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Saudi crown prince begins first foreign tour in Egypt

Riyadh, Cairo to sign a number of agreements

CAIRO: Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman landed in the Egyptian capital yesterday at the start of his first foreign tour as heir to the throne. A beaming Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi greeted the prince at Cairo airport after he descended the red-carpeted steps of his plane. The head of Prince Mohammed's office, Bader Al-Asaker, tweeted that the prince's plane was escorted by Egyptian fighter jets when it entered Egypt's airspace.

Prince Mohammed will hold meetings with Sisi, a key regional ally, and other officials in Egypt before flying off to Britain on Wednesday and then later this month to the United States. Saudi Arabia views Egypt as a cornerstone of regional stability, after the former army chief Sisi overthrew his Islamist predecessor Mohamed Morsi in 2013. Riyadh viewed Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood with suspicion and at one point briefly recalled its ambassador from Cairo during his turbulent year in power.

It has since showered Cairo with aid to prop up the country's economy, in a relationship that has led to some controversy in Egypt. In 2015, during a visit by King Salman to Cairo, the two countries agreed

on the transfer of two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia, sparking protests in Egypt. Sisi ratified the deal last year, and Egypt's top court annulled lower court rulings for and against the treaty on the eve of the crown prince's arrival. Also yesterday, US President Donald Trump called Sisi to discuss with him "regional issues" and "ways of combating terrorism", a statement from the Egyptian presidency said.

Prince Mohammed's visit comes ahead of Egypt's presidential polls in late March, with Sisi expected to win a second four-year term. The visit "will be interpreted as proof of Saudi support for Sisi to remain as the president of Egypt", Mostafa Kamel Al-Sayed, a political science professor at Cairo University, told AFP. Cairo and Riyadh have maintained close ties, although Egypt has signalled a lack of enthusiasm for Saudi regional policy, both on the Yemen war and a potential escalation with Iran. But it is among a bloc of Arab nations that joined a Saudi-led boycott since June of Qatar. The Saudi prince is expected to sign a number of agreements, Saudi state television said without giving further details. —Agencies



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi (left) welcomes Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman upon his arrival yesterday. — AFP

Amiri envoy hands letters to Saudi, Bahraini monarchs

KUWAIT: Envoy of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, handed a letter from the Amir to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud. The letter mainly included appreciation of the kingdom's significant participation in Kuwait's national celebrations. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah was earlier received on arrival by Saudi Royal Court advisor Turki bin Mohammad and Kuwait's Ambassador to the Kingdom Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah then flew to Bahrain, where he handed a letter

from HH the Amir to Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa. The letter included greetings, appreciation and thanks from the Kuwaiti people to the Bahraini king for Bahrain's effective participation in Kuwait's national festivals, in addition to distinguished brotherly and historical relations between both nations.

The Amir's envoy was welcomed on arrival by the Bahraini King's Representative for Charity Works and Youth Affairs, Chairman of the Supreme Council for Youth and Sports, President of Bahrain Olympic Committee, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahraini Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah. — KUNA



Envoy of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Sabah, hands a letter from the Amir to Saudi King Salman and Bahraini King Hamad Al-Khalifa. — KUNA



Assembly set to debate report on Filipino workers

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly is expected to debate a report on the situation of Filipino workers in Kuwait, especially domestic helpers, in the wake of a serious diplomatic spat with the Philippines. The Assembly's foreign relations panel met yesterday and completed a report on the Filipino workers, which will be submitted to the Assembly for a floor discussion tomorrow, MIP Mohammad Al-Huwailah said.

Last month the Assembly discussed the diplomatic row with the Philippines and asked the foreign relations committee to discuss the issue and prepare a report to be debated on March 6. The committee met Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, who briefed them on the diplomatic efforts to defuse tensions between the two countries. Jarallah had said the Philippine president was invited to visit the country and expected the visit to take place in the first half of March. Manila has not confirmed the visit.

The row came after Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte strongly lashed out at Kuwait and other Gulf countries for the alleged mistreatment of Filipina domestic helpers following reports of deaths and abuse. Manila then slapped a total ban on sending workers to Kuwait. Kuwait has criticized the way the Philippine authorities have handled the issue and called for a diplomatic solution to the standoff, insisting that all cases of alleged abuse are being handled by the law.

MIP Huwailah said the Kuwaiti position is clear because it is based on the law and the constitution. The Philippines sent its labor minister and senior officials to Kuwait to discuss the issue and try to hammer out a new labor agreement to regulate the employment of their nationals in the country.

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Saudi Arabia hosts first marathon for women as gaming lovers square off

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia hosted its first marathon for women at the weekend, local media said, as the conservative kingdom seeks to boost female sports in a far-reaching modernization drive. Hundreds of women runners, many of them dressed in traditional Islamic attire, raced in eastern Al-Ahsa region on Saturday. "The aim of the marathon is to promote running and introduce the concept of sports for all, for a healthier way of life," Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya News quoted the marathon's supervisor, Malek Al-Mousa, as saying.

The event came after Riyadh hosted its first international half-marathon in late

February, which prompted complaints from some Saudis on social media about the notable absence of women. Sports authorities are set to organize another marathon for women in the holy city of Makkah on April 6, pro-government Okaz newspaper reported.

Meanwhile, hundreds of Saudi men and women squared off in a video game tournament in Riyadh at the weekend, organizers said, in the kingdom's biggest ever eSports contest. The eSports tournament - in which players face off on computers instead of turf - was held in the capital from Thursday through Saturday.

Continued on Page 11



RIYADH: People attend the GSA eSports Cup in the Saudi capital. — AFP

Pakistan elects first female Dalit senator

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan elected its first female senator from the lowest Dalit caste in weekend polls which also saw the ruling party strengthen its hand ahead of a general election in the Muslim-majority country. The surprise victory of opposition candidate Krishna Kumari Kohli in the Senate election stirred a wave of optimism on social media, as Pakistanis celebrated the rare success for a woman from a marginalized community at the bottom of the Hindu caste hierarchy.

"I feel proud, I am thankful to

Pakistan People's Party that they nominated me," Kohli told AFP yesterday. "Kudos to PPP for electing #KrishnaKohli.... Our parliament should have representatives of all religions, classes & genders in pursuit of true democracy," tweeted rights activist Jibran Nasir. Pakistan's Hindus, who make up around two percent of the country's 200 million people, have long faced economic and social discrimination.

Members of parliament and of provincial assemblies voted Saturday to fill half the seats in the Senate, or upper house, before elections due this summer for the lower house of parliament. The ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) won 15 of the 52 seats up for election to secure a total of 33 spots in the 104-seat upper house.

Continued on Page 11



KARACHI: Pakistani opposition candidate Krishna Kumari Kohli walks out from Sindh province assembly after the Senate election on Saturday. — AFP

Govt eyes creating 17,000 jobs for Kuwaitis in private sector

Through jobs reclassification, increased allowances

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) has commenced procedures to fulfill their target of hiring around 17,000 citizens in the private sector, said Secretary General Fauzi Al-Majdali, noting that intensive meetings are being held with private sector unions to reach the suitable new percentage of national labor to be enforced on private sector companies. Majdali added that meetings began in February, when over 28 were held at the MGRP headquarters to discuss replacing expatriate workers with citizens and making the private sector more attractive for national labor.

Majdali said that the last decision on national labor ratio in non-governmental bodies (number 1028/2014) took effect on Feb 25, 2015, mandating the private sector to provide 10,000 job opportunities for citizens. "Since two years have passed and to meet the growing demand for jobs, MGRP studied previous decisions to assess those percentages," he added. Those steps go in line with governmental efforts to address national manpower unemployment while also tackling the state's demographic imbalance as the local private sector continues to be dominated by expatriate manpower.

Local authorities are reportedly planning a study to adjust the percentage of national manpower that private companies are required to hire. This study would serve as the basis for new decisions to come as early as April to increase the number of nationals each private firm would have to hire, Al-Anbaa reported yesterday quoting sources at the Public Authority for Manpower. Officials are also eyeing an increase for the labor allowance that Kuwaiti employees in the private sector receive from KD 100 to KD 300 a month, the sources said.

The adjustments are going to be based on reclassification of existing sectors in order to make them legally obligated to hire an increased number of Kuwaiti employees. Among those sectors are media and journalism, which are to be reclassified under the business service's sector which includes engineering offices, lawyers, advisors and other, instead of the social services sector under which they are currently classified. This step would then be followed by increasing the national manpower's percentage in the business service's sector from five to 10 percent, thus forcing an increase in national manpower in the media and press.

Another proposed change would be canceling all exceptions given to certain businesses with regards to the citizens' hiring quota, such as for jobs like 'construction worker' and 'driver', while increasing the minimum national manpower's quota in general trading and contracting companies to four percent.

No transfer

Meanwhile, contracts of terminated expatriates working in various ministries and state departments will not be extended or renewed as part of the government's plan to replace them with citizens, well-informed sources said. "Laid-off expats will not be allowed to work in any other government body," they stressed. No exceptions would be made in appointing expats in government bodies, the sources said, adding that hiring expats in specialties that cannot be covered by citizens requires approval from the Civil Service Commission (CSC).



KUWAIT: Workers are pictured on the site of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway in Kuwait yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Moreover, the sources said that a government decision had been made to mandate all state departments to annually reduce the number of expatriate employees in order to reach the numbers set by the government by 2022. They added that lists of expat employees who will be laid off during the coming fiscal year starting in April were being made.

Expat teachers

In the meantime, Ministry of Education's (MoE) Undersecretary Haitham Al-Athari stressed that the ministry will continue replacing expat teachers with Kuwaiti citizens to provide more job opportunities for newly-graduated Kuwaiti teachers, namely those specializing in History, Islamic Education, Computers and Science. Athari added that coordination is in progress with the faculties of education at Kuwait University (KU) and the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) to determine the number of students in various majors according to MoE's needs to meet the shortage in some subjects.

One month

In the meantime, head of the parliamentary replacement and employment committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh said it will be impossible to study the unemployment issue in one month because it is too complicated and requires a special vision. Saleh added that despite referring the issue to the committee on a very short notice, the committee will set a short- and long-term plan mainly focusing on creating

more job opportunities and probing the real causes of unemployment. "No canned stereotypical answer will be accepted," he underlined, noting that such responses were usually phrased and written by 'advisors' who manipulate work progress according to their own interests.

"There is a team of advisors that never provides accurate numbers of citizens seeking jobs and insists on providing inaccurate statistics about expats working in the public sector," he added, explaining that these advisors usually exclude expats working on monthly payments. Further, Saleh wondered how the employment of Kuwaitis is halted in some positions with the excuse of

overemployment, while expats are being employed in the same positions. "This happened at MoE when it stopped employing citizens as history and geography teachers despite opening new schools and hiring expats to work in them," he charged, noting that although unemployment rates had been the same over the past two years, payrolls are increasing, "which indicates hiring of more expats".

Compensation

Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf said alternatives to compensate citizens for the price difference after increasing fuel prices have been under discussion since Oct 2016. Separately, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah yesterday issued a ministerial decision (number 47/2018) pertaining a new medicine price list, said informed sources, noting that prices will increase by 20 percent.

Efforts to fight unemployment, imbalance



Corruption

local spotlight



By Muna Al-Fuzal

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To fight corruption in a society, we must speak about it loudly and openly to pressure the government to address the situation. One of the most prominent features of Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index report of 2017 is Kuwait's ranking, which unfortunately dropped from 75th internationally in 2016 to 85th out of 180 countries in the report. Kuwait's Arab position fell from 7th place in 2016 to 8th place in 2017.

The degree of transparency in Kuwait also worsened from 41 percent in 2016 to 39 percent in 2017. The report mentioned that the top Arab countries fighting corruption are the UAE, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

I believe it is regrettable and shameful that Kuwait is backing down in its anti-corruption policy instead of moving forward, and I personally do not only blame the government's policy for the decline. Citizens are partners and key players, so we have to be honest here to recognize that there is an urgent need for reform.

Kuwait Transparency Society published a long analysis in Al-Qabas daily in February on the reasons that led to the decline of Kuwait in the fight against corruption, and the first criticism was directed at the role of the general authority for combating corruption, as this important body is still below the general aspirations of the local society despite the passage of a number of years since its establishment. The National Assembly also sought to amend its law, which cast a negative impact on the achievement of the authority and its objectives.

The society added that restrictions on freedoms of expression in the media and social media, where the number of detainees increased during the last two years, reflected negatively on the results in the measure of transparency and corruption, especially with the entry of a new measure of democracy in international assessments.

The report of the Kuwait Transparency Society said there are requirements for the reform of the situation by amending the law of the general authority for combating corruption and the development of Kuwaiti democracy by the adoption of the proposed law of the general authority for democracy. Also, Kuwait needs to adopt a number of transparency initiatives.

One of the most prominent recommendations of Transparency International confirms that corruption is linked to the dwindling of the role of civil society, because there are close links between corruption and freedom of the press. Countries that have the lowest degree of protection for the press, journalists and NGOs tend to have the worst rates of corruption. Therefore, Transparency International appeals to governments that hide behind restrictive laws to review their laws and allow increased civil participation to promote freedom of expression and ensure that journalists can act without fear of repression or violence. Patricia Moreira, Managing Director at the Transparency International, said: "No activist or reporter should have to fear for their lives when speaking out against corruption." I agree. That is a true statement because corruption cannot be eliminated if the media is suppressed when reporting cases of corruption.

Transparency International said countries should give priority to corruption issues by implementing the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, which every country in the world has committed to. And countries must develop their countermeasures for the goal of reducing bribery by 2030. I love this one because the word bribe has transformed to a new term - commission - nowadays, which is used as a cover for this crime.

I believe corruption is the primary cause of a nation's backwardness, and although there are many aspects of corruption, whether social or moral, I think that financial corruption is the key to destroying societies and tearing them apart ethically and socially, bearing in mind that the spread of bribery and the theft of public funds also have a negative impact on the state and loss of rights.

When the penalties and laws that should protect rights are not strict or not enforced against powerful figures and organizations in the society, it will be normal for a corrupt person not to be afraid of any punishment against him if his involvement in corruption cases is proven.

I trust that the first step to fighting corruption is to begin by studying the reasons for its occurrence, which can lead to finding appropriate solutions. I think there is still room for serious action by supporting the Kuwait Transparency Society as an arm of the government and people, otherwise we will continue to deteriorate.

Diabetic children entitled to disability allowance: Court

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Lawyer Nasser Al-Ajmi said the administrative court yesterday ordered the public authority for the disabled to issue a 'disability certificate' for his client's daughter, who suffers from type 1 diabetes, and pay her the related allowances retroactively, which had been rejected by the authority. Ajmi argued that chil-

dren with type 1 diabetes are entitled to be covered by law number 8/2010 with all the financial and legal rights that the law provides for the disabled.

Commercial fraud

Responding to a video recently posted on social media, Kuwait Fishermen Union yesterday issued a statement expressing frustration "of both fishermen and consumers alike" over commercial fraud that he said are committed by some fishmongers at Sharq fish market, who allegedly mix imported and fresh local fish. "They defrost the imported fish and sell it as freshly-caught local fish," the union said in a statement. The union also stressed that some inspectors are too harsh in examining local fish compared to what they do with imported ones. The union also stressed that inspectors are never present at dawn, when imported fish is auctioned.

Fireman's Day festival concludes

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Service Directorate concluded the Sixth Fireman's Day festival at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad

Cultural Center in the presence of Capital Fire Director Brig Mohammad Al-Shatti. The slogan this year was 'Civil and national facilities' protection against catastrophes'. Activities of the festival reflect the humanitarian role of the fireman to protect lives and property, while delivering an awareness message to the public to be partners in limited fire risks.

New road

The Interior Ministry's traffic department, in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Works, will open a new road linking Qairawan with Jahra and Doha roads with a roundabout. The road has two lanes in each direction.



Customs foils attempt to smuggle ancient statue

KUWAIT: Customs officers discovered what seems to be a 170-cm-long Ancient Egyptian statue hidden inside a couch shipped by air. The statue was sent to the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) and is being examined in order to determine whether it belongs to the pharaonic era or not. A customs officer said a citizen came to collect office furniture that arrived from Egypt, and the statue was found during inspection. Action is pending until the examination results are complete.

Pigeons stolen

Environment police are looking for a man who stole pigeons from Shamiya. The incident, caught on video, showed a young man throwing a net on pigeons in Shamiya and taking them to his car. Police discovered that the pickup truck the youngster used belongs to an elderly man, and this may lead to his arrest soon. The fine in this case is KD 500 or a one-year jail sentence.

Central prison theft

Jahra police are looking for thieves who broke into vehicles of central prison employees, as two inspectors and a nurse reported the thefts. A female inspector at the prison told police that her phone and KD 5 were stolen from her car. Another female central prison inspector also reported that her phone, a purse and KD 510 were stolen from her car. Meanwhile, an Indian male nurse who works in the central prison hospital reported that two mobile phones and a wallet that includes his civil ID, driving license and ATM cards in addition to KD 80 were stolen. All thefts were by breaking the cars' rear windows.

Traffic dispute

Ahmedi detectives are looking for several youths who attacked a citizen and his Jordanian friend in Abu Halifa. The Jordanian man was stabbed during the fight following a traffic dispute. The citizen's car was totally destroyed, according to a police source.

Addict caught

A citizen was arrested while taking drugs in his car in a public parking place. Policemen noticed a car that was parked on the side of the road while the driver was still inside, so they approached it and found the man doing drugs. They also found drugs and joints on him. The suspect was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa

Amir receives visiting US envoy, state officials

Foreign Minister meets retired Marine Corps General



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting retired US Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the visiting retired US Marine Corps General Anthony Zinni.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled then held a meeting at his office with the visiting US official, accompanied by US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman and Deputy Assistant State Secretary for Arab Gulf Affairs Tim Lenderking. The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, assistant foreign

minister for his bureau's affairs Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the minister's assistant for GCC affairs Ambassador Nasser Al-Mzain, Assistant Foreign Minister for Deputy Foreign Minister's office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar and Assistant Foreign Minister for Americas Ambassador Reem Al-Khaled.

State officials

Separately, His Highness the Amir received at seif Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime

Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, as well as Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also met with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, in addition to Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United States Sheikh Salem Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was also among those to have met with His Highness the Crown Prince.

Graduation ceremony

Under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir, Kuwait University (KU) is set to hold its annual graduation ceremony for graduate and postgraduate students for the academic year 2016-2017 on March 5. The ceremony takes place at Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Theater at Shuwaikh Campus, the Amiri Diwan said in a press statement. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Dr Salim Al-Jubouri. — KUNA

Iraqi Speaker grateful for Kuwait's support

KUWAIT: Iraq's top lawmaker Dr Salim Al-Jubouri yesterday said he was thankful for the support Kuwait has given his war-torn country, with aid running the gamut from humanitarian to relief assistance. Iraq "wants to turn a new page in its relationship with its Arab neighbors," Jubouri told the press after meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

On his encounter with His Highness the Amir, the Iraqi parliamentarian said it centered on strategies for closer bilateral ties, in addition to security and political developments in Baghdad. Governments from around the world announced nearly \$30 billion worth of financial aid to Iraq in a recent Kuwait-hosted international conference on reconstruction in the war-battered nation. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem

attended Jubouri's meeting with His Highness the Amir. Meanwhile, Ghanem and Jubouri held official talks in which they discussed cooperative relations between Kuwait and Iraq and ways of promoting and developing them in various fields, mainly parliamentary area. Al-Dustour news network said in a press release. They also exchanged views on a host of key issues of mutual interest, the latest regional and international developments and necessary measures to address regional challenges, it added. The talks were attended by several Kuwaiti members of parliament and Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Alaa Al-Hashemi. Ghanem then held a luncheon banquet in honor of the Iraqi guests.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also received Jubouri on the occasion of his visit to the country. The reception was attended by head of the mission of honor accompanying Al-Jubouri, MP Ali Al-Deqbas, Director of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikhha Etimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Kuwait's Ambassador to the Republic of Iraq Salem Al-Zamanan. The Iraqi parliament speaker arrived in Kuwait on Saturday on a two-day official visit. —KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the Speaker of the Iraqi Parliament Dr Salim Al-Jubouri.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Mai Ibrahim Al-Mesad, Project Manager of the maritime section of the Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway, poses for a picture at the construction site in Kuwait City yesterday. The Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway is considered one of the longest in the world, covering a total distance of 37 kilometers between Kuwait City and Subliya. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Conference discusses women's empowerment in tech advancement



KUWAIT: Kuwait Women Techmakers Group (WTM) and the Arab Women In Computing (ArabWIC) organization prepare to organize a special conference on March 8, 2018, which also marks the International Women's Day. The conference will be held at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) and mainly sponsored by Gulf Bank.

Speaking on the occasion, Zainab Al-Me'raj, ArabWIC CEO and WTM leader in Kuwait, said that the group aims at empowering women through developing their technological skills so that they can contribute to boosting technological advancement in Kuwait. This is done by providing training courses and scholarships in addition to attending Google-supported conferences and workshops on Android applications, Google Chrome, Google Drive, Google Cloud computing systems and other technologies, she added.

Me'raj further noted that the conference aims at spotlighting the significance of providing leading positions for

women with technological skills. She also mentioned the cooperation with ArabWIC Vice President Dr Fatima Bojarwah in boosting Arab women's skills and investing in their potentials.

The conference is due to include two symposiums about women and computing in Kuwait, Me'raj added. "The first one will be titled 'Women in Computing and Technology Working Environments,' and the second will be titled 'Suitable Technological Environment for Starting Tech Companies in Kuwait,'" she elaborated, adding that participants would also take part in a 'Hackathon' competition which involves solving a social problem within 12 hours.

Meanwhile, WTM organizer Arwa Al-Jasser stressed that the conference presents a wonderful opportunity for both tech amateurs and professional entrepreneurs, programmers and students to exchange expertise. Also speaking on the occasion, Dr Bojarwah invited all concerned public and private sector institutions to attend the conference and take part in the Hackathon.

Commercial Bank honors policemen

KUWAIT: As part of its activities to celebrate the 57th National Day and the 27th Liberation Day anniversaries, a team from the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently honored traffic and security policemen, who were stationed along the Arabian Gulf Road to secure the national celebrations. In this regard, CBK's Assistant Manager for Public Relations Amani Al-Wer'a said that the honoring came as part of the bank's community service activities, and to show appreciation for the role that policemen play in protecting the society at all times.



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ
يَا أَيُّهَا الْمُسْلِمُونَ اجْعَلُوا فِي عِبَادَةِ اللَّهِ حُبًّا
وَأَقْرَبُوا فِيهَا حُبًّا

It is with deep sorrow that
Imad Flayhan & his family

announce the sad demise of his

Mother
Souad Salim Bou Fakhreddine
Wife of Sleiman Mahmoud Flayhan

Condolences will take place on
Tuesday, 6th March 2018
from 5PM to 8PM
in Emerald Ballroom
at Sheraton Kuwait

إِنَّا لِلَّهِ وَإِنَّا إِلَيْهِ رَاجِعُونَ

Local

Chocolate companies eye 'growing' Gulf market

'GCC travelers developed a taste for chocolate'

BRUSSELS: European chocolate companies are keen on expanding their businesses to the Gulf region seen as a growing market for chocolate products. "We now want to go to the Gulf to present our show and also in Kuwait. Gulf citizens are travelling a lot abroad to destinations like Paris, London, Belgium where they have developed a taste for chocolate," Sylvie Douce said. She is the founder of 'The Salon du Chocolat (chocolate fair)', which is believed to be the world's largest event dedicated to chocolate and cocoa.

It has organized the annual Brussels Chocolate Fair this past weekend. It is the 5th time that the chocolate fair was held in the capital city of Belgium known for the fine quality of its chocolate. One hundred and thirty companies participated in the fair which took place under the theme 'Chocolate and Cocoa: the Great Adventure' to celebrate the latest chocolate trends. The Brussels fair featured participation from the South



BRUSSELS: 'The Salon du Chocolat' founder Sylvie Douce (right) and commercial sales manager of Boissier Paris Valerie Trolet. — KUNA



Brussels hosts world's largest chocolate fair

American country of Peru, a producing country recognized for the quality and diversity of its cocoa trees. The public were shown the many stages of processing cocoa into chocolate through the reconstruction of production by chefs who line up on the Pastry Show podium to present their best chocolate recipes.

18 shows

Douce, of French-Swiss origin, said together with Francois Jeantet, they started this chocolate show 23 years ago in Paris and every year they organize 18

shows around the world. "If I have the opportunity, I am ready to expand our show in the Gulf region," she said.

She noted that Belgium has the most important and oldest chocolate industry, and Belgian chocolate companies are everywhere in the world while their chocolate craftsmen are also very experienced and credible. The biggest cocoa bean producers are Ivory Coast and Ghana, Brazil, Venezuela, Mexico, Peru and Indonesia. The most important chocolate consumers are the US because of their large population and in Europe Switzerland, Germany, Norway, France and Belgium.

Meanwhile, Valerie Trolet, commercial sales manager of chocolate company Boissier Paris, said that this company was formed in 1827, adding that they have representative offices in Dubai and Oman which is a big market. Furthermore, she expressed her interest in gaining a foothold in Kuwait. She noted that their chocolate products that are distributed in the Arab world are made by hand and are free of any alcohol or animal gelatin. According to chocolate industry statistics, Global Chocolate Market was worth \$98.3 billion in 2016. — KUNA

Smartphones made journalism easy: Experts

KUWAIT: Smartphones, though too small and quite easy to carry and use, have created new realities in the information and media realms at expense of old-time heavy audio-visual equipment, leading experts affirm. The smartphone has become man's constant companion: used for multiple purposes including journalism and media, said Glen Mulcahy of the international Thomson Foundation, in a statement at a forum, organized by the supreme committee of Sheikh Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah Journalism Excellence Award.

These mobile phones can be used for recording, photographing, writing and editing thus making journalists' tasks much easier compared to the past times when they used costly and heavy equipment to cover events and conduct interviews, he indicated at the forum, held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center. Caroline Faraj, chief editor of the CNN Arabic website, said spread of the mobile phones has prompted journalists to be much more careful in authenticating news because of the fast digital publicity. A CNN study, she says, has revealed that Arab readers focus on the news item headline, the photo and the video, unlike those in Europe who read several paragraphs in a single item.

Ghassan Hajjar, Editorial Manager at Annahar daily newspaper, affirmed that number of newspapers' readers is dramatically dropping while the number of those who read the news on the internet is increasing. Saad Al-Ali, the Deputy General Director for the Editorial Department at Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), urged journalists to embrace the emerging social media digital world. Al-Ali has indicated that academies and colleges have not been abreast of the development in the digital education and information technology.

Dr Ahmad Al-Sherif from Kuwait University concurred with Al-Ali that the academic curricula "need to be fundamentally updated." Ayman Al Ali, head of the supreme commission, also concurred with such an approach and called for training educators to upgrade their skills and knowledge of the emerging communication and media means. — KUNA

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International

MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2018



SPD paves way for Merkel's 4th term

South Korea to send envoys to North; US 'willing to talk'

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ROME: Nuns queue to vote at a polling station in Rome yesterday. — AFP

Italy election stalked by populism

Tensions mar gloomy campaign

ROME: Italians went to the polls yesterday in one of the country's most uncertain elections ever, with far-right and populist parties expected to make major gains and Silvio Berlusconi set to play a leading role. Polling stations opened at 0600 GMT and will close at 2200 GMT, with initial results expected early today. Tensions between far-right and anti-fascist activists have marred a gloomy campaign dominated by fears about immigration and economic malaise. "This election campaign has been pretty squalid, including from the Democratic Party (PD), who I voted for," 24-year-old barber Mirko Canali told AFP after casting his vote in Rome.

He said he knew many other young people who, fed up with high youth unemployment, had decided to support the anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S). "They're pissed off, can't bear (PD leader Matteo) Renzi anymore and maybe they're right," Canali said. Many Italians are cynical about election promises made by the country's many squabbling parties and confused about what the outcome might be. "We hope something will change because until now things have been very bad," said Enzo Gallo, an elderly shopper at a street market in Milan.

"The middle class no longer exists, the poor are becoming poorer, the rich are becoming richer and there is no social justice," he said. The result could be a stalemate between the M5S, three-time former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's rightwing coalition and the ruling centre-left PD. The last opinion polls before the vote put

Berlusconi's coalition in the lead with 37 percent, followed by the M5S with 28 percent and the centre-left with 27 percent. But under a new electoral law being tried out for the first time, any grouping would need at least 40 percent of the vote to command an overall majority of seats in both chambers of parliament. "These elections are a lottery. It's been the case before but never like today," said Roberto D'Alimonte, head of political science at Rome's Lauss University.

Berlusconi's back

A remarkable feature of the election has been the return to the limelight of 81-year-old Berlusconi, despite a political career overshadowed by sex scandals and legal woes. The billionaire tycoon cannot himself hold office because of a tax fraud conviction but has put forward European Parliament President Antonio Tajani as his prime ministerial nominee.

