



3 KOC: Foreign companies tackling Maqwa oil leak



23 Brains, eyes, testes, ovaries: Off-limits for transplants?



32 Saudi Princess Noura: Made to measure fashion ambassador



13 Nadal into Barcelona final with 400th clay court win



Duterte urges all Filipinos in Kuwait to return home

President to announce 'personally crafted' decision • Kuwait alarmed by leaked reports

SINGAPORE/KUWAIT: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte called on the 260,000 Filipinos working in Kuwait - most of them employed as domestic helpers - to return home, saying the state apparently did not want their services anymore, according to reports in the Philippines media. "To you there in Kuwait, [to] those who are not really household helpers, I now appeal to your sense of patriotism: Come home, anyway there are now many jobs in the Philippines," the president said, addressing overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in Kuwait.

"I will look for money and I will get it, all the Filipino workers (in Kuwait)," he told about 6,000 members of the Filipino community in Singapore, where he attended the 32nd Association of Southeast Asian Nations Summit. Duterte told his audience at the Big Box center that he had "bad news" about the diplomatic row between Kuwait and the Philippines over the recent rescues of allegedly abused Filipino maids by Philippine Embassy staff in Kuwait.

The rescue had angered the Kuwaiti gov-

ernment, saying the act violated the country's sovereignty and ordered Philippine Ambassador Renato Villa to leave the country. Duterte said ties between the two nations were now "being put to the test". "I plead that since there is a total ban on deployment, I don't want them anymore to [go to Kuwait] because apparently [the Kuwaitis] do not like them," he said. "Do not hurt" the Filipino workers and "treat them deserving of a human being", he appealed to Kuwaitis.

Duterte said he could use funds given by China to "get all those who want to go home" and joked about robbing a bank to get more money. He did not say how many or what kind of jobs awaited those willing to heed his call to return.

Despite what he described as a "diplomatic ruckus" between the two countries, the president said there was no anger or hatred in his heart towards Kuwait, adding he was thankful to Kuwait for helping OFWs, whom he said owed a debt of gratitude to the state. "If the presence of Filipinos is a burden to you, allow us to get them out," Duterte said.

"As the president of the nation, it behooves upon me to do something."

Important announcement

On Friday, presidential spokesperson Harry Roque said Duterte would announce an important "course of action" in connection with the diplomatic crisis. Roque said the president's move would be "Solomonic" and "dramatic". "I confirm that he will announce the Philippines position personally during his arrival statement in Davao on Sunday (today). He wants to announce it on Philippine soil," Roque said in a press briefing in Singapore.

He said Duterte arrived at the decision on the Kuwait problem on his own, "something he personally crafted" and that it was "not specially recommended by anyone". "It shows his experience on governance and there's wisdom I guess even in the number of years of leadership and as well as in his age," Roque said.

Manila demanded an explanation Thursday after its ambassador was expelled, shocking

Continued on Page 11



SINGAPORE: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte speaks to members of the Philippine community during a gathering yesterday. — AFP



SANAA: Honour guards stand on a truck carrying the coffin of slain Houthi leader Saleh Al-Sammad during a funeral procession held for him and his six bodyguards in the Yemeni capital yesterday. — AFP

Strike kills dozens of Houthis; missile salvo kills Saudi as Pompeo visits

SANAA: A Saudi-led coalition air strike has killed dozens of Yemeni rebels including two commanders, state media said yesterday, in another blow to the insurgents following the assassination of their political chief. The Houthi rebels staged a public funeral yesterday for Saleh Al-Sammad, head of their Supreme Political Council and effectively the insurgents' second-in-command, who was killed last week in an air raid claimed by Saudi Arabia and its allies.

His funeral came hours after Saudi Arabia's state-run Al-Ekhbariya television said two high-ranking insur-

gents were among more than 50 Houthis killed in a new strike overnight in the capital Sanaa. In a speech eulogizing Sammad yesterday night, rebel chief Abdul Malik Al-Houthi claimed Saudi Arabia and its allies had targeted the outskirts of Sabaen Square as Houthi supporters gathered for Sammad's funeral. The rebels' Al-Masirah television aired footage of black columns of smoke billowing outside the square, where Yemenis chanted slogans calling for the demise of Saudi Arabia and the United States. The date of the footage could not be immediately verified.

The rebels have been locked in a war since 2015 with a Saudi-led military alliance fighting to restore the internationally recognized Yemeni government to power. Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television said the overnight strike had targeted the interior ministry in Sanaa, which is controlled by the rebels. The Houthis, backed by Saudi Arabia's regional archrival Iran, confirmed the air strike on Sanaa but gave no details.

The rebels, who hail from northern Yemen, control Sanaa and much of the country's north - which borders

Continued on Page 11

N Korea says summit opens new peace era



PANMUNJOM: North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (left) and South Korea's President Moon Jae-in raise their joined hands during a signing ceremony near the end of their historic summit in this truce village on Friday. — AFP

SEOUL: North Korea yesterday hailed its summit with the South as a "historic meeting" that paved the way for the start of a new era, after the two leaders pledged to pursue denuclearization and a permanent peace. The official KCNA news agency carried the text of the leaders' Panmunjom Declaration in full and said the encounter opened the way "for national reconciliation and unity, peace and prosperity". In the document, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and the South's President Moon Jae-in "confirmed the common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula".

But the phrase is a diplomatic euphemism open to interpretation on both sides. Pyongyang has long

wanted to see an end to the US military presence and nuclear umbrella over the South, but it invaded its neighbor in 1950 and is the only one of the two Koreas to possess nuclear weapons. Analysts warn that previous displays of inter-Korean affection and pledges by the North ultimately came to naught.

For years, Pyongyang insisted it would never give up the "treasured sword" of its nuclear arsenal, which it says it needs to defend itself against a possible US invasion. But it has offered to put it up for negotiation in exchange for security guarantees, according to Seoul - although Kim made no public reference to doing so at Friday's spectacular summit.

Continued on Page 11

Xi, Modi seek new relations after summit

WUHAN, China: The leaders of China and India agreed to open a new chapter in their relationship yesterday after an informal summit, just months after a dispute over a stretch of their high-altitude Himalayan border rekindled fears of war. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi spent around 24 hours in the central Chinese city of Wuhan for meetings with President Xi Jinping, an ice-breaking trip both hoped would allow candor and

nurture trust. Billed as an informal get-together rather than a summit, the two men held talks on Friday that lasted far longer than expected, and yesterday chatted over tea on a boat trip round a scenic lake.

"President Xi stressed that the issues between China and India are of a limited, temporary nature but the relationship between the two countries is extensive and ongoing," Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Kong Xuanyou told reporters in Wuhan. Their differences are significant: as well as disputes over stretches of a 3,500 km border - the two fought a brief border war in 1962 - the Asian giants have squabbled over Xi's signature Belt and Road infrastructure initiative.

Continued on Page 11



WUHAN: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) and Chinese President Xi Jinping look on along the East Lake yesterday. — AFP

Israeli gunfire in focus after scores wounded, killed

GAZA CITY: When Palestinian Mohammed Al-Mughari was shot by an Israeli sniper on the Gaza border, it left a hole in his leg so big he says he could fit a finger into it. Over a month into mass protests, more than 40 Palestinians have been killed and at least 1,500 wounded by Israeli fire during the "Great March of Return", a major protest movement along the border between Gaza and Israel. Doctors are troubled by the high number of disabling wounds, especially to the legs and knees, with Israel facing questions over both its disproportionate use of force and the types of ammunition it is using against demonstrators.

Three weeks after being shot, 28-year-old Mughari's leg is propped up and wrapped in plaster, but he's not in the clear yet. He knows



GAZA: Palestinians take final pictures of 15-year-old Palestinian teenager Azzam Oweida during his funeral in Khan Younis yesterday after he was shot by Israeli forces in clashes along the Gaza border. — AFP

there is still a possibility it might need to be amputated. The bullet destroyed "30 centimeters of bone in the leg", he told AFP from his hospital bed in Gaza City. Since March 30, thousands of Palestinians have gathered every Friday at points along the border separating the besieged Gaza Strip and Israel. The marchers are demanding the right to return to

their homes seized by Israel in 1948.

While most of the crowd stands a few hundred meters from the border fence, smaller numbers have pushed closer to burn tyres and throw stones. In response Israeli snipers have fired live ammunition. Mughari declined to say whether he threw stones, but he thinks it may

Continued on Page 11

Local

Zain Strategic Partner of 'Kuwait Beautiful and Green' competition

Company encourages young artistic talents in art competition organized by Kuwait Times

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, participated in awarding the first place winners of the 'Kuwait Beautiful and Green' drawing competition organized by Kuwait Times for school students. The event took place at Symphony Style Hotel in Salmiya with the attendance of Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan.

Zain's Strategic Partnership of this initiative for the fifth year running came in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy towards the education sector, through which the company encourages and supports efforts that contribute to offering the proper environment for the youth to unleash their creativity.

The competition witnessed immense participation of students from public and private schools, including

special needs schools. The competition aimed at encouraging students to showcase their artistic skills by drawing paintings that portray a beautiful and green Kuwait.

Zain believes the development of the communities in which it operates is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the education sector.

Zain's partnership of the competition for five years springs from the company's core belief that social responsibility is a significant corporate element. The company believes that supporting initiatives such as this one provides young people with skills and tools necessary to help them highlight and develop their skills.



In line with its Corporate Sustainability strategy



KUWAIT: Zain's representative awards the winners in the presence of Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan.

Zain concludes Strategic Partnership of Media Forum

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, concluded its Strategic Partnership of the 15th edition of the Arab Media Forum under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the attendance of Zain Kuwait Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan and Forum Director Madhi Al-Khamees.

The 15th edition of the forum witnessed a number of seminars, workshops, and discussion panels related to media, featuring many of the event's most prominent attendees with the presence of distinguished media personalities who were specially invited from all around the Arab World.

Zain has been the strategic partner of the Arab Media Forum during the past seven consecutive years, as the company is keen on enriching its media involvement, being a leading private sector company in the country. Zain believes in the strong impact media has on individuals and communities, and it strives to reach out to all of the different segments of the society through this very vital tool.

The Arab Media Forum has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events



KUWAIT: Eaman Al-Roudhan with Madhi Al-Khamees and Waleed Al-Khashti at Zain's booth.

that attend to Arab media. Since 2003, the event brought together many ministers, editors-in-chief of local and regional newspapers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen, and social figures from all around the Arab world.

Zain also participated in the forum through its dedicated booth, where the company welcomed visitors to discuss the various ways in which different communication mediums can enhance the development of current media tools in the Arab region. The company also highlighted the big role social media plays nowadays in communities all around the world.

Zain's strategic partnership of this forum

highlights its social commitment, as the company believes in the importance of the role press and media plays in the development of communities. Zain will continue supporting this very important sector which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole.

The Arab Media Forum was founded in Kuwait in 2003 with the aim of developing Arab media. The forum holds a number of events and activities throughout the Arab world, and features the participation of Information Ministers, media personalities, public and private media bodies, and more.

Asset management workshop starts today

KUWAIT: A two-day workshop on investment and asset management starts today, organized jointly by the public institution for social security (PIFSS) and the international financial services firm, JP Morgan Asset Management, headquartered in London, UK. Six top financial and investments experts of the company who will cover various aspects of investment and asset management will run the workshop.

In a statement to the press, the Director General of PIFSS Hamad Mashari Al-Humaidhi said that the workshop falls within the framework of PIFSS strategy aiming at enhancing and developing efficiency and capabilities of staff members through introducing them to experiences, work techniques and strategies of leading

firms in the financial services sector, including asset management. Also invited to attend the workshop, are representatives of Kuwait and Arab institutions, organizations and entities.

He added that this workshop, is the second of its kind with JP Morgan Asset Management, and falls within a chain of specialized workshops that PIFSS plans to organize, and will be conducted by experts from leading global financial services firms. He also noted that PIFSS had organized a conference on investment with the renowned financial services company, Goldman Sachs Asset Management, in November 2017.

Humaidhi stressed the fact that staff education and training are continuous processes that should not stop in order for national human resources in our organizations to operate professionally, and within the same high levels and standards of leading international firms.

JP Morgan Asset Management is a renowned financial services firm, with assets under management totaling \$1.8 trillion. The firm is the asset management arm of the leading firm, JP Morgan Chase and Company in New York, with total assets of \$2.5 trillion.

KRCS opens project for Syrian orphans in Turkey



ANKARA: KRCS Chairman of the Board Dr Hilal Al-Sayer (center) is seen during the project's opening ceremony. — KUNA



A KRCS worker is seen with Syrian children in Turkey.

ANKARA: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) opened yesterday a multipurpose project for Syrian orphan refugees in Gaziantep city, south of Turkey. During the project's opening ceremony, KRCS Chairman of the Board Dr Hilal Al-Sayer said that the total cost of the project was around KD 42,000 (\$142,000), indicating that 140 orphans will benefit from the various services provided by the 15 staff and administrators.

He said that the current project was part of various endeavors sponsored by KRCS and executed by Al-Sham orphan society and the Qatari Red Crescent Society. Dr Sayer affirmed that the KRCS's efforts were an extension of Kuwait's unwavering supportive stance for Syrian refugees in Turkey and elsewhere in the region.

Dr Sayer and the KRCS delegation is scheduled to hold a meeting with members of the Qatar society later on to follow up on the situation of refugees fleeing from Eastern Ghouta. The KRCS Chairman opened yesterday an orphanage for Syrian refugees in Hatay region in southern Turkey. — KUNA



Officials pose for a group picture with Syrian children in Turkey.

Kuwait committed to combatting terror financing: Minister

PARIS: Kuwait's Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf has reiterated Kuwait's firm commitment towards the global efforts to dry up financial resources of terrorist groups. Kuwait commitment towards the fight against terror financing is strong and principled, Minister Al-Hajraf said Thursday on the sidelines of his participation in the Paris Conference to Combat Terrorism Financing.

He stressed that Kuwait cooperated with the international community to stop the flow of money to terrorist groups in any part of the world. Kuwait is keen on contributing to the global action to eradicate the scourge of terrorism, Hajraf asserted, noting that his country had been a victim of terrorist activities. The minister called for increasing international cooperation to keep abreast of the latest tools and methods in terror financing and money laundering as well as for taking all necessary measures to stop them.

He pointed that Kuwait had participated

in the conference's second session on Thursday. The session, chaired by French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire and attended by the Director General of the International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde, tackled the use of technology in financing terrorism.

This had been one of the major and disturbing challenges to agencies working on monitoring and combating terror financing, Hajraf said, stressing the need to control it by all means. He stated that the two-day conference concluded with Paris Declaration on fighting terror financing. The declaration focused on the importance of collective action by world countries to deny terrorists any access to financial resources, he said. Hajraf led the national delegation to the Paris Conference to Combat Terrorism Financing, which is being attended by 80 relevant ministers from 72 countries alongside 500 experts on the subject. — KUNA



PARIS: Kuwait's Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf (center) poses with Kuwaiti diplomats in Paris, France. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait gives top priority to promoting health services

Premier heads key meeting for Health Ministry leaderships



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs a high profile meeting for the Health Ministry. — KUNA

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah has emphasized the state's great interest in promoting health services as a top priority. His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak yesterday presided over a high profile meeting for the Health Ministry leaderships as part of follow-up efforts of implementation of projects and programs and development plans of the various government bodies. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Minister of Health Dr Bassel Humoud Hamad Al-Sabah attended the meeting, together with head of the

Government Performance Follow-Up Agency Sheikh Ahmad Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Minister Bassel Al-Sabah provided a detailed account of the ministry's plans for promoting services and completing projects to realize the optimal health level for the good of both citizens and expatriates. He addressed means of enhancing the health infrastructure, including expansion works in a host of hospitals nationwide, doubling bed capacity to about 16,000. The minister reviewed doctors' training programs and overseas missions in cooperation with some of the world's leading medical institutions.

Then, His Highness the Premier offered directives related to certain notes on health and medical care services in a number of hospitals, and stressed that they have to be remedied. His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak urged the officials to further care about people's complaints and not to relent any inaction or carelessness. His Highness the Prime Minister thanked the Health Ministry officials for their sincere efforts to improve services wishing them more success. Meanwhile, the Minister of Health thanked His Highness the Premier for the government's support to health services. — KUNA

Crown Prince leaves US, arrives in Paris

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrived in Paris Friday on a private visit. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf was

received at the airport by Kuwaiti Ambassador to France Sami Al-Suleiman and members of the diplomatic mission in France.

His Highness the Crown had left the US late Thursday after a private visit, which included regular medical checkups. Kuwait's Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and members of the Kuwaiti Permanent Delegation at the UN headquarters in New York saw off His Highness the Crown Prince at the airport. — KUNA



PARIS: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed upon his arrival to Paris, France. — KUNA

Private hospitals can't receive blood donations

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Private hospitals in Kuwait are not allowed to receive blood donations, and instead the Ministry of Health supplies them with their needs of blood. Health Minister Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah said.

In an answer to a question by MP Salah Khorsheed regarding the blood bank and its branches, he said the ministry is aware that private hospitals charge KD 23 to KD 40 for units of blood. Sheikh Bassel said the ministry provides private hospitals with blood at their request for fixed prices as follows: Blood bag for KD 20; plasma bag for KD 10; one unit of platelets for KD 10; and a platelet bag with 6 units for KD 60.

Such prices are considered as nominal, because blood is used for emergency treatment, while the private medical sector bears the expenses of matching and transferring blood from and to the blood bank. He said the strategic reserve makes up one third of the general stock of all blood groups so it does not drop below 350 units, and this reserve is prepared to

meet Kuwait's needs in case of catastrophes and emergencies.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Dr Bassel Al-Sabah said the ministry pays proper attention to financial and administrative discrepancies reported by the Audit Bureau. He said in an answer to MP Mohammad Hayef's inquiries about measures taken towards certain violations that a committee was formed to investigate them.

Jobseekers

The number of citizens looking for jobs and registered at the Manpower Public Authority, Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) and the state's executive apparatus has risen to 13,070 citizens, 6,023 of whom are university graduates. Recent statistics show that MGRP managed to find jobs for all PhD holders registered, while 95 Master's degree holders and 2,114 diploma holders remain unemployed.

About the rest of education qualifications that are awaiting appointment, the number of secondary certificate holders is 1,127 of those who have attended courses of two years or more, 143 with a two-year course and 778 without courses, besides 1,815 intermediate certificate holders with various experiences. The number appointed in the government from the start of this year is 499 citizens, while last year ended at 6,257, with 1,547 appointed in the private sector from January until April 26, 2018.

Foreign companies help in tackling oil leak: KOC

KUWAIT: Specialized foreign companies possessing state-of-art equipment are involved in the operation to contain oil leakage at Maqwa, located in the Great Burgan region south of Kuwait City, Kuwait Oil Company said yesterday. The oil leakage at Al-Maqwa Well-149 "has been controlled," said the KOC

in a statement, adding a cleanup and repair of the well and nearby cathodic wells were underway.

The operation is carried out in cooperation with consultants from international companies that possess special equipment, the KOC said, noting that the company has contracts with these companies, stipulating cooperation in such accidents. The situation is being handled "with utmost professionalism and the leakage has been contained to stop it from expansion," the KOC statement said, stressing that the company has been dealing with the accident according to standard procedures. On Monday, the KOC declared the leakage, followed with fire that was put out, affirming that there was no hazard to human beings. — KUNA



KUWAIT: This picture provided by Kuwait Oil Company shows works from the operation to contain oil leakage at Maqwa. — KUNA

Kuwait Times

Established 1961

SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW

KD 25

* your subscription for one year for only kd 25 and get 4 free tickets to Paintball Kuwait valued at kd 37

1 تذكرة دخول
Entrance Ticket
Value KD 9.250
Valid only for 1 person upon entry at paintball Kuwait.

50+ بطاقة
Paintballs
www.paintball-kuwait.com

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

Call now +965 248 33 199 - 248 333 58 Fax: +965 248 35 620 - 248 35 621
www.kuwaittimes.net

Local

Rohingya ordeal priority for Kuwait at UN: FM Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled

Kuwait part of UNSC delegation inspecting Rohingya in Myanmar, Bangladesh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said Friday ordeal of Rohingya Muslim minority was a priority for Kuwait, especially during its UN Security Council membership.

Kuwait's humanitarian policy is one of the country's foreign policy pillars, said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, also Deputy Prime Minister, thus the great attention to the plight of the Rohingya community in Myanmar.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled made the remarks during a banquet he held for 15 permanent representatives at the UNSC, who were en route to Bangladesh and Myanmar. The mission to the two Asian countries is co-chaired by Kuwait, Britain and Peru, and aimed at getting acquainted with conditions of around 700,000 Rohingyas. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said the timing of visits to Bangladesh and Myanmar was crucial because it meant UNSC was following with "great concern" the daily influx of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

The visits, he added, were sending a "strong signal that the Security Council is determined to follow up this humanitarian issue until it is resolved." The top diplomat wished success for the mission and hoped the ambassadors would have a comprehensive assessment of conditions of Rohingya Muslims. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled meanwhile expressed condolences for the passing away of Cote d'Ivoire UN Ambassador Bernard Tanoh-Boutchou.

The permanent representatives thanked Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled for the host, and commended the State of Kuwait's efforts for the preparation for their mission. The two sides also discussed issues listed in the agenda of the UNSC meetings.

The banquet was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for protocols Dhari Al-Ajran, Assistant Foreign Minister for Deputy Foreign Minister's office Ayham Al-Omar, permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen.

Integral part

Kuwait will be an integral part of the UNSC delegation tasked with inspecting and evaluating the status of some 700,000 Rohingya refugees and displaced in Myanmar and Bangladesh, said a senior Kuwaiti diplomat Saturday.

Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi said that the delegation - led by Kuwait, the UK, and Peru - would look into means to ensure the safety of the refugees and enable them to return to their homes and dwellings. Ambassador Otaibi said that Kuwait, since joining the UNSC as a non-permanent, tried to initiate such visit to the Rohingya while presiding over the Presidency of the council back in February; however, the authorities in Myanmar said that such visit was not suitable at that time.

He affirmed that through its time in the UNSC, the State of Kuwait would use all resources to defend just issues pertaining to the Arab and Islamic worlds, noting that the situation of the Rohingya was one of the most urgent humanitarian topics of this age. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah (center left) attends a banquet for 15 permanent representatives at the UNSC who were en route to Bangladesh and Myanmar. —KUNA

Israel unqualified for UNSC membership: Kuwait's envoy

NEW YORK: As occupying power that violates multiple UN resolutions, Israel is totally unqualified for the Security Council membership, Kuwait representative to the UN said Thursday. Addressing a Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East, Mansour Al-Otaibi said the Council faces the specter of the potential candidacy of Israel to its membership.

"We cannot imagine how an occupying power that persists in violating the UNSC resolutions can take part in the Council's efforts to defend the principles of the international legitimacy entailed in such resolutions," he wondered, referring to the UNSC resolutions 2334, 476 and 478. Undoubtedly, Israel has not the qualifications for UNSC membership set forth in the UN Charter," Ambassador Al-Otaibi stressed.

"Israel was violating Council resolutions," he said, citing the recent Israeli attacks against peaceful demonstrators in Gaza Strip. The unarmed Palestinians in Gaza started on March 30 exercising their legitimate right to return to their homes in the West Bank and staged the Great March of Return along the eastern borders of Gaza.

However, the Israeli occupation forces used brutal force to quell these protests, killing at least 37 peaceful protesters and injuring more than 5,000 others, he said, reiterating the call for the Council to provide international protection for the Palestinians. "The Council had, to date, failed to respond to those attacks by calling for a full investigation and had been impotent in getting Israel to abide by provisions of Council resolutions," Otaibi pointed out.

"As the occupying Power was routinely flouting international legitimacy, it clearly lacked all credibility in running for Security Council membership," he argued. Noting that the relocation of certain diplomatic missions to Jerusalem also violated the relevant international agreements, Otaibi said that East Jerusalem was the capital of Palestine and called on all Member States to recognize it as such.

Escalating tensions

Briefing the Council on recent developments in the region, the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary General warned of escalating tensions, outside interference and growing risks of miscalculations, from Gaza to Syria to Yemen. "What happens in the Middle East today has immediate implications for the rest of the world. Everyone in the Middle East needs to step back from the brink," Nikolay Mladenov said.

Amid rapidly shifting dynamics, he said, the United Nations was tirelessly working to prevent further deterioration while supporting national processes region wide. Underlining the need for consistent support for multilateralism in promoting security, stability and development, he said prevention must be at the center of efforts, a much needed approach when dealing with the Palestinian Israeli conflict, which remained a central part of the regional quagmire.

"Until occupation ended and a two State solution was achieved, the conflict would remain among the key drivers of the extremism threatening regional stability," he stressed. Raising grave concerns, Mladenov said Gaza was "coming apart as we speak." "Another conflict between Hamas and Israel would have devastating consequences for Palestinians in Gaza," he went on.

"Israel must calibrate its response and Hamas must keep protesters away from the border fence and prevent violence and provocations, Mladenov said, echoing the Secretary General's repeated calls for restraint and a full investigation of all incidents. The rights of all civilians,



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a Security Council open debate on the situation in the Middle East. —KUNA

including children, must be respected.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian situation in Gaza was also worsening, he continued. Salary freezes and cuts for civil servants persisted and faltering public services would soon move further towards a total collapse. He called on the Palestinian Government to resume public sector payments and on Israel to relax movement and access restrictions to enable economic recovery. The United Nations was working with partners to prioritize energy and water initiatives, he said, urging all stakeholders to support the \$540 million humanitarian appeal for 2018 to meet pressing needs.

He also urged all Palestinian factors to engage with Egypt and redouble efforts to enable the legitimate Palestinian Authority to be fully empowered in Gaza. Gaza was a "powder keg", Mladenov said, adding, "We must do everything possible to prevent another war in Gaza."

To address those concerns, he called on the international community and the Council to support United Nations efforts and key stakeholders. Raising concerns about the situation of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), he said pledges of \$100 million would only ensure the continuation of operations until the summer months. In Gaza alone, UNRWA served as a lifeline for more than 1 million people.

Constant harassment

Riyadh H. Mansour, the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, said Mladenov's statement must be viewed in the context of the constant harassment and intimidation to which the United Nations and its representatives were exposed each time they risked taking a public, principled stand on the question of Palestine.

"Israel, the occupying Power, continued to bully States into artificial, "balanced" positions, despite the absolute lack of symmetry in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, he stressed. Noting that the situation was exemplified by the dire situation in the Gaza Strip - where 2 million Palestinians, mostly refugees, had long been subjected to an illegal Israeli blockade that only compounded their misery - he said Gaza's residents and Palestinians elsewhere had been "beyond patient."

They had long endured upheavals, crises, assaults and deep deprivation. Contrary to Israeli propaganda, their recent protests on the occasion of Land Day, on 30 March, had been carried out peacefully and by unarmed civilians. Emphasizing that the protesters had been demanding their rights - including return to their land and to self-determination - he said they were also calling for an end to the Israeli blockade that had long served as a collective punishment. "Exercising their right to peaceful assembly, these men, women and youth are protesting an oppression that cannot be endured any longer, pleading for their voices to be heard," Ambassador Mansour said, emphasizing that the Palestinians were living through

the longest military occupation and the most protracted refugee crisis in modern history.

Against such a backdrop, "restraint should be seen as extraordinary" and protests must be viewed as a natural response to the illegal, cruel Israeli occupation, he noted. Israeli officials should not have been surprised to see civilians stand up for their dignity and freedom, he said, noting that the protesters - including children - had been targeted with live ammunition in a blatant "shoot to kill and maim" pattern. At least 41 Palestinians had been killed since the protests began and more than 5,000 injured.

"The international community must demand answers from Israel," the Palestinian representative said, adding that the Council's failure to address the situation was itself unjustifiable. Urging its members to condemn Israel's crimes with one voice, demand their cessation, protect civilians and demand an investigation into recent incidents, he welcomed calls by the Secretary General to launch an independent, transparent investigation through an international mechanism.

"The truth, however, is that Israel does not want peace," he said. Israel must not continue to receive support from - and even be rewarded by - the Council, a body it had never respected and even mocked and undermined. Recounting the tragic deaths of several Palestinian protesters - including a 15 year old boy - he said thousands of other Palestinians before them had also been murdered in Israel's ongoing campaign of ethnic cleansing against non-Jews. All those crimes were being committed in a deliberate breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and the United Nations Charter.

New peace plan

Recalling that Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas had come before the Council on February 20th to present a new peace plan, centered on established international terms of reference and parameters for a peaceful resolution, he said that proposal was a serious attempt to bring the situation back from the brink. However, no compromise efforts would be successful if, at every juncture, Israel continued to respond with aggression and contempt.

Indeed, no plan that disregarded the fundamental principles of respect for international law and the right to self-determination would ever succeed, Mansour stated. That was why the United States decision to move its embassy to Jerusalem and recognize the city as Israel's capital, in violation of Council resolutions, had so negatively impacted the chances for resuming peace talks.

Voicing regret that several States had further emboldened Israel - including Guatemala, through its recent decision mirroring that of the United States - the Palestinian diplomat called on the international community to remain resolute in rejecting Israel's illegal policies and practices, support UNRWA during its unprecedented funding crisis and work to deescalate the dangerous situation on the ground. —KUNA

Symposium recommends more care for historic writings in GCC states

KUWAIT: The 19th Scientific Symposium of the GCC History and Antiquities Society recommended giving more attention and care for documents and local historic writings in Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

Chairman of the Organizing Committee, History Professor at Kuwait University Dr Abdelhadi Al-Ajmi said that the symposium recommended giving support to young researchers in the field of confirming the historic identity of GCC states, and deliver this image to the entire world.

The future development plans for GCC countries has history in its folds, and making it a source for strengthening the economic power through historical

tourism, he added. "There is an increased interest in museums, antiquities and refurbishing historic sites in the GCC countries," he said, expressing appreciation to the role that the Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyya in Kuwait plays in this regard.

Ajmi, who also represents Kuwait in the GCC History and Antiquities Society, said that the 19th symposium is considered one of the most important scientific gatherings in GCC countries as per the researches presented. Meanwhile, modern history professor in Saudi Arabia Dr Fayeze Al-Badrani lauded the success of the 19th symposium and for being distinguished by a large number of attendees. —Al-Anbaa



Dr Sultan Al-Duwailah from Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters.



Modern history professor in Saudi Arabia Dr Fayeze Al-Badrani



Officials pose for a group picture during the symposium.



KUWAIT: A picture taken from the 19th Scientific Symposium of the GCC History and Antiquities Society.

Kuwait offers \$15 million for Gaza reconstruction

GAZA: Kuwait is to provide \$15 million for the infrastructure projects in the Gaza and Deir Al-Balah Governorates of the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian Government said yesterday. This is part of a grant channeled through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED).

The State of Kuwait has always been a pioneer supporting reconstruction efforts in the Strip, Palestinian Minister of Public Works and Housing Mufid Al-Hasayneh said. It is also one of the countries most committed to pledges made during the Gaza Donor Conference held in Cairo following Israel's 2014 aggression on the Strip, the minister added.

On behalf of the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Prime Minister Rami Al-Hamdallah, Al-Hasayneh thanked Kuwait's leadership and people for their continuous support to the Palestinian Cause, and the reconstruction process. Kuwait pledged \$200 million as part of \$5.4 billion donation made during the Cairo's conference. —KUNA

Local

Nearly 4,000 liquor bottles busted in two containers at Shuwaikh Port

No injuries in Shaab Cooperative Society blaze

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Shuwaikh customs officers recently discovered two containers loaded with 3,948 liquor bottles hidden in a fertilizer shipment that arrived at Shuwaikh Port. Customs officers had doubts about the two containers, so they were passed through scanners, which showed a large cavity behind the fertilizer. They found 1,968 bottles in the first container and 1,980 in the second.

Shaab blaze

Firemen battled a blaze in the administration building of Shaab Cooperative Society. The fire department received a call early morning yesterday, and Hawally and Salmiya stations responded. The fire covered an area of 40 sq m in a place containing files and furniture. The fire was put out and no injuries were reported.

Intersection closed

The traffic department said the Wafra intersection



An office burned down by a fire reported at Shaab Cooperative Society yesterday.

(306) with King Fahd Road (40) will be closed in both directions at dawn tomorrow for bridge maintenance. Traffic will be diverted to Shuaiba and Arifjan intersections.

Reckless drivers arrested

Traffic department arrested 65 reckless drivers who took the opportunity of the rain and dust storm to show off with their cars, endangering theirs and other people's lives, Al-Rai reported. The Relations and Security Information Department said patrols were sent to main roads and intersections to direct traffic and provide assistance when needed.

Policemen assaulted

A reckless driver and his friends faced police with sticks following a chase that included a collision with a patrol vehicle and riots that made police fire their guns in the air. A car was impounded, while the driver and his friends disappeared. Detectives are working on the case as the car is registered in the name of a female citizen.

Drug overdose

Two men, Syrian and Egyptian, were rushed to hospital after they were found motionless near a Farwaniya building. It was discovered later that they overdosed on drug and passed out. Police received a call about the two, so they rushed with paramedics to the scene, and found remnants of chemical joints. The two will face legal action after they recover.

Incorrect call

The interior ministry said a video clip on social media showing theft from a house in Surra is not correct. The Relations and Security Information Department said investigations revealed the house is rented by an embassy



A vehicle impounded during a recent crackdown on reckless drivers.



KUWAIT: Cardboard boxes containing liquor bottles busted at Shuwaikh Airport.

as proven by a lease contract.

Friends' row

Two bedoons stabbed their friend as punishment for refusing to push drugs for them. A security source said the victim told police at Jahra Hospital his two bedoon friends wanted him to join them in selling drugs, but he admonished them and refused. They later went to his house and stabbed him when he answered the door. They are being sought by police.

Mugging suspects caught

Hawally detectives arrested a Syrian in his 50s and another in his 20s for mugging expatriates and threatening to harm them if they complained to police. Both confessed to stealing motorcycles, bicycles and phones. Detectives were told by a Sri Lankan man that two men stole his bicycle and he saw them escape in a pick-up truck. Detectives found the two are involved in several cases around the country, and that they target Asians for their valuables.



GEORGIA: Members of the Kuwaiti military team taking part in Sullivan Cup tank competition. —KUNA

Kuwait military team takes part in Sullivan Cup tank competition

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Ministry of Defense said that a team from the Tank Regiment of the Infantry Corps is taking part in the 2018 Sullivan Cup Precision Gunnery Competition at Fort Benning US Army Base in Georgia. The annual international tank competition started on Friday and will last until May 5, according to a statement from the Ministry's department of moral guidance and public relations.

The Kuwaiti team, crewing the M1A2 - a version of the US-made M1Abrams tanks, is led by Commander of the Tank Regiment Col Staff Mubarak Al-Zu'abi. The participation of the Kuwaiti Army in the competition aims to keep abreast of the latest developments in the combat techniques and share experience with friendly countries, the statement said, noting that the State of Kuwait is the first Arab country to take part in this international event.


Since the early stages of the competition, the Kuwaiti team have proved their ability to compete with their peers from the armies of the other 17 countries represented; they are vying for the title of the best tank crew in the world. During



the daily tests of the competition, the competing teams have to finish, in the shortest possible time, the combat precision gunnery shootings at day and night and in different weather conditions.

