



3 Filipinos staying on despite free tickets; poor response to amnesty



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MPs, activists outraged after bedoon sets himself on fire

Lawmaker to demand special debate on freedoms

Zain, Ericsson create roadmap to 5G and IoT

BARCELONA: Zain Group and Ericsson have announced they have signed a memorandum of understanding to jointly develop and test selected 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) cases. The MoU, signed during Mobile World Congress 2018 in Barcelona, demonstrates the commitment of both companies to bringing next-generation connectivity and its accompanying benefits to the Middle East and Africa.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO said: "Zain is committed to bringing the latest technology and cutting-edge services to its customers. 5G will open the door for new applications that will transform consumer behavior and industries." Rafiah Ibrahim, Head of Ericsson Middle East and Africa, said: "We believe next generation technology and its applications will provide tangible benefits



BARCELONA: Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi and Head of Ericsson MEA Rafiah Ibrahim sign the agreement.

in the real world." 5G technology will enable massive connectivity and open up new markets to IoT. (See Page 19)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers and activists yesterday expressed outrage and strongly lashed out at government agencies after a stateless man set himself on fire apparently over being poverty-stricken, although the interior ministry alleged he has a criminal record. The bedoon man attempted self-immolation outside Jahra court in a bid to commit suicide, the interior ministry said in a statement. The ministry said security men rescued the man and took him to Jahra Hospital for treatment. The man, born in 1982, did not die, but he sustained serious burns.

No details about his personal life were provided, but activists said on social media he was complaining of being poor. But the interior ministry said that after investigating the man's case, it was found that he has an active criminal record with 21 crimes including a threat to kill, robbery, drinking alcohol and assault. The ministry said investigations are still ongoing to understand the motives behind the suicide attempt.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari called on the Assembly's human rights panel to investigate the case and summon all officials concerned with the issue of bedoons in the country, including the prime minister himself. Around 120,000 stateless people, known locally as bedoons, live in Kuwait and complain of discrimination and being deprived of basic human rights like citizenship, jobs, education, health and others.

Bedoons claim the right to Kuwaiti citizenship, but the

government insists that a majority of them have no right to Kuwaiti nationality because either they or their forefathers arrived in Kuwait and destroyed their identification documents in order to obtain Kuwaiti citizenship and enjoy generous benefits. MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei criticized the interior ministry for publishing details of the victim's criminal record, saying the ministry should be ashamed of itself for doing this. He said the ministry should be blamed for oppressing those people and failing to find a dignified solution for their plight.

Director of the Kuwait Society for Human Rights Mohammad Al-Humaidi said as long as the government does not stop the "atrocities" of the central agency for the bedoons, these incidents will continue and could become worse. "What do you expect from a group of people who are deprived of identity, health and education, which are the simplest of basic rights," he asked.

Ahmad Al-Dayeen, a senior official of the Progressive Movement, said regardless of any other details, any person burning himself reveals their ordeal. He said what happened reveals the deep agony and the suffering of "Kuwaiti bedoons", adding the suicide attempt was not the first and will not be the last.

Meanwhile, MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei said yesterday he will file a request to hold a special session to discuss the retreat of public freedoms in Kuwait in recent years, especially freedom of expression. The lawmaker warned the government against trying to prevent the session from being held.

Stranded Qatari camels heading home via Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Hundreds of Qatari camels stranded in Saudi Arabia are being trucked to Shuwaikh Port daily to be shipped to Qatar. "Most camel owners in the smaller Gulf countries send their camels to graze in Saudi Arabia. After the political crisis erupted between the two countries, Saudi Arabia didn't allow us to retrieve our camels and refused to send them directly to Qatar. Only about a month ago, their government allowed to release them through Kuwait," Qatari camel owner Rashid Al-Marri told Kuwait Times at Shuwaikh Port yesterday.

For Marri, it is an expensive process to transport the camels back home. "I have seven trucks here at the port carrying 150 adult and 40 young camels. I had to pay

2,000 Saudi riyals (KD 160) for each camel exiting the Saudi borders. The shipping charges for one camel from Kuwait to Qatar costs KD 70, but (Qatari Emir) Sheikh Tamim decided to send ships for free for all Qataris to transport their camels to Qatar," he said.

Thousands of camels have reached the port. "The camels reached Kuwait a month ago. We are here at the port since yesterday and hopefully the ship will carry the camels tonight. I don't know about the exact number of Qatari camels in Saudi Arabia, but I assume it's around 10,000. Some of them have already left and others will leave in the next few days," said Marri.

It's a tough journey for the camels, especially for baby camels that are still suckling. One of the camels has also died at the port. "Qatari ships come to the port daily to ferry the camels. Depending on the size of the ships, they can carry 200 to 400 camels. It's very bad for the camels' health to stay in the trucks for such a long period, as they can't move," he said. Marri was feeling upset as the ship's arrival was delayed yesterday. "I wonder why the Qatari committee in charge of transporting our camels gave me an appointment to come to the port if the ship hasn't arrived and I can't leave. I hope we will be able to leave soon," he fretted.



KUWAIT: Qatari camel owner Rashid Al-Marri stands next to a truck carrying camels at Shuwaikh Port yesterday.— Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

MBS says reforms aimed at 'cancer' of corruption; Hariri meets king

RIYADH/BEIRUT: Saudi Arabia's crown prince says the anti-corruption drive launched late last year is the "shock therapy" his kingdom needs to root out widespread graft. "You have a body that has cancer everywhere, the cancer of corruption. You need to have chemo, the shock of chemo, or the cancer will eat the body," Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told the Washington Post in an interview published Tuesday night. "The kingdom couldn't meet budget targets without halting this looting," he said.

In the latest move for change, a dramatic shake-up announced in royal decrees late Monday saw top brass, including the chief of staff and heads of the ground forces and air defense, replaced and a broad defense reform plan approved. The government bureaucracy is also to be overhauled. The crown prince said the shake-up announced by his father, King Salman, was aimed at installing "high energy" people who could achieve modernization targets. "We want to work with believers," the crown prince told the US paper.

Authorities rounded up dozens of princes, top officials and businessmen in November on Prince Mohammed's orders, with many confined and interrogated at Riyadh's glitzy Ritz-Carlton Hotel. "The corrupted princes were a minority, but the bad actors got more attention. It harmed the energy of the royal family," he said.



RIYADH: King Salman bin Abdulaziz (right) receives Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri at the royal palace in the Saudi capital yesterday.— AFP

Prince Mohammed said in the interview he maintains support from the royal family despite internal divisions that have occasionally spilled into public, such as when 11 princes were arrested last month for allegedly protesting against the government cutting payment of their utility bills. His ambitious reform agenda, which is popular with much of Saudi Arabia's burgeoning youth population, faces resistance from some of the old guard more comfortable with the kingdom's traditions of incremental change and rule by consensus.

Meanwhile, Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri met Saudi King Salman yesterday, in his first visit back to the country since his resignation in the kingdom sparked a crisis between the longtime allies. Hariri announced on

November 4 that he was stepping down in a televised address from Riyadh, only to rescind it the following month after France intervened. The shock resignation had stirred tensions between Riyadh and Beirut, amid suspicions he had been placed under house arrest.

Saudi Arabia's state news agency SPA said Hariri and King Salman discussed "bilateral relations and recent developments in Lebanon". It published pictures of the two leaders locked in a firm handshake, smiling and drinking coffee. The meeting was attended by Saudi Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef and Foreign Minister Adel Jubeir, amongst others, SPA reported. It did not say if Prince Mohammed was present.

Continued on Page 11



Egyptians check the damage following a train crash in Egypt's northern Beheira province yesterday.—AFP

Egypt train collision kills at least 12

CAIRO: Two trains collided yesterday in northern Egypt killing at least 12 people and injuring dozens of others, the health ministry said, the latest in a string of deadly rail accidents in the country. Twelve people died and 39 were injured in the crash between a freight train and a passenger train at Kom Hamada in Beheira province, health ministry spokesman Khaled Mehaged told state television, updating an earlier casualty toll.

Footage aired by the state television showed at least two carriages had derailed in a rural stretch of land. Civilians and medics were seen removing injured passengers and carrying them to ambulances. Health ministry official Alaa Othman told state television that all casualties had been removed from the scene of the accident. The provincial governor Nadia Abdou told AFP that the crash happened at around 1045 GMT and that its cause was "unknown".

She pointed out that the ministry of transport and the national railways were in charge of the rail facilities in the region. The state prosecutor announced that a team of investigators had been dispatched to probe the accident.—AFP

Amir congratulates Kuwaiti oncologist on promotion

Medical nuclear center earns American accreditation



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday congratulated Kuwaiti physician Wadah Al-Refai on his ascension to the position of regional director of the oncology department at MedStar Georgetown University Hospital in Washington DC.

His Highness the Amir expressed his well wishes in a cable he sent to Refai, who has also been named deputy president of MedStar Georgetown University Hospital's center for surgical research. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar messages to the Kuwaiti doctor.

In other news, His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince, as well as His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah, as well as Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer retired Major General Ahmad Al-Rujaib, accompanied by the local governorate's administrators.

Nuclear medicine

Separately, a health official has affirmed significance of the quality accreditation granted to the nuclear medical center of Kuwait Cancer Control

Center by the American Radiology College. Dr Kholoud Al-Ali, director of the center for combating cancer, said in a statement the certificate is one of the most prestigious ones at the global level. The center has recently earned an identical accreditation from Europe. Meanwhile, Dr Farida Al-Kandari, head of the radiology center, said the center had acquired all the specifications required by the international certificate of high quality.

In the meantime, the Kuwait Chemical Society announced plans to organize the Fifth International Chemical Conference under patronization of His Highness the Amir. The event takes place on March 12-14, Haider Bahbahani, the society's chairman, said at a press conference yesterday. The conference aims at shedding light on role of scientists and researchers in chemistry. One day ahead of the event, the society plans to host a meeting for the Union of Arab Chemists, during which the chairmanship would be shifted to Kuwait.

The society's deputy chairperson Huda Al-Nassar said meanwhile that an exhibition would be held on sidelines of the convention. Dr Hassan Al-Rabaa, head of the conference scientific committee, said up to 250 scientists and researchers from Kuwait and foreign countries would partake in the event. Head of the media commission Hamdan Al-Ajmi said that the conference official inauguration would be attended by Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi. —KUNA



Amir, Crown prince receive officials



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Governor of Mubarak Al-Kabeer retired Major General Ahmad Al-Rujaib, accompanied by the local governorate's administrators.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah.

Qatari artist makes Amir's portrait from gems

DOHA: Qatari artist Abdulsalam Al-Qadi has created a portrait of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah using quartz and Swarovski gems. The shining portrait displayed at Sheraton Hotel in Doha has drawn hundreds of onlookers at the hall to see the piece

of art, created on the occasion of Kuwait's national days.

Qadi said that he had chosen His Highness Sheikh Sabah for his long experience in international diplomacy and diverse humanitarian accomplishments as well as his good will role in defusing crises and conflicts throughout the world. Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafeedh Al-Ajmi said that the artwork depicted the GCC peoples' sentiments of endearment toward His Highness the Amir due to his major role at the level of boosting joint GCC action. The artist has revealed his inner sentiments of affection toward the sagacious leader, who has been kept for years on maintaining Arab unity. — KUNA



DOHA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Qatar Hafeedh Al-Ajmi (right) and Qatari artist Abdulsalam Al-Qadi (center) pose with a portrait of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA

Kuwait's embassies continue national celebrations

KUWAIT: Kuwait's embassies in Washington and Belgrade as well as the Delegation to the UN joined the celebrations of national days. They organized functions to celebrate the 57th anniversary of the Independence, 27th anniversary of Liberation, and the 12th anniversary of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's assumption of power.

In Washington, Kuwaiti embassy held a gala attended by the large number of US officials including Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Veterans Affairs David Shulkin, White House counselor Kellyanne Conway and Chairman of the House of Representatives' Foreign Affairs Committee Ed Royce. A plethora of heads of the foreign diplomatic missions in Washington were present at the event. The guests were welcomed by Kuwait's Ambassador to Washington Sheikh Salem Al-Sabah.

In New York, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi held a reception on the occasion at the UN headquarters. A slew of UN officials, ambassadors to the UN and representatives of the Kuwaiti community in New York attended the event.

Addressing the audience, Ambassador Otaibi congratulated His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti government and people on the dear occasions. He highlighted Kuwait's balanced, moderate and rational foreign policy which was based on full commitment to the UN principles and charter. Kuwait wanted to enforce these principles during its two-year membership at the UN Security Council, he noted.

He underlined that the achievements made by Kuwait's diplomacy in the past years were fruits of the initiatives and rules set by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-



NEW YORK: Members of Kuwait's Delegation to the UN take a group photo during an event hosted to celebrate the 57th National Day and 27th Liberation Day of Kuwait. — KUNA

Sabah since Kuwait's independence. He stated that the last time Kuwait was a member at the UN Security Council was 40 years and its presidency of the council came after 39 years from the previous one. All over this time, Kuwait was fully committed to the principles of its foreign policy, he said.

He emphasized that Kuwait's liberation was an example of the success of the UN and its security council in implementing its principles and the provisions of its charter. Kuwait had been a partner to the UN in the effort to achieve world peace, he added. During the function, a Kuwaiti orchestra band played Kuwaiti music masterpieces and a number of Kuwaiti singers sang popular and national songs.

Furthermore, Kuwait's Embassy in Belgrade organized a reception to mark the national days. A large number of dignitaries were present at the function including, Crown Prince Alexander II Karadordevic and his wife Katherine, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade, Telecommunications and Tourism Rasim Ljajic, Minister of Labor and Social Issues Zoran Dordevic. The gala was also attended by a large number of foreign ambassadors and diplomats in Belgrade.

Kuwait's Ambassador Yusuf Abdulsamad conveyed his greetings to 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, Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Kuwaiti people on the dear occa-

sion. He then shed lights on the steadily developing relations with Serbia, particularly on the agreements signed between the two countries for cooperation in various domains.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Ambassador to Russia Abdulaziz Al-Adwani expressed felicitations on these occasions to His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister. This year's celebrations coincided with the 55th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Kuwait and Russia, he said, lauding the sound status of these ties, based on mutual respect and non-intervention in each country's internal affairs.

In Cuba, the Kuwaiti embassy held a ceremony, attended by local leaders and ambassadors of the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. The embassy in Djibouti also held an identical gathering, attended by officials, diplomats and dignitaries.

Separately, Egypt's President AbdelFattah Al-Sisi on Wednesday wished Kuwait well as the country celebrates its 57th Independence Day and 27th Liberation Day. Sisi's greetings were relayed by his advisor Hossam Zaatar, during his meeting with Kuwait's ambassador to Cairo Muhammad Al-Thuwaikh. Zaatar "conveyed well wishes to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on behalf of the Egyptian President," the Kuwaiti envoy said. Thuwaikh went on to say that the gesture was a testament to the "historic camaraderie" between the Kuwaiti people and their Egyptian brethren. — KUNA

Local

Filipinos stay on despite free tickets, appeal by Duterte

Embassy officials concerned by no-shows at the airport

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Despite an offer of free tickets to all undocumented Filipinos, many have opted to stay and there have been some no-shows at Kuwait International Airport too. "I want to go back home but I have financial responsibilities in the Philippines," said Cynthia, not her real name. "If I go back home, how can I provide for my family? I have three kids and I am a single mother," said Cynthia, who was cleared to leave Kuwait a few days after submitting an application at the embassy. However, on the day of her flight, she decided to back out and did not go to the airport.

The Philippines Embassy admitted that despite free air tickets, 203 Filipinos who applied during the amnesty and were cleared by the immigration authorities did not show up, resulting in a big loss, as the tickets were booked and fully paid by the Philippine government. Embassy officials said many people applied during the amnesty in the hope they could come back under a new sponsor. However, with the current labor-related problems with Kuwait, returning to Kuwait is not possible, as President Rodrigo Duterte has banned all new Filipino workers from heading to Kuwait. Duterte is expected to visit Kuwait for bilateral talks soon.

"Out of the almost 3,000 undocumented Filipinos sent home under the amnesty program of the Kuwaiti government, 203 did not

appear on the scheduled flight date," said Vice Consul Charleson Hermosura. "I am particularly concerned about the number of no-shows on the day of their flights at the airport. We are talking about millions of pesos in losses here - flights and seats have been paid for, and we cannot get a refund. My advice to all those availing of the amnesty is to take it and leave Kuwait, or else legalize your status here," he said.

Reported deaths

The total ban on Filipino workers was triggered by the death of Filipino housemaid Joana Demafelis, whose body was found inside a freezer in a Maidan Hawally apartment and the deaths of seven Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) in a span of two months, which were reported and verified by Kuwaiti authorities. "If I go home without any assurance that I could come back, then I better stay. Anyway, I have lived in Kuwait for many years and I am safe here, so I am willing to gamble to work," said Cynthia.

She has been working as a seamstress at a dressmaking shop in Hawally governorate. "I am safe here. No one is bothering me when it comes to my visa. I want to go home, but what if the ban remains for years," asked Cynthia. "My accommodation is just across the shop where I work. I don't go out much, so I'm staying for now," she said.

The Philippine's department of foreign

affairs has sent a 10-member team to help process the documentations and repatriations of their countrymen. The team is headed by Alexander J Riosa, who also expressed frustration that people who applied for the amnesty failed to show up at the airport. "We are really thankful to the Kuwaiti government for this opportunity for our people to leave without being penalized. However, there are some sad stories and experiences shared with us. But we are happy that we can help and assist our countrymen," Riosa said.

Underwhelming results

The interior ministry extended the amnesty for residency violators for two more months as the results of the initial period were not as good as hoped for, as only 10-15 percent of illegals benefited from it. Security sources quoted in a report published by Al-Rai yesterday expressed doubts over the benefit of extending the period, as results show that some workers do not really want to correct their status and leave the country.

While the interior ministry considers the amnesty extension as a reflection of Kuwait's humanitarian approach towards those who live in it, the ministry did not give reasons for the low percentage of those who took advantage of the decision. The sources said that the interior ministry does not have answers, as the decision provided major concessions to violators in order to correct their status or leave



KUWAIT: A picture showing members from a 10-member DFA Team from Manila which is currently in Kuwait to assist Filipinos who are availing amnesty. —Photo by Ben Garcia

the country without having to face legal procedures or pay fines. Despite this, the percentage of beneficiaries is very low compared to the number of registered violators at the ministry, which is around 154,000.

"The interior ministry aims at giving the largest possible number of residency violators time to take advantage of the grace period, be it to leave or correct their status," the sources said. They added that the ministry also extended the period to counter those claiming they

had no knowledge of the decision, and to keep some embassies that demanded an extension in check, as they claim they want to send violators residing in their shelters back to their countries. The results of the initial period the interior ministry gave to violators to leave the country without having to pay fines show that around 15-20,000 had left, which is no more than 13 percent of the number of illegals, although the ministry had hoped 100,000 out of 154,636 violators would leave, Al-Rai reported.

Ex-convict kills brother in Omariya

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man shot and killed his brother before being arrested in Omariya yesterday. Police responded to a call about a shooting incident in which a citizen shot his brother in the head and escaped. The victim was pronounced dead on the scene, and a manhunt began in pursuit of the suspect who detectives discovered was released from prison only a week before the crime took place. The suspect was arrested after his car ran out of fuel, and police found the murder weapon - an AK-47 - in the car, the interior ministry's relations and security information department said. The man had reportedly served time in prison over a case in which he was found

guilty of physically assaulting a family member. He was sent to the proper authorities for further action.

10,700 tickets issued

Police issued 10,700 traffic tickets, impounded 596 vehicles and 53 motorcycles, sent 70 juveniles to concerned authorities, and arrested 53 persons during the national celebrations. They also dealt with seven cases of run-over accidents and 80 fights, while arresting 10 people in possession of drugs.

Drunk policeman arrested

Mubarak Al-Kabeer police arrested a Lieutenant Colonel who was busted driving under the influence of alcohol. Patrol police pulled the driver over at a street in the area, and placed him under arrest after discovering that he was drunk. Furthermore, police found two bottles of liquor inside the man's car.

Worker rescued

Firemen rescued a worker who fell from a height while working at a Farwaniya building, and handed him to paramedics.

terminated teachers would include teachers of Islamic and computer studies, science, social studies, mathematics, as well as Arabic and English languages in both the intermediate and secondary stages.

SMEs' budget

The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Development's 2019-2019 budget due to commence in April showed a reduction from KD 10,032,000 to KD 9,025,000, said informed sources, explaining that the budget includes KD 6,933,000 for payrolls and KD 2,092,000 for general expenses. The sources added that estimated revenues are KD 2,000, and that this would leave the budget with an estimated deficit of KD 9,023,000, which would be funded by the finance ministry.

Highest flag

Kuwait Municipality approved a request by the Amiri Diwan to allocate the beach opposite Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center to build a flag pedestal that would be the highest in Kuwait, and an artificial island, said acting director Abdullah Emadi.

in filing 10 warning notices and destroying 10.6 kg of rotten fish. The center's manager Khaled Al-Mayyas said the rotten fish included two types of fish and that warning notices were filed for various violations including not wearing uniforms, hygiene, personal hygiene and lack of health certificates. Meanwhile, headed by the center's manager Abdullah Al-Siddiqi, the Capital center inspected various stores at Mubarakiya market, Mirqab and Sharq. Siddiqi said the tour resulted in filing three citations and 27 warning notices.

Kuwait Food Bank

Kuwait Livestock Trade and Transport Company (Al-Mawashi) signed a renewable one year contract to provide Kuwait Food Bank (KFB) with meat products to be distributed to needy families in Kuwait. Al-Mawashi CEO Osama Boodai said the contract was signed as part of the company's social responsibility duties and humanitarian activities. KFB Secretary Salem Al-Hamar said the contract was an achievement in the field of humanitarian activities and providing destitute families with their needs.

Ministry terminates 'hundreds' of expat teachers

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) has started preparations to hand over termination letters to hundreds of expatriate teachers and employees this month, ministry insiders said. The employees to be released include supervisors and heads of departments whose service exceeded 34 years, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity. No exceptions would be made, the sources said, adding that terminations will include Syrian teachers who had been previously exempted because of the situation in their home country. The sources explained that

854 kg of foul food items destroyed

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The imported food department at the public authority for food and nutrition destroyed 854 kg of foul food items imported via Shuwaikh Port. An examination for a coconut and mixed fruits' shipment revealed mold, and inspectors decided that the imported products are unsafe for human consumption, the department's manager Ali Al-Khanfour said. The shipment included 750 kg of coconut and 104 kg of mixed fruits, Khanfour added.

Meanwhile, an inspection tour conducted by Al-Kout food and nutrition inspection team at Ahmadi fish market auction site and the meat market resulted

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Local

Gulf Bank hails successful MGRP career fair, signs 36 new employees

Employment ceremony held at the bank's headquarters

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank congratulates Kuwait's Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) for its tremendous efforts to increase youth employment in the private sector. The bank strongly supports and is proud to be a partner in MGRP's Recruitment Screening Program: it is a partnership designed to hire and empower Kuwaitis seeking employment in the banking sector.

Earlier this month, Gulf Bank participated, as a gold sponsor, in MGRP's Career Fair and was impressed with the enthusiasm of attendees seeking employment. Speaking on the turnout and demand from qualified candidates, Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager for Human Resources at Gulf Bank said: "The MGRP Career Fair was a unique opportunity to engage with Kuwaiti youth and the level of interest in careers in the private sector was remarkable. It was heartening to see our youth not only looking to find employment, but seeking to build long-term careers for themselves. It is just this type of enthusiasm and focused determination that the bank looks for in its new hires."

Following the Career Fair, the bank accepted 36 qualified candidates, and held a signing ceremony at its headquarters to welcome them to the bank. The bank was pleased to have Bandar Al-Rashed, Assistant General Secretary of MGRP, and Naderah Al-Houmoud, Manager, Recruitment Department at MGRP, present at the employment signing ceremony.

Commenting on the new hire signing ceremony, Hajjaj said: "Both Gulf Bank and MGRP are committed to boosting employment in the private sector to support our country's economic development. This partnership has been of great benefit to both parties, but most importantly it has led to our youth finding employment. We thank Rashed and Houmoud of MGRP for being with us at the signing ceremony. At the bank, we have a well-rounded program named Ajyal which seeks to identify high potential new employees and nurture them to prepare them for



future leadership positions, we hope to see some of these new hires in this program soon."

In 2017, Gulf Bank was awarded the 'Best Training Plan 2016' from the MGRP, which is a testimony to the bank's commitment and dedication to support Kuwait's youth. Gulf Bank has successfully implemented several initiatives over the past years, such as external training programs held in collaboration with the MGRP and its long-term sponsorship of INJAZ Kuwait offering professional skills and entrepreneurial training for high school and university students. The bank is particularly pleased with the popularity and effectiveness of its internal Ajyal Graduate Development Program nurturing young Kuwaiti talent early in the career, aiming to develop them into 'holistic bankers' and prepare them for leadership positions at Gulf Bank and in our country. Furthermore, the bank also offers an internal learning and development program, which includes a wide range of trainings and courses for employees across all ranks and departments.



Ibtikar Initiative accepts 37 school projects

KUWAIT: The Ibtikar Al-Kuwait Initiative accepted 37 out of 123 projects presented by 288 female public school students. Chairperson of the Saad Al-Abdullah Charity for Knowledge and Scientific Research Sheikhha Fadia Al-Saad Al-Sabah announced yesterday.

Fourteen science fiction story projects were presented by primary school girls, in addition to nine projects on electronic waste recycling presented by intermediate school girls, as well as 14 projects on systems, which were presented by secondary school girls, Sheikhha Fadia said.

The projects were currently being reviewed by a jury panel pending declaring the three winners by mid-March, Sheikhha Fadia said, noting that the Ibtikar Al-Kuwait Initiative works on this project in collaboration with the Ministry of Education (MOE).



Sheikhha Fadia Al-Saad Al-Sabah

KIB sponsors 'Love of Kuwait' National Day parade

KUWAIT: In celebration of National and Liberation Days, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) participated in the annual 'Love of Kuwait' National Day parade, which was organized by the Kuwait Dragons Bikers team. The parade saw the participation of over 2,000 motorcycles and 600 vintage cars, which were supervised by a group of regionally and internationally renowned motorcyclists and drivers.

The parade's official starting point was nearby the Kuwait Towers, located on the Arabian Gulf Road, and travelled all the way to 360 Mall, where a number of bicycles were showcased for public viewing. Featuring a wide range of fun, entertaining activities and performances, the annual 'Love of Kuwait' parade is a community-based, voluntary, and humanitarian event embodying the nation's message of social unity and peace.

In this context, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, Nawaf Najia, said: "It is with great pride that we lend our support to this outstanding parade. Our sponsorship came as part of our celebrations commemorating Kuwait's 57th National Day and 27th Liberation Day anniversaries. We are also committed to supporting youth-related and national activities, which is the least we could do to show our ongoing support and appreciation for our beloved nation."



Najia added that KIB is committed to participating in a number of diverse activities and initiatives that serve to memorialize this historical event in all our hearts. Accordingly,

the bank is adamant on being consistently involved in initiatives that support the success of events that truly bring people together in unity and love for this great nation.

KFH visits security, emergency personnel

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) visited security and emergency personnel in recognition of their efforts and pivotal role in serving the country and the people. The visit comes as part of KFH eventful program on the occasion of National and Liberation days. Also, it stems



KUWAIT: KFH's team pose with Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah.

from KFH's commitment towards achieving the corporate social responsibility.

Taking these initiatives, KFH confirms its keenness to reinforce humanitarian and solidarity ties with society, while reinforcing cooperation with government's institutions. Such events have a positive effect in encouraging security and emergency operatives and lifting their morale to perform their duties optimally during occasions.

Meanwhile, Acting Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Public Security Affairs Major General Ibrahim Al-Tarrah appreciated KFH initiative and lauded its distinguished role in assuming social responsibility.



KFH' team honors security and emergency personnel.

ABK sponsors National Day celebration at disabled authority

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) successfully concluded its sponsorship of the Special Needs' National Day, which was organized by the Vocational Rehabilitation of the Public Authority of the Disabled on the occasion of the National and Liberation days. The event was attended by a group of special needs children.

The event was held to shed light on the importance of involving those with special needs, and to encourage the integration of these individuals with the members of society, especially at a time of celebrating this dear national occasion. Children with special needs participated in the celebration with various activities to further strengthening the sense of nationalism and joy on this special occasion.

ABK represented by Ali Al-Baghli - Corporate Communications Manager was honored by Vocational Rehabilitation Department, for the bank's support and commitment to making a difference in the community. The bank's sponsorship of the national festival is in line with its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) strategy, which focuses on supporting the humanitarian and social issues.



KUWAIT: Ali Al-Baghli, Senior Manager-Corporate Communications at ABK, receives an appreciation award from Alanoud Al-Wazan and Anwar Al-Ansari from the Public Authority of the Disabled.

Int'l Student Network holds education fair

KUWAIT: The International Student Network (ISN) returns to Kuwait today for an educational fair at the Regency Hotel from 6-9 pm.

The fair will include a session about studying in the United States, and student visas that will start at 5.15 pm.

Representatives from nine US Colleges and universities will provide information about their schools and answer questions from students and parents about educational opportunities in the United States. The three-hour educational fair is organized by ISN in cooperation with the US Embassy.

The following universities will attend the

event: Austin Peay State University, Drury University, Grand Valley State University, Purdue University Fort Wayne, State University of New York at Geneseo, The University of Oklahoma, University of Illinois at Chicago, University of Michigan, Flint and University of Wisconsin- Stevens Point.

The US Embassy will have a booth with representatives who can answer students' questions about how to obtain information on higher education in the US, and about the student visa application process.

Local

Ministers briefed on efforts to issue UNSC Resolution on Syria

Cabinet holds post-national days session

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed his fellow ministers about results of his recent visit to the United States of America, where he attended the United Nations Security Council sessions, currently presided by the State of Kuwait. This came during the Cabinet's weekly session held yesterday at Bayan Palace, under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

These sessions addressed the humanitarian situation in Syria and the efforts that had been exerted for passing the UNSC Resolution for ending the bitter humanitarian hardships in Syria by unanimity. The resolution called for ceasing violent acts by all parties and dispatch of humanitarian aid to the besieged and the needy.

The ministers expressed gratitude to the UNSC member states for their keenness on releasing the significant resolution to alleviate the humanitarian hardships, suffered by the brotherly Syrian people, expressing hope that it would be implemented for sake of halting blood shedding suffered by the Syrian people. The Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister briefed the executives about his meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on sidelines of the UNSC sessions, noting that president Abbas praised the State of Kuwait's unwavering stand in supporting the Palestinian's just cause, their struggle to end the Israeli occupation and attain their legitimate rights, namely establishing the independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Sheikh Sabah Khaled affirmed that the balanced Kuwaiti diplomacy, guided by His Highness the Amir, was complementary to the regional and international efforts to resolve humanitarian causes and fulfil all tasks needed for serving the international community and the causes of global peace, security and stability.

Allotments' files

The ministers examined the file of allotments for the state departments, in light of the cabinet decision on 24/7/2017, tasking the Audit Bureau to examine all the allocated funds for these departments in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The cabinet had asked the bureau to check whether there were any irregularities concerning these allocations.

Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf briefed the ministers about the difficulties that had been outlined by the Audit Bureau in its efforts to draw up the required report in this respect. This had prompted the ministerial committee for economic affairs to form a panel comprising officials from the cabinet general secretariat, the ministry of finance and the legislation department to back up the bureau "to overcome such difficulties so that the diwan may be able to proceed with its task of preparing the required report and resolve this issue fundamentally."

National celebrations

Following the session, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh stat-



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's weekly meeting yesterday. — KUNA

ed that the ministers, on the 57th National Day and the 27th Liberation Day, expressed gratitude to all departments that had taken part in organizing festivities marking the national occasions.

They deeply appreciated sincere sentiments of solidarity, expressed by citizens of GCC and friendly countries who also took part in the celebrations, thus

depicting the admired status enjoyed by the State of Kuwait among these countries. The ministers expressed good wishes for Kuwait, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince on these occasions. The ministers examined various other local issues and congratulated the Moroccan monarch on a recent successful surgery. — KUNA

KRCS delivers aid to Syrians besieged in East Ghouta

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) has delivered food parcels to besieged Syrians in East Ghouta, KRCS Secretary General Maha Al-Barjas said yesterday. The ongoing Kuwaiti relief operation, carried out in coordination with the Turkish Relief Association, will be expanded to secure other necessities such as medical aid for the civilians in the encircled region located on outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus, she said in a press statement.

The humanitarian supplies have been secured with donations from Kuwaiti citizens and non-Kuwaitis living in the country, who have been generously contributing the society efforts to relieve the stricken Syrians. Donors, citizens and expatriates, can deliver their contributions during day and night times at the KRCS headquarters and via its internet website.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's voluntary team 'Shefaa' concluded a four-day voluntary mission to Jordan where it offered medical treatment to hundreds of Syrian refugees in the Kingdom. This 15th trip undertaken by the team coincided with Kuwait's National Days and witnessed a "new humanitarian achievement," namely offering treatment to 910 Syrians in the Kingdom, among them many children, women and old people, team member Dr Bashar Al-Hashash said.

