERA | TROPICAL |
| CELTIC | GOSPEL | POP MUSIC | URBAN |
| CHAMBER | GRUNGE | PROGRESSIVE | ZYDECO |

Yesterday's Solution

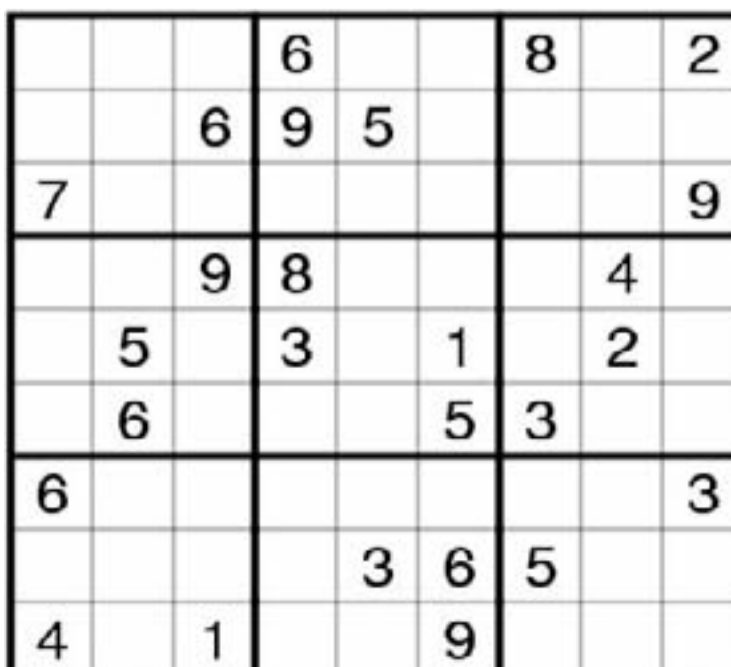
Types of Music 1



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACAPELLA | CHRISTMAS | HIP HOP | PSYCHEDELIC |
| ACID ROCK | CLASSIC ROCK | INDIAN | PUNK |
| ACOUSTIC | DANCE | INDIE | ROCKABILLY |
| AMBIENT | DISCO | JAZZ | SAMBA |
| AVANT-GARDE | ELECTRONICA | LATIN MUSIC | SOUL |
| BIG BAND | FLAMENCO | LOUNGE | TANGO |
| BLUEGRASS | FOLK | MERENQUE | WALTZ |
| BROADWAY | GANGSTA RAP | MEXICAN | WORLD |
| CABARET | GOTHIC | NEW WAVE | |
| CHORAL | HEAVY METAL | POLKA | |

The hidden message is: RHYTHM AND BLUES

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Classifieds

Monday, April 23, 2018

Kuwait Times
 Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
 e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net

STATE OF KUWAIT
 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817
 Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with moderate to fresh north easterly wind changing to south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for scattered light rain.

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind changing to north westerly wind later on, with speed of 20 - 55 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 22/04/2018 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	34 °C	24 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	34 °C	23 °C			
ABDALY	37 °C	22 °C			
BUBYAN	----- °C	----- °C			
JAHRA	36 °C	23 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	34 °C	22 °C			
SALMIYAH	28 °C	24 °C			
AHMADI	31 °C	24 °C			
NUWASIB	38 °C	23 °C			
WAFRA	36 °C	20 °C			
SALMY	36 °C	22 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	04/23	Partly cloudy + rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	33 °C	23 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	04/24	Mostly Sunny	34 °C	24 °C	VRB-N	06 - 26 km/h
Wednesday	04/25	Partly cloudy	35 °C	26 °C	VRB	08 - 22 km/h
Thursday	04/26	Partly cloudy to cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	37 °C	26 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 42 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:50
Sunrise	05:14
Zuhr	11:47
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:18
Isha	19:40

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	36 °C
MIN. Temp.	24 °C
MAX. RH	72 %
MIN. RH	13 %
MAX. Wind	E 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

NOTICE TO RESPONDENT NO. 1
 Respondent No. 1
 The Domestic Violence Case filed by the petitioner against you and your family members, under «Domestic Violence Act 2006» stands posted on 27-04-2018 for your appearance. Hence you have to attend before the Hon'ble Court on 27-04-2018 at 10:30 a.m. either in person or through an Advocate, lest, the matter will be decided in your exparte.
 «BY ORDER OF THE HON'BLE COURT»
 AMY KUMAR VEENA
 ADVOCATE FOR PETITIONER

OPERATION MANAGER
 needed In food and beverage sector with experience not less than 10 years
 cv info@robustakw.com

Airlines

American Airlines	22087425
Kuwait Airways	22087426
Jazeera Airways	171
Jet Airways	177
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
British Airways	22418064/5/6
Air France	22425635
Emirates	22430224
Air India	22921555
Sri Lanka Airlines	22438184
Egypt Air	22424444
Swiss Air	22421578
	22421516

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CHANGE OF NAME
 No: J6971528, has changed my name to Bhura Irfanahmed Mohammadyusuf. (C 5395)

I, Durgam Anjanna holder of Indian Passport No. M4636381 has changed my name to Durgam Ganganna.(C 5395) 23-4-2018