They have also to deal, under physical and psychological stress, with challenging conditions, find solutions to abrupt emergencies, fix the technical problems, and shoot at multiple hoax targets at the same time in order to reach the final stage. The competition also includes a theoretical tests to determine the knowledge and experience of the participants, as well as physical fitness tests, the military statement added. — KUNA



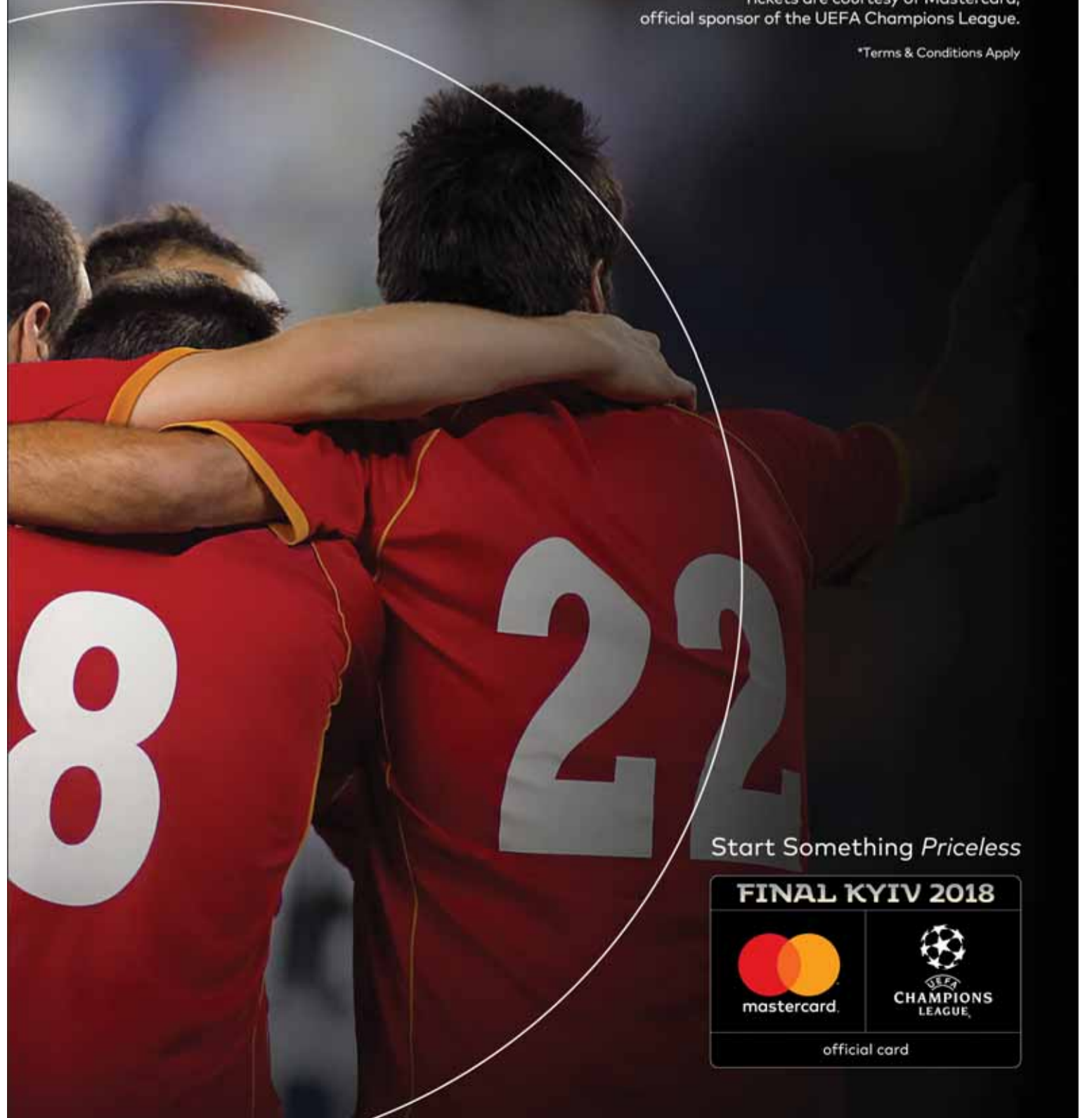


From a memorable trip,
to a final you'll never forget.

Book with Mastercard® on emirates.com/kw/mastercard for a chance to win a trip for two to the UEFA Champions League Final Kiev 2018.



Tickets are courtesy of Mastercard, official sponsor of the UEFA Champions League.

*Terms & Conditions Apply



Start Something Priceless

FINAL KYIV 2018

official card

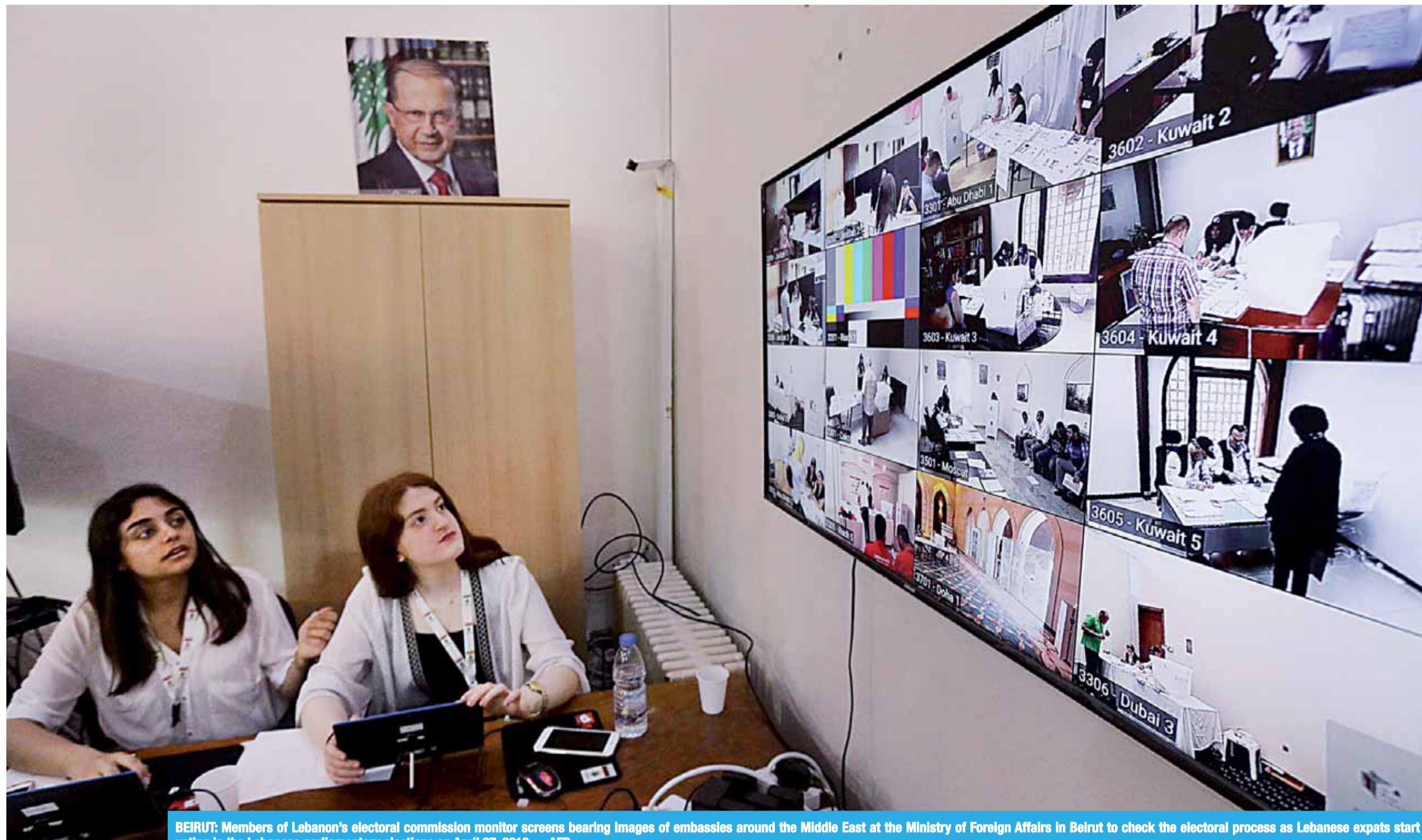


SE Asia faces threats from IS, cyberattacks

Tunisian women hit campaign trail as equals to men

Page 7

Page 9



BEIRUT: Members of Lebanon's electoral commission monitor screens bearing images of embassies around the Middle East at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Beirut to check the electoral process as Lebanese expats start voting in the Lebanese parliamentary elections on April 27, 2018. —AFP

Lebanon expatriates kick off voting

12,611 Lebanese voters register in Middle East

BEIRUT: Expatriates kick off Lebanon's parliamentary polls by voting abroad on Friday, a first for the small country's huge diaspora. The 12,611 Lebanese voters registered in the Middle East will be the first to cast ballots for the 128 seats in Lebanon's parliament. Voters elsewhere in the world will vote today, a week before the May 6 polling in Lebanon, which has not renewed its parliament since 2009. But of the estimated one million-plus Lebanese nationals scattered across the globe, of which around two thirds qualify to vote, a total of only 82,900 people have registered. Akram Khater, director of a centre for Lebanese diaspora studies at North Carolina State University, says promotion for the new initiative has been limited.

"This is a new experiment that has been poorly publicized, and many are not sure of the mechanism, the implications of their vote," he said. Others may be disillusioned after a series of political crises that notably

saw the last parliament extend its own mandate three times. "Many are reluctant to participate in what is widely regarded as rigged elections which will only bring back the same crop of politicians from the same parties," Khater said. The numbers of voters registered outside Lebanon is a fraction of the 3.7 million eligible voters at home.

Massive diaspora

But for a first try, "it's a satisfactory" number, a diplomat said. The vote is being held under a new law that allows Lebanese living abroad to vote for the first time since independence in 1943 and introduces a proportional list-based system. Expatriates will cast their vote for one list of candidates running in their Lebanese district of origin. On this list of parliamentary hopefuls, representing each religious community in that district under a strict quota system, they will also choose one candidate.

Half of the seats in Lebanon's parliament are reserved for Christians and the other half for Muslims.

Diplomatic pouch

After successive waves of emigration from the 19th century to the 1975-1990 civil war, some estimates say Lebanon's extended diaspora has bloated to a whopping 12 million but most no longer have citizenship. Christians were well represented in the early diaspora and were the first to press for expatriate polling, according to Akram Khater. But the demographics of Lebanon's diaspora and of the pool of those eligible to vote have evolved, and other communities are now on board with expatriate polling. Some Christian parties-like the Lebanese Forces and Marada-have worked hard in their biggest expat hubs like Australia and France to promote voter registration, said Ali Mourad, professor of public law at the Beirut Arab University.

"Their participation could be important for example in Christian districts in northern Lebanon," he said. "It can influence the result of the vote if competition is tight" between lists. And instead of picking traditional candidates, some voters outside the country could look for alternatives in civil society lists. Voters will head to 116 polling stations in Lebanese embassies and consulates in 39 countries, and their votes will be shipped to Beirut in the diplomatic pouch. They will then be stored at the Central Bank after being sorted into electoral districts, and dispatched to each of these for counting on May 6. The government has said polling stations abroad will be monitored by security cameras. With registration relatively low, the political weight of Lebanon's diaspora vote this year will be "symbolic", elections consultant Said Sanadiki said. But in 2022, "in the next elections, six seats will be allocated to the diaspora", he said. And then it will be "a different game". —AFP

Iraq voters fed up with 'same old faces'

BAGHDAD: Only a decade after their country's first ever multi-party elections, disenchanted Iraqis say "the same old faces" with their vested interests have been running the show since the fall of dictator Saddam Hussein. "How long have Ibrahim Al-Jaafari, Ayad Allawi, Nuri Al-Maliki or Haider al-Abadi been in power? One minute as MPs, the next as ministers," said Midan Al-Hamadani, listing Iraq's foreign minister, vice president, ex-prime minister and current premier. "The parties are always the same and the same people come back to power, whether we like it or not," said the 40-year-old Baghdad resident.

Widespread corruption combined with failings in basic services such as water, electricity and transportation have reinforced the public's lack of faith in Iraq's political leaders. In a country with a long history of conflict and intercommunal violence, more than 24 million Iraqis are registered to elect 320 deputies from a field of around 7,000 candidates on May 12, with 71 seats reserved for the capital. Baghdad has been inundated with election posters plastered on apartment buildings and even trees. In some places, candidates' faces have overshadowed posters of the "martyrs" killed in the 2014-2017 defeat of the Islamic State (IS) group in northern and western Iraq.

'Behind the 40 thieves?'

"It's the same old faces! All they care about is getting rich, not serving the people!" said an angry Haider Al-Shamri, 35, letting rip in a street in central Baghdad. Since the US-led invasion of 2003 that toppled Saddam, the same political figures and parties have held the levers of power in Iraq. "So what change has there been? At least if we had a change of faces. We're fed up with lies," was the outspoken opinion of Umm Yussuf, a 54-year-old woman from the northern city of Mosul. Her northern city, Iraq's second largest, was devastated in a ferocious battle to oust IS from its bastion and reconstruction has been stalled by a lack of state funding.

Rumour has it that the marja'ia, the highest religious



BAGHDAD: Photo shows an electoral poster of the candidate Magda Al-Tamimi ahead of the parliamentary elections to be held on May 12, in Baghdad. —AFP

authority of Iraq's Shiite majority, has called for incumbents not to be re-elected. Contacted by AFP, it gave no confirmation. According to the electoral commission, 20 percent of the candidates are newcomers. One such new face is Hala Karim, a health ministry employee, for whom "nothing has changed in 15 years (since Saddam's fall), if anything things have gone from bad to worse". "In this cradle of civilization, professionalism is on the rise and the situation is deteriorating. We must change that," said the woman in her 30s running on an independent list, Tahalouf Baghdad (Baghdad Coalition). The old guard were even resorting to posting defamatory videos online of newcomers to knock them out of contention. "The big sharks can only think of defaming us to stay in power," she said.

Haider al-Bizani, who is also running, learnt the hard way: he sold a plot of land and quit his job, all to no avail, as he failed to win a seat as an independent at Iraq's last election. "There is no way an independent candidate can win. The law is to the disadvantage of small lists. That's why I'm running this time on the Hikma list," led by Shiite politician Ammar Al-Hakim, he said. In central Baghdad stands a statue of Kahramana, a figure from "1,001 Nights", as she pours boiling oil on thieves hiding in 40 jars. Iraqi poet and activist Aya Mansour posted a photograph on Twitter of the monument obstructed by a wall of election posters. "Where's the Kahramana? Behind the 40 thieves?" she asked. —AFP

Knife attacker kills 9 children

BEIJING: A knife-wielding man with a grudge killed nine middle school children and injured at least 10 others as they returned home in northern China on Friday, authorities said, in one of the deadliest such rampages in the country in recent years. The 28-year-old suspect was detained and the injured children were receiving hospital treatment, the Mizhi County public security bureau in Shaanxi province said on its official social media account.

Seven girls and two boys were killed, the official Xinhua news agency said, citing local police. The ages of the children were not given, but middle schoolers are usually between 12 and 15 years old in China. The incident took place at around 6:10 pm local time, the department said. A man surnamed Zhao from Zhaojiashan village in Mizhi County was arrested, the public security bureau said. The suspect confessed that he had been "bullied" when he attended the same Number Three Middle School when he was a child, "hated" his classmates and decided to use a "dagger" to kill people on Friday, the bureau said.

A video posted by The Paper, a daily, on video-sharing website Miaopai.com shows two or three bodies lying on the ground in a narrow lane. A person is heard shouting "hurry, call the police!" Police are seen running and later frogmarching a man down the street. AFP could not immediately verify the authenticity of the video. Knife attacks are not uncommon in the country.

In February, a knife-wielding man with a personal grudge killed a woman and injured 12 others in a busy Beijing shopping mall—a rare act of violence in the heavily policed capital. In the southern city of Shenzhen, a man armed with a kitchen knife killed two people and wounded nine others in a supermarket last July.

History of attacks

Attacks have also targeted schoolchildren in the past, forcing authorities to increase security around schools. In January 2017, a man armed with a kitchen knife stabbed and wounded 11 children at a kindergarten in China's southern Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. The previous February a knife-wielding assailant wounded 10 children in Haikou, in the southern island province of Hainan, before committing suicide. The man had entered the school in the afternoon, claiming that he was there to pick up his son. The attacks have led to calls for more research into the root causes of such acts.

Violent crime has been on the rise in China in recent decades as the nation's economy has boomed and the gap between rich and poor has widened rapidly. Studies have also described a rise in the prevalence of mental disorders, some of them linked to stress as the pace of life becomes faster and support systems wither. In June last year, a bomb blast that killed eight people and injured dozens outside a kindergarten in Fengxian, eastern China, was blamed on a 22-year-old introvert with health problems who had written the words "death" and "destroy" on the walls of his apartment. Material to make a homemade explosive device was found in the home. —AFP

International

Palestinian vies for imaginary seat in Lebanon's parliament

'There are people who have been in this country for 70 years'

BEIRUT: She has been criss-crossing her native Lebanon ahead of May 6 elections but the parliament seat she wants does not exist and she is not even eligible. Manal Kortam is a Palestinian refugee. Tens of thousands of Palestinians have lived in refugee camps across the small Middle Eastern country for decades, facing tough living conditions and barred from certain jobs. But in a country of just four million where each religious community is allocated seats in the legislative chamber, there are none for Palestinians.



Thousands of Palestinians live in refugee camps

In the run-up to Lebanon's first parliamentary polls in almost a decade, Kortam saw an opportunity to stand up for her Palestinian community by launching a symbolic campaign. "Somebody needed to say: 'There are people who have been in this country for 70 years but who have no place at all in public politics,'" she told AFP during a visit this week to the Mar Elias camp in Beirut. "All candidates have programs that speak of social justice and democracy," she said, dressed in a slick pair of chequered trousers and black jacket, a piercing in her eyebrow. "Implementing social justice is very important—but not just for nationals, for all Lebanon residents," the 40-year-old from the northern city of Tripoli said.

'We exist'

Palestinians began taking refuge in Lebanon with the creation of Israel in 1948, setting up camps that have since transformed into bustling, urban districts. Around 174,000 Palestinian refugees live in 12 camps across the country, a one-off government census said last year. That figure was much lower than previous estimates of up to 500,000, in a

country where demographics have long been a sensitive subject. The presence of Palestinians has been controversial, with many blaming them for the eruption of Lebanon's 1975-1990 civil war. "We exist," Kortam has often repeated as a hashtag on social media and slogan on her tours of Lebanon's Palestinian refugee camps. On Facebook, she poses in a series of posters that subvert the slogans of well-known political parties to draw attention to the Palestinian cause.

"The pulse of the isolated people," goes one, adding an adjective to a slogan of the Kataeb (Phalange) party. Palestinians in Lebanon face a raft of restrictions from the state. They are banned from practicing a number of professions—including those of doctor, lawyer and engineer—and cannot buy a home outside the camps.

'Social, economic rights'

Kortam was born in Lebanon to a Palestinian father and Lebanese mother. But she does not have citizenship—a result of a century-old law that bars women from passing on nationality, meaning that the children of Palestinian men and their Lebanese wives do not have the rights of a citizen. The law was maintained over fears of upsetting the country's delicate sectarian balance. "I'm demanding civil, social, economic rights for Palestinian refugees," Kortam said.

These include "the right to all jobs, the right to social security... and the right to own property", she said. The Palestinian camps in Lebanon are built-up and fully integrated in the urban fabric but the army is banned from going in



BEIRUT: Palestinian parliamentary candidate Manal Kortam (center) explains to a classroom why she has nominated herself for a seat that does not exist in next month's elections at the Mar Elias Palestinian refugee camp in Beirut.—AFP

and crime has festered. "Palestinian camps should not be isolated" from their surrounding communities but included in Lebanon's development as a whole, Kortam said. Only "this way can we build a Palestinian... society able to liberate its land and return to it", Kortam said. Some 597 candidates are running for a seat in Lebanon's parliament, but only a few dozen have pledged to uphold human rights including refugee rights, Human Rights Watch said Thursday.

Just 27 candidates and some parties running in the polls have made public commitments to strengthen human rights protections, the New York-based watchdog said. "It is deeply disappointing that none of the parties in Lebanon's current government saw fit to make strong commitments to human rights," HRW's Lama Fakih said. Kortam said she knows her task is not easy, but she had received great feedback so far.—AFP

Tunisian women hit campaign trail as equals to men

TEBOURBA: Tunisian women "have the chance to act", says Ines Boussetta, as she hits the campaign trail in northern Tebourba, listening attentively to the problems of the rural region's inhabitants. Boussetta is one of hundreds of Tunisian women heading party lists in May 6 municipal polls—and for the first time, women will be on an equal footing with men, thanks to a new electoral law. "I have faced many criticisms and commentaries, like 'you are too young,' 'you don't have political experience,' 'how can a woman lead a council?'" Boussetta, a candidate for the ruling Nida Tounes party, tells AFP. But "women today have the chance to act, to have an opinion that counts," she added.



TEBOURBA: Head of Nidaa Tounes Party list for the municipal elections in the Locality of Tebourba Ines Boussetta (center) speaks with Tunisian citizens as she campaigns in Tebourba, some 35 kilometers west of the capital.—AFP

Around 100 party lists have been rejected for failing to meet a strict requirement for the candidacy of men and women to alternate in the municipal polls, the first since mass protests forced dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali from power in 2011. Boussetta says she was attracted by Nida Tounes because its founder, Tunisia's 91-year-old President Beji Caid Essebsi, has sought to promote the role of women and young people. The head of state's 2014 election triumph was "thanks to women", says the former health volunteer.

'New political generation'

The North African country's 2014 constitution has been praised as a key milestone, paving the way for greater equality. A law on violence against women, passed last year, came into force in January. "A new political generation is in the process of appearing," says Torkia Chebbi, vice-president of the League of Tunisian voters, a group set up in 2011 to promote female participation in political life. Fifty-two percent of Tunisia's 5.3 million voters are under the age of 35. Women now sit at the top of more than a quarter of the 2,074 party lists.

Many of the female candidates first dipped their toes into politics with the fall of Ben Ali through their work in civil society, Chebbi tells AFP. But "without the law on parity, we would never have achieved such a figure, because attitudes continue to favor men," says Chebbi. The key parties, Nida Tounes and its junior coalition partner the Islamist Ennahda party, were found to have fulfilled the new gender requirement.

'Women don't have experience'

For Boussetta, who moves onto her next campaign stop in a modest black car, her experience working in the health sector makes improving infrastructure a big priority. Many have placed their confidence in her "because she is young and sensitive to the needs of the region", she says.

Boussetta's family have a long history in Tebourba, where fresh street protests erupted in January this year against the high cost of living, unemployment and corruption. And there is a yearning for change at the local level.

With the fall of Ben Ali seven years ago, municipalities collapsed. While replaced by temporary councils, these are widely perceived as having failed to respond to communities' needs. There is hope that the upcoming elections could help improve daily life in the country, cleaning up public spaces, attracting new investment, and helping to develop marginalized regions. "Tunisian women don't have experience," acknowledges Simone Susskind, a Belgian gender politics specialist who recently ran a workshop on female leadership. "But they have to start somewhere."—AFP

Afghanistan villages face election threat

CHARBULAK: Villagers in Afghanistan say the Taliban have been telling them not to vote in elections planned later this year, threatening to burn down the house of anyone who does, in a bid to derail a vote seen as a major test of government credibility. Parliament and district council elections scheduled for October represent an enormous challenge for a government which is under heavy pressure from its international backers to ensure a fair and credible vote.

began slowly, with some 568,000 people signed up by Thursday, although they are hopeful it will gather pace. There was a bloody reminder of the threats facing the process when a suicide attack claimed by the Islamic State group killed 60 people at a voter centre in Kabul this week. However, it is in the provinces that the difficulties may be greatest. According to US estimates, the government has firm control over no more than around 56 percent of the country and vulnerability will increase as the process continues into district centers and rural areas.

'A small punishment'

Balkh, one of Afghanistan's more stable provinces with valuable trade crossings into Central Asia, is a long way from the Taliban heartlands in the south and is considered far more secure than neighboring Kunduz province, where the Taliban dominate many areas. But even here, the militants appear determined to lay down a marker. Shams, a resident of Dowlat Abad district in the north of the province, said the most recent visit by Taliban tax collectors levying ushr (land tax) and zakat (an Islamic tax) included an explicit warning to stay away from the elections.

"They came with a great show of force because the elections are coming up and they wanted the people to see," he said. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid denied the movement was issuing warnings about burning houses but said they were telling people to stay away from the election. However, other Taliban officials were more open. "Burning a house is a small punishment if they are caught in supporting this US operation to prolong



KABUL: Afghan residents walk past a banner with the image of Wakil Hussain Allahdad (center), 32, one of the 57 victims of a bomb blast, after the attack on a voter registration center in Kabul.—AFP

their stay in Afghanistan," said one Taliban commander, who asked not to be identified. Afghan security forces have launched operations to drive the Taliban back and promise people will be able to vote in safety.

"We will not allow anyone to stop elections taking place in this province," said Balkh's provincial governor, Mohammad Isaaq Rahgozar. "If the Taliban has issued warnings, that's one of their techniques to intimidate people, but

we are trying to make sure that nobody suffers any harm through this." However, many Afghans in the area, who over the years have seen repeated military clearance operations followed by the return of the Taliban, are sceptical. "The Taliban have had a presence in this area for a very long time," said Fazel Ahmad, a resident of Chemtal district in Balkh. "The government and the security forces don't have the capacity to provide security. If we vote, we'll be killed."—Reuters

News in brief

Pakistan's Ahmadi community

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's disenfranchised Ahmadi community released an annual report yesterday that detailed growing hostilities against the minority sect, including indiscriminate arrests and impediments blocking them from voting in general elections. Ahmadis are forbidden from calling themselves Muslims or using Islamic symbols in their religious practices. They face discrimination and violence over accusations their faith insults Islam and community leaders say that open vitriol and calls for violence against the community intensified in 2017. "Under pressure from religious extremists, the Ahmadis were denied registration in joint electoral lists," community leaders said in a news release accompanying the "persecution report".—Reuters

Palestinian teen dies

GAZA: A 15-year-old Palestinian youth died yesterday after being shot the previous day by Israeli troops during protests along the Gaza border, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. Israeli forces have killed 42 Palestinians since Gaza residents began staging protests along the border fence on March 30. The demonstrators are pressing for a right of return for refugees and their descendants to what is now Israel. The teenager killed was identified as Azzam Awaida. Hundreds of people gathered at his home in the southern town of Khan Younis to attend the funeral. Mourners carried his body, wrapped in a Palestinian flag, to a nearby mosque for prayers before burial. "My son is a martyr and I am very proud of him," said his father, Helal Awaida.—Reuters

Thousands flee clashes

YANGON: Thousands of people have fled renewed fighting between Myanmar's army and ethnic insurgents in the country's remote north, a United Nations official said, as a long-simmering conflict intensifies. More than 4,000 people have been displaced in the country's northernmost state of Kachin near the border with China in the last three weeks, Mark Cutts, head of the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), told AFP late Friday.—AFP

Uganda police kill 2

KAMPALA: Ugandan police stumbled upon a "radicalization centre" at a Kampala mosque, shooting dead two people, arresting dozens and releasing over 100 women and children, officials said yesterday. A security source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said officers had found what appeared to be an Islamist radicalization centre inside the mosque. The discovery came Friday as police officers followed a suspect, believed to have been involved in a high-profile kidnapping and murder earlier this year, into the city's Usafi Mosque. During an ensuing shoot-out, police said one officer was wounded, two men were shot dead and 36 arrested and accused of hoarding weapons.—AFP

Malawi's Banda returns

BLANTYRE: Malawi's former president, Joyce Banda, returned home yesterday after four years of self-imposed exile, despite facing the threat of arrest over corruption allegations. Banda, 68, fled the country in 2014 when she lost power after being embroiled in the so-called Cashgate scandal, in which government officials siphoned off millions of dollars of public money. Banda—only the second woman to lead a country in Africa—arrived at Blantyre's airport on a flight from Johannesburg around midday yesterday, where she was greeted by hundreds of supporters of her People's Party, said an AFP journalist at the scene. "Mother is here, the lights should come back", the crowd chanted.—AFP

International

One word, many meanings: Korean 'denuclearization' in the headlines

Koreans seek a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula

SEOUL: The leaders of North and South Korea declared at a summit Friday they had a "common goal of realizing, through complete denuclearization, a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula". Exactly what that means remains unclear ahead of a much-anticipated summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump. The White House has urged "the denuclearization of North Korea", but the distinction is crucial—that is an explicit reference to only one country, while the broader term is open to interpretation on both sides. The North—which invaded its neighbor in 1950—is the only one of the two Koreas to possess nuclear weapons, but the South has a security alliance with the most powerful nation on the planet.

North Korea's weapons

Estimates of Pyongyang's arsenal vary. Monitoring groups put the size of Pyongyang's sixth and last atomic blast in September at 250 kilotons - 16 times the size of the US bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945 and the kind of yield generated by a hydrogen bomb. Seoul's 2016 defense white paper—the most recent available—estimated the North had 50 kilograms of plutonium—reportedly enough for about 10 bombs and a "considerable" but unquantified ability to produce uranium weapons. Last year, the Washington Post reported a US intelligence assessment that the North had up to 60 nuclear devices. Where the North keeps its missiles is not publicly known, but it has extensive experience in tunneling and it is believed they are stored at underground facilities scattered around the country. They are also mobile—it has put transporters on show at military parades.

What does the US have?

US President Donald Trump says his nuclear button is bigger than Kim's—and it works. According to the State Department, as of September 1, the US has a total of 1,393 deployed nuclear warheads, deliverable by land- and submarine-based missiles and heavy bombers. It has thousands more in stockpiles and

awaiting dismantlement, campaign groups say, with the Arms Control Association putting the total at 6,550 last year. The US withdrew tactical nuclear weapons from the South in the 1990s and Seoul does not have any itself. But the US has an unparalleled ability to project power around the world and can reach targets anywhere with conventional or nuclear munitions. It has long-range bombers, mid-air refuelling capabilities, and a fleet of nuclear submarines constantly at sea, each armed with phenomenal destructive power.

What Pyongyang promised

According to Trump "they have agreed to denuclearization". Asked what he meant by the term, he told reporters earlier this month: "It means they get rid of their nukes—very simple." But North Korea itself has made no explicit pledge to do so during the current rapprochement. According to Seoul, it has offered to consider giving them up in exchange for unspecified security guarantees. When Kim visited key backer China last month in only his first foreign trip as leader, China's state media cited him saying that the issue could be resolved if Seoul and Washington take "progressive and synchronous measures for the realization of peace"—implying some form of quid pro quo.

What does that imply?

Pyongyang says it needs nuclear weapons to defend itself against the United States, and interprets threats against it widely—it has regularly condemned US-South Korean joint military exercises as preparations for invasion. Under the 1953 Mutual Defense Treaty between South Korea and the US, Washington is duty-bound to come to its ally's aid if attacked. In the past Pyongyang has demanded the end of the alliance and the withdrawal of US troops from the South. The US has 28,500 troops stationed in the country to defend it from its neighbor, and Washington's nuclear arsenal is a key part of its defense capabilities—it does not have a "no first use" policy.



PANMUNJOM: Photo shows North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un (2nd left) and his wife Ri Sol Ju (left) attending the official dinner with South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and his wife Kim Jung-sook at the end of their historic summit at the truce village of Panmunjom. —AFP

North's promises before

Friday's declaration was the first time the word "denuclearization" has appeared in an inter-Korean summit communique. There was no reference to the subject in the declaration after their first summit in Pyongyang in 2000, and seven years later they said they would work together to implement two existing agreements on "the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula".

But one of those documents, the Joint Statement of

the Fourth Round of the Six-Party Talks issued in Beijing in September 2005, is unequivocal. "The DPRK committed to abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs," it said, using the North's official name. But it carried out its first nuclear test the very next year. Another agreement followed before Pyongyang walked out of the six-party process—which brought together the two Koreas, China, the US, Russia and Japan—in 2009, detonating its second atomic blast months later. —AFP

'No longer a hermit': S Koreans fascinated by North Korea's Kim

SEOUL: South Koreans yesterday pored over every detail of a historic summit in the Demilitarized Zone, transfixed by an extraordinary charm offensive by the North's leader Kim Jong Un. Kim's public appearance at the summit, beamed live to millions in the south, was for many the first prolonged exposure to an authoritarian figure revered in

his secretive nation but shrouded in mystery.

South Koreans and the world have long viewed him with a mixture of ridicule and fear, becoming used to the sight of him presiding over missile launches and military parades, but it was a very different Kim that took to the world stage on Friday. The 30-something leader was on his best behaviour, frequently flashing a smile, making humorous remarks and patting children as tenderly as any election-seeking politician in the West. "I heard Kim Jong Un making a joke and hearing that made me realize that he is also just a human being," Choi Hyun-ah, a 24-year-old events planner said. —AFP

South Koreans tune into summit... even from behind bars

SEOUL: As the leaders of North and South Korea clasped hands over the Military Demarcation Line, South Koreans were glued to the screen to watch history being made—even from prison. The summit, the first in more than a decade between two countries technically still at war, received wall-to-wall coverage on nearly every television channel and many South Koreans tuned in. Even convicts across the nation saw their usual diet of pre-edited TV interrupted for "emergency live programming" of the landmark handshake between Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in, the South Korean justice ministry said in a statement.

"We allowed all inmates detained in detention centers across the country to join the nation for the historic moment of the South-North summit," added the ministry. Lee Song-eun, an elementary school teacher in Seoul, usually ensures the television in her classroom is turned off, but made a rare exception. "Even if I get complaints that I'm not teaching to watch this, I am so curious," she said. "The kids were working on their assignments and suddenly broke out into 'Ah!' and 'Oh!' when Kim Jong Un appeared," she said. Worker Kim Eun-jin, 31, said her whole office gathered around the TV to watch the summit pageantry play out on television.

"My colleague was so touched, he cried," she said. The summit dominated online as well, with "Kim Jong Un" the most searched term on Naver, South Korea's largest portal. Phrases like "Pyongyang naengmyeon"—a North Korean cold noodle dish—and "Military Demarcation Line" were trending on South Korean Twitter. In contrast, on the other side of the border, North Korean state television there is no other kind—showed a test card all morning, with the first news bulletin in the afternoon merely reading out a dispatch from the official KCNA news agency saying Kim had set off for Panmunjom to meet Moon.

Kim's security: 'Not even an ant can pass through'

SEOUL: When Pyongyang's leader Kim Jong Un came down the steps towards the inter-Korean border Friday he was escorted by a phalanx of bodyguards carefully chosen for their fitness, marksmanship, martial arts skills and even looks. Men in sharp suits and matching blue and white striped ties fanned out ahead of and around Kim as he approached the Military Demarcation Line for a historic handshake with his Southern counterpart Moon Jae-in. Some of the men had bulging pockets.

All sported red North Korean lapel badges and the curly-wired earpieces beloved of the US Secret Service. As the leader left after the morning session of talks, a dozen of them were given a pre-lunch work-out, jogging alongside and behind Kim's official car to form a human shield, ties flapping as they ran. North Korea is one of the world's most tightly-controlled societies, but even so security for its leader is iron-clad. Foreigners attending any event where Kim will be present must go through hours of security proce-



SEOUL: A man walks past a newspaper featuring a front page story about the summit between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, on a sidewalk in Seoul yesterday. —AFP

'Murderous tyrants'

At the main press centre, where around 3,000 journalists have gathered, a wave of applause rang throughout the cavernous room when Kim approached Moon for a handshake. Like Moon in the summit room, journalists from the South roared with laughter when the North's leader joked about how he had brought Pyongyang naengmyeon for the dinner banquet.

"I hope that the president will be able to enjoy the Pyongyang naengmyeon that has travelled far," Kim said, before laughing and adding, "I shouldn't say far." Pyongyang naengmyeon—already a popular summer delicacy in the South—appeared to be selling like hotcakes at lunch time. Thousands of South Koreans posted photos of the cold buckwheat noodle they slurped down for lunch on Instagram with hashtags including

#summit and #peacenaengmyeon. "Eating a bowl of naengmyeon hoping for peace," said one user. The sudden high demand meant that some were turned away disappointed.

