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MP says no need to borrow, highlights bribery scandal

Land allocation 'conspiracy' slammed • Govt warned against 'random naturalization'

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday rejected government claims to borrow from domestic and international markets to finance the budget deficit resulting from low oil prices. The lawmaker said several ministries and government bodies are holding around KD 20 billion in profits when they should have transferred them to the finance ministry. In addition, several ministries and state institutions are not doing enough to collect government debt from consumers, totaling KD 1.3 billion.

The government had sent a draft law to the National Assembly to raise the debt ceiling to KD 25 billion before it withdrew the bill last week amid stiff opposition among MPs. Under Kuwaiti law, the government cannot borrow without a law from the Assembly.

Adasani again highlighted a bribery scandal in which around 13 current and former MPs had been accused of accepting bribes for their votes.

The lawmaker showed that the MPs accepted around KD 51 million in bribes, revealed by an increase in their bank accounts in 2011. Thirteen cases were referred to the public prosecution, but it shelved the issue for legal reasons. Adasani said that he and some other MPs are trying to revive the legal prosecution of these "corrupt" MPs.

Meanwhile, former opposition MP Khaled Al-Sultan yesterday criticized the government and the security agency for chasing online activists while ignoring a "big conspiracy" in which an Iranian company with links to the Revolutionary Guards was granted 200,000 sq m at a vital site. The allocation

was made for an Iranian steel company on the southern coast, and the issue was raised in the Assembly last week.

Separately, MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli yesterday warned against "random naturalization", saying that some people tend to provide forged documents and the government does not know the origins of others after suspected forgery in nationality files. He urged lawmakers who fear the impact of forgery on citizenship not to sign on a nationality law that could undermine national identity. He said that granting Kuwaiti citizenship for excellent services could be misused, like what happened in the past. Last week, the Assembly overwhelmingly passed a law stipulating citizenship for 4,000 people - mostly bedoons - during this year. The law aims to resolve part of the problem of 120,000 stateless people who are claiming Kuwaiti citizenship.



Riyadh Al-Adasani



Ahmad Al-Fadhli

News in brief

Lebanese charged with murder

BEIRUT: Lebanon's state-run news agency reported yesterday that a Lebanese man has been charged with murdering a Filipina maid whose body was found stuffed in a freezer in Kuwait. The National News Agency said that a south Lebanon prosecutor yesterday charged 40-year-old Nader Essam Assaf and that Assaf confessed to the crime. Assaf and his Syrian wife are suspects in the death of Joanna Demafelis. NNA said Assaf's wife is at large, adding Assaf faces a possible death sentence and is expected to go on trial soon. — AP

Saudis to compensate contractors

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday said it would reimburse contractors for increased expatriate worker fees in government projects approved before Dec 2016, as the labor-intensive construction industry reels from an economic slowdown. "After reviewing the imposition of monthly fees on expatriate labor... the cabinet orders the finance ministry... to compensate enterprises which entered into government contracts before December 2016," the state-run Saudi Press Agency reported. — AFP

Saudi clerics condemn Jazeera

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's top religious body accused Qatari-owned Al Jazeera TV of being a "mouthpiece for terrorist organizations", two days after Yemen's Houthi movement fired a barrage of missiles at the kingdom. "History will not forget that Qatar's Al Jazeera was and still is a platform for the propagandists of terrorism and its leaders," the body said in a statement. "It is now ... spreading the speeches of the leader of Houthi terrorist militias in coordination with him in a clear targeting of the security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia". — Reuters

UAE won't change flight paths

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates will not change its civilian flight paths, the head of its aviation authority said yesterday, a day after the UAE accused Qatari war planes of flying dangerously close to two of its civilian aircraft. The UAE called the incident - which Qatar denied - a "provocative action". Bahrain's civil aviation authority said on Monday a private Emirati Airbus A320 en route from Fujairah to Rome was forced to a higher altitude after Qatari war planes flew dangerously close. — Reuters

As cash from Gulf dries up, families fret

VENNIYUR, India: Every evening, three generations of worried Angatt family women meet outside a half-built bungalow in this village in India's southern Kerala state. Nearly six months after the house's foundation was laid and its two floors raised, construction has slowed to a near halt. The reason is never discussed out loud - only whispered cautiously. "My husband said there are problems in the Gulf. Everything is suddenly more expensive and he is not able to save as much," murmured Faseela Angatt, 29, who is overseeing the building while her husband works in the finance

department of a Dubai firm. "The construction depends on the money he sends - and now it is a little less," she said.

For nearly four decades, the Angatt family has prospered on "Gulf money". Faseela's father spent more than 30 years working there, and his son-in-law and other relatives have followed in his footsteps. The remittances the migrants send back have built big houses across Kerala's Malappuram district - and Faseela, whose husband has spent nine years in the Gulf, is counting on one of her own soon.

But the boom is fading. An economic slowdown in the Gulf, fluctuating oil prices and changes to labor policies mean fewer migrants are flying out of the district's Calicut airport than before - and many are returning. That is "adversely affecting" the flow of remittances to India, the Reserve Bank of

Continued on Page 11



VENNIYUR, India: The Angatt family is seen outside their under-construction house in this town in Kerala on March 14, 2018. — Reuters

Camel power turns sesame into precious oil in Afghanistan

MAZAR-I-SHARIF: Old Afghan men looking to soothe their aching joints or enrich their rice dishes stand around a tiny shop where they are lulled by a camel's steady steps as sesame oil flows into a plastic bucket. The traditional industry in northern Afghanistan is the domain of ethnic Turkmen, though its origins seem unclear. The sesame seeds

are pressed not by hand but by camel power to extract their precious oil.

Two of the animals take turns every couple of hours walking around in circles in the cramped space, a pack on their shoulders supporting a mast that drives the wooden press, a patch covering one eye to narrow their gaze.

Continued on Page 11



MAZAR-I-SHARIF: An Afghan man extracts oil from sesame using traditional methods whilst working with a camel on Jan 22, 2018. — AFP

Should rubber ducks be banned from the bath?

GENEVA: Scientific curiosity knows no bounds: A group of Swiss and US researchers have delved into "the dark side" of inviting rubber ducks and other flexible plastic toys into our tubs. Any plastic materials dunked in bathwater provide ideal conditions for bacterial and fungal growth, according to the conclusions of the joint study, published yesterday by the Swiss government. "Dense growths of bacteria and fungi are found on the inner surface of these flexible toys, and a murky liquid will often be released when they are squeezed by a child," the Swiss government statement said.

The researchers from the Swiss Federal Institute of Aquatic Science and Technology EAWAG, the Swiss Federal Polytechnic School and the University of Illinois found that "diverse microbial growth is promoted not only by the plastic materials but by bath users themselves." For their study, they carried out experiments with real bath toys and controls using new bath toys under conditions simulating household use. Over a period of 11 weeks, they exposed some of the toys to clean and others to dirty bath



water, containing things like soap and body fluids.

When they cut open the toys, "the findings sound unappetizing: Between five million and 75 million cells per square centimeter were observed on the inner surfaces," according to the summary of the report. The researchers stressed though that there was a big difference between the plastic toys exposed to different types of water. "Fungal species were detected in almost 60 percent of the real bath toys and in all the dirty-water control toys," the statement said.

"Potentially pathogenic bacteria were identified in 80 percent of all the toys studied, including Legionella and Pseudomonas aeruginosa," which is often the culprit in hospital-acquired

Continued on Page 11

Amir receives credentials of newly-appointed ambassadors

Sheikh Sabah commends delegation for refuting lies against Kuwait



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Australia. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Brunei.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Poland.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Nicaragua.



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



Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah meets with Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Muhyieddin Salem Ahmad.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday the credentials of the newly-appointed ambassadors of Australia, Brunei, Poland, and Nicaragua. Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, head of His Highness the Amir office Ahmad Al-Fahad, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Abolhassan, and other officials attended the ceremony.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, as well as the Kuwaiti Ambassador to the US Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir received a letter from Sudanese President Omar Hassan Al-Bashir concerning ways to boost bilateral relations. Sudanese Ambassador to Kuwait Muhyieddin Salem Ahmad handed the letter to Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Saudi Ambassador

Separately, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace the outgoing Saudi Arabia's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Bin Ibrahim Al-Fayez. The reception was on the

ambassadors' tenure ending.

His Highness the Prime Minister also received members of the Kuwaiti society for following up on the parliament's performance. His Highness the premier expressed his desire to see the association involved in boosting transparency, interacting with citizens and their representatives in the National Assembly. Such an approach leads to deeper cooperation and enriching the Kuwaiti parliamentary experience, he said. He also underlined significance of the role undertaken by civil associations for bol-

stering the society and boosting voluntary work.

Refuting lies

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and members of his delegation, thanking them for brushing aside "allegations and lies" aimed at undermining "Kuwait's reputation as well as its parliament." In his cable, His Highness the Amir thanked members of Kuwait Parliament Caucus for refuting allegations before Human Rights Committee of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), in Geneva.

His Highness the Amir commended the positive results of the argument of the caucus. His Highness the Crown Prince also thanked Ghanem and members of the parliamentary caucus for their efforts in brushing aside the lies and fabrications, which were submitted to the Human Rights Committee. His Highness the Prime Minister sent a similar cable. — KUNA



Premier receives Saudi envoy

Acting Deputy FM, US envoy discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. The crux of the discussions revolved around strategies to take ties between Kuwait and the US to new levels, in addition to other matters including issues of mutual concern.

Separately, the Undersecretary of the Kuwaiti Defense Ministry Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah held talks with Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait Martine Moreau, along with a delegation accompanying her. The discussions centered on issues of mutual interest, read a statement by the Kuwaiti defense ministry.

Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti Army's Deputy Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nawaf Al-Sabah held talks with the chief of the National Jordanian Defense College Brigadier General Nasser Al-Mehairat. The discussions revolved around issues of mutual concern, particularly, military matters, read a statement by the Kuwaiti defense ministry. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman. — KUNA photos



Kuwaiti Defense Ministry's Undersecretary Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah meets with Canada's Ambassador to Kuwait Martine Moreau.

9th Int'l Quran award to be launched April 10

KUWAIT: Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi yesterday announced the launching of the ninth Kuwait's international Quran

memorization and recitation award on April 10 under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The award aims at defining the Islamic and Arab nation in Quran readings and highlighting the role of the imams of readings and the sciences of the Quran as well as encouraging the memorizers of Quran in studying the science of readings, Afasi said.

The award also aimed at encouraging for more effort and time to memorize, recite and care for the Quran memorizers

from the young generation and highlighting the civilized part of Kuwait as a sponsor of the Holy Quran worldwide. Honoring the prominent figures who served the Quran in the world and attract the youth towards the Holy Quran and sensing its high value and meanings are also among the main objectives of the award, he added. Minister Afasi said that this session of the award seeks to increase the number of participants in order to spread the benefit to the largest possible number of memorizers from different countries of the world. — KUNA

Kuwait underlines strong ties with Greece

KUWAIT: Kuwait Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah

underlined Monday strong relations with Greece. Sheikh Ahmad, in a statement to reporters on sidelines of a reception held by the Greek Embassy to mark the European country's national day, said Greece demonstrated a solid position against Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, as well as contributing to the 1991 war of liberation. He said Kuwait and Greece would mark 55th anniversary of their relations next year. Sheikh Ahmad said Kuwait and Athens were keen on developing relations at cultural, political and economic levels. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Acting Deputy Foreign Minister Ambassador Dr Sheikh Ahmad Nasser Al-Sabah and Greek Ambassador to Kuwait Andreas Papadakis cut the cake during a reception held by the Greek Embassy to mark the Greece's national day. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Guests in attendance.

Local

MoH eyes hiring 500 expatriate doctors, 1,500 nurses, technicians

Ministry unable to Kuwaitize medical and nursing staff within five years

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) has prepared a memo on its needs of doctors and technical medical staff who should be hired to operate new hospitals and clinics, said informed sources, noting that the memo was sent to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) for approval. They said the memo shows that MoH needs more than 500 doctors and over 1,500 nurses, radiology technicians and other support medical staff members from India, Philippines and other Asian countries. The sources explained that the aforementioned numbers exclude contracts with specialized companies to provide extra nursing and support staff.

In a different concern, the sources said MoH has started laying off expats working in administrative positions to replace them with citizens, leaving only a few expats in such positions until they become 100 percent Kuwaitized within two years. The sources stressed that MoH had repeatedly informed CSC that it would not be able to Kuwaitize medical and nursing staff within five years like it demanded because it will take at least 10 years for Kuwait graduates to meet the need of staff.



MEW lays off 85% of its expat staff

rose by 738 in the period of Jan 2017 to Jan 2018. Statistics showed that the total number of MEW employees in January 2018 was 20,656 compared to 19,918 in 2017. The sources added that 85 percent of expat employees have been laid off, leaving only 1,351 as of Jan 2018.

Labor allowance

The Manpower and Government Restructuring Program's (MGRP) Director Fauzi Al-Majadali yesterday announced that the national labor support allowances and salaries will be deposited in citizens' accounts by yesterday itself. Notably, March salaries had been delayed and the finance ministry strongly denied its responsibility for the delay.

Power outages

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) blamed power outages that were reported yesterday in parts of Andalus, Doha, Ferdous, Riggae and Nahdha to a malfunction in Ardhya power plant A. The ministry issued a statement noting that the power outage started at 10:01 am and power was restored at 11:10 am.

Removing obstacles

Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmed Al-Manfouhi will preside over a meeting that the supreme coordina-

tion committee holds today to discuss removing obstacles delaying some projects, such as the northern and southern regional highway and the railway.

45 kg of foul food destroyed

Public Authority for Food and Nutrition inspectors destroyed 45 kg of foul fish and meat and filed 23 citations in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh, said Farwanya inspectors' manager Sattam Al-Sehali, explaining that the citations included handling food items without a health certificate, hiring laborers who do not have the certificate, selling inedible food items and violating cleanliness conditions.

Fishermen's woes

Chairman of the Kuwait Fishermen Union Thamer Al-Sowayyan stressed that the union is the sole representative of all fishermen and the only body responsible for providing local markets with fish and shrimps. In a statement released on the occasion of appointing Sheikh Mohammad Al-Yousef Al-Sabah as head of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR), Sowayyan expressed hope that all challenges fishermen have been facing will be eliminated. He added that several positive and negative decisions had been made concerning fishing seasons' timings. He added that despite meeting relevant officials and discussing reports and suggestions to increase the shrimp catch, some officials insisted on directly harming Kuwaiti fishermen. Sowayyan called for making decisions that matched those made by Kuwait's neighboring countries, namely GCC states, in terms of making use of Kuwait's share of fish resources in the Gulf instead of importing fish caught by other countries. He also called for relocating the imported fish market to leave the Sharq fish market for local fish only.

News in brief

Officials grilled over missing stamps

KUWAIT: The Minister of State for Services Affairs has referred a number of ministry officials to the Public Anticorruption Authority for questioning on charges of stealing valuable stamps. In a statement yesterday, Jenan Boushehri, also Minister of State for Housing, said the department discovered that a number of stamps in the archive - including rare and valuable ones - are missing. She added that a number of current and former officials were referred to the authority for interrogation. — KUNA

\$26 billion road projects planned

KUWAIT: The director general of the Public Authority of Roads and Land Transports Ahmad Al-Hesan said yesterday that the authority had hammered out a plan to execute up to 80 ventures aimed at facilitating traffic in coming years. Speaking at a news conference, Hesan put total value of the package of ventures at KD 8 billion (\$26 billion). He added that the authority projected budget for next year amounted to KD 500 million (\$1.6 billion), in addition to KD 13 million (\$42 million) earmarked for miscellaneous expenditures. Eight of these projects have already been finalized, he said. Hesan put funds spent on infrastructural projects over the past years in the range of KD 1.6 billion (\$5.2 billion). — KUNA

Policeman arrested for hit-and-run

KUWAIT: Hawally detectives arrested a policeman for running over a Filipina and escaping. The accident took place in Salmiya. Passersby informed police, who rushed to the area along with paramedics. The woman was taken to hospital with fractures and critical injuries. The suspect denied being involved at first, but detectives were not convinced with his statement, so they intensified pressure on him until he admitted his crime.

Drunkard arrested

Hawally police arrested a drunk man who terrified customers in a pharmacy. The well-built suspect asked the pharmacist to allow him to wait for a man there, but his behavior indicated he was not in a normal condition. The Kuwaiti man then became violent, telling customers to leave the pharmacy "because there is no use of medicines". Police discovered that the man was heavily drunk. He was arrested and sent to concerned authorities.

Sexual harassment

A female citizen threatened a Kuwaiti man that she would press sexual harassment charges against him if he refuses to become a partner in a business with her. The man said he did not like the business and it was not feasible, so the woman became angry and went to Sharq police station and lodged a complaint. But when police faced them off, she attempted to drop the charges, but found herself accused of violating the law and defaming others.

Murder threat

A Kuwaiti woman was adamant about accusing her stepson of threatening to kill her despite efforts by her husband and the boy's father to cool things down. A police source said the woman lodged a complaint at Sabahiya police station, accusing the 21-year-old man of threatening to kill her in a phone call.

Family feud

A citizen, his wife and daughter accused the daughter's husband of beating them and damaging the father's luxury car. The father said he went to settle a dispute between his daughter and son-in-law, but things got worse and the three were beaten, then the son-in-law damaged the car. Dhaher police are investigating the case.

Fight

Policemen controlled five Egyptians who were fighting in the nurseries area over previous disputes. They used sticks and stones during the fight. Policemen found the five are related, and were taken to Andalus police station.

Mugging

Ahmedi detectives are looking for unidentified persons for mugging a Sri Lankan man and stealing KD 250. A security source said the suspect was wearing a military uniform, according to the victim.

Fugitive nabbed

A citizen was arrested at a checkpoint in Ahmedi after being found wanted to serve a one-year jail sentence and a KD 400 debt to a communications company.

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

KFSD's development through joining int'l organizations: Director

DOHA: Joining international firefighting organizations is key to develop the sector in Kuwait, said Director General of the Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) Khaled Al-Mekrad. He made his remarks yesterday on the sidelines of his participation in the 51st meeting of the Executive Council of the International Civil Defense Organization (ICDO) and the 23rd meeting of the organization's general secretariat in Doha. Kuwait had joined ICDO in 2015 and had ever since gained more experience in the field of firefighting, rescue missions and disaster management, he noted, adding that Kuwait is a member of the Executive Council.

Kuwait also takes part in the organization's training drills on firefighting, where participants learn of modern and most effective technology and equipment needed in the process,

Mekrad said. He added that ICDO member-states have a communication system to share information and provide support when a disaster strikes any of those countries. ICDO's three-day meeting kicked off yesterday with the participation of ministers and senior officials in charge of emergency and civil defense from 48 countries. The meeting focuses on developing the work system of ICDO and discuss its laws and future plans to boost joint international coordination in the field. ICDO was established about 87 years ago and has 57 member-states. The organization provides methods of protection against the impact of different types of disasters. It also provides technical support to national civil defense organizations and conducts research on earthquakes, hurricanes, floods, pollution and fires. — KUNA

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Local

Kuwait Autism Center for Vocational Rehabilitation, Youth Welfare opens

Serves autistic children and youth from Kuwait and neighboring countries



Children and young men perform on stage during the ceremony.



KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh (third from right) honors a participant during a ceremony held to inaugurate the Kuwait Autism Center for Vocational Rehabilitation and Youth Welfare. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Under the auspices of Minister of Justice and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Fahd Al-Afasi, the Kuwait Autism Center for Vocational Rehabilitation and Youth Welfare opened yesterday in Mishref. On the sidelines of the event, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh told reporters the Kuwait Autism Center opened with a donation from the union of consumer co-operative societies. "It will serve all children and youth with autism

from Kuwait and neighboring countries," she said. "Kuwait aims to show the challenges facing autistic people and to stress that they have rights equal to all society members. I hope in the near future that we will open other centers for other disabilities. The previous autism school was small and could not accommodate everyone."

Sabeeh said the cooperative projects' fund will focus on the disabled and the elderly and open centers, resorts and shelters to emphasize the cooperation of everyone at the Gulf, local and civil level. She pointed out that this project

comes within the framework of the national cooperative projects committee's keenness to diversify the projects it supports to serve all sectors of the Kuwaiti society, and the government will spare no effort in following up on the implementation of the projects and to provide services to Kuwaiti citizens at the highest levels.

Kuwait Autism Center for Vocational Rehabilitation and Youth Welfare is located over an area of 2,000 sq m, and consists of four floors including galleries, visual exhibition areas, a swimming pool, art workshops, sensory halls and a

multipurpose hall. The center is the first specialized institution in this field in the Arab world. The center's activities and services span beyond Kuwait to the Gulf Cooperation Council and Arab countries. It is the meeting place and organizer of gatherings of specialists, researchers and training courses, receiving the first ISO awards for institutions in this field in the Middle East. Moreover, the Applied Behavior Center of Kuwait (ABC) is another body which treats autistic children through early intervention services and educational programs.



Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh tours an exhibition held on the sidelines of the event.



Children pose for a picture outside the new center.

British Embassy celebrates the RAF's 100th birthday

KUWAIT: On Monday March 26, 2018, the British Ambassador to Kuwait Michael Davenport hosted a reception of distinguished guests to celebrate the 100th birthday of the British Royal Air Force (RAF), the world's oldest independent air force. Founded on April 1, 1918 during the closing months of the First World War, the RAF has worked tirelessly for one hundred years to guarantee peace and security around the world. This centenary year provides an opportunity to: commemorate 100 years of extraordinary success, achievement and sacrifice; celebrate the professionalism and dedication of today's RAF; and inspire the next generation of men and women who will shape the RAF's next hundred years.

Over the last century the RAF has continually evolved to meet the changing nature of aviation and global politics. Always at the cutting edge of innovation and technology,



today's RAF is a hugely capable, modern and versatile military force, comprising combat aircraft such as the Typhoon and Tornado GR4 and larger passenger and freight carrying aircraft such as Voyager and C-17, and the more tactical A400M Atlas and Hercules C-130J aircraft. These assets allow the RAF to remain at the forefront of operations,

moving personnel and freight from UK forces and our allies across the globe. In addition, the RAF is able to provide rapid response to emerging humanitarian crises worldwide.

The RAF continues to enjoy a very special relationship with the people of Kuwait demonstrated most visibly with visits by the



world famous aerobatic display team, the Red Arrows, in 2013, 2016 and most recently in September 2017. Since the Liberation of Kuwait in 1991, the RAF has continued to play a significant role in the security of this region, initially through enforcement of the Southern and Northern No Fly Zones in Iraq. This role saw Royal Air Force aircraft

and personnel stationed at Ali Al Salem air base throughout the 1990s until the removal from power in Iraq of Saddam Hussein in 2003. Today, the RAF supports ongoing operations to defeat Daesh in Syria and Iraq.

Testament to the strength of this enduring relationship is the extraordinarily generous gift by the State of Kuwait of £5m in November 2017 to expand the RAF Museum in Hendon in north London - you are encouraged to visit on your next visit to the United Kingdom!

During the event, the British Ambassador to Kuwait Mr. Michael Davenport delivered a speech on the importance of this occasion. He said: "we are fortunate indeed to have a strong and very special bond with Kuwait. The Royal Air Force has played its part in that, from the earliest days of its existence. The State of Kuwait was generous enough to recognize the role of the RAF in Kuwait's history by making a substantive donation to the RAF Museum in Hendon to enable a new wing of the museum to be opened this summer to coincide with the 100th anniversary."

In 2019 we will be marking 120 years since the signing of the Treaty of Friendship between Kuwait and the United Kingdom. During that time we have stood alongside one another, and together with mutual friends and allies, in facing common threats."