I, Shaikh Irfanahmed Mohammadyusuf, Passport No: Farwaniya block 1, near gulfmart. Available 25 of May, Contact 94418396 or 69972330 23-4-2018

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Flight Schedule

Arrival Flights on Monday 23/4/2018				Departure Flights on Monday 23/4/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:50	FDB	073	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	PIA	206	Lahore	01:00
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	JZR	528	Asyut	01:05
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	FEG	344	Sohag	01:05
JZR	267	Beirut	01:25	KAC	677	Dubai	01:30
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	THY	773	Istanbul	01:45
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:50
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	363	Colombo	01:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	JZR	502	Luxor	01:55
JZR	607	Kochi	02:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:15
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	JZR	142	Doha	03:45
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	JAI	571	Mumbai	05:05
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:35
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	JZR	786	Riyadh	06:05
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
MSB	6126	Sharjah	05:30	RJA	643	Amman	07:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	KAC	167	Paris	07:20
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:30
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	MSB	6127	Baghdad	08:00
KAC	204	Lahore	06:30	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	JZR	778	Jeddah	08:00
WAN	342	Sohag	06:55	BAW	156	London	08:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
JZR	143	Doha	07:20	KAC	161	Geneva	09:00
JZR	529	Asyut	07:30	KAC	691	Muscat	09:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:45	KAC	117	New York	09:05
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05
JZR	503	Luxor	07:50	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
KAC	384	Kochi	08:05	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KAC	358	Delhi	08:05	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:45
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	JZR	535	Cairo	09:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:15	JZR	482	Istanbul	09:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	101	London	10:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:00	JZR	124	Bahrain	10:00
MSC	405	Sohag	10:15	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	KAC	617	Doha	10:10
JZR	787	Riyadh	10:30	IRA	666	Esfahan	10:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:10	IAW	158	Al Najaf	11:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	MSC	406	Sohag	11:15
WAN	134	Doha	12:20	JZR	788	Riyadh	11:20
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
WAN	542	KTM	12:50	RSB	1071	TQD	12:00
JZR	125	Bahrain	12:55	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:30	JZR	515	Dubai	13:10
JZR	779	Jeddah	13:45	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	13:55	THY	767	Istanbul	13:40
KAC	672	Dubai	13:55	JZR	144	Doha	13:55



Britain's Prince Charles, Prince of Wales (center right) leads a celebration, including three cheers, for his mother, Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (center) as they join the performers on stage during The Queen's Birthday Party concert on the occasion of Her Majesty's 92nd birthday at the Royal Albert Hall in London. — AFP



Britain's Queen Elizabeth II attends The Queen's Birthday Party concert on the occasion of Her Majesty's 92nd birthday.

Thousands sing 'Happy Birthday' to Queen Elizabeth II

The audience at Royal Albert Hall got a rare treat Saturday - the chance to sing "Happy Birthday" to the longest reigning monarch in British history. Queen Elizabeth II, with her eldest son Prince Charles at her side, waved to the crowd as they celebrated her 92nd birthday in song. Charles got an enthusiastic response when he introduced her as: "Your majesty, mummy." The queen took center stage after a varied pop concert featuring British singers Sting, Tom Jones and Jamie Cullum along with Australian star Kylie Minogue, long a fan favorite here.

Shaggy and Craig David also performed, and the festivities took a long stroll down memory lane, with audio from a speech Elizabeth made on her 21st birthday and video from her Golden Jubilee, when roughly 1 million people gathered outside Buckingham Palace to honor her. She was flanked in the royal box by Charles, heir to the throne, and Prince William, next in the line of succession.

Prince Harry and fiancée Meghan Markle also attended, generating a roar of applause when they took their seats. The couple will wed May 19 at Windsor Castle. Prince William's wife Kate, the Duchess of Cambridge, did not attend. She is expecting the couple's third child. The queen's husband, Prince Philip, was also missing. He is recovering from hip replacement surgery. The show featured contemporary tunes, but included songs from earlier eras, including selections from "My Fair Lady" - one of the queen's favorites - and a sentimental rendering of "Wonderful World." Earlier in the day, honorary gun salutes were staged at Hyde Park, the Tower of London, a castle in Wales and the town of Windsor to mark the occasion.

The queen celebrates two birthdays every year: Her actual birthday on April 21, which she usually marks privately with her family, and her "official birthday" in the summer. That usually falls on the second Saturday in June, when she joins the Trooping the Color military parade in central London. Elizabeth's real birthday this year came on the tails of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting, which brought the leaders of the 53 Commonwealth countries together in England. The queen has led the disparate group, made up of Britain and its former colonies, since she took the throne in 1952. — AP



Members of the Royal family applaud as Britain's Queen Elizabeth II (center) waves to guests as she takes her seat in the Royal box for The Queen's Birthday Party concert.



South African male choral group Ladysmith Black Mambazo.



Canadian singer-songwriter Shawn Mendes performs on stage at The Queen's Birthday Party concert.



(From left) Former Labor MP Ed Balls and comedians Frank Skinner and Harry Hill perform with a banjo troupe at The Queen's Birthday Party concert.



