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NOTICE TO OUR READERS

Kuwait Times extends to our readers best wishes for the Kuwait National & Liberation Day holidays! The newspaper will not publish 26 February. Our next issue will be published on February 27, 2017.



Employers of Filipina maid found in a freezer arrested

Nader Essam Assaf in Lebanon custody; Wife in Syria custody



KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior yesterday urged motorists to be cautious on the roads due to the rainy weather. Drivers must ensure that their vehicles remain reasonably apart, keep the lights on, adhere to all traffic regulations and call without hesitance the emergency room at 112 if accidents occur. Kuwait witnessed heavy rain, coupled with cloudy skies and moderate visibility yesterday. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh (See Page 2)

BEIRUT: The employers of a Filipina maid found dead in a freezer in Kuwait were both arrested in the Syrian capital Damascus, a Lebanese judicial official said yesterday. Syrian authorities surrendered Nader Essam Assaf to Beirut on Friday because of his Lebanese citizenship but his Syrian wife Mona remains in custody in Damascus, the official said. The murder of Joanna Demafelis sparked outrage in the Philippines and prompted President Rodrigo Duterte to impose a departure ban for Filipinos planning to work in Kuwait. The 29-year-old's body, which allegedly showed signs of torture, was found earlier this month inside a freezer in the abandoned apartment unit of the detained couple.

The couple have been the subject of an Interpol manhunt since Demafelis's body was found more than a year after her family reported her missing. "The couple were arrested in Damascus. They were the subject of an Interpol red notice and the Syrian authorities handed the husband over to Lebanese custody on Friday morning," the official said. "Syria kept custody of the wife because she is a Syrian national," he added. "Lebanon has asked Kuwait to pass on the husband's police record." The official said that after leaving Kuwait, the couple had made a very brief stopover in Lebanon before travelling to neighboring Syria.



KUWAIT: Ciriaco A Lagunzad III (center), Undersecretary for Workers Protection, Human Resource, and Internal Auditing Services Cluster in the Filipino Department of Labor, speaks during a meeting with the Filipino community at his country's embassy in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Duterte has vowed to bring justice to Demafelis's family, lashing out at the Gulf state and alleging Arab employers routinely rape Filipina workers, force them to work 21 hours a day and feed them scraps. Kuwait has said it is investigating reported deaths and abuses, and insisted there were only a small number considering that there are more than 250,000 Filipinos working in the emirate. Duterte this week sent a team of labor officials to Kuwait to seek greater protection for migrant workers. — AFP

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Heavy rain hits Kuwait; scattered showers predicted for today

Interior Ministry urges drivers to stay cautious



—Photos by Joseph Shagra and Fouad Al-Shaikh



KUWAIT: Heavy rain hit Kuwait yesterday after a long period of drought as the country was affected by south easterly winds with speed that reached as high as 42 km/h. Nearly 7mm of rain were recorded around the country, while a chance of scattered rain is also predicted for today according to the Meteorological Department of the Directorate General of Civil Aviation. The Ministry of Interior released a statement meanwhile urging motorists to be cautious on the roads due to the rainy weather, saying that drivers must ensure that their vehicles remain reasonably apart, keep the lights on, adhere to all traffic regulations and call without hesitation the emergency room at 112 if accidents occur. The maximum temperature yesterday reached 23 C degrees while the minimum was 15 C, whereas today's maximum temperature is predicted to reach 24 C and the minimum could drop to 11 C.



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NCCAL discusses prehistory in 3rd int'l conference



KUWAIT: Officials pose for a group photo during NCCAL's third international conference.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) held its third international conference under the slogan 'Prehistoric eras in the Arab World'. The two-day conference hosted an elite group of history professors including the head of antiquities department at Africa International University Yousuf Al-

Amin from Sudan, Dr Mayson Al-Nahar from Jordan, Sultan Al-Duwaish from Kuwait, Nayef Al-Qannour from Saudi Arabia, Ali Al-Masshani from Oman, Abdelwahed bin Nasser from Morocco, Zaidan Kafafi from Jordan, Ahmad Saeed and Abulhassan Bakri from Egypt, Mustafa Ashi from Morocco, Abdelaziz Suwaileh from Bahrain, and Yousuf Munir from Iraq.



Sultan Al-Duwaish speaks during the conference.

French envoy reiterates close ties with Kuwait

KUWAIT: French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy has reaffirmed the close and distinctive bilateral relations, and continuous efforts to boost them. Diplomatic, strategic and military cooperation between the two countries has significantly contributed to documenting this vital stage in the history of the two nations, Masdupuy said yesterday, as Kuwait is celebrating National Days. She noted that maintaining stability in the region is a priority on the agenda of both. France fully realizes Kuwait's role and efforts for stability in the region, she noted.

Masdupuy lauded Kuwait's recent hosting of the Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) and the ministerial

meeting of the International Coalition against the so-called Islamic State (IS). Welcoming Kuwait's membership in the UNSC for the coming two years, the French envoy pointed to the current conditions in the Middle East saying the two countries have to work together to develop solutions to all regional issues for peace and security. She congratulated the Kuwaiti political leadership and people on the country's 57th National Day, the 27th Liberation Day and 12th anniversary of His Highness Amir's ascendance to power. She wished the country further progress and prosperity under its sagacious leadership. —RUNA



French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive National days congratulations

Celebrations coincide with National Anthem's 40th anniversary

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received from top state officials yesterday cables of congratulations on the advent of the 57th National Day and 27th Liberation Anniversary. His Highness the Amir thanked His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Chief of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy KNG Chief Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, as well as His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on their sincere wishes towards Kuwait's development and progress. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received national days greetings and congratulations from Arab and foreign leaders and officials. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah thanked the leaders for their sincere sentiments towards Kuwaiti leadership and people.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince exchanged greetings with local officials on the advent of the 57th National Day and 27th Liberation Anniversary. His Highness the Crown Prince received a cable from Ghanem and MPs who congratulated His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Amir on the national occasions. The cable wished the Kuwaiti leadership and people evermore progress and success. His Highness the Crown Prince sent a cable in return, thanking Speaker Ghanem and MPs on their sincere wishes.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf exchanged national days greetings with Sheikh Salem Al-Ali and Sheikh Mubarak Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also exchanged cables with Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, as well as ministers, governors, diplomats, in addition to a number of citizens and expatriates.

Meanwhile, the Defense Ministry said in a press release that Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad sent a congratulatory cable to His Highness the Amir, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, on the 57th and 27th anniversaries of the country's National Day and Liberation Day respectively. In the cable, Sheikh Nasser reaffirmed loyalty to Kuwait and complete resolve to resolutely defend the homeland, the Ministry of Defense said in a press release. He also wished His Highness the Amir good health and Kuwait



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

everlasting security, safety and stability. Sheikh Nasser Sabah also sent a couple of congratulatory cables of similar sentiments to His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister on the occasion of the country's National Day and Liberation Day.

National anthem

Kuwait's celebration of its 57th National Day, the 27th Liberation Day and the 12th anniversary of the assumption of office by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah coincides this year with the 40th anniversary of the country's national anthem today. His Highness the Amir took office after the executive and legislative authorities pledged allegiance to him at a historic parliamentary session on January 29, 2006. The anthem, written by poet Ahmad Al-Adwani and composed by musician Ibrahim Al-Soula, was first broadcast on February 25, 1978, in synchronization with the independence day and the

anniversary of late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah' assumption of power.

It was approved by the then cabinet, thus replacing the Amiri Salute that was composed by Yusuf Adees in 1951. Its 40th anniversary adds to the grandeur of the national celebrations across Kuwait that witnesses a remarkable development in all fields under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir.

The State of Kuwait actually gained independence from Britain on June 19, 1961 by virtue of a treaty signed by Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah (1895-1965) - the 11th ruler of the country, and Sir George H Middleton (1910-1998). The treaty ended Kuwait's status as a British protectorate under the pact signed by Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah - the seventh ruler of the country, and Britain on January 23, 1899.

Kuwait celebrated its first Independence Day on

June 19, 1962, with a grand military parade at the old airport where the late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah delivered a speech. He pledged to set up a constituent assembly to work out a modern constitution and arrange for legislative elections. The constitution was approved in November 1962 and the polls were held on January 23, 1963.

The date of celebrating the Independence Day was shifted on May 18, 1964, to February 25 to coincide with the date of the coronation of Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah in commemoration of his role in building Kuwait as an independent, fully sovereign, democratic and modern country.

Great strides

Since its independence, the State of Kuwait has made great strides on the road of progress and prosperity and abided by a balanced foreign open-door policy based on friendship, peace and mutual benefit cooperation.

It has been working with regional and international organization to help realize the aspirations of the peoples of the world for development, security and stability. It was able to build firm relations with almost all countries of the world thanks to contributions to the efforts, led by the United Nations, the Arab League, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Gulf Cooperation Council to ensure stability and security worldwide.

Kuwait plays a prominent role in humanitarian efforts, which became a distinctive feature in its foreign policy and deservedly led to the UN recognition of His Highness the Amir as Humanitarian Leader and Kuwait as Humanitarian Center in September 2014. The national celebrations have passed through different stages since the early 1960s. The festivities were first held along the Gulf Street with various state bodies, folklore bands and students taking part.

In 1985, 'Sabat Al-Alam' (the Flag Square), near the Arabian Gulf coastline, was designated as site of festivities; its area amounts to 10,000 sq. m. The country's tallest flagpole, standing 36 meters, was built at there.

The jubilant Kuwaiti people enjoy the festivities this year amid remarkable achievements in the economic development, prosperity and national unity under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA



Kuwait made great strides on road of progress, prosperity



May Kuwait remain peaceful and prosperous

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His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait
Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

His Highness the Crown Prince
Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

the Kuwaiti Government,
and all citizens of Kuwait
on the occasion of Kuwait National and
Liberation Days



Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait Towers surrounded by heavy fog that hit Kuwait recently. — KUNA photo

Zain celebrates national holidays with children in hospitals

Company's team celebrates in family atmosphere



KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, shared the joys of national holidays with children in a number of hospitals in Kuwait. The company's team visited the hospitals during this patriotic time of the year to distribute gifts to children and their families to celebrate the season in a family atmosphere full of joy and happiness.

Zain organizes visits to hospitals several times a year during many special occasions, including Kuwait's National and Liberation Days. The initiative, which comes under the umbrella of Zain's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, aimed at

sharing the joys of national holidays with the children, their parents, as well as the medical staff who take care of them.

This year, Zain's team took part in a number of initiatives that catered to children in hospitals, including social visits to Al Razi and Ibn Sina hospitals in cooperation with KACCH, participation in the event held by Zain hospital, as well as distributing national-themed gifts to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's care centers. These family-oriented contributions reflected the beautiful traditions of the Kuwaiti culture.

Zain expressed its heartfelt appreciation

and gratitude to all the parties involved in organizing the visits including KACC, hospital staff, officials, and the children's families, who all helped draw a smile on the faces of the children.

Zain highlighted that the aim of undertaking the annual hospital visits during special occasions is part of the company's commitment to celebrating with all segments of the society through ongoing social activities that generate a sense of generosity and caring. As a responsible telecommunications company, Zain looks to improve the lives of the people within the communities it serves.

ABK sponsors Bayan School National Day celebrations

KUWAIT: In a move to foster national sentiments amongst Kuwaiti youth ahead of the National Day celebrations, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) sponsored the Al-Bayan Bilingual School (BBS) Carnival, which was held at the school's Hawally campus on Saturday, February 17, 2018. The annual carnival was organized by the school's Parents Teachers Association (PTA), to help fund the school's activities and programs for the new academic year.

Conscious of the role that schools play in shaping the views of students today, the PTA initiated the carnival to reinforce the feeling of unity among students and their families, and reaffirm their commitment towards the country. ABK believes that instilling a sense of community spirit in the students is very important as it promotes better integration in the society.

During the carnival, students and their families participated in a number of fun activities, and had the chance to attend various



shows including a traditional music band, neon entertainment show, bubble show, magic show, juggler and unicyclist show. The funds

collected from the carnival will also support the Maker Space initiative, STEM projects and Green Screens projects.

Burgan Bank served as silver sponsor at MGRP Career Fair

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the most sought-after destinations providing progressive career opportunities locally, participated in the 2018 Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) Career Fair recently as a silver sponsor to network and familiarize the students of the high caliber and dynamic work environment the bank has deployed.

Providing stimulating avenues for high-achievers to shine and progress, Burgan Bank aims to develop the brand further and the banking sector as a whole through the integration of ambitious and driven young individuals.

With active participation in different career fairs like AUM, GUST, AUK and others, that facilitate both corporate and graduate demands every year, Burgan Bank continues to work as a catalyst to harness growing national talent and advance youth performance in a competitive job market. It is an integral part of the bank's mission to recruit professionals that can adapt to transformation, endure volatile market situations, and lead the diversified regional financial powerhouse forward into new areas of success.

Armed with the objective to hire candidates that are good communicators, self-motivated, team players equipped with creative and solution

driven capabilities as well as a strong work-ethic, the Burgan Banks Human Resources Team shared a comprehensive overview of the bank and its current needs. The platform enabled the bank to discuss present day gaps and what it is looking for in new employees followed by the benefits of joining the private sector. Additionally, the potential candidates were taken through positive case studies and briefed during a workshop on easy steps to pave ones way to success during interviews.

Many students that were interested in joining the award winning bank, submitted their CV through the Career Fair, Human Resources Department Email and through the Bank's website via the Job Submission page.

It is worth noting that Burgan Bank has been the proud recipient of 'Best Employee Development in GCC' award in 2013 by one of the globally leading financial publications, World Finance in recognition of its comprehensive learning programs that have led to world class bankers in the industry.

Burgan Bank Group, a strongly positioned regional bank in the MENAT region, now includes more than 900 employees in Kuwait and a wide network more than 170 branches strategically distributed across Kuwait, Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey.



KFH launches personalized Snapchat lens

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched yesterday on the occasion of National and Liberation Days, a

personalized Snapchat Lens, applying the latest social media features. KFH is the first ever bank in Kuwait to utilize this new technology in line with its digital roadmap strategy while focusing on the youth segment. KFH encourages customers and followers to join in celebrating this occasion by using this personalized lens on Snapchat camera and send photos to KFHGroup account on Snapchat and get chance to win an iPhone X.



Local

Special Report

What do Filipinos say?!

By Jeri Al-Jeri

People were both shocked and confused by the ban on Filipinos working in Kuwait. Some found it justifiable, while others found it unfortunate. People in Kuwait took it upon themselves to express their thoughts and feelings freely and without hesitation. However, Filipinos felt their voices are heard only on the Internet and only among themselves. This is not because there is government suppression or that the Kuwaiti people want them to remain silent - it is due to a lack of media efforts to listen to them.

Kuwait is tiny in size, but has a vast demographic diversity. Even certain tribal members and religious minorities such as Christian Kuwaitis do not have that much of a platform to express themselves, so how can a certain nationality be expected to be listened to, when they are a minority within a majority of foreigners from all around the world, who have their own different ideologies and cultures. Therefore, I found it necessary in this time of adversity to collect their voices in a special article.

I had a great opportunity to conduct face-to-face interviews with multiple overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) in their host country Kuwait, which secures the right for everyone to speak their mind. Being a democratic Kuwaiti, I asked three questions to everyone I met:

1. Are you happy in Kuwait?
2. What are your thoughts on the ban?
3. What do you want changed in Kuwait?

The first speaker is a housemaid named Christy. She had a very diplomatic answer with a lot of love and wisdom for all.

1. "Yes, I am happy in Kuwait working in my employer's house."
2. "I think it's not a problem for me - not all employers are difficult or manipulative. But I am not against the ban."
3. "We have to apologize to each other."

Marichu is a housemaid who works in a house occupied only by an old woman who is in need of constant medical care. Marichu gave what all of us want - a straightforward and clear-cut response:

1. "Yes of course, I am happy working here for the past seven years."
2. "Yes, I think I agree with my president, but only for housemaids. Because it is not good for them in some houses."
3. "I hope all employers are open-minded."

Jammy, a young worker, had this to say about the matter:

1. "Yeah, for now I am happy because of my work, and for experiencing a different culture here in Kuwait."
2. "Yes, we know our president is doing good for us OFWs."
3. "To better the general treatment of OFWs, Egyptians and the rest of the foreigners."

During the brief interview with Jammy, her friend and colleague Samtha fully supported Jammy's comments:

1. "Yeah, I'm happy in Kuwait."
2. "It's good what the president is doing for us."
3. "Same as what my friend said."

Other workers chimed in, including Samantha Reyes:

1. "Yes sir, I am happy."
2. "I'm scared, because we need to work here. We do have jobs in the Philippines, but not at the same salaries."

For the last question, her answer was similar:

3. "I am scared, because I need the money for my father."
- Lastly, Virginia, who is a housemaid, said:

1. "Yes, I am happy, and in this house my work is good and my employer is good."
- Unfortunately, her lack of knowledge of English did not make her feel very comfortable in sharing her responses, because she felt that her ideas won't be fully understood as she desired them to be. Language barriers are very common in Kuwait.

Note: The answers were edited for clarity to ensure what the respondents meant was not misunderstood. (The raw and unedited versions are available on Kuwait Times' website.)

After listing to their voices, and after researching this matter in Arabic, I can say as a Kuwaiti that my personal conclusion is it seems the actual reason for this problem is a misunderstanding and lack of proper communication. This is expected to happen all over the world, as the humorous saying goes: "In every farm there is a spoiled potato."

Kuwait does not deserve a total ban of Filipino workers. Kuwait is hospitable, and the law does protect foreigners from acts of violence and extortion. Kuwaitis did not turn antagonistic towards the Philippines after a number of murders and kidnappings of their fellow citizens. There was an understanding to not generalize acts of criminality with the entire populace. The Filipino people obviously have the same level of awareness, as seen by their responses. We all hope that the issue of the lack of rewarding jobs in their homeland is taken care of. There is also room for improvement in Kuwaitis' treatment of others. All in all, what we need is more understanding towards one another, and fewer barriers.



Diplomat touts govt interest in capability revamp

LONDON: Kuwait's successive governments have been paying much heed to the building and developing of Kuwaiti human capabilities, a Kuwaiti diplomat boasted yesterday. "The State of Kuwait has long encouraged and spurred education in all its stages," Kuwaiti Ambassador in London Khaled Al-Duwaisan said in a keynote speech during a congress of the National Union of Kuwait Students -

UK and Ireland. The Kuwaiti government has established several schools, institutes and colleges nationwide in an effort to push forward the educational process in the country, he emphasized. Furthermore, hundreds of Kuwaiti students are dispatched to foreign countries, including the UK, he said, adding that 5,500 students have been taught abroad over the past five years.

The Kuwaiti ambassador went on to say that his country pins much hope on young people who would live up to responsibility by means of arming themselves with learning and knowledge. Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth and Sports Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan and Kuwait Airways CEO Ebrahim Al-Khuzam and representatives of governmental bodies were present at the congress. —KUNA

News in brief

Kuwait 85th in Corruption Index

KUWAIT: Kuwait ranked 85th out of 161 countries in the Corruption Perception Index 2017 released recently by Transparency International. Kuwait finished with a score of 39 points, down from 41 in 2016 and the lowest mark it recorded in six years. Its final score was good enough to rank Kuwait in eighth place among Arab countries behind the United Arab Emirates (21st worldwide), Qatar (29th), Saudi Arabia (57th), Jordan (48th), Oman (68th), Tunisia (74th) and Morocco (81st).

Traffic violations not dropped

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior (MoI) on Friday denied a post circulated on some social networking sites on the dropping of traffic violations against citizens and residents on the occasion of the country's national days. The post regarding this matter has a fake slogan of the ministry and is untrue and incorrect, the ministry's public relations and security media department said in a press statement. It affirmed that the ministry's official bodies would take legal measures against those who posted the fake slogan and information. The ministry appealed to different media outlets to make sure news sources they cite were credible, the statement noted. —KUNA

Kuwaiti surgeon leads oncology programs

WASHINGTON: A Kuwaiti chief surgeon at Georgetown University Hospital was promoted as regional chief of Surgical Oncology and vice chair for Research, being the first Arab ever to occupy such a leading post at the hospital. Dr Waddah Al-Rafaie is recognized for creating numerous collaborative opportunities for advancing in the profession, such as founding the MedStar Georgetown Surgical Outcomes Research Center and starting the MedStar Surgery Resident Research Program. Among his many accomplishments, Dr Refaie augmented the gastric, soft tissue sarcoma and melanoma cancer lines at the hospital, where in partnership with international services at the hospital, he also plays a "significant role in growing this important service line." In a joint statement, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Joy Drass and Regional Chair Thomas Watson noted that Dr Refaie's "track record of clinical research leadership make him the ideal individual to serve in these two important capacities within the integrated surgery department." In his new role, Dr Refaie will have the responsibility for "directing the regional surgical oncology program, as well as research activities of surgical services in the Washington area. — KUNA

Kuwaiti child dead in crane's fall

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: An 8-year-old Kuwaiti girl died after a crane fell on a chalet in Abdaly where her family were spending the weekend. Three other family members were injured and taken to Jahra Hospital. Meanwhile, a fireman suffered a fractured hand during the rescue operation. A case was filed for investigations.



KUWAIT: A picture taken from the scene showing a heavily damaged chalet after a crane fell on it in Abdaly, killing a child and injuring three other family members.

Injuries in house fire
Firemen from the Farwaniya and Sabhan fire stations tackled a blaze that hit an Arab-style house of three floors. Thirty persons were evacuated from the building before firemen battled the fire which started in the ground floor and spread upwards. Firemen faced difficulties due to furniture and wood that were randomly stored in the ground floor, while some cooking gas cylinders that were kept in the hallways exploded. Three persons suffered burns, while another suffered smoke inhalation, and they were all taken to hospital.

Smuggling foiled
Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport foiled a passenger's attempt to smuggle 3.7 kg of Marijuana. The Asian man placed the illicit substances in a box, but officers were able to discover them. The suspect and substances were sent to concerned authorities.

Kuwait exerts efforts for UN resolution on Syria

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti diplomats have acted diligently and continuously throughout the night for passing a United Nations Security Council's resolution to address the humanitarian situation in Syria, the Deputy Foreign Minister said yesterday.

In a statement answering a question about the State of Kuwait efforts regarding the draft UNSC resolution on the humanitarian situation in Syria, Khaled Al-Jarallah said the Kuwaiti diplomatic efforts pursued till dawn for trying to reach a consensus at the Security Council to enforce a full-scale cease-fire for 30 days for enabling relief teams deliver humani-

tarian aid and evacuate the injured. In line with instructions by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, "we held contacts till the dawn hours with our permanent delegate at the United Nations in New York in coordination with our friends in the Kingdom of Sweden who share us adoption of the draft resolution on the humanitarian situation in Syria."

Jarallah indicated that the humanitarian situation became direr in light of the events in Eastern Ghouta where hundreds of people were killed and wounded in continuing bombardment. There have been tremendous and continuing efforts between the State of Kuwait delegation, the Kingdom of Sweden with the permanent and non-permanent members of the Security Council, particularly the friends in Federal Russia, Jarallah said. "Throughout these consultations we had at times approached consensus and at other times did not," he said. "However, we maintained our resolve to reach such concord thus the consultations resulted in delaying voting till Saturday noon in the last bid to reach the aspired accord." — KUNA



EU opens its door for Balkan states

US imposes more N Korea sanctions, warns of 'phase two'

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GHOUTA: A civil Defense volunteer, known as the White Helmets, checks the site of a regime air strike in the rebel-held town of Saqba, in the besieged Eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus yesterday. —AFP

Death toll in Syria enclave tops 500

New strikes hit Eastern Ghouta

DOUMA: New air strikes on the Syrian rebel enclave of Eastern Ghouta yesterday took the civilian death toll from seven days of devastating bombardment to more than 500 after the United Nations again delayed a vote on a ceasefire. More than 120 children have been among the dead in the bombing campaign that the regime launched last Sunday on the enclave just outside Damascus, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The Britain-based monitor of the war said at least 29 civilians were killed in yesterday's strikes, including 17 in the main town of Douma. It has said the strikes are being carried out by Syrian and Russian forces.

Moscow, which intervened militarily in support of its Damascus ally in 2015, has denied any direct involvement in the Eastern Ghouta bombardment. US President Donald Trump on Friday said Russia's recent actions in Syria were a "disgrace". The UN Security Council had been due to hold a vote on Friday on a resolution calling for a month-long ceasefire to allow aid deliveries and the evacuation of seriously wounded civilians. But the vote was postponed until 1700 GMT as Western powers bickered with Russia over the wording.