Commercial Bank sponsors '2018 Airport Carnival'

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) sponsored the '2018 Airport Carnival' which was recently organized by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

CBK sponsored the carnival's recreational and sports

competitions, as well as the talents' exhibition. A team from the bank's private banking services department briefed all participants on the bank's various accounts. Notably, CBK was one of the first banks to open a branch at Kuwait International Airport.



KIB sponsors Public Authority for Industry's activities

KUWAIT: In line with its leading social responsibility program aimed at encouraging local development initiatives, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced its sponsorship of activities taking place throughout the year held by the Public Authority for Industry (PAI).

On this occasion, Corporate Communications Team Leader at KIB, Fahad Al-Sarhan, during his meeting with the Director General at PAI, Yousef Al-Wattar, and upon signing the agreement, said: "This sponsorship came as part of KIB's ongoing commitment to supporting various industrial institutions and helping them achieve their objectives. Above all, we strive to contribute to the nation's sustainable development agenda by stimulating the industrial sector's productivity and boosting performance levels." He added: "Our role as a Bank is not only to provide outstanding banking solutions, but to also ensure that we are fully committed to our social duty, which includes supporting the nation's various industrial sectors."

Meanwhile, Wattar expressed his thanks and appreciation of KIB's ongoing support of PAI's various activities.



He also lauded the Bank's notable role in supporting a number of community-based activities carried out by local sectors and institutions. KIB's significant contribution to local development goals has made it both a leading Bank in the industry and a national symbol; in that way embodying its spirit and values.

It is worth noting that KIB remains committed to supporting impactful development initiatives and programs. The Bank aims at encouraging the development of different sectors, including the local industrial sector, in line with the Emir's vision to transform the country into a financial and commercial center.

Local

Crown Prince urges fresh graduates to contribute to development

Sheikh Nawaf attends KU's graduation ceremony for academic year 2016-17



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials attend Kuwait University's annual graduation ceremony for the academic year 2016-17.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento during the ceremony.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah poses with Education Ministry and Kuwait University officials.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Education Minister Dr Hamed Al-Azmi pose with KU professors.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Monday urged Kuwait University (KU) fresh graduates to be open to modern technology and science with objective of developing themselves and their society. His Highness the Crown Prince, addressing KU annual graduation ceremony for the academic year 2016-17 at KU's Shuwaikh Campus, called on them to be distant from extremist ideologies "which contradict with our modern approach," as well as "maintaining our genuine traditions."

His Highness Sheikh Nawaf, who conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the graduates, told them that it was their time to "serve our beloved Kuwait and their people, contributing to its progress and development."

He urged state institutions to double efforts to create more jobs in different domains. His Highness the Crown Prince congratulated the graduates for their hard work throughout their years in KU, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi, KU Reactor Dr

Hussain Al-Ansari, as well as parents of the graduates. The graduation ceremony was attended by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Parliament Speaker acting



Efforts to create more jobs

speaker Ouda Al-Ruwaiee. Minister Azmi told the graduates it was their time to continue the march of construction and development of Kuwait. He said KU has been receiving overwhelming support from the

political leadership since its establishment over 50 years ago, thus contributing to the research and development.

Azmi said the graduates have a big responsibility towards the promotion of Kuwait through different institutions. "We are confident these challenges will be an important part of their future careers, and you will be contributing to progress ... in different scientific domains," he said. KU Reactor Dr Ansari said meanwhile that KU has been exerting every possible effort to the service of Kuwait, preparing future generations in line with scientific, cultural and social principles. He urged the graduates to continue their journey for further knowledge and experience.

Noor Al-Bahar, in a speech on behalf of the graduating students, said it was time to repay for Kuwait through their future careers. "We pledge to do our utmost best to offer the knowledge we acquired in our beloved university to our beloved nation ... so that we contribute to the development and progress of Kuwait," she said. Bahar thanked the professors and the parents for their support throughout their study. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks during Kuwait University's annual graduation ceremony for the academic year 2016-17. —KUNA photos

Ooredoo diamond sponsor of 20th GUST Career Fair

KUWAIT: Out of its commitment to supporting youth embark on successful career journeys, Ooredoo Kuwait participated with a diamond sponsorship in the 20th edition of the two-day Gulf University for Science and Technology's (GUST) Career Fair, which concluded its activities yesterday. The career fair was attended by more than 20 private sector companies, in addition to representatives from the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP).

Ooredoo's Human Resources Department participated in the career fair by providing visitors for their booth with information about job descriptions and roles in the company's different departments and sectors, answering queries about job opportunities, job descrip-

tions, career paths, in addition to introducing them to the different training and internship opportunities Ooredoo provides annually in collaboration with different entities.

In a statement to the press, Ooredoo Kuwait reiterated its belief in the major role youth play in the future of our country. "We are happy to participate in the GUST Career Fair, which attracts a number of Kuwait's most talented fresh graduates and alumni who received extensive academic education in a variety of fields. Our support for youth is deep-rooted within our strategy across the organization in Ooredoo. Our aim is to help them discover their potential, open new horizons for the ambitious youth by giving them opportunities to apply their educational knowledge to the professional world."

Ooredoo boasts a dynamic and fresh corporate culture where new ideas are nurtured, and everyone is given a fair chance to grow and maximize their potential. Ooredoo employees are always given opportunities to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge through extensive year-round training programs along with new challenges to develop their interests.



KUWAIT: GUST's President Dr Donald Bates visits Ooredoo's booth at the fair.

NBK hosts Engineering College students



KUWAIT: Students from the College of Engineering and Petroleum of Kuwait University visit NBK's new headquarters.

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) recently hosted students from the College of Engineering and Petroleum of Kuwait University in a visit to its new headquarters. The visit comes in line with NBK's vital role in supporting students. The visitors from the Civil Engineering Department had a tour in the new building to learn more about the features of this state-of-art, environmentally friendly project.

NBK Engineering Department and Public Relations team accompanied Dr Ruqaya Al-Salman Al-Sabah and the students on their tour of the bank's new headquarters. The engineers and supervisors of

the project gave the students a brief presentation about the concept of the environmentally friendly building and its stage of production. The project proposes a prominent addition to the skyline of Kuwait City for its iconic design and magnitude.

NBK continuously supports Kuwait's youth and listens to their feedback. It always offers a range of initiatives as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility to support the education and development of the country's youth. NBK also offers many educational initiatives and training programs for students, fresh graduates and the newly hired.



Egyptians in Sinai queue for bread, 'not ballots'

Village councils to be punished for destroying inter-caste marriages

Page 8

Page 7



KEMEROVO: An aerial view taken with a drone shows a multi-storey shopping mall after it was gutted by a fire in the industrial city of Kemerovo in western Siberia. President Vladimir Putin said yesterday 'criminal negligence' was to blame for a Siberian mall fire that killed at least 64 people, including 41 children, after they found themselves trapped in the inferno because of locked doors. —AFP

Russia mourns; anger mounts as fire kills 64

Angry residents protest, allege cover-up

KEMEROVO: President Vladimir Putin flew to the scene of a deadly shopping mall fire in Siberia that killed 64 people and promised angry residents yesterday that those responsible for what he called criminal negligence would be harshly punished. The fire, at the Winter Cherry mall in the city of Kemerovo, killed 41 children, according to the Interfax news agency, and the calamitous way it was handled has stirred anger and focused attention on corruption and lax fire safety standards.

Putin, re-elected only this month, laid flowers at a memorial to the victims in the coal-producing region about 3,600 km (2,200 miles) east of Moscow, before chairing a meeting and declaring a national day of mourning to be held today. "What's happening here? This isn't war, it's not an unexpected methane explosion at a coal mine. People came to relax, children. We're talking about demography and losing so many people," Putin angrily told officials.

"Why? Because of some criminal negligence, because of slovenliness. How could this ever happen?" he added. "The first emotion when hearing about the number of dead and dead children is not to cry but to wail. And when you listen

to what has been said here, speaking honestly, other emotions arise." Investigators said fire exits had been illegally blocked, the public address system had not been switched on, the fire alarm system was broken, and children had been locked inside cinemas. The fire swept through the upper floors of the shopping centre, where a cinema complex and children's play area were located, on Sunday afternoon.

Hundreds of angry protesters, many of them crying, gathered in central Kemerovo. The mayor, Ilya Serebyuk, tried to speak, but his words were often drowned out by chants calling on him to resign. "Why don't they tell us the truth?," shouted one protester. Many locals do not

believe the official death toll of 64 and suspect that hundreds of people were killed in the blaze and that a cover-up is underway, something Putin has flatly denied. Relatives of the victims say they have compiled a list of 85 people, most of them children, who are still missing. Opposition leader Alexei Navalny called on people to attend a protest event later on in Moscow.

Raw anger

Public anger in Kemerovo was reflected in protesters' placards. "How many victims are there workers who should have been responsible for people's safety, for organizing an evacuation, they were the first to run away," he said. —Reuters

Putin, at fatal mall fire scene, pledges action



Thousands flee Ghouta as Assad regains control

BEIRUT: Thousands of people departed eastern Ghouta for Syrian rebel territory near the Turkish border yesterday, the third group to leave under a deal brokered by Russia to surrender the enclave near Damascus to the Syrian government. Some 7,000 people - most of them fighters and their families left on 100 buses in the early hours of the morning, to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. More buses drove into eastern Ghouta ahead of a further evacuation.

Rebels have been leaving Ghouta in batches with their families since Thursday, accepting safe passage to the Idlib region in northwestern Syria after they were beaten into retreat in a fierce assault by the Russian-backed Syrian army. It marks the biggest defeat for the rebellion against President Bashar Al-Assad since insurgents were driven from eastern Aleppo in 2016, underscoring his unassailable military position in the seven-year-long conflict.

"We faced two choices: go to Idlib or make peace with the regime," said Sakhr Yousef, a 24-year-old fighter with the Falaq Al-Rahman faction as he was preparing to leave eastern Ghouta with his wife and four young siblings. "Making peace with the regime is very difficult, making peace with those who bombed us with criminal Russia," he added in a voice message to Reuters, referring to Assad's main backer in the conflict.

The rebels being evacuated yesterday are leaving from a tract of territory centered around the towns of Arbin, Ain Tarma and Zamalka that was controlled by Falaq Al-Rahman rebels. The last remaining insurgent-held area in Ghouta is the town of Douma. The United Nations said it is highly concerned for 70,000-78,000 people it said were trapped inside. The Islamist group that controls Douma, Jaish al-Islam, is in talks with Russia that have yet to yield a result.

'Screening process'

Backed by Russia and Iran, the government has repeatedly forced rebels to surrender areas and withdraw to Idlib. The opposition has called this a policy of "demographic change" aimed at forcing dissidents out of Syria's main



Al Hazzah: A Syrian pro-government fighter searches for weapons in the town of Hazzeh in Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus yesterday. —AFP

cities. State television, broadcasting from the outskirts of Arbin, showed buses moving along a dusty road through a wasteland of heavily damaged buildings. A correspondent with Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV said it could take four to five days to evacuate the tens of thousands of people who had agreed to leave Arbin, Ain Tarma and Zamalka.

Hezbollah, a heavily armed Lebanese group backed by Iran, has fought on Assad's side during the war. The Russian news agency TASS said 13,190 rebels had left eastern Ghouta in the last three days. Many tens of thousands of people have fled eastern Ghouta this month into areas controlled by the Syrian government. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said more than 80,000 people had left formerly besieged parts of eastern Ghouta as control shifted since March 9. The displaced "have to proceed to collective shelters and are

not permitted to leave, until they have undergone a screening process and are able to prove a sponsor", OCHA said in a situation report.

Syrian state TV said the army freed 28 people who had been held captive by militants in Arbin. The Observatory said their release was part of the deal agreed by rebels. The Syrian military split eastern Ghouta into three separate zones during its assault that began on Feb 18 and has killed more than 1,600 people, according to the Observatory. The government says the offensive is securing Damascus from insurgent mortar fire that regularly used to hit the capital including its Old City. In addition to their foothold in the northwest, anti-Assad rebels still hold a chunk of territory along the southern frontier with Jordan and Israel, and enclaves near Damascus, Homs and Hama. —Reuters

Trouble at Hindu festival in India triggers clashes with Muslims

KOLKATA: Clashes in India between supporters of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party and those of an opposition party snowballed into Hindu-Muslim rioting, with three people killed and dozens injured over two days of violence, police said yesterday. The trouble in the eastern state of West Bengal began on Sunday with rival processions by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the state's ruling Trinamool Congress marking the birth of the Hindu god Rama.

Violence broke out on Sunday and spilled over into Monday, turning into clashes between Hindus and Muslims. Anuj Sharma, a top police official in the state, said officials had held an emergency meeting yesterday and security had been increased, with riot police deployed, and about 100 people detained to snuff out the violence. "Large scale arrests are underway," Sharma told Reuters.

The danger of communal violence is a constant worry in the world's biggest democracy. Tension between Muslims and Hindus has increased in some places since Modi and his Hindu-nationalist BJP came to power in 2014. Babul Supriyo, a BJP federal government minister from West Bengal, blamed Muslims for the violence. "Goons from the minority community" had torched shops and "pulled Hindus out from their houses and assaulted/injured them brutally with choppers & swords", he said on Twitter. Police declined to comment on Supriyo's assertion while a Trinamool Congress leader denounced it as "highly regrettable". —Reuters

International

Egyptians in Sinai queue for bread, 'not ballots'

Islamic State warned residents against voting

CAIRO: As some voters in mainland Egypt chanted praise for President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi outside polling stations on their way to re-elect him, residents of the restive northern Sinai Peninsula lined up for a different reason - bread handouts. A military campaign in North Sinai that aims to crush Islamic State militants has blocked most access to the peninsula as forces carry out air raids, deploy patrols and impose curfews, creating a stranglehold that has led to a shortage of food and supplies, locals say. With many people afraid to leave their homes amid the fighting against militants, barely any voters cast their ballots in parts of North Sinai on the first day of the three-day election, local officials and residents said.

"I went to vote because I was waiting in line to pick up bread" being handed out by the army, school teacher Selim Ahmed told Reuters by phone from his town of Sheikh Zuweid. "The polling station happened to be nearby so I voted. People here are waiting for food baskets, of which there are few. They're not queuing up to vote," he said. Ahmed Raouf, an official overseeing voting in another area in Sheikh Zuweid, near the border with the Gaza Strip, said only one person had been into the polling station he was supervising.

"That's out of an electorate of 6,000 people in this area. People are scared to come out because of the ongoing military operations and threats of targeting polling stations," Raouf said. Islamic State in the weeks before the election warned Egyptians not to vote in an apparent threat. Egypt's election commission said late on Monday that turnout in parts of North Sinai had been "very good".

The election, in which polls are open from Monday to Wednesday, is set to hand former military commander Sisi a second term as he faces one barely known challenger after serious opposition pulled out under pressure.

Voters went to polls in Cairo and other mainland cities on Monday, with the vote focused mainly on turnout. Sisi supporters hope he can bring stability and improve Egypt's ailing economy. Islamists have waged an insurgency in North Sinai which intensified after Sisi led the military ousting of President Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood in 2013. A year later, Islamic State set up its Sinai branch and has killed hundreds of soldiers and police and expanded targets to include civilians. An attack on a mosque near the North Sinai capital of Al-Arish in November killed more than 300 people, Egypt's deadliest such incident, prompting Sisi to order the military to use "brute force" to crush insurgents.

Many in Sinai afraid to leave home to vote



Food sometimes arrives

The tactics the military is using, which some analysts say are too heavy-handed to defeat a guerrilla-style insurgency, have made it difficult for civilians to move and have choked supplies, locals say. "We often wait for more than five hours for trucks to come carrying food parcels. Sometimes they get here, sometimes they don't," Youssef Ali from Al-Arish said last week. "If only they'd let us move freely in the city or go to another province - but we're not allowed to leave," he said. Curfews were imposed earlier this year in areas where military operations are focused and security forces are patrolling the length of the Suez



TANTA, Egypt: Picture shows an Egyptian garlic peddler haggling with a customer as she sits by her produce at a market in the Nile Delta City of Tanta, 120 kilometers (75 miles) north of Cairo. —AFP

Canal that separates Sinai from the mainland, the military says.

The military says it is distributing plenty of food and compensating families for material damage sustained to homes during fighting. One of the few areas in North Sinai that witnessed a higher turnout was the town where mili-

tants killed Muslim worshippers in November. An official said tribal leaders there had mobilized people to vote en masse. Elsewhere, the tense security situation prevented many from leaving their homes, Ali said on Monday. "Security forces are searching voters, and there are roadblocks up." —Reuters

Cairo's poor districts show little interest in presidential vote

CAIRO: At a crowded crossroads on the edge of a poor Cairo district, blaring music and a news ticker on a giant screen urged people to vote for President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi. But down its dusty alleyways, there was no such fanfare. While the presidential election that is set to grant Sisi a second term garnered some support in better-off areas of the Egyptian capital, it registered little interest - and some disdain - in working class Boulaq.

"On this entire street, I think only five or six people have voted," Hazem Abu Ismail, 28, said. "We've got nothing to gain from going to vote, especially if it takes time away from trying to make a living." At the end of Abu Ismail's road, a narrow dirt alley with washing hanging out of dust-caked windows, only a trickle of voters, mostly older men, entered a school converted into a polling station to cast their ballots. "The election is all an act. Maybe it's a class thing - it's mainly better-off people who are voting," said Abu Ismail, using an alias for fear of reprisals by authorities for criticizing the government.

Many Egyptians complain that austerity measures enacted during Sisi's first term, especially a steep currency devaluation, have left them much worse off. Young men, many of whom fear Sisi's second term will bring more austerity, said they did not wish to vote for a president they did not support, allowing him to claim a stronger mandate. "This gives you an idea of turnout - how many of us have ink on our fingers?" said 31-year-old plumber Ali, referring to the mark left on people's hands to show they have cast a ballot.

Corruption

"We voted in 2012, but what did it do? Corruption still exists and we're worse off than ever," he said. That vote brought President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood to power after a 2011 popular uprising that



SHUBRA AL KHAYMAH: Young Egyptian women dance outside a polling station in Cairo's northern suburb of Shubra Al-Khaymah on the second day of voting in the 2018 presidential elections yesterday. —AFP

toppled long-time leader Hosni Mubarak. The subdued atmosphere near polling stations in Boulaq in western Cairo and other poor districts on the other side of the Nile river contrasted with that in more upscale neighborhoods such as Zamalek and Heliopolis, where more voters turned out, some chanting slogans supporting Sisi.

Turnout in this week's three-day election is seen as the main focus in the absence of any serious contest after Sisi's main challengers quit from the race apparently under pressure. Sisi stands against a sole challenger, Moussa Mostafa Moussa, who openly supports the president. "If I voted I'd spoil my ballot by ticking both boxes. I don't want either of them," Abu Mostafa, 51, said. In Sharbiya, a mixed working class Muslim and Christian neighborhood,

a group of people chanting pro-Sisi slogans and waving Egyptian flags toured streets urging residents to vote.

However, a Reuters reporter saw a total of fewer than 10 voters enter three different polling stations on Monday evening. Not everyone was apathetic. Mohamed Hussein, 40, a shopkeeper in Sharabiya, said he had not voted but planned to cast a ballot for Sisi. Asked why, he replied that Sisi's economic measures were important, even if prices had risen.

"Things are very expensive now, but perhaps they were too cheap before and it was a burden on the government. Also he has implemented a lot of projects that we have not yet reaped the benefits of yet but we will in future, God willing," he said. —Reuters

Israel is 'critically ill,' ex-spy-masters warn

JERUSALEM: Six former Israeli spymasters accused Prime Minister Netanyahu yesterday of jeopardizing the country's future as it prepares to celebrate the 70th anniversary of its founding next month. The surviving ex-Mossad intelligence agency chiefs voiced their opinion of the fourth-term, right-wing leader in a joint interview excerpted on the front page of Yedioth Ahronoth, Israel's best-selling newspaper and a regular Netanyahu critic.

Netanyahu had no immediate response, but a senior member of his governing coalition brushed off the censure. Danny Yatom, who headed the Mossad during Netanyahu's first stint in office in the late 1990s, called for his ouster, accusing him and his aides of "putting their interests ahead of national interests" as corruption investigations deepen. Police questioned Netanyahu on Monday over his alleged dealings with the country's largest telecommunication company, one of three cases weighing on his political future. Netanyahu has denied any wrongdoing and opinion polls show his popularity is still high.

Yatom also voiced concern about "the inertia in the diplomatic sphere, which is leading us toward a bi-national state (with the Palestinians), which would spell the end of (Israel as) a Jewish and democratic state". Negotiations over a "two-state solution" to Israel's conflict with the Palestinians have been frozen since 2014. Some argue that if Israel fails to quit occupied territory, it could one day face a choice between remaining a democracy or securing a Jewish majority by denying the Palestinians voting rights.

Figures cited by Israeli officials on Monday showed the number of Jews and Arabs between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River - territory encompassing Israel, the occupied West Bank and the



TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses the annual health conference in Tel Aviv yesterday. —AFP

Gaza Strip - is at or near parity. "We have children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren here, and I want them to live in a healthy country - and the country is sick," Zvi Zamir, Mossad director from 1968 to 1974, was quoted as saying by Yedioth.

"We are in a critical medical state. It could be that the country had symptoms when Netanyahu took over, but he has brought it to the grave condition of a malignant disease." Netanyahu's office did not immediately respond. Education Minister Naftali Bennett, a hardliner in Israel's conservative coalition government, took to Twitter to dismiss the allegations aired by the ex-spy-masters as "simply untrue". "The country is in an excellent condition," said Bennett, who has cast himself as a possible successor to Netanyahu. "Among most of our leadership, the good of the country is first and foremost ... Israel is going in a good direction!" —Reuters

Southeast Asian islands 'off limit'

BANGKOK: More popular Southeast Asian islands will be off limits to visitors this year as officials seek to protect eco-systems crumbling from warming seas and unchecked sprawl, despite the risk to tourism revenues and tens of thousands of jobs. Thailand will shut Maya Bay, which famously featured in "The Beach", starring Leonardo DiCaprio, for four months a year, from June. In the Philippines, officials plan to close Boracay island for six months at the end of April. "Islands have very fragile ecosystems that simply cannot handle so many people, pollution from boats and beachfront hotels," said Thon Thamrongnawasawat, a marine expert in Bangkok.

"Coral reefs have been degraded by warmer seas and overcrowding. Sometimes, a complete closure is the only way for nature to heal," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. More than three-quarters of Thailand's coral reefs have been damaged by rising sea temperatures and unchecked tourism, said Thon, who last week recommended limiting visitors to its 22 marine parks to 6 million a year to enable their recovery. Currently, they number about 5.5 million, he said. Thailand closed dozens of dive sites to tourists in 2011, after unusually warm seas caused severe damage to coral reefs in the Andaman Sea, one of the world's top diving regions. It also shut some islands in 2016.

The country's sandy beaches helped draw record numbers of tourists last year, with revenues contributing about 12 percent of the economy. The government expects 38 million visitors this year. Southeast Asia is expected to bear the brunt of rising damage to coral reefs, depriving fishermen of incomes and leaving nations exposed to incoming storms and damage from surging seas, recent research showed. In the Philippines, which is among the most vulnerable to climate change, about 2 million people visited Boracay last year, celebrated for its white-sand beaches. —Reuters

US Republicans press for fighter jet sales to Taiwan

WASHINGTON: Two senior US Republican senators asked the Trump administration on Monday to allow the sale of Lockheed Martin Corp F-35 fighter jets to Taiwan, saying it would help it "remain a democracy" in the face of threats from China. China's hostility towards self-ruled Taiwan has grown since Tsai Ing-wen from the pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party won presidential elections on the island in 2016. China claims Taiwan as its own and is one of its most sensitive issues.