(From left) US musician Shaggy and British musician Sting perform on stage.



Australian singer Kylie Minogue.



Britain's Prince Harry speaks on stage.



British singer-songwriter Craig David.



British singer Tom Jones

'Mini-Me' actor Verne Troyer dead at 49

Verne Troyer, best known for his role as Mini-Me in the "Austin Powers" movies, died Saturday. He was 49. While no cause of death was given, a statement on the actor's social media accounts said he had gone through a "recent time of adversity" and alluded to suicide and depression as "serious issues." "Over the years he's struggled and won, struggled and won, struggled and fought some more, but unfortunately this time was too much," it added. "Depression and Suicide are very serious issues. You never know what kind of battle someone is going through inside. Be kind to one another. And always know, it's never too late to reach out to someone for help."

Troyer, who lived in Los Angeles, was taken to hospital early this month for unspecified treatment. The actor spoke about his alcohol addiction during another hospital stay a year ago. One of the world's shortest men at just two feet eight inches (81 centimeters) due to achondroplasia dwarfism, according to reports, Troyer was born in 1969 in Sturgis, Michigan. He first entered show business as a stunt person in "Baby's Day Out" (1994). "In 1993, I was working for Sprint in customer service, and a friend of mine who was the president of LPA-Little People of America-got a phone call from the producers of 'Baby's Day Out,' and they were wondering if there was anyone close to a stand-in size," he recalled in a 2012 interview with Hollywood Chicago. "I guess they searched worldwide and couldn't find anyone. I sent in my picture, and they flew me out to Hollywood to meet with them. Two days later, they offered me the job, and I quit my job at Sprint."

'Extremely caring'

Tributes poured in for the small man with an out-



In this file photo US actor Verne Troyer arrives for the screening of the movie "The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus" presented out of competition at the 62nd Cannes Film Festival. — AFP photos

sized personality. "Verne was the consummate professional and a beacon of positivity for those of us who had the honor of working with him," Mike Myers, his "Austin Powers" co-star said in a statement. "It is a sad day, but I hope he is in a better place. He will be greatly missed." Oscar-winning actress Marlee Matlin said she

was "so sad" over the news of Troyer's death.

"A lovely smile with a caring and big heart, he helped raise money on behalf of @starkeycares for free hearing aids for deaf and hard of hearing people. RIP," added Matlin, who is deaf. Ludacris posted on Instagram a photograph of himself with Troyer



In this file photo actor Verne Troyer arrives at 'Spy Kids: All The Time In The World 4D' Los Angeles premiere at the Regal Cinemas LA Live in Los Angeles, California.

strapped to him in a baby carrier, taken from the rapper's "Number One Spot" music video. The pair are wearing the same gray costume. "R.I.P. Verne Troyer aka Mini Me. You made it to that #1 Spot Glad we got to make history," Ludacris wrote. In addition to his breakout role as the "Mini-Me"-a diminutive, hairless clone of villain Dr Evil-in the first Austin Powers movie "Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me," Troyer was also known for playing Griphook in "Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone." "Verne was an extremely caring individual. He wanted to make everyone smile, be happy and laugh. Anybody in need, he would help to any extent possible," added the post on Troyer's social media accounts. "He inspired people around the world with his drive, determination and attitude." — AFP

'Avatar' director Cameron says he still hopes to film four sequels

Avatar director James Cameron said he still aims to make four sequels to the 2009 science-fiction blockbuster and is moving ahead with production while regulators review the proposed sale of 21st Century Fox's film studio to Walt Disney Co. Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Cameron said he is about 100 days into filming the second and third "Avatar" installments under a deal with Fox. If those are successful, he plans to continue with the fourth and fifth movies, which he already has written. "I'm personally committed to all of them," he said at the Manhattan Beach, California, studio where the sequels are being made.

Designs for creatures and characters for the four planned sequels are posted on walls inside the studio, Cameron said, but he did not show them to reporters. "If you were Rupert Murdoch, you could go see them," he joked, adding: "Or Bob Iger." Murdoch-owned Fox has committed to distributing the next movie in the franchise, but the film studio is in the process of being sold to Disney as part of a \$52 billion deal. Disney chief executive officer Iger has not seen the designs for the sequels, Cameron said, because there are restrictions on their collaboration while the deal is under regulatory review.

Cameron spoke during an event to promote a six-part series on cable network AMC about the history of science fiction in movies called "AMC Visionaries: James Cameron's Story of Science Fiction." "Avatar," the story of a blue, humanoid race on a lush moon known as Pandora, is the highest-grossing movie in history with \$2.8 billion in global ticket sales. The second "Avatar" film is scheduled for release in



December 2020. Cameron described the future "Avatar" movies as "a generational family saga."

"I found myself as a father of five trying to think about what would an 'Avatar' story be like if it were a family drama, if it was 'The Godfather,' he said. "Obviously it's a very different genre. It's a very different story, but I got intrigued by that idea." "So this could be the seeds of utter damnation and doom for the project, or it could be the thing that makes it stand apart and continue to be unique," he added. "Nobody knows until you make the movie and put it out." — Reuters

Sirb Al-Hamam featured in Fajr International Film Festival

Lula Production's Chairperson Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah expressed her pride in the Kuwaiti movie industry, and the participation of the 'Sirb Al-Hamam' (Flock of Doves) movie in the 36th Fajr International Film Festival, which takes place in Tehran, Iran, featuring 682 movies from 78 countries.

