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World Bank cautions warming climate will displace millions

World water forum opens after dire UN warning

Panel raps finance ministry expenses; MP warns minister over closing charity

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's budgets committee yesterday blamed the finance ministry for unnecessarily inflating financial allocations for certain items in the budget. Head of the committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said the ministry presented "illogical" reasons for its actions, giving an example of the ministry allocating KD 50 million to face the security situation following the suicide attack on the Shiite Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque, although the reasons for the allocations are no longer valid. Abdulsamad added the ministry of defense has not submitted the final accounts for the armament budget approved in the 2015/2016 fiscal year.

The Assembly's public funds committee yesterday decided to refer to the public prosecution the issue of the finance ministry's insistence to allow an investment company to utilize the state-owned Kuwait International Fairgrounds in Mishref. The committee said it took the decision to prevent further losses to public funds. Meanwhile, opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair yesterday warned the prime minister against cutting water supplies to consumers who fail to pay their bills, saying that such action is unacceptable in a rich country like Kuwait.

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WASHINGTON/BRASILIA: The wave of refugees fleeing crop failures, droughts and rising sea levels will grow drastically over the next three decades if world governments do not intervene, the World Bank warned yesterday. By 2050, 143 million "climate migrants" will face an "existential threat" and be displaced, the World Bank said in a new report. That includes 86 million in Sub-Saharan Africa, 40 million in South Asia and 17 million in Latin America.

These regions are home to more than half the developing world's population, and 2.8 percent of inhabitants are among those at risk, according to the report, which the bank said was the first to address the question of migration spurred by climate change. Climate change has inexorably become an "engine of migration," forcing individuals, families and even whole communities to seek more viable homes, World Bank CEO Kristalina Georgieva said. "Every day, climate change becomes a more urgent economic, social and existential threat to countries and their people," she said in a statement.

But, she said, "The number of climate migrants could be reduced by tens of millions as a result of global action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and with far-sighted development planning." The report said Ethiopia's population could almost double by 2050 and migration will rise due to diminishing harvests. In Bangladesh, climate migrants could be the single-largest group among all internally displaced persons. And in Mexico, people increasingly will gravitate towards urban areas away from more vulnerable regions.

At a recent conference of the International Organization for Migration, France's Ecology Minister Nicolas Hulot said climate issues already were displacing twice as many people as conflicts, and might already be the main cause of migration. Gilbert Houngbo, president of the UN's International Fund for Agricultural Development, said fast-growing rural populations in Sub-Saharan Africa that cannot grow



BRASILIA: Brazilian President Michel Temer arrives for the opening ceremony of the 8th World Water Forum at Itamaraty Palace yesterday. — AFP

enough food to feed themselves were particularly vulnerable.

The region's inhabitants currently number more than one billion but will rise to 2.7 billion people by 2060, according to World Bank figures. Nevertheless the World Bank said climate-linked migration need not descend into humanitarian crisis. Researchers believe the number could be reduced by 80 percent if countries reduce emissions, account for migration in devel-

opment planning and make investments in studying the process of internal climate migration. "Without the right planning and support, people migrating from rural areas into cities could be facing new and even more dangerous risks," Kanta Kumari Rigaud, a chief author of the report, said in a statement. "While internal climate migration is becoming a reality, it won't be a crisis if we plan for it now."

Continued on Page 11

Putin to engage with West after record win; Amir sends congratulations

MOSCOW: Vladimir Putin yesterday said he would address disputes with the West after an election that saw him return to the Kremlin with a record vote share, as Moscow faces increasing isolation. International leaders were slow to congratulate the Russian president after a Sunday election that saw him take almost

77 percent of the vote, as monitors reported ballot stuffing and other alleged cases of fraud. The poisoning of an ex-spy in Britain along with fresh sanctions from Washington over allegations of meddling in the US 2016 election have isolated Moscow to an extent not seen since the Cold War.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a congratulatory cable to Putin on his re-election. The Amir wished him best of luck, hailed historical distinguished relations between Kuwait and Russia and stressed mutual willingness to promote and bolster them for the common interest of both countries. HH the Amir also wished Putin good health, more progress and welfare to Russia, and closer bilateral relations. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister

Continued on Page 11



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin meets co-chairs of his campaign headquarters at the Kremlin yesterday. — AFP



AUSTIN: Police tape marks off the neighborhood where a package bomb went off yesterday. — AFP

Austin 'serial bomber' shows 'higher skills'

CHICAGO: Texas police said yesterday that a bombing which left two people injured overnight in the state capital Austin was connected to three previous blasts in the city and the "serial bomber" used a tripwire in the latest attack, showing a "higher level of skill". Police also said they have been unable to

determine a motive for the string of bombings which have killed two people in Austin and put the city of nearly one million on edge. "As we said from the very beginning, we were not willing to classify this as terrorism, as hate, because we just don't know enough," police chief Brian Manley told reporters.

In the earlier bombings, two African-American men were killed by packages left on their doorsteps, raising the possibility of a hate crime. A 75-year-old Hispanic woman was also injured in a blast. But Manley said the latest bombing seriously wounded two white men

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Cairo voters back native son Sisi

CAIRO: In Cairo's El-Gamaleya neighborhood where Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi grew up, residents reeling from rising prices plan to support the incumbent in this month's presidential election despite economic woes. "I still love him and my trust in him doesn't have a limit," said Mohammed El-Aswad, 46, the owner of a small sock factory next to Sisi's childhood home. Like Aswad, many residents of the working class neighborhood in the heart of the capital's old city say they will vote to reelect the president in polls set for March 26-28.

The outcome of the election appears set in stone. Sisi, 63, does not face any serious competition, as most of the rival candidates either withdrew or were arrested. His only opponent, Moussa Mostafa Moussa, was relatively unknown to the general public before announcing his candidacy in late January. For the first 20 years of his life, former defense minister Sisi lived with his family on the top floor of a four-storey building in El-Gamaleya, before moving to the newer Nasr City district on the capital's eastern outskirts.

Continued on Page 11



CAIRO: A picture taken on March 7, 2018 shows posters supporting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi hanging in a street in the downtown Cairo district of El-Gamaleya, where he was born. — AFP

News in brief

Tunisian 'blows himself up'

TUNIS: A Tunisian man "blew himself up" as he was being chased yesterday by police in a border region near Libya and his companion was shot dead, the interior ministry said. Spokesman Khalifa Chibani said the National Guard had received information concerning "two male suspects" in the southern Ben Guerdane region. They tracked them down in the Magroun area, a desert zone near a nature reserve, and tried to arrest them but "one of them blew himself up", he said. Chibani said both suspects wore explosive vests, and had currency from chaos-ravaged Libya, grenades and ammunition. One of the suspects was armed with a Kalashnikov assault rifle and had opened fire on the police. — AFP

Qatar awards gas field contract

DOHA: Qatar Petroleum aims to boost Doha's gas production by more than 20 percent with a contract awarded to Japanese Chiyoda, the state-owned energy giant said yesterday. Chiyoda will "execute the Front End Engineering and Design (FEED) of the onshore facilities of the North Field Expansion", state-owned Qatar Petroleum said in a statement. Qatar in April announced plans to lift a self-imposed ban on development of the North Field, the world's biggest natural gas field which it shares with Iran. The new facilities are expected to produce an extra 23 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) of liquefied natural gas, raising production from 77 to 100 mtpa. Qatar had previously said it aimed to reach 100 mtpa by 2024. — AFP

Pin-prick test detects sepsis

PARIS: Scientists yesterday unveiled a quick, cheap way to detect sepsis, a life-threatening condition in which the body is attacked by its own immune system. In clinical trials at Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, the researchers - analyzing a single drop of blood with a thumb-size filtering device - singled out sepsis patients in a matter of hours with 95 percent accuracy. Currently, nearly a third of sepsis patients are misdiagnosed with devices that can take days to yield results. For every hour that a sepsis diagnosis is delayed, the risk of death increases by nearly eight percent, previous research has shown. — AFP

Local

Amir one of 'wisest, most influential' Arab leaders: Ukraine president

President Poroshenko meets First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister

KUWAIT: Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said that His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is "one of the wisest and most influential leaders in Arab world," and hoped multi-faceted relations and cooperation between Kiev and Kuwait reach new heights.

Poroshenko, who asserted that His Highness the Amir "has a vast experience in international politics," also said Ukraine was a promising market for investment from the Gulf in general and Kuwait in particular.

The Ukrainian President arrived in Kuwait on Sunday and held official talks with His Highness the Amir. During the visit, the two countries signed cooperation agreements. Poroshenko, in an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), said he discussed with His Highness the Amir ways of cementing trade, economic, military, technical and humanitarian cooperation.

They also discussed Kuwaiti investments in Ukraine, he said. "I am very happy to be in Kuwait and it was a good opportunity to talk to His Highness the Amir... One of the wisest and most influential leaders in the Arab world," he said.

His Highness the Amir, added Poroshenko, "has a vast experience in international politics and is the humanitarian leader as per UN recognition. It is natural that the leader of Kuwait, which was the victim of the foreign (Iraq) aggression, is one of leaders to help victims of wars and military conflicts." Poroshenko is the first Ukrainian president to visit Kuwait in 15 years. Kuwait and Kiev established relations 25 years ago.

Poroshenko appreciated His Highness the Amir's role in settlement of regional crises. "Ukraine is very interested in supporting regional stability, and the security in the Gulf countries and the Middle East," he added. He called on importance of "rapid settlement" of Gulf crisis within framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). On a bilateral level, Poroshenko said Kiev government was ready to implement joint agricultural projects in Ukraine and then export products to Kuwait and other Gulf countries. He also called on Kuwaiti business people to invest in commercial or pri-

vate real estate sectors. "We also see many chances to develop military and technical cooperation with Kuwait. Ukraine... has great experience in manufacturing of armored vehicles, military aircraft, transport planes and naval vessels," he said.

Ukrainian doctors

He meanwhile said Ukrainian doctors were treating Kuwaiti children with brain paralysis. "I am confident if we combine Kuwait's financial resources with expertise of our doctors, we will be able to cure many more patients."

Poroshenko also said Kuwait and Ukraine were bound to a 2003 agreement to encourage and protect mutual investment. "We believe this agreement is a solid foundation to develop constructive investment cooperation," Ukraine, he said, was working at differ-

ent levels. The European country was carrying out full-fledged judicial reforms which would create equality, justice and transparency for all investors.

The country had recently established an anti-corruption system including a corruption court. "Fighting corruption is a major priority in my policy," asserted Poroshenko. "Ukraine has now genuine opportunities for foreign investment," he said, citing a wide-scale privatization program, and "I hope we will soon see Kuwaiti companies and investment in Ukraine."

Poroshenko noted the two countries, which have \$30 million in trade exchange, could capitalize on Ukraine's potentials in agriculture, machinery, construction, chemicals, sport, education and food, in addition to oil refining and transportation. "It is crucial we continue our cooperation to highlight exports capabilities and investment opportunities in Ukraine," he said.

The Ukrainian president welcomed Kuwaiti tourists who could get an entry visa at airport following their arrival. He also hoped direct flights would be launched between the two countries.

Poroshenko called on government of Kuwait to recognize universities in Ukraine, five of them were classified as among the best worldwide.



Ukraine invites Kuwaiti investors



KUWAIT: Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko meets with First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Ukrainian universities

"We hope the Kuwaiti side reconsider its decision regarding the Ukrainian universities, and we are ready to cooperate with the Ministry of Higher Education in Kuwait to recognize the universities," he said.

Poroshenko thanked Kuwait for granting scholarships for Ukrainian students to study Arabic Language in Kuwait University. "I am positive the Ukrainians who speak the Arabic language will contribute to boosting relations between our countries," he added.

Poroshenko, on the other hand, said relations between Ukraine and Kuwait were based on mutual respect and support. He said Kuwait was the first Gulf country to offer humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, valued at \$15 million, to implement a shelter as part of the Chernobyl nuclear reactor. The disaster of Chernobyl, 104 kms north of Kiev, occurred in April 1986 killing at least 31 people.

Kuwait, in 2007, contributed to wording of a resolution adopted by UNESCO about the Holodomor, that took place in Ukraine in 1932-33, which means "Kill by starvation." Ukraine, said Poroshenko, sent a force to

Kuwait in 2003 to protect civilians from a possible use of chemical weapons by defunct Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein. This force, sent at behest of Kuwait, later became the foundation of Ukrainian troops that took part in the war to liberate Iraq from Saddam Hussein. "The modern history of our countries have many commonalities, so our peoples understand the importance of the international community's support for the state sovereignty and safety of its territories," said Poroshenko.

President receives officials

President Poroshenko received at Bayan Palace yesterday First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. President Poroshenko also received Managing Director at Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) Farouq Bastaki and Deputy Director General of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Hamad Al-Omar. The receptions were attended by head of the mission of honor accompanying President Poroshenko, Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is pictured with ambassadors of the Francophone countries during a function to mark the International Francophonie Day. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait eyes stronger cultural bonds with Francophone states

KUWAIT: Kuwait is eager to strengthen cultural ties with the Francophone countries in the coming years, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said. In a speech at a function held late Sunday by the French embassy in Kuwait to mark the International Francophonie Day, His Highness Sheikh Nasser emphasized the significance of the day as a cultural occasion through which people express admiration for the French language. He hoped Kuwait and Gulf countries would have more French speakers in the near future. His Highness Sheikh Nasser described Kuwaitis as open-minded people who easily interact with other cultures.

Kuwaiti people have been interacted with the cultures of Indian Ocean nations and became open for other peoples, languages, cultures and ideas, he said. He added that Kuwaitis love the exchange of new ideas, views and

visions. He lauded Kuwait's strong diplomatic relations with the Francophone countries, recalling their supportive stances during the plight of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. He expressed his pleasure for Kuwait's hosting of the French Center for Archeology and Social Sciences, which is active in exploring the Arabian Peninsula to discover its ancient civilizations.

Meanwhile, France's Ambassador to the country Marie Masdupuy stated that one of her important goals when she assumed her post in Kuwait is to help the country become an observer member of International Organisation of La Francophonie. French President Emmanuel Macron will announce in the coming days after consultation with all his Francophone partners a major plan for overhauling Francophone organization for better sharing of ideas, values and spreading of the French language, the world's second most spoken language after English, she disclosed. The International Francophonie Day is observed within the International Organization of La Francophonie's 77 member states every March 20 to celebrate the French language and Francophone culture. There are over 369 million French speakers on Earth. The date celebrates the signing of the Niamey Convention in Niger on 20 March 1970. The convention established the Agence de Cooperation Culturelle et Technique, the precursor to the International Organization of La Francophonie. — KUNA

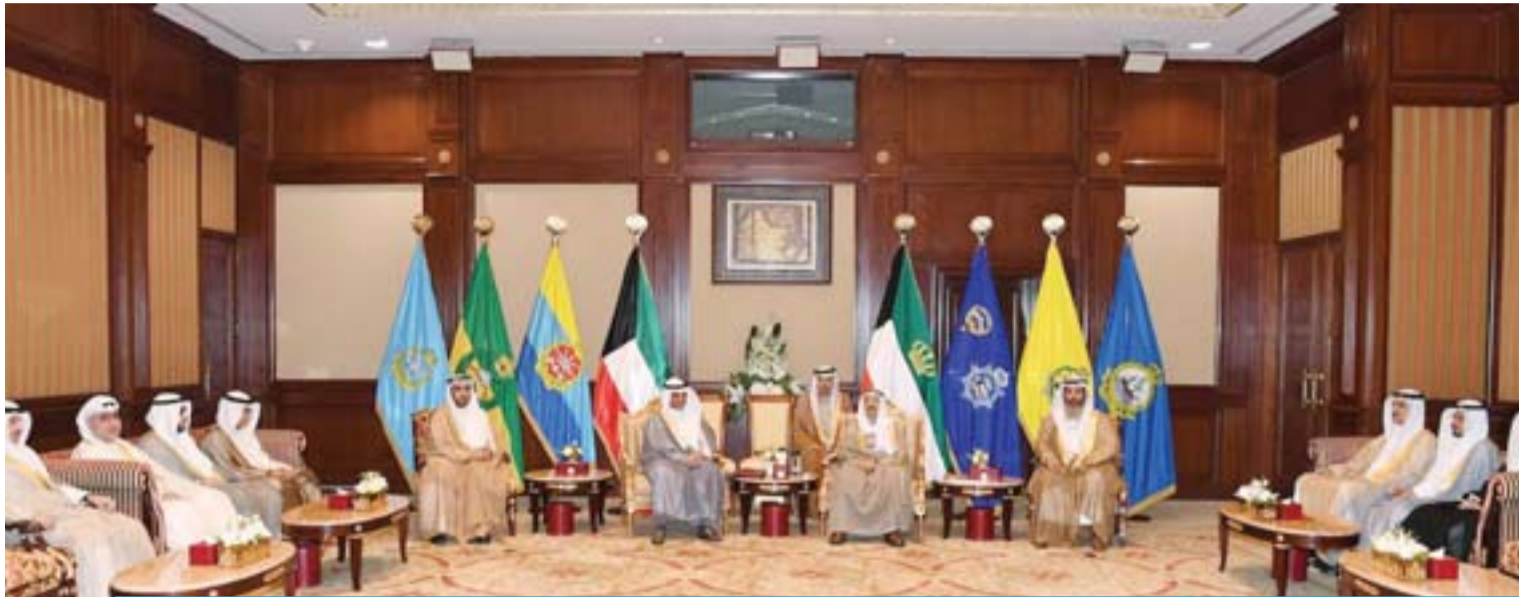


KUWAIT: His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah speaks during the function as French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy looks on.

Local

Amir receives parliamentary delegation returning from Japan

Amir to attend, patronize Kuwait Investment Forum's opening



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and the parliamentary delegation that visited Japan recently. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah and the newly-appointed ministry undersecretary Dr Mustafa Sayed Hashim.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and the parliamentary delegation that visited Japan recently. Ghanem and his delegation met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah later yesterday as well.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received the Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Chancellor Dr Fahad Al-Afasi and member of the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia Dr Saad Bin Nasser on the occasion of his visit to the country. The officials later met with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as well as His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh

Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Humoud Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who introduced to His Highness the newly-appointed ministry undersecretary Dr Mustafa Sayed Hashim. The Health Minister also introduced Dr Hashim to His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister.

Separately, His Highness the Crown Prince hosted Ambassadors of the Republic of Guinea Mamady Toure, of Nigeria Garba Gajam Mohammad, of Vietnam Trinh Minh Manh, and of Turkey Aisha Hilal Siyan, on their occasion of their appointment as envoys to the country. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf also received National Security Apparatus Chief Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah

Al-Salem Al-Sabah, as well as President of the Public Authority for Civil Aviation (PACA) Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Nepalese President Bidhya Devi Bhandari expressing sincere congratulations on her re-election as president of the republic. His Highness the Amir wished the re-elected president wellbeing and prosperity for her nation. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent cables of identical content to president Bhandari. Separately, His Highness the Amir is set to attend and patronize today the opening ceremony of Kuwait Investment Forum, at Al-Tahrir Hall in Bayan Palace at 10:00 am. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Chancellor Dr Fahad Al-Afasi and member of the Council of Senior Scholars in Saudi Arabia Dr Saad Bin Nasser.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of the Republic of Guinea Mamady Toure.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Vietnam Trinh Minh Manh.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Nigeria Garba Gajam.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Turkey Aisha Hilal Siyan.

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All entries are non-returnable, and will be the property of Kuwait Times ©

Local

First Deputy Premier, Defense Minister meets public figures

Kuwait army chief extols military cooperation with Jordan



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait University's teaching staff society chief Dr Ibrahim Al-Humoud and society members. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah received Kuwait University's teaching staff society chief Dr Ibrahim Al-Humoud and society members at Bayan Palace yesterday. He then met with a team of Mawaheb Group executives, led by Sheikh Rakan Bader Mohammad Al-Sabah, and discussed several issues of mutual interest, the Ministry of Defense said in a press release.

Meanwhile, the defense minister hosted chairman of Zakat House's trade union Rashed Al-Azmi and union members on major issues and matters, it added. Sheikh Nasser also received the Oil Ministry's trade union's chairman Talal Al-Hamdan and union members, where they considered several matters, according to the release. Finally, he met with Kuwait Hotel Owners Association's chief Ghazi Al-Nafisi and association members, where they listened to Sheikh Nasser about an international northern economic zone.

In other news, the visiting Kuwaiti Army Chief of Staff General Mohammad Al-Khodhr lauded the level of military cooperation between the State of Kuwait and Jordan. Speaking after the conclusion of the joint military committee's meeting, Khodhr underlined the significance of promoting bilateral cooperation, saying that it is necessary to draw upon Jordan's military expertise. The joint military committee mainly aims at consolidating military cooperation between both countries in diverse military activities and programs, including exercises and courses, he elaborated.



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait Hotel Owners Association's chief Ghazi Al-Nafisi and association members. —KUNA

During the committee's meeting, a bilateral military cooperation agreement was extended, and ways of developing cooperation and coordination for exchanging military expertise and potential were considered, he added. He noted that during his ongoing visit to Amman, he had held meetings with Jordanian army generals, mainly on the expertise of the Jordanian army's companies in the production of military supplies and equipment.

Polish Navy ship arrives in Kuwait

Separately, Polish Navy ship 'Wodnik' arrived at Shuwaikh Port yesterday with Kuwaiti, Qatari and Polish

student officers on board, according to the Ministry of Defense. The visit is part of the students' training trip in different countries, said the ministry's Directorate of Moral Guidance and Public Relations.

Also yesterday, Chief of the Pakistani Naval Staff Admiral Zafar Mahmood Abbasi visited the Sabah Al-Ahmad Naval Base where he was received by Interior Ministry's Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Border Security Affairs Vice Admiral Mubarak Al-Omairi.

The two sides discussed issues of joint interest and boosting cooperation between the Kuwaiti and Pakistani coast guards. Admiral Abbasi, who examined the radar system room, was briefed about tactics of aborting infiltrations via the sea, according to a statement by the Ministry of Interior.

The statement quoted Admiral Abbasi as expressing admiration at the accuracy and effectiveness of the used equipment and technologies at the naval base. — KUNA

Speaker meets Swedish counterpart

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti National Assembly (parliament) Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem held talks yesterday with the visiting Swedish Parliament Speaker Urban Ahlin and his accompanying delegation. Both sides discussed the Kuwaiti-Swedish relations and ways

of promoting and bolstering them in all fields, especially parliamentary ones. They stressed the significance of sharing views and coordinating stances at various international events, and taking practical steps on issues and subjects that concern both sides. The talks were attended by a number of Kuwaiti members of parliament and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Sweden Nabil Al-Dakheel. The Swedish parliament speaker arrived in Kuwait on Saturday on a three-day official visit.

His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah also met yesterday with Ahlin, in a reception that was attended by head of mission of honor

accompanying the guest, Secretary of the National Assembly MP Oudah Al-Rowaie and Director of His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikhha Itemad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, in addition to Kuwait's Ambassador to Sweden. The visiting Swedish official met later with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

The meeting was attended by Secretary of Rowaie, Dakheel, and Assistant Foreign Minister for European Affairs Ambassador Waleed Al-Khubaizi. In other news, Ghanem met yesterday with the outgoing Saudi Ambassador to Kuwait Abdelaziz Al-Fayez. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and other Kuwaiti MPs pose for a group photo with visiting Swedish Parliament Speaker Urban Ahlin and his accompanying delegation during a tour at the National Assembly yesterday. —KUNA

ASAR legal counsel to lenders in KOTC financing

KUWAIT: Al-Ruwayeh and Partners (ASAR), Kuwait's leading and most prominent corporate law firm, and one of the region's top tier firms, is pleased to announce that it has acted as legal counsel to Warba Bank, Kuwait International Bank and Ahli United Bank in respect of the 10-year KD 140 million Islamic financing of Kuwait Oil Tanker Company (KOTC) in support of its program to renew its fleet by purchasing eight new oil tankers. The importance of this financing comes from the fact that it is the first financing obtained by KOTC and the second financing obtained by Kuwait oil companies following KNPC's clean fuel project.

Ibrahim Sattout, Partner at ASAR said: "We are very pleased to have worked with and represented the lenders in this high profile transaction. We believe that transactions of this nature are fundamental to growing Kuwait's economy particularly given the involvement of local banks. A transaction of this magnitude underlines also the interest of the economic players in the oil sector and its development. We appreciate the confidence and trust that the lenders have put in our firm and we look forward to continuing to assist our clients in reaching their business and strategic objectives."

John Cunha, Partner at ASAR said: "This transaction is a testament to the strength and depth of the local banking



sector and underlines the key role local banks have to play in achieving Kuwait's development goals. Our involvement is further testimony of our firm's impressive credentials and our ability to advise on cutting edge transactions."

With dedicated offices in Kuwait and Bahrain coupled with its associated offices and relationships, ASAR provides clients across an extensive range of industry sectors with comprehensive legal advice and support for their business activities in Kuwait, across the GCC and beyond. The firm has been consistently rated as the leading corporate and commercial law firm in Kuwait by reputable legal guides such as the Chambers Global Guide, International Financial Law Review (IFLR) and the Legal 500. In 2017, ASAR was awarded with the "IFLR National Law Firm of the Year Award," an award which ASAR has been delighted to receive for the 9th consecutive year. Also in 2017, the firm won the "IFLR Manda Deal of the Year Award" and the "IFLR Restructuring Deal of the Year Award."

US State Department holds money laundering, terrorism funding seminar

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: A four-day seminar on money laundering and terrorism funding kicked off yesterday at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI). The event was attended by Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan and US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. The seminar is entitled 'Investigating Fraudulent Business Transactions to Prevent Money Laundering and Terrorism Funding'.

"This training will make America and Kuwait more secure," Silverman said. "Money laundering and terrorism funding must be stopped and addressed properly. We are in this struggle together. When President Donald Trump attended the GCC summit in Riyadh, they all agreed to enhance cooperation in these areas," he said. "This is implementing what our leader wants us to do. This is a training program but also an exchange of ideas. Your people know things that our people don't, so there is an exchange of best practices," he added.

Jill Westmoreland Rose, Resident Legal Adviser at the US Department of Justice, whose work covers Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain, noted the Office of Prosecutorial and Training (OPDAT) of the US Department of Justice would like to ensure that its external law enforcement partners all around the world have the benefit of



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan presents a memento to US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman during the event. —Photo by Joseph Shagra

of the expertise and experience that they have in America. "We had many cases over the years because unfortunately we had several terrorism acts committed against our country. We had several investigations into financial crimes, and we are sharing them with our counterparts in Kuwait. We are focusing on fraud and money laundering, and specifically counterterrorism funding," she said.

"We want to work closely with the ministry of commerce and industry in Kuwait to say we know that your investigators are on the frontline, regulating certain aspects of money laundering. We want to tell them that they can enhance their investigating capability to root out these kinds of crimes," Rose said. She said money laundering and terrorism are directly interconnected. "The terrorist attack on a hotel in India had money trails of about \$1,500. They need money to carry out devastating events, so it is very important to be diligent," she added.

Up to 20,000 drug addicts in Kuwait

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The National Anti-Drug Media Project 'Ghiras' launched a three-month awareness campaign 'My Life is a Trust' on all local media and most shopping malls. Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti said statistics show there are between 15,000 to 20,000 drug addicts in Kuwait. "The majority of these addicts are young people, which obliges us to cooperate to stop the great loss of lives and to make the community aware to eliminate this dangerous phenomenon. Our campaign supports adults and children face any negativity that may lead to drug addiction or other problems," he pointed out.

The campaign includes various activities. "To reach all categories of the community, we will use different methods including lectures at schools, institutes and universities, awareness videos that will be broadcast on various satellite channels, cinemas, screens of sports clubs and shopping malls, and competitions on social media," stressed Shatti.

The results of Ghiras' previous campaigns were successful. "The achievements of the previous campaigns are comparable with the campaigns in developed countries. These positive results encourage us and the community to continue holding such campaigns, which mainly focus on the awareness aspect, as the security and health aspects are the duty of the ministry of interior and the ministry of health," he noted.

"Our statistics are based on previous campaigns, which show that 87 percent of parents became more aware about the dangers of drugs and the importance of monitoring their children; 84 percent start spending more time with their families; 81 percent of them realized they should change their way of dealing with their children; 54 percent of kids start advising others to quit smoking; and 93 percent of them learned to avoid bad friends," highlighted Shatti. "The campaign also focuses on the material losses of drug addicts and their parents. We encourage them to spend their money on something else other than drugs that may kill them. The campaign also highlights the psychological and social danger to the addict, including isolation. We also provide consultations and advisory services on the proper way of dealing with addicts and the way of treating them in cooperation with the authorities through the hotline, in addition to providing consultation to



KUWAIT: (From left) Faisal Al-Ostath, Head of the Social and Psychological Services at the Education Ministry, Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti from 'Ghiras,' and Brig Bader Al-Ghadouri, Director General of the Anti-Drug General Department attend the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

social workers at schools on dealing with addicts in schools," he concluded. Brig Bader Al-Ghadouri, Director General of the Anti-Drug General Department, demanded the national drugs committee should start working again, even if it gets a different name, as it had a great role in fighting drugs of all kinds. Police officers are following a new strategy, according to which all drugs addicts are transferred to the 'addiction center', and later to counseling centers so that they avoid relapsing. The interior ministry treated 2,600 addicts in 2017," he said.

Addiction treatment depends on willpower. "The human body gets rid of drugs in 10 days. But the most important phase is rehabilitation and avoiding relapsing. Quitting drugs depends on the addict himself and not on his family. The department is organizing training courses for families to avoid re-addiction," said Ghadouri. He called upon the media not to publish wrong information or to exaggerate about simple cases or arrests, as this does not bring any benefits and only spoils the reputation of Kuwait and make the work of police more difficult.

Faisal Al-Ostath, Head of the Social and Psychological Services at the Education Ministry, noted the ministry is working hard to fight drugs, which target the future generation. "The ministry takes immediate action if any case of drug use occurs in a school. We have set a three-year long strategy to make students aware and avoid bad company. And in every intermediate and high school in Kuwait, there is a group of trained students to spread awareness of drug addiction among other students, as they are closer to them due to their similar age. The ministry is cooperating with Ghiras to eliminate drug addiction," he explained.

Local

Prime Minister reiterates need for effective anti-corruption measures

Authorities asked to map out plans to rationalize energy consumption

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday stressed once more that his anti-corruption instructions must be put in place. His Highness the Prime Minister made the remark during the cabinet's routine weekly meeting held at Bayan Palace, adding that all necessary measures should be taken in order to wipe out corruption and dry out its sources. The cabinet discussed how to effectively implement His Highness the Prime Minister's instructions so as to prove that the government is serious about fighting this destructive scourge, Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a press statement following the meeting.

This also props up the rule of law, and ensures the right implementation of the comprehensive development process in the country, Saleh added. In this context, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak underlined the necessity of speeding up the reform of the state's administrative system,

establishing governance and good administration, promoting societal participation in all fields, and adopting full transparency in all governmental measures.

He also emphasized that it is necessary to apply the principle of reward and punishment in an effective fashion, and to encourage personnel training, vowing that the counter-corruption dossier would be the government's top priority.



SMEs fund represented in fueling company

The ministers, during the meeting, decided to task the Ministry of Electricity and Water to coordinate with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC), Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and other competent authorities to map out plans and take proper measures to rationalize energy consumption and use alternative energy. They took the decision after examining a recommendation by the economic affairs committee with respect of measures and steps taken by the KPC.

The ministers were briefed about another recommendation by the commission about investing in fuel stations by owners of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). As to the accord between the KPC and the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprise on forming a new company: to be totally owned by Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), the cabinet recommended that the fund be represented in the new company's board. They examined a recommendation by the committee for educational, cultural, social, health and youth affairs on a report by the committee of human and social development at the supreme planning council regarding the national document for boosting moderation. They decided to assign the higher committee for boosting moderation to take required measures for implementing the recommendation.



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

Presidents' visits

At the onset of the meeting, His Highness the Prime Minister expounded on the outcomes of Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov's recent visit to Kuwait, together with his official talks with His Highness the Amir on ways of developing bilateral cooperative relations. The cabinet was also briefed on the outcomes of Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's just-concluded visit to Kuwait and his talks with His Highness the Amir on the latest regional and international developments and bilateral cooperation, as well as the signing of three agreements and memos of understanding in the fields of military, youth, sports, physical education and scientific cooperation.

Meanwhile, the cabinet approved bills regarding an aviation agreement with the Tajik Republic, an accord for economic and technical cooperation with Latvia and tourist cooperation with Cyprus. The endorsed bills were referred to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The cabinet discussed parliamentary affairs, Arab and international political affairs. The cabinet congratulated German Chancellor Angela Merkel on winning parliamentary confidence to serve in the fourth consecutive term, Russian President Vladimir Putin on his re-election for a fourth mandate as well as the re-elected Chinese president, hoping relations with these nations would be boosted further. It condemned the failed assassination attempt of Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Al-Hamdallah. —KUNA

Health fees increase dropped patients' numbers: Official

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Mubarak Hospital's Manager Dr Nadia Al-Jumaa stressed that increasing health fees for expatriates had remarkably decreased outpatient appointment waiting periods, adding that appointments that used to be made after a month can now be made in less than a week. Jumaa added that patients referred to the hospital from various clinics can now be seen by specialized doctors on the same day or within two days at most. "Citizens used to complain that they do not feel they are in their own country because of the crowds at various hospitals," she stressed, noting that the numbers of Kuwaiti patients have increased after imposing the new fees. "However, we do not discriminate amongst patients," she said. Jumaa added the hospital's casualty department is understaffed and needs more doctors.

Fraud bill

Well-informed sources said the government submitted the unified GCC 18-article fraud bill which mainly focuses on following a unified customs law banning the import, re-export, production, manufacture, display, sale, storage, transport, marketing, handling, promoting or possession of counterfeit or foul goods with the aim of selling them. The sources added that the bill also suggests legal accountability for those in possession or promoting the export of the aforementioned goods, as well as those involved in commercial fraud concerning the goods' type, volume, measurement, weight, caliber, nature, characteristics, components, origin, structure or validity and expiry dates.

Oil slicks spotted south of Garuh island

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) received a report that two oil slicks were spotted outside national waters, nine miles to the south of Garuh island. EPA also announced that coordination is in progress with the Marine Emergency Mutual Aid Centre (MEMAC), the oil sector, the coastguards and environment police to closely watch the situation and take proper preventive measures in the coming hours. EPA stressed that the national plan to deal with marine oil contamination cases in collaboration with relevant bodies was activated and that further reports will follow after surveying the contaminated area.

Online campaign

In collaboration with environment police, the Kuwait Environment Protection Society (KEPS) launched an online campaign to report all forms of environmental problems including marine, air, soil and biodiversity violations by citizens. KEPS Secretary General Jenan Bahzad said the campaign was launched with the aim of boosting public environmental awareness and reporting any violations through three simple steps on the society's website. Bahzad added that a special e-form had been prepared and provided to be filled on the website describing the violation.

Mother sued

Following up on a controversial case filed by a man to evict his mother and sell the family house,



KUWAIT: A map released by the Environment Public Authority yesterday showing the location of the oil slicks.

well-informed sources said that the court ordered suspending the house's sale for five years. The mother had reportedly stood crying before the judge during a hearing and begged him to make her son wait until she dies before selling the house. "Before passing his sentence, the judge addressed the ungrateful son by saying: 'Mark my words.....this is your mother and what comes around goes around,'" the sources said.

20,248 kg

The imported food department at the Public Authority for Food and Nutrition destroyed 20,248 kg of inedible imported vegetables, fruits, meat and other food products. The department manager Ali Al-Khanfour explained that the destroyed food items had been imported and confiscated at the airport, Shuwaikh, Doha and Shuaib ports, adding that on being examined, the food items were found foul and inedible.