The trip covered the camps of Al-Zaatari and Al-Azraq close to the Syrian borders as well as other areas randomly occupied by the Syrian refugees, Al-Hashash added. The team has also performed eight surgeries in one of Amman's hospitals, besides donating \$15,000 and medications to support some clinics. Moreover, the team offered cash aid to 450 refugee families with chronic-disease patients. Hashash highly appreciated the Kuwaiti Zakat House and benefactors for their support. He also thanked the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry and the embassy in the Jordanian capital for streamlining the trip. — KUNA



AMMAN: Doctors from a Kuwaiti voluntary team who offered medical services to Syrian refugees in Jordan. — KUNA photos



This handout photo released by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society shows a KRCS worker delivering a food parcel to a man in the besieged East Ghouta neighborhood of Damascus, Syria.

Kuwait discusses with Sudan bringing in more workers

KHARTOUM: Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh held talks yesterday with Sudanese Minister of Labor and Administrative Reform Dr Ahmed Babiker Nahar on a prospected accord for cooperation in various realms. Sabeeh, also Minister of Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs, discussed with her host prospects of increasing number of Sudanese workers in Kuwait, in addition to swapping expertise between the two states, Kuwait's Embassy in Khartoum said in a press statement. The meeting was attended by the State of Kuwait Ambassador Bassam Al-Qabandi and Acting Director-General of Kuwait's Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Mutawteh. Sabeeh arrived in Khartoum late on Tuesday on a three-day official visit. — KUNA



KHARTOUM: Kuwait's Minister of Social Affairs Hind Al-Sabeeh meets with Sudanese Minister of Labor and Administrative Reform Dr Ahmed Babiker Nahar. — KUNA

Interior Minister holds talks with foreign envoys

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah held separate talks yesterday with a host of foreign envoys to Kuwait. Receiving the US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman, Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah underlined the deep-rooted bilateral ties, saying both sides share views on major regional and international

issues, a ministry statement said. Silverman, meanwhile, appreciated Kuwait's support to peace and stability in the region.

The minister's meeting with the French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy reviewed a host of issues of mutual concern to the two nations, focusing on security. Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah also received the Egyptian ambassador Tareq Al-Qouni and an accompanying delegation, and reiterated progress in bilateral ties in all fields. The minister's meetings with the Turkish and Algerian Ambassadors, Ayse Koytak and Abdulhamid Abdawi discussed several issues of common concern. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman. — KUNA photos



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with French Ambassador Marie Masdupuy.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Turkish Ambassador Ayse Koytak.



Syrian ground forces seek to gain territory

Afghan leader offers talks with Taleban 'without preconditions'

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NIPA, Papua New Guinea: People walk at the site of a landslide near the village of Ekari in Papua New Guinea's highlands region after a 7.5-magnitude earthquake. — AFP

Whole villages flattened by deadly quake

Death toll hits 20 in Papua New Guinea

SYDNEY: Whole villages were flattened and water sources spoiled by a powerful earthquake that killed at least 20 people, residents said yesterday as rescuers struggled to reach the hardest-hit areas in Papua New Guinea's remote, mountainous highlands. The magnitude 7.5 quake rocked the rugged Southern Highlands province some 560 km northwest of the capital, Port Moresby, triggering landslides, damaging mining, gas and power infrastructure, and cutting communications.

Scores of aftershocks have hampered rescue efforts and rattled nervous villagers over the past two days, including a 6.0 tremor just before 1 pm yesterday registered by the US Geological Survey. Most of the confirmed fatalities were in or around the provincial capital of Mendi and the town of Tari, according to authorities and residents contacted by Reuters. "It's massive destruction," Stanley Mamu told Reuters by telephone from Tari, 40 km from the epicenter. One

person was killed in Tari and another five were killed in a landslide in a nearby village, he said.

"There are buildings on the ground and landslides along the roads. My home was destroyed. The main sources of water were all flooded, it's dirty and brown and people can't drink that water," Mamu said. Australia has sent a C-130 military transport plane to help with aerial surveillance. The office of Australia's Foreign Minister Julie Bishop said in a statement it would likely take days before the extent of the damage was clear.

Miners and oil and gas companies were also assessing the damage, which included ensuring a 700-km gas pipeline that connects to a coastal liquefaction plant was intact before it could be reopened.

A spokesman from Papua New Guinea's National Disaster Centre said a preliminary assessment of damage was still underway as officials tried to fly by helicopter to cut-off areas. A police officer in Mendi said landslides had buried homes and blocked a river residents worried could flood the town. "We are really in deep fear," said police sergeant Naring Bongi.

"It continues to be active. We didn't sleep well and stayed awake until daybreak ... no helicopters or government officials have come to our assistance." Udaya Regmi, the head of the International Red Cross in Papua New Guinea, said disrupted communication was the most immediate hurdle, but finding clean water would likely be the most pressing need if water tanks had been destroyed.

Medical supplies, food and heavy equipment to clear landslides were also needed, said James Justin, a spokesman for provincial MP Manasseh Makiba. "The casualties have yet to be confirmed but many more than 20 people have lost their lives," he said. Earthquakes are common in Papua New Guinea, which sits on the Pacific's "Ring of Fire", a hotspot for seismic activity due to friction between tectonic plates. Part of PNG's northern coast was devastated in 1998 by a tsunami, generated by a 7.0 quake, which killed about 2,200 people. — Reuters



Highlands hardest hit, cut off by road, phone lines poor

Body odor haters likely to vote for President Trump

PARIS: People easily disgusted by body odors (BO) seem to prefer authoritarian leaders and were likelier to support Donald Trump, an unusual study into the origins of ideology suggested yesterday. The seemingly obscure link, it said, may be rooted in a deep-seated instinct to avoid disease—whether in individuals whose smell suggests they are germ-carriers, or "unfamiliar" people such as immigrants or minorities. The study results "contribute to the growing evidence that contemporary social attitudes may be rooted in basic sensory functions," the researchers wrote.

In two online surveys, the team asked people in several countries a series of questions to determine their level of "body odor disgust sensitivity" (BODS), as well as their position on the political spectrum. They were looking for signs of "right-wing authoritarianism"—which study author Marco Liuzza from Italy's Magna Graecia University summarized as an attitude "promoting aggressive policies towards groups perceived as deviant or threatening the traditional values". Analysis of the data revealed a "solid connection" between how strongly people reacted to body smells and their desire for a leader that can keep

groups of people "in their places", said co-author Jonas Olofsson of Stockholm University.

In a third test, with American participants, the researchers looked for a correlation between BODS and support for Trump—who they said "was described as having a particularly authoritarian message". The study, published in the Royal Society journal *Open Science*, was conducted when Trump and Democrat Hillary Clinton were rival candidates for the presidency. The results "showed that people who were more disgusted by smells were also more likely to vote for Donald Trump than those who were less sensitive," said Olofsson.

Current trends

"We thought that was interesting because Donald Trump talks frequently about how different people disgust him ... It fits with our hypothesis that his supporters would be more easily disgusted themselves." Disgust is a crucial survival tool that helps humans avoid potential health threats lurking in foul-smelling, rotting flesh, for example. It can also be triggered by non-infectious stimuli, including by people who "deviate" from the societal norm, whether it be physically, morally or with their sexual preferences. Smells listed in the questionnaires included breath, sweat, feet, faeces, urine and gas—the participants' own and that of strangers. Political questions tested a participant's stand on issues such as abortion, pornography, religion, and morality in general, as well as whether they intended to vote for Trump or not. — AFP

'It's a lifestyle'; US teens defend guns

SUNRISE: Reanna Frauens, a lifelong gun enthusiast and a proud member of the Markham Skeet, Trap & Sporting Clays Club, is about the same age as many of the 17 victims killed by a shooter with an assault rifle at a Florida high school about a dozen miles away. But unlike many of the survivors of the massacre, the 16-year-old sees a nascent, student-led campaign for tighter gun controls as a threat to her rights under the US Constitution. "It's a horrible tragedy, but when people start promoting gun control, I am taken aback a little bit because it's a sport, it's a lifestyle, and a lot of people don't realize that," said Frauens, a member of the National Rifle Association (NRA), the politically powerful gun-rights advocacy group.

Her concerns, similar to those voiced by other teens at the club in Sunrise, Florida, are a vivid counterpoint to the views of students who have been lobbying state and federal lawmakers for tighter restrictions on gun ownership. "We have a tradition of hunting in my family, and to hear that people want to take it away and put many restrictions on it sounds unrealistic," said Frauens, who saw any attempt to ban the kind of AR-15 semi-automatic rifle used in the school shooting as an infringement upon her Second Amendment right to bear arms. The NRA Foundation, the organization's charitable arm, has long relied on grants for shooting-related programs to build support among new generations of Americans.

A big slice of the more than \$335 million it allocated to shooting programs since 1990



OREM: A 7.62x39mm round sits next a 30 round magazine and an AK-47 with a bump stock installed at Good Guys Gun and Range in Orem, Utah. The bump stock is a device when installed allows a semi-automatic to fire at a rapid rate much like a fully automatic gun. — AFP

went to youth groups ranging from Boy Scout troops to school clubs. Nikolas Cruz, the 19-year-old accused of the killings at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida, belonged to one of those clubs before he was expelled from the school. The young Florida gun enthusiasts suggest it may be premature to forecast a victory for the student-led movement in turning the tide on the gun debate in America. Polls show that previous schools shootings over the last two decades failed to make younger Americans significantly more in favor of gun control than their parents or grandparents.

Attitudes toward gun control appear to have strong correlation with political affiliation and whether a person lived in a household with a firearm, not with age, said Juliana Horowitz, director of research at the Pew Research Center. "At least with the current 18 to 29 year olds, we don't see a difference in their views compared with older

Americans," said Horowitz, while conceding that things could change with the next generation. The Parkland students are attempting to break a nearly decade-old stalemate in which the proportion of Americans backing gun control, over protecting gun rights, has not budged from around 50 percent, according to Pew data.

That said, a poll on Friday by the Marist College Institute for Public Opinion, nine days after Parkland, found three-quarters of Americans believed the students would have some impact on gun reform. And 85 percent said a candidate's views on gun ownership would influence their votes in November's midterm elections. Emma Gonzalez, one of the Parkland students who formed the #NeverAgain gun control movement, surpassed one million followers on Twitter on Monday, twice as many as the NRA has. In the current atmosphere, many of the Markham club members feel like pariahs. — Reuters

International

Thousands of Iraqis too scared to go home because of IS stigma

'ISIS family' daubed on some homes

LONDON: Hundreds of Iraqi families forced to flee last year's fighting in Mosul are being prevented from returning home by their communities because they had a relative who joined Islamic State, an aid worker said yesterday. Communities are also barring some families from accessing aid for the same reason, said Omar Ali, Iraq country director of British charity Human Appeal.

Others have had "ISIS family" daubed on their old homes, jeopardizing their safety, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation on the sidelines of the Bond international development conference in London. "There's a real social cohesion challenge for the future," said the British aid worker who set up Human Appeal's operations in Iraq 14 months ago as fighting raged in Mosul. Hundreds of thousands of people are still living in camps around Mosul after fleeing Iraq's second largest city at the bloody end of the militants' rule. Islamic State, also known as ISIS, seized nearly a third of the country in 2014. Iraq declared victory in December.

Ali said thousands of people had been ostracized by their communities even though they never supported the militants. "You have a family of 50, with just one man who joined ISIS, but the whole family, despite reporting that individual, is now stigmatized - and they are scared to return," he said. Ali warned that there was also potential for land and property disputes as families return home because so few people have papers to prove ownership. He said ISIS had confiscated people's identity papers, creating a "massive problem".

"There are huge issues with civilian ID - many people have no birth certificates, marriage certificates or property ownership certificates," Ali said. "This means people can't access assistance from the government and they can't go back to their houses because they can't prove ownership." Ali said the war had left many women as head of their household, but many were illiterate and did not know how to obtain identity documents to access government help or food aid. Human Appeal and the United Nations refugee agency have opened centers staffed by lawyers to address such problems.

Thousands ostracized by communities

guardianship," Ali said. He said the challenges in Iraq were enormous but aid agencies were "working their socks off" and the government was supportive. "Western Mosul is complete and utter devastation, everything is destroyed, everything is rubble," he added.

"Hospitals are decimated and lack medicines, and many children have been out of school for three years." Although the government has promised people compensation to rebuild homes, Ali said it was "not coming any time soon". Despite the militants' defeat, he said violence continued in the northern city due to ISIS sleeper cells. Iraq's allies promised Baghdad \$30 billion this month to recover from the war ahead of elections in May. Baghdad has said it

Children in charge

The war has also left many households headed by children. "You get eight or nine children being looked after by a 14- or 15-year-old boy or girl who is at the complete mercy of whoever has taken control of their



ARBIL: Picture shows a road sign to Arbil's international airport in the capital of Iraq's autonomous northern Kurdish region. Iraq has extended by three months a ban on international flights to the autonomous Kurdish region, a senior official at Arbil airport in the capital of Iraq Kurdistan said. The federal government in Baghdad first imposed the air blockade in September after Iraq Kurdistan voted overwhelmingly for independence in a non-binding referendum rejected as illegal by the central government. - AFP

needs \$88 billion. A report by three major aid groups yesterday said that the majority of displaced Iraqis in the western province of Anbar also feared returning home. It found that 84 percent of Iraqis in the Amriyah Al-Fallujah and Bezabize camps reported feeling safer in the camps

than in their area of origin. "People are afraid of retribution, unexploded bombs, or simply have nowhere to return to," said Petr Kostohryz, Iraq country director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the aid groups behind the report.—Reuters

Syrian ground forces seek to gain territory

BEIRUT: Syrian government forces launched a ground assault on the edge of the rebel-held eastern Ghouta enclave yesterday, seeking to gain territory despite a Russian plan for five-hour daily ceasefires, a war monitor and sources on both sides said. Hundreds of people have died in 11 days of bombing of the eastern Ghouta, a swathe of towns and farms outside Damascus that is the last major rebel-held area near the capital.

The onslaught has been one of the fiercest of the civil war, now entering its eighth year. The UN Security Council, including President Bashar Al-Assad's strongest ally Russia, passed a resolution on Saturday calling for a 30-day countrywide ceasefire, but it has not come into effect, with Moscow and Damascus saying they are battling members of banned terrorist groups excluded from the truce.

Russia has instead proposed daily five-hour local ceasefires to establish what it calls a humanitarian corridor so aid can enter the enclave and civilians and wounded can be evacuated. The first such truce took place on Tuesday but quickly collapsed when bombing and shelling resumed after a short lull. Moscow and Damascus have accused rebels of shelling the corridor to prevent people leaving. Rebels deny this, and say people will not leave eastern Ghouta because they fear the government. A senior US general accused Moscow of acting as "both arsonist and firefighter" by failing to rein in Assad. Yesterday's ground assault targeted the Hawsh Al-Dawahra area at the eastern edge of the rebel-held area.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a monitoring group, reported advances by the government forces in the area, describing it as the resumption of an assault that first began on Feb 25. It said rebels had inflicted heavy losses on government forces. An official with one of the rebel groups in eastern Ghouta said fighters were battling to repel an attempted incursion, and characterized the battle as "back and forth". A commander in the military alliance that backs Assad said an elite unit of the Syrian army, the Tiger Force, was taking part in the assault, but the advances so far were small.

With no sign of decisive international pressure to stop the attack, eastern Ghouta appears on course to eventually meet the same fate as other areas won back by the government in lengthy, punishing assaults, where rebels and



HAMOURIA: A Syrian man cycles past destroyed buildings in the rebel-held town of Hamouria, in the besieged Eastern Ghouta region on the outskirts of the capital Damascus. —AFP

civilians who oppose Assad were finally evacuated in negotiated withdrawals. Damascus appears to be applying tried and tested military means, combining air strikes and bombardment with ground assaults, as it did to win back eastern Aleppo in 2016.

US, Russia clash

Diplomatic sources have said the chemical weapons watchdog, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, opened an investigation into attacks in eastern Ghouta to determine whether banned munitions were used. US disarmament ambassador Robert Wood said yesterday that Russia has violated its duty to guarantee the destruction of Syria's chemical weapons stockpile and prevent the Assad government from using poison gas.

Syria agreed to give up its stockpile of poison gas and join the international chemical weapons ban in 2013 under a Russian-brokered deal that averted US retaliatory air strikes after a nerve gas attack killed hundreds of people. Washington accused Damascus last year of again using nerve gas and ordered air strikes. More recently, the United States says it has evidence Syrian forces have used

chlorine, which is permitted for civilian purposes but banned as a weapon, in attacks in eastern Ghouta and elsewhere.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, addressing a disarmament conference in Geneva, said Syria had eliminated its poison gas stockpiles, and called allegations it was still using chemical weapons "absurd". Lavrov said militants entrenched in eastern Ghouta were blocking aid and the evacuation of people who want to leave. Moscow would continue to support the Syrian army in totally defeating the "terrorist threat", Lavrov told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

A Syrian army officer told journalists insurgents had shelled the corridor again yesterday to prevent people leaving. Rebels have intensified shelling of nearby government-held Damascus. A medical official in the capital said on Monday 36 people had been killed in four days. Damascus and Moscow say the campaign in eastern Ghouta is needed to halt such shelling. The United Nations said on Tuesday it was proving impossible to aid civilians or evacuate wounded, and said all sides must abide by the 30-day truce sought by the Security Council.—Reuters

Church of the Holy Sepulchre reopens after protest

JERUSALEM: Jerusalem's Church of the Holy Sepulchre, revered as the site of Jesus's (PBUH) crucifixion and burial, reopened yesterday after Israel backtracked on Tuesday from a tax plan and draft property legislation that triggered a three-day protest. The rare decision on Sunday by church leaders to close the ancient holy site, a favourite among tourists and pilgrims, with the busy Easter holiday approaching put extra pressure on Israel to re-evaluate and suspend the moves.

After receiving a statement from the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Armenian clergy announced on Tuesday the church would reopen the next morning. Before dawn yesterday, Wajeeh Nusseibeh, who is in charge of locking and unlocking the church, climbed a stepladder and turned the key to open its

main wooden door. "It's one of the holiest sites for our religion and we prayed very hard these last three days that things would change and it would be open for us to be able to go in," said an American pilgrim, who gave her name only as Laurie.

An Israeli committee led by cabinet minister Tzachi Hanegbi will negotiate with church representatives to try to resolve the dispute over plans to tax commercial properties owned by the church in Jerusalem, Netanyahu's statement said. Church leaders, in a joint statement, welcomed the dialogue. "After the constructive intervention of the prime minister, the churches look forward to engage with Minister Hanegbi, and with all those who love Jerusalem to ensure that our holy city, where our Christian presence continues to face challenges, remains a place where the three monotheistic faiths (Judaism, Islam and Christianity) may live and thrive together."

The Jerusalem Municipality, Netanyahu said, would suspend tax collection actions it had taken in recent weeks. Mayor Nir Barkat has said the churches owed the city more than \$180 million in property tax from their commercial holdings, adding that "houses of worship" would remain exempt. While the review of the tax plan is under way, work on legislation that would allow Israel to expropriate land in



JERUSALEM: Christian worshippers pray inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem after it reopened yesterday, following a three-day closure to protest against Israeli tax measures and a proposed law. —AFP

Jerusalem, that churches have sold to private real estate firms in recent years will also be suspended, Netanyahu said.

The bill's declared aim is to protect homeowners against the possibility private companies will not extend their leases of

land on which their residences stand. Churches are major landowners in Jerusalem. They say such a law would make it harder for them to find buyers for their land-sales that help to cover operating costs of their religious institutions.—Reuters

News in brief

'Suspicious envelope'

WASHINGTON: An envelope containing an "unknown substance" was opened at a US base near Washington on Tuesday, leaving 11 people sick, including military personnel, the Marine Corps said. The envelope, which was received at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall around 3:30 pm, led to an evacuation of the building, the US Marine Corps said in a statement. "Shortly after receiving the letter, 11 people started to feel ill," three of whom were "transported in stable condition for further medical evaluations," it said. "Joint Base Police Department officials are working with local HAZMAT teams, NCIS (Naval Criminal Investigation Service) and the FBI. The building was screened and cleared," it said. CNN reported that a corporal, gunnery sergeant and a colonel complained of a "burning sensation" on their hands and face.—AFP

Czech 'fake jihadist'

PRAGUE: A 70-year-old Czech man is facing terror charges after allegedly causing two train crashes and pretending he was a jihadist in a bid to provoke a backlash against Muslims, a news report said yesterday. The man felled trees by two different railways near the central city of Mlada Boleslav in early June and late July 2017, the lidovsky.cz news site said, quoting a prosecutor. Trains crashed into both trees but no one was injured. In both places, the man left leaflets with messages in Arabic transliterated into Roman characters. Police arrested the man last week. "The culprit is a Czech-born citizen whose motivation was to raise fears of the Muslim migrant wave and terror attacks," the website quoted Prague prosecutor Marek Bodlak as saying. If convicted, the alleged fake jihadist faces up to life in prison, said lidovsky.cz.—AFP

Sex abuse scandal

SEOUL: South Korea's Catholic hierarchy yesterday said it was "devastated" by allegations that a priest had tried to rape a woman, after she came forward to join the country's burgeoning #MeToo movement. The Catholic Church has been rocked around the globe by years of damaging clerical sex abuse cases as well as cover-ups by senior church officials who often ignored victims and protected predators. Until now the church in South Korea had largely avoided such scandals. But earlier this month a female congregant took the rare step of appearing on television to accuse a priest of sexually abusing her in 2011, sparking widespread fury. Announcing she was inspired by the global #MeToo movement to go public, Kim Min-kyung said the unnamed priest sexually abused and tried to rape her during a volunteer mission in South Sudan.—AFP

Tackling slavery online, web firms urged to do more

LONDON: Web companies must do more to stop victims of modern slavery being sold and exploited over the internet, Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May said yesterday, as the country aims to ramp up efforts to tackle traffickers who operate online. Britain's anti-slavery taskforce - which unites ministers, police leaders and intelligence chiefs - is using new technologies and data analytics to identify tactics used by traffickers and uncover slavery victims, the government said.

Sexual exploitation accounts for about half of all cases of modern slavery in Britain, with gangs advertising many victims on adult service websites, said a statement by May's office.—Reuters

International

EU nationals try to secure their futures after Brexit

Queen and cricket: Brexit-wary Europeans become British

LONDON: Songs by The Beatles play out as Britain's newest citizens prepare to take their oath to queen and country—some of a growing number of EU nationals hoping to secure their futures after Brexit. There is talk of queuing and cricket as the group gathers in front of the Union flag and a portrait of Elizabeth II in Islington Town Hall, north London.

"Up until the referendum it never occurred to me to take British citizenship," said Almudena Lara, a 43-year-old Spanish charity worker. Under EU freedom of movement laws, the mother-of-two has lived in Britain for 19 years but decided to formalize her status after the 2016 vote to leave the European Union. "As a European citizen I felt very much at home here. But now with all the uncertainty... given that I had the right to get my citizenship, it's safer to do so," she said.

Britain and the EU struck a deal last December to secure the rights after Brexit of around three million EU citizens living in Britain, and one million British expatriates. But many people are wary of politicians' promises, and applications by EU nationals for British citizenship more than doubled in 2017 compared to the previous year, from 15,460 to 38,528. "I probably would have eventually done it—I see my future here," said Julie Kvaerndrup, a 33-year-old Danish music teacher receiving her passport after six years in Britain. "But the referendum pushed the decision. It made me think, what is going to happen in five, ten years from now?"



Applications for British citizenship more than doubled

values. It is a significant event, and for most a joyful occasion, with participants proudly posing for photographs with their certificates of citizenship. In Islington in north London, registrar Dion Goncalves keeps the mood lively by playing hits by the Fab Four that ring out across the wood-paneled council chamber. He checks to make sure everyone says the oath in full, joking that he has the power to delay their citizenship if they miss a bit.

And highlighting their new rights, he references growing calls for a second Brexit vote, noting they can take part in "any new referendum". A South African with Portuguese parents, Goncalves has been overseeing such ceremonies since 2005 - and obtained his own citizenship in 2013. He quips that being British, he can wear socks with sandals "and I like queuing", before adding more seriously: "It just means that I belong here." The largest numbers of people applying for citizenship are from the Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan Africa, and the ceremonies reflect Britain's multicultural society.

But a growing number are from EU nationals who would not previously have felt the need to apply. Despite the political turbulence caused by Brexit, Britain is also still viewed as a refuge—even by Europeans. "I'm gay, and I grew up in a country where I didn't feel safe," said 36-year-old Cypriot artist George, who asked AFP not to publish his last name. Clutching his certificate, he said: "Today, I felt safe. It's not just about being British, it's about finding a home that accepts me."

'Rules of cricket'

Applicants must normally have lived in Britain for at least five years, and the process itself can be lengthy and expensive, costing more than £1,300 (around 1,500 euros, \$1,800). This includes a test on "Life in the UK", which

'Today I felt safe'

New citizens are required to attend a ceremony at their local town hall where they pledge allegiance to the queen and vow to uphold the rule of law and Britain's democratic



LONDON: Snow falls on a member of the Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment, on Whitehall in central London yesterday. Europe yesterday remained gripped by a blast of Siberian weather which has killed at least 24 people and carpeted palm-lined Mediterranean beaches in snow. —AFP

covers everything from history and politics, sports, culture and culinary habits in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Andrei Misarca, a 26-year-old Romanian software engineer receiving his citizenship in Ealing in west London, said he did not expect life to change much. "I already feel British," he told AFP, while conceding that his new pass-

port might make travelling abroad a bit easier. He has lived in Britain for more than seven years and like others, felt a "sense of urgency" to make his move permanent after the Brexit vote. "Things can change. It's better to have this reassurance rather than hoping for the best," he said. "And I feel like I'm already part of our society. Although I still don't understand the rules of cricket." —AFP

Italy's quake-hit city L'Aquila still grateful to ex-PM Silvio Berlusconi

LAQUILA: Nearly nine years after a devastating earthquake, L'Aquila is still struggling to emerge from the rubble, but residents of the once stunning city thank Silvio Berlusconi for putting roofs over their heads. Then-prime minister Berlusconi is now back in politics as the head of a centre-right coalition tipped to win the most votes in a March 4 poll. While many around Italy are skeptical about the billionaire media mogul's return, people here remember how, following the April 2009 quake that left more than 300 people dead, he moved quickly to build homes for many thousands left with nothing.

In September that year the first quake-resistant Progetto CASE (meaning "homes project") apartment blocks were thrown up. By August 2010 they would offer shelter to around 15,000 people. Despite the fact that last year some families had to be evacuated due to structural problems, the speed with which Berlusconi's government moved in the wake of the tragedy has not been forgotten. "I cried when I moved in here," says Pierluigi Lo Marco, standing outside the place he called home until May 2014.

'Roof over my head'

Lo Marco was among those, in the presence of Berlusconi in September 2009, to be given the first 400 homes in the Bazzano area, one of 19 new neighborhoods placed effectively in the Abruzzo countryside. There was some controversy over the speed with which the houses were built, while many suspected Berlusconi was merely after a popularity boost.

Also, many of the houses were built in locations isolated from the rest of the city and left without maintenance. "Regardless I thank God that, whether for honest reasons or not, there was someone who put a roof over my head," Lo Marco adds. "You can't ignore that ... I'd be a hypocrite to do so." Today more than 10,000 people still live in the homes built in the wake of the disaster. Lo Marco explains that they are largely people who are still waiting to return to their city centre homes and young couples who can't afford the rent elsewhere.

Workmen, diggers, cranes

Some are paying as little as 15 euros (\$18) a month and have little incentive to move back onto the private housing market. "Often ... the building work would be done, but in the meantime the tenant lost their job and couldn't pay the rent anymore," says Lo Marco. "So they've stayed here." In the centre of L'Aquila workmen, diggers and cranes crowd the streets and dominate the skyline. The elegant buildings and squares—which span the medieval, Renaissance and Baroque periods—are beginning to take shape and restaurants and bars are open for business. But local restorer Francesca Aloisio says: "Normal life hasn't come back to this city."

Aloisio is working to restore the facades on three buildings in central L'Aquila's "red zone"—the area still considered unsafe. She points to the "spotty" way the rebuilding has been carried out since work began in the city centre in 2013 - four years after the earthquake hit. "Often a building is done but it's not connected to the water, gas or electricity," she says. "Or it's a white elephant surrounded by buildings propped up and others that need to be knocked down."

The other issue holding L'Aquila back is the lack of businesses other than the bars and restaurants. Family-run bakers and grocers, for instance, are conspicuous by their absence. —AFP

Trump son-in-law Kushner loses top security clearance

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior aide Jared Kushner has lost his top-level security clearance, sources familiar with the matter said Tuesday, a decision with potentially profound implications for the US administration. Two sources, who could not speak on the record because the status of security clearances is classified, confirmed US media reports that the 37-year-old White House aide will no longer be able to access America's most closely guarded secrets.

The White House-up to and including the president himself—refused to comment on the record, but officials insisted that the decision would not impact Kushner's role. Still, Kushner's loss of access to "Top Secret/SCI (Sensitive Compartmented Information)" data casts serious doubt on his status as a powerbroker inside the White House and his ability to negotiate Middle East peace.

Kushner had been an integral part of Trump's election campaign and, among White House advisors, is seen as something like a first among equals. The soft-spoken aide is married to the president's daughter Ivanka and has been a leading figure in efforts to reach a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians. He has also been a strong proponent of Washington's intensified support for the government of embattled Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Politico and CNN first reported that his clearance may have been rescinded late last week. The decision comes just days before Netanyahu visits the White House.

Risk of losing credibility

Former US negotiator Aaron David Miller said Kushner now risks losing "credibility" with interlocutors in the Middle East. "They know you can't be reading about them," he said, and "you can't possibly know what you



WASHINGTON: Photo shows an empty seat in front of a name plate for White House Senior Advisor Jared Kushner during the 2018 White House business session with governors in the State dining Room of the White House. —AFP

don't know." Kushner's lawyer had earlier admitted that he has not yet completed the formal clearance procedure, despite reportedly getting access to the most secret material contained in the president's daily briefing—the crown jewels of US intelligence. White House Chief of Staff John Kelly ordered changes to the clearance system after a top aide—Rob Porter—worked for months without full clearance because of allegations he abused both his former wives. "I will not comment on anybody's specific security clearance," Kelly said in a statement.

Kelly has told Kushner he had "full confidence in his ability to continue performing his duties in his foreign policy portfolio, including overseeing our Israeli-Palestinian

peace effort and serving as an integral part of our relationship with Mexico." "Everyone in the White House is grateful for these valuable contributions to furthering the president's agenda. There is no truth to any suggestion otherwise," Kelly added. Ivanka Trump's level of security clearance has also been in question. She recently visited South Korea and briefed that country's president Moon Jae-in on new North Korea sanctions.

For almost any staffer other than Kushner, his future in the White House would now be under serious doubt. He had already been forced to repeatedly revise statements to US intelligence and law enforcement about his contacts with foreign officials and his business interests. —AFP

Murdered Slovak journalist 'probed Italian mafia links'

BRATISLAVA: Murdered Slovak journalist Jan Kuciak was probing alleged high-level political corruption linked to the Italian mafia, the news portal he worked for revealed yesterday, as the killing sparked calls for fresh anti-corruption protests in the small EU state. Opposition politicians have demanded the interior minister and police chief step down, accusing them of failing to protect Kuciak when he filed criminal complaints after receiving threats. Kuciak, 27, and his fiancée Martina Kusnirova were found shot dead on Sunday at his home in Velka Maca, a town to the east of Bratislava, raising concerns at home and abroad about media freedoms and the level of corruption in Slovakia.

He reported for actuality.sk, a news portal owned by German-Swiss Axel Springer and Ringier group, focusing on fraud cases involving businessmen with links to Prime Minister Robert Fico's governing SMER-SD party and other politicians. At the stroke of midnight, actuality.sk published Kuciak's last, unfinished investigative report on possible political links to Italian businessmen with alleged ties to Calabria's notorious 'Ndrangheta mafia supposedly operating in eastern Slovakia.

"Two people from the circles of a man who came to Slovakia as someone accused in a mafia case in Italy have daily access to the country's prime minister," Kuciak wrote in the article titled "Italian mafia in Slovakia. Its goblins extend into politics." "Italians with ties to the mafia have found a second home in Slovakia. They started doing business, receiving subsidies, drawing EU funds, but especially building relationships with influential people in politics—



BRATISLAVA: A policeman stands guard behind bundles of Euro banknotes during a press conference on the murder case of a leading journalist who investigated high-profile tax fraud in Bratislava, Slovakia. —AFP

even in the government office of the Slovak Republic.