Office worker Lee Su-hyeon told AFP that 100 people were ahead of her in the line. "I really wanted to eat naengmyeon today. I'm so sad," Lee said. But not all was euphoria and optimism, with some protesters burning a North Korean flag near a checkpoint leading to the Demilitarized Zone where the summit was taking place. One commenter on Naver said the summit was positive, "but we can't have blind faith", blaming Kim for the assassination of his half-brother Kim Jong Nam in Malaysia last year. "We believed them during the 2000 summit and were hit in the head. We have to be open all possibilities. We have to be wary because he is the guy who killed his brother." —AFP

'Scariest place on Earth'

Former US president Bill Clinton once described the Demilitarized Zone that divides the peninsula and where Friday's summit was being held as "the scariest place on Earth". Despite its name, the DMZ is among the most heavily fortified areas on the planet. Around 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of the South Korean capital Seoul, the four-kilometer-wide space stretches for 250 kilometers across Korea and bristles with electric fences, minefields and anti-tank barriers.

At the joint security area at Panmunjom the two sides, technically still at war, come face-to-face, with stern South Korean guards—also chosen for their height and looks—standing stock still only meters from the North Korean positions. Soldiers are permitted to carry only sidearms in the area, but it is an open secret that both sides have larger weapons stashed nearby for use in case of emergencies. In November a North Korean soldier defected under a hail of automatic rifle fire from his comrades. Back in 1984, a 22-year-old Soviet tourist bolted from North to South at Panmunjom, triggering a gun battle in which three pursuing North Korean soldiers were killed, along with a Southern trooper, although defector Vasily Matuzok was unharmed. —AFP



Announcement from Ministry of Commerce & Industry Consumer Protection Department



Ministry of Commerce & Industry - Consumer Protection Department, in accordance with Law No. 39/2014, and cooperation with Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Est. Company, (authorized Distributor for Lexus in Kuwait).

As an After Sales service commitment to customer satisfaction, Toyota Motors Corporation announces recall of some Lexus models of 2015-2016 model year RX350 and NX200t to inspect and replace Airbag Sensor if necessary.

Models & Production dates

RX350 2015-2016 MY
Production from Sep. 2015 to Dec 2015 – P Sensor
(In Kuwait 407 Units)

NX200t 2015-2016 MY
Production from May. 2015 to Oct 2015 – G Sensor
(In Kuwait 179 Units)

Al-Sayer will contact the involved vehicle customers and inform them to bring to our service centers as the necessary parts are available. You are also kindly requested to contact us at 1830030. All the repairs will be free of charge for both Parts and Labor.

Lexus apologizes for any inconvenience, sparing no effort to ensure best customer service and safety levels. We need your co-operation to serve you better for any customer satisfaction program.

International

SE Asia faces threats from Islamic State, cyberattacks

10-country region struggling with Islamic militancy

SINGAPORE: Southeast Asia faces "very real" threats from the Islamic State (IS) group despite their defeat in the Middle East, as well as cyberattacks, Singapore's prime minister warned yesterday at a regional summit. Parts of the 10-country region have long struggled with Islamic militancy and the emergence of IS has served as a new rallying point for radicals and re-energized extremist groups.

A deadly gun and suicide-bombing attack in the Indonesian capital Jakarta in 2016 was the first IS-claimed assault in the region, while the Philippine city of Marawi was overrun last year by fighters loyal to the jihadists, triggering a months-long battle that killed hundreds. Fears are also growing that Southeast Asia, which is home to booming economies where a growing number of people are adopting digital technology in their everyday lives, could be increasingly targeted by cyberattacks.

Opening the summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in Singapore, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong warned that IS continues to threaten the region, home to about 650 million people, despite their military defeat in Iraq and Syria. He also warned the move towards digitalization has made countries more vulnerable to cyberattacks. "Southeast Asia is at peace, but these threats are very real," he said. "We need to be resilient to both conventional threats, and also non-con-

ventional threats such as terrorism and cyberattacks." The leaders at a working dinner Friday ahead of their formal summit agreed to increase coordination to shield countries from cyberattacks.

Trade war fears

In a bid to give teeth to the fight against terrorism and other transnational crimes, the leaders agreed to their officials to start talks on an ASEAN-wide extradition treaty. Officials have already completed a model of a treaty on which a regional agreement could be based. "We now need just to formalize that (the model treaty) and to start negotiating an actual ASEAN extradition treaty," Lee said at a post-summit news conference. "It should not take very long because the model is already there, it's just a matter of tweaking and making sure it's in a complete document."

In an final statement, the leaders vowed to fight a "rising tide of protectionism" and intensify efforts to conclude talks for a massive 16-nation free trade zone that would include China and India, called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. Lee warned that the open global trading system, which has allowed many of the region's export-driven economies to flourish, has come under increasing threat due to protectionist policies in major economies.

"The political mood in many countries has shifted



Digitalization makes countries more vulnerable to cyberattacks

Party—which has a majority of seats in parliament—of clinging to power.

Ultimatum

Pashinyan, 42, has issued an ultimatum to the authorities, saying he should be elected a new prime minister in a vote on May 1. He however does not have enough votes to get elected. Moscow has urged compromise and Russian President Vladimir Putin this week spoke by phone with the interim head of government, stressing the importance of the upcoming election. Yesterday, the Prosperous Armenia Party, which holds 31 seats in the 105-member chamber, was expected to issue a statement on whether it would back Pashinyan.

Pashinyan has said he hoped Prosperous Armenia and a smaller opposition party, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, "will make up their minds and clarify their position." Armenia's figurehead president, Armen Sarkisyan, met with acting head of government Karen Karapetyan and Serzh Sarkisian. The two Sarkisians are not related. "The head of state is hoping that it will be possible to find a mutually acceptable solution through joint effort," his office said, calling the meetings "constructive."

Crunch talks

On Friday, Karapetyan refused to hold talks with the protest leader, accusing him of promoting his own agenda and worsening the crisis in the poor country of 2.9 million people. Observers said intensive talks were going on behind the scenes and the situation was highly unpredictable. Political analysts say Prosperous Armenia, led by wealthy businessman Gagik Tsarukyan, has



DILIJAN, Armenia: Armenian opposition leader Nikol Pashinyan meets with supporters in the small town of Dilijan yesterday. —AFP

expressed support for Pashinyan but some of its members say they will only back the party's leader as a candidate.

Pashinyan, who heads the Civil Contract party, pressed ahead with his campaign to rally support across the country after thousands attended a rally he led on Friday in Armenia's second largest city of Gyumri which hosts a Russian military base. He has called a



SINGAPORE: ASEAN leaders pose for a group photograph during the opening of the 32nd ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

against free trade," he said. "In particular, the trade tensions between the US and China are worrying concerns." Washington and Beijing have imposed tit-for-tat tariffs on billions of dollars worth of goods which analysts said

could escalate into a global trade war and scupper global growth. ASEAN groups together Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. —AFP

Armenian protest leader Pashinyan rallies support

YEREVAN: Armenian protest leader Nikol Pashinyan yesterday scrambled for support in his bid to become prime minister amid key talks to break a deadlock over the country's next leader. Pashinyan was to hold anti-government rallies in his birthplace Ijevan and Armenia's third largest city of Vanadzor, driving around the landlocked South Caucasus country with his supporters in a convoy. In the small northern town of Dilijan, several hundred locals greeted Pashinyan, holding flags and beating drums. "We want change in Armenia and Pashinyan to be elected prime minister right away," said Arman Ovspeyan, a 43-year-old musician. "If the Republicans refuse to leave power, we will force them to do so peacefully."

Tatevik Karapetyan, a 32-year-old computer designer, added: "The people have started a peaceful revolution because Armenia desperately needed change." Armenia has been in the grips of a severe political crisis for the past two weeks. Observers fear the turmoil can destabilize the Moscow-allied nation. Accused of a power grab by the opposition, the country's leader Serzh Sarkisian resigned this week as the country's new prime minister after serving as president for a decade. The protest movement led by Pashinyan has accused Sarkisian's ruling Republican

Party—which has a majority of seats in parliament—of clinging to power.

The five, all from the southern city of Seville, filmed the incident with their smartphones and then bragged about it on a WhatsApp messaging group where they referred to themselves as "La Manada", or "The Pack" in English. "It is indisputable that the plaintiff suddenly found herself in a narrow and hidden place, surrounded by five older, thick-bodied males who left her overwhelmed and unresponsive," the judges said in their ruling. "The videos show the plaintiff surrounded and stuck against the wall by two of the accused... she has an absent grimace, and keeps her eyes closed," they added.

'Macho culture'

Large crowds of mainly women marched in cities across Spain, including Madrid and Barcelona, on Thursday night after the court sentenced the men. In the northern city of Santander protesters blocked roads, public television TVE reported. On Friday thousands of people demonstrated outside the Pamplona court where the judgment was made for the second day in a row, shouting "it's not sexual abuse, it's rape". Some held banners reading "sister, I believe you". State prosecutors said they would appeal the ruling.

Adriana Lastra, a top official with Spain's main opposition Socialist party, said the court ruling was "disgraceful". "It's the product of a



MADRID: A woman shouts slogans during a demonstration in Madrid to protest after five men accused of gang raping a woman at Pamplona's bull-running festival, were sentenced to nine years in jail for 'sexual abuse,' avoiding the more serious charge of rape. —AFP

patriarchal and macho culture," she added. The case was cited in signs carried by many women during massive demonstrations held in cities across Spain to mark International Women's Day in March, which were among the largest in Europe. "Spain was a pioneer in terms of equality," Soledad Murillo, Spain's former Socialist secretary of state for equality between 2004 and 2008, told AFP when asked about the huge turnout at the demonstrations.

Authorization to work

Spain in 2004 passed a landmark law

against gender violence and women's groups mobilized strongly against a proposed law which would have restricted access to abortion, prompting the resignation in 2014 of the justice minister at the time, Alberto Ruiz Gallardon, who had tabled the reform. "Younger women became aware of what their grandmothers lost," said Murillo. She cited as an example the fact that during General Francisco Franco's 1939-75 dictatorship, women needed the authorization of their husbands to work, as well as special authorizations "to leave the country or drive". —AFP

Turkish opposition scrambles to unite against Erdogan

ANKARA: Turkey's usually divided opposition parties are trying to unite to maximize their chances of defeating President Recep Tayyip Erdogan after his surprise decision to hold early elections. Erdogan last week rocked the world of Turkish politics when he said there would be parliamentary and presidential polls on June 24, 2018, more than a year before the expected date of November 3, 2019.

For the opposition, which was initially stumped by the announcement, these elections are a last chance to stop what they describe as Erdogan's authoritarianism. Following an intense referendum campaign in April 2017, Turks approved by a narrow margin changing Turkey's parliamentary system into an executive presidency giving the head of state expanded powers. The government insists the changes will ensure political stability, but opponents say it will lead to one-man rule. Less than a week after the early polls announcement, opposition parties began intense talks to figure out a strategy to stop Erdogan.

In a surprise move of solidarity, the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) helped the newest right-wing Iyi ("Good") Party at the weekend, boosting its numbers to form a parliamentary group and thereby allowed to run in the polls. "What we have done is a contribution to democracy, not just the Good Party," CHP chief Kemal Kilicdaroglu said after the two parties met again on Wednesday. With the opposition targeting Erdogan, rumors are rife over who could run against him. There has been fevered speculation that former president and co-founder of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) Abdullah Gul might become a unity candidate though he has made no public comment on the rumors. —AFP

Russia, Turkey, Iran hold talks on Syria

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov yesterday hosted his Iranian and Turkey counterparts for talks on Syria in the wake of an alleged chemical attack that has exposed differences between the three powers. The three nations have been attempting to find a political solution to the Syrian conflict at talks that started last year in Astana, Kazakhstan, in competition with the US and UN-backed Geneva initiative. Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov held separate bilateral talks with his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu and then Iran's Mohammad Javad Zarif, who stressed the warmth of their relationship in opening comments. These were to be followed by three-sided talks.

Meeting his Turkish counterpart, the Russian diplomat stressed the "great importance" both Russian President Vladimir Putin and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attach to improving relations. Cavusoglu, in translated comments, praised the "atmosphere of trust that has grown up between us" and said the countries had "seriously moved forward on questions of Syria settlement." He said yesterday's meeting would discuss "what further steps can be taken." Lavrov also held a bilateral meeting with Iran's Zarif, who hailed the three countries' work together in the Astana process as a success, saying it led to "the defeat of the Islamic State group." Zarif said this was the only aspect of joint cooperation with "our Turkish friends" and it was "bearing fruit." —AFP

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

WASHINGTON WATCH

Celebrating service to others

Last week, the Arab American Institute held its 20th Khalil Gibran "Spirit of Humanity" Awards Gala. This annual event provides an opportunity for Arab Americans to recognize organizations, leaders and activists from around the world for their service to humanity. During the past two decades, the Institute has honored such illustrious figures as: Mohammad Ali, Lech Walesa, the leader of Solidarity Movement and former Prime Minister of Poland, Queen Noor Al-Hussein, Salma Hayek, and former President of Ireland and UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson.

Also honored in past years were institutions like Amnesty International, St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, ANERA, and Save the Children. These individuals and organizations have been recognized not only for the work they have done, but also because their example has inspired us to emulate their efforts. The light they have shown is like a beacon in a dark night reminding us that there is no higher calling than to serve those who are vulnerable and in need.

This year's Gibran award recipients are exemplary. World renowned Chef Jose Andres has led the way by organizing massive food relief efforts to respond to victims of natural disasters. Beginning in 2010 following the earthquake that devastated Haiti, Andres founded World Central Kitchen (WCK), a network of chefs from around the world committed to "creating smart solutions to hunger."

WCK has operated in eight countries opening kitchens to feed those whose communities and homes have been destroyed. After hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, Andres personally led the effort to establish 25 kitchens throughout the island that provided millions of meals to those without power or access to food. By the time they were fully operational, they were serving 150,000 meals each day. In the end, the efforts of Andres' WCK fed more people than the programs set up by the US government or the Red Cross.

Preeminent champion

For the last century, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) has been the United States' preeminent champion for civil liberties. They have protected freedom of speech and fought to protect vulnerable communities whose rights were being threatened by government repression. The ACLU was one of the only organizations with the courage to fight the internment of Japanese during World War II and in the decades following the war, they provided leadership in opposing segregationist laws that had denied African Americans the right to vote and the guarantee of equal treatment under the law.

More recently, the ACLU has defended the rights of Arabs and Muslims facing profiling, unlawful government surveillance, restrictions on free speech, and efforts to limit their religious freedoms. It was the ACLU that successfully overturned some state laws that have attempted to make support for BDS illegal. And today, they are a leading force challenging the Trump Administration's refugee and Muslim bans.

Ireland's Senator Frances Black is a trailblazer and role model committed to protecting the vulnerable and challenging government policies when they fall short. She is a renowned and award-winning Irish singer whose life-trajectory has led her to public service wherever she has seen people in need.

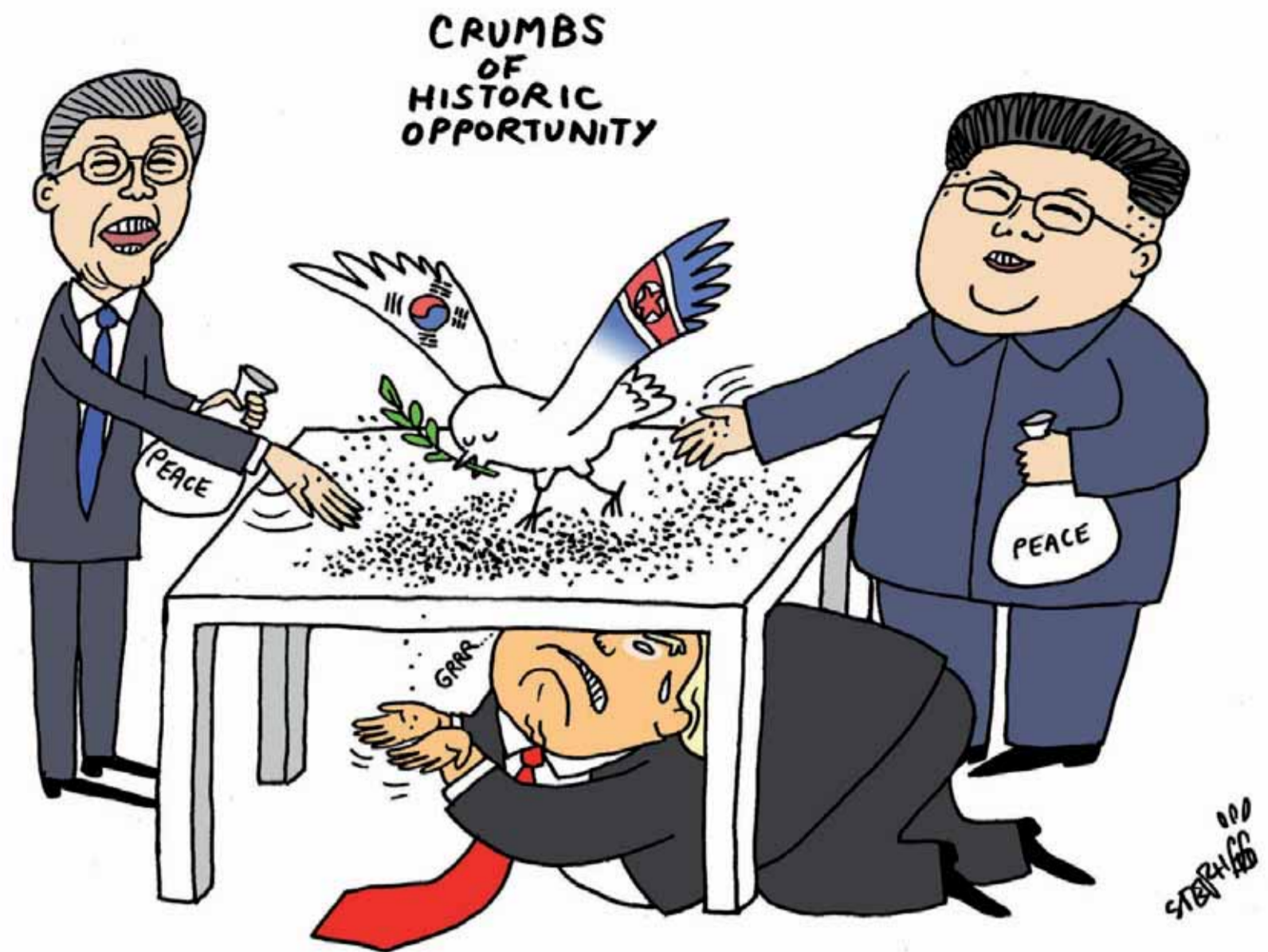
Before running for elective office, Black founded The RISE Foundation in 2009 to provide support and services for those she refers to as the "silent victims" of drug and alcohol addiction. As she once noted, there are rehab programs for the addicts, but until RISE was formed the addict's family members were overlooked and left to suffer in the shadows.

As a Senator, she has demonstrated her expansive vision, becoming a leading advocate for migrants and the homeless. Senator Black is also the chair of the Irish Senate's Palestine Working Group, which is leading the effort to have Ireland recognize Palestinian statehood and to be more vigorous in opposing Israel's occupation and settlement policies. In honoring these champions, the Institute is holding up values and behaviors that represent the best of our humanity, values espoused by the great Syrian/Lebanese American poet, Gibran Khalil Gibran.

Almost one century ago, Gibran often wrote about the importance of service to those in need, calling it the highest calling in life. "Service brings joy," he said. Like much of what Gibran wrote back then, his words apply to every place and age. The Khalil Gibran Gala speaks to his vision, calling on us to embrace a vision of humanity that celebrates - not the acquisition of power, position, and wealth - but rather a life lived in the service of others.

There are many challenges facing America and our world today as many lives are shattered by war, an erosion of democracy, widespread violations of human rights, growing disparities in income and opportunity, homelessness, and addiction. For some, the accumulated impact of all this suffering and tragedy has resulted in a loss of hope and a sense of powerlessness. What is so remarkable about the evening in which we celebrate the "Spirit of Humanity" by awarding those who have risen above despair and acted to serve those who are vulnerable and in need, is that the event's attendees leave with their spirits uplifted. Gibran was right: Service is joy. Doing for others not only helps those who are served, it can also cure our own despair by restoring our faith in each other and in our capacity to make change.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute



Macron's surprise gift to Trump

Emmanuel Macron, the 40-year-old president of France, came to the United States last week to cement his relationship with Donald Trump, the 71-year-old US president he calls his good friend. He came, too, to save the Iran nuclear deal. The three-day state visit was a vivid display of Macron's political showmanship, a kind not seen since Britain's Tony Blair left the political scene more than a decade ago. During a joint press conference, Macron kissed Trump on the cheek, a Gallic gesture which seemed to embarrass the American a little. Trump's recovery line: "I like this guy a lot!"

Politics at that level must be a show, in which Trump, the ex-reality TV show star, should dominate. But he's often clumsy in public, showing ignorance of detail, resorting to lame phrases. Macron, who attended the Ecole nationale d'administration - since 1945 charged with creating the country's governing and business elite - shows all that finishing school's easy mastery, along with his own self-confidence.

Macron's speech to the joint meeting of Congress on Wednesday was a French classic: a first act of throbbing-sincere evocation of US and French history as revolutionary countries, of their common devotion to freedom and democracy, followed by a second act in which he laid down his own views on the world order. When these are explained to Trump, he may regret his affection for Macron, who ramméd home fundamental differences with implied criticisms of the US president's stances on free trade, climate change, nationalism and multilateralism.

And on Iran. The multinational Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) agreement lifts many sanctions on Iran in exchange for a closely monitored renunciation by the Islamic Republic of any development of nuclear weapons. Trump has repeatedly described it as the "worst deal ever" and vowed to scrap it. Macron, in his speech to the U.S. legislators, reminded them, and the president, that the deal was initiated by Trump's predecessor, Barack Obama - and that it should not be scrapped unless something better was to be put in its place.

#MeToo activists use blockchain to skirt China censors

Attempts to silence a student who drew attention to sexual abuse allegations at a Chinese university have inspired tech-savvy activists to use blockchain technology to dodge censors and keep the fledgling #MeToo movement alive. The uproar began when a student wrote an open letter this week accusing a staff member at Peking University of trying to intimidate her over a petition she launched urging the school to make public an investigation into a 1998 sexual abuse case.

The student's missive was quickly taken down from Chinese social media after it went viral, only to resurface on the blockchain service Ethereum on Monday night, attracting hundreds of comments that are virtually unassailable. "This is how we use technology to (fight) against brutal tyranny," said one commenter, while others hailed it as a "historic moment". The #MeToo movement has been concentrated in university campuses in China, and the authorities have tolerated some social media commentary about sexual harassment allegations in recent months.

But the furore over the Peking University case appears to have been too much for censors. A search for the student's name on the popular Weibo microblogging platform yields no results. Yue Xin, a foreign languages student, co-authored a petition with around 20 others demanding the university release details of the probe into allegations a student was driven to suicide after being sexually abused by a professor. The professor, who now teaches at Nanjing University in eastern China, was suspended pending the investigation after the

That something better seems to be the possibility of a super-deal, in which the existing agreement is one of four pillars - the others being a long-term deal to come into being after the present one expires; pressure on Iran to suspend its ballistic missile program (a particular concern of Washington) and a full-scale effort, by Europe and the United States, to produce an all-embracing framework for regional peace.

Macron got an ambiguous agreement from Trump that he and European partners might work something out, a

with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on "denuclearization" have any chance of success if the dictator saw a US agreement so lightly discarded?

Then there's Macron. His performance in Washington was impeccable, and inspiring - for liberals. "We can build the 21st century world order," he told the legislators, "based on a new breed of multilateralism..." But the domestic ice on which Macron skates grows thinner. Strikes by railway workers, Air France pilots and others continue; he cannot shake the appellation that he is "the president of the rich".

His drive to create a more integrated Europe, and all-European parties, has met with no more than tepid, shifty support - including from Germany, where seemingly weary Chancellor Angela Merkel leads an already-fractious coalition. Resistance in France to radical economic and labor reforms remains strong; European states also fear relinquishing national control in the face of rising public anti-Europeanism. Macron needs a success, and he has had one - on the public stage. Behind it, the aura is fading.

The third actor is Iran itself. Its influence in Syria and on Iraq, its continued sponsorship of Hezbollah militants in Lebanon and its ambition to lead the anti-Israel struggle mask a weak economy, the continued exodus of many of its smartest workers, little foreign investment and a growing series of revolts and demonstrations by the middle class. Its facade can be formidable, but it's a regime in decline. Which does not, of course, make it easier to deal with. On the contrary, it has already made clear it will brook no changes to the agreement.

Yet the Macron visit may have achieved a surprising result. The US president looked and sounded more... sensible. If the Frenchman has shown him, even dimly, that the leader of the free world must embrace the ideals of liberty, democracy and the rule of law as well as respect agreements, then he may have started the education of Donald J Trump into something resembling the president his country deserves. —Reuters

US president looked and sounded more sensible



demonstration for Trump that making a threat to ditch the deal gets the Europeans scurrying around to find a way of accommodating him. Has Trump, the great dealmaker, actually set the stage, with help from his friend Macron, for a breakthrough - not just on Iran, but in a region in which tensions involving Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Israel and others are escalating dangerously?

There are three important actors in play whose actions will answer that question sooner or later. Trump may, in the end, be reluctant to break with the deal's European signatories - Russia and China have signed too - especially after the International Atomic Energy Agency as well as his own State Department have certified that Iran is observing its conditions. And would his planned talks

allegations emerged earlier this month.

In her open letter, Yue said a student adviser came to her dorm at about 1:00 am (1700 GMT Saturday) on Sunday, with Yue's "terrified" mother in tow, and demanded she delete all information related to the petition from her phone and laptop. Yue wrote she had also received veiled threats from university officials over whether she would be allowed to graduate. She said the university's actions had caused her mother to have an "emotional meltdown" and had "broken their relationship". "When I saw my mother crying, slapping her face, falling on her knees, and threatening to commit suicide, my heart was bleeding," she said in her letter.

'Symbolic move'

Chinese social media users often find roundabout ways to avoid censors. In this case, some resorted to posting a photo of the letter upside down to avoid detection technology. The text has also found an impregnable home in the hard-to-crack blockchain - a technology usually associated with cryptocurrencies. A blockchain is essentially a shared, encrypted "ledger" that cannot be manipulated. But finding the letter is not easy. It is attached to a transaction viewable on a link.

Seeing the letter requires downloading the entire blockchain and searching for it with special software tools, said Leonhard Weese, president of The Bitcoin Association of Hong Kong. Embedding her message into a blockchain is "largely a symbolic move", Weese said. "It's true that this message cannot be deleted (or altered) from a blockchain, because all participants of the network will be forced to store it forever, but this won't help in spreading the message," he said. But censors would struggle to delete the nearly 300 comments that have appeared so far. Everyone who is part of the blockchain has to keep a copy of the transaction, creating multiple copies in thousands of computers. —AFP

European unions look for new role

European labor movements have been losing steam for decades, but can trade unions forge a new role for themselves leading the fight against wage inequality or protecting workers in the new "gig economy"? "It's wrong to think that unions belong to the old world," says Thibault Weber of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), an umbrella group for European trade unions. Ahead of the annual Labor Day celebrations worldwide on May 1, he acknowledged that they face a "big challenge" in continuing to defend the strong social model found in Europe "without the strong membership base of the past".

The decline began in the 1980s with a wave of privatizations of state companies, reductions in heavy industry and the rise of free-market economics made famous by US President Ronald Reagan and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. In France, Britain, Switzerland and the Netherlands, the level of union membership has fallen by over a third since the 1980s, according to the OECD. Economists have tied this disaffection to rising individualism, unemployment and growing job insecurity, noting that workers on project-based, part-time or casual contracts are less likely to join unions.

They have also linked waning union clout to the decline in traditional political parties, particularly the big parties of the left including Communist movements which were the historic defenders of trade unions. Across Europe, the picture is highly contrasted, both in terms of union sway and membership. Nordic countries like Sweden and Finland boasting union membership rates of about 70 percent compared to

around 10 percent in France and Poland and about 20 percent in Germany and Spain.

But Germany's labor confederation DGB, France's public sector heavyweight CGT and Italy's CGIL, still have the power to call mass protests and strikes. With rising inequality a major issue in many developed democracies, economists say that countries where unions are weak are those where the gap in income between rich and poor is the greatest. In 2015, researchers from the International Monetary Fund - an organization that usually backs the kind of reforms resisted by unions - published a study showing that the decline of unions had aggravated social inequality in wealthy countries by reducing the negotiating power of workers to the benefit of top management and shareholders. Strong unions also help keep the salaries of CEOs in check, economist Patrice Laroche said.

Local strength

In some sectors of the economy, trade unions are still able to prove their worth using traditional collective bargaining tactics. The powerful German IG Metall union, which represents 2.3 million metal workers, recently negotiated a new pay and worktime deal that will see salaries go up and the working week fall to 28 hours. Its power stems from it being the only representative of employees which means it is able to negotiate agreements that cover all staff.

In countries where staff must negotiate directly with their bosses on an individual basis, they can secure better pay only by being extremely competent or accepting freelance and therefore precarious work, experts say. In some countries, vulnerable workers have also formed new unions which help to fight low-pay and pressure on wages. This was the case for "Le Collectif" which protects bike-riding delivery service workers since 2017 in Belgium, or a new network of freelance writers in Italy. —AFP

News

Xi, Modi seek new relations...

Continued from Page 1

India signalled as recently as Tuesday its opposition to the grand trade and transport plan because one of its branches runs through Pakistani-administered Kashmir, which India claims. Xi and Modi agreed their problems would be resolved with time. China's Foreign Ministry, in a separate statement, cited Xi as telling Modi their nations were major drivers of world economic growth and a good relationship would be positive for global stability.

Indian Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale said both leaders had agreed they could handle their differences peacefully. "On the issue of the India-China boundary question, the two leaders endorsed the work of the special representatives in their efforts to find a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement," he said. "And the two leaders also underscored that in the meantime it is important to maintain peace and tranquility in all areas of the India-China border region," Gokhale said.

Kong said Modi and Xi did not discuss last summer's border flare-up, although they agreed to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable settlement to the boundary problem. "The biggest takeaway was that we have to increase mutual

trust," he said. "The reason that we had this dispute was because we were both mistrustful of each other."

Chinese state media praised the tone of the trip. The overseas edition of the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily said in a front page commentary on Saturday "two great countries ought to have great co-operation". It published a large photo of the two leaders shaking hands. The official China Daily said in an editorial there was no denying mutual suspicion was keeping the two countries from working together. "Yet neither Beijing nor New Delhi calls the other an enemy, which means both expect bilateral ties to improve. Indeed, China and India are natural partners," it said.

Despite the upbeat statements, which on Friday included Modi inviting Xi to India for a similar informal summit next year, there were no concrete agreements reached. Still, Kong said there are a number of projects China and India can cooperate on in the spirit of Belt and Road. "We won't force them to do something they don't want to do," he said. India has long been apprehensive about China's traditionally close ties with Pakistan. For its part, China has been concerned about US efforts to draw India into a maritime "quad" of democracies, including Japan and Australia.

China is also suspicious of India's hosting of the Dalai Lama and other exiled Tibetans. Kong said China did not believe India had changed its official position that Tibet is part of China. Modi and Xi are set to meet again soon, when Modi visits China in June for a summit of the China and Russia-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization security bloc. — Reuters

N Korea says summit opens new peace...

Continued from Page 1

In a separate report, KCNA said the two leaders had a "candid and open-hearted exchange of views" on issues including "ensuring peace on the Korean Peninsula and the denuclearization of the peninsula". The Rodong Sinmun newspaper, the mouthpiece of the North's ruling Workers' Party, devoted the first four of its six pages to the event, carrying a total of 60 photos, 15 of them on page one. State television broadcast several minutes of footage from the meeting, including the leaders' embrace, but with a voiceover throughout, and deployed veteran newsreader Ri Chun Hee to read out the declaration.

Yang Moo-jin of the University of North Korean Studies said the breadth of coverage was a signal the North was "sincere in its commitment". "It is also another signal to Washington in the lead up to the US-North Korea summit that the ball is in your court now," he told AFP. When Kim stepped over the military demarcation line that divides the peninsula he became the first North Korean leader to set foot in the South since the Korean War hostilities ceased in 1953 with an armistice rather than a peace treaty.

He then persuaded Moon to step into the North - a fact reported by KCNA yesterday - and the two leaders

shared a day of smiles, intimate moments, and a half-hour-long one-on-one conversation. The North has made rapid progress in its weapons programs under Kim, detonating its sixth and most powerful nuclear test last year and launching missiles capable of reaching the US mainland, in moves that triggered increasingly strict UN Security Council sanctions against the regime.

Kim and US President Donald Trump traded personal insults and threats of war, sending tensions soaring before Moon seized on the Winter Olympics to broker dialogue, beginning a dizzying whirl of diplomacy that led to Friday's meeting in the Demilitarized Zone. Analysts and diplomats say that a combination of factors were behind Pyongyang's change of heart, including feeling that it was in a position to negotiate from strength, the looming impact of sanctions, and fear of potential US military action.

But KCNA gave Kim the credit. "The historic meeting at Panmunjom came to be realized thanks to the supreme leader's ardent love for the people and will for self-determination" independent of outside influence, it said. Washington is pressing Pyongyang to give up its weapons in a complete, verifiable and irreversible way, and analysts say that meaningful progress will depend on the outcome of Kim's much-anticipated summit with Trump in the coming weeks.

Trump said yesterday that "things are going very well" after talking with Moon about the upcoming eagerly-awaited summit. "Just had a long and very good talk with President Moon of South Korea. Things are going very well, time and location of meeting with North Korea is being set," Trump wrote on Twitter. — AFP

Duterte urges all Filipinos in Kuwait...

Continued from Page 1

Philippine authorities and deepening a diplomatic row over the treatment of domestic workers in the state. The two nations had been working to resolve differences sparked by the murder of a Philippine maid, whose body was found stuffed in her employer's freezer in Kuwait earlier this year.

But relations plunged after the Philippines released videos last week of embassy staff helping Filipino workers flee from allegedly abusive employers, which Kuwait called a violation of its sovereignty. Philippine Foreign Secretary Alan Peter Cayetano apologized, but Kuwaiti officials announced Wednesday they were expelling Villa and recalling their own envoy from Manila. Speaking to reporters in Singapore, Cayetano said he disapproved of the release of the videos but defended the action of the embassy staff, citing urgency.

Tensions rose earlier this year following the murder of maid Joanna Demafelis, prompting Duterte to ban Filipina workers from deploying to Kuwait for work. Relations appeared to recover after a Kuwaiti court sentenced to death in absentia a Lebanese man and his Syrian wife for Demafelis' killing. Following the verdict, Duterte this month announced plans to visit Kuwait to seal an agreement on workplace safety guarantees for the Filipinos working in the nation.

But Cayetano on Thursday expressed doubt about the deal because "the ambassador (of Kuwait)... was suddenly recalled and is not answering our inquiries at this point in time". The proposal sets terms for vacation leaves, food and custody of passports. Roque also said he does not know what will happen to the agreement. "I do not know anymore what will happen to the MOU, I could only surmise. I do not know, everything is up in the air now with the Kuwaiti ambassador being recalled and [the] Philippine ambassador being declared persona non grata," he said.

Kuwait surprised by memo leak

On Friday, Kuwait expressed surprise after a memo of a recent meeting between the Kuwaiti ambassador in Manila and the Philippine foreign minister was circulated by the Philippine media. Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry took note of its Philippine counterpart's memo - published by the Philippine media - on the meeting, Jarallah said in a press statement. Kuwait, represented by its foreign ministry, has tackled recently strained relations between both sides with patience and wisdom through diplomatic channels, he said.