Rebel fire on Damascus

Control of Eastern Ghouta is shared between two Islamist factions and Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, and Russia insists there can be no ceasefire with the jihadists or their allies. Russia has been pressing for a negotiated withdrawal of rebel fighters and their families like the one that saw the government retake full control of second city Aleppo in December 2016. But all three rebel groups have refused.

World leaders have expressed outrage at the plight of civilians in Eastern Ghouta, which UN chief Antonio Guterres called "hell on earth", but have so far been powerless to halt the bloodshed. The enclave is completely surrounded by government-controlled territory and its 400,000 residents are unwilling or unable to flee the deadly siege. The rebels

have been firing back into Damascus, where a hospital was hit on Friday, state news agency SANA reported. At least 16 civilians have been killed in eastern districts of the capital since Sunday, according to state media, and many residents have sought temporary accommodation elsewhere for fear of a further intensification of the fighting.

'Unbelievable'

At the United Nations, US ambassador Nikki Haley expressed dismay as negotiations dragged on to secure Russian approval for a ceasefire resolution. "Unbelievable that Russia is stalling a vote on a ceasefire allowing humanitarian access in Syria," Haley posted on Twitter. "How many more people will die before the Security Council agrees to take up this vote? Let's do this tonight. The Syrian people can't wait." Russia has vetoed 11 draft resolutions on Syria to

block action that targeted its ally. In November, it used its veto to end a UN-led investigation of chemical weapons attacks in Syria.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron wrote to Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Friday to ask him to back the ceasefire. Negotiations have stumbled over a key provision of the draft resolution that specifies when the ceasefire will begin. Following hours of tough negotiations, an amended draft was circulated that demands a 30-day ceasefire "without delay," while stopping short of specifying the timing.

A previous draft had said the ceasefire would go into force 72 hours after the adoption, but that was dropped from the text in a bid to reach compromise with Russia. In another concession to Russia, the draft also specifies that the ceasefire will not apply to operations against the Islamic State group or Al-Qaeda, along with "individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated" with the blacklisted terror groups. The text would demand the immediate lifting of all sieges, including that on Eastern Ghouta, and order all sides to "cease depriving civilians of food and medicine indispensable to their survival". —AFP



More than 120 children among the dead

in Syria." Haley posted on Twitter. "How many more people will die before the Security Council agrees to take up this vote? Let's do this tonight. The Syrian people can't wait." Russia has vetoed 11 draft resolutions on Syria to

Gun glut: Industry's woes go beyond the politics

NEW YORK: Just two days before the school shooting in Florida revived the US gun control debate, debt-plagued gunmaker Remington Outdoor announced it will file for bankruptcy. The financial woes of the more than 200-year-old company illustrate a paradox of the Trump era: weapon manufacturers miscalculated, ramping up production in anticipation of a Hillary Clinton presidency that would drive sales of those fearing increased gun control. Instead, they got a period of political dominance for the powerful gun lobby accompanied by financial fragility for the gunmakers.

Since Donald Trump was elected president in November 2016, gun manufacturers have struggled to deal with excess supply, forcing them to rein back manufacturing, cut jobs and slash prices, as well as prompting some executives to be replaced.

"Because Republicans are in control of both the White House and the Congress, the threat of increased gun regulation went way down and so the stocking behavior of consumers went way down," said Emile Courtney, an analyst at S&P Global Ratings.

But since the February 14 Parkland shooting, which left 14 students and three teachers dead, survivors from the Florida school have emerged as powerful advocates for gun control, urging Trump and others to take action. On Friday, a stampede of major companies, including insurers Chubb and MetLife, security company Symantec and rental car giants Avis Budget Group, Enterprise Holdings and Hertz joined others in ending discount programs for National Rifle Association members. The move came amid heightened pressure from some consumers as the "#BoycottNRA" hashtag trended on Twitter.

Demand fell 'off the cliff'

If past trends hold, the revived talk of gun

restrictions in the wake of the mass shooting will boost gun sales as more consumers stockpile weapons amid worries they could be banned. But it is unclear how that will affect the companies' bottom line amid a rising tide of antagonism toward the gun lobby. Sturm Ruger & Company this week became the latest industry player to detail the hit from slackening sales, reporting a 40 percent drop in 2017 profits to \$52.1 million, a sharp pullback from the assessment of "stronger-than-normal demand during most of 2016."

The company cut manufacturing of its firearms and has eliminated 700 jobs over the last year, 28 percent of its workforce, executives said on a conference call this week. Sturm Ruger chief executive Christopher Killoy said the company had made progress in working down inventory amid the tough climate. Christopher Metz, who was hired as chief executive of Vista Outdoor in October, said pricing is now "much more rational" compared with a significant part of last year. "There were competitors that were trying to catch up with the kind of falling off the cliff demand," Metz said early this month.

New era?

In the wake of the Parkland shooting, Trump has opened the door to some changes, such as endorsing a ban on "bump stocks," an accessory that can turn a semi-automatic weapon into an automatic one, and urging stronger background checks. But the president, who praised the National Rifle Association as "very, very great people," also favors arming teachers, a stance ridiculed by educators. Jeff Pistole, a gun dealer in Arkansas, expects the headlines to boost gun sales in the short run, especially for the AR-15, the gun used in Florida and many other mass shootings. —AFP

Military takeover of Rio police stirs dictatorship ghosts

RIO DE JANEIRO: The ghosts of Brazil's dictatorship are stirring in the wake of President Michel Temer's order for the army to take over policing in Rio de Janeiro. There's no direct comparison between the Rio operation and the 1964 coup that brought two decades of military rule to Latin America's biggest country. In this case, the military isn't overthrowing a president—it's just taking charge of Rio state's security situation after months of escalating crime. But the echoes have been loud enough to force the government into extraordinary denials. "I'm going to tell you how many marks I give the idea of a military coup: zero," Temer told Radio Bandeirantes on Friday. The center-right president went on to say that there was "no mood" in the military or population for a coup. Earlier, the defense minister, Raul Jungmann, stated "there is no risk to democracy... On the contrary, we are strengthening democracy."

First since democracy's return

Over the last decade, Rio residents have grown used to seeing camouflaged soldiers support the police in their battle against powerfully armed drug gangs. Some 8,500 troops arrived last July in an ongoing deployment to help with operations in favelas, the latest of which took place Friday in western Rio. During the 2016 Olympics, troops focused on securing tourist areas, patrolling with rifles among the bathing-suit clad crowds of Copacabana and Ipanema. But the "intervencao," as it's called in Portuguese, is different this time. Now the army isn't helping out—it's taking full charge, with generals replacing the entire civilian leadership of the police. This hasn't happened anywhere in Brazil since democracy returned in 1985.

Mass arrests

Facing an understandably nervous public,



RIO DE JANEIRO: A woman carries her child as she walks past military police on patrol near the Vila Kennedy favela in Rio de Janeiro yesterday. —AFP

the government made what looked like an immediate PR blunder by suggesting that mass arrests and mass searches might become the norm. That would mean, for example, that an entire street, rather than a single house, could be subjected to an intense raid. There was strong backlash, including from Brazil's highest-profile anti-corruption prosecutor, Deltan Dallagnol.

The government has softened its message on the collective searches. But there are still widespread fears that military intervention will become a blunt instrument endangering poor and defenseless people in the favelas, while doing little to eradicate narco gangs. A short video made by three young black men about surviving encounters with police—including advising against carrying a long umbrella that could be mistaken for a gun—went immediately viral on social media. "The intervention in Rio is

an inadequate and extreme measure that causes concern because it puts the population's human rights at risk," said Amnesty International's director in Brazil, Jurema Werneck.

Who watches the watchmen?

Temer made it clear Friday that the army will use deadly force when justified. But rights activists, weary after years of botched police operations and stray bullets, ask who will hold the soldiers to account. The army wants troops to be subject only to military courts, while the police it is working alongside have to face regular courts. Adding a politically explosive twist to that already complex issue, the army's top commander, General Eduardo Villas Boas, said this week he wants "a guarantee of being able to act without risking a new truth commission." —AFP

International

EU opens door for Balkan states, but hurdles remain

Montenegro and Serbia - the frontrunners

BELGRADE: The European Union has offered some of the six Balkan states who hope to join the bloc the prospect of becoming new members by 2025, but warned them they still have many obstacles to overcome. The European Commission's roadmap for the region unveiled earlier this month said the countries must root out problems with corruption and the rule of law, and, especially, settle a series of simmering territorial disputes.

"The EU door is open to further accessions when, and only when, the individual countries have met the criteria," the plan said. European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker will start a tour of the region today to discuss the new strategy, which stresses "implementing fundamental reforms and good neighborly relations". Montenegro and Serbia are the frontrunners to join, with Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia lagging behind, but all are getting impatient after the EU put expansion on hold four years ago.

The EU has been wary of admitting new members before they settle their differences, and the border rows will be a particular point of contention in a region still bedeviled by the aftermath of the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s. Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said the chance to join by 2025 was "very important as an incentive for Serbian citizens". But he warned that it would take some "difficult decisions" to solve the country's outstanding issues-first and foremost, Serbia's dispute with Kosovo. Serbia has refused to recognize its former breakaway province since it declared independence a decade ago.

'Ball in our court'

Montenegro has reason to be satisfied with the EU's

strategy, according to Prime Minister Dusko Markovic, but the European Movement Montenegro found it was "discouraging" that the plan considered 2025 to be an "extremely ambitious" prospect. Juncker has warned Serbia and Montenegro against too much "excitement", saying that 2025 "is an indicative date, an encouragement date so that the people concerned can consistently set out on their way".

The deadline for the other Balkan nations is less clear. Albania, a candidate since 2014, hopes to open talks with Brussels this year and is willing to speed up reforms to catch up with the others, according to Prime Minister Edi Rama. "We want to make progress faster

and, why not, join EU at the same time" as Serbia, Rama said. But Albanian political analyst Lutfi Dervishi warned that joining the EU "is a national desire but it is not a lottery". "The ball is in our court," Dervishi told AFP, referring to the pace of reform, particularly in the fight against organized crime and

Obstacles and border issues linger

corruption, seen by the EU as a priority for Albania.

'Locked in the waiting room'

Macedonia, an EU candidate since 2005, will have to resolve a festering 25-year row with Greece over its name. Athens, which can block Macedonia's EU membership, argues its neighbor's use of the name suggests Skopje has territorial claims to Greece's historic northern region. But Macedonia has made significant progress recently and the EU said it is "very confident" the dispute will be settled before July.

Prime Minister Zoran Zaev has praised the EU's new plan, saying that "according to this strategy Macedonia is on the right track". He added it would provide motivation "to work and catch up with Serbia and Montenegro, who already negotiate" with the EU. But



BRUSSELS: Journalists work during the European Council summit yesterday in Brussels. — AFP

Macedonia's Foreign Minister Nikola Dimitrov said earlier this month that it was difficult for countries to keep moving in the right direction if they are "locked in the waiting room". In Bosnia, which applied for membership in 2016, Muslim leader Bakir Izetbegovic said he was confident "we can catch up with those currently ahead us on the path towards the EU".

But the country will have to tackle ongoing tension with Bosnian Serbs, including their leader Milorad Dodik, who regularly threatens secession. Kosovo was

the most disappointed with the EU's strategy. Media in the capital Pristina pointed out that rather than employing terms like "accession" and "candidate status" used for other countries, the document said Kosovo could "advance on its European path" once "circumstances allow". Five of the EU's 28 member states still do not recognize Kosovo's independence, and President Hashim Thaci has blamed them "for the lack of a unique stand for Kosovo" in the new plan. "But Kosovo will not sink into despair," Thaci said. — AFP

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قائد حكيم ..
شعب وفي

We dyed Henna on our hands
In jubilation with the people of our homeland
We sing together and chant the name of Kuwait
We proudly glorify the name of Kuwait
Our Beloved Homeland

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International

US imposes more North Korea sanctions, warns of 'phase two'

Trump: Phase two may be ... very, very unfortunate

WASHINGTON/SEOUL: The United States said on Friday it was imposing its largest package of sanctions to pressure North Korea to give up its nuclear and missile programs, and President Donald Trump warned of a "phase two" that could be "very, very unfortunate for the world" if the steps did not work. In addressing the Trump administration's biggest national security challenge, the US Treasury sanctioned one person, 27 companies and 28 ships, according to a statement on the US Treasury Department's website.

The United States also proposed a list of entities to be blacklisted under separate UN sanctions, a move "aimed at shutting down North Korea's illicit maritime smuggling activities to obtain oil and sell coal." North Korea has been developing nuclear-tipped missiles capable of reaching the US mainland and Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un have exchanged taunts that have raised fears of war.

In August, Trump threatened to go beyond sanctions by bringing "fire and fury like the world has never seen," although his administration has repeatedly said it prefers a diplomatic solution to the crisis. Speaking at a news conference with Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, Trump made apparent reference to military options his administration has repeatedly said remain on the table. "If the sanctions don't work, we'll have to go phase two," Trump said. "Phase two may be a very rough thing, may be very, very unfortunate for the world. But hopefully the sanctions will work."

The sanctions' targets include a Taiwan passport holder, as well as shipping and energy firms in mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. The actions block assets held by the firms and individuals in the United States and prohibit US citizens from

dealing with them.

The US Treasury said the sanctions were designed to disrupt North Korean shipping and trading companies and vessels and further isolate Pyongyang. They are also aimed at ships located, registered or flagged in North Korea, China, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Marshall Islands, Tanzania, Panama and the Comoros. Last month, three Western

said showed December 2017 images that revealed ship-to-ship transfers of fuel and other products destined for North Korea in an attempt to evade sanctions.

He said he could not rule out the prospect of the United States boarding and inspecting North Korean ships. Mnuchin said virtually all shipping currently being used by North Korea was now under sanction and the US government had "issued an advisory alerting the public to those continuing to enable shipments of goods to and from North Korea." Mnuchin said the number of sanctions steps taken by the United States against Pyongyang since 2005 was now 450 with approximately half imposed in the last year.

Christopher Ford, assistant secretary of state for international security and non-proliferation, told reporters sanctions already had affected North Korea's weapons programs and this was shown by the lengths North Korea was going to try to evade sanctions.

Jonathan Schanzer of the Washington think tank Foundation for the Defense of Democracies said Friday's move was "the largest tranche of DPRK (North Korea) sanctions" released by the Treasury Department. "The only thing missing here today is action against Chinese banks," he said. "We know they continue to undermine our efforts to isolate North Korea." Tougher sanctions may jeopardize the latest detente between the two Koreas, illustrated by the North's participation in the Winter Olympics in the South, amid preparations for talks about a possible summit between North Korea's Kim and South Korean President Moon Jae-in.

Nevertheless, South Korea welcomed the US sanctions saying they would "alert those who are illegally trading with North Korea and therefore bolster the international com-



Japan also backs sanctions

European intelligence sources told Reuters that North Korea shipped coal to Russia last year and that it was then delivered to South Korea and Japan in a likely violation of UN sanctions.

Frustrated Trump

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said the new sanctions would help prevent North Korea from skirting restrictions on trade in coal and other fuel through "evasive maritime activities."

"The president is clearly frustrated and rightly so over the efforts that have failed in the past and also over the uptick in testing and the advances we've seen in the North Korean program," a senior administration official told reporters. At another briefing, Mnuchin stood next to enlarged photos he

banking accounts, and one count of lying over his work as a foreign agent for Ukraine. Each count could bring a maximum of five years in prison and a \$250,000 fine. But sentencing depends on the extent of his cooperation with Mueller's broader investigation, which has focused on a number of others in Trump's orbit, including current White House aides and members of Trump's family. That was similar to deals offered to two other ex-advisors to Trump, who have also pleaded guilty to reduced charges. Former Trump national security advisor Michael Flynn and former campaign foreign policy aide George Papadopoulos have each pleaded guilty to one count of lying.

Gates and Manafort still face a separate indictment filed Thursday by Mueller in a Virginia court, on charges of bank and tax fraud in relation to how they deployed their Ukraine earnings back into the United States.

Manafort defiant

The Mueller probe, which began in May, has built up steam in recent weeks. Last week, Mueller indicted 13 Russians who were allegedly behind a Kremlin-backed operation to spread disinformation and disrupt the 2016 election via social media. And on Tuesday, a London-based lawyer with links to Russia and to Gates pleaded guilty to lying to FBI agents.

Manafort was defiant, refusing to cut a deal. "Notwithstanding that Rick Gates pled today, I continue to maintain my innocence," he said in a statement.

"I had hoped and expected my business colleague would have had the strength to continue the battle to prove our innocence... This does not alter my commitment to defend myself against the untrue piled up charges contained in the indictments against me." In a letter to family and friends made public by some US news outlets, Gates said he had planned to defend himself but had a "change of heart," and was ready to accept "public humiliation" to avoid distressing his children.

"The reality of how long this legal process will likely take, the cost and the circus-like atmosphere of an anticipated trial are too much. I will better serve my family moving forward by exiting this process," he wrote. — AFP

"I am glad that the UK government seems to be moving towards a more detailed position," Tusk told journalists after 27 EU leaders - all apart from May - met in Brussels on Friday.

"However... I am afraid that the UK position today is based on pure illusion. It seems like the 'cake' philosophy is still alive. From the very start it has been a key clear principle of the EU 27 that there can be no cherry-picking and no single market 'a la carte'."

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has famously said he wants Britain to get the best of both worlds - to "have its cake and eat it".

EU leaders have long been asking May for details of London's vision for future relations, but she has been hampered by divisions within her ruling Conservative Party, with some backing close trading ties and others seeking a "clean break". — Reuters

After shooting, Florida to station police officer at every school

WASHINGTON: A police officer will be stationed at every public school in Florida, the state's governor announced Friday as part of a plan to improve security following last week's deadly high school shooting. President Donald Trump repeated his call, meanwhile, for arming some of America's teachers and claimed the controversial proposal was increasingly drawing support. The push to make schools safer came as the local sheriff's office released details of nearly two dozen visits to the residences of Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old behind the assault at Marjory Douglas Stoneman High School in Parkland, Florida.

Speaking at a news conference in the state capital Tallahassee, Republican Governor Rick Scott unveiled a \$450 million security plan in response to the Valentine's Day rampage.

"There is nothing more important than the safety of our children," Scott said. "We must take care of our kids." "I am proposing at least one law enforcement officer for every 1,000 students," Scott said of putting police in public schools. Asked about Trump's proposal that teachers carry concealed weapons, Scott replied: "My focus is on providing more law enforcement officers, not on arming the teachers." Scott proposed a ban on "bump stocks" - an accessory which turns a semi-automatic weapon into an automatic one - and making it easier for courts to prohibit a violent or mentally ill person from purchasing or possessing a firearm." Scott also said the age for gun buyers in the state would be raised from 18 to 21 — a move opposed by the powerful National Rifle Association (NRA) gun lobby.

The governor stopped short, however, of endorsing a ban on assault weapons - a demand

Pastor has faith he can unseat Maduro in Venezuela poll

CARACAS: Despite unpopularity and a deepening economic crisis, Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro seems such a certainty for reelection in April that only an evangelical pastor has found the faith to run against him. "I am the light in the darkness," said little-known pastor Javier Bertucci, without a hint of irony, so far the only opponent willing to try to unseat the leftist leader in a presidential election which Maduro's opponents accuse him of rigging.

Mainstream opposition parties say they are boycotting the April 22 poll because they have no guarantees they would be free and fair.

A ballot wasn't due until December but the Constituent Assembly, an all-powerful legislature stacked with Maduro loyalists, announced in January that the date was being brought for-



OXON HILL: US President Donald Trump speaks during the 2018 Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) at National Harbor in Oxon Hill, Maryland, on Friday. — AFP

munity to carry out resolutions from the UN Security Council".

Japan also supported the new sanctions, Defence Minister Itsunori Onodera said, according to the Kyodo news agency. Taiwan said it was in touch with the United States and would investigate its citizens and entities suspected of helping North Korea. It also called on Taiwan firms and citizens not to break UN sanctions. Reuters was unable to locate contact details for the Chinese companies listed in the new US sanctions. In a commentary carried by Korean Central News Agency on Saturday, North Korea said it never intended to aim its nuclear weapons at South Korea, adding the weapons will only be aimed at the United States.

'Warm climate'

North Korea last year conducted dozens of missile launches and its sixth and largest nuclear test in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions. It defends the weapons programs as essential to deter US aggression. It has been more than two months since North Korea's last missile test. Kim said he wants to boost the "warm climate of reconciliation and dialogue" with South Korea, which hosts 28,500 US troops, after a high-level delegation, including his sister, returned from the Olympics.

In an extension of that rapprochement, the North agreed on Friday to hold working-level talks on Tuesday for the Pyeongchang Winter Paralympics on the North's side of the border village of Panmunjom. — Reuters

Ex-Trump aide Gates pleads guilty to conspiracy, lying

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's former campaign deputy Rick Gates pleaded guilty Friday to fraud and lying, pledging to cooperate with Special Counsel Robert Mueller on his vast probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election. Gates was the third former Trump aide to agree to cooperate in exchange for reduced charges by Mueller, who is also examining Moscow's alleged collusion with the Trump campaign and whether the president illegally sought to obstruct his probe.

The plea deal in a Washington federal court, on charges much reduced from the original ones filed against Gates, immediately put him at odds with his former business partner and ex-Trump campaign chairman Paul Manafort, who refuses to bow to pressure from Mueller to strike a deal.

Manafort has countered Mueller, accusing the former FBI director of going far beyond his Justice Department mandate in the probe. A new indictment against Manafort accuses him of having secretly paid a group of former senior European politicians more than two million euros (\$2.5 million) to lobby for the government of Ukraine's former pro-Russia president Viktor Yanukovich.

Charges tied to Ukraine work

Gates and Manafort were originally charged on October 30 with multiple counts of laundering \$75 million and tax evasion related to their work from 2006 to 2014 for Yanukovich. They were also accused of illegally representing a foreign government, Ukraine, as lobbyists without first registering with the US government as foreign agents. But the charges Gates ultimately pleaded guilty to on Friday were one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States in relation to not reporting offshore

British ideas on post-Brexit ties are 'pure illusion', says EU's Tusk

BRUSSELS: European Council President Donald Tusk on Friday dismissed as "pure illusion" the ideas floated by Britain so far on what sort of relationship it wants with the European Union after it leaves the bloc. Tusk said he hoped to get more clarity when he meets Theresa May next Thursday, a day before the British prime minister is due to deliver a speech to outline London's vision of its future ties with the EU.



NEWTOWN, CT: Mourners attend a community vigil at Newtown High School for the victims of last week's mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, on Friday. — AFP

of many of the teenagers who survived the shooting at Stoneman Douglas that left 14 of their classmates and three staff dead.

"I know there are some who are advocating a mass takeover of Second Amendment rights for all Americans," Scott said - referring to America's constitutional right to bear arms. "That is not the answer." "Keeping guns away from dangerous people and people with mental issues is what we need to do," he said. Trump also does not support a ban on semi-automatic weapons and in a speech to a conservative gathering near Washington, he returned again to his idea of arming teachers.

'Shot the hell out of him'

Speaking to a receptive crowd of thousands of fellow Republicans at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), Trump said "well-trained" teachers could help stop school shootings. "Maybe 10 percent or 20 percent of the population of teachers," he said. "Not all of

them, but you would have a lot. "And the beauty is it's concealed," Trump said. Referring to Cruz, the Stoneman Douglas assailant, Trump said "a teacher would have shot the hell out of him before he knew what happened."

Trump claimed his proposal to arm teachers, which has been strongly criticized by the nation's largest teachers' unions, was drawing support. "Since I started this two days ago, a lot of people that were totally opposed to it are now agreeing," he said. "They don't want their students to be killed or to be hurt."

Trump proposed measures preventing the mentally ill from obtaining weapons and to "really strengthen up background checks" for gun buyers. "And I really believe that Congress is going to get it through this time," he said.

Lawmakers in Washington have been deadlocked on the gun debate, accomplishing nothing despite a spate of mass shootings and polls showing Americans support stricter gun laws by a two-to-one margin. — AFP



CARACAS: In this file photo, Venezuelan opposition presidential pre-candidate and evangelical pastor Javier Bertucci rolls up his sleeve after a press conference in Caracas. — AFP

ward. Venezuela's Supreme Court issued a ruling that excludes the opposition coalition Democratic Unity Roundtable from running and banned several prominent opposition figures from participating. The United States and European Union have imposed sanctions on Maduro and his officials, with Washington calling him a "dictator."