CRIMES

Airport staff ignore no-smoking warnings

KUWAIT: A department director at Kuwait International Airport sought environment police's help against smoking employees who ignored rules and kept smoking in the building. A security source said an environment police officer went to the department, where he was met with an angry response. A dispute then took place during which the officer was verbally insulted by an employee. The officer lodged a complaint at Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh police station. The employee was summoned and detained as the case went to the public prosecution.

Theft

Hawally detectives arrested a Kuwaiti man for claiming a cheque issued by the defense ministry for the treatment of his friend abroad. A soldier in Kuwait army received approval for treatment abroad and named a friend to be with him during the treatment and asked him to claim the cheque. But he kept it for himself, then disappeared and did not answer calls. The soldier informed Jabriya police, so detectives arrested the suspect, who faces legal action.

Fall and injury

A Jordanian man returned home with shopping bags, leaving one for his wife to carry. The woman then noticed a toy snake moving, so she dropped the bag and ran. But she fell down the stairs and was injured. She was taken to hospital. — Translated from the Arabic press

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China elects new economic team

The OPCW: Ridding the world of deadly chemical weapons

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HAMBURG: Syrian defendants accused of being members of jihadist Islamic State group (IS) in Syria stand trial at the district court in Hamburg, northern Germany. — AFP

Jailbird jihadists: Security threat for Europe

Hundreds of jihadists due to be released from prison

PARIS: Already wrestling with a constantly-evolving terror threat, European intelligence agencies spy a new problem on the horizon: hundreds of jihadists due to be released from prison. Battling to stop further attacks like those seen everywhere from London to Paris, Brussels to Barcelona, freshly-released prisoners will add to agencies' surveillance burden.

Although many may go on to lead peaceful lives after prison, some may not and officials admit they have so far given insufficient attention to working out the scale of the threat. They are already working to keep track of jihadists returning from the battlefield in Iraq and Syria, and homegrown radicals who investigators fear could launch an attack at any moment.

In France alone, some 500 jihadists handed heavy jail sentences at the beginning of the 2000s are set to be released before 2020 after serving their time, an anti-terror official said. "They represent a potential threat, a worrying threat that we are taking very seriously," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. Some 1,500 other French prisoners are suspected to have been radicalized behind bars, not least thanks to contact with these hardened extremists. One of the most infamous examples of authorities losing track of a released jihadist is that of Cherif Kouachi, who along with his brother massacred staff at Charlie

Hebdo magazine in Paris in 2015.

Imprisoned from 2005-2006 awaiting trial for his role in a recruitment network that sent jihadists to Iraq, he was convicted in 2008 but walked free as he had already served his time. Kouachi was placed under surveillance and his phone was tapped for several years, but he and his brother Said threw investigators off the scent by using their friends' phones. Before they attacked Charlie Hebdo in 2015, killing 12 in a hail of Kalashnikov bullets, they had slipped off the radar simply by moving house.

Prison, a 'school for jihad'

Anti-terror officials agree that the same mistakes must not be made again. "We have to have the same attitude towards those leaving prison as we do towards those coming back from Syria," said Yves Trotignon, a former anti-terror analyst at French foreign intelligence agency DGSE. "For these 500 guys that are going to be coming out, we have no means of evaluating the operational danger they represent," said Trotignon.

"The only solution is to immediately start following their networks. Who is meeting who? Who is telephoning who? In this way you can start to map out their contacts." He added: "We often say that prison is a school for crime, but it's also a school for jihad. It's the place where those on the fringes get radicalized, where they learn things from those detained earlier."

Britain has some 200 people in prison on terrorism offences as of December, according to interior ministry figures, a number that has been steadily rising in recent years. And Belgium is wrestling with a similar problem.

Islamic expert Alain Grignard of Liege University said up to 200 people had been sentenced on terror charges before and after the 2016 Brussels attacks, and at some point they will walk free. "Rarely do people come out of prison better than when they went in," he warned. "Even more so for someone who is idealistic who, as well as a criminal past, has this dimension of a fight against injustice in which Muslims are the victims,"

he added. "They can come out even more motivated than before."

Continuity in intelligence work

Dutch lawyer Andre Seebregts, who has defended several suspected jihadists recently released from jail, said none of his clients had been offered any formal rehabilitation. Such convicts are often tracked with GPS ankle bracelets and given contact with a government-provided imam and parole officer. But "the danger of re-radicalization is still there," he told AFP. Extremists may be carefully surveilled before their arrest but then go on to inhabit what one French penitentiary official called an "intelligence blind spot" once behind bars. "After the attacks of 2015 and 2016, this is no longer acceptable," the official said.

French authorities last year gave the prison intelligence agency BCRP boosted powers, and they are increasingly using surveillance techniques previously reserved for police. Across Europe, the goal is now to try to maintain as much continuity as possible when it comes to tracking jihadists in prison and afterwards. But a senior French anti-terror official pointed out that permanent surveillance of all radicalised prisoners is out of the question. "Tailing a suspect 24/7 takes 20 or 30 cops," he said. "You do the math." — AFP

“Rarely do people come out of prison better than when they went in”

36 jihadists, 4 Egypt soldiers killed in Sinai

CAIRO: Egypt's military said yesterday that 36 jihadists, an officer and three soldiers were killed over five days during a sweeping operation against Islamic State group militants in the Sinai. The army launched the campaign on February 9 after Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, who is standing in elections this month for a second term, gave it a three-month deadline to crush IS in the Sinai. Security forces "eliminated 30 armed takfiri elements during a shootout with raiding forces" in the northern and central Sinai Peninsula, the military said in a statement.

A police shootout also left six "takfiri elements" dead and destroyed "an extremely dangerous terrorist cell," it added. Over the past five days, soldiers also arrested 345 people "including a number of extremely dangerous takfiri elements and fugitives," it said. An officer and three soldiers were killed in the fighting, while three officers and five soldiers were injured, it said. Sisi issued his ultimatum in November after suspected IS gunmen massacred more than 300 worshippers at a Sinai mosque associated with Sufi Muslim mystics.

Security forces have sought to quell attacks by an Egyptian jihadist group that later declared allegiance to IS since the military ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in 2013, following mass protests against him. The group has killed hundreds of soldiers, policemen and civilians, mainly in its North Sinai stronghold but also elsewhere in Egypt. The jihadists have also killed scores of Christians in church bombings and shootings. IS claimed the 2015 bombing of a Russian airliner carrying tourists from the South Sinai resort town of Sharm El-Sheikh, which killed all 224 people on board. — AFP

Saudi Crown Prince in his own words

WASHINGTON: Saudi Arabia's crown prince Mohammed bin Salman is set to meet with US President Donald Trump in Washington today. Mutual rival Iran will be high on the agenda, but the 32-year-old strongman prince will also be looking to showcase his sweeping changes to Saudi society and an increasingly assertive foreign policy that includes the war in Yemen and an ongoing diplomatic feud with Qatar. The following are quotations from an interview he gave to CBS News on Sunday.

The role of women

Prince Mohammed has implemented some reforms on women's rights, loosening clothing restrictions, pushing for greater participation in the workforce, and, significantly, lifting a ban on women driving. But guardianship laws, which require women to seek the permission of male relatives for a host of activities, remain in place. "We have extremists who forbid mixing between the two sexes and are unable to differentiate between a man and a woman alone together and their being together in a work place. Many of those ideas contradict the way of life during the time of the Prophet," he said. "We are all human beings and there is no difference."

Roots of Saudi extremism

The prince acknowledged Saudi society was

dominated by particularly harsh strain of conservative Islam, which he traces back to 1979, the year of the Islamic Revolution in Iran and the seizure by extremists of the Grand Mosque in Makkah. "We were victims, especially my generation that suffered from this a great deal," he said. "This is not the real Saudi Arabia. I would ask your viewers to use their smart phones to find out. And they can google Saudi Arabia in the 70s and 60s, and they will see the real Saudi Arabia easily in the pictures. "We were living a very normal life like the rest of the Gulf countries. Women were driving cars. There were movie theaters in Saudi Arabia. Women worked everywhere. We were just normal people developing like any other country in the world until the events of 1979."

The purge

He defended at length his anti-corruption purge which saw many of the kingdom's princes and tycoons detained for several weeks inside Riyadh's luxurious Ritz-Carlton hotel-widely seen as an attempt to cement his grip on power. "What we did in Saudi Arabia was extremely necessary" and legal, he said. He said he was able to recover more than "\$100 billion" of ill-gotten wealth from the detainees, but added: "The idea is not to get money, but to punish the corrupt and send a clear signal that whoever engages in corrupt deals will face the law."

His personal wealth

The prince has been accused of hypocrisy over his opulent lifestyle at a time his government is preaching greater austerity of its citizens and has imposed new taxes. He was recently revealed as the owner of a French chateau



Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman

described as the world's most expensive home, according to a report in the New York Times. But he insisted his wealth was a private matter. "As far as my private expenses, I'm a rich person and not a poor person. I'm not Gandhi or Mandela. He added: "But what I do as a person is to spend part of my personal income on charity. I spend at least 51 percent on people and 49 on myself."

Ascent to the throne

As heir to the throne after his father King Salman dies, the young prince could be set to rule the kingdom for the next half century or more. Asked what could stop him, he replied: "Only death." — AFP

International

The OPCW: Ridding the world of deadly chemical weapons

International chemical weapons experts in Britain

THE HAGUE: International chemical weapons experts arrived in Britain yesterday to collect samples of a nerve agent allegedly used to poison a former Russian spy. Britain has called on the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to lend its expertise and know-how to the investigation amid a political crisis between London and Moscow. Samples collected in the town of Salisbury following the poisoning of Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia will "be dispatched to highly reputable international laboratories selected by the OPCW for testing," the Foreign Office said, with the results not expected for at least two weeks. Here are four questions about the OPCW:

What is the OPCW?

Founded in 1997, the OPCW based in The Hague oversees the application of The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) aimed at ridding the world of toxic arms. Chemical weapons, such as mustard gas, were first used on the battlefields of World War I, and also in 1988 by late Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein against civilians in Halabja, Iraq. Other incidents include the 1995 subway sarin gas attack in Tokyo by a Japanese cult.

After almost 20 years of negotiations, the convention took effect on April 29, 1997. The OPCW now has 192 member nations, covering some 98 percent of the world's population. In the past two decades, the OPCW has overseen the destruction of some 96 percent of the world's declared chemical weapons stocks of 72,304 metric tons. The United States is on target to destroy its chemical arms—the last remaining major declared stockpiles—within the next seven years. Only three nations have not yet signed up to the convention—Egypt, Israel and North Korea. South Sudan said last year it was moving to join. In 2013, the OPCW was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize "for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons," according to the Nobel committee.

How does OPCW work?

A country that has signed the convention must

declare and destroy all chemical weapons it possesses; destroy all such arms abandoned in another country; and destroy any facilities involved in manufacturing such weapons. The OPCW upholds the convention by monitoring the destruction of all declared stockpiles and inspecting all former sites where chemical weapons were produced, and suspect sites. It also seeks to verify credible allegations of chemical weapons use, mostly by sending experts, many of them from ex-military or scientific backgrounds, to the site. Samples are taken and then sent to OPCW-selected labs—or to its own laboratory in the Rijswijk suburb of The Hague—for further analysis. The OPCW has carried out some 6,729 inspections at 3,166 chemical weapon-related and 3,563 industrial sites since April 1997.

What is Russia's role?

Russia signed the CWC in January 1993, and ratified it in December 1997. In 2013, Moscow was instrumental with Washington in sealing a deal forcing Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad to join the OPCW after Damascus had denied for years possessing any chemical weapons. In September, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow had destroyed its last chemical weapons in a process begun in 2005 and overseen by the OPCW. Outgoing OPCW head Ahmet Uzumcu said the destruction of Russia's declared stockpile of 39,967 tons was a "major milestone" for the CWC. But Britain's ambassador to the OPCW, Peter Wilson, last week accused Moscow of failing to fully declare "for years" its stockpile.

Are there penalties?

The OPCW is more of a watchdog than a police force and depends on member states being truthful in their declarations about the size and composition of its toxic arms stockpiles. It is also not mandated to attribute blame, or to determine who unleashed such weapons. Complicating the situation, some chemicals, like chlorine which has been used against civilians in gas form in



PORTON: Vehicles enter the Porton Down science park that houses the Ministry of Defense's Science and Technology Laboratory in the village of Porton, near Salisbury, in southern England yesterday where samples collected in connection with the investigation into an apparent nerve agent attack in Salisbury were analyzed. — AFP

Syria's civil war, are exempt from any such declarations as they have wide industrial or agricultural uses. Britain has accused Russia of breaking the convention, saying it manufactured the nerve agent Novichok allegedly used to poison the Russian spy Skripal.

But the CWC contains no specific punitive measures for countries that use chemical weapons. To date, despite condemnation of the use of toxic arms in Syria, no state member has been publicly found to have violated the convention.—AFP

South Sudanese flee only to find unrest across the border

OBO: Refugees seeking safety from the atrocities of South Sudan's unending conflict cross the border only to find themselves in one of Africa's most war-torn and poorest countries. Neighboring Central African Republic (CAR) has been ravaged by armed groups vying to control the vast landlocked nation, trapped in poverty where more than half the population survives on humanitarian aid. In the southeastern town of Obo, some 2,000 South Sudanese have fled to a refugee camp set up by the United Nations in 2016.

But it has not been the peaceful haven they had sought. "You know, there has been a lot of dying here," says refugee Nicolas Anthony, explaining life in the camp. The refugees are caught between the hostility of locals in Obo and the threat from armed groups who prowl around the town. The CAR has been struggling to return to stability since exploding into bloodshed after the 2013 overthrow of its Christian president by the mainly Muslim Seleka rebel alliance. Since the rebels were ousted from power, sectarian violence has raged between remnants of the Seleka and Christian vigilante militias.

'Fear of attack'

Some refugee farmers have tried to get work among the Centraficans, "but they refuse to pay us! They say we don't have the right, that we should go back to South Sudan!", says Moise Valentino, losing his temper. "We even have to sell the kitchen utensils the UN hands out in order to buy something to eat!", the 39-year-old exclaims. Others have gone out into the bush to find a patch of land to cultivate, but that, too, has met resistance. "Each time we clear any area, an Obo native comes and says that it's his" land, recounts James Simon Uffo, 32.

"So we have to go out farther but not too far because there is the LRA," he adds, referring to the Lord's Resistance Army, a notoriously cruel militia hiding in CAR after being driven out of Uganda. There are also the ethnic Fulani herders, who are fully armed and roam a swath some eight kilometers (five miles) from the town, he says. And the threat of the wider conflict in CAR is never far away. "Zemio and Mboki have been attacked, that could happen here too, we are Christians so they could attack us," says Uffo, referring to two nearby towns.

Some have given up and returned to South Sudan. According to the UN, more than 4,000 refugees have fled to CAR since 2015, but the UN camp at Obo houses half that number as people have decided to go back to their homelands. Uffo has lost his dream of something better, except for one: a football and some boots to play. "We remain here longing for our country, our family. If we could play football, we could forget our unhappiness for a while."—AFP



OBO: View of the Southern Sudanese refugee camp in Obo. — AFP

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International

Cows in the classroom: Inside S Sudan's cattle camp schools

South Sudan's war creating another 'lost generation'

MINGKAMAN: In the early morning, smoke from burning cow dung rose over hundreds of animals sleeping tightly side by side, with children dotted between them, warming their hands in the smoke, their faces covered in white ash to fend off flies and mosquitoes. The cattle camps - where South Sudan's nomads migrate to find pasture during the December to May dry season - are some of the world's most remote, nestled between the arms of the Nile in Lakes State's swamps. "My days are busy," 24-year-old Mary Amal said, standing between hundreds of cows and holding her baby, Gok, in her arms.

"I came here with my brother to take care of our cows and I'm expected to clean up the camp's cow dung and prepare food, while also taking care of my eight-month-old daughter." The camp was full of children who work as herders, cooks and cleaners. For many, it was also their first chance to learn to read and write.

calculate sums and learn about hygiene. Aid agencies are starting to provide mobile education in the remote cattle camps amid fears that South Sudan's latest civil war is creating another "lost generation" of uneducated adults and country risks becoming a failed state.

"The cattle camp is like a village," said Amal. "We have our tents here, we have small shops and even a church. It's important to have a school here too." The United Nations (UN) estimates almost three-quarters of the adult population is illiterate - one of the highest rates in the world - and three-quarters of children are out of school. Tens of thousands of people have died and 4.5 million people have fled their homes since clashes between troops loyal to President Salva Kiir and former

vice president Riek Machar broke out in the oil-rich new country in 2013.

Lifeline

South Sudan's cattle camps are not only a cultural tradition, but provide a lifeline for millions in the world's youngest country, enabling them to trade and store their wealth as hyperinflation has rendered the currency almost worthless. In the camps, everything evolves around the animals - their milk provides nutritious meals for children, manure lights fires and urine is used as a disinfectant hand and face wash.

Aid agencies provide mobile education in remote cattle camps

Agriculture Organization. "Many of them have never before received formal education," said Kassa, who manages the project, adding that adults also learn about livestock production, disease control and literacy.

The camp is several hours away from the town of Minkaman, accessed by trekking through thick bush, swimming through a muddy, stagnant river and then walking over a vast open field. Miles from any village, it has three informal teachers and almost 100 students, who crouched on the floor with a small chalkboard in front of them and hundreds of white, big horned cows behind them. "I was trained to become a mobile teacher and now teach every morning once the cattle have been released for grazing," said Abuoch Madit Awur, who



MINGKAMAN: Informal teacher Abuoch Madit Awur teaches an English lesson to his students in Minkaman, South Sudan. —Reuters

lives in the camp and teaches for several hours each day, sitting in the dust.

Only chance

Only a fifth of the students are girls and their progress is often erratic due to their workload and monthly menstruation. "Attendance is generally low among women," said Maker Maker, livelihood officer with Norwegian People's Aid, another partner in the project, who trains the cattle keepers. "Many take long trips to the village to pick up more food in the market. During their periods, women always stay at home ... It's a big problem."

Amal, 24, is learning to read and write for the first time. "I've never been to school in my life. I grew up working in the household and later got married," she said. While her days are long, she is determined to learn. "This is my only

leaders confirmed their close cooperation in realising North Korea's denuclearization" before an expected summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, the ministry said. Abe and Putin also discussed joint economic activities on disputed islands and "humanitarian measures" for former Japanese islanders, the ministry said. Referring to the poisoning of a former Russian spy in Britain, Abe told Putin the use of chemical weapons was not acceptable.

'Develop relations further'

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani congratulated Putin on his "decisive victory" and pledged to boost ties. "I am sure that during your new term, relations between our two countries will develop further," he said. Iran and Russia have strengthened ties in recent years, both giving major military and financial backing to Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad.

'Strategic ties'

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El Sisi sent his "warmest congratulations," according to a statement. "(Sisi) lauds the strategic relations that the two countries share and their keenness to further enhance them so as to realize the interests of both peoples."

'End blackmail, sanctions'

France's far-right National Front, which has enjoyed close ties with the Kremlin, urged the European Union to reconsider its poor relations with Russia. Putin's re-election should above all "bring the European Union to reconsider and put an end to its absurd and counter-productive blackmail, threats and sanctions," against Moscow, a party statement said.

'Brother countries'

The presidents of leftist regimes in Venezuela and Bolivia effusively congratulated Putin both using the same word, "overwhelming" to describe the victory. Russia and Venezuela are "brother countries" as both must "face the frequent manoeuvres of imperialism" to "impose doctrines of world supremacy," said a statement from President Nicolas Maduro. Bolivian President Evo Morales said on Twitter that Putin's win "guarantees geopolitical equilibrium and world peace before the onslaught of imperialism".

What the world is saying about Putin's victory

PARIS: China was the first world power to react yesterday to Russian strongman Vladimir Putin's re-election vowing to push ties to a "higher level", but Germany questioned the fairness of the vote and warned Moscow would remain "difficult". Here's a roundup of global reaction:

'Cooperative partnership'

Just a day after Xi Jinping was unanimously re-appointed President, the Chinese leader said Beijing was willing to work with Moscow. "Currently, the China-Russia comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership is at the best level in history, which sets an example for building a new type of international relations," Xi said in a message to Putin, according to the official Xinhua news agency. "China is willing to work with Russia to keep promoting China-Russia relations to a higher level."

'Challenges'

German Chancellor Angela Merkel was to congratulate Putin, but the message will also raise "challenges" in relations, her spokesman said. Berlin and Moscow have "differences in opinion" on issues ranging from Russian politics to the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria. "Nevertheless, the continuous contact with Russia's leadership is very important to us," Foreign Minister Heiko Maas was more critical, saying: "We certainly cannot talk in all respects about a fair political contest as we know it." It was "unacceptable" that the election also took place in Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine four years ago in breach of international law, Maas said. "In this respect, we assume that Russia will remain a difficult partner."

'Denuclearize North Korea'

Japan's Foreign Ministry said Prime Minister Shinzo Abe had congratulated Putin and they agreed to work together for North Korea's denuclearization. "The two

N Korea 'in talks to free US detainees' as diplomacy escalates

SEOUL: North Korea is in talks with the US and Sweden to release three jailed Americans, reports said, as diplomatic activities intensified ahead of Pyongyang's planned summits with Washington and Seoul. The release of the three Korean-Americans is under discussion through multiple channels more than a week after President Donald Trump agreed to meet the North's Kim Jong Un, the reports said.

Pyongyang has yet to confirm it even made the US summit offer-relayed by Seoul envoys who had met Kim in Pyongyang-but South Korea said he had "given his word" about his commitment to denuclearisation. Trump's stunning announcement has triggered a race to set a credible agenda for what would be historic talks between the two leaders. Seoul-based MBC TV station reported Sunday that Pyongyang and Washington had "practically reached" a final agreement on the release of US citizens Kim Hak-song, Kim Sang-duk and Kim Dong-chul.

"They are hammering out details over the timing of the release," it quoted a South Korean diplomatic source as saying. The negotiation was held through the North's mission to the United Nations and the US State Department-an unofficial avenue of communication dubbed the "New York channel", the source said. CNN said the prisoners' release was also discussed at three-day talks in Stockholm between the North's Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho and Swedish counterpart Margot Wallstrom that ended Saturday.

Sweden represents Washington's interests in the North. It raised the issue of American detainees to "move things in the right direction", CNN quoted one source as saying. Kim Dong-chul, a South Korea-born American pastor, has been detained by the North since 2015 when he was arrested for spying. He was sentenced to 10 years' hard labor in 2016. Kim Hak-song and Kim Sang-duk-or Tony Kim-were both working at the Pyongyang University of Science and Technology, founded by evangelical Christians from overseas, when they were detained last year on suspicion of "hostile acts".

Diplomatic flurry

Reports of their possible release come amid a flurry of diplomatic activities involving Pyongyang and Washington along with Seoul and other US allies. During a visit to Pyongyang by Seoul's envoys earlier this month, Kim reportedly offered to meet Trump, with the US president subsequently agreeing to talks by May. No specific time or venue has been set. Kim also agreed to hold a summit with South Korean President Moon Jae-in next month-the third ever between the two Koreas-according to the envoys. And he reportedly offered to consider abandoning his nuclear weapons in exchange for US security guarantees.

South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said in an interview aired Sunday that Kim was "taking stock" after Trump's surprise decision to accept the invitation, but that a channel of communication had been established. She said Kim had "given his word" on his commitment to denuclearisation. "But the significance of his word is quite, quite weighty in the sense that this is the first time that the words came directly from the North Korean supreme leader himself, and that has never been done before," Kang told CBS's "Face the Nation". Nothing has been offered to the North Koreans to engage in negotiations, she said.

The Stockholm talks overlapped with another meeting between the national security advisers of the US, South Korea and Japan. US National Security Advisor HR McMaster, the South's Chung Eui-yong and Japan's Shotaaro Yachi met in San Francisco over the weekend and vowed "close policy coordination" for the weeks ahead, Seoul's presidential office said. —AFP

Palestinian stabs Israeli security guard to death

JERUSALEM: A Palestinian stabbed an Israeli security guard to death in Jerusalem's Old City on Sunday before being shot dead by a police officer, Israeli officials said. The stabbing came with concerns over the potential for an upsurge in unrest in the coming weeks as the United States prepares to move its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. The security guard was taken to hospital in serious condition suffering a stab wound to his torso, medics said.

The hospital later announced he had died from his wounds. Israeli media reported that he was in his 30s, with some reports saying he was off-duty at the time. Police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld confirmed the assailant had been shot dead. Israel's Shin Bet domestic security service identified the assailant as Abdul Rahmani Faddal, 28, and a father of two from Aqraba near Nablus in the north of the occupied West Bank.

The attack comes after a Friday car ramming by a Palestinian near Jenin in the northern West Bank that the army said killed two Israeli soldiers and wounded two others. Tensions were high after Palestinian Islamist movement Hamas called for a day of

rage on Friday to mark 100 days since US President Donald Trump's controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Palestinians also see the city as their capital and Trump's recognition broke with decades of US policy that Jerusalem's status would be negotiated between the parties.

Palestinian leaders have boycotted Trump's administration over the declaration, though the White House says it still plans to push ahead with its efforts to restart peace talks. At least 32 Palestinians and four Israelis have been killed since Trump's announcement, which set off major protests. The United States is planning to open its new embassy in Jerusalem in May to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel's founding. Palestinians commemorate May 15 as the Nakba, or "catastrophe," marking when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians either fled or were expelled in the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

Gaza tensions

There have also been tensions along the border between Gaza and Israel in recent days. Israel's military said Sunday it had carried out an air raid overnight against an underground Hamas facility in the Gaza Strip and destroyed a separate tunnel under construction that could be used for attacks. No casualties were reported in either operation, which came after an explosive device was detonated near the Gaza border with Israel, the latest in a string of such incidents. Hamas, which runs the Gaza Strip, called Israel's actions an attempt "to scare the



KOKHAV HASHAHAR: People mourn during the funeral of Adiel Kolman, in the Jewish settlement of Kokhav HaShahar yesterday. Adiel Kolman, 28, was stabbed in the torso on Sunday evening and died of his wounds a few hours later in a Jerusalem hospital. —AFP

people" and head off planned protests along the border beginning later this month. Israel "bears all the consequences of the escalation," Hamas spokesman Fawzy Barhoum said. Beginning on March 30, Gazans are planning to erect hundreds of tents near the Israeli border in a six-week show of support for Palestinian refugees.

Two explosive devices were detonated Thursday along the border, which had already provoked Israeli attacks on Hamas

positions. Also on February 17, four Israeli soldiers were wounded by an improvised explosive device on the border, sparking intense military retaliation. It was not clear who was behind the blasts, but Israel held Hamas responsible as the de facto power in the Palestinian enclave. Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza have fought three wars since 2008. The strip has been under an Israeli blockade for around a decade. —AFP

chance," she said. "When I found out about the camp's school, I immediately decided to attend. I get up even earlier now so I can get my work done and study at night." She felt ashamed talking about her menstruation, but said she does not attend school while on her period.

Susan, another student, who declined to give her full name, said she sits by the river for days when she is menstruating. "I don't like that I have to miss school," she said. "We don't have pads or a spare change of clothes. That's why I stay by the river where I can wash." Out of hundreds of camps across South Sudan, only about 10 have a school, with about 100 students each. Keeping the schools running is not easy. Children are brought to the camp to work, not to go to school, and women are expected to provide food, said Maker. "It's a slow progress but my students are encouraged," said teacher Awur. —Reuters



MOSCOW: Members of Russia's Central Election Commission announce the preliminary results during the commission's session in Moscow yesterday. —AFP

'Health and happiness'

Saudi Arabia's new strongman, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and his father King Salman sent congratulations and wished Putin "constant good health and happiness and his people steady progress and prosperity". —AFP

International

China elects new economic team as President Xi kicks off 2nd term

Beijing cracks down on riskier financing

BEIJING: China elevated a key confidante of President Xi Jinping to one of the top positions in government yesterday as Beijing cracks down on riskier financing and a debt to reduce systemic risks to the world's second-largest economy. The election of Liu He by parliament to be a vice premier also comes as the United States presses China to cut its trade surplus by \$100 billion. Harvard-educated Liu, 66, was the most prominent envoy to visit Washington recently in a bid to prevent the outbreak of a trade war. While most of the personnel changes on the economic team were widely anticipated, the choice of Yi Gang to take over as the new head of the People's Bank of China (PBOC) was unexpected.

Yi is a vice governor of PBOC and a protégé of outgoing chief Zhou Xiaochuan. His appointment is seen as pointing to continuity in monetary policy even as one of the world's biggest central banks is gaining considerable new regulatory power. The head of a newly merged banking and insurance regulator is expected to be announced yesterday. Reform-minded Guo Shuqing, 61, the current chair of the China Banking Regulatory Commission, is viewed as the top candidate to play that role. The chief of a powerful new competition and food safety regulator will also be unveiled.

As Xi begins his second five-year term as president, Beijing is streamlining regulators and ministries to cut inefficiencies while expanding the remit of others such as the central bank to boost their policymaking powers. "China's ministries are giant, nationwide silos and fiefdoms that never talk to one another. Hence, in order to accomplish anything major, the command must come from the top down: only they can get ministries to work together," Cliff Tan, east Asian head of global markets research at Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ, said in a note. "Such a setup nearly

guarantees the continuation of power that is never devolved, otherwise nothing would get done."

Liu has a deep understanding of the country's economic issues, and was elected last October into the 25-member Politburo, the second-highest tier in Beijing's political power structure after the seven-member Politburo Standing Committee. Liu won a top Chinese economics study award in 2015 for his research on the global financial crisis, and is widely seen as masterminding Xi's supply-side reforms which are cutting excess factory capacity and pivoting the economy away from low-value industries. Liu, who speaks fluent English, gained a master's degree in public administration at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government in 1995. He had been the head of the General Office of the ruling Communist Party's Central Leading Group for Financial and Economic Affairs and a vice minister of the National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) - China's top economic planner.

Liu He to be vice premier, Yi Gang to be PBOC chief



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping (center) rubs his eye as he arrives for the seventh plenary session of the first session of the 13th National People's Congress (NPC) with Premier Li Keqiang (right) and Chairman of the NPC Li Zhanhu (left) at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

Zhou's protege

US-educated Yi Gang, 60, has been vice PBOC governor since 2008. He is seen as instrumental in steering monetary and currency policy, including the landmark devaluation of the yuan in 2015 and more recently a tightening in capital controls. The PBOC and other regulators are trying to rein in risks from an increasingly complex financial system and a rapid build-up in debt without jolting markets or hurting economic growth. "The main task right now is to implement prudent monetary policy, push forward financial sector reform and opening up, and keep the financial sector stable," Yi told reporters on the sidelines of yesterday's parliament session at the Great Hall of the People.

But Yi is not regarded as a heavyweight like his boss

Zhou, and he may play a supportive role with Liu overseeing the economy and finance sector on the whole, some economists say. "Frankly speaking, (Yi's nomination is) a bit unexpected as he holds a relatively low political ranking as the alternative member of CPC Central Committee," said Tommy Xie, China economist at OCBC Bank in Singapore.

The Central Committee is the largest of the party's elite decision-making bodies, and is made up of 204 full members and about 170 alternate members. "In terms of implication, we see policy continuation as Yi will support Liu He to drive economic reform. Both are the main driver to China's reform in the past few years," Xie said. Yi, one of the highest-ranking "sea turtles" - a colloquialism for Chinese returning from

overseas - has a PhD in economics from the University of Illinois. He was also the head of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) from 2009 to 2016.

With Yi's background and his reputation of being pro-reform, his nomination would be good news for foreign investors. Xie also said. Zhou, 70, who is China's longest-running central bank head, having taken the job in 2002, is expected to announce his retirement soon. Separately, Liu Kun, head of the budget office of parliament, was elected to be the new finance minister, replacing Xiao Jie. Liu was formerly a vice finance minister. Zhong Shan was re-elected as the commerce minister. He Lifeng was also re-elected as the head of NDRC. —Reuters

PTSD-ongoing fight for generation of Iraq war veterans

WASHINGTON: Justin Carlisle was in the center vehicle of a five-Humvee convoy when the bomb went off. Insurgents had jammed several 155mm artillery shells into a manhole on a street in Ramadi, central Iraq, then triggered a blast that ripped through the patrol's final Humvee, killing a Navy medic and three of Carlisle's Marine Corps comrades-including his best friend. "Within 18 hours, we were back out on our next mission," Carlisle said of the April 2, 2006 attack. "We didn't have time to process it. You couldn't sit there and dwell on what was going on because you still had to get up and go and fight the next day."

Carlisle, from Ohio, is now among the millions of veterans dealing with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD, a signature wound of any war but especially prevalent after the brutal urban fighting in Iraq. George W Bush launched that conflict 15 years ago this month, but in some ways its toll is only in its early phases. During two deployments to Ramadi and Fallujah, Carlisle said his unit of about 800 men lost 25 Marines and sailors, with another 350 wounded in action. Since coming home, at least a dozen more have killed themselves or died of drug overdoses. "It's not until you get out and you are not with your tribe anymore that you start realizing you have some serious issues," the former Marine infantryman said.

Curable condition?

Estimates vary, but the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) believes about 13-20 percent of Iraq War vets suffer from PTSD. Symptoms can range from insomnia and depression to debilitating panic attacks, flashbacks, irritability and self-harming behavior. Like many of his buddies, it took Carlisle time to seek help for his condition, only going to see a doctor in 2012 - four years after leaving the military. He was given five different types of



VIRGINIA: Justin Carlisle is seen at the Marine Corps Museum in Triangle, Virginia, following a reunion with his Marine unit. —AFP

medication, and worries the VA dishes out pills too readily. "I don't want to see them keep pushing medications to veterans. That should be, in my mind, the last line of defense," he said, noting that alternative approaches including meditation have helped him more. Carlisle runs a non-profit organization - 3/8 Veterans of Fallujah and Ramadi-advocating for fellow veterans, and he's about to start another group to run retreats for combat veterans. Paula Schnurr, executive director of the VA's National Center for PTSD, said that while treatment is often through anti-depressants, the preferred recourse comes through various types of psychotherapy.

In 2006, the VA started training clinicians in techniques such as cognitive-processing therapy, where a patient learns about and processes their trauma. The VA

also uses other methods aimed at desensitizing a veteran. Schnurr, who has been studying PTSD since 1984, said treatments have come a long way over the past decade and in many cases it is effectively curable. "We have treatments for PTSD ... it doesn't have to be a chronic disorder," Schnurr said. The National Center for PTSD runs a project called About Face encouraging veterans to seek treatment, and is increasingly using "teletherapy" to offer web-based counseling to vets without easy access to a VA center.

Mark Russell, director of Antioch University's Institute of War Stress Injury, Recovery and Social Justice, said the VA's response to veterans' PTSD has been inadequate, arguing that war-related psychological conditions still go under-diagnosed. —AFP

Turkey-led forces comb Syria's Afrin after ousting Kurds

AFRIN: Turkish-led forces secured the city of Afrin yesterday after a deadly two-month assault that dealt the Kurds a major blow and could reshape the region. Opposition groups supporting the capture of Afrin from the Kurds condemned looting carried out by Ankara's Syrian proxies when they seized the northern city Sunday.

The most significant control of territory change in Syria this year coincided with the regime's grinding down of Eastern Ghouta, a six-year-old rebel bastion near Damascus. President Bashar Al-Assad visited reconquered areas there Sunday to hail his troops' advances, which led tens of thousands of civilians to flee to government areas after years of siege. The Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) could do little when Syrian Arab fighters backed by NATO's second-largest army thrust into Afrin, nearly two months into a massive assault on the region.