"They owned or still own dozens of companies. Their property is worth tens of millions of euros." Slovakia's leading SME broadsheet had first revealed details of Kuciak's investigation on Tuesday. The report triggered an angry rebuke from Fico, who showed reporters stacks of euro bills totaling the one million euro (\$1.2 million) reward he has offered for information that could lead to the killers. "Do not link innocent people without any evidence to a

double homicide. It's crossing the line. It's no longer funny," he warned. The Kuciak shooting followed the October murder of campaigning Maltese journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia—who exposed crime and corruption on the Mediterranean island—in a car bombing. Police commander Tibor Gaspar, who has said the motive was "most likely" related to Kuciak's investigative journalism, warned reporters that publishing details of the case could tip off suspects. —AFP

International

School restarts in South Sudan, in theory; 30% of teachers quit

Classrooms filled with hungry displaced families

JUBA: Some of South Sudan's 6,000 schools opened for a new academic year this month—but the government does not know how many. Teachers have not been paid. Many of them, and their pupils, are on the run after four years of fighting. In the capital, classrooms are filled with hungry displaced families. The United Nations Children's Fund estimated in December that three-quarters of children are out of school, threatening to create a second "lost generation" of uneducated adults in a country in danger of becoming a failed state. Some are the children of the original "lost boys" — the nickname for the generation that survived South Sudan's 22-year liberation war from Sudan only to be caught up in a new conflict two years after it won independence in 2011.



UN fears 'lost generation'

Men like Lawrence Samuel had hoped for food, peace and education for his own children. But the civil war shattered those dreams. He could not pay for any of his children to finish school. Most of his neighbors cannot even pay for food. "If you ask a child in primary school questions," he said, "He will not answer you because his mind is very far away, thinking of food." Last year, only half of schools opened, said Education Minister Deng Deng Hoc, whose officials are still trying to gauge how many are open now, three weeks into the new term.

Tens of thousands of people have died and 4.5 million people have fled their homes since clashes between troops loyal to President Salva Kiir and former vice president Riek Machar broke out in the oil-rich new country in 2013. Almost three-quarters of the adult population is illiterate, one of the highest rates in the world, according to the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The latest attempt to end the conflict, a ceasefire signed in December, was violated within hours. Many

schools are deserted in abandoned towns and villages around the country. Nearly 19,000 children have been recruited by armed groups, the UN said, although several hundred were released this month. But militias easily lure children by offering them food and protection.

On Monday, the UN said more than 7 million people — nearly two-thirds of the population — would have problems finding food this year. Parts of the country are experiencing shortages close to last year's famine. If they are lucky, mothers might be able to choose between feeding their children and sending them to school. Two of Salaw Adam's five children were in school last year. She won't be sending any this year, she said, after school fees doubled from 1,000 to 2,000 South Sudanese pounds per term, equivalent to \$9 on the black market this week. "Of course, missing school will affect them," she said quietly, wringing her hands. "But what can I do?"

Teachers deserting

Fighting forced oil companies to shut down most of the country's production, slashing government revenues. Education ministry director general Daniel Swaka Ngwanki said salaries for the last three months of the previous academic term, which ended in December, have not been paid. The government allocated 3 percent of its 2017/18 budget to education. More than 50 percent went to security and administration, including President Kiir's office. Neighboring Kenya spent 7.3 percent of its national budget on education this year.

Ateny Wek Ateny, Kiir's spokesman, said the presidency needed a large budget because cash-strapped ministers were constantly asking for bailouts. "When other departments are supposed to spend and they couldn't find any



GANYIEL, South Sudan: Two women hold their acute malnourished children in a stabilization centre in Ganyiel, Panyijjar county, in South Sudan. Nearly half of the population in war-torn South Sudan is experiencing extreme hunger, with many more set to run out of food as famine looms, government and UN agencies said. —AFP

(money) ... they will come to the office of the president to ask for intervention," he said. Even if teachers' salaries had been paid, Ngwanki said, rampant inflation means a teachers' monthly salary of 1,500 South Sudanese pounds won't even buy a bag of cooking charcoal. "Many teachers have deserted the profession," he said. The UN estimates

around a third of teachers have left their posts. Former teacher Garang Mabior Deng is among those. He quit in February. He left to work at a private company offering him twice his teaching salary: "I decided to teach because I loved helping my country, but after two years, it was impossible to take care of my family." —Reuters

Terror victims shun Indonesia reconciliation meeting

JAKARTA: A group of terror attack survivors and traumatized relatives of those killed boycotted Indonesia's first-ever meeting between former militants and their victims yesterday, marring an event hailed as a key step towards reconciliation. The government-hosted talks brought together 124 people convicted of terror-related crimes and some 51 survivors or family members of those killed in attacks. But it drew fewer than expected survivors as two victim's rights groups shunned the event, saying the face-to-face meeting in the ballroom of a Jakarta hotel was poorly planned.

"There are so many of them (former convicts) in the room. We're not ready psychologically," said Ni Luh Erniati, an adviser to the Indonesian Survivors Foundation, which did not attend. "We have forgiven them but we cannot predict what would happen if our emotions were ignited." Indonesia, which has the world's biggest Muslim population, has suffered a string of extremist attacks this century, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed more than 200 people.

Most of the dead were foreign tourists but 38 Indonesians were among those killed. Erniati lost her husband in the Bali attack and later founded the Isana Dewata Foundation to represent families of those killed. Both the Isana Dewata and Indonesian Survivors foundations stayed away from yesterday's event. "We've tried similar smaller-scale events in the past but it was hard even then," said Erniati. "Some survivors were so emotional and they became furious at the former militants."

But some victims were able to dispel their anger and attend the talks. "If I succumb to my resentment, I would not be any different from them," said Febby Firmansyah—badly injured in Jakarta's 2003 JW Marriott hotel bombing that killed twelve. He refused to hold a grudge despite a mangled hand and permanent burn scars all over his body. "I cannot force other survivors to forgive them as quickly as I did... so I



JAKARTA: Government officials, former militants and terror attack survivors attend a 'terrorist-victim' meeting in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP

warned them: don't come if you are not ready," he said at the meeting.

'I am sorry'

Sumarno, who served four years in jail for delivering and helping pack explosives used in the Bali bombing, said terror attacks must stop. "It's hard and saddens me to see survivors who are now suffering from permanent disabilities," said the former militant, who like many Indonesians goes by one name. "I had not imagined the impact would be like that. I am sorry and have apologized to them." He added that the meeting might help soften "discrimination" toward convicted militants who can have trouble finding work and fitting back into society.

Yesterday's meeting was the last of a three-day event which included remarks from government ministers along with education, social affairs and religious officials. Only the

convicted militants took part in classes about tolerance and diversity held earlier in the week. Some cast doubt on the meeting when it was first announced last month, while there was also suspicion that its chief purpose was to boost the power of Indonesia's counter-terrorism agency by bringing the oversight of terror victims under its authority.

Chief Security Minister Wiranto rejected those claims yesterday. "This event is unprecedented. It's never happened before," he said. "This event goes beyond just being ceremonial." Jakarta has been running a deradicalisation program for a number of years while a crackdown has weakened the most dangerous terror networks. But fears have grown of a resurgence in militancy after hundreds of Indonesians flocked to the Middle East and the Philippines in recent years to join the Islamic State group or its allies.—AFP

Afghan president offers talks with Taliban 'without preconditions'

KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani offered recognition of the Taliban as a legitimate political group yesterday as part of a proposed political process that he said could lead to talks aimed at ending more than 16 years of war. The offer, made at the start of an international conference aimed at creating a platform for peace talks, adds to a series of signals from both the Western-backed government and the Taliban suggesting a greater willingness to consider dialogue. Ghani proposed a ceasefire and a release of prisoners as part of a range of options including new elections, involving the militants, and a constitutional review as part of a pact with the Taliban.

"We are making this offer without preconditions in order to lead to a peace agreement," Ghani said in opening remarks to the conference attended by officials from around 25 countries involved in the so-called Kabul Process. "The Taliban are expected to give input to the peace-making process, the goal of which is to draw the Taliban, as an organization, to peace talks," he said, adding that he would not "pre-judge" any group seeking

peace. The comments represented a significant shift for Ghani, who in the past has regularly called the Taliban "terrorists" and "rebels" although he has also offered to talk with parts of the movement that accepted peace.

The Taliban, fighting to restore Islamic rule after their 2001 ouster by US-led troops, have offered to begin talks with the United States but have so far refused direct talks with Kabul. It was unclear whether they would be prepared to shift their stance, despite growing international pressure. However Ghani, who recently helped launch the latest stage in a major regional gas pipeline from Turkmenistan, said the momentum for peace was building from neighboring countries that increasingly saw the necessity of a stable Afghanistan. "The Taliban show awareness of these contextual shifts and seem to be engaged in a debate on the implications of acts of violence for their future," he said.

Political office

Ghani said a framework for peace negotiations should be created with the Taliban recognised as a legitimate group, with their own political office to handle negotiations in Kabul or another agreed location. Taliban officials have acknowledged that they have faced pressure from friendly countries to accept talks and said their recent offers to talk to the United States reflected concern that they could be seen to be standing in the way of peace. Ghani said the process would be accompanied by coordinated diplomatic support including a global effort to persuade neighboring Pakistan, which Kabul has regularly accused of aiding the Taliban, of the advantages of a stable Afghanistan. He renewed an offer of talks with Pakistan,



KABUL: Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and Afghan First Lady Rula Ghani pray at the second Kabul Process conference at the Presidential Palace yesterday. —AFP

which rejects the accusations and points to the thousands of its citizens who have been killed by militant groups over the years. In return for Ghani's offer, the Taliban would have to recognize the Afghan government and respect the rule of law, he said. In addition, Taliban prisoners could be released and their names removed from international blacklists, while security arrangements could be made for Taliban agreeing to join a process of reconciliation. Former fighters and refugees could be reintegrated and provided with jobs. The United States last year stepped up its military assistance to Afghanistan, notably through a sharp increase in air strikes, with the aim of breaking a stalemate with the insurgents and forcing them to the negotiating table.—Reuters

News in brief

Buhari for second term?

ABUJA: The national executive committee of Nigeria's ruling party has endorsed President Muhammadu Buhari to seek a second term in an election next year, two senior party sources said yesterday. Buhari, who took office in May 2015, has not yet said whether he intends to seek re-election. The 75-year-old leader spent five months on medical leave in Britain last year for an unspecified ailment, raising questions about his ability to run Africa's most populous nation. The national executive committee of the president's All Progressives Congress (APC) party, which takes decisions on the party's direction, held a one-day meeting which concluded late on Tuesday. "The party made it clear that this endorsement is not an automatic ticket for the president," one of the sources said, adding that the party would still conduct a presidential primary to be fair to other potential candidates.—Reuters

14 missing as boats sink

KINSHASA: At least 14 people are feared drowned after two overcrowded, rickety boats sank in the River Congo, the interior minister of DR Congo said yesterday, though local sources fear the toll could be much higher. "Fourteen missing, 108 survived," the Democratic Republic of Congo's interior minister, Henri Mova, said in an email, after the two vessels sank in the river in the southwestern province of Mai-Ndombe. Local official Didace Pembe said many more people may have died. "The crowded vessels were sailing at night, and they were suddenly hit by strong winds. Many more went missing in this accident than those who survived," Pembe said. Local fisherman Leon Bateko told AFP by phone that weather conditions on the powerful river "were extremely bad", hampering the rescue efforts.—AFP

10 killed in Nigeria

YOLA: At least 10 people were killed in an attack in a region of northeastern Nigeria that has been a flash-point for communal clashes between farmers and herders, a military commander and a local politician said. Such clashes have plagued Nigeria's hinterland despite pledges by President Muhammadu Buhari since he took power in 2015 to improve security, especially in the northeast, which also faces an insurgency by the militant Islamist group Boko Haram. Brigadier general Bello Mohammed said yesterday soldiers under his command killed 10 herdsmen and arrested seven others after attackers struck a village in the Gwamba region of Adamawa state on Tuesday. The region is a hotspot for violence between Muslim herders and Christian farmers over rights to grazing land and agriculture.—Reuters

23 dead in DR Congo

GOMA: Twenty-three people have been killed in renewed clashes between ethnic groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo's troubled east, according to an official toll yesterday. The violence, in Rutshuru territory in the conflict-scarred province of North Kivu, has pitted the Hutu community on one side against the Nande and Hunde groups on the other. "We have recorded the death of 16 civilians and seven militiamen since Sunday," Francois Bakundakabo, an aide to the provincial governor said. Fighting occurred in the villages of Bwalanda, Mutanda and Kikuku, where the groups have regularly clashed over control of land. Several dozen people were killed in 2017. The Nande and Hunde consider Congolese Hutu to be foreigners and in league with Rwandan Hutu rebels, gathered in a notoriously violent militia called the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR).—AFP

Analysis

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Toronto's housing supply challenge and growth plan paradox

Toronto, Canada's largest city and one of the world's hottest property markets, has a supply problem and the nation's housing agency admits it is not quite sure why soaring prices have not spurred more construction. New homes replace demolished ones at a sharply lower rate than early this decade, completion times for multi-family projects have doubled and prospective buyers have far fewer new homes to choose from than only a few years ago. The reason, in part, may lie in an ambitious growth plan for the greater Toronto area the Ontario province forged over a decade ago.

With new "density" targets favoring multi-family housing, designated urban growth areas and tougher environmental rules, the 2006 plan sought to check urban sprawl while supporting the area's further growth as North America's major economic hub. The market, though, did not follow that vision. Detached homes are still most sought-after and their tight supply keeps prices high even as some condominiums and multi-family projects languish.

Developers say the growth plan, updated in 2017 with higher density targets, both created a demand-supply mismatch and added a layer of new municipal regulations. "The growth plan has throttled growth severely," said Matthew Cory, principal at planning consulting firm Malone Given Parsons. Ryerson University economist Frank Clayton said part of the problem was the plan's emphasis on protecting the environment and heritage sites at the expense of development. "That superimposed more planning on a planning structure that was already bureaucratic-heavy," he said in an interview.

Toronto's troubles are of national concern given its role as Canada's top financial and technology hub, which, together with surrounding towns, accounts for a fifth of the nation's economy. The city, alongside Vancouver, Canada's third-largest city, is also among top North American destinations for international property investors and a major draw for Chinese capital. So far, the authorities have sought to cool what they call speculative demand with stricter lending rules and by taxing foreign buyers. Now they also begin to look at supply bottlenecks as a driver for prices that have risen by 43 percent in Toronto and 63 percent in Vancouver just over the past three years.

"If I were concerned about anything from a long-term housing market point of view it's the supply of housing in Toronto and Vancouver," Evan Siddal, the head of the federal housing agency, the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation, told Reuters. "We're replacing houses in Toronto at a much lower rate than we were five or six years ago," he said. The agency's data, first published by Reuters, show just over 20 new homes were built in Toronto for each one demolished in 2016, down from around 70 to one in 2011. Data from property research firm Altus Group offered a different perspective: it estimated last year prospective buyers had about 11,000 properties to choose from in the greater Toronto area, less than half the level of just two years earlier.

'Land banking' and red tape

Siddal said "simpler, more flexible" approval procedures would help, but developers were also contributing to the bottlenecks by "land banking" - delaying projects in anticipation prices will rise further. In a report this month, the agency said, however, that it needed more data to fully understand the factors behind supply constraints. Industry representatives said complex regulation, rather than speculation, drives the delays.

Michael Pozzebon, vice president of low-rise developer DG Group, said his firm used to sell houses once it got approvals because in the past it knew how long projects would take. "To sell at that point now, there's a risk that we can't deliver the product on time. So there's a perception that we're holding on to land without developing it," he said. A 2016 survey of land use regulations by the Fraser Institute, a public policy think-tank bears out developers' assessment. The survey found Toronto was Canada's most regulated city, with approval times nearly double that in other centers, and the highest compliance costs, followed by Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary and Montreal.

Developers now have to satisfy about 200 conditions, from protecting species at risk to transport requirements, to get municipal approval, according to Bryan Tuckey, former head of the Toronto area's building and developer lobby. That compared with about 25 at the start of the last decade, he said. East Gwillimbury, a town just north of Toronto, is a case in point.

The plan designated it as a significant growth area, but the municipality is at least six years behind with construction of a new sewage plant needed for the town's population to grow from 30,000 to 86,000 by 2031. The reason? A municipal funding shortage and delayed environmental assessments by the province, says James Young, town councillor and former mayor. "Without the servicing, we stop. It's been very frustrating," Young said.

Developers said municipal cash is tight in part because planned condominiums take longer than expected to complete, or do not get built at all, and that means less income from development fees that help fund infrastructure. —Reuters



World braces for Xi power play blowback

President Xi Jinping's leap toward lifelong rule has largely been met by guarded silence in world capitals as governments try to predict how China's formidable leader will wield his newfound power on the global stage. The Communist Party's move to lift presidential term limits will allow Xi to reign supreme as he pushes through an ambitious agenda to turn China into a military and economic superpower by mid-century. "Xi has all this power. But we don't really know what he wants to use it for," said Kerry Brown, the director of the Lau China Institute at King's College London. "If it's to address the challenges that need sorting out in China then that will be a good thing. If not, then it will be deeply problematic."

China is already causing global jitters with its growing assertiveness, from its territorial claims in the South China Sea to the opening of its first overseas military base in the Horn of Africa and its influence in capitals across the Western world. Xi has championed one of the largest international infrastructure projects in history, the \$1 trillion Belt and Road initiative, which has drawn both interest and suspicion about China's intentions.

At the same time, it is teetering on the brink of a trade war with the world's largest economy, the United States. At home, the move has been hailed by state media as a necessary measure to usher in an era of "stability" that will provide a reassuring beacon of hope to countries spooked by the turmoil of American politics. "In the future, with Xi leading the country for a very long time, it's guaranteed that foreign relations will be stable and predictable," Wu Xinbo, a US politics expert at Fudan University, told AFP.

'Autocrat for life'

The Communist Party's constitutional amendment is certain to be approved by the rubber-stamp National People's Congress when it begins its annual session next week, which will enable Xi to remain president beyond 2023. Where countries stand on the move largely depends

on where they sit. In Russia, whose President Vladimir Putin's unyielding grasp on power is often cited as a model for Xi's rule, the reaction to the abolition was largely positive, according to Alexander Gabuev, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Moscow Center.

Although some China-watchers expressed concern that China could slip back into Mao-style authoritarianism, the government thinks that Xi "staying in power beyond 2023 is a good thing," especially as "relations with the West are hitting new lows every month". But Xi's power play is likely to fuel growing suspicions about China in Western countries. After the election of Donald Trump in the US, China tried to step into the vacuum created by his rapid withdrawal from international trade pacts and environmental agreements.

Xi's speech at Davos last year emphasizing the importance of globalization earned rapturous reviews from liberal politicians. But "getting permission from a rubberstamp legislative branch to become autocrat-for-life only undermines the ability of democratic leaders to afford such respect," said Orville Schell, director of the Center on US-China Relations at the Asia Society in New York.

It will look particularly bad in Australia, New Zealand and the United States, where concerns about China's

growing power and how it chooses to exercise it have increasingly preoccupied lawmakers. The White House has avoided criticism of the move, saying the decision was "up to China". But "there's been a lot more concern about China and what it wants abroad," said Eric

Hundman, an international relations expert at NYU Shanghai. "Everybody's going to read this as he's going to become a dictator, which makes China look much more threatening."

Surrounded by sycophants

Xi's consolidation of power means that China's own foreign policy will likely become more assertive, said Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies. If the term limit repeal is a sign of strength, that could mean that Xi will increasingly be surrounded by sycophants and yes-men. "Xi is unlikely to get balanced, objective input and advice. He may be overconfident about what he can achieve," Glaser said. That could mean a China that is "even more aggressive" in its use of economic coercion and its assertion of its territorial rights in places like the East and South China Sea, where it has long-standing disputes with its neighbors. NYU's Hundman warned that if Xi's apparent power grab is a sign of weakness, then that "may lead to actions on China's part that look irrational... but are directed at domestic audiences". He could do things such as threatening Taiwan that are aimed at "whipping up popular support. They would look very provocative to us, from a foreign perspective, but they may not be intended that way." —AFP

From prison to fridges: Japan has a mascot

Representing everything from prisons to safe sex, Japan has literally thousands of mascots, ranging from the uber-cute to the frankly disturbing. As Tokyo 2020 organizers unveiled the mascot for the games yesterday, here are five of the most weird and wonderful mascots from the country that brought you Hello Kitty and Pokemon.

Funassyi: The 'pear fairy'

Funassyi is a bright-yellow hyperactive lifesize mascot in the shape of a pear, who has a love of heavy metal and is renowned throughout Japan for death-defying TV stunts and good-natured bad behavior. The self-appointed representative for Funabashi City, 20 km east of Tokyo, Funassyi shot to fame after coming to blows with arch-rival mascot Kumamon on live TV.

The Aerosmith and Ozzy Osbourne-worshipping mascot has delighted fans with stunts: Once risking life and limb running shrieking through a field as explosions cascaded behind it. The chubby prankster has given press conferences and made international appearances as far afield as New York, entertaining supporters with high-pitched squealing, jumping and violent gyrating.

Katakuri-chan: Jailbird mascot

You might think prison is no place for a cuddly mascot, but not so in Japan, where Asahikawa prison on the northern island of Hokkaido adopted Katakuri-chan in an

attempt to soften its dark and foreboding image. The humanoid mascot stands nearly two metres tall, has a huge smiling face and sports an enormous purple flower for hair. It has a female and male incarnation and proudly wears a prison warden's uniform. The mascot's name and hair is inspired by the dogtooth violet - katakuri - which blooms on a mountain near the prison as soon as the winter snows melt.

'Jimmy Hattori: Binja condom'

Mascots are even used to promote safe sex in Japan, with one of the most famous being Jimmy Hattori, a ninja with a large pink condom on his head. Another mascot that has raised eyebrows is Com-chan, a fluffy character also based on a condom that is used by the AIDS information center in Yokohama, near Tokyo.

'Ororon Robo Mebius'

Budgetary pressures have forced some local communities to cut back on the number of mascots representing the community but the remote town of Rumoi in Hokkaido decided it simply couldn't face it, so created a terrifying hybrid from eight different mascots. "Ororon Robo Mebius", which resembles a gigantic humanoid "Transformers"-style robot, has legs, arms, a face and a body that all came from different mascots representing various communities.

'Fukuppy'

Not all mascots are cute and cuddly. Meron-kuma ("Melon-bear") from Yubari in Hokkaido comes in the shape of a terrifying bear with a melon for a head, a nasty snarl and razor-sharp teeth. Despite this, children love snapping photos with their heads between the bear's toothy grin.

One mascot that fell foul of online ridicule was that of Japanese refrigerator maker Fukushima Industries, with the unfortunate name of "Fukuppy". The firm tried to blend the first part of its name -

Fuku - and the end of the English word happy but the result was that the Internet exploded in gags. It was particularly unfortunate as it recalled the cata-

logue of mishaps at the Fukushima nuclear plant - despite the firm having nothing to do with the area hit by nuclear catastrophe. —AFP



This file handout photo from Asahikawa Prison taken on Sept 3, 2013 shows a person dressed up as "Katakuri-chan", the mascot of Asahikawa Prison. —AFP



Picture taken with a drone on Tuesday shows snow-covered sailing ships mooring at the boatyard harbor of Kirchdorf on the Baltic Sea island of Poel, northeastern Germany, where bays freeze due to permafrost and night temperatures below minus ten degrees Celsius. — AFP

Hezbollah launches Syria war videogame

BEIRUT: Sidling down the mean streets of Syria with his rifle, he picks off his enemies relentlessly: Ahmed is the hero of the videogame Lebanon's Hezbollah movement launched yesterday. The Shiite armed group held a ceremony and news conference in Beirut to unveil the latest production of its electronic media department, which it named "Sacred Defense - Protecting the Homeland And Holy Sites". "It reflects Hezbollah's experience in Syria," Hassan Allam, one of the game's developers, told AFP.

With a life of 12 hours, the first-person shooter game is a low-cost spinoff of bestseller "Call of Duty" that glorifies the group's battles in the ongoing Syrian conflict. The scenario's introductory sequence has Ahmed in plain clothes visiting the Sayyeda Zeinab shrine, one of the holiest Shiite sites. The mausoleum comes under attack and Ahmed reap-

pears wearing a military uniform in a room whose walls bear a poster of Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah.

The game allows for a series of different battles, including against the Islamic State group, in a variety of different locations, including Syria's border with Lebanon. Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran and is often considered to have more firepower than Lebanon's own regular army, deployed fighters in Syria in 2013.

They have since fought alongside the forces of President Bashar Al-Assad, an intervention widely seen as a major factor in the regime's survival. Two years into the Syrian conflict, the Assad regime's grip on Damascus was tenuous and its days looked numbered, but it has since regained significant ground. "The idea took shape from real events on the ground, that took place in Syria, at the Syrian-Lebanese border and in Lebanon itself," Allam explained.

The game, which will sell for \$5 in gaming shops, is expected to be particularly popular in Shiite-dominated areas such as Beirut's southern suburbs, where the militia's aura is immense. Allam said the aim was to make players understand "what really happened and what the fighters who made sacrifices were doing". Hezbollah has lost many hundreds of fighters, including senior commanders, since it

deployed some of its forces to Syria. "To finish one level and move to the next, the player will suffer... He will see how difficult it is for the resistance fighters," Allam said.

The battles a player has to win to complete the game include fighting in Qusayr against rebel groups in 2013, Hezbollah's first major military victory in Syria. "Sacred Defense" ends with the Ras Baalbek battle in Syria's mountainous border region with Lebanon during which Hezbollah

and Lebanese army troops fought on two separate fronts, which saw the militants defeated in the summer of 2017.

In a gamer room in southern Beirut among the first to receive a copy, 25-year-old Hussein Mhanna is testing the new Hezbollah product. "I don't know where the shooting is coming from," said the young man, who is a videogame fanatic but was stuck on level 2. "I loved it, I wanted to shoot everybody." — AFP



BEIRUT: A Lebanese man plays a computer game created by Hezbollah called "Holy Defense" in a southern suburb of the capital yesterday. —AFP

MBS says reforms aimed at 'cancer' ...

Continued from Page 1

Hariri's office had previously said he would meet with King Salman and Crown Prince Mohammed.

The Washington Post said yesterday Prince Mohammed complained he had been unfairly criticized

over Hariri's resignation. "Now he's in a better position," the newspaper quoted the crown prince as saying. Hariri's visit comes after a meeting Monday in Beirut with Saudi envoy Nizar Al-Alula during which Hariri said he received and accepted an invitation to travel to Riyadh. Alula also met Hezbollah ally President Michel Aoun, who told him of Lebanon's desire to "maintain the best relations" with the oil-rich Gulf state. Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, also a Hezbollah ally, said he had heard "very positive talk" from Alula about Lebanon and "its historical and civilized role", a statement from Berri's office said. — Agencies



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Sports

Eric Staal's hat trick leads Wild over Blues in lopsided 8-3 win

Jack Campbell made 41 saves to pick up his first career NHL win

MINNESOTA: Eric Staal collected three goals and five points, and Jason Zucker potted one goal and had four assists as the Minnesota Wild recorded their fifth straight win with an 8-3 thumping of the struggling St. Louis Blues on Tuesday night in Saint Paul, Minn. Mikael Granlund, the third member of Minnesota's top line, scored twice in a four-point game as the Wild tied a franchise record for most goals in a game. Goalie Devan Dubnyk made 22 saves in the victory. Mikko Koivu had a goal and an assist for the Wild, and Jared Spurgeon scored a goal. The Blues got a pair of goals from Vladimir Tarasenko and one from Alex Pietrangelo.

PREDATORS 6, JETS 5

Ryan Hartman's first goal in a Nashville uniform—with exactly one minute left in the third period—gave Nashville a comeback win over Winnipeg. Hartman emerged as the hero in his first game since being acquired in a trade with the Chicago Blackhawks. Roman Josi collected five assists for the Predators, and Craig Smith scored two goals. The Predators, who trailed 5-3 with less than 10 minutes remaining, recorded their fifth straight win and denied the Jets a chance to move into a tie with them for first place in the Central Division. The Jets lost for the first time in three games.



McAvoy scores winner in a two-point game

KINGS 4, GOLDEN KNIGHTS 1
Jack Campbell made 41 saves to pick up his first career NHL win as visiting Los Angeles completed a back-to-back sweep of Vegas. Campbell, the 11th pick of the 2010 draft by the Dallas Stars, was making his first start in goal for the Kings this season and first in the NHL since 2013. He was called up from the AHL Ontario Reign last week when Los Angeles traded Darcy Kuemper to the Arizona Coyotes. Anze Kopitar had a goal and an assist, and Jeff Carter, Kyle Clifford and Tyler Toffoli also scored goals for the Kings. William Karlsson found the net for the Golden Knights.

SHARKS 5, OILERS 2

Joe Pavelski notched a goal and two assists in San Jose's four-goal second period as the Sharks bounced visiting Edmonton. Evander Kane, acquired Monday from the Buffalo Sabres, chipped in two assists in his first game for San Jose. Justin Braun, Timo Meier, Logan Couture and Chris Tierney also scored goals for the Sharks. Connor McDavid and Jesse Puljujarvi potted goals for Edmonton, which saw its three-game winning streak end and was rebuffed in its chance to sweep its California road trip. The Oilers won one-goal decisions Saturday night in Los Angeles and Sunday night in Anaheim.



LAS VEGAS: Jon Merrill #15 of the Vegas Golden Knights skates with the puck against Alex Iafallo #19 of the Los Angeles Kings in the first period of their game at T-Mobile Arena on Tuesday in Las Vegas, Nevada. The Kings won 4-1. — AFP

NHL results/standings

Boston 4, Carolina 3 (OT); New Jersey 3, Pittsburgh 2; Washington 3, Ottawa 2; Florida 3, Toronto 2 (OT); Minnesota 8, St. Louis 3; Nashville 6, Winnipeg 5; Dallas 2, Calgary 0; Los Angeles 4, Las Vegas 1; San Jose 5, Edmonton 2; Calgary 6, Vancouver 1; Las Vegas 5, Florida 2; Chicago 4, Minnesota 1; Winnipeg 4, St. Louis 0.

Eastern Conference						Western Conference							
Atlantic Division						Central Division							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Tampa Bay	43	17	3	227	170	89	Nashville	39	14	9	202	160	87
Toronto	39	20	7	218	185	85	Winnipeg	37	17	9	213	170	83
Boston	38	15	8	199	153	84	Minnesota	36	20	7	196	177	79
Florida	29	25	6	178	195	64	Dallas	36	23	4	186	164	76
Detroit	26	26	10	165	183	62	St. Louis	34	26	4	176	172	72
Montreal	23	29	10	157	194	56	Colorado	33	24	5	190	186	71
Ottawa	21	31	10	168	219	52	Chicago	27	28	8	178	179	62
Buffalo	19	33	11	151	206	49	Pacific Division						
							Las Vegas	41	17	5	218	173	87
							San Jose	34	21	9	187	178	77
							Los Angeles	35	24	5	184	158	75
							Anaheim	31	21	12	176	178	74
							Calgary	32	23	9	182	187	73
							Edmonton	27	32	4	179	209	58
							Vancouver	24	32	7	168	204	55
							Arizona	18	34	10	148	205	46
							Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L)						

Cheika set to walk if Wallabies don't win World Cup

SYDNEY: Wallabies coach Michael Cheika says he will likely quit if he fails to lead Australia to victory at the World Cup in Japan next year. The two-time winners have been pitted with Wales, Georgia, Fiji and Uruguay in a Pool D pundits have called a dream draw, although Cheika has warned against complacency.

Australia lost the 2015 London final to the All Blacks and the 50-year-old said he has set himself a win-or-walk ultimatum in Japan, with making the decider again not enough to sway him to give it one more crack in 2023. "The way I see it is like this: we came second in the last one and you have got to improve," he told the Sydney Daily Telegraph yesterday. "So there is only winning the World Cup,

otherwise it is probably somebody else's opportunity to do it.

"What I would like to do in the interim is leave enough legacy in there so that that person has the best possible chance to do it as well." Cheika, who is out of contract at the end of 2019, admitted showing his cards so early was "probably not the normal answer". "People love to hedge their bets because they want their next contract," he said, adding that his motivation was to leave the Wallabies on a high. "So, in a World Cup, that's a good chance to leave and to leave behind the legacy that you've built in the interim. That's the target. You have to do better. And doing better is coming first." The Telegraph said Cheika was grooming assistant coach Stephen Larkham to take over, and he reiterated his belief that the former ACT Brumbies star had the tools to replace him.

"It is obviously not my decision ... but that's what I like, I like the idea of having that type of succession," he said. "Stephen has come on in leaps and bounds, even just in the time he's only been in this role (full-time) and understanding how to integrate and effect and understand, and listen. — AFP

Erasmus poised to take over as S Africa coach

CAPE TOWN: After a months-long wait, Rassie Erasmus is finally poised to take over as coach of South Africa today, and take on the task of guiding a team he once graced as a player to victory in next year's Rugby World Cup.

Erasmus returned home from coaching Irish provincial side Munster in November to become national Director of Rugby. That was a position that then Springbok coach Allister Coetzee felt was imposed on top of him, and he aimed bitter parting criticisms at SA Rugby's hierarchy when he was sacked on Feb. 2.