Bertucci scoffs at assertions from the opposition that he is merely a political stooge to legitimize Maduro's election. Other would-be candidates have only a few more days to register. Analysts believe Henri Falcon, a polarizing figure in the opposition, will eventually emerge as Maduro's main challenger. Bertucci, 48, says Maduro is "beatable" in the ballot and criticized the opposition for effectively giving him a clear run to a second six-year term.

"It's a mistake to leave the way clear (for Maduro) and continue with talk that everyone is cheating," he said after preaching to a packed congregation at his church. The government "continue to take all the space. They have always had the advantage, but more than 50 percent of the electorate wants to vote. Why deny them that right?"

There seems little doubt that the few thousand fervent followers who packed a hall to hear him preach this week would vote for him. People

in the congregation, young and old, held their arms up in supplication, tears streaming down their faces, as a suited Bertucci murmured into a microphone on a stage over a soundtrack of motivational music. But it's a stretch to believe Bertucci can make more than a tiny dent in the national vote. Most will say he hasn't a prayer. Still, he says his fusion of politics and religious faith is what the country needs to overcome its deep economic crisis, which has made food and medicine shortages the norm. — AFP

International

23 killed in multiple suicide bombings in Afghanistan

Taliban militants storm army base in Farah

In the news

Pakistan acquits 12

LAHORE: A Pakistani court acquitted 12 men of child sex abuse and blackmail charges on Saturday, the latest verdict in a massive paedophilia scandal that rocked the country in August 2015. The abuse and extortion scandal, which authorities have called the largest in Pakistan's history, allegedly involved hundreds of victims in Punjab province. Two of the accused were jailed for life in April last year. Judge Chaudhry Ilyas acquitted the men of "sexual abuse of a young boy and making a video to blackmail his family," a court official told AFP. — AFP

India crash leaves 9 kids

NEW DELHI: At least nine schoolchildren were killed and 20 others injured in eastern India's Bihar state yesterday after a vehicle crashed into them outside their school in an apparent hit-and-run, police said. Officers said the driver hit the children at speed as he was driving away from another location close to the school, where his vehicle had brushed against a pedestrian. The incident took place in Muzaffarpur district, around 43 miles (70 kilometers) from the state capital Patna. "Eyewitnesses have told us that the driver didn't stop even after running over these middle-school children," Anil Kumar Singh, deputy inspector general of Bihar police told AFP. — AFP

Philippine Catholics protest

MANILA: Around a thousand Catholics in the Philippines marched in Manila yesterday to protest President Rodrigo Duterte's bloody war on drugs and his efforts to reinstate the death penalty. The protests come a day after students in the capital and provincial universities held demonstrations against Duterte, and a day before the 32nd anniversary of the "People Power" revolution that drove dictator Ferdinand Marcos into exile. — AFP

Indonesia croc attack

JAKARTA: A 66-year-old woman was mauled to death by a huge crocodile on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, police said yesterday. The Indonesian woman's family and neighbors launched a search after she failed to return home from a riverside garden near the remote village of Teluk Kuali in Jambi province earlier this week. — AFP

KABUL: At least 23 people were killed and more than a dozen wounded in multiple suicide bombings and attacks in Afghanistan yesterday, officials said, the latest in a series of assaults in the war-torn country. In the biggest attack, Taliban militants stormed an army base in the western province of Farah overnight, killing at least 18 soldiers.

"Last night a big group of militants attacked an army base in Bala Buluk district of Farah. Unfortunately, we lost 18 soldiers, two soldiers were wounded. We have sent more reinforcements to the area," defense ministry spokesman Daulat Wazir said. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. Deputy provincial governor Younus Rasooli said the authorities had sent a fact-finding delegation to Bala Buluk to investigate the assault. In another attack, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives near the diplomatic area of Kabul during the morning rush hour, killing at least three people and wounding five others, deputy interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi told AFP. "At around 8:30 am, a suicide bomber on foot, well-dressed with a necktie on, was identified at a checkpoint. He blew up his explosives, killing three and wounding five others," he said, updating an earlier toll.

A security source who requested not to be named said the explosion happened near a compound belonging to the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan intelligence agency. The NDS compound is located near the NATO

headquarters and the US embassy. "I was driving nearby when I heard a big explosion, the windows of my car were smashed. I saw several wounded people on the street near me," a witness told Tolonews TV adding that security forces had since swarmed the area, closing off the main road leading to the attack site.

In December, a suicide attacker on foot blew himself up near the same compound, killing at least six civilians. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the latest attack in Kabul, which in recent months has become one of the deadliest places in Afghanistan for civilians. Since mid-January, militants have stormed a luxury hotel, bombed a crowded street and raided a military compound in the capital, killing more than 130 people as the city remains on high alert fearing further violence.

Car bombings

In two other attacks yesterday in volatile southern Helmand province, suicide car bombs killed at least two soldiers and wounded more than a dozen others, officials said. In the first incident, militants used a Humvee to attack an army base in Nad Ali district but the vehicle was destroyed when soldiers identified it and hit it with a rocket propelled grenade, provincial spokesman Omar Zawak told AFP.

"Unfortunately, two soldiers were killed in the attack and seven wounded," he said. The Nad Ali

official, police told AFP. Besides the bloody campaign against the Rohingya in the state's north, Rakhine has been struggling with a decade-long rebellion fought by ethnic Rakhine Buddhist insurgents, though bombings in the state capital are rare. "Three bombs exploded and three other unexploded bombs were found. A police officer was injured but not seriously," a senior officer told AFP on condition of anonymity.

The blasts hit at around 4:00 am (2130 GMT Friday), the officer said. One was detonated in the compound of the state government secretary's home, while the two others exploded in front of an office in the city and on a road leading to a beach. A local official from the state government confirmed the explosions. Photos of the



KABUL: Afghan security personnel stand guard near the site of a suicide bombing at Shash Darak in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

attack was followed by a second suicide car bombing in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah that wounded seven people. The attack was against an NDS compound and near a police headquarters in the city, Helmand police spokesman Salaam Afghan told AFP. The Taliban claimed both attacks in Helmand.

Militants including the Taliban and the

Islamic State group have stepped up their attacks on beleaguered Afghan troops and police in recent months, sapping morale already hit by desertions and corruption. Afghan soldiers have taken what the UN describes as "shocking" casualties since international forces ended their combat role at the end of 2014, though troop casualty figures are no longer released. — AFP

sites showed shattered windows and scattered debris.

"Some streets are being blocked by police already because of the bomb blasts," Zaw Zaw, a resident of Sittwe, told AFP by phone. In recent months, unrest in Rakhine has been concentrated in the state's northern wedge, where a sweeping military crackdown on the Rohingya Muslim community last August pushed nearly 700,000 refugees across the border to Bangladesh.

International attention has focused on that conflict, with the UN leading global condemnation of what it says amounts to a military-led ethnic cleansing campaign against the Rohingya.

Yet restive Rakhine also hosts a lesser-known insurgency waged by a Rakhine

Buddhist rebel group called the Arakan Army, which periodically clashes with Myanmar troops. Unlike the Rohingya Muslims who are denied citizenship, the Rakhine are recognized by the government as an ethnic minority but are still marginalised in a country historically dominated by the Bamar (Burmese) majority.

Tensions between the community and local authorities shot through the roof after a police crackdown on an ethnic Rakhine mob left seven dead last month.

That violence in Mrauk U township prompted the Arakan Army's political wing to warn of a "serious" retaliation for the deaths of the protesters.

Around two weeks later the town's administrator was found murdered on the side of the road. — AFP

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Business

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11 Al-Sayer campaign for prevention and detection of heart diseases



12 New Mercedes-Benz A-Class celebrates its world premiere



13 GCC Financial Forum 2018 puts spotlight on digital transformation



BARCELONA: Workers arrive at the main hall of the Mobile World Congress (MWC) yesterday ahead of the start of the world's biggest mobile fair, held from February 26 to March 1, 2018 in Barcelona. —AFP

AI and 5G in focus at top mobile fair

Smartphones bet on better cameras, bigger screens

PARIS: Phone makers will seek to entice new buyers with better cameras and bigger screens at the world's biggest mobile fair starting tomorrow in Spain after a year of flat smartphone sales.

But with no major innovations awaited in handsets, analysts expect the four-day Mobile World Congress in Barcelona to focus on new uses for artificial intelligence (AI) and the looming deployment of super-fast 5G wireless networks. Smartphone giants Huawei, LG or HTC are not expected to launch a new flagship device at the annual show, so Samsung will have the opportunity to grab the spotlight when it unveils its S9 and S9+ phones today on the eve of the fair.

The teasers suggest major changes to the camera, which will reportedly allow for "super slow-motion" videos and a new camera lens that improves low-light photos: features some of its rivals already offer.

The camera "seems to have become a major source of differentiation for the latest generation of smartphones," said mobile phone analyst Ben Wood of CCS Insight. Samsung suffered a humiliating recall of its Galaxy Note

7 device in 2016 after several devices exploded but its Galaxy S8 smartphone was a consumer and critical success. The company remained the world's biggest seller of smartphones in 2017 with a 21.6 percent market share, up from 21.1 percent in the previous year, according to research firm IDC.

Apple, which as usual will not be present at the show, was the second biggest vendor at 14.7 percent.

'Sea of sameness'

Overall global smartphone sales for 2017 were virtually flat-down 0.1 percent at 1.47 billion units-as phone makers struggled to come up with innovations that encourage customers to upgrade their devices. "The

sea of sameness continues to erode the impact that new models have on the market," said Wood.

In addition to better cameras, phone makers will focus on introducing bigger screens in mid-market devices, not just flagship ones, to try to boost their sales said Ian Fogg, senior director of mobile and telecom at IHS Markit. "They are all really struggling to find good differentiation points to drive that upgrade cycle. They are not just competing with each other, they are competing with the phone that consumers

already own that they may consider good enough." The sector is hoping the introduction of blazing fast 5G mobile internet service-which is about 1,000 times faster

than the 4G widely available in the developed world-will trigger a wave of growth in equipment sales and mobile services.

The first deployment of 5G wireless networks, which are quick enough to download a full length film in less than a second, are expected in key markets like the United States, Japan and South Korea at the end of the year.

"We are in a phase of acceleration...as much for 5G as for artificial intelligence," said Jacques Moulin, the director general of IDATE, a French think tank on the digital economy.

The tech industry in December agreed on most universal standards for 5G, clearing the way for future wireless connections to support functions such as driverless cars and traffic systems.

"We will hear much more pragmatic discussion around 5G, around commercial trials, around what initial 5G networks will deliver. It is transitioning 5G from a future technology that has many possibilities into more of a business as usual approach," said Fogg. —AFP



Samsung to unveil S9 and S9+ today

US to discuss trade disputes with China

WASHINGTON: Senior US officials will discuss trade disputes next week with a top Chinese economic official when he visits Washington, a senior US official said on Friday as President Donald Trump considers new tariffs on steel imports.

The talks will be led by Trump's trade envoy, Robert Lighthizer, who will meet with senior Chinese economic adviser Liu He, the official said. US officials say they do not expect a major breakthrough in the discussions.

Trump has long sought a way to a more balanced trade relationship with China and threatened to impose a big "fine" against China to protect American intellectual property. The US official said Trump had been discussing imposing a global tariff on imports of steel from China and other countries.

A source close to the White House said he had expressed interest in imposing a tariff on steel imports of at least 24 percent, but a White House spokesman

said no final decision had been made. The prospect of a global tariff sent steel shares rising after hours with United States Steel Corp and AK Steel Holding Corp up more than 3 percent. The Commerce Department on Feb. 16 recommended that Trump impose stiff curbs on steel imports from China and other countries and offered the president several options, ranging from global and country-specific tariffs to broad import quotas.

A blanket tariff on steel would cover every steel and aluminum product entering the American market from China, the world's largest steel producer.

"No final decisions have been made. As with every decision he makes, the security of the American people and the American economy will be the president's primary concerns while he considers his potential options," White House spokesman Raj Shah said.

"President Trump is committed to achieving fair and reciprocal trade relationships that protect the American worker and grow our economy," he said.

Liu, a Harvard-trained economist and trusted confidant of Chinese President Xi Jinping, has emerged as the front-runner to be the next governor of China's central bank, according to sources with knowledge of the situation. Liu is the top adviser to Xi on economic policy and is also expected to become vice premier overseeing the Chinese economy. —Reuters

India seizes jeweler's farmhouse, power plant after PNB fraud

MUMBAI: Indian authorities said yesterday they seized a farmhouse, a solar power plant and land belonging to billionaire jeweler Nirav Modi, at the center of an alleged \$1.8 billion fraud against Punjab National Bank that has shaken confidence in state lenders.

Modi, who had a chain of boutique stores from New York to Beijing, and his uncle Mehul Choksi are both accused of perpetrating the biggest loan fraud in Indian banking history and are both out of the country. India's Enforcement Directorate, which fights financial crimes, said on Twitter it had taken possession of 21 properties belonging to Modi worth 5.24 billion rupees (\$81 million) in the latest swoop in Mumbai and Pune, another city in western India.

Earlier in the week, the agency said it had seized luxury cars worth millions of rupees belonging to

Modi and his firms in a case that has turned the spotlight again on India's deep-seated corruption problem. Modi and Choksi are accused of colluding with employees of Punjab National Bank, the country's second-largest state lender, to fraudulently issue letters of undertaking over a seven year period which the businessmen used to obtain credit from overseas branches of Indian banks.

A lawyer for Modi has denied his client was involved in any fraud. Choksi's firm, Gitanjali Gems, has also denied involvement in the alleged fraud. At least a dozen people - six from the bank and six more from Modi's and Choksi's companies - have been arrested and the investigation is still continuing.

Separately, India's federal police registered a case against a Delhi-based jeweler on a complaint of fraud filed by Oriental Bank of Commerce, another state-owned bank, a police source said. The lender has alleged the firm, Dwarka Das Seth International, cheated the bank with the help of some of its officials, using Letters of Credit (LCs) - a banking instrument similar to those used by firms led by Modi and Choksi. Reuters was unable to reach the Delhi firm as the phone numbers listed online did not work. —Reuters

Business

Al-Sayer campaign for prevention and detection of heart diseases

Awareness campaign with Kuwait Heart Society



KUWAIT: To reduce cardiovascular risk and promote a heart-healthy planet, Al-Sayer Holding Corporate Excellence conducted awareness campaign in cooperation with Kuwait Heart Society at Corporate Headquarters Kuwait Free Trade Zone as well as their Delivery and Rent-a-car offices located at Ardiya.

Senior Management members and employees from different business units participated in the event. The campaign covered free blood cholesterol test, blood sugar test

and blood pressure test.

Eng. Nehad Al-Haj Ali, Deputy Group Manager Corporate Excellence Al-Sayer Holding thanked Kuwait Heart Society for their co-operation in successfully conducting this campaign and said "By this program our aim is to convey to people the Importance of early detection of heart diseases, at the same time reflect the care towards employees at Al-Sayer with health checkup and spread awareness about healthy living for all the employees of the Group"



The health awareness session administered by Kuwait Heart Society emphasized on adopting healthy lifestyle to have a healthy heart through:

- Controlling cholesterol and unhealthy fats
- Regulating blood pressure and diabetes
- Stop smoking and limiting alcohol
- Managing weight and exercising daily
- Consuming fruits and vegetable regularly
- Getting 7 to 8 hours of sleep daily

BDO provides insights and roadmap for VAT readiness



KUWAIT: BDO Al-Nisf & Partners ("BDO"), a leading audit, tax and consulting firm in Kuwait and a member of BDO International, the world's fifth largest network of accounting firms, conducted an awareness seminar on Value Added Tax ("VAT") on February 19, 2018 at JW Marriott. The introduction of VAT in the GCC has been a matter of significant public interest across all the GCC states over the last couple of years. VAT has already been implemented in Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates ("UAE") starting January 1, 2018. The seminar was presented by Brian Conn - BDO Kuwait Indirect Tax Partner and Head of VAT in the GCC, Rami Alhadhrami - Tax Director and Mneesh Bajaj - Senior Manager at BDO Kuwait. The seminar focused on the GCC Framework Agreement, the concepts of VAT, the status of its proposed implementation in Kuwait and highlighted experiences learned from VAT implementation in Saudi Arabia and UAE. BDO mentioned that Kuwait is working towards the introduction of VAT starting January 1, 2019 and the remaining GCC countries - Bahrain, Oman & Qatar, are also very likely to introduce VAT latest by January 1, 2019.

The seminar was attended by over 50 delegates including key officials from the Ministry of Finance, Embassies, and commercial companies. Rami Alhadhrami started the seminar by providing insights into VAT developments in the GCC region, and explained key aspects of the GCC VAT Framework Agreement ("the Agreement") which has been signed by Kuwait. Rami commented on the delay of the issuance of the final VAT regulations in Saudi Arabia and UAE and how this left very little time for businesses to get ready for VAT. Rami also spoke at length about the VAT laws already enacted in UAE and Saudi Arabia covering exempted and zero rated sectors, compliance requirements, to provide the delegates a flavor of how the Kuwait VAT law may be finally structured and how certain sectors will be impacted by VAT. In line with the Agreement, VAT will be introduced in Kuwait at the rate of 5% on supply of goods and services.

Bait.com weekly report

A bigger network means more career opportunities

KUWAIT: Many of you will have heard the famous saying, "It's not what you know, it's who you know." But as far as we know, both are equally important. At least when it comes to landing a job and succeeding in your career, it's not only what you know, but also who you know.

That said, let's place focus on who you know, how you get to know them and why it matters to know more people. In other words, let's talk about networking!

Networking is a powerful career-growth tool that can open up many doors and bring about opportunities that would otherwise have flown past your radar. Networking can expose you to new jobs, improve your chances of getting those jobs and introduce you to new career opportunities you might be interested in or might have never even thought about pursuing.

Now, building a professional network sounds incredibly challenging and time-consuming and you might not know how or where to start, especially if you are a fresh graduate. However, Bait.com is here to tell you that it is not as hard as you might think!

In the era of the internet and social networking, it has become significantly easier to build a professional network and get your name out there. A wide professional network will enable you to reach more job opportunities if you are a job seeker, get more clients and increasing your sales if you have a business, or increase your ability to share and receive valuable information and ideas.

You can build your professional network both online and offline in so many different ways. In this article, we have six ways that are often considered the best to help you widen your professional network starting today:

1- Bait.com public profiles:

You can think of your Bait.com public profile as your online business card. With a public profile, more people will be able to reach you and find you through search engines like Google or Bing. Having a public profile will also help you get skills endorsements from your colleagues and people you worked with.

2- Personal branding:

Many people think of branding as something exclusive to products or companies. But why can't you build a brand for yourself? Well, you definitely can. You'll need people to recognize you when your name or your job title is mentioned.

When you build your personal brand perfectly, more people will be curious to know you and connect with you, and this will indeed expand your network. You should also remember that getting a job and moving up the career ladder have a common thread and that is recognition. Through branding yourself, you will be able to attain recognition, build your reputation and control the message people get when they see your name or hear about you.

By focusing on your personal brand and how you connect with others, you'll also be able to easily add recommendation letters and references to your Bait.com profile, which are essential components of a successful CV.

3- Attend conferences and events:

Whether it's a conference, a workshop, a career-related event, or a job fair, professional events are always a great place to meet and share ideas and information with professionals

from the various industries. Do not limit yourself to your own industry as contacts in other industries will also be useful to you along the line.

Always keep your eyes and ears on alert for events happening in your area or in different countries so that you don't miss any opportunity. Don't hesitate to even host an event of your own every once in a while. This is guaranteed to get your name and expertise recognized and to impress some potential employers.

4- Volunteer:

Not only is volunteering about helping people in your community and supporting a cause you passionately care about, but volunteering is also an amazing opportunity to break free of your daily working routine, and to meet new people from different backgrounds and careers. You can think of volunteering as another opportunity to connect with more professionals and expand your circle.

5- Social media platforms

Ask and answer questions. Social networks are flooded with information and work-related groups. Every day, there are hundreds of questions you can ask or answer. You can share articles you write, make videos to talk about a topic you're good at, and maybe follow more professionals in areas that interest you. Remember that you can expand your professional network without even leaving your desk!

6- Travel

Travelling is one of the best ways to broaden your knowledge, mind and horizons, but it doesn't stop there! It is also a perfect way to expand your network. Be friendly, introduce yourself and never hesitate to meet new people. You never know who could end up connecting you to the job of your dreams.

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Business

New Mercedes-Benz A-Class celebrates its world premiere

The benchmark in the compact class



KUWAIT: The new Mercedes-Benz A-Class celebrated its world premiere in Amsterdam, revealing a model as youthful and dynamic as ever, but grown-up and comfortable like never before. It completely redefines modern luxury in the compact class, and revolutionizes interior design. Technologically, the new A-Class not only takes first place thanks to MBUX - Mercedes-Benz User Experience; but it also offers a number of functions that were previously the preserve of the luxury segment. In certain driving situations, it is able to drive semi-autonomously for the first time, and MULTIBEAM LED headlamps are available on request. All models of the new A-Class are also powered by new, efficient petrol engines, and although Mercedes-Benz has retained the sporty appearance, the utility value has increased.

"With the fourth generation of the A-Class, we are redefining modern luxury in the compact class. To do this we have opted for a combination of uncompromisingly dynamic design and an intuitive operating concept," says Britta Seeger, the member of the Daimler AG Board of Management responsible for Mercedes-Benz Cars sales. "With MBUX - the new Mercedes-Benz User Experience - we are creating a completely new customer experience."

Exterior design: Exercise in purism

The purist, surface-accentuating design of the new A-Class is the next step in the Mercedes-Benz design philosophy of Sensual Purity. On the basis of a compact two-box design, optimized dimensions and proportions have led to a new interpretation of the model's design.

The exterior of the new A-Class stands for sportiness, dynamism and emotion. The progressive front design with a low bonnet, flat LED headlamps with chrome elements and torch-like daytime driving lamps ensures an emotionally appealing and alluring appearance. The striking radiator grille with Mercedes star, whose silhouette opens out towards the base as a reinterpretation of its predecessor, features pins in a diamond look and a central silver louvre to underline the sportiness of this model.

The vehicle is visually extended by the longer wheelbase and character line along the side. The bonnet slopes more steeply than in the preceding model series, emphasizing the dynamic, upright front. The larger wheel arches for wheels from 16 to 19 inches emphasize the sportiness of the new A-Class and make it sit more squarely on the road. The vehicle has a wider look at the rear end thanks to a more heavily waisted greenhouse, which also emphasizes the shoulders, and to the wider-spaced rear reflectors in the modular, two-section rear bumper. The

slim, two-section tail lights ensure an emotionally appealing, alluring appearance.

Interior design: A revolution from within

The interior of the new A-Class is completely redefined with its modern, avant-garde look. Mercedes-Benz has taken a completely new approach, revolutionizing the compact class from the inside with a new feeling of spaciousness. The unique interior architecture is shaped in particular by the avant-garde design of the dashboard: for the first time a cowl above the cockpit has been completely dispensed with. As a result, the wing-shaped main body of the dashboard extends from one front door to the other with no visual discontinuity. The Widescreen display is completely free-standing. The air vents in a sporty turbine-look are another highlight.

The dashboard is divided into two three-dimensional, horizontal sections: the lower section is visually separated from the main body of the dashboard by a "trench", and it appears to float in front of the dashboard. The 64 colors of the optional ambient lighting make five times as many colors available than before. And it is not just the variety that has increased, as the emotive presentation also sets new standards in this segment: the different colors are composed into ten color worlds to allow an avant-garde lighting display with spectacular color changes.

The completely free-standing display is available in three versions:

- * two 7-inch displays (17.78 cm)
- * one 7- and one 10.25-inch (26 cm) display
- * two 10.25-inch displays

MBUX - Mercedes-Benz User Experience: Unrivalled experience

The new A-Class is the first Mercedes-Benz model to feature the completely new multimedia system MBUX - Mercedes-Benz User Experience. A unique feature of this system is its ability to learn thanks to artificial intelligence. MBUX can be individualized and adapts to suit the user. It thus creates an emotional connection between the vehicle, driver and passengers.

Its further strengths include the high-resolution Widescreen cockpit with touchscreen operation of the media display, plus intelligent voice control with natural

speech recognition, which is activated with the code word "Hey Mercedes". A head-up display is also available. The touchscreen is part of the comprehensive MBUX touch-control concept - a triad consisting of the touchscreen, touchpad on the centre console and touch control buttons in the steering wheel.

New and improved Mercedes me connect services are being launched with the new infotainment generation MBUX in the UAE only. These include navigation functions based on Car-to-X communication (information from vehicle to vehicle about events registered by sensors, e.g. emergency braking, ESP intervention, or manual reporting e.g. of an accident by the driver), and Vehicle Tracker, which makes it easier to find the parked vehicle, as well as outputting a message if the parked vehicle suffers an impact or is towed away.