"These fighters will have a positive impact on Taiwan's self-defense and would act as a necessary deterrent to China's aggressive military posture across the Asia-Pacific region," Senators John Cornyn, the assistant majority leader, and James Inhofe, a senior member of the Armed Services Committee, said in a letter to President Donald Trump. "After years of military modernization, China shows the ability to wage war against Taiwan for the first time since the 1950s," they wrote. "However, with your leadership, it is possible to help Taiwan remain a democracy, free to establish a relationship with China that is not driven by military coercion."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. China has been increasing its military exercises around Taiwan and making markedly stronger public comments about the need to prevent Taiwan independence. Yesterday, retired Chinese general Wang Hongguang explained how easy it would be for China to attack Taiwan in an opinion piece in widely read state-run newspaper the Global Times, including a mass bombardment which would render Taiwan's military inoperable within 48 hours. Taiwan's main command center outside Taipei is also clearly marked out on Google maps. Wang, a former deputy commander of the Nanjing military region, wrote. "It would be like picking off lice on the head of bald man," Wang added.

Taiwan praises US ties

The sale of the jets could increase tensions with Beijing, where officials were infuriated when Trump signed legislation this month that encourages the United States to send senior officials to Taiwan to meet Taiwanese counterparts and vice versa. Yesterday, the office of Taiwan's president reiterated its support for the legislation and awarded US Representative Ed Royce, who is currently visiting the island, a medal of honor for his contributions toward Taiwan-US relations.

"President Tsai believes that stable relations between Taiwan and the US serve as an important foundation for peace, stability and prosperity in the Indo-Pacific region. Taiwan has the ability and is willing to work with the United States in the Indo-Pacific region to make more contributions," the presidential office said. Separately, Liu Jieyi, head of China's Taiwan Affairs Office, told state television late on Monday that "certain Americans" were trying to play the Taiwan card, which harmed the interest of people both in China and Taiwan.

"This is duping Taiwan compatriots," Liu said, without naming any US officials. "It is futile for any outside forces to try to play the Taiwan card and do anything to harm the interest of the Chinese people." The US military has put countering China and Russia at the center of a new national defense strategy unveiled by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis in January. Other US allies in the Asia Pacific region, such as Singapore, also are exploring the purchase of the stealthy F-35. Lockheed hit its 2017 target to deliver 66 F-35 fighter jets to the United States and its allies last year. —Reuters

International

Beijing shrouded in security amid speculation over 'mystery guest'

Unconfirmed reports 'N Korean leader was in Beijing'

BEIJING: A train believed to be carrying a senior North Korean delegation left the Chinese capital yesterday following a dramatic whirlwind visit that some reports said included the country's leader, Kim Jong Un. The conservative South Korea Chosun Ilbo newspaper, citing an unnamed senior intelligence official, said the delegation had included Kim and that he had since left to return to North Korea. South Korea's left-leaning press Hankyoreh also reported Kim had travelled to Beijing for meetings with Chinese President Xi Jinping on Monday afternoon before leaving for a "third location" yesterday. It did not cite specific sources.

The Hankyoreh did not specify where the "third location" was but said it could be in China. South Korea said it was closely watching events in Beijing, where a foreign ministry spokeswoman deflected a question on whether Kim, his sister or some other senior North Korean was visiting. South Korea's spy agency declined to confirm the report. "At present I have no understanding of the situation you mention. If there is news we will release it," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular daily briefing.

Diplomatic sources in Beijing said a senior North Korean official was in town, but did not know exactly who. Bloomberg, citing three unidentified sources, reported late on Monday that Kim was in Beijing in what would be his first known trip outside North Korea since taking power in 2011. The unconfirmed visit came ahead of planned summit meetings with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and US President Donald Trump. "The presidential Blue House is watching things in Beijing very closely, while keeping all

possibilities open," said the senior official in Seoul, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Improving ties between North Korea, which is pursuing nuclear and missile programs in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, and China would be a positive sign before the planned summits, he said. A Reuters reporter saw a convoy leave Beijing's Diaoyutai State Guest House, where senior foreign leaders often stay, and drive north. It was unclear where the convoy was headed. Later, a Reuters journalist saw what was believed to be the delegation's train pulling out of a Beijing station. The group was reported to have arrived in China on Sunday after crossing from North Korea in the border city of Dandong.

A senior US official who follows North Korea closely said the available evidence suggested that Kim had travelled to Beijing to meet Chinese

President Xi Jinping, but stressed that has not been confirmed. Underscoring the mystery, one senior Beijing-based diplomatic source said simply: "We just don't know." One source with ties to China's leadership said it was possible Kim's younger sister, Kim Yo Jong, was in town. She visited South Korea for the Winter Olympics last month, paving the way for a summit between the two Koreas.

South Korean news agency Newsis reported that Kim Yo Jong and the North's ceremonial leader, Kim Yong Nam, were visiting Beijing, citing an unidentified North Korea-related source in Beijing. The pair visited South Korean President Moon Jae-in at his office in Seoul during the Winter Olympics in February. The US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it was unlikely Kim Jong



Train carrying top N Korea delegation leaves China capital



SEOUL: A man watches a television news report about a suspected visit to China by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, at a railway station in Seoul yesterday.—AFP

Un would have sent his sister on such an important mission, unlike her ceremonial visit to South Korea for the Olympics. On the contrary, the official said, a summit with Xi would underscore Kim's standing as a world leader.

'Lot of leverage'

Xi and Kim Jong Un had reasons to meet in advance of Kim's meetings with Moon and possibly Trump, the US official said. "Xi has met Trump, and in many respects learned how to deal with him better than some people here

do," the official said. "At the same time, despite the recent tensions, he needs to know what Kim has in mind for dealing with the South and the US, and he still has a lot of leverage with the North." Japanese media reported on Monday that a high-ranking Pyongyang official appeared to have arrived by train in Beijing. The Blue House official said South Korea had been aware of "related movements" in North Korea, such as the train, for a few days but he could not confirm whether Kim or another high-ranking North Korean official was visiting China.—Reuters

News in brief

Pakistan 'revenge rape'

ISLAMABAD: Police in central Pakistan have arrested 10 men for ordering the rape of a woman as revenge for a rape allegedly committed by her brother, officials said yesterday. The incident happened on March 20 in Toba Tek Singh, a town in Punjab province 275 kilometers southwest of Lahore. "A boy named Waseem was caught in the act with a 16-year old girl and the whole neighborhood gathered demanding to kill the boy," Naeem Yousuf, a local police official said. "The boy's family then gave the girl's family the option of raping any woman in their family," he said. They chose a 40-year-old woman, who was duly raped by the brother of the 16-year-old girl.—AFP

Indian 'sand mafia' death

NEW DELHI: Amid growing outrage over the latest murder of a journalist in India, police have arrested a truck driver accused of killing Sandeep Sharma over his investigative reporting into the country's 'sand mafia'. The television journalist was mown down by a truck as he rode a motorcycle on Monday—the second hit and run killing of a journalist in 24 hours. Sharma had reportedly told local authorities he feared he would be a target of the gangs that traffick sand for the construction industry. Activists say the networks are helped by police and political patronage. The journalist had reportedly exposed links between a police official and the mafia.—AFP

'Miserable little worm'

LONDON: Julian Assange was called a "miserable little worm" yesterday by a junior British foreign affairs minister who said the WikiLeaks founder should leave the Ecuadorian embassy in London and give himself up to British justice. Assange has been living inside the embassy since June 2012, when he entered the building to avoid extradition to Sweden to face questioning about allegations of sex crimes, which he has always denied. The Swedish investigation was dropped in May last year, but Assange, who was on bail at the time when he walked into the embassy, faces arrest by the British authorities for breaching his bail terms should he step outside.—Reuters

Bahrain jails nine

DUBAI: Bahrain has jailed nine Shiites, including a minor and a relative of a prominent London-based activist, on charges of throwing petrol bombs at police, a judicial source and activists said yesterday. The kingdom's Sunni rulers have cracked down heavily on all displays of dissent ever since they bloodily suppressed mass protests led by the Shiite majority in 2011 for a constitutional minority with an elected prime minister. The court sentenced eight defendants to seven years in prison on Monday after convicting them of attacking a police patrol with Molotov cocktails in the southern village of Aley, the judicial source said. The ninth, a minor, was sentenced to three years.—AFP

Armed Palestinians nabbed

JERUSALEM: Israeli soldiers yesterday detained three Palestinians who slipped across the border with the Gaza Strip in possession of knives and grenades, officials said, as tensions rise along the volatile frontier. The military said the trio were apprehended some 20 kilometers inside Israel near an army base, while police distributed pictures of hand grenades, knives and wire cutters found on them. "We don't know who sent them and what their purpose was," an army spokeswoman said. The detentions come as Israel braces for the annual Palestinian Land Day protests, commemorating the killing of six unarmed Arab protesters in Israel in 1976, set to begin on Friday in Gaza and the West Bank.—AFP

US adds citizenship question in Census

WASHINGTON: A question about citizenship status will be included on the 2020 Census to help enforce the Voting Rights Act, federal officials said on Monday, but California sued to block the move arguing that it would discourage immigrants from participating. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross decided to add the question to the count after a Department of Justice request based on the desire for better enforcement of the voting law, the US Department of Commerce said in a statement.

"Secretary Ross determined that obtaining complete and accurate information to meet this legitimate government purpose outweighed the limited potential adverse impacts," it said. The census, which is mandated under the US Constitution and takes place every 10 years, counts every resident in the United States. It is used to determine the allocation to states of seats in the US House of Representatives and to distribute billions of dollars in federal funds to local communities.

Ross said in a memo that the Voting Rights Act requires a tally of citizens of voting age to protect minorities against discrimination, and that getting this information as part of the census would make it more complete. Opponents of a Census question about citizenship status say it could further discourage immigrants from participating in the count, especially when they are already fearful of how information could be used against them. The State of California, which has a large immigrant population, responded early on Tuesday by filing a lawsuit in federal court against the commerce department and census bureau.

California Attorney General Xavier Becerra asked the US District Court in the Northern District of California to issue a preliminary injunction and rule that the move violates the constitution by interfering with the obligation to conduct a full count of the US population. The announcement came as President Donald Trump tries to keep his campaign promise to build a border wall between Mexico and the United States and to crack down on illegal immigration. He ordered stricter immigration enforcement and banned travelers from several Muslim-majority countries

Vatican-affiliated Chinese bishop, official arrested

VATICAN CITY: A Chinese bishop recognized by the Vatican has been arrested in his diocese just as Beijing and the Holy See are set to confirm a historic agreement on the appointment of bishops, a Vatican-linked website reported. AsiaNews, run by the Pontifical Institute for Foreign Missions—a missionary society recognized by the Vatican—wrote yesterday that Vincent Guo Xijin, bishop of the diocese of Mindong in the southeastern Fujian province, was arrested on Monday along with another official of the diocese. The Vatican refused to comment on the news. Contacted by AFP, both the local Chinese police and the Fujian provincial office of religious affairs said they were unaware of the arrests.

Beijing and the Vatican severed diplomatic relations in 1951 and although ties have improved as China's Catholic population grows, they have remained at odds over the designation of bishops. China's roughly 12 million Catholics are divided between a government-run association, whose clergy are chosen by the Communist Party, and an unofficial church which swears allegiance to the Vatican. The

situation is however complex because the Vatican has previously accepted several bishops appointed by Beijing, officially an atheist regime. Bishop Guo, 59, is recognized by the Vatican but not by the Chinese authorities.

'Shameful'

He was recently urged by the Vatican to step aside for Bishop Vincent Zhan Silu and to accept being demoted to auxiliary bishop, as part of the preparation for the agreement it has been working on with China for the last three years. AsiaNews reports that Guo was summoned by the authorities responsible for religious affairs on Monday afternoon, then returned to his residence in the early evening to pack his bags before being taken away at around 22:00 local time. According to Catholics consulted by AsiaNews, the disappearance of the bishop of Mindong can be explained by his refusal to celebrate Easter with the prelate who will replace him.

The site also reports that this same bishop disappeared for 20 days last year. An Amnesty International official in Hong Kong, Patrick Poon, said the Chinese government urgently needed to communicate the fate of the bishop. "It's disgraceful to harass the prelate and take him away for no legitimate reason. It's a blatant violation of freedom of religion," Poon told AFP. According to information from the French daily La Croix published Monday, a Chinese delegation is expected this week in Rome.—AFP



LOS ANGELES: Susan Zapata (left), waits for her mother, an immigrant from El Salvador, to depart a naturalization ceremony in Los Angeles, California. The naturalization ceremony welcomed more than 7,200 immigrants from over 100 countries who took the citizenship oath and pledged allegiance to the American flag.—AFP

soon after taking office in January 2017. "This untimely, unnecessary, and untested citizenship question will disrupt planning at a critical point, undermine years of painstaking preparation, and increase costs significantly, putting a successful, accurate count at risk," the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights said in a statement. Test surveys showed in late 2017 that some immigrants were afraid to provide information to US Census workers because of fears about being deported. "This decision comes at a time when we have seen xenophobic and anti-immigrant policy positions from this administration," said Kristen Clarke, President and Executive Director of the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.

Confidentiality

Immigrants and those who live with immigrants are troubled by confidentiality and data-sharing aspects of the

count, Mikelyn Meyers, a researcher at the Census Bureau's Center for Survey Measurement, told a meeting of the bureau's National Advisory Committee in November. Census researchers have said immigrants they interviewed spontaneously raised topics like the travel ban and the dissolution of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, a program that has protected from deportation young immigrants brought to the country illegally as children.

One person, Meyers said, told government interviewers: "The possibility that the Census could give my information to internal security and immigration could come and arrest me for not having documents terrifies me." Citizen questions have appeared on the census in the past and are included on more frequent population surveys that are administered by the census bureau. Ross said he met Census officials and considered arguments for and against the change made by interest groups, members of congress and state and local officials.—Reuters

Councils to be punished for destroying inter-caste marriages

CHENNAI: Punitive action should be taken against village councils that impose punishments including murder on inter-caste marriages between consenting adults, India's Supreme Court ruled yesterday. The judgment by the country's top court underscores the prevalence of councils that act as de-facto courts and have sanctioned the killings of young couples, campaigners said. "Across the country there have been increasing instances of couples being harassed or killed for marrying outside their caste," petitioner Ravi Kant of charity Shakti Vahini told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a telephone interview.

"This is a progressive order that addresses gender and caste based violence in the country." About 500 people - mostly women - have died in "honor killings" in India since 2014, according to government data. The murders are often carried out by

family members who believe the relationship has brought "shame" on their community. Many killings are instigated by village councils - or "khap panchayats" - comprised of uneducated men of a particular clan or caste, according to human rights activists.

Calling for a crackdown on the practice, Kant filed a public interest litigation in 2010, which described instances where couples were beaten, had their heads shaved, and were sometimes set on fire at the behest of these "kangaroo courts". In some cases, couples were penalized with "social boycotts" in which they were banished from the community and denied access to temples, wells, markets and celebrations. "The collective behaves like a patriarchal monarch which treats the wives, sisters and daughters subordinate, even servile or self-sacrificing," said three judges in their ruling.

While their power has diminished since 1992 when elected village councils were made mandatory, the khap panchayats remain powerful in socially conservative regions such as Haryana, Punjab and Rajasthan states, and parts of Uttar Pradesh. The killings have instilled a "chilling sense of fear" among young people who want to get married. Chief Justice of India Dipak Misra said in the ruling, which called for preventive, remedial and punitive measures. The court suggested safe houses for couples, video-recordings of khap panchayat meetings, and a law to prosecute honor killings.—Reuters

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Roadblocks ahead for Ramaphosa after Moody's win

South Africa's new president Cyril Ramaphosa will need to call on all his deal-making skills to overhaul ailing state-owned firms and tackle land reform if he wants to capitalize on Moody's decision not to downgrade the country's debt to junk. Moody's said its decision to keep South Africa's rating at investment grade reflected its view the country's institutions would regain strength under more transparent and predictable policies - though the new government had to stay on track.

Since replacing Jacob Zuma in February, Ramaphosa has reappointed the finance minister his predecessor fired in 2015, sacked some ministers allied to Zuma, put another respected former finance minister in charge of struggling state-owned firms and suspended the head of the revenue service. "It's a big deal," political analyst Ralph Mathekga said about Moody's decision. "What he has been able to achieve in two months is to reverse some of Zuma's influence in key sectors. The message he sent is: 'I can do more.'"

After his whirlwind start, Ramaphosa's challenges now include keeping the unions on side as the government overhauls cash-strapped national carrier South African Airways (SAA) and heavily indebted state power utility Eskom. Perhaps his stiffest test will be to push through land expropriation, as promised, to address racial disparities in ownership - while keeping the left wing of the ruling African National Congress (ANC) on board and not scaring off investors.

Parliament passed a motion last month seeking to change the constitution to allow land expropriation without compensation. Ramaphosa has promised to speed up the transfer of land to black people, but has stressed the need to preserve food security. "A big deliverable is to initiate the land debate under his leadership to control the narrative and discourse. Should he fail to do this, he runs the risk of undoing the good work already done," said Daniel Silke, director of Political Futures Consultancy.

Ramaphosa's negotiating skills have been respected for decades, ever since Nelson Mandela turned to the former trade union boss to lead the successful negotiations to end white minority rule. More recently, Ramaphosa had to strike a fine balance between applying pressure on Zuma to go, while still affording him a dignified exit. Now, some analysts say land reform is Ramaphosa's litmus test. "Are we over-estimating Ramaphosa's ability to deal with this land issue? It is undoubtedly one of his biggest challenges. Investors are worried about this and watching him very closely," said independent political analyst Nic Borain.

'Good negotiator'

When it comes to South Africa's struggling state-run companies, Ramaphosa will need to perform a similar balancing act and he has already named respected former finance minister Pravin Gordhan as minister of public enterprises. Eskom and SAA are both weighed down by massive wage bills but the country's powerful unions are likely to dig in their heels at any attempt to cut jobs, especially with elections looming in 2019.

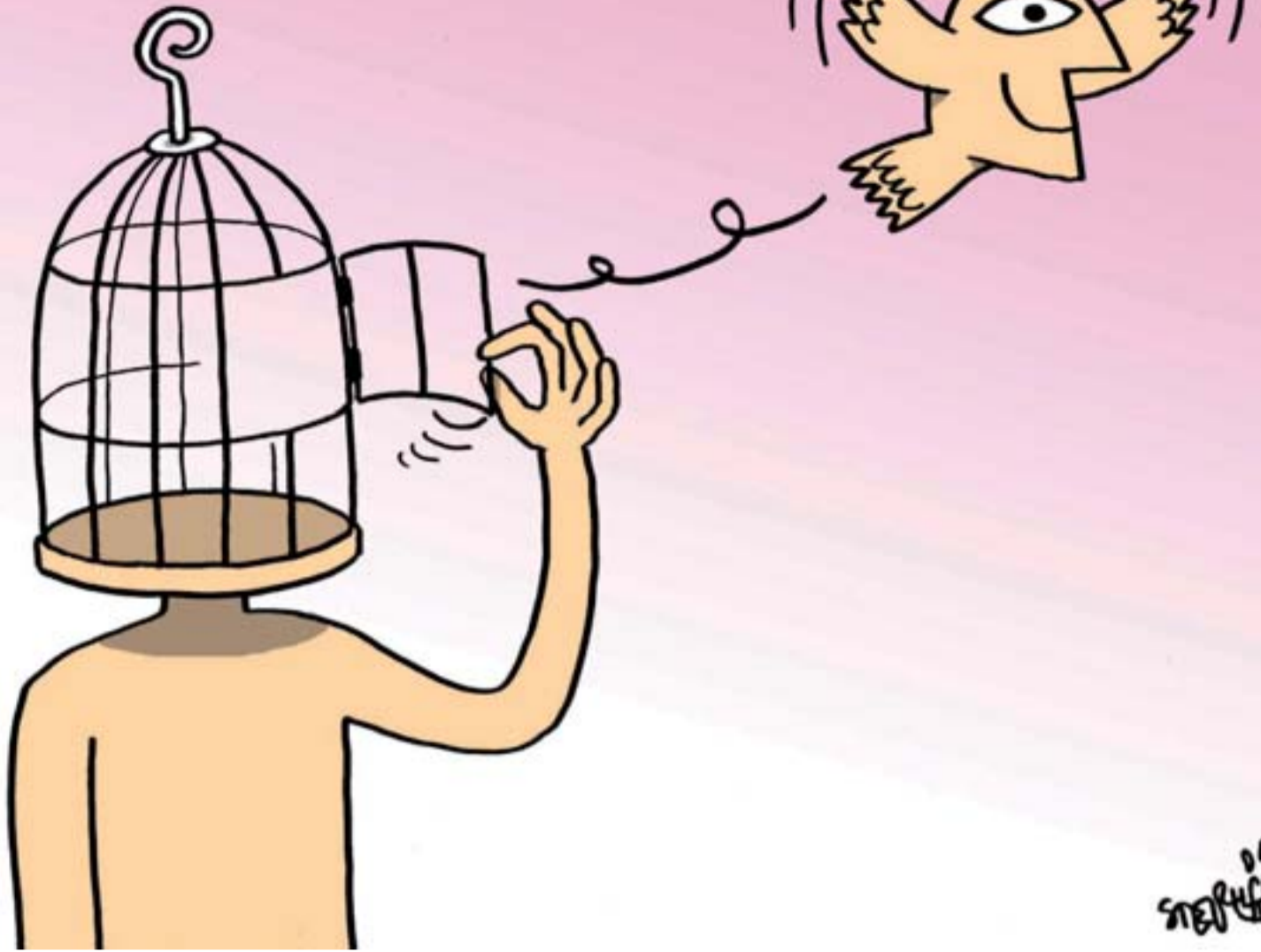
Influential labor leaders, sections of the ANC and the opposition Economic Freedom Fighters are also likely to balk at any moves to partially privatize the companies, which is one strategy backed by the Treasury. South African Airways runs one of Africa's biggest fleets but years of operational losses have left it on the brink of bankruptcy. It needed a bailout in July to repay debt and 20 billion rand (\$2 billion) in state guarantees to keep it afloat.

Eskom received a 5-billion rand loan in February from the state's Public Investment Corporation (PIC), which holds a large amount of government bonds and ranks as Africa's biggest investment fund, or it would have defaulted on its debts. "There is going to be some tension when these job cuts are announced. It is a delicate balance because it could impact the support base of the party ahead of next year's elections," said Borain.

Still, Ramaphosa has already taken the politically risky step of raising value-added tax (VAT) for the first time since apartheid to try to reduce the budget deficit and analysts say he is unlikely to back down on reforms. "He did not give in to populism on the VAT; this was a good example of him having to do something unpopular but necessary," Borain said. "He is known to be a good negotiator."

Finance minister Nhlanelo Nene expressed hope on Monday that S&P Global Ratings and Fitch might also look favourably on South Africa during upcoming reviews, saying investors he had met at a roadshow in London before Moody's decision were upbeat. S&P downgraded South African local currency debt to "junk" in November citing a deterioration in the economic outlook and public finances. Fitch cut its rating in April to sub-investment grade after Zuma fired Gordhan as finance minister. S&P will publish its review on May 25. Fitch has not given a date. "I want to call this a honeymoon phase - and it is for that reason that we cannot be complacent about it," Nene told Talk Radio 702. —Reuters

Cartoon for the Soul



Islamabad children lead green offensive

Upset by the felling of many of Islamabad's trees - victims of rapid urbanization - the city's children are fighting back with a tree planting drive. Children, accompanied by their parents, are now a common sight at tree nurseries in Pakistan's capital, buying saplings to plant at home - some after receiving school assignments to do just that. "They will get awards and certificates of appreciation as 'green' students if they succeed in growing healthy trees for at least the next two years," said Aneela Karim, whose 5-year-old daughter and 8-year-old son recently picked out saplings of magnolia, pine and silver oak at a tree nursery in Islamabad. Karim, 41, said her children had been assigned at school to plant at least one sapling each at home and to care for them for the next three years. "This was really inspiring to see our children sensitized and talking about the value of trees with us," she said, noting that she'd learned little about the environmental and health benefits of trees while she was in school. In recent years there has been more tree felling than tree planting in the capital, as new roads and other construction projects require the clearing of trees in formerly green areas. The changes have triggered anger and protests among many residents.