Berlusconi's plans, however, face a challenge from his ambitious coalition partner, League leader Matteo Salvini, whose anti-immigration and eurosceptic rhetoric has fired

up the campaign. Salvini has said he should be nominated prime minister if his party comes ahead of Berlusconi's and their coalition as a whole wins a majority. Berlusconi and Salvini have promised to expel 600,000 illegal migrants if they win power—a proposal dismissed by the centre-left as logistically impossible.

'Pure populism'

The election has drawn international attention, including from former White House adviser Steve Bannon—the man who harnessed the populist insurgency that propelled Donald Trump to power. Italy's election "epitomizes everything, it is pure populism," Bannon said in an interview with

the New York Times last week.

Bannon, who is visiting Italy as part of a European tour, told the paper: "The Italian people have gone farther, in a shorter period of time, than the British did for Brexit and the Americans did for Trump". He called a potential alliance between the Five Star Movement and the League—a scenario that has spooked financial mar-

kets and European capitals the "ultimate dream". PD leader Renzi told a final campaign event in his native Florence on Friday that only a vote for his party would prevent Salvini from taking power. "The PD is the only serious political force that can bring concrete results," Chiara Serdone, a 70-year-old retired railway company employee said at the rally.

Scenarios

If no party wins an overall majority, one scenario outlined by analysts could be a grand coalition between the PD and Forza Italia—a prospect that would reassure investors but risks spreading more cynicism and emboldening populists and the far-right. Another possibility could be a temporary government and eventually new elections.

"The M5S may end up as the single biggest party but has ruled out any post-election deals with the others. "I voted for the right and Berlusconi in the past ... but this time I'm voting Five Star Movement to be against the parties that have always stolen," said 24-year-old pastry chef Francesco Tagliavini at a polling station in Rome's Tor Marancia neighborhood. Five Star's leader Luigi Di Maio broke with tradition by announcing a full list of ministerial nominees ahead of the vote, including many academics with no political experience. The 31-year-old Di Maio told supporters: "Some people have mocked this decision but we will be the ones laughing today." — AFP



Far-right, populist parties expected to make major gains

Bangladesh writer targeted, attacked as 'enemy of Islam'

DHAKA: Bangladeshi investigators said yesterday that a young man accused of stabbing a celebrated secular writer at a seminar had targeted him as "an enemy of Islam". Saturday's attack on Zafar Iqbal in the northern city of Sylhet was just the latest in a series of stabbings of secular or atheist authors and bloggers in Muslim-majority Bangladesh. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, whose government has waged a fierce crackdown on homegrown extremism in recent years, blamed "religious fanatics" for the assault. Iqbal, a longstanding champion of free speech and secularism, remains in a stable condition after being flown to a military hospital in Dhaka with stab wounds to his head. Police detained 21-year-old Faizul Hasan, a former Islamic seminary student, and were investigating any ties to the radical groups. Colonel Ali Haider Azad Ahmed from the elite Rapid Action Battalion unit said Hasan told investigators it was "his duty as a Muslim to resist those who work against Islam". "He has said Dr Zafar Iqbal was an

enemy of Islam," Ahmed said. Police said Hasan, whose father was a teacher at an Islamic seminary, may have had links to extremists blamed for attacks on secular and atheist writers in the last four years. Suspected Islamist radicals have killed around a dozen such writers and bloggers, including an American atheist blogger of Bangladeshi origin. Police have blamed homegrown Islamist extremist group Ansarullah Bangla Team—also known as Ansar-Al Islam and linked to Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent—for most of the attacks. Bangladesh's government has provided security for top secular writers and activists since Islamist extremists named them in several lists of targets.

'Religious fanatics'

Iqbal, 64, is a bestselling author and celebrity speaker who regularly appears at campuses nationwide. The US-trained professor teaches at a state university in Sylhet. The attack was swiftly condemned by protesters in Dhaka and Sylhet, who staged torchlit marches and planned further rallies to demand justice later. Hasina urged Bangladeshis to remain alert to the threat of extremism. "Those responsible for these incidents have become religious fanatics," she said yesterday. "They think that they'll go to a heaven, but they will actually go to hell, because no one goes to heaven by killing a human being."

In recent years Iqbal had supported the execution of



SYLHET: Zafar Iqbal, activist and bestselling science fiction writer lies on a stretcher at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College after he was stabbed in the university campus in Sylhet. — AFP

top Islamist party leaders—key opponents of Hasina—for their part in war crimes in the early 1970s, despite allegations the prime minister was crushing dissent. Bangladesh has been waging a war against extremists in

the wake of numerous attacks by radical groups in recent years. In July 2016, militants stormed a Dhaka cafe and massacred 22 hostages, including 18 foreigners, in an assault claimed by the Islamic State group. — AFP

International

Jihadist group claims deadly twin attacks in Burkina Faso

One shot dead in night assault near Burkina presidency

OUAGADOUGOU: One person was shot dead after three people attempted to storm a roadblock near the Burkina presidential compound yesterday, a government source said. Two of the trio managed to flee the scene but the third was arrested and gunned down after attempting to seize the weapon of a guard, the source said. The incident in the early hours came two days after eight soldiers were killed in deadly twin attacks on the French embassy and the Burkina military HQ in the capital Ouagadougou.

Meanwhile, a jihadist group allied to Al-Qaeda has claimed responsibility for a deadly co-ordinated assault on the French embassy in Burkina Faso's capital, Ouagadougou, and the country's military HQ, condemned by the prime minister as a "cowardly" terrorist attack. Eight armed forces personnel were killed in the fighting in the West African nation on Friday, the government said, while a French security source said 12 more were seriously injured.

Eight attackers were also killed and 80 people, including civilians, were wounded, officials said. The government said the attack on the military HQ was a suicide car bombing and that a regional anti-terrorism meeting may have been the intended target. Visiting the HQ on Saturday, Prime Minister Paul Kaba Thiéba said he saw "apocalyptic scenes" and condemned "with the utmost severity this terrorist attack, cowardly, which attacks our country, once again, which sows death, unnecessary destruction".

The Group to Support Islam and Muslims (GSIM) claimed to have carried out the twin attacks, in a message

cited by Mauritania's Al-Akhar news agency. Led by the Malian jihadist Iyad Ag Ghaly, the group is allied to Al-Qaeda and has claimed responsibility for previous attacks in the troubled Sahel region. GSIM said the Ouagadougou attacks were a response to the deaths of some of its leaders "in a French army raid in northern Mali two weeks ago," the agency reported. According to French military sources, some 20 jihadists were "killed or captured" on that occasion.

'Terror attack'

Authorities on Saturday began to gather clues at the two attack sites. The car bomb explosion left a huge crater in the pavement by the military HQ and a hole in the side of the building, with windows smashed and bullet holes in the walls. "This is a terrorist attack, linked to a current or another terrorist movement in the Sahel... or to others who want to destabilize or block our democratic progress," said communication minister Remis Fulgance Dandjinou on Saturday morning.

3 attempt to storm a roadblock near presidential compound



Two people were arrested near the military HQ, a security source said. "It was a panic yesterday (Friday). People were running around in the city, trying to get home. Shops were closing, schools too," said Sayouba Ouedraogo, a 36-year-old driver. A salesman who usually sells cigarettes in front of the French Embassy, Zondi Mahamadi, 52, said it was chaos: "People ran, they left everything, even motorcycles, bikes, we climbed a fence to get away." "Does religion command people to kill? Religion has never said that," he added.



OUAGADOUGOU: Photo shows bullet holes on the exterior of the French embassy, a day after dozens of people were killed in twin attacks on the French embassy and the country's military. —AFP

Soft targets to hard targets

The violence began mid-morning Friday when heavy gunfire broke out in the centre of the Burkina capital. Witnesses said five men armed with Kalashnikov assault rifles got out of a car and opened fire on passersby before heading towards the French embassy. They were "dressed in civilian clothes" with their faces uncovered, witnesses said. At the same time, the bomb went off near the head-

quarters of the Burkina armed forces, about a kilometer from the site of the first attack. A gunman who attacked the military HQ was wearing the uniform of the national army, according to a security source. Officials from Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania and Niger had gathered at the HQ for a G5 Sahel meeting, an anti-jihadist group which aims to train 5,000 troops and be fully operational by the end of the month. —Agencies

S Africa firebrand Malema launches bid for presidency

JOHANNESBURG: Radical South African opposition leader Julius Malema yesterday launched his campaign to be elected president in 2019 by aggressively distancing his party from a one-time coalition partner. The Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) leader used a speech at a packed arena in Johannesburg to confirm that he would seek to unseat the mayor of Port Elizabeth whose administration his party propped-up since 2016 elections.



Julius Malema

The mayor of the south coast city, Athol Trollip, is a member of the Democratic Alliance (DA) party which has governed Port Elizabeth as well as Johannesburg and Pretoria with the support of Malema's EFF. But since the resignation last month of president Jacob Zuma, long the target of Malema's ire, the EFF has switched its attentions to the main opposition DA, accusing it of being a racist party that promotes the interests of whites.

"All white people who are voting DA, who are angry with what we are going to do in PE... all of you can go to hell, we don't care about you. We don't care about white feelings," he said to loud applause and cheering. "We don't hate white people, we just love black people." Malema has sought to rebuild ties with the ruling African National Congress (ANC) since President Cyril Ramaphosa succeeded Zuma last month. "Ramaphosa must do the right thing. We don't care about him being a billionaire, we want him to do the right thing," said Malema.

Malema founded the EFF in 2013 when he was expelled from the ANC along with a number of allies, and

the party now has the third largest number of MPs in the National Assembly. In his speech, Malema welcomed the ANC's recent resolution to seek to expedite the process of redistributing land to "rightful owners" that is widely understood to mean transferring land owned by whites to economically disadvantaged blacks. "We want to give land to our people, it is going to happen, it will happen in our lifetime, whether they like it or not. The land will be returned," he said.

"We are not going to listen to any Britain, we are not going to listen to European Parliament, we are not going to listen to UN—we are going to listen to the people of South Africa," Malema added. He was referring to a letter sent Tuesday by right-wing British UKIP MEP Janice Atkinson to Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson calling on London to "step in" over the issue of land redistribution in South Africa. Malema also announced a voter registration drive for EFF supporters. "All fighters in all branches must be registered to vote. If you are not registered, then you are a criminal." —AFP

Four soldiers and 10 jihadists killed in Sinai campaign

CAIRO: Egypt's military said yesterday four soldiers and 10 jihadists were killed in a military operation in Sinai against Islamic State group jihadists. The deaths raise military casualties to at least 16 dead, along with more than 100 jihadists, since the start of the operation on February

9, according to previous army tolls. The army launched the campaign after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who is standing in elections for his second term this month, gave them a three month deadline to crush IS in Sinai.

Sisi issued his ultimatum in November after suspected Islamic State gunmen massacred more than 300 worshippers in a Sinai mosque associated with Muslim Sufi mystics. IS in Sinai has been among the group's most resilient affiliates, killing hundreds of soldiers, policemen and civilians in Sinai and elsewhere in Egypt. It has killed scores of Christians in church bombings and shootings, and bombed a Russian airliner carrying tourists from an Egyptian resort in 2015, killing all 224 people on board. —AFP

Israeli Arab motorist rams security men

JERUSALEM: An Israeli Arab motorist injured three security personnel in a ramming attack in northern Israel yesterday and was shot and wounded, police and the mili-

tary said. A police statement said the driver was taken into custody after carrying out the attack at a market parking lot and outside a train station in the city of Acre. The force said he had acted for nationalistic reasons. Video posted on social media showed a sport utility vehicle turning into the parking lot at high speed and hitting a pedestrian, sending him flying. In other footage, the vehicle is seen mounting a sidewalk.

Police said three people were struck by the vehicle, identifying

one of them as a paramilitary policeman.

The military said the two others hurt in the incident were soldiers. A hospital official said their injuries were not life-threatening. The police statement did not say who shot the driver, who identified as an Arab citizen of Israel. Local media reports said soldiers at the train station fired at the vehicle. The hospital official said the driver was shot several times and was in a moderate to serious condition. —Reuters

Nigeria looks to local skills to develop oil and gas

LAGOS: Fishing boats look like specks alongside Egina, which has been moored for the last month in Lagos. Even the container ships that normally dominate the port look like small boats. The floating production storage and offloading facility (FPSO), developed by the French group Total, looks a lot like a giant Lego set. Everything about it is huge: its weight (220,000 tons), length (330 meters/1,083 feet) and width (60 meters). At 33 meters, it's as high as a 10-storey building. The vessel is in its final stage of construction and will soon produce some 200,000 barrels of oil a day or about 10 percent of national production.

In the next few months, Egina will head to the Niger Delta and link up to 44 subsea wells some 1,600 meters under the Gulf of Guinea. Up to 2.3 million barrels of crude can be stored in its hull, before being taken abroad to be refined. The cost of the project is up to \$16 billion (12.8 billion euros) but according to the head of Total in Nigeria, Nicolas Terraz, the investment is justified. "Nigeria is a very important country for Total. We've been here for the last 60 years," he said, looking up at

the huge ship. "It's the biggest FPSO ever constructed by the group."

'Local content'

The construction of Egina in Africa for Africa may be a first but it's not been welcomed by everyone in Nigeria's commercial capital. Local residents say it's disturbed their sleep while the Egina's sheer size has made it difficult for the yachts of amateur sailors to catch the wind in their sails. It's not just Egina's size and cost that are unique: it's the first major project to have been undertaken since a 2010 Nigerian law that made "local content" compulsory. More than half of those involved in its construction were Nigerian and more than 75 percent of the work was done in Port Harcourt or Lagos. The remainder was done at the Samsung shipyard in South Korea. "We would have never thought that these things could be done locally," said Dolapo Oni, an oil analyst with Ecobank. "It was a big gamble for Total." "Local companies have no access to local banks or even international funding."

"But Egina shows that there is still foreign confidence at a time when Shell or Exxon don't invest anymore in Nigeria." Nigeria has suffered years of mismanagement of its resources. In January, parliament voted for a bill to reform the oil sector and make it more transparent, nearly two decades after it was first proposed. The bill still needs the approval of President Muhammadu Buhari to become law. Buhari, who also doubles up as oil minister, has vowed to overhaul the sector as part of his drive to clean up politics and claw back billions of dollars in looted public money. —AFP

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International

German Social Democrats back Merkel-led coalition

SPD paves way for Merkel's fourth term

BERLIN: Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) voted decisively for another coalition with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives yesterday, clearing the way for a new government in Europe's largest economy and ending months of political uncertainty. Two thirds of the membership voted "yes" to the deal, a party official said—a wider margin than many had expected—meaning Merkel could be sworn in for a fourth term by mid-March, in a repeat of the grand coalition that has governed since 2013.

The challenges are piling up for Merkel, who has been acting chancellor for more than five months since an inconclusive election, with Europe looking to its largest country for leadership on a host of economic and security issues. Addressing party activists lining the balconies around the atrium of the party's Berlin headquarters early yesterday, acting SPD leader Olaf Scholz said: "We now have clarity: the SPD will join the next German government." Merkel took to her party's Twitter feed to congratulate the SPD. "I look forward to working with the SPD again for the good of our country," she said.

European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs Pierre Moscovici congratulated the SPD for "their responsible and decisive vote" on Twitter and said Germany was now "ready to engage for a stronger Europe". French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire wrote on Twitter that he had spoken to Scholz and acting finance minister Peter Altmaier, a Merkel ally, by telephone yesterday morning to discuss giving the euro zone new impetus after the SPD's vote, adding: "Resolved to work closely together!"



Decisive vote ends months of political uncertainty

The SPD ballot pitted the leadership of the centre-left party against the radical youth wing, which wanted the SPD to rebuild in opposition after a disastrous election showing. "I'm happy it worked out this way," Andrea Nahles, the SPD's likely next leader said. Scholz declined to comment on reports that he would be finance minister, saying only that the SPD would appoint three men and three women to the federal cabinet. As part of the price for its support, the SPD will take the helm at key ministries, including the finance ministry. The outcome means the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) will be the largest parliamentary opposition party. In a tweet, they labeled the SPD's decision a "catastrophe" for Germany, promising fierce opposition over the coming four years.

Kevin Kuehnert, head of the SPD's youth wing, said he was disappointed but that the "Jusos" (youth wing) would keep up their criticism, signaling that, after bringing in a flood of new members, they would be a thorn in the leadership's side. "Criticism of the grand coalition remains. The SPD needs to be more like it has been in recent weeks and less like it has been in recent years - the Jusos will ensure this," he tweeted. The party, already one of Europe's largest, has seen tens of thousands of new members join this year. Turn-out in the poll was over 78 percent.

Business relieved

German business greeted with relief the news that Germany would get a government after its longest-ever post-election interregnum. "While the United States are starting a trade war and China is challenge our industri-

SPD ministers

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BERLIN: Andrea Nahles, parliamentary group leader of Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) party and also designated SPD leader, gives a statement after the result was announced of the SPD party members' referendum on whether or not to join a new coalition government with German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives yesterday. — AFP

al leadership, we have been unnecessarily self-absorbed," engineering trade union VDMA's managing director Thilo Brodtmann said.

The SPD was forced to revisit its original plan to go into opposition after the failure of Merkel's initial

attempt to form a coalition with two smaller parties. With her conservatives, they thrashed out a coalition agreement which SPD leaders hailed for its commitments to strengthening the EU and giving them key government roles.—Reuters

US Northeast faces flooding, outages after a killer storm

PRINCETON: More than 1.5 million customers remained without power throughout the eastern United States yesterday, and communities on the New England coast faced more flooding two days after a powerful storm snapped trees, downed wires and killed at least nine people. The remnants of the storm, known as a nor'easter, lingered yesterday with flood watches and wind advisories in effect until 1 pm in northeastern United States even as it moved hundreds of miles out to sea, hampering efforts to restore power.

The governors of both Massachusetts and New York declared a state of emergency on Saturday afternoon, following similar announcements by the governors of Virginia and Maryland on Friday. The moves give those states access to federal resources. The storm carried hurricane-force winds in excess of 90 miles per hour (145 kph), sending seawater churning into streets in Boston and nearby shore towns - the second time the area has been flooded this year.

The National Weather Service (NWS) said that while winds have weakened yesterday and most of the rain and snow has moved offshore, flooding and extreme high tides could still affect the coastal areas from Maine, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Long Island, NY. "We're definitely not out of the woods yet," said meteorologist David Roth at the weather service's Weather Prediction Center in College Park, Maryland.

Falling trees killed seven people - including two boys who died when trees struck their homes - in Connecticut, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island and Virginia, according to local media and police.

Two others died in the storm, according to media reports, including a 41-year-old man in Andover, New Jersey, who came in contact with power lines. Private forecasting service AccuWeather said the storm dumped as much as 18 inches (46 cm) of snow on parts of New York state and Pennsylvania. The Massachusetts town of East Bridgewater received nearly 6 inches of rain, the NWS said.

The storm also snarled transportation from the Middle Atlantic into New England, with more than a quarter of flights into and out of New York's three major airports and Boston's airport canceled on Friday, tracking service FlightAware.com reported.

The problems carried over into Saturday, with hundreds of flights canceled into and out of New York and Boston, according to the website. One flight landing at Washington's Dulles International Airport on Friday experienced turbulence so rough that most passengers became sick and the pilots were on the verge of becoming ill, the Federal Aviation Administration said.—Reuters

Fearing mass shootings, some schools in US turn to armored equipment

BERLIN: Linda Bragg wrote a "quote of the day" on the small whiteboard in her classroom, a teaching aid that can double as a bullet-resistant shield in the event of a school shooting. The tablets, made of polyethylene fiber and weighing just three pounds (1.5 kilograms), have been in the classrooms of Worcester Preparatory School in historic Berlin, Maryland since 2013. Berlin, which features a population of 5,000 and is located just miles from some popular Atlantic beaches, calls itself "America's coolest small town."

The prep school's whiteboards, measuring some 20 by 18 inches (50 by 45 centimeters), look like those used in many classroom around the country. But with handles screwed to their backs, they are designed to allow a teacher like Bragg to protect herself from an assailant's bullets. The whiteboards are produced not far from Berlin by a small company, Hardwire, which has become a world leader in bullet-resistant equipment and armored devices, sold both to American police departments and the US Army.

Shocked by the 2012 massacre at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, where a young shooter killed 26 people—including 20 six- and seven-year-old children—Hardwire's boss, George Tunis, saw a way to help out while moving into a new market: classrooms. When a shooter entered a high school in Parkland, Florida on February 14 and began firing his assault rifle, the school's assistant football coach, Aaron Feis, was among the first of the 17 victims to be gunned down as he attempted to protect students from the gunfire.

'A last, last resort'

Tunis said he believes his company's shield "would have made a difference." In addition to the protective white-

'Queen of Europe' lives another day

BERLIN: Long dubbed the "Queen of Europe", Germany's veteran Chancellor Angela Merkel emerges as the bruised survivor of her deepest crisis to govern for what many expect will be her final term. After 12 years at the helm of Europe's top economy, the pastor's daughter often called the world's most powerful woman goes on to live another day after post-war Germany's longest stretch of coalition haggling. If she indeed serves out her fourth four-year term, the 63-year-old could match or surpass the marathon tenure of her late mentor, Germany's "reunification chancellor" Helmut Kohl.

But a growing band of observers doubt she will stay in power that long as many voters have grown wary of "Mutti" (mummy) and talk is rife of the "twilight" of her reign. Merkel's deep woes are the price she paid for an uncharacteristically bold move—opening Germany's borders to a mass influx of refugees that has brought more than one million asylum seekers to Germany since 2015. The humanitarian act made her a liberal hero to many, but also sparked a xenophobic backlash that propelled the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, whose battle cry is "Merkel must go".

When the AfD entered Germany's par-

liament last September, it shattered a taboo against extremists sitting in the Bundestag, while the serial election winner Merkel slunk away with her party's worst result since 1949. Although no-one within her Christian Democrats has dared openly to challenge the still popular leader for the top job, political analyst Oskar Niedermayer said, it is clear that "Angela Merkel is past her zenith".

'Leader of free world'

During her long rule, the leader raised behind the Iron Curtain has weathered multiple crises. She was long dubbed Europe's "austerity queen" for her tough stance on debt-hit euro-zone economies, where demonstrators derided her as a Nazi. In the turbulent times of US President Donald Trump, Brexit and multiple global crises, she came to be hailed abroad as a defender of liberal democracy. Germans have long seen her as the bedrock of stability and enviable growth and jobs rates.

They have thanked her by keeping her in government ever since she became their youngest and first female chancellor in 2005, a contemporary of Tony Blair and George W Bush. Merkel, with her pragmatic, modest and reassuringly bland style, seemed to have perfected the art of staying in power in a wealthy, ageing nation that tends to favor continuity over change.

Seemingly devoid of vanity and indifferent to the trappings of power, she lives in a Berlin flat with her media-shy scientist husband Joachim Sauer, shops in a local supermarket and spends holidays hiking in the Alps. Though frequently criticized for



POCOMOKE CITY: George Tunis, CEO of Hardwire, demonstrates the use of his bulletproof backpack inserts at his factory in Pocomoke City, Maryland. —FP

boards, Hardwire makes armored clip boards, tablets and notebooks. It also makes hardened inserts, the size of a notebook, that can be placed in a student's backpack. The company equips schools in Maryland, Minnesota and Delaware, and exports outside the country as well. It refuses to reveal its revenue figures but says that since the Parkland shooting, "sales have been skyrocketing." Prices range from \$75 for a backpack insert to \$1,000 for a whiteboard capable of stopping rounds from an assault rifle.

"It's a last, last resort for personal protection," Tunis said.

At Worcester Prep, with 500 students from kindergarten through 12th grade, administrators, teachers and students' parents say they are fans of the whiteboards. "Whiteboards have given our teachers a real comfort," said Barry Tull, 72, who is in his 33rd year as Worcester's headmaster. Though some teachers were initially "not at ease" with the idea, "as they trained to use this as one more piece of security, they got very comfortable," he said. Many Berlin residents supporting the whiteboards. "It's a good start," said Jessica Collins, 34, a local police officer.—AFP



German Chancellor Angela Merkel

sitting out tough challenges, Merkel has punctuated her reign with some bold decisions, including scrapping nuclear power after Japan's 2011 Fukushima disaster.

'Merkelvellian'

Merkel was born Angela Dorothea Kasner on July 17, 1954 in the port city of Hamburg. Soon after, her father, a Lutheran clergyman, moved the family to a small-town parish in the communist East at a time when most people were headed the other way. Biographers say life in a police state taught Merkel to hide her true thoughts behind a poker face. A top student, she excelled in Russian, which would

later help her keep up the often tough dialogue with President Vladimir Putin, who was a KGB officer in Dresden when the Berlin Wall fell in 1989.

During that momentous upheaval, Merkel joined a group that soon merged with the Christian Democrats of Kohl, who fondly if patronizingly dubbed Merkel his "girl". Merkel's mentor was not the last politician to underestimate her and pay the price. When Kohl became embroiled in a campaign finance scandal in 1999, Merkel openly urged her party to drop the self-declared "old warhorse". The move, which has been described as "Merkelvellian", sparked her meteoric rise.—AFP

International

S Korea to send envoys to North; US 'willing to talk'

We will neither beg for dialogue: North Korea

SEOUL: South Korea will dispatch a delegation led by senior security officials for a two-day visit to North Korea starting today, the presidential Blue House announced yesterday, as US President Donald Trump hinted that he is ready to talk to Pyongyang. For its part, North Korea said it was not begging to talk with Washington and denounced upcoming US-South Korean joint-military exercises, warning that it would take counter measures against the United States if they went ahead.

The drills will take place next month, a South Korean presidential security adviser said according to the Yonhap news agency. They had been delayed until after the Winter Olympics and Paralympic games in South Korea. South Korea's presidential Blue House said in a statement that National Security Office (NSO) head Chung Eui-yong and National Intelligence Service (NIS) chief Suh Hoon, a veteran of past negotiations with the North, will be among the 10-member South Korean delegation visiting Pyongyang.

The visit was part of an effort to lower tensions on the Korean peninsula as well as possibly arrange talks between North Korea and the United States, it said. After the visit to North Korea the envoys will travel to the United States to brief officials, and Seoul said it would also coordinate closely with officials in Japan and China. During a joke-filled monologue at a dinner with journalists in Washington on Saturday, Trump suggested that the United States will be meeting with North Korea but has told Pyongyang it must first "denuke."

"We will be meeting and we'll see if anything positive happens," he added. It was unclear if Trump was

joking or if formal US-North Korea talks were imminent. Speaking yesterday in Beijing ahead of the opening of China's parliament, Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Yesui said China hoped the United States and North Korea could begin dialogue too. "War and chaos on the peninsula is not in the interests of any side," Zhang said.

Last month, US Vice President Mike Pence was scheduled to meet with North Korean officials, including leader Kim Jong Un's sister, while in South Korea for the Winter Olympics but the North Koreans canceled at the last minute, US officials said in February. North Korea reiterated on Saturday that it was willing to talk to the United States but said it would never sit with any precondition. A North Korean foreign ministry spokesman was quoted by

KCNA as saying "we will neither beg for dialogue nor evade the military option claimed by the US." A commentary published by North Korea's official KCNA news agency warned that North Korea would "counter the US" if joint military drills go forward.

The Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang last month gave a boost to recent engagement between the two Koreas after more than a year of sharply rising tensions over the North's missile program and its sixth and largest nuclear test in defiance of United Nations sanctions. South Korean President Moon Jae-in hopes to capitalize on that thaw in relations by arranging talks over North Korea's nuclear weapons and ballistic missile program. During a phone call on Thursday, Moon told Trump of his plan to send a special envoy to North Korea in response to an invitation from leader Kim Jong Un.

In sending an envoy to Pyongyang, Moon said he



ANDREWS AIR FORCE BASE: US President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump walk off Air Force One at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, on March 3, 2018. —AFP

would be seeking to reciprocate Kim Jong Un's decision to send a senior delegation, including his sister, Kim Yo Jong, to the Olympics, marking the first visit by a member of the North's ruling bloodline since the 1950-53 Korean War. The White House has said any talks with North Korea must lead to an end of its nuclear program,

and on Feb 23, the United States said it was imposing its largest package of sanctions to pressure North Korea to give up its nuclear and missile programs. At the time, Trump also warned of a "phase two" that could be "very, very unfortunate for the world" if the steps did not work.—Reuters



Trump suggests meeting if North Korea 'denukes'

'Lions' dream of football glory in Libyan camp

TRIPOLI: The Tajoura migrant camp on the edge of Libya's Tripoli was the scene of a clash between lions: teams of Cameroonian and Senegalese footballers whose dream is to play in Europe. The Indomitable Lions and the Lions of Teranga took their names from those of their national teams, but the match had little of the atmosphere of African sports events. Played on a sandy pitch marked out by a low white wall, in front of a prison building, its only spectators were two prison guards. The teams had been thrown together, their players selected from among 500 inmates who have languished in detention for months. The luckiest players had shoes, but others tread the makeshift stadium in their socks.