The festival is chaired by Iranian director Ridha Kareemi, and runs through April 27, 2018. Sirb Al-Hamam is the only Kuwaiti feature film that represents Kuwait in the long feature films' category, 'Oriental Features' division which is dedicated to movies from Asia and Islamic countries.



Avicii death a coming-of-age in electronic music boom

Rock 'n' roll had Buddy Holly, the psychedelic era had Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin and grunge had Kurt Cobain. Now electronic dance music has Avicii. The Swedish DJ's death Friday at age 28 marks a symbolic coming-of-age for a genre that remains resolutely youthful, with the first electronic superstar to die near his prime. Avicii, the stage name of Tim Bergling, was not a first-out-the-door pioneer of electronic dance music-or EDM-a scene that has exploded since the turn of the century and last year was worth \$7.4 billion, according to a study by the industry's International Music Summit in Ibiza.

But Avicii both showed the mainstream possibilities of EDM-and, by the end of his short life, had already become a sage elder who cautioned about the artistic and commercial overreach of the music. Avicii came to define the new age of radio-friendly EDM in 2011 with "Levels," which entered the top 10 across Europe with its sample of soul great Etta James in between synthesizer riffs that soar with stadium-packing power. Non-clubbers also heard EDM's energy when Avicii teamed up with rockers Coldplay on "Sky Full of Stars," with Chris Martin's voice giving way to fast-building, synthesized ecstasy.

But perhaps his most influential moment came in 2013 when he headlined the Ultra Music Festival in Miami. A year after he invited Madonna as a surprise stage guest, Avicii befuddled a crowd of ravers by bringing out a bluegrass band with a banjo for his soon-to-be-hit "Wake Me Up." In an interview shortly afterward, Avicii warned that EDM was moving too quickly into a sound too hard and unmelodious, saying that audiences would soon tire of it. "Since it got so big in America the past couple of years, dance music is taking over everywhere," Avicii told the London Evening Standard. "It's important that it keeps changing so it doesn't become a fad."

'Stay forever this young'

"Wake Me Up" may now be remembered for more than the banjo twist. The track, featuring singer Aloe Blacc, reflects on aging with the line, "I wish I could stay forever this young." Like other musicians who died with so many years ahead of them, Avicii looks destined to be remembered with an aura of tragedy. He retired from touring in 2016 as he suffered health problems including acute pancreatitis, triggered in part by excessive drinking.

Avicii, who acknowledged his problems in the sole lyric to the song "Alcoholic," died while on vacation in Oman. The cause remained unclear, although police sources in the Gulf sultanate did not suspect foul play. The electronic music world has been struck by few other deaths. House music forerunner Frankie Knuckles and New York party organizer David Mancuso have both died in recent years, but both were considerably older.

Avicii's death puts him nearly in the so-called 27 club-celebrated musicians who have died at age 27 including Cobain, Hendrix, Joplin, Jim Morrison, soul singer Amy Winehouse and Rolling Stone Brian Jones. Avicii-a stage name derived from the Sanskrit for the deepest



In this file photo taken on August 14, 2015, Swedish DJ, remixer, record producer and singer Tim Bergling, better known by his stage name 'Avicii' performs at the Sziget music festival on the Hajogyar island of Budapest. — AFP

stage of hell, the inverse of Cobain's Nirvana-had spoken of being an introvert who was never comfortable with the hard-partying lifestyle of a DJ, for whom alcohol was always available and usually free.

EDM 'oversaturated'?

But could his death also amount to a turning point for EDM? Late in his life, he appeared to think the scene was on a wane. "EDM started getting oversaturated four, five, six years ago, when money became everything. From that point, I started mentally not wanting to associate myself with EDM," he told Rolling Stone magazine in September. After retreating to the studio, he last year released an EP whose singles included "Lonely Together" featuring singer Rita Ora-Avicii's soundscape accentuating a tight pop song with none of the booming synthesizers of EDM anthems.

But there are limited signs of an imminent bubble in EDM. Calvin Harris, the top-paid DJ, earned \$48.5 million last year, according to an estimate by Forbes, and the rise of streaming subscriptions has helped bolster the industry's overall earnings. Kygo, another leading DJ, closed his set Friday at the Coachella festival in California with a tribute to Avicii, to whom he credited his decision to pursue electronic music. "I know he's inspired millions of other producers out there," Kygo said. — AFP

The white-haired Hollywood lawyer, Cosby's last hope

Tom Mesereau is a Hollywood lawyer to the stars who got Michael Jackson acquitted of child molesting. The question is, can he do the same for Bill Cosby at the first celebrity trial of the #MeToo era? Instantly recognizable by his striking helmet of white hair, the 67-year-old is tall and stocky-yet remarkably sedate, even ponderous in court. Quiet and cerebral, Mesereau shuns the theatrics of many a showman lawyer, spending much of Cosby's sexual assault retrial silent, sitting erect in his chair, until he steps purposefully behind the lectern.