Air pollution risk

Karim said she was outraged that the government was chopping down mature trees, something she believes is worsening air pollution in the capital, particularly as the number of vehicles on the roads grows. The Islamabad Municipal Corporation and Capital Development Authority could not provide official figures for the numbers of trees felled. However, Sanaullah Aman, until recently executive director general for environment at the Capital Development Authority, estimated that over the last five years the city had lost around a third of its green cover to road expansion and the construction of housing and shopping malls. Asif Shuja Khan, a former director general of Pakistan's Environmental Protection Agency, said that just 10 years ago most of Pakistan's towns and cities still had significant green areas. But in recent years green areas have quickly disappeared or deteriorated, he said, often as a result of urbanization. Pakistan's population has swelled



A family looks at plants at a nursery in H-9 neighborhood of Islamabad on March 7, 2018. —Reuters

from 132 million in 1998 to 210 million today, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics.

According to the Pakistan Forest Institute and Pakistan Institute of Development Economics, 39,000 hectares of forest are cleared every year across the country. Pakistan lost one-third of its forest area between 1990 and 2010, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. In Islamabad, tree-planting initiatives have the backing of non-governmental organizations, the municipal corporation and the Capital Development Authority, which is planting 300,000 tree saplings in the city this spring.

Pass it on

Rukhsana Gul, Karim's daughter, said she had planted trees with her classmates at school, and was now using her

own pocket money to buy four small trees for the front of her family's home, after persuading her parents to bring her to the nursery. Tasneem Sher Mohammad, her school's principal, said the school had organised spring and monsoon time tree-planting programs for the past three years, involving pupils, parents, teachers and administrative staff.

Nearly 60 percent of the city's schools are organizing tree-planting drives or sending their students to tree-planting events at nearby schools or colleges, government officials say. "We highlight with the participants, particularly children and parents, to play a part in tackling environmental pollution and protecting human health with planting more trees in their houses and neighborhoods," said Mohammad, who noted the response from the children has been enthusiastic. —Reuters

In Niger's desert, Europe migration crackdown pinches wallets

For this ancient town on the southern edge of the Sahara, the flow of desperate migrants trying to reach Europe used to be a boon, not a burden. Abdoul Ahmed, a 31-year-old mechanic in Agadez, measured the good years in customers. When arrivals in Europe peaked in 2015, dozens of cars came to his workshop each day to get their tyres changed before setting off across the desert. But since the European Union cracked down on migration a year later, his daily clientele has dropped to one or two. That earns him about \$4, to be shared with five skinny teenage apprentices.

"Times are bad. There's no activity," he said, sitting along one of the few paved roads in Agadez, a mud-brick town where beat-up motorcycles outnumber cars. For years, the old trading post in Niger has been a key stop for West Africans travelling north - mostly young men fleeing poverty in search of better opportunities abroad. It is the place where migrants find smugglers to arrange their trip across the desert. Those ferrying the travellers earn hundreds of dollars for each person they cram into the back of a Toyota Hilux.

But smugglers have not been the only ones to benefit from the migrant boom, said Sadou Soloke, the governor of Agadez. Cash from feeding, housing and transporting migrants fed thousands of people in the area and helped develop the impoverished region, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. That activity began to slow when Niger, under EU pressure, started arresting smugglers and posted sol-

diers across the desert in 2016. By late last year, the life had been sucked out of the once-bustling town, several residents said.

Now corners once crowded with merchants are quiet, and wide streets are empty even at midday. Men on motorcycles gather in patches of shade, waiting hours for someone to request a ride. "We worry for the people who used to provide services to the migrants," Soloke told humanitarian workers last month. "Now they've been put in a risky situation too."

As more people move around the world - spurred by climate extremes, conflict and poverty - migration has developed an economy of its own, one many people rely on for an income. That reality can make efforts to brake or shift migration harder - and riskier - to achieve, as they affect everything from powerful criminal networks to vulnerable people just trying to get by. In Agadez, about 6,000 people who were directly employed in the migrant economy are now jobless, the governor said, while countless others - shopkeepers, phone sellers, mechanics - have also seen their earnings fall.

While aid agencies have swooped in to help migrants still stranded in the town, local people feel increasingly marginalized, said Otilia Maunganidze, a migration analyst at the Africa-based Institute for Security Studies. "The primary question they ask is ... why is the aid going to people who just got here, when in fact we are suffering just as much but we've chosen to remain at home?" she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Smugglers' earnings

Niger is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking second to last in the latest U.N. Human Development Index. Agadez used to survive on tourism, with Europeans flocking to see its 16th-century clay mosque and sultan's palace, until fears of terrorism scared them away, locals said. Then the Libyan revolution that removed Muammar Gaddafi from power created a security vacuum between Niger and the Mediterranean, and migration surged.



Abdoul Ahmed (second left) pictured outside his mechanic shop with his apprentices in Agadez on Feb 20, 2018. —Reuters

Three years ago, 100 to 200 overloaded pick-up trucks would leave Agadez in a convoy every Monday at sundown, kicking up dust as they sped down routes once travelled by salt traders in camel caravans. Each trip to Libya could earn a smuggler about \$5,000, said Giuseppe Loprete, country head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Now smugglers charge even more, but overall earnings have plummeted since only a few vehicles make it past the checkpoints, he said.

"Communities are losing their main income," said Loprete, explaining that migration revenues sustained not only Agadez but other desert villages along the route as well. His organization is running cash-for-work programmes in the region, paying locals to help dig wells or install electricity. Loprete said such efforts will "buy some time" until people are able to come up with more lasting

solutions. But nothing will replace the level of income they had, he said. Eager to occupy people with something other than migrant smuggling, the EU is also funding alternative employment programs, offering to buy ex-smugglers equipment to start farms or carpentry shops, for example. Niger is one of several West African countries where the EU has struck or is seeking deals to cut migration, offering development aid in exchange for tighter borders, and threatening trade consequences if there is a failure to cooperate. Local government officials said they are counting on the jobs program, which has only just got underway. Privately, aid workers laughed when asked if they thought it would work. Used to making thousands, smugglers are unlikely to settle for meager profits from a farm stand, several said. "I think the EU is trying," said security analyst Maunganidze. —Reuters

News

Egyptians urged to vote as Sisi cruises to win

CAIRO: Egyptian authorities pressed for a high turnout yesterday on the second day of a presidential election expected to give President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi a sweeping victory in the absence of real competition, in a contest dismissed by critics. In an effort to entice voters, the state news agency reminded Egyptians that voting is mandatory and those who do not vote, face a fine of up to 500 pounds (\$28) - a sanction that in previous elections has not been enforced rigorously. "I expect turnout and participation to increase in the coming hours, and I call on Egyptians to go out and vote," said Prime Minister Sherif Ismail.

Sisi says he is seeking a second term to repair the economic damage from years of political turmoil, defeat Islamist insurgents and revive Egypt's role as a preeminent Arab power. His only opponent is an obscure politician loyal to Sisi. More serious challengers were forced to step down and several opposition politicians called for a boycott of the vote, saying repression had removed credible challengers.

But authorities hope that over three days they can mobilize a strong turnout. The president still has many admirers, although austerity measures in recent years and a fierce crackdown on Islamists, secularists and liberals have reduced that support. Brigadier General Ali Hareedi, head of the central elections operations room, said the first

day of voting produced a high turnout "which proves the Egyptian people's awareness". He gave no figure.

Pro-Sisi media said voters were flocking to ballot centers. "Millions of voters gather in front of polling stations...and rejoice in every square," ran a headline in the newspaper Al-Akhbar. Two sources monitoring the election, including one from the National Election Commission, said about 13.5 percent of 59 million eligible voters had cast ballots on Monday. At a polling station in Fayoum, a bastion of Islamist support 100 km south of Cairo, an election official put the turnout at 25 percent, only to be quickly corrected by an army officer who said "over 50".

One 55-year-old civil servant said she had voted partly because her employer had encouraged her to, but also because "there's security now, it's not like Iraq, Syria or Yemen". Her husband did not vote though. "He's not happy about the economy. We hope it will improve, but God only knows. Not everyone is voting because not everyone is convinced (by Sisi)."

Sisi, who in 2013 led the military overthrow of Egypt's first democratically elected president, Mohamed Morsi of the Muslim Brotherhood, took 47 percent of the vote when he was first elected, in 2014. The political risk consultancy Eurasia Group said if the government failed to mobilize voters and publicly admitted to a turnout of below 40 percent, "Sisi would come out of the elections weakened and more vulnerable to domestic pressure".

That seems unlikely, the consultants said, but Reuters reporters found the pace of voting leisurely. The election aroused little interest in Cairo's working-class districts. And at three voting centers in middle-class Dokki, no queues formed and voters were coming in at about one every five minutes. Most people voting for Sisi defended his economic policies and his suppression of political plurality. The blamed their woes on the Brotherhood, saying it



CAIRO: An Egyptian woman dances before a large national flag in Cairo's northern suburb of Shubra al-Khaymah on the second day of voting in the 2018 presidential elections yesterday. — AFP

had created instability and high inflation that had scared off tourists and investment.

Saeed Mohieddine, 67, a retired employee, said: "I voted for Sisi for the things he has achieved. He crushed terrorism, built new cities and started new development projects." "Inflation started six years ago during the

Brotherhood days; Sisi didn't find anybody to stand against him," he said. "Not everything can be done at once. The country needs to get going." Ahmed Adel, a 50-year-old stockbroker, said he had voted for Sisi because he had brought stability and security. "I can now walk in the street feeling secure," he said. — Reuters

As cash from Gulf dries up...

Continued from Page 1

India noted in a 2016 report. "Unskilled workers, employed as drivers and laborers, are coming back in large numbers," said Amit Meena, the administrative head of Malappuram, which has an estimated 300,000 workers in the Gulf - at least one from every home. "And back home, they are in a fix because the loan payments are mounting for the big homes they built or the cars they bought with Gulf money," he said.

As migration increases around the world - spurred by climate extremes, conflict and economic stresses - remittances are helping boost prosperity, from Nepal to Haiti. But the crucial flow of cash that families and countries have come to depend on is vulnerable to everything from shifting political policy on migration to economic slowdowns.

Since the 1960s, remittances from the Gulf have been the backbone of Kerala's economy, making up a third of the state's gross domestic product, finance ministry officials said. Of an estimated 6 million Indians who have migrated for employment, 2.5 million are from Kerala, most working in the six Gulf states of Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Oman. The fruits of their labor are visible along the roads crisscrossing Malappuram district, in the big gates and driveways that sweep into large homes with porches.

Construction consultant Babu Vahab's office in Venniyur has stacks of home design magazines and photo albums of smart houses. In the last year, he has overseen the construction of nearly 15 projects in and around Venniyur. "Even the most modest homes I have worked on are double-shot and have at least five bedrooms," Vahab said, noting they cost upward of 1 million Indian rupees (\$15,414). "Families come to my office with ambitious designs, often downloaded from the Internet. Irrespective of what work they do in the Gulf, their homes here will always be grand," he said.

Mohammad Ali, 52, is the proud owner of one such house. He returned to his neighborhood of "non-resident Indians" in Cherumukku town last year, after working as an office boy in Dubai for 36 years. But today he is a worried man as his cash runs short and jobs at home prove scarce. "I built the house, married my daughters, organized a passport for one son, and all my income (has) just finished. For the last year, I have been using my meager savings for everyday expenses," he said, sitting outside his home.

Ali's 21-year-old son left for the Gulf three months ago but has yet to send home any money. "Every time he calls, he says times are tough," Ali said. "I understand the hardship of working there," he added. "But I was luckier than

him. I went happily, knowing I would make money if I worked hard. He has gone grudgingly and we are not sure he will earn enough."

Many other Kerala families also say they are not receiving much cash from the Gulf these days, and are putting plans for big purchases on hold. That has drastically reduced footfall in the glitzy furniture stores, Gulf-inspired supermarkets and hardware shops that dot the district's highways. In some cases, families are even sending money to the Gulf to support migrant relatives until they find jobs, Ali said.

A Kerala migration survey conducted by the Centre for Development Studies, based in the region, first spotted the dip in remittances and drop in local migrants to the Gulf in 2016. That year, the number living there fell to 2.24 million from 2.4 million in 2014. "Looking at the present situation, I suspect the ongoing 2018 survey will show a further decline," said S. Irudaya Rajan, the professor who headed the survey.

Dileep Thacheru Parambil, who worked in the Gulf for 10 years and now runs the Kerala Emigrants' Organization, said he has had "disturbing news" almost every day in the last year. Work permit renewal fees and taxes in the Gulf have increased, he said, and "nationalization" policies now give preference to locals in recruitment in some places. Meanwhile, with Saudi Arabia allowing women in the driver's seat, Parambil fears family drivers - many of them Kerala migrants - will be axed.

Others fear cuts in hospitality industry jobs, for decades dominated by Indian workers. "Last week, in Jeddah, nearly 4,000 Indian families have put in requests to pull their children out of school" rather than re-enroll them for the next school year, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation at his office. "It's a sign that things are not okay," he said. "And here we can see the immediate impact with car sales down, land sales down, and construction coming to a virtual standstill."

In an adjoining building, a bank manager, who asked not to be named, said Gulf remittances had dropped by at least 15 percent in the last year, with rising cases of loan defaults. M. Gopa Kumar, a spokesman for the state's finance ministry, agreed the Gulf downturn was causing concern at home. "Spending has definitely dropped, indicating that people are saving because of the uncertainty in the Gulf," he said. Return migration is also becoming a major issue as the agriculture sector cannot absorb those coming back, while further urbanization or construction in the state is becoming "ecologically unviable", he said.

The government has begun putting in place a plan to help returning migrants by allowing some to enroll in local pension schemes and helping anxious families find new ways to earn a living. But some returnees say they feel "abandoned". "We are back home, but don't feel like we belong here," said Saldalavi Thottungal, who spent 35 years in the Gulf and whose son has spent the last three months job-hunting there. "The homes we built with our toil are grand. But inside these homes, all is not well. We suddenly have no income and we don't know how to restart our lives." — Reuters

Camel power turns sesame into...

Continued from Page 1

Chari Amini has taken over the business started by his father and his 12-year-old son is already helping him as he prepares to become the next generation of sesame oil producers. Amini buys sesame at the local market, which are grown between rows of wheat, hashish and poppies in the fertile soil of Balkh province, which borders Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

If the seeds are of good quality, one kilogram can produce half a litre of oil. "We are about 35 producers in Mazar-i-Sharif, all Turkmen, and we all know each other," says Amini, his bald head covered with a turban, referring to the capital of Balkh. "We are honest - it's the key to business," he explains. "We never stopped during the wars."

Amini also presses sesame for farmers who bring their harvest to him, charging 100 Afghanis (\$1.50) per ser, a traditional unit of weight that is equal to seven kilos. Dark chunks of residue are collected and used as fuel in homes. This modest trade brings Amini 20,000 Afghanis per month - not as lucrative as opium poppy used to produce heroin, but better than the income of a soldier. And it is enough to support his five children.

His shop is one of several facing a wide road in Mazar-i-Sharif, the front entirely open to customers. Every two hours, his employee Alokozai pours 11 kg of seeds into the press and takes the reins of the camel to guide him around the circle. Alokozai never considered doing anything else with his life, he says, surprised by the question.

Each camel works for 10 hours a day. Amini keeps the animals for 18 months and then resells them "for a profit" once they are muscular. Roughly 300,000 litres of sesame oil are produced using the traditional method each year in Balkh, according to Zabihullah Zubin, a director at the provincial Department of Agriculture. That provides a livelihood for about 50 producers. About 300 farmers produce sesame but they prefer to sell on the regional market for a higher price - 120 Afghanis per kilo against 90 Afghanis in the Mazar-i-Sharif bazaar, explains Zubin.

This method of producing sesame oil is competing with more efficient industrial presses, of which Mazar-i-Sharif has three. "They have the food technology, they know how to process, to clean the seeds, do the packaging... the small manual production would need investment and technical support" to access the overseas market, said Zubin.

Joseph Nezam, an Afghan-French businessman, is trying to develop local sesame oil production with the support of the American development agency USAID so they can sell directly into markets abroad. "Afghanistan has a very good quality sesame but people prefer to sell to neighboring countries that serve as an intermediary to the international market, and help them to produce at European standards," Nezam says.

Old customers of Amini swear that the camel-pressed sesame oil they use to flavor their traditional Afghan rice dish kabuli palau is "totally organic, healthier, and sweeter" than industrial presses that "burn" seeds by crushing them. "It's better than any tablet or medicine," says Hajji Abdul Ghani Rahmani, a traditional doctor who stops by Amini's shop to stock up on sesame oil to use at his clinic. "You can use it and feel better very soon," he adds, as he massages the knee and leg of an elderly man sitting inside the shop. — AFP

Should rubber ducks be banned...

Continued from Page 1

infections, it added. The main problem is that warm water gathers inside the toy, often made of low-quality polymers, which release organic carbon compounds that serve as nutrients to growing bacteria colonies.

"During bathing, other key nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus, as well as additional bacteria, are con-

tributed by the human body (body fluids such as urine and sweat), external contaminants and personal care products," according to the study. This allows bacteria and fungi to multiply inside of a toy children often enjoy using to squirt water into their faces. "This could strengthen the immune system, which would be positive, but it can also result in eye, ear, or even gastrointestinal infections," microbiologist Frederik Hammes pointed out in yesterday's statement.

So should we toss the ducks out with the bathwater? Or as some suggest on Internet comment forums, simply plug their holes to avoid the accumulation in their cavity? Hammes suggests a more scientific approach: Tighter regulations on the polymeric materials used to produce bath toys. — AFP

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Sports

Wilder awaits, but heavyweight Joshua has eyes only for Parker

Parker stopped 18 opponents during an unbeaten 24-fight career

ISLEWORTH: Anthony Joshua heads into his bout against rival world heavyweight champion Joseph Parker in Cardiff on Saturday with Deontay Wilder lying in wait—but the Briton insists he is not looking beyond this fight.

Joshua is putting his International Boxing Federation and World Boxing Association titles on the line against World Boxing Organisation champion Parker in front of an expected 78,000 sell-out crowd at the Principality Stadium.

It will be the first time two undefeated heavyweight champions have met in a title fight in the United Kingdom, with the British Olympic gold medalist boasting a professional record of 20 wins, including 20 knockouts, from as many contests, while New Zealander Parker has stopped 18 of his opponents inside the distance during an unbeaten 24-fight career.

But next in line for the winner is Deontay Wilder, the American who holds the World Boxing Council version of the heavyweight title. "It's 1,000 percent one fight at a time," Joshua told a news conference at the London headquarters of broadcaster Sky Sports. "My future stops on Saturday. One fight at a time. All this talk about Wilder. I'm looking at Parker, he's a champion for a reason." Joshua added: "He (Parker) is quick and he can take a punch but that is what I have heard, so I am repeating what people are saying. 'Let's say I've got £20 in my pocket, looking at myself I believe Anthony Joshua knocks out Joseph Parker for sure.'"

Joshua had been accused by Parker of showing disrespect to travelling New Zealand media by failing to grant them a separate interview slot last week.

'TAKE CARE OF BUSINESS'

But he insisted that, after several hours of press duties, he had to eat before heading off for another training session. "People thought I walked out on the New Zealand press but that wasn't the case, I had to make a move and I was willing to return," Joshua said. "Unless I take care of business, no one is going to interview me."

Meanwhile Joshua said he was in the best shape of his career after dethroning Wladimir Klitschko in a brutal battle and seeing off Carlos Takam. "Every fight has been a learning fight and every camp a learning camp," he explained. "I learnt from the Klitschko fight I shouldn't use camp to get fit. I took everything I didn't know then into this camp. I've been working solely on my technique and ability."

"Takam was game, he was a lot shorter, he was in great shape, I wanted to control him. I knew there would be a big 2018 on the horizon." Parker, wearing a smart suit and glasses, was equally bullish about his chances.

'MY TIME'

"It's great to be here, we've had a great build-up and a great camp. I can't wait to put on a great display on March 31," he said. "I'm taking those belts back to New Zealand. 'Joshua is a great champion and we respect him and what he's achieved. We love challenges."

"It's my time, I'm young, sharp and am determined to win. I'm here to be part of history, doing it for my



LONDON: Britain's Anthony Joshua (2L) and New Zealand's Joseph Parker (2R) attend a press conference in London yesterday ahead of their world heavyweight title unification boxing bout with promoters Eddie Hearn (3L) and David Higgins (3R) and trainers Robert McCracken (L) and Kevin Barry (R)—AFP

team, family and country. "I'm going to beat AJ, I haven't decided how I will win. These belts are mine."

His trainer, Kevin Barry, said he was delighted to be working with a fully-fit boxer following Parker's history of elbow trouble. "This has been the most enjoyable time we have spent together for the last eight years," Barry said.

"I think he has the best skill, the fastest hands of

all the heavyweights and I will see if I have been dreaming or am proved right on Saturday night." But Rob McCracken, Joshua's trainer, countered by saying: "Being relaxed and comfortable preparing for fights like this doesn't do anything for what happens when you are in there facing Joshua. 'You won't know what's happening when you get hit by Anthony Joshua.'" — AFP

ONE Championship pushes into Thailand despite challenges

BANGKOK: As someone who has practiced Thai boxing (Muay Thai) for 30 years, Chatri Sityodtong knows very well the challenges he faces as he tries to bring his version of Mixed Martial Arts to the Southeast Asian nation.

Chatri, who left a Wall Street career to start the ONE Championship in 2011, said the first major problem was a Thai misconception about the series born of televised western versions of cage fighting.

"Thais have a misconception, they think ONE Championship is about MMA," the ONE Championship chief executive, who has Thai and Japanese parentage, told Reuters in an interview.

"MMA is what our western counterparts use to promote violence. Real martial arts is about respect, humility and discipline." Given the long history of martial arts in Thailand, the country should be a fruitful recruiting ground for fighters and audiences alike.

But getting Muay Thai boxers to take up MMA has been a challenge with the fighters reluctant to learn new rules and techniques, especially around ground fighting, which does not feature in the local codes.

Muay Thai fighter Thaweechai Chatarasuk underwent some MMA training before deciding to stick to what he knew. "Muay Thai is better, you can learn more from it," he said.

The chairman of the Kru Muay Thai Association, Chinawut Sirisompan, says MMA has good promotion and media but Thais prefer stand-up striking techniques and are "bored" by ground fighting.

ONE Championship's CEO is no stranger to Muay Thai, having trained with legendary Muay Thai coach, the late Master Yodtong Senanan, who gave him the ringname, Chatri.

His familiarity with its old traditions and rituals that pay homage to masters and respect for opponents, is helping ONE Championship connect with Muay Thai fans and practitioners. The ONE Championship is seeing more Muay Thai athletes joining its kickboxing and MMA league, Chatri said. Muay Thai-to-MMA convert, Dejdamrong Sor Amnuaysirichoke, says it helps if Muay Thai fighters understand MMA rules, especially around ground fighting. "Muay Thai gives us an advantage in MMA," he said. "Thais should keep an open mind and give MMA a chance."

Female ONE Championship athlete, Rika Ishige, said that if Thais took time to understand the rules, they would see it was not barbaric. "The thing that will bring (Muay Thai) further on in the future is MMA," she said.