Flourescent yellow bibs for Senegal, orange for Cameroon, the migrants took the game deadly seriously. After the warm-up, hand in hand, they saluted their two spectators. After a few minutes of sprinting, dribbling and crunching tackles, sweat began to appear on the players' foreheads. Short of breath, one Senegalese player threw in the towel and sat at the foot of the wall. "I can't take it any more. I haven't had any physically activity for months, we don't move in prison," he said. "Plus, we're amateurs," he added. "The Cameroonians are real players who played for teams." The match continued without him, and the score left no doubt: the Cameroonians won 4-0.

'Destiny decided otherwise'

Mamadou Awal, 21, said he was proud of the victory. A midfielder like his idol, former French superstar and Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane, Awal left Cameroon aged 17 in a bid to reach Europe and become a professional footballer after a few years in a training center in his country. He decided to "go on an adventure", he said, adding he was confident in his talent. "But destiny decided otherwise," he said.

After boarding a boat headed for Europe, he was arrest-



TRIPOLI: Cameroonian African migrants warm-up ahead of a football match at the Libyan Interior Ministry's illegal immigration shelter in Tajoura. —AFP

ed at sea. "In Libya, I suffered a lot: it's my third time in prison," he said. Each time he attempted the crossing, the Libyan navy caught him. European glory is also the dream of his teammate, Takoute Styve, who quit his studies "to devote myself to football". "When I saw (Cameroonian stars) Roger Milla and Samuel Eto'o, I wanted to become like them". According to the United Nations, up to a million migrants are currently in Libya, tens of thousands of them detained in inhumane conditions.

After attending two training centers and playing for two second-division teams in Cameroon, Ukamou Lobu left his home town of Douala at the age of 16 to attempt the crossing to Europe. "I tried to leave Algeria and then Morocco but I did not succeed," he said. He has also been arrested several times and has seen other migrants die at

sea. He dreams of playing for Arsenal. But 22-year-old Seryne Diokhane said he has "nothing to do with football". "It's just an opportunity for me to get out of jail for a while," he said. "When they asked who can play, I answered 'me' right away."

He was interrupted by a camp official, Faraj Al-Guilouchi, who asked the migrants to return to their cells. "We organize matches every week to try to alleviate their suffering," Guilouchi said. "Most of them have suffered psychological shocks, either because they have tried and failed (sea) crossings or because they have lost loved ones." He said the camp would soon try to organize a tournament among various African nations. "No thanks, all we want is to leave this place," a migrant said in a low voice, as the metal door of the prison closed behind him.—AFP

Falcon cuts divisive figure in Venezuela presidential election

CARACAS: Henri Falcon, the main opponent to unpopular President Nicolas Maduro in Venezuela's presidential election, is in the unusual position of being unloved by both Maduro's ruling socialists and the main opposition alike. Falcon, 56, rejected calls from the opposition Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) this weekend to join their boycott of the May 20 election, insisting his victory would end Venezuela's diplomatic isolation. "Once we change this government, rest assured that we will be recognized by the international community and we will rescue relations with our allies," he told reporters.

But analysts say the main problem for Falcon, a 56-year-old former mayor and state governor who defected from the ruling socialists in 2010, is that he is seen as a traitor by both the opposition and the government. "Falcon has generally shown a predisposition to play by the government's rules and has been one of the fiercest advocates of electoral participation," said Risa Grais-Targow of Eurasia Group.

That has flown in the face of the four main opposition parties who make up the MUD, who dismiss the election as a farce and Falcon as a Maduro puppet. "Without a doubt, the government needs Henri Falcon, it needs a relatively well-known figure to participate," Venezuela analyst Andres Canizales told AFP. "He is playing a risky game, trying to form a political center distinct from Chavism and the radical opposition," he said.—AFP

Vatican's Pell faces hearing on abuse claim

MELBOURNE: Vatican finance chief Cardinal George Pell faces a crunch hearing starting in Australia today to determine if he stands trial on historical sexual offence charges. The 76-year-old, a top adviser to Pope Francis who has taken leave to fight the allegations, is accused of multiple offences relating to incidents that allegedly occurred long ago. Pell, the most senior Catholic cleric to be charged with criminal offences linked to the Church's long-running sexual abuse scandal, has denied all the claims. The exact details and nature of the allegations have not been made public, other than they involve "multiple complainants".

One of charges was withdrawn on Friday, reportedly because the accuser died. Up to 50 witnesses could be called during the four-week committal hearing at the Melbourne Magistrates Court, which will be closed to the media and public for up to two weeks while they give their accounts. The magistrate will then decide if there is sufficient evidence for the case to go to trial. Pell's defense team said last week part of their cross-examination would be to determine when the accusers first disclosed he had allegedly abused them, as they try to prove the allegations were a "recent invention", the Australian Broadcasting Corporation reported.

A frail-looking Pell has so far made two court appearances at preliminary hearings in July and October last year. He has not had to enter a plea, although he instructed his lawyer from the outset to make clear he intended to plead



Cardinal George Pell

not guilty. "For the avoidance of doubt and because of the interest, I might indicate that Cardinal Pell pleads not guilty to all charges and will maintain the presumed innocence that he has," his barrister Robert Richter said in July.

The former Sydney and Melbourne archbishop did not have to attend the previous hearings, but opted to do so having vowed to clear his name after a two-year investigation led to him being charged on June 29 last year. He is expected to be in court again today. Since his last appearance, his legal team has been denied requests for medical records of the complainants, with the magistrate saying disclosure could be harmful.

The Pell case has coincided with Australia's Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, ordered in 2012 after a decade of pressure to investigate widespread allegations of institutional paedophilia. The commission spoke to thousands of survivors and heard claims of child abuse involving churches, orphanages, sporting clubs, youth groups and schools.—AFP

Off the hook for mass murder, Khmer Rouge cadre turns to God

ANLONG VENG: Breaking into a broad smile, former Khmer Rouge cadre Im Chaem describes the relief she has felt since her baptism—part of a new spiritual journey for the 75-year-old after she dodged charges of crimes against humanity. "My mind is fresh and open with blessings from God," the frail but sharp-tongued grandmother told AFP from her stilted wooden home in a village outside Anlong Veng, the dusty Cambodian border town where the Khmer Rouge fought their last battles. From radical communism to Buddhism and now Christianity, Im Chaem's latest conversion marks another twist in a tumultuous life.

She was until recently facing charges of murder, enslavement, imprisonment and other "inhumane acts" linked to her time as a district official for the Khmer Rouge, a Maoist movement that brutally persecuted the religious and the educated in pursuit of an agrarian "utopia" in the late 1970s. But the case was unceremoniously dropped by a UN-backed court last year, renewing criticism of government efforts to block further prosecutions against former regime members who still populate every rung of society.

In an unlikely turn, Im Chaem's conversion this January was the work of a man who says he toiled in one of the forced labor camps she oversaw. The pastor, Christopher LaPel, survived the grueling ordeal and eventually escaped the regime that killed nearly a quarter of Cambodia's population between 1975-79 — including his parents and siblings. Four decades later on a missionary trip in his Buddhist-majority homeland, LaPel saw Im Chaem's name in the news.

"In my heart I felt that I would like to meet her," US-based LaPel said by phone. "I just wanted to tell her that Jesus loves her and I love her too." LaPel, who has worked with other ex-Khmer Rouge converts, visited his former oppressor several times last year, bringing small gifts and holding prayer sessions. Im Chaem says she embraced the new faith after seeing how it cured her son of a chronic illness. Since then she has held Sunday services in an abandoned rice mill next to her home, fitted with red plastic chairs for pews, a wooden lectern and Khmer-language bibles.

40,000 deaths

The septuagenarian, who enjoys gardening and spends mornings picking cashew nuts in a plot behind her house, also feels redeemed by the dismissal of her mass murder case. Like many ex-cadres, Im Chaem fled to the jungle after the fall of the Khmer Rouge in 1979 and later settled in Anlong Veng, the movement's last stronghold. After the area was brought under government control in 1998, she resumed her political career, serving as a local official for premier Hun Sen's party. But her past was publicly unearthed in 2015 when the UN-backed tribunal charged her in absentia with crimes against humanity for alleged atrocities at a prison and worksite she oversaw as secretary of Preah Neir Preah district.

A prosecution document said some 40,000 people died from executions, starvation and overwork at the largest prison, Phnom Trayoung, between 1977 and 1979. In a heavily-redacted report explaining the case's dismissal, judges questioned that figure but noted Im Chaem, who was deployed to the region to "purge" traitors, had authority over the prison and other security centers and labor camps. They ruled to drop the charges because she was not one of regime's most "senior" or "most responsible" leaders. An appeal is now pending.

The Phnom Penh-based tribunal, which combines elements of Cambodian and international law and includes local and foreign judges, opened in 2006 with a remit to try top Khmer Rouge cadres.—AFP

Analysis

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Putin's nuclear-tipped hybrid war on West

This month marks the fourth anniversary of Russia's March 2014 annexation of Crimea, an event that shocked the world and shook European faith in the post-Cold War security order. In retrospect, it has become clear that, for Putin, annexing the peninsula was not so much an end goal as a declaration of future intent, an early escalation in a broader and more ambitious effort that Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko recently termed, with little obvious exaggeration, Russia's "World Hybrid War" on Western democracy itself.

In an unusually bellicose speech on Thursday, Russian President Vladimir Putin put Moscow's remilitarization and its confrontation with the West at the heart of his pitch for re-election. His approach to this confrontation, which many now term "hybrid warfare", mixes nuclear posturing and cutting-edge technology with covert action, and was deliberately designed so as to make it very difficult for the West to respond.

President Vladimir Putin's Russia did not, it must be said, invent hybrid warfare. Combatants have always looked for innovative ways around the rules and conventions of conflict, and Israel, Iran and the Gulf states have employed common hybrid tactics - including cyber attacks, and the use of armed proxy groups - for years. China's leaders, too, have found increasingly unorthodox ways to push back against the United States and its allies in their immediate neighborhood: it recently emerged that, while Western nations were distracted by North Korea's nuclear program, China artificially expanded islands in the South China Sea in support of its territorial ambitions.

What Moscow has successfully done, however, is to refine a variety of old and new techniques to a higher level, and to employ them in a wider range of ways. As with China and Iran, Russia's aim in developing and perfecting its hybrid warfare capabilities is to weaken and undermine the United States and its allies without sparking all-out war.

It's a dynamic that brings with it some very real dangers, not least of accidental conflict. The American air strikes that killed dozens, if not hundreds, of Russian mercenaries in Syria last month marked the bloodiest confrontation between the two nations in decades. US prosecutor Robert Mueller's decision to charge 13 Russians and several Russian companies with interfering in the 2016 election also amounts to a significant escalation.

Exactly what prompted Russia's interest in reheating Cold War-era animosities remains a subject of much debate among Western security analysts. Many, however, see its roots in the anti-government protests that rocked Russia in 2011 and 2012, the most serious such unrest since the breakup of the Soviet Union. Putin was widely believed to be furious that American diplomats had wooed pro-democracy

and anticorruption activists, and to have concluded that Washington hoped to subvert his power.

'Little green men'

When Russia invaded Crimea early in 2014, and when a wider conflict erupted in Russian-speaking Ukrainian regions later that year, it acted with ruthless efficiency. By using troops wearing uniforms without insignia or identification - who became known universally as "little green men" - Russia achieved surprise and dominance on the ground before authorities in Kiev, let alone Washington, really knew what was happening.

It would be hard to overstate how much this took US President Barack Obama's administration by surprise. The Pentagon's Quadrennial Defense Review, published only days before the Crimea annexation, barely mentioned Russia and prioritized the risk of war with China as well as ongoing action against Islamist militant groups in the Middle East and beyond.

Russia's seizure of the strategically important Crimean peninsula, and its apparent role in shooting down a Malaysian Airlines flight over eastern Ukraine in July 2014, forced the United States and its European allies to urgently reconsider their beliefs about Russia's intentions. Since then, NATO has deployed battle groups to Eastern Europe and the Baltic States (in case Moscow is tempted to try out the techniques it used in Ukraine against NATO members).

In some ways, this resembles the Cold War, but it is in many respects a much more dynamic confrontation. Russia is now far more closely intertwined with the West, through investments and business deals, and this gives it new vulnerabilities - to sanctions, for example.

Convoluted dealings

Mueller's prosecution of former Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort - who has a long history of

business interests to the former Soviet Union - has drawn attention to just how convoluted some of these dealings have become. Russian money has been essential to the success of many Western businesses, possibly including those of President Donald Trump. But many powerful Russians are similarly beholden to the West - which is one reason so many of them have been frantically lobbying Congress to ensure their names aren't included on upcoming sanctions lists.

NATO members concerned about Russian political interference have recruited armies of bloggers and social media activists to push back against Russian messaging, and established new monitoring bodies to track Russian disinformation efforts. But, in hindsight, they may have interpreted that threat too narrowly. Rather than simply concentrate its efforts on spreading subversion on Europe's vulnerable periphery, Moscow appears to have concentrated on destabilizing the West's most powerful countries.

The most recent Mueller indictments allege that, by mid-2014, Russia's preparations for its interference in the 2016 US presidential elections were well underway, and that it had already made significant progress with plans to boost its political influence in Europe. (These plans, the indictment suggests, included paying off the so-called "Hapsburg group" of well-connected former European politicians.)

Meanwhile, the ongoing fighting in Ukraine - as well as Russia's post-2015 military intervention in Syria - has prompted a major Western reappraisal of Russia's military capabilities. In addition to its newer hybrid warfare tactics, Russia has proved increasingly adept at combining the use of drones, electronic warfare and more conventional heavy artillery to lethal effect against Ukrainian forces using more traditional Western equipment and tactics.

The seizure of Crimea prompted NATO to deploy a significant, and permanent, ground force to the Baltic countries and Poland. New fronts continue to erupt, and Western analysts increasingly worry over Russian activity in the Western Balkans. Putin's explicit nuclear threats last week will likely cause the United States and its European allies to reconsider their own nuclear postures. It seems far from impossible that the United States would decide to increase its nuclear footprint in Eastern Europe. Just over a century ago, a similar welter of international anxiety and confusion formed the base of dry tinder that World War One would set alight. Russia and its rivals must take great care not to allow history to repeat itself. —AFP



Can matchmaking create happy homes for employers and migrants in Lebanon?

When Jane came from the Philippines to Lebanon as a domestic worker to cook, clean and care for children, she only met her new boss on the day she moved into her house - and was unhappy from the outset. Meanwhile Beirut resident Tina, expecting her first child, was looking to hire help at home but was worried about employing someone she had never met - as is usually the case in Lebanon where foreign workers need a sponsor to come to the country.

Enter Leena Ksaifi who runs Equip, the first non-government organization in Lebanon to play matchmaker between employers and migrant domestic workers in a bid to tackle worker abuse and trafficking and ensure both bosses and workers are happy. Ksaifi said she wanted to shake-up traditional recruiting in Lebanon where people go through agencies and rarely meet workers in person before hiring them under the kafala sponsorship system, which binds migrant workers to one employer.

Jane and Tina - whose names have been changed upon request for privacy - said they didn't want to get into an employment relationship again that was decided on a photo and resume so they turned to Beirut-based Equip who matched them. "I wanted to see her, meet her, before I made a decision. At the end of the day this person is living in my house ... it is pretty intimate," said Tina, who also wanted to avoid the large fees of hiring from overseas. "I don't want somebody to come here and be a slave," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in her Beirut home.

Jane needed a new sponsor after deciding not to move abroad with her previous employer's family but wanted her next job to be a mutual agreement of salary, hours and time off. "I wanted to meet the person face-to-face. Before, I could not ask for what I want," she said, adding that her previous sponsorship felt like somebody owned her.

Shake-up for workers

Equip was set up in late 2016 but started direct hiring about six months ago as the kafala system - that applies across the Arab world - comes under increasing scrutiny and criticism from human rights groups for exploiting workers and denying them the ability to travel or change jobs. This criticism has led to some nations reforming the system, with countries like Bahrain and Jordan introducing flexible visas that stop workers being under one sponsor, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO).

Migrants - mostly women - account for more than 80 percent of domestic workers in the Arab states which is the highest percentage globally. A 2015 report from the ILO showed globally there were 11.5 million migrant domestic workers, accounting for 7.7 percent of all migrant workers, with 73 percent of jobs held by women. In Lebanon there are more than 200,000 registered migrant domestic workers, according to 2017 government data.

There are no official records of trafficked or abused domestic migrant workers in Lebanon. Lebanon has yet to introduce any changes to the kafala system and Ksaifi said Equip was only matching domestic workers already in Lebanon with legal sponsors. But she hoped this would reduce the possibility of trafficking because employers and workers have direct contact with each other creating "open communication". "Matchmaking is important because it is the first step in ensuring a positive relationship ... there are aligned expectations, transparency of salary, care, etc," she said. "It ensures safety for the employer and worker, and there won't be abuses."

There are more than 500 licensed recruitment agencies in Lebanon, according to Ali Amin, the president of the syndicate for recruitment agencies in Lebanon, who acknowledges that the recruitment process is not perfect. Amin said recruiting agencies can charge employers up to \$4,000 depending where they are hiring and workers' experience but agencies can only connect migrant workers with employers in advance if contact information is given in the origin country. "(The system) could be better by educating the Lebanese sponsors and workers about workers' rights - and to be more open and clearly inform workers about their duties," he said.

Zeina Mezher, ILO migrant specialist, said matchmaking did not solve the problem of forced labour on its own but did give "the base for an honest relationship", adding laws were needed. Migrant domestic workers in Lebanon are excluded from the Lebanese labour law, and groups working with migrants are concerned that the kafala system leaves people with no legal right to escape abusive bosses or poor working conditions. "It is important to make sure that it is matchmaking into a decent job opportunity, in a labour market that is equipped to protect labour rights," said Mezher.

For Ksaifi the process starts with the employer writing a job advert that is circulated to migrant leaders in Lebanon. Any interested domestic workers are interviewed by phone and only introduced to the employer if deemed a good match. Only the employer pays a fee once a match is made with Equip so far only making four matches but Ksaifi is confident this will increase. "It sets the tone for professionalism in a sector that was never seen as an employment relationship," said Ksaifi, 32. "Both parties should come out of this as winners. Workers can feel empowered and supported, and employers can feel liberated - these two people need to support each other." —Reuters

Weakened Merkel has work cut out to make coalition last

Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) have bought Chancellor Angela Merkel time with their vote to join her conservatives in another coalition, but she risks losing her long grip on power if she fails to balance the awkward allies' conflicting demands. Merkel's conservatives - her Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) allies - and the SPD are both still bruised after suffering from the rise of the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) in last year's election.

Archconservatives want to move right to counter the AfD, which profited from Merkel's 2015 decision to open German borders to over 1 million migrants. The SPD, by contrast, wants to ally people's insecurities with spending on welfare and education. "Merkel needs to appease a weakened and insecure SPD without alienating her own CDU/CSU too much," said Carsten Nickel, managing director at consultancy Teneo Intelligence.

Merkel has shared power with the SPD in two of her previous three terms in office, from 2005-2009, and from 2013 until now. The SPD said on Sunday its members had voted by a two-thirds majority in favour of a coalition deal struck last month. But the two blocs' weak performances in last September's election, when they both suffered their worst results since Germany became a republic in 1949, mean the latest incarnation of their awkward alliance

promises to be the most fractious yet. "Despite the pretty solid majority (in the SPD ballot), this is not a long-term or permanent set up," said Guntram Wolff, director of the Bruegel think tank. "The SPD is very fragile, and the CDU is also fragile."

Break clause?

The inclusion in the coalition deal of a clause that envisages a review of the new government's progress after two years is widely seen as giving the SPD an exit should it want one, and has also fuelled a debate about the post-Merkel era. "If the Social Democrats continue to fall in the polls, then the point will come at some stage when they say 'we must get out of the government'," said Nils Diederich, professor at the Free University in Berlin.

One opinion poll published last month showed the AfD surpassing the SPD for the first time in a national poll to become the second-strongest party. The SPD initially vowed to rebuild in opposition, only agreeing to talks on a return to its loveless marriage with Merkel after her negotiations with two smaller parties collapsed in November, plunging Germany into political uncertainty.

To stop the SPD from bolting, Merkel must deliver on those points in the coalition deal that are most dear to the Social Democrats: healthcare reform, and investment in education to meet the challenges of the digital age. Like French President Emmanuel Macron, who is pushing for "a Europe that protects", the SPD wants to promote economic stability and social convergence through the European project.

Kevin Kuehnert, head of the SPD's Jusos youth wing who campaigned for a 'No' vote, is ready to call out any delay in implementing the hard-won coalition deal, which envisages euro zone reforms in partnership with France.

"Criticism of the grand coalition remains," he tweeted after the ballot result. "The SPD needs to be more like it has been in recent weeks and less like it has been in recent years - the Jusos will ensure this."

Enemy within

To her right, Merkel, 63, also faces pressures from her own camp. Her weakness on the refugee issue has forced the chancellor to name Jens Spahn, her biggest critic within the conservative bloc, as health minister in the new government. Spahn, 37, wants to make the AfD "superfluous" by winning back voters on the right. He is also widely seen as ambitious, with an eye on succeeding Merkel, though he says he supports her as chancellor for the full parliamentary period.

Illustrating his lukewarm support for the new tie-up with the SPD, he described the coalition agreement this week as "no furious fireworks of innovation". Josef Joffe, publisher-editor of weekly Die Zeit, questioned whether Merkel would last out the full parliamentary term to 2021, "or whether she will be forced to hand over leadership to a younger CDU generation in two years". "Those who want to get rid of Merkel will try pull the party to right in order to recapture those voters who have defected to the nationalist, anti-immigrant AfD," he said.

Merkel has already sought to head off challengers by appointing close ally Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer to take over as CDU secretary general, heeding calls from within the party to inject new blood and groom a successor. Merkel also wants to serve a full, fourth term, rather than yield before her time is up. Asked last month if she saw Kramp-Karrenbauer as a possible successor, Merkel dodged the question, replying: "We have our hands full managing the business of the day." —Reuters



BEIT SAWA, Syria: Residents flee their homes with their belongings in this town in Syria's besieged Eastern Ghouta region yesterday following air strikes.—AFP

Regime retakes quarter of Syria rebel enclave as civilians flee

DAMASCUS: Syria's regime seized control of over a quarter of rebel-held Eastern Ghouta on the edge of Damascus after two weeks of devastating bombardment, sending hundreds of civilians into flight, a monitor said yesterday. As the United States, Britain and France stepped up pressure on Damascus and Moscow to end the bloodshed, the United Nations said it plans to deliver much-needed humanitarian aid to Eastern Ghouta's besieged residents.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said regime forces had advanced to within three kilometres of Douma, the enclave's main town, after retaking "more than 25 percent" of Eastern Ghouta, in operations mostly through farmlands. The advance into the last major opposition enclave near the capital, on the back of 15 days of air strikes, artillery fire and rocket attacks that are reported to have killed more than 640 civilians, sent hundreds into flight to western parts of the enclave.

Regime backer Russia last week announced daily five-hour "humanitarian pauses" in the enclave. But while the air campaign has eased, fighting has intensified on the ground. With the support of Russian warplanes, the Syrian military has advanced on several fronts, retaking control of farms and villages, a military source told state media. The source said government forces seized a number of districts including Al-Nashabiyeh and Otaya, and had "eradicated terrorist groups" on the eastern outskirts of Damascus.

They have reached the center of the enclave, to the edge of Beit Sawa, according to the Observatory, a Britain-based war monitor. After advances in recent days that saw the regime seize control of 10 percent of Eastern Ghouta, rebel fighters clashed with regime forces yesterday in the eastern part of the enclave, the Observatory said. Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Observatory, said at least 12 regime fighters had been killed in two areas, Al-Rihan and Shifoniya, in overnight clashes with the Jaish al-Islam rebel group.

Jaish al-Islam shares control of rebel-held parts of Eastern Ghouta with Faylaq al-Rahman and Ahrar al-Sham. Hamza Bayraqdar, a spokesman for Jaish al-Islam,

said on Twitter that the group's forces had launched "surprise attacks" against regime positions. The Observatory, which relies on a network of sources on the ground, said rebels had retaken some parts of Shifoniya.

Hundreds flee

An AFP correspondent inside Eastern Ghouta saw hundreds of civilians yesterday fleeing from the town of Beit Sawa in the southeast of the enclave. The Observatory said some 2,000 civilians had fled regime shelling and clashes in eastern areas to western parts of the enclave. "Everyone is on the road. There's destruction everywhere," said 35-year-old Abu Khalil, carrying a little girl in his arms wounded on the cheek. On Saturday, 18 civilians, including three children, were killed in regime bombardment of Eastern Ghouta, according to the Observatory. At least 76 pro-regime fighters and 43 rebels from Jaish al-Islam have also been killed in clashes since Feb 25, it says.

Encircled by regime-controlled territory and unable or unwilling to flee, Eastern Ghouta's 400,000 residents have in recent weeks suffered one of the most ferocious assaults of Syria's civil war. Under siege since 2013, they had already been facing severe shortages of food and medicine. The region's over-burdened medical workers have been struggling to cope with the rising number of wounded.

While falling short of a 30-day ceasefire demanded by the United Nations, Russia's announcement of daily humanitarian pauses in fighting had raised hopes of some aid deliveries and evacuations. A convoy of "46 truckloads of health and nutrition supplies, along with food for 27,500 people in need" would finally enter the battered enclave today, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. The OCHA said further deliveries would follow and that it had "approval" to help 70,000 needy residents.

Moscow has offered safe passage to non-combatants wishing to leave Eastern Ghouta during the pause, but no Syrian civilians have left the enclave since the first break in fighting took effect on Tuesday, the Observatory says. Damascus and Moscow have accused rebels of preventing civilians from leaving.

On the international front, US President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May said Russia and Syria were responsible for the "heartbreaking human suffering" in Eastern Ghouta. The two leaders, during a phone call, "agreed it was a humanitarian catastrophe, and that the overwhelming responsibility for the heart-breaking human suffering lay with the Syrian regime and Russia, as the regime's main backer", the premier's office said. — AFP

Pakistan elects first female...

Continued from Page 1

Support from allies is likely to give it a dominating majority. The Pakistan People's Party (PPP) won 12 and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party of former cricket star Imran Khan came third with six.

"Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz has secured a clear majority in the Senate polls," the party announced late Saturday on its official Twitter account. The victory came despite legal setbacks. Last July the Supreme Court toppled PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif from the

premiership over corruption allegations. Ahead of the Senate vote, the court also barred Sharif from leading his party, forcing all PML-N candidates officially to stand as independents because they had been selected by the axed chief.

Following the win, Sharif called on his supporters to keep fighting at the ballot box in the face of pressure from the courts. "First they removed my name and then they removed the Muslim League's name but members of parliament and provincial assemblies rejected that decision," he told thousands of supporters at a rally in the eastern city of Gujarat yesterday. Despite the court rulings, the PML-N has won a string of by-elections following the ousting of Sharif. The Sharif clan and their supporters have repeatedly denied corruption, suggesting Nawaz is the victim of a conspiracy driven by Pakistan's powerful military establishment. — AFP

Assembly set to debate report...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday he will file to grill State Minister for National Assembly Affairs Adel Al-Khorafi today. Adasani provided no

details on the reasons of the grilling but added that everything will be explained in the grilling. Last month, Adasani threatened to grill new minister Khorafi for allegedly providing lawmakers with false information in response to a question.

Separately, the court of cassation yesterday deferred the National Assembly storming case until March 11. The court last week freed all jailed opposition activists and MPs who were handed harsh sentences for storming the Assembly building in late 2011.

Saudi Arabia hosts first marathon...

Continued from Page 1

Organizers said they were flooded with 30,000 registrations for over a little more than 1,300 spots in the competition, highlighting the growing gaming community in the kingdom.

Saudi teenagers were among the winners, taking home cash prizes of up to 10,000 riyals (\$2,667), organizers said. "eSports is open to everyone, the ultimate equalizer, male or female, big or small, anyone can step up to the challenge, anyone can win," said Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Sultan Al-Saud, president of the Saudi Arabian Federation for Electronic and Intellectual Sport. "We have great untapped talent in Saudi... This (is) just the beginning."

The tournament is part of a modernization drive by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is seeking to balance unpopular subsidy cuts in an era of low oil prices with more entertainment and sporting options. Sports simulation video games are hugely popular in a country of more than 30 million people, the majority of whom are under 25. eSports are to be included as a medal sport for the first time at the 2022 Asian Games in Hangzhou and proponents are pushing for Olympic status.

Long known for its ultraconservative mores, the kingdom has embarked on a wide-ranging program of social reforms that includes allowing women to drive from June. The kingdom's General Entertainment Authority last month said it will stage more than 5,000 festivals and concerts in 2018, double the number of last year, and pump \$64 billion in the sector over the coming decade. But some Saudis have complained on social media of what they called wasteful spending as the kingdom reels from slumping oil revenues, high inflation and unemployment. — AFP



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Sports

'New Bolt' Coleman sprints to 60m glory, Dibaba bags double

Maslak wins gold after top two disqualified

BIRMINGHAM: Christian Coleman confirmed his status as the most exciting young sprinter in the post-USain Bolt era when he stormed to 60m glory on Saturday as Ethiopian track legend Genzebe Dibaba bagged a golden world indoor brace.