Kuwaiti measures, the latest of which was declaring the Philippine ambassador persona non grata, came after the diplomat had received two memos of protest, which included a request for handing over those involved in acts that undermine Kuwait's sovereignty and are deemed as interference in its internal affairs and even violate relevant international agreements and treaties, especially Article 41 of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations, Jarallah added.

Jarallah reiterated Kuwait's rejection to any bid to undermine its sovereignty or to interfere in its internal affairs, vowing decisive response in this regard. Laws applied in Kuwait,

where 3.1 million residents of 195 different nationalities live, ensure their rights and safeguard their security, dignity and freedom thanks to the country's fair and independent judiciary, he affirmed. The deputy foreign minister pointed to Kuwait's willingness to sign the labor agreement with the Philippines, which was recently initiated by both sides in Manila, reflecting Kuwait's keenness on maintaining friendly relations and joint interests.

In response to 10 points mentioned in the memo from the Philippines Foreign Ministry, Jarallah said Kuwait has put in place a 24-hour emergency hotline, which responds to distress calls "immediately and effectively". Phone calls made to the hotline, managed by the interior ministry, and subsequent measures, are regularly monitored in order to ensure its efficiency, he underlined.

Kuwait has also created a state-of-the-art shelter for domestic helpers, providing services and assistance to those facing problems with their sponsors, such as the right to accommodation, food, security and liberties. In this aspect, Kuwait is unique in that it is the only country to have formed a center of this nature, said Jarallah, mentioning that the facility has hosted several global human rights monitors' visits. He also said that "relevant Kuwaiti bodies are keen on cooperating with the Philippine Embassy in providing assistance related to the pending applications of Filipino workers facing difficulties".

With regards to the repatriation of 800 Filipino citizens currently at this shelter, he said the Kuwaiti government has granted them and other expatriates full amnesty for any financial obligations they may have incurred for over-staying or residency law violations. The government also took steps to ease their travel, providing them with the amnesty which was extended for another two months, in response to calls from the Filipino government - with the new deadline of April 22.

"This highlights, without a doubt, the extent of cooperation and appreciation Kuwait extends with regards to its relationship with Republic of the Philippines, and its keenness on cooperating with the Philippine Embassy on agreeing to arrangements that enable their (Filipino citizens) repatriation," he added. On ensuring justice is served in lawsuits from Filipino citizens, he said Kuwait has a fair and independent justice system that is renowned for its transparency and ensuring the rights and legal protection of all nationals and expatriates living in the country.

Furthermore, on the matter of ensuring the peaceful and humane treatment of Filipinos who have been held in detention post-deadline, he said Kuwait has an unblemished record of human rights hailed by relevant international agencies. As for freeing Filipinos hired by the Philippine embassy and who did some acts that breached Kuwait's sovereignty and laws, and whose practices reflected interference in Kuwait's internal affairs, he said they are now being investigated and Kuwaiti authorities allowed their embassy's staff to visit them.

Regarding allowing the Philippine foreign ministry's diplomats, who are in Kuwait now but not accredited as part of the embassy's staff in the country, to return to Manila, he said Kuwait requests the Philippines to hand them over for investigations. Jarallah concluded by reaffirming the accuracy, commitment and efficiency of the Kuwaiti ambassador in Manila, noting that he honored his commitments made during the meeting with the Philippine foreign minister. — Agencies

Strike kills dozens of Houthis; missile...

Continued from Page 1

Saudi Arabia - and the key Hodeida port on the Red Sea coast. Shortly after Sammad's funeral began, the Houthis said they had launched eight ballistic missiles into the kingdom. The coalition confirmed it had intercepted four missiles headed for the southern Saudi coastal city of Jizan, one day after the kingdom's defense forces said they had downed a missile headed for the same area. While the coalition statement said the attack claimed no casualties, Jizan's civil defense spokesman Colonel Yahya Abdullah Al-Qatani told Al-Arabiya that a Saudi citizen had been killed by falling shrapnel. A picture accompanying the Arabiya TV report appeared to show the outside of a civilian home podmarked by shrapnel. A coalition spokesman did not immediately respond to a request for confirmation. The rebels have ramped up their missile attacks on Saudi Arabia this year. One person was reported killed by falling shrapnel in Riyadh last month.

In Sanaa, Houthi supporters lined the streets yesterday for the funeral of Sammad and six others killed in the April 19 strike. Rebels dressed in military fatigues marched ahead of his hearse, which included seven cars draped in the Yemeni

flag and accompanied by a marching band.

Meanwhile, Washington's newly appointed secretary of state landed in Riyadh yesterday on a tour of America's key Middle East allies, after vowing to bring some "swagger" back to US diplomacy. The Saudi capital is the first stop on a three-day trip that will also take Mike Pompeo to Israel and Jordan to update friends on President Donald Trump's plans for the Iran nuclear deal. Pompeo was met on the tarmac in Riyadh by a sizeable Saudi Arabian delegation, including the kingdom's Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir and ambassador to the US Khalid bin Salman - brother of the powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Trump is widely expected to pull the United States out of the Iran accord next month, re-imposing sanctions against Tehran's nuclear program. Pompeo insists the president has not yet made the decision. The former CIA chief, who was sworn in as Trump's top diplomat on Thursday and set off within two hours for Brussels, will consult with leaders of Iran's main regional opponents ahead of the announcement.

But he also has a second, more personal mission, to show foreign capitals and his own colleagues that US diplomacy is back on track after the troubled reign of his sacked predecessor Rex Tillerson. Trump's first secretary of state, a former oil executive, failed to fill senior positions, embarked on unpopular bureaucratic reforms and had conspicuously little chemistry with the president. Pompeo - a former army officer, businessman and conservative congressman - wanted to set off on the road immediately on being sworn in, in order to reach out to NATO and Middle East allies. — Agencies

Israeli gunfire in focus after scores...

Continued from Page 1

he years before he can return to his restaurant job. "I was planning to get married soon. I'm not thinking about it anymore," he said.

The Israeli army says it fires live rounds only as a "last resort" to protect soldiers and the fence. It has accused Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas of exploiting the demonstrations and using the protesters as human shields. Since the protests began, Israeli troops have shot more than 1,500 people. The vast majority are young men, and most of the wounded were hit in the legs, according to the health ministry in Gaza. Twenty-one people have had limbs amputated. Among those killed there have been two journalists and several teenagers.

The asymmetry of force has brought criticism of Israel's policies. No Israelis have been injured since the protests began. The European Union and others have called for an investigation into Israel's response, but the Jewish state has rejected the idea. The United States, Israel's strongest backer, has blocked moves for a probe at the United Nations.

Doctors have reported unusually severe injuries. "What is unusual is the lesions and the fact that the wounds are very wide, and the bones can be in many fragments," Marie-Elisabeth Ingres, head of the Doctors Without Borders mission (MSF) in the Palestinian territories, told AFP. The charity has given nearly 600 people post-operative care since March 30.

Abdel Latif El-Haji, director general of hospitals in Gaza, accused Israel of using types of ammunition aimed at permanently disfiguring their targets. He told AFP the army was using "expanding bullets" that separate inside the body, "breaking the bones and blood vessels, causing severe rupturing of the tissue". Amnesty International on Friday said some of the wounds appear consistent with bullets that expand inside the body. Such ammunition is considered illegal in international warfare. AFP could not independently confirm the claim.

"The nature of these injuries shows that Israeli soldiers are using high-velocity military weapons designed to cause maximum harm to Palestinian protesters that do not pose imminent threat to them," an Amnesty statement said. It accused Israel of "deliberate attempts to kill and maim" protesters. In a statement the Israeli army said it was only using "standard weapons and ammunition that are lawful under international law", and accused Gaza's health ministry of regularly spreading false information. — AFP



Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
ads@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net



ORCA
OR-A24KDXI

24000 BTU/hr

152 000
189 000

37 000 SAVE

4 Way Air Flow
Golden Fin Condenser



SHARP
AH-A18RCM

18000 BTU/hr

139 000
174 000

35 000 SAVE

Up & Down auto air swing



Midea
MWTF-12CM

12000 BTU/hr

68 000
96 000

28 000 SAVE

best **بيست**
AL-YOUSIFI

Credit: Start from SKD • Up to 48 month • Instant approval

Shop Online www.best.com.kw Free Delivery

1809 809

• Kuwait 1 (the New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khalid str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road)

• Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwaniya (Behind police Station) • Fahahel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

Sports

Three in a row for Vettel, Hamilton shares front row

Hamilton was 0.179 seconds adrift

BAKU: Ferrari's championship leader Sebastian Vettel smiled with relief yesterday after he had claimed pole for today's Azerbaijan Grand Prix ahead of a revived Lewis Hamilton for Mercedes in a crash-strewn qualifying session. The German, who leads the defending four-time champion by nine points after three races this season, clocked a best lap in one minute and 41.498 seconds to sweep to the prime starting spot.

It was an emphatic demonstration of his and Ferrari's pace after he had struggled in practice on Friday. It was his third consecutive pole position and the 53rd of his career. "In the end, I knew I had the car I wanted and it did what I wanted... The first lap was good and it was good enough in the end so I am happy," said Vettel. Hamilton was 0.179 seconds adrift after an improved showing that left him ahead of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas, Daniel Ricciardo and his Red Bull team-mate Max Verstappen.

"That was close," said Hamilton. "We did the best job we could and I think I lost a little bit in the final sector, but Sebastian did a great job. We are in the mix and I am hoping to give him a hard time in the race."

Boltas said: "We can fight them here and we are starting very close. This race can be crazy, but we have a good starting point." Kimi Raikkonen wound up sixth in the second Ferrari after an eventful session and a huge slide on his final flying lap.

Esteban Ocon was seventh ahead of his Force India team-mate Sergio Perez, Nico Hulkenberg who faces a five-place grid penalty for a gearbox change, and his Renault team-mate Carlos Sainz.

Renault to start planning for Sainz replacement

BAKU: Renault will not wait for Daniel Ricciardo to decide his Formula One future before starting the search for a potential replacement for Spanish driver Carlos Sainz. The French manufacturer team currently have Sainz on loan from Red Bull, who can take back the 23-year-old at the end of the season should their race-winning Australian Ricciardo decide to go elsewhere.

"We need to make plans, we need to be prepared for the worst as always," Renault Sport F1 managing director Cyril Abiteboul told Reuters at the Azerbaijan Grand Prix. "So the worst for us would be that we would want to stay with Carlos and that's not possible. And it can happen, let's be honest. So we need to plan accordingly." Abiteboul said the team were treating Sainz as if he were staying, however. "We already actually started to work on next year's car, we had a meeting this week with him to talk about the plan for next year, the objectives and also... the early concept of the 2019 car," he said.

"It's a clear sign we are not thinking that, in the back of our mind, he may not be with us. It may happen, but we don't want to compromise short-term or middle-term performance by starting to mitigate the way we are working with him." Sainz, who joined Renault late last season to replace Britain's under-performing Jolyon Palmer, has been out-qualified by team mate Nico Hulkenberg 3-0 this season and has only three points to the German's 22. Abiteboul recognised the youngster was "a bit behind" but said Renault remained fully supportive.

"It would be completely inappropriate to start making judgements only after three races, way too early," he said. "But it does say something about the quality of his team

mate and that's great, that's only positive. "For the rest, we will see. We have a bit of time to specifically think about Carlos. Having said that, we will not delay the thinking process about the alternative in case it cannot work out with him. "It's my responsibility to make sure that we have a competitive lineup next year and to present the options to the board of Renault in the coming weeks and months and we will do that."

'UNACCEPTABLE'

For Hulkenberg, it was encouraging despite knowing he faced a five-place grid penalty for a gearbox change. More drama followed in the final minutes of Q1 when Pierre Gasly almost clipped his Red Bull team-mate Brendon Hartley. Taking avoiding action, Gasly bounced over the kerbs at Turn 15 and into an escape road. The Frenchman was furious, screaming at the New Zealander over the team radio. Told Hartley had a puncture he said: "Unacceptable". "Sorry guys," said Hartley. "I was

trying to get out of the way, but it was too late. I went the wrong way. I feel pretty stupid."

This incident resulted in them both being eliminated in 17th and 19th positions along with the luckless Grosjean. Also out went Stoffel Vandoorne of McLaren and Marcus Ericsson of Sauber. In Q2 more drama saw Raikkonen going straight on, at Turn 15, and Lance Stroll also left the track. Bottas led the way ahead of Verstappen and Vettel before Raikkonen went off again and a persistent Hamilton topped the charts ahead of his team-mate by 0.003 seconds until Raikkonen, racing with fury on a set of ultra-

softs, roared to the head of the lap-times in the final seconds. All this left Stroll in 11th place ahead of Williams team-mate Sirotkin, Fernando Alonso of McLaren, Charles Leclerc of Sauber and Kevin Magnussen of Haas. On their



BAKU: Pole position winner Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel (C) celebrates with second placed Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (L) and third placed Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas after the qualifying session for the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix at the Baku City Circuit in Baku yesterday. — AFP

first flying runs, Vettel outpaced Hamilton by three-tenths ahead of Bottas and the Red Bulls with Raikkonen sixth, following a scary off-road excursion at Turn 16. "I was on the kerb and couldn't steer," said the Finn. — AFP

Trailblazer Walsh wins and hangs up boots

DUBLIN: Trailblazing Irish jockey Katie Walsh, who came closest to becoming the first woman to ride a Grand National winner, has retired. The 33-year-old-third on Seabass in the world's most famous steeplechase in 2012 — bowed out in the best possible way with a fine win at Irish national hunt racing's premier festival Punchestown.

Despite still being at the top of her game—which down the years has seen her win an Irish National on Thunder and Roses and three winners at the Cheltenham Festival—Walsh felt she had achieved all she could. "I've had a marvellous career and I've unbelievable memories. The next chapter in life begins now," she said. "I said to myself that I'd retire whenever I rode my next winner, whether it be here at Punchestown or wherever."

"I'd be the first one sitting at home saying: 'When is she going to be hanging up her boots?'" Walsh hails from a legendary Irish racing family with father Ted and brother Ruby combining as trainer and jockey respectively to win the 2000 Grand National on Papillon.

She was heavily backed to win this year's National on Baie Des Iles trained by her husband Ross O'Sullivan. However, the grey never really fired and came in last of the 12 finishers. Walsh, who was given a guard of honour by her fellow jockeys as she made her way back to the weighing room after her final victory on Friday, said she had been blessed with the career she had had. "I wanted to ride in a National for Ross and did that, and have ridden winners in France,



Katie Walsh

Australia, England and Ireland and was very lucky throughout my career," she said. "I've had the backing of dad and Ross, and wouldn't have ridden half these winners without the backing of Willie (Mullins).

"Everyone is here, my husband Ross and my family. I couldn't have picked a better place." Mullins too had a festival to remember as having begun the week trailing Gordon Elliott by almost 500,000 euros (\$607,000) in the trainer's championship he overhauled him to secure the title. However, a six-timer on the Wednesday and big wins for Footpad and Faugheen allied to Elliott's hurdling star Samcro falling in Friday's Champion Hurdle saw Mullins turn the tables completely and with a lead of over half a million euros himself he will be handed the trophy for the 12th time later at Punchestown. — AFP

Zain holds employees volleyball tournament

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, successfully held its Employees Volleyball Tournament at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) fields. The tournament continued for two days and witnessed the participation of ten teams.

The organization of various sports tournaments is a main pillar of Zain's internal strategy towards the health of its employees. The company remains committed to the wellbeing of its employees by organizing similar events to increase the spirit of teamwork and out-of-office bonding amongst them.

The tournament witnessed positive participation from Zain employees, continuing for two consecutive days between ten teams at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) fields. "Game Over" team won the first place title, while "Al Khibrah" team won the second place title.

During the award ceremony, Zain awarded the winning players as well as recognized the Head of Sporting Activities at GUST Salem Al Qabandi for hosting the event at the university's fields.

Zain will spare no efforts to organize activities and programs that enrich the recreational aspect of its employees' lives and cater to their different talents and interests. The company is keen on encouraging employees to pursue healthier lifestyles and take part in different sports and health programs all year round.

Zain is keen on ensuring employees take part in all of the company's social activities and programs, whether they be cultural, sporting, or recreational events. The organization of this tournament is part of Zain's belief in supporting the physical wellbeing and health-orientation of its employees, as well as the company's commitment to the development of the sports sector in Kuwait.



KUWAIT: Winners of the first and second place titles.

Sports

Crusaders go top after Reds upset Lions, historic win for Jaguares

Win push Crusaders to the top of the standings

CANBERRA: Defending champions Canterbury Crusaders went top of Super Rugby as the Queensland Reds upset the Golden Lions and the Jaguares beat the Blues for their first-ever win over a New Zealand side yesterday.

The Crusaders were reduced to 13 men during the second half but were too organised and clinical for the ACT Brumbies, winning 21-8 in Canberra to stretch Australia's losing sequence against New Zealand teams to 36 matches. Elsewhere, the Reds, coming off four losses, set up their shock 27-22 win over South Africa's leading team with a rousing four-try first half to lead 24-0 at half-time and battled hard to hold on in the second half. The Jaguares, full of confidence after beating the Brumbies and Melbourne Rebels in the past two weeks, came from behind in Auckland to beat the Blues 20-13. The eight-time Super Rugby champions Crusaders fell behind to a try by Henry Speight after 90 seconds but powered away to lead the Brumbies 21-8 at half-time. The Brumbies had more territory and possession in a scoreless second half but despite the Crusaders losing Scott Barrett and Ryan Crotty to the sin bin, they could not close the gap.

The win pushed the Crusaders to the top of the standings after the Lions upset and it was their 10th straight win outside New Zealand. "There were guys in the sin bin, that's never nice, and full credit to the boys who stayed out there, they remained pretty calm and we worked through those issues of having two guys on the sidelines," Crusaders skipper Sam Whitelock said.

The Reds, coached by former All Black lock Brad Thorn,

jumped to third in the Australian conference with four wins from nine games, while the Lions, with six wins from 10, remain top in South Africa.

"Last week you could tell quite early we weren't quite there, but this afternoon that first try in the first five minutes was indicative of how we wanted to play, be aggressive in the contact area," Reds veteran flanker George Smith said. "We came out well for that first 10 minutes of the second half and we were holding on in the last 30."

Jean-Pierre Smith, Caleb Timu, Brandon Paenga-Amosa and Smith all scored for the Reds in the first half. The spluttering Lions finally scored through their outstanding hooker Malcolm Marx to trail 27-5 after 55 minutes.

Marx powered over once more and replacement Mamus Schoeman added two further tries before the Lions revival ran out of time and they had to settle for a losing bonus point. The Jaguares and Blues battled away in persistent rain in Auckland which detracted from a spectacle but was not helped by 24 penalties, 15 of them by the Blues.

The Argentinians stepped up the pressure as they demolished the Blues pack in the second half and were rewarded with tries to Emiliano Boffelli and Tomas Lezana with a conversion and penalty by Nicolas Sanchez. The win moved the Jaguares into the top eight to the delight of captain Joaquin Tuculet.

"We are very happy," he said. "In the second half we played very well and we won the game. The forwards, their work was amazing and the scrum and lineout, so our win is for them." —AFP



BRISBANE: Reds' Filipo Daugunu (L) and Lions' Andries Coetzee (R) compete for the ball during the Super Rugby match between Australia's Queensland Reds and South Africa's Golden Lions in Brisbane yesterday. — AFP

“ We came out well for that first 10 minutes ”

Nadal thrashes Goffin to set up final with teenager Tsitsipas

BARCELONA: Rafael Nadal booked a place in the Barcelona Open final by breezing past David Goffin 6-4 6-0 yesterday with his 18th successive claycourt win and 400th overall on the surface.

World number one Nadal will meet Greek teenager Stefanos Tsitsipas in Sunday's showpiece when he will target a record-extending 11th title in Barcelona a week after claiming the Monte Carlo Masters for the 11th time.

Nadal has won every final he has played in Barcelona. The Mallorcan got off to a slow start in the semi-final on the Rafael Nadal Court as he surrendered his service in the opening game and 10th-ranked Goffin held to take a 2-0 lead. Nadal immediately broke back to level and the home favourite broke again in the 10th to take the first set. The Spaniard came into his own in the second while Goffin, who had to play three sets against Roberto Bautista Agut in the last quarter-final on Friday, began to wilt. The Belgian finally came out fighting in the sixth game but eventually succumbed to claycourt specialist Nadal, surrendering serve for the third time in the set by firing a shot beyond the baseline, ending a match lasting one hour 22 minutes. Greek 19-year-old Tsitsipas stormed into his first ATP final by beating Spain's world number 11 Pablo Carreno Busta 7-5 6-3. Tsitsipas had pulled off the biggest win of his career on Friday before stunning last year's finalist and world number seven Dominic Thiem in straight sets and was the underdog against Carreno Busta, who is ranked 52 places above him.

The youngster got off to a flying start as he broke his opponent in the second game and marched into a 4-1 lead. The Spaniard hit back with a break to level at 5-5 but wasted a chance to break again and lost his serve to concede the set. Tsitsipas, ranked 63rd, broke the 27-year-old for a third time to pull 4-2 ahead in the second and eventually served out the



BARCELONA: Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas returns the ball to Spain's Pablo Carreno Busta during their Barcelona Open ATP tournament semi-final tennis match in Barcelona. — AFP

match, collapsing to the ground in elation as he won on his second match point when Carreno Busta hit beyond the baseline. Tsitsipas becomes the first Greek player to reach an ATP final since 1973 when Nicholas Kalogeropoulos made the final of the now defunct Des Moines Open.

Meanwhile, top seed Caroline Wozniacki was forced to retire from her Istanbul Cup quarter-final against Pauline Parmentier on Friday with an abdominal injury. Wozniacki won the opening set before France's Parmentier fought back to level the contest at 4-6 6-3. Unable to continue, Australian Open champion Wozniacki conceded the match before the start of the decider.

Up next for 32-year-old Parmentier is Romania's Irina-

Camelia Begu, who battled past Donna Vekic 3-6 7-6(1) 6-1. After being broken in the first game of the opening set, Wozniacki took a 4-1 lead before her opponent drew level. The Dane then switched gears to claim the opening set.

Seeking her maiden victory over Wozniacki, Parmentier raced ahead 3-0 in the second set. Wozniacki took a medical timeout to deal with her injury but struggled thereafter and called it quits after Parmentier won the second set.

Earlier, twice grand slam champion Svetlana Kuznetsova made 21 unforced errors in her 6-1 1-6 7-5 defeat by Slovenia's Polona Hercog. Hercog, 27, will take on Maria Sakkari of Greece who beat Dutch qualifier Arantxa Rus 6-3 7-6(6). — Agencies

Vandeweghe stunned by Halep triumph

STUTTGART: CoCo Vandeweghe knocked world number one Simona Halep out of the Stuttgart Grand Prix on Friday with a commanding 6-4, 6-1 win but admitted she wasn't even aware of the score for large parts of the match.

The Californian's 74-minute demolition of the Romanian top seed follows Maria Sharapova's loss in the first round and the injury retirements of second seed Garbine Muguruza and German crowd favourite Angelique Kerber on Thursday in the second round.

Vandeweghe, ranked number 16, admits that this is her least-favourite surface, but she has still reached the first clay semi-final of her WTA career. She will face French sixth seed Caroline Garcia, who constructed a third straight fightback over third-seeded Elina Svitolina 6-7 (4/7), 6-4, 6-2.

"At one point in the first set, I wasn't even sure of the score," Vandeweghe said. "Maybe that's the secret." The American held her nerve to break early in the second set and added an insurance break for a 5-1 lead and closed out the upset on her second match point a game later when Halep went long with a return.

"Clay is still not my favourite surface, it's certainly not my number one," added the American. But with a Porsche 718 Boxster going to the tournament winner along with prize money, Vandeweghe admits she has plenty of motivation to win a first title on the alien surface.

"I'm one step closer, maybe if I keep it up I can win a new toy to take home to California." Halep lost to an American for the first time since the 2017 Australian Open when she was stunned by Shelby Rogers in the first round. "It was like a flash and I don't really know what happened during the match," the Romanian said.

"She served really well and it was really tough to break her. I lost the serve in the first set and then I went a little bit down. "I couldn't feel the rhythm. I couldn't feel the game. I missed a little bit too much. She was very strong today."

Garcia has made a habit of rallying to beat Svitolina, duplicating comebacks she completed last autumn in Beijing and at the season-ending WTA finals in Singapore.

The two-and-a-quarter-hour struggle featured nine aces from Svitolina and 10 from Garcia, who earned her first win of the season over a top 10 player.

Saturday's second semi-final will be contested between Estonia's Anett Kontaveit and fifth-seeded Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic. Kontaveit needed almost three hours to beat Russia's Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova 7-5, 6-7 (6/8), 6-4 while Pliskova came from break points down in the final game to beat Roland Garros champion Jelena Ostapenko, 5-7, 7-5, 6-4. — AFP

Al Sayer honors Kuwaiti Drift Champion powered by Motul

KUWAIT: Al Sayer Engineering, a subsidiary of Al Sayer Holding held a ceremony at Motul Center at Canada Dry Street Shuwaikh to honor 2018 Kuwait King of Drift title winner Ali Maksheed. The memento presentation ceremony was attended by Bengt Schultz Chief Operating Officer at Al Sayer Holding, Krishna Kumar General Manager Al Sayer Engineering, Ali Maksheed Kuwait Drifting Champion, Vivek Kohli Senior Manager Oil and Paints and Mohamed Nasimi Senior Manager After-Sales Marketing.

Speaking during the occasion Bengt Schultz said "Congratulations to Ali for this achievement backed by excellent track performance. We look forward to our continued partnership for brand Motul and wish him the best for all drifting competition for this season." According to Krishna Kumar "Al Sayer is pleased to introduce Motul brand's presence to the exciting circuits of drift racing through our sponsorship contract with Ali Maksheed Kuwait Drift Champion. Motul is partnering with world's leading racing teams and we aim to reflect the same spirit here".

Defending champion, Ali Maksheed, secured the title for the second year running, at the Red Bull Car Park Drift Kuwait Qualifier clinching the title with a jaw-dropping performance collecting an impressive 386 points. Sharing the excitement he commented "I am ecstatic to represent Kuwait at the 2018 Series Final, for the second year running, and aim to keep Kuwait's head held high. At this point I thank and appreciate the valuable support from Al Sayer and Motul as my racing sponsor." Al Sayer's partnership comes as a title



sponsor featuring Motul logos on Ali Maksheed's customized and fine-tuned drift racing car Toyota FT 86 along with supply of high performance Motul racing oil for the competitions.

Earlier this year, Ali Maksheed was one of the top performers in Red Bull Car Park Drift Series Final which was held at SIRBB Circuit Kuwait recently. Ali had topped the leader board among the three drifters from Kuwait who participated in the local qualifier. The local Kuwaiti competitor impressed the judges to win the King of Smoke title. The 2018 series kicked off in Oman on January 26 and the competition has continued since then with qualifiers in UAE and Egypt. Qualifiers will continue in Qatar, Tunisia, Turkey, Morocco,

Algeria, Jordan, Mauritius, and Lebanon. With only one drifter from each participating country, Lebanon will welcome the 2018 Kuwait King of Drift at the Series Final this September 22 where he will compete to claim the Series Final thrown. As a specialist in synthetic oils, Motul has become the partner of many manufacturers and sports teams for its technological developments in mechanical sports, car and motorcycle racing. Motul is present in many international competitions as official team supplier: MotoGP, Road racing, Trial, Enduro, Endurance, Superbike, Supercross, Rallycross, World Rally Championship, FIA GT, Le Mans 24 Hours, Spa 24 Hours, Le Mans Series, rally raid, Paris-Dakar, F3, etc.

Sports

Bayern see off Kovac's Eintracht, Cologne relegated

All eyes on Tuesday's Champions League clash with Real Madrid

BERLIN: Youngster Niklas Dorsch scored on debut as a second-string Bayern Munich side cruised to a 4-1 victory over future coach Niko Kovac and Eintracht Frankfurt in the Bundesliga yesterday, while Cologne were relegated in dramatic fashion after a 3-2 defeat by Freiburg. With all eyes on Tuesday's Champions League clash with Real Madrid and with the Bundesliga title wrapped up, Bayern rested several key players, giving first-team debuts to the 20-year-old Dorsch, as well as teenagers Meritan Shabani and Franck Evina.

Dorsch gave Bayern the lead from close range just before half-time, and Sandro Wagner doubled the advantage in the second half. Sebastian Haller grabbed a goal back for Frankfurt, before Rafinha and Niklas Sule wrapped up victory for the hosts.

Bayern will face Frankfurt and Kovac again in next month's German Cup final in Berlin. "We played very efficiently, which is something we didn't manage to do against Real Madrid last Wednesday," said Bayern coach Jupp Heynckes. Nils Petersen scored a goal in each half to give Freiburg a comfortable lead, before a dramatic late comeback from Cologne. Leonardo Bittencourt netted two goals in five minutes to give the visitors hope, but a late strike from Lucas Hoeler sealed Cologne's relegation. "Hoeler's goal was the cherry on the cake of a completely awful season," said Cologne goalkeeper Timo Horn. "We feel totally empty." Fellow strugglers Hamburg, meanwhile, fuelled hopes of a miraculous

escape with a 3-1 win in Wolfsburg. Bobby Wood fired Hamburg ahead from the penalty spot on 43 minutes, ending his 247-day goal drought. Lewis Holtby doubled the lead moments later, nodding Tatsuya Ito's cross into the far corner. Josip Brekalo pulled a goal back for Wolfsburg 12 minutes from time, but Luca Waldschmidt secured victory in stoppage time for Hamburg.

Hamburg's third win in four games puts them just two points adrift of safety as they bid to avoid a first relegation in their history. "It's great that the boys are playing so bravely," said Hamburg coach Christian Titz. "We still need another win in Frankfurt next week, which won't be easy."

Elsewhere, Schalke drew 1-1 with Borussia Moenchengladbach, while Hertha Berlin rescued a point against Augsburg. Schalke's Nabil Bentaleb was sent off early in the game, after appearing to slap Gladbach captain Lars Stindl. Stindl then set up Raffael as Gladbach

took the lead on 32 minutes but, in a cruel blow to his World Cup hopes, was carried off the field with an ankle injury before half-time.

Daniel Caligiuri levelled the scores with a penalty late in the first half. In Berlin, Michael Gregoritsch's deflected shot looped into the top corner to put Augsburg ahead on 32 minutes, and Sergio Cordova doubled the lead with a well-placed shot on the hour mark. A Vedad Ibisevic penalty and a late strike from Davie Selke, however, rescued a point for Hertha. — AFP



MUNICH: Bayern Munich's German defender Mats Hummels (L) and Bayern Munich's German midfielder Sebastian Rudy (R) vie for the ball with Frankfurt's Serbian forward Luka Jovic (2nd L) and Frankfurt's Mexican midfielder Marco Fabian (2nd R) during the German first division Bundesliga football match FC Bayern Munich vs Eintracht Frankfurt in Munich, southern Germany yesterday. — AFP



Hertha Berlin rescued a point against Augsburg

Wenger set for Old Trafford farewell

MANCHESTER: Arsene Wenger is unsure of the welcome he will receive on his final visit to Old Trafford as Arsenal boss today after many "great battles" against Manchester United during his two decades in charge.

The 68-year-old Frenchman, leaving the club at the end of the season, will bring a side that is a pale shadow of the team that challenged United's Premier League dominance during his first decade in charge. Wenger's clashes with former United boss Alex Ferguson are the stuff of legend and his relationship with current Manchester United manager Jose Mourinho has been laced with bitterness. But both men have reached out to him with warm words since he announced he was stepping down.

Mourinho said he regrets some of the "little negative episodes" between himself and Wenger over the years, calling on United fans to give him a fitting send-off. When asked whether he could be friends with Mourinho, Wenger spoke instead of "respect" for the current United boss. Arsenal, in sixth spot in the league, look certain to miss out

on the top four for the second year in a row. But Wenger will still believe he can leave the club with a trophy and a Champions League spot despite conceding a late goal in a 1-1 home draw with Atletico Madrid in the Europa League on Thursday.

The Frenchman is unsure how he will be greeted at Old Trafford, where he is unlikely to play a first-choice side with the second leg of the Europa League tie looming next week. "I don't know what reaction I will get but look we had some great battles in 22 years and for me what will be at stake is to recover from that result (against Atletico) and before we go to Atletico have a good game," Wenger said.

The Frenchman, who says he is not ready to retire from football, is likely to face a side including former Gunners star Alexis Sanchez, who left to join United in the January transfer window. The Chilean's presence in the opposing team will be a painful reminder to Arsenal fans of Wenger's inability in recent years to convince many of his best players to buy into his project and stay. Wenger said he was so committed to Arsenal that he even declined an approach by then United chairman Martin Edwards when Ferguson was mulling retiring in 2001. "Arsenal is the love of my life. I turned many, many clubs down to face the challenge when we built the stadium," said Wenger, referring to the Emirates. — AFP

Everton celebrates 2-0 victory at Huddersfield Town

HUDDERSFIELD TOWN: Huddersfield Town were left sweating over avoiding relegation after goals from Cenk Tosun and Idrissa Gueye condemned them to a 2-0 home defeat by mid-table Everton in a scrappy Premier League clash yesterday.

The result left Huddersfield 16th on 35 points from as many games, two more than Swansea City - who are hosting Chelsea later on Saturday - and three ahead of 18th-placed Southampton who rekindled their survival hopes with a 2-1 home win over Bournemouth.

The home team's boss David Wagner conceded his outfit were beaten by a better team and was optimistic about securing top flight football next season.

"The support from the stands was great, we gave everything but we were beaten by quality in the end,"

Wagner told BBC. "We missed opportunities and they scored with their first effort on goal and then in the second half we were not at the same level. "We have to deal with it and we will deal with it. The players need a lift and we will give them that. We had good momentum. We will fight until the final end." Huddersfield dictated the pace in the opening half of a scrappy affair but Everton always looked more likely to break the deadlock. Tosun fired them ahead in the 39th minute with a fine finish from 18 metres after good work by Theo Walcott.

The visitors missed two good chances to double their advantage in the second half before Gueye silenced the noisy home crowd with a superb shot from 20 metres which gave the home keeper Jonas Loessl no chance. Everton manager Sam Allardyce, who came under fire from the visiting fans, praised his team.

"It was an excellent performance," he said. "Huddersfield at home have been strong and they were looking to make themselves safe by beating us but we were too good for them. "It's a good win and that's 11 points in six games. We are riding high and are finishing the season strongly... we shouldn't keep talking about critics." — Reuters



LONDON: Everton's Irish defender Seamus Coleman (R) clears the ball during the English Premier League football match between Huddersfield Town and Everton at the John Smith's stadium in Huddersfield, northern England yesterday. — AFP

Mitrovic stars as Fulham maintain bid for Premier League promotion

LONDON: Aleksandar Mitrovic crowned Fulham's come-from behind win with the decisive goal in a 2-1 victory at home to Sunderland on Friday that saw the Cottagers stay in the hunt for automatic promotion to the Premier League.

Victory meant London side Fulham leapfrogged Cardiff into second place, although the Welsh club will regain that position if they win away to Hull then the top two teams at the end of the regular season in the Championship are guaranteed promotion to English football's lucrative top flight, with champions Wolves having already secured one of those coveted spots. The four teams finishing in third to sixth places will battle it out for the one remaining promotion place via a series of play-off games. Sunderland, already relegated, upset the form book by going ahead in the 28th minute through Joel Asoro. But Fulham-whose US-based owner Shahid Khan's bid to buy Wembley was revealed this week-were level when Lucas Piazon equalised just before the break. Mitrovic secured victory with a 76th-minute header, his 12th goal since arriving on loan from Newcastle in January.