Chatri's vision is to build a sports property that will bring Asia together through martial arts and believes the rags-to-riches stories of its athletes can help. "Ninety five percent of our athletes come from incredible backgrounds of tragedy and poverty," Chatri said.

"Their spirit to overcome adversity represents authentic martial arts." They are stories also familiar to fans of Muay Thai with those fighters typically having impoverished beginnings in rural Thailand. —Reuters



KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the event on behalf of His Highness the Amir.— KUNA photos

Amir patronizes equestrian club festival finale

KUWAIT: Under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the Hunting and Equestrian Club held on Monday evening the finale of the 2017-18 Amiri equestrian sports festival cup.

Horse 'Al-Mertejez' from Al-Asayel stable won the event. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah attended the event on behalf of His Highness the Amir.

Meanwhile, HH the Amir will attend and patronize today the opening of Kuwait Motor City project at 10:30 am. — KUNA



Sports

Venus Williams, Azarenka march into Miami quarter-finals

Pliskova advance to last eight, Diyas forced to retire

MIAMI: Venus Williams upended defending champion Johanna Konta 5-7 6-1 6-2 on Monday to reach the Miami Open quarter-finals while a dominant Victoria Azarenka also advanced with a straightforward win over Agnieszka Radwanska.

Three-times champion Williams stormed back from an early deficit to cruise past the British 11th seed, who needed several bouts of treatment on her lower back throughout a match that lasted two hours and 19 minutes.

Perhaps more impressive was that Williams, who turns 38 in June, was able to look so in control despite playing a day after spending nearly three hours on the court for her third round clash against Dutchwoman Kiki Bertens.

"The first set was definitely all her, and she came up with some amazing shots to break me at 5-all," Williams told reporters. "There was not much I could do there, except hope I could keep up in the second and third sets." Former world number one Azarenka, in only her second event after an eight-month absence because of a custody dispute involving her son, also looked sharp throughout her 6-2 6-2 win over 30th-seeded Pole Radwanska. The Belarussian, competing as a wild card, won 79 percent of her first service points and needed only 82 minutes to prevail in a clash between former Miami champions.

Up next for the 28-year-old is Czech fifth seed Karolina Pliskova, who advanced to the last eight after Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan was forced to retire injured while trailing 6-2 2-1. "Pliskova is an amazing player, a

top 10 player," Azarenka said.

"For me, it's a challenge to see how I can approach that and how I can progress from that match. It's perfect. I wouldn't ask for anything else."

Former world number one Pliskova was efficient from the start and did not drop a point on her first serves in the entire match against Diyas, who took multiple medical time-outs and was visibly struggling with her movement. Sloane Stephens raised her game to levels similar to last year when she won the US Open as she beat Spanish third seed Garbine Muguruza 6-3 6-4 and secure passage to the quarter-finals.

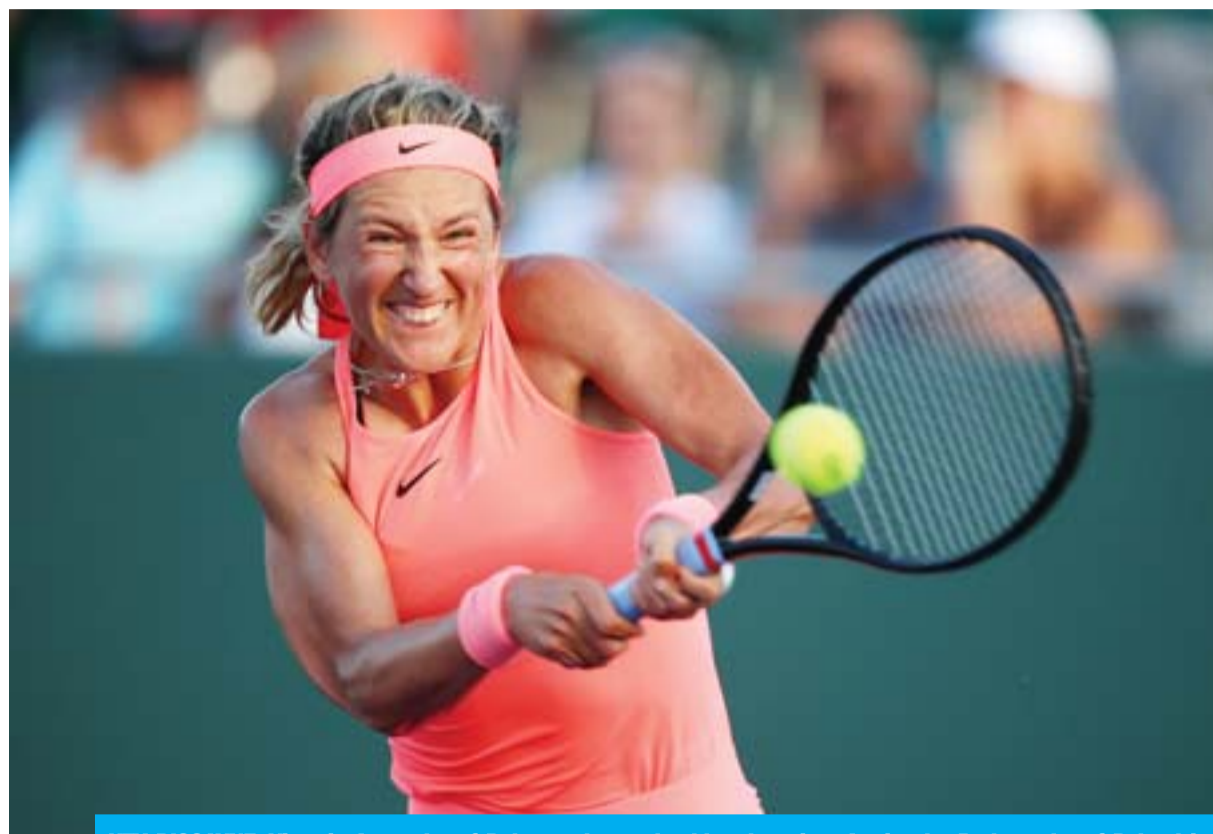
The American 13th seed dictated play against the Wimbledon champion from the start by taking eight of the first nine points of the match.

After securing a break in the fifth game of the second set, Stephens sent Muguruza packing with a backhand on the line on her second match point.

Stephens, who equalled her best result in Miami having also reached the quarter-finals in 2015, will next face German 10th seed Angelique Kerber, a 6-7(1) 7-6(5) 6-3 winner over Chinese qualifier Wang Yafan.

Ukrainian fourth seed Elina Svitolina also advanced with a 7-5 6-4 win over Australian Ashleigh Barty.

French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko will cap the night session with her clash against ninth-seeded Czech Petra Kvitova. French Open champion Jelena Ostapenko capped the night session with a 7-6(4) 6-3 triumph over ninth-seeded Czech Petra Kvitova.



KEY BISCAZYNE: Victoria Azarenka of Belarus plays a backhand against Agnieszka Radwanska of Poland in their fourth round match during the Miami Open Presented by Itau at Crandon Park Tennis Center on Monday in Key Biscayne, Florida. — AFP

Monica Puig, the 2016 Olympic gold medallist who defeated world number two Caroline Wozniacki, had

her run end with a 3-6 6-4 6-2 loss to Danielle Collins, who will meet Williams in the quarter-finals. — Reuters

“There was not much I could do there”

Zverev rallies to down Ferrer

MIAMI: Alexander Zverev rallied from a one set deficit to defeat Spain's David Ferrer 2-6 6-2 6-4 in the third round of the Miami Open on Monday as he moved a step closer to a breakthrough title this year.

The 20-year-old German has yet to recapture the form that earned him five singles titles, including two Masters events, in 2017 but he has displayed guile in prevailing in a pair of three-set matches in Miami.

Zverev, ranked fifth in the world, recovered from a rusty opening set to break Ferrer's service three times in the second set and twice more in the decisive stanza.

He will next face Australian Nick Kyrgios, who advanced with a 6-3 6-3 win over Fabio Fognini.

"I knew it was going to be tough. He has a lot of tricks up his sleeve and he's very unpredictable," Kyrgios said. "We both competed. I just played a little better in some bigger points."

In earlier action, Fernando Verdasco dug deep to earn a 3-6 6-4 7-6(4) win over Australian qualifier Thanasi Kokkinakis to set up a fourth round clash against fellow Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta.

The 34-year-old fired down 13 aces to beat Kokkinakis, who had been full of confidence after stunning world number one and defending champion Roger Federer in the second round.

Verdasco, who reached the Miami quarter-finals in 2009 and 2010, rallied from a 3-1 deficit in the third set and again from 3-0 down in the decisive tiebreaker before prevailing in a match that lasted nearly three hours. He then got involved in a Twitter spat with Kyrgios, who had expressed his desire for the Spaniard to lose his third round match.

Next up for Verdasco is Carreno Busta, who beat



KEY BISCAZYNE: Alexander Zverev of Germany returns a shot to David Ferrer of Spain during the Miami Open Presented by Itau at Crandon Park Tennis Center on Monday. — AFP

American Steve Johnson 6-4 6-4 to reach the fourth round for the first time.

"It's never easy," Carreno Busta, the 16th seed, said after his 78-minute match.

"And this is the first time that I've played on this court. But I feel really comfortable and I'm playing good. When you play with confidence it's easier."

Also reaching the fourth round were Kevin Anderson, a 4-6 6-2 6-3 winner over Karen Khachanov, and Denis Shapovalov, who upset 11th-seeded American Sam Querrey 6-4 3-6 7-5.

Unseeded American Frances Tiafoe was leading his match against 10th seed Tomas Berdych, 6-7(2) 6-2 5-4 when it was suspended due to darkness. — Reuters

Thailand's in-form Aphibarnrat ready to spring US Masters surprise

TEXAS: Thailand's Kiradech Aphibarnrat is hoping to emerge as a surprise contender at next week's US Masters following a string of consistent performances over the last two months.

The 28-year-old has been in blistering form since winning the World Super 6 Perth title in February and Richard Mille Brunei Championships earlier this month.

With momentum on his side, Aphibarnrat recorded a tied-fifth finish in the WGC-Mexico Championships before being beaten in last week's WGC-Dell Match Play in Texas in the quarter-finals by eventual winner Bubba Watson. His performances in the last four months of the season saw him jump from 160th in the world into the top 50 and the result at Texas moved him up to a career-high 29th. "The way I fought to qualify for the Masters is amazing. Now I want to show the world an Asian can surprise and contend in a major," he told the Asian Tour website.

"I've been comfortable with the way I've been playing. I'm feeling very confident and I've putted very well lately. I look forward to playing in Augusta. I will try to go earlier and try and feel comfortable on the greens."

It will be Aphibarnrat's second appearance at the Augusta National after securing a credible tied-15th on his Masters debut in 2016, his best result at a major so far. "The goal now is to try and stay inside the top 30 and hopefully earn a PGA Tour card," he said.

"I will give it my best at the Masters because I have such good memories there. Augusta is a golf course which suits my game and I've been playing very well so hopefully it will be another week which I will remember." The Masters will be played from April 5-8. — Reuters

F1 is missing a vital ingredient, says Brawn

LONDON: Formula One's Australian season-opener lacked a vital ingredient, overtaking, and it will take years to fix the problem, managing director for motorsports Ross Brawn said on Monday. The former Honda, Brawn GP and Mercedes team boss said in a review of the Melbourne weekend that a fundamental rethink was needed. "Think of how much wheel-to-wheel dicing we missed out on," he said. "The point is that, until we take a structured approach to the problem, we won't really make any progress."

"One of our aims, which we are looking at with the (governing) FIA and the teams is that, for 2021, we want to have cars that allow drivers to really fight one another on track," he added. The sport is preparing for a major shake-up after 2020, when current commercial and technical agreements expire.

Brawn, who won multiple championships at Benetton and Ferrari as technical director when Michael Schumacher was dominant, said the FIA and Formula One were carrying out aerodynamic research using wind

tunnel models and computer dynamics.

"We need to evolve a car design that achieves close to the level of performance we now see, but permits wheel-to-wheel action," he said. Several drivers, including Mercedes' four-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, complained after Sunday's race about how difficult it had been to overtake with the cars' aerodynamics creating turbulence in their wake. The Albert Park layout also makes it hard to get past even though this year there was a third zone where the DRS (drag reduction system) moveable rear wing flap could be used to make it easier to pass.

"My best friend was on the edge of a cliff and I couldn't get to him to save his life today, that's how hard it was to overtake," said Hamilton, who had started on pole position but finished second. Ferrari's race winner Sebastian Vettel did not pass Hamilton on the track, however, but in the pitlane during a virtual safety car period.

Red Bull's 20-year-old Dutch driver Max Verstappen, who finished sixth on Sunday and provided one of the highlights with a 360 degree spin that cost him several places, was even more scathing.

"Completely worthless. I would have turned off the TV," motorsport.com quoted him as saying when asked what the race would have been like for watching fans. "It was very boring. You do your best to try something, and I was in DRS range all the time, but there is nothing you can do." —Reuters

Nadal back for Spain in Davis Cup

MADRID: Rafael Nadal celebrates his impending return to world number one spot with a recall yesterday to Spain's Davis Cup team for the quarter-final tie against Germany. Nadal, who will top the latest world rankings to be released Monday, rejoins the squad for the first time since 2016 for the April 6-8 tie, team captain Sergi Bruguera announced.

The 16-time Grand Slam winner is certain to take over from Roger Federer as world number one after the shock defeat of the Swiss ace in the second round of the Miami Masters on Saturday.

Bruguera said that the 31-year-old was recovering well from an injury to his right leg that has sidelined him since he pulled out of the Australian Open in January. In February, he pulled out of the Mexican Open just hours before his opening match.

"I have kept in touch with him and he is going from strength to strength and he is feeling good after his convalescence and he is training more," said Bruguera. Nadal last appeared for Spain in the Davis Cup in September 2016. Pablo Carreno, Roberto Bautista, David Ferrer and Feliciano Lopez line up with Nadal for the tie on clay in Valencia, eastern Spain.

The winner of the tie will meet either France or Italy in the semi-final. In the other two quarter-finals, Croatia play Kazakhstan and the United States play Belgium. Nadal, who turns 32 in June, ended 2017 as the oldest year-end world number one in the 45-year history of the ATP rankings. He lost the top ranking to Federer in February. —AFP

Sunderland and Walkner poised to strike in Desert Challenge

ABU DHABI: Sam Sunderland and Matthias Walkner are well poised to challenge for the 2018 Abu Dhabi Desert Challenge title heading into the second half of the rally raid race. The perilous sand dunes have tested the mettle of the world's elite with defending bike champion Sunderland keen to make up for his Dakar Rally back injury retirement. Here is all you need to know:

- The Briton sits second overall behind Chilean leader Pablo Quintanilla with Austrian Walkner sitting third in the wake of his maiden Dakar win.

- Sunderland revealed: "A lot of the track was off piste and the sun was pretty high and I reckon I lost time today. It was an extremely hot and long day."

- Walkner added: "That was a rough stage and really hot. The big peaks and dunes were difficult to read. In the end we rode together to the finish."

- Australian Toby Price, who slipped down the standings due to a shattered fuel pump, said: "I lost so much time which will be hard to make up, but that's rallying."

- Czech Martin Prokop is in control of the cars from Pole Kuba Przygonski and UAE driver Khalid Al Qassimi with five-time bike winner Cyril Despres back in fifth.

- The Frenchman explained: "It was a very hot and exhausting day and I ran out of water at one point. I started seeing stars."

- Compatriot Luc Alphand, who has suffered gearbox trouble, said: "We started having a problem selecting the gears and then after that we only had second gear." —Reuters

Sports

Expansion Knights clinch Stanley Cup playoff berth

Kings blank Flames, tie Ducks for 3rd in Pacific

LAS VEGAS: Marc-Andre Fleury made 28 saves to pick up his 403rd career victory and tie Grant Fuhr for 11th place on the all-time wins list as the expansion Vegas Golden Knights clinched a Stanley Cup playoff berth with a 4-1 decision over the visiting Colorado Avalanche on Monday in Las Vegas. William Karlsson and Jonathan Marchessault each had a goal and two assists, Shea Theodore finished with a goal and an assist, and Alex Tuch also scored a goal for Pacific Division-leading Vegas. The Golden Knights' Gerard Gallant earned his 200th career coaching victory. The Golden Knights became the third expansion team since 1968-69 to make the Stanley Cup playoffs. The Hartford Whalers and Edmonton Oilers both accomplished the feat in 1979-80 after moving over from the World Hockey Association. Semyon Varlamov made 26 saves for Colorado, and Erik Johnson scored his ninth goal of the season.



Third team since 1968-69 to make the playoffs

CANADIENS 4, RED WINGS 2

Brendan Gallagher netted a pair of goals 5:05 apart in the second period, and Montreal defeated visiting Detroit in a battle of teams eliminated from the playoff race. Alex Galchenyuk had a goal and an assist, and Paul Byron also scored for Montreal. Canadiens goalie Carey Price made 26 saves. Detroit got one goal and one assist from Gustav Nyquist, and Tyler Bertuzzi added a goal. Jared Coreau stopped 27 shots.

SABRES 3, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Jack Eichel scored the tiebreaking goal with 10:23 remaining in the third period as Buffalo ended Toronto's team-record 13-game home winning streak. Eichel also scored Buffalo's first goal and recorded his fifth multi-goal game of the season and 15th career. It was his first two goals since returning March 17 from a 15-game absence caused by an ankle injury, and he matched his career high by scoring his 23rd and 24th goals. Casey Nelson also scored while Zemgus Girgensons recorded two assists as Buffalo snapped a four-game losing streak. Patrick Marleau and Nazem

Kadri collected goals for the Maple Leafs.

KINGS 3, FLAMES 0

Dion Phaneuf, Anze Kopitar and Jeff Carter scored power-play goals, and Jonathan Quick stopped 23 shots for his fifth shutout of the season as Los Angeles topped visiting Calgary. The Kings moved into a tie with Anaheim for third place in the Pacific Division with 91 points. The result also moves Los Angeles a point ahead of the Colorado Avalanche and two points in front of the St. Louis Blues in the wild-card chase.

Phaneuf and Kopitar each finished the night with a goal and an assist. Dustin Brown added

secondary helpers on the final two goals.

SHARKS 4, BLACKHAWKS 3 (SO)

Kevin Labanc scored the decisive goal in a shootout, and San Jose won at Chicago for its eighth victory in a row. Logan Couture also scored during the shootout round for San Jose, which has not lost a game in more than two weeks. Marcus Sorensen, Evander Kane and Tomas Hertl scored in regulation for the Sharks. Alex DeBrincat, Connor Murphy and Patrick Sharp each tallied goals for the Blackhawks. Sharp also scored during the shootout.

COYOTES 4, LIGHTNING 1

Trevor Murphy scored his first career NHL goal, and visiting Arizona pulled away for a win at Tampa Bay. Jakob Chychrun, Brendan Perlini and Clayton Keller also scored for the Coyotes, who snapped a two-game skid. Arizona goaltender Antti Raanta allowed a Nikita Kucherov goal late in the third period to spoil a chance for his third shutout of the season. Raanta made 19 saves. Tampa Bay goaltender Louis Domingue stopped 31 of 34 shots but drew the loss against his former team.

CAPITALS 4, RANGERS 2

Alex Ovechkin and Evgeny Kuznetsov each had a



MONTREAL: Brendan Gallagher #11 of the Montreal Canadiens tips in the puck past goaltender Jared Coreau #31 of the Detroit Red Wings during the NHL game at the Bell Centre on Monday in Montreal, Quebec, Canada. — AFP

goal and an assist as Washington scored four first-period goals and defeated host New York for a fourth consecutive win. Washington also got one goal apiece from Matt Niskanen and T.J. Oshie. Nicklas Backstrom had two assists, giving him six in the past two games. Rangers center Lias Andersson scored a goal in his first NHL game, and Mats Zuccarello also collected a goal.

HURRICANES 4, SENATORS 1

Warren Foegele notched a goal in his first NHL game to start the scoring as Carolina defeated visiting Ottawa. The Hurricanes' Valentin Zykov and Brock McGinn scored in a 98-second span of the second period. Sebastian Aho added an empty-net goal and Derek Ryan provided two assists for the Hurricanes, who have won three games in a row to keep alive slim

playoff hopes in the Eastern Conference. Bobby Ryan scored for Ottawa.

PANTHERS 3, ISLANDERS 0

Keith Yandle, Nick Bjugstad and Evgenii Dadonov scored goals, and James Reimer tied a career high by recording his fourth shutout of the season for Florida, which moved closer to a wild-card spot and eliminated host New York from playoff contention. The Panthers won for the seventh time in 10 games (7-3-0) to close within one point of the idle New Jersey Devils for the second wild card in the Eastern Conference. Florida has a game in hand on New Jersey. Reimer stopped all 32 shots he faced. The Islanders lost their third straight and fell for the ninth time in 11 games (2-6-3). New York will miss the playoffs for the third time in the past four seasons. — Reuters

Axe looms for Australia coach and captain in cricket crisis

JOHANNESBURG: Australia coach Darren Lehmann and skipper Steve Smith faced the axe yesterday with cricket chiefs holding crisis talks in South Africa to deal with an escalating cheating scandal.

Cricket Australia (CA) boss James Sutherland, under mounting pressure to come down hard on what Australian media has dubbed a "rotten" team culture, has arrived in Johannesburg and is expected to give a press conference later. Sutherland is holding talks with Cricket Australia's head of integrity, Iain Roy, who is probing the ball-tampering scandal during the third Test match against South Africa on Saturday.

Reports say they could ban both Smith and vice-captain David Warner for 12 months and send them home in disgrace. Smith has already been suspended for one Test and docked his entire match fee by the International Cricket Council for his role in a plot that saw teammate Cameron Bancroft use a piece of grit-encrusted sticky tape to change the condition of the ball. It means Smith will miss the fourth and final Test in Johannesburg starting Friday.

LEHMANN SILENCE

Lehmann has remained silent, but Britain's Daily Telegraph said he had decided to quit. Lehmann took over the coaching reins in 2013 when predecessor

Mickey Arthur was sacked, with Justin Langer considered a frontrunner as his replacement although Ricky Ponting will also be in the mix.

"We understand the strong interest everyone has in this situation and we are following due process to properly address all of the relevant issues involved," Sunderland said in an email.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said Tuesday it had been "a shocking affront to Australia" and Cricket Australia must act "decisively and emphatically". Former Australian coach John Buchanan, who led the team from 1999 to 2007, said Smith must resign as captain and urged cricket chiefs to be fully transparent in their investigation. "It is a very difficult time for members of Australian cricket; however, I believe there is a golden opportunity to reset the dial around player and staff behaviours, actions and decision-making," he told reporters.

NATIONAL OUTCRY

There has been a national outcry over Smith's admission that the "leadership group" within the team decided to cheat. That group of senior players usually includes fast bowlers Josh Hazlewood and Mitchell Starc, but they are reportedly furious at being embroiled in the saga.

The ramifications of the scandal have been far-reaching with the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the guardian of the laws of the game, calling for a "major shift in attitude" to preserve the game for future generations. Former South African captain Graeme Smith has hit out at the ICC's handling of the scandal, saying it had "missed an opportunity to really handle this properly and lead our game". "They haven't done that. You have had two players, who have admitted guilt for cheating. I think that's huge."