But Erasmus arguably arrives as an overdue replacement after a hapless two-year spell in which Coetzee's Springboks suffered a record 57-0 defeat at the hands of New Zealand, lost at home to Ireland for the first time and away to Italy and slumped to sixth in the world

rankings. With no other candidates in the frame, Erasmus's appointment is widely viewed as a formality. The new Springbok coaching team is due to be announced at 0930 GMT, with a news conference scheduled for 1100.

Erasmus faces a tough start with a game against Wales in Washington DC on June 2, followed by three home tests against England on the next three Saturdays. But the main focus will be on next year's World Cup in Japan, for which South Africa are currently considered among the dark horses rather than the favourites.

The 45-year-old Erasmus had success early on in his coaching career when he won the Currie Cup with the unfancied Free State Cheetahs and quickly built a reputation as an innovator. While in charge of Bloemfontein, he used mobile discotheque lights during matches to relay messages to his players from the coaching box, leading wags to call him 'DJ Rassie'.

He also served as technical advisor to the Springboks in the run-up to the 2007 Rugby World Cup in France, which South Africa won. Erasmus won 36 caps as a loose forward, debuting for South Africa against the British and Irish Lions in 1997 and captaining the side once, in a 32-6 loss to Australia in Brisbane in 1999. — Reuters

STARS 2, FLAMES 0

Devin Shore and Tyler Seguin scored goals and goalkeeper Ben Bishop turned away 38 shots for his fifth shutout of the season as host Dallas did just enough to beat Calgary. The Stars improved to 2-3-0 in its past five games after going 6-1-0 in the previous seven contests. The Flames were 0-for-6 on the power play—with four of the Dallas penalties against Tyler Pitlick—including the final 1:42, when they pulled goalkeeper Jon Gillies to try to break through Bishop with a two-man advantage but were unsuccessful.

PANTHERS 3, MAPLE LEAFS 2 (OT)

Jared McCann scored with 1:14 left in overtime to lift Florida to a win over Toronto in Sunrise, Fla. Aleksander Barkov and Jonathan Huberdeau also had goals for the Panthers. Dominic Moore and Zach Hyman scored for the Maple Leafs. Florida goaltender Roberto Luongo stopped 37 shots in improving his record to 4-1-0 since his return from injury.

DEVILS 3, PENGUINS 2

Stefan Noesen scored a tiebreaking goal early in

the third period as New Jersey won at Pittsburgh. The goal was the right winger's ninth this season and came 5:01 into the third period with the teams deadlocked at 2. Noesen tipped the puck past Pittsburgh goalie Casey DeSmith (35 saves) — in for starter Matt Murray, who sustained a concussion in practice Monday.

BRUINS 4, HURRICANES 3 (OT)

Charlie McAvoy scored the winner in a two-point game, and Riley Nash and Tommy Wingels also had a goal and an assist apiece as Boston beat visiting Carolina in overtime. McAvoy ended overtime at the 1:08 mark when he raced down the ice during an odd-man rush and elected to shoot to the shelf after sustaining a broken foot on the weekend. Boston goalie Tuukka Rask regrouped from a spotty opening period and made 29 saves in the win that snapped the Bruins' two-game losing skid. — Reuters

Bottas laps up early advantage over Hamilton

BARCELONA: Valtteri Bottas will take any advantage he can get as Lewis Hamilton's Mercedes team mate, even if it lasts little longer than the snow that covered the Circuit de Catalunya yesterday. With the day largely a write-off, the Finn looked set to end the first pre-season test having done much more mileage than the Briton who will line up in Australia on March 25 as favourite for a fifth Formula One title.

Bottas completed 94 laps on Tuesday and 58 on Monday for a total of 708km. Hamilton has done 25 laps in total, a mere 116km, and most were in damp and cold conditions. The test ends today and the teams have four more days at the circuit next week, when the weather should be better. "The miles, in these conditions, are less valuable than proper miles in proper conditions," Bottas, wrapped up warm on a chilly morning, told reporters.

"But I'll take it," added the Mercedes driver, who would have preferred to test in Bahrain than Barcelona.

"Definitely so far I've got a better understanding because of the mileage. "For sure Lewis will also get a good idea of the new car. He is quick to adapt anyway so I'm sure it will be fine for both of us."

FOCUSED BOTTAS

Bottas won three races last year after moving from Williams to Mercedes while Hamilton won nine and the title. The Finn suffered something of a slump after the August break and said he had spent plenty of time over the winter reviewing those races and others where he underperformed.

"I have definitely been focusing more on my weaknesses," he said. "But also you need to remember your strengths and how to use them." Hamilton, he said, also had weaknesses but he preferred to focus on himself rather than trying to get under the skin of his team mate.

"If I perform on the level I am aiming to at every single race, I hope that will do the job. I'm not going to start wasting my energy on any (mind) games," he added. Bottas said at the team's launch at Silverstone last week, when he was also the first to drive the new car, that he felt Hamilton was beatable over the course of a year. "He's definitely the toughest team mate I've ever had," he said. "But there's no driver who is unbeatable. I believe in myself also. "I feel I have better chances this year than last year." — Reuters



MONTMELLO: Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas drives at the Circuit de Catalunya on Tuesday in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona during the second day of the first week of tests for the Formula One Grand Prix season. — AFP

Sports

Futuristic superheroes picked as Tokyo 2020 Olympic mascots

A futuristic blue-checked, doe-eyed character with pointy ears

TOKYO: Tokyo yesterday unveiled its long-awaited mascot for the 2020 Olympic Games: A futuristic blue-checked, doe-eyed character with pointy ears and "special powers" that was picked by schoolchildren across mascot-mad Japan. The mascot, which has yet to be named, was selected by elementary school kids from a shortlist of three competitors instantly recognisable as "made in Japan".

The students picked option "A", which, according to the Tokyo 2020 organisers, has a "strong sense of justice and is very athletic". Helpfully, it also has a magical power that enables it "to move anywhere instantaneously".

Its Paralympic counterpart sports pink cheeks derived from Japan's famous cherry blossom and is "usually calm, however, it gets very powerful when needed". Its magic power: "It can talk with stones and the wind. It can also move things by just looking at them".

The pair, which have "opposite personalities"

but are "very good friends", received over 100,000 votes—more than the other two design sets combined. Mascots are massive in Japan, the land of Hello Kitty and Pokemon, and there are literally thousands representing everything from small communities to prisons.

Known locally as "yuru-kyara" or "laid-back characters", mascots can also be major money-spinners. The pot-bellied, red-cheeked bear known as Kumamon—created in 2010 to promote Japan's southern Kumamoto region—raked in \$8.8 million last year for local businesses selling branded products.

BIG BUSINESS

Twelve-year-old Miyu Kawa from the school where the winner was unveiled on Wednesday pronounced

the mascots "unique" and "very cool". "I am excited to imagine these characters on display everywhere and moving around," she said.

But social media reaction was mixed with some saying they wanted something "more round" and more "huggable".

Several users said the futuristic-looking mascot chosen appealed more to children whereas adults preferred the softer and more traditional options. Welcoming the "adorable" characters to the Tokyo 2020 team, the city's governor Yuriko Koike said she hoped the selection would continue to build "momentum" and "excitement" with less than 900 days to go until the opening ceremony.

Selected by elementary school kids

The Tokyo 2020 mascot will hope to replicate the success of Soohorang, the cuddly stuffed tiger from the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang handed out to athletes on the podium.

More than 100,000 stuffed dolls (Soohorang and Paralympic mascot

Banbdabi) were sold over the past year. Pyeongchang organisers said. Soohorang sparked an inadvertent social media frenzy after a volunteer dressed up as the tiger got stuck in a doorway, needing a helper to push him through.

The 2016 Rio Olympics had a yellow feline animal representing Brazil's rich fauna and wildlife named Vinicius after music great Vinicius de Moraes. The Paralympic mascot, a predominantly blue and green figure whose head was covered with leaves to represent Brazil's rich vegetation, was named Tom after musician Tom Jobim.

Brazil netted \$300 million in profits from licensing intellectual property from the 2016 Games, according to the International Olympic Committee (IOC).



TOKYO: Ryo Taniguchi (R), winning designer of the official mascots for the 2020 Olympics (L) and Paralympics Games, speaks beside members of the Mascot Selection Panel at an elementary school in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

HIT AND MISS

But Wenlock and Mandeville, the widely mocked mascots of the 2012 London Games, proved far from Olympic gold. The one-eyed characters were dubbed "bizarre" and "creepy" by some, reportedly sending shares in their manufacturer down by more than a third. The Rugby World Cup, which takes place in Japan next year, has already unveiled a pair of pot-bellied lions as its mascots. With luxurious manes, short horns and faces that appear to be shaped like rugby balls, mascots "Ren" and "G" are inspired by "shishi," the mythi-

cal lion-like figure that features in Japan's new year celebrations and kabuki theatre.

Organisers turned to children to select the 2020 mascot, hoping to avoid a repeat of the bungled roll-out of the official Olympic logo, which ended up having to be scrapped following accusations of plagiarism.

Designer Ryo Taniguchi seemed overwhelmed at the decision. "Thank you. My mind is going absolutely blank. I don't know what to say," he said when the decision was announced at the ceremony. "I want to tell this to my beloved wife." — AFP

Wade scores season-high 27 points

MIAMI: Dwyane Wade scored a season-high 27 points, including a fade-away jumper with 5.9 seconds left, to lead the host Miami Heat past the Philadelphia 76ers 102-101 on Tuesday. Wade came off the bench to score 15 of Miami's final 17 points, including the tough 18-footer over 76ers rookie Ben Simmons. Philadelphia's JJ Redick had a chance for the win but missed a 3-point attempt from the top of the key at the buzzer. It was just Miami's third win in its past 11 games. Joel Embiid led Philadelphia with 23 points, and Dario Saric added 21 points. The 76ers have lost two in a row following a seven-game win streak. Miami's Goran Dragic had 21 points, and Hassan Whiteside had 15 points and a game-high 11 rebounds.



MIAMI: Ben Simmons #25 of the Philadelphia 76ers shoots the ball against the Miami Heat on Tuesday at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. — AFP

Cavaliers 129, Nets 123

LeBron James recorded his 13th triple-double of the season with 31 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists as Cleveland withstood a stiff challenge from visiting Brooklyn. James shot 13 of 25 and became the 11th play-

er to reach 8,000 career assists. He recorded his 67th career triple-double while helping Cleveland beat the Nets for the 10th straight time at home since April 2, 2013. George Hill added 26 points for Cleveland. D'Angelo Russell scored 25 points to lead the Nets.

Hornets 118, Bulls 103

Kemba Walker scored a game-high 31 points and Charlotte pulled away late in a win over visiting Chicago. The Hornets won their fifth consecutive game, their longest winning streak of the season. Charlotte outscored Chicago 67-52 in the second half to improve to 18-15 at home. Hornets center Dwight Howard finished with 24 points on 10-for-12 shooting. Jeremy Lamb contributed 15 points off the Charlotte bench on 7-for-9 shooting. Zach LaVine led Chicago with 21 points.

Wizards 107, Bucks 104

Bradley Beal scored 21 points and Washington held off a furious fourth-quarter comeback attempt in a victory over visiting Milwaukee. Otto Porter hit three 3-pointers and added 17 for the Wizards, who shot 47 percent from the floor. Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 23 points. Jabari Parker finished with 19 off the bench while Khris Middleton and Eric Bledsoe added 17 each. — Reuters

NBA results/standings

Charlotte 118, Chicago 103; Cleveland 129, Brooklyn 123; Miami 102, Philadelphia 101; Washington 107, Milwaukee 104; Portland 116, Sacramento 99; LA Clippers 122, Denver 120.

Eastern Conference					Western Conference				
Atlantic Division					Northwest Division				
	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	42	17	.712	-	Minnesota	38	26	.594	-
Boston	43	19	.694	0.5	Portland	35	26	.574	1.5
Philadelphia	32	27	.542	10	Oklahoma City	35	27	.565	2
New York	24	38	.387	19.5	Denver	33	28	.541	3.5
Brooklyn	20	42	.323	23.5	Utah	31	30	.508	5.5
Central Division					Pacific Division				
Cleveland	36	24	.600	-	Golden State	47	14	.770	-
Indiana	34	26	.567	2	LA Clippers	32	27	.542	14
Milwaukee	33	27	.550	3	LA Lakers	26	34	.433	20.5
Detroit	28	32	.467	8	Sacramento	18	43	.295	29
Chicago	20	41	.328	16.5	Phoenix	18	44	.290	29.5
Southeast Division					Southwest Division				
Washington	36	25	.590	-	Houston	47	13	.783	-
Miami	32	29	.525	4	San Antonio	36	25	.590	11.5
Charlotte	28	33	.459	8	New Orleans	34	26	.567	13
Orlando	18	42	.300	17.5	Dallas	19	42	.311	28.5
Atlanta	18	43	.295	18	Memphis	18	41	.305	28.5

Iran wrestling head quits, refusing to lie over facing Israelis

TEHRAN: The head of Iran's wrestling federation resigned yesterday after criticising authorities for letting athletes pay the price for the ban on facing Israeli opponents. Wrestling is a hugely popular sport in Iran where Rasoul Khadem, an Olympic gold medalist, was re-elected as president of the Wrestling Federation just two months ago.

But in a somewhat cryptic letter published on the federation's website he suggested he had been forced from his post, saying "apparently it is not going to work out" because of "my awkward mentality". "I cannot lie. Sometimes the best way to take a stand is not to stand," he wrote.

The councils for freestyle and Greco-Roman wrestling announced they were resigning en masse along with Khadem, the semi-official ISNA news agency reported.

Khadem had recently criticised Iranian authorities for their approach to competing against Israeli opponents. It followed a six-month ban given to Iran's Alireza Karimi Mashiani by the United World Wrestling Disciplinary Chamber for deliberately losing a match at the under-23 world championships in Poland in November in order to avoid an Israeli opponent in the next round.

His coach Hamidreza Jamshidi was banned for two years. Khadem, argued that Iranians should openly admit they will not compete against Israelis rather than invent excuses, and accept the consequences. "If we must continue with the policy of non-competition against the Zionist regime's athletes, the responsibility cannot fall on the shoulders of the coach and the athlete," he said on public radio, according to ISNA. He said a "fundamental solution" needed to be reached by the Supreme Council for National Security. "Forcing an athlete to accept defeat or run around all night looking for a doctor's note is not right," he added. He had previously told ISNA that, if the country's policy was to avoid Israeli rivals then it should "behave honestly and... accept the consequences". Dozens of Iranian athletes have boycotted competitions against Israelis since the 1979 Islamic revolution, either out of choice or under pressure from authorities. — AFP

Nadal cuts short comeback after injury flares up

ACAPULCO: World number two Rafael Nadal pulled out of the Mexican Open on Tuesday, cutting short his comeback from an injury when his ailing right hip flared up again. "My goal and hope was to play in this tournament. Unfortunately, in my last training session yesterday, I felt a sharp pain in my leg again," the 31-year-old Spanish star said hours before what was to have been his opening match of the ATP Tour event in Acapulco.

Nadal, favoured to win the tournament and champion here in 2005 and 2013, had been due to face fellow Spaniard Feliciano Lopez. "I took all the appropriate steps to arrive at the tournament in form. I went to Cozumel first, to adapt (to the climate)," he told reporters. "But yesterday, in my last training session before the tournament, during one movement I felt a sharp pain again in the same area where I had the problem in Australia."

Nadal limped out of the quarter-finals at the Australian Open on January 23. He has since lost his number one ranking to Roger Federer. Nadal said doctors in Mexico warned him not to play for fear of aggravating the injury.

"I still don't know what it is,

because we don't know. It seems it's not as bad as what I had at the Australian Open," he said. "Now, my main goal is to find out the extent of the injury." This marks the sixth tournament in a row that Nadal has pulled out of or retired from—the Australian Open, Brisbane, London, Paris, Basel and Acapulco.

INJURY UNCLEAR

The 16-time Grand Slam winner Nadal previously announced himself fully fit and said he was looking forward to competing in his second event of 2018. "I took a couple of weeks of rest and worked hard on rehabilitation," he said earlier in the week. "Last week, I started practising hard again. I feel ready." Nadal is expected to remain at least one more day in Acapulco to have more tests done. "Maybe it is a minor situation, but the reality is that there is liquid and until it goes down a bit and the relevant tests are done, it will not be possible to diagnose," he said.

While a victory this week would not have been good enough to overhaul Federer, it would leave Nadal primed to replace the Swiss star at Indian Wells or Miami next month. The 2008 Olympic gold medal winner is known as the "King of Clay" and is considered the greatest clay-court player in the history of the sport. But his success is not limited to clay. Nadal has won 10 French Open titles, three US Opens, two Wimbledon and one Australian Open. Nadal, who turns 32 in June, ended 2017 as the oldest year-end world number one in the 45-year history of the ATP rankings. — AFP



ACAPULCO: Spain's Rafael Nadal speaks to the press during the Mexico Open in Acapulco, Guerrero state on Tuesday. — AFP

Sports

Stokes steers England home in second New Zealand ODI

'Hopefully it's a stepping stone for other games coming up'

MOUNT MAUNGANUI: All-rounder Ben Stokes set aside his off-field troubles to steer England to a six-wicket win in the second one-day international against New Zealand yesterday. The 26-year-old produced a man-of-the-match performance in just his second appearance for England since being sidelined over a nightclub incident five months ago.

Stokes took two wickets for 42 then hit an unbeaten 63 as England easily chased down New Zealand's target of 224 at Mount Maunganui. "It was good to get a bit of time out in the middle," he said after England levelled the five-match series 1-1.



MOUNT MAUNGANUI: England's Ben Stokes bats during the second one-day international (ODI) cricket match between New Zealand and England at the Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui yesterday. — AFP

“It's great to see him back in fine form”

"It's good to get out here and train and implement it in the games to make sure I was out there at the end. Hopefully it's a stepping stone for other games coming up." Stokes only joined England this month after pleading not guilty in a British court to a charge of affray, with the controversy forcing him out of the Australian leg of their tour, including The Ashes.

After England finished on 225 for four in reply to New Zealand's 223 all out, captain Eoin Morgan was full of praise for his star all-rounder. "Ben's a big character, big in our changing room, he lifts everybody in the side when he performs like he did today," he said. "It's great to see him back in fine form."

BLACK CAPS FALL SHORT

Trent Boult made early inroads as New Zealand tried to defend their modest total, dislodging Jason Roy for eight and Joe Root for nine. Jonny Bairstow made a rapid-fire 37, then Morgan and Stokes dug in for an 88-run partnership that had England at 144 for three after 25 overs.

Morgan notched his first ODI 50 in 11 innings off 48

balls before departing on 62 before Stokes brought up 50 off 54 balls with a six edged over the keeper's head. Earlier, Black Cap spinner Mitchell Santner scored his maiden limited overs half-century as the New Zealand tail to give the home team's score some respectability.

Santner's unbeaten 63 off 52 balls was the highlight of New Zealand's innings, with in-form opener Martin Guptill also scoring 50. But a superb fielding display from England saw New Zealand bowled out for 223 with two balls remaining.

England pulled off a string of sharply taken catches and ran out four batsman, ensuring that every chance their bowlers created resulted in a wicket.

New Zealand never recovered from an early double blow by Woakes, who dismissed Colin Munro for one in his first over then Mark Chapman for the same score in

his second.

David Willey's prowess in the field was responsible for Ross Taylor's departure on 10, swooping on the ball at backward point and firing it to Jos Buttler to break the stumps.

The loss of Taylor, a century-maker in the opening fixture, left New Zealand on 48 for three with Guptill holding the first half of the innings together. His half-century came off 84 balls but he failed to push on and was caught by Roy on 50 trying to sweep Ali's spin over the boundary.

Colin de Grandhomme contributed 38 but then it was left to Santner to provide late resistance. The lanky spinner hit a match-winning 45 in the opening match but his heroics at Mount Maunganui were not enough to get the Black Caps over the line. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

MOUNT MAUNGANUI, New Zealand: Final scoreboard in the second one-day international between New Zealand and England in Mount Maunganui yesterday.

New Zealand	
M. Guptill c Roy b Ali	50
C. Munro c Buttler b Woakes	1
M. Chapman c Willey b Woakes	1
R. Taylor run out	10
T. Latham c Curran b Ali	22
H. Nicholls c Roy b Stokes	1
C. de Grandhomme run out	38
M. Santner not out	63
T. Southee run out	6
L. Ferguson c Rashid b Stokes	19
T. Boult run out	2
Extras (lb5, w5)	10
Total (all out: 49.4 overs)	223
Fall of wickets: 1-6 (Munro), 2-9 (Chapman), 3-48 (Taylor), 4-79 (Guptill), 5-82 (Nicholls), 6-108 (Latham), 7-141 (de Grandhomme), 8-147 (Southee), 9-216 (Ferguson), 10-223 (Boult) Bowling: Willey 5-0-16-0 (2w), Woakes 7.4-1-42-2, Rashid 10-0-32-0, Curran 9-0-53-0 (3w), Ali 10-0-33-2, Stokes 8-0-42-2.	

England:	
J. Roy c Santner b Boult	8
J. Bairstow c sub (Astle) b Ferguson	37
J. Root c de Grandhomme b Boult	9
E. Morgan c and b Munro	62
B. Stokes not out	63
J. Buttler not out	36
Extras (lb2, w8)	10
Total (4 wickets: 37.5 overs)	225
Fall of wickets: 1-15 (Roy), 2-47 (Root), 3-86 (Bairstow), 4-174 (Morgan)	
Did not bat: M. Ali, C. Woakes, A. Rashid, D. Willey, T. Curran	
Bowling: Southee 7-0-55-0 (2w), Boult 8-1-46-2, Santner 7.5-0-40-0, Ferguson 8-0-48-1, de Grandhomme 2-0-11-0 (1w), Munro 5-0-23-1 (1w).	

Result: England win by six wickets
Series: Five-match series is level 1-1

Australia skipper Smith eager for S Africa revenge

DURBAN: Australia captain Steve Smith is looking for revenge in the upcoming Tests against South Africa to continue the trend which has seen the tourists dominate in recent series between the sides. "Certainly it's a big series for us. We've had a lot of great contests over the years. South Africa got the better of us at home so we'd love to get them back for that one," said Smith ahead of the start of the first Test at Kingsmead in Durban today. South Africa won 2-1 in a three-Test series in Australia in November 2016, their third straight series win there. However, Australia have a brilliant record away in South Africa, and it is an anomaly that Smith and his opposite number Faf Du Plessis put down to the similar conditions in both countries.

Australia are aiming to build on a "magnificent" home summer which included a 4-0 Ashes defeat of England. "The conditions are similar but it's still an away tour for us. I've got a goal as captain to play really well away from home and start winning series, so this is a really good opportunity for us," said Smith.

The world's leading Test batsman, Smith said a century in tough conditions at Centurion on Australia's previous tour in 2013/14 had given him the confidence that he could score runs against any bowling attack. Du Plessis is fully aware of Smith's threat having played alongside him in the Indian Premier League, and he is hoping to use that experience to bring about his rival's downfall.

"The last series we played against him he was their best batter but to some degree we did keep him quiet," he said. "He's obviously a very good player but it's similar to what I said about the Indian team. They have one or two star batsmen. If you can put pressure on them and keep them quiet it obviously reflects how the series will go."

Du Plessis said no pressure had been put on groundsman to prepare pitches to help the South Africans following the controversy that marred the recent series win over India. "I think I learned my lesson from that," he said.

"Australia and South Africa are very similar teams and they play in similar conditions. We'll play on what we get. We've asked for nothing." It seems likely that South Africa will switch from the policy of four specialist fast bowlers that was used against India, with an extra batsman likely to be picked. With Temba Bavuma not fully recovered from a finger injury, Theunis de Bruyn is a strong candidate, especially as he can bowl a few overs of seam to back up the main bowlers. Injuries and lack of form have plagued the South Africans recently. Du Plessis will play, though, despite having broken his right index finger less than a month ago. "I've played with finger injuries before," he said. "The biggest battle you have to get over is the mental side of things. I have had three good nets, hitting a lot of balls, but the biggest thing is mentally to be ready for the battle and I'm ready for that." — AFP

Pakistan ban Shahzaib Hasan for year in fixing case

LAHORE: Pakistan yesterday hit former opener Shahzaib Hasan with a one-year ban and a million rupee (\$9,050) fine for a spot-fixing incident that rocked the country's Twenty20 League last year. Hasan, 28, was a member of Pakistan's World Twenty20 winning team in 2009 but had not played any international cricket in the past eight years. Hasan, who was playing for the Karachi Kings, was one of six players charged with various breaches of the Pakistan Cricket Board's anti-corruption code during the second edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) held in the United Arab Emirates.

"Hasan has been banned for one year and fined one million rupees on one charge and we have requested for more action against him on inducing other players for fixing," board legal adviser Taffazul Rizvi told the media. Hasan, an aggressive opener, played three one-

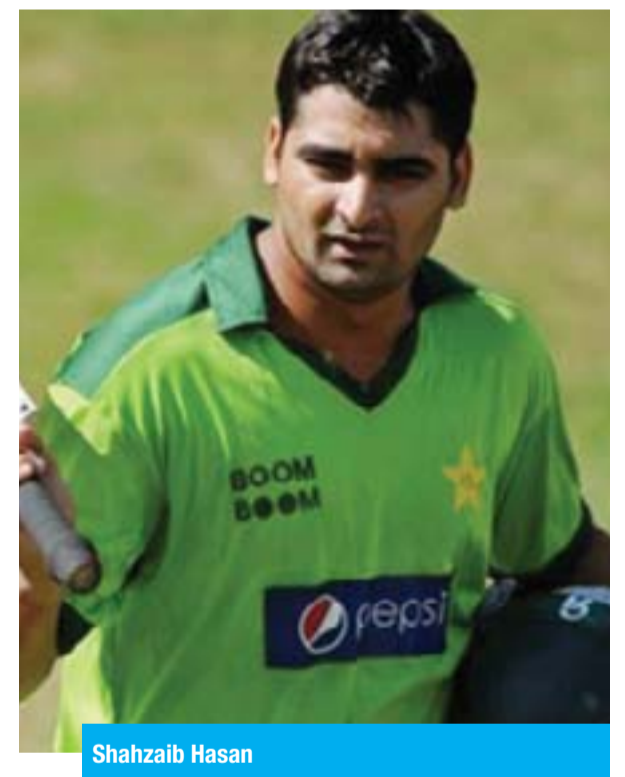
day internationals and 10 Twenty20 internationals before losing his place due to poor performance in 2010. The PSL was rocked by scandal in February last year when it was announced that several players were caught in a spot-fixing incident. Spot-fixing involves determining the outcome of a specific part of a match rather than the overall result, and is therefore harder to detect than match-fixing.

The PCB formed a three-man tribunal which later banned Sharjeel Khan for five years (two and a half suspended) while Khalid Latif was banned for five full years and fined one million rupees.

Mohammad Irfan was banned for one year (six months suspended), Mohammad Nawaz for two months (one suspended) and Nasir Jamshed for one year. The third edition of the PSL is currently being staged in the UAE, with two play-offs in Lahore and the final in Karachi on March 25. The PCB took extra measures to stem spot-fixing, with all six teams in this year's league monitored by anti-corruption officers. Pakistan has a history of fixing, with former captain Salim Malik and Aatur Rehman banned for life in 2000.

A spot-fixing case during Pakistan's tour of England in 2010 ended in five-year bans on then Test captain Salman Butt, Mohammad Asif and Mohammad Amir.

Pakistan leg-spinner Danish Kaneria is also serving a life ban on charges of spot-fixing during a county match in England in 2009. — AFP



Shahzaib Hasan

Alvarez, Golovkin promise fireworks in May 5 rematch

LOS ANGELES: World middleweight champion Gennady Golovkin and Saul "Canelo" Alvarez promised to deliver an explosive sequel to their epic draw here Tuesday as they faced off ahead of their May 5 rematch.

Hard-hitting Kazakh Golovkin was widely believed to have won last September's first battle against Mexican star Alvarez, when a bizarre judging controversy dominated the aftermath of the bout. While one judge scored the fight for Golovkin and another had it even, there was widespread astonishment at the card of judge Adalaide Byrd, who marked it 118-110 in favour of Alvarez.

On Tuesday the two fighters came face-to-face before a crowd of fans in downtown Los Angeles and both vowed that judges would not be a factor when they climb into the ring again at Las Vegas's T-Mobile Arena in what is likely to be one of the fights of the year.

"Everything is ready for an amazing show," Golovkin told reporters, unsurprisingly adamant that he had won the first bout. "I felt very comfortable. I felt I won 100 percent," added Golovkin, 37-0 with one draw and 33 knockouts.

Golovkin's trainer, Abel Sanchez, meanwhile taunted Alvarez's hit-and-run strategy in the first meeting. "I definitely think he ran a lot more than we thought he was going to," Sanchez said. "I talked to (Michael) Jordan about it and asked if he could make us some

shoes so that we can go a bit faster and are able to catch him. "I hope for the fans that he puts on the fight that he said he was going to do the first time."

CANELO UNIMPRESSED

Alvarez, 49-1 with two drawn and 34 knockouts, was unimpressed with Sanchez's barbs, insisting he had done enough to win the first instalment. "I went in there, I outboxed him, I went on the ropes, I made him miss, I controlled the centre of the ring," Alvarez said.

"I'm a technical fighter. I'm not a jack-ass who just comes forward, throwing punches and gets hit. "I hope he (Sanchez) goes home tonight and really thinks about what he says. Because he's saying stupid, idiotic things."

Alvarez however acknowledged he could have been more aggressive in the first fight, maintaining that he had not taken advantage of openings that presented themselves. That was something he plans to rectify in the rematch.

"I learned a lot," Alvarez said. "When I made him miss there were a lot of openings that I didn't take advantage of. Now I'm going to work in the gym to take advantage of those chances."

"We both want to win convincingly. We both want to erase any doubt. And that's going to make the fight more interesting—because if we take more risks, there's going to be more openings."

Golovkin promoter Tom Loeffler meanwhile said his team would pay close attention to the judges chosen for the Nevada fight, and would not hesitate to object to any appointed individual they were unhappy with. "There's going to be a lot more focus on the judges going into this fight," Loeffler said.

"We have the right to object to any judges we think aren't going to be satisfactory. Hopefully the judges won't be a factor." — AFP



Gennady Golovkin

Sports

Guardiola's City a painful reminder of Arsenal's past

Wenger faces the might of City for second time in five days

LONDON: Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger faces the might of Manchester City for the second time in five days today as the Gunners seek salvation after an abject display in losing the League Cup final 3-0.

City's victory on Sunday delivered the first trophy of the Pep Guardiola era and underlined the sense that the two clubs are on radically different trajectories. Guardiola's men also enjoy a 13-point lead at the top of the Premier League and are virtually assured of their place in the Champions League quarter-finals, thanks to a 4-0 last-16, first-leg win in Basel.

Arsenal, by contrast, face a huge challenge just to make it back into the Champions League next season. Sixth in the league, they trail north London rivals Tottenham Hotspur, in fourth place, by 10 points.

Even the emergency route of a Champions League return via winning the Europa League looks a big task after Arsenal were paired with Italian giants AC Milan in the last 16. What is galling for Wenger and Arsenal is that in many ways Guardiola is the modern-day incarnation of what the Frenchman used to be in his first decade at the club.

Wenger's early years married attractive, aggressive football with a winning culture. While some of the frills to Arsenal's football have remained in the second half of his 22-year reign, the club have failed consistently to challenge for the biggest prizes.

"This development of mediocrity has to be arrested," Arsenal's second-highest goalscorer of all time, Ian Wright, who played under Wenger, told BBC radio.

Guardiola shares Wenger's ideals of how the game should be played and has spoken glowingly of his admiration for his counterpart's longevity.

"I would have liked to have played for him," said Guardiola ahead of Sunday's final. "He likes one type of player, with quality and respect for the ball. They are things I like a lot, so if people say we play a little bit like Arsenal of the last 20 years then it's good for us."

SERIAL WINNER

The difference is that Guardiola is a serial winner, lifting 21 trophies in his first seven years of senior management with Barcelona and Bayern Munich.

He has shone after the first season of his career without silverware in his debut campaign at City in 2016-17. Rather than abandon his principles, the Catalan has doubled down on the passing and pressing game he made famous at Barcelona to create the spectacle and success for which he was lured to Manchester by the club's cash-rich Abu Dhabi owners in the first place.

Wenger, by contrast, despite an enviable record of success in the FA Cup in recent years, has failed to arrest his side's general slide from the pinnacle of the English game.

Guardiola has also demonstrated a far shrewder sense of timing than Wenger in knowing when to walk away. He left his boyhood club in Barca as their most successful coach because the intense demands of four seasons in the job had taken their toll.

Likewise, his time at Bayern never seemed likely to



Pep Guardiola

“This development of mediocrity has to be arrested”

extend beyond the initial three-year contract he signed despite winning three straight Bundesliga titles. "No chance," Guardiola responded at the thought of matching Wenger's two-decade long stay at City. "That is not going to happen because I am not going to train in 20 years more."