Spaciousness and seating: The A-Class has grown up

Despite its sporty look, the new A-Class has considerably more utility value, making it as youthful as ever but grown-up like never before. More shoulder, elbow and headroom plus easier access to the rear are clear benefits, as is the larger and more family- and recreation-friendly luggage compartment. All-round visibility has also been considerably improved. This enhances both safety and the impression of spaciousness.

At the same time, comfort features from higher vehicle segments make an appearance: upon request, and for the first time in this model series, not only will seat heating be available for the front seats, but also seat climate control and a Multicontour Seat package with massage function.

Quiet running: There is strength in serenity

Quiet, vibration-free driving characteristics are a major factor in the grown-up, premium driving impression made by the new A-Class. Alongside effective insulation of the suspension from the vehicle body and aeroacoustic measures, the bodyshell itself plays a decisive role. The suspension connecting points between the body, suspension and powertrain have been strengthened to considerably reduce road roar, as well as the interior noise level.

Intelligent Drive: functions from the S-Class

The new A-Class has the very latest driving assistance systems with cooperative driver support, giving it the highest level of active safety in this segment with functions adopted from the S-Class. For the first time, the A-Class is able to drive semi-autonomously in certain situations. To do this it keeps a close eye on the traffic situation: improved camera and radar systems allow it to see up to 500 m ahead. The A-Class also uses map and navigation data for assistance functions. For example, Active Distance Assist DISTRONIC as part of the Driving Assistance package is able to support the driver in numerous route-specific situations, and predictively and conveniently adjust the speed e.g. when approaching bends, junctions or roundabouts. Also on board are e.g. Active Emergency Stop Assist and intuitively understandable Active Lane Change Assist.

The new A-Class comes with extended Active Brake Assist and PRE-SAFE PLUS as standard. Depending on the situation, the Active Brake Assist can effectively help to mitigate the consequences of rear-end collisions with slower-moving, stopping or stationary vehicles ahead, and even with crossing pedestrians and cyclists, or prevent them altogether. The PRE-SAFE PLUS can recognize an imminent rear-end collision. If the danger of a collision persists, the system can also firmly apply the brakes of the vehicle when stationary, thus minimizing the risk of injuries by reducing the forward jolt caused by an impact from the rear.

The new A-Class is also the first Mercedes-Benz model to have been developed at the new Technology Centre for Vehicle Safety (TFS). The design of the vehicle structures incorporates findings from research into real accidents. Every single bodyshell component was developed according to the loads and stresses encountered, with respect to geometry, material thickness, joining technology and material.

MULTIBEAM LED headlamps: optimum visibility in all conditions

The optional MULTIBEAM LED headlamps are another example of the technology transfer from the luxury to the compact class. These allow extremely quick and precise, electronically controlled adjustment of the headlamps to suit the current traffic situation. 18 individually actuated LEDs are housed in each headlamp. The daylight-like light color of the LEDs is easy on the eyes and has a positive effect on concentration. The road ahead is precisely and brightly illuminated. LED High Performance headlamps are a further option. As standard the new A-Class is equipped with halogen headlamps with integrated LED daytime driving lamps.



Sportiness, dynamism and emotion

Service Hero awards Home Centre 'Superior Customer Service' in home furniture category

KUWAIT: For the third consecutive year, Home Centre, the region's leading home retailer, was awarded 'Superior Customer Service' in Home Furniture Category in Kuwait for the year 2017 from Service Hero, the creators of Kuwait's only customer satisfaction index.

The awards ceremony, held in Symphony Style Hotel, witnessed the attendance of many private sector leaders from across various fields. The award came after an in-depth evaluation by an independent advisory council, which recognized Home Centre's commitment to providing outstanding service and value to its customers.

Service Hero is the Arab world's only 100 per cent consumer-powered customer satisfaction index, which rates 17 industry segments - including cafés, retail banks, mobile operators, home furniture, electronics, and airlines - for customer service. Upon nominating leading brands across every segment, the Service Hero launches a year-long voting process that culminates in the selection of a single winner in each category.

Launched in 2010, the index has counted over 24,024 consumer votes on more than 350 private sector companies in Kuwait and has lately expanded its reach to the UAE.

Commenting on award, Saibal Basu, Chief Operating Officer of Landmark Group Kuwait said: "We are proud of our important achievements which are reflected in the awards we win. We are delighted to receive this prestigious award for the third year running. What makes the validation even more special is that it comes from our customers, who have always been the prime focus of every initiative and launch at Home Centre."

He added: "We aim to bring them only the very best - both in terms of products and experiences

- and this recognition reinforces our long-standing dedication to exceptional customer service. Such distinctions motivate us to double our efforts to ensure we remain the preferred home shopping destination in the region."

Service Hero has appointed an Independent Advisory Council comprised of academic institutions as well as leading business professionals. As a neutral panel of experts, the Council's function is to supervise the assessment and ensure fair and empirical results that adhere to all procedures and norms. Service Hero's main goal is to measure the satisfaction level in the market by real consumers in order to help and empower companies to improve their service levels.



26 win Al-Hassad Islamic account

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 21st of February 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 Sameer Saleh Farhan Al-Saeed, 25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Faisal Zaid Fahad Al-Zaid, Qutaybah Faisal Abdurahman Al-Shayea, Mustafa Hasan Abdul Mawla Al-Basha, Mona Khaled Sadekhan Al-Fadhli, Bodour Jawad Taher Al-Baghli, Raja Abdullah M Al-Meshari, Danah Sulaman Abdullah Al-Rashdan, Naqwah Faleh Saeed Al-Azmi, Georges Saba, Mohd Rafiq Mohd Ibrahim, Fuad Abdulmohsen Mohammad Al-Wuhaib, Mohammad Abdullah Ghazi Al-Mutairi, Rwham Fawzi Abdullah Al-Othman, Mohammed Homoud Mohammed Al-Homoud, Abdullah Ghannam Abdulaziz Al-Otaibi, Meshal Turki Dabbous Al-Dabbous, Jaber Mohammad W Al-Azemi, Abdulrahman Mohammad Rashed Rasheed Al Rasheedi, Naser Haj Ebraheem Al-Muzayyan, Magdy Mohamed Al-Sayed El Morabbi, Abdulla Saleh Ahmed Seyadi, Adetola Idowu Olawale, Abdulla Mansoor Nassir Khamis, Ishaq Hamad Mohamed and Batool S Abdulnabi Ibrahim Alhawi.

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. Ahli United Bank added, "There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year." Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.

Business

GCC Financial Forum 2018 puts spotlight on digital transformation

Speakers discuss the shape of future financial system



KUWAIT: The GCC Financial Forum, held on 20th and 21st February 2018 in Manama, Bahrain, put digital transformation in the financial industry in the spotlight and reinforced the significance of pursuing a forward-thinking approach with respect to integrating new technologies into existing business models and strategies.

EuroMoney Conferences and the Bahrain Economic Development Board (EDB) were honored to welcome Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa, the Minister of Finance, Zayed R Alzayani, the Minister of Industry, Commerce and Tourism, and Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraaj, the Governor of the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB).

Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed Al-Khalifa gave an opening keynote interview and spoke about Bahrain's commitment to diversifying the local economy and continuously driving innovation across all key industries on its path towards Vision 2030. An important part of this endeavor has been the creation of a strong infrastructure and ecosystem for economic growth, aiming to maintain global competitiveness and further enhance the quality of life for Bahrainis. His Excellency underlined the importance of embracing new technologies to stay relevant, inspired by best practice approaches from around the world.

Contributing an important macro perspective, Zayed R Alzayani highlighted that creating a fertile business environment for investors is crucial to supporting the growth of the financial industry. The

commercial registration portal 'Sijilat', launched in 2016, has already helped the country to achieve a substantial increase in inward FDI flows. He highlighted that this development is set to expedite Bahrain's journey towards digital transformation by helping to attract more international companies and best practice approaches from around the world.

Rasheed Mohammed Al-Maraaj participated in his traditional interactive town-hall session at the event where he talked about the unique characteristics of Bahrain's banking system and the potential of FinTech. He commented: "What we have to keep in mind is that FinTech solutions have the potential to optimise cost structures by cutting out the middle man.

We encourage all Bahraini financial institutions to take the leap and embrace the new technologies. The Central Bank of Bahrain is committed to not only keep up with the changes, but enable them for the benefit of our local economy and our people."

This year's agenda included two high-profile global speakers including, Mohamed A El-Erian, Chief Economic Advisor at Allianz, who brought a global perspective to the conference. In his keynote address and town-hall interview, he focused on the current economic climate, geopolitical risks and the implications of digital disruption for the financial industry worldwide. Lord Mervyn King, Economist and Former Governor of the Bank of England, spoke about the global history of transformation in

the banking sector, drawing a comparison to the technological innovation drive witnessed currently. He reminded participants of the crucial role of central banks in anticipating the needs of market participants and ensuring the financial soundness of the sector amidst monumental changes. Khalid Al-Rumaihi, Chief Executive of the Bahrain EDB, shared insights into Bahrain's collaborative approach bringing together government, regulators

on the cusp of significant disruptions and innovations, from AI and blockchain to the evolution and growth of mobile payment solutions and peer-to-peer funding.

The conversations and announcements that have taken place over the past two days demonstrate that we have the talent, infrastructure, connectivity and supportive ecosystem in place in Bahrain and the GCC to embrace these opportunities and help shape the future of financial services globally. "Further contributing to the discussions, Mahmood H Alkooheji, Chief Executive Officer of Muntalakat, talked about the significance of finding new approaches to expanding and continuously reinvigorating their business model through fruitful partnerships and joint ventures for the benefit of the Bahraini economy. Looking back on the rapid development of the company, which saw the number of Muntalakat portfolio companies more than double over the past years, Alkooheji underlined that despite this successful track record, he still sees significant potential for further growth, particularly in Bahrain's thriving financial sector.

The conference also featured a series of panels, the first of which focused on Innovation and the shape of the financial system of the future, bringing together speakers from Bank ABC Group, C5 Accelerate, Amazon Web Services and IBM. There was a lively debate on how the financial sector of the future will look in 20 years' time, covering top-

ics such as: cryptocurrency, big data, cloud computing, reg tech and artificial intelligence. The second panel focused on the fast-changing payments sector and gathered speakers from Mastercard, PayTabs, TransferWise and Tap who examined the future potential of the sector, looked at what will differentiate the winners from the losers in the payments space and considered the impact of Bitcoin and other digital currencies.

The final panel, featuring participants from Finalytix, Trafigura, Beehive, and FinTech Consortium, explored the requirements for the creation of an innovation economy and covered topics such as data, privacy and security law to IoT, infrastructure and financing.

Over the course of the past seven years, the GCC Financial Forum by EuroMoney Conferences and co-hosted by the Bahrain EDB has developed into the region's leading platform for financial industry professionals to gather, network and debate crucial topics that shape the future of the financial system in the region. In 2018, the two-day event brought together more than 700 regional and international economists, policy makers, financiers and fintech leaders.

The GCC Financial Forum 2018 closed with and culminated in the official opening of Bahrain FinTech Bay, which will provide the region's first dedicated ecosystem to nurture and develop new technologies that aim to revolutionize the delivery of financial services.



Stress on technological innovation

and the private sector to create an enabling environment for disruption and innovation. He commented: "It has been a privilege to co-host the GCC Financial Forum with EuroMoney in Bahrain for the seventh year, bringing together some of the sector's leading minds to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead. This is a particularly interesting time for the financial services sector, which is

that can be won during the offer period. Guests making online bookings during the offer period (February 25-26, 2018) will be included in the lucky draw. Tickets booked online during the offer will carry an open travel validity.

Shakir Kantawala, Vice President - Gulf, Middle East & Africa, Jet Airways, said, "As the preferred carrier on the Indo-Gulf route, Jet Airways enjoys a long standing relationship with Kuwait, that is deeply cherished. We take this opportunity to convey our good wishes and congratulations to the people of the Kuwait on their National Day. Our promotional offers represent a small part of our efforts to continually offer value to guests while they create lasting memories while flying with us."

Celebrate National Day with Renault Al-Babtain's offers

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait continues its celebrations of Kuwait's National and Liberation days by offering exceptional service offer. Customers visiting the service center can benefit from 30 percent discount on parts, 15 percent discount on Labor and 25 Points worth free Safety check up. Additionally, customers will have the opportunity to win several benefits such as free Aircomatic Service, Window tinting & body protection vouchers as well

as Fuel and Accessories vouchers along with free tickets to Kidzania for the children to discover a different world through education.

To benefit from this seasonal offer that is available until March 15, 2018 customers can download MyRenault App & book the service appointment online for added convenience.

Renault Al Babtain urges everyone to take advantage and explore new experiences through the exclusive deals this February to March.

Celebrate Kuwait's 57th National Day with special fares from Jet Airways

KUWAIT: Jet Airways, India's full-service, premier international airline, announces special promotions in celebration of Kuwait's 57th National Day and 27th Liberation Day.

Under the special online offer, guests can enjoy 20 percent off on prevailing Economy and Premiere fares on bookings made only via the airline's website www.jetairways.com or its mobile App on the carrier's flights from Kuwait to over 50 destinations in its network, including those in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the Far East. The limited period 'National Day' promotion will be valid for 48

hours until the end-of-the day on Liberation Day, February 26, 2018.

The promotion will enable guests to firm up their holiday plans with family and friends. At the same time, the promotion holds special significance for Corporates as well as entrepreneurs who can use it to enjoy the airline's well differentiated product and service experience, taking advantage of the substantial savings on offer.

Commemorating the National Day celebrations, Jet Airways has also announced a lucky prize in the form of "2 Free Return Tickets"



KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds' 213th showroom globally in Jaleeb Al-Shuyoukh, Kuwait was inaugurated by Colonel Ibrahim Al-Duay, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area Police Commander in the presence of General / Ali Hamdan Al-Daihani, Farwaniya Governorate Consultant & Acting Manager of the Governor's Office, Shamlal Ahamed MP, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Abdul Salam KP, Group Executive Director - Malabar Group, management team members of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, well-wishers & guests.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds opens its 213th global outlet in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the BIG 5 jewelry retailers globally with a strong retail network of over 210 retail outlets spread across nine countries has launched a new store in Kuwait. The brand new showroom located next to Olive Hypermarket in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh was inaugurated by Colonel Ibrahim Al-Duay, Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh area Police Commander in the presence of General / Ali Hamdan Al-Daihani, Farwaniya Governorate Consultant & Acting Manager of the Governor's Office, Shamlal Ahamed MP, Managing Director - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Abdul Salam KP, Group Executive Director - Malabar Group, management team members of Malabar Gold & Diamonds, well-wishers & guests. Having 7 outlets spread across Kuwait, this is Malabar Gold & Diamonds' 8th outlet in Kuwait. By opening the new showroom in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, the total number of showrooms of Malabar Gold & Diamonds will jump to 213 globally.

This new outlet unveils a significantly large collection of traditional as well as contemporary designer jewelries. The exquisite range of collections in the new outlet can hold you spell-bound with their awe-inspiring beauty and classic designs. Like all their other outlets, this outlet also will exhibit a wide range of diverse and trendy designs in gold (18K, 22K & 24K), IGI certified diamonds and precious gem jewelry from Italy, Singapore, Bahrain and India.

Special inaugural offers were announced by Malabar Gold & Diamonds on the occasion of the opening. Customers get one gram gold coin absolutely free on every KD 250 worth diamond jewelry purchase & for every gold jewelry purchase worth KD 150 customers will get a free gold coin. These offers are valid until March 03rd in the Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh outlet only. A true shopper's delight, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has also unveiled a huge collection of jewelry in gold, diamonds and precious gems from different parts of the world to enthrall the jewelry lovers.

Malabar Group has established its presence in the Kuwait market in a surprisingly short span of time. The group strives to continue embarking on its journey by further expanding in the near future. In Kuwait, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also operates in Al-Rai - Lulu Hypermarket, Souk Al Watya - Maliya, Dajeej - Lulu Hypermarket, Fahaeel, Hawally - Grand Hypermarket, Mahboula & at Al Salam Mall, Salmiya.

Unlimited roaming internet with Ooredoo passport

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait announced the launch of its revamped roaming service, Ooredoo Passport. The new plan gives customers exclusive roaming internet for KD 12/week, to keep up with the customers' mode of usage for mobile internet, as it is the main tool for sharing videos, pictures and audio clips with loved ones on various social media channels such as Instagram and Snapchat. The service can be activated conveniently through the free My Ooredoo smartphone app.

Commenting on the launch of the revamped service, Ooredoo Kuwait issued a statement saying that the new service is aimed to enrich the experience of the telecom service provider's customers and meet



their expectations, taking in mind the lifestyle of the company's global-oriented customer base. The new service also reiterates Ooredoo's commitment to helping customers enjoy the internet, especially since mobile internet is an essential part of

everyday use to many customers. ooredoo noted that the new my Ooredoo passport service can be conveniently activated through the company's My Ooredoo smartphone app, available on the iOS AppStore and the Android Google Playstore.

KFH continues to serve customers electronically, through Airport branch during holiday

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced that it is ready to fulfill its commitments towards its customers during the Kuwait National and Liberation day holiday. The bank will continue to offer a plethora of services for its customers in Kuwait and overseas through its website that offers over 150 e-services, in addition to the alternative channels, XTM and the 24/7 branch at the Kuwait International Airport.

XTM service allows customers to conduct their transactions and perform many banking services in minutes in a very modern way using advanced tools through visual and audio communication options: conference call with KFH staff who are always

available and ready to answer all customers' questions. This service is available 24/7 at Avenues mall and Al-Fayhaa Branch.

Moreover, the Call Center will be ready to receive calls from clients throughout the day, and will work relentlessly to overcome any problems that might face clients in Kuwait and overseas.

In addition, KFH continues to offer its IVR service that is available throughout the day. Clients can call to make account transactions, ask for financial transaction, pay bills, purchase cards to recharge cell phone, and other services.

Further, clients can take advantage of



KFH's ATM machines (Shamel) that are available at most of the branches in vital locations. KFH offers Mobi Baitok vehicles that serve as mobile branches that allow people to deposit and withdraw cash in addition to other banking transactions.

KFH has additional technical privileges, such as allowing customers to conduct several banking transactions through smart phones on kfonline application.

Wes Anderson, Norway teen massacre films lead Berlin fest race

Wes Anderson's "Isle of Dogs", an animated movie with political bite, and a controversial dramatization of Norway's 2011 massacre of teenagers by a neo-Nazi gunman led the award favorites yesterday at the Berlin film festival. The Berlinale, Europe's first major cinema showcase of the year, will hand out its coveted Golden and Silver Bear top prizes at a gala ceremony starting at 1800 GMT. A six-member jury headed by German director Tom Tykwer ("Run Lola Run", Netflix series "Babylon Berlin") will choose among 19 contenders from around the world.

Anderson's "Isle of Dogs" opened the festival on February 15, delighting audiences with an all-star cast voicing a pack of pooches expelled from a fictional Japanese city by a corrupt, fear-mongering mayor. Britain's Guardian called the movie "hugely enjoyable", showing an "indefatigably fertile imagination letting rip in inimitable style - and packing an eco-themed, anti-bioterror message as well". The picture led an international critics' poll at the Berlinale published by industry magazine Screen. Reviewers were also impressed with the gut-wrenching drama "U-July 22" about the mass murder of 69 mainly teenage victims

on the Norwegian island of Utoya by far-right militant Anders Behring Breivik.

The film, featuring in a chilling single 72-minute take, recounts the carnage in real time with fictionalized characters. It premiered just days after one of the worst school shootings in US history, killing 17 in Florida. The movie sparked a heated debate among viewers, victims' families and survivors about whether it was too soon or even necessary at all-to reenact Norway's most traumatic tragedy since World War II on screen. However, US website IndieWire said the "almost unbearably harrowing recreation" in Erik Poppe's movie honored the victims while rallying societies to do more to protect their young. "Movies have the power to re-sensitize us to violence, restoring some terrible shape to the mass horrors we've negligently allowed to become abstractions," it said.

'Blind faith in authority'

Acclaimed Filipino director Lav Diaz, who scooped the top prize in Venice two years ago with "The Woman Who Left", won admirers for his new picture, "Season of the Devil". The four-hour-long folk musical, filmed in black and white, depicts the suffer-

ing unleashed on rural communities by a sadistic government-backed militia under Ferdinand Marcos in the late 1970s. Film industry bible Variety said the opus also served as a searing critique of the current regime by exposing its origins. "In its firm, direct rhetorical stand against martial law... (the film) damns the current leadership of President Rodrigo Duterte, under whose rule extrajudicial killings have soared in the country," it said.

Another subtly topical movie also resonated strongly, a biopic about Russian-Jewish writer Sergei Dovlatov grappling with Soviet-era state censorship. "This is not only a look back," said the daily Berliner Zeitung about Alexey German Jr's "Dovlatov". "The societal deformation and the blind faith in authority seen here also have much to say about today's Russia."

#MeToo cast shadow

Audiences swooned over a rare Paraguayan film export, "The Heiresses" by Marcelo Martinessi, about a middle-aged lesbian couple forced to sell their belongings to pay off mounting debts.

"The relative scarcity of female-centric queer cinema from South America should

guarantee continuing interest from festival programmers," the Hollywood Reporter wrote. At a ceremony late Friday, the Teddy prize for best feature film with gay or lesbian content went to Brazilian "Hard Paint" by Marcio Reolon and Filipe Matzembacher about a young man making his living in sex chat rooms.

Germany's "Transit" with a mysterious tale of refugees in Nazi-occupied Europe transposed to the present day, and "Museum" from Mexico starring Gael Garcia Bernal about a daring heist of priceless relics, also earned praise.

The final day of the competition brought one last critical hit with "In the Aisles", starring Sandra Huelker of "Toni Erdmann" fame and Franz Rogowski as a couple of lost souls in east Germany set adrift after reunification.

The #MeToo movement also cast a long shadow over the Berlinale, with several topical films screened and a raft of industry initiatives launched to combat sexual exploitation. Last year, a tender Hungarian love story set in a slaughterhouse, "On Body and Soul", captured the Golden Bear. It is now nominated for best foreign language film at next month's Academy Awards. —AFP

Recent winners of the Berlin filmfest's Golden Bear

The Golden Bear prize for best picture will be awarded Saturday at the 68th Berlin film festival to one of the 19 contenders from around the world. Here are the winners over the past decade of the Golden Bear at the event, one of the world's top cinema showcases and the first major European film festival of the year.



Brazilian director Jose Padilha attends a press conference for the film '7 Days in Entebbe' presented in competition during the 68th Berlinale film festival on February 19, 2018 in Berlin. — AFP

2008: "Tropa de Elite" (Elite Squad) by Jose Padilha (Brazil/Argentina)

2009: "La teta astutada" (The Milk of Sorrow) by Claudia Llosa (Spain/Peru)

2010: "Bal" (Honey) by Semih Kaplanoglu (Turkey/Germany)

2011: "Jodaeiye Nader Az Simin" (A Separation) by Asghar Farhadi (Iran)

2012: "Cesare deve morire" (Caesar Must Die) by Paolo and Vittorio Taviani (Italy)

2013: "Poziția Copilului" (Child's Pose) by Calin Peter Netzer (Romania)

2014: "Bai Ri Yan Huo" (Black Coal, Thin Ice), Diao Yinan (China)

2015: "Taxi", Jafar Panahi (Iran)

2016: "Fuocoammare" (Fire at Sea), Gianfranco Rosi, Italy/France

2017: "Trestrol es lelekrol" (On Body and Soul), Ildiko Enyedi, Hungary. — AFP

ED SHEERAN SEARCHES FOR NEW LINES IN MOVIE 'SONGWRITER'

British singer Ed Sheeran said on Friday that the hardest part of songwriting was coming up with lines that had never been written before as a new documentary detailing his creative process premiered at Berlin's international film festival. The movie "Songwriter" was directed by Sheeran's cousin, Murray Cummings, and follows the Grammy winner as he travels around the United States and England writing songs on his laptop, jamming in a garden and recording in the studio.

The intimate portrait of Sheeran, who was the most-streamed artist on music service Spotify globally in 2017, includes footage of him belting out songs while crossing the Atlantic on the Queen Mary 2, returning to high school to see his music teacher and talking to his father about his



British singer-songwriter Ed Sheeran poses during a photocall for the film "Songwriter" presented in the "Berlinale special" category during the 68th edition of the Berlinale film festival. — AFP

songs. "I think the most difficult thing to do with writing a song is finding a phrase that you haven't heard before because there's always a song that's going to be like: 'I love you baby like crazy. I miss you maybe,'" Sheeran told a news conference.