CAPE TOWN: Coach Darren Lehmann of the Australian Cricket Team arrives at OR Tambo International Airport after the team was caught cheating in the Sunfoil Test Series between Australia and South Africa yesterday. — AFP

ASHES ACCUSATION

Bancroft used a strip of yellow sticky tape he had covered with dirt granules to illegally scratch the rough side of the ball, thereby facilitating more swing for bowlers. He was filmed not only rubbing the ball with the dirtied tape but concealing the evidence down the front of his trousers. The ICC fined him 75 percent of his match fee and slapped him with three demerit points, but he escaped a suspension. Former South Africa captain Fanie de Villiers has described how he tipped off the TV camera crew that caught Bancroft in the act after he noticed the ball behaving unusually for the conditions.

"We actually said to our cameramen:

'Go out. Have a look, boys. They are using something.' It's impossible for the ball to get altered like that on a cricket wicket where we knew there is a grass covering on." De Villiers told Australian radio station RSN927.

Smith insisted it was the first time his team had cheated in this manner, but former England captain Michael Vaughan claimed he is "pretty sure" Australia were ball-tampering during their 4-0 victory in the Ashes, which finished earlier this year.

"I look at the amount of tape some of the fielders have worn, particularly during the Ashes series at mid-on and mid-off. You don't have to name names, they know who they are," he told BBC Sport. — AFP

Fanie de Villiers undoes Australia again

CAPE TOWN: Twenty-four years ago Fanie de Villiers dismantled an Australian cricket team with a sensational spell of swing bowling. Now he has emerged as one of the key figures in exposing the current Australian side as ball tamperers. In January 1994, an inexperienced South African team, on their first tour of Australia after two decades of political isolation, faced almost certain defeat when Australia needed just 116 runs to win the second Test in Sydney.

Playing in just his second Test, De Villiers took six for 43 and bowled South Africa to an improbable five-run victory in a match in which they had been forced to follow on and in which Shane Warne had taken 12 wickets for Australia. Twenty-four years later De Villiers was at

Newlands as a television commentator, trying to understand how the Australians were able to get reverse swing on a grassy field with a ball which was still relatively new.

De Villiers told Australian radio station RSN927 that he had tipped off the camera crew that caught Cameron Bancroft rubbing the ball with a piece of yellow tape which the batsman then tried to conceal.

"We actually said to our cameramen: 'Go out. Have a look, boys. They are using something.' It's impossible for the ball to get altered like that on a cricket wicket where we knew there is a grass covering on. It's not a Pakistani wicket where there are cracks every centimetre. I said earlier that if they could get reverse swing in the 26th, 27th, 28th over, then they are doing something different from what everyone else does."

According to De Villiers, it took the cameramen an hour and a half of searching before they caught Bancroft in the act. Bancroft admitted he panicked when he saw close-up images of himself on the big screen, leading him to try to conceal the tape in his underwear, an image shown around the cricketing world and reproduced on websites and numerous newspapers.

"I was nervous about it because with hundreds of cam-



Fanie de Villiers (right)

eras around that's always the risk," Bancroft said when he admitted to using the tape to rub against the ball. It was only a slight exaggeration. SuperSport television producer Alvin Naicker said that 30 cameras were at the ground, with seven instructed to follow the ball at all times, even when it was out of play. — AFP

Bangladesh eye Kirsten as team consultant

DHAKA: Bangladesh cricket authorities said yesterday they were in talks with former South African batsman Gary Kirsten to hire him as a team consultant for an extended period. Bangladesh have been looking for a head coach for the national cricket team since October, after former Sri Lankan opener Chandika Hathurusingha stepped down.

But Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) spokesperson Jalal Yunus said they had offered Kirsten, 50, who was India's coach when they won the 2011 World Cup, a different role unlike that of a head coach.

"He is on our list but he will come only as a team consultant. It's not final, though. Hopefully we will be able to strike a deal after the Indian Premier League," Yunus said. Kirsten, who played 101 Tests and 185 one-day internationals for South Africa before coaching the Proteas and India, will be in charge of Royal Challengers Bangalore in the IPL, which begins on April 7. "If he agrees, he will also work with the Under-19 and the A-team and give us advice about cricket structure," Yunus said.

The BCB said it would appoint a separate head coach for the national team even if it reached an agreement with Kirsten. "He will not always be with the team, he will deal with separate issues, work with development squads like what Eddie Barlow did. He (Kirsten) will give advice but there will be a head coach." — AFP

Harare official handed 20-year ban for fixing

HARARE: A Harare official has been banned from all cricket activities for 20 years for offering Zimbabwe captain Graeme Cremer \$30,000 to fix a match last year, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said yesterday.

Rajan Nayer, the treasurer and marketing director of Harare Metropolitan Cricket, accepted the charge of "directly soliciting, inducing, enticing or encouraging Cremer" to fix an international match, the ICC said without identifying the game. "I would like to place on record my thanks to Graeme Cremer, who has acted with the utmost professionalism throughout this process," Alex Marshall, general manager of the global governing body's Anti-Corruption Unit (ACU) said in a statement. "Immediately after he received the approach from Nayer, he reported it to the ICC and we were able to get an investigation underway swiftly." Cremer credited the ICC for educating players on the perils of fixing. "I was appalled to be approached by someone so closely connected to the game and there was no doubt in my mind that I had to report it as soon as I could," the 31-year-old said. "We receive education around this which you never expect to have to use, but it certainly helped when it came to knowing what to do." — Reuters

Sports

European champions Portugal look shaky after a 3-0 loss to Dutch

Sanches suffered the most dramatic fall from grace

ZURICH: European champions less than two years ago, Portugal are suddenly looking shaky in the run-up to the World Cup with key players suffering a dip in form and a central defence showing its age.

Coach Fernando Santos admitted before this month's friendlies against Egypt and Netherlands that, compared to Euro 2016, it was proving much more difficult to finalise his squad for this year's tournament in Russia.

Monday's 3-0 drubbing by a Dutch team who failed to qualify for the World Cup would not have brought him any comfort, although it might have helped to decide who to leave out. One thing abundantly clear was that Portugal still need Pepe in the central defence.

The Brazilian-born player, nursing a broken toe but expected to play again next month, is 35 and playing his club football in Turkey rather than with Real Madrid, yet was sorely missed against the Dutch.

The makeshift pairing of Rolando and Jose Fonte, also into their 30s, were all at sea as Portugal shipped three goals in 35 first-half minutes. Santos had hoped to give 20-year-old Ruben Dias his international debut but the Benfica defender pulled out due to injury. Bruno Alves, the other main option who played in Friday's 2-1 win over Egypt, is 36.

One of Santos's biggest headaches is that many of his key players at Euro 2016 have lost their way at club level.

Renato Sanches has suffered the most dramatic fall from grace. The dread-locked midfielder barely got a look-in after joining Bayern Munich in 2016 and has spent this season on loan at Swansea City where injuries and lack of form have badly affected his confidence.

BARELY FEATURED

Adrien Silva missed four months of the Premier League season because his move from Sporting to Leicester City was not registered while Andre Gomes has barely featured at Barcelona.

There is still plenty of talent

Borussia Dortmund.

There is still plenty of talent. In midfield, William Carvalho is as reliable as they come while Joao Moutinho and Bernardo Silva offer creative options.

In attack, Andre Silva remains a bright prospect despite difficulties in settling at AC Milan and the gifted Ricardo Quaresma brings a touch of the unexpected.

And, of course, there is captain Cristiano Ronaldo, Portugal's all-time leading scorer and most capped player, but the squad lacks strength in depth as Santos admitted last year.

"Portugal has group of players of very high quality



GENEVA: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (L) fights for the ball with the Netherlands' defender Nathan Ake during the international friendly football match between Portugal and Netherlands at Stade de Geneve stadium in Geneva on Monday. —AFP

but in numerical terms, we don't have a large number," he said. "It's important they are always in good form."

A rather dour figure even in good times, Santos struggled to look on the bright side after Monday's

defeat. "The result made us poorer but the experience left us richer," he said. "We never want to work on the basis of defeats but we have to know how to draw positive conclusions." —Reuters

Zain participates in honorary match of Ahmad Jasem

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, participated in the honorary match of former Kuwait National team and Al Arabi Sporting Club player Ahmad Jasem on the occasion of his retirement. The friendly match, held between Kuwait and Cameroon, came under the patronage and presence of the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khalid Al-Roudhan and General Director of the Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh at Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium.

Zain's participation in this honorary match came in line with the company's keenness on encouraging the various efforts exerted to contribute to the development of the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait. Such efforts include the recognition of distinguished Kuwaiti athletes whose achievements contributed to raising Kuwait's name high in regional and international sporting events.

Ahmad Jasem is considered one of the top goalkeepers who played for Kuwait's National Football Team and Al Arabi Sporting Club. His football career started in 1992, and he greatly contributed to achieving many titles with Al Arabi Sporting Club. His achievements with Kuwait's National Football Team included winning the Arabian Gulf Cup title in 1998, as well as attaining the second place title in the AFC Asian Cup, where he played a big role in reaching the final match



Zain honours Ahmad Jasem

by stopping multiple crucial penalty shots.

Supporting Kuwaiti sports in general and football in particular will always be an integral part of Zain's Corporate Sustainability strategy towards the youth and sports sectors. The company further confirms its commitment towards Kuwaiti champions, which resembles the company's endless confidence in the competencies of these athletes and their capabilities in

excelling in different sports.

As a leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, Zain is constantly looking to identify and support excellence across the sports sector. The company will continue to put Kuwaiti National teams and individual athletes at the forefront of its priorities and pledges to continue motivating them to achieve all the recognition they deserve.

Beijing starts drive for improved display at home Games

TOKYO: China plans to field athletes in as many disciplines as possible at the Beijing-hosted 2022 Winter Olympics in a major push for medals in a country that has had limited success in winter sports, a Chinese Olympic official said yesterday.

China topped the medals table at the 2008 Summer Games, also hosted by Beijing, the host nation winning 48 gold medals out of 100 in total, but the country's prowess in winter sports remains far less accomplished.

At last month's 2018 Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang, China finished 16th on the medals table, winning just one gold — in short-track speed skating — and nine overall.

However, the Deputy Director General of the Competition and Training Department of the Chinese Olympic Committee, Yang Shande, said that the wheels were in motion for a much improved performance in 2022.

"We hope in Beijing that the Chinese athletes will take part in all the events. It's our first aim," Yang told Reuters on the sidelines of a visit to Tokyo by various National Olympic Committee officials to survey venues for the 2020 Summer Games.

"Also we hope all Chinese athletes can have a good performance and get more medals and more gold medals."

The vast nation, which regularly finishes in the top three performers at the Summer Games, has its work cut out, with China only claiming the first of 13 total Winter Olympic golds at the 2002 Games in Salt Lake City.

"Short track and figure skating are very traditional events but we also want Chinese athletes to do more popular events, like freestyle (skiing) and bobsleigh," Yang added.

Aside from a government drive to promote winter sports and build a huge pool of potential athletes, Yang said sports officials hoped to invite more foreign coaches to China and send more athletes overseas to train.

China would also seek to recognise talent in other more popular sports, such as soccer or the martial art of wushu, and convert them into Winter Olympians.

"They have basic training, they have strong balance — I think this is a very nice way, especially (in) the new events for China. We can find some talented (people)," Yang said. "It's quicker."

Yang's hopes of increased financial support for the Beijing Games received a major boost yesterday when the Bank of China Ltd (BoC) said it would provide 30 billion yuan (\$4.79 billion) for the winter sports industry over the next seven years.

"Chinese winter athletes will (have a) good performance," Yang added. "I think they also will have a similar performance like the Beijing summer event." — Reuters

Greece lifts Superleague ban, matches to resume

ATHENS: The Greek government yesterday ordered the lifting of the suspension for Superleague matches after more than two weeks following the pitch invasion of a gun-carrying club president.

Matches were suspended on March 12, a day after Ivan Savvides, the president of PAOK, charged on to the pitch with a gun in his belt, to complain over a disallowed goal towards the end of a game against fellow title contenders AEK Athens.

Greece's Deputy Culture and Sports Minister Georgios Vassiliadis took the decision a day after Superleague clubs unanimously accepted changes to the league's disciplinary code and submitted proposals for improving the country's top soccer division.

"The Deputy Minister for Culture and Sport...has decided to immediately lift the suspension of the Superleague championship as well as the Greek Cup," the ministry said in a statement.

Greece had indefinitely suspended matches after Savvides was filmed wearing a gun holster as he strode on to the pitch to protest about a PAOK disallowed goal against AEK Athens. The game was abandoned and later awarded to PAOK 1-0 following the controversial goal which had prompted the initial protests. Savvides has since apologised for his actions but he and the club still face sanctions. World soccer's governing body FIFA has also warned Greece to act decisively in this matter or risk facing a potential national suspension. The European Club Association (ECA) has suspended PAOK as a member with immediate effect. — Reuters

Hazard in no hurry to extend Chelsea contract

LONDON: Chelsea midfielder Eden Hazard is in no hurry to discuss his future at the London club and the Belgian international believes that talks to extend his current deal would progress only after this summer's World Cup.

Hazard's contract with Chelsea runs until 2020 and the defending English Premier League champions are keen for the 27-year-old to extend his stay amid persistent media reports of a possible move to Spain.

Speaking ahead of Belgium's international friendly against Saudi Arabia, Hazard said that finishing the season and playing in the World Cup finals were higher on his list of priorities.

"Look, I'm going to finish the season first, then play the World Cup and then I'll leave on holiday ... we'll see what happens next," Hazard said. "I haven't thought about it yet. I have another two years' contract with Chelsea. I am very happy. I just think about the end of the season and the World Cup."

Chelsea manager Antonio Conte has been criticised recently for his negative approach to their 1-0 league defeat by Manchester City this month, in which Hazard cut a frustrated figure operating in the unfamiliar role of a deep-lying striker.

However, Hazard said he was fully committed to helping fifth-placed Chelsea to secure a top-four finish and a Champions League spot for next season. "I just want to be on the pitch," Hazard added. "Number nine or number 10. I can play left back if the manager wants me to, no problem." Chelsea host fellow top-four contenders Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday. Mauricio Pochettino's side are currently fourth with 61 points, five points clear of Chelsea. — Reuters



Eden Hazard

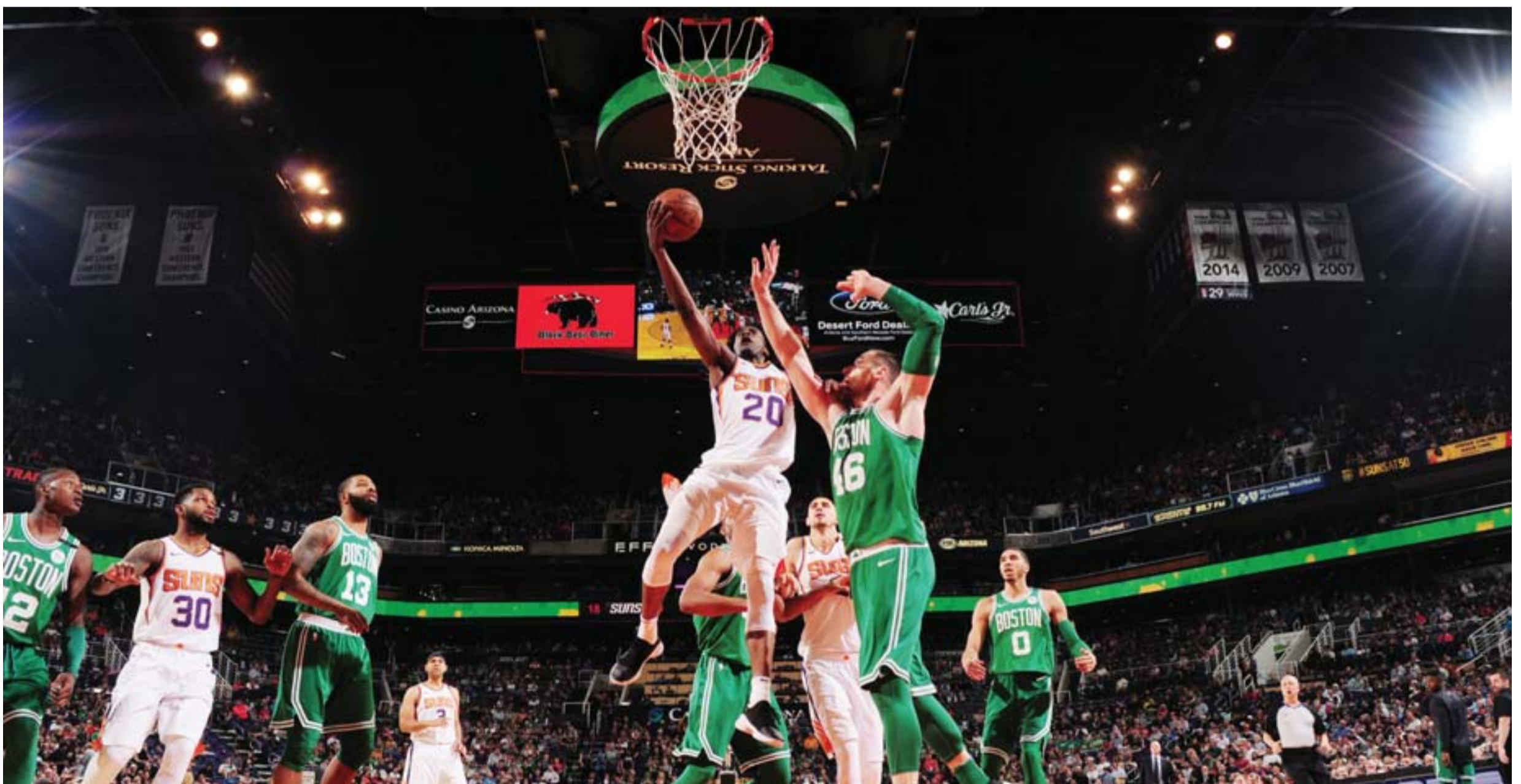
12 Wilder awaits, but heavyweight Joshua has eyes only for Parker



13 Venus, Azarenka march into Miami quarter-finals



14 Axe looms for Australia coach and captain in cricket crisis



PHOENIX: Josh Jackson #20 of the Phoenix Suns dunks against the Boston Celtics on Monday at Talking Stick Resort Arena in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP

Sixers notch big win as Fultz returns

Tatum shines as Celtics blow past Suns

PHILADELPHIA: Outscoring the visiting Denver Nuggets 34-15 in the third quarter, the Philadelphia 76ers moved a step closer to locking down home-court advantage for the first round of the NBA playoffs with a 123-104 win Monday night. Seven players scored in double figures for the 76ers, who remain the fourth seed in the Eastern Conference, a half-game ahead of the Indiana Pacers. Dario Saric led the way with 20 points while Joel Embiid contributed 20 points and 13 rebounds despite foul trouble. Sixers rookie Markelle Fultz, the No. 1 overall pick in last June's NBA draft, returned from a five-month absence due to a shoulder injury and finished with 10 points and eight assists in 14 minutes. Will Barton led the Nuggets with 25 points.

Celtics 102, Suns 94

Jayson Tatum scored 23 points and Marcus Morris had 20 against his former team before leaving with an injury as Boston won at Phoenix. Al Horford added 19 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for the Celtics, who picked up their fourth straight win. Morris sustained a right ankle injury in the second half and did not return. X-rays on Morris' ankle came back negative, the team announced. Josh Jackson had 23 points, Tyler Ulis had 19 points and eight assists and Troy Daniels scored 18 as Phoenix took its 12th

straight defeat and lost for the 22nd time in 23 games.

Grizzlies 101, Timberwolves 93

Wayne Selden canned four 3-pointers and scored 23 points as Memphis defeated Minnesota in Minneapolis. Marc Gasol added 20 points, including a pair of foul shots with 14.5 seconds left to up the lead to six, and also grabbed 10 rebounds for a double-double. Jeff Teague notched a game-high 25 points and seven assists for Minnesota, which managed just 11 points in the fourth quarter. Andrew Wiggins and Taj Gibson each finished with 18 points, while Karl-Anthony Towns contributed 15 points, 12 rebounds and six assists.

Hornets 137, Knicks 128 (OT)

Kemba Walker had 31 points, including 11 in overtime, and Dwight Howard added 23 points to lead Charlotte over visiting New York. Walker had three 3-pointers in the extra frame as the Hornets outscored New York 20-11 to win their fourth consecutive game. Trey Burke scored 42 points and Michael Beasley had 27 to lead the Knicks, who lost for the third time in four games.

Pistons 112, Lakers 106

Reggie Jackson led a balanced attack with 20 points,

NBA results/standings

Phoenix 94, Boston 102; Minnesota 93, Memphis 101; Charlotte 137, New York 128 (OT); Detroit 112, LA Lakers 106; Philadelphia 123, Denver 104.

	Eastern Conference				GB	Western Conference				
	W	L	PCT							
Toronto	54	20	73.0	-		Houston	60	14	81.1	-
Boston	51	23	68.9	3		Golden State	54	19	74.0	5.5
Cleveland	44	29	60.3	9.5		Portland	45	28	61.6	14.5
Philadelphia	43	30	58.9	10.5		Oklahoma City	44	31	58.7	16.5
Indiana	43	31	58.1	11		New Orleans	43	31	58.1	17
Washington	40	33	54.8	13.5		San Antonio	43	31	58.1	17
Milwaukee	39	34	53.4	14.5		Utah	42	32	56.8	18
Miami	39	35	52.7	15		Minnesota	42	33	56.0	18.5
Detroit	34	40	45.9	20		Denver	40	34	54.1	20
Charlotte	34	41	45.3	20.5		LA Clippers	39	34	53.4	20.5
New York	27	48	36.0	27.5		LA Lakers	32	41	43.8	27.5
Chicago	24	49	32.9	29.5		Sacramento	24	50	32.4	36
Brooklyn	23	51	31.1	31		Dallas	22	51	30.1	37.5
Orlando	22	51	30.1	31.5		Memphis	20	54	27.0	40
Atlanta	21	53	28.4	33		Phoenix	19	56	25.3	41.5

and host Detroit won for the fourth time in five games by topping Los Angeles. Jackson, playing just his fourth game since recovering from a severe ankle sprain, added five rebounds and three assists. Reggie Bullock scored 16 points and Andre Drummond had 15 points

and 18 rebounds for Detroit, which retains slim playoff hopes. Julius Randle paced the Lakers with 23 points and 11 rebounds. Kyle Kuzma contributed 20 points and 11 rebounds, and fellow rookie Lonzo Ball posted 15 points, eight rebounds and 11 assists. — Reuters

UEFA introduce fourth extra-time sub for next season

LAUSANNE: Teams will be allowed to make a fourth substitution in Champions League and Europa League matches that go to extra-time from next season. UEFA announced yesterday amid other changes. The fourth sub rule would be available in knockout-stage games and will also be applied by FIFA at this year's World Cup in Russia, having previously been used for the 2016 Rio Olympics.

UEFA has also changed the rules regarding cup-tied players, with January signings set to be able to play for their new clubs in

European competitions even if they have already featured for another team. For example, Barcelona's Philippe Coutinho has been unable to play in this year's Champions League knockout stage after joining from Liverpool in January, but under the new rules, players in the same situation next season will not be cup-tied.

UEFA said that each team can add three new players to their squads for the knockout rounds "without any restrictions". Teams in the Champions League, Europa League and Super Cup finals will also be able to name 12 substitutes instead of seven. The kick-off times for the Champions League have been changed from the traditional 1945 GMT slot to 2000 GMT, with group-stage matchdays to have two games played at 1755 GMT in an apparent attempt to maximise income from television rights. — AFP

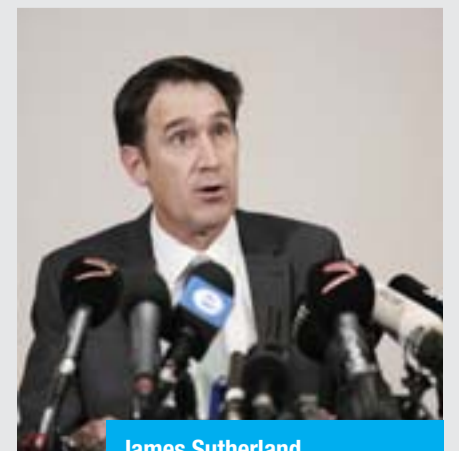
Australia trio sent home after ball-tampering scandal

JOHANNESBURG: Australia captain Steve Smith, his deputy David Warner and Cameron Bancroft are being sent home from the South Africa tour in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal that has shaken the sport but coach Darren Lehmann was not involved. Cricket

Australia said yesterday.