"Of course I was confident, but if the team play good, I play good as well," Mitrovic told Sky Sports. "We didn't play the best as we have for most of the season, but in the end we got three points."

"It was a really hard and tough game but we have to be happy with this win tonight. "We have one game left and we have to make that final push and see what is going to happen. We came a really long way. If someone asked us before Christmas to take second place in the last game, and be in this position, the gaffer (manager) would 100 percent have taken it." Slavisa Jokanovic, the Fulham manager, added: "Today it was complicated for us and I am happy to take the pressure off our back. It's part of the competition."

"Aleksandar's contribution is crucial. He's scored many winning goals and today it was an important goal for us. "(Cardiff playing Hull) is not under my control, I expect taking this pressure off our back will make us better in the next game."

Defeat meant northeast club Sunderland become the first side since Wolves in 1983/84 and 1984/85 to finish bottom of the top two tiers of English football in successive seasons, and just the third club to have done so, after Fulham in 1967/68 and 1968/69. — AFP

Struggling Hamburg beat Wolfsburg in relegation derby

BERLIN: Former European champions Hamburg SV edged past hosts VfL Wolfsburg 3-1 in their relegation derby yesterday to continue their desperate comeback to stay in the Bundesliga with two matches remaining.

A 43rd minute penalty by Bobby Wood put the visitors in front and Lewis Holtby doubled their lead with a glancing header on the stroke of halftime.

Josip Brekalo slipped his 78th minute free kick past Hamburg keeper Julian Pollersbeck to give Wolfsburg some hope.

But Hamburg, the only team to have played in the Bundesliga every season since the top division's creation in 1963, scored in stoppage time with Luca Waldschmidt to seal their third win in the last four matches. The northern club are still 17th but have clawed their way back to within two points of the relegation

playoff spot and 16th-placed Mainz 05 who have 30 points and are in action against RB Leipzig today. Wolfsburg are also on 30 points, in 15th on goal difference. Schalke 04 failed to seal their Champions League spot for next season after drawing 1-1 against Borussia Moenchengladbach. They also had Nabil Bentaleb sent off for striking Gladbach's Lars Stindl, who had to be taken off injured after twisting his foot a little later. Schalke are second on 57 points, with Borussia Dortmund, who travel to Werder Bremen on Sunday, in third on 54.

Bayer Leverkusen, who host VfB Stuttgart later, are fifth on 51, with the top four teams qualifying for the Champions League. A second-string Bayern Munich that included four reserve players in the starting lineup, eased past Eintracht Frankfurt 4-1 as coach Jupp Heynckes rested his players ahead of Tuesday's Champions League semi-final second leg at Real Madrid. Bundesliga debutant Niklas Dorsch scored the opener and Sandro Wagner, Rafinha and Niklas Sule were also on target as next season's Bayern coach Niko Kovac watched quietly from the Eintracht bench. Bottom club Cologne were relegated despite coming back from two goals down to lose 3-2 at Freiburg. — Reuters

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
West Ham United v Manchester City	16:15	beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Manchester United v Arsenal	18:30	beIN SPORTS HD 2	
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Getafe v Girona	13:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Deportivo Alaves v Atletico de Madrid	17:15	beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Valencia v SD Eibar	19:30	beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Deportivo La Coruna v Barcelona	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 3	
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Crotone v US Sassuolo Calcio	13:30	beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Atalanta v Genoa CFC	16:00	beIN SPORTS	
Bologna v AC Milan	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Hellas Verona v spal	16:00	beIN SPORTS	
UC Sampdoria v Cagliari Calcio	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 12 EN	
Benevento v Udinese Calcio	16:00	beIN SPORTS	
Fiorentina v SSC Napoli	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Torino v Lazio	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 4	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA			
FSV Mainz 05 v RB Leipzig	16:30	beIN SPORTS HD 5	
Werder Bremen v Borussia Dortmund	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 5	
FRENCH LEAGUE			
Stade Rennais v Toulouse	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6	
SCO Angers v Olympique Marseille	18:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6	
Paris Saint-Germain v EA Guingamp	22:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6	

12 Three in a row for Vettel, Hamilton shares front row

13 Nadal thrashes Goffin to set up final with teenager Tsitsipas

14 Pacers force game seven, Raptors and Jazz advance



LONDON: Leicester City's English striker Jamie Vardy (C) in action during the English Premier League football match between Crystal Palace and Leicester City at Selhurst Park in south London yesterday. — AFP

Fabregas boosts Chelsea's top-four bid

West Brom earn stay of execution, Liverpool held in Stoke stalemate

LONDON: Cesc Fabregas boosted Chelsea's bid to qualify for the Champions League as his superb strike clinched a 1-0 win at Swansea, while West Brom kept alive their slender hopes of avoiding Premier League relegation with a 1-0 victory against Newcastle yesterday.

Spain midfielder Fabregas gave Chelsea the perfect start at the Liberty Stadium when he took an Eden Hazard pass and fired home for his 50th Premier League goal in the fourth minute. That was enough to secure a third successive league win for Antonio Conte's fifth-place side, who move within two points of Tottenham ahead of their fourth-placed London rivals' clash with Watford on Monday. It was a damaging defeat for Swansea and Carlos Carvalhal's team are now only one point above the relegation zone with three games left. West Brom would have been relegated to the Championship if they had failed to take maximum points at St James' Park, but Matt Phillips bagged the first-half winner to keep them in with a shout for a few more hours at least.

Jake Livermore's pin-point pass sent Phillips racing clear of the Newcastle defence and the winger lashed past Martin Dubravka in the 29th minute. Bottom club Albion are five points from safety and an eight-season stay in the top flight would still be over if they fail to take maximum points from their last two games against Tottenham and Crystal Palace.

Interim boss Darren Moore said: "We can't control other results. There's nothing we can do. "We're just doing everything we can at our end. The boys have done really well since I came in." Dusan Tadic breathed new life into Southampton's bid to beat the drop as his double sealed a crucial 2-1 success in the south-coast derby against Bournemouth at St Mary's.

Mark Hughes' third-bottom side took the lead when Serbia winger Tadic finished off a rapid counter-attack from Mario Lemina in the 25th minute. Joshua King equalised for Bournemouth with a close-range finish after Saints failed to clear a corner in first-half stoppage-time.

But Southampton restored their advantage in the 54th minute thanks to a gem from Tadic, who embarked on a fine solo run before finishing in clinical fashion. It was Southampton's first league win in five matches since Hughes replaced the sacked Mauricio Pellegrino last month. Southampton, hoping to extend their six-season stint in the top flight, are one point adrift of safety with three games left.

"This is one of the most important wins in our history," Tadic said. "We are fighting for our lives and we showed that. We knew we had to win, no matter how we played."

BATTLING STOKE

Jürgen Klopp admitted Liverpool were below their best as they prepared for the Champions League semi-final, second-leg clash with Roma by settling for a goalless stalemate against Stoke at Anfield.

The Reds head to Rome on Wednesday with a 5-2 advantage from the first leg and do so on the back of a

tame encounter they controlled for long periods without over-exerting themselves in search of a winner.

The draw left Liverpool needing a maximum of four points from their remaining two matches to guarantee qualification for the Champions League via a top-four finish. "I saw everything I wanted to see except fluency and fun and joy," Klopp said. "It is hard on a day like this. But no-one was seriously injured so we carry on."

Second-bottom Stoke are three points from safety, but boss Paul Lambert said: "I could not have asked for any more. If the lads had played like that from the start of the season, I would not be here and they would be cruising in the league." Crystal Palace are on course to avoid relegation after thrashing Leicester 5-0 at Selhurst Park. Everton pushed Huddersfield deeper into the relegation mire as goals from Cenk Tosun and Idrissa Gueye earned a 2-0 win at the John Smith's Stadium.

Burnley, in seventh and chasing a Europa League place, were held to a 0-0 draw by Brighton at Turf Moor. — AFP

Bale leads Real to low-key win over Leganes

MADRID: Gareth Bale scored as a much-changed Real Madrid warmed up for Tuesday's Champions League semi-final second leg against Bayern Munich with a 2-1 win over Leganes yesterday. Bale bundled Real into an early lead, before Borja Mayoral took advantage of more sloppy defending to make it two before half-time. Serbian Darko Brasanac gave Leganes hope of a comeback, but Real closed out victory despite struggling in the second half.

Zinedine Zidane's men stay third in the table, one point behind city rivals Atletico who play Alaves on Sunday, when Barcelona can secure the La Liga title if they avoid defeat at Deportivo La Coruna.

Coach Zidane made 10 changes to the starting XI which beat Bayern 2-1 in Wednesday's first leg at the Allianz Arena, with Bale and Karim Benzema returning. Bale boosted his hopes of a start in the second leg by hooking in a deflected Benzema effort to give Real an eighth-minute lead with his first goal since a double against Las

Palmas on March 31. Leganes had stunned Real with a 2-1 victory at the Santiago Bernabeu in January to reach the Copa del Rey semi-finals, but struggled to make any inroads against their dominant hosts.

Daniel Ceballos fired narrowly over, but the soon-to-be deposed league champions doubled their advantage on the stroke of half-time. Mayoral tapped in from close range after Leganes goalkeeper Pichu Cuellar totally missed a left-wing cross, with offside appeals waved away as defender Unai Bustinza had got a touch to the ball on its way through. It was the 21-year-old Mayoral's second La Liga goal, having also netted against Real Sociedad back in September.

Leganes grew into the game after the break as Real's thoughts perhaps turned towards Bayern, and Miguel Guerrero wasted an excellent chance to halve the deficit as he headed wide from a Nabil El Zhar cross. But the away team did pull one back in the 66th minute, as Nordin Amrabat forced his way to the byline and squared for Brasanac to tap in from close range.

On-loan Watford winger Amrabat was proving dangerous, and the Moroccan saw a low shot saved by stand-in Real goalkeeper Kiko Casilla. Leganes continued to pile on the pressure, with Casilla making a brilliant stop to deny Bustinza. Leganes defender Gabriel sent off in injury-time, as Real clung on for the three points after a below-par performance. — AFP



MADRID: Real Madrid's Welsh forward Gareth Bale (L) challenges Leganes' Spanish midfielder Diego Rico (C) and Leganes' Greek defender Dimitrios Siovas during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid and Leganes at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2018

18 Costa Coffee celebrates its 50th store opening at Kuwait International Airport**20** Bursa Kuwait ends mixed amid selling pressures on small caps**21** 50% discount on purchases from Trolley, using KFH wallet

SINGAPORE: ASEAN leaders pose for a group photograph during the opening of the 32nd ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Summit in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

ASEAN worried over US-China trade row

US keeps China, puts Canada on IP priority watch list

SINGAPORE/WASHINGTON: Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday a mounting trade spat between the United States and China was one of the most pressing worries for Southeast Asian nations as their leaders echoed the concern over rising protectionism.

Lee flagged his concerns in remarks made as he opened a summit of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), for many of which the United States and China are the top two trading partners. "In particular, the recent trade tensions between the US and China are worrying concerns," he said. Singapore occupies the group's rotating chair for this year. "We are deeply concerned over the rising tide of protectionism and anti-globalization sentiments," said a statement issued on behalf of the ASEAN chair at the end of summit talks. The US Trump administration has threatened to impose tariffs on up to \$150 billion of Chinese imports, and Beijing has vowed retaliation against American exports. In a final statement, the leaders vowed to fight a "rising tide of protectionism" and intensify efforts to conclude talks for a massive 16-nation free trade zone that would include China and India, called the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

Lee warned that the open global trading system,

which has allowed many of the region's export-driven economies to flourish, has come under increasing threat due to protectionist policies in major economies.

IP concerns

Meanwhile, the Trump administration on Friday labeled 36 countries as inadequately protecting US intellectual property rights, keeping China on a priority watch list and adding Canada over concerns about its border controls and pharmaceutical practices.

The US Trade Representative's annual report on global IP concerns is separate from the "Section 301" report on Chinese technology transfer practices that has led the world's two largest economies to threaten each other with tariffs. The so-called "Special 301 Report on Intellectual Property Rights" calls out China for its "coercive technology transfer practices" and "trade secret theft, rampant online piracy, and counterfeit manufacturing".

It was the 14th straight year that China was placed on the "Priority Watch List".

The report was met with objections from the Chinese commerce ministry, which said the United States lacks objective standards and fairness. "The Chinese side opposes this, and urges the US to earnestly fulfill its bilateral commitments, respect the

facts, and objectively, impartially, evaluate with positive intentions the efforts made by foreign governments including China in the area of intellectual property rights and the results achieved," the ministry said in a statement on its website yesterday.

US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer is due to travel to China next week along with other senior Trump administration officials for talks on US demands for changes in Beijing's trade and intellectual property policies. President Donald Trump has threatened up to \$150 billion in tariffs on Chinese goods, and China's Ministry of Commerce has threatened to retaliate in equal measure. A USTR official declined to comment on Lighthizer's specific message to his Chinese counterparts next week, but said US officials "anticipate engaging with them meaningfully on all these issues."

The biggest surprise in Friday's report was the decision to move Canada from the lower-level "Watch List" to the same priority list as China. USTR cited Canada's "poor border enforcement," especially for counterfeit goods shipped through America's northern neighbor, and concerns about intellectual property protections for pharmaceuticals. US pharmaceutical companies have long complained that generic versions of drugs still under US patent protection flood in from Canada at much cheaper prices.

NAFTA talks

The increased criticism of Canada was revealed as Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland was locked in intense negotiations with Lighthizer over updating the North American Free Trade Agreement. Washington has demanded that a modernization of the 1994 pact include stronger IP protections. Lighthizer, Freeland and Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo are trying to work out a number of stumbling blocks in the NAFTA talks, including auto content rules. The office of Canadian Innovation Minister Navdeep Bains, who launched an intellectual property strategy on Thursday, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Ottawa is pledging to create an independent body to oversee patent and trademark issues, "which will ensure that professional and ethical standards are maintained." Colombia also was added to the Priority Watch List for failing to revise its copyright laws as required under a free trade agreement with the United States. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates were added to the Watch List. Concerns about pharmaceutical intellectual property protections, pirated software and counterfeit goods were factors in those decisions, USTR said. —Agencies

Macron digital tax plan faces EU rebuff

SOFIA: French President Emmanuel Macron's ambitious plans for an EU digital tax targeting US tech giants such as Google or Facebook faced strong headwinds yesterday, provoking anger from Paris.

Finance ministers from the EU's 28 member states discussed a controversial proposal aimed at claiming a bigger share of billions of euros from mainly US multinationals that shift earnings around Europe so as to pay lower tax rates. Many of the countries expressed caution out of fear of scaring off high tech investment, but also of provoking US President Donald Trump while the threat of a EU-US trade war still looms. "We are not putting on the brakes, but we do not want a standalone solution that will not work," said Luxembourg Finance Minister Pierre

Gramegna as he arrived for talks in Sofia, Bulgaria.

"I will insist that we talk to the Americans quickly and constructively otherwise it could lead to an escalation with America, knowing that we already have trade war rhetoric," he added.

Luxembourg hosts the EU headquarters for Amazon and along with Facebook and Apple hub Ireland, is loathed to see US tech giants head for the exit. A European source said the lukewarm response, which also included a muted Germany, drew the "cold fury" of French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire who asked ministers if Europe would "be strong or not".

"One thing I learnt from my week in the USA with President Macron: the Americans will only respect a show of strength," Le Maire said in the closed-door session, according to the source. Getting all countries on board is crucial as tax reforms in the EU require unanimity and the backing of Berlin is especially key. But Finance Minister Olaf Scholz was reported to have stayed mum during the heated debate, although he said Germany was behind the principle of the digital tax.

Taxing the likes of Facebook was "a big moral question", Scholz told a joint news conference with Le Maire after the talks. "There is no country that could accept what we see today that big companies are not (taxed)," Scholz said. The special tax is the latest measure by the European Union to rein in Silicon Valley giants and France would like a deal by the end of the year.

"It is not an anti (US tech giant) tax, it is not an anti US tax, it is not a protectionist approach, it is something which it is in interest of all Europeans wherever they live," said EU Economic Affairs Commissioner Pierre Moscovici, who is driving the plan.

The transatlantic shot across the bow has been championed by Macron who believes the measure would be a popular accomplishment for the EU ahead of European elections next year, in which anti-Brussels populists could do well. The most controversial part of the plan is to slap an emergency tax on digital companies with worldwide annual turnover above 750 million euros (\$924 million), such as Facebook, Google, Twitter, Airbnb and Uber. —AFP

Al-Ahli Kuwaiti Fund distributes dividends for FY17

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Kuwaiti Fund, managed by Ahli Capital Investment Company (ACIC), the investment arm of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), yesterday announced the distribution of dividends for the financial year ended December 31, 2017 (FY17) by 6.5 percent of NAV at 54 fils per investment unit.

Commenting on these excellent results, Muhsen M Alharbi, Chief Executive Officer of Ahli Capital Investment Company said: "Al-Ahli Kuwaiti Fund outperformed the Kuwaiti Weighted Index for the year ended December 31, 2017 by 3.2 percent, as the Fund's performance recorded 8.81

percent compared to 5.61 percent for the Kuwaiti Weighted Index.

"The Fund is an open-ended Kuwaiti denominated investment fund with a variable capital which is increased by issuance of new investment units or decreased by redemption of some of its units within the period set in its Articles of Association. It aims to

achieve long-term capital growth by investing in securities to realize returns and profits from market proceeds, while taking an acceptable risk level. It also allows investors to enter and exit investment on monthly basis," Al-Harbi added.



Business

Costa Coffee celebrates its 50th store opening at Kuwait International Airport

Alghanim Industries extending unique Costa Coffee experience in Kuwait



KUWAIT: (From left to right) Tom Edgar, Head of Franchise, MENA & India at Costa Coffee, Phil Broad, Vice President of Food & Beverage at Alghanim Industries, Omar K Alghanim, CEO of Alghanim Industries and Clair Preston-Beer, Managing Director of Costa Coffee Middle East & Asia. (Right) The Costa Coffee team at the new branch at Kuwait International Airport.



KUWAIT: Costa Coffee, London's favorite coffee shop chain and part of Alghanim Industries Food and Beverage portfolio, celebrated the opening of its 50th store at the Kuwait International Airport on 23 April 2018. Following the opening of a store at Al-Kout Mall earlier this month, the company continues its expansion in Kuwait to extend the Costa Coffee experience to more customers.

The opening ceremony was attended by CEO of Alghanim Industries, Omar K Alghanim, and the Managing Director of Costa Coffee Middle East & Asia, Clair Preston Beer, as well as Alghanim Industries executives.

Commenting on the new opening, CEO of Alghanim Industries, Omar K Alghanim said: "We are excited to open our 50th Costa Coffee store, bringing Costa's great products and first-class customer experience to Kuwait International Airport. This is an important milestone for Costa Kuwait, and we're really proud of our team for making it happen. We're happy that we serve the highest quality coffee in Kuwait, but what makes all the difference is the customer experience at all of our stores which has been internationally recognized by our partners in the United Kingdom."

He went on to say, "I'd like to thank our customers for continuously showing us their love for Costa Coffee and for making it the success it is today. We promise many future store openings in the days to come, and to always keep our customers at the heart of everything we do." Managing Director of Costa Coffee Middle East & Asia, Clair

Preston-Beer, said: "It has been a pleasure to watch Alghanim Industries grow Costa Coffee's presence in the Kuwaiti market, and to celebrate this milestone opening at Kuwait International Airport. This is just the beginning of a long-term expansion plan for our brand both in this market and worldwide." Strategically located by the departure gates, the store is accessible to everyone and will be open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Spread across 62 square meters, the store features new urban decor with natural lighting.

In addition to its geographical expansion, Costa Coffee has expanded its delivery services to Carriage, the online ordering platform. Furthermore, Costa Coffee has also launched an exclusive healthy menu with new recipes and specialty items developed in collaboration with international chefs such as Chef Dean Brettschneider, global-based professional baker and patissier and Annabel Karmel, the UK's No 1 children's cookery author and best-selling international author.

Costa is the UK's No 1 coffee shop, with over 2,000 stores in the UK and over 1,000 across more than 30

countries, and it continues to grow at a rapid rate. The brand currently operates in 50 locations across Kuwait and has a number of outlets slated to open across the country over the next year. Alghanim Industries acquired

Costa Kuwait in July 2013. Since then, Costa Coffee has been focusing on customer service, refurbishing existing stores and opening new ones around Kuwait, and refreshing and broadening its product range.

Costa is the UK's favorite coffee shop, having been awarded "Best Branded Coffee Shop Chain in the UK and Ireland" by Allegra Strategies for seven years running (2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016). With 2,000 coffee shops in the UK and more than 1,180 in 30 overseas markets, Costa is the fastest growing coffee shop business in the UK. Founded in London by Italian brothers Sergio and Bruno Costa in 1971, Costa has become the UK's favorite coffee shop chain and diversified into both the at-home and gourmet self-serve markets.

Costa is committed to looking after coffee-growers.

That's why we've established The Costa Foundation, a registered charity. The Costa Foundation's aims are to relieve poverty, advance education and the health and environment of coffee-growing communities around the world. So far, The Costa Foundation has funded the building of 53 schools and improved the social and economic welfare of coffee-growing communities. Costa is also committed to tackling the UK's literacy challenge and is proud to have signed the Vision for Literacy Business Pledge 2016.

Alghanim Industries is one of the oldest and largest, privately-owned companies in the MENA region. Founded at the turn of the century, in Kuwait, the company today employs more than 15,000 people in 30 businesses across 40 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Eastern Europe and Asia.

Alghanim Industries is a market leader in almost every major sector of its operations, which include: engineering, retail, automotive sales and service, insulation and pre-engineered steel building structures, logistics and warehousing, fast moving consumer goods, food & beverage, oil & gas, office automation, advertising, insurance, consumer credit and travel. The company is actively growing its brand portfolio, with a focus on top-tier global partners. Among them: Avis, British Airways, British Petroleum, Cathay Pacific, Daewoo, Honda, Saint-Gobain and Toshiba. Additionally, Alghanim Industries has created a number of successful regional businesses, including X-cite (consumer electronics), and Safat Home (lifestyle and home furniture).



Company offers convenient locations to customers

US economy slows in Q1, but wage growth accelerates

WASHINGTON: The US economy slowed in the first quarter as consumer spending grew at its weakest pace in nearly five years, but a surge in wages amid tightening labor market conditions and lower tax rates suggested the setback is likely temporary.

Gross domestic product increased at a 2.3 percent annual rate, the Commerce Department said in its snapshot of first-quarter GDP on Friday, also restrained by a

moderation in business spending on equipment and investment in homebuilding. These factors were partially offset by a rise in inventories and a narrowing of the trade deficit. The economy grew at a 2.9 percent rate in the fourth quarter. Domestic demand increased at a 1.7 percent rate, the slowest in two years, after rising at a brisk 4.8 percent pace in the final three months of 2017.

The moderate first-quarter growth is, however, probably not a true reflection of the economy's health as GDP tends to be sluggish at the start of the year because of a seasonal quirk.

Economists expect growth will accelerate in the second quarter as more households feel the impact of the Trump administration's \$1.5 trillion income tax package on their paychecks. The tax cuts came into effect in January. Lower corporate and individual tax rates as well as increased government spending will likely lift annual economic growth close to the administration's 3 percent

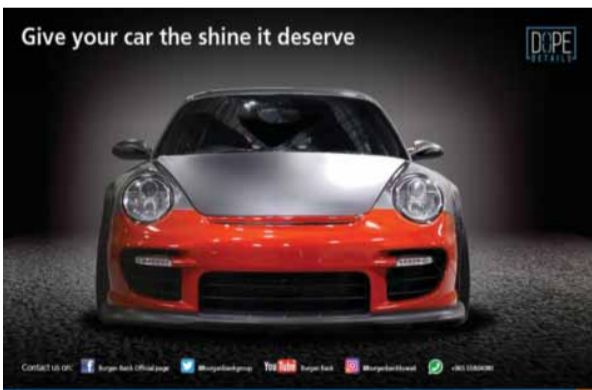
target. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast output rising at a 2.0 percent rate in the January-March period. "Tax cuts and government spending increases should lead to better overall economic activity," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pennsylvania. Federal Reserve officials are likely to shrug off the first-quarter performance. The US central bank raised interest rates last month in a nod to the strong labor market and economy, and forecast at least two more rate hikes this year. Minutes of the March 20-21 meeting published earlier this month showed policymakers "expected that the first-quarter softness would be transitory," citing "residual seasonality in the data, and more generally to strong economic fundamentals."

But a jump in wage growth and an acceleration in inflation in the first quarter will attract attention when Fed officials meet next Tuesday and Wednesday.

In a separate report in Friday, the Labor Department

said wages and salaries shot up 0.9 percent in the first quarter. That was the largest increase since the first quarter of 2007 and followed a 0.5 percent rise in the fourth quarter. Wages and salaries were up 2.7 percent in the 12 months through March compared to 2.5 percent in the year to December.

The GDP report showed the Fed's preferred inflation gauge, the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index excluding food and energy, increased at a 2.5 percent rate - the fastest pace since the fourth quarter of 2007. The core PCE price index rose at a 1.9 percent pace in the fourth quarter. The US central bank has a 2 percent inflation target. "It is increasingly difficult to argue that the 2 percent inflation target hasn't already been breached," said Steven Blitz, chief US economist at TS Lombard in New York. "Could the Fed go next week? Not likely, but there are no rules preventing it. A more hawkish statement is coming." —Reuters



Burgan Bank customers granted 20% discount from 'Dope Details'

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank is pleased to announce the launch of a new value adding offer to its customers, who will now be entitled to a 20 percent discount from Dope Details, the professional car detailing and protection center that provides the best of paint protection film and window tinting. Customers can find the center located in Shuwaikh Industrial 3, Block B, Street 49. To avail the benefit of this new offer just use any of Burgan Bank debit or credit cards. To know more about Burgan Bank's latest offers, or any of its products and services, customers can visit any of the bank's branches, or contact the call center on 1804080.

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.806
Indian Rupees	4.630
Pakistani Rupees	2.602
Sri Lankan 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

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		Selling Rate
Rate for Transfer	0.41214	301.000
US Dollar	0.006346	235.025
Canadian Dollar	0.045015	421.915
Sterling Pound	0.360865	369.235
Euro	0.360865	297.965
Swiss Franc	0.001326	800.470
Bahrain Dinar	0.033844	82.355
UAE Dirhams	0.064488	83.585
Qatari Riyals	0.004835	81.160
Saudi Riyals	0.008972	425.820
Jordanian Dinar	0.011916	17.013
Egyptian Pound	0.015646	1.916
Sri Lankan Rupees	0.050015	4.538
Indian Rupees	0.006346	2.604
Pakistani Rupees	0.004835	3.611
Bangladesh Taka	0.001326	5.770
Philippines Peso	0.003326	17.915
Cyprus pound	0.033844	3.760
Japanese Yen	0.081338	1.585
Syrian Pound	0.064488	2.830
Nepalese Rupees	0.004835	77.880
Malaysian Ringgit	0.008972	48.140
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	0.004835	10.550
Thai Bhat	0.008972	74.000
Turkish Lira		

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY Europe	SELL
British Pound	0.418714	0.418714
Czech Korone	0.015646	0.015646
Danish Krone	0.050015	0.050015
Euro	0.368365	0.368365
Georgian Lari	0.138050	0.138050
Hungarian 0.001136	0.001326	0.001326
Norwegian Krone	0.039044	0.039044
Romanian Leu	0.081338	0.081338
Russian ruble	0.004835	0.004835
Slovakia	0.018972	0.018972

Swedish Krona	0.030824	0.030824
Swiss Franc	0.299378	0.299378
Australia		
Australian Dollar	0.221023	0.221023
New Zealand Dollar	0.207975	0.207975
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.230117	0.230117
US Dollars	0.297550	0.297550
US Dollars Mint	0.298050	0.298050
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002981	0.002981
Chinese Yuan	0.046119	0.046119
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036683	0.036683
Indian Rupee	0.003982	0.003982
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000017
Japanese Yen	0.002682	0.002682
Korean Won	0.000273	0.000273
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073167	0.073167
Nepalese Rupee	0.002780	0.002780
Pakistan Rupee	0.001984	0.001984
Philippine Peso	0.005676	0.005676
Singapore Dollar	0.222510	0.222510
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001612	0.001612
Taiwan	0.010350	0.010350
Thai Baht	0.009223	0.009223
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.793501	0.793501
Egyptian Pound	0.013914	0.013914
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000083
Iraqi Dinar	0.000203	0.000203
Jordanian Dinar	0.420844	0.420844
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000155	0.000155
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022592	0.022592
Omani Riyal	0.777188	0.777188
Qatar Riyal	0.078566	0.078566
Saudi Riyal	0.079353	0.079353
Syrian Pound	0.001278	0.001278
Tunisian Dinar	0.119617	0.119617
Turkish Lira	0.069438	0.069438
UAE Dirhams	0.080703	0.080703
Yemeni Riyal	0.000980	0.000980

Business

Nissan Al-Babtain inaugurates the first Nissan Patrol quick service center

Al-Babtain's pioneership continues to raise brand excellence



Advanced convenience to satisfy growing customer base in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co., the sole authorized agent of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, recently launched the Quick Service center at the Nissan Patrol Workshop to support the needs of its expanding clientele in Kuwait. Designed to solely serve Nissan Patrol owners, the service center equipped with full-fledged utilities accommodating mechanical repairs, high quality spare parts, and superior cleaning facilities, all within the care of personalized trained technicians.

The opening ceremony was attended by Al-Babtain Group Chairman Mr. Khalid Al-Babtain, Board Member Mr. Nasser Al-Babtain and General Manager Automotive Mr. Laurent Pernet as well as Group Managers and representatives from Nissan Gulf, Nissan Middle East and Nissan Patrol customers. "Nissan Patrol legacy began in 1951 when it ruled the roads as one of the most reliable, rugged and versatile 4X4s available. Nissan Patrol has evolved into one of the world's toughest off-road vehicles and gradually to its sixth generation. Recognized as the Hero Of All Terrain, Nissan Patrol has grown in strength in

Kuwait over the past years. Proving its leadership in the automotive world, Al-Babtain's journey as a global pioneer commenced with the first dedicated Patrol Service Center in 2015. Backed by more than 2 decades of delivering top quality, up to date advantages over its competitors through passion and innovation, Al-Babtain progresses the brands proud history into the modern era", said Mr. Laurent Pernet

"Owing to the success of its first launch, Al-Babtain continues to manage expectations with enhanced customized experiences with the first facility of its kind now available at the same service center, which will guarantee improved accessibility, technology and swift interaction with walk in customers to avoid prolonged waiting. Customers are able to schedule appointments through the call center and are additionally entitled to the premium Nissan Patrol Lounge amenities", he added.

Committed to ensure complete satisfaction, customers can avail of trained service advisors who will attend to possible issues, as well as skilled technicians with the lat-

est diagnostic tools and up-to-the-minute repair techniques to fix any complications. Apart from state-of-the-art processes, it is important to note that Nissan Patrol will be subjected to detailed inspection checklist to ensure safety and functionality of all major components while using only Nissan Genuine Parts and accessories, oils and lubricants to never compromise on safety, functionality, accuracy of fit and value retention.

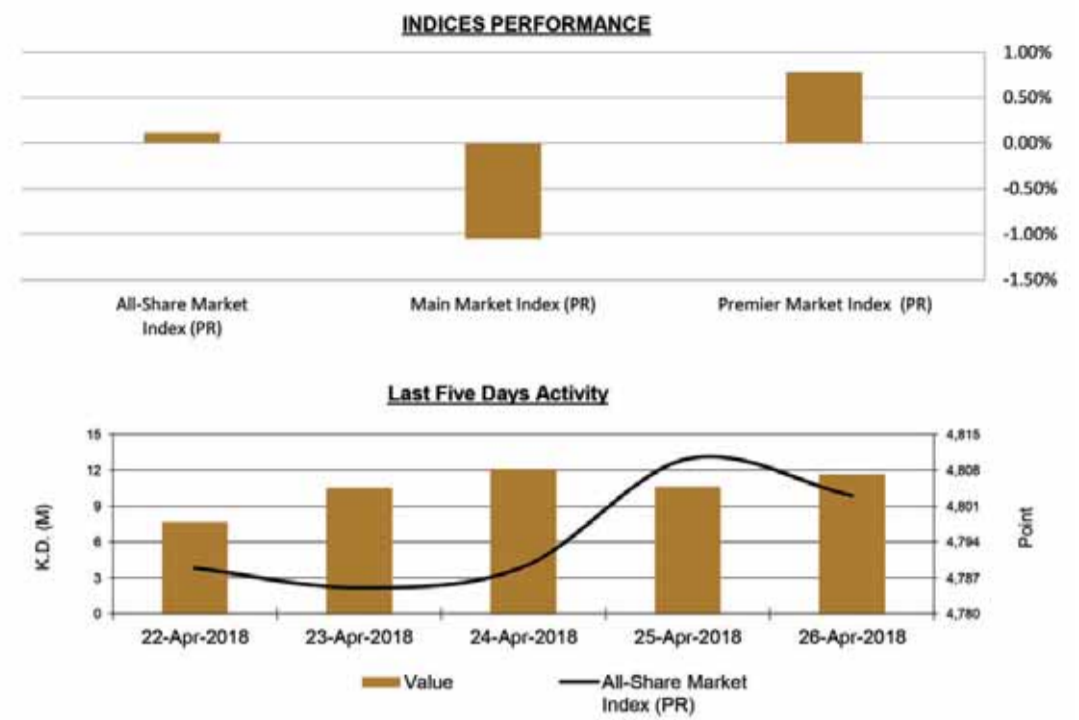
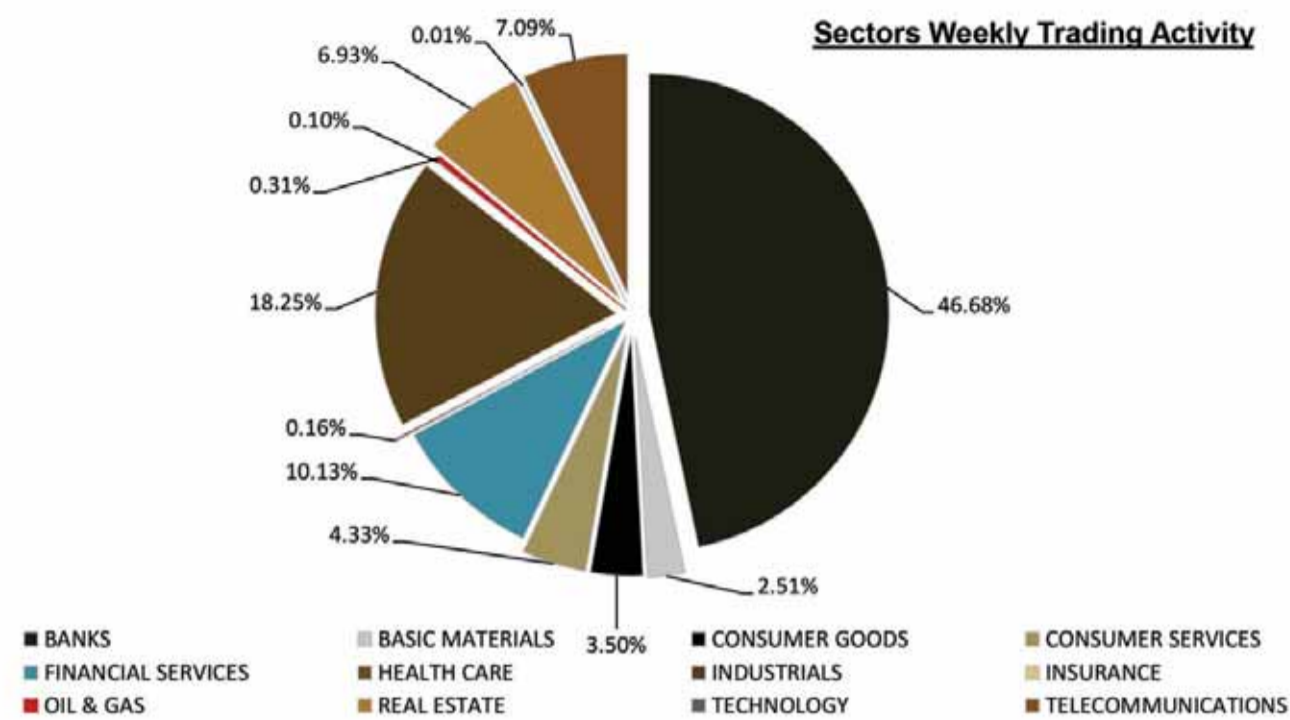
Following best practices for success across the board, Nissan Al-Babtain in an effort to enrich the lives of its patrons through the provision of efficient solutions, presently owns 9 Nissan service centers located in strategic locations around Kuwait.