Coleman arrived in Birmingham, England, fresh from having set a new world indoor record of 6.37sec for the sprint and the 21-year-old American made no mistake when taking his first steps in the global arena in the absence of the now-retired Bolt.

Starting in lane four, Coleman enjoyed an electrifying start and powered through the line in a championship record of 6.37sec ahead of Su Bingtian of China, who lowered the Asian record to 6.42sec when he took silver. Coleman's US teammate Ronnie Baker claimed bronze.

"I have a good chance to lead the sport in the post-Bolt era but like I've told so many others, loads of guys have the talent," said Coleman. "I have to make sure I keep working to stay on top and when I get the opportunity to take gold medals you take them."

Serial world record holder Dibaba once again demonstrated her imperious form in winning her second indoor 1500m title, just two days after winning her third consecutive 3000m gold. Dibaba looked completely unruffled as she led the same two athletes on to the podium as she had in the 3000m, this time Briton Laura Muir taking silver ahead of Ethiopian-born Dutchwoman Sifan Hassan.

In an outstanding night for US athletes, there were also championship records set by Coleman's teammates Sandi Morris and Kendra Harrison. A thrilling

competition in the women's pole vault saw Morris clear 4.95m for victory ahead of Anzhelika Sidorova, the Russian competing as a neutral athlete (4.90m).

Greece's Katerina Stefanidi, the reigning world, European and Olympic champion, took bronze (4.80) in what was a totally gripping event as Morris finally converted her world outdoor and indoor silvers into gold. There was more of the same from 100m hurdles world record holder Harrison, who scorched home in 7.70sec in the shortened form, the third fastest time ever run.

US MEDAL RUN

US teammate Christina Manning took silver as Courtney Okolo also led a US 1-2 with Shakima Wimbley in the women's 400m while there was more American gold in the triple jump as multiple world and Olympic medallist Will Claye soared out to 17.43m for his

second world indoor title, having previously won in Istanbul in 2012.

Poland's Adam Kszczot also finally won a global title after two world outdoor silvers in the 800m, adding gold to the silver and bronze he has previously won indoors with a dominant display in the four-lap race. The Pole looked untroubled as he clocked a winning time of 47.47sec, with American Drew Windle taking silver and Saul Ordonez of Spain bronze.

Controversy again struck the 400m as more disqualifications for lane infringements marred the race. Czech Pavel Maslak eventually became the first athlete to win three consecutive world indoor titles when he was bumped up into first spot from third after Spain's Oscar Husillos, who was initially accredited with the

"I have to make sure I keep working to stay on top"



BIRMINGHAM: US athlete Christian Coleman (L) wins ahead of China's Su Bingtian (R) during the men's 60m final at the 2018 IAAF World Indoor Athletics Championships at the Arena in Birmingham on Saturday. — AFP

win in a championship record time of 44.92sec, and Dominican Luguélin Santos were both disqualified.

"The guys were stronger than me and I do not know what went wrong for them," said Maslak. "They would have beaten me anyway so even if it is gold, it will have a bronze flavour for me."

France's Kevin Mayer added indoor heptathlon hon-

ours to his outdoor decathlon title when he edged Canada's Damian Warner by just five points at the end of two days of competition. After a disastrous showing in his favoured pole vault, Mayer left Warner with an opportunity: to beat him by three seconds in the final event, the 1,000m, but the Frenchman bundled over the line with half a second to spare for the win. — AFP

Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah shooting tourney concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah shooting tournament concluded on Saturday in the presence of the representative of the patron Sheikh Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi, Assistant Secretary of Kuwait Shooting Sports Club Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba. The tournament continued for three days during which shooters competed in the Olympic 10m air pistol and rifle, 50m pistol and rifle and archery.

Eng Mohammad Al-Ghurba delivered the club's speech and said the tournament attracted a large number of shooters from the club and National Guard, and had good and promising results.

He said the shooting club is keen on organizing this annual tournament in appreciation of Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah's contributions to the development of the shooting sport since its beginning.

Meanwhile, President of Arab and Kuwait Shooting Federations President Duaij Al-Otaibi said, we are pleased to organize the Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, as he is among the first supporters to the establishment of the sport of shooting in our country Kuwait.

He said Kuwait Shooting has become due to the support it receives from HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the government, a prominent sport and made many international and Olympic achievements, and



developed its technical abilities and now have the best referees and technical staff in the world. Eng Al-Otaibi said KSSC is keen on organizing this annual tournament in recognition of Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah's contribution to the development of the shooting sport in Kuwait.

Results of the tournament were as follows:
10 m Air Rifle men: Abdullah Al-Harby, Mohammad Adel, Sultan Al-Osaimi
10 m Air Rifle women: Zahraa Al-Saffar, Mariam Erzuqi, Heba Erzuqi
10 m Air Pistol men: Ali Al-Mutairi, Saad Al-Ajmi, Hamad Al-

Namshan.
10 m Air Pistol women: Huthama Al-Baghly, Amira Al-Murdhi, Israa Bahman
50 m Rifle men: Khalid Al-Majid, Majid Al-Zafri, Abdallah Al-Harby
50 m Pistol Men: Hamad Al-Namshan, Ali Al-Mutairi, Saad Al-Ajmi
Olympic archery men: Abdallah Al-Harby, Abdallah Taha Faisal Al-Rashidi
Compound Archery men: Salem Al-Saeed, Abdallah Yacoub, Mislim Ibrahim.

Burgan Bank wishes 'Tareq Al-Qallaf' success in Fencing Classic

KUWAIT: As one of the highest contributors to society and a dedicated sponsor to one of Kuwait's most celebrated athletes, Tareq Al-Qallaf, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes to the globally acclaimed player for the upcoming contest taking place in Columbus, Ohio, USA between March 2 - March 4, 2018. Competing in several competitions this year, Al Qallaf is now poised to represent Kuwait at the Arnold Fencing Classic, a part of the Arnold Sports Festival which is the largest multi-sport festival in the world.

Sponsoring for four consecutive years, Burgan Bank remains committed to the growth and success of the home grown Fencing titleholder as he prepares to compete in the fifteenth Arnold Fencing Classic followed by the Pennsylvania Championship at the World Club in May, the US Open in September and New Jersey Copa in October.

Held for 3 days, the prestigious Arnold Schwarzenegger Sports Festival will be featuring over 50 sports and events with an expected 180,000 spectators, and 19,000 athletes. Considered a unique event with medals unlike other contests in the world of fencing, 2018 brings the return of Wheelchair fencing to the Arnold Fencing Classic.

Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects



Tareq Al-Qallaf

affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.

Coe, Cram salute the great Bannister who paved their way

BIRMINGHAM: Roger Bannister's death at the age of 88 prompted a host of emotional tributes to athletics' great barrier breaker yesterday with the sport's senior figure, Sebastian Coe, saluting him as the "man who made the impossible possible".

Coe and Steve Cram, who followed in the spike tracks of the sport's first sub-four minute miler to also become world beaters, emphasised that, while Bannister had been their running hero, he meant so much more to the life of his home nation.

To Coe, another British world record holder at the mile, Bannister's landmark achievement in 1954 "transcended sport beyond athletics". Cram, who broke the mile world record in 1985, told Reuters in Birmingham: "Bannister really started off that great British tradition of great middle distance runners which people like Seb (Coe), Steve (Ovett) and myself were able to continue.

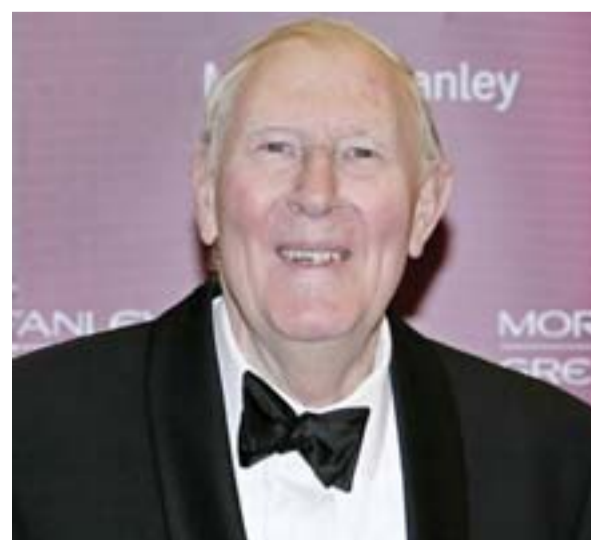
"But beyond that, he was part of that pioneering spirit which seemed to exist in the 1950s - with a new Queen on the throne, Everest being conquered, the new TV age and the idea that you could do anything you put your mind to in barrier-breaking.

"The four-minute mile stood out. Someone was going to break that barrier and it turned out to be him. What a great period that must have been to be alive." To Cram and Coe, the man who now runs the sport as the IAAF president, Bannister's three minutes 59.4 seconds run at Iffley Road, Oxford, was the almost mythical tale which underpinned their own youthful athletics days. "The first book I read was (Bannister's book) The Four-Minute Mile, my coach (Jimmy Hedley) used to get me to sit and watch that grainy film in the days before YouTube," said Cram. "I got to meet him after I got selected to go to the Commonwealth Games when I was 17 and he was a big part of my early athletics career development, as the biggest hero in our sport, especially for a 1500 metres runner like me.

"I was completely awe-struck when I met him but he was a gentleman, an engaging personality who put you at your ease."

IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE

Cram felt the next generation of athletes were just as



Roger Bannister

inspired by Bannister's legacy. Mo Farah, the greatest British distance runner of all and one of the finest in the sport's annals, tweeted on Sunday: "I'm so sorry to hear the sad news about Roger Bannister.

"I met him several times throughout my career and he was always humble, supportive and encouraging. He was an inspiration to so many." At the world indoor championships in Birmingham, the news cast a sad shadow over the final day of events on Sunday as the IAAF prepared a special tribute to Bannister's life and times to be screened to the crowd in Arena Birmingham.

Coe, who had only just learned the news before the launch of a new IAAF Heritage initiative designed to showcase the sport's former greats like Bannister, explained: "This is a day of intense sadness both for our nation and for all of us in athletics."

Coe told his audience: "On May 6, 1954, Roger made the impossible possible. Just one year after the coronation of the young Queen Elizabeth II and the conquering of Everest, he ran the first sub four-minute mile with the help of Christopher Chataway and Chris Brasher.

"The world's best runners, such as Paavo Nurmi, Jack Lovelock, Arne Andersson, Gunder Hagg and Bannister's personal hero Sydney Wooderson had been seriously attempting the four minute mile for a quarter of a century.

"It was as much a psychological as it was a physical barrier and Bannister's success allowed mankind to enter a new world filled with possibilities. — Reuters

Sports

South Africa's Markram fights but Australia close to victory

De Kock and Morkel survived nine overs in deteriorating light

DURBAN: Aiden Markram led a stirring South African fightback but could not prevent Australia from closing in on victory on the fourth day of the first Test at Kingsmead yesterday. Opening batsman Markram made 143 but South Africa were hanging on at 293 for nine, still 124 runs short of a target of 417, when bad light stopped play. South Africa were in desperate trouble at 49 for four but Markram shared stands of 87 with Theunis de Bruyn (36) and 147



Markram's third Test century

with Quinton de Kock (81 not out) which gave South Africa hope that they could pull off a miracle victory. His dismissal, though, opened the door for Australia to rip through the tail. Mitchell Starc took three wickets in five balls to have South Africa nine down. That caused the umpires to tell Australian captain Steve Smith that play could only continue if he used slow bowlers. De Kock and Morkel survived nine overs in ever-deteriorating light against Smith and Nathan Lyon before the umpires took the players off five minutes before the scheduled close. That South Africa would even entertain faint hopes of victory seemed impossible when their four most senior batsmen were dismissed without reaching double figures.

But Markram, in only his seventh Test, remained calm amid the carnage. The recovery started with a determined partnership for the fifth wicket with De Bruyn, who made a stylish 36 before he was caught behind off Josh Hazlewood.



DURBAN: Australia bowler Josh Hazlewood (L) celebrates taking the wicket of South Africa batsman Hashim Amla (R) during the fourth day of the first Test cricket match between South Africa and Australia at The Kingsmead Stadium in Durban yesterday. — AFP

It was the only wicket to fall between lunch and tea. Markram was joined by De Kock, whose form leading into the Test had been dismal. But the left-handed wicketkeeper looked in good touch from the start and took the fight to the Australians.

It was Markram's third Test century but easily his important innings. He made hundreds against Bangladesh and Zimbabwe, two of cricket's lesser powers, earlier in the sea-

son. He showed good composure, a sound technique and some elegant off side drives in a 218-ball innings which included 19 boundaries. The damage was done before lunch when Dean Elgar, Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers and captain Faf du Plessis all fell cheaply.

Markram and Elgar put on 29 for the first wicket before Elgar edged a sharply lifting delivery from Starc to wicketkeeper Tim Paine to be out for nine. Amla avoided a pair but

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard at stumps on the fourth day of 1st test between South Africa and Australia yesterday at Durban, South Africa.

Australia 1st innings: 351
South Africa 1st innings: 162
Australia 2nd innings: 227

South Africa 2nd innings	
A Markram c Paine b M Marsh	143
D Elgar c Paine b M Starc	9
H Amla lbw Hazlewood	8
AB de Villiers Run Out Warner	0
Faf du Plessis b Pat Cummins	4
Theunis de Bruyn c Paine b Hazlewood	36
de Kock Not Out	81
V Philander c Paine b Starc	6
K Maharaj b Starc	0
K Rabada b Starc	0
M Morkel Not Out	0
Extras 2b 3lb 1nb Open Ow	6
Total (89.0 overs)	293-9

Fall of Wickets: 1-29 Elgar, 2-39 Amla, 3-39 de Villiers, 4-49 du Plessis, 5-136 de Bruyn, 6-283 Markram, 7-290 Philander, 8-290 Maharaj, 9-290 Rabada.

Bowling: M Starc 16-1-74-4-4.62 (1nb); J Hazlewood 14-1-57-2-4.07; N Lyon 32-7-86-0-2.69; P Cummins 15-3-47-1-3.13; M Marsh 7-2-21-1-3.00; S Smith 5-3-3-0-0.60.

only made eight before he was leg before wicket to Hazlewood.

South Africa then suffered a hammer blow when De Villiers, their top scorer in the first innings, was run out for nought. Markram turned a ball from off-spinner Nathan Lyon behind square leg and did not respond when De Villiers called him through for a run. De Villiers had to turn and tried to go back but could not beat David Warner's throw to Lyon. Pat Cummins struck with his third ball of the innings when he beat Du Plessis for pace and flattened his off stump. — AFP

India target T20 success in Sri Lanka tri-series

COLOMBO: India's rising talent will be put to the test in this week's tri-nation Twenty20 series in Sri Lanka in the absence of some established stars. Rohit Sharma-led India enter the tournament against Sri Lanka and Bangladesh as favourites, but must cope without big-hitters Virat Kohli and Mahendra Singh Dhoni.

Selectors opted to rest the star pair for the short-format series and instead experiment with fresh faces. Wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant, who has just two T20 international appearances, and rookie paceman Mohammed Siraj, 23, are being given the opportunity to gain international experience.

Pant, 20, recently smashed the second-fastest T20 century off 32 balls for Delhi against Himachal Pradesh—just two balls short of Chris Gayle's all-time quickest 100 off 30 balls in the 2013 Indian Premier League (IPL). And 26-year-old left-arm seamer Jaydev Unadkat, who has already taken seven wickets in six T20 international appearances, made headlines when he was bought for \$1.8 million by the Rajasthan Royals in January—the highest price paid for an Indian player.

India enjoyed one-day international and T20 series wins over South Africa earlier this month, but face a resurgent Sri Lanka in their opener tomorrow. "India has decided to rest their star players after the arduous South Africa tour and this gives an opportunity to some young players to show their mettle... and that they are ready for international cricket," former India captain Sunil Gavaskar wrote in the Times of India.

'WE CAN COMPETE'

Sri Lanka will face a home crowd buoyed by their recent tour of Bangladesh where they thrashed the hosts in all three formats. The sweep ended a Sri Lanka slump which saw them win just 14 of 57 matches in 2017.

The upswing has been credited to new coach Chandika Hathurusingha, who was appointed in December. Hathurusingha coached Bangladesh through their most successful period in his three years in charge before returning home to lead a beleaguered Sri Lanka to victory against his old charges. "We can definitely go and compete with bigger teams, but in cricket you can't guarantee results," Hathurusingha told espnricinfo.com. "What we can aspire to... is to try and get better every time we train, every time we play, and try to do our best," the 49-year-old former allrounder said. Dinesh Chandimal will lead Sri Lanka in the absence of Angelo Mathews who is recovering from a hamstring injury sustained in Bangladesh. The Tigers will be looking to interim coach and former West Indies bowling great Courtney Walsh for some inspiration after dropping to 10th in the T20 rankings.

"If we can get consistent, we will be happy. It is going to be the biggest challenge and it is something that I will be stressing on a lot," said 55-year-old Walsh. The T20 tri-series, timed to commemorate Sri Lanka's 70 years since independence, begins tomorrow and runs until March 18 in Colombo. — AFP

Rockets beat Boston for 15th straight win

LOS ANGELES: Trevor Ariza nailed the game-tying 3-pointer and later added a go-ahead layup as the Rockets rallied for a 123-120 victory over the visiting Boston Celtics on Saturday, Houston's 15th consecutive win. Shredded by the Celtics' sublime offensive execution throughout, the Rockets arrived defensively at an opportune time. P.J. Tucker set up the Ariza 3-pointer with a steal off Terry Rozier before Ariza pilfered Kyrie Irving and dashed for a layup with 1:16 left for a 117-115 lead. Eric Gordon scored 29 points off the Houston bench, making 7 of 11 from behind the 3-point arc. James Harden added 26 points, seven rebounds and 10 assists while Ariza scored 21 points. Marcus Morris had 21 points for Boston, which saw Marcus Smart just miss on a desperation 3-point attempt at the buzzer.

NUGGETS 126, CAVS 117

Paul Millsap hit a lead-saving 3-pointer with 2:26 remaining, sending Denver to a victory over host Cleveland. Gary Harris poured in a game-high 32 points and Will Barton added 23 as the Nuggets, coming off a 108-102 win at Memphis the night before,

won for the sixth time in the past eight games. LeBron James recorded a 25-point, 10-rebound, 15-assist triple-double for the Cavaliers, who have lost four of their past six games.

LAKERS 116, SPURS 112

Lonzo Ball canned three consecutive 3-pointers in the final three minutes, and Julius Randle scored 25 points to lead Los Angeles over host San Antonio. Isaiah Thomas added 21 points for the Lakers off the bench while Ball and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 18 each. Caldwell-Pope, with 13 rebounds, and Ball, with 11 assists recorded double-doubles. Pau Gasol led the Spurs with 19 points and 10 rebounds. Rudy Gay scored 15 points and Patty Mills added 14 for the Spurs, who have lost two games in a row and five of the past six.

HEAT 105, PISTONS 96

Josh Richardson and Kelly Olynyk scored 17 points each as host Miami defeated Detroit. The Heat are in eighth place in the Eastern Conference standings, which represents the final playoff position in the East. The Pistons are in ninth place, four games behind Miami. Detroit's Blake Griffin scored a game-high 31 points and added a team-best six assists, but it wasn't enough as the Pistons lost their eighth consecutive road game.

TRAIL BLAZERS 108, THUNDER 100

CJ McCollum led the way as Portland earned its sixth straight victory, downing visiting Oklahoma City.



Sports information course opened

KUWAIT: The sports information course was opened under the patronage of Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, Director General of Public Sports Authority and presence of Director of Abdallah Al-Salem Center Mahmoud Abul, his deputy Ahmad Al-Zafiri and more than 50 students led by PAS Public Relations Director Khalid Al-Subaie and President of Basketball Federation Dhari Al-Barjas.

Mahmoud Abul on his part lauded the role of Dr Humoud Fulaiteh and his interest in sports media and its importance at the current time, and thanked the President of the Asian Sports Journalism Association Sattam Al-Sahli for his cooperation. Lecturer Abdelkareem Al-Shamali spoke about the media coordinator and his importance in associations and clubs. He gave a detailed explanation on the role of the coordinator. He said that the role of the media coordinator in Kuwait is concentrated on football only, though it should cover all sports. He then thanked PAS and Abdallah Al-Salem center for organizing this course, and hoped that it achieves its goals, adding that the media needs achievements so that it can focus on them.

ABK sponsors 5th International Men's Volleyball Tournament

KUWAIT: In line with its 2018 CSR strategy to promote healthy living initiatives throughout the year, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) sponsored the 5th International Men's Volleyball Tournament Independence Cup 2018

under the patronage of the Greek Embassy. The event took place at the BSK Campus on Friday 16th February 2018. The inter-embassy tournament organized by the British Academy of Sport aimed to engage various embassies and nations, and develop the sport of volleyball in Kuwait.

As a gold sponsor of the event, the Bank received a trophy in recognition of its contribution in the community, which was collected by Ali Al Baghli, Senior Corporate Communications Manager at ABK.

ABK's decision to participate in this event is in line with its 2018 CSR strategy to promote a healthier lifestyle within the community.



Sports

Italian international defender Astori dies of heart attack at 31

Fiorentina's game was called off

ROME: Italy international defender Davide Astori died in his hotel room during the night of Saturday, his club Fiorentina said yesterday. "Fiorentina are profoundly shocked to have to announce the death of captain Davide Astori after a sudden illness," the Serie A club said on Twitter. The 31-year-old, who leaves behind a two-year-old daughter, was in Udine to prepare for Sunday's match against Udinese.

Astori died of "natural causes" after a "cardiac circulatory collapse"—a type of heart attack—Antonio de Nicola, a Udine magistrate was quoted in Italian media as saying. The magistrate added that it was "strange that such a thing happened without any warning symptoms in a profession which is so closely monitored".

Astori's body was taken to a hospital in Udine for an autopsy. Fiorentina's game was called off in the morning. The early kick off between Genoa and Cagliari, one of Astori's former clubs, was abandoned when players learned the news while warming up on the pitch.

The Italian league then postponed the other five Serie A matches scheduled for Sunday, including the Milan derby. Astori began his career at AC Milan, also playing for Cagliari and Roma before joining

Fiorentina in 2015. He played 14 times for Italy. Former team-mates, coaches and teams were amongst those taking to social media to express their grief.

Gianluigi Buffon, the Juventus captain, called Astori "a great man". "Farewell dear Asto", wrote Buffon in a post on Instagram accompanied by a photo of the two players exchanging pennants before a game between their clubs.



Gianluigi Buffon, called Astori "a great man"

TRAGIC DEATH

Buffon said he did not usually make a habit of expressing his feelings about others. "I want to make an exception to my rule because you have a young wife and others close to you who are suffering, but mostly because your little girl deserves to know that her dad was a good man... a great man," Buffon wrote.

Radja Nainggolan, a Belgian international who played with Astori at two clubs, posted a photo of the two of them joyously celebrating a goal at Cagliari. "A great player, but an even bigger man, so many battles fought together in Cagliari before coming to Rome. I cannot believe it," he wrote.

Astori's formative club Milan joined in. "A man who



UDINE: File photo taken on September 18, 2016 Fiorentina's defender Davide Astori falls as he plays the ball during the Italian Serie A football match Fiorentina vs AS Roma, at Florence's "Artemio Franchi" communal stadium. — AFP

loved football and who grew up with us. AC Milan is shocked by the tragic death of Davide Astori," the club's official account tweeted in English.

Matteo Renzi, a former mayor of Florence and now

leader of the Democrat Party in Sunday's Italian election, tweeted: "This seems to me impossible. I don't believe it and I cry with the family and everyone at Fiorentina. Ciao capitano." — AFP

Southgate's England seek seclusion at World Cup

REPINO: England's World Cup squad will seclude themselves in a modest hotel in the woods near Saint Petersburg, opting for the calm of a history-steeped village rather than a city closer to their group matches.

The four-star ForRestMix Club Sport and Relax—an affordable option for Russians looking to get away from it all—offers little entertainment but plenty of sleep. Nervous fans back home might frown at the choice since England are playing nowhere near Saint Petersburg, Russia's so-called northern capital. Their three group stage matches will take Harry Kane and his teammates from the Volga River to the edge of Poland, making a total of 6,400 kilometres (4,000 miles) of back and forth travel.

England will play in Volgograd against Tunisia on June 18, in Nizhny Novgorod against Panama on June 24, and in Kaliningrad against Belgium on June 30. But coach Gareth Southgate has decided that peace and quiet on the Gulf of Finland was what his men needed most.

"We want that environment where the players are relaxed," he said in October as the FA settled its choice on the outskirts of President Vladimir Putin's home town. Located 27 kilometres (17 miles) northwest of Saint Petersburg, the village England will be calling home is named after Ilya Repin, a realist painter who settled there at the turn of the 20th century.

Repin became famous for its wooden country houses favoured by Russian artists, intellectuals and nobles, before being transformed into a Soviet rest home for workers and children. These traces of history are still visible today: by the understated four-floor hotel stand quaint tsarist-era cottages and an imposing concrete sanatorium built by the communists.

The feel of Repino is decidedly serene and opportuni-



SAINT PETERSBURG: File photo taken on December 04, 2017 shows the four-star ForRestMix club hotel which was chosen to be England's national football team's base for the 2018 FIFA World Cup, in the village of Repino on the Baltic coast near Saint Petersburg. — AFP

ties for players to go out on the town—repeating the fabled exploits of Paul Gascoigne—will be rare. "Our hotel is for lovers of silence," said manager Tatyana Zubochenko. It is a place to focus the minds of the English, whose 1966 World Cup win on home soil has never been repeated and who enter the June 14-July 15 tournament as long shots despite being the so-called "home" of the beautiful game.

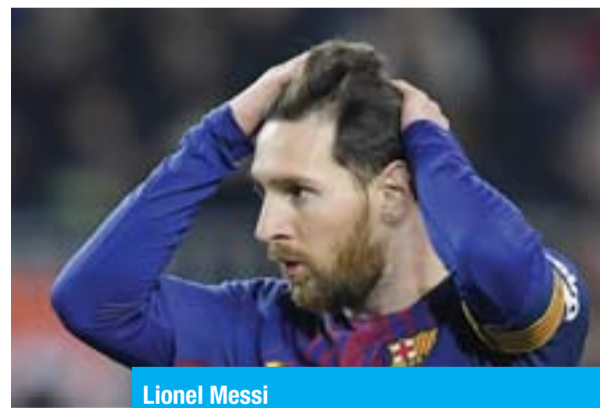
RUSSIAN JUDOKAS STAYED

Built in 2011, the hotel has 105 rooms with pleasant views of the surrounding forest and traditional Russian rugs overlaying the carpet of the more upscale suites. A no-frills "Standard" room with two beige armchairs and a TV screen the size of a laptop computer is offered for \$145 (115 euros), while a "Family" room with a balcony and a couch runs up to \$240. Normally able to accommodate

200 people, it has four restaurants, a "Fito Bar" offering fruit and herbal tea, a 25-metre pool and a fairly modern gym. "We already have experience accommodating athletes," manager Zubochenko said. "We also hosted the (Russian) Olympic judo team" as they prepared for the 2016 Rio Games.

The training ground is seven kilometres away in Zelenogorsk, which can be reached by bus in about 15 minutes. "The location is very convenient," said Zubochenko. "The training ground is nearby, the city centre is not far and we are in the woods." But travel might frazzle the Three Lions' nerves.

Simply getting to and from Saint Petersburg's Pulkovo Airport is a hassle, requiring the team to cross the congested city of four million people, where traffic jams are a constant fixture. — AFP



Lionel Messi

Messi hits 600th career goal

BARCELONA: Barcelona forward Lionel Messi struck a remarkable 600th professional goal for club and country yesterday by scoring the opener in his side's Liga clash at home to nearest challengers Atletico Madrid.

The Argentine slammed a free kick right into the near top corner in the 26th minute to break the deadlock in the top-of-the-table clash and put league leaders Barca 1-0 up at halftime, scoring from a set piece for the third game running.

Messi is the leading scorer in La Liga this season with 24 goals and is also the all-time top marksman in Spain's top flight. He is also the top scorer in the history of Barcelona and Argentina. The Argentine, 30, has scored 539 goals for Barca in all competitions and 61 for his country. — Reuters

Farah wins inaugural Big Half

LONDON: Britain's top long distance runner Mo Farah won the inaugural Big Half 13.1-mile half-marathon yesterday in his build-up to next month's London Marathon. Farah won a sprint to the finish line in the London district of Greenwich, ahead of Kenyan Daniel Wanjiru, winner of last year's London marathon, with Scot Callum Hawkins in third.

The 34-year-old Farah has been training in Ethiopia and arrived in London on Thursday. He managed to adjust to a huge drop in temperature for Sunday's race, his first for six months.

"It wasn't too bad, I was comfortable," Farah told BBC radio, but added with a laugh "I have to do double the distance (in six weeks' time)." Farah has turned to marathon racing after a glorious career on the track winning gold medals in both the 5,000 and 10,000 metres at the 2012 and 2016 Olympic Games.