There his hardball tactics, forensic cross-examination and attempts at character assassination against Cosby accusers send shivers down the spine of supporters of victims of sexual assault. One witness for the prosecution called him "sleazy" and his tactics "repugnant," yet even Cosby's detractors admit Mesereau is doing the best he can for an actor slayed in the court of public opinion. An acquittal for "America's Dad," publicly accused by 60 women of sexual misconduct, would cement Mesereau's reputation as the attorney celebrities call when their back is against the wall.

Friends underscore his integrity, or his decades of free legal aid for poor African Americans and those facing the death penalty as evidence of his commitment to justice. "His cross-examination skills are unmatched by anybody," says Charles Salvagio, a criminal defense attorney who has worked on pro-bono cases with Mesereau in Alabama since 1998, and considers him a close friend. "He leads you down a path and you're not even realizing where he's leading you to and then all of a sudden he'll bang you with something."

'Extraordinary'

Mesereau's opening statement was an



Defense attorney Tom Mesereau leaves the courtroom after the tenth day of the retrial for actor and comedian Bill Cosby's sexual assault case at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pennsylvania. — AFP

electric, rhetoric-laden attack on Andrea Constand, the woman Cosby is accused of drugging and assaulting 14 years ago. He called her a liar blinded by greed, playing with the emotions of a lonely, grieving father to hoodwink him out of a \$3.4 million settlement as a way out of financial problems. "A con artist, ladies and gentlemen of the jury. And we'll prove it," he hectorred. "She's now a multi-millionaire because she pulled it off."

It is a radically different defense than that pursued at Cosby's first trial by Philadelphia lawyer Brian McMonagle, who called one witness. Mesereau tore into Cosby accusers Janice Baker-Kinney and Janice Dickinson. If barred from admitting testimony about what he called Constand's "extensive" use of magic mushrooms and marijuana, it was not without a backhanded compliment from Judge Steven O'Neill. — AFP

French rider David Rinaldo performs during a motocross freestyle show.



Australian rider Clinton Moore performs during a motocross freestyle show.



'You make a mistake, you die': Daring but deadly world of freestyle motocross

It's crazy what we do, there's no limit. If you make a mistake, you can die." They are the chilling words of Japan's Taka Higashino, one of the stars of freestyle motocross, the daring but not always death-defying sport which is gripping a worldwide audience. After performing a series of high-risk jumps off ramps set up inside an arena in the French city of Tours, the 33-year-old Higashino, a veteran of the X Games culture, warned the sport is not for the faint-hearted. In 2009, Jeremy Lutz, a 24-year-old Californian and an X Games gold medalist the previous year, was killed after a fall in competition. Five years ago, Eigo Sato of Japan died after a training accident. Sato's death almost pushed Higashino to the brink of quitting. "But as soon as I got back on the bike, I felt great. I know only that this sport makes me smile," he said.

The more dazzling the tricks on their bikes, the better. And the packed house in Tours got their money's worth as riders flew more than 10 meters off the ground.

“

The dramatic shapes they make are reflected by their names—'Tsunami', 'Kiss of Death', 'Cliffhanger', 'Shaolin', 'Superman'

”

Once airborne, they take their hands and feet off their machines while allowing their bikes to somersault around them, twisting and turning at 180 degrees. The dramatic shapes they make are reflected by their names—'Tsunami', 'Kiss of Death', 'Cliffhanger', 'Shaolin', 'Superman'. French star Tom Pages, one of the leading exponents of the sport, admits it's a tough addiction to shake. "Every time I go to the X Games or Madrid (where the high-profile Red Bull X Fighters event takes place) I ask myself: 'What am I doing there? I tell myself that this will be the last time,'" he told AFP. "It's too hard a life, the knot in your stomach, the urge to vomit." The sport of freestyle motocross—or FMX—enjoys a global circuit, boasting bright lights and dancing girls, and is run under the supervision of the international motorcycle federation.

There are two major centrepieces—the Red Bull X Fighters in Madrid in front of 25,000 fans and the long-established X Games. Other events run in parallel—in Mexico, the freestyle stars pull in crowds of 45,000. Not bad for a discipline which has only been in existence for two decades. It all started in 1997 when riders headed out to the deserts of America, leaping over sand dunes. "They were real freestylers, tattooed, real trashers, people who had a high level in motorcycle racing but who preferred to party and do anything in the dunes, people who lived their lives," said Charles Pages, the brother of Tom.