Customers are urged to explore the luxuries of owning a Nissan Patrol and acquaint themselves with the new level of customer service excellence at the quick service center located in Al Rai, Block 4, Street 12 or call on 1804888 to book an appointment. Business Hours are from Saturday to Thursday between 7 am to 10 pm and on Friday from 2 pm to 8 pm.



Business

Bayan Weekly Market Report



Boursa Kuwait ends mixed amid selling pressures on small caps

Loss since new market segmentation move reaches KD 1.87 billion

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait ended last week with mixed performance. The Premier Market Index closed at 4,810.39 points, up by 0.78 percent, the Main Market Index decreased by 1.05 percent after closing at 4,788.55 points, whereas the All-Share Index closed at 4,803.0 points up by 0.12 percent. Furthermore, last week's average daily turnover decreased by 3.87 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 10.51 million, whereas trading volume average was 68 million shares, recording a decrease of 7.32 percent.

The Boursa ended last week's trading with mixed closings of its three indices, as the Premier and All-Share indices were able to realize some weekly gains supported by the continued concentration of most traders on the leading and heavy stocks, while the Main Market Index went against the current and ended the week's trading in the red zone, affected by the continued selling pressures on the small-cap stocks.

The Boursa lost around KD half billion during the last five sessions only, as its market capitalization reached by the end of the week KD 25.98 billion, down by 1.89 percent compared to KD 26.48 billion in a week earlier, where delisting of (Kuwait Food Company-Americana) from the Market during the last week contributed in such drop, as KD 490 million representing the market cap of the delisted company was removed from the total market cap value.

Also, the Boursa loss since the application of the new market segmentation that took place on the beginning of the current month reached around KD 1.87 billion, down by 6.72 percent. (Note: The market capitalization of the listed companies in the Market is calculated based on the weighted average number of the outstanding shares as per the latest available official financial statements).

As far as the daily trading activity during the last week; the first session of the week witnessed a fluctuated closing of the three indices, whereas the Premier Market Index only benefited from the random purchasing operations executed on some leading stocks, especially in the Banks sector after the good new periodic results disclosed by some banks, while the

STOCKS ACTIVITY				
Total Listed Stocks	Traded Stocks	Up	Down	No Change
175	144	62	74	39
TOP GAINERS				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (Pils)	Ch. %
MENA	45.60	30.00	15.6	62.00%
WINS	72.00	62.00	10.0	16.13%
FUTUREKID	125.00	109.00	16.0	14.68%
SULTAN	42.30	37.80	4.5	11.90%
BIHC	31.80	28.50	3.3	11.58%
TOP LOSERS				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (Pils)	Ch. %
EFFECT	15.10	22.90	-7.8	-34.06%
MASSALEH	28.40	36.80	-8.4	-22.83%
SALBOOH	38.00	44.00	-6.0	-13.64%
MARAKEZ	22.20	24.70	-2.5	-10.12%
AKK	325.00	360.00	-35.0	-9.72%
MOVERS BY VOLUME				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Total Volume (Stock)	To Market (%)
INVESTORS	13.90	14.00	37,632,237	11.07%
AAYAN	32.30	30.10	37,275,499	10.96%
MANAZEL	39.20	37.60	24,612,110	7.34%
ABYAAR	19.60	19.30	18,165,571	5.34%
KIB	222.00	221.00	12,330,688	3.63%
MOVERS BY VALUE				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Total Value (K.D)	To Market (%)
NBK	748.00	723.00	8,756,159	16.66%
KFIN	513.00	517.00	5,686,666	10.82%
ZAIN	408.00	419.00	3,401,760	6.47%
HUMANSOFT	3,850.00	3,920.00	3,280,563	6.24%
KIB	222.00	221.00	2,795,760	5.24%

All-Share and Main Market indices did not record gains and ended the session in the red zone affected by the selling operations that included some small-cap stocks. The Boursa witnessed such fluctuation in parallel with the noticeable decrease of the trading indicators, whereas the volume dropped by 44.77 percent, and the cash liquidity declined by the end of the session by 35.99 percent.

The Boursa performance did not differ from the previous session, as the Premier Market Index continued its upward direction in light of the continued concentration of the purchasing operations on the heavy stocks, while the red color continued to control the Main Market and All-Share indices due to the continued selling trend on the small-cap and mid-cap stocks, however, the trading indicators recorded a noticeable growth by the end of the session, whereas the cash liquidity increased by 37.99 percent, and the volume increased by 55.25 percent.

The mid-week session witnessed a return of the All-Share Index to the green zone after it was able to realize limited increase that did not exceed 0.09 percent, accompanying the

Premier Market Index that continued to increase supported by the continued random purchasing operations on the leading stocks, which was opposite to the Main Market Index that added to its losses after recording a decrease of 0.30 percent, as a result to the continued selling operations on some small-cap and mid-cap stocks too.

On Wednesday's session, the three Market indices met in the green closing zone for the first time in the week, as a result to the success of the purchasing powers that were present in the Market during the session, which included many stocks of different weights, on the selling pressures that were not absent from affecting the trading activity. The Market witnessed such performance despite the decreased trading levels of both the value or the volume, where the first decreased by 12.18 percent, and the second dropped by 16.46 percent.

The last session of the week witnessed a return to the fluctuation of the three Market indices, where the Premier Market and All-Share indices declined affected by the profit collection operations executed on the heavy and operational stocks, while the Main Market Index continued its increase supported by the random pur-

chasing operations witnessed by some small-cap stocks especially after the drop in its prices reaching low levels. Moreover, the Market witnessed during the last week a trading activity over 144 stock out of 175 listed stock in the Market, where 74 stock prices declined, against 62 stock prices increased, and 39 stock prices remained with no change.

Sectors' Indices

Six of Boursa Kuwait's sectors ended last week in the green zone, and six recorded declines. Last week's highest gainer was the Insurance sector, achieving 1.31 percent growth rate as its index closed at 938.30 points. Whereas, in the second place, the Consumer Services sector's index closed at 1,016.61 points recording 1.20 percent increase. The Banks sector came in third, as its index achieved 0.85 percent growth, ending the week at 974.98 points.

On the other hand, the Technology sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 5.51 percent to end the week's activity at 1,012.66 points. The Telecommunications sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 2.90 percent, closing at 843.39 points, followed by the Consumer Goods sector, as its index closed at 897.58 points at a loss of 1.63 percent.

Sectors' Activity

The Financial Services sector dominated a total trade volume of around 112.81 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 33.19 percent of the total market trading volume. The Real Estate sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 26.84 percent of last week's total trading volume, with a total of around 91.24 million shares.

On the other hand, the Banks sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of around KD 24.53 million or 46.68 percent of last week's total market trading value. The Industrial sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 9.59 million representing 18.25 percent of the total market trading value.

— Prepared by: Studies & Research Department - Bayan Investment Co



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor at the closing bell of the Dow Industrial Average at the New York Stock Exchange on Friday. — AFP

Wall St flat as earnings offset inflation jitters

NEW YORK: Wall Street closed nearly flat on Friday as inflation worries and struggling technology and energy stocks were offset by an advance in the consumer discretionary sector led by Amazon.

The S&P 500 and the Nasdaq eked out small gains while the Dow Jones Industrial Average edged into negative territory by the end of the session. All three major US indexes were down for the week at the end of a choppy session, ending two-week winning streaks.

"There's a ton of cross-currents going on in the market right now and consequently you get trading days like this where the market can't seem to make up its mind what it wants to do," said Chuck Carlson, chief executive officer at Horizon Investment Services in Hammond, Indiana.

Growth in the US economy slowed in the first quarter as consumer spending grew at its weakest pace in nearly five years, according to the Commerce Department. But a jump in wages and lower tax rates suggested the setback could be temporary.

The US Treasuries yield curve flattened as the growth data renewed bets that the Federal Reserve would continue hiking benchmark US interest rates to keep inflation in check. Wages and salaries increased at their fastest pace in 11 years, according to a report from the Labor Department, adding to inflation jitters.

As companies warn of higher costs eroding margins, markets have fluctuated as investors focus on guidance in the face of the strongest quarterly profit growth in seven years. "You've got investors grappling with a new environment of volatility and how to handle that," said Carlson. "That means a market like we have now, kind of manic-depressive, passive-aggressive."

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 11.15 points, or 0.05 percent, to 24,311.19, the S&P 500 gained 2.97 points, or 0.11 percent, to 2,669.91 and the Nasdaq Composite added 1.12 points, or 0.02 percent, to 7,119.80. More than half of the S&P 500 companies have reported first-quarter earnings already, 79.4 percent of which have beat consensus estimates. Analysts now expect first-quarter earnings growth of 24.6 percent, more than double expectations at the beginning of the year, according to Thomson Reuters data.

Amazon.com led the S&P 500 and the Nasdaq, helping them close in positive territory as the online retailer's shares rose 3.6 percent on the heels of a blockbuster earnings report. Brokerage firms have begun to value the company in excess of \$1 trillion.

Microsoft was up 1.7 percent as the technology bellwether beat first-quarter expectations and grew its cloud computing services. Following a profit miss, Exxon Mobil weighed on the S&P 500 and Dow Jones Industrial Average, falling 3.8 percent. Sprint jumped 8.3 percent following a Reuters report that the wireless carrier and rival T-Mobile were finalizing terms of a merger. Seven of the 11 major S&P sectors were higher, with the defensive telecom and real estate sectors posting the biggest percentage gains, at 1.75 percent and 1.32 percent respectively. The Exxon drop pulled the energy index down 1.2 percent, the biggest percentage loser.

Advancing issues outnumbered declining ones on the NYSE by a 1.42-to-1 ratio; on Nasdaq, a 1.07-to-1 ratio favored advancers. The S&P 500 posted 17 new 52-week highs and seven new lows; the Nasdaq Composite recorded 60 new highs and 57 new lows. Volume on US exchanges was 6.13 billion shares, compared to the 6.62 billion average over the last 20 trading days. — Reuters

SECTORS TRADING ACTIVITY				
Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %
BANKS	68,767,284	20.23%	24,527,789	46.68%
BASIC MATERIALS	2,381,233	0.70%	1,320,753	2.51%
CONSUMER GOODS	5,727,081	1.68%	1,839,357	3.50%
CONSUMER SERVICES	16,064,348	4.73%	2,274,199	4.33%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	112,813,115	33.19%	5,321,019	10.13%
HEALTH CARE	71,000	0.02%	85,532	0.16%
INDUSTRIALS	22,390,261	6.59%	9,587,290	18.25%
INSURANCE	611,394	0.18%	54,046	0.10%
OIL & GAS	5,656,224	1.66%	160,677	0.31%
REAL ESTATE	91,243,003	26.84%	3,643,792	6.93%
TECHNOLOGY	46,249	0.01%	6,997	0.01%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	14,132,400	4.16%	3,723,342	7.09%

SECTORS INDICES PERFORMANCE				
Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
BANKS	974.98	966.74	0.85%	-2.50%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,042.97	1,048.06	-0.49%	4.30%
CONSUMER GOODS	897.58	912.47	-1.63%	-10.24%
CONSUMER SERVICES	1,016.61	1,004.53	1.20%	1.66%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	974.24	972.01	0.23%	-2.58%
HEALTH CARE	996.33	991.93	0.44%	-0.37%
INDUSTRIALS	975.67	974.16	0.16%	-2.43%
INSURANCE	938.30	926.18	1.31%	-6.17%
OIL & GAS	978.02	990.73	-1.28%	-2.20%
REAL ESTATE	961.05	970.92	-1.02%	-3.90%
TECHNOLOGY	1,012.66	1,071.73	-5.51%	1.27%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	843.39	868.61	-2.90%	-15.66%

Business

50% discount on purchases from Trolley, using KFH wallet

Mandani: KFH working on enhancing its efforts in supporting companies



Group photo of KFH and Trolley officials following launch of exclusive offer.



KUWAIT: Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani said that "KFH is working on enhancing its leading efforts in supporting companies, operations and service projects by providing all banking requirements and needs based on the principal of partnership and cooperation between the two parties. The cooperation aims to provide integrated and comprehensive set of services that would achieve a strong kick-off for the company at the market level.

He emphasized, while launching an exclusive offer to KFH customers, that KFH customers holding MasterCard may use KFH Wallet for payment of their purchases from all Trolley branches in 29 fuel

stations and obtain a 50 percent discount on every KD 10 purchase transaction. This offer aims to further strengthen our relation with premier customers, alleviate service at the market level and drive economy which depends partially on services.

Mandani indicated that this offer comes as part of KFH efforts and keenness to provide and present the best exclusive offers to customers, add more value to their banking transactions, enhance their confidence and trust and improve their satisfaction.

Araba company CEO "Trolley" Mohammed Yacoub Boodai has praised this partnership with KFH and its initiative to enhance the company's market sales and provide this unprecedented exclusive offer

to customers. This is not strange for KFH who are always available to support and enhance Kuwaiti companies, develop and expand their activities through its expertise as the leading and highly reputable Islamic bank worldwide. He indicated that the company intends to provide high level global services applied in similar points of sale worldwide. Our aim is to enhance the concept of "Super Market" in form and content. We also aim to achieve an added value to the concept of marketing and customer comfort through the smallest super market worldwide where all customers' needs are available under one roof.

The customer receives a 50 percent discount on every KD 10 purchase as per the rules and regula-

tions which involves the usage of 'Mobile Wallet Payment Service' for the bank's MasterCard credit and prepaid cardholders.

KFH Wallet service is an innovated payment service using MasterCard through Android systems for payment of purchases at any store. KFH customers holding MasterCards and Prepaid cards may use KFH Wallet through NFC technique. To activate KFH Wallet facility please follow the following steps: Open KFH Wallet application on Android smartphones - select the icon KFH Wallet on the list - register KFH Wallet and add KFH MasterCard or prepaid card and KFH Wallet will be ready for payment.

Ford Alghanim launches its service summer offer on engine cooling system

KUWAIT: In line with its mission to provide excellent service for all Ford owners in Kuwait, Ford Alghanim, the authorized dealer of Ford in Kuwait, encourages Ford owners to take advantage of the current summer offer before May 15, an exceptional opportunity to perform a free 7-point check up on the engine cooling system, in addition to a 30 percent discount on engine cooling system parts and 10 percent discount on labor.

Ford owners are invited to bring their cars to the Service and Spare Parts Center for an early checkup to make sure that their Ford vehicle is in tip-top mechanical condition, particularly when it comes to critical components like the radiator, drive belts, and water pump.

To ensure the optimum performance of their Ford vehicle and guarantee their peace of mind, customers are encouraged to visit Ford Alghanim Service and Spare Parts Center to take advantage of this exclusive summer offer that entails a free, comprehensive 7-point checkup performed by a highly qualified team of Ford-trained technicians who use the latest diagnostics tools and serv-

icing equipment. The 7-point checkup covers the most important mechanical components related to a car's operation and safety, including coolant levels, drive belts, water pump, radiator hoses and leak checks, as well as a thorough examination of the radiator, and cooling system.

The service promotion doesn't end there, however, as Ford Alghanim is also offering 30 percent discounts on the engine cooling system parts and 10 percent on labor for the services offered on those parts as part of its dedication to service excellence, making this offer irresistible for all Ford owners who have been waiting to have their car to be prepared for the summer. In addition to these great savings, customers can also expect to have all their maintenance needs fulfilled in a timely and professional manner by a team of qualified Ford-trained technicians and specialists.

The Ford Alghanim Service and Spare Parts Center is fitted with advanced equipment to ensure the completion of all maintenance services in an efficient manner from the first time, expertly performed by Ford-trained technicians using Ford and Motorcraft genuine spare parts, for guaranteed quality and peace of mind. For added convenience, customers looking to perform routine maintenance are encouraged to do so.

Ford Alghanim is also the only authorized dealer by Ford Motor Company to perform several aftersales services such as Honoring Ford Extended Service Plan(tm) (ESP) contract for maintenance and repair, performing warranty repairs, importing and selling genuine Ford and Motorcraft parts in Kuwait, as well as accessing Ford technical resources such as the Ford Technical Hotline and up-to-date workshop manuals to ensure the best



repairs. Ford and Lincoln customers can get immediate access to all the above mentioned, in addition to maintenance and body shop repair services by Ford-trained and certified technicians at the dedicated Ford Alghanim Ford service center.

All Ford owners in Kuwait are encouraged to take advantage of this fantastic saving opportunity by visiting the Ford Alghanim Service and Spare Parts Center at their earliest convenience. The Service and Spare Parts Center, located in the Shuwaikh Industrial Area, opposite from the Classical Car Museum and Sirbb Circuit, is open from 7am to 7pm, Saturday to Thursday.

26 new winners in Al-Hassad Islamic account draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad Islamic account weekly draw. Kuwait's leading sharia-compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, on the 25th of April 2018. The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car. On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26 new winners and prizes to the Al Hassad Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300.

The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 Hebatallah Abdulaziz Mohammad Younes. 25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Sarah Athal Majed Edhaib, Ahmad Ali Alabras, Ali Yousef Ali Al-Tammar, Soubhi Ahmed Alqadi, Yousef Sayyah Mohammad Al-Rasheedi, Soud Abdulaziz A Alaboud, Ismaeil Abdrazzaq Alobaid, Sulaiman Fahad Sulaiman Alfahad, Majeed Sulaiman Qarin Aldhafeeri, Badreya Rashed Al-Shebeeb, Zaid F A Alzaid, Musaed Faraj Khamees Alsaeced, Dheyaa Salem AlMahmoud, Shareefah Salem Hussain Ibrahim, Isa Abdulla Abdulrahman Buali, Mustafa Ebrahim Ali Akbar Lari, Amal Abdulsool Mohammed Turki, Abdulshahed Habib Abdulaal Habib, Khalil Mohammed Yousif Alshaban, Sarah Alrowaie, Khalid Sulaiman Salman Khattab, Ghazi Ahmed Yousif, Robert James Kirby, Mansoor Ali Abdulla Al-Qattan and Radhi Abdulla Jassim A.Ridha.

Al-Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions.

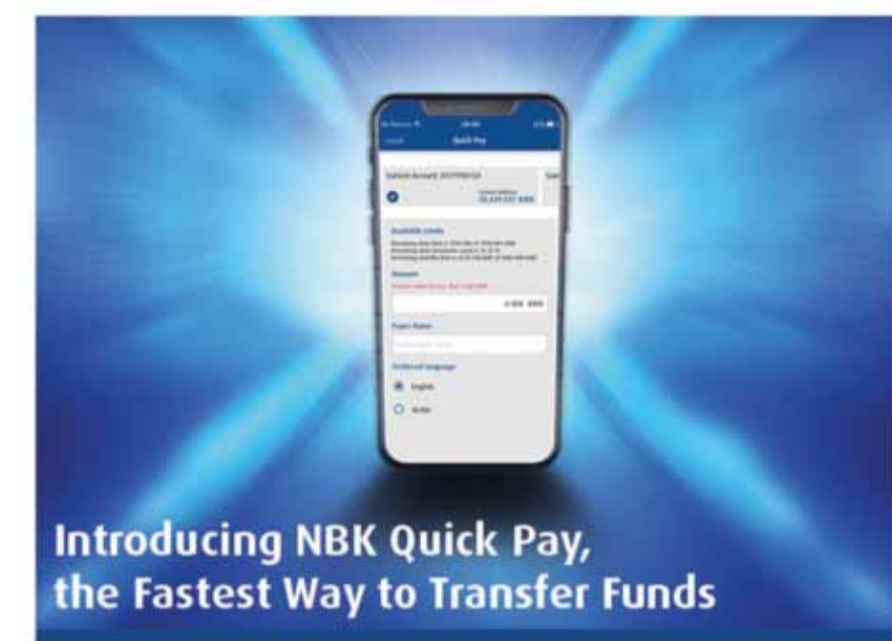
QNB Group holds its strategy conference in Kuwait

DOHA: QNB Group, the largest financial institution in the Middle East and Africa, has recently held its Strategy Conference in Kuwait with the attendance of the Group's executive management, general managers, and CEOs from across the Group's international network.

During the two-day event, the attendees discussed a number of major topics including the Group's business plans, the progress achieved throughout the year, the strategies to be followed across the group's international network to increase and sustain growth, in addition to the up to date progress made to achieve the group's vision of becoming a leading bank in the Middle East, Africa, and South East Asia by 2020.

It is worth mentioning that Ali Ahmed Al-Kuwari, QNB Group CEO, along with top management representatives, has visited the Banks' second branch, recently opened at the Avenues shopping mall of Kuwait, making QNB the first non-Kuwaiti bank to get the approval of the regulatory authorities in Kuwait to open a second branch.

QNB's first branch was opened in 2007, where it offers all retail and business banking products, as well as the distinguished QNB First services and other innovative products and services designed to suit the needs of the Kuwaiti market. QNB Group is present, through its subsidiaries and associate companies, in more than 31 countries across three continents providing a comprehensive range of products and services. QNB Group staff exceeds 28,000 operating through 1,200 locations, with a network of more than 4,300 ATMs.



Introducing NBK Quick Pay, the Fastest Way to Transfer Funds

NBK launches 'Quick Pay' to make simple, fast and secure payments

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait makes banking convenient, simple and easy, with the latest innovations in technology. Customers can utilize a newly launched service, 'Quick Pay' on the NBK Mobile Banking app to receive funds in just a few clicks. The Quick Pay option allows NBK customers who use NBK Mobile Banking app to receive money into their personal accounts during the week and even during holidays from any local bank in Kuwaiti Dinars, without having to go through the process of adding beneficiary details. Simply type in the payer or receiver's email or mobile number to securely receive money transfers any time day or night.

"NBK banks on customer satisfaction as our number one priority and we develop

new functionality and simplified services with this in mind," said Hala Al-Shoabi, Senior Alternative Channels Manager, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait. "We provide up-to-date services based on our customers' lifestyle needs." To access the Quick Pay function, customers should download the updated version of the NBK Mobile Banking app. Once updated, NBK Quick Pay service will let customers receive money into their personal account from other NBK customers or non-NBK customers holding a debit card from a local bank. They will receive the transfer request as a link via SMS or email. "NBK's Mobile Banking app is meant to make banking via your smart phone secure and simple," added Al-Shoabi. "We are continuously adding new services and functions to the app, improving its functionality to help customers complete their required banking transactions in the most convenient way possible. With NBK Quick Pay, you can receive money from any NBK account or local accounts with just a few taps on your mobile. All you have to do is enter the payer's email or mobile number."

The NBK Mobile Banking app provides a wide array of banking services and options. Customers can transfer funds locally or abroad, pay bills including local mobile phone bills, transfer money between accounts, and much more.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds draw



KUWAIT: The raffle draw winner of '10Kg Gold for 100 Winners' campaign by Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Badar Nisar receiving the prize 100gm gold from Shahil - Branch Head, Malabar Gold & Diamonds in the presence of management team members of Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Technology

AI for Good: Empowering China's nonprofits with world-leading tech

'Coming together to find solutions that will help people'

BEIJING: "In front of you is Barack Obama, looking straight towards you." At the prompt, the volunteer takes off the Seeing AI glasses she was trying on. In front of her was simply a large photograph of Barack Obama that the glasses had decoded with facial recognition.

The Chinese version of Seeing AI was one of the solutions presented at the "Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Good" event held at Microsoft offices in Beijing to empower nonprofit organizations with technology. Over 130 representatives from 78 nonprofits shared their experiences and learnt how others are utilizing Microsoft technologies in their work.

"Since Microsoft entered China, we've helped over 100 nonprofits by providing monetary and technology support worth around RMB200 million (USD32 million). This is important, but donations are not going to make a difference in lives," said Alain Crozier, Chairman and CEO of Microsoft Greater China Region, in his opening remarks. "What will make a difference is the ecosystem of nonprofits, Microsoft technologies, partners and employees coming together to find solutions that will help people."

The wearers are in darkness

Leveraging on Microsoft's Seeing AI solution, one such partner, Adjacent Technologies, has developed a pair of China-specific smart

glasses to give the visually impaired the experience of knowing what lies in front of them. With an inbuilt camera and WiFi connectivity, users will be able to take a photo of what's in front of them with a press of a button on the leg of the Pivothead glasses. The photo is then sent to servers that use Microsoft's Cognitive Services - an AI tool set that developers can use in their app or website - where it is converted into text and audio description sent to the user's mobile phone.

"We have to provide as much details as possible since the wearers are in darkness," said Chen Jie, Co-Founder of Beijing Adjacent Technologies. The system applies facial recognition and environmental recognition to create a succinct description. It currently works in English, but Microsoft's translation AI now provides real time descriptions in Chinese. Users can personalize the system by training it with photos of friends, family and colleagues so that the glasses can identify them by name. Demonstrations at the event showcased the level of details the solution can deliver, for example, "I think it's a young girl playing with an orange frisbee in the park".

The Bus Listening app developed by Guangzhou Huatu Information Technology was another solution presented at the event to empower the visually impaired by making

their public transportation journey easier. Huatu uses Microsoft Azure to build a city-sized Internet of Things (IoT) solution that informs users of bus arrival timings. "Only 9 percent of China's 17 million visually impaired people go out on their own and 40 percent of them barely go out at all," explained Zeng Zheming, product manager at Huatu.

Zeng's team has installed 20,000 Bluetooth beacons in buses across Guangzhou, connected to 3,000 guild terminals. After letting the app know their selected bus route and destination, users at enabled bus stops will receive a notification when their bus is 80 meters away and when the bus arrives, a voice prompt will guide them to the bus door. Once on board, the IoT solution generates a notification when the user is one stop away from the destination and once again just as the bus arrives at the stop. At present, the system is operating in Guangzhou and Macao. Visually impaired participants at the event were particularly keen for the service to be made available in Beijing. The team is also developing virtual paths, using beacons, in indoor settings such as subway stations.

Preparing for the future

The day was also an opportunity for the nonprofit community to discuss the bigger picture. "Welfare isn't the same as before,"



said Wei Qing, Chief Technology Officer of Microsoft China, during a panel discussion. "It's not just about food, water and clothes, but also about preparing for the future... And we have to make use of the tools at hand to

help improve welfare." Wei believes we are in an AI age, whether we realize it or not. He sees AI as a way of democratizing the current digital divide and that Microsoft can play a role in enabling this shift.—AFP

Robot interview: AI revolution hits human resources

PARIS: You have a telephone interview for your dream job, and you're feeling nervous. You make yourself a cup of tea as you wait for the phone to ring, and you count to three before picking up. Now imagine that your interviewer is a robot named Vera. Russian startup Stafory co-founder Alexei Kostarev says Robot Vera, which his company developed, is driven by artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms. "It's machine learning," Kostarev said, as he explained that his firm programmed Vera using 1.4 million interviews, as well as Wikipedia and 160,000 books.

When Vera first started conducting phone interviews, she followed a script, but that has since changed. "Vera understands the kind of answers candidates give," Moscow-based Kostarev told AFP by phone. And while robot recruiters will appeal to companies trying to keep costs down, there may also be another, more subtle advantage. "When (candidates) give feedback on a job offer for example, they (say) more honest things they would not tell ... a human," Kostarev said. Stafory says Robot Vera currently has 200 clients, major companies which then take the selected job candidates through conventional interviews and final selection.

Danger of bias

More broadly, human resources specialists are looking to AI solutions to speed up recruitment processes as a whole. US company ZipRecruiter is touting a real-time selection service, with each job offer posted immediately on as many as 100 websites. In the blink of an eye, its algorithm then trawls through the 10 million jobseekers who have registered with ZipRecruiter to see which best suit the job description.

The prospective employer then gets a shortlist of the top candidates, making recruitment a far less time-consuming exercise. Ian Siegel, head of ZipRecruiter, told AFP the system works well because "employers aren't great at describing what they want but they know what they want when they see it". Algorithms get better and better over time at detecting what kind of profile companies are looking for, as human resources staff give a virtual thumbs up to their preferred candidates.

So far so good, but of course there are concerns. For one, the algorithms are learning so fast it is hard to work out how they make such crucial choices. There is also a fear that the robots cannot remain immune to weaknesses such as bias or prejudice when all their learning comes from humans. ZipRecruiter is trying its best to take the risk of bias into account in its algorithms. But "the thing is, the algorithm is so sophisticated, there's so many different pieces of information, we can't reverse engineer exactly how it's coming up with the matches," Siegel said by phone.

'It takes two'

Jeremy Lamri of the Paris-based association of human resources start-ups called LabHR said one way to counter this risk is to dial down the AI in the system. "It is enough to tell the machine what to look out for; there is no need for machine learning in this," he said. Technology is developing all the time as employers look for candidates with soft skills such as learning capacity, adaptability, and the ability to work well in a team.

"If tomorrow someone invents a scanner which can tell simply by looking into your eye whether you can perform well in a job, then I would think most (companies) would adopt it," said Lamri. But if machines can make the initial selection, it should always be up to human beings to make the final choice, said Laurent da Silva, head of Adecco recruitment units Badenoch & Clark and Spring. "It's like in our private lives," he said. "AI can help facilitate meetings, but at the end of the day, it takes two real people to tango." —AFP

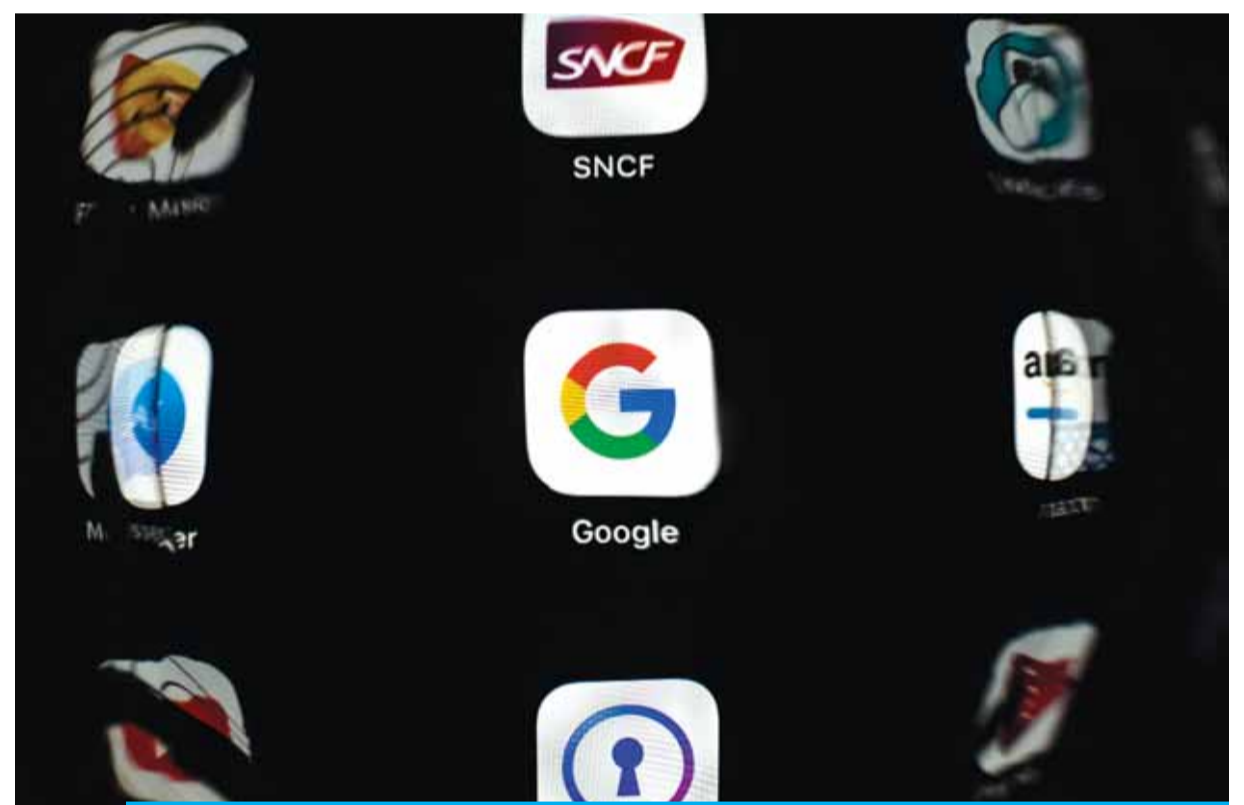
Alphabet's Brin says company must assume more responsibility

SAN FRANCISCO: Alphabet Inc President Sergey Brin said on Friday that technology companies must take greater responsibility for the social impact of their work, his first comments following a year of heightened global awareness about misuse of digital services. Brin delivered the message through Alphabet's annual shareholder letter, which he signed for the first time since 2014 instead of Chief Executive Larry Page.

"We're in an era of great inspiration and possibility, but with this opportunity comes the need for tremendous thoughtfulness and responsibility as technology is deeply and irrevocably interwoven into our societies," Brin wrote after quoting from Charles Dickens' novel "A Tale of Two Cities" about the "the best of times" and "the worst of times."

Alphabet's primary unit, Google, has become a top target in Silicon Valley for regulators, authorities and critics in advertising and media. It has drawn global scrutiny for its dominance in online search advertising, its policies around user privacy and its role in helping politically consequential misinformation spread online.

Brin did not touch on those issues, nor did he specify any actions the company would take to recognize new responsibilities. But Brin focused on artificial intelligence, computer systems that are able to learn without humans hard-coding them. Artificial intelligence enables self-driving cars and software that can identify diseases. Brin said that Alphabet would tread with "serious thought and



This illustration picture taken on April 19, 2018 in Paris shows the tablet and smartphone app for Google.—AFP

research" about societal consequences such as eliminating jobs and advancing biases as the company expands use of artificial intelligence.

"While I am optimistic about the potential to bring technology to bear on the greatest problems in the world, we are on a path that we must tread with deep responsibility, care and humility," he said. Alphabet sep-

arately announced Friday details regarding its annual shareholder meeting, which it scheduled for June 6. The company recommended shareholders reject each of the seven proposals brought by investors that call for it to provide more information around gender pay disparity, environmental impact policies, content moderation and other issues.—Reuters

Facebook says to extend political ad changes to UK

LONDON: Facebook said that it would be extending a raft of measures to allow its users to identify the source of political adverts that appear in their feed to Britain next year. The US social media giant's Chief Technology Officer Mike Schroepfer appeared before a British parliamentary committee probing the role of fake news in recent votes, and how data gathered from the network was used to target potential voters.

Schroepfer admitted that Facebook had been "slow" in realizing how its data was being used following revelations that British communications firm Cambridge Analytica mined information on around 90 million users. "We didn't understand the threat," he said. "I can't fix that back then, but I can devote my time and energy to two things: one is, with the specific acts, we build every defense we can, and

then two, we do a deeper more rigorous forward looking... proactive defense."

Under new plans to be implemented in Britain next year, those seeking to run political adverts will need to be authorized and ads that are political will be required to be labeled as such, along with details of who funded them. Any ad labeled political will be available for seven years in Facebook's archive, which will allow users to search the amount spent on the ad and the number of views it received. The changes were introduced in the US earlier this month.