He said he had learned not to push himself if he was struggling to write and did not believe writer's block existed.

"What I do when I can't write a song is I just put the guitar down and go and do something else for about a couple of weeks and then come back and then I'll be able to write a song," the 27-year-old said. "So the way that my mind is now is, I will be able to write songs forever - they probably will start being about pretty mundane things because my life is getting more and more calm." Sheeran said he liked the documen-

tary because it showed a song being written from start to finish, rather than just an album being recorded.

"I like that Murray found a niche that hasn't really been done before. It's quite difficult to find something that hasn't been done in a music movie," Sheeran said. Sheeran, who said he planned to make a film next year in which he would play something other than himself, listed "Goodfellas", "Cool Runnings" and "Love Actually" as his favorite movies. Cummings told Reuters the documentary would give fans an insight into Sheeran off-stage. "When he's on his own he's kind of very like relaxed and chilled and stuff. So I think they're going to see that's what he's like because this film just kind of shows what I see every day," Cummings said. — Reuters

Deeply indebted Lisa Marie Presley and manager in dueling lawsuits

Lisa Marie Presley, the only daughter of Elvis Presley, says she is facing financial ruin and has filed a \$100 million lawsuit accusing her former business manager of negligence and mismanaging her finances. Her ex-manager has filed his own lawsuit, accusing Presley, 50, of squandering her famous father's



Lisa Marie Presley

inheritance because of her lavish lifestyle. The lawsuit seeks \$800,000 in unpaid bills. The dueling lawsuits, filed earlier this week in Los Angeles Superior Court, follow the collapse in 2016 of Presley's fourth marriage and her announcement that she was \$16 million in debt.

Presley was just 9 years old when Elvis died in 1977, leaving her his sole heir. Her affairs have been managed by Barry Siegel since 1993, when she came into her inheritance through a trust. Her lawsuit

said Presley's "11-year odyssey to financial ruin" began in 2005 and alleged that as result of Siegel's actions, "Lisa has been damaged in an amount that has not yet been fully ascertained, but is believed to be in excess of \$100 million." The 2005 deal she was referring to involved income from Elvis' former home Graceland and his intellectual property rights. The lawsuit said that by 2016, the trust was left with \$14,000 in cash and over \$500,000 in credit card debt. Siegel's lawsuit said Lisa Marie has "twice squandered" her inheritance and she had been repeatedly told to curb "her spendthrift ways." Siegel's attorney, Leon Gladstone, said in a statement on Friday that the 2005 deal Presley was complaining about "cleared up over \$20 million in debts Lisa had incurred and netted her over \$40 million cash and a multi-million dollar income stream, most of which she managed to squander in the ensuing years."

"It's clear Lisa Marie is going through a difficult time in her life and looking to blame others instead of taking responsibility for her actions," Gladstone said. Presley launched her own career as a singer in 2003 and has released three albums to mixed success. She is better known for her two-year marriage to singer Michael Jackson and her 108-day marriage to actor Nicholas Cage. — Reuters



Maya Jama

JAMA POSTS HEARTFELT TRIBUTE TO STORMZY

Maya Jama has paid tribute to her double BRIT Award winning boyfriend Stormzy, describing him as an artist who is "changing history". The 23-year-old TV presenter worked as a red carpet interviewer at the star-studded event at the O2 on Wednesday night and then joined her man on his table as he waited to find out he would be leaving with the statuette for British Male Solo Artist and British Album for 'Gang Signs and Prayer'. Maya has now taken to her Instagram page to tell Stormzy, 24, just how "proud" she is of him. Posting a picture of the grime rapper holding his two BRITs, she wrote: "Proud is an understatement! You put everything into the album and work harder and are more passionate about what you do than anyone I know, you are inspiring on so many levels and everyone around you is blessed to have you, you deserve everything that comes your way, you are changing history and it is such a pleasure to witness you grow into the most incredible human the actual best [sic]"

Maya and Stormzy went public with their relationship in 2016, before Stormzy's career took off, and she has been there supporting him ever since. Stormzy even said that he is ready to take their relationship to the next level and revealed that he is even ready to propose to Maya. He previously said: "I'm still so young but I want to propose, it's going to happen and I will do it right. She is so sick, she is the best." The songwriter has seen his debut LP go platinum in the wake of his BRITs wins and he wants to enjoy this special moment in his life and career with his family and friends. — Bang Showbiz

Stormzy went on pre-BRITs diet for closing performance

Stormzy went on a strict diet ahead of his BRIT Awards 2018 performance. The 24-year-old rapper enjoyed an incredible night at the ceremony, leaving the O2 arena in London on Wednesday night with two of the evening's most prestigious prizes: British Male Solo Artist and Album of the Year for his acclaimed debut 'Gang Signs and Prayer'. Stormzy was given the honour of closing the show and at one point in his performance he stood on stage shirtless as water poured down on him and he admitted he worked hard to ensure he was in the best shape possible for his stunt.

Speaking on the red carpet before the event began, Stormzy said: "There's been a diet, specifically for today. I don't think I've quite pulled it off, but I got 70 per cent there. It's all about the lighting." His girlfriend Maya Jama, who was interviewing him for TV, confirmed his efforts to eat healthily, saying: "He has been dieting, he's been getting in shape for his performance." Stormzy performed a medley of two tracks from his BRIT-winning LP, 'Blinded By Your Grace' and 'Big For Your Boots' and in the middle of his set he broke into a freestyle which criticised UK Prime Minister Theresa May for her actions in the wake of the Grenfell Tower Fire tragedy which destroyed a London tower block, claiming many lives. He rapped: "Yo, Theresa May, where's the money for Grenfell? / what, you thought we just forgot about Grenfell? / you're criminals, and you got the cheek to call us savages / you

should do some jail time, you should pay some damages / you should burn your house down and see if you can manage this." Stormzy won both awards he was nominated for but admitted he most proud that his album was recognized because he put so much into the songs. — BangShowbiz



Stormzy

All that jazz: Saudis attend country's first jazz festival

Men and women swayed to music at Saudi Arabia's first-ever jazz festival on Friday, the second of a three-day outdoor event that showcases the Kingdom's recent efforts of shedding its conservative image. Locals and foreigners flocked to the festival to watch bands from Riyadh, Beirut and New Orleans. The crowd sang along when Lebanon's Chady Nashif performed the Eagles' "Hotel California" - an unusual moment in the Islamic country after the religious police last year condemned concerts that feature singing as harmful and corrupting.

On Thursday, the General Entertainment Authority announced it will stage more than 5,000 shows, festivals and concerts in 2018, double the number of last year. The entertainment plans are largely motivated by economics, part of a reform program to diversify the economy away from oil and create jobs for young Saudis. They also mark a change in social Saudi life and the gradual relaxing of gender segregation, although restrictions persist. At the festival, the area in front of the stage was divided into two sections - one for men and one for women - but people mixed in family seating areas on

the side and in the back. "I am so so happy I got up from bed this morning and went to a jazz festival and performed in front of a crowd like me, my countrymen," said Saleh Zaid, a Saudi musician from the local band Min Riyadh. "It's a feeling I just cannot explain to you." While some showed up out of a love for jazz, many came to enjoy the chance to hear music at an outdoor event, with food trucks, a vintage car display and a relaxed atmosphere.

While reforms have taken place in the Kingdom, with a 35-year cinema ban lifted and women set to drive later this year, the majority of the country is conservative, which is reflected in government decisions. Earlier this month, authorities detained a man after a video of him dancing with a woman in the street went viral.

But on Friday, women in abayas, loose-fitting robes, moved with the music, unconcerned with the possible backlash. "This festival shows that the leadership here wants to let the people open up, to see more things, more cultures," said Salem al-Ahmed, who with his stylish young friends jumped at the opportunity to attend his city's first-of-a-kind festival. — Reuters

Saara Aalto to support Steps on tour



Saara Aalto will support Steps on tour this summer. The 'X Factor' runner up - who has already worked with the likes of Adam Lambert, Sophie Ellis-Bextor and Matt Terry - has been asked to join the popular 90s band when they hit the road in May and June and she has teased that fans will get to hear some of her new music as well as experience some of her classic performances from the past.

Speaking to The Sun newspaper, she said: "Hitting the road with Steps is going to be so much fun. It's right after 'Eurovision' so I will be on cloud nine after performing to millions of people. It will be the first chance to see my new music and some classic performances on the road in the UK, so I'm very excited." Her gigs come just months after she decided to cut ties with Sony as she didn't think they were the "right team" for her and moved across to rival Warner - who she signed a global deal with - because they were keen to make her a "big theatrical artist." She said recently: "I was honored I was signed to Sony. But later I felt like they weren't the right team. When I met the people at Warner they were very excited about my style and making me into this big theatrical artist."

Despite her switch, the 30-year-old Finnish beauty is adamant there is no bad blood between her and Simon Cowell - who owns Sony - as she's going to be a judge on 'The X Factor' in Finland. She added: "He knows, I'm doing 'X Factor' Finland, so I'm still part of the Sony family." However, the brunette beauty's intense work schedule - on TV and in the studio - has meant that she and her long-term girlfriend Meri Sopanen - who got engaged last summer - have been forced to put their wedding plans on hold for the time being. She said recently: "We wanted to have the wedding next year. But it might be too late to book that now. We don't have time to plan it! I did see some photos online yesterday and sent them [to Meri] but that's sort of it." — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Art

Hunting for the woman in the 'African Mona Lisa'

She's been described as "the African Mona Lisa", the subject of a long-lost series of three paintings by the artist considered the father of Nigerian modernism. But like Leonardo da Vinci's most famous portrait, finding out more about the woman in Ben Enwonwu's "Tutu" has so far been elusive, even for her extensive extended family. One of the missing works, which was discovered in a north London flat, goes on sale in the British capital on Wednesday and is expected to fetch 250,000 pounds (\$347,000, 282,000 euros).

Enwonwu was professor of fine arts at the university in Ile-Ife, the cradle of the Yoruba people in southwest Nigeria, when he met Adetutu Ademiluyi and painted her in 1973 and 1974. The painting of the Yoruba princess by an ethnic Igbo artist became a symbol of national reconciliation at a delicate time in Nigeria's history. A brutal civil war had ended just four years earlier between federal forces and Biafran separatists wanting an Igbo homeland in the southeast.



Ben Enwonwu's "Tutu" painting has been compared to Leonardo da Vinci's portrait of Mona Lisa.



A worker at Bonhams auctioneers poses next to Tutu," by Nigeria's best-known modern artist Ben Enwonwu, ahead of its sale, in London, Britain February 7, 2018. — AFP Photos

Royal stock
What is known about "Tutu" is that she was the granddaughter of the traditional ruler, Ademiluyi Ajagun, the Ooni (king) of Ife, who died in 1930. He is said to have married up to 47 times, had many mistresses and, unsurprisingly, many children. Surviving relatives in Ife said they remember an Adetutu in the family. "Adetutu was... one of the daughters of Kabiyesi (king) Ademiluyi," said Olori (queen) Anifowoshe, who added that she was the only surviving wife of the former monarch.

But Anifowoshe, who is said to be more than 100, couldn't recall if Adetutu married or had children and told AFP: "She died many years ago." Cecilia Ayoka is another centenarian and was married to Prince Okero Ademiluyi, a son of the former king.

"I used to know Adetutu in those days but for some years now I haven't heard anything about her," she added. "Not many people knew Adetutu because Ademiluyi is such a large family. "My husband who happened to be one of the direct children was over 120 years before he died and

he had more than 40 wives," she said. "Only three of us are still alive."

'I can't believe she's alive'
Giles Peppiatt, the head of modern and contemporary African art at Bonhams auction house who found what he describes as "the mythical picture", has been in Nigeria doing his own detective work. Last week, he travelled the 200 kilometers (125 miles) from Lagos to Ife and said the older women in the family may have been referring to an Adetutu of a different generation.

He said family members told him a younger Adetutu was alive, in her late 60s and living in Lagos, which would tally with her being aged in her late teens when she sat for Enwonwu.

"Tutu is one of about 300 (children). That's why it's actually quite difficult to find her," he said. He added: "It's amazing. I can't believe she's alive." Enwonwu-famous for creating a bronze sculpture of Queen Elizabeth II-died in 1994 and appears not to have left any clues about his subject. At his studio in Lagos, the artist's son, Oliver, said he can't recall his father ever discussing it and doesn't know where the remaining two paintings are.

But the 42-year-old, who is president of the Society of Nigerian Artists, said he was pleased about the increasing recognition his father was getting. "It's a thing of joy that several decades after his death my father's works are being appreciated globally," he added. Peppiatt said although he was hopeful of finding the real Tutu after so long, it had no bearing on the painting's worth as art. "I will say, either way, I think it's... just a beguiling picture, it's an amazing portrait and whether we find her or not doesn't really affect the value of the work. "The value of the work is what he painted in 1973, not whether we find the sitter in 2018." — AFP



This handout photo taken on February 22, 2018 in an unknown location and released on February 23, 2018 by the French customs (Douanes Francaises) shows a French custom officer holding a Degas painting stolen from a museum in Marseille nine years ago has been found on a bus near Paris, the French Culture Minister said on February 23. — AFP

Stolen Degas painting found on a bus near Paris

A Degas painting stolen from a museum in Marseille nine years ago has been found on a bus near Paris, the French Culture Minister said Friday. Francoise Nyssen said customs officials found the pastel-thought to be worth around 800,000 euros (\$893,000) — in the luggage compartment of a bus stopped in a motorway layby.

None of the passengers on the bus admitted to owning the painting, she added. Experts from the Musee d'Orsay in the French capital later confirmed that the depiction of a group of opera extras was "Les Choristes"—sometimes called "The Extras"—which was stolen in 2009 from the Musee Cantini in the southern port. — AFP

Row at German art fair over 'Erdogan with banana' painting

A German artist complained Friday after his gallery took down a painting that depicts Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan with a banana in his buttocks. The provocative painting entitled "Turkish dictator" by Thomas Baumgaertel has sparked noisy complaints and protests at the art Karlsruhe fair. The fair organizers tweeted that, amid the row, not they but the gallery owner had "decided to take down the caricature". Gallerist Michael Oess said he took the decision "to avoid trouble."

"I have a certain responsibility toward other visitors," he told national news agency DPA. The artist wrote on Twitter that he had severed ties with his gallery after it had taken the decision "without consulting me". Baumgaertel is a street art pioneer also known as the Banana Sprayer whose trademark motif is an Andy Warhol-style banana.

The uproar started when a Turkish journalist Thursday filmed the picture with a smartphone while reporting online, said Oess. The Turkish newspaper Daily Sabah reported on the painting, saying that to Turks it presented a "racist and vulgar attack" on their president. Oess said the painting, part of the "Despots series—Trump, Kim and Erdogan", had sold for 5,900 euros (\$7,200). Germany is home to a three-million-strong ethnic Turkish community. Erdogan has in the past sued a German TV comic over his satirical "Defamatory Poem". — AFP

Picasso's hidden mistress set to fetch millions at sale

A Pablo Picasso painting depicting his muse Marie-Therese Walter with future lover Dora Maar emerging from the shadows behind is expected to fetch an eye-watering sum at a London sale next week. The 1937 "Femme au Beret et la Robe Quadrillee (Marie-Therese Walter)" is expected to reach \$50 million (40 million euros) at a sale of Impressionist, Surrealist and Modern Art at prestigious London auction house Sotheby's on Wednesday. The identity of its current owner remains a mystery.

"It's an incredibly important museum-quality picture," James Mackie, director of the Impressionist and Modern Art department at Sotheby's, told AFP on Thursday. "It comes from a key era in Picasso's career, 1937, when he makes the great painting 'Guernica,'" he added, referring to the masterpiece which portrayed the horrors of the Nazi bombardment of a Basque city during the Spanish civil war. The painting also has a strong autobiographical appeal, said Mackie. The main subject of the piece, Marie-Therese Walter, was the Spanish painter's "long time lover and muse". But the looming figure of Dora Maar, whom he met in 1936, emerges in the shadows behind Marie-Therese, explained Mackie. Several masterpieces have reached astronomical



Gallery assistants hold an artwork by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso entitled 'Femme au beret et a la robe quadrillee' (Marie-Therese Walter) with an estimate price in the region of 35 million pounds, (50 million dollars), during a photocall at Sotheby's in central London. — AFP

prices at recent auctions, fuelled by the opening of major museums in the Gulf and the purchasing power of collectors from emerging countries.

Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman, acquired Leonardo da Vinci work "Salvator Mundi" for \$450 million in November 2017. "The market for masterpieces is at an unprecedented level, and this picture certainly sits very much in that masterpiece category," said Mackie. Three other Picasso works will be auc-

tioned, including "El Matador", valued at between £14 and £18 million (\$20-\$25 million, 16-20 million euros).

Two Salvador Dali paintings are also up for sale. The two small oil works, "Gradiiva" (1931) and "Maison pour Erotomane" (circa 1932), have been in a private collection in Argentina, having been bought directly from the artist by an Argentinean countess. "They are a rediscovery, which is incredibly exciting," Mackie said of the two works. — AFP

SUGIMOTO GIVES WASHINGTON'S HIRSHHORN A FACELIFT WITH ANCIENT TREE



The redesign of the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum lobby and cafe by Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto is seen at the Museum in Washington, DC. — AFP photos



Members of the media tour Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto's redesign of the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum lobby and cafe at the Museum in Washington.

For years, it sat in the corner of a Tokyo lumberyard, a tangled, muddy mess of roots no one wanted. That was until Hiroshi Sugimoto came along. Now, the Japanese photographer has taken what was once the life support system of a medieval tree to help transform the ground floor of Washington's museum of modern and contemporary art into an airy game of light and space. The 700-year-old roots form the base of twin glass-top semicircle tables that are part of Sugimoto's redesign of the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden lobby that opened Friday, echoing the donut shape of the brutalist building conceived by Gordon Bunshaft.

"If people ask me to do this again, it's impossible," said Sugimoto, who has spent the better part of his lifetime documenting the "history of history" in pensive black and white reflections on the passage of time. "Someone cut the tree and then found these roots are even more interesting, and so carefully dug it out, almost excavated. This is definitely one of a kind, nature art." Sugimoto, 70, sliced the root system in half, to dramatic effect. "The cut

piece is so fresh and new. Even though the outer part is very old, it shows the presence of the power of life, of light," he said in an interview. Soft gray spiral chairs evoking the DNA



The redesign of the Smithsonian's Hirshhorn Museum lobby and cafe by Japanese artist Hiroshi Sugimoto is seen at the Museum in Washington.

helix surround the tables. White vinyl benches sit atop large blocks made of the same type of glass used in camera lenses. Light passing through the prisms forms small rainbows scat-

tered on the ground. A multicolored light play takes place above as well, thanks to a 12-foot (3.7-meter) swirling sculpture hanging from the ceiling by Olafur Eliasson, an Icelandic-Danish artist who has also dabbled in architecture.

By removing an "ugly" dark film that covered the lobby's 3,300-square-foot (307-square-meter) windows, Sugimoto created a more open feel and enhanced the museum's views over the National Mall, the grassy esplanade that runs from the US Capitol to the Washington Monument. A 20-foot brushed brass coffee bar displays a tin diamond pattern inspired by fireproofing techniques used in 1930s Tokyo. Sugimoto even created the menu's font. But the original terrazzo floor, exposed aggregate walls and coffered ceiling remain intact for the museum's first redesign since opening in 1974.

'Patination of aging'

Sugimoto doesn't care about children and other visitors spilling drinks on the tables and bumping into the large, precious roots. In fact, he welcomes it. "I like this patination of aging,"

he said. As it turns out, transforming spaces has become a bit of a habit for Sugimoto, whose practice has long spanned various media, including sculpture, installations, architecture and the performing arts. In recent years, he has lent particular focus to design and architecture, revamping and creating restaurants, private residences and his own Odawara Art Foundation.

The arts and culture complex's Enoura Observatory opened in October, nestled on the outer rim of the volcanic Hakone mountains overlooking Sagami Bay about an hour's drive from Tokyo. Sugimoto also created a two-level indoor garden for the 110th anniversary of the Japan Society in New York last year—his first US architectural design project—complete with pond, bonsai, stone islands, the artist's three-dimensional mathematical objects and a pulsating waterfall.

While not a licensed architect himself, Sugimoto co-founded the Tokyo-based architecture firm New Materials Research Laboratory, with which he collaborates on projects like the Hirshhorn. — AFP



Models present creations by Versace during the women's Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection fashion show, in Milan. — AFP photos

Versace, Cavalli, Etro, Marras update their design DNA



For anyone wanting to unlock the DNA of Milan ready-to-wear, a new museum exhibition surveying three decades of Italian fashion offers some keys. Echoes of styles and trends on display in the "Italiana" exhibit at Milan's Palazzo Reale are apparent in big and small ways on the runways during Milan Fashion Week, which runs through Monday with previews of mostly womenswear for next fall and winter. Here are some highlights from Friday's shows, including Versace, Roberto Cavalli, Antonio Marras and Etro:

Versace explores clans and Aristocracy

Donatella Versace is seeking new kinships in her latest collection that brings together classic Versace motifs with a new set of codes. Colors were loud and prints clashed in a metaphor for clans coming together as Versace combined punk references, contemporary youth culture and Versace trademarks to create a new aristocracy. "Aristocracy is not something you are born to, but comes from carrying yourself in a

certain way," Versace said before the show. "It is in being above it all, and in being an example to other women." Bustiers defined the silhouette: overtop wild print dresses with high-heeled booties, or over a Versace T-shirt worn with, say, a tartan mini and argyle socks, or better yet, a full, long skirt decorated with beaded fringe.

The designer appealed to youth subcultures with the branded T-shirts, fringed athletic scarves, hooded mini-dresses with beaded fringe and fashion house's new Chain Reaction sneakers. Slinky black and red evening dresses that bared shoulders and legs had incorporated scarves to cover the heads. And for Versace, long dresses aren't just for evening. She pairs hers with sunglasses, which she said was the sign of a true aristocrat. Asked before the show to name the queens of today: "I am," she joked, then said, "There are many queens today."

One came quickly to mind: Jennifer Lawrence, who neatly deflected social media criticism for going outdoors in the cold for a photograph in a revealing Versace evening dress. "She is a real Versace woman," the designer said.

Sensual, glamorous Cavalli

Paul Surridge's second womenswear collection for Roberto Cavalli takes the fashion house's tried-and-true battle horses - slinky dresses, glam rock vibes and animal prints - and reinvents them for the next Cavalli generation. Surridge said he started the collection with two adjectives: glamour and sensuality. "This is a woman who wants to be visible, also respecting social codes," he said. The looks offered lots of skin and also the promise of more.

Tailored jackets and coats were sliced to be revealing. Long clingy dresses with

cutouts showed off curves, including an off-shoulder ruched purple dress belted at the side to shown skin, and worn punk-like over a pair of black leggings. On the more romantic side, long pleated, ruffled or fringe chiffon offered a softer, billowing drama. Surridge dipped into the Cavalli archive for animal prints, including lynx, lizard and crocodile, and also included an array of smoky, purple prints that evoke sunsets or deep seas. On the men's side, a skin-tight top in an ethereal blue that bleeds into darkness seemed inspired by the creature in the Oscar-nominated film "The Shape of Water."

Etro's new cosmic Prairie

Etro celebrates its 50th year with a womenswear collection for the armchair traveler. Veronica Etro created colorful looks celebrating the American prairie, what a modern-day Laura Ingalls Wilder might wear. Geometric prints complement the brand's trademark paisleys interpreted as vintage bandanas on contemporary prairie dresses and blouses to wear with leather chaps. The looks also feature colorful





Models present creations by Roberto Cavalli during the women's Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection fashion show in Milan.

jacquard knitwear in prairie colors of burned orange, tobacco and mustard, which created enveloping capes and ponchos.

Etro says she doesn't have to visit a place to get the inspiration. "I travel also in my mind very often," Etro said. "You travel in books, you travel in your memories, you travel in your dreams sometimes, so it is really a mix." The fashion house will conclude its anniversary celebration with a show opening in September at the MUDEC museum.

The emigration Of Marras

Antonio Marras explores the story of European emigration in his latest fashion collection, touching on the pain of separation, the anticipation of adventure and the raucous exhilaration of finally being accepted in a new land. It's apt reminder of the

cycle of emigration that many Italian families lived as Italy experiences an election campaign in which immigration has proved a divisive issue.