Charles Pages is a former rider himself but after a serious injury, now acts as a judge. He fell heavily competing at the Bercy arena in Paris in 2010, suffered a head injury and was in a coma for a number of days. But he was still hooked and three years later he was back in the saddle before another accident in 2015 left him with a shattered ankle. "I was depressed like never before, I couldn't see the point in getting up in the morning, to eat, breathe, to live," the 37-year-old recalled after realizing his days of competing were over. "Everything I did in my life was in relation to this sport. Today, things are better, but the adrenaline I had when I was riding, I know I'll never find it again. "There has to be risk because that's where the adrenaline is." —AFP

Japanese rider Taka Higashino performs during a motocross freestyle show in Tours. — AFP photos



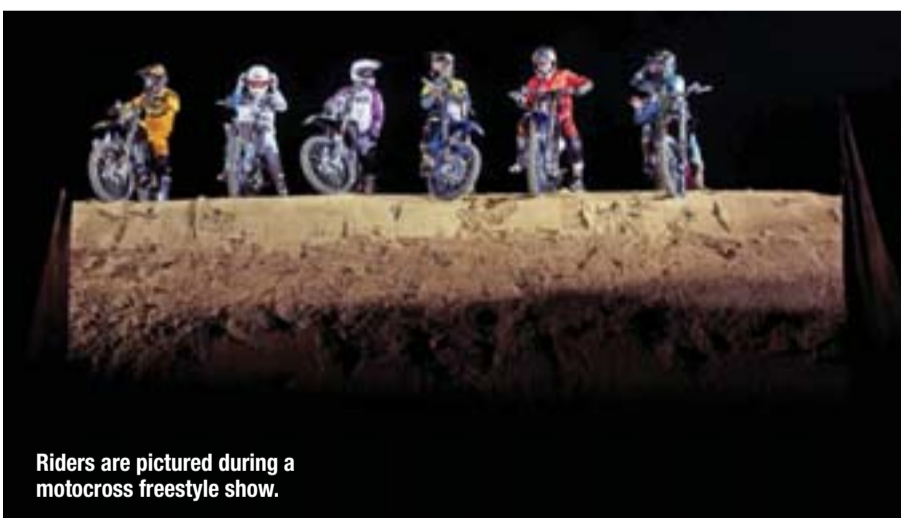
Spanish rider Maikel Melero performs during a motocross freestyle show.



Rider Tom Pages performs during a motocross freestyle show.



Riders are pictured during a motocross freestyle show.



Australian rider Clinton Moore performs during a motocross freestyle show.



Rider Pat Bowden performs.



Japanese rider Taka Higashino (center) and fellow riders are pictured prior to a motocross freestyle show.



A rider performs during a motocross freestyle show.



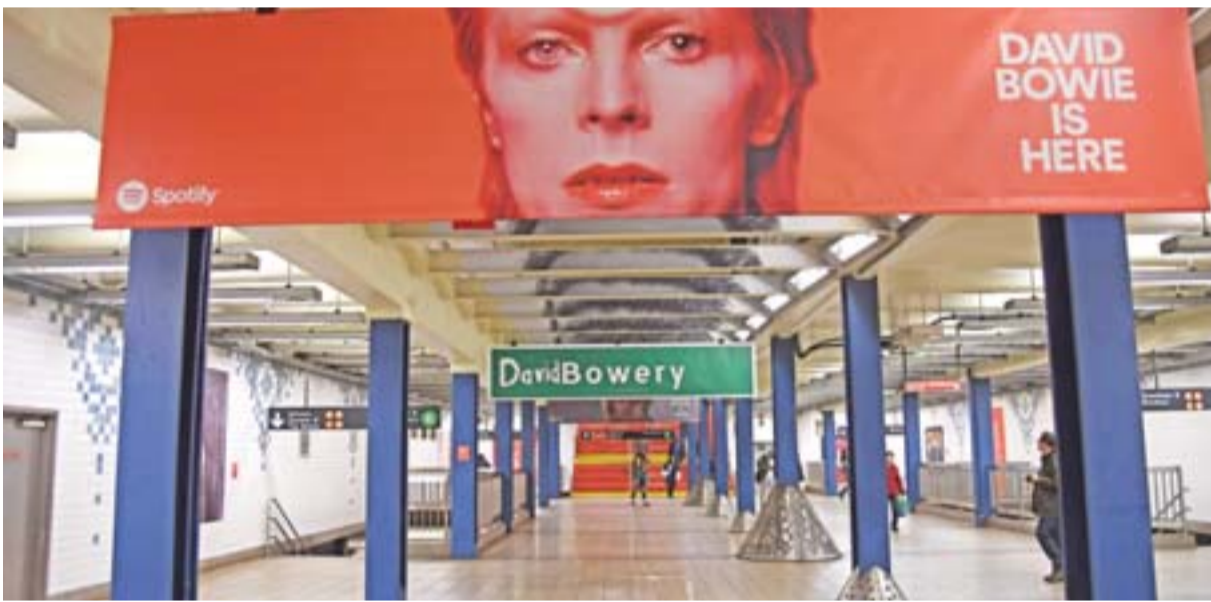
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A David Bowie art installation is seen at the Broadway-Lafayette subway station in New York City. — AFP photos

People walk by a David Bowie art installation seen at the Broadway-Lafayette subway station.

BOWIE'S NEW YORK SUBWAY STATION TURNS INTO MUSEUM TO HIM



David Bowie art installations are seen at the Broadway-Lafayette subway station.



A David Bowie art installation is seen at the Broadway-Lafayette subway station.

People walk by a David Bowie art installation seen at the Broadway-Lafayette subway station.

A woman holds up keepsake MetroCards available for purchase inside the Broadway-Lafayette station.