Wenger's desperation to hold on to recreate his glory days means it is increasingly likely he will be edged towards the exit door before he walks come the end of

the season. City will fall short of one of Wenger's greatest achievements. Defeat at Liverpool last month means they cannot go a full Premier League season unbeaten as Arsenal did in their last title-winning campaign of 2003-04. "Arsene's record belongs to him, we are not going to break it - he has to be calm," said Guardiola earlier in the campaign. It may be the only thing remaining that Wenger holds over English football's new dominant power. — AFP

Real's Ronaldo gamble backfires as Espanyol snatch late victory

MADRID: Real Madrid rested Cristiano Ronaldo and suffered a fifth Liga defeat of the season as Espanyol's Gerard Moreno struck late for a 1-0 win over the Spanish and European champions on Tuesday.

Catalan forward Moreno wasted a number of chances but his last-minute volley took a wicked deflection off defender Raphael Varane to secure Espanyol's first victory over Real in 11 years. Real stay third on 51 points from 26 games, seven behind second-placed Atletico Madrid, who host Leganes later, and 14 adrift of pacesetters Barcelona who play today.

Real coach Zinedine Zidane rested Ronaldo ahead of next week's visit to Paris St-Germain in the Champions League last 16, which his side lead 3-1 from the first leg, and selected Gareth Bale at centre forward in a much-changed team.

However, despite a promising start, an insipid Madrid were second-best all night at Cornellana not that Zidane thought so. "We really didn't deserve to ship that goal," said the Frenchman. "We played really well in the first half but couldn't score. The second-half wasn't good but nevertheless we didn't deserve to concede in the final minute."

"Espanyol had few chances and we deserved more. That's football and we now have to look forward." Bale, having struggled to get back into the side following injury, saw a header parried by Espanyol's former Real keeper Diego Lopez, who then scrambled away a deflected Marco Asensio cross, but that was as good as it got for the visitors.



CORNELLA DE LLOBREGAT: Real Madrid's French forward Karim Benzema (C) vies with Espanyol's Spanish defender Marc Navarro (L) and Espanyol's Spanish midfielder Granero (R) during the Spanish league football match between RCD Espanyol and Real Madrid CF at the RCDE Stadium in Cornellana de Llobregat. — AFP

Espanyol should have led only for Moreno to spurn a gilt-edged chance after pouncing on a wayward Varane clearance. The forward's misery was compounded when he saw a successful effort incorrectly ruled out by the linesman's flag before halftime.

After the break Espanyol defender Oscar Duarte clipped the bar before Real keeper Keylor Navas acrobatically denied Moreno. It appeared the forward was going to endure a torrid night when his left-foot effort

curled past the far post with a minute left but Moreno was not to be denied at the death.

His goal securing a deserved three points that took Espanyol up to 13th with 31 points after their first win in eight games. "We need to go game-by-game," Moreno said. "This victory will help us and calm things down a bit. We should be doing this more regularly and it'll give us the confidence that we needed. Hopefully it will push us forwards to better things." — Reuters

Neymar faces 'at least six weeks out', to miss Real clash

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's hopes of getting Neymar back for their crunch Champions League clash against Real Madrid next week look to be over after the Brazilian's father claimed the player would be out for "at least six weeks".

Speaking to ESPN in Brazil on Tuesday, Neymar Senior said: "PSG know that they will not be able to count on Neymar for the upcoming matches: his treatment will last six to eight weeks, whether there is an operation or not." That was after PSG coach Unai Emery claimed earlier that "no decision" had been taken on whether Neymar would require surgery and that there remained a "small chance" of getting the world's most expensive player back in time to face Real next Tuesday, March 6.

Tests confirmed that Neymar suffered a hairline fracture of the fifth metatarsal in his right foot as well as a twisted ankle late in PSG's 3-0 win over Marseille in Ligue 1 on Sunday.

He appeared to be in tears as he was stretchered off the field at the Parc des Princes, immediately raising fears that the 26-year-old could miss the Champions League last 16, second leg against Madrid. PSG lost 3-1 in the first leg in Spain two weeks ago and are in danger of being knocked out of the competition in the last 16 for the second season running.

Brazilian newspaper Globo Esporte had claimed Neymar would undergo surgery, and that the former Barcelona player would be sidelined until May. If his father's estimate is correct, Neymar would not return before the semi-final stage of the Champions League in late April. On the possibility of rushing Neymar back for the Real second leg, experts say that PSG would be taking a huge risk, possibly even jeopardising Neymar's participation at the World Cup in Russia in June and July. "It would be very risky as it's a fragile bone in the foot which is difficult to protect," Jean-Marcel Ferret, a former doctor with the French national team, told AFP.

"(Playing against Real) could compromise the rest of his season." In the meantime, PSG are preparing to do without Neymar for yesterday's French Cup quarter-final at home to Marseille, the second meeting of the clubs in four days. — AFP

Swansea past Wednesday into FA Cup quarters

LONDON: Swansea City reached the FA Cup quarter-finals for the first time in 54 years with a 2-0 win over second-tier Sheffield Wednesday on Tuesday as goals from Jordan Ayew and Nathan Dyer settled an attritional fifth round replay.

Swansea, who face a last-eight home tie against Tottenham Hotspur or Rochdale, who play their replay on Wednesday, was lifeless in front of a sparse crowd at the Liberty Stadium until Ayew tapped home a rebound from close range in the 55th minute.

Dyer then settled the contest against his manager Carlos Carvalhal's former club with 10 minutes remaining, slipping the ball through goalkeeper Cameron Dawson's legs after being played in by Tammy Abraham. Swansea last reached the sixth round of the competition in 1964, when they were known as Swansea Town. That year, they went one stage further before losing to Preston North End in the semi-finals.

"1964 is a long time ago, I know because I was born in '65," Swansea's Portuguese manager Carvalhal told the BBC. "Swansea have now made the best path in the Cup since then so it's a little part of history and we are happy about that. I'm very proud of my players." Carvalhal would have seen little to be proud of in the first half, however, as Swansea struggled to create chances against their Championship opponents.



SWANSEA: Swansea City's English striker Tammy Abraham (L) takes a shot at goal past Sheffield Wednesday's Portuguese defender Frederico Venancio during the English FA Cup 5th round replay football match between Swansea City and Sheffield Wednesday. — AFP

Swansea, battling to avoid relegation from the Premier League, dominated the ball but would have fallen behind but for two smart saves in quick succession by Kristoffer Nordfeldt from Wednesday striker Jordan Rhodes. Their breakthrough arrived when midfielder Tom Carroll let fly with an unstoppable drive that ricocheted off both posts before halftime substitute Ayew slotted in the rebound. As Wednesday pushed

forward, space opened up for Swansea and Dyer made the game safe.

"At the break we weren't happy with the score," added Carvalhal. "We needed more energy and intensity, so we brought on Martin Olsson and Jordan Ayew and they had a big impact..."

"I think we deserved the win, but Sheffield Wednesday did well in the two games." — Reuters



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Arsenal v Manchester City	22:45
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Real Betis v Real Sociedad	21:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Las Palmas v Barcelona	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Deportivo Alaves v Levante	23:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4	

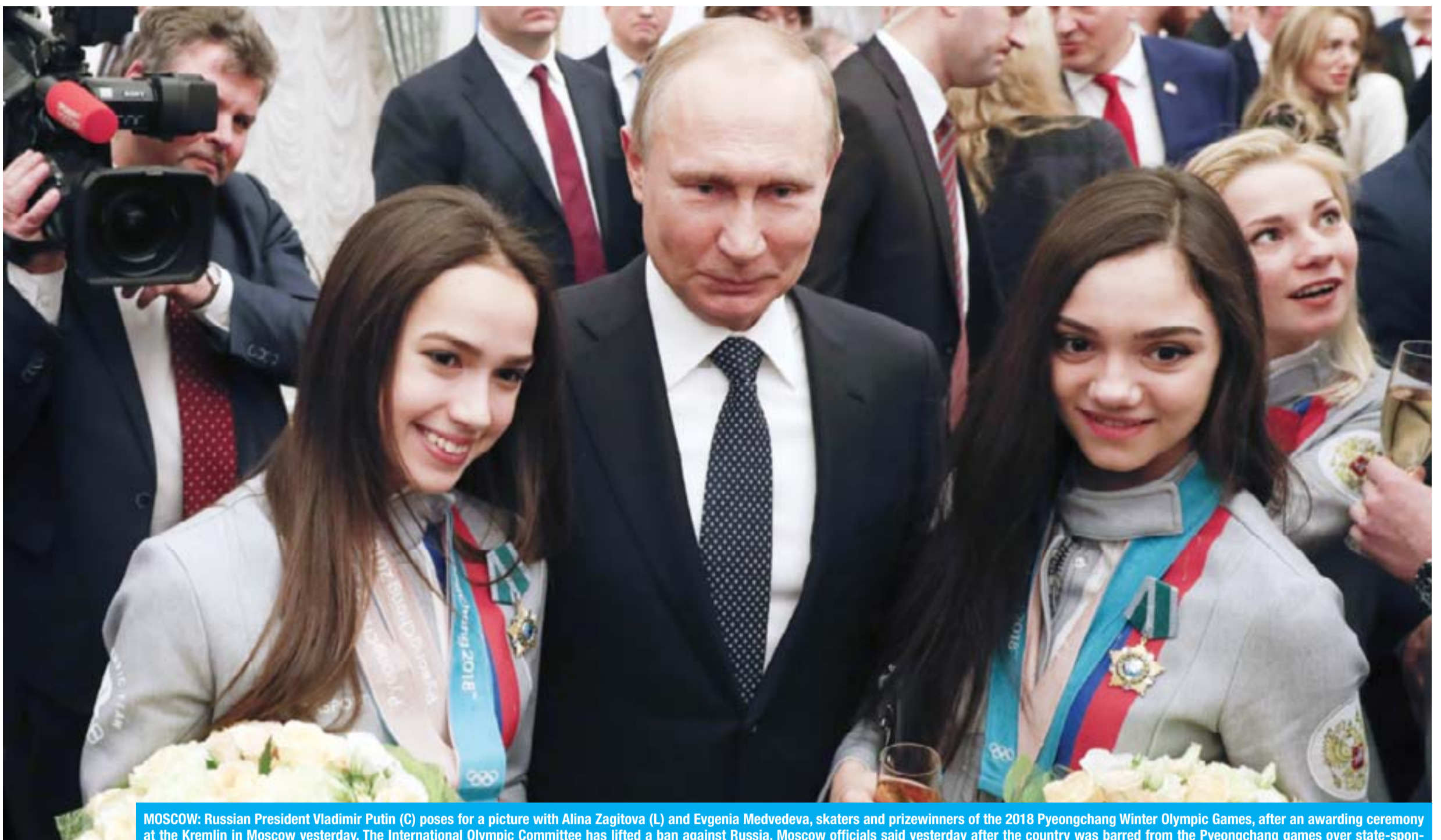
12 Eric Staal's hat trick leads Wild over Blues in lopsided 8-3 win



13 Futuristic superheroes picked as Tokyo 2020 Olympic mascots



14 Stokes steers England home in second New Zealand ODI



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin (C) poses for a picture with Alina Zagitova (L) and Evgenia Medvedeva, skaters and prizewinners of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games, after an awarding ceremony at the Kremlin in Moscow yesterday. The International Olympic Committee has lifted a ban against Russia, Moscow officials said yesterday after the country was barred from the Pyeongchang games over state-sponsored doping. — AFP

IOC lifts doping ban on Russia

‘Rights of Russian Olympic Committee have been fully restored’

MOSCOW: The International Olympic Committee has lifted a ban against Russia, Moscow officials said yesterday, after the country was barred from the Pyeongchang games over state-sponsored doping.

“The rights of the Russian Olympic Committee have been fully restored,” said the president of the Russian Olympic Committee, Alexander Zhukov. Zhukov said Russia received a letter from the IOC yesterday which confirms that no other Olympic athletes from Russia had tested positive for doping, following two positive Russian drug tests at this month’s Winter Games in Pyeongchang.

“All of the doping tests that were conducted on our athletes in the last days of the Olympics were negative,” Zhukov said. The IOC decided in a meeting Sunday that in such an event the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee would be lifted.

Russia was banned in December from taking part in the 2018 Olympics following revelations of widespread doping, though 168 athletes were deemed “clean” and were cleared to go to Pyeongchang to compete under the

Olympic flag. The time since the ban on December 5 was “probably some of the most difficult months in the history of Russian sports and the Olympic movement in Russia,” Zhukov said, praising athletes in particular for competing in “difficult conditions.”

“For us today’s decision by the IOC is very important.” “We are very relieved,” added Russian Olympic Committee vice president Stanislav Pozdnyakov. “A lot of what we did in the last three months of course will not be made public” he said.

“But the main thing is that our athletes... had the opportunity to represent... our country” in Korea, despite the team’s neutral status as “Olympic Athletes from Russia.”

Two Russians, curler Alexander Krushelnitsky and bobsledder Nadezhda Sergeeva, were kicked out of the Olympics after their doping tests were revealed to be positive, with Krushelnitsky being stripped of his bronze medal.

The scandal meant that the Olympic team from Russia could not use national colours or flag for the closing ceremony in Pyeongchang as originally hoped. Moscow blamed the two cases on “negligence rather than malicious intent,” while Krushelnitsky denied knowingly doping and some Russian media said his food was spiked by an ex-girlfriend. Russia’s Olympic ban followed the uncovering of a doping conspiracy where tainted urine samples were switched with clean ones. The government has denied any

state involvement in the plot but a top sports official Vitaly Mutko, currently a deputy prime minister, was suspended by the IOC for life.

Russia’s reinstatement in the IOC does not affect the suspended status of its RUSADA national anti-doping agency with the World Anti-Doping Agency, which on Monday said the country remains non-compliant, citing “proven systemic manipulation of the doping control process.”

WADA previously criticised the decision by the Court of Arbitration for Sport which overturned Olympic life bans on 28 Russians accused of doping, though they still did not compete in Pyeongchang.

“Unfortunately so far our relationship with WADA, the reinstatement of status of RUSADA, is not complete,” Zhukov said. “There is still a lot of work to be done which is likely to be as difficult as the work to reinstate the Russian Olympic Committee,” he said. “But we must do this as quickly as possible to create a comprehensive system to fight doping in Russia.” — AFP

“

We are very relieved

”

W Cup coaches brace for ‘modern life’ of VAR

SOCHI: World Cup coaches expressed a quiet confidence yesterday about Video Assistant Referee technology ahead of its likely adoption for this year’s showpiece event in Russia. Representatives from the 32 teams to have qualified for the World Cup gathered in the Black Sea resort of Sochi for a briefing on how “modern life” was taking over the beautiful game.

Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology is expected to be given the green light by the International Football Association Board (IFAB), when the body that determines the laws of the game meets on Saturday. VAR has been heavily promoted by world football’s governing body FIFA,

despite its implementation this season in leading leagues such as the German Bundesliga and Italy’s Serie A not convincing everyone. Earlier this week, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin said European football’s governing body would not introduce VAR in next season’s Champions League due to ongoing “confusion” surrounding its use. But coaches emerging from the Sochi meeting said they were ready to ring in the changes—even if the system had not ironed out all the kinks. “This is the new life. This is modern life,” said Iran head coach Carlos Queiroz. “It is obvious that football cannot go on with its eyes closed to the modern world.” VAR can only be used when there is doubt surrounding any of four key game-changing situations: after a goal, penalty decisions, after a straight red card or in cases of mistaken identity. Two of the top complaints have involved VAR either being used too often and slowing down the game or—conversely—not being called on in decisive moments. One case in England—where VAR has been trialled in the FA Cup—saw the referee given a different picture from the one shown to confused fans on television.

Some head coaches said Russia will be something of a test case about which it was premature to pass judgement.

“It’s something to improve football, we suppose,” said Uruguay’s assistant coach Celso Otero.

“I think VAR will be approved and then we will evaluate it.” Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr said FIFA’s refereeing department chief Massimo Busacca assured sceptics at yesterday’s meeting that video replays produced fairer outcomes. Busacca said “it was very important for the referee to make less mistakes to have the video assistant,” Rohr told AFP. “VAR is coming to eliminate mistakes by the referee. It’s actually something that makes the game fair,” Saudi Arabia’s assistant coach Manuel Suarez agreed.

England in particular have had famous run-ins with disputed goals at the World Cup. Diego Maradona’s “Hand of God” saw Argentina through in 1986 while Germans are still smarting about a goal that helped England win their only World Cup in 1966.

Some coaches agreed that resorting to replays could result in match interruptions that break up a team’s rhythm and momentum. “It might slow down a little bit the play,” said Egypt assistant coach Jose Fantaguzzi. “But in general, the technology is very important for the time being.” Yet Fantaguzzi also admitted that his squad was a little bit anx-



SOCHI: Switzerland’s national team head coach Vladimir Petkovic speaks to the media after FIFA World Cup 2018 Team Workshop. — AFP

ious about how it will all turn out. “A little bit, but not that much,” Fantaguzzi said with a laugh. “We are just ready to follow the rules and prepare.” — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2018

18 China Jan factory growth dips to 8-month low**20** Wall St rebounds after falling on rate fears**21** Ford increasing production of new Lincoln Navigator, Ford Expedition

CAIRO: A billboard with an election poster for Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi standing next to a bridge overlooking the river Nile in the capital Cairo's island of Manial. —AFP

Egypt reforms stall amid rising prices

Effects of pound flotation still felt as election nears

CAIRO: Traders at the textile market in Cairo's Al-Azhar district were once used to seeing their shops filled with customers, but soaring prices have driven many away. The reason for the spiraling costs—drastic reforms that the government pledged would bring benefits to the turmoil-hit nation. But far from improvements, many Egyptians say they feel worse off, and the economic woes could present the major challenge for President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi as he approaches an election essentially unopposed.

"People who want to get married these days have to wait: there is no money for anyone to buy anything," said Shaimaa, a homemaker in her 30s, as she looked for some fabric. "Years ago, the salary was enough and there was even a surplus, but now a salary that is even as high as three thousand, or four thousand pounds (\$225, 180 euros) a month is not enough."

The effects of flotation

Egypt's presidential vote from March 26-28 is the third since a 2011 uprising toppled longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak, and Sisi looks certain to win a second four-year term. Most of his rivals have either been sidelined or withdrawn and the only other candidate, Moussa Mostafa Moussa, has himself previously

expressed support for the ex-military chief.

While there is little competition at the ballot box the economic discontent facing many Egyptians could prove a bigger political issue. Shaken by the 2011 revolt and the years of turmoil that followed, Egypt implemented a set of radical economic reforms linked to a three-year \$12-billion loan the International Monetary Fund approved in November 2016.

The steps included the adoption of a value-added tax, energy subsidy cuts, and floating the pound, which halved its value against the dollar in the import-reliant country. Sayyed Mahmoud, 50, one of the biggest fabrics merchants in Al-Azhar district, sits outside his store, blaming "the pound's flotation" for the slump. "This decision changed everything. Prices went up threefold and fourfold," said Mahmoud. "A blanket that was 200 pounds, now costs 800 pounds," said Mahmoud.



Govt pushes ahead with mega projects

Since the currency move the inflation rate has soared, reaching a high of 34.2 percent in July.

Meanwhile some 28 percent of Egyptians, or 93 million people, now live under the poverty line, according to official figures. While some of the government's measures were positive, floating the pound was handled "the worst", said Alia El Mahdi, the former dean of the faculty of Economics and Political Science at Cairo University. "If the economic improvement comes at the expense of people's living standards, then the target of the reform program was not met," she said.

Unemployment and local industry

Despite the soaring inflation and rising poverty, Sisi insists that his first term has seen an "unprecedented boom". Since his election in 2014, Egypt has been working on a series of mega projects.

The large-scale national projects included the expansion of the Suez Canal, which ended in 2015, about year after Sisi's inauguration. After its completion, Sisi announced another ambitious project: a new capital that is currently being built over about 170 square kilometers and should begin functioning next year. "We are about to finish about 11,000 projects... with a cost of about two trillion pounds," Sisi said in January.

Hailing the economic successes during his term he pointed to a rise in foreign currency reserves to \$37 billion and a drop of unemployment to 11.9 percent. But economists like Mahdi said that if the government wanted to build sustainable growth it needed to focus on bolstering "industry, agriculture, and services to reduce unemployment in a lasting and real way".

"National projects only need temporary workers," she said. And while the IMF in January declared a "favorable" economic outlook for Egypt after growth of 4.2 percent in the fiscal year to June 2017, many are not feeling it. Like fabric vendor Mahmoud, who is adamant that he has not seen any improvements. "The state's political leadership works correctly and has accomplished many massive projects, and I support Sisi through and through, but where is the return for me at the moment?" —AFP

Toys'R'Us 'winds down' as British retailers hit hard times

LONDON: The British arm of troubled retailer Toys'R'Us is winding down its activities, administrators said yesterday as the US firm faces pressure from rival stores and online giant Amazon.

Yesterday's announcement puts up to 3,200 jobs at risk and comes as British electricals retailer Maplin joined Toys'R'Us UK in falling Wednesday into administration—the process whereby a troubled company seeks independent financial advice

regarding its future.

Maplin operates out of 217 stores across Britain and Ireland, employing close to 2,500 staff. The collapse of certain major retailers in the UK comes as Brexit uncertainty appears to be impacting the country's economic growth according to recent official data.

"The challenging conditions in the UK retail sector are well documented," said Zelf Hussain at PWC, which is acting as administrators for Maplin. "Like many other retailers, Maplin has been hit hard by a slowdown in consumer spending and more expensive imports as the pound has weakened" following Britain's vote in favor of exiting the European Union.

Hussain added that the administrators will "engage with parties who may be interested in acquiring all or part of the company". The British division of Toys'R'Us narrowly avoided entering administration in December after a key creditor embraced its plan to begin shut-

ting stores and plug its pensions deficit. It was agreed ahead of the New Year that at least 26 of the 105 shops in Britain would close in early 2018.

But the firm was nevertheless forced to enter insolvency proceedings. Court-appointed administrators Moorfields said in a statement: "Following the failure to attract a buyer for the business... administrators are conducting an orderly wind-down of the company's store portfolio."

While the Toys'R'Us announcement "is likely to affect many... staff, whether some or all of the stores will close remains to be decided", said Moorfields administrator Simon Thomas. As of late last year, Toys'R'Us in the UK employed more than 3,000 staff across more than 100 mostly warehouse-style stores.

"All is not well on UK (shopping) high streets," said Richard Lim, chief executive of Retail Economics. —AFP



LONDON: In this file photo, closing down posters are in the windows of a Toys 'R' Us store in south London. —AFP

Business

Zain Group and Ericsson create roadmap to 5G

Cooperation will enrich digital lifestyle of our customers: Al-Kharafi

BARCELONA: Zain Group and Ericsson (NASDAQ: ERIC) have announced they have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to jointly develop and test selected 5G and Internet of Things (IoT) cases. The MoU, signed during Mobile World Congress 2018 in Barcelona, demonstrates the commitment of both companies to bringing next-generation connectivity and its accompanying benefits to the Middle East and Africa.

The new partnership will accelerate digitalization in the region, enabling rapid deployment of innovative services in the Internet of Things (IoT) in the coming years. The agreement covers technical demonstrations and strengthens technical cooperation between the two companies and will ensure smooth 4G to 5G evolution across Zain's networks.

Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice Chairman and Group CEO says: "Zain is committed to bringing the latest technology and cutting-edge services to its customers. 5G will open the door for new applications that will transform consumer behavior and industries. By introducing these new technologies, we will enrich the digital lifestyles of individuals and support the growth and development of businesses we serve by creating new opportunities for them to grow."

Rafiah Ibrahim, Head of Ericsson Middle East and Africa, says: "We believe next generation technology and its applications will provide tangible benefits in the real-world. Ericsson has enjoyed a long and successful history of collaboration with Zain and this new agreement demonstrates our ongoing support in transforming their networks to enable these benefits for users around the Middle East and Africa region."

5G technology will enable massive connectivity and open up new markets to (IoT). Consumers and enterprises will be able to take advantage of a seamless experience on their connected devices; they will be able to adopt and invest in new applications such as smart transportation, connected cars and appliances, remote health care and remote control of machinery.



BARCELONA: Bader Al Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO and Rafiah Ibrahim, Head of Ericsson MEA sign an agreement flanked by Zain and Ericsson executives.

Zain taps Google's Apigee Edge API Platform to boost digital strategy

BARCELONA: At the Mobile World Congress in Barcelona, Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa, announced that it will launch the Zain Group Application Program Interface (API) Platform, that will see the operator exposing its APIs, thereby helping to remove a significant barrier to developing potential digital partnerships from across the globe.

A ceremony was held at the Zain booth attended by Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO; Sebastian Marotte, VP EMEA from Google Cloud, and Hiroyuki Sato, CEO of DOCOMO Digital. Zain will initially launch the platform with a pilot phase in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, and will be thereafter gradually extended to all Zain operations.

Zain will work alongside the Apigee team at Google Cloud as the API platform provider, FOO, a leading regional mobile digital solutions entity as the developer, and Shift Technologies, the leading Apigee Edge API Platform implementer in the Middle East region, to introduce this Group-wide API program with the aim of connecting its operating companies across the region onto a single enablement platform. This strategic initiative is set to bring about greater agility to Zain as it considers new market opportunities, accelerating innovation and expanding into new business verticals and building future platform business model-based revenue streams.

Notably, Zain has partnered with the global alternative payments provider DOCOMO Digital, the European unit of Japan's NTT DOCOMO as its first new content partner using the new API layer. DOCOMO Digital offers an advanced mobile commerce ecosystem-enabling platform that encourages financial inclusion for citizens worldwide. Thanks to this partnership DOCOMO Digital will enable Zain with the most advanced VAS Digital Content hosted on its own Product Frameworks and supported by a Best in Class Advertising Solution Platform & Service. Zain Kuwait and Zain Saudi Arabia will be the first operations to offer DOCOMO Digital's services.

Commenting on the imminent launch of the API platform in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO said, "We are pleased to be collaborating with more blue-chip technology companies in the form of Google and DOCOMO Digital in rolling the platform initially in Kuwait. In an ever-evolving and challenging telecommunications market, technology acts as an enabler for service differentiation and digital enablement. It drives our ambition to ensure a superior customer experience, and we believe opening up our APIs will help us to push continuous delivery of the best user experience while also expanding contribution to the development of our digital services to a whole new universe of contributors." Al-Kharafi added, "This initiative is another step in our strategy to build a digital lifestyle provider partnering with the best possible technology providers and offer the best services for our customers."

Sebastian Marotte, VP EMEA, Google Cloud, "We are excited to be a part of Zain's digital journey. There



Left to Right: Sebastian Marotte, VP EMEA, Google Cloud; Bader Al-Kharafi, Zain Vice-Chairman & Group CEO; and Hiroyuki Sato, CEO DOCOMO Digital.

are tremendous opportunities for telcos to provide enhanced customer experience, create new products and partner with other organizations to create value for both consumers and business. We look forward to supporting Zain as they drive their various innovation initiatives forward."

Hiroyuki Sato, CEO of DOCOMO Digital said: "Our partnership with Zain is very strategic, demonstrating the focus DOCOMO Digital has on MEA to drive scalable growth for our payments and content platform services. I strongly believe this is one of the many such important partnerships we hope to forge in the region in coming months as it weaves into our prime aspiration of driving financial inclusion for 5 billion people worldwide with the greatest possible trust and convenience."

Yusef Al-Barkawie, CEO of Shift Technologies added: "The vision that Zain has set for itself as a true digital innovator across the Middle East is very exciting, and we are very proud to be the partner of choice to help Zain lay the foundation of its Digital Platform leveraging the exceptional capabilities that Apigee Edge API Platform offers. Zain has a deep understanding of the importance of Digital Ecosystems to power the new emerging economies, and we are excited to be provided this opportunity to translate this vision into reality."

The API platform is set to give opportunities for large digital players and individual developers alike to be able to launch services to Zain customers in a reduced amount of time. In due course, with the new open source digital enablement platform available at each of its operations, Zain will be able to offer inter-



BARCELONA: Zain booth at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona

net service providers, other mobile network operators, and its own customers the following features:

- Direct Operator Billing, SMS, Location Based Service and Identity Services
- A streamlined engagement model with a single contract offering access to other APIs
- Centralized support for fast track new partner integration
- Centralized reconciliation services and reporting

The group-wide agreement with Google and DOCOMO Digital will bolster Zain's efforts to further leverage the capable operations of FOO, a leading mobile digital solutions developer in which Zain holds a strategic stake. FOO's expertise in implementing and managing this platform played a critical part of the development of the API. FOO will further support the rollout of the API platform across other Zain markets.

Business

Wall St rebounds after falling on rate fears

LONDON: Wall Street stocks pushed higher yesterday, a day after an upbeat assessment of the US economy by Federal Reserve boss Jerome Powell fanned fears of a sharp rise in interest rates sent equities tumbling.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average added 0.4 percent in the first minute of trading, with the broader S&P 500 and tech-heavy Nasdaq Composite also moving higher. "US stocks are rebounding slightly in early action from yesterday's drop that came courtesy of an apparent hawkish reaction to Fed Chairman Jerome Powell's first Congressional monetary policy testimony," said analysts at Charles Schwab brokerage.

Powell, making on Tuesday his debut before

Washington lawmakers, said the outlook for the US economy had improved since December when President Donald Trump pushed through massive across-the-board tax cuts. "Powell's unequivocal optimism over the outlook for the US economy and his hawkishness have led investors to believe that the Fed could take a more aggressive approach to monetary policy," said City Index analyst Fiona Cincotta.

While it was a positive sign for the world's top economy, the appraisal spooked investors already on edge at the prospect of higher borrowing costs. They forecast four rate rises this year rather than the three previously expected. World markets suffered a sharp drop at the start of February after strong jobs and wages data

sparked concerns that inflation would surge, and in turn force the Fed to ramp up borrowing costs. The Dow and Nasdaq both fell 1.2 percent Tuesday while the S&P 500 dropped 1.3 percent.

UK pound weighed down

Asian equity markets took their lead from Wall Street, with sentiment also hit from news of the third successive monthly fall in China's purchasing managers' index (PMI) survey of factory activity to a 19-month low in February. That news weighed heavily on London's energy and mining sectors because the Asian powerhouse economy is a top consumer of many raw materials. But European indices pushed higher as trading in the United States approached, with

London and Paris both moving into positive territory. London's FTSE 100 index was nearly 0.2 percent higher despite shares in British broadcaster ITV slumping over seven percent, topping the London FTSE 100 fallers' board. The company posted declining advertising revenues in the first results under new chief executive Carolyn McCall, the former boss of low-cost airline EasyJet.

Sentiment was jolted also by news that around 6,000 jobs could be lost following the collapse both of the UK arm of Toys'R'Us and British electrical retailer Maplin. The European single currency drifted lower following news that eurozone inflation slowed to 1.2 percent in February. That could make it less likely that the

European Central Bank will turn off its massive stimulus program in the near future.