The fighters, mostly former anti-Assad rebels, celebrated their victory by destroying the statue of Kurdish hero Kawa and looting shops and other property. The pillaging drew widespread condemnation,

including from Syrian opposition groups supporting the Turkish intervention. "The looting and stealing of private and public property is a crime," said Mohamed Alloush, a key figure in the Jaish al-Islam rebel group. "All those who took part in this decade need to have their hands slapped hard."

Sweeping for mines

An AFP reporter said looting was still taking place yesterday, with fighters joking at checkpoints about their spoils. The Britain-based Syria Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group, which relies on an extensive network of sources across Syria, also said pillaging was still under way. The mosaic of factions hired by Turkey from Idlib province and elsewhere to wage the offensive were spray-painting their groups' names on Afrin shop fronts and walls.

They also picked through debris for bombs and unexploded ordnance after explosions killed at least 13 of them on Sunday. The command of the operation Ankara launched on January 20 appeared to be rotating some fighters out in order to bring a police holding force. Turkey, which has threatened to push deeper into Syria, said its operation was aimed at securing the north of the country to allow the three million Syrian refugees on its soil to return. Ankara was also worried that the Kurds, who control some 30 percent of Syrian territory, would consolidate a statelet stretching all along the border.



AFRIN, Syria: Turkish-backed Syrian Arab fighters loot shops after seizing control of the northwestern Syrian city of Afrin from the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG). —AFP

'Years to come'

Nicholas Heras, a security fellow at the Center for a New American Security, said taking Afrin was a success for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan who shrugged off international concern to press on with the operation. "Afrin is one of the most strategic areas of northwest Syria. It is a piece of real estate that anchors Turkey's presence for many years to come," Heras said. Bitterness ran high among the Kurds, who felt poorly rewarded for the sacrifices made when they were the ground force of the US-led coalition's war against the Islamic State

jihadist group. The Observatory said that more than 1,500 Kurdish fighters had been killed since the start of the offensive, most of them in air strikes and artillery fire.

The YPG has vowed to fight back but their chances look slim and tens of thousands of Afrin residents who fled in recent days now find themselves in limbo. Syria's conflict, which started seven years ago this month when Assad's forces cracked down on peaceful protests demanding regime change, has killed at least 350,000 people and displaced more than half of the pre-war population of 20 million. —AFP

Japan's leader hits back over scandal as support plunges

TOKYO: Japan's embattled prime minister hit back at critics yesterday over a favoritism and cover-up scandal that has seen his popularity plunge and loosened his iron grip on power. In a hotly awaited statement in parliament, Shinzo Abe denied he had ordered bureaucrats to alter documents relating to a controversial land sale as he comes under mounting pressure over the affair. "I have never ordered changes," he said.

The scandal surrounds the 2016 sale of state-owned land to a nationalist operator of schools who claims ties to Abe and his wife Akie. The sale was clinched at a price well below market value amid allegations that the high-level connections helped grease the deal. The affair emerged early last year, but resurfaced after the revelation that finance ministry documents related to the sale had been changed. Versions of the original and doctored documents made public by opposition lawmakers appeared to show passing references to Abe were deleted, along with several references to his wife Akie and Finance Minister Taro Aso.

Aso has blamed the alterations on "some staff members" at the ministry. But Jiro Yamaguchi, a politics professor at Hosei University in Tokyo, said the public was "not at all convinced" by this explanation. "Why was the land sold at a discount price? Without any political pressure, this could never happen, and voters are angry about it," said Yamaguchi. The prime minister repeated an apology, saying he "keenly felt" his responsibility over the scandal that has "shaken people's confidence in government administration."

Abe 'wobbling'

The affair is hitting Abe's ratings hard, with a new poll in the Asahi Shimbun showing public support nosediving by 13 percentage points from the previous month to 31 percent. The figure is the lowest approval rating for Abe in the poll since his return to power at the end of 2012. Another survey suggested that for the first time since before a general election in October, more people disapproved of the cabinet's performance than approved. The scandal is harming Abe's hopes of winning re-election as head of his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in September, which would make him Japan's longest-serving prime minister. Political analyst Yamaguchi said that if support continues to tumble, LDP members might begin to feel Abe is a liability ahead of upper house elections next year.

Abe insisted that, even before the alterations, the documents showed that his hands were clean. "If you look at the documents before the alterations, it is clear there is no evidence that I or my wife was involved in the sale of the national land or approval of the school." But the opposition is demanding that Abe fall on his sword over the issue. "This is a problem that is worthy of the resignation of the whole of the cabinet," opposition upper house member Shoji Namba demanded as he questioned Abe over the scandal.

Masayuki Kubota, chief strategist at Rakuten Securities, noted there were "growing voices" calling for Abe and Aso to be held responsible. "Various polls have shown his cabinet approval rating plunging and the stable base of the Abe administration is wobbling," he said in a commentary. The political uncertainty was beginning to take its toll on the Japanese stock market. The benchmark Nikkei 225 index fell 0.90 percent or 195.61 points to close at 21,480.90 yesterday, while the broader Topix index was down 0.96 percent or 16.66 points at 1,719.97. Toshikazu Horiuchi, a broker at IwaiCosmo Securities, said the affair was expected to continue hurting market sentiment for now, saying: "It's unlikely we will see the scandal disappearing tomorrow." —AFP

Analysis

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Powell's Fed to show caution, shun friction

Jerome Powell heads for his first interest rate increase as Federal Reserve Chairman this week with an unanswered question looming above others: could his optimism about the US economy lead to more hikes than markets have prepared for? Powell's public comments and Reuters conversations with his Fed colleagues since January, when he was confirmed as chairman, suggest such fears are overblown: Powell, the consensus-builder, may make some tweaks to reflect changing economic conditions but is committed to gradual, moderate rate increases as his predecessor Janet Yellen who adopted that approach.

The new chairman's overriding concern will be to sustain one of the longest US recoveries for as long as possible, according to conversations with Fed officials and analysts. But given signs that the economy's potential has strengthened, that might mean a policy-tightening cycle that lasts longer, with rates going a bit higher than earlier thought.

Powell was widely seen as a choice of continuity when President Donald Trump picked him. He served as one of the Fed governors during the central bank's transition from crisis-era stimulus to a more balanced approach that led to three rate increases last year in response to steady growth and falling unemployment. Yet uncertainty over how the 65-year-old lawyer and former investment banker would steer the Fed was on full display last month when global stocks sold off briefly after Powell's first congressional testimony.

Investors initially took his upbeat assessment of the US economy as a sign he was more of a policy "hawk" than Yellen, and that four rate hikes might be in store for this year rather than the three previously telegraphed by the Fed. This might still turn out to be the case. Even the dovish Fed Governor Lael Brainard noted recently that the economy's "headwinds are shifting to tailwinds."

But a stronger economy does not necessarily mean the Fed is abandoning its balanced assessment of risks to growth and price stability. Rather, it can give Powell wiggle room in balancing nudging inflation up after more than five years below target, and guarding against the risk of runaway prices as some \$1.8 trillion in tax cuts and new government spending take hold.

Under Yellen, the central bank was still more guarded about the economic impact of such fiscal stimulus that could overheat an economy already near full capacity, but also boost business confidence and productivity, giving the rates more room to rise. One hint whether the Powell Fed now sees more policy leeway will come on Wednesday when the central bank will publish its new median estimate of the so-called neutral rate of interest - the level that neither stimulates nor chills the economy.

This rate has drifted down to a 2.75 percent median, from 4 percent in 2013. A rise to, say 3 percent, could signal the fiscal stimulus and recent data like the blockbuster February jobs report have begun convincing Powell and others that the gradual rate-hike cycle could go on for another couple years or more, allowing extra room to cut rates in the next recession.

If it ain't broke

The Fed is expected to lift its policy rate to a range of 1.5 to 1.75 percent at the end of its two-day meeting on Wednesday and also update its assessment of the economy. Months of synchronized global growth, some signs of US price pressures and fears Trump's protectionist steps could escalate into a trade war have fanned concerns within the Fed that inflation, now a bit below its 2-percent target, could accelerate. Some policymakers also worry the tax cuts could stoke risky investments that could tip the economy into another downturn.

But the Powell Fed is likely to take extreme care not to over-react to stronger economic data, according to a series of public statements by policymakers and minutes of their January meeting. Investors can also take comfort from what those who have worked with Powell describe as his "if it ain't broke, don't fix it," approach, which ultimately helped him land his job.

While Powell has shown little appetite for sweeping changes, such as revamping an inflation-targeting regime as advocated by some of his colleagues, the new Fed chief has already begun setting his own tone. He is "careful and practical but definitely open to new approaches," said Narayana Kocherlakota, former Minneapolis Fed president who worked with the then-Fed Governor Powell between 2013 and 2015.

For one, Powell, a Republican former Treasury official who enjoys his regular private meetings with lawmakers of both parties, emphasizes a warmer relationship with Congress and avoids venturing outside of the Fed's strict policy remit. During his first appearance on Capitol Hill as Fed chief, when asked what he was willing to do to ensure economic growth benefits all Americans and not just elites, Powell stuck to the script saying the Fed simply lacked the tools to do that.

That marks a contrast to the era when Yellen and her predecessor Ben Bernanke were in charge. Their years in office were dominated by innovation and experimentation in the face of crisis, an overhaul of how the Fed sets and communicates policy, and sometimes free-form public discussions about social issues like inequality that put Yellen in particular at odds with the Republicans who control Congress. So far Powell has dropped no hints of immediate changes to press conferences or other means of communication. His reluctance to take unnecessary risks may convince him that any change could confuse the public, do little to improve policy, and draw unnecessary political fire. —Reuters

A NEW HOPE :
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FUTURE FORWARD PARTY

Living across the frontlines in South Sudan

Nyokol was 15, healthy and strong when South Sudanese soldiers attacked her hometown of Leer, forcing her to flee with her mother into the surrounding swamps. Not for the first time, government troops tore through the northern rebel stronghold, killing, kidnapping and raping, so Nyokol was lucky to escape, but she contracted cerebral malaria while in hiding. Treatment for the disease came too late, leaving her brain-damaged and unable to walk, talk or eat without help.

In the nearly three years since, Nyokol's mother, Nyaduol, has carried her to safety numerous times as fighting has continued. Their most recent uprooting was just last month when they managed to cross the shifting front lines, arriving exhausted and hungry in rebel-held Touch Riak, less than 16 km from Leer. The constant upheaval of conflict, illness and starvation has left Nyokol severely malnourished: her weight is that of a two-year-old, her skin hanging loose on protruding bones.

A war on civilians

South Sudan's civil war began in late 2013 and has overwhelmingly affected civilians who are treated as prey by soldiers from all sides. Rape, torture, murder and starvation have come to define the conflict, while efforts to bring peace have failed. Leer has been the epicentre of this man-made crisis. The town was once home to rebel leader Riek Machar and dominated by his Nuer tribe, and so was a target for government forces.

The violent tug-of-war between government and rebel forces has scattered most of the population to places like Touch Riak, the

village where Nyokol and her mother are staying, squatters at a tarpaulin hospital. Leer is, for now, under government control and so off-limits to Nyokol. "Touch Riak is still in the hands of the opposition and during the rainy season it becomes an island. That's why we feel safe here," said Nyaduol as she tended to her invalid daughter, lying prone on the makeshift clinic's dirt floor.

Leer is also largely abandoned by international aid agencies, who have not returned since the major government offensive of 2015, unwilling to take the risk of operating in the area after their compounds were serially looted and their staff threatened.

Access blocked

Instead, local South Sudanese charities are on the ground, while the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) drops sacks of food from the air. "The situation is tense and it's difficult to move," said Galkan David Jal of the Universal Intervention and Development Organisation, one of just two NGOs in Leer. Movement is expensive too: a series of roadblocks manned by voracious soldiers mean that Jal, like other aid workers, must use a helicopter to cover even short distances.

Last year, famine was declared in Leer, triggering a massive airlift of emergency food that mitigated the worst of the starvation. But hunger remains. "We need to take food to where hunger and hungry people are before they are cut off due to the rainy season. With the start of the rains, the situation will become extremely dire," said the WFP's Adnan Khan. The impending rains will make travel overland all but impossible, washing away the few seasonal roads. "Access then



Malnourished Sudanese Nyokol, 18, weighing 11 kg, suffers from the consequences of cerebral malaria in Touch Riak, Leer county, where famine has been declared since Feb 2017. —AFP

becomes our biggest challenge and it's only possible by air," said James Mat Gai, program director of Nile Hope, which runs the hospital where Nyokol is being treated.

Nowhere to run

Renewed fighting is also a predictable threat to the refuge of Touch Riak. Makuil Puok, a 25-year-old patient lies on the floor, hunched in pain and breathing heavily. His lowered trousers reveal a gunshot wound in his buttock, sustained as he tried to make the journey to safety. "I tried to cross the front line to get to Touch Riak, but a soldier shot me," he said. Gai's staff have cleaned

and dressed the wound, but they were unable to extract the bullet. Puok said if the war catches up with him again he will escape by canoe.

But for Nyokol and her mother, the running is over. "My daughter almost died when we crossed into Touch Riak. She is very weak. I hope we'll be even safer here when we're cut off by water," she said. But safety without food is just a slower death sentence, so Nyaduol is taking every opportunity to forage in the swamps or seek her share of what little aid arrives. "Before the rains start, we need to make sure to have enough food to survive," she said. —AFP

When the Maasai met the Maori: Kenya seeks to end land conflicts

As the semi-nomadic Maasai of Kenya's Great Rift Valley prepare to lose more land to a geothermal plant, they hope to win a better deal this time, after meeting the Maori in New Zealand. Protests by the Maasai - known for dressing in red blankets and colorful beads - halted construction in 2016 of Kenya's Olkaria V plant, about 100 km northwest of the capital Nairobi, on ancestral land sacred to community rituals. Although building resumed after negotiations, both sides are keen to improve relations so that the hot water under the soil can help to lift the Maasai community, who farm and herd cattle on the semi-arid land above it, out of poverty.

"(The Maori) have conflicts, but they've found better ways to solve them," said Mwangi Sururu, who travelled to down south in November to see how the indigenous New Zealanders kept their culture intact by partnering with energy firms. "They were given a share in the power plants and the areas that were already being used for power production were leased directly from them," said the Maasai elder, who was one of more than 1,000 people evicted from their Rift Valley land in 2014.

Kenya is Africa's biggest geothermal producer. It aims by 2025 to triple its output of clean electricity made from generating stations that harness natural, underground heat. This will require more geothermal plants. But further encroachment on land claimed by the Maasai could cause conflicts if the process is not managed carefully, said John Maina of the renewable energy department at Kenya's energy ministry.

"Problems arise when the investor doesn't do thorough community engagement and participation," Maina told a public forum hosted by the University of Nairobi. "Geothermal projects are very sensitive and people have to be moved because of the nature of the steam ... but this sometimes causes friction with the community."

Cross-continental

The Maasai-Maori exchange was arranged by Power Africa, former US President Barack Obama's signature Africa energy initiative, which aims to boost access to electricity in a continent where two in three people live without it. The Maasai and the Maori consider geothermal springs as critical to their way of life, offering heat for cooking, a place to treat ailments and a venue for traditional rituals. The Maori said they faced similar threats to their lands but found ways to work with the plant operators.

"We are an indigenous community over here, and we've had some projects just like the Maasai," said Desterney Mana Newton, chairman of New Zealand's Ngati Tahu Tribal Lands Trust, which administers blocks of Maori land used for geothermal projects. "We feel we can learn from each other," he said by phone. Benefits included taking up shares in companies investing in geothermal plants and monitoring their activities so that the Maori way of life was not affected, said Newton, who was part of the exchange program.

The Maori also received dividends and revenue from annual rates paid for leases on their land, he added. The Maori have one key advantage over the Maasai. Under New Zealand law, they "own the resources mined in their land", Sururu said, while the Maasai do not have the right to any underground resources, all of which belong to the state.

Controversy

When the Olkaria IV plant was being built, state-run Kenya Electricity Generating Company (KenGen) relocated more than 100 families - including Sururu's - to a 1,700-acre plot on Kedong Ranch, about 20 km away. The exercise was marred with controversy. An investigation by the World Bank, one of several international lenders, found that evicted families were adversely affected. "People were resettled to land which was less suitable for them than their older habitats," its 2015 report said.

KenGen - the country's biggest electricity generator - said it has been holding meetings with Maasai leaders every two months since 2014 to address community concerns. "We are trying to find common meeting points," said Moses Wekesa, KenGen's business development director, adding that KenGen cannot ignore community concerns because it plans to build at least three more



KenGen's Olkaria IV geothermal plant overlooks settlements where the sixth plant would be constructed in Kenya. —Reuters

geothermal plants in Olkaria.

The East African nation is ramping up electricity production to keep up with growing demand for power and to reduce frequent blackouts. Given the challenges in compensating the Maasai with alternative plots of land, KenGen is vesting its hopes in other approaches, including a bill tabled in parliament last month. It lays out a revenue-sharing regime under which geothermal companies pay up to 2.5 percent of revenue from a site into a fund for a decade, with higher royalties in later years. The national government would take at least 75 percent, with 20 percent for local governments and 5 percent for the local community, the energy bill says. "The revenue-sharing bill will help," Sururu said.

KenGen is already negotiating resettlement with people living on the proposed Olkaria VI site, said Cyrus Karingithi, a resource development manager for the company. "Eventually they will have to move because the plant is something that benefits more than just a few people," he said, pointing at a sparsely-housed plain beyond the Olkaria IV plant. "But negotiations have not been completed," added Maasai elder Maenga Kisutu. "(The Maori) have shown us how they live with the energy companies." —Reuters

News

Cairo voters back native son Sisi...

Continued from Page 1

Here, like many other neighborhoods across the capital, banners supporting the president stretch across streets, hang down the facades of buildings, and are tied to the top of streetlights. The ubiquitous signs of support come despite the pain felt by locals in the district, which now houses small-scale industries, due to an economic reform package introduced by the president after he took power in 2014. Elected with 96.9 percent of the vote a year after leading the ouster of former Islamist president Mohammad Morsi, Sisi made returning security and economic stability his top priorities.

But inflation has skyrocketed as Cairo carried a major reform package in exchange for a \$12 billion from the International Monetary Fund in 2016, floating its currency and slashing state subsidies. Like Egypt's international partners, many residents in El-Gamaleya are convinced that Sisi's economic reforms are necessary, despite the rising cost of living. "We support anyone who will put the country back on its feet," said Sheikh Hassan, as he left a neighborhood mosque where he leads prayer.

The man with a long black beard and white galabeya - the traditional Egyptian robe - plans to vote for Sisi but is desperate for some much-needed economic relief. "We need him to boost the economy because prices have risen and people are exhausted," said. In a nearby narrow alley where metal workshops sit side-by-side, Mohammed Abdel Fattah coated trinkets in gold paint for a patiently waiting customer. "I'm going to vote for Sisi. It's true that the president's popularity has dipped, but he's still appreciated," he said.

Just 100 m away on a crowded street in Khan El-Khalili, Cairo's main tourist bazaar, Mohammed Khaled runs a shop alongside an art store opened decades ago by Sisi's father and uncles, and still being



CAIRO: A giant election campaign board supporting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi is seen in the capital. — AFP

run by a cousin. Khaled, 56, is enthusiastic about the polls and the prospects for the future. "Obviously, I will vote again for President Sisi, and I'll bring my children with me," he said. "I might be exhausted today (by rising prices), but I'm optimistic. I feel that he will bring good with him". — AFP

World Bank cautions warming climate...

Continued from Page 1

Meanwhile, the world must race to avert disastrous loss of water supplies, Brazil's President Michel Temer told a conference yesterday, after the UN said some 5.7 billion people may run short of drinking water by 2050. "There is simply no time to lose," Temer said in opening remarks at the 8th World Water Forum, which takes place all week in the Brazilian capital. Under the slogan "sharing water", the forum brought together 15 heads of state and government, 300 mayors and dozens of experts. An estimated 40,000 people were expected to attend, organizers say.

They were meeting shortly after publication of the United Nation's 2018 World Water Development Report, which said 3.6 billion people, or half the world's population, already live in areas where water can be scarce at least one month a year. That could rise to 5.7 billion people by 2050, the report said. At the Brasilia forum, the main focus was on the specter of supplies collapsing in major urban centers, as almost happened in Cape Town this year.

Until earlier this month, the South African city was projected to run out of water as early as July, forcing the closing of household taps and extreme rationing. That crisis has now eased, with the local government saying that a campaign to bring 60 percent reduction in consumption has done enough to dodge the shut-off. But the drama set off alarm bells. "This is the consensus," Temer said. "Life on earth is threatened if we don't respect nature's limits." Brazil has its own problems. Although the country holds 18 percent of the world's drinkable water, the northeast is suffering its longest drought in history and even Brasilia has been under rationing since Jan 2017.

Securing supplies means shifting from so-called "grey" to "green" approaches, in other words less reliance on man-made concrete structures like dams

and more on natural systems, the UN said. "In many cases, more ecosystem-friendly forms of water storage, such as natural wetlands, improvements in soil moisture and more efficient recharge of groundwater, could be more sustainable and cost-effective," said the report's chief editor, Richard Connor.

The report said that green solutions were already proven to work, but are widely ignored. New York, for example, has protected the three largest watersheds that supply water to the city since the late 1990s through forest preservation programs and paying farmers to be environmentally friendly. "Disposing of the largest unfiltered water supply in the US, the city now saves more than \$300 million yearly on water sea treatment and maintenance costs," the UN said.

Another example is China's "Sponge City" project to improve water availability. By 2020, China plans to build 16 pilot projects across the country with the aim of recycling 70 percent of rainwater through greater soil permeation, retention and storage, water purification and restoration of adjacent wetlands. "These solutions are cost-effective" and not more expensive than traditional systems, said Connor. The UN pointed to estimates that global agricultural production could increase by about 20 percent with greener water management practices.

In addition to improving water availability and quality, "it is possible to increase agricultural production per hectare with better water management" and thus feed more people, said Stefan Uhlenbrook, program coordinator at the UN World Water Assessment Forum. "Green" infrastructure also helps fight erosion, drought and flood risks while boosting soil quality and vegetation. And indigenous peoples could be involved in implementation, something which was not the case in "grey" infrastructure," the report said.

However, only "marginal" use is being made of such nature-based solutions. "Accurate figures are not available", but investments in these techniques "appear to be less than one percent... of total investment in infrastructure and water resource management," according to the report. They "are often perceived as less effective" because they are less visible, Connor said. — Agencies

Austin 'serial bomber' shows...

Continued from Page 1

in their 20s as they walked along a sidewalk in southwest Austin. He said it appeared "random" and was triggered by a tripwire. "We're clearly dealing with what we expect to be a serial bomber at this point based on the similarities between now what is the fourth device," the police chief said.

"(But) what we have seen now is a significant change from what appeared to be three very targeted attacks to what was last night an attack that would have hit a random victim that happened to walk by," he said. "So we've definitely seen a change in the method that this suspect or suspects are using," the police chief said. Police believe they are "now dealing with someone who's using tripwires, shows a higher level of sophistication, a higher level of skill," he said. Manley appealed to the bomber to contact the authorities and to the public to report anything suspicious. "People need to be vigilant, pay attention," he said. "Pay attention to your surroundings."

Police said they were increasing the reward offered for

information leading to an arrest, bringing the total city and state bounty money to \$115,000. "We need every tip, every piece of information, however inconsequential you may think it is," Manley said. Police cordoned off a half-mile radius of a residential neighborhood of southwest Austin after the latest explosion. Area residents were told to stay indoors until police determined it was safe.

An exploding package killed a 39-year-old African-American man on March 2. A 17-year-old African-American man was killed on March 12 and the Hispanic woman was injured the same day. All of the cardboard packages were hand-delivered, not sent through the mail, and the bombs were built with household items available at hardware stores. A task force of hundreds of agents are working the case, including criminal profilers and experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF).

Austin Mayor Steve Adler said the manhunt for the bomber was the "highest priority". "We have some of the best law enforcement folks around dealing with this," Adler said on ABC's "Good Morning America". "There's an army of federal agents. We have state resources. We're going to find out who is responsible for this and we're going to stop it," he said. Since the bombings began city police have responded to some 700 suspicious package calls, the Austin-American Statesman newspaper said. —AFP

Putin to engage with West after record...

Continued from Page 1

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. Putin, who has ruled Russia for almost two decades, yesterday denied he was driving a new arms race with Washington after he unveiled a range of "invincible" nuclear weapons this month. "From our side, we will do all we can so that the disputes with our (international) partners be resolved by political and diplomatic means," he said during a meeting with the seven other candidates he resoundingly defeated on Sunday. "It goes without saying that not everything depends on us - as with love, both sides have to be involved, otherwise there can be no love at all," he said.

Putin said he would focus on "increasing the well-being of the residents of this country" through investments in healthcare, education and infrastructure during his next term. With Putin's most vocal opponent Alexei Navalny barred from running for legal reasons, the outcome of the weekend election was never in doubt, and most of the suspense lay in how many people would turn out to vote. The Kremlin pushed for high participation to give greater legitimacy to a fourth term for Putin, who is already Russia's longest-serving leader since Joseph Stalin.

But Navalny called on supporters to boycott the vote and sent out more than 30,000 monitors to voting stations. Navalny's movement and the non-governmental election monitor Golos reported ballot stuffing, repeat voting and Putin supporters being bussed into polling stations en masse. Fewer irregularities were reported than in previous years, however. An OSCE observer mission said that although the election was marred by a lack of "genuine competition", it was generally well conducted.

Authorities used both the carrot and the stick to boost engagement in the polls. Selfie competitions, giveaways, food festivals and children's entertainers were laid on at

polling stations to entice voters. But employees at state and private companies, as well as students, said they had come under other pressure to vote.

Analysts said Putin used tensions with the West to rally support and suggested that armed with a strong new mandate, he could push through further punitive measures against dissenters. Putin's campaign spokesman Andrei Kondrashov said that turnout, which was above 67 percent, was eight to 10 percentage points higher than expected. He claimed that was "thanks to Britain". London this month implicated Putin in the poisoning of former double agent Sergei Skripal in England with a Soviet-designed nerve agent. Most of the voters AFP spoke to said they had backed Putin despite Russia's problems of poverty and poor healthcare, praising his foreign policies.

Western leaders were slow to publicly acknowledge Putin's landslide win. Angela Merkel's spokesman Steffen Seibert told reporters the German Chancellor would congratulate Putin but would also broach "challenges" in their relations. French President Emmanuel Macron wished Vladimir Putin success in "modernizing Russia" after his re-election, but urged Moscow to shed light on the "unacceptable" attempted assassination of an ex-spy in Britain. Macron also expressed concern over the war in Syria, in which Moscow plays a key role as the regime's closest ally, in a carefully-worded statement that steered clear of congratulating Putin directly. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo called Putin to congratulate him on his victory as did Chinese President Xi Jinping, who has just gained a path to indefinite rule.

Among liberal Russians the mood was grim. "Have you been thinking about emigrating for a long time? This reality is the ideal moment," remarked Stanislav Kucher, a journalist for Kommersant FM radio. Putin polled well ahead of his nearest rival Pavel Grudinin, the Communist Party candidate, who described the elections as "dishonest". With 99.84 percent of ballots counted, Grudinin had secured 11.8 percent. Ultrarationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy took 5.66 percent, former reality TV presenter Ksenia Sobchak was on 1.67 percent, while veteran liberal politician Grigory Yavlinsky received just over one percent of the vote. — Agencies

Panel raps finance ministry expenses...

Continued from Page 1

Separately, MP Saleh Ashour yesterday issued a stern warning to Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh for dissolving the Shiite Al-Theqalain charity society. Ashour said in a statement that the minister's action is wrong and will not go without accountability, especially since it was taken without any warning or investigation. He said he will give the minister two days to respond to the petition filed against the dissolution and if she does not reverse her decision, political action will be taken, a clear reference to grilling.

The lawmaker also sent a series of questions to the minister about her action against the society. He said

the minister said in a statement that she will not allow the reputation of Kuwaiti charity work to be tarnished in a way to impact the image of Kuwait internationally. Ashour asked the minister if any Kuwaiti charity has distorted the image of charity work in the country, and asked her to provide the names of those societies. He asked if any Kuwaiti charity, its founders or members are listed on the UN terror list.

Ashour said the statement coincided with the dissolution of the Al-Theqalain society and asked if there has been any international complaint against it, what is the type of complaint and who made it. Ashour asked if the ministry informed the society of the said complaint and if the ministry has conducted an investigation into the incident. He said that the minister has claimed that the society was dissolved because of grave financial and administrative violations, which were proved by official committees. Ashour demanded to know the nature of those violations and if the society was notified of them before it was dissolved.

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Sports

McIlroy blitzes Bay Hill back nine to end title drought

Plenty of positives for Woods heading into Masters

ORLANDO: Rory McIlroy staged a spectacular back nine charge to claim a three shot victory at the Arnold Palmer Invitational on Sunday, collecting his first PGA Tour win since 2016 and putting himself among the red-hot favourites for the US Masters.

Two back of overnight leader Henrik Stenson when the day began, McIlroy overhauled the Swede with a brilliant error-free final round eight-under 64. The Northern Irishman hit five birdies over his last six holes, including a nerve-wracking clutch 25-foot birdie at the 18th to clinch his first PGA Tour title since the 2016 Tour championships.

"I kept saying the last few weeks, I wasn't that far away and it just takes something to click into place," McIlroy said in a greenside interview. "Something clicked into place with my game and obviously something clicked into place in my putting and this is the result."

"It's so nice to see everything come together finally," McIlroy arrived in Orlando with plenty of concern over the state of his game having missed the cut in two of his four PGA Tour starts this year with his best result a tie for 20th.

After Sunday's round, though, the Northern Irishman was right back in the conversation about who will win next month's U.S. Masters at Augusta, where he

will have another chance to complete his collection of all four major titles.

McIlroy strung together four consistent subpar rounds for an 18-under 270 total and a three shot victory over American Bryson DeChambeau (68). Briton Justin Rose (67) finished alone in third while Stenson (71) faded to fourth. Tiger Woods, an eight-time winner at Bay Hill, had a 69 to

McIlroy, however, had the answer and rolled in a 25-footer for birdie at the last, triggering a roar from the massive gallery and a huge fist pump from the Northern Irishman. "I've seen Tiger making this one enough times, so I was just trying to emulate that," said McIlroy.

"Just to be able to create my own little bit of history at the 18th green here is pretty special and I'm just really proud of myself to have hung in there over the last few months. "The last time I won a PGA Tour event was the day Mr. Palmer passed away and so it's a little bit ironic I come here and win."

McIlroy's dramatics overshadowed another patented charge from Woods, who had put himself within one shot of the lead with four to play. Deeded out in his familiar final round red, Woods mixed six birdies with a single bogey through his opening 13 holes but watched his charge fizzle with back-to-back bogeys at 16 and 17.

While it was disappointing end to promising week, the 14-times major winner will take away plenty of positives as he looks ahead to next month's US Masters. Still in the early stages of his comeback from spinal fusion surgery and years of back issues, Woods result offered more evidence that he is getting close to his old form coming on the heels of a runnerup finish last

“It’s so nice to see everything come together finally”

cap another solid comeback effort and finished in a tie for fifth.

OWN HISTORY

After a tense afternoon at Bay Hill Golf Club, McIlroy had looked poised for an uneventful finish when he stepped onto the 18th tee with a three shot lead. But before McIlroy could get to his second shot, DeChambeau turned up the pressure with an eagle at 16 to trim the advantage to one.



ORLANDO: Rory McIlroy of Northern Ireland holds the trophy after his two shot victory during the final round at the Arnold Palmer Invitational Presented By MasterCard at Bay Hill Club and Lodge on Sunday in Orlando, Florida. — AFP

Sunday at the Valspar. "I felt pretty good out there, I hit the ball probably a little bit better than I did last week," said Woods. "This golf course affords the opportunity to

go ahead and stretch it out a little bit, the greens were really smooth and really fast and I felt like I really putted well the entire week." — Reuters

Hamilton wants fast start to F1 season

MELBOURNE: Lewis Hamilton will try to lay down a marker in this week's season-opening Australian Grand Prix as he sets his sights on beating fierce rival Sebastian Vettel to a fifth F1 world title.

Mercedes's reigning world champion and Ferrari's Vettel can both join the legendary Juan Manuel Fangio as five-time world titleholders this year, second only to Michael Schumacher's eight.

Vettel swept home in last year's opening race against Hamilton in Melbourne before the British ace went on to land the championship with two races to spare from the German. Ferrari once again have sizzled in pre-season testing along with Red Bull, pointing to a potential three-team assault on this season's constructors' title.

But Hamilton, who is reportedly about to sign a new contract with Mercedes which could earn him up to £40 million (US\$55 million) per year, says at 33 he's motivated to blaze on. "It doesn't feel like the start of the final chapter, and I don't feel as though I am about to embark on my last contract," Hamilton told reporters.

"I want to arrive in Melbourne fit. I want to hit my target weight. I want to kill it through practice, get pole position and I want to win the race convincingly. "I don't know how long this feeling is going to last when I go into a new season, but as long as I am still feeling like this I will keep going."

Hamilton has won twice in Melbourne, in 2008 and 2015. But Vettel, also chasing his third Australian victory, is in a similarly feisty mood ahead of the new season. "We know what we need to do," Vettel said. "There are lessons that were obvious, some were a bit more hidden, but I'm sure we'll dig deep enough and try to find all of them. "We are completely fired up."



YAS MARINA: In this file photo, Mercedes' British driver Lewis Hamilton (R) gestures next to Ferrari's German driver Sebastian Vettel during the drivers press conference ahead of the Abu Dhabi Formula One Grand Prix at the Yas Marina circuit. — AFP

'IT'S GOING TO BE CLOSE'

Hamilton also expects the Red Bulls of Australia's Daniel Ricciardo and Dutchman Max Verstappen to close the gap during the 21-stop season, based on winter testing. "I think Red Bull are the fastest at the moment, potentially," he said.

"I'm super-confident in my team and the work they've done, I just think it's going to be close." Starting the new campaign in a home GP places Ricciardo under extra pressure as he bids to become the race's first Australian winner since Alan Jones in 1980.

"Starting the F1 season in Australia means there is so much hype and so much build-up, with me being the only Australian on the grid there is extra attention, extra questioning and expectation," Ricciardo said.

"Melbourne in 2017 was a combination of my errors and some misfortune, I crashed in qualifying and then we had a technical issue for the race. So 2018 is definitely time to get what we deserve in Melbourne."

The new season also marks the introduc-

tion of governing body FIA's new mandatory safety halo head protection device, which has drawn ire from some teams. "I'm not impressed with the whole thing and if you give me a chainsaw I would take it off," bristled Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff.

"I think we need to look after the driver's safety, but what we have implemented is aesthetically not appealing and we need to come up with a solution that simply looks better." FIA chief Jean Todt hit back, saying the measure had been introduced to save lives and at the request of drivers' body the GPDA.

"I am amazed to hear some people say: 'OK, motor racing is dangerous, if it happens, it happens,'" Todt said. "Can you imagine how we would all feel if something happened and if we would have had the halo it would not have happened?" Although a majority of drivers are in favour of the device, some have said they are opposed to it. Others have raised objections about the difficulty of getting in and out of the car and identifying drivers on the track. — AFP

Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud shooting tournament begins on Thursday

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Club concludes its local season with the tournament of the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah starting Thursday and will continue until Saturday. The tournament which includes the Olympic skeet, trap, double trap, 10m air pistol and rifle, 50 m rifle and archery, will be held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex.

Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Secretary General Obaid Al-Osaimi said the club always immortalize the memory of those who contributed to the service of our beloved country, and left behind clear marks in supporting and caring for the sport of shooting, which is an integral part of our heritage.