The Marras collection for next fall and winter has a decisively vintage feel with looks adorned with ruffles, beading and lace. In modern touches, flaps on a red trench coat were off-skew, argyle patterns on sweaters were knit on the bias, and long pleated skirts had mismatching hemlines. The runway mood ranged from romantic rose prints on black backgrounds to New World plaids, old-time Varsity jackets and sweaters worn over lace and tulle skirts, and finally to fun night-out wear. Each change of mood was portrayed by dancers who transitioned from nostalgic farewells to university frat parties to elegant Great Gatsby-style soirees.

"Italiana:" Tracing Italy's Fashion DNA

Back at the "Italiana" exhibit, creations that together made Milan a fashion capital are on display: Antonio Marras' big tulle skirt, Moschino's smiley face on yellow leather, Roberto Cavalli's animal prints and Prada's black vinyl. For all the talk of exploring gender roles in recent seasons, the exhibit shows with side-by-side suits by Gucci, Versace and Armani from decades past that confirm that this exploration is far from new, even if it has gained new currency.

"We think that Italian designers were the first to solve some identity issues, to give an answer to identity, to changes that were happening in society and to new identities that were emerging," Stefano Tonchi, Curator of exhibit and Director of W Magazine, said during a preview of the exhibit. That includes, critically, the role of

women in society. Armani's soft suits were a revolution of comfort, while Versace's studded leather jackets and dresses promoted sexual freedom and Max Mara's trademark 101801 double-breasted overcoat gave women a key building block for a button-down workplace wardrobe.

The exhibit also traces Italy's evolution into an economic powerhouse, as purchasing power grew in the 1950s and 1960s, said the head of the Italian Fashion Chamber, Carlo Capasa. The show, titled runs through May 6 at Palazzo Reale. — AP

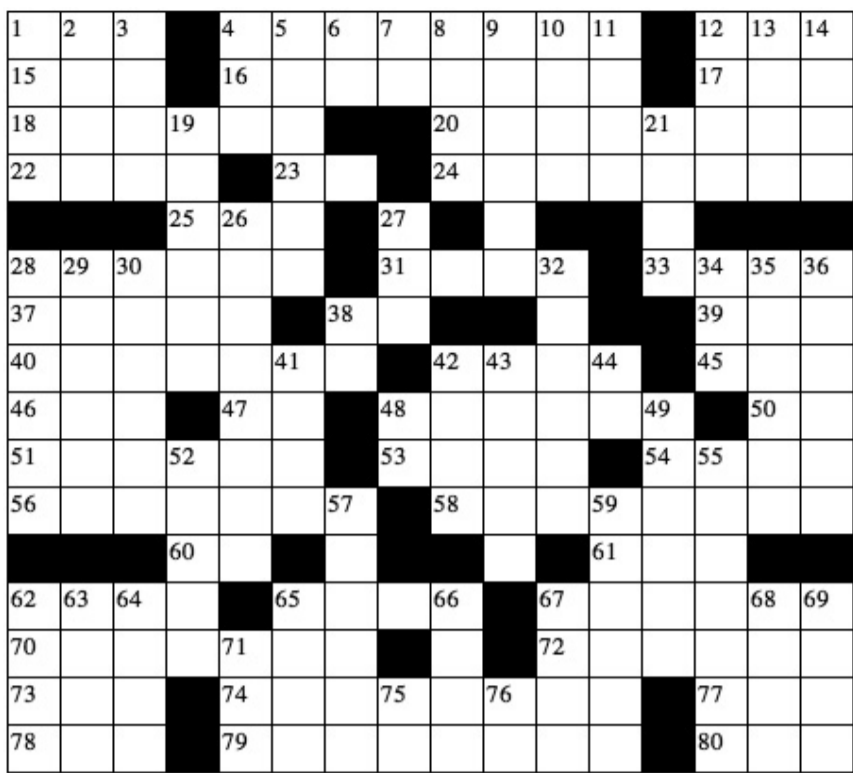


Models present creations by Etro during the women's Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection fashion show in Milan.

Models present creations by Marras during the women's Fall/Winter 2018/2019 collection fashion show in Milan.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1844



ACROSS

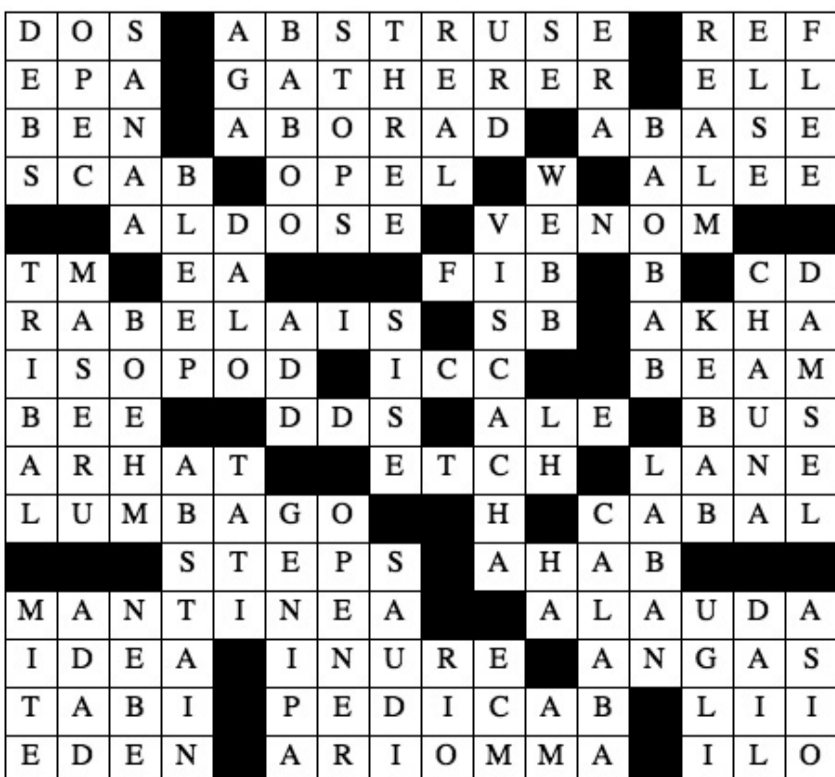
- 1. A sharp hand gesture (resembling a blow).
4. Without a face or identity.
12. An informal term for a father.
15. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
16. Some held in custody.
17. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
18. Included seven times in every 19 years.
20. A resident of Montana.
22. (prefix) Indicating difference or variation.
23. Being one more than one.
24. Agile long-tailed nocturnal African lemur with dense woolly fur and large eyes and ears.
25. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
28. A medieval hood of mail suspended from a basinet to protect the head and neck.
31. The capital and chief port of Qatar.
33. A car driven by a person whose job is to take passengers where they want to go in exchange for money.
37. (archaic) Of persons.
39. A protocol developed for the internet to get data from one network device to another.
40. Herbs of temperate regions.
45. (Old Testament) Adam's wife in Judeo-Christian mythology.
46. Be seated.
47. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
50. Being nine more than ninety.
51. of or involving excess nitrogenous waste products in the urine (usually due to kidney insufficiency).
53. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
54. The capital of Western Samoa.
56. Battle in which the ruler of Afghanistan defeated the Mahrattas in 1761.
58. Of or relating to or containing basalt.
60. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
61. The capital and largest city of Japan.
62. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
70. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
72. A noisy or scolding or domineering woman.
73. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
74. Using a pronoun or other pro-word instead of repeating a word.
77. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
78. A doctor's degree in education.
79. Antihistamine (trade name Benadryl) used to treat allergic reactions involving the nasal passages (hay fever) and also to treat motion sickness.
80. A negative.

- 4. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
5. In or belonging to the air or operating (for or by means of aircraft or elevated cables) in the air.
6. A New England state.
7. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
8. One of the jointed appendages of an animal used for locomotion or grasping.
9. Enough to meet a purpose.
10. A strong-smelling plant from whose dried leaves a number of euphoriant and hallucinogenic drugs are prepared.
11. (Old Testament) Third son of Adam.
12. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
13. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
14. Declare untrue.
19. The largest city of Cameroon.
21. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
26. At or near or toward the center of a ship.
27. 32nd President of the United States.
29. Canna grown especially for its edible rootstock from which arrowroot starch is obtained.
30. Reduced to liquid form by heating.
32. Tropical trees having papery leaves and large fruit.
34. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
35. Being eight more than ninety.
36. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
38. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
41. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
42. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
43. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
44. A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
48. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
49. (Norse mythology) God of light and peace and noted for his beauty and sweet nature.
52. A member of the extinct Algonquian people formerly living in northern Indiana and southern Michigan.
55. Any of various amines (such as putrescine or cadaverine) formed by the action of putrefactive bacteria.
57. An inhabitant of ancient Thebes.
59. Of or belonging to an accium.
63. A notable achievement.
64. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
65. Something causes misery or death.
66. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
67. A battle (1590) in which the Huguenots under Henry IV of France defeated the Catholics under the duke of Mayenne.
68. A city in northern India.
69. Offensively curious or inquisitive.
71. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
75. An informal term for a father.
76. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.

DOWN

- 1. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
2. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
3. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you're open to changes on every level; you could find your thoughts stuck on ways to make the world a better place. New friends turn you on to a new group studying some of the cosmic mysteries you long to know more about.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, there is an energy of restlessness and dissatisfaction present today. Your emotions seem shallow, even absent; you neglect your needs in this area.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, you may feel overshadowed by your partner, roommate or friend; you could feel trapped or unable to express yourself in your own unique ways.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you buck the system, so to speak, when called upon to make an important decision for the future; listen to your logic and intuition on this one.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you tend to think outside the box when making changes around the house. Color schemes are easily combined to create the energy you want.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you're determined to truly start taking care of your health. Perhaps a health scare or simply feeling poorly spark sincere efforts to recharge your body.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, your career makes huge progress as your hard work pays off in acres! Opportunities to continue your accomplishments are abundant and you make plans to develop more.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, being overconfident causes some memorable pitfalls you don't soon recover from. You wrestle with your willfulness and win. Your best bet is to go with the very best rather than the flashy ones.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, a strong sense of family unity is felt now and into the year; this is most important to you now. You could be coming out of a dark tunnel regarding an intimate relationship.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, your taste and judgement are impeccable; yours is the best strategy presented at a family meeting. Domestic chores spur new thoughts about how to do something in an easier manner.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, your thoughts are turned into eloquent speech when you express them to others. The attitudes of those around you are easy for you to read.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, others oppose and criticize your ideas and the methods you suggest; some prefer to work harder, not smarter; be patient, they'll see you're right.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old TV Shows 3

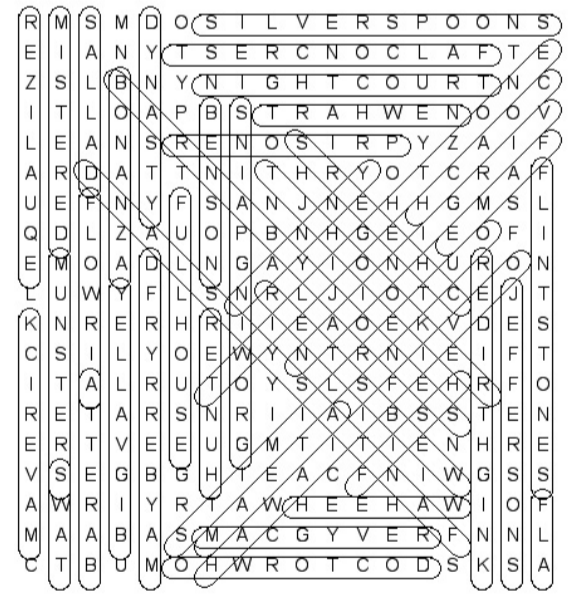
Find and circle all of the old TV shows that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell the name of an additional old TV show.



- ADDAMS FAMILY, AVENGERS, BATMAN, BEWITCHED, BRADY BUNCH, CHARLIE'S ANGELS, COACH, COLUMBO, COSBY SHOW, CYBILL, DRAGNET, FAMILY TIES, GET SMART, GOLDEN GIRLS, GUNSMOKE, HAPPY DAYS, HARRY O, HIGHLANDER, HOGAN'S HEROES, HOTEL, I LOVE LUCY, KNOTS LANDING, KUNG FU, LONE RANGER, MAGNUM P.I., MANIX, MASH, MCLOUD, MONKEES, NIGHT GALLERY, PRETENDER, QUANTUM LEAP, QUINCY, ROCKFORD FILES, ROSEANNE, STAR TREK, THE SAINT, TWIN PEAKS, WINGS, WONDER YEARS, X FILES

Friday's Solution

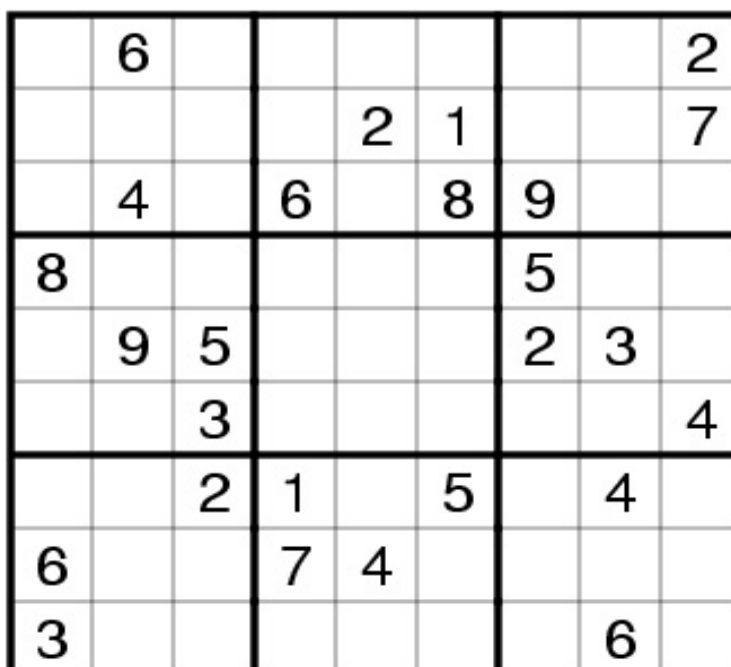
Old TV Shows 2



- A-TEAM, ALF, AIRWOLF, BARETTA, BARNABY JONES, BENSON, BIG VALLEY, BONANZA, CHEERS, COACH, DALLAS, DOCTOR WHO, DYNASTY, EQUALIZER, FALCON CREST, FAME, FANTASY ISLAND, FISH, FLINTSTONES, FULL HOUSE, GROWING PAINS, HAWAII FIVE-O, HEE HAW, HUNTER, JEFFERSONS, KNIGHT RIDER, MACGYVER, MAVERICK, MAYBERRY R.F.D., MISTER ED, MUNSTERS, NANNY, NEWHART, NIGHT COURT, OUTER LIMITS, PRISONER, S.W.A.T., SILVER SPOONS, T.J. HOOKER, TWILIGHT ZONE, VIRGINIAN, WEBSTER

The hidden TV show is: MONTY PYTHON'S FLYING CIRCUS

Daily SuDoku



Friday's Solution



Classifieds

Sunday, February 25, 2018



STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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



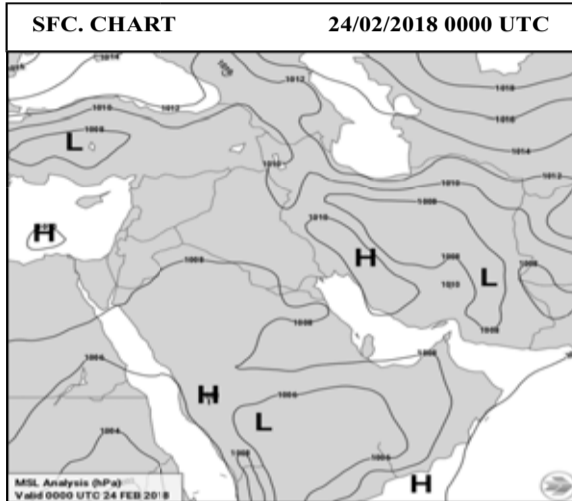
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Cloudy with light to moderate freshening at times south easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 42 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

BY NIGHT: Cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 40 km/h with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WARNING: No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	19 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	15 °C
ABDALY	24 °C	16 °C
BUBYAN	23 °C	-- °C
JAHRA	26 °C	17 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	22 °C	17 °C
SALMIYAH	22 °C	19 °C
AHMADI	22 °C	19 °C
NUWASIB	23 °C	16 °C
WAFRA	27 °C	15 °C
SALMY	24 °C	18 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	02/25	Clouds will decrease gradually with a chance for scattered rain	24 °C	11 °C	SE-NW	20 - 40 km/h
Monday	02/26	Clouds will increase gradually with a chance for scattered rain later on	24 °C	13 °C	SE	12 - 40 km/h
Tuesday	02/27	Partly cloudy	25 °C	13 °C	SE	15 - 38 km/h
Wednesday	02/28	Fair and some scattered clouds will appear	23 °C	14 °C	N-NE	08 - 30 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:59
Sunrise	06:18
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:17
Sunset	17:44
Isha	19:01

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	24 °C
MIN. Temp.	10 °C
MAX. RH	85 %
MIN. RH	36 %
MAX. Wind	SE 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

ACCOMMODATION

Sharing accommodation For Filipino ONLY Farwaniya block 1, near gulfmart. Available already, Contact 94418396 or 69972330 22-2-2018

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Chundu Reddaiahnaidu holder of Indian Passport NO. G8267663 resided at Sunduvaripally (VI) Mittamidapalli, Rajampet, Kadapa, AP. Now I want to change my name Chundu Reddaiahnaidu to Chundu Bala Reddaiah. (C 5382) 20-2-2018



Airline

American Airlines	22087425
Kuwait Airways	22087426
Jazeera Airways	171
Jet Airways	177
FlyDubai	22924455
Qatar Airways	22414400
KLM	22423888
Royal Jordanian	22425747
British Airways	22418064/5/6
Air France	22425635
Emirates	22430224
Air India	22921555
Sri Lanka Airlines	22438184
Egypt Air	22424444
Swiss Air	22421578
Saudia	22421516
Middle East Airlines	22426306
Lufthansa	22423073
PIA	22422493
Bangladesh Airlines	22421044
Indian Airlines	22452977/8
Oman Air	22456700
Turkish Airlines	22958787
Aeroflot	22453820/1
	22404838/9



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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 25/2/2018				Departure Flights on Sunday 25 /2/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
JZR	125	Bahrain	00:10	JZR	604	Ahmedabad	00:05
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	MSC	406	Sohag	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	677	Bahrain	01:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	BBC	044	Dhaka	01:30
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	JZR	142	Doha	01:45
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:05	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
KAC	414	Bangkok	03:05	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
JZR	555	Alexandria	03:20	KAC	103	London	05:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	203	Lahore	05:10
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:30
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	UAE	874	Dubai	06:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	RJA	643	Amman	07:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	QTR	8512	Doha	07:55
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	165	Rome	08:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:00	FEG	934	Sohag	08:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	KAC	791	Madinah	08:35
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	FDB	054	Bahrain	08:35
QTR	8511	Doha	06:25	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	KAC	691	Muscat	08:50
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	613	Bahrain	08:55
FEG	933	Sohag	07:30	BAW	156	London	08:55
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	KAC	117	New York	09:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	JZR	534	Cairo	09:10
KAC	358	Kochi	07:40	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	101	London	09:45
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	IRC	529	Ahwaz	09:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00
IRC	528	Ahwaz	09:05	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	482	Istanbul	10:05
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:40	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	KAC	617	Doha	10:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	KAC	661	Abu Dhabi	10:30
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	JZR	778	Jeddah	10:40
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	IRA	664	Shiraz	10:40
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	ZAV	4102	ZRM	11:00
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	ZAV	4101	IAQ	11:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	MSC	416	Sohag	11:15
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
KAC	792	Madinah	13:20	JZR	786	Riyadh	11:55
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40				



AT SEA: Photo shows an aerial view of the Tamar Israeli gas-drill platform in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Israel. —AFP

Tensions flare in Mediterranean gas scramble

NICOSIA: Warships, militia threats and multi-billion dollar deals: the scramble for gas in the Eastern Mediterranean is fuelling hope and tensions across a volatile region. In an area riven by geopolitical feuds the quest for underwater resources has sparked dreams of economic transformation that could bind wary neighbors closer. But while there still remain major questions over the scale of deposits simmering disputes have erupted to the surface as the race for claims heats up.

Off the divided island of Cyprus on Friday, Turkish warships forced back an Italian drillship after a two-week standoff that has stirred up a decades-long row and dragged in Egypt and the European Union. At the same time the US is trying to mediate between foes Israel and Lebanon as they spar for control along a disputed maritime border where Beirut is looking to catch up. "What we see is that energy becomes another flashpoint—so when there is tension between countries, that tension spills over into energy," said Nikos Tsafos, a senior associate at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies.

Cyprus vs Turkey vs Egypt

February appeared to bring good news for the

Greek-majority Republic of Cyprus. After a string of disappointments since a first find in 2011, Italy's Eni and France's Total announced they had hit potentially major gas deposits off the EU member's southern coast. But days later, Turkey once again began flexing its muscles. As an Eni drillship sailed to explore a contentious area it was blocked by Turkish warships who said they were conducting manoeuvres. After a costly two-week standoff, Ankara's forces refused to budge—and when the Italian vessel tried to break the blockade it was forced to turn back, Cypriot officials said Friday.

The confrontation is just the latest with Turkey over the hunt for gas around Cyprus. Once seen as an incentive to reunify the island, the struggle for resources has become a major stumbling block to restarting peace talks that collapsed last year. Ankara, which invaded in 1974 and supports a statelet in the north, has consistently sought to halt drilling—saying it is defending the claims of Turkish Cypriots. Cyprus has enlisted the help of the EU, which eyes the region's resources as a potentially valuable alternative energy source, and warned that there can be no peace negotiations unless Turkey respects its "sovereign rights".

Egypt, which sits on the region's biggest gas reserves and has a key agreement with Cyprus that allows development, has also traded angry barbs with Ankara. But Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appears to have little incentive to give way as he plays to nationalist sentiments and looks to protect Ankara's role as a key transit hub. "I don't think Turkey is willing to spark a confrontation, but I think it cannot be fully dismissed," said analyst Andrew Neff from IHS Markit. "If one of these drillships wanders too far into disputed waters then I think we'll see Turkey engage in some additional 'gunboat diplomacy' in defense of its interests."

Lebanon vs Israel

Further to the east, Israel has been setting the pace ever since it made the first find in the region in 2009. And Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared jubilant—and vindicated as he hailed a "historic" \$15-billion deal to export gas to Egypt on February 19. "Many people did not believe in the gas plan," he said in a video. "This is a joyous day." Israel's authorities have pitched gas as a potential bonanza that can help smooth fraught relations with its neighbors. Thawing ties with Turkey, in addition to

major supply deals with Jordan and now Egypt appeared to back up its claims.

But to the north trouble is brewing. After years of debilitating political deadlock Lebanon earlier this month signed its first exploration deal with a consortium of Italian, French and Russian firms. The agreement includes a block on the disputed maritime border that Israeli officials insist belongs to the Jewish state. The United States has dispatched a senior official to try to mediate, but as the two sides spar the war-of-words is ratcheting up. The leader of Hezbollah—which fought a war with Israel in 2006 and has missiles that could hit its offshore projects—insisted it could win the "oil and gas war".

"If Israel threatens you, you can threaten it," Hassan Nasrallah said. The Jewish state is taking no chances, bolstering its missile defense at sea and navy. But despite the sabre-rattling, some insist that given Lebanon's need for energy and Israel's multi-billion dollar deals on the line—neither side is willing to start fighting. "I don't think that there is any question of it here because nobody is interested in a conflict," said Eyal Zisser, head of department of Middle Eastern history at Tel Aviv University. "It's all about money; everybody can lose, everybody can win." — AFP

Fates of foreign jihadists held in Iraq, Syria vary

QAMISHLI: Iraq and Syria's Kurds have netted foreign jihadists by the thousands but while the former is expediting trials, the latter would rather send them home. A Baghdad court on Monday sentenced Frenchwoman Melina Boughedir to seven months in prison, a term she had already served by the time she was tried. The authorities only found her guilty of entering Iraq illegally and she will soon be able to return to France, a country which was one of the Islamic State group's main suppliers of foreign fighters.

The 27-year-old is one among the thousands of foreigners suspected of having fought for or supported jihadist groups, more or less directly, over the past years. Iraq, which has detained at least 560 women, as well as 600 children, identified as jihadist or relatives of suspected IS fighters, is wasting no time in putting them on trial. In January, a court sentenced a German woman to death on charges of providing logistical support to IS and on Sunday a Turkish woman was also handed the death penalty.