Schroepfer admitted that Facebook had not read the terms and conditions of the app, developed by academic Aleksandr Kogan's research firm Global Science Research (GSR), used to harvest its data. Conservative MP Julian Knight slammed the social media giant, accusing it of being "a morality-free zone." Schroepfer replied that he would "respectfully disagree with that assessment." Facebook boss Mark Zuckerberg previously blamed Kogan for the data breach, telling US lawmakers that he had broken the rules by selling the data to CA. Kogan, who teaches at Cambridge University, told the committee on Tuesday that he did not sell data, and said the US social media giant was scapegoating him as it was in "PR crisis mode". —AFP



LONDON: Facebook's Chief Technology Officer, Mike Schroepfer leaves after answering questions before the Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee at Parliament.—AFP

Amazon delivers hefty profits, led by web services

SAN FRANCISCO: Internet colossus Amazon reported that its quarterly profit more than doubled on soaring revenue from online commerce and cloud services. Amazon said it earned \$1.6 billion in the first three months of this year on revenue that soared to \$51 billion from \$36 billion in the same period last year. Amazon shares that finished the formal trading day up climbed more than six percent to \$1,617 in after-hours trades that followed release of the earnings figures.

The Seattle-based firm spotlighted the juggernaut growth of its Amazon Web Services (AWS) division, which hosts services and content that companies in the internet cloud. AWS leads big-name rivals Microsoft and Google in the market that has boom with the lifestyle shift to accessing movies, music, games and more from the array of online devices.

"AWS had the unusual advantage of a seven-year head start before facing like-minded competition, and the team has never slowed down," Amazon founder and chief Jeff Bezos said in the first-quarter earnings release. "That's why you're seeing this remarkable acceleration in AWS growth, now for two quarters in a row."

Amazon also reported sales from its online stores rose 18 percent from the same period a year ago to \$26.94 billion. Amazon has also found success with its own streaming music and movie services, one of the perks of its Amazon Prime, which the company says now has 100 million members. Streaming television is included in an Amazon Prime subscription service that also offers free, fast delivery of products purchased at the online retail powerhouse. Amazon has been broadening its business by moving into new sectors, notably with the acquisition of the Whole Foods grocery chain. The research firm eMarketer said online commerce represents about 60 percent of Amazon's business but that it also will generate \$3.37 billion in global advertising this year.

Amazon's success has made Bezos the world's richest individual, and the company has been a frequent target of President Donald Trump, who has argued that the tech giant gets a sweetheart deal from the US Postal service, a claim which is disputed by many analysts.—AFP

Health

Brains, eyes and testes: Off-limits for transplants?

Nowadays, people can get a new hand... or even a uterus

PARIS: Since the world's first successful organ transplant in 1954 — a kidney—the discipline has advanced to the point where a wounded soldier could have his penis and scrotum replaced in a groundbreaking operation last month.

A Frenchman recently became the first person to receive a second face transplant after the first failed, and another made history by regrowing skin lost over 95 percent of his body, thanks to a graft from his twin brother. Transplants are no longer limited to the vital organs: heart, liver, or lungs. Nowadays, people can get a new hand... or even a uterus. But some organs remain off-limits. For now.

Brain swap

Topping the list, brain transplants are a long way off, for both technical and ethical reasons, experts say. "The most challenging organ to transplant is anything related to the nervous system, as we do not have effective techniques for nerve growth/regeneration," explained transplant surgeon David Nasralla, of the University of Oxford.

"For this reason, eye and brain transplants are currently beyond the scope of modern medicine," he told AFP. Nerves carry messages through the body in the form of electrochemical pulses flitting between the brain and spinal cord, muscles and other organs. An Italian-Chinese surgical duo recently set the science world afire by announcing they planned to remove a person's head and attach it to a decapitated donor body in what would be the first such procedure. There is a high likelihood, observers say, that the patient will die.

Many doubt it is possible to connect the nerve fibers of two spinal cords. Above all else, the undertaking raises troubling moral questions, including a very basic one: What constitutes a person? A brain alone? The patient, suggested a recent article in the journal Surgical Neurology International, will likely struggle with the concept of "human identity".

"Even memories of the role the former body played in the creation of the subject's identity would encounter possible conflict with a new donor-given body," wrote bioethicists Anto Cartolovni and Antonio Spagnolo. "Similar issues were also seen in cases of face and hand transplants. This confusion to the person's psychological state could possibly lead to serious psychological problems, namely insanity and finally death."

Fancy a pig heart?

Given the dire shortage of donor organs, the use of animal hearts, lungs or livers to save human lives has long been a holy grail of medical science. But organ rejection has stood stubbornly in the way of inter-species "xenotransplants". "It was tried in the 50s and 60s, with kidneys from chimpanzees, for example. But organ failure set in immediately, within days. They could not break through the species barrier," said Olivier Bastien, of France's bio-medicine agency.

This is changing as scientists learn to modify the genes that prompt the immune system to attack intruder germs, but also foreign tissue perceived as a threat. Researchers' focus is to modify the genes of donor animals so their organs will resist the human immune response, while also preventing the transfer of animal diseases. Animal welfare is an added concern. "Up to what point should we undermine the animal's immune system", asks Bastien-potentially exposing it to disease and suffering so we can harvest its organs?

Are there limits?

Few organs remain technically non-transplantable. But two are excluded, for now, due to their raising of ethical eyebrows—the testes and ovaries. "A testicle transplant would amount to assisted reproduction in disguise," said Bastien.

One question is this: If the recipient fathers children with his new sperm-producing testicles, whose offspring are they—his, or the donor's? The same issue arises in the case of a head transplant onto a male body. A paper last year in the Journal of Medical Ethics urged a rethink of risk-benefit ratio of non life-saving organ transplants.

"The greatest risk transplant recipients face comes from the powerful but noxious agents, immunosuppressives, which must be used to keep transplanted organs from being rejected," wrote Arthur Caplan and Duncan Purves. A long list of possible side effects—including cancer—can be justified for a heart or lung transplant, they argued, but possibly less so for a new face, hand or penis. "The shift away from saving lives to seeking to make them better requires a shift in the ethical thinking that has long formed the foundation of organ transplantation," the duo argued. —AFP



PARIS: A handout photo released by the Hôpital Européen Georges-Pompidou AP-HP on April 16, 2018 shows the face transplant on Jerome Hamon, a patient suffering from neurofibromatosis type 1. —AFP

Study triples number of known depression genes

PARIS: A study of nearly half-a-million people has uncovered 30 new genes linked to depression, tripling the number known to play a role in the debilitating disease. The same enlarged basket of depression genes also underpins other psychiatric disorders, such as schizophrenia, a consortium of nearly 250 scientists discovered. "This is a game changer," said Patrick Sullivan, director of the Center for Psychiatric Genomics at the University of North Carolina and co-leader of the research.

The findings, published in Nature Genetics, provide targets for new drugs and other forms of treatment. "We all carry genetic variants for depression, but those with a higher burden (of genes) are more susceptible," said co-author Naomi Wray, a researcher at the University of Queensland in Australia. "Many life experiences can contribute to the risk of depression, but identifying the genetic factors opens new doors for research into the biological drivers."

Being overweight or obese was also shown to be a risk factor for depression, the data showed. The relative importance of genetic or environmental factors underlying depression varies from individual to individual, but is almost always a combination of the two. "Figuring out the genetic basis of major depression has been really hard," said Sullivan. —AFP

CLINIC
PAGE

248 33 199

Global Medical Center Welcomes Dr. Marzouq Al-Bader

Consultant vascular and general surgery

All general and specialized surgeries such as:

- All critical and non-critical arteries and veins surgeries
- Carrying out delicate procedures such as removing the extra rib
- All methods of treating varicose
- Treating excess perspiration
- Special department for care of injured diabetic foot
- AV connection for dialysis

مركز جلوبال الطبي
Global Medical Center

Telephone: 1871111

Global Medical Center, Bneid Al-Qar
Bour Saeed Street, Block-1, Building-128.

@globalmedcenter
www.globalmed-center.com

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

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

What's On



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

The 50th showroom of Grand Hyper opens at Souk Al Kabir, Kuwait City

As part of its continuous expansion drive, Grand Hypermarket opened its 50th showroom at Souq Al Kabir on a single floor in an area spanning 25,000 sq ft on Friday, 27th of April. Located in one of the busiest business areas of Kuwait, the new showroom is eagerly looked forward to by consumers. This was announced at a press conference held Tuesday.

Grand Hypermarket has been steadily growing over the years with the unqualified support and trust of its growing customer base. The retail chain has been catering to both citizens and expatriates with a wide range of products that are much sought-after for their high quality and competitive pricing. Grand Hypermarket achieves this by sourcing the items directly from the source without the middlemen.

Grand Hypermarket gives consumers the exclusive experience of celebrating all occasions under one roof, providing the customers with a wide range of products including food stuffs, world-class electronic appliances, home appliances, footwear, health and beauty items and fashion wears

and accessories from leading European designers among others. Perishable goods, farm produces and meat are shipped by air on a daily basis to ensure they are available fresh to the end users. These are procured from internationally-recognized farms to ensure world-class standards. Making high quality products affordable for the everyday consumer is what sets Grand Hypermarket apart from the rest.

The success of Grand Hypermarket is testified by the continuous expansion of the retail chain in various parts of the GCC countries on a daily basis. The benefit of price efficiency that the retailer gains through large-scale procurement of products is transferred onto the end-consumer. In addition to that Grand Hyper is also providing a host of prizes to the consumers as an inaugural offer.

The participants at the press conference included: Chief Patron Grand Hyper-Kuwait Sheikh Dawood Salman Al Sabah, Mohammed NV (Director Regency Group), Ayuob Kaccheri (Regional Director), Dr Abdul Fatah (Director Grand Hyper Kuwait), Mohammed Suneer PC (CEO) and Tahsir Ali (General Manager).



LuLu Hypermarket launches 'Best of South Africa 2018'

LuLu Hypermarket, the regional retail heavyweight, launched its 'Best of South Africa 2018' promotion with an inauguration ceremony held at its Egaila outlet on 25 April. The event was inaugurated by South African Ambassador to Kuwait, HE MP Bona, in the presence of top LuLu Management in Kuwait and a large gathering of customers, well-wishers and media personnel.

The 11-day promotion which runs at all LuLu Hypermarket outlets in the country and is slated to end on 5 May, showcases a range of enticing products from South Africa, especially popular food brands including Heartland, Nandos, Bakers, Yum Yum and Simply Cereal. A highlight of the promotion is the special offers on all South African branded products, which will hopefully entice shoppers to savor the distinct flavors of South African foods.

A captivating feature of the 'Best of South Africa' promotion are the prominently displayed large cutouts of iconic South African attractions that will probably lure shoppers to visit the Rainbow nation. Close interaction with customers through promotions and active participation in local festivities has always been a priority for LuLu Hypermarket. The 'Best of South Africa 2018' promotion once again reinforces this customer-centric approach, and the Hypermarket's continued commitment to creating an engaging and fun experience for shoppers, while simultaneously providing them with the widest range of high quality products at the most competitive prices.



— Photos by Joseph Shagra



Kuwait's first anti-bullying program

Under the patronage of HE Sheikha Intisar Salem Al Ali Al Sabah, Alnowair - the first non-profit organization in Kuwait and the GCC committed to driving positive social behavior change - announced a new educational program called "Boomerang" through two interactive plays performed by students at the New English School, attended by over 650 students from elementary and middle school.

Boomerang is Kuwait's first anti-bullying school outreach program that uses creative drama therapy and kindness habits to help 7000+ students across 14 private schools to rise above bullying. Proudly sponsored by Zain Kuwait - the main partner, and EQUATE Petrochemical Company - the co partner, Boomerang was officially launched by Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah at her alma mater, the New English School (NES). The plays were directed by Alnowair and performed by year 6 students of New English School, who participated in four rehearsal workshops to understand the problem of bullying and how to use kindness as an effective strategy



through role-playing and practicing acts of kindness.

Sheikha Intisar Al Sabah, the Founder & CEO of Alnowair said on the occasion, "Bullying is prevalent in many schools in Kuwait and it can severely affect the academic grades, school attendance, personality development and health of students. Our program is the first of its kind to give bullies, victims and by-standers an opportunity to work together through the creative medium of performing arts to find effective solutions to bullying. Alnowair is always responding to community needs to create positive social behavior change, and I am very proud to see over seven schools joining the program to shape a future generation of confident, compassionate students." The program also features mentor-

ship opportunities for students with successful role models from program sponsors.

Over the next academic year, Boomerang will continue to visit private schools to conduct drama therapy workshops, perform plays and roll out kindness activities. Alnowair Head Ms Gaya Kruchlik says, "We want to create sustainable impact in Kuwait's schools through activities that will promote kindness. In each school that Boomerang visits, we follow up the drama therapy plays with educational tools, projects and Kindness songs for students and also measure the impact through surveys with teachers, students and parents. A big thank you to our sponsors Zain Kuwait and EQUATE Petrochemical Company for enabling us to create kinder school cultures in Kuwait."

Marmore Mena Intelligence and Kuwait Business Council sign MoU

In an effort to expand mutual collaborations and to fulfill strategic objectives as a provider of information and tools that helps the Kuwaiti business community in the UAE grow their businesses, Marmore Mena Intelligence, a majority-owned subsidiary of Kuwait Financial Center 'Markaz' signed an MoU with the UAE based Kuwait Business Council.

Marmore provides research reports and consulting services aimed at providing solutions to businesses for market assessment, feasibility studies, and valuation studies. Among its publications include reports focused on big picture including the broader economy, infrastructure, industries and policy areas. The publications of Marmore can be found at emarmore.com

About the partnership, Raghu Mandagolathur, Managing Director of Marmore Mena Intelligence commented: "We are proud to partner with the Kuwait Business Council in Dubai to provide fact-based research to help entrepreneurs and businesses stay up-to-date with latest regional and global trends as it unfolds."

Luma Bourisly, Chairperson - Kuwait Business Council in Dubai and the Northern Emirates said: "The industry is controlled by rapid shifts where change has always been the only constant. As a business community, we understand the dynamics and

the challenges of today's business industry which is characterized by relentless transformation to stay competitive. Therefore, strategic alliances with the right partners such as Marmore MENA Intelligence, will help produce current pieces of intelligence that will make organizations aware of the present market conditions, to help them identify and reset their goals towards profitability and operational efficiency and ultimately support them in evolving and growing in this very competitive business environment."

She added: "Our agreement with Marmore Mena Intelligence is in line with our objective to facilitate the exchange of business intelligence reports and market assessments with the council's members about diverse business sectors in the region."

The agreement provides Kuwaiti business owners, professionals and entrepreneurs custom made research-based consulting solutions to help understand current market conditions, identify growth opportunities, assess supply and demand dynamics, in addition to hosting conferences, seminars and papers arranged and organized by both parties via digital marketing mediums and mutually established link on the Council's website and social media channels to provide facts and statistics and ensure the availability of data needed on a broad spectrum.



TV

AM MOVIES ACTION
00:40 Railroad Tigers
02:45 The Veil
04:15 Kingslaive: Final Fantasy XV

ANIMAL PLANET HD
00:45 Swamp Brothers
01:13 Swamp Brothers
01:40 Swamp Brothers

Discovery Family
00:30 Ultimate Survival
01:20 How It's Made
01:45 How It's Made

BBC FIRST
00:30 Mum
00:55 Trauma
01:45 Death In Paradise

ID
00:30 Doctors
01:30 Doctors
03:10 Doctors

crime & investigation network
00:00 American Ripper In London
01:00 Cursed
01:55 My Haunted Vacation

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

COMEDY CENTRAL
00:05 Eugene Mirman: An Evening Of Comedy
01:10 Nathan For You
02:35 Inside Amy Schumer

Disney Junior
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales

Discovery Channel
00:15 Goblin Works Garage
01:05 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
01:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

ID
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

EHD
00:00 Botched
00:55 Botched
01:50 E! News

Disney Junior
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales

Discovery Channel
00:15 Goblin Works Garage
01:05 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
01:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

ID
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

EHD
00:00 Botched
00:55 Botched
01:50 E! News

Disney Junior
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales

Discovery Channel
00:15 Goblin Works Garage
01:05 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
01:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

ID
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD
00:10 Mystery Files
00:35 Mystery Files

Disney Junior
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales

Discovery Channel
00:15 Goblin Works Garage
01:05 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
01:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

ID
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD
00:10 Mystery Files
00:35 Mystery Files

Disney Junior
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales

Discovery Channel
00:15 Goblin Works Garage
01:05 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
01:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

ID
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

AM MOVIES HD KIDS
00:15 Last Wizard
01:40 The Apple & The Worm
03:05 Dinofurg Return To The Past

Disney Junior
00:00 Trulli Tales
00:30 PJ Masks
00:55 Trulli Tales

Discovery Channel
00:15 Goblin Works Garage
01:05 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
01:50 Manhunt With Joel Lambert

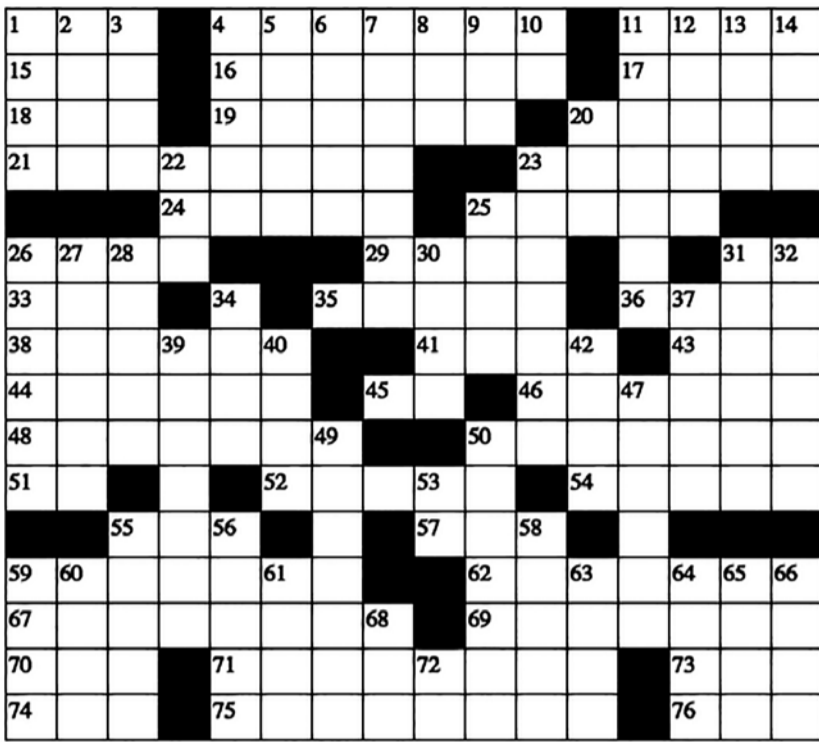
ID
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

Disney HD
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse

AM MOVIES FESTIVAL
00:20 Once Upon A Time In America

Stars

CROSSWORD 1895



ACROSS

- 1. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
4. Qualities that are comparable.
11. An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
15. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
16. Only the bowfins.
17. Being the only one.
18. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
19. Forbidden by law.
21. A woman sahib.
24. Tropical American tree grown in southern United States having a whitish pink-tinged fruit.
26. In or of the present month.
29. Lacking excess flesh.
33. Vietnamese New Year.
35. An inflammatory swelling or sore.
36. Divulge information or secrets.
38. United States industrialist who manufactured vacuum cleaners (1849-1932).
41. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
43. South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
44. The capital of Eritrea.
45. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
46. Smear thickly.
48. A city in northeastern Ukraine.
51. (Greek mythology) A maiden seduced by Zeus.
52. A long narrow excavation in the earth.
54. A city in northeastern Ohio.
57. The habitation of wild animals.
59. An advanced student or graduate in medicine gaining supervised practical experience ('houseman' is a British term).
62. A vast Asian region of Russia.
67. A railcar where passengers ride.
69. A metrical unit with unstressed-unstressed-stressed syllables.
70. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
71. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
73. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
74. A doctor's degree in education.
75. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
76. (Irish) The sea personified.

DOWN

- 1. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
2. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
3. Burrowing marine mollusk living on sand or mud.
4. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
5. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
6. A British imperial capacity measure (liquid or dry) equal to 1/60th fluid dram or 0.059194 cubic centimeters.
7. A game played on a sloping board.
8. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
9. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
10. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
11. The hard cylindrical core that bears the kernels of an ear of corn.
12. Squash bugs.
13. Sustentacular tissue that surrounds and supports neurons in the central nervous system.
14. An unfledged or nestling hawk.
20. Committee formed by a special-interest group to raise money for their favorite political candidates.
22. Be seated.
23. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
25. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
27. A river that rises in eastern Kansas and flows eastward into Oklahoma to become a tributary of the Arkansas River.
28. A minute epidermal pore in a leaf or stem.
30. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
31. Australasian kingfishers.
32. A port city in southwestern Iran.
34. An incidental benefit awarded for certain types of employment (especially if it is regarded as a right).
37. Of or relating to or affecting a lobe.
39. Dutch painter renowned for his use of light (1632-1675).
40. A sudden short attack.
42. Fallow deer.
47. Activity involved in maintaining something in good working order.
49. Sour-tasting liquid produced usually by oxidation of the alcohol in wine or cider and used as a condiment or food preservative.
50. European annual grown for forage.
53. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
55. A violin made by Antonio Stradivari or a member of his family.
56. (of something seen or heard) Clearly defined.
58. (Sumerian and Babylonian) A solar deity.
60. The back side of the neck.
61. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
63. A small cake leavened with yeast.
64. Being or occurring in fact or actuality.
65. A small island.
66. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
68. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
72. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your focus is on getting what you want and figuring out who you have to deal with to get it; be careful that you don't appear to be overbearing. Being in pursuit of something very hard to attain is an empowering experience. When you attempt to prove yourself, you run into several different challenges or blockages; this and other instances lead to growth and evolution. You may feel disconnected from the group and this could be due to your own requirements. Quality time spent with a close friend recharges your drained body, mind and spirit. You're able to influence those your work with; strong support for your leadership skills is present. A positive word goes a long way when you take time to encourage a nice, new friend who's down.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

As you begin something new you become aware of the negative aspects that come with it; you figure out how to diminish the negative and replace with the positive. A nice day at home recharges your spirit and you feel you can tackle just about anything. Someone insists that you do something their way and toss what you wanted to do to the side; perhaps separating yourself from this petty, dominating person would be best. Stay focused on your direction and don't be distracted by busybodies. Time gets away from you as you immerse yourself in a project you enjoy. An ambitious energy takes over as you come near to reaching a big goal. Anything that doesn't create positive energy is irrelevant to you. You know what you're doing now.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You could feel thwarted in your attempt to make something better the best way you know how; you could have problems with issues of self-worth. There's a lot going on that you're not comfortable with; keep looking forward, never backward. Temptations abound as your work toward self-discipline; never give up, you can definitely do this. You see something naturally beautiful that makes you remember something you'd forgotten; search for and enjoy everything that brings joy. You could find that someone thoughtlessly piles more on you than you can handle but you somehow manage to rise to the occasion. You feel nostalgic and blessed by having the family you have; your heart's grateful. Your intimate relationships provide contentment.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your focus is on understanding yourself and your motives; this could involve someone who's important to you. Knowing where you stand with someone clears the way for taking action. Some gossip you hear from a reputable person explains something you've been wondering about. You actually want to deal with your secretive side so that you can make improvements; you may realize that something you're hiding from others is nothing to be ashamed of. You know more than you let on regarding a sensitive matter. Staying in a positive spiritual place is a priority; you may have to step away from someone who's against your beliefs. Being with someone you love brings your week to a nice, gently close. Enjoy tonight.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have a natural ability to get your thoughts across to those you're working with on a domestic project. You come to a realization regarding something from the past; this is an issue that's bothered you for some time. You get the go ahead from someone who's asked you to tend to an important investment matter. Focus and confidence join to bring you to the end of an assignment. You discover something at home that needs to be repaired; someone who can fix this just happens to stop by. Something you thought of long ago shows up on television for sale; you hate the thought of missing out on this! Your clever mind is active in trying to figure out how to better someone's life you care about. Self-appreciation, rare for you, is strong tonight.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Dealing with your tendency to sabotage yourself is called for today. Realizing the only thing you can truly control is yourself provides strong motivation to pursue this. A kindness you did a while back is repaid! Looking at things from all the different angles sheds a lot of light on a certain situation. You strongly suspect someone of false flattery as they give compliments you don't believe; perhaps they're trying to win you over for a specific reason. Being strongly connected to intuition brings positive results; staying realistic helps with this. Dealing with a difficult person is something you refuse today. When someone has the nerve to tell you what you should and shouldn't do you don't hesitate to put them in their place. Take a deep breath.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your ideas are well communicated and inspiring to others. Stringent requirements are frustrating but you're definitely able to meet them. Being irritated on an emotional level could prove too much to deal with today; perhaps excusing yourself until this blows over is called for. An old memory crops up and causes you to rethink something in the present. You'd like for someone to step up to the plate and be fair; this could be way too much to expect from this particular person. Wanting more doesn't guarantee getting it but with right thinking and sincere effort you can make this happen; you have definitely got this! Being in the right place at the right time's more than a coincidence; karma's what we make it. Good, good times tonight.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your comebacks and responses are lightening fast today. You may find it easy to find answers others can't seem to find; positive outcomes are likely when you take care of things on your own. You could be challenged by someone regarding a domestic project; even with your accelerated mental ability you might want to listen in the instance. People enjoy spending time with you as the positive aspects of your personality shine. You could want to do something that's not good for you; think about this one carefully. You desire control over everything going on right now; perhaps taking some time to sincerely look at this could help. You discover the secret of a friend they have been hiding. A sense of accomplishment is very noticeable tonight.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Trying something new at home could cause problems. You find an item long lost. Pay attention to what intuition is saying; there's important truth linked to this. A gathering of friends at your house creates fun and laughter for your close circle. A small change in decor is more than likely; you find ways to make this happen in an affordable way. Love and security are what you find most important; your sweetheart of mate is key to this as are you. Being able to overlook faults in others is a hallmark of your psyche. A nice person grants a favor you didn't request. A new outlook on life is refreshing! A big step forward sets you on the right path. You don't look back when you make a definite decision. You're open to change and new attitudes.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Something serious demands your attention which, you gladly give. Taking care of details is important and a big part of finishing a certain thing; knowing exactly what's needed helps. You care nothing for anything that doesn't contribute to your security and abundance. Be aware that when you're focused on work or attainment you tend to be far too harsh on yourself. You instinctively know how to conduct business and cover all the specifics of a project. You love what you do! You could find that someone in authority has their eye on you for something special! Smooth sailing with work is strongly indicated for some time to come; may be a new offer for your soon. There's nothing more attractive than a captivating book tonight.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

An easy day for you to spend at your leisure a rare occasion, so take full advantage! You make big progress working on something you love; nothing compares to enjoying a beloved hobby or other interest that stimulates the soul. Those around you support and encourage you to take life by the horns and make it all that you want. Spiritual phenomenon have your full attention and you may find a certain book or video you seek. Someone who feels negative shows up for a very quick visit. Your tastes are sharpened, as though the taste buds of your life have been cleansed! You could adopt a pet or take on another similar situation caring for someone who can't care for themselves. Important goals become clear tonight.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Teamwork saves the day as something goes awry at home; someone shows up unexpectedly to help with this. You weed out times and attitudes that don't seem to further your ambitions or reaching your goals; be watchful that you don't discard something you may need later. You examine decisions made earlier that no longer fit your lifestyle; hard work pays off in this effort. You discover that you are far more serious about something than your partner or associate. Time to reconsider your position on several things is at hand. Sticking to a budget could prove more difficult than you thought. People enjoy your humor and funny take on a certain situation that's not as bad as it seems; it's better to laugh than cry if at all possible.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Washing a Car

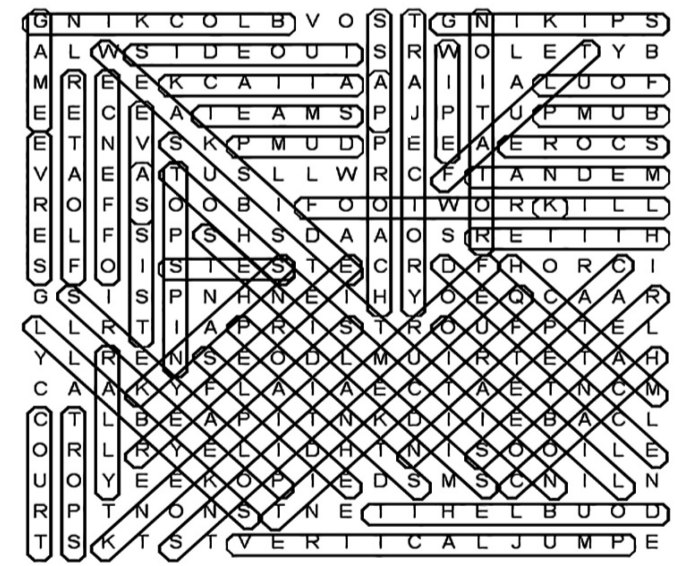
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 13 letters spell something that you wash off of a car.



- BRUSH, BUCKETS, CHAMOIS, CHROME, CLEAN, DEAD BUGS, DIRT, DOOR HANDLES, DOORS, DRIVEWAY, DRY OFF, FENDERS, FRONT, GARDEN HOSE, GLASS, GRIME, HEADLIGHTS, HOOD, HUBCAPS, LICENSE PLATE, MIRRORS, MUD, PREPARATION, REAR, RINSE, ROOF, SCRUB, SIDES, SOAP, SPONGE, SQUEEGEE, SUDS, TAIL LIGHTS, TIRES, TOP, TOWELS, VEHICLE, WASH, WATER, WAX, WHEELS, WINDOWS, WINDSHIELD

Friday's Solution

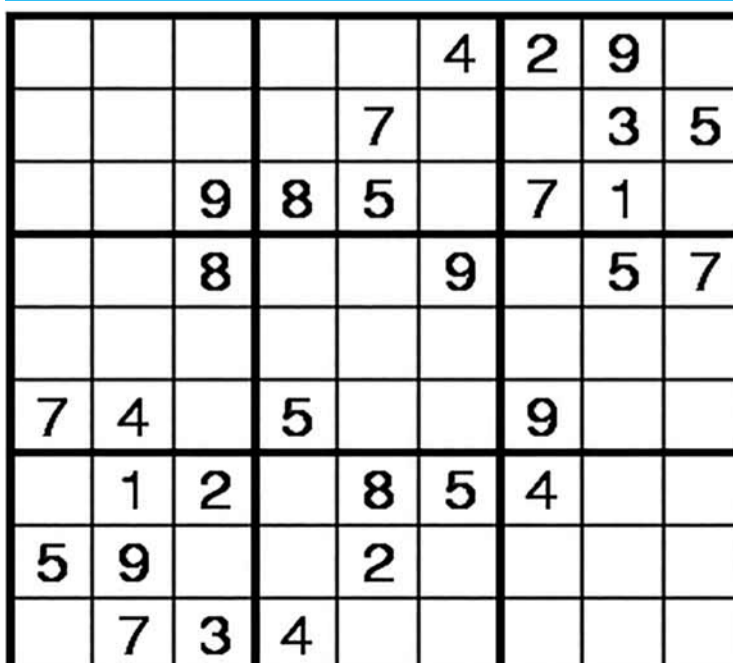
Volleyball



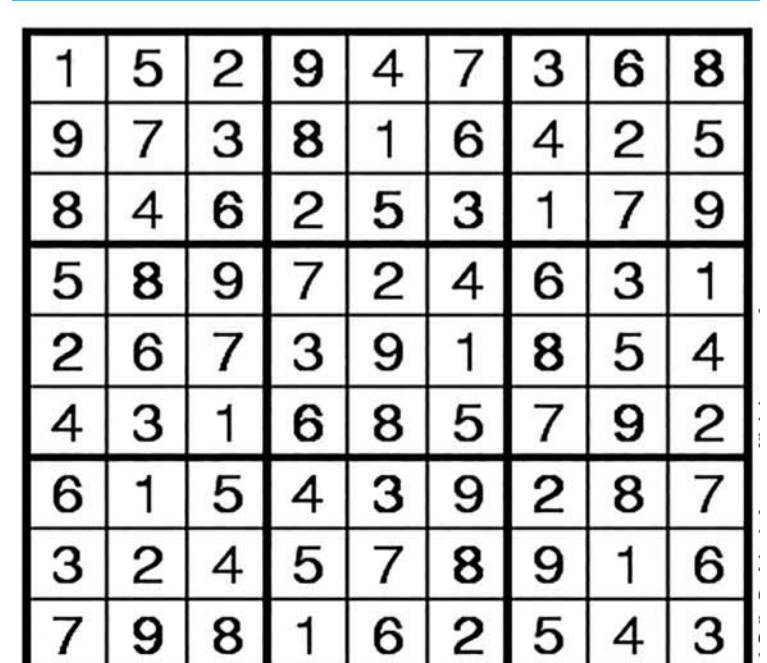
- APPROACH, ASSIST, ATTACK, BLOCKING, BUMP, CAPTAIN, COACH, COURT, DEFENCE, DOUBLE HIT, DUMP, FAULT, FLOATER, FOOTWORK, FORMATIONS, GAME, HITTER, KILL, KNEE PADS, LIBERO, MATCH, OFFENCE, PASS, PLAYERS, POINTS, QUICK HIT, RALLY, REFEREE, ROTATION, SAVE, SCORE, SERVE, SETS, SETTER, SHANK SHOT, SIDELINES, SKY BALL, SLIDE, SPIKING, SPORT, SUBSTITUTION, TANDEM, TEAMS, TOPSPIN, TRAJECTORY, VERTICAL JUMP, WEAK SIDE, WIPE

The hidden message is: VOLLEYBALL WAS ORIGINALLY CALLED MINTONETTE

Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



French domestic abuse thriller terrifying US audiences

It is an unsatisfactory but all-too-familiar denouement of divorce battles involving children: the judge who must allow a violent man back into his family's lives because there is no proof of abuse claims. Oscar-nominated Xavier Legrand's French-language thriller "Custody," an unsparing account of abuse focusing as much on the damage to the children, has earned acclaim at home and on the festivals circuit ahead its summer US release.

"I would like people to realize that domestic violence is a real scourge in our society and that children are also victims who are too often forgotten," Legrand, 40, said during the COLCOA festival of French film in Los Angeles, which wraps on Monday. "And especially that they understand that these kinds of situations can turn into horror. These are murders. Under no circumstances are these crimes of passion."

Over half of the killings of women in the United States are related to domestic violence, government figures show, with victims often dying at the hands of an ex who was granted shared custody of the children. Last year the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed around 10,000 murders of women in the decade from 2003, finding that more than half were perpetrated by a romantic partner or ex. Data from Legrand's native France — 123 women killed by domestic violence in 2016 — demonstrate that the problem is not confined to the US.

Stranger danger

The frightening reality of domestic violence runs counter to an idea perpetuated by Hollywood that the threat to women from men comes in the form of lunatic serial killers lurking in dark alleys. With a few creditable exceptions—among them "Tyrannosaur" (2011), "Once Were Warriors" (1995) or "Sleeping with the Enemy" (1991) — spousal abuse hasn't been as captivating a subject for filmmakers as the much less common "stranger danger."

"Custody," which was written by Legrand, premiered at the Venice Film Festival last year, where it was awarded the Silver Lion for best direction and the Lion of the Future for best first feature film. Lauded by the Los Angeles Times as a "masterclass in tension modulation and psychological entrapment," it is released on July 13 in New York before getting a nationwide rollout. Legrand's debut feature-length movie recounts the custody battle of the abused wife and a menacing husband first portrayed in his powerful Oscar-nominated 2013 short "Just Before Losing Everything."