Al-Osaimi appreciated the support the family of the late Sheikh's family, as evident in the unlimited efforts of Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, who is the honorary president of the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club, which contributed to the achievements regionally and internationally.

Obaid Al-Osaimi said the season was busy be it in local tournaments or at the international level, as after starting the season with HH the



Obaid Al-Osaimi

Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah tournament, which witnessed major success, it was followed by specialized and all inclusive tournament, in which shooters were keen to participate in so that they may be selected to represent Kuwait at the international level.

He said that it was a good omen that HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Seventh International Grand Prix coincided with the launch of Kuwait's National and Liberations and celebrations, in which more than 300 shooters representing more than 30 countries participated.

Park storms to five-shot win in Founders Cup

LOS ANGELES: South Korea's Park In-bee stormed to victory in the LPGA Founders Cup on Sunday, firing a bogey-free five-under par 67 for a five-stroke triumph. Park, a seven-time major champion, birdied four straight holes on the back nine and finished with a 19-under par total of 269. England's Laura Davies, 54, headed a group sharing second on 274, her bid to become the oldest winner of an LPGA title ending with a final-round 69 at Wildfire Golf Club in Phoenix, Arizona.

Davies was tied with Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn, who closed with a two-under 70, and American Marina Alex, who carded a 68. Park captured

her 19th LPGA Tour title, and her first since March 2017 at the HSBC Women's Championship.

She teed it up this week for just the second time since a seven-month break, during which she contemplated retirement. "It feels great, especially after the long break I didn't know how I'd be able to compete," Park said. "Being able to contend and win is a great feeling." Park played the weekend without a bogey. She was in the lead after a 63 on Saturday, and opened with a birdie at the first. She then parred her next 10 holes as Davies pulled to within one stroke.

But Park pulled away with birdies at 12, 13, 14 and 15 to take command. She moved into a tie for 28th on the all-time LPGA wins list and now has a win in six of the last seven seasons. The year she didn't win - 2016 - was the same year she won Olympic Gold in Rio de Janeiro. Davies, who powered into contention with a 63 on Saturday, was seeking her first LPGA title since the 2001 Rochester Invitational. In her

32nd LPGA campaign, Davies admitted she was feeling the nerves on the first tee as a long-awaited win beckoned.

"It's about as nervous as I've ever felt," she said. "I nearly shanked it. "It was a bogey, but then I chipped in for eagle at the second and it calmed me down." Davies would add three more birdies before a bogey at 18 cost her sole possession of second place.

Nevertheless, she was more than pleased with her week. "It would have been huge," she said of a win. "Not having won for God knows how many years on the LPGA, it would have been huge. "But I'm actually quite pleased. It's a great finish for me. I was four-over after six (holes) on the first day, so just to get into this position is amazing."

Davies' tie for second was her best finish since the 2007 Honda LPGA Thailand, where she also finished second. "Maybe now people will ask me when I'm going to retire," joked Davies. "I can just tell them I finished second last week." — AFP



PHOENIX: Inbee Park of South Korea poses with the trophy after winning the Bank Of Hope Founders Cup at Wildfire Golf Club on Sunday in Phoenix, Arizona. — AFP

Sports

Del Potro ends Federer's streak to win Indian Wells title

Roger's unbeaten 2018 run ended

INDIANA WELLS: Juan Martin del Potro saved three match points in a thrilling final at the BNP Paribas Open on Sunday before handing world number one Roger Federer his first loss of the year and claiming his maiden Masters 1000 title.

The Argentine stunned a raucous Indian Wells crowd that had been loudly backing Federer to continue his winning streak and secure the biggest win in the nine years since his U.S. Open title triumph with a 6-4 6-7(8) 7-6(2) victory.

Federer, the defending champion, had chalked up 17 consecutive wins in 2018, a run which included his 20th grand slam title at the Australian Open, but was unable to outlast his determined 29-year-old opponent. Del Potro was considered a genuine threat to Federer's dominance of the game when he won at Flushing Meadows in 2009 but has been dogged since by a series of wrist problems which almost ended his career.

"I'm still shaking I'm so nervous. It's difficult to describe with words, it's like a dream," del Potro said on court after extending his own winning streak to 11 matches. "I've been working hard to get this, and I did it after all my problems, all my surgeries. I can't believe I'm here and winning a Masters 1000, beating Roger. It's amazing."

Beating Federer has never been easy - del Potro had succeeded just six times in 24 previous attempts - and the nailbiting final lasted almost three hours with both players taking occasional issue with the chair umpire.

Del Potro arrived in the Californian desert on the

back of a title win in Acapulco but had far from a smooth ride against an agitated Federer, who simply would not give up on his quest for a sixth Indian Wells title.

The Argentine seized the opening set and had a match point in the second set tie break but misfired on a forehand - usually his most dependable weapon - to allow the 36-year-old Swiss back into the match.

"I was thinking about (that) forehand miss the entire time," del Potro said. With Federer on top 6-5 in the second set tie break, he appeared to fire an ace to clinch the set, but a late challenge by del Potro overturned the call and the Swiss was double faulted.

An annoyed Federer barked at the umpire during a changeover and, fired up by his grievance, took the second set to even up the contest before pushing del Potro to the limits in the final stanza. The third set went with serve until Federer blasted a cross-court winner to break del Potro's serve and take a 5-4 advantage - breaking a run of 32 consecutive service game wins for the Argentine.

The Swiss maestro served for the set, and the title, but del Potro dug deep to save three match points, two at 40-15 down, before breaking back to send the stanza to a tiebreak, which the Argentine dominated.

"I lost my serve a little bit, and then he was clean and I wasn't. And then it goes very quickly in the breaker," Federer said. "As close as it can be sometimes when you're not feeling it or momentum has shifted, it's just crazy how it can go the other way." — Reuters



INDIANA WELLS: Juan Martin Del Potro of Argentina poses with the winner's trophy after defeating Roger Federer of Switzerland during the men's final on Day 14 of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Sunday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

Wins first Masters 1000 title



Osaka draws Serena in first round at Miami Open

INDIANA WELLS: Indian Wells champion Naomi Osaka will have little time to celebrate in her first career victory with the Japanese drawing eight-time champion Serena Williams in the first round of next week's Miami Open.

Osaka scored a commanding 6-3 6-2 victory over Russian Daria Kasatkina in a battle of 20-year-olds at the BNP Paribas Open at Indian Wells on Sunday. "I was extremely stressed and extremely nervous, but my plan was to fake that I'm very calm," Osaka told reporters.

"I just knew that she was going to fight for every point, too, so I couldn't afford to lose points based on nerves, and I had to keep making the right decisions." Osaka had defeated former grand slam champion Maria Sharapova, fifth seed Karolina Pliskova and then world number one Simona Halep on her way to the title and the \$1,340,860 first place money.

"It was hard for me to get my nerves in check in the first game, especially since - I don't know why I decided to serve first," Osaka said. "We were playing some long points, and I wasn't really trying to hit hard



INDIANA WELLS: Daria Kasatkina of Russia and Naomi Osaka of Japan pose at the trophy ceremony during the women's final on Day 14 of the BNP Paribas Open at the Indian Wells Tennis Garden on Sunday in Indian Wells, California. — AFP

today, because I felt like it would be better for her to take my pace.

"I wanted her to do whatever she wanted to do, and I was just going to sit back and see what she does. I feel like I wasn't that aggressive today. I was just more con-

sistent." Williams lost to sister Venus at Indian Wells in the third match of her return after having a child and is likely to face Osaka for the first time on Wednesday, the third day's play in the women's draw in Miami. — Reuters

Navratilova slams BBC over Wimbledon pay

LONDON: Tennis great Martina Navratilova accused the BBC yesterday of a "shocking" pay gap which saw her fellow Wimbledon pundit John McEnroe paid at least 10 times more than her. Navratilova said she was paid around £15,000 (\$20,900, 17,000 euros) by the BBC for her role as a commentator at Wimbledon, where she was crowned ladies' champion nine times during her tennis career.

It wasn't until the British broadcaster published the salaries of its highest-paid stars last July, in brackets of £50,000, that she realised fellow presenter McEnroe's pay packet was between £150,000 and £199,999.

"Unless John McEnroe's doing a whole bunch of stuff outside of Wimbledon he's getting at least 10 times as much money", Navratilova told the BBC's Panorama programme. The Czech-born American tennis star said she was told she was getting paid a comparable amount to men doing the same job. "It's shocking," she told Panorama, adding: "It's still the good old boys network.... The bottom line is that male voices are valued more than women's voices."

Responding to the allegations, the BBC

said McEnroe's contract is "entirely different" to Navratilova's and the two are not comparable. "Martina is one of a number of occasional contributors who is contracted to carry out a fixed volume of work and paid per appearance," the BBC said in a statement. "The BBC believes her pay reflects what she is asked to do, her time commitment, her level of broadcast experience, profile and track record and expertise," the broadcaster added, denying gender was a factor.

Navratilova worked for the BBC on 10 occasions during Wimbledon 2017, including three live match commentaries, whereas McEnroe was on call over the entire tournament and had a far greater workload according to broadcaster.

The dispute is part of a broader gender pay row at the publicly-funded BBC after the salary disclosures last year. Twelve of the top 14 were shown to be men, as were two-thirds of BBC staff earning more than £150,000.

A review commissioned by the BBC found a 6.8 percent gender pay gap, but "no evidence of gender bias in pay decision-making". Six male BBC presenters voluntarily agreed to take wage cuts in January after the broadcaster's female China editor quit in protest over unequal pay.

Carrie Gracie was on £135,000 a year as an international editor and since quitting her China role has been working for the BBC in London. Comparatively, North America editor Jon Sopel earned £200,000 to £250,000 and was among the six to agree to a pay cut, while Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen earned £150,000 to £200,000. — AFP



Martina Navratilova

Laine ties for NHL goal lead as Jets beat Dallas Stars

WINNIPEG: Patrik Laine scored two goals and Connor Hellebuyck turned away 28 of the 30 shots he faced as the Winnipeg Jets defeated the Dallas Stars 4-2 on Sunday at Bell MTS Place in Winnipeg. Sunday's game was the second of a season-long six-match homestand for Winnipeg. The Jets are in second place in the Central Division, eight points behind Nashville and seven points ahead of Minnesota, both of whom were idle on Sunday.

Dallas lost its fifth straight match and is 0-3-2 on its six-game road trip. The Stars still hold the second wild card into the playoffs from the Western Conference, pending the results of Sunday's game between Anaheim and New Jersey. A Ducks win or overtime loss would vault them over Dallas.

Laine got the only goal of the first

period, scoring on the power play with just one second left after Blake Wheeler found him with a pass as he was falling down. Dustin Byfuglien also got an assist on the goal, which extended Laine's club-record point streak to 15 games.

Mattias Janmark tied the game for the Stars 1:13 into the second as he received a sweet pass in the slot from Radek Faksa and beat Winnipeg goaltender Hellebuyck. Tyler Pitlick garnered the second assist on the tally.

Just 1:04 later, Ben Chiarot unloaded a slap shot from the point that made its way through traffic and past Dallas netminder Kari Lehtonen, giving the Jets a 2-1 lead. Joel Armia and Adam Lowry were credited with the assists.

Laine scored his second goal of the match (and his 43rd of the season) at the 6:43 mark of the second period when he grabbed the puck on the rush after a pass from Nikolaj Ehlers and wristed a shot between Lehtonen's legs, extending the Jets' lead to 3-1.

That advantage lasted until the 17:13 mark of the second quarter as Jamie Benn cut into the lead when he found a hole over Hellebuyck's left shoulder after assists by John Klingberg and Alexander Radulov. — Reuters

NHL results/standings

Colorado 5, Detroit 1; Las Vegas 4, Calgary 0; Tampa Bay 3, Edmonton 1; Carolina 4, NY Islanders 3; Philadelphia 6, Washington 3; St. Louis 5, Chicago 4 (OT); Winnipeg 4, Dallas 2; Anaheim 4, New Jersey 2.

	Eastern Conference					
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS
Atlantic Division						
Tampa Bay	49	19	4	260	202	102
Boston	45	17	8	235	179	98
Toronto	43	22	7	243	204	93
Florida	35	27	7	210	216	77
Montreal	26	34	12	182	230	64
Ottawa	26	34	11	197	244	63
Detroit	26	35	11	184	224	63
Buffalo	23	36	12	172	232	58
Metropolitan Division						
Washington	41	24	7	225	214	89
Pittsburgh	41	26	5	237	218	87
Philadelphia	37	25	11	218	215	85
Columbus	39	28	5	200	199	83
New Jersey	37	27	8	217	215	82
Carolina	31	30	11	194	225	73
NY Rangers	32	32	8	208	231	72
NY Islanders	30	32	10	231	262	70
Western Conference						
Central Division						
Nashville	47	14	10	232	178	104
Winnipeg	43	19	10	240	189	96
Minnesota	41	24	7	224	206	89
Colorado	39	25	8	231	209	86
Dallas	38	27	8	209	197	84
St. Louis	39	28	5	201	193	83
Chicago	30	34	9	208	223	69
Pacific Division						
Las Vegas	46	21	5	244	199	97
San Jose	40	23	9	219	199	89
Anaheim	37	24	12	206	197	86
Los Angeles	39	27	6	207	181	84
Calgary	35	28	10	202	217	80
Edmonton	31	36	5	201	231	67
Vancouver	25	38	9	186	236	59
Arizona	23	37	11	170	228	57

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

Sports

'Fearless cricket', Bangladesh praised after India near-miss

'We were close but in the end India was on winning side'

COLOMBO: India captain Rohit Sharma praised Bangladesh for their "fearless cricket" after the Twenty20 minnows came within one ball of a shock victory in the tri-series final in Colombo. Tenth-ranked Bangladesh pushed their illustrious neighbours all the way in Sunday's final before wicketkeeper-batsman Dinesh Karthik smashed a six off the last ball to secure a four-wicket win.

With the packed 20,000 crowd cheering India, in anger at Bangladesh's tactics in the semi-final, Karthik's eight-ball 29 clinched it after a tense, 167-run chase that saw Bangladesh concede 35 runs off the final two overs. But Sharma, who gave his team a blazing start with a 42-ball 56, said Bangladesh were a "very good team" who have vastly improved over the past three years.

"(Bangladesh) play fearless cricket, it's always good. Sometimes, it can bite you when things don't go your way but that is the style of cricket they want to play," Sharma told reporters after the final. "They are certainly a very good team... in the last three years, we've seen how they've changed their style of cricket."

"A few of the guys who are experienced are nurturing the younger guys," Sharma said the unusual Sri Lankan support for his team had been "very crucial" at the R. Premadasa Stadium.

Home fans were angry at Bangladesh captain Shakib Al Hasan briefly withdrawing his batsmen in the final over of their win over Sri Lanka in protest at an umpir-

ing decision. "We didn't feel that we were playing outside India," the captain said. "They supported us throughout the course of 40 overs."

'NEVER EASY AT THE DEATH'

Wicketkeeper-batsman Mushfiqur Rahim, who registered two half-centuries in the series, senior batsman Mahmudullah and skipper Shakib Al Hasan played key roles as the Tigers beat hosts Sri Lanka twice to book the title clash with third-ranked India.

Bangladesh's Rubel Hossain, who sent down the 19th over in the final that conceded 22 runs, and Soumya Sarkar, who was entrusted with the final six balls which went for 13, were the unfortunate bowlers on the receiving end of Karthik's explosive innings.

But Sharma had comforting words for Soumya, an occasional medium-pace bowler, after his final ball disappeared for six as Karthik took India to 168 for 6. Soumya conceded just seven runs from his first four deliveries and then had Vijay Shankar caught at long-on with the fifth, leaving India needing five runs.

But his wide half-volley was drilled over the extra cover rope by Karthik as the India dressing room erupted in wild celebrations. "We always knew Soumya Sarkar is not a premier bowler. He's a part-time bowler at the most," said Sharma.

"It can happen to anyone when you bowl those big overs. It's never easy at the death. The pressure is

“We didn't feel we were playing outside India”



COLOMBO: Indian captain Rohit Sharma (L) receives the Nidahas Twenty20 Tri-Series international cricket trophy at the end of the final Nidahas Twenty20 Tri-Series international cricket match between India and Bangladesh in Colombo. — AFP

always on the bowler not the batsman," he added. Shakib also lauded the performance of his team, who have never won a T20 match against India in eight meetings so far and have also lost 11 of their last 14 games in the shortest format.

"We were very close but in the end India was on the

winning side. Credit goes to them but we cannot take anything away from us for the way we played throughout this tournament," said Shakib. "We have showed some good character and played the game in the right spirit and I cannot ask more than that from my team," the all-rounder added. — AFP

Windies edge Zimbabwe to stay on World Cup course

HARARE: West Indies edged closer to a place in the 2019 World Cup when they defeated Zimbabwe by four wickets in the latest qualifying match yesterday. Chasing 290 to win, the two-time champions reached their target with six balls to spare after surviving a worrying mid-innings collapse.

The West Indies lead the Super Sixes qualifying table with six points but will still need to avoid defeat against Scotland on Wednesday in their last pool match to be sure of a place in next year's finals.

Zimbabwe, on five points, can still make the 2019 finals by beating the UAE on Thursday although the Scots, Ireland and Afghanistan all remain in contention for a spot in the showpiece in England and Wales.

Brendan Taylor top scored for Zimbabwe with 138 which included 20 boundaries and two sixes. For the West Indies, Marlon Samuels smashed 86 off 80 balls with four sixes while Evin Lewis and Shai Hope also contributed half centuries.

Brief scores:

Zimbabwe 289 all out in 50 overs (B. Taylor 138; J. Holder 4-35) v West Indies 290-6 in 49 overs (M. Samuels 86, S. Hope 76, E. Lewis 64). West Indies won by four wickets. — AFP

Bolt to attend Commonwealth Games

SYDNEY: Sprint legend Usain Bolt will attend next month's Commonwealth Games on Australia's Gold Coast to watch the 100-metres final, former Jamaican world champion Yohan Blake has revealed. Bolt, 31, who retired from athletics after August's World Championships in London, has been busy preparing for a tilt at football and has also worked with Australia's cricketers to boost their running between the wickets. Blake, one of the track stars at the April 4-15 Games, arrived in Australia on Sunday and told reporters the eight-time Olympic champion and world record holder in the 100m and 200m was "coming to watch the 100m final". "He) was at the track in Jamaica before I left. He said, 'When I come to Australia, if you don't win there is going to be problems,'" Blake told Brisbane's Courier Mail late Sunday.

"I don't have a Commonwealth medal. It's very important for me to have one in my trophy case. Usain Bolt has left his legacy for us to carry on and that's what we want to do," said Blake of his fellow Jamaican. Blake, 28, the second-fastest man of all time, missed the Glasgow 2014 Commonwealth Games due to injury. — AFP

Aggression's fine, we don't want robots: Brett Lee

COLOMBO: Former Australia fast bowler Brett Lee says emotion and aggression are part of the game and doesn't want to see robots on the field, but he warned against behaviour "crossing the line".

The ongoing Australia tour of South Africa has been marred by on-field altercations with South African speedster Kagiso Rabada appealing against a two-Test ban for a shoulder barge on Aussie skipper Steve Smith in the second Test.

The 41-year-old Lee, a fearsome fast bowler during a sparkling career for Australia from 1999 to 2012, told AFP that controlled aggression is good for the sport.

"The thing that I will say about that, in all honesty, is we don't want robots on the field," he told AFP ahead of the T20 tri-series final between India and Bangladesh in Colombo on Sunday.

"Of course, there is a line that the players should not cross," Lee added, without offering any judgement on the incident involving Rabada, whose appeal is due to be heard by the International Cricket Council later.

"You don't racially vilify someone. You don't use excessive swearing or stuff that can upset children who are listening in. Other than that you've got to play hard cricket. "Now I am not saying I agree with what happened and I am not saying that I don't agree with what

Rabada to learn ban appeal result by Wednesday

CAPE TOWN: Fast bowler Kagiso Rabada will learn the result of his appeal against a ban for the remaining two Tests against Australia within 48 hours following a hearing yesterday, Cricket South Africa said.

The hearing, via teleconference with judicial commissioner Michael Heron of New Zealand, lasted for more than five hours. Cricket South Africa said the International Cricket Council would announce the outcome by Wednesday, the day before the start of the third Test against Australia. The series is currently 1-1.

Rabada, who has been highly influential in the two

Tests so far, was given the ban for making physical contact with Australian captain Steve Smith during the second Test in Port Elizabeth.

Rabada's brush with Smith led to him being given three demerit points which took him to the eight-point threshold that triggers an automatic two-Test ban. South African captain Faf du Plessis attended the early part of the meeting before leaving to join the team but team manager Mohammed Moosa and advocate Dali Mpofu remained with Rabada.

Australia's tour has been marred by altercations on and off the field. In the first Test, the visitors' vice-captain David Warner was involved in an altercation with South Africa wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock in a stairwell. Former Australia fast bowler Brett Lee has told AFP that while he did not want to see behaviour "crossing the line", emotion and aggression were part of the game.

"In all honesty... we don't want robots on the field," Lee said. — AFP

'BOWL MORE YORKERS'

Lee, who was in the TV commentary team for the recently concluded T20 tri-series in Sri Lanka, said bowling in the shortest format was challenging, especially towards the end of the innings.

"I think it's a different style... but one thing I haven't seen throughout the tournament enough is yorkers," said Lee. "A yorker in Test, one-day or T20 cricket can still take wickets and for some reasons bowlers now, in particular, fast bowlers, are hitting a length at the end. I don't necessarily agree that's the best tactic."

Lee though was impressed with Bangladesh fast bowler Rubel Hossain for his variations throughout the



Former Australian cricketer Brett Lee

tournament, including consistent use of the yorker.

Hossain, a veteran of 85 one-day internationals and 25 Tests, played a key role in Bangladesh making the final of the tri-series, which they lost in a last-ball thriller to India.

"To me he is a guy that probably has been the only one in this tournament that has kept the seam upright, comes off a short run-up and he bowls a good yorker," said Lee, who claimed 310 wickets in 76 Tests and 380 wickets in 221 ODIs for Australia.

"Yes, guys have been bowling yorkers throughout the tournament but I want to see it more often." — AFP



Kagiso Rabada

Russia's football doctor says players cleanest in world

MOSCOW: Russia's World Cup team doctor claimed yesterday that his country's domestic football leagues were cleaner than any other sport on the planet. Doping allegations have dogged Russia as it prepares to host the World Cup for the first time in mid-June.

Russian athletes were forced to take part in the Pyeongchang Winter Games under a neutral Olympic flag because of cheating at the 2014 event in Sochi. Former Russian Football Union (RFU) chief Vitaly Mutko oversaw national preparations for the 2014 Games.

He became closely associated with the scandal and stepped away from World Cup preparations in

December. Yet Russian team doctor Eduard Bezuglov said there were simply no grounds for suspicion against players because they have all been clean for years. He explained that the RFU and the Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) were holding "mandatory online courses" and publishing medical guidelines for teams in all football leagues.

"There is no such thing anywhere else in the world," Bezuglov told the RIA Novosti state news agency. "In other words, I do not know of any other sport that does not have a problem with banned drugs. But Russian football does not have this problem." The world football governing body FIFA is still investigation allegations about past or present violations in the Russian game. The most serious charges against it have come from former Moscow sports lab boss Grigory Rodchenkov—viewed as a traitor by the Kremlin and living in hiding in the United States.

FIFA has thus far been unable to confirm Rodchenkov's claims that past Russian World Cup teams doped or that current national players were involved. But it has sent him a list of 59 questions to

which it has so far received no public reply.

Bezuglov said 1,500 Russian player samples have been tested abroad since the World Anti-Doping Agency stripped RUSADA of accreditation in November 2015. "In this entire time, there has not been a single positive test," said the doctor.

"I think that a lot of the credit for this should go to Vitaly Mutko, no matter what people may think of him now," Bezuglov added. "He constantly told us: have meetings, explain things, educate and scare them, do whatever you want, but make sure there is no doping in football." The beautiful game is not among the sports closely associated with doping and past Russian problems should have no impact on the World Cup. "No Russians will be involved in the implementation of the anti-doping programme and all analysis of doping samples will be done at WADA laboratories outside Russia," a FIFA spokesman told AFP.

FIFA said the same was the case during the last tournament in Brazil because its laboratory also lacked certification at the time. — AFP

Sports

Depay grabs Lyon dramatic win over top-three rivals Marseille

Both sides clashed after the final whistle

PARIS: Memphis Depay's last-gasp winner clinched Lyon a thrilling 3-2 victory at Marseille on Sunday that kept them firmly in the hunt for Champions League qualification. Kostas Mitroglou looked to have snatched Marseille a vital point with an 84th-minute equaliser to make it 2-2, but Depay showed great bravery to nod home in the final minute of normal time.



Bruno Genesio's Lyon are now just two points adrift of their opponents in the race for the third and final Champions League spot, after following a six-game winless run with back-to-back victories. Marseille had forged ahead in the 31st minute through Portuguese defender Rolando, but Lyon levelled as Adil Rami put through his own net before Houssem Aouar scored early in the second period.

Both sides clashed after the final whistle, with fights also breaking out in the tunnel as Marseille frustrations boiled over. Both teams looked dangerous going forward early on, with Lyon forward Mariano Diaz seeing an effort spin narrowly wide of the far post, before visiting goalkeeper denied Dimitri Payet with a sprawling save. Marseille dominated possession, but Lyon always looked a threat on the counter-attack and Steve Mandanda had to get down quickly to push away Bertrand Traore's low drive.

It was Rudi Garcia's hosts who struck the first blow, though, as Rami nodded a Payet free-kick back across the area for his centre-back partner Rolando to turn the ball in through the legs of Lopes. Mandanda made a magnificent save to tip Maxwell Cornet's curling effort onto the post, but Lyon equalised in fortuitous circumstances shortly afterwards.

Marseille dominated possession

fourth league goal of the season.

A draw would have been an excellent result for Marseille with a five-point lead to defend, but Lyon continued to outplay their hosts and Mandanda had to show all of his agility to get a vital hand on Traore's backheeled effort. Marseille managed to get a grip on proceedings and some terrible defending from the away side gifted Mitroglou the equaliser as Jeremy Morel's sliced clearance dropped for the Greek striker to head home. But former Manchester United winger Depay, who came on as a second-half substitute, leapt highest to direct Diaz's flick-on header into the far corner and spark wild Lyon celebrations. — AFP



MARSEILLE: Marseille and Lyon footballers argue at the end of the French L1 football match between Marseille and Lyon at The Velodrome Stadium in Marseille, southern France on Sunday. —AFP

Albiol keeps Napoli's title hopes burning

ROME: Spanish defender Raul Albiol headed in the winner as a 1-0 victory over Genoa on Sunday kept Napoli's Serie A title hopes alive, closing the gap on leaders Juventus to two points. Juventus' march towards a seventh consecutive Italian title was stalled on Saturday by a goalless draw at struggling SPAL.

And Napoli seized the opportunity to revive their bid for a first league crown since 1990, after a 4-2 defeat by Roma and a goalless draw at Inter Milan in their last two games had put Juve in control.

Maurizio Sarri's side were pushed hard, with Lorenzo Insigne and Dries Mertens both hitting the woodwork before Albiol broke through after 72 minutes at the Stadio San Paolo. "This was an important game, we were coming back from two matches without a win," said Napoli coach Sarri. "At this stage last season, Juventus had basically already won the title, so this means we are causing them real problems. "This is already the second-best campaign in Napoli's history in terms of points, so we'll keep pushing." Sarri added that the international break had come at just the right time for tired Napoli captain Marek Hamsik, who limped off with a thigh injury after 20 minutes. Behind the leading pair in the battle for Champions League football next season, Roma consolidated third place — 14 points behind Napoli — with a 2-0 win over Crotona.

ICARDI BRINGS UP TON

Inter Milan moved fourth-four points behind Roma following a 5-0 rout of Sampdoria with captain Mauro Icardi scoring four times to break through the 100-goal mark in Serie A. Inter's win pushed Lazio outside the Champions League places into fifth, after the Romans were held 1-1 at home by Bologna. Argentinian international Icardi, who had been sidelined for a month with injury, broke the century after scoring his first goals since January. His four-goal haul included three in 14 minutes against his former club. Icardi now has 103 goals in Serie A — 93 with Inter and ten for Sampdoria. "I really wanted to reach 100 goals



SAN PAOLO: Genoa's Italian goalkeeper Mattia Perin dives after Napoli's Belgian striker Dries Mertens set the ball during the Italian Serie A football match SSC Napoli vs Genoa CFC on Sunday at the San Paolo Stadium. —AFP

and then I just kept going," said Icardi. But Lazio — who qualified for the Europa League quarter-finals in midweek — showed signs of fatigue.

Simone Verdi scored after just three minutes for Bologna, but Lucas Leiva earned a point for Lazio with his second goal in four days but his first in league football since scoring for Liverpool in May 2009. "We have many fixtures, this was the last in a long run and now we'll have some rest over the break for international duty," said Lazio coach Simone Inzaghi. In Calabria, Roma claimed a six win in seven games. Stephan El Shaarawy latched onto an Aleksandar Kolarov cross to open the scoring after 39 minutes with Radja Nainggolan sealing the win on 70 minutes

ly purchased the port of Thessaloniki, the gateway to the Balkans, and he is in the process of opening a TV station.

CHALLENGING ATHENS

Savvidis, whose ancestors were Black Sea Greeks who faced oppression in Turkey, and later in the Soviet Union, was rewarded for his investments with honorary Greek citizenship by the previous conservative administration. To many in the north, he is the only man who can challenge the power of Athens and end a three-decade football drought for clubs from outside the capital. "Athens are bothered because someone dares to challenge the status quo," says Christos Nikolaidis, a local journalist. "Savvidis is the only investor left in Greece with the strength to hit back at this rotten structure. The war is about him, not PAOK," adds Christos Dimitriadis, a shop employee.

By splashing out on players, including former Manchester United striker Dimitar Berbatov and former Porto winger Vieirinha, Savvidis has put PAOK back on the map. "We cannot tolerate being a marginalised club. We are stronger than them," Savvidis said in a speech to the PAOK board in 2016. This year, they are in a neck-and-neck race with AEK Athens for the title. It was a match between the clubs that prompted Savvidis' pitch invasion, with a gun clearly on display — he was protesting against a disallowed PAOK goal.

An outpouring of support from PAOK players, local politicians and former associates followed a sports prosecutor's decision to throw the book at Savvidis, who faces a hefty fine and a suspension of three to five years. "I don't care what they say, because they don't know how we feel about you," former Real Madrid and PAOK defender Pablo Garcia, now a PAOK youth coach, posted on Instagram.

SUPPORTERS BEHIND SAVVIDIS

"All political parties should know that they cannot play with the people of PAOK. If they dare to hurt Ivan

to condemn Crotona to their third loss in four matches.

AC MILAN BOUNCE BACK

AC Milan extended their unbeaten league run to 10 games with a come-from-behind 3-2 win over Chievo in the San Siro to consolidate sixth position-five points off the Champions League spots. After their Europa League exit to Arsenal, Gennaro Gattuso's side were in battling mood opening their account after ten minutes when Hakan Calhanoglu finished off a Franck Kessie cross.

But Chievo pulled ahead with two quick fire goals from Mariusz Stepinski and Roberto Inglese just after the half-hour mark. —AFP



Ivan Savvidis

Savvidis will be there like soldiers to give battle," says Yiorgos Triantafyllidis, 31, who is unemployed. Earlier this month PAOK had a three-point penalty over another bout of violence at their Toumba stadium overturned.

PAOK is "at war" with Athens, the club's technical director Lubos Michel, a Slovak former FIFA referee, told a Russian news website. The Greek football federation are taking precautions. They have moved an international friendly against Switzerland on March 23 from Thessaloniki to Athens, fearing possible violence.

Savvidis, who has a firearms licence, is just one of several football bosses assumed to be armed for their safety. In the 1980s, the chairman of Athens powerhouse Panathinaikos, Yiorgos Vardinoyannis, was rumoured to carry a handgun to games. And in 1996, shots were fired in the VIP offices of AEK Athens in a refereeing dispute between club officials and the head of league.

"We lived with bosses drawing guns in past years. Was anything done about them?" said retired PAOK player Kyriakos Alexandridis. —AFP

Amazing Salah scales new heights with four-goal salvo

PARIS: An extraordinary season for Liverpool star Mohamed Salah reached a new high at the weekend when he scored four goals against Watford to once again be the star African performer in Europe.

The 25-year-old striker raised his season goal tally to 36 in all competitions after becoming the first Egyptian to score a Premier League hat-trick as the Reds triumphed 5-0 at Anfield. It is a far cry from his time with Swiss club Basel, where his repeated missed scoring opportunities led the media to label him "chance waster".

ENGLAND

MOHAMED SALAH (Liverpool)

The winger's remarkable debut season after joining Liverpool from Roma continued with goals in the fourth, 43rd, 77th and 85th minutes. Liverpool are up to third thanks to Salah's masterclass and he said: "I have to thank everyone, but mainly my team-mates. Without them I couldn't have reached this number."

ERIC MAXIM CHOUPO-MOTING (Stoke)

The Cameroon midfielder came off the bench to score against Everton, but couldn't stop his struggling team suffering a damaging 2-1 defeat. Choupo-Moting was sent on in the 72nd minute with Stoke trailing 1-0. He made an immediate impact, scoring in the 77th minute with a close-range finish from a cross. But the 28-year-old's fifth goal of the season was followed by a late Everton winner that leaves Stoke second last in the Premier League.

WILFRIED ZAHA (Crystal Palace)

The Ivory Coast winger avoided another injury in Palace's crucial 2-0 win at relegation rivals Huddersfield. Zaha had been out since early February with a knee injury, but returned to help give Palace's survival hopes a major boost as they won for the first time in over two months. Zaha had missed Palace's previous four games, which all ended in defeats.

SPAIN

RYAD BOUDEBOUZ (Real Betis)

The Algerian international scored his first goal since November as Real Betis stepped up their pursuit of European football with a 3-0 home win over Espanyol. Boudebouz set up Junior Firpo for his first La Liga goal on 34 minutes and then struck himself early in the second half, picking up the ball on the edge of box and throwing a couple of body feints before driving a low angled shot into the far corner.

ITALY

SEKO FOFANA (Udinese)

Ivorian midfielder Fofana equalised for Udinese just before the break only for his side to fall to a fifth consecutive defeat — 2-1 home at home against Sassuolo. It was Fofana's second goal this season for the side from north-eastern Italy. —AFP

Thessaloniki, club owner who invaded pitch is king

THESSALONIKI: A Greek-Russian businessman of humble origins, PAOK FC owner Ivan Savvidis has put Greek football once again under the spotlight after storming onto the pitch with a holstered gun at his belt.

The Greek government suspended the football league after the incident on March 11 and FIFA has demanded immediate action from Greek authorities, with both PAOK and Savvidis facing stiff penalties.

But in Thessaloniki, Greece's neglected northern metropolis, Savvidis is feted as the man who has saved many of the top enterprises in the Greek north from ruin. "This man has poured out his soul, as well as his money," says Filotas Pelliou, head of PAOK's veterans club. Savvidis, who started as a tobacco worker in Russia, was a member of the Russian Duma, the lower house of parliament, until 2011 and has an estimated fortune of \$600 million (488 million euros).

In just six years, he acquired PAOK — one of Greece's four most popular clubs — state tobacco company SEKAP, leading bottling company Sournoti, Thessaloniki's top hotel and national newspaper Ethnos. It was reported on Friday that Savvidis had sold his Russian tobacco conglomerate Donskoy Tabak, which includes SEKAP, to Japan Tobacco, and he is part of a Franco-German consortium that recent-

12 Park storms to five-shot win in Founders Cup



13 Osaka draws Serena in first round at Miami Open



15 Thessaloniki, club owner who invaded pitch is king



TORONTO: Russell Westbrook #0 of the Oklahoma City Thunder shoots the ball against the Toronto Raptors on Sunday at the Air Canada Centre in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. — AFP

Thunder's Westbrook end Raptors run

Trail Blazers streak to 13th straight win

LOS ANGELES: Russell Westbrook's fifth straight triple double helped the Oklahoma City Thunder end the Toronto Raptors 11-game NBA winning streak on Sunday, as the Portland Trail Blazers rumbled to a 13th consecutive victory.