Meanwhile the pound fell after the EU released its draft proposal for Brexit, which Prime Minister Theresa May angrily rejected and said "no UK prime minister could ever agree to it." The EU draft proposes keeping British-ruled Northern Ireland in a customs union if there is no better solution to avoid a hard border with EU-member Ireland. "The EU released its draft Brexit treaty this morning and despite containing no language that hadn't already been anticipated, it did weigh on the pound in the immediate aftermath," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at online currency trading platform OANDA. —AFP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report						
Wednesday, February 28, 2018						
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing			
Price Index	▲ 2.53	6,772.83	6,770.30			
Weighted Index	▲ 1.09	413.98	412.86			
KSX 15	▲ 2.94	958.03	955.09			

Volume	67,127,041
Value (KWD)	12,291,770
Number of Trades	2,676

Trades							
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KDI)	Trades	Last	Change
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	450	▲ 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	810	▲ 0.0
ENERGYH	27.5	27.5	500	14	1	27.5	▼ -0.5
GPI	28.7	28.1	279,900	7,960	12	28.1	▼ -0.9
ABAR	78	74	116,125	8,703	3	78	▲ 12.9
Oil & Gas			396,525	16,677	16	968.43	▲ 3.40
KFOUC	234	226	5,100	1,153	2	234	▲ 6.0
BPCC	708	707	57,857	40,961	19	708	▲ 0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	680	▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	343	331	145,350	49,052	26	343	▲ 11.9
Basic Materials			298,367	91,166	47	1314.37	▲ 20.20
KCEM	460	455	18,761	8,587	5	460	▲ 10.8
CABLE	418	410	80,085	32,908	9	418	▼ -3.0
BHP	205	203	39,985	8,137	5	205	▲ 3.0
PCEM	1,048	1,040	74,100	77,190	12	1,042	▼ -8.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▲ 0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	84	▲ 0.0
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▲ 0.0
HCC	95	95	10,000	950	1	95	▼ -4.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	197	▲ 0.0
EQUIPMENT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	37.8	▲ 0.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	72	▲ 0.0
GYPSSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	▲ 0.0
SALBOOKH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	51	▲ 0.0
AGLTY	852	845	378,029	320,961	34	845	▼ -9.0
EDJ	303	302	51,111	15,437	5	302	▼ -1.0
CLEANING	57	51	232,030	11,941	9	57	▼ -3.5
KGL	98	93	419,173	39,763	45	93	▼ -4.8
KPC	150	150	25,000	3,750	1	150	▼ -1.0
HUMANSOFT	3,999	3,988	21,866	81,717	17	3,988	▼ -194.0
GFC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▲ 0.0
SHOOTING	18.4	17.0	1,691,800	30,236	44	18.0	▼ -0.8
GOC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	459	▲ 0.0
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	▲ 0.0
UPAC	800	707	99,965	73,806	46	710	▲ 38.0
ALAFACD	374	368	70,000	26,040	6	374	▲ 6.0
MUBARRAD	73	72	741,100	53,635	18	73	▲ 1.8
LOGISTICS	51	50	1,002,060	50,526	23	50	▼ -0.3
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	▲ 0.0
GCEM	84	78	94,750	7,913	9	78	▼ -6.3
GIC	81	81	121,333	9,828	4	81	▲ 6.0
FCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	71	▲ 0.0
RKWC	81	80	20,000	1,610	2	81	▲ 1.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	54	▲ 0.0
Industrials			5,191,238	854,985	295	1844.95	▼ -18.40
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	85	▲ 0.0
CATTL	224	224	260	60	1	224	▲ 4.0
DANAH	74	74	900	37	1	74	▲ 0.9
FOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,804	▲ 0.0
Consumer Goods			764	97	2	816.14	▲ 7.20
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,100	▲ 0.0
YIACO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	125	▲ 0.0
Health Care			0	0	0	1391.79	▲ 0.00
KCIN	1,100	1,095	102	112	3	1,099	▲ 0.0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	197	▲ 0.0
SULTAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	67	▲ 0.0
CABLETV	16.0	16.0	10	0	1	16.0	▲ 1.0
IFAHR	152	121	110,999	14,101	14	152	▲ 1.0
OULAFUEL	116	115	13,905	1,808	14	116	▼ -2.0
MUNTAZAHAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	79	▲ 0.0
JAZEERA	825	599	101,550	60,910	28	599	▲ 0.0
SOOR	117	115	14,433	1,675	8	116	▲ 1.0
FUTUREXID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	▲ 0.0
ALTRAJ	121	119	76,870	9,277	8	119	▼ -2.0
Jiyad	82	79	585,602	47,067	70	80	▼ -2.0
Mezzan	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	795	▲ 0.0
Consumer Services			963,571	134,791	146	863.20	▼ -4.90
ZAIN	478	467	3,748,225	1,792,087	186	478	▲ 5.0
QORDOO	1,053	1,013	16,575	17,266	13	1,049	▲ 19.0
AAAN	22.4	21.6	307,804	7,272	21	22.2	▲ 0.0
VIVA	798	759	82,335	94,629	82	798	▲ 23.0
Telecommunications			4,174,939	1,871,255	282	552.63	▲ 18.80
NBK	770	761	1,313,393	1,010,153	69	770	▲ 4.0
GBK	261	250	6,096,232	1,584,076	116	261	▲ 5.0
CBK	460	450	47,551	21,607	19	453	▲ 3.0
ABK	310	310	9,418	2,920	2	310	▲ 0.0
ALMUTAHED	335	334	100,395	33,509	9	334	▲ 0.0
KJB	237	232	2,898,304	680,415	100	234	▼ -1.0
BLRG	290	287	277,620	80,220	39	287	▼ -2.0
KFIN	590	589	2,619,862	1,545,787	143	589	▼ -2.0
BOUBYAN	481	474	230,403	109,507	44	475	▼ -4.0
AUB	219	216	6,838,351	1,503,613	122	216	▼ -1.0
ITHMR	36.0	33.3	12,132,452	424,589	281	34.8	▲ 1.0
WARISBANK	246	241	1,585,528	385,082	85	242	▼ -4.0
Banks			34,250,009	7,381,539	1,628	933.10	▲ 0.70
KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	290	▲ 0.0
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	895	▲ 0.0
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	510	▲ 0.0
WINS	65	59	1,484	87	6	64	▲ 8.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	192	▲ 0.0
FTI	81	57	10,100	582	3	81	▼ -0.1
WETHAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.0	▲ 0.0
BKOWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	▲ 0.0
Insurance			11,564	688	9	1033.23	▲ 8.40

Trades							
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KDI)	Trades	Last	Change
SOKOLK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	47.8	▲ 0.0
KRE	54	53	642,100	34,387	22	53	▼ -0.2
URC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	74	▲ 0.0
NRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	119	▲ 0.0
SRE	341	337	138,000	46,748	10	340	▲ 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	399	▲ 0.0
AREEC	160	142	960	137	5	160	▲ 2.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	39.9	▲ 0.0
ARABREC	34.9	34.1	52,354	1,808	7	34.9	▲ 0.2
ERESCO	34.9	32.7	30,810	1,006	4	34.4	▲ 0.0
MABANEE	733	725	82,638	60,207	15	733	▲ 8.0
INJAZZAT	92	87	110	10	2	92	▲ 0.0
INVESTORS	15.7	15.5	832,000	12,968	21	15.7	▲ 0.1
IRC	29.8	29.0	80,902	2,347	3	29.8	▲ 0.8
ALTUARIA	82	80	160,030	14,378	4	82	▲ 0.0
SANAM	32.0	32.0	12,610	404	3	32.0	▼ -1.0
AAYANRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	77	▲ 0.0
ADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	▲ 0.0
ALAGARIA	29.8	29.8	10,000	298	2	29.8	▼ -0.1
MAZAYA	110	109	754,000	82,920	10	110	▲ 0.0
TUARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▲ 0.0
TAAMEER	29.5	27.3	1,510	43	3	29.4	▲ 0.0
ARKAN	87	87	20,700	1,801	1	87	▼ -1.2
ARGAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	160	▲ 0.0
ABYAR	20.2	19.3	1,240,300	24,210	38	19.5	▼ -0.3
MUNSHAAT	82	80	147,000	11,771	9	80	▲ 0.0
FIRSTDUBAI	49.5	47.0	430,014	20,540	14	49.0	▲ 1.1
KBT	51	50	258,000	13,166	20	51	▲ 1.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,572	▲ 0.0
MENA	31.0	26.2	30,110	873	3	31.0	▼ -1.0
ALMUDON	39.8	39.8	1,000	40	1	39.8	▲ 0.8
MARAKEZ	33.5	27.4	190,811	5,287	19</		

Business

Ford increasing production of new Lincoln Navigator, Ford Expedition

Production boost to meet greater-than-anticipated customer demand

DUBAI: Ford is increasing production of two popular full-size SUVs to meet surging demand for both all-new models ahead of their arrival in the Middle East. The Lincoln Navigator, the company's new all-new luxury SUV flagship, and the Ford Expedition - the smartest, most capable and most adaptable large SUV ever - have both undergone a complete redesign, building on the reputation the nameplates have forged in the region for quality, capability and power.

The company is using advanced manufacturing technologies and an upskilled workforce to increase line speed at its Kentucky Truck Plant to build even more Lincoln Navigator and Ford Expedition SUVs, boosting production targets approximately 25 percent since last fall when the SUVs hit the market.

A new \$25 million investment for additional manufacturing enhancements brings Ford's total investment at Kentucky Truck Plant to \$925 million and allows the company to increase manufacturing line speed.

This investment and advanced manufacturing upgrades are examples of the company's quest to improve its operational fitness. Upgrades include 400 new robots, a new 3D printer that enables workers to make parts and tools more quickly and cheaper as well as enhanced data analytics to keep the assembly line moving as efficiently as possible.

Surging customer demand

In the US, Lincoln dealers simply can't keep the entirely new Navigator on dealer lots: the luxury SUVs are spending an average of just seven days at the dealership before they are sold. In the Middle East, pre-release demand for the Navigator is extremely strong from customers in Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Kuwait.

Expedition - which begins arriving into Middle East showrooms - is also off to a strong start, with demand

for Ford's smartest, most capable and most adaptable SUV ever growing considerably since its appearance at the Dubai International Motor Show last November.

Ford Middle East and Africa's marketing director, Crystal Worthem said, "We knew that the Middle East would fall in love with the Expedition and Navigator - but we've been floored by the interest both all-new SUVs have had ahead of their arrival. Both have been tailored to deliver the best on- and off-road performance, power and capability for customers in a region where uncompromising dependability is essential."

"Launching Lincoln's flagship SUV in such a receptive market is incredibly exciting and we really can't wait for the first customers to get their hands on theirs. For Ford, the all-new Expedition heads our robust SUV lineup, making it the freshest line-up of SUVs available in a highly competitive scene for 2018," Worthem added.

To ensure customers can get vehicles as quickly as possible, Kentucky Truck Plant assembly line workers are working overtime and voluntary weekend shifts.

Advanced manufacturing

Kentucky Truck Plant's advanced manufacturing technologies and tools are helping Ford upskill its workforce and deliver better quality vehicles to customers more quickly. More than 400 new robots - including collaborative robots - were added to the facility during last year's transformation, mainly in the body shop. The robots enable the plant to increase the line speed while keeping employees safe from repetitive-motion injuries. The plant also added a robot lab, where employees can test out software tweaks or trouble shoot issues away from the factory floor - in both instances, saving valuable time.

Data analytics have helped the plant identify and address thousands of concerns in near-real time. A data



Ford's investment at Kentucky Truck plant up to \$925m

analytics hub includes seven big-screen TVs that provide minute-by-minute updates, letting plant officials know whether production is meeting hourly targets or whether there is a concern on the line that should be immediately addressed. Data updates also allow workers to be proactive, alerting them to instances of pending parts shortages so they can arrange for a new batch to be delivered to a work station before parts completely run out. An enormous spare parts "vending machine" allows workers to more quickly locate a necessary part while automatically keeping inventory at optimal levels.

The plant recently installed a 3D printer onsite to print individual parts for tools necessary to keep the

plant running. Manufacturing a prototype part using traditional methods can take eight to 16 weeks at a cost of more than \$250,000 in tooling alone. Producing the same part using 3D printing can take days - and sometimes just hours - and can be done for a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

Kentucky Truck Plant

Kentucky Truck Plant opened in 1969. It currently employs more than 8,400 people, including approximately 8,100 hourly employees. The plant builds the Ford Expedition, Lincoln Navigator and Ford Super Duty.

Munich Airport and Lufthansa start testing of humanoid robot in Terminal 2

MUNICH: She is 120 centimeters tall, with sparkling, round eyes and a pleasant voice: Starting today, "Josie Pepper" the robot will be answering questions for passengers in Terminal 2. Whether they need directions to their gate or want to stop at a certain restaurant or shop - Josie Pepper will look them in the eyes and give them a prompt answer.

With the rollout of Josie Pepper, Munich Airport and Lufthansa are breaking new ground: It is the first-ever test of a humanoid robot equipped with artificial intelligence at a German airport. For the next few weeks, Josie Pepper will welcome travelers to the non-public area of Terminal 2, which is jointly operated by Munich Airport and Lufthansa. In her initial deployment, Josie Pepper, who speaks English, will await passengers at the top of the ramp leading to the shuttle connecting the main terminal to the satellite building. This test phase will be used to show whether Josie Pepper is accepted by passengers.

Josie Pepper's "brain" contains a high-performance processor with a WLAN internet access. This creates a connection to a cloud service where speech is processed, interpreted and linked to the airport data. What sets the system apart: When this robot type



speaks, it does not just deliver pre-defined texts. With its ability to learn, it answers each question individually. Just like a "real" brain, the system gets steadily better at combining questions with the relevant information to provide more precise replies.

IBM Watson Internet of Things (IoT) cloud-

based, artificial intelligence technologies are behind Josie Pepper's capabilities. Pepper was developed by the French company SoftBank Robotics. The lady robot was given the name "Josie" by the staff of Munich Airport and Lufthansa when she arrived at the airport.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah daily draws

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draws on 27 February 2018 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 18 February - 22 February 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

The winners are:

(Sunday 18/02): Jasbeh Abed Jber, Ahmad Hussain Ahmad Abbas.

(Monday 19/02): Jamal Asheer Almeslamany, Ashraf Abdulmottaleb Hasan Mohammad Eid.

(Tuesday 20/02): Sami Mohammad Helal Alsuwaidan, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Almallik.

(Wednesday 21/02): Ismaeel Abd Ali Alraheem Alshatti, Abdullah Hussain Ibrahim Shah.

(Thursday 22/02): Ali Abdullah Abdularhaman Almuhanha, Fatima Abdulkareem Mohammed Alsaqer.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2018 draw lineup includes daily draws (Two winners per working day each receive KD 1000). Al-Danah's first quarterly draw for the prize of KD 200,000 will be held on 28 March, the second quarterly draw for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 27 June and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 will be held on 26 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on 10 January 2019 whereby the

Al-Danah millionaire will be announced. Gulf Bank encourages you to increase your chances by depositing more into your Al-Danah account, immediately from any local bank, using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking.

Five reasons why the Al-Danah account is the best:

- 1) Kuwait's single biggest yearly cash prize of KD 1 million and the largest international bank prize according to Guinness World Records
- 2) Kuwait's biggest quarterly cash prizes, up to KD 500,000
- 3) Two winners of KD 1,000 every working day
- 4) The most chances to win
- 5) Only Bank that transfers your chances to win from the previous year to the current year.

NBK announces Al-Jawhara KD 125,000 winner



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait announced the winner of the KD 125,000 monthly Al-Jawhara draw for February 2018. The name of the winner, Khalid Abdullah Al-Sahoo, was announced live on air on radio FM 88.8 and in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and NBK representatives. NBK rewards its most loyal customers through Al-Jawhara draw with weekly, monthly and quarterly prizes total of KD 2.2 million annually. Customers qualify for a chance in the draw for every KD 50 in their Al-Jawhara account.

Customers can double their chances in case no withdrawals or transfers occur during the required period. To open Al-Jawhara account, customer can simply visit NBK Online or Mobile banking and deposit KD 400 (minimum opening balance) or they can visit the nearest branch. Each KD 50 deposited during the required period equals one chance to enter the draw. Winners' names are always made public and posted on the NBK website & Social Media accounts.

Winners for Al-Jawhara weekly draws in February include: Younan Najeeb Mikhael Jadallah, Bassam Abdullah Al-Bassam and Khaleel Ibrahim Slaem. Each won KD 5,000.

Benefits of Al-Jawhara Account include a free Visa debit card with access to more than 650,000 ATM machines around the world; access to NBK Online Banking and the NBK Mobile Banking app for viewing and managing your account wherever you are in the world. Customers always have access to NBK's 24 hour, seven day a week call center and SMS notice service by request. Al-Jawhara account holders also have unlimited withdrawals (terms and conditions apply).

NBK strives to maintain lasting, strong and positive relationships with customers and work to provide many premier prizes, rewards and promotions to thank our customers for their loyalty.

VIVA participates in Mobile World Congress 2018 in Barcelona

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, participated in the Mobile World Congress 2018 organized by Group Special Mobile association "GSMA" that took place in Barcelona between 26 February and March 1.

VIVA's delegation from different divisions, Technology, Marketing and Corporate Communications, was present at the congress through STC's Booth, sponsor of the event, where VIVA showcased in cooperation with Huawei Kuwait a product called "CEO War Room". It is data centric - all planning goes through a centralized data warehouse, which required it

to consolidate information relating to billing, usage and rollout planning, and define the number of users and sites.

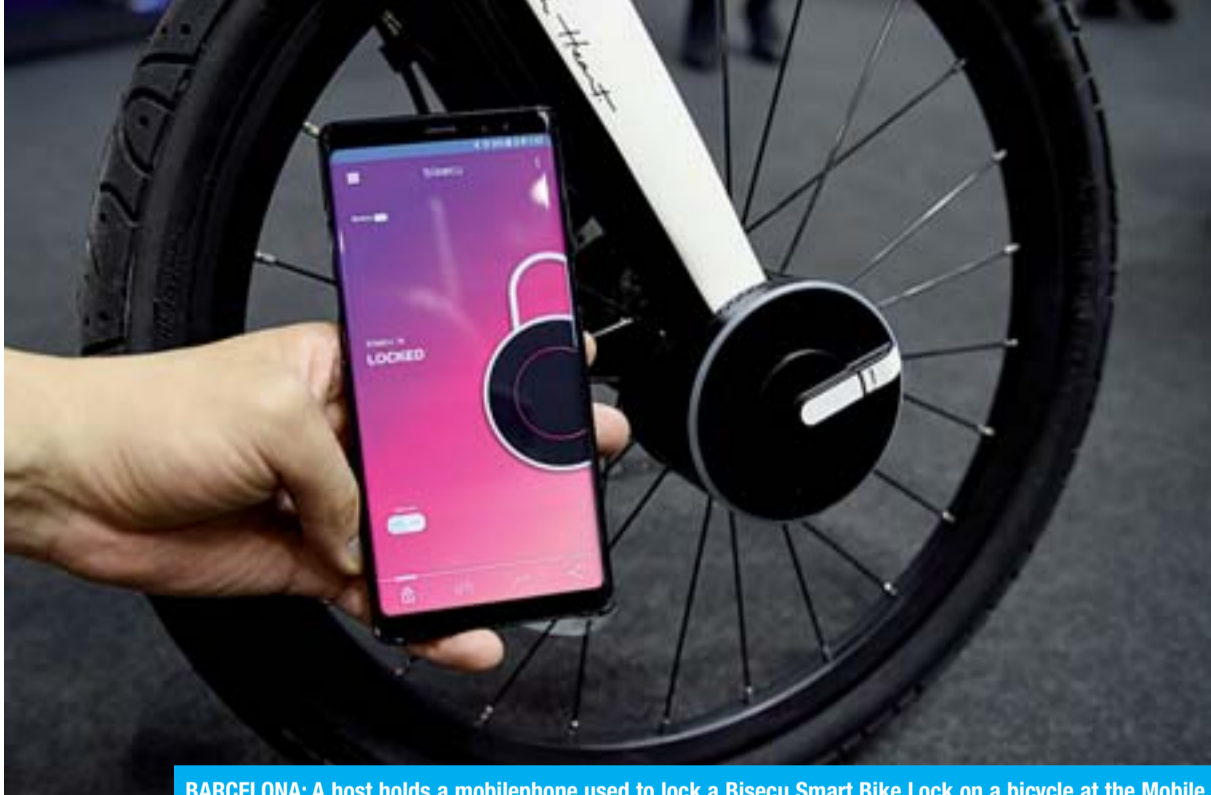
It is noteworthy to mention that VIVA won lately "Speedtest Award Winner 2017 - Kuwait's Fastest Mobile Network" by Ookla, and it is pioneer in the middle east in providing the latest products and services to its customers among telecom operators in the middle east region, and achieved successfully the establishment of the first Voice Over LTE (VoLTE) interconnection in the Middle East and North Africa region in partnership with local networks, and was the first telecom company in Kuwait that has successfully tested the fifth-generation "5G" in its lab, which fosters its leadership in providing the latest technology that will enable customers to exchange information and communicate at higher speeds.

The GSMA represents the interests of mobile operators worldwide, uniting nearly 800 operators with more than 250 companies in the broader mobile ecosystem, including handset and device makers, software companies, equipment providers and Internet companies, as well as organizations in adjacent industry sectors. The GSMA also produces industry-leading events such as Mobile World Congress, Mobile Asia Expo.



Technology

Top gadgets at Mobile World Congress



BARCELONA: A host holds a mobilephone used to lock a Biscu Smart Bike Lock on a bicycle at the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the world's biggest mobile fair. —AFP photos

BARCELONA: From headsets that help you lose weight without dieting to a smart meat thermometer, here are five eye-catching devices on display at the Mobile World Congress, wireless industry's biggest conference which got underway Monday in Barcelona:

Smart bike lock

Tired of bending down to lock your bike? A team of South Korean engineers have developed a small circular device that is installed on the hub of the front wheel and is connected to the owner's smartphone via Bluetooth. When the bike owner stops riding and walks away, the device—dubbed Biscu—automatically locks itself. When the rider returns, it detects that too and it will unlock. Any thief who tries to ride off with the bike would find the front wheel frozen in position—and a 100 decibel

alarm would also be triggered and the owner notified on their phone that the bike is being tampered with.

Weight loss headset

British startup Neurovalens presented a headset that generates a low-level electrical pulse which sends a signal to the brain to burn fat and lose weight. The company's head Jason McKeown said 80 percent of those who have used the Modius headset have lost weight. It comes with an app that allows you to track your progress.

Wireless meat thermometer

Knowing how long to cook meat can be tricky, and you often need to check the oven multiple times to make sure you don't overcook it. The Meater, a wireless meat thermometer about the width of a standard pen,



BARCELONA: A man wears the VUZIX M300 Augmented Reality Smart Glasses at the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the world's biggest mobile fair.

lets you monitor how your meat is doing from an app on your phone. It works like any other meat thermometer, except it communicates with your phone via Bluetooth or wi-fi. "The app has been designed to monitor the internal temperature of the oven or barbecue and the internal temperature of the meat," said Matt Blyden, Meater's marketing manager. "You chose on the app how you would like the meat cooked, whether it is rare, medium or well done, and the app tracks the temperature. When it nearly gets to that point it beeps on your phone."

See through walls

Can I really pierce this wall or is there a pipe behind it? Israeli 3D imaging company Vayyar has developed a sensor that uses radio waves to "see" through materials.

Stick the sensor on your mobile and when you place your handset on the wall, what is behind it appears on the screen. "It is almost like a new kind of camera that opens up capabilities that were not there before," said Vayyar director of marketing Malcolm Berman.

Smart glasses

US firm Vuzix presented its latest augmented reality glasses which connect to your smartphone, allowing text messages to appear before your eyes as you walk through the streets. The glasses can also give you directions via GPS on the screen and if you want to take a picture you don't need to take out your phone. Just tap the side to open the photo app, look at what you want to photograph and the glasses take the snapshot. —AFP

British astronaut hails 'groundbreaking' Airbus satellite

PORTSMOUTH: British astronaut Tim Peake on Monday hailed a "groundbreaking" satellite being built by Airbus which its developers say will bring an unprecedented level of flexibility to space telecommunications. The Eutelsat Quantum satellite is being put together by the multinational company in Portsmouth, on the south coast of England, where it was unveiled Monday ahead of transfer to France for testing later this year.

When launched in 2019 it will for the first time allow a commercial satellite to be fully reconfigurable while in orbit, with operators able to change key elements in real time, such as its frequency and which parts of the earth it covers. "What is really new is the level of flexibility that the satellite will provide and so this will be thanks to a combination of technologies that we will put on board the satellite," said Yohann Leroy, deputy CEO of French satellite operator Eutelsat.

Leroy said the new technology also allows operators to adapt to different regulatory constraints around the world and adjust to changing market conditions in the 15-year life span of the satellite. "There can be much faster change in market demand, seasonal demand or even daily demand," he told AFP. Allowing passengers to connect to the internet while flying over the Pacific Ocean is just one example of innovative satellite use, with demand changing according to flight schedules, Leroy added.

Visiting the Airbus site astronaut Peake—who in 2015 became the first British European Space Agency (ESA) astronaut to visit the International Space Station—said the enterprise was an example of British innovation in space. "It's a European Space Agency-led program but being built here in the UK," said Peake, noting the antenna array is coming from Spain. "So there's international partnership from small satellites to major space stations, and I think the UK will continue to do well to look globally for those partnerships."

Cooperation on such pioneering projects will continue beyond Britain's upcoming departure from the European Union, predicted Peake, adding that membership of the ESA is not dependent on being part of the block. Graham Turnock, chief executive of the UK Space Agency, said Britain needed to "be at the forefront of innovation" in order to retain a leading position in the space industry. "So this new satellite... I think is really exciting and it gives us the ability to be at that particular part of the leading edge," he said. —AFP

Amazon buys video doorbell startup Ring

SAN FRANCISCO: Amazon confirmed Tuesday that it bought video doorbell startup Ring, in a move that could help the internet giant's delivery arm reach into people's homes. Financial terms of the acquisition were not disclosed, but online reports valued the deal at more than a billion dollars. "We're excited to work with this talented team and help them in their mission to keep homes safe and secure," an Amazon spokesperson said.

California-based Ring first caught the spotlight with a failed quest for funding about five years ago on reality television show Shark Tank. Ring went on to win backing from the likes of billionaire Richard Branson and Amazon's Alexa Fund. "Ring is committed to our mission to reduce crime in neighborhoods by providing effective yet affordable home security tools to our neighbors that make a positive impact on our homes, our communities and the world," Ring said in a statement. —AFP

Cosmonaut, astronauts return to Earth from ISS

DZHEZKAZGAN, Kazakhstan: Two NASA astronauts and a Russian cosmonaut returned to Earth yesterday, rounding off a mission of more than five months aboard the International Space Station. Alexander Misurkin of Russia's Roscosmos space agency and NASA's Mark Vande Hei and Joe Acaba touched down on steppe land southeast of the town of Dzhezkazgan in central Kazakhstan at the expected time of 0231 GMT.

"All descent and landing operations went according to plan. The crew members that have returned to Earth are feeling well," Roscosmos said in a statement. Misurkin, 40, who handed over command of the International Space Station to compatriot Anton Shkaplerov Tuesday and took charge of the Soyuz descent module carrying the trio down to Earth has spent 334 days in space over two flights.

He was in buoyant mood on the way down, telling Russian Mission control he felt "better than anyone", and was the first crew member to emerge out of the spacecraft onto the snow-covered steppe. Following him out of the craft that landed upright were Acaba, 50, who has now

racked up some 10 months in orbit over three missions and his 51-year-old colleague Vande Hei, who was in space for the first time.

Both NASA astronauts were active on Twitter while aboard the ISS, while Misurkin eschewed the micro-blogging platform. Puerto Rican native Acaba on Sunday tweeted a photo of his hands framing the Earth as viewed from the ISS's famous "Cupola" observation module. "The future of our home is in all of our hands. May we all care for #Earth and practice good stewardship," he wrote. Ex-military man Vande Hei took to the micro-blogging platform to share his love of sports, taking in both the American football Superbowl and the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics while aboard the orbital lab.

Both NASA men will board a plane from Kazakhstan to Houston to continue post-mission testing while Misurkin is bound for Star City, just outside Moscow. Remaining ISS crew members Shkaplerov of Roscosmos, Scott Tingle of NASA and Norishige Kanai of the Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency are set to be joined by Americans Ricky Arnold and Andrew Feustel and Russian Oleg Artemyev following a launch from the Baikonur cosmodrome in Kazakhstan later this month. NASA stopped its own manned launches to the ISS in 2011 but recently moved to increase its crew complement aboard the ISS as the Russians cut theirs in a cost-saving measure.

Roscosmos will replenish its crew once a new, multi-purpose space module called Nauka docks at the ISS, but the



Ground personnel help NASA astronaut Joe Acaba get out of the Soyuz MS-06 space capsule after landing in a remote area outside the town of Dzhezkazgan (Zhezkazgan), Kazakhstan. —AFP

launch of the module has been delayed several times and is now not expected to take place before 2019. The ISS laboratory, a rare example of American and Russian international cooperation, has been orbiting Earth at about 28,000 kilometers per hour since 1998. —AFP

Huawei revolutionizes smartphone photography: A world of firsts

In today's world, armed with a mobile device, anyone can become a photographer, recording their life and capturing every worthy moment. And the age of social networks, where hundreds of millions of photographs are uploaded and shared across the world, mobile phone photography is replacing portable digital cameras as one of the most effective mediums of communicating information.

Camera is indeed one of the influential element that defines a premium smartphone and it is one of the most significant key selling points for consumers. We have seen that innovations in smartphone photography were focused on clarity and speed of the pictures. Consumer preference has now shifted beyond the usual megapixel count where higher quality of focus, better perspective, and more visible depth of field is not just 'nice-to-have', but a prerequisite.

Reinventing Smartphone Photography

Redefining the limits between professional and amateur photography, Huawei's partnership with premium camera manufacturer Leica offers new and improved dual-lens camera technology that sets a new standard in smartphone photography. By leveraging the unrivaled capabilities of Leica, the leader in the world of imaging for more than 100 years, users of the Huawei smartphones can now enjoy more accurate colors, more refined interaction between light and shadow, and more life-like pictures. Huawei has taken dual camera technology to the next level.

During the past couple of years, HUAWEI has built a strong competitive advantage in smartphone photography through the core technology, improvements in image quality thanks to its exceptional partnership with the photography giant Leica, and the adoption of AI technology, substantially enhancing its overall photography experience.

Leica's Film Style, which depicts the visual sense of an oil painting, first came true on a smartphone with the model P9. "The Leica Style" brings high color saturation



but a natural look with no overflow effect. The overall hue makes the photo look like an oil painting. The transition of the color is natural, the image is sharp and the details of the lowlights part are well taken care of.

Breakthrough in smartphone portrait photography

The P10, focuses on portrait photography, creating portrait mode, introducing precise 3D facial detection, dynamic illumination and natural portrait enhancements to produce stunning artistic portrait shots. It's been a revolutionary step in the field of portrait photography, making smartphone photography more humanistic.

The HUAWEI P series has always been committed to the pursuit of excellence in artistic expression. P10 made a breakthrough by bringing Leica's portrait mode, which continues to build a system of skills including blurring, monochrome, color and zoom to deliver the best portrait. These skills give each portrait photo rich expression and emotion. Through 3D detection technology we can fully understand basic feature information of faces, calculate the face contour information and implement intelligent additional light, so that the nose looks to have real depth and the forehead and cheekbone look more realistic and rounded. A skin enhancement solution designed by HUAWEI Aesthetics Research Center in France is also applied to improve the skin tones of different ethnicities.

From smart photography to intelligent photography

The latest HUAWEI product co-engineered with Leica is the Mate 10 series. Built with the world's first AI processor for smartphones, the Kirin 970 chipset, the Mate 10 series delivers the ultimate intelligent experience in smartphone photography. It features an AI-powered Real-Time Scene and Object Recognition and Real-Time Auto Settings allow the camera to automatically adjust and choose settings to help users capture better photographs in a range of different environments. It also features AI-powered Bokeh Effect for a more natural and detailed transition between the background and subject and AI-powered Digital Zoom brings far-off text into clearer focus.

Combining a 12-megapixel RGB sensor with a 20-megapixel monochrome sensor, the HUAWEI Mate 10 new dual cameras co-engineered with Leica features 2x lossless zoom, optical image stabilization, and lenses boasting the "world's largest aperture" of f/1.6. The Mate 10 series also has 4K video recording. This is the first intelligent photography smartphone that truly turns every shot into a perfect memory. The collaboration of the fastest growing smartphone company, Huawei and most legendary brand in the history of photography, Leica is providing smartphones with not only professionalism, but opening doors for more possibilities into the future.

Health

Experts call for more genetic research support for those living with rare diseases in MidEast



DUBAI: This Rare Disease Day, experts are calling for increased research to unlock the answer to rare diseases which will, in turn, help the 25 million patients from the Middle East living with a rare disease. There are more than 6000 known rare diseases, of different prevalence rates, and this number is continuously growing. Most rare diseases are caused by a genetic defect, which means that children are born with the condition and will not get better by themselves. The symptoms of rare disease can often be very serious, making patients very sick or causing disabilities that impact on how long they will live and their quality of life. It is reported that rare diseases affect 7% of the population in the Arab world.

A 2018 report on Rare Diseases by the Centre for Arab Genomic Studies (CAGS) highlights that in the Arab World, most rare diseases have no cure and only few treatments are available and that, to help change this, patient involvement in research needs to improve. Although there is a need for more research in the Middle East, CAGS have successfully increased the number of gene and disease entries for the Arab population so it now exceeds 2,300 entries.

Dr Mahmoud Taleb Al-Ali, Director of the Centre for Arab Genomic Studies said, "CAGS joins the global call of Rare Disease Day 2018 on policy makers, researchers, and healthcare professionals to increasingly and more effectively involve patients in rare disease research. This will contribute to enhanced and faster diagnosis of rare diseases and therefore reduce the number of people around the world who face the daily challenge of living with an undiagnosed rare disease. In addition, it will help develop treatments that can greatly ameliorate the quality of life of rare disease patients."

New research and techniques

International centers such as Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children (GOSH) based in London, who treat 1,500 children from the Middle East every year, also aim to

help children from the Middle East through using their specialist expertise to pioneer new research and techniques into rare, genetic diseases. GOSH is home to 17 nationally commissioned services for rare diseases and has helped nearly 100 children from the Middle East with immunology problems last year.

Dr Matthew Buckland, who specializes in primary immune deficiency at GOSH says, "The Immunology services at GOSH have been at the forefront of novel therapies in rare and inherited disorders for decades. The first gene therapy in the UK for gamma chain SCID was developed here and trialed over 15 years ago. Since that time the team has worked with others in the field. The first licensed gene therapy for an immune deficiency (ADA-SCID) is now available in Europe, there are further developments in Wiskott-Aldrich, Chronic Granulomatous disease and novel approaches for other disorders to follow. Genetic discovery is incredibly important, but so is translating this into treatments that work for affected children."

Gene therapy is one of the revolutionary treatment areas GOSH specializes in. Gene therapy is the introduction of normal genes into cells in place of missing or defective ones to correct genetic disorders. It tackles the root cause of genetic disease, offering the prospect of effective and lasting treatment for children with conditions that were previously difficult or even impossible to manage.