He is targeting the marathon at the 2020 Olympic Games in Tokyo, training with Gary Lough, husband of former women's great long distance runner Paula Radcliffe. — Reuters



LONDON: Winner Britain's Mo Farah (C) and his wife Tania (L) pose with family members after the half marathon elite men's race during the inaugural The Big Half in London yesterday. — AFP

Illegal gambling shadow hangs over Russia ahead of WCup

MOSCOW: At least a billion dollars a year are believed to be pouring into offshore accounts of Russian shell companies linked to just one semi-legal but blossoming industry: online gambling.

This poses a new challenge for Russia as it prepares to host the World Cup in June and July—the country has already been plagued for decades by allegations of match-fixing in its domestic football.

No one expects illicit betting to play a role on the pitch when football's most celebrated competition kicks off in 100 days. But it represents another dark corner of Russia's economy that the authorities have struggled to police.

"The total turnover volume of the legal and offshore online bookmaking market is more than two billion dollars (1.6 billion euros) a year," Anton Rozhkovsky, the director of the government-mandated TsUPIS online betting payment system, told AFP. "We do not pretend to know if the actual figure is \$2.5 billion or \$4 billion," said Rozhkovsky. "Around 70 percent of that is illegal, offshore business."

Pent-up demand for organised gambling was unleashed with the collapse of the Soviet Union and led to glitzy casinos and seedy slot machine halls opening across Russia.

They skirted paying taxes but were not strictly illegal. The government tried to impose order by shutting them all down in 2009 and allowing bookies to open sport betting shops that instantly gravitated toward football. Improved internet access pushed most of these punters online and produced a legal vacuum filled by scores of anonymous websites with no licences but burgeoning business.

Russia's Bookmakers Rating gambling analysis centre pegged the entire industry's annual turnover at \$11.8 billion in May 2017, 65 percent of it made in illegal online bets. It also expected the market to triple in the next five years thanks to high-profile events such as the World Cup. "We expect colossal interest in the World Cup," Alena Sheyanova, spokeswoman for the legally registered bookmaker Leon, told AFP. "The legal online betting industry is developing at phenomenal rates." — AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Crystal Palace v Manchester United	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Celta de Vigo v Las Palmas	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
ASIAN CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
Nasaf Qarshi v AlSadd	16:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Persepolis v AlWasl	16:45
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
AlJazira v Tractor Sazi Tabriz	18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
AlGarrafa v Alahli	18:10
beIN SPORTS HD 1	

13 'New Bolt' Coleman sprints to 60m glory, Dibaba bags double



13 Coe, Cram salute the great Bannister who paved their way



15 Italian international defender Astori dies of heart attack at 31



MANCHESTER: Manchester City's Argentinian striker Sergio Aguero (C) takes a shot off-side during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Chelsea at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England yesterday. — AFP

City too good for cautious Chelsea

Chelsea's fourth defeat in five league games

MANCHESTER: Manchester City's relentless run towards the Premier League title continued as they opened up an 18-point lead by inflicting more damage on Chelsea's chances of a top-four finish with a 1-0 home win yesterday.

Bernardo Silva scored the only goal of the match 35 seconds into the second half at the Etihad Stadium when he prodded home at the back post from David Silva's low cross. Chelsea's fourth defeat in five league games left Antonio Conte's reigning English title-holders five points adrift of the Champions League places.

And the Italian's negative approach will come under scrutiny after he again opted to start without a recognised centre-forward by leaving Alvaro Morata and Olivier Giroud on the bench.

City now need a maximum of four wins from their last nine league games to seal the title and were well worthy of another victory despite not needing to hit some of the heights they have so far this season.

Just as in a 3-0 win at Arsenal on Thursday, Leroy Sane was the inspiration for much of City's best attacking play.

Sane created the hosts' first big chance 21 minutes in when he slalomed past three Chelsea defenders before feeding Bernardo Silva.

However, unlike his opening goal at Arsenal, Silva's shot dipped just too late and dropped onto the roof of the net. City were fortunate to escape moments later, though, when Oleksandr Zinchenko wiped out Victor Moses with a wild lunge that could easily have drawn a red rather than a yellow card from referee Michael Oliver.

Sane thought he had opened the scoring just before the half-hour mark when he caught Kevin De Bruyne's cross

flush, but Chelsea captain Cesar Azpilicueta bailed out his side with an excellent goal-line clearance.

The German winger sparked the danger once more moments later as his pass picked out Bernardo Silva via a dummy from David Silva, but the Portuguese blazed high and wide on his favoured left foot. So anonymous were Chelsea as an attacking threat that their own fans sarcastically cheered when a rare foray forward earned a corner just before the break.

However, Conte's contain and counter-attack game plan was undone within a minute of the second period when Sergio Aguero's reverse pass picked out David Silva and his namesake Bernardo knocked the ball into the ground

and over the helpless Thibaut Courtois for his seventh goal of the season.

Thereafter, City were quite content to keep possession as Chelsea still refused to abandon their cautious approach. Conte eventually introduced Giroud with 12 minutes remaining. By then it was nearly too late as Sane again escaped the clutches of Victor Moses but his low teasing cross just evaded Aguero in the middle.

Chelsea's club-record signing Morata had to wait until the final minute to get on, but even then it was top scorer Hazard who was sacrificed and the Belgian cut a frustrated figure as he trudged off in the pouring rain.

The visitors could have snatched an unlikely point in stoppage time only for Marcos Alonso's mishit strike from the edge of the box to dribble wide.

And a jubilant Pep Guardiola celebrated wildly at full-time safe in the knowledge it would now take a monumental collapse to miss out on delivering his first Premier League title. — AFP



City now need a maximum of four wins

Brighton add to Wenger's woes as Arsenal lose again

BRIGHTON: Arsene Wenger's problems deepened as Arsenal lost 2-1 away to Brighton in the Premier League yesterday—the Gunners' fourth successive loss in all competitions. The future of Arsenal manager Wenger has been the subject of fierce debate amid reports of players' meetings and of a weakening in boardroom support for the Frenchman. And Arsenal's eighth loss since the turn of the year and one that leaves them 13 points adrift of fourth place — will do nothing to strengthen the position of the veteran manager, who has reigned largely unchallenged since taking over at north London club Arsenal in 1996. First-half goals from Lewis Dunk and Glenn Murray secured the win that moved south coast club Brighton seven points clear of the bottom three, with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's strike immediately before the break the visitors' only reply. If ever Wenger needed his side to make a

solid, composed start to the game, this was it. Having been outplayed in back to back 3-0 defeats by Manchester City, first in the League Cup final and then, four days later, in the league fixture at the Emirates Stadium, the Gunners badly needed a lift ahead of Thursday's Europa League meeting with AC Milan.

Instead Arsenal betrayed the defensive frailties that have been a feature of their campaign and allowed Brighton to take control. It took Chris Hughton's side just seven minutes to open up the Arsenal backline, with Ezequiel Schelotto's powerful run down the left eventually leading to Pascal Gross's cross forcing a corner. Gross then delivered the set-piece toward the far post where Shane Duffy rose above Petr Cech's unconvincing attempt to punch and headed down for defensive partner Dunk to hook home. The goal triggered the first chants of "you're getting sacked in the morning" directed at Wenger from the home supporters but alarmingly for the manager, prompted little response from his side. Instead, Arsenal were repeatedly pushed back with Cech forced to save well from Gross before Dunk wastefully headed over the bar. Arsenal's lacklustre display was summed up by the way Alex Iwobi was easily dispossessed inside his own half by Anthony Knockaert who was denied only by another good save from

Cech. Worse was to come for Arsenal in the 26th minute when Laurent Koscielny gave the ball away before Shkodran Mustafi could not reach Gross's pinpoint cross, allowing Murray a free header that the striker directed past Cech for his 11th league goal of the season.

Aubameyang's reply, shortly before half-time, had the effect of quietening those fans who had taunted Wenger and injected a sense of nervousness into Brighton's play. The former Borussia Dortmund striker reacted well to turn home Granit Xhaka's drilled pass in the 43rd minute and Arsenal might have been level had Laurent Koscielny not headed against the post in first-half added-time.

The interval came at the right time for Brighton and while the Seagulls didn't develop the same momentum at the start of the second period, they again showed they could stretch the Arsenal defence.

The Gunners, though, stood firm and with Mesut Ozil becoming more prominent, stepped up their efforts to find an equaliser. Ozil had been quiet in the first half but a powerful run and shot brought a fine save from Mat Ryan before the German's threaded pass almost let in Aubameyang for his second goal. But Arsenal were unable to sustain the pressure needed to break Brighton down for a second time. — AFP



BRIGHTON: Arsenal's Armenian midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan crosses the ball during the English Premier League football match between Brighton and Hove Albion and Arsenal at the American Express Community Stadium in Brighton, southern England yesterday. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2018

18 Double victory for Lexus at Kuwait PR Awards**19** Dollar surrenders gains as Trump kicks off trade war**21** All-new Mazda CX-5, 'the next generation of Japanese tradition'

GENEVA: This file photo in Geneva shows a general view during the first press day of the 87th Geneva International Motor Show. Electric cars sales accelerate in the world, a trend that is expected to be reflected at 2018 Geneva Auto Show opening on March 8, 2018. — AFP

Profits and doubts in equal measure

Geneva Motor Show runs from March 8 to 18

GENEVA: This year's Geneva Motor Show comes at a curious time for an auto world enjoying record profits yet also gripped by doubt midway through the grand transition from diesel to electric and self-driving vehicles. "Geneva really ought to have been a lovely salon," says, with heavy irony, Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer, director of German-based Center Automotive Research of a Europe's first major car show of the year running from March 8 to 18.

"The luxury car makers continue to present their new models and worldwide sales set new records in 2017. "But behind the glamour and the finery are plenty of worry wrinkles."

Number one overriding concern is the increasing slide in diesel sales, a blow for European constructors who had essentially sought to bet the house on diesel as they strove for years to cut CO2 emissions with the support of public authorities. The emissions cheating scandal, which blew up at Volkswagen in 2015, has heaped discredit on a technology criticized for belching out nitrogen oxide and harmful particulates. Major cities including Paris have announced their intention to ban diesel progressively while a top German court last month opened the way to banning older diesel cars from the streets on air quality grounds.

Diesel's fall from grace has pushed constructors to turn their attention to production of more-in-demand models running either on petrol, dubbed "dinosaur juice", or else make the jump to electric or at least hybrid.

Are future friends electric?

The top global constructors have earmarked investments worth tens of billions of euros (dollars) over the past few years to accelerate their push to electric. Yet the commercial upshot of the strategy remains unclear. This year's Show, the 88th edition, will see the unveiling of several new electric models and concepts at Tuesday and Wednesday's media days, before opening its doors to the general public on Thursday.

Among new potential star turns are Jaguar's first all-electric model as it shows off the production version of its I-Pace, as well as Hyundai's Kona, advertised as the world's first fully electric subcompact SUV.

Constructors also have to contend with the fact that where fuel engines are concerned, their greater emissions of CO2 will render a tough challenge compliance with future European norms. They will have to cut CO2 emissions to an average 95 grams per kilometre across the board by 2021 from 130 grams in 2015, or else face

swingeing fines. Auto makers are bound to continue investing, furthermore, to ensure improved performance of their combustion engines as these still make up the bulk of sales. And yet they will prove progressively less of an earner as volumes inexorably fall off.

Traditional constructors also have a wary eye on sector newcomers, led by those in the electric vanguard such as Tesla, as well as giants from the high-tech such as Apple or Google and would-be Chinese rivals all seeking their slice of a "smart car" cake.

The future belongs to those whose vehicles enjoy ever more autonomy through increasing recourse to artificial intelligence and telecommunications. Such qualities are not the preserve of the traditional automobile constructor.

Square the circle

The last few weeks have seen a slew of carmakers post record profits-but the question is the degree to

which that will act as a springboard to paying for the switch to a new auto-tech world. Eric Kirstetter of the Roland Berger consultancy told AFP that, currently, some constructors are doing "very well," yet their "future is very complicated".

They must "reduce costs in such a way as to make savings allowing them to achieve their R&D plans," said Kirstetter, adding this will involve surmounting "a problem of squaring the financial circle."

That, he says, is "an equation extremely difficult to resolve in order to make the necessary investments to develop new generations of vehicles while continuing to invest massively in improving the combustion engine" in the shorter term. The task may be more readily surmountable for pioneers in the development of alternatives to diesel, including the Renault-Nissan alliance, with both leaders in the move towards electrification, while Toyota has the early jump on the hybrid market.

However the future of a metamorphosing industry ultimately pans out, the 700,000 Salon visitors expected to descend on Geneva's Palexpo in the coming days will be able to cast their eyes over some 900 vehicles. Today will see the car of the year unveiled from seven finalists for the accolade.

The contenders are the Alfa Romeo Stelvio, Audi A8, BMW series 5, Citroen C3 Aircross, Kia Stinger, Seat Ibiza and Volvo XC40. — AFP



Grand transition from diesel to electric and self-driving vehicles

Huawei unveils latest, innovative products, solutions at MWC 2018

KUWAIT: At the Mobile World Congress 2018 (MWC) in Barcelona, Spain, Huawei, the leading global ICT solutions provider, shared its vision for a collaborative ecosystem that could stimulate innovation and the development of 5G, All-Cloud network, video, and IoT technologies. Huawei engaged with industry leaders, fostered important discussions on the three key issues of better connections, better business growth, and better experience, and showcased leading products and scenario-specific solutions. With its carrier customers and partners, Huawei used MWC as a platform to demonstrate how it is helping to build a fully connected, intelligent world.

In preparation for MWC, Huawei successfully held the Global Digital Transformation Forum. The forum focused on 5G, new economic value, business-to-business (B2B) services, big video, and operation transformation, and discussed how to accelerate operators' digital transformation in the age of All Cloud, gathering more partners to forge a favorable digital ecosystem, and enhancing digital infrastructure.

Following the forum, Huawei unveiled a full range of end-to-end (E2E) 3GPP-compliant 5G product solutions. This world-first release covers the core network, the bearer net-

work, base station, and terminals. Huawei's 5G product solutions are entirely based on 3GPP standards, with full range, full scenario, and all-cloud being the defining characteristics. The featured products are also the only available options within the industry to provide 5G E2E capabilities.

This was not the only groundbreaking 5G announcement at MWC. Huawei and a host of other leading companies including China Mobile, Deutsche Telekom, Digital Domain, Fraunhofer FOKUS, GE, CEPRI of SGCC, Tencent, TIM and Volkswagen AG together announced the inauguration of the "5G Slicing Association". The association will address requirements from vertical industry and the potential application scenarios of 5G network slicing on the way to defining new business models. The initiative will study key technical issues, cooperate with slicing related standards development organizations (SDOs) and foster test beds and trials to verify 5G network slicing capabilities.

In addition, Huawei partnered with Zain Saudi Arabia, signing a Memorandum of Understanding promising to develop a new network strategy in the Kingdom. The aim of the MoU is to accelerate the realization of 5G networks and assist Zain in building the most advanced end-to-end networks in the region. The two companies will work together to accelerate the deployment of 4.5 to 5G networks, make further advances towards full cloudification, and produce additional strategy and planning in the field of ICT Synergy Cloud.

Huawei also used MWC as a platform to release a range of cutting-edge products and solutions. Day two saw the launch of AUTIN, an Operations Consulting and Software as a Service (SaaS) solution for Digitized Operations Services to help operators manage complex hybrid ICT environments. AUTIN delivers AUTomation and

Intelligence to modernize and reshape operations for the digital era. On the same day, Huawei released the OceanStor Dorado18000 V3, a high-end, intelligent all-flash array (AFA), which helps customers manage storage resources for mission-critical enterprise services.

Following on this, Huawei launched the Intent-Driven Network solution. This solution will bridge the gaps between the physical network and business goals by creating a digital twin of the network infrastructure. These technologies will enable software-defined networks (SDNs) to evolve into intent-driven networks,

and maximize business value. Ken Hu, Huawei Rotating CEO, said: "The intelligent world is drawing near, filled with potential and possibilities. Groundbreaking technologies like 5G and IoT promise to solve complex business challenges and improve the lives of the population. Yet challenges remain on our path before these dreams are realized. MWC 2018 was an excellent opportunity for us to meet with other leading companies and discuss how together we can overcome these obstacles, achieve sustainable business growth, and Build a Better Connected World."



Huawei booth at the Mobile World Congress 2018 (MWC) in Barcelona.

Double victory for Lexus at top Kuwait PR awards

Awards of excellence in call center and CSR activities

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons Lexus a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding was bestowed with two awards of excellence in Call Center and CSR activities during an event which was held recently by Kuwait Public Relations Association under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Leading public and private sector organizations were contenders for awards and Lexus Kuwait was chosen as the winner in the relevant category among the automotive sector of Kuwait.

The award ceremony was attended by HH the Amir's representative of Amiri Protocols - Amiri Diwan, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh and Chairman of Kuwait's Public Relations Association Jamal Al-Nasrullah along with dignitaries and other distinguished guests.

The award is a highly distinguished being presented under the patronage of HH the Amir. Lexus had previously won the award for best public relations and customer service. Winning this award for the third time is a great achievement as well as a testimony of Lexus commitment to 7 star customer service standards.

Abdullah Saleh Alshuwaie Group Manager, Customer Complaints and Legal Representative represented Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons at the event and received the award from Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh.

According to Mahmoud Abou Zahr Business Director Al-Sayer Lexus Division, "We highly appreciate this initiative of Kuwait Public Relations Association where Award winners are determined by a judging committee consisting of local and international experts among the participating companies at par with the highest international standards. I wish to extend my sincere appreciation to all central departments in the Group for their continuous support to Lexus operations."



KAMCO GCC Markets Monthly Report

Global market decline affects GCC indices, hits trading activity

KUWAIT: After starting the year on a positive note, GCC markets retreated during February-18 led by softness in global equity markets despite a largely positive earnings season. GCC Benchmark indices witnessed steep declines during the first two weeks of the month followed by minimal recovery during the third week but failed to keep the momentum and declined towards the end of the month.

Last month's best performer Qatar was the biggest loser during February-18 shedding almost 6.0 percent followed by slide in Dubai and Saudi Arabia benchmarks. Among the major decliners, stocks in the real estate, insurance and capital goods sectors witnessed the steepest decline, while banking and telecom stocks also faced pressure, resulting in around 2.2 percent decline in the MSCI GCC Index. Real estate stocks, especially in Dubai with a YTD-18 decline of 7.3 percent, have been battered recently due to falling property prices coupled with oversupply concerns.

The start of the month witnessed one of the biggest single day declines in major global indices, especially in the US, led by a number of factors including an expected long-pending correction, scale back in quantitative easing by central banks and rising interest rates, although economic fundamentals and economic growth remains strong. GCC markets also took a hit from the global sell-off but were quick to recover in the subsequent week in line with a recovery in other markets globally. For the GCC markets, a weak oil market also capped growth during the month.

In terms of trading activity, total value traded on GCC exchanges declined to the lowest in 5-months recorded at \$22.3 billion, a 21 percent decline as compared to the previous month. Kuwait and Qatar witnessed the steepest drop in value traded that dropped more than a third while in Saudi Arabia it dropped by 17.5 percent or \$3.8 billion to \$18.6 billion.

Bursa Kuwait

Kuwait continued on a gradual recovery process during February-18 and was the second-best performing market in the GCC during the month. All the three benchmark indices have grown consecutively over the past three months with the Price

index surging almost 10 percent since the end of November-17. During February-18, the Kuwait Price Index surged 1.3 percent bringing YTD-18 gains to 5.7 percent, the highest in the GCC. The increase in the Weighted Index was more modest at 0.5 percent while the Kuwait 15 Index saw a healthy growth of 1.8 percent, indicating that large-cap stocks supported overall growth during the month while cheap stocks declined.

The monthly sector performance chart was topped by the Technology index that surged 13.9 percent as both constituents ASC and Osos recorded more than 10 percent returns. The Insurance sector was the second-best performing index with a gain of 4.9 percent led primarily by 18.6 percent surge in shares of Ahleiah Insurance although trades were minimal in the stock. Banking stocks were also upbeat with a benchmark return of 2.0 percent with only two Kuwaiti banking stocks showing a monthly decline. CBK was the best performing bank with a return of 13.3 percent after the bank reported 10 percent growth in net profit. Overall earnings growth for Kuwaiti banks was positive with a net profit growth of 9.4 percent, although the decline reported by KIB and Burgan Bank partially dented sector earnings. Sectors on the decliners side included Healthcare with a decline of 6.1 percent followed by Consumer Services and Financial Services indices with declines of 5.9 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively.

In terms of trading activity, the exchange recorded the steepest monthly decline in the GCC. Total monthly volume traded halved to 1.3 billion shares as compared to 2.6 billion shares during the previous month, while monthly value traded declined by more than a third to KD 207.3 million as compared to KD 322.9 million during January-18. Shares of NBK (+4.1 percent) garnered the most interest in terms of value traded recording total trades worth KD 32.5 million followed by KFH (+0.7 percent) and Zain (+1.3 percent) at KD 26.8 million and KD 16.6 million, respectively. In terms of monthly volume, Ithmaar Holding topped with 207.5 Mn traded shares followed by shares of AUB Bahrain and Alimtiaq Investment recording 61.8 million and 54 million shares traded during the month, respectively. The monthly gainers chart was topped by REAM recording a gain of 87.8 percent, although with minuscule trades in the stock, followed by Osos Holding and Ahleiah Insurance with gains of 18.8 percent and 18.6 percent, respectively. On the decliners chart, Ithmaar Holding topped with a fall of 38.8 percent, followed by 34.9 percent decline for Yiaco Medical and 29.7 percent decline for National Shooting. In economic news, S&P retained Kuwait's sovereign rating at 'AA/A-1+' with a stable outlook and said that the country is expected to return to growth in 2018 despite being an "undiversified" market based on their criteria. The rating is supported by Kuwait's large government and external balance sheets and S&P expects a growth rate of 2.5 percent in 2018 supported by higher crude prices.

Tadawul

The positive trend in Saudi Arabia's benchmark TASI reverted and declined for the first time in four months by 3.0 percent during February-18 led by weak trends in global equity markets. The index recorded minimal recovery during the third week and reached 7,418.8 points at the end of the month resulting in a lower YTD-18 gain of 2.7 percent. The monthly sector performance chart also showed declines in large-cap sectors like Banks, Materials and Real Estate. The Real Estate sector witnessed the biggest decline during the month at 8.1 percent as all the real estate stocks, with the exception of Alandalus Property and Arriyadh Development, closed the month with a decline. The Banks index was down by 4.6 percent during the month, as all the banks closed the month with a decline. Bank Al-Jazira witnessed the steepest fall of 12.2 percent followed by The Saudi Investment Bank that declined by 10.0 percent. Shares of NCB also declined marginally by 1.2 percent despite the sector witnessing a solid earnings growth of 9.5 percent for 2017.

Abu Dhabi Exchange

The ADX index ended Feb-18 broadly range bound, marginally declining by only 0.1 percent m-o-m, after gaining by 4.6 percent m-o-m in Jan-18. The index closed at 4597.7 points as sectoral performance was mixed for the month. The Energy sector was the best performing index as the index was up by 5.1 percent m-o-m, driven single-handedly by TAQA, as its share price was up by 48.1 percent m-o-m. Investment & Financial Services (+3.5 percent m-o-m) and Banking (+1.5 percent m-o-m) indices followed the sectoral gainers list. Investment & Financial Services index was buoyed by Waha Capital, which gained by 3.9 percent m-o-m. The positive performance of Banks was driven by mega cap First Abu Dhabi Bank, as its share price gained by 3.1 percent m-o-m.

Dubai Financial Market

The DEM index unlike its UAE counterpart came under pressure in the month of Feb-18 and declined by 4.4 percent m-o-m. The index closed at 3244.1 points, as most sectoral indices closed lower during Feb-18. Consumer Staples was the main laggard and plunged by 12.8 percent m-o-m, driven mainly by DXB Entertainment, as its stock price dropped by 13.3 percent m-o-m. The stock came under pressure after the theme park operator reported a net loss of AED 1.11 billion in 2017 as against AED 485 million. Further, the company is reportedly talking to banks to restructure \$1.15 billion in loans after footfalls fell behind expectations. The Real Estate sector followed, as it dropped by 7.8 percent m-o-m, as no stock in the index saw higher levels during Feb-18.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw



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

The lucky winners are:

1. Nabeel Youssef Asaad Alabdullah
2. Mohammad Ali Yaqoub Alaryan
3. Wali Abdulwahab Dolati Ghadhban

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

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

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENA region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years

EXCHANGE RATES

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.410062	0.417562
Czech Korune	0.006593	0.015893
Danish Krone	0.045679	0.050679
Euro	0.365227	0.372727
Georgian Lari	0.133884	0.133884
Hungarian O.001132	0.001322	
Norwegian Krone	0.034640	0.039840
Romanian Leu	0.064204	0.081054
Russian ruble	0.005308	0.005308
Slovakia	0.008923	0.018923
Swedish Krona	0.032452	0.037452
Swiss Franc	0.314406	0.325406
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.225622	0.237622
New Zealand Dollar	0.211727	0.221227
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.228385	0.237385
US Dollars	0.296500	0.300920
US Dollars Mint	0.297000	0.300920
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003189	0.003773
Chinese Yuan	0.045953	0.049453
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036548	0.039298

Indian Rupee	0.004187	0.004828
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002770	0.002950
Korean Won	0.000268	0.000283
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073095	0.079095
Nepalese Rupee	0.002999	0.003169
Pakistan Rupee	0.002529	0.002819
Philippine Peso	0.005678	0.005978
Singapore Dollar	0.222559	0.232559
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001642	0.002222
Taiwan	0.010313	0.010493
Thai Baht	0.009212	0.009762

Arab	
Bahraini Dinar	0.790780
Egyptian Pound	0.014076
Iranian Riyal	0.000083
Iraqi Dinar	0.000202
Jordanian Dinar	0.419359
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000154
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022671
Omani Riyal	0.774461
Qatar Riyal	0.078277
Saudi Riyal	0.079073
Syrian Pound	0.001273
Tunisian Dinar	0.121540
Turkish Lira	0.073749
UAE Dirhams	0.080417
Yemeni Riyal	0.000977

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	300.250
Canadian Dollar	233.815
Sterling Pound	415.835
Euro	371.320
Swiss Frank	283.055
Bahraini Dinar	798.475
UAE Dirhams	82.150
Qatari Riyals	83.380
Saudi Riyals	80.960
Jordanian Dinar	424.760
Egyptian Pound	17.100
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.936
Indian Rupees	4.616
Pakistani Rupees	2.716
Bangladesh Taka	3.604
Philippines Pessso	5.793
Cyprus pound	17.875
Japanese Yen	3.835
Syrian Pound	1.585
Nepalese Rupees	2.886
Malaysian Ringgit	77.300
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.720
Thai Bhat	10.535
Turkish Lira	79.205

Business

NBK Money Markets Report

Dollar surrenders gains as Trump kicks off trade war

Fed Chair optimistic on status of US economy

KUWAIT: Fed Chair Jerome Powell had his first semi-annual testimony in front of congress since being appointed by President Trump to succeed Janet Yellen. In his testimony Powell iterated on the Fed's path to gradually tighten the monetary policy amid the accelerated growth of the US economy. With the unemployment rate at a historically low level and the labor participation rate not moving up much, Powell expressed confidence that wage growth would pick up and that the recent shortfall in inflation would prove transitory. The Fed chairman emphasized the need to revisit various aspects of the tighter financial regulation adopted in the aftermath of the global financial crisis, including leverage ratios.

Looking at the debt market, US treasury yields retreated last week as the 10-year treasury yield reached a low of 2.807 percent after President Donald Trump sparked fears of a trade war announcing tariffs on steel and aluminum. In details, treasury prices rallied Thursday, pushing down yields, with investors rushing into government paper after the Trump administration's decision to impose global tariffs on steel and aluminum imports triggered a stock-market selloff. The tariffs are to be implemented as early as next week said President Trump.

Globally, the tensions escalated between the EU and the UK after EU officials published their draft on the Brexit deal to the UK. Prime Minister May said that she will never accept the drafted Brexit agreement, fueling the prospect that the negotiations are heading for a tougher period. Meanwhile, the Bank of Japan will start thinking about how to exit its massive QE program around the fiscal year starting April 2019, said Governor Kuroda. This marks the first time the central bank provided any clear guidance on the timing for normalizing policy.

On the currency front, the dollar index opened the week on a strong footing reaching a high of 90.932 before retreating towards Friday following Trump's speech, Powell's testimony, and weak economic data. The US dollar closed the week at 89.935.

The euro started the week with a bearish move and broke the 1.2200 level to reach a low of 1.2155 towards the end of the week. The single currency capitalized on the increased tensions in the Brexit negotiations and erased most of its losses to the dollar. The currency ended the week at 1.2312.