Westbrook scored 37 points, pulled down 13 rebounds and handed out 14 assists. His heroics, including back-to-back baskets to break a tie with 54.9 seconds remaining, denied the Raptors the longest win streak in club history. Toronto remained atop the Eastern Conference with a 52-18 record, but the Raptors were fuming after a chaotic end to the contest. DeMar DeRozan, who led Toronto with 24 points, was ejected with less than 10 seconds to play for arguing with an official.

"You know the frustration, you know what it came down to," said DeRozan, who was still angry after the game at what he said were non-calls on obvious fouls. "It was obvious, especially at the end of the game."

Teammate Serge Ibaka was tossed moments later, then Toronto coach Dwane Casey was ejected—although video

appeared to show it was a fan behind him who yelled at the referee.

'KEEP YOUR COMPOSURE'

Casey was measured in his post-game comments, saying only that the Raptors are looking for "fairness and consistency" from officials and adding: "We'll complain in the proper way." His reticence came on the same day that New Orleans coach Alvin Gentry and Detroit coach Stan Van Gundy were fined \$15,000 apiece for post-game rants about refereeing.

New Zealand center Steven Adams added 25 points and eight rebounds for the Thunder while Paul George scored 22 points and Carmelo Anthony netted 15.

"You've got to be able to keep your composure through it all," Westbrook said. "That's what the game was all about." The Thunder remained two games behind the surging Trail Blazers for third place in the West. Led by Damian Lillard's 23 points, all five Trail Blazers starters scored in double figures in a 122-109 victory over the

Clippers in Los Angeles. CJ McCollum and Maurice Harkless scored 21 points apiece, Jusuf Nurkic added 17 and Al-Farouq Aminu chipped in 16 as Portland's starters out-scored their Clippers counterparts 98-44. With their 13th consecutive victory, Portland equaled the second-longest win streak in team history, behind their 16-game run in 1991.

ROCKETS HOLD OFF TIMBERWOLVES

In Minneapolis, the Houston Rockets improved their league-leading record with a 129-120 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves by fending off a late surge from the hosts. Trailing by 25 early in the second half, Minnesota rallied to trim the deficit to five with 3:58 remaining.

But the Rockets, led by 34 points from Most Valuable Player candidate James Harden, responded to beat the Timberwolves for the fourth time this season.

"It's good for us, man," Harden said. "We needed it. We needed to be in games like that. Obviously, having a big

lead and losing it, we can't let it happen, but if it does we've got to make sure we can keep our composure and get a good shot every time."

The New Orleans Pelicans, fighting for their playoff lives in the West, gained a much needed 108-89 victory over the Boston Celtics. Anthony Davis scored 34 points and pulled down 11 rebounds and the Pelicans, who trailed by two at halftime, dominated in the second half to pull away. Cheick Diallo scored a season-high 17 points and Nikola Mirotic added 16 for the Pelicans, who had dropped four of their previous five to see their playoff hopes dwindle.

"We know that we're a good team when we move the basketball instead of coming down and doing a one-pass shot or a no-pass shot," Davis said. "When we move the basketball, make the defense scramble a little bit, we tend to find guys that are open."

Jayson Tatum scored 23 points to lead the injury depleted Celtics, who remained comfortably ahead of the third placed Cleveland Cavaliers in the East. — AFP

Ronaldo hits four in Real's thrilling win over Girona

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo continued his scorching scoring run by bagging four goals in Real Madrid's hugely entertaining 6-3 La Liga win over Girona on Sunday.

Ronaldo opened the scoring in the 11th minute with a deadly first-time finish but former Middlesbrough forward Cristhian Stuani headed home from a corner to draw the Catalans level in the 29th minute.

The Portuguese restored his side's lead at

the start of the second half by racing on to a through ball from Karim Benzema and hammering it in off the crossbar. He then laid on a pass for Lucas Vazquez to score Real's third.

Ronaldo gobbled up a rebounded shot from Benzema to complete his hat-trick in the 64th and make it 4-1, while substitute Gareth Bale added a fifth in the 86th after Stuani had struck again down the other end.

Girona's Juanpe then made it 5-3, only for Ronaldo to roar back in injury time and score his fourth goal of the game, his 17th in his last eight appearances in all competitions. Ronaldo has now netted 22 times in the league this season, trailing Barcelona's Lionel Messi by just three goals.

"Cristiano is very important to us, he transmits an incredible amount of energy for the team," Real Madrid coach Zinedine

Zidane told reporters. "Cristiano is three goals from Messi and I hope he can become the top scorer because it's very important to him. When Cristiano plays well the team plays well."

"Cristiano's ambition is tremendous. But I also want to highlight the work of his team mates, who help him a lot. We scored some spectacular goals today which was down to the whole team."

Ronaldo's goal rush helped him to leapfrog Luis Suarez into second place on the Liga's top scorer's list, with the Barca forward missing his side's 2-0 win over Athletic Bilbao on Sunday due to suspension. Real are third in the Liga standings on 60 points, 15 behind runaway leaders Barcelona and four adrift of second-placed Atletico, who were beaten 2-1 at Villarreal on Sunday. — Reuters



MADRID: Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo vies with Girona's Spanish defender Jonas Ramalho during the Spanish League football match between Real Madrid CF and Girona FC at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid on Sunday. — AFP

Business

TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2018

18 Avaya committed to driving development of Kuwait's knowledge-based economy**19** GCC budget gaps forecast to further narrow in 2018**20** KFH completes four decades of significant achievements

KUWAIT: A night view of the Kuwait City. The Kuwait Investment Forum 2018 (KIF 2018) will commence today where Kuwait will roll out investment partnerships and strategic investment opportunities valued at more than \$100 billion in key economic and social sectors for investors.

Kuwait Investment Forum 2018 opens today

KIF 2018 to showcase over \$100bn in investment opportunities

KUWAIT: The State of Kuwait is rolling out investment partnerships and strategic investment opportunities valued at more than \$100 billion in key economic and social sectors for investors that include information and communications technology, oil & gas, renewable energy, electricity & water, urban developments & housing, healthcare, education, transport, tourism, and the North zone development.

The showcase of opportunities that bring long-term added-value and returns on investments is being highlighted at the Kuwait Investment Forum 2018 (KIF 2018) to be held today and tomorrow (March 20-21) in Kuwait City, where several new deals are also set to be revealed.

Held under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber, KIF 2018 is co-organized by the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), and the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) at the Bayan Palace and the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre (JACC). His Highness the Amir will attend the Forum.

The event builds on the positive momentum gained globally following the country's commitment to the Kuwait 2035 roadmap that aims to transform

the nation into a world-class financial and commercial center. Kuwait is a country that enjoys a secure, open and dynamic market that welcomes inward direct investments to forge partnerships that would complement its outward investments in several countries around the world led by its renowned Sovereign Wealth Fund, and with its leading global presence in the oil and gas sector through the Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its K-companies as well as its buoyant private sector.

Ali Al-Ghanim, Chairman of the KCCI, said, "Kuwait is taking determined steps to continue its transformation into one of the world's most competitive economies. In its re-emerging development narrative, the private sector has a significant role to play. The country has always been an open market economy, formed strong trade and commercial relations, and remains a strong believer in liberalization, which is maintains its dynamic and thriving nature. This and more, will be highlighted at KIF 2018 and investors are welcomed to see first-hand the opportunities available today that

will enable them to build their solid operational base from the central location of Kuwait to engage with the rest of the region."

Sheikh Dr Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Director General for KDIPA, said: "Value added FDI flows into Kuwait increased in the past two years



Forum to support Kuwait 2035 vision, determination

enhancing innovation and foster competitiveness whilst also contributing to achieve the National Vision 2035 goals pertaining to diversifying the economy and ensuring a sustainable future. We are confident that KIF 2018 will lend further momentum

to the inward inflows in a number of high-growth sectors that will be showcased varying from oil and gas, renewable energy, manufacturing, education and training, financial services, information technology and digital solutions, healthcare services, transport and communications among others.

KDIPA provides investors with a host of incentives that include 100 per cent foreign ownership to establish legal entities anywhere in the country, along with exemptions on income tax up to 10 years, as well as customs duty exemptions for projects.

KDIPA is at the forefront to exercise its role in providing all needed information, facilitation and aftercare services for existing and potential investors to ensure they establish successful businesses in our promising market that is expected to further play a leading role throughout the region and the neighboring countries capitalizing on its low risk status, balanced international relations, improving business climate, and large pool of young, tech-savvy population, with unique cultural identity."

KIF 2018 has remarkable confirmed guest speakers of prominent public officials, leading

Kuwaiti business and financial community, as well as prominent international business executives. It has a crystallized agenda that underpins the future investment strategy and roadmap for global investors through interactive sessions with focused discussions that cover topics such as 'Investing for the Future Kuwait', which underpins the nation's role as an important partner in the Belt and Road initiative (BRI), trade facilitation to enhance Kuwait's leading position in integrated Logistics services and cross border supply chains, and on financing for sustainable development. There will be a dedicated session on a wide array of lucrative investment opportunities in the country's dynamic growth sectors. In addition to a special feature on 'New Kuwait' in what is the first public discussion on the development roadmap since its launch last year. It will present a 'Progress Report' on the projects and developments under its seven pillars: Public Administration, Economy, Healthcare, Living Communities, Infrastructure, Human Capital and global position.

KIF 2018 will close with a vivid dialogue on 'Kuwait's Development Path: The Vision & the Determination'.

Facebook slumps 5.0% as US stocks open lower

NEW YORK: Facebook shares tumbled 5.0 percent in early trading yesterday following reports of a large data breach as US stocks fell ahead of a Federal Reserve policy decision later this week.

Of the major indices, Facebook weighed most heavily on the tech-rich Nasdaq Composite Index, which was down 0.9 percent to 7,411.34 about 20 minutes into trading.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average dropped 0.8 percent to 24,749.76, while the broad-based S&P 500 dropped 0.7 percent to 2,733.09. EU Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova called "horrifying" reports that Cambridge Analytica, the data analysis firm hired by Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, stole information from 50 million Facebook user profiles to help design software to predict and influence voters' choices. Facebook suspended Cambridge Analytica, but pushed back against the claim of a data breach, suggesting misused data was limited to a far smaller group of users.



NEW YORK: In this file photo, a Facebook logo is seen through the windows of the NASDAQ stock exchange as people walk by on Times Square in New York. — AFP

Other large tech firms also stumbled, with Amazon losing 1.3 percent, Google-parent Alphabet 2.2 percent and Microsoft 1.4 percent. Apple shed 0.7 percent. Tech shares were the worst-performing of the major sectors, but the broader market also has been pressured over the last couple of weeks by

worries over a potential trade war and the prospect of more aggressive Fed rate hikes due to faster growth and inflation. The Fed is expected to raise interest rates tomorrow and will release its quarterly economic projections which will include officials views of the path of rates over the coming years. — AFP

China reshapes economic team to battle trade tensions, debt pile

BEIJING: Xi Jinping reshaped his core economic team yesterday, promoting two trusted, US-educated lieutenants to key positions at a time of escalating trade tensions with Washington and concerns over a growing debt mountain.

Parliament approved the nomination of Xi's influential adviser Liu He, a Harvard-educated Communist Party official who as vice premier is expected to oversee the financial and economic sectors.

The deputy governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC), Yi Gang, was elevated to head the central bank, replacing Zhou Xiaochuan, another advocate of reforms who had held the job since 2002. The appointments were made at an annual session of the National People's Congress that has boosted Xi's influence on the world's second-largest

economy, with presidential term limits abolished and his name added to the constitution. The reshuffle gives Xi trusted hands at the economic controls as China faces the prospect of a tit-for-tat trade war with the US and concerns that ballooning debt has made the country vulnerable to a potential crisis. Liu travelled to Washington earlier this month and met with US officials at the White House, but his trip has not stopped Trump from considering new trade measures against China.

"The most important task is carrying out a stable monetary policy, and at the same time pushing forward financial reform and opening, while maintaining financial stability," Yi told reporters after his appointment.

"There will be a series of reform and opening policies and measures to come," Yi said, according to the central bank's news outlet Financial News. While at the PBOC, Yi has called for greater market access for foreign investors and further internationalization of China's currency. At a press conference earlier in the annual parliamentary session, Yi said the central bank would work to push through reforms that will bring about "equal treatment for domestic and foreign investors". He specifically cited liberalization of China's financial sector, by "allowing greater access or eliminating restrictions on foreign ownership" altogether. — AFP

Business

Avaya committed to driving development of Kuwait's knowledge-based economy

We're embracing new technologies to build new solutions: Official

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: "Embracing new technologies, leveling the field and building new solutions. These are just some of many reasons why Avaya exists in the Middle East," a senior official of Avaya Middle East, Africa and Turkey told Kuwait Times. Avaya Vice President Fadi Hani is in Kuwait to attend a forum organized at Four Seasons' Hotel to showcase the company's commitment to its customers in this part of the world.

"Our primary focus is on customer satisfaction and enabling new technologies and digital platforms to be used and adopted by our valued customers to their advantage. One example is through artificial intelligence - how it is used for a better customer experience," he said. AI can predict what customers want or can even guide customers in a certain way to get the expected outcome.

"For example, speech recognition technology has helped many. AI is significantly impacting everything related to a customer's experience. The Internet of



Primary focus on customer satisfaction

Things (IoT) is playing a big role in AI technology. In the medical field, we now have machines that talk to each other. In a hospital in Saudi Arabia (Habib Medical Group), doctors can monitor various ICU units across multiple hospitals from one centralized location using IoT technology connected to monitoring units," Hani said.

But AI and IoT, according to Hani, are in an early stage. "These are still being tested on how they can adapt and benefit businesses and customers. All of these are new and we can say they're part of many aggressive technologies now flooding the market," he added.

AI is an area of computer science that creates intelligent machines that work and react like humans. Some of the activities computers with artificial intelligence are designed for include speech recognition, learning, planning and problem solving. Hani takes pride in Avaya's presence in Kuwait and his company's achievements since its establishment. "We are in the oil and gas sectors in Kuwait (KOC); we are also in the banking sector -

KFH is our primary customer in this sector; we are also in the hospitality industry and are involved in hospitals (Jahra Hospital). In education, we are connected and involved with Kuwait University. We are in some ministries like the Interior Ministry, addressing public safety solutions," he said.

With regards to competition, he said each company has its own particular strengths, adding Avaya is an open platform regardless of whether you only want one solution - other competitors can provide other solutions. "We give you the platform to be used. We provide you with the products and we give you the flexibility to protect your investments even if they are from other sources," he said.

Hani said the Kuwaiti market is growing and dynamic and that many are hungry for the latest technologies. "They are quite tech-savvy and the level of intelligence and adaptability is very high. They know how they want to be treated when it comes to technology. They want their mobile apps to be able to do even beyond what is already available. Service providers here are great and are creating the momentum to set a higher standard in the entire digital platform," he said.

According to Hani, he is looking at a double-digit growth in terms of sales in the Kuwait market. "The government has started spending on digital platforms. It is now spending on healthcare facilities and education, while the oil and gas sector is really doing



Fadi Hani, Avaya Vice President for Middle East, Africa and Turkey during the interview

well. So we see growth and traction, a big contributor in our growth engine," he said.

Avaya is a leading global business communications company, committed to driving the development of Kuwait's knowledge-based economy by leveraging technology. Avaya recently honored leading customers for their innovative deployments of its next-generation communications solutions in key industry sectors, including banking, retail, aviation, oil and gas, financial services, and healthcare.

Hong Kong's richest woman sees her wealth halved

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's richest woman Pollyanna Chu has seen more than half of her wealth wiped out in the last three months after warnings from regulators about her company led to stock plunges.

Chu's Hong Kong-listed Kingston Financial Group tumbled again by as much as 12 percent yesterday after index provider FTSE Russell removed the stock from its benchmarks, according to Bloomberg News. Yesterday's crash comes on the heels of a steeper slide since January after Hong Kong's securities regulator warned the company's shares were too concentrated in a small number of shareholders and that

prices could fluctuate substantially. The Securities and Futures Commission found more than 91 percent of the company's shares were controlled by 20 shareholders, adding investors "should exercise extreme caution".

Kingston Financial Group, which 59-year-old Chu co-founded with her husband Nicholas, operates Macau casinos and offers financial services.

The stock has become the worst performer on index compiler MSCI Inc's gauge in Asia this year, Bloomberg News reported. Chu, whose father Lee Wai-man is a veteran in Macau's casino industry, was named Hong Kong's richest woman by Forbes in 2017, with her fortune estimated at almost \$12 billion at the start of this year.

Her wealth has slumped to around \$5.7 billion as of yesterday, hovering above gambling mogul Stanley Ho's daughter Pansy Ho on the billionaires' list who is estimated to be worth \$5.5 billion by Forbes.

Chu recently became part of a record \$5.2 billion



Hong Kong's richest woman Pollyanna Chu

deal to acquire a Hong Kong landmark skyscraper previously owned by Hong Kong's richest man Li Ka-Shing, according to reports by Bloomberg News and the South China Morning Post. —AFP

AU launches ambitious bid for world's largest free trade area

ADDIS ABABA: Africa's leaders will gather in Rwanda tomorrow to launch what they say will be the world's largest free trade area but Nigeria has already pulled out, highlighting the challenge in getting the continent to sign up. Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) with 55 African Union (AU) members having a cumulative GDP of \$2.5 trillion is one of the bloc's flagship projects.

However Muhammadu Buhari, president of one of Africa's largest markets Nigeria, this week cancelled plans to attend the Kigali launch and called for more consultations after business leaders objected to joining the world's biggest free trade area in terms of countries.

Trade between neighbors

"The signature of the CFTA is something that makes Africa look good on paper, but for implementation it's going to have a lot of hiccups," said Sola Afolabi, a Nigeria-based international trade consultant. Some 27 heads of state are expected to attend

the Kigali meeting, but it is unclear who will sign on to the CFTA right away.

AU trade and industry commissioner Albert M. Muchanga said Africa's fledgling industries and growing middle class would benefit from the CFTA's removal of tariffs.

Currently, African countries only do about 16 percent of their business with each other. "If we remove customs and duties by 2022, the level of intra-African trade will increase by 60 percent, which is very, very significant," Muchanga told AFP.

"Eventually, we are hoping that all the African Union states will be parties to the Continental Free Trade Area," he added. With underdeveloped service and industrial sectors across the continent, African countries have for decades seen their fortunes rise and fall with the prices of exported commodities such as oil, cocoa and gold.

In recent years, nations like Ethiopia and Ghana have tried to wean themselves from this cycle by building factories and new infrastructure for local industries, spurring rapid growth. Landry Signe, a development expert with Stanford University in the United States, said the agreement could help these industries, while giving African countries a unified platform to negotiate trade deals with wealthier nations. "With the CFTA, the manufacturing sector would be much more diversified, as the market would not be a few million people, but potentially 1.2 billion people," he said. South Africa, a vocal backer of the trade deal, has argued that African economies are too small to support economic diversification and industrialization on their own.

Regional integration "is critical to reduce the vulnerability of African economies to global shocks, a vulnerability which results from their heavy reliance on commodities," South Africa's Trade and Industry Minister Rob Davies wrote in an editorial last week. However in Nigeria, the plans have not gone down well with unions and business leaders. "We have no doubt this policy initiative will spell the death knell of the Nigerian economy," said the Nigeria Labour Congress (NLC).

Easing trade and travel

The CFTA is a key part of the AU's long-term development plan Agenda 2063, which calls for easing trade and travel across the continent. At its most recent summit in Ethiopia in January, AU member states agreed to a common air transport market that could drive down air fares, as well as plans for visa-free travel for Africans across the continent.

Which countries will adopt these agreements remains unclear, as do the prospects for the CFTA, which requires 22 ratifications at a national level after its signing to come into force.

Afolabi said countries with more developed industries would embrace the CFTA because it could open more markets, but nations whose ports served landlocked neighbors could opt out, fearing a loss of revenue. He worked on setting up the Economic Community of West African States's (ECOWAS) common market, which he has subsequently criticized for failing to punish countries that violated its terms. —AFP

Pound surges as post-Brexit transition deal sealed

LONDON: The pound rose yesterday after Britain and the EU reached a landmark deal on a two-year transition after Brexit that will buy businesses and citizens time to adjust to life after the divorce.

World stocks jittered, meanwhile, ahead of a feared US interest rate hike later this week, as concerns of a possible trade war sparked by US President Donald Trump's announcement on tariffs also weighed.

Rocking the US market were Facebook's shares plummeting 5.0 percent following reports of a large data breach. "Concerns over the potential for a Trump trade war still seem to be weighing on the minds of investors, with a lack of risk appetite still leading to caution in global stock markets," FXTM research analyst Lukman Otunuga said. Trump's taxes on imports worldwide are to come into effect on March 23, with the exception so far of Canada and Mexico, which have won exemptions from the US. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom is heading to Washington to seek a similar exemption after the bloc threatened to hit flagship US products including peanut butter, orange juice and bourbon whiskey with counter measures.

The pound found strength in a deal reached yesterday between Britain and the EU on a transition period between March 29, 2019 and December 31, 2020. Crucially, the transition will give Britain and Europe more time to agree on a trade deal. Weighed down by the stronger currency the London FTSE 100 benchmark underperformed its European peers as a strong pound stands to hurt exporters.

Stock markets elsewhere dropped because of trade war fears, and the tariffs are set to overshadow the two-day meeting of the world's richest 20 nations in Buenos Aires, beginning on Monday.

'Rocky start'

"It's been a rocky start to trading at the start of the week, as the prospect of a trade war becomes ever more real," said OANDA analyst Craig Erlam. "Tariffs are likely to be the main topic of conversation at the G20 meeting." Sentiment was cautious before interest rate decisions this week from both the US Federal Reserve and the Bank of England, on Wednesday and Thursday respectively. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.844
Indian Rupees	4.628
Pakistani Rupees	2.720
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.926
Nepali Rupees	2.901
Singapore Dollar	229.230
Hongkong Dollar	38.349
Bangladesh Taka	3.597
Philippine Peso	5.788
Thai Baht	9.665

GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	80.254
Qatari Riyal	82.658
Omani Riyal	781.575
Bahraini Dinar	799.120
UAE Dirham	81.959

ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.650
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.051
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.208
Tunisian Dinar	127.170
Jordanian Dinar	423.890
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.005
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.232

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	300.750

Euro	370.370
Sterling Pound	420.300
Canadian dollar	230.200
Turkish lira	77.510
Swiss Franc	317.080
Australian Dollar	233.080
US Dollar Buying	299.550

GOLD	
20 Gram	260.52
10 Gram	133.18
5 Gram	67.43

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	300.400
Canadian Dollar	229.680
Sterling Pound	419.470
Euro	370.015
Swiss Frank	288.020
Bahrain Dinar	798.875
UAE Dirhams	82.190
Qatari Riyals	83.420
Saudi Riyals	81.000
Jordanian Dinar	424.970
Egyptian Pound	17.125
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.926
Indian Rupees	4.624
Pakistani Rupees	2.717
Bangladesh Taka	3.604
Philippines Peso	5.774
Cyprus pound	17.885

Japanese Yen	3.840
Syrian Pound	1.585
Nepalese Rupees	2.898
Malaysian Ringgit	77.730
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.895
Thai Bhat	10.615
Turkish Lira	76.840

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.412700	0.420200
Czech Korune	0.006530	0.015830
Danish Krone	0.045543	0.050543
Euro	0.363131	0.370631
Georgian Lari	0.136386	0.136386
Hungarian 0.001132	0.001322	
Norwegian Krone	0.034913	0.040113
Romanian Leu	0.064245	0.081095
Russian ruble	0.005236	0.005236
Slovakia	0.008930	0.018930
Swedish Krona	0.032667	0.037667
Swiss Franc	0.308617	0.319617
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.222798	0.234798
New Zealand Dollar	0.210126	0.219626
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.223784	0.232784
US Dollars	0.296650	0.301070
US Dollars Mint	0.297150	0.301070

Asia	
Bangladesh Taka	0.003191 0.003775
Chinese Yuan	0.045976 0.049476
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036567 0.039317
Indian Rupee	0.004175 0.004816
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018 0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002758 0.002938
Korean Won	0.000270 0.000285
Malaysian Ringgit	0.072936 0.078936
Nepalese Rupee	0.003001 0.003171
Pakistani Rupee	0.002530 0.002820
Philippine Peso	0.005673 0.005973
Singapore Dollar	0.222811 0.232811
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001606 0.002186
Taiwan	0.010318 0.010498
Thai Baht	0.009277 0.009827
Arab	
Bahraini Dinar	0.791072 0.799572
Egyptian Pound	0.014085 0.019803
Iranian Riyal	0.000083 0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000202 0.000262
Jordanian Dinar	0.419571 0.428571
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000 1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000154 0.000254
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022688 0.046688
Omani Riyal	0.774851 0.780531
Qatar Riyal	0.078319 0.083259
Saudi Riyal	0.079113 0.080413
Syrian Pound	0.001274 0.001494
Tunisian Dinar	0.121204 0.129207
Turkish Lira	0.071732 0.082032
UAE Dirhams	0.080457 0.082032
Yemeni Riyal	0.000977 0.001057

Business

KAMCO GCC Economic Report

GCC budget gaps forecast to further narrow in 2018

Single-digit deficits expected by 2020

KWD (Bn)	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	Y-o-Y (%)
Oil Revenues	11.7	11.7	13.3	13.7%
% of Total Revenue	89.3%	88.0%	88.7%	
Non-oil Revenue	1.4	1.6	1.8	12.5%
% of Total Revenue	10.7%	12.0%	11.3%	
Total Revenue	13.1	13.3	15.0	12.8%
Salaries & Wages	10.2	10.9	11.2	3.4%
Subsidies	2.7	3.1	3.4	12.4%
Capital Expenditures	2.6	3.4	3.6	6.0%
Other	2.2	2.6	1.7	-33.2%
Total Expenditure	17.7	19.9	20.0	0.5%
Fiscal Balance (Pre FGF)	(4.6)	(6.6)	(5.0)	-23.7%
Transfer to FGF	1.3	1.3	1.5	15.4%
Fiscal Balance (Post FGF)	5.9	7.9	6.5	-18.0%

Source: Ministry of Finance- Kuwait

KUWAIT: Budgets deficits for the GCC region in 2018 are forecast to come in at \$51 billion, a 52 percent reduction from 2017 budget deficits (\$107 billion), based on our analysis of IMF's general government fiscal balance estimates. Expense optimization and reduction initiatives are key drivers for the lower budget gaps, while Saudi Arabia is expected to contribute to about 63 percent of the region's budget deficits, despite lowering expenditure by 14.3 percent y-o-y. Nevertheless, we forecast budget deficits to come in lower, as higher revenues are expected if oil prices were to stay at levels seen in Q1-18 (above \$60/bbl) for the rest of 2018. Current account balances in the GCC over 2017-2019 are estimated to move into surplus, albeit marginally, and is expected to average 0.3 percent of GDP over the period.

Credit trends and monetary indicators such as liquidity and inflation mixed Inflation trends

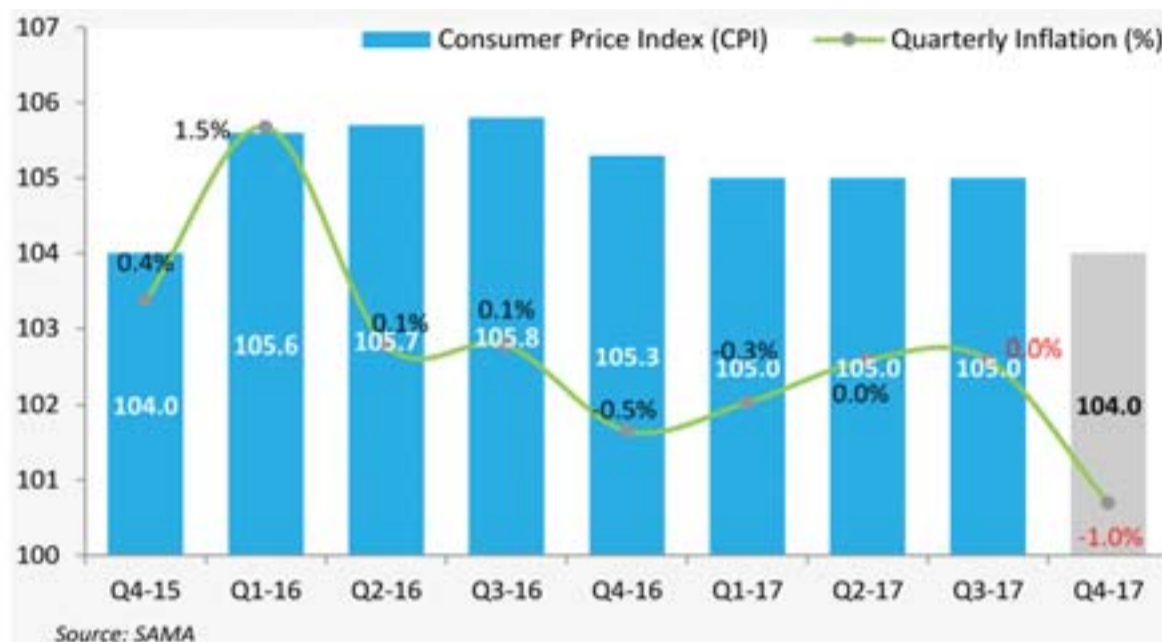
reported for Q4-17 suggested that overall consumer prices grew across UAE, Kuwait and Qatar, as quarterly inflation ranged between 0.5 percent-1 percent, while Saudi Arabia and Bahrain witnessed lower CPI levels. Money supply (M2) growth for Q4-17 was also broadly positive across UAE, Kuwait & Qatar with 1.5 percent-6.0 percent growth registered for the quarter. Credit disbursed across the GCC was mixed, as quarterly lending grew in UAE (0.4 percent), Qatar (1.8 percent), Bahrain (1.7 percent) and Oman (1.7 percent).

We expect initiatives to bolster the GCC non-oil economy to continue; but be less synchronized than the previous years, as individual GCC countries are likely to use different fiscal tools to shore up their state finances. A case in point is the introduction of VAT in the UAE and Saudi Arabia, while other GCC countries are yet to implement VAT measures, even as the IMF

estimates VAT to generate additional revenue in the range of 1.5 percent-3 percent of region's non-oil GDP. Other independent revenue measures include excise taxes implemented in the UAE & Saudi Arabia in 2017, higher fees introduced for government services and taxes on vacant lands introduced in Saudi Arabia, while other countries prepare to implement business profit tax reforms. Leading indicators for the non-oil economy in 2018 still remain healthy in our view, as purchasing manager indices (PMI) for Saudi Arabia and UAE show expansion, while the IMF estimates a real non-oil GDP of 2.4 percent for the current year. Timelines and newer initiatives will hinge on oil price signaling from OPEC production cuts beyond Dec-2018, in our view.

Kuwait

Total government revenues for Kuwait in 2017/18 is estimated to increase and grow to



Source: SAMA

KD 13.3 billion from KD 13.1 billion in 2016/17, as per the Ministry of Finance. The growth is ascribed to non-oil revenues, which is estimated to grow from KD 1.4 billion in 2016/17 to KD 1.6 billion in 2017/18, while oil revenues are expected to stay stable at KD 11.7 billion over both fiscal years. On the other hand, expenditure also grew from KD 17.7 billion in 2016/17 to KD 19.9 in 2017/18, as capital expenditures, subsidies and salaries & wages grew in the current fiscal year.

Government finances are estimated to stay in the negative over 2017/18, however the Ministry of Finance expects an improvement in the next fiscal year. In 2018/19, the deficit is expected to be lower by 23.7 percent, before contribution to FGF (Future Generations Fund). Higher oil revenues (+13.7 percent) and non-oil revenues (+8.5 percent) are key drivers for the y-o-y improvement in 2018/19, despite the

marginally higher expenditure (+0.5 percent) in the fiscal year.

Credit facilities extended by Kuwaiti banks by the end of Q4-17 decreased by 1.2 percent q-o-q to KD 35.4 billion. On a y-o-y basis however, credit extended improved by 3.2 percent, driven by the growth in Personal facilities, which grew by 4.4 percent over the period and accounted for over 43 percent of the credit disbursed by December-17. Credit to the construction sector however declined on a y-o-y basis, as credit disbursed by the sector went down by 11.1 percent, while the real estate sector witnessed a 2.7 percent growth in credit disbursed. Kuwait's broad measure of money supply (M2) jumped by 1.6 percent q-o-q to KD 37.1 billion in Q4-17, after remaining broadly stable in Q3-17 (+0.2 percent), as Q4-17 growth was driven by an 8 percent q-o-q growth in currency in circulation.

Get your car ready for summer heat with BTB special discounts, free service offers

KUWAIT: Bumper-to-Bumper (BTB), part of Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive Group, launched its most recent safety-oriented and customer-focused campaign, offering customers a series of free offers and special discounts on other services to help ensure that their cars have the highest standards of safety and security and running ahead of the summer.

The free services and discounts comprise free air-conditioning checkup for temperature, pressure and air flow, free brakes check, free car wash, free nitrogen fill as well as discounts on tire services and 10 percent discount on all labor fees.

The campaign runs from March 17 to April 30, enabling customers to take advantage of the diversified services provided by Bumper-to-Bumper with the highest level of service, thanks to a trained team and the best in the market product range which include oils, filters and much more.

Our BTB service centers also offer a free 14-point offer, and free car wash when using the oil and filter service at one of the 11 BTB service centers located in various areas in Kuwait.

Throughout the years, Bumper-to-Bumper has been the leading car maintenance and servicing center trusted by customers in Kuwait and continues to expand to serve more segments of the population.

Founded in 1980, BTB started as quick-service shops that specialized in replacing and repairing exhaust systems. Five years later in 1985, the brand BTB was created as a unique concept in the Kuwaiti market. Today, BTB's clear mission is to exceed expectations by offering the best in car maintenance and spare-parts services, for both individual customers and corporate owners. But what makes BTB truly stand out is the highly-trained team of technicians and professionals, who collectively provide an unprecedented level of support through state-of-the-art equipment and auto maintenance knowledge.

As one of the strongest local brands in the country, with more than 160,000 vehicles serviced each year, in one of 150 service platforms in 11 service centers throughout the country, BTB provides customers with total convenience and peace of mind, dealing with all car makes and models. At BTB, the customer comes first and each center is designed with the customer's comfort in mind, including free wireless access, a spacious lounge area, cafe, playground and much more.

Indeed, choosing BTB service centers means turning over your car to a crew of specialized technicians who operate the most advanced equipment and analyzing tools to produce a highly-detailed report and an accurate estimate of total cost of repair. To top it off, BTB service centers offer genuine spare parts for all car models, as well as warranties for parts and labor.

BTB service centers are strategically located throughout Kuwait including Sharq, Fahaaheel, Shuwaikh and Jahra, and are also integrated in Alfa Petrol Stations in Shaab, Egaila, Shuwaikh and South Surra, and in KNPC petrol stations in Ishbiliya, Jahra (Al-Waha) and Ardiya (Jaber Stadium area).

AUB launches new salary transfer campaign

KUWAIT: Following the considerable success achieved through the special Salary Transfer Campaign from Ahli United Bank (AUB), which received a very positive response from customers, the Bank has launched a new salary transfer campaign for citizens which includes a package of new exclusive benefits.