The sanction against the trio was announced by Cricket Australia chief executive James Sutherland, who had flown into Johannesburg just hours earlier to get to the bottom of the scandal, at a packed news conference.

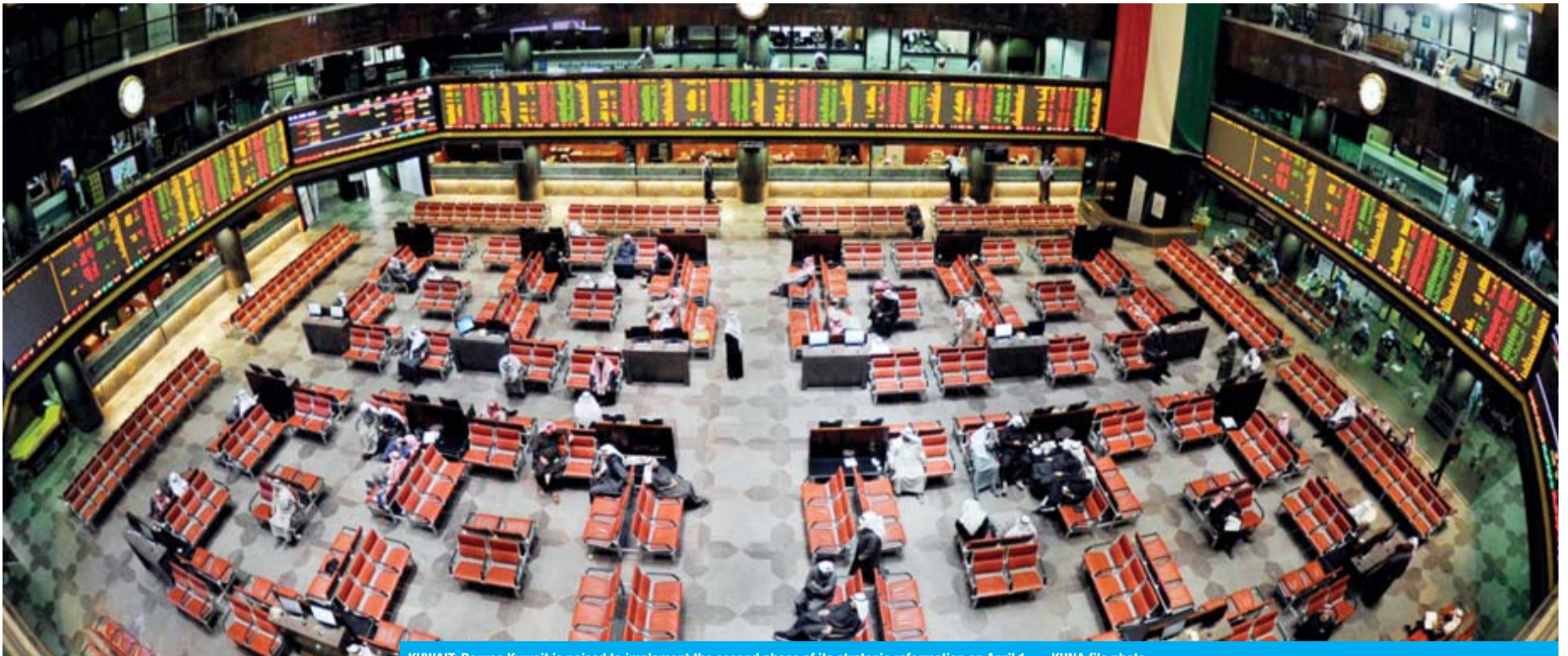
He said significant punishments would be handed out to the trio after a more thorough investigation. Tim Paine has been named as the new Australia captain in place of Smith. The pre-meditated attempt to cheat has drawn condemnation from around the world, with ball-tampering a serious breach of the International Cricket Council's code of conduct. — Reuters



James Sutherland

Business

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018

18 UAE banking sector could be more supportive of growth**19** In a trade war, aviation giant Boeing could be a sitting duck**21** Tamdeen Entertainment reveals Infinity Sea in Al-Kout Mall

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait is poised to implement the second phase of its strategic reformation on April 1. — KUNA file photo

Boursa Kuwait to start market segmentation

Second phase of market's strategic reformation from April 1

KUWAIT: On April 1, Boursa Kuwait is set to implement the second phase of the market's strategic reformation. The first phase, implemented last year, set the bourse on the path with the introduction of T+3 settlement cycle in May of last year and then the promotion to 'secondary emerging market status (commencing September 2018) by FTSE Russell.

Now Boursa Kuwait will introduce from 1 April 2018, market segmentation. According to January 2018 Strategy Note from NBK Capital, the plan, "seems to be aimed at achieving two major objectives. One is to create a blue-chip mid to large cap segment of the market that comprises market leaders in terms of size, liquidity, transparency, and governance which will effectively be the Premier Market. The Second would be a market of small to mid-size companies that are relatively liquid and well governed."

Specifically, market segmentation will divide the market into three segments: Premier Market, Main Market and Auction Market. Segmentation will be

based on certain criteria related to liquidity, market capitalization, price to par ratio, years of operations plus disclosure and compliance with the terms and conditions of listing.

Premier market

"Premier Market" forms the elite category, which will be occupied by high caliber companies with high liquidity

company should have been listed on the course for no less than two years; capitalization should meet minimum threshold; liquidity should meet minimum requirements, company's average share price should not be below its nominal value for each of the two years preceding the annual review and company should have been operational for at least 7 consecutive years.

Main market

Companies which are not qualified for the "Premier Market" category will be classified under the "Main Market", those companies need to maintain minimum level of liquidity in accordance with all basic requirements for the "Main Market". Companies in this segment are subject to annual reviews to prove its performance throughout the year to be able to remain in the segment it falls under or to be re-classified to the other segments.

Auction market

The "Auction Market" will include companies with low liquidity regardless of its market capitalization. Companies in the "Auction Market" will not be part

of any index. Trading in the "Auction Market" will trade following an auction trading mechanism with no continuous trading.

Market segmentation is a common practice worldwide, many reputable world exchanges such as the London Stock Exchange, Deutsche Borse and NASDAQ have similar markets. A new set of Indices will also be implemented. The new Indices will be market cap weighted and will replace all of the current indices. There will be a General Market Index covering companies listed in both the Premier and the Main markets, a Premier Market Index and Main Market Index. In addition, indices for each of the 13 market sectors will be as follows:

1. Oil & Gas Weighted Index
2. Basic Material Weighted Index
3. Industrials Weighted Index
4. Consumer Goods Weighted Index
5. Healthcare Weighted Index
6. Consumer Services Weighted Index
7. Telecommunications Weighted Index
8. Utilities Weighted Index
9. Banks Weighted Index
10. Insurance Weighted Index
11. Real Estate Weighted Index
12. Financial Services Weighted Index
13. Technology Weighted Index.



A new set of indices to be implemented

and medium to large market capitalization requirements. Companies in this segment are subject to annual reviews and must hold quarterly analyst conferences and offer disclosures in both Arabic and English.

To qualify for the premier market,

OPEC, Russia weigh 10-20-year oil alliance: Saudi Crown Prince

NEW YORK: OPEC and Russia are working on a long-term deal to cooperate on oil supply curbs that could extend controls over world oil supplies by major exporters for many years to come.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman told Reuters that Riyadh and Moscow were considering extending an alliance on oil curbs that began in January 2017 after oil prices crashed.

"We are working to shift from a year-to-year agreement to a 10-20 year agreement," the crown prince told Reuters in interview in New York. "We have agreement on the big picture, but not yet on the detail." Top OPEC producer Saudi Arabia recruited

Russia and other producers to collaborate with the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries when oil prices collapsed from over \$100 a barrel in 2014 to below \$30 in 2016.

Crude has recovered to \$70 but fast-rising output from US shale producers has capped prices.

Russia, never a member of OPEC, has worked alongside OPEC during previous oil gluts, dating back to 1990, but a 10-20 year deal between the two would be unprecedented. The crown prince said a flotation of 5 percent of state Saudi oil company Aramco could take place at the end of 2018 or early 2019, depending on market conditions.

Aramco IPO

Meanwhile, the head of Saudi oil giant Aramco has said a much-anticipated IPO is on track for 2018, but declined to give a fixed date-or venue. "We should be ready for listing in the second half of 2018," CEO Amin Nasser told Bloomberg Television on Monday, conceding that the oil giant was looking at a "complex process". "There's a lot of work that is still ongoing, the IPO is ongoing," Nasser said. "The venue and the timing is the government... Don't forget this is a very

complex process. Aramco's size and complexities is something that requires time."

Saudi authorities plan to list five percent of Aramco on an as-yet unspecified stock market, but the company has struggled to arrive at a \$2 trillion valuation sought by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Investors are reportedly skeptical about the lengthy process of placing Aramco on a foreign stock exchange, potentially the largest stock sale ever, with New York, London and Hong Kong among the potential sites. Nasser, however, said there was "a lot of demand for the listing". Saudi Arabia's energy minister has raised concerns that litigation would complicate a listing in New York, although President Donald Trump has publicly lobbied for a US Aramco listing.

The Wall Street Journal reported last week that the company may scrap its international plans and opt instead for a domestic exchange listing. London's Financial Times reported earlier this month that the IPO may be delayed until 2019 at the earliest, citing British officials briefed on the matter. The Aramco IPO plan is a pillar of the petro-state's "Vision 2030" reform program, which aims to wean the economy off its reliance on oil revenues. — Agencies

Boursa Kuwait will establish academy for investors: CEO

NEW YORK: Foreign investors are keen on knowing the latest updates in regards to Boursa Kuwait, said an official late Monday. Speaking to KUNA and Kuwait television on the sideline of the HSBC Middle East North Africa (MENA) Investors forum, CEO of Boursa Kuwait Khaled Al-Khaled said that the current Kuwaiti participation in the event was to spread awareness on the latest developments at the national stock exchange of his country. Marketing Boursa Kuwait will help it to further reformulate its infrastructure to meet international standards, said the Kuwaiti official.

CEO of Boursa Kuwait
Khaled Al-Khaled

The current progress at Boursa Kuwait, which attracted the interest of foreign investors, is an indication that the market is heading in the right direction, said Al-Khaled who revealed that the bourse would be establishing an academy to develop the skills and knowledge of investors. Also speaking to KUNA on the sidelines of the forum, Vice Chairman of Kuwait's Capital Markets Authority's (CMA) Board of Commissioners and Acting Managing Director, Mishaal Al-Usaimi said that Boursa Kuwait's advancement had indeed attracted the interest from banks and investors from around the globe. Boursa Kuwait has carried out the first phase of its development in 2017 since it was upgraded to the status of an emerging market.

The second phase of development will kick start on April 1 with major shifts in the market's indices and divisions, said the official who added that the third phase would begin mid-2018 with full implementation by the end of the year. Al-Usaimi said that the fourth phase, which regulates brokers' activities, would begin in 2019. All these steps will hopefully have a positive effect on the market, he affirmed. The HSBC forum witnessed the participation of 70 major investors from the US and the MENA region. Boursa Kuwait, the CMA, the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK), and Humantsoft holding represent Kuwait at the forum. — KUNA

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

UAE banking sector could be more supportive of growth

Credit growth decelerated in 2017 despite advancing economy

KUWAIT: UAE's headline credit and deposit growth have moved in opposite directions for most of the past 2-3 years, sending mixed signals on the health of the monetary sector. Although there are still forces pulling in both directions, the banking system now looks better adjusted to the new, lower oil price climate and could become more supportive of economic growth this year.

On the one hand, credit conditions remain disappointingly weak. Since peaking at 11 percent y/y in mid-2015, credit growth has been in more or less consistent decline, standing close to multi-year lows at just 0.5 percent y/y in January 2018. The current figure would likely be slightly higher once an adjustment is made for an accounting change last August.) This is the lowest in the Gulf region, other than Saudi Arabia, where economic growth is weaker.

A number of factors explain the slowdown. The plunge in oil prices in mid-2014 triggered a moderation in non-oil economic growth from 5 percent per year on average in 2013-14 to 3 percent in 2015-17, as well as a downturn in the key real estate market - both of which affected credit demand. Banks tightened lending criteria in response to slower deposit growth and a tougher funding climate, while new regulations to cap mortgage loans were also in effect. Finally, the policy repo rate has been increased four times following hikes by the US Fed, contributing to tighter liquidity and pushing market interest rates higher.

Latest sectoral figures (December 2017) show that lending growth is negative across a range of sectors, including the finance, personal (including mortgages) and trade sectors, the latter two reflecting weak conditions in the consumer sector affected by subsidy cuts and a soft labor market. By contrast, lending to construction remains robust, helped by project-related activity ahead of the Dubai Expo and the rising supply of new property developments.



Banking sector adjusts to lower oil price climate

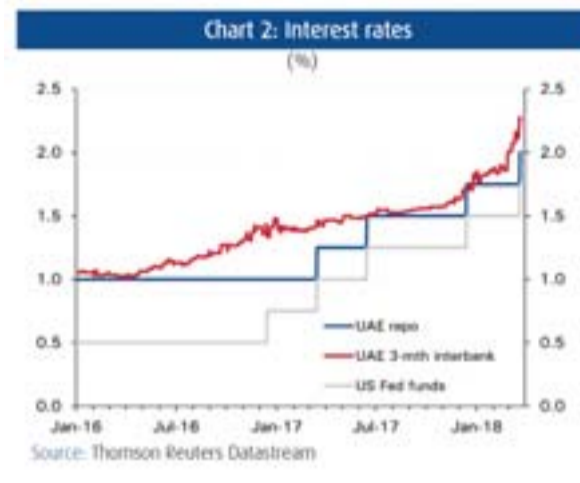
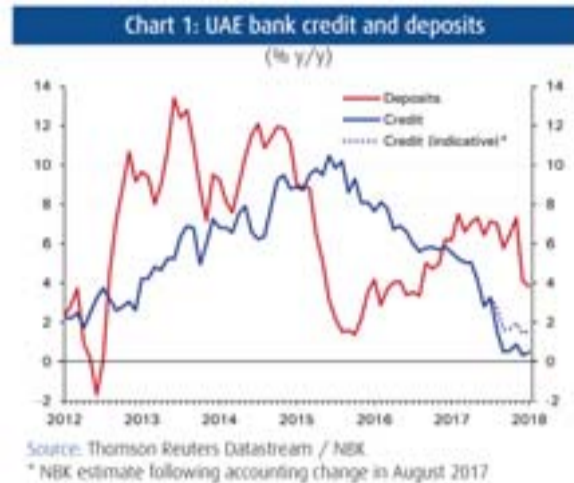
Deposit growth

On the deposit side, however, things are looking better. After slumping to just 2 percent y/y in mid-2015, deposit growth has staged a steady recovery, rising to 4 percent in 2016, then 7 percent last year (though the latest figures are weaker, partly on base effects). But even here, the underlying picture is mixed. As chart 4 shows, the pick-up in deposit growth has been driven exclusively by government deposits, which have surged over the past year helped by rising oil revenues and two large sovereign debt issues by Abu Dhabi in 2016 and 2017. Private deposit growth has remained weak, and in fact decelerated in 2016 and 2017.

Although nuanced by sector, stronger overall deposit growth has at least improved the funding picture for banks. The ratio of liquid-to-total assets fell to 14 percent in 3Q 2015 following the fall in oil prices, but recovered to above 18 percent by end-2017. This provides banks with better cover for short-term deposit flows. Meanwhile, the loans-to-stable resources ratio fell from above 88 percent in 3Q 2015 to below 85 percent at the end of last year, giving banks greater scope to lend.

Banks report profitability in 2017

Against this backdrop, banks' financial results for last year were encouraging. Net profit at the five largest banks rose 6 percent in 2017. This rises to 12 percent if the merger-affected profits at the largest bank, First Abu Dhabi Bank (previously National Bank of Abu Dhabi and First Gulf Bank), are excluded. Profits were supported by rising net interest income, with higher interest rates helping to offset the impact on revenues of slow lending growth. Banks also pursued cost-cutting measures, though expenses are being pushed higher by investments in technology and in the case of FAB integration costs relating to the merger. Finally, the rise in impairment



costs triggered by the 2014 oil price crash (particularly for SMEs) may be abating.

Monetary climate

Although there are pressures in both directions and a major upswing looks unlikely, monetary trends could improve through 2018. One factor is that sentiment seems to be improving. The central bank's credit survey shows that the pace of tightening in bank credit standards has consistently eased in recent quarters - and is expected to moderate further in 1Q 18. This could herald better access to credit, including for SMEs, reflecting greater confidence in the economic outlook.

Another positive is that liquidity conditions at present look well-supported. The rise in oil prices to above \$60/bbl has been backed by a supply agreement among key producers that has been extended until at least end-2018. This will help deposits and reduce the government's borrowing requirement. Indeed, central bank issuance of certificates of deposit rose 25 percent y/y in December, a sign that it is now looking to remove excess liquidity from the system.

Finally, the pick-up in non-oil growth forecast for this year (3.7 percent versus an estimated 3.3 percent in 2017)

should itself help the banking system, including by shrinking non-performing loans and supporting credit growth: the central bank's survey shows credit demand gradually recovering, with the construction and property sectors strongest. Faster growth could also help reverse the slowdown in private deposit growth.

Although the overall picture looks more positive, other factors will continue to weigh on the banking sector. Weakness in property prices is likely to persist through the rest of this year (see our recent report, "Stronger economy unlikely to lead to a rapid rise in property prices"), exerting downward pressure on mortgage lending and presenting ongoing credit risk. Meanwhile, interest rates in both the US and the UAE (linked via the exchange rate peg) are set to rise at least twice more this year. This could lead to some retightening of liquidity conditions.

Finally, although credit rating agencies consider the banking system overall as solid and well-supported (large banks already meet Basel III capital thresholds, for example), they also point to ongoing structural challenges that will affect growth and performance. These include high loan concentrations (including to government-related firms) and limited transparency at some large corporate borrowers.

Holidays by flydubai goes on sale



DUBAI: Dubai-based flydubai new Holidays division is on sale. The online portal is designed to be a one-stop shop for passengers to browse for and book their holiday packages consisting of flights and hotels, with the option to add ancillary services.

Commenting on the launch, Hamad Obaidalla, Chief Commercial Officer of flydubai, said: "The launch of flydubai's Holidays division marks yet another milestone in our growth story and our continued investment in providing customers with an enhanced travel experience along every touch-point of their journey."

"I am very proud of what the team and the carrier have achieved over a short period of time."

In under 10 years we have seen the launch of flydubai's Cargo division, rewards program, comprehensive code-share partnership with Emirates and an overhaul of the cabin interior design with the new Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft entering service. We hope this provides our passengers with an even more convenient and pleasant travel experience with flydubai," he added.

By combining internally sourced

wholesale hotel rates and rates provided by third parties with competitive airfares, Holidays by flydubai offers extremely competitive travel packages. Customers will also have the option to add ancillary services to their holiday experience, including airport transfers, sightseeing packages, UAE visa facilitation, car rental and excursions.

Nelson D'souza, Vice President - Holidays, commented on the launch: "booking with holidays.flydubai.com puts our passengers in control of their entire holiday experience as they can purchase tailor-made packages that suit all budgets with a single booking process."

The portal already gives passengers access to thousands of hotel options and other add-ons through our partners. We look forward to rolling out more options in the future as we continue to grow our list of services and partners."

Egypt economy stabilizes under Sisi

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has revived economic growth and tackled pressing problems in power and gas supply, but as he heads for a second term, he must juggle austerity under an IMF program with the need to tame inflation.

Sisi inherited an economy in tatters when he took over the presidency in 2014, requiring aggressive reforms that have largely stopped the rot while hurting most Egyptians through a currency devaluation and withdrawal of some price subsidies.

"He's now at the crossroads that every Egyptian president has found himself in," said Reham Eldesoki, an independent economist long focused on Egypt. "He needs to push forward on intensive reforms, to move forward in building services and non-oil industry and to make Egypt really investment-friendly."

Sisi's performance in consolidating the gains over the next four years - he is set to cruise to victory in a presidential election which began on Monday - will be watched well beyond Egypt's borders. European nations particularly worry that any faltering of reforms could worsen unemployment and encourage young Egyptians to cross the Mediterranean illegally, aggravating already sizeable flows of migrants from north Africa.

Sisi, who led the military's overthrow of Egypt's first democratically-elected president in 2013, was elected president the following year

after a prolonged period of popular protests had scared away many investors and foreign tourists. Successive governments' reluctance to devalue the overpriced currency had led to an acute foreign exchange shortage, dampening imports and pricing Egyptian exports out of foreign markets.

Sisi's signature economic achievement so far has been concluding a three-year deal with the International Monetary Fund in 2016. Under this, the government has raised the price of subsidized fuel to ease the huge burden on the budget, increased value-added tax to 14 percent and devalued the Egyptian pound against the dollar by more than half.

Many say the reforms were needed to stabilize Egypt as it recovers from the chaos and tackles an Islamist insurgency. However, the currency reform hit the middle classes particularly hard, while inflation remains high, poverty has increased and unemployment is not going down as quickly as people had hoped.

Economists see some grounds for hope. GDP growth increased to 5.3 percent year-on-year in the three months to December from a low of 2.1 percent in 2012/13, according to the central bank. "I think we should see growth continuing to escalate," said Mohamed Abu Basha, an economist with Egyptian investment bank EFG Hermes. "Tourism has space to recover, and consumption and investment should continue to recover over the next few years."

Energy fix

Egypt, once a net energy exporter, had struggled to get enough fuel to run its antiquated power stations, with the country of 97 million people suffering regular blackouts. Under Sisi, the government signed construction contracts for new plants and arranged for floating gas ter-

minals to allow more imports. The power shortages were soon brought to a near halt.

Sisi has also acted to break a logjam in gas exploration and development. Likewise, he moved to reduce vast arrears in payments to international energy companies for oil and gas.

This has encouraged them to revive their activities in Egypt, leading to several gas discoveries, including the Zohr field, the largest in the Mediterranean region. Zohr, operated by Italy's ENI, shipped its first gas at the end of 2017. Other fields that were brought on stream included BP's Atoll and West Nile Delta. The government says the country will be self-sufficient in gas by the end of this year.

Infrastructure expansion

Sisi launched a series of large infrastructure projects designed partly to put Egyptians back to work. Many won praise, such as new roads and expanded electricity capacity. More controversially, Sisi has begun work on several megaprojects, some of which economists say will produce little immediate return. These include dredging a new branch of the Suez Canal.