The cable traded sensitively prior to the Brexit negotiation developments and PM May's comments on the drafted EU deal reaching a 6-week low of 1.3712. The Sterling pound had the biggest losses to the dollar as it depreciated by 1.60 percent. The pair closed

the week at 1.3796. The Japanese yen moved with the market at the beginning of the week as a strong dollar direction was the theme of the market. However, the currency had substantial gains after Governor Kuroda's comments on the timeline of monetary policy normalization, breaking the 106 level and reaching a low of 105.25.

US GDP

The US economy did expand, yet on a slightly slower pace than previously thought for the fourth quarter of 2017. The reading came at 2.5 percent, down from the previous reading of 2.6 percent. The report said that the downward revision reflected a "downturn in private inventory investment", while consumer spending remained at 3.8 percent. The reliance on imports to fulfill domestic demand could widen the trade deficit and halt the anticipated economic boost from the tax cuts and the increased government spending. Economists do believe that the economy will reach Trump's administration 3 percent annual growth target this year, possibly putting pressure on the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates more aggressively than currently anticipated.

EU-UK tension escalates over Brexit

US housing market stalls

Pending home sales declined in January to more than three-year low at 4.7 percent m/m. The property market is settling into a cooler pace as there aren't enough affordable listings to choose from. Rising property prices remain a hurdle.

US home sales fell for the second month in January, recording their lowest level since August 2017. The measure is based on signed contracts during the month and is a strong read on reactions to home affordability. Mortgage prices are increasing and price appreciation of properties continues to overtake wage growth. It is worth noting that the average rate on a 30-year mortgage has jumped to the highest level since 2014.

Core durable goods fall

US durable goods orders fell to their lowest in six months. Durable goods, or items that are intended to last for three years or more fell 3.7 percent versus the expected 2.4 percent. One of the factors that dropped down the number is bookings for commercial aircrafts, which decreased 28.4 percent while bookings for defense aircraft shrank 45.6 percent. Core durable goods orders, which exclude transportation, came down 0.3 percent versus a projected gain of 0.4 percent. In addition, Non-defense capital goods excluding aircraft fell 0.2 percent against the expected 0.5 percent increase.



UK manufacturing PMI

The rate of activity in UK factories dropped into an eight-month low this February, and a survey of businesses suggested that manufacturing was struggling to cope with rising orders. The UK Manufacturing PMI fell to 55.2 from 55.3 in January. It is worth mentioning that UK manufacturing was boosted last year with the help of a combination of stronger global growth and the weaker sterling. Slower rates of growth have been recorded around the globe this year, with the latest Eurozone poll highlighting bottlenecks among suppliers. Similar constraints have been pointed by the UK survey, where employment in manufacturing rose for the 19th month in a row. Companies were seeking to increase the capacity to meet rising sales, but some reported shortages of components and rising costs of raw materials.

Eurozone inflation stagnant

Inflation in the eurozone fell once again in February though the move should have few implications for monetary policy. European inflation came in line with market expectations in February at 1.2 percent y/y down from 1.3 percent. Core inflation on the other hand was stuck at 1.0 percent y/y and also in-line with expectation. The inflation report shows that the decrease was led by the sharp fall in unprocessed food prices as the winter season comes to an end.

However, weak core inflation is likely to leave the doves at the ECB resisting calls from the hawks for a quick move toward the exit from its asset purchase program.

China's manufacturing

The Chinese manufacturing PMI came at 50.3 in February, lower than the projected 51.2 and hitting a 19-month low. If we look at the breakdown of the index we come to the realization that this is not alarming, since the domestic market was still good at 51.0 and expectations of business activity stood at 58.2, which is higher than 56.8 in January. This means that the low reading is probably caused by holiday effects and not an underlying slowdown in manufacturing activity. Meanwhile, the non-manufacturing PMI fell to 54.4 from 55.3 in January. This is understandable as the financial and real estate sectors were off for two weeks in February. The PMI still shows that consumption, tourism and the travel industry did not counter the low activities during the holiday season. Economists are expecting the Chinese economy to slow down in 2018 as the government cracks down on the polluting industries and high levels of debt.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.29975
The USDKWD opened at 0.29975 yesterday morning.

We're going to Miami: The first proving ground for Ford's self-driving service

By Sherif Marakby

Watching some of the world's greatest athletes over the past week had me thinking about all of the individual elements that come together for the extraordinary performances we see from these competitors. It's overwhelming to think about the dedication, commitment and the amount of time these athletes had to put in to get every little step, spin, jump - any move you can think of - just right to win a medal.

Now, I'm inspired more than ever because Ford is in a similar position as we pull together our self-driving vehicle business. We've spent years researching and developing self-driving technology, studying changing customer behaviors, serving some of the largest fleets in the country with help from our dealers, and working with governments big and small. Now it's time to pull it all together head for the finish line!

So now, we're headed to Florida to test and prove out our business model. With the help of Miami-Dade County, we're taking our service directly to the streets of Miami and Miami Beach.

Miami-Dade Mayor Carlos A. Gimenez is a champion of innovative technology and applying it to help improve life for residents of the county. He's on the forefront of thinking about the future of transportation, leading a county that already offers a diverse set of transportation modes ranging from ride-hailing services and rail to buses and bike sharing. He understands the potential of self-driving vehicles and how they can fit in, interact with, and enhance all of those modes and more. That's why this collaboration makes so much sense.

There's clearly a need for innovation. Miami was recently listed as the 10th most congested city in the world, according to the Inrix Global Traffic Scorecard, and the fifth most congested city in the United States. Miami commuters spend an average of 64 hours in congestion per year during peak time periods - or nearly 10 percent of their total drive time. That's just not right, yet it serves as a reminder that people always need to be at the centre of our plan, so we're setting out to solve for their pain points.

To understand what Miami-Dade residents would

experience with self-driving vehicle service, the first part of our presence will involve pilot programs throughout the year with our partners, starting with Domino's and Postmates. What we learn from this customer experience research will be applied to the design of our purpose-built self-driving vehicle that we plan to launch in 2021 to support the expansion of our service.

The types of questions we're trying to answer include:

- Before a self-driving vehicle makes a delivery, how will employees stock it and send it off?
- At the end of its journey, how will customers interact with the vehicle to retrieve their food or groceries, and how far from their homes are they willing to walk to get it?
- What benefits could and should people get from a self-driving experience?

Another way to think about it is to consider the costs of convenience. Today, deliveries can be made to someone's door, though there is usually an extra charge involved. Oftentimes, drivers illegally double-park when they can't find a space, potentially causing traffic congestion for others. A self-driving vehicle won't need to be tipped and it won't park illegally. So, from the outset we understand there are both hurdles and benefits to self-driving delivery in cities and we intend to learn all of these ins and outs so that we can serve people in a way that's most intuitive and convenient. Our Domino's pilot is already up and running in Miami, and we're finalizing plans to launch one with Postmates in March.

In parallel to creating the best customer experience possible, we will continue to develop the self-driving technology powering our vehicles by expanding testing in partnership with Argo AI. Running a self-driving business in any city requires a comprehensive understanding of local laws and the unique driving habits of residents, which is where Argo specializes. A new fleet of Argo vehicles is already on the streets, mapping the roads and accumulating miles that will help us improve the way they move through cities. The effort will grow throughout the year as we add vehicles and expand areas of testing.

Having all these vehicles on the road means we have to face some practical realities too. There's no doubt in my mind that we will develop fully self-driving vehicles, but one thing we don't talk about much is the need to take care of the fleet after it spends a long day or night on the road. These vehicles will need to be maintained, repaired and cleaned, including prying sticky gum off the seats. Taking care of a vehicle - whether it drives itself or not - requires space and manpower.

That's why we're establishing our first autonomous vehicle operations terminal in Miami. Situated close to downtown, it will be the base from which we'll develop



our vehicle management processes and house our test fleet. The vehicles will be washed and have their sensors cleaned here; routine maintenance will be conducted, including troubleshooting problems that arise and more.

Additionally, we will work closely with our extensive dealer network in the area, looking for ways to integrate and incorporate their operations and capabilities into our terminal. A healthy dealer network is critical for support, as dealers can help with repairs and conduct parts deliveries and other services. Before thousands of self-driving vehicles can hit the streets, we have to be prepared to manage large, high-tech fleets efficiently, and the steps we're taking in Miami represent a significant stride in that process.

After working out numerous muscles and developing different techniques to navigate a future of self-driving cars, we're heading onto the stage in Miami-Dade to see how our business performs. By bringing all of our different development tracks together to test in unison, we're putting ourselves in the best position to analyze our execution, determine what works well and improve what doesn't. This way, we can quickly expand our service and take it to other cities when the time comes.

The development of self-driving vehicles hints at a whole new way of moving people and goods, but it doesn't change our way of doing business - placing the customer above all else. We're looking forward to connecting with the people of Miami-Dade County and becoming part of their community as we increase awareness for our efforts and build a service they can confidently rely on day in and day out. *Note: Sherif Marakby is Ford Vice President, Autonomous Vehicles and Electrification*

Qualcomm-Broadcom battle heads for showdown

SAN FRANCISCO: With a potential for the biggest-ever deal in the tech sector at stake, Qualcomm shareholders will have their say on a hostile bid for the US mobile chip giant by Singapore-based rival Broadcom.

Qualcomm shareholders at an annual gathering on Tuesday will get to vote whether to replace six of the California company's 11 board members with candidates backed by Broadcom, essentially endorsing the deal estimated to be worth \$117 billion.

Weeks of parries and thrusts, along with tactical public statements, have left the companies' boards at odds over the unsolicited offer. Qualcomm's board on Thursday sent a letter to shareholders urging them to re-elect its current members, making a statement against Broadcom's offer.

"The Qualcomm board believes it is not in the best interest of Qualcomm's stockholders to elect Broadcom's nominees," the directors said.

Qualcomm, which is the dominant maker of microprocessors for smartphones, says it has a bright future on its own, especially ahead of a transition to fifth-generation (5G) wireless communications networks. The Qualcomm board has also expressed concern that any deal with Broadcom could be delayed or blocked by antitrust regulators around the world.

Broadcom meanwhile fired off a letter of its own, urging Qualcomm shareholders to elect all six of its nominees to the board, sending "a clear signal" supporting the takeover bid which would provide a handsome gain to shareholders of the US firm.

The hostile offer "provides greater value and certainty to Qualcomm stockholders, with less risk, than any other available alternative," Broadcom said in its appeal to shareholders.

Broadcom made its first offer in November, and subsequently raised it to \$121 billion but then lowered it, arguing that Qualcomm had effectively agreed to "transfer" value by raising its takeover offer for Dutch-based tech firm NXP.

The Broadcom offer "undervalues" the US firm, Qualcomm has said, while opening the door to talks if Broadcom boosts its price. —AFP

Business

Wall Street Week Ahead

Earnings boost for stocks may lose luster

NEW YORK: There is little doubt on Wall Street that US corporate profits are on track to rise at a healthy rate this year, with an overall estimate for growth of almost 20 percent. Less certain, however, is how investors should value those profits with price-to-earnings estimates. The struggle to do so could lead to more stock market volatility.

The valuations issue has gained fresh prominence for market strategists amid a rise in interest rates and bond yields, along with concerns about inflation increasing.

Those factors, including a yield on the

benchmark 10-year US Treasury note that is approaching 3 percent, has prompted investors to rethink how to price stocks, which have become more expensive as the nearly nine-year bull market has aged. Indeed, some investors are weighing whether equities deserve lower valuations.

"It's a topic that's got to be in the front of a lot of asset managers' minds right now: What level is this market a really good buy again?," said Jim Paulsen, chief investment strategist at The Leuthold Group in Minneapolis. "We are going to get good

earnings coming through," Paulsen said. "The problem is we are going to lose the value on those earnings."

A test for equity valuations could come with next Friday's US employment report for February. Last month's report revealed surprising wage gains that sparked concerns of inflation, in turn setting off a jump in yields and a drop in stocks. Stocks are commonly valued by comparing their price to their estimated profits over the next year, known as the price-to-earnings, or P/E, ratio.

"Interest rates set the discount for what

you want to value companies at and in general with higher interest rates you are going to see lower P/E's as fair value," said Rick Meckler, president of LibertyView Capital Management in Jersey City, New Jersey. "You are going to be less willing to pay higher multiples on stocks where your discount rate continues to go up."

Volatility

The P/E ratio on the benchmark S&P 500 index had climbed to 18.6 times by the end of January, the highest level in about 15 years,

according to Thomson Reuters Datastream, as stocks climbed to all-time peaks.

That was just before the market plunged at the start of February, dropping 10 percent and confirming a correction, and in turn lowering the P/E ratio to 17 times earnings estimates. Valuations hovered around that level at the end of a turbulent week. The S&P 500 rose 0.5 percent on Friday, recovering some losses from Thursday, when U.S. President Donald Trump announced plans for tariffs on steel and aluminum, raising concern about higher prices and a trade war.—Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report									
Sunday, March 04, 2018									
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing						
Price Index	▼ -40.36	6,767.54	6,807.90						
Weighted Index	▼ -0.57	413.85	414.42						
KSX 15	▼ -0.89	956.44	957.33						
Global									
Volume		79,874,251							
Value (KWD)		11,200,516							
Number of Trades		3,128							
Trades									
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KDI)	Trades	Last	Change		
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	450	▼	0.0	
NAPESCO	813	813	3,100	2,520	4	813	▲	3.0	
ENERGYH	27.5	25.0	100,151	2,804	9	27.5	▼	0.0	
GPI	29.2	28.3	216,631	6,248	22	29.1	▲	0.6	
ABAR	85	80	27,057	2,176	2	85	▲	7.2	
Oil & Gas			346,939	13,540	37	960.50	▲	16.90	
KFJOC	221	221	700	155	1	221	▼	-8.0	
BPCC	705	705	7,033	4,958	3	705	▼	-2.0	
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	680	▼	0.0	
ALQURAN	340	335	28,337	9,607	7	340	▲	6.0	
Basic Materials			36,070	14,720	11	1297.47	▼	-2.10	
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	445	▼	0.0	
CABLE	411	411	8,900	3,494	3	411	▼	-7.0	
SHP	203	203	7,500	1,523	1	203	▼	0.0	
PCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,042	▼	0.0	
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▼	0.0	
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▼	0.0	
ACICO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▼	0.0	
HCC	96	96	3,800	365	1	96	▼	0.0	
NIGM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	194	▼	0.0	
EQUIPMENT	35.9	34.0	119,601	4,085	14	35.8	▼	-0.2	
NCICI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	72	▼	0.0	
GYPSSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	95	▼	0.0	
SALBOOKH	52	48.0	3,500	175	3	52	▲	1.0	
AGLTY	854	850	420,033	356,347	43	854	▲	3.0	
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	302	▼	0.0	
CLEANING	64	60	998,800	62,394	44	64	▲	3.9	
KGL	116	108	2,800,054	314,780	154	109	▼	-2.0	
KPCPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	150	▼	0.0	
HUMANSOFT	3,800	3,750	76,910	291,735	13	3,795	▼	-0.0	
GFC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▼	0.0	
SHOOTING	17.9	17.1	1,731	30	7	17.8	▲	0.7	
GCC	474	474	50	24	1	474	▲	14.9	
MTCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	▼	0.0	
UPAC	720	690	5,996	4,256	5	710	▼	0.0	
ALAFAC	375	375	4,188	1,563	2	375	▲	5.0	
MUBARRAD	71	70	380,000	26,739	10	70	▼	-2.9	
LOGISTICS	54	53	3,797,756	203,978	141	53	▼	-0.5	
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	▼	0.0	
GCEM	82	82	5,675	465	1	82	▼	-1.9	
QIC	82	82	15,000	1,230	1	82	▲	1.0	
FCM	75	74	159,590	11,867	5	75	▲	4.0	
RKWC	83	83	40,000	3,320	1	83	▼	-3.0	
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▼	0.0	
Industrials			8,849,304	1,296,349	450	1877.13	▲	0.60	
FAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	▼	0.0	
CATTL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	224	▼	0.0	
DANAH	75	74	188,718	14,018	11	74	▲	0.4	
FOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,004	▼	0.0	
Consumer Goods			188,718	14,018	11	816.85	▲	2.20	
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	1,060	1,054	3,140	3,323	6	1,054	▼	-6	
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	197	▼	0.0	
SULTAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	67	▼	0.0	
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	15.5	▼	0.0	
IFAHF	154	135	68,100	9,155	13	149	▼	-3	
OULAFUEL	115	114	17,341	1,989	10	114	▼	-3	
MUNTAAZAHAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69	▼	0.0	
JAZEERA	599	590	15,200	8,970	4	599	▼	0.0	
SOOR	115	114	14,534	1,667	8	114	▼	-3	
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	▼	0.0	
ALURAI	119	118	132,450	15,654	8	118	▼	-3	
Jiyad	84	81	118,996	9,954	23	84	▼	0.0	
Mezzan	798	795	30,163	28,828	4	798	▲	5	
Consumer Services			463,924	79,539	76	857.67	▼	-6.80	
ZAIN	477	469	1,434,944	670,505	250	469	▼	-7	
QORFOD	1,038	1,036	84	87	1	1,038	▲	11	
AAAN	22.0	20.9	1,840,718	38,721	56	20.9	▼	0.0	
VIVA	780	763	16,784	12,815	30	764	▼	-2	
Telecommunications			3,292,510	728,128	337	534.46	▼	-2.60	
NBK	780	770	3,689,836	2,840,772	238	772	▲	1	
GBK	256	250	5,519,511	1,394,070	102	250	▼	-7	
CBK	460	455	12,360	5,626	13	457	▲	3	
ABK	313	310	401,852	124,512	7	310	▼	0.0	
ALMUTAHED	342	335	98,524	33,285	16	338	▼	0.0	
KIB	236	233	1,530,441	360,069	31	235	▲	1	
BLRG	293	289	151,776	44,067	30	292	▲	3	
KFIN	591	588	1,407,473	830,481	115	589	▼	-1	
BOUBYAN	481	475	258,143	123,819	30	481	▲	3	
AUR	218	216	2,305,478	499,676	51	217	▼	0.0	
ITHMR	41.3	37.4	4,993,045	193,381	134	41.1	▲	4	
WARABANK	245	243	1,219,083	297,455	64	244	▼	0.0	
Banks			21,537,219	6,747,263	831	948.98	▲	8.30	
KNS	290	290	6,378	1,850	2	290	▼	0.0	
GNS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	695	▼	0.0	
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	510	▼	0.0	
WNS	60	60	55	3	1	60	▼	-6.6	
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	192	▼	0.0	
FTI	81	87	410	24	2	81	▲	0.5	
WETHAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.0	▼	0.0	
BKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365	▼	0.0	
Insurance			6,843	1,877	5	1027.43	▼	-6.40	
SOKOL	46.2	44.2	182,011	8,213	11	44.2	▼	-2.3	
KRE	54	52	4,746,324	250,883	94	53	▼	-0.5	
URC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	74	▼	0.0	
NRE	118	117	195,000	22,960	11	117	▼	-3.0	
SRE	342	342	2,500	855	1	342	▲	1.0	
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	399	▼	0.0	
AREC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	160	▼	0.0	
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	39.9	▼	0.0	
ARABREC	34.0	32.8	237,074	8,005	10	33.9	▲	0.3	
ERESCO	34.9	34.5	20,000	692	3	34.5	▲	0.1	
MABANE	730	727	2,050	1,496	2	727	▲	4.0	
INJAZZAT	91	91	100,000	9,100	1	91	▼	-1.0	
INVESTORS	15.7	15.2	4,212,511	64,711	64	15.2	▼	-0.4	
IRC	30.5	27.6	201	6	4	30.5	▲	0.4	
ALTUARIA	91	91	71,500	8,511	3	91	▼	-1.0	
SANAM	32.0	32.0	19,240	616	3	32.0	▼	0.0	
AAYANRE	75	75	20,000	1,500	1	75	▼	-3.0	
ADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	▼	0.0	
ALAGARIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	28.3	▼	0.0	
MAZAYA	109	109	94,052	10,252	3	109	▼	-1.0	
TUARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	64	▼	0.0	
TAMMEER	29.0	27.2	117,150	3,233	12	27.6	▼	-1.8	
ARKAN	87	87	15,000	1,					

Business

All-new Mazda CX-5, 'the next generation of Japanese tradition'

KAICO unveils all-new Mazda CX-5 at the Avenues Mall



The all-new Mazda CX-5



The all-new Mazda CX-5 being unveiled



KODO design: exterior



Bose Premium sound system



KUWAIT: With traditional Japanese artistic sensibilities and innovative technology, the 2018 CX-5 is crafted with attention to quality and design. New for 2018 is the available, extraordinarily fuel-efficient SKYACTIV-G 2.5 L engine with Cylinder Deactivation system. Built with the conviction that strength, intelligence and beauty are one, the CX-5 is the one SUV you'll love to drive.

The 2018 CX-5 is crafted to bring out your love of driving, from engineering that is seamlessly responsive to a human-centric interior that enables intuitive driving. And with the beautiful design and craftsmanship that brings it all together in harmony, you'll experience an unparalleled sense of connection to the road and uniquely inspired driving.

Key features
KODO Design

The 2018 CX-5 with stunning KODO design elevates both beauty and the toughness you expect in an SUV. The stylish front grille, lower-placed headlights and LED fog light bezels accentuate the sense of flow and speed. And inside, KODO enhances the interior with exquisite fit and finish and materials that feel smooth to the touch.

KODO design: interior

The smallest details, such as the perfect placement of the instrument panel, express a uniquely Japanese, premium craftsmanship. Designed for a bold, athletic and sophisticated

feel, the 2018 CX-5 truly embodies Mazda's KODO "Soul of Motion" design. Traditional Japanese fine craftsmanship makes the CX-5 both a living piece of art that evokes excitement and a beautiful machine that delivers on its promise of joyful driving.

SkyactivTechnology

At Mazda, building strong vehicles that deliver a soul-rousing driving experience is the first priority. So Mazda did the impossible: Engineered a vehicle that never sacrifices performance for fuel efficiency. SKYACTIV Technology is engineering innovation that takes the entire car into consideration - from body construction and engine technology to chassis and transmission - to improve the overall driving experience. The high-efficiency SKYACTIV-G engines available in the 2018 CX-5 deliver superb fuel economy and better torque than a conventional gasoline engine, and reduced noise and vibration.

SKYACTIV-Drive

Our engineers created a precise, high-performance automatic transmission that combines the direct, responsive feel of a manual transmission with the silky smoothness of an automatic.

SKYACTIV-Chassis

The SKYACTIV-Chassis is engineered to be nimble at

low speeds, yet stable at high speeds. We also engineered it to be light, allowing for a more direct and agile feel.

SKYACTIV-Body

Because we crafted an efficient structural design and used ultra-high-tensile steel in critical areas, the CX-5's body is lighter than normal, yet it's stiffer and stronger.

SKYACTIV-VEHICLE DYNAMICS with G-Vectoring Control (GVC) works behind the scenes to achieve a smoother, less fatiguing drive for you and your passengers by subtly adjusting engine torque, intentionally optimizing vehicle weight transfer during every day commutes and spirited drives alike. The result is steering that is more precise and a more comfortable ride

Interior refinement

The 2018 CX-5 offers a cabin rich in thoughtful touches that make life in the driver's seat - and passengers' seats - a joy. From the perfect positioning of the instrument panel and reclining rear seats, to an abundance of standard features like HMI Commander Switch and reduced noise, vibration and harshness (NVH), the CX-5's human-centric cabin is a perfect match for the long haul and the everyday.

I-ACTIVSENSE

At Mazda, we're all about proactive safety measures that swing into action to alert you so that you can avoid a collision

or lessen its impact. Now with more standard i-ACTIVSENSE features, including Smart City Brake Support (SCBS) and Advanced Blind Spot Monitoring (ABSM) with Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), our suite of safety technologies help you stay in tune with your CX-5 and focus on the road ahead.

MAZDA CONNECT makes staying informed and entertained effortless. Features such as audio, hands-free phone, and available navigation are easily controlled using the convenient, multifunction HMI Commander control.

10-Speaker Bose Premium Sound System

Custom-built for the CX-5, we worked with Bose(r) to devise a system that considered hundreds of factors, from cabin size and materials to seat positioning and the unique sound variances of today's digital devices. The result is outstanding clarity, image and power.

Bose Premium sound system
Bluetooth Compatibility

Now standard on all CX-5s, explore new music and infotainment options via your Bluetooth-enabled and internet connected device. With hands-free phone and audio streaming, you stay entertained while streaming audio from your compatible mobile device. Discover the all-new Mazda CX-5. The model is on display at Kaico showroom in Al-Rai 4th Ring Road.

Ahli United Bank holds workshop on investment opportunities

KUWAIT: In line with the Bank's continued efforts to provide financial awareness to its customers, and to update them on the latest investment opportunities and trends witnessed by the financial sector in different countries, Ahli United Bank (AUB) invited a select group of its elite Private Banking and Wealth Management clients to attend the Egypt Investment Forum, which was recently held in Cairo under the patronage of President Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi, in order to present the latest developments in the Egyptian economy. Alongside the forum, Ahli United Bank's Private Banking & Wealth Management Division held a workshop under the theme of "Investment Opportunities in Egypt" targeting the Bank's clients. The workshop drew clients' attention towards the various investment opportunities at the regional level.

Moreover, the workshop focused on future investment in Egypt, and on the country's economic outlook. In addition, it further addressed potential investors' queries around available investment options and future investment opportunities.

During his introductory note, Medhat Tawfik, AUB's General Manager - Private Banking and Wealth Management - welcomed his guests and said, "Organizing such events is to enable attendees to benefit from the technical research and insights provided around investment opportunities. It also paves the way for a deeper understanding around the risks associated with investments as well as general market performance."



Ahli United Bank at the Egypt Investment Forum.

Tawfik added, "The guidance provided by my Private Banking team at AUB assists in clients managing their own investments in a more efficient and effective manner given the continuous changes that take place across markets. It further gives them alternative options to maximize their return on investments and diversify their investment portfolios."

Tawfik closed his remarks by saying, "We are very pleased with our clients' interaction around the importance of the workshop, which mirrors our underlying commitment to provide the necessary available financial information that matters to our clients and helps them take the best and most suitable investment decisions and in accordance with their personal risk appetite."

It is worth noting that the Egypt Investment Forum was held for the third consecutive year and

was organized by the Federation of Egyptian Chambers of Commerce and Al-Iktissad Wal-Aamal Group, in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment and International Cooperation and the Ministry of Trade and Industry as well as the Union of Arab Chambers.

The event discussed the different stages of the investment climate development and policy reform, while shedding light on large scale development projects, job opportunities and the role of the private sector as well as foreign investments' response to the government's efforts to date, in addition to the prospects of Arab and foreign investment in Egypt.

Ministers, officials, industry experts, businessmen and investors from Egypt and various Arab states shared their experiences along with representatives of regional and international funding bodies and institutions.

CBK announces winners of Al-Najma account

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the daily draw on Al-Najma Account yesterday at the Bank's head office to select three winners to win a cash prize of KD 7,000 for each. The draw was held in the presence of Jassim Al-Otaibi, representative of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry. The following names were announced as winners of the prizes:

1. Saad Abdulaziz Al-Houlani
2. Jassim Shaaban Al-Ameeri
3. Fatemah Mollaq Al-Qemlas

Al-Najma Account allows its customers to win

a daily prize of KD 7,000 which is the highest daily prize in Kuwait. In addition, the Account offers quarterly draws that provide customers with opportunity to get their dreams turned to reality by winning great prizes starting from KD 100,000 for the first quarter escalating thereafter by KD 50 thousand for each quarter to reach KD 250,000 in the last quarter. Customers can enjoy additional benefits including obtaining ATM card and a credit card against the customer's account along with enjoying all other banking services.

The Bank congratulates all the lucky winners and draws their attention that the cash prizes will be credited into their accounts with the Bank. Further, the Bank appreciates the Ministry of Commerce and Industry's significant role and its continuous cooperation and effective supervision on the draw that was smoothly and transparently organized.



KFH receives 3 prestigious awards from 'Euromoney'



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has won 3 awards at the Euromoney Private Banking and Wealth Management 2018 Survey held recently in London.

The bank won the awards for the "Best Bank for High Net worth Clients" which confirms the excellence in wealth management, "Best Bank for Research & Asset Allocation Advice" and "Best Bank for SRI / Social Impact Investing".

The awards instituted by Euromoney magazine were received by Executive Manager Group Public Relations and Media, Yousef Abdullah Al-Ruwaich.

These recognitions highlight KFH capabilities to serve High-net-worth clients in an innovative way, with services dedicated to the specific needs of this segment, and a wide range of diversification solutions. They affirm the bank's excellence in offering a variety of distinctive lifestyle benefits and privileges including building a team of Customer Relation Managers to meet customers' requirements and answer their questions in total privacy, while putting at their service all the resources and professional long experience of KFH Group, to guarantee the highest return on their investment.

The Euromoney Private Banking and Wealth Management survey awards are considered the banking industry's leading barometer of the world's best services and product providers to high-net-worth individuals.

This award ceremony is considered a prestigious event in the Annual Financial Events Calendar attended by top financial institutions from across the world.

Euromoney's Private Banking Awards are the most prestigious in the growing area of wealth management. They cover over 60 countries each year, as well as global and regional awards. They are voted for by the people who know the industry best - the private bankers themselves.