The new campaign, which will run until the 30 June 2018, offers new customers transferring their salaries to the Bank, a chance to choose from a number of instant cash gifts that are valued at KD 300 for salaries of KD 1,000 and above, and KD 200 for salaries less than KD 1,000. Or, customers can receive a Qard Hasan with a maximum value of KD 8,000 with a flexible repayment period of up to five years, providing more room for reduced monthly installments. The campaign also offers customers the chance to enter into the Bank's Grand Draw to win one of 3 cars: BMW 730Li Executive (model 2018), BMW 420i Coupe M Sports (model 2018) or Mini Cooper F56 (model 2019). The draw will take place on the 18 July 2018.

The benefits of this campaign also include providing customers who transfer their salaries to AUB's Al-Hassad Islamic Account, free Takaful life insurance against natural death worth 36 monthly salaries up to KD 50,000 maximum, in addition to free Takaful insurance against accidental death worth 72 monthly salaries up to KD 100,000 maximum. The minimum salary transferred must be KD 700. Customers are also given the chance to enter the draw for Al-Hassad Islamic Account prize draws, which offers the largest prize draw val-

Special discount on NBK Tap & Pay wristbands and stickers

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait brings innovative and secure technology to the people of Kuwait. Tap & Pay technology, including stickers and wristbands, are a part of the bank's initiative to introduce ground-breaking, highly secure payment solutions that make customer transactions simpler and easier. NBK Tap & Pay gives customers the ability to make small purchases without signing or using a PIN with a mere tap of the sticker or wristband, for a faster and more efficient checkout experience.

Wear your Tap & Pay wristband or place a Tap & Pay sticker on your mobile while jogging, running errands or even walking around the park and pay for small purchases up to KD 100, without the need to carry a wallet.

As part of special promotion campaign, NBK is offering its popular Tap & Pay wearables for a special fee of KD 12 at less than half the price of KD 25, to give customers an opportunity to experience this stylish, convenient, safe and innovative technology for themselves. This special offer is available in NBK branches at The Avenues, Grand Avenues, Surra, Qurain, KNPC, Al-Hamra and Mishref. You could also order over the phone by contacting the NBK Call Center.

"We've launched this promotion, offering a discount on Tap & Pay Wristbands and Stickers, to give customers a chance to try it out and discover how much easier this stylish and innovative payment technology makes their lives. Tap & Pay technology is convenient to use, seamless and simple. It makes small payments easy and safe



ue to the largest number of winners, while also being the first draw program in Kuwait that is sharia-compliant.

Furthermore, customers who transfer their salaries during the campaign period will receive free credit cards during the first year of the card issuance.

while enhancing the check-out experience," explained Naser Alduwaisan, Cards Products Officer, National Bank of Kuwait.

More than 7,000 restaurants, shops, entertainment centers, coffee shops and lifestyle brands now accept the NBK Tap & Pay service in Kuwait, in addition to different locations around the world. So you will always have opportunities near you to pay in style.

The NBK Tap & Pay service is currently available for Credit, Debit, and pre-paid cards from NBK. Customers can also avail of special rewards and promotions depending on the card.



Infiniti Al-Babtain announces limited time offer on all Infiniti cars this March

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in Kuwait is pleased to announce its limited offer urging all fans to benefit from owning their very own latest models this season, the exclusive opportunity that ends on 31 March 2018 also ensures a wide range of advantages to ensure an added value customer experience. The campaign assures customers with a two-year service package or 30,000Kms, one year full insurance and free window tinting along with full body protection. As market leaders, the Infiniti models universally boasts a sophisticated design approach and exquisite motor experience backed by innovative world class driving technologies to ensure a unique and seamless experience on the road.

Infiniti Q30

Taking into consideration some of the best performance models in Kuwait, the Q30 which is Infiniti's signature design is a premium compact vehicle that is popular among the younger drivers. Q30 comes with a double-arch grille with a unique 3D mesh and is powered by 1.6L or 2.0L Turbo engines in a 2WD configuration. For enthusiasts, the 2.0L Turbo is also offered with an optional AWD drivetrain. The 2.0L Turbo engine is a power-horse as it delivers 208hp and 350Nm torque. At peak performance, the INFINITI Q30 blasts from 0-to-100kph in 7.3 seconds.

Infiniti Q50

Built with a consistent, daring and engineering design that speaks to the new generation of adventurous customers, the INFINITI Q50 is a luxury model that comes with a powerful engine. Expressing signature Infiniti design, the double arch grille is prominently placed front and center. The arc of the bottom, like a natural reflection to that of the top, gives the front fascia a distinctive appearance while the upper and lower body of the Q50 directs air to flow over, around and under the Q50, turning it into effective downforce.

Infiniti Q60

Distinctive features that set it apart from its peers is the INFINITI Q60's powerful elegance and striking performance. The 2.0-liter 4 turbocharged engine promises optimal power and efficiency, to glide forward confidently while the turbo spools quickly to produce 208hp at 5,500 rpm and outputs a stirring 350 Nm of torque. The Q60 is known to deliver a confidence-inspiring and personalized experience behind the wheel. Infiniti Al-Babtain invites its customers to discover its complete range by visiting the Infiniti showroom located in Al-Rai area, which is open every day except Fridays.



KFH Chairman Hamad Abdul Mohsen Al-Marzouq's statement

KFH completes four decades of significant achievements

KFH AGM decides to distribute 17% cash dividends, 10% bonus shares



KUWAIT: KFH Chairman Hamad Abdul Mohsen Al-Marzouq, accompanied by the board members, addresses the shareholders.

KUWAIT: Praise be to Allah Almighty, and Peace and Blessings be upon our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), his Family and Companions.

Esteemed shareholders,

Assalamu Alaikum Warahmatu Allah Wabarakatuh
On behalf of myself, my fellow colleagues, members of the Board of Directors of Kuwait Finance House ("KFH"), I would like to present to you KFH Group Annual Report for 2017. We have managed this year to achieve positive results despite various difficult challenges, continued weak economic growth in several countries and geopolitical tensions.

However, it can be said that 2017 was a unique year in KFH's journey of success as it was crowned by celebrating its 40th Anniversary as the first and pioneer Islamic bank in Kuwait. KFH has completed four decades of significant achievements that contributed effectively to the national development and growth of Kuwait's economy. Started as an ordinary small bank in late 1970s, KFH has succeeded in becoming one of the largest, most prominent, credible and secured Islamic banks in the world where it also attained high credit ratings amongst the local and international peers with distinguished geographical diversity worldwide in Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia and Germany.

With steadiness and absolute confidence, KFH has managed during the past 40 years to enhance the value of its depositors and shareholders' equity, increase returns on their investments and maintain steady profitability despite crises and major challenges encountered at both local and international levels. Starting from a limited capital not exceeding two million Kuwaiti Dinars upon incorporation, its total shareholders' equity grew to reach approximately KD 2 billion as at the end of 2017.

This long march has reflected several competitive advantages rendering KFH as a model, being a leading development bank with a prestigious Islamic trademark. KFH provides a large variable package of banking and investment products to motivate saving, meet finance and investment needs, attract more capital and acquire depositors and shareholders trust in light of its high quality assets, growth in profits and prudent risk management policy. All such factors have ranked KFH as one of the pioneer leading Islamic banks both at local and international levels.

We have started 2017 with a much stronger base where we reaped the harvest of our efforts during the past three years. These results are attributed, by the grace of Allah, to the loyalty of our customers, the outstanding efforts of our employees, our strict compliance with Islamic sharia principles and rules, the efficiency of our control systems and our good resources and risks management, where cost optimization outcomes have become obvious. We have executed prudent exits from certain investments to determine the ideal volume of investments after consolidating "KFH Investment Portfolio" through KFH Capital, overcoming certain duplicated activities, focusing on core banking business and expanding the strategic supervision circle so as to enable KFH to seize income generating investment opportunities and become the most sustainable in terms of profitability and the most trusted Islamic bank worldwide.

Three-year strategy

On a strategic level, KFH managed to set its 3-year strategy ending in 2020. The strategy is focused on three main pillars including the development of current customers' base, innovation based on the new digital financial technology (FINTECH) and achievement of operational excellence.

We have set our ambitious strategy trend for the following years to counter challenges in the organizational, economic and operational environment and respond to regulatory requirements. Our aim is to make customers the main focus, exceed their expectations, maintain a constant leadership, and achieve distinct performance and sustainable growth.

In regards to banking services and private banking, we have maintained our leading position among Kuwaiti banks, especially in the field of expanding the new innovative sharia-compliant solutions circle, increasing the focus on services through digital media that enhance customers' self-service, whereas we provided XTM machines in some of our branch locations.

Corporate banking continued its growth benefiting

from the strong and well established links and coordination with the Group's subsidiaries and associates, which had the greatest effect on providing distinct financial solutions both at local and global levels. At the local level, KFH has arranged several major transactions to finance infrastructure projects including financing a company entering into contract with the Ministry of Electricity and Water with total value amounting 120 million Kuwaiti Dinars. Further, it has also financed a transaction for purchasing three aircrafts with value amounting 124 million Kuwaiti Dinars in favor of ALAFCO Aviation Lease and Finance Company. On the global level, KFH played the role of the main organizer and subscription manager of a transaction in US dollar syndication finance amounting 180 million Kuwaiti Dinars in favor of a wholly owned company of Omani Investment Fund.

Further, KFH continued its focus on Small and Medium Enterprises.

At another level, Group Treasury's contribution to the financial results achieved by KFH this year was strong and outstanding. The main focus was placed on the development and improvement of treasury and Sukuk investment activities. This fact is confirmed through the rating given by International Islamic Liquidity Management Corporation (IILM) where KFH has taken the leading position amongst main traders in the premier Sukuk issuances, thus representing a share of 30% of its value amounting 10 billion US dollars whereas KFH's trade volume reached more than 15 billion US dollars in coordination with KFH Capital, which has excelled in the

intense training programs to acquire accredited international certificates in the field of Sharia audit and control.

These factors have helped achieve a noticeable and clear improvement in most of the main sources of income at the Group level. Efforts exerted during the last three years with an aim of enhancing the profitability of the Group, optimizing its costs and achieving integration among its parties have led to several achievements as evidenced in 2017 financial results whereas we managed, thanks to Allah, to achieve a net profit for the shareholders reached KD 184.2 million at a growth rate of 11.5 percent compared to the preceding year. Further, the earnings per share reached 32.41 fils at a growth rate of 11.4 percent whereas the total assets amounted KD 17.4 billion at a growth rate of 5.2 percent. Further, total operating expenses share reached 42.76 percent in total operating income, thus continuing its decline for the third consecutive year. KFH customers' deposits grew by 8.2 percent to reach KD 11.6 billion. Such figures reflect a strong financial position amidst tough operational conditions.

HR development

We continued to focus primarily on serving our customers by taking care of our staff where 2017 was a busy year from a Human Resources perspective. For the second year in a row we have had record participation in our Employee Survey and this year our Group Engagement Score improved by 2 percent to remain above 70 percent, which compares favorably to our peers in the GCC and high performing organizations around the world.

KFH major player in development and growth of Kuwait economy

issuance and management of Sukuk through several major transactions including that of the Omani Mazoon Electricity Company in value of 500 million US dollars for a term of 10 years, and 500 million US dollars for APICORP Sukuk for a term of 5 years. The Group has also arranged for the first time sovereign Sukuk for Hong Kong amounting one billion US dollars for a term of 10 years in addition to other Sukuk transactions worldwide.

To enhance our commitment to a more open and cooperative environment and to cope with the highest possible code of ethics, we have established a new organizational structure for KFH Group Sharia Department in 2017. The new structure is marked by consistency and absorbing the prudent governance standards issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait. Also, it aims to develop certain work mechanisms in the sharia sector, simplify procedures, enhance the Shari'a control efficiency and promote the Sharia performance quality level through

We continued to attract national talent through developing their academic and professional knowledge in the field of Islamic Banking and Finance. Our Human Resources Strategy is closely linked to our Nationalization agenda where we maintain a healthy Kuwaitization ratio of 66 percent. This year, more than 90 percent of all recruitment in KFH Kuwait has been Kuwaiti nationals, and we have re-launched our "Forssah Program" for talented Kuwaiti graduates to fast track their development into becoming the future banking leaders across KFH Group.

To cope with the latest technological developments in the banking industry, KFH has worked during the year on developing several IT systems according to a new strategy to accommodate the latest digital products. Many of our business channels and products have achieved leading positions in the market. Further, we continue to introduce highly integrated and diversified digital products to

enable our customers to avail modern developed banking options.

Whereas KFH seeks to enhance and strengthen its communication with the components of the Kuwaiti society and react to the rapid developments witnessed by social media, KFH was keen on drafting and executing several social and humanitarian initiatives. To stress this mandatory role, we have launched 'KFH Sustainability Report' for the 4th consecutive year as per the sustainability instructions on the social responsibility. Further, KFH continued its efforts to spread financial and banking culture through its economic and real-estate publications, expanding the online publication base through our website and social media and cooperating in this field with Thomson Reuters Agency, which is reflected in the increased number of followers on social media accounts of the Group.

Ambitious initiatives

KFH has adopted several necessary, ambitious initiatives and programs in the field of social development to support the Kuwaiti "Zakat House" and educational, rehabilitation, cultural and humanitarian institutions. KFH has donated about KD 8.2 million to support Zakat House's charity activities and projects in addition to our vital role and participation in providing support and care to environment and supporting all activities and events organized by universities and educational institutions.

Prizes and awards received by KFH during the year from various prestigious global institutions reflect KFH's success in providing highly distinguished services at both local and international levels, expressing its strong credit rating and highlighting its ability to maintain profitability based on its leading position in the market, capital adequacy, distinguished financial standards and available liquidity.

Owing to its continued efforts during the year, KFH has deserved the appreciation of global credit rating agencies. Fitch Rating Agency has increased KFH viability and growth rating from bb to bb+ and confirmed its long-term credit rating at A+ and the short-term credit rating at F1. Meanwhile, Moody's affirmed KFH long-term credit rating at A1 and short-term rating at P-1 at the time where it amended its future view of KFH from Negative to Stable. Further, Standard and Poor's (S&P) raised KFH rating with no support from bb+ to bbb-. These indicators reflect an improvement in capital management, starting from high levels maintained by KFH through internal resources, integration of risk management functions at the Group level, the strong franchise of the Bank, its highly experienced management team in the local and regional banking business with effective governance standards, improved financing quality, and put potential improvement of profitability in light of lesser concentration elements compared to other banks, Fitch Rating Agency has a positive outlook on the Group's strategy management despite the prevailing competitive environment.

As we are committed to realize significant returns for shareholders in the long run, the Board of Directors has made its recommendations to the general assembly to distribute cash dividends of 17 percent, bonus shares of 10 percent and returns on investment deposits and saving account.

We would like to avail this opportunity to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to all our shareholders and customers for their continuous support. We are confident that we will, by the grace of Allah, continue to achieve rewarding returns for the shareholders and the depositors. I would also like to thank our employees at Group level and the members of Fatwa and Sharia Supervisory Board for their continuous efforts and constructive work.

In conclusion, I would like to extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, May Allah safeguard Him, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, May Allah safeguard Him, and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, May Allah safeguard Him. Our thanks and appreciation are also extended to Dr Mohammed Al-Hashel, the Central Bank of Kuwait's Governor and all the regulatory authorities for their ongoing support to the banking sector in the State of Kuwait.

May Allah grant us success.



Business

Group CEO Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh's statement

A glance at KFH's long journey of success

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House "KFH" has taken the lead since its inception in 1977 amongst the well-established Kuwaiti banking institutions. Today, we are concluding 2017 in synchronization with the 40th anniversary after such proudfest start with its fascinating achievements realized during four decades and qualitative moves, which have translated a deep corporate insight, crystalized its shareholders' ambitions and opened new horizons for the giving of its employees to achieve leadership in the world of banking industry and as a new innovation that paved the way for the inception of the Islamic finance industry not only locally but globally as well.

KFH has continued its previous approach in implementing its strategy to expand its business, diversify the base of its activities and play a leading role in supporting infrastructure projects and development plans with an aim to enhance the position of KFH Group within a more consistent and unified framework that is based on the Islamic sharia rules with banking services as a main support that enables the Group to achieve the highest degrees of harmony among its subsidiaries.

KFH Group (KFH) has successfully completed the ambitious strategy for the last three years through its different core activities: led by retail banking, private banking, corporate finance and treasury activities based on the strength of our business and in enhancement of its effectiveness and efficiency with an aim of increasing the competitiveness and providing all banking services to our customers worldwide.

Outstanding financial indices

Such ambitious plan has achieved extremely positive results in respect of most indices of the Group whereas the net profit distributed to the shareholders increased during three years (2014 -2017) by 46 percent. We have significantly succeeded in rationalizing the expenses by 21 percent approximately, thus increasing return on equity to reach 10.1 percent in 2017; which is one of the highest percentages among local banks for the same year. Return on Assets raised to 1.3 percent in 2017.

Retail banking and private banking

KFH continued to restructure and develop its branches network in compliance with the strategy of expansion, growth and cost optimization and to provide banking products and services to its customers. Retail banking and private banking paid a great attention to give the customer the first priority based on professional practices supported by high quality assets, solid and growing deposits base, highly developed customer service along with continuous endeavors to open new markets and innovations.

Digital retail services

KFH Group owns one of the largest branch networks at the local and global levels. Further, ATM machines cover several markets, all are supported by a huge banking services network through various electronic applications in addition to the call center, which provides round the clock direct interaction with customers and whereas its response rate reaches 90 percent of customers' calls within 30 seconds and succeeded in reducing the waiting period to reach 5 percent of the calls.

XTM service stands as one of the main banking accomplishments achieved by KFH. A transformation from traditional to electronic status via video call facility to provide round the clock more effective service to customers. The service is the first of its kind in Kuwait and shall be expanded and it is a new addition to several smart applications achieved by KFH in support of its e-banking services. Stressing on such efforts, KFH has introduced, during the year and for the first time locally and in the Middle East and Africa, the smart wallet service (KFH Wallet) in partnership with Master Card Company whereas KFH is still occupying the first rank in issuing banking cards in the Kuwaiti market.

In a new qualitative achievement, we have provided a service for opening the gold account and carrying out electronic sale and purchase transactions using mobile applications and KFH website (KFH online) alongside the nine banking branches that provide gold account opening services in response to the great turnout from the part of customers and as it is considered to be an innovative product and a promising investment opportunity for KFH customers. On the other hand, KFH has introduced an ATM service of foreign currencies at Kuwait International Airport in cooperation with the Shared Electronic Banking Services Co. (K-Net) in addition to the available long-term banking products package including Shifaa, Jameati, Thimar, and Rifaa accounts to meet customers' medical, educational and investment needs.

In 2017, KFH has, in cooperation with Visa International Company, marketed Visa Checkout solutions to facilitate the online purchase process in a secured and swift way, and to enhance KFH tendency towards digital solutions. To enrich its experience within its products package, KFH has launched an e-service enabling customers to open long-term investment accounts and deposits in addition to the possibility of submitting the application for finance services online. Also, it worked in the last year on developing KFH website and KFH mobile application adding new security facilities for customers using hand and face print identification codes for dealing with the the application in a more swift and secured environment. Demand has increased on digital services as customers using this service reached about 250 thousand customers in Kuwait. Further, KFH Turkey website has been developed and designed in Arabic, English in addition to the Turkish language. KFH Bahrain was also developed to include new additional e-services.



KFH Chairman Hamad Abdul Mohsen Al-Marzouq (center), Group Chief Executive Officer Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh (left) and Sharia Supervisory Board Chairman Dr Sayyed Mohammad Al-Sayyed Abdul Razzaq Al-Tabtaba'e.

Banking services have been expanded at the Group level whereas "Bishara" Account was launched in both of Bahrain and Malaysia. This account is a promising product for KFH Bahrain and has been launched in the mid-2017 and was widely accepted whereas nearly 40 thousand accounts have been opened during that short period and it has been chosen as the best investment product in Bahrain, which has been reflected in the growth of the Group deposits.

Our private banking customers were able to open accounts through the Group subsidiaries. Further, KFH has signed a bilateral cooperation agreement with KFH Germany with an aim to enhance the integration of the Group business in the field of "Vostro Account" services, which is an account for KFH with KFH Germany to communicate the international transactions related data. According to this agreement, KFH has provided Clearing and Settlement services so that the subsidiary bank in Germany can remain the main driver of Islamic banking in the Euro Zone.

The number of direct sale employees increased to reach about 100 employees. This increase is expected to contribute to activating, enhancing direct banking products sales, attracting more customers and maintaining existing customers.

Pioneering social role relevant to its message since inception

Customers trust is considered to be one of our most important objectives and it comes through distinct banking products and services introduced by the bank. KFH is always keen on providing such products and services in a manner exceeding customers' expectations in terms of quality, diversification and spread locally, regionally and globally. KFH has succeeded in structuring two new segments of customers: i.e. "Nukhba" and "Ruwaad" to serve creditworthy customers in a more efficient and effective manner through specialized relation managers and maximize customers' benefit from our expansion in Turkey, Germany, Bahrain and Malaysia. Private banking sector has continued to market a set of funds and investment opportunities including "KFH Real-estate Fund" in US dollar in value of 116 million dollars and "UK Real-estate Fund" in Sterling Pound in value of 62.5 million pounds sterling (\$83.6 million).

Private banking's efforts have improved performance and customers' satisfaction levels and increased the quality of service provided through our banking services to the priority customers. Some of such services have been renewed to be a modern and distinct edifice meeting our customers' aspirations and marketing competitive products that give them more options and increase their confidence in KFH.

In the field of retail finance, KFH finance portfolio has increased, accentuating KFH leadership in the finance market in general and the real-estate finance in particular, and reflecting the success and effectiveness of KFH strategy and introduced solutions and innovative tools for sustainable growth. Such strategy was keen, in 2017, on raising the quality of finance portfolio by reducing credit and market risks as per the rules and regulations organizing the finance market in Kuwait.

Corporate finance services

To enhance and support KFH's leading position as one

of the biggest Islamic bank providing trade finance and projects finance solutions, the Group Corporate Banking has worked with a vision of being a strategic partner with our customers via a distinct work environment and through highly specialized corporate relation managers working on forming a comprehensive understanding of customers' financial requirements. Group Corporate Banking expanded its local business to reach global horizons through the full coordination and cooperation with its Group banking subsidiaries and managed to finance several leading global organizations based on KFH's vast experience in the field of corporate finance.

At the level of supporting the development plan in the State of Kuwait through launching infrastructure projects for the private sector's finance, KFH sought for establishing a specialized department for serving this kind of long-term projects in light of our available capabilities for supporting the qualitative and accurate execution of the development projects in Kuwait. Accordingly, KFH has participated in financing a contract concluded with the Ministry of Electricity and Water by providing "Cash and Non-Cash" facilities amounting to KD 120 million, and financed a transaction for the purchase of three aircrafts

totaling KD 124 million in favor of ALAFCO. Further, it contributed to financing several major real-estate projects through financing certain real estate companies in value amounting to about KD 100 million. On the international level, KFH acted as the Lead Arranger and Underwriter of a transaction for financing a complex in US dollar and in value of KD 180 million in favor of a company that is wholly owned to a GCC Sovereign Fund. Furthermore, KFH concluded a consolidated finance agreement through Kuwait Turk Participation Bank in favor of Balkant Laboratories Project in Turkey and in amount of KD 288 million within the framework of the partnership between the public sector and the private sector and under the umbrella of Islamic Development Bank.

To cope with the government trend to establish new entities through supporting small and medium enterprises, KFH has taken the initiative, in cooperation with the National SME Development Fund, to provide technical and professional opinion and make use of all resources to achieve goals to make the government project a success due to its positive reflections on the society in general and youth segment in particular.

Treasury and Financial Institutions

KFH Treasury has focused on improving the liquidity management at the Group level by developing its human resources, IT systems and infrastructure with an aim to develop customer service through providing innovative financial solutions in both money market and capital market in conformity with the Islamic sharia rules.

KFH continued in maintaining a low finance cost compared to the market and supported by the high credit rating and efficiently managed liquidity in light of several products including CBK sharia compliant instruments.

KFH has occupied a distinct position as a main market maker of private and sovereign Sukuk whereas its trading volume exceeded 15 billion US Dollars. Such trading has been expanded through benefiting from the diversity of finance resources and Group geographical spread and in coordination with KFH Capital, which has performed well in Sukuk issuance and management in several major transactions.

Currency risk management and expansion of foreign currency usage scheme in finance operations, at the Group level, have represented a major concern for KFH. New hedging products against currency fluctuations have been created. In an unprecedented initiative, KFH has managed to create a treasury operations manage-

ment system in coordination with Thomson Reuters so as to improve operations' efficiency, increase productivity rates, reduce errors and, meanwhile, establish for itself a central framework for treasury operations at the Group level through a trading system that searches automatically for the best prices in order to contribute to improving the efficiency of the decision of Exchange Rate Traders in addition to the appointment and development of young Kuwaiti talents that are able to complete trading quickly and effectively.

Further, the Financial Institutions Department has successfully participated in a consolidated finance deal in value of \$400 million in favor of Warba Bank for a period of three years.

Information technology

KFH has won the best Digital Bank award in Kuwait for 2017 from Global Finance, which was a result of our modern strategy in information technology. IT Department has contributed to operating several initiatives and systems during the year with an aim to continue in improving business quality and enhancing the integration among Group parties. The implementation of the best-automated systems this year has enabled us to complete several vital projects; e.g., XTM system, which provides comprehensive and direct banking services through video technology. IT has also participated in providing instant issuance of customer's cards in banking branches, supervising and constantly updating KFH website (kf.com), which led to creating and finding several business opportunities through meeting customers' needs in a better way.

Awards and recognitions

Several high-ranking awards were granted to KFH in the field of Islamic finance. The Bankers magazine, a subsidiary of Financial Times, awarded KFH three awards: Islamic Bank of the Year 2017 Globally, Middle East, and Kuwait. The Global Finance Magazine also awarded KFH as the Best Islamic Project Finance Provider 2017 Globally. The same Magazine also awarded KFH Germany as the Best Up-And-Coming Financial Institution 2017 Globally.

Group Risk department

In 2017, Group Risk Department circulated all policies and procedures for assessment of Group risks. All policies and methodologies have been circulated to achieve Risk Department integrity at the Group level. Automation development process has continued in regards to Risk Department reporting system to save time and effort, enhance analytical capabilities of the Group Risk Department and improve decision making mechanism. Finishing touches have been applied for the implementation of the International Financial Reporting Standard IFRS9, in coordination with Group Financial Control Department.

Compliance department succeeded in fulfilling regulatory requirements and coping with the decisions and instructions issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait and Capital Market Authority. Such instructions include Basel III standards on capital adequacy, liquidity and corporate governance standards.

The Bank's Capital Adequacy Ratio reached "17.76 percent", thus exceeding regulatory requirements limit.

KFH & society

KFH achieved a successful social role relevant to its message since inception. KFH's social responsibility and contribution was diversified and comprehensive for development of society and environment, thus nurturing the concept of "sustainable growth". KFH has adopted certain fundamental aspects to perform its social role including education, health, youth and support of sponsorships activities and services provided by official authorities and institutions as part of the state trend to achieve comprehensive development.

Business plans and programs executed during 2017 have incarnated KFH's keenness to contact and communicate with various society tiers. KFH has focused this year on global initiatives and international events launched by UN in regards to social and human issues by spreading awareness and enhancing the concepts of volunteering in different forms and events. KFH has patronized several awareness and educational campaigns in addition to its activities to serve all society tiers and the local and regional environment.

Finally, I would like to avail this opportunity to convey our sincere gratitude and appreciation to our shareholders and customers for their continuous and valuable support. We are confident, by the Grace of Allah, that we will continue to achieve distinction in performance, render customer as a top priority, avail all available opportunities, enhance group capabilities to encounter all challenges to develop business on the long run and achieve rewarding returns for our shareholders.

Our success is mainly attributed after the grace of Allah to our employees' endeavor and the valuable trust that our customers and shareholders have bestowed upon us. We would like to extend our deep thanks and gratitude to our shareholders and customers for their continuous support. In addition, we would like to convey our sincere thanks and appreciation to KFH Board Members and sharia Board for their distinguished efforts to enhance KFH credibility. We shall always seek to execute our plan in a systematic and orderly fashion and achieve more success for our reputable organization.

Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh
Group Chief Executive Officer



Technology

Can 3D-printed houses provide cheap, safe homes for the poor?

Globally nearly 1 billion people live in slums

BOGOTA: Dozens of families living in El Salvador's slums hope to swap their makeshift wooden shacks for concrete 3D-printed houses next year, in what developers say is the first project of its kind in the world. ICON, a Texas-based construction technology company has unveiled a 350 square foot (33 sq m) house, which it printed and built in two days using a gigantic, portable 3D-printer. "Something that sounds like science fiction is real," Jason Ballard, ICON's co-founder, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We plan on printing a whole sort of development... not just a 3D-print house but a 3D-printed neighborhood."

Globally nearly 1 billion people live in slums, often in shacks made from scraps of metal and wood with dirt floors, according to the United Nations, which predicts the world's population will reach 8 billion by 2030. Innovators are racing to develop quick, cheap technology to address global housing needs. Dubai opened in 2016 what it said was the world's first functioning 3D-printed office building.

Ballard said ICON's house is the first to be built on site and receive a permit - from the U.S city of Austin - allowing someone to live in it. "We had to build it to the

highest international standards of building safety," he said. New Story, which builds homes in developing countries, has partnered with ICON and they plan to transport an updated version of the 3D-printer to El Salvador and produce 600 to 800 square foot versions of the house in 24 hours.

They plan to build about 100 homes for people in slums in the Central American nation within 18 months, while reducing building costs to about \$4,000 from \$10,000. "It represents the chance for breakthrough technology to come to developing areas first," said Alexandria Lafci, co-founder of San

Francisco-based New Story. "Having a safe home is truly a foundation."

Living in a hazardous shack or tent is dangerous for people's health and wellbeing, making it difficult to perform well at school or work, she said. A mix of concrete, water and other materials are pumped through the 3D-printer, which then pours out a hybrid of concrete mortar that hardens as it is printed, producing layers of structures used to build a house.

"The material has to be have some pretty unique features. It has to flow out... but it can't flow like water as you would just have a puddle of concrete and so it

was one of the people who knew most about space without having been there," 16-year-old Juan Esteban Lopez, a pupil, told AFP.

Catalina Sanchez, another adolescent moved by Hawking's death, said students at the school consult short films, plays and books by or about the scientist on a daily basis. Every year, the pupils at the school mark the British astrophysicist's birthday on January 8 with a science festival, but they want to go further. "We want to be his spokespersons," said Sanchez, adding that they would visit other secondary schools to help children understand that Hawking "helped us to learn more about the universe."

Hawking defied predictions that he would only live for a few years after developing a form of motor neurone disease in his early 20s. Propelled to stardom by his 1988 book "A Brief History of Time," an unlikely worldwide best-seller, Hawking's genius and wit won over fans far beyond the rarefied world of astrophysics. As a scientist he earned comparisons with Albert Einstein and Isaac Newton. — AFP



First project of its kind in the world



AUSTIN: A 3D-printed home is seen in this US city on March 12, 2018. — Reuters

has to set pretty quickly," Ballard said. "This is meant to be long-term sustainable housing. Concrete is one of the most well understood materials on earth and it's also one of the most resilient."

Two possible sites where the 3D-printed homes could be built on have been identified, one outside the capital San Salvador and another about two hours away from the city, Lafci said. Local authorities will

grant the land on which the homes will be built on to the slum-dwellers, she said. Families taking part in the project will pay a small, interest-free mortgage, which should take between five and 12 years to clear, she said. "When they pay off their mortgage, they own both the home and the land that the house sits on," Lafci said. "Land ownership can be a stride to getting out of poverty." — Reuters

Gifted Colombia kids pay tribute to hero Hawking

BOGOTA: Gifted children at the Stephen Hawking school in Colombia's capital Bogota have been paying a special tribute to the astrophysicist whose life inspired them to study science. Students have covered walls of the school with drawings, photographs and cards in memory of the wheelchair-bound Hawking, who died Wednesday aged 76.

The school named after Hawking was founded in 1995 by a group of teachers committed to helping children with low resources but high IQs. Dora Pardo, who runs the school, said several past pupils have gone on to study physics and mathematics at university. "Hawking couldn't move but his incapacity didn't deter him, and he



BOGOTA: Students and teachers at Stephen Hawking school in Bogota, pay homage to the British scientist, following the announcement of his death. — AFP

Facebook rocked by data breach scandal

WASHINGTON: Facebook shares plunged yesterday following revelations that a firm working for Donald Trump's presidential campaign harvested data on 50 million users, as analysts warned the social media giant's business model could be at risk. Calls for investigations came on both sides of the Atlantic after Facebook responded to the explosive reports of misuse of its data by suspending the account of Cambridge Analytica, a British communications firm hired by Trump's 2016 campaign. "This is a major breach that must be investigated. It's clear these platforms can't police themselves," Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar said on Twitter.

Expressing "serious concern regarding recent reports that data from millions of Americans was misused in order to influence voters," Klobuchar and Republican Senator John Kennedy called for Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and other top executives to appear before Congress, along with the CEOs of Google and Twitter. In Europe, officials voiced similar outrage. Vera Jourova, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, called the revelations "horrifying, if confirmed," and vowed to address her concerns while travelling to the United States this week.

In Britain, parliamentary committee chair Damian Collins said both Cambridge Analytica and Facebook had questions to answer following what appears to be a giant data breach, carried out in an attempt to influence voters' choices at the ballot box. "We have repeatedly asked Facebook about how companies acquire and hold on to user data from their site, and in particular whether data had been taken from people without their consent," Collins said in a statement. "Their answers have consistently understated this risk, and have also been misleading to the committee."

'Systemic problems'

On Wall Street, Facebook shares skidded 7.7 percent in midday trade amid concerns about pressure for new regulations that could hurt its business model. Brian Wieser at Pivotal Research said the revelations highlight "systemic problems at Facebook," but that they won't immediately impact Facebook revenues. Still he said "risks are now enhanced" because of the potential for regulations on how Facebook uses data for advertising and monitoring users.

According to a joint investigation by The New York Times and Britain's Observer, Cambridge Analytica was able to create psychological profiles on 50 million Facebook users through the use of a personality prediction app that was downloaded by 270,000 people, but also scooped up data from friends. Cambridge Analytica said it was in touch with Facebook while denying any misuse

In huge antitrust trial, Big Tech looms in background

WASHINGTON: In the biggest antitrust court battle in decades, the US government will seek to block the merger of AT&T and Time Warner to prevent the creation of a powerful new television behemoth. With opening arguments set for Wednesday, AT&T will be pointing to the new landscape in which media is increasingly dominated by Big Tech giants like Netflix, Amazon and others.

The Justice Department filed suit in November to block the planned \$85 billion tie-up of AT&T, one of the dominant telecom and internet firms, with media-entertainment powerhouse Time Warner. The deal had been under review since late 2016, and the move

by the Trump administration represents a test for antitrust enforcers in the digital age.

The case has also been clouded by politics, notably the feud between President Donald Trump and Time Warner unit CNN - which the White House regularly attacks as "fake news." Unconfirmed reports have suggested the government sought the sale of CNN as a condition for approval of the merger. It said a combined AT&T and Time Warner would create a stronger competitor for Netflix, Google, Amazon, and Facebook. Time Warner, according to the AT&T argument, cannot effectively compete without a digital partner against tech giants, which can gather data for personalized ads and content. Complicating the case is the 2011 approval of a similar tie-up between Comcast and NBCUniversal, with some conditions. AT&T argues the same precedent applies to its "vertical" merger and evidence will show the Comcast/NBCU merger "resulted in no harm to competition whatsoever." Legal experts are divided on the odds of the case, while noting that blocking the deal would go against a decades-long precedent of allowing these kinds of vertical tie-ups. — AFP

of data. Facebook on Friday suspended the firm, but pushed back against the claim of a major breach, suggesting misused data was limited to a far smaller group of users.