GOSH runs more gene therapy trials for immune deficiency in children than any other centre in the world. Fifty children have now been treated with gene therapy at GOSH, including two patients from the Middle East. With ongoing support, the research team hopes to roll out the hospital's gene therapy program to a wider range of life-threatening and life-limiting genetic diseases allowing many more patients to be offered this ground-breaking new therapy as a front-line approach.

How the blind use clicks to 'see': Study

PARIS: Just as bats bounce sound waves off objects to find their way in the dark, some blind humans spontaneously make clicking sounds with their mouths to navigate the world, scientists said yesterday. Not only that, but they adjust the speed and volume of the clicks when they need to zoom in on a hard-to-place object.

"Even though people have not been 'designed' to echolocate, they have adapted their brains extraordinarily well to detect faint echoes and to instinctively adjust emissions as the task changes," said Lore Thaler of Durham University in the UK, co-author of a study published in the journal Proceedings of the Royal Society B. The research team tracked down eight blind people with experience in echolocation for the study.

They placed the "expert echolocators" in a noise-insulated room, then conducted experiments by placing a wooden disk at different angles from the person—straight ahead, at 45, 90, or 135-degree angles to their left, or directly behind them—always at a distance of a meter. Standing in one place and without moving their heads, the subjects' task was to make clicking sounds with their mouths to determine whether the disk was present in the room or not.

At zero, 45 and 90 degree angles, the participants

were correct 100 percent of the time, the researchers found. Their success rate dropped to about 80 percent when the disc was placed at an 135-degree angle, just over their left shoulder. At 180 degrees, directly behind them, the participants were correct half the time.

For the larger, more difficult angles, the echolocators "increased the number of clicks they made and the intensity of the clicks," the team discovered. "Our results clearly demonstrate that people, just like bats, adjust their emissions to situational demands." The team also measured the echoes, and found they were "very faint". "Indeed, based on previous research, people would have said that it should have been impossible for them to perceive these echoes," Thaler told AFP.

The fact that blind people can teach themselves to echolocate had been documented before, he said, but never that they can adjust their sound emissions in sonar-like fashion. The clicks are made by pressing the tongue against the roof of the mouth, then quickly pulling the tongue down, creating a vacuum that "pops". The sound travels, and bounces from surfaces and objects around the blind person, returning as echoes. "What we have found is very useful when teaching people echolocation," said Thaler. "Now we can tell them, for example, that if they find a task or situation difficult or they find it hard to hear an echo they should consider making the click louder and make some more clicks and this will help them hear the echoes better." —AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

248 33 199

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

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What's On

Ooredoo Bikers visited children's hospital ward at Razi Hospital



Stemming from its corporate social responsibility strategy, and in alignment with its deep-rooted values of caring and connecting, Ooredoo, Kuwait's fastest network, organized a visit to the children's ward at Razi Hospital recently. The visit was organized by the Ooredoo Bikers, which consists of employees in the company who share the passion of motorbike riding. The visit was made possible by the efforts of the Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH), further solidifying Ooredoo's position with the organization. The initiative aimed at raising awareness about driving motorbikes in a safe and responsible manner, under the title "Hurt Your Helmet, Not Your Head." It promotes the importance of wearing the necessary safety gear, including helmets and protective vests.



In a statement he made regarding this visit, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub said, "We at Ooredoo Kuwait are committed to embodying our values of caring, connecting, and challenging through sustainable projects across Kuwait, and we have had the honor to work more than once with KACCH, whose noble values are harmonious with ours. This event was organized spontaneously by Ooredoo employees, and we are proud of their initiative and interest in giving back to the community.

We intend to hold more events similar to this in the future, as this is part of our social responsibility strategy in Ooredoo."

Alayoub added that Ooredoo works according to a year-long agenda on social responsibility initiatives, in collaboration with different entities, noting that the company places great importance on involving its employees and giving them an opportunity to participate in embodying the values of caring and giving. Ooredoo Bikers Club includes more than ten Ooredoo employees from across the company's different departments, such as Technology, Sales, Marketing, and Legal Affairs. During their visit, the members of the club distributed gifts to the children staying in Razi Hospital, in addition to donating games for the entertainment corner of the children at the hospital.



Mijbil Alayoub

Jumeirah Royal Saray opens in Bahrain

Jumeirah Group's first hotel in the Kingdom of Bahrain opened yesterday. Jumeirah Royal Saray offers a new wave of understated luxury on a private beach in the northern coastal Seef district. Architecturally inspired by traditional Bahraini summerhouses, the hotel will blend history and modern culture with a chic dining, spa and pool scene.

The new 174 room hotel will feature stunning rooms, unique summerhouses and royal residences, poolside cabanas and an upscale casual and trendy restaurant featuring a fantastic Gin bar. A spectacular lounge, 'The Palm Lounge' overlooks the turquoise blue waters of the Arabian Gulf, serving world class coffee by Colombian baristas and French Patisserie. The Al Hadiqa pool cabanas will offer guests fresh blended cocktails in a Mediterranean ambience complete with ancient olive trees that adorn the pool.

Indoor and outdoor meeting spaces will be able to accommodate more than 400 people and Talise, Jumeirah's own brand, will eventually offer a wide range of signature treatments from a destination Spa, sitting in its own wing. Additionally, PLAY Restaurant & Lounge(tm) a Dubai concept by acclaimed chef Reif Othman, recently voted as the 'Restaurant Of The Year' with Timeout Restaurant Awards for Play Dubai opened yesterday within the hotel.

As General Manager of the hotel, Nordine



El Yafi is responsible for introducing Jumeirah's unique approach to luxury hospitality to Bahrain. Commenting on the opening of Jumeirah Royal Saray, Nordine El Yafi, said, "Jumeirah Royal Saray is an important opening for us as it's our first in Bahrain and first in 2018. The hotel will become a key reason for international visitors to discover Bahrain, an ideal destination for a weekend escape for visitors from across the GCC, and a gastronomic hotspot in the city. We are confident that this landmark, understated luxury hotel will have great appeal to the growing number of tourists visiting Bahrain every year and become a particular favorite of Bahrain residents."

The design of guest rooms within Jumeirah Royal Saray pays homage to the Bahraini pearl diving industry with the colors of nacres (mother of pearl), silvers, and shimmering ocean blue tones. Across the resort, patterns from traditional and royal houses

including 'The House of Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa' feature heavily in furniture, glass and ornate details. In addition to Bahraini heritage, the design brings together curated materials from all over the world, including hand-blown glass chandeliers in every bathroom from the Czech Republic; five different types of Italian marble; and gold and silver foiled walls by master French artisans.

Located 15 minutes from the airport, the hotel is set in an ideal location in the prestigious district of Seef, with its stunning coastline, luxury living and high-end shopping malls. It is also just a short drive to tourist landmarks including the UNESCO World Heritage site of Qal'at Al Bahrain - Ancient Harbour and Capital of Dilmun which dates back 4,000 years as well as Adliya, Bahrain's buzzing art, food and nightlife district and Muharraq Island with its narrow, winding alleyways and traditional and royal houses.



Dr Khalid Rajaey Al Matrawi was recently honored by the Hawally Dental association for his achievements and accomplishments in the field.



Happy Birthday!

A very happy birthday to our daughter Ira Suvarna, who celebrates her 7th birthday in Kuwait. May God bless you. Best wishes comes from Mom & Dad, friends & relatives.

Burgan Bank in Kuwaiti Project for Special Needs Exhibition

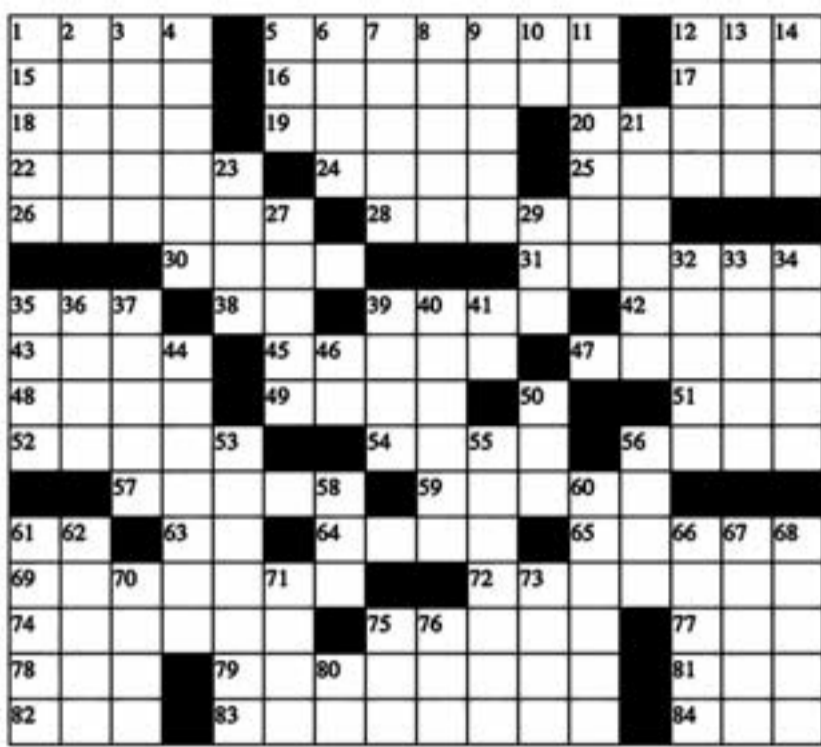
Burgan Bank successfully concluded its sponsorship in the Kuwaiti Project for Special Needs Exhibition that took place on 22 February 2018. Burgan Bank representatives illustrated how the special needs segment are met with a full-fledged banking experience backed by improved accessibility and the latest world-class technological applications.

The exhibition was held to showcase Kuwait's growing efforts to facilitate the overall requirements and comfort of the special needs segment. In support of the Central Bank of Kuwait instructions and regulations, Burgan Bank has deployed 6 fully-equipped branches at convenient locations, in Adaliyah, Bayan, Khaitan, Qurain, Riqqa and Al Qosour, allowing physically disabled, visually impaired and seniors' to carry out their banking transactions proficiently, independently and with utmost ease. Each branch is managed by a number of highly proficient employees trained to communicate via sign language.

Part of Burgan Bank's long standing mission is to ensure best in-class services for all segments of society and as one of the highest contributors to the wellbeing of the community, the bank has played an important role in being the first to develop innovative solutions that comprehensively serve the requirements of vulnerable groups in Kuwait.



CROSSWORD 1846



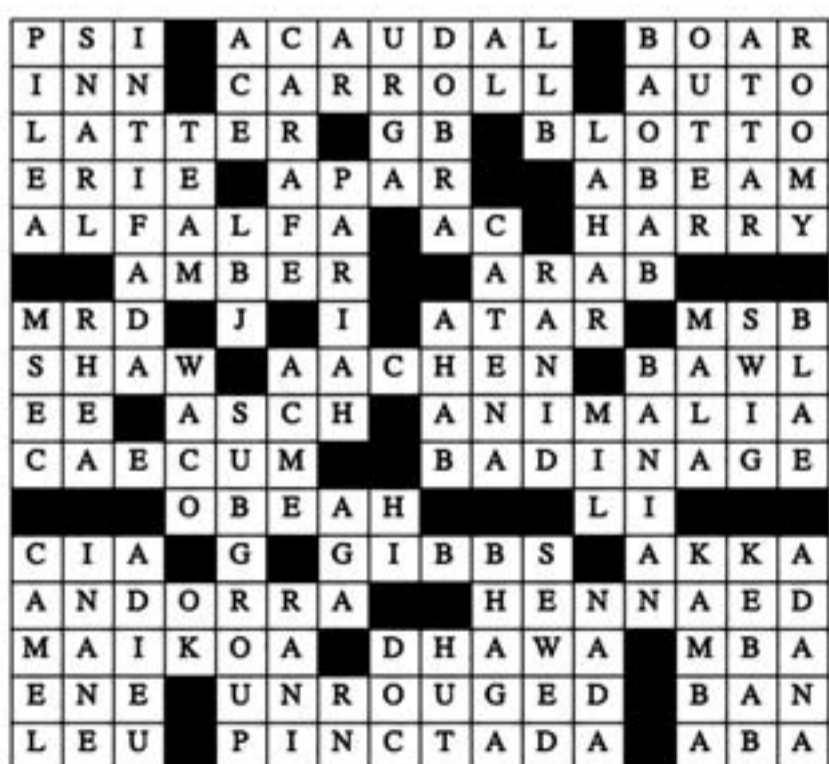
ACROSS

1. Powdery starch from certain sago palms.
5. (of time) Having passed or slipped by.
12. Alternative names for the body of a human being.
15. Any property detected by the olfactory system.
16. Short-tailed monkey of rocky regions of Asia and Africa.
17. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
18. An awkward stupid person.
19. (Babylonian) God of fire.
20. Given or having a specified name.
22. A unit of dry measure used in Egypt.
24. African tree with edible yellow fruit resembling mangos.
25. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
26. 40th President of the United States (1911-).
28. A midnight meeting of witches to practice witchcraft and sorcery.
30. In bed.
31. Small genus of aquatic or semiaquatic plants.
35. 36th President of the United States.
38. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
42. Characteristic of false pride.
43. A white crystalline double sulfate of aluminum.
45. (neurology) Of or relating to the vagus nerve.
47. A French river that flows through the heart of Paris and then northward into the English Channel.
48. A sodium salt of carbonic acid.
49. A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
51. A unit of pain intensity.
52. A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
54. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
57. Leafless East Indian vine.
59. A chronic disorder that occurs in tropical and nontropical forms and in both children and adults.
61. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
63. A metric unit of length equal to one billionth of a meter.
64. Quality of being active or spirited or vigorous.
65. Music performed for dancing the polka.
69. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
72. Occurring during the middle of the week.
74. Large ornamental tropical American tree with bipinnate leaves and globose clusters of flowers with crimson stamens and sweet-pulp seed pods eaten by cattle.
77. A master's degree in business.
78. Electronic warfare undertaken under direct control of an operational commander to locate sources of radiated electromagnetic energy for the purpose of immediate threat recognition.
79. A sudden violent spontaneous occurrence of an undesirable condition.
81. Tag the base runner to get him out.
82. A field covered with grass or herbage and suitable for grazing by livestock.
83. A sweet cake flavored with sesame or caraway seeds and lemon.
84. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Relating to or derived from the sun or utilizing the energies of the sun.
2. Love intensely.
3. Mild cream-colored Dutch cheese shaped in balls.
4. Nicaraguan statesman (born in 1945).
5. A graphical record of electric currents associated with muscle contractions.
6. Set down according to a plan.
7. Cricket frogs.
8. A kind of heavy jacket ('windcheater' is a British term).
9. Short and fat.
10. A bivalent and trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
11. The act of refusing a request.
12. Area around the altar of a church for the clergy and choir.
13. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
14. Panel forming the lower part of an interior wall when it is finished differently from the rest.
21. (pathology) Tending to become more severe or wider in scope.
23. A small cake leavened with yeast.
27. Italian architect who pioneered in the use of reinforced concrete (1891-1979).
29. Having undesirable or negative qualities.
32. The main city of ancient Phoenicia.
33. Of lesser importance or stature or rank.
34. Administer an oil or ointment to.
36. A group of countries in special alliance.
37. (Old Testament) The fourth son of Jacob who was forebear of one of the tribes of Israel.
39. Highly excited.
40. The basic unit of money in Gambia.
41. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
44. Tropical American aroid having edible tubers that are cooked and eaten like yams or potatoes.
46. A public promotion of some product or service.
50. A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
53. Any of several games played with small rectangular blocks.
55. Morning glory.
56. The sound made by a cat (or any sound resembling this).
58. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
60. United States author (born 1932).
62. Very sophisticated especially because of surfeit.
66. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
67. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
68. Jordan's port.
70. An annual award for outstanding achievements in television.
71. A fit of shivering.
73. A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
75. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
76. Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.
80. A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, the energy is available for you to make sound choices regarding work and personal situations. Financial abundance is indicated; be wise with how this new-found wealth is used. Someone from your past has done very well; you could struggle to be happy for this person as you ended your relationship on a negative note. An energy of judgement surrounds you as you try to accept the way someone else believes. You could experience unrealistic thoughts that could be spawned by jealousy on your part. Gains in real estate could manifest as though out of thin air, but this is a result of putting your mind on abundance and acquiring it. Smile as you relax this evening with someone fun and available to share some quality time. Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you appear desirable and inviting just now; this would be a great time to go after that new job or perhaps go out on that date you have been considering. Others have noticed your appeal and someone steps up to offer a fun opportunity. Your reputation for making things happen and getting projects completed brings a request for your assistance or services. Someone is in agreement with you on a personal level. A tendency to daydream is difficult to deal with as your list of tasks doesn't allow time for anything but work. A way for you to make extra money appears in an unusual place. You sense that someone is hiding something; you may distance yourself. Smile this evening when you realize this month is ending better than it started. Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, an independent streak is seen throughout everything you do on a personal level; some of this also appears at work. Someone accuses you of being unrealistic and impractical; you could encounter a difficult situation. You're planning, or have recently made, a move pointing to the domestic area of your life. This move could pertain to work if this is where much of your focus is. You hold a strong disagreement with something the law states that you find unfair and negative. You appreciate your surroundings and find comfort here; just a small bit to go until a project is complete. Good vibrations and positive results are here! A garden party or garage sale could command your immediate attention; step forward and let unneeded items go, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you may experience feeling as though you've been excluded or that you may be unwanted. Remember that energies ebb and flow, just like the tides as influenced by the moon; temporary dips are easier when you realize they're short lived. Positive situations make themselves known today in the workplace as well as at home, seize them! Time flies as you go from one assignment or task to the next. You could have good feelings about a new acquaintance at work. You pull a sticky situation out of the fire with quick thinking. More than ever, you consider a comfortable home and loving family your safe zone. You have carried your share of the load today so take time to relax and recharge for another demanding day tomorrow. Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you feel and appear unstoppable just now. Your efforts reflect a dynamic energy and you attract the attention of many. You reach an important conclusion; make the best of what you have got and grow from there having learned a valuable lesson. The main players in your life's story change and evolve; keep in mind that relationships come and go, some temporary but leaving permanent imprints upon our lives, if not a forever physical presence. You encounter a strong desire to fling responsibility to the wind and instead take the day off to play. Focus on your happy home life and a new hobby you have started. An intimate, sexy exchange causes your pulse to race this evening as someone very special springs a surprise vacation getaway on you. Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, you know who you are and you're okay with it. You seem to be able to create more positive energy when you can see what you need to work on regarding yourself; plans to begin this effort come together. Figuring out how to fund a stronger will to overcome painful emotional damage isn't easy, but remembering the strength you carry inside helps. There are opportunities for gathering with like-minded people if you look around. Art, other finer arts and expensive investments hold your attention just now. It's appropriate to enjoy material blessings and be grateful for them. Just as the body requires nourishment, so does the soul require stirring and filling. Material blessings appear in the forms of beauty, prosperity and wealth of all kinds. Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, you look closely at some changes you have noticed within yourself; steel is forged in fire and so are you, that's how you have grown stronger. Confidence levels are high as you move forward with your plans. You don't fear losing, you fear not acting! Your opinion is sought in solving a mystery or finding difficult answers; this could bring someone new into your life, friend or lover. This period of time opens up opportunities to relocate your home or place of work; you feel feng shui in certain places, pay attention to this. A team effort is at hand, you and others make a large difference for those less fortunate; this could indicate elderly people or animals. Your sense of accomplishment is prominent and it's not easy for you to wind down and relax tonight. Libra.



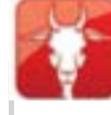
Scorpio (October 23-November 19)

Scorpio, you're learning to let go of unimportant issues and people. Your true focus is upon your family, work and life in general; you have a strong wish to live with as much ease as possible. Your energy is forceful and strong as you listen, then pursue valuable solutions and tricks that make your job easier. You sometimes feel a need to remove yourself from the group; this helps recharge and clear your mind. You stumble upon someone else's personal secret and promise not to tell. You share some special time with a mentor or teacher; you could arrive late for an engagement you don't really want to attend. You enjoy sharing new ideas with like-minded people. An exotic dish for dinner ignites your curiosity about its country of origin. Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, the cycle you have entered opens up a time of good luck, protection and abundance. You excel at making plans and executing them; you're often approached to do just that. Your professional reputation is well known and your advice is sought after. Your spirits are high and pulling positive people straight to you. Involvement in a super large project pays off and you're feeling satisfied and humbled at the same time. If there's a problem with finances, these can be solved by changing your spending habits; there could be an opportunity to earn extra money. You may want to do something you know isn't right for you; this could be a strong test of will. Do what's best for you in the end. Trying something new is recommended for you. Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, you've entered a phase that is beneficial to creating stability and comfort. Going through this period of time making thoughtful decisions and plans pays off. Sticking with cautious investments and expenditures is the way you choose. A boss or supervisor approves of your performance and commitment. Someone pops in and brings with them laughter and a light mood. You're drawn to tending to others who have serious health care and nourishment related needs; this could indicate volunteering in an animal shelter or hospital. You could have a desire to purchase everything you see today, especially one item; be mindful of your pocketbook and budget! You feel overwhelmed and grateful for your home, family and place in life. Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, an energy of dissatisfaction is prominent; there may be trouble on a deep emotional level. Some news you receive makes these negative feelings intensify. You feel helpless and unable to make this better. The positive changes you are working toward regarding yourself should not be discussed at this time. Don't be surprised when you feel as though you're going to explode! Remember the meditation and other calming directions you have been going toward; hold tightly to your beliefs no matter what anyone says. Someone is deliberately trying to upset you. It's difficult but you can always rise above this. Make preparations for the future this evening as you reconsider some choices and activities that should be rearranged. Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you wake knowing you have the ability to get your tasks completed with ease. Energy levels are unusually high physically and being clumsy seems impossible! You could feel sentimental but are able to keep this to an acceptable level. You're being looked at for a leadership position regarding a volunteer project. Timing is always important and yours is spot on as you tell others of new plans and designs; you could get some important help because you shared this information. You find someone who needs help and can help you right back! This is the time of smooth energy that leads to accomplishment and positive outcomes. You may find a large item in a surprising place for a ridiculously low price; a rare find in many ways. Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Old West 1

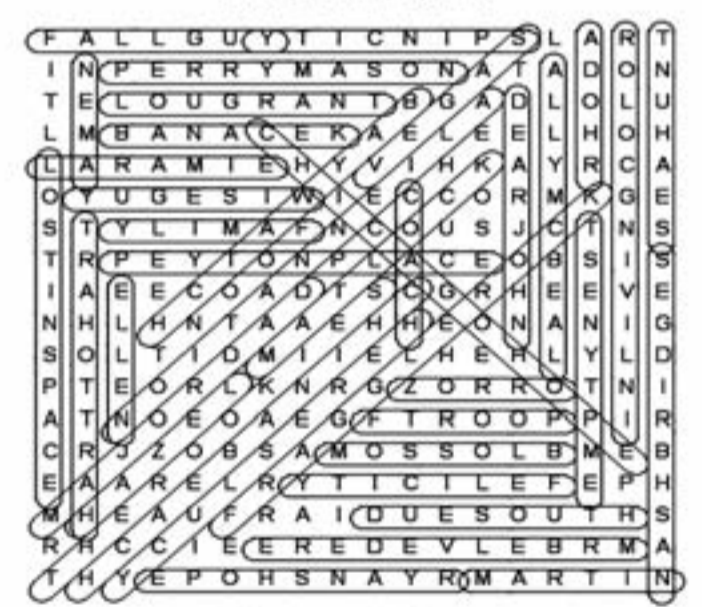
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 25 letters spell a George Eliot quotation.



- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| BANKER | FARRIER | LAWMAN | SALOON |
| BARKEEP | FORT | LIVESTOCK | SHERIFF |
| BILLY THE KID | FURS | MINER | SHOPKEEPER |
| BOOT HILL | GOLD MINE | OUTLAW GANG | SITTING BULL |
| BRAND | GOLD PANNING | PISTOL | STAGECOACH |
| CAMPFIRE | GRAZE | PLOW HORSE | TELEGRAPH |
| CATTLE DRIVE | HIRED GUN | POSSE | TRACKER |
| CHAPARRAL | HOSES | RAILROAD | TRAIL |
| COAL | HOMESTEAD | RANCH | TRAIL |
| CORRAL | HOTEL | RATTLESNAKE | UNDERTAKER |
| COWBOY | JUDGE | RIFLE | WATER TANK |
| DOC HOLLIDAY | LARIAT | SADDLE | WELL |

Yesterday's Solution

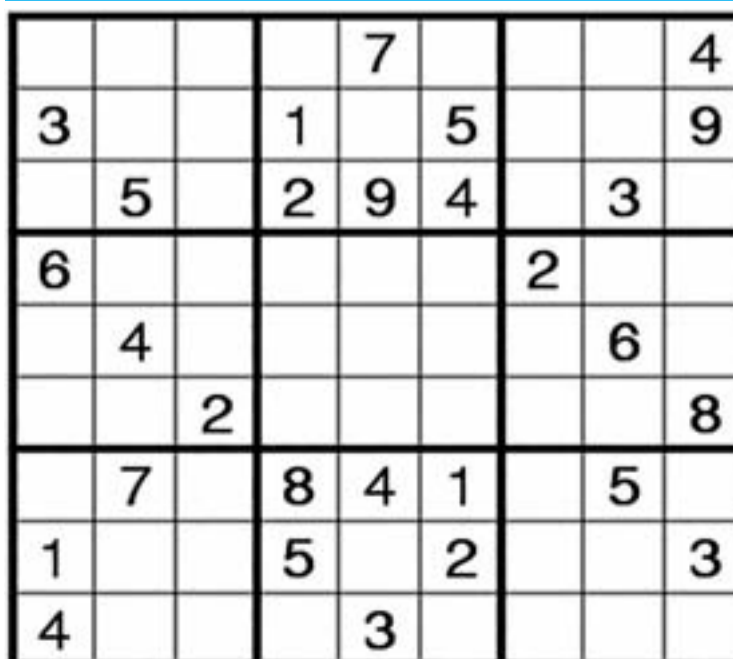
Old TV Shows 4



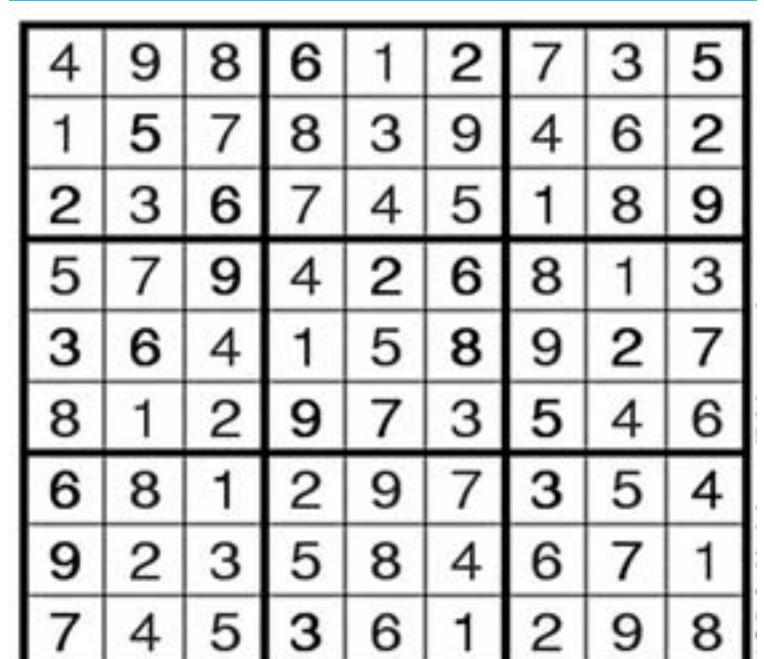
- | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| ALIEN NATION | DUE SOUTH | HERE'S LUCY | PERRY MASON |
| ALLY McBEAL | ELLEN | IN LIVING COLOR | PEYTON PLACE |
| AMEN | EMPTY NEST | LARAMIE | RHODA |
| BANACEK | F TROOP | LOST IN SPACE | RYAN'S HOPE |
| BAYWATCH | FALL GUY | LOU GRANT | SEA HUNT |
| BLOSSOM | FAMILY | MAJOR DAD | SPIN CITY |
| CHICAGO HOPE | FELICITY | MARTIN | THE ROCKIES |
| CHINA BEACH | FRAGGLE ROCK | MATLOCK | VEGAS |
| COACH | HART TO HART | MR BELVEDERE | WISEGUY |
| DEAR JOHN | HAZEL | NASH BRIDGES | ZORRO |

The hidden TV show is: LITTLE HOUSE ON THE PRAIRIE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Classifieds

Thursday, March 1, 2018

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

STATE OF KUWAIT
 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

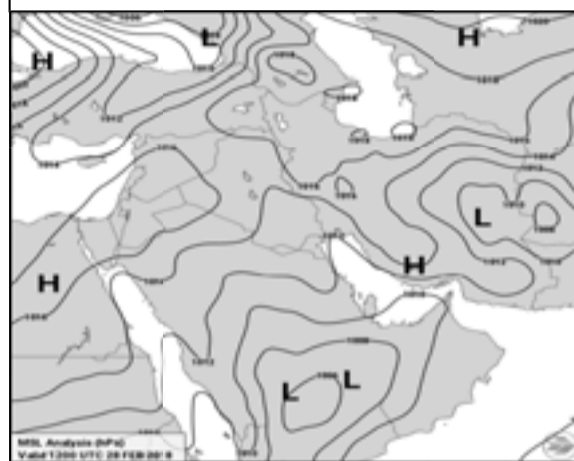
BY NIGHT: Cool and with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h with a chance for mist forming.

BY DAY: Partly cloudy with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 06 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.

WEATHER WARNING No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	23 °C	16 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	23 °C	15 °C
ABDALY	23 °C	13 °C
BUBYAN	0- °C	0- °C
JAHRA	25 °C	15 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	21 °C	16 °C
SALMIYAH	20 °C	16 °C
AHMADI	20 °C	16 °C
NUWASIB	24 °C	17 °C
WAFRA	26 °C	15 °C
SALMY	22 °C	14 °C

SFC. CHART 28/02/2018 1200 UTC



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	03/01	Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered light rain	24 °C	15 °C	VRB-NW	06 - 28 km/h
Friday	03/02	Sunny and some high clouds will appear	25 °C	16 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	03/03	Sunny and some scattered clouds will appear	27 °C	16 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 28 km/h
Sunday	03/04	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	29 °C	17 °C	SW-SE	12 - 35 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:56
Sunrise	06:14
Zuhr	12:01
Asr	15:19
Sunset	17:47
Isha	19:04

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	23 °C
MIN. Temp.	16 °C
MAX. RH	96 %
MIN. RH	59 %
MAX. Wind	SE 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	1.29mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

ACCOMMODATION

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 22-2-2018

Automated enquiry
 about the Civil ID card is
1889988

EMERGENCY
112

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



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

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 1/3/2018				Departure Flights on Thursday 1/3/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
SAI	441	Lahore	00:15	JZR	528	Asyut	00:15
KAC	504	Beirut	00:30	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
KAC	102	London	00:50	PIA	240	Sialkot	00:40
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	MSC	412	Asyut	01:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	JZR	502	Luxor	01:30
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	JZR	142	Doha	01:45
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
TRQ	230	KRT	02:00	PGT	222	Istanbul	02:30
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
JZR	555	Alexandria	02:15	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	351	Kochi	03:05
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	ETH	621	AddisAbaba	03:05
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	544	Cairo	04:25	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:05
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	DHX	172	Bahrain	06:50
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	RJA	643	Amman	07:05
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	JZR	902	Baku	07:50
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	KAC	413	Bangkok	08:10
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	KAC	791	Madinah	08:35
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40
BAW	157	London	07:10	BAW	156	London	08:55
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	KAC	613	Bahrain	08:55
QTR	8511	Doha	07:35	WAN	133	Doha	09:00
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	KAC	117	NewYork	09:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:35	QTR	8512	Doha	09:05
JZR	503	Luxor	07:45	JZR	534	Cairo	09:10
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	741	Dammam	09:45
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	101	London	09:45
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:00
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
FDK	803	Damascus	10:00	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10	KAC	617	Doha	10:15
WAN	342	Sohag	10:15	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	JZR	778	Jeddah	10:40
MSC	403	Asyut	11:15	RSB	7867	IQA	11:00
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	FDK	804	Damascus	11:00
NIA	161	Cairo	11:35	IRA	672	Ahwaz	11:10
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	JZR	786	Jeddah	12:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:10	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
FEG	933	Sohag	12:40	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	MSC	404	Asyut	12:15
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	VIZ	202	IQA	12:30
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	QTR	1075	Doha	12:30
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	NIA	362	Alexandria	12:35
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:15				
KAC	792	Madinah	13:20				

India bids tearful farewell to Bollywood superstar Sridevi



Crowds gather behind the funeral procession of Indian Bollywood actress Sridevi Kapoor in Mumbai. — AFP photos



Indian Bollywood actor Anil Kapoor (left) stands with the body of actress Sridevi Kapoor (center) in the funeral cortege as they reach the crematorium for the final rites in Mumbai yesterday.