The survey was conducted from August 15th until October 13th, 2017. The magazine received 2395 valid responses for the 2018 Survey.

Technology

Huawei brings the all-connected world to Mobile World Congress



BARCELONA: Building on its success in delivering beautifully-designed and powerful high-end mobile devices, Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) has unveiled the HUAWEI MateBook X Pro, the HUAWEI MediaPad M5 Series and the HUAWEI 5G customer-premises equipment (CPE), the world's first commercial terminal device supporting the globally recognized 3GPP telecommunications standard for 5G. With stunning new design updates and outstanding performance advances, Huawei's new devices showcase the power of technology to deliver innovative computing experiences ready for the mobile world.

"At Huawei, we're guided by a vision of an all-connected world, and to achieve that goal, we invest significantly in research and development to understand the ways in which people interact and connect with technology," said Richard Yu, CEO of Huawei CBG.

"We've made it our mission to push the boundaries of what technology and innovation are capable of. With the introduction of the new HUAWEI MateBook X Pro, HUAWEI MediaPad M5 Series and the world's first 3GPP 5G CPE, we are delivering on the promise to provide breakthrough devices that redefine every part of the mobile computing experience." The HUAWEI MateBook X Pro and HUAWEI MediaPad M5 Series will be available in the spring of 2018 in China, Europe, North America, Asia Pacific and the Middle East.

HUAWEI MateBook X Pro

The HUAWEI MateBook X Pro is an ultra-slim, yet full-featured 13.9-inch notebook with an all-new 3K touch-enabled HUAWEI FullView Display and 91 percent screen-to-body ratio. Powered by an 8th

Generation Intel(r) Core(tm) i7/i5 processor, a discrete NVIDIA(r) GeForce(r) MX150 GPU with 2GB GDDR5 and a long-lasting 57.4Wh (Typical Capacity) battery - making it one of the lightest and most powerful notebooks on the market. The HUAWEI MateBook X Pro features Dolby Atmos(r) Sound System and custom speakers that deliver breakthrough, immersive audio for sound to flow above and around you, making you feel like you're inside the action.

HUAWEI MediaPad M5 Series

Ergonomically designed with a 2.5D glass screen and 2K HD, ClariVu 5.0-enhanced display, the sleek and powerful 8.4-inch and 10.8-inch tablets feature speakers tuned by Harman Kardon. HUAWEI Histen technology provides immersive 3D audio and fully supports Hi-Res audio for exceptional sound quality.

The 10.8-inch HUAWEI MediaPad M5 Pro comes with an ultra-precise HUAWEI M-Pen featuring 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity to make note-taking more realistic, easier and effortless.

3GPP Standard 5G CPE

The HUAWEI 5G CPE is the first of its kind supporting the globally recognized 3GPP telecommunications standard for 5G. Available in indoor and outdoor configurations, it provides super-fast download speeds of up to 2Gbps and can operate on both 4G and 5G networks. The HUAWEI 5G CPE adopts Huawei's internally developed Balong 5G01 chipset - the world's first commercial chipset supporting the 3GPP standard, compatible with all 5G frequency bands, including sub-6GHz and millimeter wave (MMW).

Cameroon startup launches drones for global market

DOUALA: Talking fast and dreaming big, William Elong shows off the first "made in Cameroon" drone at his sixth-floor workshop in downtown Douala, minutes from the economic capital's Atlantic seaford. The 25-year-old, known as a high-flyer after being named one of Forbes' most promising young Africans under 30, is enthusing about his new unmanned aerial drones and keen to promote his company and Africa as a place where IT and new tech can flourish.

We must "get out of the Afro-centric vision of business" to "understand that when one has a global vision, worldwide, this includes Africa," Elong says in a discussion of future technologies. Elong has no degree in IT or robotics but studied strategy and competitive intelligence in France, becoming the youngest-ever graduate from Paris' Economic Warfare School. He founded his startup Will & Brothers in 2015 with a main project called Drone Africa, which aims to provide drones for civil purposes to businesses, the state in Cameroon and elsewhere.

With a top range of up to 20 kilometers, the drones can be used for purposes as different as cartography, media coverage, support for agriculture and detecting gas in mines to reduce the risk of accidents. "The know-how is here, in Cameroon," says Elong, who is aware young African talent often seeks employment in Europe and elsewhere. He says at this stage his firm's capital of \$200,000 (162,400 euros) has come from Western backers. Also supported by the government of President Paul Biya, Elong hopes eventually to raise \$2 million to expand the business but he regrets that "not many Africans are involved" in the project, which features two airborne types of drone and one terrestrial model. The commercial market in Africa is expanding with unmanned aircraft already whizzing across the skies delivering items like medicine and food, and even helping farmers sow seeds.

Flying wing

In Rwanda, drones get medical supplies such as blood and vaccines to remote areas. Tanzania is launching a similar program. And drones equipped with night-vision cameras help to detect and track poachers in Kenya, Namibia, South Africa and Zimbabwe. Elong presents the two airborne prototype models on a table inside his assembly shop. The first "flying wing that we've baptised Algo" has the furthest range and could prove an economical solution to the costly task of making maps, he suggests.

The second type, known as Logarithm, has four arms forming a propeller, can reach an altitude of up to 500 metres (1,640 feet) and is fitted with high-definition cameras, which would be useful in high-risk zones and for precision work, Elong adds.

Crucially, he argues, manufacturing costs are lower than those of foreign manufacturers, so the drones produced will be priced competitively across the African marketplace. He envisages "selling drones to Vietnam, to Venezuela, to Denmark for example, and becoming one of the biggest global enterprises in this sector." Elsewhere, two young engineers in white lab coats are carefully building a prototype. "When all the components are available, we are able to assemble a drone like this in 24 hours," says engineer Louis Ekani. Some of the parts are made in Cameroon, while others are supplied from abroad.

The pride of Cameroon

"The start was extremely complicated," says young technical director Yves Tamu, who is described on the company website as an entrepreneur, digital champion and inventor. "But we have a dynamic, autonomous and state-of-the-art team thanks to which we found the solution (to assembling drones)." The average age of employees is barely 22 and the team comprises mainly engineers and developers who have spent two years building airworthy drones. —AFP

Television titans bulk up to battle Internet rivals

NEW YORK: Traditional television titans are bulking up in a battle with online streaming giants Netflix and Amazon as viewers take to bingeing on shows when and where they want. The latest evidence was the surprise move this week by US cable giant Comcast to outbid Rupert Murdoch's 21st Century Fox for pan-European satellite TV group Sky with an all-cash offer valued at more than \$31 billion (25 billion Euros).

The twist comes after Britain's competition regulator provisionally ruled that Fox's offer was "not in the public interest". In 2016, 21st Century Fox bid for the nearly two-thirds of Sky it does not own-but a full-takeover had been held up by UK government concerns. Maneuvering has accelerated in the sector, which is being transformed by Silicon Valley technology that enables viewers to stream shows on-demand to a broad array of internet-linked devices.

Content is critical ammunition, with Netflix and Amazon pouring massive amounts of money into 'original' programming and licensing deals with the backing of shareholders who have seen the companies' values soar. Meanwhile, YouTube cultivates armies of 'creators' who upload videos to the platform with the potential to share in advertising revenue.

The Google-owned online video venue also has a subscription service called YouTube Red, which also features original content. Acquiring content makers has become a go-to tactic for traditional actors in the television and cable sector, where they are under pressure to replicate success of disruptive newcomers. Pivotal Research Group analyst Brian Wieser was among those who expected the content market to become more consolidated, especially as large US companies bring home large amounts of spending money from overseas due to recent tax reform.

Who's courting whom?

AT&T wants to merge with Time Warner (HBO, Cartoon Network, Warner Brothers Studio, CNN) in an \$85.4 billion deal. Already the owner of DirecTV satellite group, AT&T would add significant muscle in the distribution and production of shows. The catalog AT&T would gain from the merger would be impressive, from hit shows "Game of Thrones" and "Big Little Lies" to popular channels such as TNT, TBS, and CNN, seen as a perpetual source of global news. The content could also be used to entice people to subscribe to AT&T mobile phone plans.

An obstacle in the path of the merger is the US

Astronomers detect signal of Universe's first stars

PARIS: A signal from the Universe's first stars, born a cosmic heartbeat after the Big Bang, has been detected for the first time, astronomers said Wednesday, setting the science world aflutter. The observation came after a decade-long quest, years earlier than expected, and was described by one excited observer as the biggest astronomical breakthrough since the Nobel-capped detection of gravitational waves in 2015.

The findings have to be confirmed by other experiments. Crucially, it is hoped the discovery will shed light on dark matter-an invisible, mysterious substance thought to make up a large share of the Universe. "Finding this minuscule signal has opened a new window on the early Universe," said Arizona State University astronomer Judd Bowman, the



BEVERLY HILLS: Michelle Veintimilla attends the premiere of Netflix's "Seven Seconds" at The Paley Center for Media. —AFP

Department of Justice, which opposes the deal on anti-trust grounds.

A trial in the matter is slated to begin in the middle of March. Meanwhile, a Walt Disney Co. bid for much of the film and television assets of 21st Century Fox could help make the streaming platform Hulu a legitimate rival to Netflix.

The proposed multi-billion-dollar deal has drawn attention for potentially turning over to Disney another major Hollywood studio and key television operations in the US and overseas. But if streaming video represents the future, Hulu could be the key.

Created in 2008, Hulu has garnered comparatively little attention as the number three streaming platform in the US market, behind Netflix and Amazon.

Hulu was created by the major broadcast operators to counter the growing influence of Netflix. But Hulu's structure has been a handicap. Disney Fox and Comcast's NBCUniversal each own 30 percent, with Time Warner holding the remaining 10 percent. The Disney transaction would exclude popular, conservative Fox TV channel and sports stations as well as its newspapers, notably the Wall

Street Journal and New York Post. Sky and its 23 million customers represent an opportunity for Disney to strengthen its presence in Europe. It also offers a streaming service (Now TV). Apart from its catalog of films, Disney does not offer much other content outside the US.

Ballet

Comcast already owns NBC, NBC Sports, MSNBC and CNBC, E!, Telemundo, Xfinity (cable and internet), and Universal (Dreamworks). The company was valued just above \$168 billion based on the price of shares on the Nasdaq exchange on Wednesday. Other media firms in this ballet include Viacom and CBS. Both properties of media mogul Sumner Redstone, the two companies plan to merge.

Such a transaction would bring under one roof Paramount movie studio, CBS, MTV, Comedy Central, Nickelodeon, and BET. The merger would reconstitute the group as it existed before Viacom became a separate entity on the stock market in 2006. Even if they are not yet in the dance, others in the sector could step in-like US telecom firm Verizon and leading social network Facebook, which has made video a priority. —AFP

project's lead investigator. "Telescopes cannot see far enough to directly image such ancient stars, but we've seen when they turned on"-that is, sparked to life-"in radio waves arriving from space."

Fingerprints of the stars, already active 13.6 billion years ago-a mere 180 million years after the Big Bang gave rise to the Universe-were picked up by a dining table-sized radio spectrometer in the Australian desert. Such evidence had been expected, but not for years to come. To everyone's surprise, and delight, the signal contained something curious. The early Universe, the data showed, appears to have been twice as cold as previously estimated, at minus 270 degrees Celsius (-454 degrees Fahrenheit), according to the study in Nature. Some suggested a role for dark matter-the theme of an accompanying science paper published by the same journal.

'Wow!'

The author of that study, Rennan Barkana of Tel Aviv University, said the freeze might be explained by ordinary matter interacting with, and losing energy to, dark matter. "If Barkana's idea is confirmed then we've learnt something new and fundamental about the mysterious dark matter that

makes up 85 percent of the matter in the Universe, providing the first glimpse of physics beyond the Standard Model," said Bowman.

Data from the Planck satellite showed in 2013 that ordinary matter-which makes up everything we can touch and see-comprises a mere 4.9 percent of the Universe, and dark matter 26.8 percent. The other 68.3 percent is dark energy. Invisible to telescopes, dark matter is perceived through its gravitational pull on other objects in the cosmos. But its existence is not explained by the Standard Model of physics-the mainstream theory of the fundamental particles that make up matter and the forces that govern them.

Finding dark matter particles could require updating the Standard Model with futuristic theories such as "supersymmetry", which postulates the existence of a heavier sibling for every particle in the Universe, or extra dimensions. Expert observers' reactions ranged from "a truly amazing result", and "wow!", to advising caution. "The apparent detection of the signature of the first stars in the Universe will be a revolutionary discovery if it stands the tests of time," said Nobel Prize-awarded astrophysicist Brian Schmidt of The Australian National University. —AFP

Health

Royale Hayat Hospital celebrates 8 years of trust

KUWAIT: Royale Hayat Hospital has been named Best Hospital in Kuwait for the Eighth Year at the Service Hero Awards, Arab World's 100% consumer-driven customer satisfaction index. "Receiving this award for the Eighth time is an honor. We value this award, because it reflects the satisfaction of our community and customers. At Royale Hayat Hospital, we work as a team to provide the best and most advanced services and technology in the medical and hospitality industry. As chairman and members of the board, we are committed to fulfill the needs of patients and families in Kuwait". Since launching in 2006, Royale Hayat continues to provide the safest, most modern and highest quality of medical care and services to the Kuwaiti society in an environment of compassion, comfort and care. This vision has guaranteed Royale Hayat's leading place in the health sector and has redefined the benchmarks in hospitality.



Health savings outweigh costs of global warming

PARIS: The estimated cost of measures to limit Earth-warming greenhouse gas emissions can be more than offset by reductions in deaths and disease from air pollution, researchers said on Saturday. It would cost \$22.1 trillion (17.9 trillion euros) to \$41.6 trillion between 2020 and 2050 for the world to hold average global warming under two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit), a team projected in The Lancet Planetary Health journal.

For the lower, aspirational limit of 1.5 C, the cost would be between \$39.7 trillion and \$56.1 trillion, they estimated. But air pollution deaths could be reduced by 21-27 percent to about 100 million between 2020 and 2050 under the 2 C scenario, the team estimated, and by 28-32 percent to about 90 million at 1.5 C.

"Depending on the strategy used to mitigate climate change, estimates suggest that the health savings from reduced air pollution could be between 1.4-2.5 times greater than the costs of climate change mitigation, globally," they wrote. Health costs from air pollution include medical treatment, patient care, and lost productivity. The countries likely to see the biggest health savings were air pollution-ridden India and China, said the researchers, who used computer models to project future emissions, the costs of different scenarios for curbing them, and the tally in pollution-related deaths.

"The health savings are exclusively those related to curbing air pollution," study co-author Anil Markandya of the Basque Centre for Climate Change in Spain told AFP. "Other health benefits are not included, which of course makes our figures underestimate of the total benefits." The costs of limiting warming, Markandya explained, included higher taxes on fossil fuels like oil and coal, which in turn raise the costs of production. —AFP

'Paradigm shift' in the diagnosis of diabetes: Study

PARIS: Scientists on Friday unveiled a revised classification for diabetes, one they said could lead to better treatments and help doctors more accurately predict life-threatening complications from the disease. There are five distinct types of diabetes that can occur in adulthood, rather than the two currently recognized, they reported in The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology, a leading medical journal.

The findings are consistent with the growing trend toward "precision medicine," which takes into account differences between individuals in managing disease. In the same way that a patient requiring a transfusion must receive the right blood type, diabetes sub-types need different treatments, the study suggested. Similarly, scientists have also identified distinct kinds of microbiome—the bacterial ecosystem in our digestive tract—that can react differently to the same medication, rendering it more or less effective. "This is the first step towards personalized treat-

ment of diabetes," said senior author Leif Groop, an endocrinologist at Lund University in Sweden, adding that the new classification is a "paradigm shift" in how the disease is viewed. People with diabetes have excessively high blood glucose, or blood sugar, which comes from food. Some 420 million people around the world today suffer from diabetes, with the number expected to rise to 629 million by 2045, according to the International Diabetes Federation.

Currently, the disease is divided into two subtypes. With type-1 — generally diagnosed in childhood and accounting for about 10 percent of cases—the body simply doesn't make insulin, a hormone that helps regulate blood sugar levels. For type-2, the body makes some insulin but not enough, which means glucose stays in the blood. This form of the disease correlates highly with obesity and can, over time, lead to blindness, kidney damage, and heart disease or stroke. Acute cases may also require limb amputations.

'Exceeded expectations'

It has long been known that type-2 diabetes is highly variable, but classification has remained unchanged for decades. For the study, researchers monitored 13,270 newly diagnosed diabetes patients

ranging in age from 18 to 97. By isolating measurements of insulin resistance, insulin secretion, blood sugar levels, age, and the onset of illness, they distinguished five distinct clusters of the disease—three serious and two milder forms.

Among the severe types, a group of patients with insulin resistance—in which cells are unable to use insulin effectively—was at far higher risk of kidney disease. "This group has the most to gain from the new diagnostics as they are the ones who are currently most incorrectly treated," Groop said. Another group facing serious complications was composed of relatively young, insulin-deficient patients.

The third "severe" group were people with autoimmune diabetes corresponding to the original "type-1" diagnosis. The two other groups have milder types of the disease including one, which includes about 40 percent of the patients, beset with a form of diabetes related to advanced age. "This will enable earlier treatment to prevent complications in patients who are most at risk of being affected," said lead author Emma Ahlqvist, an associate professor at Lund University. The results were checked against three other studies from Sweden and Finland. "The outcome exceeded our expectations," said Groop. The researchers plan to launch similar studies in China and India. —AFP

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What's On

IWG celebrates the culture of Sri Lanka



Kaandeepan Bala, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Kuwait



Wife of the Vietnamese Ambassador, Lan Nguyen, Kaandeepan Bala, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Kuwait, 'Kuwait Times' editor-in-chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan and Narjes Al-Shatti, IWG's member cutting the cake of IWD. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



By Faten Omar

The International Women's Group (IWG) held its monthly meeting yesterday where the culture of Sri Lanka was celebrated at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Farwaniya. The event had a traditional fashion show, dancing, singing performance and screened a documentary about tourism in Sri Lanka.

During the speech of Kaandeepan Bala, Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Kuwait, underlined the close-knit relationship with Kuwait adding that the strong foundation of the Sri Lanka-Kuwait relationship can be readily discerned in the two countries' common views and interests in several areas. The ambassador also thanked IWG for providing this opportunity for Sri Lanka to proudly display its culture.

He pointed out "Sri Lanka is filled with romantic landscapes, rising mountains, lush forests, ocean and waterfalls, that it was considered the lost paradise by many a globe trotters. The stirring mountains carpeted with lush green tea gardens. It has a rich heritage, a potpourri of races, religions and cultures." Bala added that Sri Lanka is known by its tea and gems where it called "Land of gems".

The Board Member of International

Women's Group, Narjes Al-Shatti, told Kuwait Times that the meeting was also held in accordance with International Women's Day that will be on March 8. "We chose Sri Lanka because of Sirimavo Bandaranaike, who served as the nation's Prime Minister and was the world's first female head of government."

On IWG's upcoming activities, she said that the Ministry of Information Kuwait organized a tour of Kuwait on March 10, for IWG's members to know more about the Kuwait's milestones, adding that most of the spouses of the new ambassadors are interested in knowing more about Kuwait. Shatti noted that IWG is also set to hold its annual Spring Heritage Cultural Festival on March 21 to celebrate the beginning of spring along with celebrating Mother's Day.

"On April 1st, the embassy of Oman will organize a trip for our members to Oman on board of the Sultan's Yacht. After the tour, we will be visiting the orchestra of Omani Sultan." IWG, is a non-profit multinational group of women from more than 50 countries, which was formed with the objective of providing a forum for ladies to meet, form friendships and learn about each other's culture.



Mais Alghanim awarded for best customer service in the country

Mais Alghanim has succeeded in being the number one restaurant with the best customer service for the seventh time in a row. The award followed a 2017 poll conducted by Service Hero, the first performance index in Kuwait. The Service Hero annual awards ceremony was held in the Symphony Styles in Kuwait on February 19, 2018. The winning companies were identified after a rigorous data authentication protocol was conducted for the total 24,024 assessments that were collected online as well as via phone surveys, of which 19,356 were validated.

The 15 industry categories that were rated in the 2017 Customer Service Assessment included cafes, casual dining, fast food, new car sale, car service, clothes, electronics, home furniture, retail banks, Islamic Banks, ISP, mobile operators, private hospitals, regional Arab airlines, and supermarkets. Each industry category was



measured across up to eight service dimensions on a ten-point scale, which are reliability, speed, product quality, staff quality, value for money, location, call center and website quality.

Mais Alghanim's win for the seventh time in a row is a high-level achievement that it was able to accomplish thanks to the ongoing efforts to maintain the quality service it has been providing for its customers since 1953. In this competition, Mais Alghanim has shown the greatness of its achievements in hospitality and outstanding services, which it develops year after year, allowing it to stay in the first place for the seventh year in a row.

The poll was conducted in a bid to show which services or goods really exceeded customer expectations in Kuwait. The awards were given following a direct vote through the application and an online voting

that lasted for a whole year and included a large segment of consumers interested in assessing the services provided by companies in Kuwait.

The Service Hero index follows the protocols of Esomar, a leading European organization in the promotion of market research standards, as well as it adheres to the American Customer Satisfaction Index standards. Service Hero is monitored by an independent advisory board which consists of sponsor educational institutions, particularly the American University of Kuwait, the Gulf University for Science and Technology, the Australian College of Kuwait, the Kuwait Maastricht Business School, as well as senior professionals from some of the most prominent institutions, including the American Customer Satisfaction Index, the Boston Consulting Group and Noor

Financial Investment Company in Kuwait.

Commenting on this great achievement, Managing Director of Barakat Foods, in charge of the Mais Alghanim Restaurants, Chawki Barakat, said, "The fact that Mais Alghanim has been number 1 in the catering sector for seven consecutive years is a great accomplishment for us and a greater responsibility towards our customers." Adding, "The Barakat Foods administration seeks to develop the culture of hospitality and it continuously trains its staff and workers at all the company's facilities to keep pace with the aspirations of Mais Alghanim's customers by providing them with the best service they could possibly expect. This is how we were finally awarded

and we dedicate this win to our customers who put all their trust in us and we promise to remain at the same level of hospitality as ever." He also praised the efforts of all employees in all business units, without whom Mais Alghanim would not have been able to remain in the first place since 2010. Meanwhile, the 2018 poll is currently available for all those who wish to participate, either through the Service Hero website, on social networking sites or even on the Service Hero smartphone application. Customers have all year to vote as they are given the time and chance to express their satisfaction and share their opinion regarding all the services they use and the products they buy.

TIES announcement

You are cordially invited to our Tafseer class (Divine Wisdom from the Last Testament) today at 7:00 pm. In this class, we will focus on Surat Al-Tahreem (The Prohibition), verses 9 - 10. We will gloss the meaning of 'jihad' and examine its different con-

notations, contemplate the various methods Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to spread his message, and explore how he was instructed to deal with polytheists and hypocrites. We will also learn about the wives of two righteous prophets who were punished on earth and then consigned to the Hell-Fire, eliciting some lessons from that noteworthy parable. Finally, we will learn about the categories of people for whom Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) will intercede on Judgment Day.

TV



00:10 The Night Crew
01:55 American Ninja
03:45 Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice



00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 Wild Africa: Rivets Of Life
02:40 Treehouse Masters



00:00 Call The Midwife
01:00 Liar
01:50 Line Of Duty



00:00 It Takes A Killer
00:30 It Takes A Killer
01:00 The Menendez Murders: Erik



00:05 Nate Bargatze: Full Time
00:55 Comedy Central Presents
01:20 Chris Ramsey Stand Up

09:20 Idiotsitter
09:45 The Jim Gaffigan Show
10:10 Detroiters



00:30 Ultimate Survival
01:20 Everest: Beyond The Limit
02:10 Everest: Beyond The Limit



00:50 Too Pretty To Live
01:45 Kindred Spirits
02:40 A Haunting



00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binny And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer

Witch
12:05 Hank Zipzer
12:30 Alex & Co.
12:55 Alex & Co.



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 Vampirina
01:00 Vampirina
01:30 Art Attack



00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Heavy Rescue
01:50 Railroad Australia



06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow

Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much
Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat



00:00 Revenge Body With Khloe
Kardashian
01:00 Live From The Red Carpet



00:10 The Chase
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Emmerdale
02:00 Coronation Street



00:00 United Stuff Of America
01:00 Modern Marvels
02:00 Missing In Alaska



00:20 Swamp People
01:10 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers

12:40 American Pickers
13:30 Mountain Men
14:20 American Pickers



00:45 The Shelbourne
01:10 Tripping Out With Ali & Georgia
01:40 Eat: The Story Of Food



00:10 Wicked Tuna
01:00 Locked Up Abroad
02:00 India's Mega Kitchens



00:20 Make You Laugh Out Loud
01:10 Savage Kingdom: Uprising
02:00 Big Cat Wars

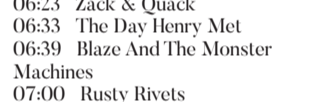


00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion

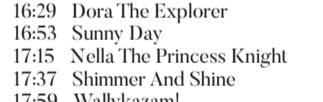
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger



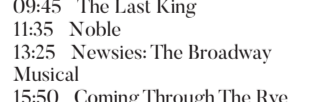
00:16 Kid-E-Cats
00:21 Shimmer And Shine
00:45 Sunny Day



00:10 Wicked Tuna
01:00 Locked Up Abroad
02:00 India's Mega Kitchens



00:20 Make You Laugh Out Loud
01:10 Savage Kingdom: Uprising
02:00 Big Cat Wars



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion

15:15 Operation Arctic
16:55 A Town Called Panic
18:20 Song Of The Sea



00:30 Live On The Red Carpet: The
Arrivals 2018
02:30 Live From The Red Carpet



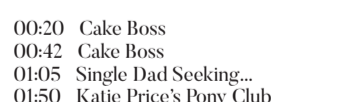
00:40 The Strangest UFO Stories Of
All Time
01:30 The Strangest UFO Stories Of
All Time



01:10 Hate Story 3
03:00 Hate Story 3
03:20 Mr. Mobile



01:30 Speakeasy
03:00 Scorched
04:45 Terminus



00:20 Cake Boss
00:42 Cake Boss
01:05 Single Dad Seeking...

Lifestyle | Gossip

Liam Gallagher cancels gig



Liam Gallagher has pulled out of his gig in Cologne last night. The 'Wall of Glass' hitmaker was due to perform in the city's Palladium venue but has advised fans the show will no longer be taking place because he is ill. However, Liam is hoping to be recovered enough for his gig in Berlin tomorrow. He tweeted: "The Beast from the East has wiped out the Cock of the North. I'm going to have to reschedule tonight's Cologne gig under Drs order as I have a nose, ear and sinus infection. Been told to rest up and take antibiotics. See you in Berlin tomorrow LG x (sic)" It is not yet clear when a rescheduled show will take place. Liam is no stranger to controversy in Germany as he was arrested when Oasis toured there in 2002. And the 45-year-old rocker recently accused Munich police of pulling out his teeth when he was taken into custody for bodily harm, trespassing and material damage following a bar-room brawl which saw him lose both his front gnashes. He explained: "If I was to hit you in the mouth, you'd think you'd have a fat lip, right? I didn't have a fat lip. I was still whistling while I worked, mate. "Here's what I think happened: it all went down after I kicked a copper at some point in the lobby, I think, because after that I woke up in the nick. So I think they give me a whack over the head in the back of the van and I think they've just gone, 'later on. Because they were pulled out completely perfect. "They were going: 'Oh, as you were coming up the stairs, you tripped and they whacked on there.' But they'd have broken, wouldn't they? You don't have them completely fall out like that. And I woke up in a prison cell, handcuffed, no teeth, but I could still [whistle] and no other marks on me. So I'm going: they ripped them out because I did one of their geezers, that's what happened there."



Anne-Marie's album fears

Anne-Marie is a "bit scared" about releasing her debut album. The 26-year-old singer will release her long-awaited LP 'Speak Your Mind' next month and though she's been waiting ages for fans to hear her record, she is nervous about the reaction when it finally drops. She said: "It's finally coming. It's actually so scary now as well. I was really impatient about it coming out, and now it's finally on, I'm a bit scared. "It's called 'Speak Your Mind', and yeah I'm excited. I can't wait... "It's scary because it's taken about five years, it's been in the making for five years. "People's expectation is scaring me, cos I hope that they like it, but you never know. I'm just hoping everyone likes it. I've tried to put as much as myself on it as possible. "Loads of different vibes, different subjects, different things that I'm talking about - it's just scary." The 'Heavy' singer admitted she's had every detail of the record planned for a long time but feigned ignorance when asked about it until recently. Speaking to BANG Showbiz at the Global Awards, she said: "I knew everything about it, all of it. I knew the title of it, I knew what songs were gonna be on it, and I was like 'I don't know.' " Anne-Marie has been busy promoting her music on radio and ahead of the interviews, she was nervous about accidentally saying something inappropriate. She admitted: "It's funny because they were asking me at the start of the week, 'what are you most worried about?' " And I was like, 'swearing'. And they've been trying to make me swear the whole time. 'Why are you making me do that? I'm not gonna be allowed on radio ever again?' But today I said penis... "I've actually loved it. You just chat! You're having a chat with your mate."