'Huge impact'

Jennifer Grygiel, a Syracuse University professor who studies social media, said the disclosures will increase pressure to regulate Facebook and other social media firms. "Self-regulation is not working," Grygiel said. "I'm wondering how bad this needs to get before our regulators step in and hold these companies accountable." Grygiel said the breach stems from "thin" regulations that allowed Facebook and its partners to exploit data without oversight. "They grew because of this," she said. "This was not a mistake."

Daniel Kreiss, a professor of media and communications at the University of North Carolina, said Facebook failed to live up to its responsibilities in handling targeted political ads as it expanded. "The fact that Facebook seems to make no distinction between selling sneakers and selling a presidential platform is a deep problem," Kreiss said.

Some analysts suggested the breach posed an existential crisis for Facebook because of how it gathers and uses data on its two billion members. David Carroll, a media professor at the New School's Parsons School of Design, said Facebook and others will soon be forced to live with new privacy rules such as those set to take effect in the European Union. — AFP



This file photo taken on November 20, 2017 shows logos of US online social media and social networking service Facebook. — AFP

How Chinese giant Didi plans to challenge Uber

MEXICO CITY/SAN FRANCISCO: Working quietly from a shared office space in one of Mexico City's trendiest neighborhoods, China's ride-hailing giant Didi Chuxing is planning to hit its archrival Uber where it hurts. Mexico is one of Uber Technologies Inc's most prized and profitable markets. The San Francisco firm boasts a near monopoly here, with seven million users in more than three dozen cities. Which is precisely why Didi wants to knock Uber from that comfortable perch.

To learn how to conquer Uber, the Chinese firm is going straight to the source. It is poaching Uber employees for its Mexico management team. Didi employees are riding incognito with Uber drivers and chatting up passengers to pinpoint weaknesses, according to people familiar with its strategy. And Didi is thinking bigger than Uber, with ambitions for bike-sharing, scooters and motorcycles in Mexico, the people say.

The Chinese firm has deep pockets, thanks to blue-chip global investors that include Apple Inc and Japan's SoftBank Group Corp. In the past year alone, it has pulled in nearly \$10 billion to help fund global expansion. "I would not want to go to war with Didi," said Beijing-based investor and adviser Jeffrey Towson. "They don't lose." But whether Didi can beat its nemesis here is far from certain. Mexico is the Chinese firm's first attempt at building an operation from scratch outside of Asia - a costly gambit. What is clear is that Didi is under pressure to keep growing to justify its \$56 billion valuation. Latin America is the newest battleground for the old rivals, and Didi will be in enemy territory. "It's fundamentally different when you're jumping across an ocean," said IHS Market analyst Jeremy Carlson.

Didi Chuxing Technology Co is the world's largest ride-hailing firm by number of rides, thanks to its commanding market share in China, where it has 450 million users. It completed more than 7.4 billion rides last year, not quite double Uber's count.

Uber learned the hard way about Didi's brawn. After waging an expensive campaign to crack the Chinese market, Uber in 2016 sold its operation to Didi in exchange for a 17.5 percent stake in the Chinese firm, which also made a \$1 billion investment in Uber. The titans continue to butt heads as they race to carve up the rest of the globe. Uber is the top dog in Latin America, where Brazil and Mexico rank among its largest markets outside the United States. In Mexico, Uber

held an 87 percent market share as of August, according to Dalia Research, a Berlin-based consumer research firm.

Didi wants to change that. Reuters was first to report that Didi had designs on Mexico, where it began recruiting employees last year. The company declined to talk openly about its plans, but details of its strategy are emerging. Nestled on the ninth floor of a WeWork shared office building in the capital's Juarez neighborhood, Didi is building an operation from the ground up. In foreign markets such as India and the Middle East, it purchased stakes in existing companies. But Uber is so dominant in Mexico that there is no clear investment opportunity in a local competitor, according to people familiar with Didi's thinking. Hungry for experienced talent, Didi is aggressively recruiting current and former Uber employees, offering to nearly double their salaries in some cases, two people with knowledge of the matter said.

At the helm of Didi's Mexico operation is Uber veteran Lin Ma, who helped launch Uber's ill-fated venture in China. Now Didi's director of international operations, Ma also worked on operations at 99, the Brazilian ride-hailing startup that Didi purchased at the end of last year, according to his LinkedIn profile. Ma and others at Didi have so far poached at least five Uber managers and specialists in Mexico who have experience in operations, logistics, strategy, marketing and driver training, a review of LinkedIn profiles shows. Ma declined to comment.

The company has yet to recruit drivers, and it is not clear which cities it will enter first, according to a person familiar with Didi's strategy. Rather than compete solely on price, the person said, Didi plans to promote safe drivers and fast response times; the company has built an algorithm to help it predict 15 minutes in advance where it should dispatch vehicles. Didi is also considering offering bike-sharing, scooters and motorcycles in Mexico, while Uber so far has stuck to ride-hailing. A broad array of transport options helped Didi prevail in China.

But the biggest difference may come down to cash. To protect drivers, the person said, Didi will not handle cash fares in Mexico. Uber, meanwhile, has pushed Mexican lawmakers hard for the right to accept cash in a region where tens of millions lack bank accounts. The move has generated business, along with controversy. — Reuters

Health

House call 2.0: Women GPs bring remote care to rural Pakistan

A fresh solution to Pakistan's struggling healthcare sector

BHOSA MANSEHRA: In a remote Pakistani village surrounded by lush green hills, Mohammad Fayyaz brings his two-year-old son to a clinic so that a female doctor sitting hundreds of kilometers away can examine him. Healthcare in rural Pakistan and the careers of women doctors are being revolutionized as internet access grows across the country, allowing people with limited mobility because of geography or culture to interact online.

Previously, Fayyaz would have had to travel for hours from his village of Bhosa, in northern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, only to spend hours queuing at overcrowded clinics in cities like Abbottabad or Peshawar for medical help. Women doctors more than 1,500 kilometers to the south in the port of Karachi, Pakistan's largest city, face their own challenges, with their careers often put on ice once they marry and become mothers in the conservative, patriarchal country.

Now, a Karachi-based health tech startup, Sehat Kahani, has deployed Skype to solve both problems at once by bringing work to the doctors and medical advice to the villages.

"My son took just one dose of medicine and he feels much better now," Fayyaz said after paying a nominal fee of 100 rupees (90 cents) to visit the Sehat Kahani clinic in his village and speak face-to-face via video conferencing to a doctor in Karachi.

Convenience is everything in a place where women must walk for miles to fetch water from a spring and power cuts can last up to 12 hours a day, the low hum of generators a constant backdrop to village life. The remote doctors offer a fresh solution to Pakistan's struggling healthcare sector. The country has one of the world's highest infant mortality rates and just 0.5-0.8 percent of its GDP has been spent on the health sector

in the past decade. "It is very helpful, particularly for female patients because it is close to all of us," Fayyaz says. "That's why I am here," agrees Bibi Mehrunisa, one of the many women clustered in the clinic's waiting room, some with children in tow.

Marriage vs career

It's also important for the women on the computer screens. At her Karachi home, doctor Benish Ehsan was multitasking, caring for her child as he sat on her lap, even as she began her online examination of a young patient in Bhosa. "Is he using the bathroom, has the vomiting stopped or not?" she asks through the computer screen, advising the worried mother to feed her child more fruit and vegetables. "He has lost some weight, so I am prescribing some medicines for that too," she says.

Later, speaking to AFP, Ehsan says the program is empowering for stay-at-home mothers who also happen to be doctors, like her. "It suits us, we don't need to go outside and can continue our practice even sitting at home," she says. "We are enjoying our family life and can also take care of patients." Raheel Tanvir, a Sehat Kahani representative at the clinic in Bhosa, says roughly 80 percent of women doctors quit the profession after they get married. "So the basic aim was to bring back those female doctors... They can continue their profession, can examine the patients while sitting at home and can also take care of their family," says Tanvir.

The Bhosa clinic opened last September and since then has seen hundreds of patients each month, demonstrating the need for the female doctors' skills. "It's a huge waste," says Javed Akram, vice chancellor of the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) in



MANSEHRA: This photograph taken on October 19, 2017, a Pakistani resident carries his sick son as he chats with a nurse after an online doctor gave a prescription for medicine at a clinic in the remote Bhosa village. — AFP



Empowering for stay-at-home mothers

Islamabad, lamenting how women end up using their medical degree "to get married". "Men prefer to have doctors as wives rather than receptionists or hair stylists," he explains. "They are not giving anything back to the country... Let them work."

Helping remote areas remotely

The clinic in Bhosa operates simply: a nurse examines the patient and sends all the information to the doctor, who then consults with the patient via Skype before making a diagnosis. The local government is also tuning in to the trend, setting up an e-ilaj, or e-treatment, centre in a village called Bilahi, with plans to expand in other remote areas of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa.

At Bilahi, where women clad in traditional shawls

await their turn at the clinic surrounded by rolling hills, a four-year-old named Zehwish Azeem is examined remotely by physician Nadia Rasheed in Islamabad. Rasheed said the government initiative works with a local internet provider to bring medical advice to some 15 villages with a population of more than 27,000 people in a rural area where doctors are few.

Over the last five years, more than 50,000 patients have been treated in such clinics in the Punjab, Sindh, Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa provinces, and in a remote village in the Margalla Hills bordering Islamabad, said Rasheed. "This area is remote, people are poor and they had to travel a long time for treatment," Mian Badar Jan, an official in the Bilahi clinic told AFP. "Now this system with modern facilities is helping them." —AFP

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What's On

Takween Library inaugurates storytellers conference

By Faten Omar

The Takween Library inaugurated the story and storytellers conference on Sunday. It was sponsored by the American University of Kuwait, in the presence of the novelist and founder of the library Bothayna Al-Essa and the president of the AUK, Dr Tim Sullivan. In her opening speech titled "Once upon a..", the novelist Al-Essa said "Once, I remembered thinking the absence of imagination could be the root of all evils in the world.

"We sometimes find human beings who can kill a man because he is simply incapable of imagining putting himself in his place. How can we understand oppression, fanaticism, and hatred in the presence of imagination, the bridge that connects both sides with each other? Will the world remain the same, if we all abide by our moral duty, to imagine?"

Essa quoted the words of Ghassan Kanafani "They judge you because they do not know you." But how can they know you without imagination, without the ability to walk your own steps, to make themselves heroes in your own story, what the story does, it gives us the ability to understand the other, rather than judge him. "If we want to understand someone, we usually ask, what is his story? All of our side conversations, all our dreams, our nightmares, and all that we are looking for in art and lit-



AUK president and founder of the library Bothayna Al-Essa

erature is almost the same, we always want the story, because we want to understand," she noted.

A video about the Takween library was shown during the opening ceremony in which Essa said that the goal is to make a radical cultural change in order to make



reading become a lifestyle. "There is always an obsession to convince someone who does not read to be a reader and transform the concept of reading into a daily habit in every person's life in society." It is worth mentioning that the events of the conference will continue

until March 24th. The sponsors of the forum include: The National Library of Culture, Arts and Letters, The American University of Kuwait, Boubyan Bank, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences, Contemporary Art Platform, Al Qabas Newspaper.

LOYAC Arabic Youth Festival



In the presence of many Kuwaiti heritage as well as Western jazz lovers, Al-Shaheed Park audience recently enjoyed a mixture of Arabic rhythms and Jazz music at the Arabic Youth Festival organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) at the park's amphitheatre. The first part of the concert included a performance by Ghazi Al-Mulaifi accompanied by Ma'youf Mejalli musical band, which was founded in 1948 and specialize in Kuwait marine folklore. The second part of the concert included a charming performance by Kuwaiti folkloric singer, Salman Al-Ammari accompanied by a folkloric dance which was performed by Al-Mass company.



This Mother's Day treat your mother at Jumeirah Hotel

On March 21st, invite your mother for a special dining experience at Kuwait's idyllic resort's award-winning restaurants to savor exceptional menus created to mark this occasion. Enjoy the international gastronomic delights of the all-day dining restaurant Garden Cafe, prepared by the hotel's renowned chefs with sweet desserts. If your Mother is a fan of outdoor gatherings, take her for the renowned BBQs by the poolside at Mint Cafe. Book a table for five or more people at these restaurants for KWD 20 per person, and your Mother will be treated to a complimentary dinner.

Additional dining options are also available at the resort. Chef Rino welcomes you and your Mother for an evening of authentic



homemade Italian favorites, including pizzas made in the wood-burning stove at Olio Restaurant. While Pepper Steakhouse has a treat for all the special Mothers offering them the finest flame-grilled steaks cooked to perfection; dinner in Salt will unearth flavorsome treasures of the sea for seafood lovers. Mothers will be treated to a complimentary main dish while dining in these restaurants.

All mothers deserve rejuvenation and relaxation and there's no better way than a

grand pampering at the resort's award-winning Talise Spa. Treat your mother to a 90-minute body scrub followed by a massage. It is made with brown sugar from the island of Mauritius, gourmet honey, aromatic vanilla and rejuvenating Macadamia Oil and priced at KWD 70. Your Mother will be offered a full use of the Spa's world-class facilities, including sauna, steam room, experience showers and more. Special Mother's Day vouchers are also available at the Spa.

'Roaa Misriya' the Egyptian Annual Art Exhibition

Roaa Misriya, the Egyptian Annual Art Exhibition of Egyptian artists was recently opened in Modern arts Museum gallery in Kuwait City

under the Patronage of the Egyptian Ambassador his Excellency Tarek Al Quni and the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters in Kuwait. More than 32 artists participated with more than 100 works of art in various artistic expressions were displayed such as sculpture, photography, ceramics and graphic work, digital art and photography. Artist Sherif Ismail, who created in a modern take on Arabic Calligraphy and created a relationship between Arab women through the language of the mysterious dialogue. The colors also played a role in creating a new artistic language.



ABCK celebrates anniversary

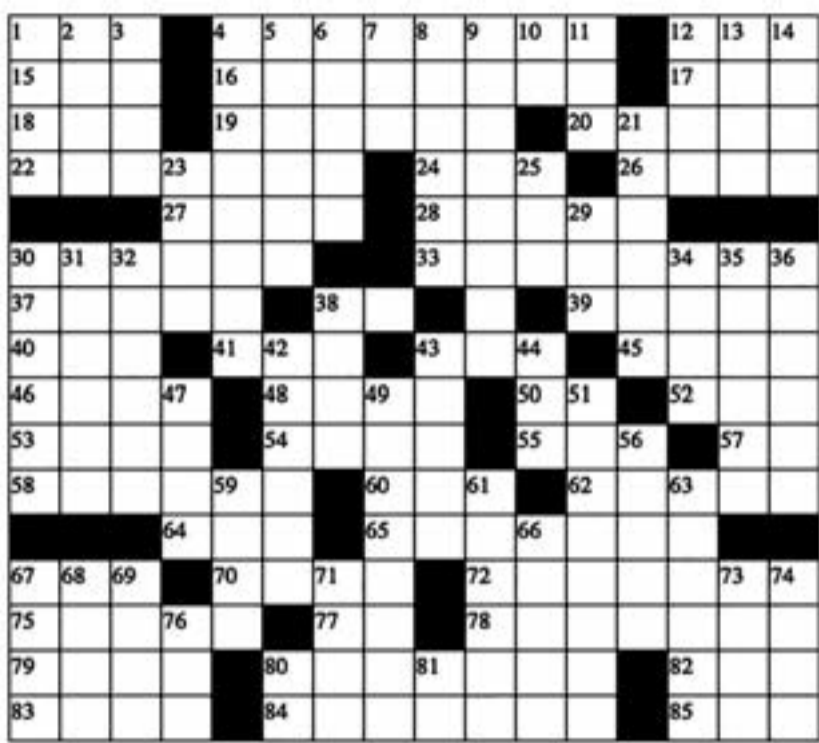
The American Business Council Kuwait (ABCK) celebrated its 33rd anniversary with a black tie gala at the US Embassy. The event

featured many dignitaries including US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman and Australian Ambassador Jonathan Gilbert. ABCK Chair Dr Juliet Dinkha kicked off the evening with a brief introduction about ABCK, highlighting the organization's many achievements over the past year and its upcoming events. She then introduced Ambassador Silverman who provided remarks on the strong bilateral relations between the State of Kuwait and the United States.



Stars

CROSSWORD 1862



ACROSS

1. A doctor's degree in theology.
4. The academic world.
12. General term for any insect or similar creeping or crawling invertebrate.
15. The seat within a bishop's diocese where his cathedral is located.
16. A dicot family of the order Urticales including.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
18. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
19. Someone given to teasing (as by mocking or stirring curiosity).
20. A telegram sent abroad.
22. Set afloat again.
24. An honorary degree in science.
26. A British peer ranking below a Marquess and above a Viscount.
27. Being six more than ninety.
28. Containing or involving or occurring in the form of ions.
30. An official at a baseball game.
33. Being susceptible to persuasion.
37. Emperor of Rome who introduced a degree of freedom after the repressive reign of Domitian.
39. Of or relating to walls.
40. The United Nations agency concerned with the interests of labor.
41. A slight amount or degree of difference.
45. Black honeycreepers with yellow feathers around the tail.
46. Enjoying or affording comforting warmth and shelter especially in a small space.
48. The head of a branch of an organized crime syndicate.
50. A person forced to flee from home or country.
52. A doctor's degree in education.
53. (Old Testament) The eldest son of Isaac who would have inherited the Covenant that God made with Abraham and that Abraham passed on to Isaac.
54. Baby bed with high sides.
55. An awkward stupid person.
57. A colorless odorless gaseous element that give a red glow in a vacuum tube.
58. The face or front of a building.
60. The month following October and preceding December.
62. Follower of Rastafarianism.
64. A coenzyme derived from the B vitamin nicotinic acid.
65. (informal) A very large profit.
67. Extremely pleasing.
70. The state of owing money.
72. Small or little relative to something else.
75. Jordan's port.
77. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
78. Reproduce someone's behavior or looks.
79. A human female who does housework.
82. A small amount of liquid food.
83. The basic unit of money in Western Samoa.
84. The great hall in ancient Persian palaces.
85. (informal) Informed about the latest trends.

DOWN

1. A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
2. (Greek mythology) The goddess of youth and spring.
3. Lacking or deprive of the sense of hearing wholly or in part.
4. A dictator or dictatorial person.
5. Separate or cut with a tool, such as a sharp instrument.
6. Italian violin maker in Cremona.
7. Any of several small ungulate mammals of Africa and Asia with rodent-like incisors and feet with hooflike toes.
8. (ecology) The process by which a plant or animal becomes established in a new habitat.
9. Greek film actress (1925-1994).
10. A state in midwestern United States.
11. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
12. A small cake leavened with yeast.
13. (Norse mythology) One of the Aesir known for his beauty and skill with bow and skis.
14. A Gaelic-speaking Celt in Ireland or Scotland or the Isle of Man.
21. Fruiting body of some rust fungi bearing chains of aeciospores.
23. Being four more than sixty.
25. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
29. A belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school.
31. South American herb with sticky glandular foliage.
32. A selective-serotonin reuptake inhibitor commonly prescribed as an antidepressant (trade name Prozac).
34. A small nail.
35. A cry of sorrow and grief.
36. Submerged freshwater perennials.
38. The sixth month of the civil year.
42. Submit or yield to another's wish or opinion.
43. Common Business Oriented Language.
44. A rapid bustling commotion.
47. The basic unit of money in China.
49. Pearl oysters.
51. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
56. Responsibility for a bad situation or event.
59. An informal term for a father.
61. A distensible membranous sac (usually containing liquid or gas).
63. The sound like water splashing.
66. The capital and largest city of Jordan.
68. A Loloish language.
69. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
71. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
73. Small ornamental ladies' bag for small articles.
74. A fabric with prominent rounded crosswise ribs.
76. An undergarment worn by women to support their breasts.
80. An informal term for a father.
81. A state in the Rocky Mountains.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you won't fit in with the crowd today as you will see things differently. You could feel you have been left out in the cold and verbal disagreements will seem to support this notion. Major conflict with those younger than yourself causes disruption. You may receive valuable news pertaining to a personal situation; pay close attention to a surprising source. Be aware of what you promise today, especially to a young person; keep your promises. Understand that blockages are short-lived and not as important as you think. You are able to speak your mind with very little effort; you will see what is causing trouble and get straight to the heart of the matter. This evening will bring enjoyment with those you love, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, you will be called on to create new approaches and techniques. Putting these revelations on paper will be a very easy task and many will gain by your efforts to explain. You could move upward in your career or perform so exceptionally well your superiors will take note. The choices you make now will be good ones. You may need to teach someone what you do so you can advance or take another position. Be careful to keep a lid on that heady feeling that comes with being self-assured. An occasion for you to act on behalf of your group could materialize. You empathize with the people you're close to and they look to you for guidance. You are thinking of going out this evening but can't seem to make up your mind who to invite, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, this should be a day for very good, positive energy. You could work with those much younger than yourself; this could be at home or other places you frequent. Certain events could create well wishes and fantastic productivity. People may call on you for input regarding an important situation; your opinions are considered golden. A trip to the library or book store, or perhaps a movie theater, could provide a great escape. A nice person will lend a sympathetic ear. Your quiet mood could be most helpful today. Strategies will be highlighted as meaning a great deal to you in this particular cycle. Break away from your routine and start planning a very special vacation and short getaway to a place you love and enjoy, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, this is the time to put a twist on the old methods everyone wants you to use. You have the talent of making your thoughts clear through words to capture the attention of others. You could receive praise and acknowledgment for a job very well done. You could feel that you can depend on your team to do their part to make a smooth accomplishment of the goal. People will see that you are compassionate and able to help in any situation. A young person asks for your help in a tricky situation they cannot handle on their own. Now is a good time to take a risk and do something better for yourself. Your family and close relatives and friends take priority at this time. Tune in to a good classic movie or immerse yourself in a good book, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, you will use your special methods to overcome sure failure and make gains in finances. Someone will come to be even more precious than you ever imagined. You could become frustrated with circumstances surrounding you now; try to keep your emotions in check and your facial expressions pleasant. You may have to make hasty decisions regarding the home front; resist making decisions you are not comfortable with. You will be called upon to mediate between two people you know very well; you will help them work through this delicate situation. Your research and efforts have brought you answers regarding the mystical realm. Concentrate on relaxing and enjoying the end of the day with a fun, exciting person this evening, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, your suggestions or strategies could fall flat to those who you speak to in a meeting today. You could have a tendency to produce without taking risks that would push the boundaries of a certain project. When you feel your confidence fade, push back and regain forward momentum. Be sure to take periodic breaks to recharge your energy. You could have a disagreement with someone on a personal level; let tempers cool before bringing this up again. Make preparations around the house and at the office for power outages or other natural disasters during this season. You may gather loved ones around you tonight for a family meeting to discuss vacation plans. After this roller coaster day you should unwind with a warm shower and delicious meal, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, your work will be done on a global level now and you will make new contacts from around the world; one of these could evolve into an affair of the heart. Many of the mystic questions you have researched could be answered by letting your self-experience life in diverse circumstances. This is a rich time for meeting new people. You could experience a wonderful trip to a museum or university that brings an opportunity to learn and expand your thinking. You are on the threshold of enjoying abundance on material, mental and spiritual levels if you choose; we don't always accept our gifts, because it is a choice. Refuse to daydream until the end of the day. Tonight, let your thoughts go to your future and all the positive energy contained within it, Libra.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Scorpio, you are transitioning and for you this is difficult for you don't usually like change if it's not your idea. You really should not spend money today. To avoid some real or imagined problem you pay less attention to work and perhaps domestic duties or loved one. You are trying to make a decision regarding vocational choices; relax the answer will come without stress. Someone may come to you for help in a very hard situation but sometimes you can't help everyone you want to. Your focus will switch to learning more about the arts and spiritual matters; understanding the meaning of life takes on new importance. This evening may be the time you and your mate have set aside to talk about those financial matters patience, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, the new week could present changes for new starts on certain projects. Teamwork is at its finest today and you and others tackle a sticky issue that was actually necessary. You will feel very pumped up at the end of the day when you look back at what was accomplished. This could be the day to purchase that new pair of shoes or boots you were thinking of. Daydreams may be your enemies today as they take your attention from something that others want you to be present for. Someone could make the statement, you're not my boss! Perhaps a long lunch with friends would break up the monotony of the day and smooth your ruffled feathers at the same time. No matter what, you will end the day on a good, positive note, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, honest study of your place in life and how you got there is called for now. New approaches and goals regarding your immediate surroundings look likely and will be for the best; could be either work or home. People ask for your opinion on a work project that isn't yours. Your introspective, laid-back attitude is perfect for reading a meaningful book, checking out a movie suggested by a friend or perhaps a massage. Wealth and abundance are likely for you as you enter this new cycle. There could be some blockage on a minimal level from an unexpected source. Mind over matter works for you; success stays near you for now. Relax and enjoy the results of your hard work for yourself and others; your karma is good, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, the chances are that your energy will draw openings your way. You are definitely approachable at this time; you also feel no hesitation when called upon to make the first move. You may feel it is important to be held in high esteem by your superiors; your inspiring words and deeds have not gone unnoticed by many people. You will research how to help someone younger with a significant issue. You could figure out how to reach a financial goal in a most unusual way. Others will look to you for advice when an emergency arises; timing will be very important concerning this. Someone may pay a surprise visit tonight, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you may not feel like returning to work in favor of meeting friends for a fun time. However, the projects of the day demand your presence and you must strive to meet your obligation. Your new way of thinking and doing may set someone off who prefers the usual methods; an unpleasant exchange could occur. Let your ideas continue to form before you present them again. A sense of needing to help will be prominent in this cycle and you will know just how to do it. Intuition is just a part of who you are; embrace this and let it help you help others. Home is where your heart truly is and you may find an opportunity to earn a living without leaving the house this year. You could find that large purchase on sale today, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Restaurant

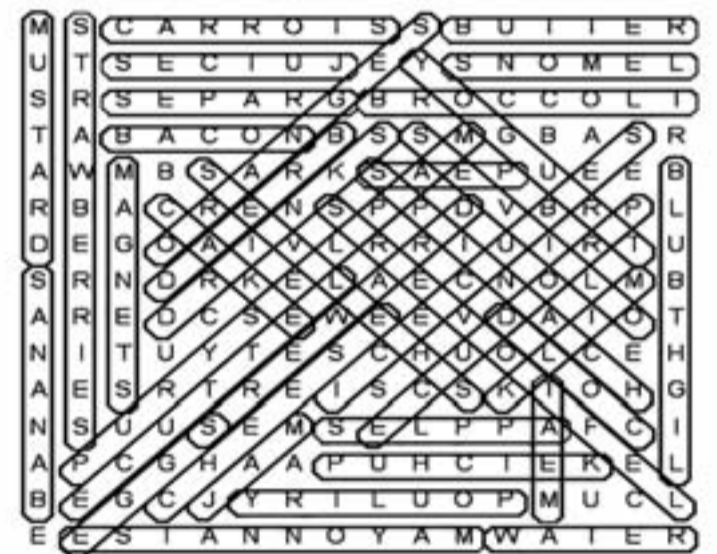
Find and circle all of the Restaurant words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional word.



- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|------------|
| APERITIF | CUPS | MANAGER | SPOON |
| APPETIZER | CUSTOMER | MEAL | TABLECLOTH |
| BILL | DESSERT | MENU | TABLES |
| BUSBOY | DISHWASHERS | MARKINS | TEA |
| CASHIER | DRINKS | ORDER | TIP |
| CHAIRS | ENTREE | PLATES | WAITER |
| CHEF | FORK | SALAD | WAITRESS |
| COFFEE | GLASSES | SAUCERS | WATER |
| COOKS | KNIFE | SERVERS | WINE |

Yesterday's Solution

Refrigerator



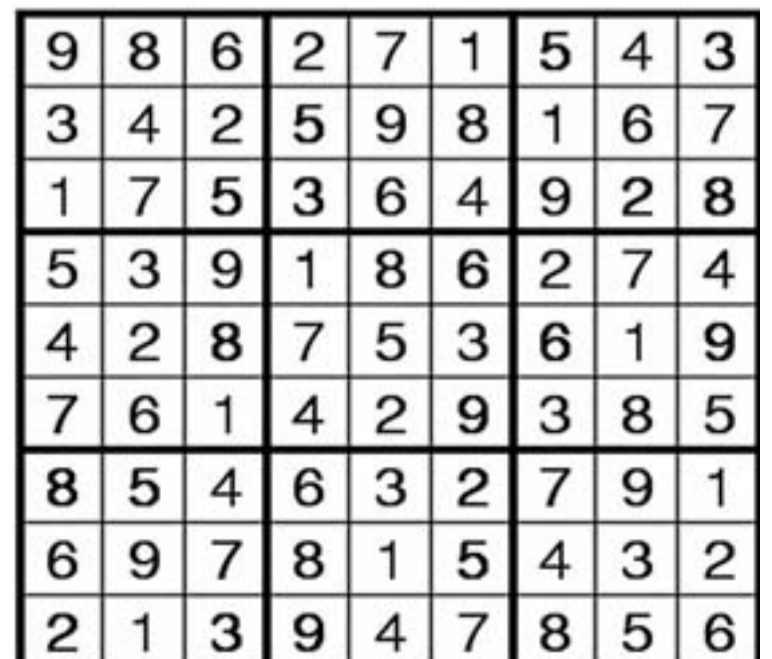
- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------------|--------------|
| APPLES | DRAWERS | LETTUCE | ORANGES |
| BACON | DRINKS | LIGHTBULB | PEAS |
| BANANAS | EGGS | MAGNETS | POULTRY |
| BREAD | GRAPES | MAPLE SYRUP | PRODUCE |
| BROCCOLI | ICE CUBES | MAYONNAISE | SHELFS |
| BUTTER | JAM | MEAT | SPINACH |
| CAKE | JUICES | MILK | STRAWBERRIES |
| CARROTS | KETCHUP | MUSTARD | WATER |
| CHEESE | LEFTOVERS | OLIVES | YOGURT |
| COLD | LEMONS | | |

The hidden message is: BARBECUE SAUCE

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle | Gossip

FIFTH HARMONY ANNOUNCE HIATUS

Fifth Harmony are going on hiatus. The 'Work From Home' hitmakers - which are comprised of Ally Brooke, Normani, Dinah Jane and Lauren Jauregui - have decided to go on a break, six years after they formed on US TV show 'The X Factor', in order to focus on solo projects. They announced in a statement: "Reflecting on the past six years since we started on 'X Factor', we've realized just how far we've come and we appreciate everything so much, more now than ever. "We've really had one hell of a memorable journey together and can't begin to express our gratitude to y'all for coming along with us on this wild ride!" "After six years gong hard, non stop, we also realized that in order to stay authentic to ourselves and to you, we do need to take some time for now to go on hiatus from Fifth Harmony in order to pursue solo endeavors." And the quartet are confident their time away from the group will only make them stronger when they reunite. They continued: "We are all very excited and grateful to be able to take this

time to learn and grow creatively and really find out footing as individuals. In doing this we are allowing ourselves to gain new experiences, strengths and perspectives that we can bring back to our Fifth Harmony family." The 'Worth It' hitmakers - whose fifth member, Camila Cabello, quit in December 2016 - went on to thank fans for their support and promised that concerts they have scheduled in 2018 will still be going ahead as planned. The statement concluded: "To our Harmonizers, thank you for everything we have been able to build as Fifth Harmony. With your love and encouragement we will continue to build on ourselves, support one another in everything we do, and keep making you proud, each other proud and ourselves proud. "We do have some upcoming shows through the end of the year which will still happen as planned, and we can't wait! "All our love, from the bottom of our hearts, Dinah Jane, Lauren, Normani and Ally."



Bloc Party to perform debut LP in full on European tour

Bloc Party are set to perform their seminal LP 'Silent Alarm' in full on tour this October. Kele Okereke and co will play each track on the 2005 record - which included breakthrough hit 'Banquet' - at six shows across Europe, concluding at London's Alexandra Palace on October 24. Alongside a poster for the tour dates, the band wrote on Twitter: "This October, we will perform Silent Alarm in full at six European shows. Tickets on sale this Friday. (sic)" The indie rockers haven't released an album since 2016's 'Hymns', but frontman Kele teamed up with Years & Years frontman Olly Alexander last year on "romantic duet", 'Grounds For Resentment'. Both frontmen are openly gay and decided to release the track in a bid to break the taboo surrounding musicians in the pop industry who feel they have to use "codes" to talk about their sexuality in songs rather than being straight-talking about same sex relationships. "This Modern Love" hitmaker Kele, 36, said the single - which is featured on his solo LP 'Fatherland' - is just the starting point for breaking the barrier down, as he admits there is "a long way to go" with regards to homosexual pop stars feeling confident enough to "describe love and desire authentically". He said: "I remember reading something that [Olly] wrote about the use of pronouns in pop music for gay artists that I thought that was very perceptive and intelligent - that the use of pronouns was the last frontier for gay artists. "There are lots of gay acts that avoid using the term he when singing about same sex desire. "It will just be a neutral term, whereas Olly understands from what I read that there is a long way to go for gay musicians in being able to describe love and desire authentically. "So I was very happy to sing a romantic duet with him on my



album, because I couldn't think of a precedent of any out gay musicians singing a love song to one another without having to hide behind codes." Kele was referring to an interview Olly did previously where he said he'd like to see more mainstream gay stars be more open about their sexuality, and praised pop megastar Miley Cyrus for promoting a "non-binary gender"

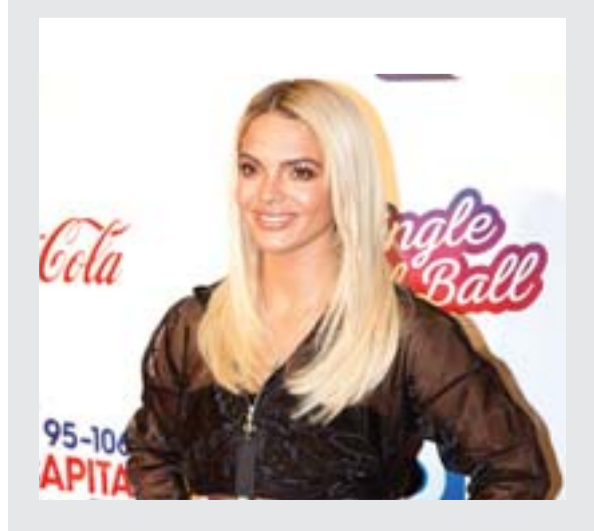


Liam Gallagher 'upset' after cutting Lollapalooza Santiago set short

Liam Gallagher is feeling "severely upset" after being forced to cut his Lollapalooza Santiago set short due to illness. The former Oasis star was performing at the music festival in Chile, South America on Sunday when he left the stage because the symptoms of his "on-going" chest infection made it difficult for him to sing properly. Liam told the crowd before leaving: "My voice is absolutely smashed. "I'm not just going to stand here all night screaming out for everybody sounding horrific. "I'm very sorry I can't sing the tunes." The 45-year-old rocker was extremely "disappointed" that he had to walk away from the gig, but he was having problems with his breathing and felt it was best to stop his performance to avoid making it any worse. Liam - who is set to return to the studio next month to work on the follow-up to his chart-topping debut solo LP 'As You Were' - has vowed to return to Santiago at a later date. In a statement to his fans posted on his social media accounts, Liam's representative said: "Due to an ongoing chest infection, we had to cut the Lollapalooza Santiago show tonight short. "Liam was diagnosed with a sinus, ear and nose infection after a European show a few weeks ago which has led to a chest infection. "He has been continuing to perform and trying to push through it but unfortunately today he was finding it hard breathing on stage and wasn't able to continue the set. "Liam is severely disappointed and upset that he couldn't finish the show and wants to apologize to everyone who came out to see him tonight. "He promises to reschedule a gig in Santiago as soon as possible." The 'For What It's Worth' singer has been suffering with a chest infection since his concert in Paris on March 2.