David Bowie has taken over a subway station in his adopted home of New York, with images of the rock legend plastered throughout and commemorative fare cards issued in his honor. Concert photos figure on the walls and his giant black-and-white likeness appears at the track entrance of the Broadway-Lafayette station, a short walk from where the London-born rocker lived his final years. The art installation is sponsored by streaming company Spotify and will be in

place until May 13 as a tie-in to the exhibition "David Bowie is" at the Brooklyn Museum. The exhibition, which opened at the Victoria and Albert Museum in London, has traveled across a dozen cities with New York scheduled to be its final stop. Bowie's death in 2016 from an undisclosed battle with cancer stunned the music world. He lived more than 20 years in New York which he first visited to seek out his hero Andy Warhol and later to soak up American soul music and star on

Broadway. The subway station put up a guide dubbed "Bowie's Neighborhood Map" that shows sites associated with the singer including Washington Square, the park in the heart of bohemian Greenwich Village where he enjoyed strolling. The map, however, does not mark his Soho apartment which became a hub of mourning after his death and which the rocker bequeathed to his widow, the supermodel Iman. To mark the occasion, New

York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority is selling 250,000 subway cards with the image of the rocker to be sold only at Broadway-Lafayette and the nearby Bleecker Street station. A line stretched about 30 meters (100 feet) on Thursday as fans sought to buy the souvenir subway cards from an automatic dispenser. Susan Bowen bought several of the subway cards for her family. She saw Bowie perform once in nearby New Jersey and said

she considered him to be a New Yorker. "It seems to be where he felt at home," she said. Bowie, who was already famous when he moved to New York permanently in the 1990s, turned out to be a surprisingly frequent commuter on the subway. The writer William Boyd, writing in The Guardian after Bowie's death, said that the rocker told him that he would carry a Greek newspaper which he pretended to read when other passengers started to recognize him. — AFP

NY's Met museum recreates a vivid taste of Versailles



The reflection of a visitor is seen as they look at clothing in the 'Visitors to Versailles (1682-1789)' exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

Visitor walks past a picture in the 'Visitors to Versailles (1682-1789)' exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. — AFP photos

A visitor walks past clothing in the 'Visitors to Versailles (1682-1789)' exhibition.

A new exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York seeks to recreate some of the grandeur of the Versailles royal palace in France. At first, the idea was to create a book based on the accounts of people who visited the palace, such as diplomats and nobles. But Danielle Kisluk-Grosheide, in charge of decorative art and sculpture at the Met, and Bertrand Rondot, chief curator at Versailles, ultimately decided to do a full-blown exhibit, which is open through July 29. Depicting the beauty of

Versailles so far away is a challenge. The Met is doing it with works from 53 sources and its own collection. The exhibit features pieces and recreations of halls at the palace over the years, and audio for people to hear what visitors said of the palace way back in the day. "There was a tradition in France, before Louis XIV already, that French subjects should have access to their king," said Kisluk-Grosheide. "But then having spent all this effort on creating this magnificent palace and these enormous gardens, they

wanted to share this. Because this was all to the greater glory of France and Louis XIV. So it was a very politically calculated idea," she added. "They loved particularly to receive foreigners because they would write about it, just like we tweet about this or Instagram today. And it was all to impress with the might of France." The accounts also describe the rigid protocol in place at the French royal court. One visitor depicted in the audio describes a visit by ambassadors who had to bow three times before approach-

ing the king, then walk away backward, facing him as they left, even though he was no longer even looking at them. Even after all these years, Versailles fascinates people, especially in America. Kisluk-Grosheide said Americans love royalty—which they never experienced—but also French art. And they have a special fondness for France since it supported the colonies when they fought for independence from Britain in the 18th century. Even today, she said Versailles "is a place to dream." — AFP

Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2018



Yasukuni Shrine priests purify themselves before walking towards the outer shrine to perform a Shinto ritual during the three-day spring festival at the shrine in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

Taxi drivers, Uber square up on Istanbul's roads

Istanbul's bright yellow taxis, ubiquitous and perennially honking for custom, appear ingrained in the daily life of the Turkish metropolis. But could the fast-growing ride sharing app Uber make them a thing of the past? Uber has enjoyed soaring popularity in Istanbul, where users appreciate the cashless payment system, security and convenience of hailing a cab by phone. But, as in several other European cities, this has stoked antagonism with official taxi drivers, who have brought legal cases in Istanbul in a bid to have the app blocked in Turkey. Tensions have also spilled over into violence, with Uber drivers complaining of being verbally harassed, beaten up or even shot at.

'Smear campaign'

Kemal Kuru, an Uber driver since last year, said he was cornered and beaten by a group as he set off for a concert hall in the Sisli district last month on a job. "I went to pick up a customer around midnight but someone blocked the road and harassed me verbally," he told AFP. "I got out of the car and all of a sudden 10 people attacked me... My teeth were broken and my lip was split." Kuru said the assailants could not be im-



Kemal Kuru, Uber driver who was beaten by a dozen assailants on the way to pick up a customer, poses for a photograph in a vehicle.



Official yellow taxis and van vehicles wait for their customers at the Eminonu district in Istanbul. — AFP photos



Eyup Aksu, head of the main taxi drivers association is pictured during an interview.

mediately identified as they fled into the darkness. But he pointed the finger at taxi drivers. "I believe our income is getting on their nerves and they think we are stealing their customers."