Indian Bollywood actress Shradha Kapoor.



Indian Bollywood actress Deepika Padukone.



Indian Bollywood actress Rekha.



Indian Bollywood actor Neil Nitin Mukesh (right) attend with his father and singer Nitin Mukesh.

Thousands of heartbroken fans and Bollywood actors paid their last respects to Indian superstar Sridevi Kapoor yesterday following her shock death from accidental drowning in a Dubai hotel bathtub aged just 54. Huge crowds of mourners—some carrying roses, others holding photos of the late actress—lined Mumbai's streets to see their beloved idol embark on her last journey. At one point police had to use batons to force back those unable to get into the hall where her body was laid out, wrapped in the Indian flag.

"It's a shock to believe that she is no more. We want to pay her one last visit today and thank her for all her wonderful performances," 32-year-old teacher Nandini Rao told AFP as she queued at the condolence event. After a public service, Sridevi's flower-bedecked funeral cortege made its way slowly to a crematorium where her family said their final goodbyes. She was cremated with full state honors at a private Hindu ceremony late in the afternoon after her husband, film producer Boney Kapoor, performed the last rites.

Bollywood stars, including actresses Aishwarya Rai and Kajol, were among the mourners at the Celebration Sports Club in the Andheri West area of Mumbai the home of the Hindi film industry. Several tearful fans chanted prayers as Sridevi's body was brought the short distance from her home to the club at 9:00 am (0330 GMT). "I'm an avid Sridevi fan. I loved her smiling personality. She had such a commanding presence in the Indian film industry. Her death was so sudden and I feel terrible," 45-year-old Kuldeep Singh told AFP.

Heavy security was in force along the streets to control the crowds, which included people who had travelled hundreds of kilome-

ters to be there. Sridevi was considered one of the most influential Bollywood actresses of all time and her sudden death at the weekend sparked an outpouring of grief in India. Tributes poured in from fans and fellow actors as well as Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Life in the spotlight

The star of hit films such as "Chandni" and "Mr India" drowned in her bathtub after losing consciousness late Saturday in a hotel in Dubai, where she was attending a wedding. Police in the emirate said a post-mortem examination found that she had drowned after losing consciousness. On Tuesday they ruled out any foul play and released the body to Sridevi's family. It arrived in Mumbai on a private jet on Tuesday evening, accompanied by her husband and her stepson, actor Arjun Kapoor.

Sridevi, born Shree Amma Yanger Ayappan in the southern state of Tamil Nadu, appeared in around 300 films and was awarded the Padma Shri, India's fourth highest civilian award, for services to the movie industry. She made her acting debut at the age of four and her career spanned more than four decades. Sridevi worked in India's regional Tamil, Telugu and Malayalam-language films before making her Bollywood debut in 1979.

She became a national sensation with a string of blockbuster films including "Mawali" ("Scoundrel") and "Tohfa" ("Gift"). Sridevi took a 15-year break from the silver screen after marrying Kapoor but returned in the 2012 hit comedy-drama "English Vinglish". Her most recent film was last year's "Mom". Sridevi was set to see Jhanvi, the elder of her two daughters, make her Bollywood debut in a movie scheduled for release later this year. — AFP



Indian Bollywood actress Aishwarya Rai Bachchan.



Indian Bollywood actor Anupam Kher (right) and film director Shekhar Kapoor (left) attend the funeral.



Indian Bollywood actresses Soha Ali (left) and Neha Dhupia.



Indian Bollywood actress and politician Hema Malini (left) and actress Madhu Shah.

Streisand says she cloned her dog—twice

Not once, but twice: before Barbra Streisand's dog died, she cloned it.

The US singer and actress disclosed this in an interview published Tuesday by Variety magazine. Streisand's dog Samantha—a Coton de Tulear, a small breed with a cotton-like coat—died last year. The cloned versions are named Miss Violet and Miss Scarlett.

Streisand, 75, did not give many

details of the cloning but said she collected cells from the mouth and stomach of her dying dog. Of the new dogs, Samantha, the two-time Oscar winner said: "I'm waiting for them to get older so I can see if they have her brown eyes and seriousness." When Streisand brought the dogs home she dressed them in violet and scarlet to tell them apart. She has a third dog, a distant relative of Samantha, that she calls Miss Fanny. — AFP

James Bond director Lewis Gilbert dies aged 97

British filmmaker Lewis Gilbert has died at the age of 97. James Bond producers said of the director famed for his work on three 007 movies. "It is with great sadness that we learn of the passing of our dear friend Lewis Gilbert," producers Michael G. Wilson and Barbara Broccoli said Tuesday, describing the director as "a true gentleman". "He made an enormous contribution to the British film industry as well as the Bond films... His films are not only loved by us but are considered classics within the series," the added.

Gilbert directed Sean Connery in the 1967 "You Only Live Twice", returning to the British film series a decade later with "The Spy Who Loved Me" (1977) and "Moonraker" (1979) starring Roger Moore. While most well-known for his work on the spy series, Gilbert also

directed a young Michael Caine in the 1966 movie "Alfie" which gained four Oscar nominations. Born in east London in 1920, Gilbert's first directing credit came in 1945 with "The 10 Year Plan", a documentary about postwar housing.

After a lengthy career including production and writing roles, his last of 33 directing credits came in 2002 with "Before You Go". "The BFI salutes the most prolific of British filmmakers," said Heather Stewart, creative director of the British Film Institute which had awarded Gilbert a fellowship for outstanding contribution to British film. Stewart praised the late director for telling stories of British wartime bravery, to creating working class heroes and "funny and real character studies of women" rarely seen on screen. — AFP

Lifestyle | Feature



A woman runs during her lunch break at Djurgarden park in Stockholm. — AFP photos



Employees of Bjoern Borg sportswear brand are pictured during a yoga class.

Mandatory exercise at the office, Sweden's latest craze

Workers spending their lunch break at the gym may be commonplace in most Western countries, but in Sweden some employers are pushing the idea even further, making on-the-job exercise compulsory. Every Friday, employees of fashion and sportswear retailer Bjorn Borg leave their desks at the company's Stockholm headquarters to get their weekly workout at a nearby gym. There is no getting out of it: for more than two years the company founded by the Swedish tennis legend has made on-the-job exercise mandatory at the initiative of chief executive Henrik Bunge, a 44-year-old built like a wrestler.

"If you don't want to exercise or be a part of the company culture, you have to go," says Bunge, without batting an eye. So far no one has quit because of the requirement, he adds. The main aims of the policy—shared by other firms such as city water company Kalmar Vatten and construction consultancy Rotpartner—are to boost productivity and profitability while fostering camaraderie in the work force. In 2014, a University of Stockholm study showed that exercising during the workday was advantageous for both employees—who were healthier and more concentrated—and the employer.

The study found there was a 22 percent decline in work absences, not negligible in a country where the

average person is on sick leave four percent of the time, twice the European average. Rosy-cheeked and smiling, the 60 Bjorn Borg employees taking part in this week's grueling yoga session head to the changing rooms, their endorphins soaring. "Most of us think it's a really good part of the work week," says employee Cecilia Nissborg.

Healthy outdoor lifestyle

Swedes have long been known for their healthy outdoorsy lifestyle. Long walks to pick mushrooms or, just for pleasure, regardless of the weather, are part of their everyday lives. "In Sweden there's this idea that you'll be healthy, strong and happy if you get a lot of exercise, if you spend a lot of time in nature," says Carl Cederstrom, an economics researcher at Stockholm University and the author of "The Wellness Syndrome", a critique of the pervasive ideology of wellness. He notes that it is a common belief in Sweden "that if you exercise and take care of your body, you're a better person".

Swedes get more exercise than anyone else in Europe. A 2014 Eurobarometer poll found that 70 percent of Swedes exercised once a week, and 51 percent two to three times a week. At the bottom of the rankings, only 22 percent of Bulgarians exercised once a week. Swedes also generally see being in shape as a duty to oneself and

"If you don't want to exercise, you have to go"

society, an expectation dating to the 1930s, when a cult of youth, vigour and "social hygiene" flourished, Cederstrom says. But people also see it as a "responsibility you have to your employer", he adds.

'Everyone is equal' at the gym

Since the late 1980s, most Swedish companies subsidize their employees' sporting activities—from golf to water aerobics—contributing up to 500 euros (\$615) per year, which is tax deductible for the employer. And some, like at Bjorn Borg, go so far as to organize exercise classes during work time. Bunge is convinced the workplace

he has created has made employees happier and more productive, noting that all the company's key numbers have gone up since the new regime was introduced.

Mandatory workouts, usually in a group, also have other benefits. They bring together all the departments of a company, allowing employees to put their work responsibilities aside and get to know each other on an equal footing. "When we go into the gym, we're all on the same level. Your place in the company has no importance, everyone is equal," says Ida Lang, who works in Bjorn Borg's accounting department.

For Cederstrom, while the search for wellbeing and performance through physical activity is not unique to the Scandinavian country, "Sweden is really extreme when it comes to companies that make exercise on the job mandatory".

It is a development he finds worrying. "When you start to think that you're a better mother or a better father or a better friend if you exercise, you can get to a point where you think that people who don't live healthily, who are overweight or who smoke, are less good people," he says.—AFP

'GIRL WITH PEARL EARRING' TO UNDERGO PUBLIC EXAMINATION

One of the world's most famous paintings "Girl with a Pearl Earring" is to undergo a two-week scientific examination in front of curious visitors to the Dutch museum where it lives. The luminescent tableau painted by Dutch master Johannes Vermeer around 1665 was last examined in 1994 during a conservation treatment at the Mauritshuis museum in the center of The Hague.

"Although further restoration is not yet required, major advances in non-invasive technical analysis have been made over the last 25 years," the museum said in a statement.

used in a two-week project opening Monday, dubbed "The Girl in the Spotlight." Vermeer's work will be minutely examined "to investigate the canvas, pigments and oil" he used, all from inside a special glass-enclosed structure where visitors can watch a team of international experts at work. "For two weeks, the museum will house one of the most advanced research centers in the world," said Mauritshuis head researcher Abbie Vandivere, after which the painting will be "one of the best documented works of art in the world," the museum added.



This picture shows Johannes Vermeer's "Girl with a Pearl Earring" painting inside a XRF macro-scanner during a research at Het Mauritshuis in The Hague. — AFP

Researchers have long been fascinated by the painting of a young girl with an enigmatic gaze, as she stares out of the canvas, wearing an eastern blue and yellow turban, her ear adorned with a large pearl. They have "a number of unanswered questions about how Vermeer painted this work of art and which materials he used," the museum said.

So the latest technologies, such as fluorescent X-rays, optical coherence tomography and digital microscopy will be

The much-loved masterpiece inspired a 2003 Hollywood film starring Scarlett Johansson, with Colin Firth in the role of Vermeer. The movie was itself adapted from a best-selling novel by the American-British writer Tracy Chevalier. But it is believed the painting is not a portrait of a real girl, but what is known as a "tronic" or a representation of a character. — AFP



The tide rises at the beach of Marino Ballena National Park in Costa Rica's Pacific Coast. — Reuters photos



A tour operator drives his boat across the beach for a trip into the waters of Marino Ballena National Park on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast.

Ocean warming threatens to drown Costa Rica's whale tourism

In good years, more than a hundred thousand tourists flock to this marine park on Costa Rica's Pacific coast to see humpback whales breaching in the blue waters. But warming temperatures—driven by climate change and strengthening El Nino events—are beginning to threaten the region's tourism economy. "When temperatures rise two or three degrees (Celsius) above the region's average, we have very few whale sightings compared to normal years," said whale specialist Jose David Palacios, who works at the Marino Ballena National Park with the Keto Foundation, a Costa Rican marine conservation organization.

"Typically, there are many sightings a day. When temperatures rise, there are only one or two a week," he said. For Julio Badilla, the operator of Dolphin Tours, that's bad news. Over the three most recent tour seasons, including a strong 2015-2016 El Nino period, whale sightings have been "terrible," he said. Whales are one of the main tourist draws for Marino Ballena National Park, one of Costa Rica's most visited natural areas. As climate change hits the country's parks and biodiversity, it is also threatening local economies highly dependent on tourism, scientists and local people say.

"What's happening with the whales is concerning. In previous years (2015-2016) there was a decrease in the amount of tours precisely because the probability of finding whales was very low," said Rafael Sanchez, a tour operator from the company Adventure Bay. Scientists similarly have noticed a drop in whale sightings in the park, mainly in warmer-than-average years, they said.

Although more study is needed, they believe rising water temperatures may be altering the migration routes of humpback whales moving past Costa Rica from the north.

When the whales descend in search of warmer waters to reproduce, they may now be finding them before reaching the park, scientists believe. The problem is that, as the whales spend time elsewhere, the community of Bahia Ballena could see its income dry up. "Whale sighting tourism really moves this community. Tourism has been the main economic activity in the region for a couple of years now.

Recently, it's been growing in these type of activities," said Sanchez, the tour operator.

A study published in the journal Nature in 2014 estimated that extreme El Nino events, like the recent one in Costa Rica, will become twice as likely due to climate change. That is a growing worry for tour operators in Bahia Ballena. Along with altering whale migration, climate change is causing other problems as well, from coral bleaching to rising sea level, Palacios said. A drop in tourism in the region would mean a big hit for Costa Rica's tourism economy. According to data from the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism, the park is the third most visited in the country with over 130,000 tourists per year.



Tree seedlings at the community of Bahia Ballena await planting along the beach at the Marino Ballena National Park on Costa Rica's Pacific Coast.

Less beach, dead coral

While a decrease in whale sightings is the most direct economic threat to the park, other changes—such as a loss of beach area to sea level rise—are causing concern as well. "We're losing beach, which is affecting tourism activity because that space available for recreation and tourism is retreating," explained Catalina Mora, executive president of the Keto Foundation. In the 1980s, a series of stone blocks were installed along the beach, 50 meters

from the water, to protect fragile coastal plants from waves during strong storms, she said.

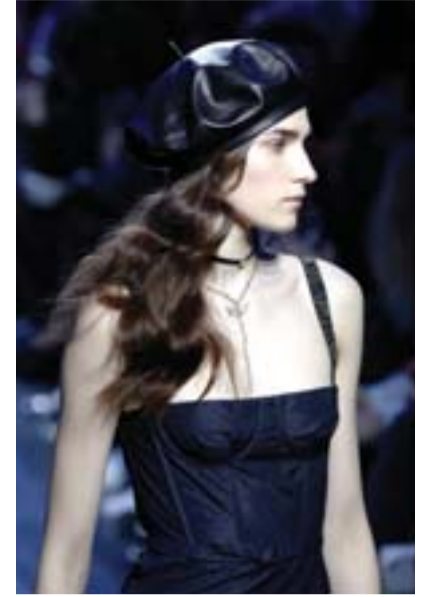
Today, during high tide, the blocks sit entirely underwater. "The water is reaching some forest paths," said Mora, a scientist. "It's also reaching the first line of palm trees along the coast" and eroding the soil from the roots of the trees, she said.

Marino Ballena's coral reefs also are feeling the heat. Almost all the coral in the park suffered some bleaching in 2015, said Palacios, a marine biologist. By 2016, 94 percent of the park's corals were bleached and today almost 90 percent have died, he said. That is a huge worry for tour operators because snorkeling on the reefs has been another major tourism draw, the scientist said.

Adapting?

With the surrounding community depending on the health of the park for an income, park backers are pushing for adaptation measure to try to limit damage to the reserve. For instance, Mora said her organization is pushing for more sustainable tourism practices, including changing snorkeling and whale watching areas regularly to ensure the same ones are not overstressed. The foundation also is urging that more palm trees be planted along the coast to serve as a defense barrier against erosion and big waves, Palacios said.

However, tour operators say the problem of continuing warming in the reserve can only be solved by global action to limit climate change. Because of this lack of local control over the ongoing damage, they also are searching for ways to diversify their business, just in case. "We are an hour away from Corcovado National Park, for example," Sanchez said. Birdwatching tours in that park have "a lot of potential and are promoted very little", he said. According to the Costa Rican Institute of Tourism, the country has about 900 bird species—and the area around Marino Ballena is listed among the top 12 spots in the country to find them. — Reuters



This file photo shows an employee polishing berets at Laulhere factory in Oloron Sainte-Marie, in the French Basque area, southwestern France. — AFP

This file photo shows Barbadian singer Rihanna posing during the photocall before the Christian Dior women's Fall-Winter ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris.— AFP

This file photo shows a model presenting a creation by Christian Dior during the women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris.



Beret-mania as fashion ditches beanie for French classic

What do Rihanna, Che Guevara nostalgic, and the Kardashian clan all have in common? They are all bonkers about berets. The Frenchest of hats is now also the hippest, with makers struggling to keep up with demand from everyone from pop stars to the crowned heads of Europe. Since Dior's Maria Grazia Chiuri sent out every one of her 68 models wearing one in her first autumn winter show last March, the humble Pyrenean shepherd's hat has become the epitome of cool.

"I love berets because they're the T-shirt of hats," said Stephen Jones, the British master milliner who helped create the cult Dior line for Chiuri. "Young, old, rich, poor, male, female—the beret suits everybody," he said. The black leather Dior version Rihanna wore to the show with such badass Black Panther attitude flew off the shelves and now sells for \$999 (812 euros) on eBay.

Style icons as diverse as the Hadid sisters, the Jenner-Kardashians, the Duchess of Cambridge—a longtime fan—Meghan Markle and Princess Charlene of Monaco have all been photographed sporting berets. Fashion critics also rejoiced at the beret's revival with The Guardian declaring that it "may finally free us from our beanies". Gucci and Marc Jacobs have also got in on the act, while Laulhere, the last historic French beret maker, has been at full stretch to keep up with demand.

Satin and pearls

It has even opened a shop in Paris' ritzy Rue St Honore between Hermes and Prada, where sales manager Mark Saunders said some of "our bestsellers, which are covered with pearls or finished in extraordinary leathers and satins, retail at between 450 and 500 euros." Its more traditional "heritage" felt berets made to protect Basque and Bearnais peasants from winter snow and the summer sun sell for a much more modest 35 euros. But retailer Sebastien Reveillard said such is the demand from fashionistas that he can never keep enough of them at his Paris est Toujours Paris (Paris is always Paris) boutique in the French capital.

"Many customers buy two and three at a time. They cannot make them fast enough for us to sell them," he told AFP as Paris fashion week began in earnest Tuesday. "We have sold out of some colors and if I could get my hands on more I would sell them too. Everybody—young and old—wants them. "Not only is the beret always chic, but you can wear them for every occasion. And they last forever, the Laulhere ones are made for life," he added. Saunders admitted that the modest Laulhere factory, which nestles in the foothills of the Pyrenees at Oloron-Sainte-Marie, is stretched, but insisted that there were no quick fixes to meet demand. "It takes two days to make a beret and there is an incredible amount of hand work involved. It is a very complicated process, 80 percent of it by hand.

'They go with everything'

The felting process alone takes between 11 and 18 hours, Irish-born Saunders said, using the "water from the Gave d'Aspe river right next to the factory. "It is not easy recruiting people in such a rural area but if we moved the factory somewhere else we would not have

the water which is full of minerals from the mountains. "When you touch a finished beret you can feel them, and we would lose that," Saunders said the beret's renaissance is no passing fad, but has been gathering since its present owners, Cargo, rescued Laulhere from the brink of bankruptcy in 2012. "We realized we had something quite amazing in our hands, something that was both a fantastic fashion and luxury item which also had an incredible history and cultural importance." Having more than doubled the workforce to 55, Laulhere last year sold more than 300,000 berets.

"I love berets because they're the T-shirt of hats"

With stores in Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong and now China clamoring for its hats, Saunders said this year they will sell even more. "We have calls every day from shops all over the world," he said. Reveillard said the beret's timeless appeal was because they were "so hugely practical. You can wear it as a kind of cap, like the farmers do, backwards like Rihanna to show the label or sideways" at a rakish angle. A fact that was confirmed when AFP questioned beret wearers on the freezing streets of the French capital. Florence, a 33-year-old charity worker, said you "will never look like an idiot in a beret, unlike those people who wear woolly hats in cold weather." Twenty-one-year-old Zulu Cecile from Bordeaux said the beret was the quintessential symbol of French style. "It is lovely to wear, goes with almost everything, and is very fashionable at the moment. What is not to like?" —AFP



Models present creations for Christian Dior during the 2018/2019 fall/winter collection fashion show. — AFP photos



Lifestyle | Fashion



This file photo show models presenting creation by Christian Dior during the women's Fall-Winter 2017-2018 ready-to-wear collection fashion show in Paris.



DARK ATMOSPHERICS AT SAINT LAURENT

In a strong-shouldered red military jacket, actress Charlotte Gainsbourg posed for cameras ahead of Saint Laurent's warehouse-style show in front of the Eiffel Tower. An eerie feeling pervaded the collection of clothes that recalled the 1980s and were done in black or doused in glitter. The dim beam light in the show decor evoked a hybrid of a disco and a prison courtyard. A smoke machine chugged out wisps of mist. Some guests bumped into each other trying to find their seats, and the first of the black styles were so faintly lit the detail of the clothes was lost.



The effect was intentional. Anthony Vaccarello has consistently created dark atmospherics in his presentations since becoming Saint Laurent designer in 2016. Huge fringed boots, black mini dresses and voluminous sleeves in black gave way to loose metallic disco dresses with strong shoulders and plunging necklines. They shimmered in the dappled light. There was a brooding sensuality in many of the details, such as shiny black leather gloves or a black fur band wrapping the bust that was set against naked shoulders.

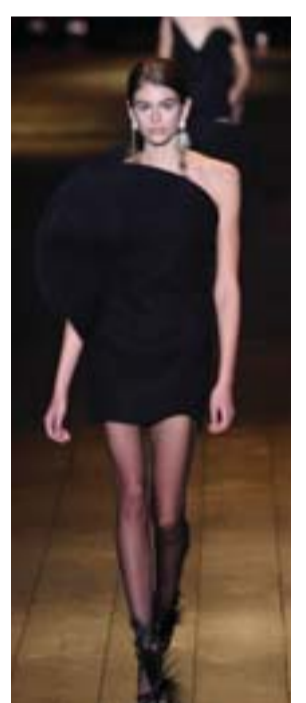
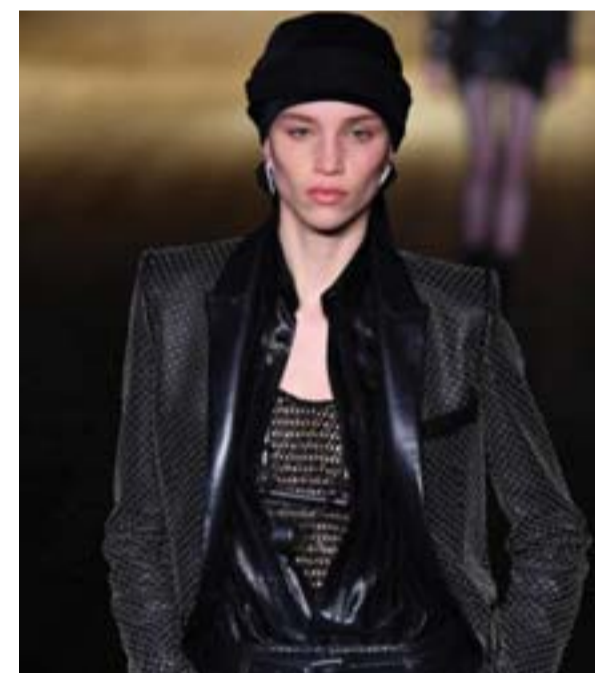
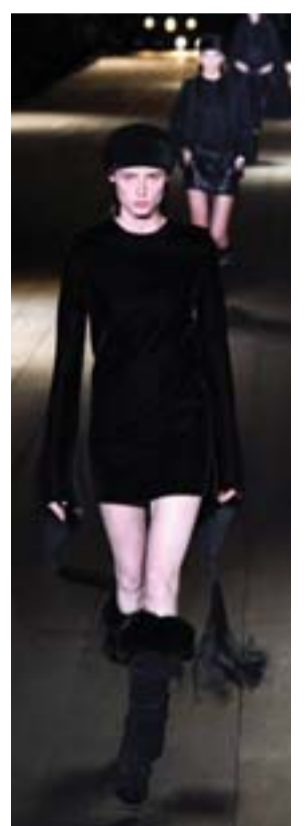
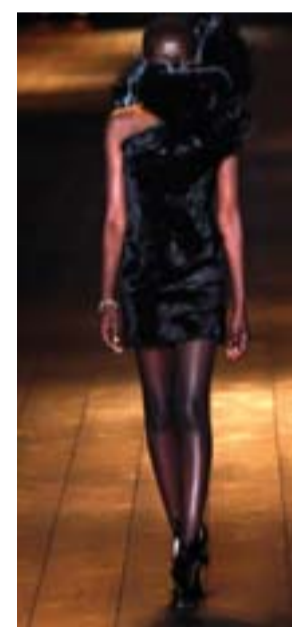
The piece de resistance? A black column dress that evoked a tuxedo and had a front section artfully cut out. Instead of a white shirt, the opening revealed a bare chest.

Jacquemus kicks off Paris Fashion Week
French fashionistas flocked to the front row beneath the lofty ceilings of the Petit Palais - from model Farida Khelfa to legendary couturiere Christian Lacroix - in a

testament to the growing star power of designer Simon Porte Jacquemus, whose collection now opens the Paris Fashion Week calendar. Capitalizing on the current buzz, the 28-year-old this month announced he's expanding into menswear.

His fall-winter display went on a journey to Morocco, a country that Jacquemus has said he often retreats to after Fashion Week. Exaggerated proportions of fabric defined the exotic silhouettes- in split skirts, gargantuan wrap-hats, pleated culottes or coats with a round. "This winter, I got lost in the souks again," Jacquemus quipped.

A silken kaftan in light French beige flowed with an Eastern feel thanks to loose proportions - and trompe l'oeil pants that billowed by like a skirt. The well-executed 58-piece collection featured pigment colors and had several standout moments. The front of one frayed skirt in dark vanilla was imagined as a hoop of fabric. And the stilettos, with heels made of giant colored beads, had many in the audience whipping out their cameras. — AP



Models present creations for Saint Laurent during the 2018/2019 fall/winter collection fashion show.—AP photos

Vatican, Versace and Vogue team up for Met's spring exhibit

The Vatican, Versace and Vogue are joining forces to show off the Catholic influences in fashion. The Vatican's culture minister joined Donatella Versace and Vogue's Anna Wintour on Monday to offer sneak peek of gorgeous Vatican liturgical vestments, jeweled miters and historic papal tiaras that will star in a spring exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.

"Heavenly Bodies: Fashion and the Catholic Imagination" opens May 10 and represents the most extensive exhibit of the museum's Costume Institute, officials said. It also represents the first time some of the Vatican's most precious treasures from the Sistine Chapel sacristy are being exhibited outside the Vatican. Along with the papal treasures, the Met show includes garments for more ordinary mortals by designers spanning Azzedine Alaïa to Vivienne Westwood, all set against the backdrop of the Met's collection of medieval and religious artwork.

"Some might consider fashion to be an unfitting or unseemly medium by which to engage with ideas about the sacred or the divine," curator Andrew Bolton told a crowd of Roman fashionistas and journalists. "But dress is central to any discussion about religion. It affirms religious allegiances and, by extension, it asserts religious differences." The exhibit, featuring some 40 Vatican vestments and accessories spanning 15 papacies, will be spread among various Met galleries as well as the Cloisters branch in upper Manhattan in what organizers called a planned "pilgrimage" blending fashion, faith and art.

With Ennio Morricone's soundtrack for "The Mission" playing in the background, visitors on Monday were able to glimpse a small sampling of the soon-to-be-shipped Vatican bling: The white silk cape embroidered with gold thread that once belonged to Pope Benedict XV, and the emerald, sapphire and diamond-studded miter, or pointed



(From left) Italian designer Donatella Versace poses on February 26, 2018, with editor-in-chief of Vogue Anna Wintour and cardinal Gianfranco Ravasi, President of the Vatican Pontifical Council for Culture, at Rome's Palazzo Colonna at the end of the press conference to present the exhibition "Fashion and the Catholic Imagination" that will run at the New York MET on May 10, 2018.

bishops' hat, of Pope Leo XIII. They were put on display at the Palazzo Colonna, a former papal residence in downtown Rome that is a jewel of the Roman Baroque period.

Wearing a cardinal-appropriate red and black velvet tunic dress, Wintour, for whom Costume Institute's space

was renamed, said the exhibit shows the influence of the papacy over millennia. "Part of the power of the church has been how they look, and how they dress," Wintour told The Associated Press. "They have this extraordinary presence." — AP



Italian designer Donatella Versace (left) and Valentino's creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli arrive at Rome's Palazzo Colonna for a press conference to present the exhibition "Fashion and the Catholic Imagination" that will run at the New York MET. — AFP photos

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 1, 2018



Two horses play in their paddock close to the small Bavarian village of Puchheim near Munich, southern Germany, during cold winter weather with temperatures by minus eight degrees. — AFP

All the wild horses are extinct

All the world's wild horses have gone extinct, according to a study Thursday that unexpectedly rewrites the horse family tree based on a new DNA analysis of their ancestry. What most people thought were the last remaining wild horses on Earth—known as Przewalski's horses—were actually domesticated horses that escaped their owners, said the report in the journal *Science*. "This was a big surprise," said co-author Sandra Olsen, curator-in-charge of the archeology division of the Biodiversity Institute and Natural History Museum at the University of Kansas.



A new quest

According to Beth Shapiro, a professor of ecology and evolutionary biology at the University of California Santa Cruz, the findings are "super interesting." "Certainly, it is surprising to see that Przewalski's horses are descended from early domestic horses, as this is not what people tended to believe," Shapiro, who was not involved in the study, told AFP.

"Swapping the word 'wild' for 'feral' is a semantic change that may better reflect their evolutionary history but should not change their status. We should continue to protect Przewalski's horses as a population of wild horses." Przewalski's horses are considered an endangered species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

The round-bellied, short legged, reddish brown to beige horses roamed Central Asia, Europe and China in prehistoric times. They were listed as extinct in the wild in the 1960s, but a number of breeding programs and reintroductions have helped bolster their numbers. The findings have also sparked a new quest—to uncover the true origins of today's domestic horses.

"Current models suggest that all modern domesticated horses living now descend from those first tamed in Botai, in the north of present-day Kazakhstan," said a statement from the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) scientist Ludovic Orlando. "Yet this genomic analysis yielded unexpected results." Since the Botai horses did not give rise to today's domesticated horses, "the origin of modern domestic horses must be sought elsewhere." — AFP



This file photo taken on January 22, 2016 shows wild Przewalski's horses on a snow covered field in the Chernobyl exclusions zone. — AFP photos

"This means there are no living wild horses on Earth—that's the sad part," said Olsen. The study is based on archaeological work at two sites in northern Kazakhstan, called Botai and Krasnyi Yar, where scientists have found the earliest proof of horse domestication, going back more than 5,000 years. To further dig into these roots, international researchers sequenced the genomes of 20 horses from the Botai-based on teeth and bones unearthed from the sites—and 22 horses from across Eurasia.

Then, they compared these ancient horse genomes with already published genomes of 18 ancient and 28 modern horses. They discovered that Przewalski's horses descended from the earliest-known domesticated horses, kept by the Botai people of northern Kazakhstan some 5,500 years ago. That means what people thought were wild horses were actually feral, meaning they had escaped from domestication but were not originally wild.



Missing Monet returns home to Japan



These handout pictures taken in Tokyo and released by Japan's National Museum of Western Art shows a severely damaged study painting of French Impressionist painter, Claude Monet, titled 'Water Lilies: Reflections of a Willow Tree' (1916). — AFP photos

A painting by French Impressionist master Claude Monet that belonged to a Japanese collector but was lost for decades after WWII is now back in Tokyo, a museum official said Tuesday. The oil painting, around two meters long and 4.2 meters wide, was unearthed in the Louvre Museum in Paris in 2016 but the discovery had not been made public until now. "The painting was recently returned" to the National Museum of Western Art in the Japanese capital, a spokeswoman told AFP. The painting—entitled "Water Lilies: Reflections of a Willow Tree"—is dated 1916 and depicts bright flowers floating on a lake.

The museum said it was a study painting for his famous series "Water Lilies" but the work is severely damaged with half of it destroyed. It will be necessary to restore the canvas "with extreme care", the museum said in a statement. "But the remaining painting is still very large. It has the potential to show Monet's wonderful work if handled with the proper care," it said. The

painting had belonged to Kojiro Matsukata, a businessman who collected Western art between 1916 and 1927 with the proceeds amassed from a shipbuilding fortune. It is said Matsukata directly purchased the piece from Monet at his atelier in 1921, according to the museum.

His art collections including the painting were moved to Paris for safekeeping during WWII and later requisitioned by the French government at the end of the war as enemy property. In 1959, the French government returned to Japan the majority of 400 pieces in the Matsukata collection. "The existence of the painting might have been forgotten given the tremendous damage caused by bad storage conditions during the war," the Tokyo museum said. The museum plans to show the painting to the public in June 2019 following restoration work. — AFP