Starting out as a nerve-jangling social drama,

"Custody" simmers until it boils over into a full-blown, stomach-churning thriller, its pared-back screenplay aided by a conspicuous lack of music, à la Claude Chabrol or Alfred Hitchcock. Lea Drucker and Denis Menochet reprise the roles they played in the short, while newcomer Thomas Gioria embodies the conflicting feelings and terrors of the couple's traumatized 12-year-old son.

Menochet, in particular, has been singled out by critics for his terrifying but nuanced portrayal of a man humiliated by allegations of abuse and driven by possessive rage.

Fragility

Perhaps more impressive still was debut of Gioria, who convinced Legrand as soon as they met that he had the sensitivity, maturity and fragility—not to mention courage—that the role required. "I started at the same age as Thomas. So I know that at that age, the mind is very clear about reality and fiction," said Legrand, an accomplished theater actor who studied at the National Academy of Dramatic Arts in Paris. He was clear from the beginning that while the menace is ever-present, he wanted the violence itself to take place off screen, hidden from view as it is in real life.

“Domestic violence is a real scourge”



Actor/director Xavier Legrand speaks onstage during the Colcoa French Film Festival Day 3 at the Directors Guild of America, West Hollywood, California. — AFP

The filmmaker met abuse victims, a judge, psychologists and police, and attended violent men's groups to prepare for the movie. He always intended "Custody" to play out as a thriller, he says, rather than the type of social drama mastered by directors like Federico Fellini, Ken Loach or Mike Leigh. "The stories that some women told me were really like thrillers," he said. "That is the essence of this kind of situation. Fear is at the heart of domestic and family violence." —AFP

1980s classic 'Karate Kid' reborn as YouTube joins content wars

For Generation X, "The Karate Kid" is a pop culture touchstone. Now, more than 30 years on, YouTube wants to bring a new generation into the dojo. Thirteen years after its creation, the wildly popular video-sharing platform is rolling out its first major original content series, "Cobra Kai"—a revival of the 1980s saga with a twist. With the first 10-episode series going live online on May 2, Google-owned YouTube is also hoping to draw new customers to its \$10-a-month streaming service, YouTube Red, which was launched in 2015.

YouTube Red is now available in five countries—the US, Australia, New Zealand, Mexico and South Korea.—but YouTube says it will reach dozens more by year's end. The portal—which now has 1.5 billion users—is hoping its forays into original content will help change the company's economic model, which until now has been largely based on ads and home-grown viral video stars. To do that, and also counter the rise of Netflix and Amazon, the company have looked to a known quantity.

"The Karate Kid," released in 1984, led to three sequels, and even a reboot in 2010 starring Will Smith's son Jaden. Overall, the films have taken in more than \$500 million at the box office worldwide. The star of the first film, Ralph Macchio, and the creative team behind such unhinged, raunchy comedies as the "Harold and Kumar" films and "Blockers," are on board for "Cobra Kai."

The twist?

The series—still set in the Los Angeles suburbs—is a comedy, and it's told not from the perspective of Daniel LaRusso (Macchio), the bullied teen hero who learns karate from a martial arts master, but that of his nemesis Johnny Lawrence (William Zabka). "Cobra Kai" creators Josh Heald, Jonathan Hurwitz and Hayden Schlossberg helped convince a hesitant Macchio, now 56, to get on board.

"They were so convincing, passionate,



Actors Ralph Macchio, left, and Billy Zabka participate in a panel discussion during the NYC Tribeca Red Carpet + screening of the YouTube Red series 'Cobra Kai' at SVA Theater in New York City. — AFP

completely well versed into the narrative of where they wanted to go, respectful of the nostalgia, the legacy of what the film is," Macchio said at a roundtable organized during the recent Tribeca Film Festival. "It's their 'Star Wars,'" he added, referring to the series creators' passion for the source material. "They know much more about the movie than I do, which is kind of freaky."

Nostalgia card

"Cobra Kai" subverts the usual hero-villain set-up of many martial arts film by exploring the complexity of Johnny, who was somewhat misunderstood, and thus demonized. Johnny, now in his 50s, has led a life full of ups and downs—mostly downs. Viewers can imagine that Daniel's triumphant kick in the original film's ultimate bout was the beginning of his woes. Johnny is offered a chance to rebuild his life—and upset that of his old rival, now a successful car dealer.

Karate still takes center stage, along with a

more general look at martial arts training and teenage relationships—all hallmarks of the original films. But the show has an off-kilter humor that stems from Heald, Hurwitz and Schlossberg. With a cast of mainly young actors, YouTube hopes "Cobra Kai" can earn a following with a generation whose parents remember the first films, but often don't understand what makes their own kids tick.

"There was something especially about bullying that looked very 2018 to us," said Heald. "We had to show restraint. We had to pull ourselves back and resist the will to just swim in a 'Karate Kid' fan bath." YouTube has already produced some series for YouTube Red, including a fresh take on the popular "Step Up" street dance films. The first episode of "Step Up: High Water," put online in late January, has so far been seen 12 million times. But those shows were squarely aimed at the under-25 crowd. With "Cobra Kai," YouTube is hoping to also play the nostalgia card, and win over a much bigger audience. —AFP

Internet sensation 'yodeling kid' wins US music contract

CHICAGO: In a whirlwind month, 11-year-old Mason Ramsey has gone from singing at a Walmart near his rural Midwestern US town, to becoming an internet sensation, and now, scoring a major music contract announced Friday. The American country music-loving boy has signed a deal with two record labels—Atlantic Records and the Nashville-based Big Loud—and released his first single Friday, aptly titled "Famous."

"I'd been to Nashville a few times before, but never thought something like this would happen," the young singer was quoted as saying, in a joint statement released by the music labels. Smartphone video posted in late March showed Ramsey singing at a Walmart store near his home in Harrisburg, Illinois—something he said he did often. His yodeling performance went viral, garnering 31 million views—and counting. It featured Ramsey singing "Lovesick Blues" by the late Hank Williams.

The legendary American singer-songwriter, who was among the first country music superstars, is Ramsey's favorite musician. Ramsey's sudden internet fame caused Williams' 1949 rendition of the song to spike 1,800 percent on various music services such as Spotify—getting one million streams, according to Billboard magazine. Global searches for the lyrics to the song also spiked. Like his idol, Ramsey has been thrust into the spotlight and become the subject of internet memes and video remixes.

Walmart sponsored a concert starring Ramsey at the same store where he initially performed. He has sung at the prestigious Coachella music festival and on country music's biggest stage, the Grand Ole Opry in Nashville. "He is a down to earth kid who loves country music," Big Loud's Seth England said in a statement. Next, the young singer is working on a new video to accompany his just-released single. —AFP



Viral internet sensation Mason Ramsey aka The Walmart Yodeling Boy performs onstage with Florida Georgia Line during 2018 Stagecoach California's Country Music Festival at the Empire Polo Field in Indio, California. — AFP

Singer Mapfumo returns to post-Mugabe Zimbabwe

After 16 years in self-imposed exile, Thomas Mapfumo, one of Zimbabwe's most popular and outspoken musicians, has returned home displaying the same defiance that forced him to flee. "I was speaking out against the government and what was happening," he told AFP as he recalled his vocal and much-celebrated opposition to Robert Mugabe, who was ousted from power in November.

"There was no rule of law. Everything was just out of order. There was a lot of dictatorship going on. I don't tolerate dictatorship," Mapfumo, 72, has remained a beloved national hero despite moving to the United States, and he has been mobbed by fans since flying back into Harare to perform at an all-night concert on Saturday. "We were happy to hear that Mugabe was gone... (but) it seems we are not developing," he said. "Most of our people are still living in squalor. Our health system is going down. Our education system is going down. The economy is in shambles. We don't have our own currency. The poor are getting poorer, the rich are getting richer."

Popular hero

Mapfumo's popularity dates back to before Zimbabwe's independence when his songs called on youths to take up arms and fight against white-minority rule. One tune—"Mothers send our offspring off to fight in the war"—became a rallying call and unofficial



United States-based Zimbabwean musician Thomas Mapfumo speaks during an interview in Harare. — AFP

anthem, spurring many to join the independence war. Mapfumo played at the country's independence celebrations in 1980, after Bob Marley's famous set.

But he soon became a critic of Mugabe, who held onto power for 37 years during which music became a key expression of resistance. In 1989, Mapfumo released a protest album titled "Corruption" which was banned on state radio and television but was still a huge underground hit. As Mugabe cracked down on any sign of dissent, opposition gatherings were banned and security forces brutally targeted any critics. —AFP

Mamma Mia! ABBA make new music after 35 years

Mamma Mia! Here we go again: Sweden's legendary disco group ABBA announced on Friday that they have reunited to record two new songs, 35 years after their last single, sparking joy and surprise among fans. "We all four felt that, after some 35 years, it could be fun to join forces again and go into the recording studio. So we did," the group said in a statement after repeatedly vowing they would never reunite.

The new songs "I Still Have Faith In You" and "Don't Shut Me Down" were recorded last summer, the band's manager Gorel Hanser told TT news agency. The quartet split up in 1982 after dominating the disco scene for more than a decade with hits like "Waterloo", "Dancing Queen", "Mamma Mia" and "Super Trouper". "It was like time had stood still and that we only had been away on a short holiday. An extremely joyful experience!" members Agnetha Faltskog, Bjorn Ulvaeus, Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Benny Andersson added.

The group, which sold more than 400 million albums, have not sung together publicly since 1986. "I think it's going to sound pretty much like their last songs from 1982, with quite a mild tempo, not like 'Voulez-Vous' or 'Gimme Gimme Gimme,'" Carl Magnus Palm, who has written several books about the group, said. "Frida's and Agnetha's voices are the same, so it won't be a huge difference," he said.

Palm said he was stunned by Friday's announcement. "I'm as surprised as everyone else.... They've always been so adamant that they weren't going to make new music." The news came as Sweden mourned the death of another of its music sensations, Avicii, one of the world's most successful DJs whose real name was Tim

Bergling. He was found dead a week ago in Oman where he had been on holiday with friends.

Come of age

Computerized avatars are to perform "I Still Have Faith In You" in a TV special produced by NBC and the BBC to be broadcast in December, the group said. "We have come of age, but the song is new. And it feels good." Bjorn, 73, was married to Agnetha, 68, and Benny, 71, was married to Anni-Frid, 72. The group dominated the 1970s disco scene with their glitzy costumes, kitsch dance routines and catchy melodies. —AFP



(L-R) Picture taken in Stockholm shows Benny Andersson, Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Agnetha Faltskog and Bjorn Ulvaeus, members of the Swedish pop group 'Abba' posing after winning the Swedish branch of the Eurovision Song Contest with their song 'Waterloo.' — AFP

Picasso painting with 25,000 owners on show in Geneva

It won't hang on the wall in their living rooms, but they own it nonetheless: 25,000 Internet users banded together to buy a Picasso painting, which went on display in Geneva on Friday. Visitors to Swiss bargain site Qoqa usually end up buying a new drill, a set of luggage or a cheap trip to Marrakesh.

But last December, the website that was created in 2005 with the motto: "We do anything, but it's all for you", proposed a painting by none other than artist superstar Pablo Picasso. The 1968 painting titled "Buste de mousquetaire" (Musketeer Bust) was offered up at the bargain price of two million Swiss francs. Over the course of three days, 25,000 people purchased 40,000 shares, at a price of 50 Swiss francs each, to become the proud owners of the artwork.

Qoqa's main objective with selling a work by arguably the most famous artist of the 20th century was obviously "to go viral" and get people talking about the website, company chief and founder Pascal Meyer said. But standing in the middle of the site's open workspace, with its young, hip staff bent over laptops, the 37-year-old stressed the move had also been inspired by a desire to democratize the art world, which he said was often viewed as "closed and obscure".

Doubly impossible

"When we launched this idea, people told us to forget it, that it was just impossible," said Meyer, who like the rest of Qoqa's workforce adheres to a no-tie policy. "And then when we started talking about Picasso, people said, 'now that is doubly impossible'. So the challenge was irresistible," he enthused. "We said: Let's do this thing. Let's try ... to democratize this area, which seems so inaccessible to regular people."

The company gathered a team of specialists to certify the authenticity of the painting, but also to ensure that the price was fair. Meyer refused to divulge how much Qoqa paid for the 58 x 28.5-centimetre painting, which portrays what looks like a man with a pointy beard and moustache, and a lacy collar. He said only that the company bought it from a European seller who



A contributor swipes the card associated with her share of the 1968 work by late Spanish artist Pablo Picasso entitled 'Buste de mousquetaire' at the Museum of Contemporary Art (MAMCO) in Geneva. — AFP photos

did not wish to be identified.

In the "musketeer" spirit of the painting, the owners have basically made a vow of "all for one, one for all" by pool decisions on where it will go on display. Geneva's modern art museum MAMCO was on Friday the first to receive that honor. Director Lionel Bovier said he had been smitten by the project.

More sexy, less boring

For the reputedly high-brow museum, associating with the crowd sourcing scheme could serve to help broaden its appeal beyond the elitist crowd it usually attracts. "The main interest for us is to foster a broader group of visitors... to reach out and address this group of people who have become owners of the painting," Bovier said. "We hope to draw the biggest crowd possi-

ble from this group of 25,000 people," he said, adding that most of the buyers were from the French-speaking part of Switzerland. Each owner has been issued his or her own card, bearing individual numbers and a picture of the painting, allowing them to come and admire it at will, for free. Bovier said he had drawn on Qoqa's technological know-how to display the painting in an original manner, using among other things a webcam and an interactive platform, "PiQasso", which will be available through the Qoqa site. A 3D scan of the piece has also been made, allowing visitors to stroll through it.

"There are lots of little things that will make this a bit more sexy and bit less boring," Meyer said with a laugh. The museum meanwhile will offer a range of meetings, conferences and other activities around the painting, Picasso and also the conservation work museums usually



A 1968 work by late Spanish artist Pablo Picasso entitled 'Buste de mousquetaire' is displayed.

do behind the scenes, Bovier said. The "Buste de mousquetaire" is set to remain in Geneva until October. It will be up to its owners to determine where it will go next. — AFP

Landmark Palestinian art museum opens doors in US



People visit the Palestinian Museum on the day of its inauguration in Woodbridge, Connecticut. — AFP photos

A bucolic Connecticut town may have outwardly little in common with the Middle East, but it's home to a new art museum hoping to change US attitudes toward the Palestinians. Tucked away in Woodbridge, an affluent community near Yale University 80 miles north of Manhattan, it is well off the museum circuit and the bright lights of a big city, at least for now.

The achievement is that it exists at all, funded on a shoe-string budget of half-a-million dollars, and nine months in the making by its Palestinian-American businessman founder, determined to create the first museum dedicated to Palestinian art in the United States. Israel's imminent 70th anniversary, the prospective US embassy move to Jerusalem, Washington's close relationship with the Jewish state, past suicide bombings and headlines about stabbing attacks overshadow much of the US discourse about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"The media and the forces that are not friendly to Palestine have painted the Palestinians in a very negative light and in some ways they were dehumanized," museum founder Faisal Saleh, 66, said. His hope is for everyday Americans to visit and discover that the Palestinians have a rich artistic heritage. "We have our own artists, just like everyone else has their own artists, and we have a disproportionate number," he said. "A lot of them are working under very austere conditions."

Called Palestine Museum US, it will open to the public this Sunday and for now will open only Sundays, free of charge and staffed by volunteers. It houses more than 70 works of art, 100 photographs, collections of embroidery, costumes and several modern installations. While it's about art, not war, and the museum offers little education on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict itself, the longing for land, for peace and for self-determination permeates much of the work. Palestinians commemorate the anniversary



Palestinian artist Samia Halaby speaks during the inauguration.

of Israel's creation in 1948 as the "nakba" or "catastrophe" that forcibly displaced or sent into exile the first of successive waves of Palestinian refugees.

'Creative rather than backward'

"Art always expands your thinking," says Samia Halaby, 81, a prominent Palestinian artist who lives and works in New York. Three of her pictures hang in the gallery space. "I hope they will learn more about our existence as a people, see us as being creative rather than backward victims, as the press is prone to present us," she said. "It is something that is accomplished a great deal by museums all around the world for other cultures and other ideas." The airy 4,000 square feet of gallery space, with sunlight flooding through the windows, starts with old photographs of Jerusalem under the British Mandate, and leads through to contemporary and abstract paintings. Featuring the work of 29 artists, many living in Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Saleh says it is proof of a concept that can be transported on a bigger scale.



Faisal Saleh, founder of Palestinian Museum, speaks during the inauguration.

"We are hoping that very soon other Palestinian entrepreneurs will join and fund the ultimate objective, which is creating a much larger museum in a major city, such as in New York or Washington DC," he said. This is a tall order, but the Ramallah-born Saleh says initial reactions have been "phenomenal," already generating press coverage focused on Palestinian art rather than conflict. "It's a very peaceful activity," he said. "We want to share our art with the people and I don't see why anybody would have a problem with it."

Timothy Niedermann, an editor and author of a novel about a Palestinian schoolteacher, was one of those who attended an invitation-only opening ceremony last weekend. "Our negative image is perhaps more than partially justified in terms of the terrorist experience but we don't know anything else. So this is going to give us a picture of 'yes normal people live there'. "And that's what really needs to be said. Normal people with whom one can have a normal conversation and perhaps arrive at normal solutions." — AFP

Wall Street lawyer builds art career out of Lego

Tired of Wall Street, American lawyer Nathan Sawaya turned to Lego and a second life creating sculptures out of hundreds of thousands of tiny bricks. The latest version of his "Art of the Brick" exhibition opens in Paris's Parc de la Villette today, next stop on a global tour that began in 2007, this time with a theme of superheroes from DC Comics, creators of Batman and Superman.

"I have millions of bricks, and I'll design something by sketching it out, getting that idea, and then brick by brick I put it together," Sawaya said, beside a suspended, life-size Superman, his gloved fist thrust out forward and cape billowing. Sawaya swapped Manhattan for a studio in Los Angeles, where he has designed sculptures of Wonder Woman, Flash, the Joker and other fictional legends.

His 5.5 meter-long Batmobile, parked inside an intricately designed Batcave, was shaped with half a million Lego bricks - the largest sculpture in the show. "I wasn't happy as a lawyer. Creating art made me happy. And using Lego bricks made the art very accessible," he said.—Reuters



US artist Nathan Sawaya poses during a photo session in Paris prior the exhibition 'The Art of the Brick' displaying his sculptures of super heroes made with Lego bricks. — AFP





Diners eat at the Nampo Myeonok noodle bar in Seoul. — AFP photos



A chef prepares 'Pyongyang naengmyeon', a cold noodle dish.

Complete de-noodlisation: Kim's dish sells out in Seoul

At Seoul's Nampo Myeonok noodle bar, the owner was rushed off her feet, shouting at a long queue of hungry punters that she was clean out of "Pyongyang naengmyeon". "You'll have to wait around 40 minutes" for the broth to boil, she told the line snaking out of her door Saturday. Demand for North Korea's signature dish peaked all over the South's capital after it was featured on the menu at Friday's historic inter-Korean summit and became a surprise talking point.

A cold noodle dish served in a cool mild broth, "Pyongyang naengmyeon" is usually garnished with pieces of meat and vegetables. The long buckwheat noodle strands are usually cut with a pair of scissors to simplify the eating process. The dish is already popular in the South but many saw the summit as a good excuse to

“ Especially to eat Pyongyang naengmyeon ”

indulge. Thousands posted photos of the noodles they slurped down for lunch on Instagram with hashtags including #summit and #peacenaengmyeon.

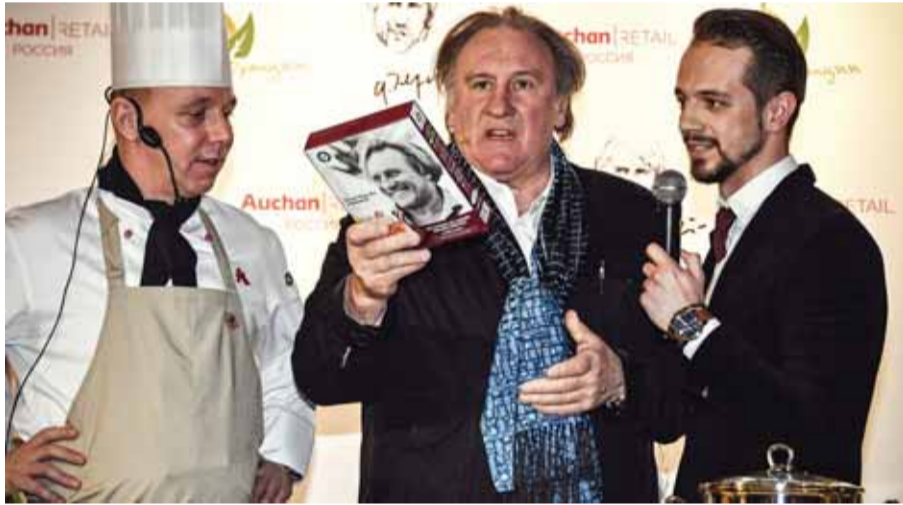
North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un provoked laughter at the summit and among South Korean journalists at a press centre when he cracked jokes about the dish, hoping that the South's President Moon Jae-in "will be able

to enjoy the Pyongyang naengmyeon that has travelled far". He laughed before adding: "I shouldn't say far."

The noodles—a special request by Moon—had been crafted by a leading chef from Okryu-gwan, a famed restaurant in Pyongyang. According to the North's state news agency KCNA, the dish "deeply impressed the participants". At Nampo Myeonok, the verdict was unani-

mous—at least on the food. "I came to this restaurant especially to eat Pyongyang naengmyeon. This place has been around for a long time and it's good," said diner Park Jae-chun.

Bass guitarist player Kim Tae-hun said the dish made him feel "closer" to those on the other side of the border "because we also eat a lot of it". But while the leaders made several references to unification of the two Koreas in their statement Friday, the culinary connections only went so far for some. Park said: "Personally I think it's okay for both South and North Korea to co-exist rather than unify as long as it's peaceful and we acknowledge each other."—AFP



French actor Gerard Depardieu, center, gestures as he takes part in a cooking workshop in Auchan supermarket for the promotion of food products that he recommends, in Moscow. — AFP photos

France's Depardieu brings French fare to Russia

French film star Gerard Depardieu's taking of Russian citizenship in 2013 was not to everyone's taste in his native France—but Friday saw him launch a line of food products "inspired by French traditions" in Moscow. Items including foie gras mousse and an assortment of jams and desserts—as well as vodka, in a nod to his dual citizenship—will all come with the "as recommended by Gerard Depardieu" label, and featured on the shelves of French supermarket chain Auchan in the Russian capital and vicinity.



Muscovites will be able to enjoy such French favorites as fillet of duck and mille-feuilles puff pastries. The 69-year-old gourmand, who told an Italian newspaper two years ago that "France is likely to become a Disneyland for foreigners, populated by imbeciles making wine and stinky cheese for tourists," was on hand alongside a Michelin-starred chef for a tasting and cooking workshop.

The line was created by "Gouts de France" (Tastes of France), a Russian company promoting the qualities of French cuisine using "the best producers of food-stuffs and beverages in Russia and the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States," comprising former Soviet republics minus the Baltic States and Georgia. Products earning the Depardieu seal of approval are distinguished by "a refined taste inspired by French traditions," according to Gouts de France.

"Food for the body is just as important as food for the soul. That's why what we eat is of fundamental importance," Depardieu had told a Moscow press conference Thursday. "My idea was to have the Russian market discover the products of local producers who are as passionate as I am about product quality and their beneficial effects," added the star of such films as "Cyrano de Bergerac" and "Green Card".

He moved to Belgium in 2012 to avoid French taxes before taking a Russian passport, something which earned him a warm hug from President Vladimir Putin. The larger than life actor, who also starred in the Asterix & Obelix franchise, is registered as a self-employed entrepreneur in Saransk, a city of around 300,000 people some 650 kilometers east of Moscow.—AFP

Symbolism on menu at Korea's summit dinner

Symbolism will be the main course of a banquet at Friday's inter-Korean summit, Seoul revealed Tuesday, with a menu featuring Pyongyang's signature dish and food from the home towns of the South's leaders at previous meetings. No detailed schedule has been released yet, but the dinner will be held after the summit in the same Peace House venue on the southern side of the border Demilitarized Zone.

Some of the food will come from the North. Moon suggested the North's signature dish of cold noodles and Pyongyang agreed to send a leading chef from Okryu-gwan, a famed restaurant in the capital city, to the venue, his office said Tuesday. Cold noodles come served in a cool mild broth and garnished with pieces of meat and vegetables. The long buckwheat strands are usually cut with a pair of scissors to simplify the eating process.

The South has its own varieties but even its diners tend to favor the Pyongyang version. Friday's menu also includes rosti—a traditional Swiss potato fritter—with a Korean twist to remind Kim of his childhood in Switzerland, it said.

Kim attended boarding school in the European country. Other dishes feature seafood, meat and rice from the home towns of Moon and the Southern presidents who went to Pyongyang for the two previous summits, Kim Dae-jung in 2000 and Roh Moo-hyun in 2007.

"We prepared the welcoming dinner to honor the people who worked so hard for peace and unification of our people," Moon's office said. Friday's summit is a result of a months-long diplomatic campaign orchestrated by Moon, a dovish leader who advocates dialogue to bring the isolated and nuclear-armed North to nuclear negotiations.

The Blue House has a tendency to make political points with its food choices. When US President Donald Trump visited last year, his meal included a prawn fished from the waters around Dokdo, disputed islands controlled by Seoul but claimed by fellow US ally Tokyo.—AFP



Mango mousse cake



An appetizer made of octopus and other sea food



Dumplings made of sea food. — AFP photos



Roasted Korean beef



A snapper steak and a catfish steak



Peter's fish steak



Rosti, a traditional Swiss potato fritter



Bibimbap, a traditional dish featuring various vegetables mixed with rice

Lifestyle | Fashion

Balenciaga, Paris store apologize over incident with Chinese customers

Luxury fashion brand Balenciaga and a French department store have apologized after allegations that Chinese customers were mistreated in Paris sparked an uproar and calls for a boycott on Chinese social media. Balenciaga and the Printemps store issued their apologies in Mandarin on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform, where the incident had become a top trending topic.

The hashtag #BoycottBalenciagaDiscriminates Chinese had been viewed 23 million times on Weibo on Friday. China's state-run Global Times, citing a video posted online, said a Chinese customer scolded queue

jumpers when she was standing in line to enter the Balenciaga shop in Printemps. One of the jumpers pushed the woman and threatened to punch her, prompting her son to come to her defense, according to the tabloid, which cited a video that was posted on another Chinese social media platform, WeChat.

Her son was beaten to the ground by group, the daily said, adding that a sales clerk then allegedly insulted Chinese customers and told them to leave. "Balenciaga shoes are beautiful, but such an episode is an eye-opener. #Boycott Balenciaga, which discriminates against the Chinese," said one Weibo user. Another wrote: "You can

say goodbye to the Chinese market." In its statement late Thursday, Balenciaga said it regretted the incident and noted that security guards had acted immediately to restore calm.

"Balenciaga sincerely apologizes to the customers who were present and reaffirms its strong commitment to respect equally all its customers," it said on Weibo. Printemps wrote that staff would receive additional training to ensure they manage such situations in the best possible way. "We would like to extend our sincerest apologies to the Chinese customers involved in this altercation as well as to all those who were upset or inconvenienced in any way," it said.

Paris is a favorite European destination of Chinese travelers, and they are crucial clients for French luxury brands. Long lines of customers from China and other countries are common at Parisian stores. But big-spending Chinese tourists have become targets for thieves in France, with the embassy issuing a statement last year urging them to exercise caution following "several large-scale violent robberies".—AFP



Brazilian designer and craftsman Gustavo Silvestre, center, is pictured as he teaches a crochet lesson to inmates, as part of "Ponto Firme" project in the Adriano Marrey maximum security penitentiary in Guarulhos metropolitan area of Sao Paulo, Brazil.



Inmates crochet clothing as part of "Ponto Firme" project. — AFP photos

Brazilian prisoners get fashionable in couture project

Never mind running away—these Brazilian prisoners prefer the fashion runway. The inmates of the Adriano Marrey penitentiary near Sao Paulo are part of a project using couture to help rehabilitate convicts and give them a chance to stitch together a new life. "Yarn and the crochet hook are my new weapons," said Honorato Bezerra, who has been an inmate for four years. Here it's not mail sacks that the prisoners sew, but trendy dresses, beachwear, jackets and other apparel that all saw their debut this week on the catwalk at Sao Paulo Fashion Week (SPFW).

Their main technique is crocheting, which Bezerra first learned from a cellmate and now perfects in weekly classes with Brazilian designer Gustavo Silvestre. The work results in more than the daringly revealing dresses or baggy pants sent out onto the runway at SPFW. "Crocheting helps us reduce our anxiety and to make time go by," Bezerra said. About 120 inmates have worked under Silvestre in the Ponto Firme (Strong Stitch) project over the last two and a half years, with 19 contributing to the prisoners' first SPFW collection, featuring 45 creations. Nearly all of them are convicted of drug trafficking.

For all its cool and sexy elements, the collection made sure to remind the crowd where the couturiers came from, alternating the soundtrack with the sounds of slamming cell doors and other sounds that can be heard in prisons.

"Yarn, crochet hook are my new weapons"

Well-behaved students

Silvestre, a fashion veteran who has been crocheting since 2008, comes to the maximum security Adriano Marrey prison with magazines and donated couture supplies. In the facility's small cultural center, he sits with his laptop to give the students a tutorial. They start crocheting and clearly they've learned their lesson. "No one does anything wrong here," Silvestre said in the well-lit, bright white room. "They make the most of everything."

Hooks and hands move quickly as the prisoners dive into their tasks, some crocheting, some cutting, others working with instructions. Two men, Thiago Araujo and Fabiano Bras, sit in a corner at the back working on carpet crocheting. They're the oldest in the class. Araujo is quiet and doesn't smile much. He's also busy, weaving a hat the previous day, finishing the carpet today and planning a dress for the next day.

"For ex-convicts it's very hard to get opportunities once you get out, so that's my motivation. I'm going to perfect my technique and when I'm out it will be my new profession," he said, without pausing with the crocheting. Bras is a specialist at weaving animals and characters from cartoons. "We'd like to have classes every single day," he said.



Inmates wait for their crochet class.

Gentler side

Adriano Marrey is a tough place. Like many Brazilian prisons it is hugely overcrowded, holding 2,100 prisoners despite having capacity for just 1,200. In most cells designed for six inmates, there are in fact 12. However, the prison is clean and is proud of its gentler side that includes the fashion project and a visit in 2016 by the Italian opera singer Andrea Bocelli. That makes a change from the usual Brazilian prison news of riots and attempted escapes.

"We believe that art can change lives," said security and education officer Igor Rocha, who's been overseeing the facility's cultural programs since 2010. "Before, I used to think that crocheting was something for grandmas. That was my opinion, but when I became tired of the criminal life, I joined the church group here and got interested. Then I came to this class," said Bruno Ribeiro, also working on a carpet.

"I changed my life thanks to this and I'm glad to be part of something that will be followed by the people who come after us," he added. For Bezerra, crochet work means everything while in prison. "Here I don't have to think about my freedom. Here I am free."—AFP

Bolivia capital bans child beauty pageants

LA PAZ: Child and teenage beauty queens are set to become a thing of the past in the Bolivian capital La Paz, where youth beauty pageants have been banned over concerns about sexualizing children. Supporters say the law, that also bans advertisements featuring children making sexualized poses or gestures, is intended to tackle violence against children resulting from hypersexualization. "We don't want young girls to continue being sexualized or used as objects to sell certain fashion products," municipal councilor Pedro Susz said Wednesday.

The legislation, which will only come into force in La Paz, is intended to prevent children from "being used... as copies of adults" and forced into activities "that don't correspond with their age," Susz added. Susz suggested penalties for breaching the regulations could include mandatory training workshops on issues surrounding premature hypersexualization and violence against women. According to official figures, on average of 16 children and teenagers are victims of some type of sexual violence every day in Bolivia, while in 2017 there were 87 child killings recorded.—AFP

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, APRIL 29, 2018



Children stand in a field of Tulips in Mainau, southern Germany.—AFP

SAUDI PRINCESS NOURA: MADE TO MEASURE FASHION AMBASSADOR

A young Saudi Arabian princess inspired by her time living in Tokyo is the new face of fashion in an ultraconservative kingdom, where dramatic reforms have sparked equal parts optimism and skepticism. Princess Noura bint Faisal Al-Saud, the great-granddaughter of Saudi Arabia's founder, was named honorary president of the Arab Fashion Council in December. The royal, who turns 30 on Sunday, this month oversaw her country's first Arab Fashion Week, headlined by Jean Paul Gaultier and Roberto Cavalli.

"Wearing the abaya or being if you would like to call it conservative in the way we dress is something that is part of who we are. Its part of our culture ... this is how our life is, even while travelling," she said. Saudi Arabia has witnessed rapid policy change since the June appointment of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, son of the king and heir to his throne. From this summer, women will be allowed to drive in the kingdom. The crown prince has also hinted that the abaya, the neck-to-toe robe worn by women, may no longer be compulsory.

Safe couture

The first Saudi Arabian edition of Arab Fashion Week opened on April 11, two weeks behind schedule, under the eye of Princess Noura. Organized by the Arab Fashion Council, the event drew international attention both as a watershed in Saudi Arabia and for its controversial configuration, which saw the shows restricted to women and banned to cameras. The lineup included Saudi Arabia's own Arwa Banawi, whose The Suitable Woman range is adored by fashionistas across the region, and Mashaal Alrajhi, the eponymous gender-inclusive label of a rarely seen Saudi sheikha.

Princess Noura said the limited access was "part of the restrictions that we have to follow as part of the culture. It was a women-only event and some women are coming to the event—most of them, I would say—feeling safe. 'I'm coming to see fashion without having to worry about anyone taking my picture. I want to enjoy it.'" Pictures of the event were taken by the fashion council's photographers and released after the approval of Saudi Arabia's General Entertainment Authority.

Fashion for everyone

The princess graduated from Tokyo's Rikkyo University with a Masters degree in International Business with a Japanese Perspective. She cites her time in Japan as a major influence on her approach to fashion, business and people at home.

"Couture is no longer affordable to a lot of people," said Princess Noura. "It was something that was part of fashion and still is ... but these days people are focusing even more on ready-to-wear which is something that everyone can indulge in, everyone can wear, everyone can be part of."

“Couture is no longer affordable”

With a shayla headscarf draped over her hair, the princess is warm, welcoming and eloquent, the exact image that fans have hailed as the future of Saudi Arabia and critics have dismissed as little more than window dressing in one of the most restrictive countries in the world. "Absolutely I understand people's perspective," Princess Noura said in an interview in Riyadh. "Saudi Arabia has strong ties with its culture. As a Saudi woman, I respect my culture, I respect my religion."



"That's where the whole love of fashion started," she said. "So I think I bring back a lot of Japan to Saudi ... The respect of others, the respect of other people's culture, of other people's religion."

The cultural influence of Asia is visible in Riyadh, where the crossover between the kimono and abaya is growing in popularity among fashion-loving youth. Ready-couture, the halfway point between haute-couture and ready-to-wear, has also skyrocketed in the region with the rise of social media and influencers, and Saudi Arabia has an eye on that market—as a future manufacturing hub.

The princess also has her eye on introducing textile manufacturing to Saudi Arabia, which is seeking to reduce the economy's dependence on oil. "Even if it's just 10 percent of the production line, or the manufacturing line, we can have the finishing ... the last stages of assembly in Saudi Arabia," she said. "I believe that we can do something great."—AFP

President of the Arab Fashion Council in Saudi Arabia Princess Noura bint Faisal Al-Saud works at her office in the Saudi capital Riyadh. — AFP photos