In March, shots were fired at an Uber vehicle in Istanbul's Kucukcekmece district. The driver escaped unhurt. Uber drivers say they are easily targeted as the vans they

generally drive are unusual in the city. But representatives of official taxi companies condemn such accusations—widely publicized in the Turkish media—as a stunt to discredit their business. Eyup Aksu, head of the main taxi drivers' association in Istanbul, accused Uber of launching a "publicity campaign" in an attempt to influence the pending legal cases. "Taxi drivers have never resorted to violence against Uber. This is a smear campaign to blacken the reputation of taxis," he told AFP in his Istanbul office.

'Taxis changing'

There are almost 17,400 official yellow taxis in Istanbul, providing an essential and relatively affordable service in a gigantic city where public transport often falls short. But as new competitors like Uber have emerged, the official taxis have often failed to keep pace with changing times and society. They have been slow to implement systems to pay by card, install panic buttons that help female passengers in particular feel more secure and are only now considering lights to indicate if the cab is occupied or free.

In a bid to trump Uber, Istanbul taxis are themselves now becoming part of a digital network called iTaksi that allows passengers to order them from their phone. Aksu admitted some deficiencies in the taxi sector but said taxis were transforming to catch up with Uber's standards. "We are shifting to luxurious taxi transport. We now have VIP transport in some touristic places and airports," he said.

'Pirates'

Meanwhile horror taxi stories abound in Istanbul—not just from incredulous tourists but also exasperated locals—about being over-charged, driven a circuitous route to ramp up the meter or being given fake change. In a well-publicized case, an

Istanbul court this month handed a taxi driver a suspended jail term for having taken a Saudi passenger on an epic city tour rather than to the airport as requested.

But Istanbul taxi drivers insist they are working hard to make an honest living from a tough business where margins were already tight and now squeezed further by Uber's presence. Taxi drivers rent their car from the owner of the license, whose cost of 1.5 million lira (300,000 euros, \$370,000) is well beyond most drivers. The number of license plates available for taxis has stayed stable as the city's population boomed, driving up their price. Taxi driver Burhan Yuksek, looking for passengers in the busy waterside Eminonu district, said his business is suffering "hugely" because of Uber.

"I work by a hotel. We used to receive 40-50 calls daily from the hotel and currently it has dropped to 15-20," he said. "They are pirates. They are stealing our labor and bread." Taxi drivers feel they have political backing, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan regularly pictured drinking tea with the taxi community. In the bigger of two legal actions brought by taxi drivers' associations against Uber, an Istanbul court is due to resume hearing the case on June 4.

'Slavery to freedom'

The tension in Turkey is one of a number of headaches for Uber and its new chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi, who took over last August after founder Travis Kalanick was ousted following a series of scandals. In London where its drivers number around 40,000, Uber lost its license over its approach to reporting serious criminal offences and its criminal record checks for drivers.

But it is allowed to operate in the British capital pending an appeal set for later this year. Uber also put a temporary halt to its self-driving car program in the United States after an accident involving one of its cars near Phoenix killed a pedestrian. In service for three years in Turkey, Uber has 5,000 vehicles and 8,000 drivers in Istanbul. Vedat Kaya, of the Tourism and Development Platform, said Uber represented a "revolt against the taxi monopoly", adding that some 4,500 taxi drivers had already switched to work with Uber.

Former taxi driver Yavuz Sarac, who joined Uber last summer, says he did it after realising he would not own his own business "no matter if I work for 150 years". "Uber has presented new opportunities. I've owned my business," he said, complaining that taxi drivers were exploited by the plate owners, while the Uber licence was much less costly. "I earn a living for my family. To me, it is a kind of escape from slavery to freedom." — AFP



This picture received from Kikaicho Town Hall via Jiji Press shows 117-year-old Nabi Tajima in Kikaicho on Kikai island of Kagoshima prefecture. — AFP

'WORLD'S OLDEST PERSON' DIES IN JAPAN AT 117

A 117-year-old Japanese woman, thought to be the world's oldest person, has died, a local official told AFP yesterday. Nabi Tajima, who was born August 4, 1900, died around 8:00 pm (1100 GMT) Saturday at a hospital on her native Kikai Island in Kagoshima region, according to Susumu Yoshiyuki, a health and welfare official. Tajima, who became the oldest woman in Japan in September 2015, could have been the oldest person in the world since Violet Brown of Jamaica died in September 2017 at age 117, Japanese media said.

Since Brown's death, Guinness World Records has been investigating who is the oldest person in the world and was yet to recognize Tajima as such. The oldest man in the world is 112-year-old Masazo Nonaka of Japan, the organization announced on April 10. "Ms Tajima was living at a nursing center for the elderly. In January, she became weaker, so she was taken to a local hospital," Yoshiyuki told AFP. "She died there (Saturday) due to her advanced age," he said. Japan is known for the longevity of its people and has been home to several oldest title holders. There are around 68,000 people aged 100 or older in the country, the government said last year. — AFP



Official yellow taxis and van vehicles wait for their customers at the Eminonu district in Istanbul.