France so far has ignored appeals by families and lawyers advocating repatriations and said it supported the idea of its nationals detained in Iraq and Syria being tried there. Paris has said it would only intervene if death penalties were handed down. Iraq is one of the countries in the world that carries out the most executions. Most countries, especially in Europe where a string of deadly attacks has had a major impact on public opinion, do not want to see those detained nationals return on their soil.

There appears to be little ambivalence in Iraq over the fate of the foreign fighters and their families. "These people have killed, put women into slavery... They have committed war crimes on Iraqi soil, and Iraqi law prevails," said the main spokesman of Iraq's judiciary, Abdel Sattar Bayraqdar. Across the bor-

der, the Syrian Kurds have more misgivings. "We have arrested thousands of foreign jihadists and we still capture some every day," Redur Khalil, a senior spokesman said in the Kurdish region of Syria. Khalil is an official in the People's Protection Units, a group which formed the backbone of an outfit that was the US-led coalition's main ground partner in the fight against IS in Syria.

"We want foreign jihadists to be tried in their home countries," he said. The Kurdish forces have more immediate priorities, such as fending off a Turkish military offensive on the enclave of Afrin. The Kurdish administration in northeastern Syria is self-proclaimed, which leaves many legal question marks hanging over its dealing with foreign states over such an issue. The semi-autonomous region is led by a de facto government and elections are due for its parliament but its fledgling institutions are not recognized internationally.

"According to which law can we sentence them?" Khalil asked, adding: "We don't have big prisons." Abdul Karim Omar, a senior official in one of the three cantons of the autonomous Kurdish territory, said a bilateral deal had been reached with Indonesia and Russia, calling for others to follow suit. "We wish to deliver these prisoners to their countries," he said. But after being held up as the heroes of the war against IS, Syria's Kurds face the risk of isolation on the international scene and appear ready to accommodate some of the states least willing to take back their jihadists. "If it's not possible to deliver them, we will put them into court here," Omar said.

Sentences in Syrian Kurdish courts go up to 20 years in jail for terrorism-related charges but can be reduced. The families of and lawyers of some of the detained foreign jihadists have voiced concern that these foreign detainees will turn into bargaining chips in geopolitical horse-trading. — AFP

Once the world's fattest, Mexican man dreams of walking again

GUADALAJARA: The folds of flesh on Juan Pedro Franco's back sway heavily as he cranks the pedals of a modified bicycle with his arms, exercising to boost his already jaw-dropping weight-loss total of 250 kilos (550 pounds). Franco, who comes from northern Mexico, used to be the world's fattest man. Guinness World Records certified the title after he weighed in at 595 kilos (1,310 pounds) in October 2016. At the time, he was completely bed-ridden, suffered from diabetes and high blood pressure, and had a severely obstructed lung. Doctors warned his life was at risk if he didn't lose weight.

That's when Franco decided to undergo double gastric surgery. He and his mother moved from his home state, Aguascalientes, to Guadalajara in the west, the city where his bariatric surgeon, Jose Antonio Castaneda, has his clinic. Castaneda put Franco, who suffers

from hypothyroidism, on a "very severe" diet of Mediterranean cuisine for six months. Then, in May 2017, came the first surgery: a gastric sleeve operation, which involves removing part of the stomach to reduce its volume by up to 80 percent.

Six months later, he underwent a gastric bypass, in which Castaneda halved what remained of his stomach, and then connected one of the smaller pouches to the intestines. The intestines themselves were also divided, to reduce his absorption of nutrients. Since Franco could barely move at the time, burning off calories would never have been enough, doctors said. The only option was to radically reduce the size of his stomach.

Now 33 years old, Franco currently weighs in at 345 kilos (760 pounds). Castaneda expects him to lose about 100 kilos more in the next year and a half. He is still connected to an oxygen tube 24 hours a day, but he spends less and less time lying in bed. Using a walker, he has managed to take his first steps in years. Now, he says, he has one big dream: "I want to walk again."

Franco's skin is pale white from lack of exposure to the sun. He spends his days knitting scarves and making sweets for his family to sell his way of contributing to the household budget. In his free time, he likes to sing and play guitar. But a large part of his day is devoted to his exercises. These include lifting weights, pulling resistance

cords and pedaling his hand-cranked stationary bike. "I'm very happy because everything is going very well," he said from his bed, which is outfitted with a custom-built metal structure that enables him to lift himself to his feet.

"He's doing more exercise each day," said Castaneda, at his side. "He is making an effort to stand up by himself, to get his life on track. He has a very positive attitude." According to the clinic, a lot now depends on how well he progresses and how he responds to treatment for the lymphedema in his legs—accumulated fluid caused by the blockage of his lymphatic system. "He remains a complex patient and will be at risk until he no longer suffers from extreme obesity," his medical team said in a statement. "We are trying to save a life, and we will remain vigilant until he is out of danger."

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization, 58 percent of people in Latin America and the Caribbean are overweight. Mexico is one of the countries worst affected by the problem, along with the Bahamas and Chile. Franco is not the only Mexican to have been the world's fattest man. His compatriot Manuel Uribe claimed the title in 2007 after weighing in at 597 kilos. He later went on a diet that brought him down to 394 kilos. Uribe got married in 2008, after being lifted to the ceremony by a crane. He died in May 2014 at age 48. — AFP



GUADALAJARA: Mexican Juan Pedro Franco exercises at his house in Guadalajara, Jalisco state. Franco, 33, lost 250 kilograms after undergoing a medical treatment which included two surgeries and now dreams of being able to walk again. — AFP

Sports

Penguins extent winning streak, thump Hurricanes

Jets blank Blues 4-0; Blackhawks beat Sharks

RALEIGH: Phil Kessel scored a pair of second-period goals after the Pittsburgh Penguins already had the lead in a 6-1 victory against the Carolina Hurricanes on Friday night in Raleigh, N.C. Jake Guentzel, Olli Maatta, Sidney Crosby and Evgeni Malkin also scored for the Penguins, who have a six-game winning streak. Kessel assisted on the game's first goal, so he had a three-point game. Guentzel, who assisted on both of Kessel's goals, and Malkin also each had three points. It continued a special week for the Kessel family. The Pittsburgh right winger's sister, Amanda Kessel, was one of the standouts for the US goal medal team in the Olympics. The Hurricanes have gone 0-3-1 across their last four games after they had moved into playoff position in the Eastern Conference.

Jets 4, Blues 0

Connor Hellebuyck had 34 saves en route to his sixth shutout of the season to help lead Winnipeg past host St. Louis. Hellebuyck, making his 10th straight start, also finished with his 32nd win of the season, second only to

Tampa Bay's Andrei Vasilevskiy, who has 35. It also was the 12th shutout of his career. Blake Wheeler and Kyle Connor each had a goal and an assist, Patrik Laine and Nic Petan scored goals and Mark Scheifele added a pair of assists for Winnipeg, which was playing its first road game since a 4-3 shootout loss at Anaheim on Jan. 25, a span of 28 days. The Jets remained in second place in the Central Division but closed to within two points of first-place Nashville.

Wild 4, Rangers 1

Eric Staal and Mikael Granlund registered two goals and assists apiece as Minnesota beat New York at Madison Square Garden. Staal recorded his 13th career game with at least four points and first since March 8, 2015, when he played for Carolina. Granlund tied a career high with his second career four-point game. For most of the game, Granlund had his third career hat trick. He was credited with Minnesota's second first-period goal until a scoring change with about a minute left gave the tally to Staal.



LAS VEGAS: Tomas Hyka #38 of the Vegas Golden Knights celebrates with teammates on the bench after he scored his first career NHL goal during the first period of a game against the Vancouver Canucks at T-Mobile Arena on February 23, 2018. — AFP

Blackhawks 3, Sharks 1

Goaltender Jean-Francois Berube made 42 saves to earn his first victory in more than a year, and host Chicago held off San Jose. Jan Rutta, Nick Schmaltz and Artem Anisimov each scored one goal apiece for the Blackhawks. Chicago won back-to-back games for the first time since January. Timo Meier scored the lone goal for the Sharks. San Jose lost its second game in as many nights.

had three assists as Vegas cruised past Vancouver in Las Vegas. Jonathan Marchessault had a goal and an assist and Tomas Hyka, Tomas Nosek and David Perron also scored goals for Vegas, which moved one point ahead of Eastern Conference-leading Tampa Bay for most points in the NHL. Marc-Andre Fleury finished with 30 saves for the Golden Knights, who improved to 24-5-2 at home this season. It was the 31st time this season that the Golden Knights scored at least four goals in a game, tying Tampa Bay for No 1 in the league. — Agencies

Golden Knights 6, Canucks 3

William Karlsson scored two goals and Reilly Smith

NHL results/standings

Minnesota 4, NY Rangers 1; Pittsburgh 6, Carolina 1; Winnipeg 4, St. Louis 0; Chicago 3, San Jose 1; Las Vegas 6, Vancouver 3.

Eastern Conference							Western Conference							
Atlantic Division							Central Division							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS								
Tampa Bay	41	17	3	219	164	85	Nashville	37	14	9	192	155	83	
Boston	37	13	8	191	142	82	Winnipeg	36	16	9	203	161	81	
Toronto	38	20	5	209	175	81	Minnesota	34	20	7	185	172	75	
Florida	27	25	6	169	188	60	Dallas	35	22	4	181	159	74	
Detroit	24	26	10	159	180	58	St. Louis	34	24	4	173	160	72	
Montreal	23	29	8	154	189	54	Colorado	32	23	5	186	180	69	
Ottawa	21	29	10	163	211	52	Chicago	27	27	8	176	176	62	
Buffalo	18	32	11	146	200	47								
Metropolitan Division							Pacific Division							
Pittsburgh	36	22	4	201	181	76	San Jose	33	21	8	180	173	74	
Washington	34	20	7	189	183	75	Anaheim	31	20	11	171	170	73	
Philadelphia	32	19	10	183	175	74	Los Angeles	33	23	5	174	151	71	
New Jersey	31	22	8	183	187	70	Calgary	31	22	9	177	184	71	
Columbus	30	26	5	160	172	65	Edmonton	25	31	4	167	196	54	
NY Islanders	29	26	7	206	223	65	Vancouver	23	31	7	164	200	53	
Carolina	27	24	10	163	186	64	Arizona	17	33	10	145	202	44	
NY Rangers	27	30	5	175	198	59								

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).

KFH concludes Arabian Horse Festival



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) concluded the Kuwait International Arabian Horse Festival 2018 organized by Bait Al Arab Kuwait Stud Show Arena as part of its continuing efforts to support the major events and forums held in Kuwait, especially sport-related events. The festival attracted huge number of visitors from the GCC

and other Arab Countries. Moreover, it included the Egyptian Horses championship Kuwait that took place amid huge participating. KFH was praised in recognition of its main sponsorship and keenness to participate in the national events and celebrations while sponsoring and supporting sport and the youth as part of its social responsibility.

List and Lovemark ahead in Florida; Woods struggles

FLORIDA: Luke List and Jamie Lovemark moved into a share of a one-stroke lead at a windy Honda Classic on Friday as Tiger Woods was left to rue a late lapse that left him four shots off the pace after he signed for a one-over 71. The leaders reached the halfway mark on three-under-par 137 with Woods in contention on a tightly packed leaderboard despite dropping three shots in two holes on his back nine at the PGA National in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida. "Two bad swings and it cost me three shots," the 14-times major champion told Golf Channel after an errant tee shot led to a double-bogey five on the par-three 15th, which the American followed with a bogey five on the next hole.

However, the 42-year-old former world number one birdied the 17th and closed with a par to sit in a tie for 14th in his third tournament of 2018 as he continues his latest comeback following back surgery last year. "It's a strong test right now," said Woods, who also had two birdies and a bogey on the front nine to sign for a one-over-par 141 total after 36



FLORIDA: Tiger Woods plays a shot on the 18th hole during the second round of The Honda Classic at PGA National Resort and Spa on February 23, 2018. — AFP

holes in testing conditions, particularly on the greens. "It feels good," he said. "I feel solid. I feel I am making some good passes at the golf ball and I've got pretty good pace on the greens, except for that putt at 16."

Early starter List made five birdies in a four-under 66 to surge up the leaderboard with the low round of the day after he had opened with a one-over 71 on Thursday. "Only one bogey," List told reporters. "I'm really pleased the way I played. A bunch of

pars and kind of hang on." Fellow American Lovemark later shot a 69 for a share of the halfway lead. "I finally found a driver I like," said the American, who made three of his four birdies on the back nine. Overnight co-leader Webb Simpson was in a group of four one stroke behind the leading pair, the American shooting a 72 to join Briton Tommy Fleetwood (68), compatriot Russell Henley (70) and South African Rory Sabbatini (69) on two-under-par 138. — Reuters

Thai star Srisaket to shine in 2018

LOS ANGELES: Thai dynamo Srisaket Sor Rungvisai is ready to back up his spectacular 2017, starting with a defense of his World Boxing Council super flyweight world title against Mexico's Juan Francisco Estrada yesterday. Both fighters made weight on Friday for their world title showdown at the Forum in Los Angeles—former home of the Los Angeles Lakers. Srisaket, virtually unknown to US fight fans last year, shot to prominence with an upset of former pound-for-pound king Roman Gonzalez at Madison Square Garden last March. His majority decision win was tabbed the 2017 "Upset of the Year."

Some, however, believed Gonzalez deserved the decision. But Srisaket silenced doubters with a spectacular fourth-round knockout of Nicaragua's

Gonzalez in the rematch in September. Southpaw Srisaket knocked down "Chocolatito" twice in the final round, finishing him off with a right hook with 1:45 to go in the fourth. The performances brought plenty of notice, and his rags to riches story has prompted comparisons to Filipino icon Manny Pacquiao. Srisaket takes a record of 44-4-1 with 40 knockouts into the bout against Estrada, a former unified flyweight world champion who brings a record of 36-2 with 25 knockouts.

Estrada said he'll be looking for a knockout. "I am a fighter who goes from less to more and we will go looking for the knockout to leave no doubt and return with that belt," he said. "I am very motivated by this fight and very well prepared. I am excited to think about the WBC belt because it is a Mexican organization and I will not let this opportunity pass. He is a fighter that we have to be careful with." On the same card, International Boxing Federation flyweight world champion Donnie Nietes (40-1-4, 22 knockouts) defends against Juan Carlos Reveco (39-3, 19 knockouts). — AFP

No NHL at Olympics?

GANGNEUNG: The absence of NHL players at the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics was disappointing but "you don't need caviar every day," the International Ice Hockey Federation president said yesterday. Rene Fasel spoke on the eve of the men's final between Germany, never better than bronze in Olympic history, and the Olympic Athletes from Russia. "Not having the NHL is still a disappointment, but in Germany nobody cares if the NHL is here or not," Fasel said. "Everybody can beat everybody in this competition." National Hockey League (NHL) officials decided not to shut down the season over money and injury issues, making these the first Games without the superstar players since 1994. A German-league all-star lineup stunned two-time defending champion Canada 4-3 in a semi-final Friday that excited as much as any NHL game. "You don't need caviar every day," Fasel said. "I have to be honest, I miss the NHL here. But what can we do? We have to do our best to promote the game and Germany-Canada was all

about emotions." Even German coach Marco Sturm would like to see the NHL's top players competing for Olympic gold once more. "Everyone, the best players, should be in the Olympics," Sturm said. "All the NHL guys should be in the Olympics. That's just what the event is for and hopefully in the future they will be back on Olympic ice."

Fasel wants them back as well, but Olympic desires for more NHL spending on insurance and travel might have the league thinking twice about the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics—as much as the league wants to break into the China market. "Going to Beijing in 2022 will be another opportunity to promote the game in Asia," Fasel said. "We will then see about the possible participation of the NHL or not. I really hope in 2019, 2020, we can have some discussion and they can make a decision."

Fasel addressed the empty seats at games even though 80 percent of hockey tickets were sold. "This is a non-hockey country and I think the price was relatively expensive," he said. "In Sochi, we had a plan to fill the empty seats. They didn't have this concept here. "Not having the NHL? Maybe." Fasel also addressed Canadian complaints about having the women's gold medal game decided on a shootout. — AFP

Sports

Bucks overpower Raptors as Rockets, Cavaliers win

Pelicans overcome Heat 124-123

LOS ANGELES: The Milwaukee Bucks turned the tables on Eastern Conference leaders Toronto on Friday, winning 122-119 in overtime to snap the Raptors' seven-game NBA winning streak. Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 26 points and pulled down 12 rebounds for the Bucks. "We did a really good job just moving the ball, defending, just playing together," Antetokounmpo said. "We were able to stay calm down the stretch and get a tough win." Raptors center Jonas Valanciunas slammed down a dunk at the buzzer in regulation to send the game to overtime. But the Bucks, with 21 points apiece from Eric Bledsoe and Khris Middleton, emerged with the victory over a Raptors team that had won 15 of their 17 prior encounters.

"You've got to understand, this team sent us home last year," Bucks guard Jason Terry said in a halftime television interview. "This game is personal. This is a pride thing." Toronto and Milwaukee also went to overtime on January 1, when DeMar DeRozan set a Toronto franchise record with 52 points in the Raptors' 131-127 victory. It looked like the Raptors would pull it off again when Toronto scored the first five points of overtime, but Terry and Middleton made three-pointers in an 8-0 Bucks scoring run that gave Milwaukee a 118-115 lead with 1:58 remaining and they wouldn't fall behind again. "We showed growth as a team tonight," Antetokounmpo said. The Raptors remained one game ahead of the Boston Celtics atop the East. The Celtics returned from the All-Star break with a 110-98 victory over the Pistons in Detroit.

The Celtics were hurting heading into the break, losing three straight and four of five to fall two games behind the Raptors. It appeared the break, and the return of guard Marcus Smart, who missed 11 games with hand lacerations, were just what the Celtics needed. Leading 77-73 with 2:47 left in the third quarter, Boston mounted a 22-6 scoring run to seize control, limiting the Pistons to three field goals in the span.

Cavaliers 112, Grizzlies 89

LeBron James recorded his 11th triple-double of the season to lead Cleveland past host Memphis. James had 18 points, 14 rebounds and 11 assists to help the Cavs avenge a 110-103 loss to Washington on Thursday, which snapped a four-game winning streak. Playing in its first game since the All-Star break, Memphis has now lost eight in a row.

Pelicans 124, Heat 123 (OT)

Jrue Holiday made the game-winning basket with seven seconds left in support of Anthony Davis' 45 points as New Orleans edged visiting Miami in New Orleans. Dwyane Wade's jumper gave the Heat a one-point lead with 21 seconds left, but Holiday answered with a jumper from the lane. Miami had another chance, but Wade missed a jumper and Josh Richardson missed a tip. Davis added 17 rebounds, five blocks and five steals as the Pelicans won their fourth straight. The Heat lost their third straight in a battle of teams that began the night clinging to the final playoff spot in their respective conferences.

Rockets 120, Timberwolves 102

Clint Capela was a stabilizing force in the paint as Houston extended its winning streak to 11 games with a victory over Minnesota in Houston. Capela finished with 25 points and 11 rebounds. The Rockets also received strong performances from guards James Harden (31 points, nine assists) and Chris Paul (14 points, 10 boards, eight assists) in improving to 3-0 against the Timberwolves this season. Andrew Wiggins paced Minnesota with 21 points while Jeff Teague added 18 points, four assists and two steals. Jimmy Butler was carried off the floor in the third quarter after injuring his right knee on a non-contact play.

Celtics 110, Pistons 98

Daniel Theis scored a career-high 19 points, and Boston used a strong effort from its bench to snap a three-game losing streak and top host Detroit. Theis was one of four Boston reserves to reach double figures. Marcus Morris had 15 points, Marcus Smart tossed in 12 and Terry Rozier chipped in 11 as the Celtics bench outscored its counterparts 65-21. Smart had missed the previous 11 games with right hand lacerations. Kyrie Irving led Boston's first unit with 18 points, five rebounds and six assists. Jayson Tatum contributed 15 points in the first game for both clubs since the All-Star break. Ish Smith led the Pistons with 20 points and six assists while Blake Griffin scored 17 points but committed six turnovers.

Hornets 122, Wizards 105

Frank Kaminsky scored 25 points while Kemba Walker celebrated his 500th NBA game with 24 as Charlotte defeated Washington in Washington D.C. The Wizards had won eight of their last 10 games before this contest, but Washington has had trouble with Charlotte all season. The Hornets now are 3-0 against the Wizards. Kaminsky came off the bench to score his 25 points, including hitting six 3-pointers, while Walker got 20 in the second half alone.

Pacers 116, Hawks 93

Thaddeus Young scored 20 points and Victor Oladipo showed off his playmaking abilities on an off-shooting night as Indiana hammered visiting Atlanta. Oladipo hit just five of 16 shots for 14 points, but made an impact all over the court. The All-Star finished with nine assists, seven rebounds and four steals. Domantas Sabonis came off the bench to score 21 points and grab 13 rebounds, and Lance Stephenson added 13 points, eight rebounds and eight assists for the Pacers, who have won four in a row and 10 of their last 13. Isaiah Taylor scored 17



CALIFORNIA: Giannis Antetokounmpo of Team Stephen scraps for the ball during the NBA All-Star Game 2018 at Staples Center in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

points, and Taurean Prince added 14 points for the Hawks.

Nuggets 122, Spurs 119

Gary Harris scored 23 points, including six in the final minutes during a crucial, decisive run, as Denver outlasted visiting San Antonio. Harris' jumper with 3:05 to play and the game tied at 114 were the first points of a 6-1 run (with all those points scored by Harris) that sent the Nuggets to a 120-115 lead with 45.3 seconds remaining. Denver was able to hang on from there, winning its fourth straight contest and its 10th in its past 13 games. Nikola Jokic led the Nuggets with 28 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists, recording his third straight triple-double before fouling out with 1:46 to play. Wilson Chandler added a double-double with 18 points and 16 rebounds. San Antonio's LaMarcus Aldridge led all scorers with 38 points, his 12th 30-plus-point game this season.

Clippers 128, Suns 117

Lou Williams had 35 points off the bench and Tobias Harris had 30 points and 12 rebounds as Los Angeles blitzed host Phoenix early and rolled to victory. Harris and Williams took turns personally dismantling the skidding Suns, who have lost eight straight and 13 of 14. Harris scored 16 points in the first quarter, and the Clippers scored the first 19 points of the game. They led 24-2 en route to a 40-point first quarter. Williams had 23 points in the second quarter.

Trail Blazers 100, Jazz 81

CJ McCollum scored 26 points and Damian Lillard added 24 to lead visiting Portland past Utah. Jusuf Nurkic scored 15 points and collected seven rebounds and Al-Farouq Aminu added 12 points and eight boards for Portland. The Blazers beat Utah for the first time this season after losing two previous meetings. Utah had its league-leading 11-game winning streak snapped after being undone by turnovers. — Agencies

NBA results/standings

Boston 110, Detroit 98; Indiana 116, Atlanta 93; Charlotte 122, Washington 105; Milwaukee 122, Toronto 119 (OT); Houston 120, Minnesota 102; Cleveland 112, Memphis 89; New Orleans 124, Miami 123 (OT); Denver 122, San Antonio 119; LA Clippers 128, Phoenix 117; Portland 100, Utah 81; LA Lakers 124, Dallas 102.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	41	17	.707	-	Minnesota	36	26	.581	-
Boston	41	19	.683	1	Oklahoma City	34	26	.567	1
Philadelphia	31	25	.554	9	Denver	33	26	.559	1.5
New York	24	36	.400	18	Portland	33	26	.559	1.5
Brooklyn	19	41	.317	23	Utah	30	29	.508	4.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	35	23	.603	-	Golden State	45	14	.763	-
Indiana	34	25	.576	1.5	LA Clippers	31	27	.534	13.5
Milwaukee	33	25	.569	2	LA Lakers	23	34	.404	21
Detroit	28	30	.483	7	Sacramento	18	40	.310	26.5
Chicago	20	38	.345	15	Phoenix	18	42	.300	27.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Washington	34	25	.576	-	Houston	45	13	.776	-
Miami	30	29	.508	4	San Antonio	35	25	.583	11
Charlotte	26	33	.441	8	New Orleans	32	26	.552	13
Orlando	18	40	.310	15.5	Memphis	18	39	.316	26.5
Atlanta	18	42	.30	16.5	Dallas	18	40	.310	27

Arsenal stand in way of Pep's first City silverware

LONDON: Pep Guardiola is anxious to play down suggestions that winning his first piece of silverware for Manchester City in today's League Cup final against Arsenal would herald a period of dominance. The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich coach takes his side to Wembley with the Premier League title virtually in the bag and a place in the Champions League quarter-finals looking certain. But despite City's dominance this season, Guardiola will be eager to get his hands on a trophy, even if it would have been fourth on the list of his priorities when the campaign began.