Craig David enjoys his own music



Craig David "enjoys" hearing his songs in clubs. The 36-year-old singer insists he isn't "too cool for school" and could never pretend he didn't care when he hears his music because he is so "proud" of his work. Asked what he does if his music comes on in a club, he said: "I mean, I don't go nuts but I'll enjoy it, for sure. I'm definitely not one of those guys to play it too cool for school, because I'm proud of all the music that I make." However, the '7 Days' hitmaker doesn't go clubbing as much as he used to because he doesn't want his energy levels to be depleted when he has a gig. Speaking at the Global Awards, he exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "If I'm absolutely honest, when I'm on stage that's my club. I don't clubbing like I used to, because there's a finite amount of energy you have every day, and I wanna make sure that I give 110% on stage. "Whereas I did the clubbing thing like crazy back in the day and I know how that feels." And Craig thinks it is "beautiful" seeing other people enjoying his music when he's out. He said: "That's the most beautiful thing, it's flattering and it's what I make music for. I want to just make people feel everything I'm creating. "If it's just on the way to the club, or getting ready, or someone on their way to school or whatever it may be - you're slowly becoming part of people's DNA. "I think that's amazing, but when you're in a club and it's blasting and you're seeing people actually having the time of their lives, it's the best thing ever."

Led Zeppelin working on 'other projects'

Jimmy Page has teased Led Zeppelin are working on "other projects". The 'Stairway to Heaven' group mark their 50th anniversary this year and while he's excited about the upcoming release of a pictorial book he and fellow surviving members, Robert Plant and John Paul Jones, have contributed to, as well as a reissue of live album 'How The West Was Won', he admitted fans can expect some other treats to mark the milestone. He said: "It's a bit early to talk about that. "I'm really happy we're all doing [the book] and I am really very happy to be working with the Reel Art Press. They produce fine books. "But there will be other projects too that we're working on and that are being discussed right now." Jimmy has been supervising the remastering of the 2003 live album - which highlights the best performances from Led Zeppelin's legendary concerts at the Los Angeles Forum and Long Beach Arena on June 25 and 27, 1972 showcasing the band at the peak of their career - but decided against including tracks that didn't make the final cut of the record. He told MOJO magazine: "I'm not entirely sure why 'Tangerine' was left off because it was really good. "But I didn't want to mess with the album so we haven't added it or any other tracks. "What's important though is that you can get the album on vinyl for the first time. It's a jolly good 5.1 mix too." The group's website previously teased that they will be giving their fans lots of "surprises" for their anniversary, including never-heard-before tracks. In a video posted on the Academy of Achievement website, Jimmy said: "There'll be Led Zeppelin product coming out, for sure, that people haven't heard, because I'm working on that. Next year will be the 50th year, so there's all manner of surprises coming out." Led Zeppelin formed in 1968 and were joined by the late John Bonham on drums until his death in 1980.



Jason Momoa's The Crow remake gets release date



Jason Momoa's 'The Crow' remake will open on October 11, 2019. The 38-year-old actor started shooting the reboot of Alex Proyas' 1994 fantasy thriller 'The Crow' in November and Sony has now set an opening date for the upcoming flick. Last year, Momoa was revealed to be portraying the titular undead vigilante in the new version - which is to be helmed by Corin Hardy. The original movie starred the late Brandon Lee in the title role, who died when he was accidentally shot and killed during filming. As with the original movie, the film will be based on the 1989 graphic novel by James O'Barr, but it was previously reported the remake will be more faithful to the original source. Speaking in 2016 about his shooting schedule, O'Barr revealed previously said: "As of right now, it's slated to start pre-production in February with a very talented British director named Corin Hardy. "I'm involved in every aspect of the film and working closely with the director." The plot focuses on rock musician Eric Draven and his fiancée Shelly who are attacked by a gang of street thugs who shoot the couple, but when Eric dies in the hospital he is resurrected by a crow and then goes on a revenge mission to punish his attackers for killing the love of his life. The remake has long been delayed and has previously seen a number of actors, including Luke Evans, Nicholas Hoult, Jack O'Connell and Jack Huston in line for the lead role.

Nadine Coyle was always distant from Girls Aloud

Nadine Coyle claims Girls Aloud rarely spoke to one another off stage. The 32-year-old singer admitted there was always a "distance" between herself, Sarah Harding, Cheryl, Kimberley Walsh and Nicola Roberts, and they used to stay in their own dressing rooms before a show. She said: "There was always a distance between us. "We all had our own dressing rooms and we'd just meet up to go on stage." And even after a gig, the 'Sound of the Underground' hitmakers wouldn't hang out together. Nadine explained in an interview with Fabulous magazine: "A lot of the dancers were my friends from very early on, so I'd be going out and finding the local gay bar, which meant that we distanced ourselves." And when the quintet won their first Brit Award, Best British Single for 'The Promise', in 2009, Nadine had no interest in celebrating with her bandmates. She admitted: "What I most enjoyed about that night was going home. I just wanted to be with my friends and have a drink, and I enjoyed doing that way more than any of the rest of it. "It's never been about the success for me. That has never driven me. "It was great to be there, and I still have the award sitting in the house, but it doesn't bring me any joy. "I've never seen it as a sign of achievement or success. So I was there, I went to the parties, but I couldn't wait to get back home." However, the 'Insatiable' singer insists the group - who formed in 2002 on reality show 'Popstars: The Rivals' - were not in a totally "toxic" state or she would have quit before their hiatus in 2009. She said: "I just didn't see them. If it had been toxic or horrendous I don't think I'd have been able to do it. I'd have been like, 'You're all right, I'll find another job, thank you.' " And even now, the 'Go to Work' singer rarely speaks to her former "colleagues" but doesn't miss them being in her life. She said: "I don't speak to them. I've not spoken to them in a long, long time. Sarah and I occasionally speak. Very occasionally. She phoned me before she went into 'Celebrity Big Brother' and I was like: 'What are you doing?' I was worried about how they'd portray her. But that's it." Asked if she misses them, she added: "No. They were great colleagues and we worked very well together for a long time. But I have lots of great friends of my own."



The Vaccines reflect on Pete Robertson's departure

The Vaccines were "lost" after the departure of Pete Robertson. The 'Post Break-Up Sex' hitmakers admitted they felt they had "lost control" around the time the drummer left the group after he was left exhausted by touring in support of their 2015 LP 'English Graffiti', and they were struggling to figure out where they wanted their next album to go. Guitarist Freddie Cowan said: "At that stage, we had a lot of personal maintenance to take care of." Singer Justin Young added: "Pete leaving was testament to how tense it got. We'd lost control, where it feels like someone else's hands are on the wheel. "We don't know what record we wanted to make next, or what band we wanted to be. We were lost." The duo, along with bassist Arni Arnason, began working on new material in Autumn 2016 but were still struggling to put together something they liked. Eventually, Justin received a call from Ross Orton - who produced Arctic Monkeys' 'AM' - and they credit his straight-talking with helping them get back on track and find a focus again. The singer told Q magazine: "He just bitched about our demos for an hour. "He goes, 'I'm confused, because I really thought you had a curled upper lip and there was a bit of bite to what you guys did.' " Freddie added: "He's very real. We had everyone saying, 'Yeah, it's great' and what we needed was, 'Yes, but there's a lot of work to be done guys.' "At one point, he said, 'Have you actually got a drummer?' Sometimes, you don't recognize these things. We were asleep, drifting." The group then recruited new drummer Yoann Intonti and keyboardist Tim Lanham, and will release new album 'Combat Sports' next month.

Lifestyle | Gossip



Hamill not convinced Luke Skywalker is gone

Mark Hamill "refuses to believe" Luke Skywalker is dead. The 66-year-old actor seemingly said goodbye to his beloved 'Star Wars' character in the eighth installment of the franchise, 'The Last Jedi', but he still doesn't think that was the end for his Jedi alter ego. He told the BBC: "I refuse to believe that he's gone. My theory is he just teleported to somewhere else and left his robe behind. 'He teleported to a nudist colony - that's what I'm hoping.'" While 'The Last Jedi' is up for four Oscars at the Academy Awards, Mark insisted he isn't too bothered about recognition. He said: "It's nice but that's not why you do it - you do it for the passion and that's why you should do it, not because you think it's going to win lots of awards." The veteran actor will be attending the Oscars for the first time in four decades to present Best Animated Short, but he admitted he'd rather stay at home. He said: "[I always enjoyed] watching it in my pyjamas, saying 'Look at her hair!'" "Now I have to put on a tuxedo and be part of it because I'm presenting. 'Believe me, as big an honor as it is, to be part of it, it's much more fun to be watching it at home.'" And Mark won't even spend much time watching the ceremony because he thinks it's more fun to stay backstage. He said: "I hope it's fun and light-hearted, you know? 'Sometimes it's shaded by causes and politics but I think it's a good time for everyone to just relax and enjoy themselves. I know that's what I'll do. 'What happens when you present is you go backstage early - and I don't come back to my seat. I just hang out backstage, eat all the free food and just stay away from my seat - there's always the seat-filler. Usually they're much more handsome than I am, so it's a win-win.'"

Vikander's crippling Tomb Raider stunts

Alicia Vikander was left "crippled" by the stunts on 'Tomb Raider'. The 29-year-old actress threw herself into the stunt work as adventurer Lara Croft in her latest movie and she initially found her rigorous training unbearably painful. She said: "At first it hurts. So much so that you can't walk or get out of bed for the first three weeks. I was, like, crippled. I had pain places I didn't know existed." Alicia's version of Lara is not the pin-up associated with the video game or Angelina Jolie's take on the character, with her famous micro-shorts ditched for trousers, and the actress thinks it was important to show her alter ego as more than just a sex symbol. She said: "It's not just the character of Lara Croft, it's the society that's changed. 'I think what we actually express as being extremely attractive or sexy is just different. 'Even young boys or girls on the street wouldn't comment, 'Oh, a pair of shorts is what I find sexy'. It's actually changing, which is a lovely thing. 'People say, 'Oh you don't want to make her sexy?' No, I want to make a young woman who is sexy but I want her to be fierce, cool, witty, funny. 'I want her to be somebody you want to hang out with, as a woman and a man. Society's changing so this is more up to date with what we find sexy.'" While Alicia had a number of action scenes in the film, nothing left her more "terrified" than the day a number of gamers visited the set. She said: "We had on set what are called social influencers, like the biggest gamers. 'And I was terrified, for obvious reasons. It's a very beloved character. 'People who have followed Lara Croft over the years know her inside out. I want to make a character that lives up to the character they all love.'"



Lawrence unsure whether to show family Red Sparrow



Jennifer Lawrence doesn't want her family to watch 'Red Sparrow' because of the sex scenes. The 27-year-old actress plays a ballerina who becomes a spy after suffering a career-ending injury in the new thriller, and as well as going through some unpleasant experiences, she has some raunchy scenes with her co-star Joel Edgerton, so she admitted she isn't sure she wants her mother and father to see the film. She said: "My favorite scene? I don't know. Making out with Joel is always fun. Hopefully there's a second movie..." "I think my parents are going to have a hard time. I don't know if they should watch it." Jennifer enjoyed working with Joel, 43, because they have a similar approach to their craft. She explained: "Both of us hate staying focused at work, so we were complete idiots until, 'Action!' We're very similar that way." While the Oscar-winning star had a great experience on the movie, she did find the ballet training incredibly hard. She said: "It was the hardest thing I've ever done in my life. I have so much respect for dancers. 'I mean, the physical and mental discipline that goes into doing something like that. 'These people start when they're four, so we had to cram 20 years of training into just four months. It was really difficult, but I think it worked out.'" The film is directed by Francis Lawrence - who she also worked on on the 'Hunger Games' franchise - and Jennifer admitted it helped her make a step up into "more adult" projects with him there on set. She told OK! magazine: "It was amazing because I feel like it was something I needed to do. 'I needed to make that next step and make something more adult. I wanted that. 'But having him at the helm, somebody who I have known for so long and trust as a filmmaker, it was perfect for that transition.'"

Stone's back to work nerves

Sharon Stone was terrified about returning to acting after overcoming her health problems. The 59-year-old actress has been out of the spotlight for several years after suffering a stroke and brain haemorrhage in September 2001, but she can now be seen in Steven Soderbergh's new TV drama 'Mosaic' as murder victim Olivia Lake. And though she jumped at the chance to appear on the show, she admitted she had to mask her insecurities about being back in front of the camera. Asked if she was nervous, she said: "Yes, I absolutely felt insecure. But I certainly didn't want anyone to think I did. 'I was asking myself, 'What's going to happen if I can't do it? 'What's going to happen if I fall apart?'" Sharon was particularly nervous because the stroke left her with memory problems, whereas she used to be famed in the acting world for quickly being word-perfect with her scripts. She said: "I lost my short- and long-term memory when I had the stroke and it took me a long time to get it back, because I had to learn to learn. 'I was such a hot shot, back in the day. I had a photographic memory so I didn't even have to learn lines. Coming back to it, I didn't know what the hell I was doing.'" But the 'Basic Instinct' star - who was given just a 5 per cent chance of survival after the brain haemorrhage - felt "really lucky" to be able to bring her personal struggles to the role in the drama series. She told Grazia magazine: "If Steven Soderbergh had asked me to come and read the phone book, I'd probably have done it. 'But I feel really lucky that he asked me to do something that was so personal and raw and revealing because, frankly, I've been through hell and it was great to be able to bring all of that insecurity and compassion to the screen.'"



Danny Boyle to helm a musical around Beatles music

Danny Boyle has teamed up with Richard Curtis to create a new musical movie based on The Beatles' songs. The 61-year-old filmmaker - who won the Best Director Academy Award for his drama 'Slumdog Millionaire' - has joined forces with the screenwriter, who is best known for his classic British movies such as 'Four Weddings and a Funeral', 'Notting Hill' and 'Love Actually', to make a new cinematic story inspired by the Liverpool born Fab Four. The Daily Mail newspaper reports that Curtis, 61, has penned the script for the musical which has the tentative title 'All You Need Is Love' - the name of the band's 1967 single of the same name - but Working Title, who are producing the picture, insisted the project is still untitled. From what is known at this moment is that the film will tell the story of a struggling musician who thinks he is the only one who remembers The Beatles. Himesh Patel - best known for playing Tamwar Masood in 'EastEnders' - has been cast as the musician and is so far the only star to be attached to the musical. The Beatles were comprised of John Lennon, Sir Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Sir Ringo Starr and they were together from 1960 until 1970. They became widely regarded as the foremost and most influential rock band and their discography includes numerous hits, like 'Ticket To Ride', 'I Am the Walrus' and 'Get Back', and seminal albums such as 'Revolver', 'Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band' and 'Abbey Road'. They are the best-selling band in history, with estimated sales of more than 800 million physical and digital albums worldwide. As well as their music, the band also starred in a number of films based around their hit songs including 1964 'A Hard Day's Night' and 'Help!'. Out of the four members, only two survive - Paul and Ringo - after John was murdered in 1980 and George died from lung cancer in November 2001. — Bang Showbiz



Steven Spielberg's exhausting shoot



Steven Spielberg was left "sleep deprived" shooting 'Ready Player One'. The 71-year-old filmmaker admitted his latest sci-fi saga has been one of the most "difficult" projects he's ever worked on and he needed to learn a lot of new skills to make it work. He said: "It's the third most difficult film I've made after 'Jaws' and 'Saving Private Ryan'. 'I think there is a distinction between a physical challenge, which was both 'Jaws' and 'Saving Private Ryan' and another kind of challenge, which is trying to do something technologically new that has never been done before. 'Going from a live-action, real-world production - with sets and props and extras and chases and all kinds of rigmarole - to digital capture in a volume (performance capture stage), sometimes with just a day in between, created a level of effort I had never experienced before. 'I had to learn how to make a film like this while I was making a film like this. And that meant a lot of trial and error. 'I was only getting four or five hours sleep a night, because I was always thinking about what I was going to do the next day. So it was maybe the most sleep-deprived experience I've ever had making a movie.'" The acclaimed director admitted he wondered if it would have been an "easier" movie to make when he was younger, but he thinks it needed the level of experience he has now to pull it off. He said: "At the same time, it was one of the most fulfilling experiences I've had. 21 made the movie when I was 69 years old. I had to ask myself, several times, would this have been any easier if I had been 29 years old? I think it was so complicated I wouldn't have had any clue what to do at 29. 'I had a lot of experience that gave me confidence to say, 'This is the time to tell this story'. 'I probably would have been just as tired at 29 as I was at 69. Puppies get more tired than old dogs. They run around and fall asleep. 'Old dogs measure their distance a little bit better - based on the experience of being an old dog.'"



ELIE SAAB'S VICTORIAN FASHION AT PARIS FASHION WEEK

Elie Saab went to the "dark romance" of the Victorian era for inspiration for his brooding fall-winter offerings. The house produced a predominantly black collection of high necklines, statement bell and Juliette sleeves, defined shoulders and lots and lots and lots of ruffles.

There was a delicacy to some of the fabrics and detailing such as in large velvet bows draped from collars inspired by the 19th-century paintings of France's Auguste Renoir. Saab fused that covered-up era's styles with an exploration of all things floral - and served it on his bread-and-butter design choice, cinched-waisted gowns. The collection, entitled "Winter Bouquets," had blooms as prints, embroideries and appliques in white, blush, powder blue and burgundy. — AP



Models present creations by Elie Saab during the 2018/2019 fall/winter collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Feature



Refugee children skate at the "7Hills Skate Park" in Amman, that was constructed in 2014 by passionate skateboarding volunteers from all over the world thanks to an initiative launched by a German NGO and a local Jordanian association which offers free skateboarding lessons to refugees several times a week. — AFP photos

Jordan skate park puts smile on faces of refugee children

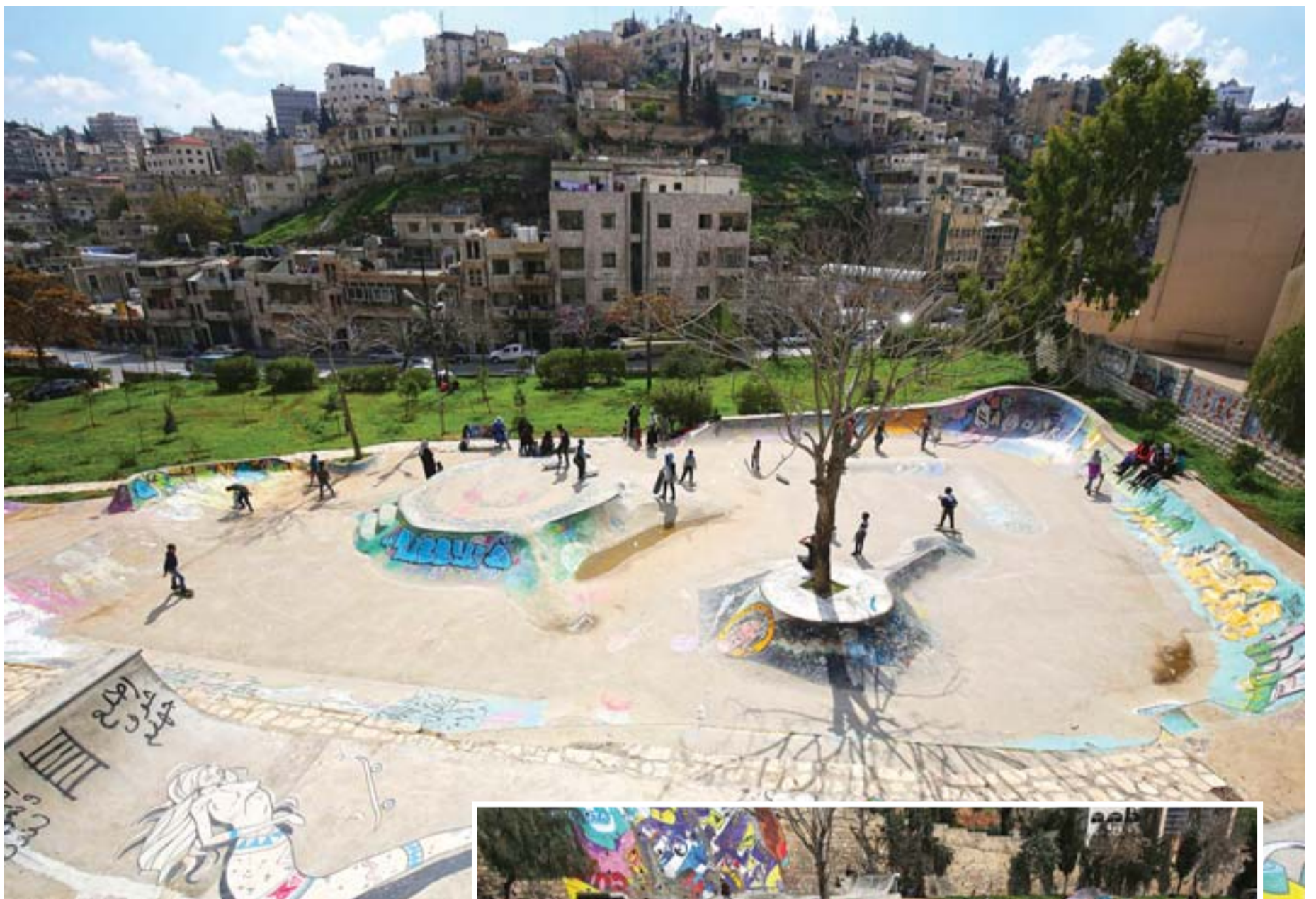
Hair flying in the wind Manar, Amniya and Farida hurtle down the slopes of "7Hills Skate Park" in the Jordanian capital Amman where refugee children come to play. The 650-square-metre (almost 7,000-foot) concrete space was built in December 2014 by skateboard enthusiasts from around the world. The money was raised during a fundraising campaign by a German NGO and a local association that offers free classes for the children of refugees from countries such as Syria, Iraq or Sudan. Mohammed Duma, a 40-year-old Sudanese man who fled the war in Darfur, looks on with pride and a touch of apprehension as his two daughters, aged four and eight, learn to ride a skateboard with their trainer.

“ This place makes me forget that I’m a refugee ”

“We come here every Monday. Life in Jordan is very expensive, it’s the only place where I can take my girls to play and have fun for free,” said Duma. He has applied with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for relocation to the United States, Canada or Britain. Salima Issa, a 26-year-old housewife, sits on a patch of grass with her two-year-old son, who is busy nibbling on crackers. She watches as her son Mohammed, four, and eight-year-old daughter Amniya cruise by on their skateboards. Issa too fled Darfur, where the conflict that broke out in 2003 has killed hundreds of thousands and displaced millions of others.



‘Fall until you succeed’
The skatepark’s name was inspired by the topography of Amman, a city built on seven hills. “This park has become a breath of fresh air for young refugees from Sudan, Somalia, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Palestine,” said Mohammed Zakaria, one of the park managers.



Skateboarding “is a difficult sport, which allows you to gain self-confidence and learn that falling is not the end of the world, and that you have to try a second and third time to succeed,” he explained. “Life is like that and we all learn from our mistakes,” said the 32-year-old Jordanian.

He said around 140 boys and girls take free classes every week, mostly run by foreign volunteers. Jordan hosts refugees from more than 40 countries, including over 650,000 people from Syria, according to the UNHCR. Youssef Khaled, 14, who lost his father in Somalia’s war, arrived six years ago with his mother and sister, and does not miss an opportunity to come to the skate park. “There are not many places to have fun in Amman, and even if there were, we wouldn’t have the money to go anyway,” said the teenager. “This place makes me forget that I’m a refugee,” he said, showing off his latest trick on the skateboard. — AFP



Lifestyle

MONDAY, MARCH 5, 2018



A bee takes flower nectar at a park in Kuwait City yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Elton John left stage because of 'rude' fan

Elton John left the stage in Las Vegas because a "rude" fan was interfering with the performance, he said on Saturday. "A fan put his hands on the piano keys while I was playing and continued to do so even after I asked him to stop," the 70-year-old British entertainer said in a statement posted on Twitter. "This guy was rude, disruptive and had no care or respect for our show and so I let him know how I felt, then left the stage until they had removed him," John said.

The incident occurred during a performance of "Saturday Night," for which John had brought fans onstage. He later returned to the stage, but the group of fans did not. John, who in the 1980s became one of the first openly gay major celebrities, announced earlier this week that he plans "go out with a bang" with a global tour that will open on September 8 and last through 2021. — AFP



Elton John

'Get Out' tops Spirit Awards ahead of Oscars

Jordan Peele's satirical horror flick "Get Out" triumphed Saturday at the Spirit Awards—the latest in a string of honors the film has picked up, with the Oscars just one day away. Generating rave reviews from experts and audiences alike, Peele's feature directorial debut—which cost under \$5 million to produce—has raked in \$255 million at theaters worldwide. The film—a dark send-up of the African American experience and of suburban white guilt over racial inequality—follows a young black man, Chris (Daniel Kaluuya), who is so nervous about meeting the family of his white girlfriend (Allison Williams) that he fails to realize the menace lurking within their mansion.

"This project didn't start as a statement. It began as me wanting to make a film in my favorite genre," said Peele, who also bagged best director honors. "I sat down and I would smoke a little bit of weed and try to make a mind-bending horror film... and I realized there were a lot of people locked up for smoking less weed than I was smoking when I made the movie." The Film Independent Spirit Awards, an annual celebration of low-budget cinema that takes place on Santa Monica beach just outside Los Angeles, are seen as a strong indicator of movies that could strike Oscars gold.

Five of the last six best feature winners have gone on to best picture glory at the Academy Awards, including "Moonlight," "Spotlight" and "Birdman."

'Fearless'

The prize for best actor went to American-French rising star Timothee Chalamet, whose acclaimed performance as a lovelorn teen in "Call Me by Your Name" has seen him win numerous awards. Frances McDormand won best actress, her third Spirit Award, for her searing performance as a rage-filled grieving mother in Martin McDonagh's black comedy "Three Billboards Outside Ebbing, Missouri." "I continue to be amazed that you let me get to the microphone. Are you crazy? One thing I know is that we are allowed to swear," joked McDormand, a mainstay on this year's awards circuit who is the favorite for the Oscar.

"Do you know how hard it has been not to swear for the



The cast of 'Get Out' poses with the Best Feature Award in the press room during the 2018 Film Independent Spirit Awards, in Santa Monica, California. — AFP photos

last couple of months?" she asked, before cursing a blue streak. Sam Rockwell won best supporting actor for "Three Billboards," in which he plays opposite McDormand as a racist, violent police officer. The best supporting actress prize went to Allison Janney, for playing figure skater Tonya Harding's cold, brutal mother LaVona in Craig Gillespie's acclaimed biopic "I, Tonya." "I play a lot of confused and complicated women, but not anyone this dark. I don't think people think of me that way," Janney said backstage. "I guess I have to play more dark characters—that's in my future."

Best screenplay for 'Lady Bird'

Coming-of-age tale "Call Me by Your Name" had led the nominations going into Saturday's event. Set in 1980s Italy and starring Armie Hammer opposite Chalamet, it tells the

story of 17-year-old Elio as he begins a relationship with his father's American research assistant, Oliver. The film was nominated in six categories, winning best cinematography and editing ahead of Chalamet's triumph. Josh and Benny Safdie's heist thriller "Good Time" tied in second place with nods for directing, editing and three actors, including for its star Robert Pattinson—but went home empty-handed.

Greta Gerwig's comedy "Lady Bird"—up for best picture at the Oscars—earned her a best screenplay award while real-life couple Emily Gordon and Kumail Nanjiani took best first screenplay for "The Big Sick," the comedy story of their romance. — AFP

Ooredoo and FASTtelco participate in Kuwait Comic Con

Ooredoo Kuwait and FASTtelco participated in the Kuwait Comic Con, which concluded its activities last week. The event took place over the course of three days in the Kuwait International Fair in Mishref. The sponsorship comes to reiterate Ooredoo's commitment to sharing the passions of its customers.

The Kuwait Comic Con is a convention that focuses on comic books and their spin-offs, including video games, movies, cartoons, and much more. Thousands of participants from all age groups attended the event. FASTtelco, a company owned by Ooredoo, participated in a

special booth where it displayed a number of its latest special offers targeting video game fans. The offers utilize high-speed internet to make streaming and downloading content from the internet a hassle-free simple process.

Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Al-Ayoub noted that Ooredoo's participation signifies its commitment to all the passions of its customers. "Comic books and their heroes are cross-generational; they speak to different age groups in different mediums. We're happy to be part of this convention and its success," he said.

The convention included a number of activities featuring renowned artists with big presence in the comic industry, including voice actors David Hayter, Nolan North, Michael Fassbender, Cara Theobald, Fred Tatasciore, in addition to producers and game designers such as Michael Murray and Katsuhiro Harada, among other guests.

This photo shows (from right) Mijbil Al-Ayoub, Sheikh Khalid Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and Sheikh Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah during the event.