Johnson is in 'control' of music now

Louisa Johnson feels "in control" of her music now. The 'X Factor' winner has admitted she rushed into a lot of bad decisions after she won the singing competition back in 2015 but is pleased she's now found her niche when it comes to style of music and likes that she's now finally calling the shots. Speaking on 'Sunday Brunch', she said: "I'm just trying to be a bit careful about what I do. I've just grown up a lot, and I think I wanted it so badly and I rushed too much. And now I've just found this nice position that I'm in and I'm just kind of being myself a little bit more, and taking it easy. I feel so in control, it's amazing." Although the 20-year-old singer still loves doing collaborations and has promised her debut album will be dropping some point this year, she finally feels "happy" after making some changes to the way she records her music. She explained: "I just kind of realized I was a bit down, and a bit lost and I just thought, 'Do you know what? I'm not really that happy in myself. "It just clicked one day, and I was like I'm going to change everything - I want to be my own person. It was a weird feeling, but now I'm so happy." The blonde beauty recently joked the music industry is "dangerous" for her because she's a "party animal" and it doesn't take much for her to hit the town. She said: "Well I wouldn't say the music business is scary but it is dangerous, all the partying because, honestly, I'm a party animal and it's tough. I am a party girl, so I'd say that's kind of scary because people are like, 'Do you wanna come out?' And I'm like, 'No ... I'm then out. I'm 100 per cent I'm there."



Dev Hynes teases Blood Orange album?

Dev Hynes has teased he's set to release a new album under the Blood Orange moniker. The 32-year-old producer's last record was 2016's 'Freetown Sound', which featured guest appearances from the likes of Blondie's Debbie Harry, Nelly Furtado and Carly Rae Jepsen. However, it looks like the follow-up is on the way as Dev shared a blurry video of him covered in a purple piece of material whilst a cinematic piece of music played, on his Instagram on Sunday. Alongside the clip, Dev wrote: "Be right back. Thanks for your patience. #BloodOrange2018 (sic)" The 'Better Numb' hitmaker's last update came in October last year, when Dev said the new record was "78 per cent" done. Dev said that his next outing as Blood Orange will be "dark" as it focuses on his difficult childhood growing up in Essex, England, as one of few African immigrants at the time. He said: "If 'Freetown' was delving into my parents from my eyes, being younger and now, this one is definitely me looking at my younger self, growing up in that setting. So yeah, it's a little dark." Dev also previously posted footage of traffic passing on the photo-sharing app last year, in what appeared to be a taster of his new music. He captioned the post "Album...4(?) (sic)" As well as releasing his own music, Dev has produced tracks for the likes of Charli XCX, Solange Knowles, Kylie Minogue and Haim.



MARIAH CAREY IS BACK IN THE STUDIO



Mariah Carey is back in the studio working on her new album. The 'We Belong Together' hitmaker has been working on new music since 2015, after she signed a new deal with Sony label, Epic Records, and on Saturday she celebrated St. Patrick's Day by recording new tracks. Mariah, 47, captioned the post: "Pon de studio Happy St. Patrick's Day! #happyst-patricksday (sic)" In 2015, her long-term collaborator Jermaine Dupri posted a photo on Instagram with the caption, "been in the studio all night with @MariahCarey. (sic)" The record producer has worked with Mariah numerous times before, and previously masterminded her hit singles 'Always Be My Baby' and 'We Belong Together'. Her deal with Epic Records saw the star reunite with producer L.A. Reid, who worked on her 2005 record 'The Emancipation of Mimi'. The new record will follow 2014's 'Me. I Am Mariah... The Elusive Chanteuse', which was released through Def Jam Recordings, and featured the singles '#Beautiful' and 'The Art of Letting Go'. The record will also be her first since her highly publicized split from her ex-fiance, billionaire businessman James Packer, in 2016. Mariah - who has six-year-old twins Monroe and Moroccan with ex-husband Nick Cannon - released the single 'I Don't' with rapper YG last year. The song was previewed during an episode of her E! docuseries, 'Mariah's World'. It samples the Donell Jones song 'Where I Wanna Be'. Mariah has been keeping tight-lipped about the musical direction she will be taking on her 15th studio album.

Alexa Chung launches Superga collection

Alexa Chung has launched a collection with Superga. The 34-year-old model began working as the brand ambassador for Superga in 2011 before launching her own eponymous brand in 2017 and now the designer is turning her hand to footwear after her mother inspired Alexa to incorporate the classic Superga style into her wardrobe. In a statement about the collection, she said: "My mother wore Supergas when I was growing up, so for me they've always been a classic shoe and something I have incorporated into my daily wardrobe for years now. It has been wonderful to return to this brand as a designer working on a collaboration for this season because in the past Superga were one of the first companies to let me art direct a campaign for them. It feels a lot like coming home." Alexa opted not to change the shape of the shoe, but update the designs for a "luxe" look. She told WWD.com: "We approached this very much as a passion project, an homage to Superga and their classic sneaker. It's the shape that I love, so rather than amend the last and make the sole crazy or do anything wild, we just did really subtle additions that I think make it look really luxe-y." The English beauty - who starred in the spring campaign which was shot in Los Angeles - designed a capsule collection featuring the

brand's iconic 2750, mid cut and mule styles, which were updated with modern fabrics such as varnish, terry towel and satin in a range of muted shades. And the designer has been showing off ways to style the shoes on Instagram, posting a picture of herself pairing the satin high-tops with boyish printed trousers to her followers. She captioned the image: "Man, I feel like a woman."



Lifestyle | Gossip

Spielberg doesn't feel like a legend



Steven Spielberg doesn't consider himself a movie legend. The 71-year-old four-time Academy Award winning filmmaker - who helmed a number of iconic movies including the 'Jurassic Park' and 'Indiana Jones' franchises - was awarded the Empire Legend of Our Lifetime at the Rakuten TV Empire Awards 2018 on Sunday but admitted he just "feels like a movie director". Speaking to BANG Showbiz at the event at Camden Roundhouse, in London, Spielberg said: "They call me a legend but I don't feel like that way but I am happy to accept the award in the name of that word. I just feel like a movie director than a legend. "Getting an award from a magazine I have been reading for 20 years, that I have

loved and even about 20 years ago thought, 'How do we bring it to America and publish it in America?' "I'm a big fan. I was the guest editor in the 20th anniversary and for them to honor me with this is one of the best honors I have received." Spielberg is one of the most award-nominated and winning filmmakers and won two Academy Awards and two BAFTAs for his 1993 wartime epic 'Schindler's List'. Although he has amounted numerous gongs over his career, the iconic filmmaker - who has recently received praise for his newest movie 'The Post' - revealed he doesn't keep the awards at his home. He said: "I don't keep anything at home. I keep them all in my office at work." Although best known for his big budget

blockbusters, Spielberg said his favorite project was his Holocaust documentary for the Shoah Foundation, which collected the testimonies of survivors of the World War Two atrocity. He said: "I think my favorite project, as a documentary, has been my Shoah Foundation where we have collected the testimonies of over 153 thousand Holocaust survivors and we are also collecting the testimonies from other genocides so that has been the most important project I have ever been part of."

Karen Gillan teases Nebula's big role in Avengers movies

Karen Gillan has teased her Marvel Cinematic Universe character Nebula has a big part to play. The 30-year-old actress portrays the blue alien assassin in the 'Guardians of the Galaxy' movies and has wrapped up reprising her role in the upcoming 'Avengers: Infinity War' and 'Avengers 4' films, and had no idea Nebula would still be in the MCU. In an interview with ScreenRant, Gillan said: "I had no idea that this was where the character was going. "I genuinely signed on to the role thinking it was eight days of filming and then I was going to die in the first Guardians. "Three movies later and there's three more to come out it's, like, crazy. It's funny because I read the 'Infinity Gauntlet', which is what the new 'Avengers' films are based on, as research for my character because it's her sort of biggest moment within the Marvel comic book world. "And then to find out they're making a double-bill feature based on that, I was just so excited actually because Nebula gets some really cool stuff." Recently, the star revealed it is a painstakingly long process preparing for the MCU movies as she sits in hair and make-up to get blue skin "stuck" to her face for numerous hours each day. Last year, she said: "I've been in there [MCU] for a little while now, nearly five years playing this blue bald character. "It takes four hours in the morning of having a skin stuck on my face." 'Avengers: Infinity War' will see the hero squad, which includes Iron Man (Robert Downey Jr.), Captain America (Chris Evans), Thor (Chris Hemsworth), The Hulk (Mark Ruffalo), Scarlet Witch (Elizabeth Olsen), Vision (Paul Bettany), Black Widow (Scarlett Johansson) and Hawkeye (Jeremy Renner), join forces with the 'Guardians of the Galaxy' troop to save the Earth. The two teams will have to work together to fight intergalactic tyrant Thanos, but they will also receive a helping hand from Spider-Man (Tom Holland), Black Panther (Chadwick Boseman), Dr Strange (Benedict Cumberbatch), as well as Captain Marvel (Brie Larson), which will mark the star's debut in a Marvel production.



Iannucci defends Patel casting in David Copperfield

Armando Iannucci has defended casting Dev Patel in his 'David Copperfield' adaptation. Last month, the 27-year-old actor was cast to play the titular character in 'The Personal History of David Copperfield', an upcoming movie based on the semi-autobiographical novel by Charles Dickens, but now Iannucci, 54, has admitted he cast the 'Skins' actor to "reflect" modern day. When asked if he had got any criticism from Dickensian loyalists at the Rakuten TV Empire Awards 2018 on Sunday, Iannucci said: "Do they have a voice online? "No, I mean it was set in 1840 but I wanted it to reflect today and also I don't know anyone else better suited to playing the role. "At no point in the novel does it say, 'David is a white man'. I just couldn't think of another actor who could do that sort of innocence and get stronger and the vulnerability and then the strength." Iannucci also defended adapting a period drama for modern audiences and said he doesn't want his adaptation to have to follow the "rules of costume drama". He said: "I'm not saying that every period drama should be adapted for modern audiences but that's just what I wanted to do. "When FilmNation [Entertainment], who are funding it, said, 'Oh you're doing David Copperfield, are you going to do anything different? Why are you doing it?' "And I explained what I wanted to do with it and they wanted me to do it. "I wanted it to feel like we don't have to follow the rules of costume drama and how you shoot it and how you speak." His latest comedy, 'The Death of Stalin' - which won the Best Comedy at the event at Camden Roundhouse in London - was recently banned in Russia for its satirical portrayal of the Communist leader Joseph Stalin, but Iannucci - who was joined by his daughter Carmella - said all it has done is give it the film a bigger profile in Eastern Europe. He said: "I feel sad really because, really do they still ban stuff today? Considering it's a film on digital format. "So all it's done is give it a high profile in Eastern Europe and it's doing an astonishing business in the Ukraine and I hope we will get it into cinemas because that's where it's meant to be seen. "Russians who have seen it loved it."



Dafne Keen says filming Logan felt like a little family on set



Dafne Keen felt like she was part of a "little family" on the set of 'Logan'. The 13-year-old actress starred in the R-rated superhero flick alongside Hugh Jackman and Sir Patrick Stewart - who both reprised their roles as Wolverine and Professor X respectively - and Keen had nothing but praise for her co-stars. Speaking to BANG Showbiz after winning the Best Female Newcomer at the Rakuten TV Empire Awards 2018 on Sunday, Keen said: "Hugh is the nicest human being on planet earth and I think in the whole world and the universe. "And he is such a great actor and partner and everything. You really engage with him. "And Patrick Stewart is really, really, nice and such a great actor. He was very, very nice. I think, as a threesome, we were like a little family on set." Keen was only 11 when she landed the role opposite Jackman and Stewart and has no desire to stop acting and would love to star in a

musical. She said: "I would love to carry on acting. I love doing superhero movies because they are really fun to film. "I did a comedy in summer, so I have ticked that off. I still want to do a musical. I can sort of sing but I can dance. "I would like to do everything." Keen was also wearing a Time's Up pin in wake of the sexual harassment allegations affecting the film industry, and the actress thinks everyone should be supporting the movement. She said: "It's a big thing because finally we are being accepted with all these big films like 'Wonder Woman' and everything and all these women characters. "I think we should support this because we have been doing these horrible things to actresses just so they are in our films. "And there are so many women who are being abused and I think it's finally their time to say, 'Hey. Help me. I've been abused.'"

Matrix screenwriter Zak Penn working on fourth movie

'Matrix' screenwriter Zak Penn is determined to get the sci-fi franchise back on the big screen. The 49-year-old scribe - who co-wrote the scripts for 'X2', 'X-Men: The Last Stand' and the story for 'The Avengers' - has been busy working on a fourth movie which he's been "harassing" Warner Bros. to take on. He told Screen Rant: "I've been working on 'Matrix' right now. Which is in...a phase right now. That's a franchise I desperately want to see brought back and, I can't go in to too much detail, but I've been harassing Warner Bros. for years to try to get it going again so that's one thing I'm working on and I've been working on a bunch of other things too." The Matrix Trilogy kicked off in 1999, with two sequels, 'The Matrix Reloaded' and 'The Matrix Revolutions', both out in 2003. Penn believes the multiplayer online simulation game OASIS in Steven Spielberg's new movie 'Ready Player One' is similar to that of the Matrix, a simulated reality that depicts a dystopian future. And Penn says he'd happily throw fisticuffs with anyone who doesn't like the trilogy. He said: "I will fight people who don't under...look, I think OASIS (the interconnected virtual space in 'Ready Player One') is similar, both the 'Matrix' and OASIS are similar in that they are brilliant ideas for universes. "And they are not, you know, when it came out about 'Matrix', people were like 'Oh no, they are going to reboot 'Matrix' I was like, Why, I'm not insane. I mean, the 'Matrix' is still one of my favorite ... they'd re-release 'The Matrix' and people would go see it." Last year, lead star Keanu Reeves [Neo, also known as 'The One' said he was unaware of any plans for another installment. He said: "Remaking 'The Matrix'. I don't know. Maybe it's ... I don't know anything about it." It's not known if the original cast will return if the fourth film goes ahead.



Shia LaBeouf to play his father in movie about himself



Shia LaBeouf is set to play his father in a movie about himself. The 31-year-old actor has reportedly agreed to portray his "law-breaking, alcohol-abusing" dad in the forthcoming film 'Honey Boy' - a blockbuster loosely based on his own life - while Lucas Hedges will play the leading role, according to Variety. 'Honey Boy', which was LaBeouf's childhood nickname, follows a popular child star who attempts to mend his relationship with his damaged father over a decade. The film will be directed by Alma Har'el but a release date it yet to be given. LaBeouf was arrested for disorderly conduct and public drunkenness at a hotel in Georgia last July after he repeatedly swore at arresting officers. He has since admitted he "messed up" and is "mortified" by his behavior. He said: "What went on in Georgia was mortifying. White privilege and desperation and disaster... It came from a place of self-centered delusion... "It was me trying to absolve myself of guilt for getting arrested...I messed up." And the 'Transformers' actor - who was ejected from a theatre in 2014 for drunken behavior - admitted his past antics have come back to haunt him. He explained: "I'm run out. No one's giving me a shot right now. Spike Lee is making a movie. I was talking to him about it. "He goes to the money and pushes to try to get me in the movie, the money says no, and that's the end of me hanging out with Spike Lee for this film." He recently claimed to have been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which stems from hearing his mother being sexually assaulted when he was younger, and he believes that witnessing the violence against his mom triggered a lot of his own erratic behavior and he now sleeps with a gun beside his bed.—Bang Showbiz



TOKYO FASHION WEEK



Models walk in the finale of Japanese fashion brand, 'ha-ha' 2018 Autumn/Winter collection at the Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo yesterday. — AFP

British designer Kim Jones takes over at Dior Homme



In this file photo British fashion designer Kim Jones acknowledges the audience after the Louis Vuitton men's 2015 spring-summer ready-to-wear collection show in Paris. — AFP

British designer Kim Jones said yesterday that he was taking the reins at Dior Homme two months after quitting Louis Vuitton. The 38-year-old wunderkind—who insists that he wants to retire by the time he is 45 — brought a buzz and a galaxy of star fans to the Vuitton catwalk in his seven years at the label. “I am deeply honored to join the house of Dior, a symbol of the ultimate elegance,” he said in a statement. “I am committed to create a modern and innovative male silhouette built upon the unique legacy of the house.” He will replace Kris Van Assche, who said he was leaving Dior Homme after 11 years at the head of the French menswear label.

Jones made headlines with a series of eye-catching hook-ups with hip New York streetwear brand Supreme and the iconoclastic British artists Jake and Dinos Chapman during his time at Vuitton. The fashion label had poached him from British heritage house Dunhill in 2011, which he had dusted down and given a new lease of life. At Vuitton he brought

his passion for wildlife and for exotic travel to his ultra-luxurious collections, mixing a lingering nostalgia for British colonial chic with a streetwise edge.

The creator, who had a globetrotting childhood that took in Africa and the Amazon, said in November that he planned to retire in five years, or at least by the time he was 45. Van Assche's departure comes only weeks after the arrival of new Christian Dior Couture chairman Pietro Beccari, who had worked with Jones at Louis Vuitton. Dior said in a statement that the 41-year-old Belgian, who added a punkish street style influence to Dior's fine tailoring, would be staying on with the luxury giant LVMH, which owns the label. Women's Wear Daily, the fashion industry bible, had reported that Jones was in talks with Versace in September. It said the Briton was one of the “small clutch of marquee designers who can straddle the luxury and streetwear worlds, which is why Versace might have come knocking”. — AFP

Norwegian Cruise Line demonstrates commitment to growing Middle East market



One of the leading cruises based companies in Kuwait, Cruise Center, launched the road show for the initial public offering (IPO) of its 2018 special commission from Norwegian Cruise Line and its offers to travel partners. The event in Kuwait showcased all the updates about Norwegian and the Monday night was full-fledged with the participation of more than 100 travel partners. For nearly one hour during the presentation, all the agents were onboard with Nick Wilkinson, Vice President and Managing Director, Norwegian Cruise Line UK & MEA, has introduced the brand new ship Norwegian Bliss, which will be christened in April 2018. She will sail to Alaska and the Caribbean beginning in May 2018. Norwegian Bliss will feature the largest race track at sea, original new dining concepts, heart-racing waterslides that round the side of the ship and so much more.

The prominent personalities from the travel companies such as Al-Ghanim, Booking Express, Jumbo, I.T.L., Ashkanani, Sawah, Jerallah, Cozmo are few of the participants attended the road show along with many other leading travel partners. At the event, Nick Wilkinson underlined the importance and value of the Middle East region to the brand's overall global objectives, and revealed two exclusive

incentives to support growth plans across Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Jordan, and Kuwait.

KLM - Air France Sponsored One ticket for the lucky draw winner and Cruise Center Kuwait (NCL partners) sponsored one cabin for 2 guests as well. It was the second time KLM - Air France participating with NCL for the road show and Rajat Kumar, Country manager of KLM announced the new updates on their fleets and their exciting marketing strategies with NCL for 2018 in launching exclusive Fly Cruise packages for Kuwait Market.

It's an on-going process of conducting such road shows by NCL and very soon, they will be planning to conduct more road shows in Kuwait with the participation of guests those sailed with NCL as well, to educate more about the floating resorts.

About Norwegian Cruise Line

Norwegian Cruise Line has demonstrated its commitment to the Middle East market during this special trade partners' event (road show) held to mark the launch of the company's plans for 2018. The brand has launched a 5% bonus commission for all new cruise holiday bookings. This incentive is exclusive to all travel partners in the Middle East market, for bookings made

between 11-25 March, 2018 only. This incentive is applicable on a wide selection of sailings, including the Western Mediterranean, the Baltics, the Canary Islands, Southern and Western Caribbean and Alaska.

In addition, Norwegian is offering guests another reason to explore new destinations around the world and book their next cruise holiday with \$1 deposits. From 15 March - 19 March only, guests will have five days to take advantage of \$1 deposits when they book a new cruise in a studio inside, ocean view, and balcony or mini-suite category stateroom. This limited time offer is available fleet wide, providing guests the freedom and flexibility to design their perfect cruise getaway. This is offer may also be combined with other incredible promotions available in March.

Norwegian's popular Free at Sea promotion will be extended through to March 19. This signature value-added offer provides guests who book a new three-day or longer sailing in an ocean view, balcony or mini-suite category stateroom with the opportunity to select their preference of two free choices from five spectacular onboard amenity offers, including free unlimited open bar, \$50 towards shore excursions in each port per stateroom, a free specialty dining package, 250 minutes of free Wi-Fi,

or Norwegian's Friends & Family Sail Free offer that allows the third and fourth guests to sail for free on many 2018 sail dates. Inside staterooms, as well as Norwegian's Studio staterooms for solo travelers, can choose one free offer. Those who want to enjoy more luxurious amenities, can book a cruise in a suite or The Haven by Norwegian and enjoy all five free amenities, providing up to \$2,700 in overall value to their cruise.

Now through to March 19, guests can book a new three, four or five-day Bahamas or Cuba cruise aboard Norwegian Sun or Norwegian Sky with free unlimited open bar and Norwegian's free at sea all-inclusive. With this amazing offer, guests will choose from five onboard amenities including a \$50 specialty dining credit, \$50 towards shore excursions in each port, 100 minutes of complimentary Wi-Fi, a photo package with 10 free images, or Norwegian's Friends & Family Sail Free offer that allows the third and fourth guests to sail for free on select sailings.

The beautiful state of Hawaii is a cruisers paradise and Pride of America is the only ship in the world that can sail an incredible seven-day inter-island itinerary roundtrip from Honolulu year-round. Guests looking to experience over 100 hours in port time and explore

the wonders of four different islands can take advantage of Norwegian's Free at Sea Hawaii offer, which has also been extended through to March 19. Guests who book a new cruise vacation aboard Pride of America, have the freedom to choose from five offers to enrich their cruising experience, including a free one-night pre-cruise hotel stay with an option to select reduced airfare starting at \$399 from select gateways, a free specialty dining package, free pre-paid service charges for the first and second guest in the stateroom, free \$50 per port shore excursion credit per stateroom, or Norwegian's Friends & Family Sail Free, allowing the third and fourth guests in each stateroom also to sail for free on many 2018 sail dates. Guests who book a suite aboard Pride of America can enjoy all five offers.

“With the increasing importance of the Middle East market to Norwegian Cruise Line, we are delighted to launch our 5% Bonus Commission incentive and \$1 deposits to support both partners and guests when making a new booking with us”, Nick Wilkinson, VP and Managing Director, UK&I and MEA.

For more information and your enquiries, contact Cruise Center Kuwait - sales@cruise-center-kwi.com, Tel: 22414340 - 22404075 - 22454301.



A local farmer carries water from the Jerez river, to water Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) trees at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department, Colombia. — AFP photos



Local farmers learn how to prepare "arepas" using dried seeds powder of the Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) tree, during a workshop.

LATIN AMERICA'S 'MAGIC TREE' SLOWLY COMING BACK TO LIFE

The guaimaro, a highly prized tree bearing nutritious fruit, once abundant throughout South America, is slowly being coaxed back from near extinction in Colombia. Widely adaptable, the tree is resistant to drought—though not, sadly, to man. Deforestation has decimated the bountiful tree, whose leaves and fruit have for centuries sustained animals and humans alike. "Without trees, there is no water, and without water, there are no trees. People cut it, burn it for cultivation, for their livestock. Wood is scarce and the rivers are drying up," lamented Manuel Duran. With a weary hand, the 61-year-old farmer raised his straw hat and wiped the sweat from his brow.

A searing sun beat down on the dry forest near Duran's home outside Dibulla, in the foothills of the majestic Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains. Here, in Colombia's northeastern Guajira region, new life is being breathed back into stocks of the beloved tree. More than 900 kilometers (560 miles) away, in Medellin, hundreds of global experts are gathered around the planet's sickbed this week.



Local farmer waters small Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) tree plants at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department, Colombia.



Children help to prepare the soil, before planting Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) trees, at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department.

The Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) will make its diagnosis later this month on the health of the world's fauna, flora and soil. Conscious of the damage caused by rapacious agricultural practices, Duran has joined in a reforestation program run by a French-Colombian NGO. "The guaimaro is a magic tree," said Daisy Tarrier, the 39-year-old director of the NGO Envol Vert. She enthusiastically lists the qualities of its fruit, a sort of orange nut rich in nutrients.

Ancestral Tree
Brosimum alicastrum, to give the tree its scientific name, grows from Mexico to Brazil. Depending on the country, it is known variously as ramon, campeche, ojoche, mewu or, in

English, as maya nut. It was as essential to pre-Colombian civilization as corn, and still is for a number of indigenous communities. But its qualities have been forgotten by many farmers. In order to revive valuable knowledge in the fight against malnutrition with local food sources, Envol Vert organizes cooking workshops using the fruit. "The fruit contains as much protein as milk, four times more potassium than bananas, as much iron as spinach, four times more magnesium than kidney beans," said Tarrier.

Biologists have discovered the evergreen tree balances acidic soils, and even secretes the greenhouse gas carbon monoxide into the soil. Unlike most trees when they die, it never releases it into the atmosphere. It can grow to a height of 50 meters (165 feet), and its taproot sinks just as deep into the earth. That makes it very resistant to both drought and hurricanes. It even has phoenix-like qualities, scientists say, as it readily regrows after a fire. "This tree has a great ability to adapt to different climates and can withstand various types of soils, humidity, altitude, temperature—and many animals feed on its fruit. It is an important species for conservation," said Colombian biologist Monica Florez.

A survivor of deforestation
But the lust for hardwoods for house building and furniture-making, as well as deforestation to clear land for cattle breeding and for crops such as oil palms, has taken its toll—not to mention the effect of Colombia's coca plantations to feed the demand for cocaine. "We are still facing a huge challenge related to the control of deforestation," Colombia's minister for environment and sustainable development, Luis Gilberto Murillo, said last month. But he pointed out that the rate of deforestation was

decreasing, from more than 282,000 hectares (700,000 acres) in 2010 to about 170,000 hectares in 2017.

Working with nearly 200 families, including 87 from Santa Rita de la Sierra, a village for displaced people near Dibulla, Envol Vert has contributed since 2011 to planting more than 30,000 trees across some 20 species, including 6,000 guaimaros.

Nurseries are entrusted to communities who raise trees there to be transplanted in their own plots. "I've always loved guaimaro because it gives shade, and when the leaves fall, they are eaten by the goats and by the cattle. Its roots strengthen the soil, keep the moisture, and its fruits are good for animals and for us humans," said Maria Alarcon, 64, who lost two brothers and a son in the country's decades-long war.

A guaimaro will produce about 180 kilos (400 pounds) of fruit a year across a lifespan of some 100 years. The fruit is consumed raw and in juices, soups or mashed like potatoes. It can even be grilled and ground to powder to make infusions, with the look and flavor of chocolate coffee. Indigenous communities use guaimaro sap for medicinal purposes: for asthma in Central America, anemia in Mexico, or rheumatism in Peru.

Maria Alarcon, her hands in the earth, is all too aware of the damage already done, and of the long road to recovery. "We will have to plant a lot to replace all the trees that have been lost," she warned. —AFP



A local farmer waters the soil to plant Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) tree seeds at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department.



A local farmer plants Guaimaro trees (*Brosimum alicastrum*) at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department.



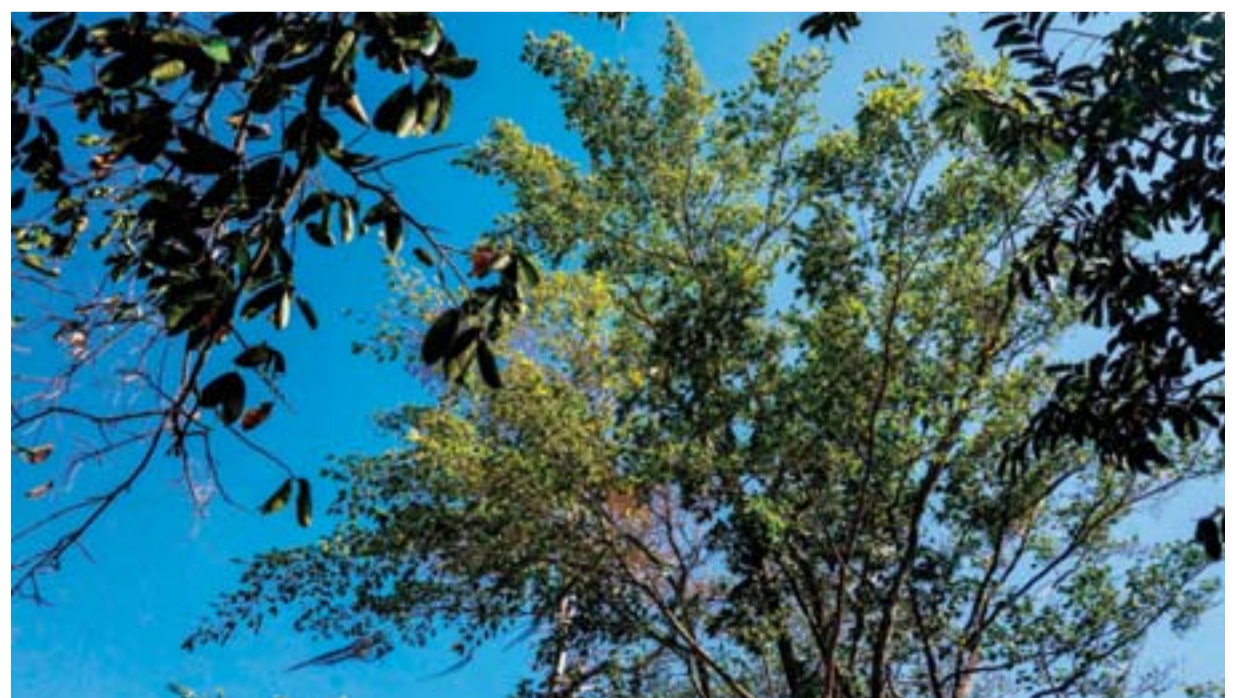
Local farmers prepare the soil to sow Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) tree seeds at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department, Colombia.



Hernan Castrillo Moscote works at a Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) trees plantation in Dibulla, La Guajira department, Colombia.



Local farmers carry Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) tree plants to transplant them into the ground, at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department, Colombia. (Right) View of Guaimaro (*Brosimum alicastrum*) treetops at a small farm in Dibulla, La Guajira department, Colombia.



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, MARCH 20, 2018



'The Last Three,' billed as the world's largest rhino sculpture by artists Gillie and Marc Art is seen during a ceremony at Astor Place in New York. Gillie and Marc Art have recreated the last three Northern White Rhinos - Sudan, Najin, and Fatu - in a 17-foot bronze sculpture in hopes of making a change against the illegal rhino poaching trade. — AFP

Character building: Taiwan's presidential calligraphers

Deep in the high-ceilinged corridors of Taiwan's presidential office, calligraphers craft messages on behalf of the island's leaders as they seek to keep the traditional art alive. Both the president and vice president appoint a personal scribe who creates everything from small notes to large scrolls, delivering congratulations and condolences to residents. Yang Shu-wan is President Tsai Ing-wen's calligrapher, selected after applying for the position in 2016 when Tsai came to power. Her workshop is hung with large swathes of red or white sheets, freshly decorated with traditional Chinese ink strokes and drying over metal racks.

"The style of characters should mirror the personality and I want to show the frank and unpretentious side of the president," Yang, 59,

told AFP. She explained that she had met the president a number of times and spoken with her shortly after the leader took office, when she praised how beautifully Yang wrote her name. "I also think she is personable and I want to show that other side of her through the calligraphy, using a script that is spirited and vivacious," Yang said. Yang's brush set varies from thick to fine tips, enabling her to make bold or delicate marks on paper spread across a large wooden table, working with unwavering concentration.

Members of the public apply for the messages to mark birthdays from 80 and above, wedding anniversaries from 50 years as well as deaths of loved ones aged 70 or older. Temples and schools also ask for the calligraphy tributes from the president, which are all sent out free of charge, to commemorate anniversaries and

achievements. More than 11,000 such messages were issued by the presidential office last year.

Like most Taiwanese students, Yang practiced calligraphy when she was at school but did not take it up seriously until 20 years ago, when she was a stay-at-home mother. Through practicing rigorously for hours a day she began to win competitions and teach the art. Yang says one of her most memorable messages on behalf of the president, who is an animal lover, was a tribute to a golden retriever named Cherry that toured schools to promote animal protection before dying of an illness.

She describes how her work gives her inner calm and balance, and helps accumulate good karma. "I write condolences for a person who passed away at 112 years old and congratulate a couple celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary," she told AFP. "I have come to realize that there is no constant in life and we should cherish every moment." Yang sees calligraphy as one of the island's most important cultural assets and teaches the art to students as young as five.

Her views are echoed by Susan Huang, official calligrapher of Vice President Chen Chien-jen, who says the art helps cultivate patience and persistence in children. The retired maths teacher, now 72, met Chen at the Catholic church they both attend. She says her characters are "balanced and calm" to reflect what she describes as Chen's gentle nature and that she writes them as if they were for her own family, seeing herself as a bridge between the government and the people. "It gives me a great sense of accomplishment," she told AFP. "I hope when people receive the messages I write, they will feel pleased or comforted." — AFP



Taiwan presidential calligrapher Yang Shu-wan demonstrating her calligraphy skills in Taipei. — AFP photos



Taiwan presidential calligrapher Yang Shu-wan picking a writing brush for her calligraphy in Taipei.



Taiwan presidential calligrapher Yang Shu-wan displaying her calligraphy in Taipei.

Bizarre news



Woman tries to get out of driving offence by claiming she is Homer Simpson

A woman tried to get out of a driving offence by claiming she was Homer Simpson. The woman from Milton Keynes was pulled over by the police earlier in the week after she was caught driving without insurance, and instead of showing officers her real driving licence, she handed over the license of the beloved patriarch from the animated TV show, 'The Simpsons'. Thames Valley Police posted a picture of the license on Twitter and wrote: "Earlier this week, @tvprp's PC Phillips stopped a car in Milton Keynes. "When she tried to identify the driver's ID, she found the below... The driver's car was seized and he was reported for driving with no insurance and driving without a proper licence. D'oh! (sic) Although fans of the show were quick to prove that the woman had got the date of the birth of the character wrong. On the show, Homer was apparently born on May 12, 1956, but the woman's license say he was born on August 4, 1963.

Lamb the size of a toddler has been born

A lamb has been born the same size as a toddler. The baby sheep named Billy has been dubbed the biggest-ever newborn lamb after weighing around 24.7lbs - three times the weight of a normal lamb - and his brothers from the same litter weighed just 4.4lbs, the Metro reported. Farmer Steve Booth said: "It is the biggest one we've delivered and I've been doing this for 20 years. "This is a fairly one-off thing but you never know, there could be a bigger one around the corner."

Steve, 59, also revealed Billy's birth was normal and said he thought it looked like an adult ram when the sheep was giving birth. He said: "I didn't know it was going to be that big until I saw its head showing. It looked like an adult ram. "The poor thing was stuck. His head and foot were popping out but his other foot was bent back inside his mother. "Samantha's [daughter] got smaller hands than me and managed to push it back in and pull the other leg out. "He came out pretty easy considering his size."



Fat and fit myth busted by new study

The idea that people can be fat and fit has been revealed as a myth. A new major study by the University of Glasgow found that heart attacks, strokes and high blood pressure are