City are clear favourites to beat Arsenal but Arsene Wenger's men have made a habit of cup success in recent years, winning the FA Cup in three of the past four seasons. "Not even in Barcelona when we won the first title in the cup did I expect to win 14 titles in four years," said Guardiola, anxious not to over-burden his players. "I'm more pragmatic. I think in football it's a big mistake to think what might happen in the next three years. It's a big mistake for our heads, our targets, it makes no sense."

"When people asked in the beginning, about winning four titles (this season), I said of course we'll try, but the big teams have not been able to do that—the big Liverpools, the big Uniteds, the big Arsenals, the big Chelseas." Defeat for City could lead to a certain feeling of anti-climax at the Etihad as it would follow hot on the heels of their FA Cup exit at the hands of lowly Wigan Athletic—ending their quest for an historic quadruple.

Shock Jesus return?

Striker Gabriel Jesus could make a shock return at Wembley after being out with a knee injury since the end of December, although there are doubts over Raheem Sterling's fitness. Guardiola confirmed second-choice goalkeeper Claudio Bravo will start, having done so in all domestic cup matches this season, but Fabian Delph is suspended after being sent off against Wigan. The Catalan boss earlier this season questioned the value of the League Cup, saying "you waste a lot of energy" but it could serve as a springboard to further success, as it has done previously for the likes of Jose Mourinho.

Wenger has won the FA Cup a record seven times since he took the helm at Arsenal but has twice been beaten in the final of the League Cup, by Chelsea in 2007 and Birmingham City in 2011. The French manager was asked at his pre-match press conference what the key was to beating City. "To first of all have a strong belief that we can do it, be well-organized and take every opportunity to go forward and



WIGAN: Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola gestures during the English FA Cup fifth round football match between Wigan Athletic and Manchester City at the DW Stadium in Wigan. — AFP

play our offensive game," he said. He acknowledged the threat from players such as Sergio Aguero and Kevin De Bruyne but said it was difficult to focus on shutting down individuals. "One of the big strengths of Man City is De Bruyne of course, because he has become a very complete player," Wenger said. "He is a modern midfielder for me, he can be decisive in the final third, he works very hard, he is right-footed, left-footed and he is a fighter as well so overall I am not surprised he has done well."

"They have so many players that you have to stop that it is better to focus on the team plan rather than on any individual." Alexandre Lacazette is unavailable because of injury and Henrikh Mkhitaryan is ineligible because he played in the competition for Manchester United earlier this season. Wenger said David Ospina would play in goal at the expense of Petr Cech, continuing his role as the go-to 'keeper for cup matches. He said Mesut Ozil was likely to play and he would make a decision on Aaron Ramsey yesterday. — AFP

Conte-Mourinho feud

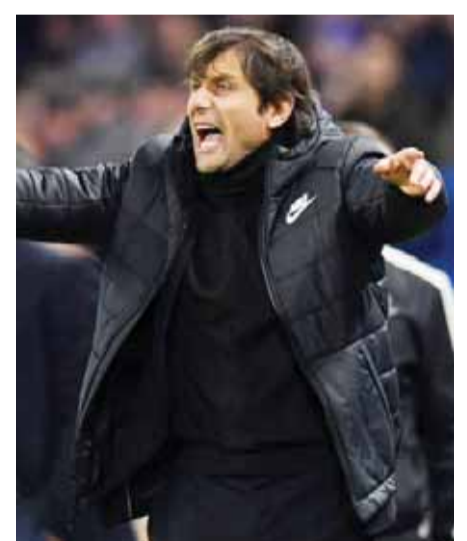
MANCHESTER: Jose Mourinho and Antonio Conte renew hostilities when Chelsea visit Manchester United in a mouthwatering Premier League clash today spiced up by bad blood between the two managers. Former Chelsea boss Mourinho and Conte have not hidden their disdain for each other in a series of clashes in the press and on the touchline since Conte arrived at Stamford Bridge in 2016. And there is plenty more than personal pride at stake, with both clubs locked in a battle for a top-four place in the Premier League. AFP Sports looks at the best of Mourinho and Conte's war of words.

Humiliating homecoming

Mourinho returned to Stamford Bridge for the first time in October 2016 after his second spell in charge of Chelsea ended in his sacking 10 months earlier. The Portuguese was given a mixed reception by the Chelsea fans in the stands but shown no mercy on the pitch as Conte's men dished out a 4-0 thrashing of United. Mourinho was unhappy with Conte's wild celebration of N'Golo Kante's fourth goal. "You don't celebrate like that at 4-0, you can do it at 1-0, otherwise it's humiliating for us," Italian TV reported Mourinho as saying when he confronted Conte at full-time.

Avoid the 'Mourinho season'

On Chelsea's pre-season tour of Asia, Conte cited Chelsea's collapse in Mourinho's final season in charge just months after being crowned champions as a warning to his squad. "Two years ago, the team finished 10th place in the league and we want to avoid this," said Conte. "I want to avoid, and the players want to avoid, the last season with Mourinho." Chelsea were 16th when Mourinho was sacked in December 2015, having lost nine of their first 16 Premier League games.



LONDON: Chelsea's Italian head coach Antonio Conte gestures during the first leg of the UEFA Champions League round of 16 football match between Chelsea and Barcelona at Stamford Bridge stadium. — AFP

No clowning around

The spat between the two managers accelerated in January when Mourinho, who made his name in England sprinting down the touchline at Old Trafford to celebrate a late goal as Porto coach in 2004, claimed he was still as passionate without acting like "a clown". "I prefer to behave the way I am doing it, much more mature, better for my team and myself," he said. "I don't think you have to behave like a crazy guy on the touchline to have that passion." The remark was read as a jibe not only at Conte, but at Mourinho's other rival managers at Liverpool and Manchester City, Jurgen Klopp and Pep Guardiola. Conte responded by suggesting Mourinho had "senile dementia" and had forgotten his behaviour as a younger manager. — AFP

Sports



US punch Sweden to win first gold medal

Last-rock magic from skip Shuster

GANGNEUNG: The United States delivered a gold-medal knockout punch, scoring five in the eighth end to crush Sweden 10-7 and claim their first ever Olympic men's curling title yesterday. With the score deadlocked at 5-5, United States skip John Shuster provided some last-rock magic with a pinpoint double take-out for five that left their Swedish opponents stunned as the Gangneung Curling Centre erupted into chants of "USA, USA" led by US President Donald Trump's daughter Ivanka.

The gold was just the second Olympic curling medal won by the US men, following a bronze at the 2006 Turin Winter Games which Shuster was also a part of. Switzerland beat Canada 7-5 on Friday to win the bronze. "I think during the entire (eighth) end we could feel it building," said Shuster. "Their margin for error was incredibly small. I can't tell you how un-nervous I was." The victory capped a remarkable comeback for the United States who sputtered through early preliminary-round play with a 2-4 record before rattling off three straight wins to make the playoffs where they beat twice defending Olympic champions Canada in the semi-finals before seeing off the top-ranked Swedes.

The only real miscue involving the Americans yesterday came when officials mistakenly presented them with the women's gold medals but that error was quickly corrected and switched for the correct ones. "We've played our best when our backs were up against the wall," American second Tyler George. "We took it to

another level this week. "Usually we're fighting and scrapping to get into the playoffs but for five days we were the best team in the world and we did it at the right time."

The result meant more Olympic disappointment for Niklas Edin who had skipped Sweden to world championship titles in 2013 and 2015 and a bronze at the Sochi Olympics but could not grab the one medal to elude him. The contest got off to a tactical start with the Swedes blanking the first then scoring a pair in the second only to have the US hit right back with a two on another brilliant last-rock shot from Shuster.

The US stole a point in the fourth after a measurement to determine shot stone to take their first lead, 3-2. The Swedes would not be rattled, answering with two in the fifth as the seesaw battle continued with the US replying with a pair in the sixth and Sweden getting one back in the seventh to leave the teams deadlocked on 5-5 with three ends to play.

After the US scored their five a reeling Sweden chipped two off the deficit in the ninth but there was too much damage to repair and the Swedes finally conceded. "In the eighth end we don't exactly get the rocks where we wanted them and they put a lot of rocks in the house and we were forced to go all in," explained Edin. "That last shot if it curls three centimeters more it's probably good for them to draw for two or something but when that misses and they make that double we knew we were going to lose." —Reuters



GANGNEUNG: Team USA competes during the curling men's gold medal game between the USA and Sweden at the Gangneung Curling Centre in Gangneung yesterday. —AFP



Ivanka Trump leads cheers for US team

conceded. "In the eighth end we don't exactly get the rocks where we wanted them and they put a lot of rocks in the house and we were forced to go all in," explained Edin. "That last shot if it curls three centimeters more it's probably good for them to draw for two or something but when that misses and they make that double we knew we were going to lose." —Reuters

'Miracle on snow' as Ledeska seals Olympic double

PYEONGCHANG: Ester Ledeska completed a historic Olympic double yesterday when the Czech star romped to snowboarding parallel giant slalom gold to add to her shock super-G title in alpine skiing. The 22-year-old world champion became the first woman to capture gold medals in different sports at the same Winter Games after beating Germany's Selina Joerg by almost half a second in the Pyeongchang final.

"It was quite tough to change myself back into a snowboarder today," said Ledeska, already the first athlete to compete in snowboard and alpine skiing at a Winter Olympics. "But suddenly the snowboarder girl showed up and today was a big day for snowboard Ester! "It was something very special," added Ledeska, who wore her goggles throughout her press conference as she had after her astonishing ski victory.

"I'll think about this moment until the end of my life." One week ago, Ledeska stunned a strong field including defending champion Anna Veith and American Lindsey Vonn to win the super-G, becoming one of the fairytale stories of the Games. Ledeska now joins Norwegians Thorleif Haug and Johan Groettumsbraten as the only athletes to do a multi-sport double at the same Olympics.

Haug did the cross-country and Nordic combined double at the 1924 Olympics and Groettumsbraten won the same events at the 1928 Games. Ledeska never looked threatened in a giant parallel slalom competition she was expected to dominate, beginning the day by overpowering 2014 gold medalist Patrizia Kummer to avenge her loss to the Swiss in the Sochi quarter-finals. The Czech, dubbed a "miracle on snow" by her national media, dealt equally ruthlessly with Austrian Daniela Ulbing, who had narrowly avoided running over a squirrel in winning her first race.



PYEONGCHANG: Czech Republic's Ester Ledeska competes to win the big final of the women's snowboard parallel giant slalom event at the Phoenix Park yesterday. —AFP

'Once in a lifetime'

Ramona Hofmeister was no match in the semi-final, wiping out as she tried to keep up with Ledeska. The German finished with the bronze. "In the super-G I really didn't believe what happened," said Ledeska when asked which gold tasted sweeter. "My plan is to stay with my heart, so for now I think I'll continue to do both because I love both," she added. "I'm in my skin and doing what I love." Ledeska started skiing aged two and first strapped on a snowboard at five, going on to compete at world championships in both disciplines though she had never medaled on skis before the Pyeongchang Games.

Two other athletes have won multi-sport gold medals at the Winter Olympics Finland's Heikki Hasu won the Nordic combined title in 1948 and cross country four years later, while Russian Anfisa

Reztsova bagged cross country gold in 1988 and biathlon titles in 1992 and 1994. Ledeska's snowboarding coach Justin Reiter revealed that the Czech snow queen had been under intense strain all week.

"The amount of pressure that was on her was pretty incredible," said the American. "But she's very focused on her goals. She's once in a lifetime and she's got a great heart. She's not just like a champion that's kind of a jerk-she's a really incredible human being." Joerg also paid tribute to Ledeska. "She's incredible! I've heard of people competing in summer and winter Olympics, but never in two sports in one Olympics," said the silver medalist. "It's more than a full-time job. I think she shows what's possible in sports, she's an amazing athlete and she deserves it. She's the girl for the future and the world is looking to Ester now." —AFP

Swiss win inaugural team gold, Norway set medals record

PYEONGCHANG: Wendy Holdener led a strong Switzerland team to alpine team skiing gold yesterday, as Norway took bronze to set a new record of 38 medals at a Winter Olympics. Switzerland won the final 3-1 against an Austrian quartet missing double gold medalist Marcel Hirscher for the inaugural title as the event made its debut. Holdener, who had already won slalom silver and combined bronze, Denise Feierabend, Daniel Yule and men's slalom runner-up Ramon Zenhausern held their nerve after the two Austrian men failed to finish the mixed-sex final.

"I enjoyed it a lot. We had a cool team, the spirit was here but everybody was really focused," said Holdener. "It's really nice to get a gold medal after a silver and bronze." Holdener and Zenhausern were both undefeated in racing at the Yongpyong Alpine Centre as the Swiss overcame Hungary, Germany and France on their run to the final. Austria, boasting individual slalom bronze medallists Michael Matt and Katharina Gallhuber, Katharina Liensberger and Manuel Feller overcame South Korea, Sweden and Norway before the match-up with the Swiss.

Sweden had been fancied for a podium spot given they fielded individual slalom gold medallists Frida Hansdotter and Andre Myhrer, but they went down 4-0 to the Austrians in the quarter-finals. Norway won bronze, Leif Kristian Nestvold-Haugen beating France's Clement Noel in the fourth and final run to win by a tie-breaking 0.12sec after two victories to each team. It was a record 38th Winter Olympics medal for Norway, beating the record set by the United States in 2010. Norway and Germany top the medals table on 13 golds, although the Norwegians have more medals overall. —AFP

Germany seek their own 'Miracle on Ice'

GANGNEUNG: Nearly 40 years after the United States stunned the Soviet Union in the 1980 Miracle on Ice, a gritty German squad is trying for their own "Wunder auf Eis" at the Pyeongchang Olympics. Germany will face the Olympic Athletes from Russia, trying to end a 26-year gold drought, in today's gold medal men's hockey final after three shocking one-goal playoff upsets, including a 4-3 semi-final ouster of Canada.

"Half the team just cried on the ice because we just made history," German forward Dominik Kahun said. "It's unbelievable. It just shows what kind of team we have. We play for each other." It sets up a fairy-tale story not unlike the US collegians who dethroned the Soviet juggernaut in Lake Placid 38 years ago. The unlikely German league all-star unit are into their first Olympic final and will face the top hockey talent outside the NHL, which unusually refused to release its players for the Olympics.

"Anything is possible," Kahun said. "Russia is the favorite, everybody knows it, and if you lose the game, we got silver medal. We're going to do everything to win gold, but we have no pressure so we can play our best." From the emotional high of the greatest victory in German hockey history, players must regroup to face the top talent from Russia's two best clubs. "For German hockey, this is unreal," Marcel Goc said. "We're in the final against the superstars from Russia. "I'm still waiting to get poked and somebody wakes me up and tells me, 'Hey, you're late for the bus to the game.' But we made it to the final."

'Huge for the country'

The Russians boast the most potent Olympic offence, including former NHLers and five-time Olympians Ilya Kovalchuk and Pavel Datsyuk. They are seeking their first gold since the 1992 Unified Team won at Albertville just weeks after the breakup of the Soviet Union. "It would just mean everything to us," said Russian forward Mikhail Grigorenko. "It's huge for the players and the country." Russia are also waiting to see if officials will lift their suspension from the Olympics over mass doping in



PYEONGCHANG: Canada's Andrew Ebbett (2nd right) scores against Czech Republic's Pavel Francouz in the men's bronze medal ice hockey match between the Czech Republic and Canada during the Pyeongchang 2018 Winter Olympic Games yesterday. —AFP

time for today's closing ceremony. Germans took Olympic bronze in 1932 and 1976, the latter as West Germany.

Germany's top finish at the world championships was second, last achieved as West Germany in 1953. Just playing for gold is a shocker. "We are super-happy and super-excited. We couldn't even imagine this. It's like a dream," German forward Frank Mauer said. "We're just going to enjoy the final, do our best and see what happens." It's not like German sports don't offer examples of shock wins. The 1954 FIFA World Cup final saw West Germany beat heavily favoured Hungary 3-2 in the Miracle of Bern. —AFP

Russians reel over doping

PYEONGCHANG: A despondent mood swept through Russian athletes at the Pyeongchang Winter Games yesterday, their hopes of being able to fly the Russian flag at the closing ceremony deflated by a second positive doping test. "They were due to look at how we behaved here and decide, but as we've got two doping cases I don't think they will allow us to be at the closing with the flag," alpine skier Anastasia Silanteva said.

Russians are competing as neutral athletes at the Games due to allegations they ran a systematic drug-cheating program at the 2014 Sochi Games. They have been unable to wear national uniforms or have the Russian anthem played at medal ceremonies. But the International Olympic Committee (IOC) held out the prospect of lifting its suspension of their Olympic status and allowing them to carry the Russian flag at today's closing ceremony, on condition they behaved well at Pyeongchang.

Silanteva said the entire Russian team were upset at the prospect of leaving the Games without flying the flag or wearing the Russian uniform. It would have shown "we are a strong country and we will achieve everything we want", she added. This week, it emerged that a Russian medal-winning curler and bobsledder had failed tests for performance-enhancing drugs. Curler Alexander Krushelnitsky, who won bronze in the mixed doubles event, agreed to return his medal along with his wife who is his curling partner. —Reuters

21 Blackhawks beat Sharks as Jets thrash Blues 4-0



22 Bucks overpower Raptors; Rockets and Cavaliers win



23 US punch Sweden to win first gold medal



Liverpool thrash West Ham 4-1

Salah's hot-streak continues; Liverpool go second



LIVERPOOL: West Ham United's Argentinean defender Pablo Zabaleta (right) vies with Liverpool's Senegalese midfielder Sadio Mane during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and West Ham United yesterday. — AFP

LEICESTER: Mohamed Salah scored for the sixth straight game as Liverpool took advantage of being the only Premier League top six side in action yesterday to move into second with a 4-1 thrashing of West Ham at Anfield. Jurgen Klopp's men still trail runaway league leaders Manchester City by 15 points, but strengthened their case to finish in the top four and make the Champions League next season as Emre Can, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane were also on target. Liverpool edge a point ahead of bitter rivals Manchester United, who host fourth-placed Chelsea today.

Salah also drew level with Harry Kane on 23 Premier League goals in an outstanding debut season at Liverpool in the battle for the golden boot. The Egyptian was inches away from opening the scoring inside three minutes when he struck the post, but did have a hand when Can's bullet header from Salah's cor-

ner broke the deadlock on 29 minutes for Liverpool's 100th goal of the season in all competitions. Salah doubled Liverpool's lead when he steered a shot into the far corner on his favoured left foot after the break from Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain's through ball. Moments later it was Firmino who beat West Ham goalkeeper Adrian to Can's pass before slotting into an empty net.

Substitute Michail Antonio pulled a goal back for the Hammers just a minute after coming on, but Mane ensured all of Liverpool's prolific front three were on target when he converted Andrew Robertson's cross 13 minutes from time. At the other end of the table, promoted

Huddersfield and Brighton moved clear of the bottom three. West Brom remain rooted to the foot of the table as Huddersfield struck twice in eight minutes at the start of the second period through Rajiv Van la Parra and Steve Mounie to win 2-1 at the Hawthorns.

Brighton moved up to 11th thanks to Glenn Murray's double and late goals from Anthony Knockaert and Jurgen Locadia to end Swansea's 10-match unbeaten run in a 4-1 thrashing. Dwight Gayle also scored twice, but Newcastle failed to back up their stunning win over Manchester United as they blew a two-goal lead to draw 2-2 at Bournemouth. Adam Smith and Dan Gosling struck for the hosts in the final

10 minutes. Southampton also salvaged a point late on to edge out the drop zone on goal difference. Manolo Gabbiadini came off the bench to level in stoppage time and salvage a 1-1 draw at Burnley, whose wait since December 12 for a Premier League win continues.

Earlier, Stoke City boss Paul Lambert hailed Jack Butland as the "best goalkeeper in Britain" despite an own goal from the England international costing his side the chance to move out of the bottom three in a 1-1 draw at Leicester. The visitors, who remain 19th, led through Xherdan Shaqiri's long-range strike until Butland fumbled Marc Albrighton's cross into his own net 20 minutes from time. But Butland did at least make amends with a stunning save from Riyad Mahrez. Leicester's Harry Maguire and Matty James also hit the post as Stoke held on to move to within a point of safety. — AFP

Brighton crush Swansea 4-1 as Murray shines



Real sink Alaves

MADRID: Real Madrid's 'BBC' strikeforce hit back with a vengeance when Cristiano Ronaldo, Gareth Bale and Karim Benzema all scored in a 4-0 win over Alaves yesterday as the champions moved within four points of second-placed Atletico Madrid. Ronaldo returned to the starting line-up after being rested for Wednesday's game with Leganes and after shaking off a painful ankle knock the Portuguese put Real ahead on the stroke of halftime, taking advantage of a clever backheel from Benzema. Benzema was also the catalyst for Real's second goal which came under a minute into the second half, with the Frenchman winning the ball back in midfield and tearing towards goal, slipping it into Bale's path for the Wales international to slot it inside the near post.

Ronaldo struck Real's third goal of the day and his 299th in La Liga in the 61st minute, meeting a cut-back from in-form winger Lucas Vazquez first time and sending it under the reach of former Real goalkeeper Fernando Pacheco. Ronaldo then surrendered the opportunity to score a hat-trick by offering Benzema penalty-taking duties after Bale was brought down, and the Frenchman made no mistake, converting from the spot in the 89th minute. Real are third in the standings on 51 points, 11 behind leaders Barcelona who host Girona later and four from Atletico, who can widen the gap back to seven when they visit Sevilla today. — Reuters

Migrants keep football dreams alive in Morocco

CASABLANCA: The rubbish had been cleared away and spectators emerged from makeshift tents: it was time for kick-off in the daily football game at the Oulad Ziane migrant camp in Morocco's Casablanca. "We organize ourselves among the different nationalities," said Djabel Niang, 21, who left Senegal two years ago to pursue his dream of crossing the Mediterranean and playing for Real Madrid.

"We play in teams of five or six in conditions that aren't really up to scratch, but we play anyway—we play for pleasure, and to forget." The camp, near the central bus station in Morocco's coastal commercial capital, is home to migrants from sub-Saharan Africa who are trying to reach Europe or have been forced back. The population fluctuates between a few dozen and several hundred, and the small football pitch on the edge of the tent encampment is a key focal point. The different communities—from Mali, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ivory Coast, Cameroon and Guinea—each have

their own "president" and team.

The best-equipped squads wear old jerseys bearing the colors of AC Milan, Real Madrid, the Moroccan national team and local club Wydad Casablanca. The others make do with whatever they can find. "It isn't easy to get football kits, we don't have jobs or families," said Niang. Like all those in the camps, the footballers live from hand to mouth and try to avoid drawing the attention of constantly passing police patrols. Relations with the Moroccans living nearby are also complicated—some bring clothes or food, but others resent the presence of the migrants and sometimes pick fights.

The football matches are a way to forget the tough situation. "We train every day, every evening," said midfielder Chancelin Njike, 25, from Cameroon. To signal a foul during games, the referee hits the ground with a plastic bottle, for lack of a whistle. Along the edge of the pitch, petty traders continue plying their wares, a cook mixes up semolina, a carpenter hammers away and street children sniff glue.

At one recent match, the Guinean team chalked up a 2-0 win over Cameroon, who were hampered by the fact that two of their best players had been sent by security forces to the southern city of Agadir. "Often we organize small tournaments to create



CASABLANCA: A sub-Saharan migrant practices his skills on a makeshift football pitch in the middle of the Oulad Ziane migrant camp in Casablanca. —AFP

some atmosphere, and other times we just play for fun," said Njike. He used to play in Cameroon's third division and graduated from a sports academy, but left the country in 2015 to head to Europe. "It is my hope to get in to be able to train, play and reach a good level one day," he said.

But he has not been lucky. As he talked about his journey, his voice trembled. For months he lived in the forests

of northern Morocco, but could not find a way to breach the tall border fence that divides it from the Spanish enclave of Melilla. He nearly drowned twice attempting perilous sea crossings. Two of his friends didn't make it, dying during a voyage on an overcrowded dinghy. He said two classmates from his football academy had reached Europe and ended up playing football in France, inspiring him to attempt the same path. — AFP