Sisi insisted the project be completed within a year, adding to the cost, but because of a worldwide trade slowdown canal revenue was little changed. He has begun building several new desert cities, including a \$45 billion new administrative capital east of Cairo. Egypt has also been negotiating with Russia for a new \$20 billion nuclear power plant. Many investors and economists worry that the army is becoming too involved in these projects and in other ventures, threatening to crowd out private investors. Austerity measures imposed under the IMF deal pushed annual inflation to 33 percent in August. By last month, the rate had dropped back to 14.4 percent. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.857
Indian Rupees	4.631
Pakistani Rupees	2.640
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.922
Nepali Rupees	2.897
Singapore Dollar	229.850
Hongkong Dollar	38.265
Bangladesh Taka	3.591
Philippine Peso	5.749
Thai Baht	9.654

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	80.133
Qatari Riyal	82.534
Omani Riyal	780.405
Bahraini Dinar	797.930
UAE Dirham	81.837

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	19.300
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.026
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.206
Tunisian Dinar	126.980
Jordanian Dinar	423.600
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.002
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	33.330

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	300.300
Euro	373.570
Sterling Pound	427.630

Canadian dollar	234.790
Turkish lira	76.120
Swiss Franc	318.960
Australian Dollar	233.780
US Dollar Buying	299.100

GOLD

20 Gram	249.070
10 Gram	127.450
5 Gram	64.570

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer Selling Rate

US Dollar	300.050
Canadian Dollar	233.370
Sterling Pound	426.210
Euro	372.320
Swiss Frank	286.070
Bahrain Dinar	797.945
UAE Dirhams	82.095
Qatari Riyals	83.325
Saudi Riyals	80.910
Jordanian Dinar	424.475
Egyptian Pound	17.089
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.924
Indian Rupees	4.612
Pakistani Rupees	2.627
Bangladesh Taka	3.600
Philippines Peso	5.762
Cyprus pound	17.860
Japanese Yen	3.835
Syrian Pound	1.584
Nepalese Rupees	2.882

Malaysian Ringgit	77.640
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.915
Thai Bhat	10.610
Turkish Lira	77.140

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.420915	0.428415
Czech Korune	0.006644	0.015944
Danish Krone	0.046042	0.051042
Euro	0.367571	0.375071
Georgian Lari	0.123088	0.123088
Hungarian 0.001100	0.001290	
Norwegian Krone	0.034975	0.040175
Romanian Leu	0.063214	0.080064
Russian ruble	0.005233	0.005233
Slovakia	0.008897	0.018897
Swedish Krona	0.032544	0.037544
Swiss Franc	0.310689	0.321689
Australian Dollar	0.223398	0.235398
New Zealand Dollar	0.212062	0.221562
Canada Dollar	0.228211	0.237211
US Dollars	0.295950	0.300370
US Dollars Mint	0.296450	0.300370
Bangladesh Taka	0.003182	0.003766

Chinese Yuan	0.046473	0.049973
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036147	0.038897
Indian Rupee	0.004119	0.004760
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002753	0.002933
Korean Won	0.000270	0.000285
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073451	0.079451
Nepalese Rupee	0.002993	0.003163
Pakistan Rupee	0.002449	0.002739
Philippine Peso	0.005667	0.005967
Singapore Dollar	0.224001	0.234001
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001601	0.002181
Taiwan	0.010195	0.010375
Thai Baht	0.009284	0.009834
Bahraini Dinar	0.789258	0.797758
Egyptian Pound	0.014042	0.019760
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.418580	0.427580
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000148	0.000248
Moroccan Dirhams	0.023218	0.047218
Omani Riyal	0.773032	0.778712
Qatar Riyal	0.078126	0.083066
Saudi Riyal	0.078927	0.080227
Syrian Pound	0.001271	0.001491
Tunisian Dinar	0.122383	0.130383
Turkish Lira	0.070760	0.081060
UAE Dirhams	0.080267	0.081967
Yemeni Riyal	0.000975	0.001055

Business

In a trade war, aviation giant Boeing could be a sitting duck

Threat of losing export markets still clear at Charleston plant

CHARLESTON, United States: The sparkling new Boeing 787s bound for China Southern Airlines and Air China are waiting to be delivered, but the prospect of a trade war could make for a less rosy future.

At this Boeing manufacturing plant in Charleston, South Carolina—which President Donald Trump visited a year ago to cries of “God Bless Boeing”—the trade battle he unleashed with Beijing last week is far off. Or so it seems. Like the company itself, workers at the plant, which produces the Boeing 787 and where unions have struggled to organize the labor force, say little when the question comes up.

But the threat of losing export markets is still clear and present. “Unfortunately, Boeing makes an easy target for anyone wishing to retaliate against the new US trade measures,” Richard Aboulafia, vice president of analysis at Teal Group, told AFP.

A flagship of US industry and one of the best known American brands, the company says it is the largest US exporter because about 80 percent of its planes are for export.

As a result, any major trade conflict would leave the company dangerously exposed—in particular one involving the world’s fastest growing aviation market in China. Boeing was one of the first companies Trump attacked on Twitter, when he threatened to cancel an order for a new presidential plane he said was too expensive.

The company has managed to work its way back into the president’s good graces, with its share price up 129 percent since the election in November 2016.

But since peaking in February, Boeing’s shares are down more than 10 percent as investors consider the company’s prospects in the new trade environment Trump has created. At least in the short term, the company has little to fear, with a healthy order portfolio of 5,864 planes—meaning it will be in constant production through 2024.

Furthermore, China, where air travel is booming, can scarcely afford to push its partly state-owned

domestic carriers to cancel their orders or boycott the US manufacturer because they simply have no alternative, experts say.

Where China could strike Boeing

The Chinese manufacturer Comac, which soon hopes to market its C919 — a potential competitor to the mid-range Boeing 737 and Airbus A320 jets—is not yet ready for large-scale production. The plane had its first test flight in December. “In the best case scenario, Comac will need another five or six years to reach a respectable production capacity,” said Michel Merluzeau, an analyst at AirInsight.

Meanwhile, Airbus, Boeing’s main competitor, also has a healthy backlog of orders and its suppliers are already struggling to keep up with the speedy new pace of production.

“In the short term, China has no choice if it doesn’t want to put the brakes on the growth of its air transport sector,” according to Merluzeau. Boeing is also due to open a new finishing center for its medium-range 737 jets in Zhoushan, south of Shanghai, this year. And Beijing will certainly do nothing to jeopardize that, added Merluzeau. When Boeing considers the longer term, however, its grounds for self-confidence become shakier.

Scott Hamilton, managing director at aviation consultants Leeham Company, said China can use industrial orders for political messaging. “If China were to retaliate against Boeing, it would more likely be in freezing new orders for an indefinite time, placing them with rival Airbus instead,” he told AFP.

Aboulafia of Teal Group agrees: “A few large block orders for Airbus would send a strong message, particularly if China abstains from any Boeing orders for some time,” he said. Between January of 2016 and the start of this year, China accounted for a fifth of all Boeing’s deliveries, or 303 out of 1511 aircraft received by commercial air carriers, according to the company’s figures.

The company’s order backlog also shows China’s share of Boeing deliveries set to grow, analysts say.



CHARLESTON: Planes are seen under construction at a Boeing assembly plant in North Charleston, South Carolina. —AFP

Furthermore, Beijing could frustrate Boeing’s plans to expand into the so-called mid-market by introducing a new jet in the 220-to-260-seat range, an industry segment where Airbus currently has a head start. “Chinese air carriers would only have to place a few large orders of A330-800neo and A321neo jets to hurt the newer aircraft’s potential,”

said Merluzeau of AirInsight.

Other countries in addition to China could also retaliate against Boeing because of President Donald Trump’s promised new tariffs.

Brazil, for example, could block Boeing’s efforts to form a commercial jet joint venture with the Brazilian aircraft manufacturer Embraer. —AFP

US seeks China trade moves on autos, chips, financials

WASHINGTON/BEIJING: Top Trump administration officials are asking China to cut tariffs on imported cars, allow foreign majority ownership of financial services firms and buy more US-made semiconductors in negotiations to avoid plans to slap tariffs on a host of Chinese goods and a potential trade war. A person familiar with the discussions said these were among the asks from Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer as they pursue talks with Beijing. The Wall Street Journal first reported the demands from US officials, saying they came in a letter sent to Beijing last week.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro confirmed that President Donald Trump asked Mnuchin and Lighthizer to try to resolve trade differences with China.

“We’re hopeful there that China will work with us to basically address some of these practices,” Navarro told CNBC television. US stocks surged on Monday on the news that the two sides were talking, after a massive rout last week when Trump announced plans to impose tariffs on up to \$60 billion of Chinese imports over alleged misappropriation of US intellectual property.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average posted its third biggest point gain ever, rising 669.4 points, or 2.8 percent, to close at 24,202.6 while the broader S&P 500 rose 2.7 percent after a nearly 6 percent drop last week. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said China’s door was always open to talks, but that this needed to happen on the basis of equality and mutual respect with a “win-win” outcome.

Premier Li Keqiang said earlier on Monday that China and the United States should maintain negotiations and repeated pledges to ease access for American businesses to China’s markets. Li told a conference that included global chief executives that China would treat foreign and domestic firms equally, would not force foreign firms to transfer technology and would strengthen intellectual property rights, repeating promises that have failed to placate Washington.

Despite a steady stream of fierce rhetoric from Chinese state media lambasting the United States for being a “bully” and warning of retaliation, Chinese and U.S. officials are busy negotiating behind the scenes.

Tariffs to proceed

In an interview aired on Sunday, Mnuchin told Fox News that he was pursuing an agreement with the Chinese “for them to open up their markets, reduce their tariffs, stop forced technology transfer. These are all the things we want to do.”

“We are proceeding with these tariffs, we’re not putting them on hold unless we have an acceptable

agreement that the president signs off on,” Mnuchin added.

China has offered to buy more US semiconductors by diverting some purchases from South Korea and Taiwan, the Financial Times reported, citing people briefed on the negotiations. China imported \$2.6 billion of semiconductors from the United States last year. Chinese officials are also working to finalize rules by May instead of the end of June — to allow foreign financial groups to take majority stakes in Chinese securities firms, the Financial Times said.

“I anticipate that for political reasons it would be logical for China to respond, because countries do,” Blackstone Group Chief Executive Stephen Schwarzman told Reuters on Monday on the sidelines of the Beijing conference where Li spoke.

“That’s why I view this more as a skirmish, and I think the interests of both countries are served by resolving some of these matters.” China called on World Trade Organization members on Monday to unite to oppose Trump’s proposed tariffs targeting alleged intellectual property theft, saying they should “lock this beast back into the cage of WTO rules.”

On Friday, China responded to the US tariffs on steel and aluminum by declaring plans to levy additional duties on up to \$3 billion of US imports, including fruit, nuts and wine.

China could also inflict pain on US multinationals that rely on China for a substantial — and growing — portion of their total revenues, said Alex Wolf, senior emerging markets economist at Aberdeen Standard Investments. “This could put US companies such as Apple, Microsoft, Starbucks, GM, Nike, etc in the firing line,” Wolf said in a note. China can increase the regulatory burden on US companies through new inspections and rules; ban travel; stop providing export licenses of key intermediate goods; raise the tax burden on US multinationals in China; or block US companies from the government procurement market, he said.

Car tariff differential

The Trump administration has demanded that China immediately cut its \$375 billion trade surplus with the United States by \$100 billion. China has a 25 percent tariff on US cars and has talked recently of lowering it, while Trump has often complained that the US import tariff on passenger vehicles is only 2.5 percent. China’s imports of US-built motor vehicles totaled \$10.6 billion in 2017, about 8 percent of the country’s overall US imports by value, according to US government data.

On the reported offer to increase US semiconductor imports, it is unclear how US chips would replace South Korean and Taiwanese chips, since there is minimal overlap between US chips and those of the two Asian producers.

China is heavily dependent on foreign semiconductors, one of its biggest import categories by value. That said, the United States accounted for just 1 percent of China’s total semiconductor imports last year by value, according to Reuters calculations based on Chinese customs data. —Reuters

KFH: 200 million euros credit facility to Limak for Canakkale Bridge in Turkey

KUWAIT: Group Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh emphasized the efficiency of Islamic finance instruments in providing financing solutions that meet customers’ requirements while reflecting the world leadership position of KFH in the Islamic finance industry and the excellence in providing a wide range of comprehensive sharia-compliant financial services as per highest international standards of reliability and quality.

Al-Nahedh’s statement was made on the occasion of the 200 million euros credit facility provided by KFH, together with its subsidiary, KFH-Turkey to Limak Insaat, one of world’s leading contractors, for the construction of Canakkale Bridge in Turkey, indicating the strategy of KFH Group focuses on the markets in which it operates, which enjoy high competitive advantages. He pointed out that the Turkish market is a major market for the Group, a rich and diverse, and full of investment opportunities.

Limak received credit facility from 24 banks and

financial institutions from 10 countries, including South Korea, Germany, France, Italy, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, China, Britain, Denmark and Turkey of a total of 1.6 billion euros, representing 70 percent of the 2.3 billion euros. The credit facility has a maturity of 15 years with a 5-year grace period.

Meanwhile, construction continues on the Canakkale Bridge, whose groundbreaking ceremony was held on March 18 -2017. The bridge will be the longest suspension bridge in the world with a 2,023-meter main span and 318-meter-high towers. It is expected to be ready in 2023.

KFH has recently signed a KD 124.6 million Syndicated Credit Agreement to facilitate construction works of Kuwait International Airport New Passenger Terminal II currently being constructed by Limak. The project is considered to be one of the most important construction and infrastructure projects under Kuwait’s development plan. It builds on KFH’s growing track-record of financing mega-projects with advanced sharia-compliant financing solutions. The terminal is designed to serve 25 million passengers per year.



Mazin Al-Nahedh

CBK opens heritage stall at Grand Avenues

KUWAIT: Within its 7th ‘Ya Zein Torathna’ campaign, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday opened a booth at the Grand Avenues where it will operate it for two days showcasing the examples of Kuwait’s rich cultural heritage before the visitors to the Grand Avenues.

CBK’s Assistant Manager for PR and Publicity, Amani Al-Wer’a said that the bank is pleased to receive

Kuwaiti heritage lovers, namely newer generations who should keep in touch with the heritage and traditions of the country. She added that the campaign would be held today and tomorrow (March 28 and 29) when a CBK team would be available for interaction with the visitors. In addition, a folkloric heritage band will perform traditional Kuwaiti songs on the occasion.



Amani Al-Wer'a

Rio Tinto sells Australian coal mine for \$2.3bn

LONDON: Anglo-Australian resources giant Rio Tinto has agreed to sell its majority holding in a coal mine in northeastern Australia for almost \$2.3 billion to private equity manager EMR and Indonesian coal group Adaro. The huge divestment, equivalent to 1.8 billion euros, is part of the company’s strategy of strengthening its portfolio and focusing on high returns.

“Rio Tinto has entered into a binding agreement with a consortium comprising EMR Capital and Adaro ... for the sale of its entire 80 percent interest

in the Kestrel underground coal mine in Queensland, Australia, for \$2.25 billion,” it said in a statement.

The transaction, subject to regulatory approvals, is expected to complete in the second half of 2018.

The news comes one week after Rio Tinto agreed to offload a raft of Australian coal assets to Swiss-based commodities giant Glencore as it moves a step closer to a full exit from the industry.

The US\$1.7 billion deal involves the sale of Rio’s 82 percent stake in the Hail Creek mine and its 71 percent holding in the undeveloped Valeria project, both in Queensland state.

“The sale of Kestrel, together with the announced divestments of Hail Creek and our undeveloped coal projects, delivers exceptional value to our shareholders and will leave our portfolio stronger and more focused on delivering the highest returns through targeted allocation of capital,” added chief executive J-S Jacques in yesterday’s statement. —AFP

Business

Stocks surge on receding trade war fears

LONDON: A wave of optimism flowed across stock markets yesterday as Wall Street built on the previous day's gains after fears of a US-China trade war receded further.

US stocks ticked higher yesterday building on strong gains from the previous session amid easing fears of a trade war between the United States and China.

Global markets were rattled last week after President Donald Trump moved to impose tariffs on Chinese imports of up to \$60 billion, adding to the import restrictions already placed on solar panels, steel and aluminum.

foreign majority ownership of financial services firms and buy more US-made semiconductors to avoid tariffs and a potential trade war.

White House trade adviser Peter Navarro confirmed that Trump has asked Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer to try to resolve trade differences with China.

At 9:59 am ET, the Dow Jones Industrial Average was up 33.73 points, or 0.14 percent, at 24,236.33. The S&P 500 gained 0.12 percent at 2,661.81 and the Nasdaq Composite rose 0.24 percent, at 7,238.02.

The company now faces an investigation by the US Federal Trade Commission on how it allowed data of

50 million users get into the hands of a political consultancy. Red Hat shares rose 3.5 percent after the software developer reported better-than-expected quarterly results on strong demand for its hybrid cloud products.

"US stocks are adding to yesterday's sharp recovery in early action, with trade war concerns between China and the US appearing to continue to cool," Charles Schwab consultants said.

'In rebound mode'

This week nerves were soothed as it emerged that high-level talks had been taking place between the world's top two economies to find an agreement.

couple of weeks I don't think (Trump) will be keen to follow through on his threats and risk sending markets into a tailspin," Erlam said.

In Europe, takeover activity boosted sentiment with shares in GlaxoSmithKline jumping six percent after the British drugs giant agreed to buy Novartis' stake in the pair's consumer healthcare joint venture for \$13 billion (10.4 billion euros).

The Swiss group said the sale of the 36.5-percent stake would enable it to focus on its core pharmaceutical business. Earlier yesterday, Asia also performed well, with Tokyo closing higher thanks to a drop in the yen against the dollar, as traders shifted out of assets considered safe in times of uncertainty and turmoil.

And if confirmed, the visit would mark the latest development in the fast-paced shift towards an easing of tensions on the Korean peninsula. —Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report. Tuesday, March 27, 2018. Includes sections for Global Stock Indices, Trades, Basic Materials, Industrials, Consumer Goods, Consumer Services, Telecommunications, Banks, Insurance, Health Care, and various individual stock listings with columns for High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, and Change.

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report. At 02:00 PM Previous Day. Includes sections for Global Stock Indices, MENA Stock Indices, Global Currencies Exchange Rate, MENA Currencies Exchange Rate, Global Interest Rates, Global Bond Yields, and Commodities.

Business

Tamdeen Entertainment reveals Infinity Sea in Al-Kout Mall

First-of-its-kind leisure hub offers fun for the whole family

KUWAIT: Tamdeen Entertainment Company, a subsidiary of Tamdeen Group, Kuwait's leading property developer, has unveiled Infinity Sea - the latest interactive addition to the burgeoning family entertainment sector in Kuwait.

Set to open during Q2 2018 in Al-Kout Mall, Fahaheel, Kuwait, Infinity Sea features a unique design inspired by marine life and the mall's location on the inviting Fahaheel coastline. Spanning 4,000 square meters the state-of-the-art indoor leisure center is the ultimate entertainment destination for the whole family.

Visitors will embark on a unique journey from the sandy shores and the beachfront to the depths of the sea, passing through three distinctive zones. This first-of-its-kind experience continues with a range of rides and games including a roller coaster, air balloon game, and the inimitable family favorite, bumper cars.

Furthermore, commenting on the innovative project, Chairman of Tamdeen Entertainment, Ahmed Al-Osaimi, pointed: "Tamdeen Entertainment strives to offer a new world of entertainment in Kuwait. Infinity Sea, the latest

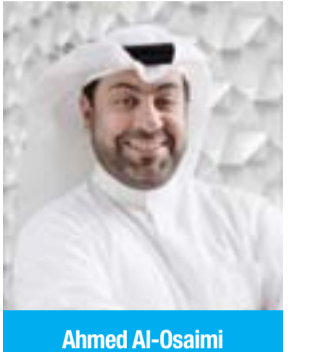
edition in family entertainment, offers an enriching, pulsating journey for all visitors that begins with the eye-catching unique design and a welcoming atmosphere".

"Infinity Sea is an evolution of the first Infinity in 360 Mall, and further positions us as pioneers in the entertainment industry seeking customer's satisfaction and exceeding their expectations".

Infinity Sea also features a modern bowling alley with eight lanes, as well as a party room equipped with latest audio-visual technology and

amenities to host parties, special occasions and events. The spacious center is the ideal destination for school trips, corporate activities or team building activities.

With safety, security and inclusivity paramount, Infinity Sea, the latest indoor family entertainment center, is designed to facilitate accessibility with two entrances and exits, and it caters to visitors with special needs. In addition, Al-Kout Mall will also house Kuwait Karting, the biggest indoor karting track of-its-kind in the Middle East.



Ahmed Al-Osaimi



KFIC profits grow by 7% in 2017

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance and Investment Company (KFIC) announced its aggregate financial results for the year ended December 31, 2017 in which it yielded a net profit of KD 226.7 thousand signifying a growth of 7 percent at an EPS of 0.7 fils per share, compared with a profit worth of KD 211.5 thousand, at an EPS of 0.7 fils for the year 2016.



Tareq Mishari Al-Bahar

It is notable that the group's net profits grew at a rate of 89 percent from KD 212.7 thousand in 2016 to 401.4 in 2017.

Tareq Mishari Al-Bahar, KFIC's Board Member & CEO stated that "We continue to pursuing our strategy based on diversifying income sources from different

investment vessels in addition to generating revenues and cashflow from the financing, asset management, brokerage and yielding investments operations instead of solely depending on stock exchange trading." This strategy has proved its efficacy in creating a sustainable and promising business model that is able to generate steady cashflows and less likely to be affected by the volatility of stock exchanges especially in the light of the current geopolitical circumstances in the region.

Al-Bahar then added: "Currently the company has a strong financial position and a promising growth potential. Where the total assets have amounted to KD 57.2 million, out of which the current assets have amounted to KD 20.6 million. On the other hand, the total liabilities amounted to KD 17.8 million, out of which the current liabilities amounted to KD 5.8 million. Furthermore, the equity of the shareholders of the parent company has amounted to KD 38.4 million."

Al-Bahar then concluded: "We are always keen on finding variety of effective investment products that yield acceptable rates with limited risks, in order to meet the expectations of our valuable clients. Moreover, KFIC in continuing its plans to exit from some of the non-yielding investments and diversify the investment portfolio geographically to minimize risks.

At KIF 2018, ministers outline progress of New Kuwait's key pillars

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti ministers discussed the progress achieved on the seven pillars of New Kuwait, the long-term strategy envisioned by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber to transform the nation into a lucrative business and cultural hub, following its launch in 2017, for the first time at a public event at the Kuwait Investment Forum 2018 (KIF 2018).

At a special feature on 'New Kuwait', Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf - Minister of Finance; Hind Sabeeh Barack Al-Sabeeh, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Economic Affairs; Khaled Nasser Al-Roudan - Minister of Commerce and Industry & Minister of State for Youth Affairs; and Bakheet Shabib Al-Rashdi, Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water, provided an update on the development and projects announced, and unveiled the upcoming perspective of the strategic roadmap to progress.

They discussed the achievements under the seven pillars of the New Kuwait: Effective Government, Diverse & Sustainable Economy, Quality Infrastructure, Sustainable Living Communities, Quality Healthcare, Innovative Human Capital, and Prominent International Position.

Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf set the grounds by providing an overview of the achievements made by Kuwait in the past year were highlighted. The country has achieved significant milestones in global rankings, improving from rank 90 to 59 in wastefulness of government spending, from 75 to 62 in quality of market regulation and from 108 to 90 in burden of government regulation, as per the Global Competitiveness Report 2017/18.

He also highlighted Kuwait's improved its ranking in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business report from 102 to 96, while Moody's has rated the country's credit rating at AA2 stable. Meanwhile, FTSE Russell classified Kuwait as emerging - all of which are indicators of the government's role to focus on guaranteeing investor their rights and giving the private sector a stronger role in operations and project implementation.

Khaled Nasser Al-Roudan, Minister of Commerce and Industry highlighted the significant achievements were made in the past year, especially in driving inward foreign investment and boosting the role of the private sector, adding that the government is keen to serve as a facilitator that supports the business community. He said 29 foreign companies established in the country helped attracted KD 725 million, and created 1,000 jobs for Nationals in 11 different business sectors.

Bakheet Shabib Al-Rashdi said with the launch of New Kuwait, there has been commendable progress in areas including the energy sector and infrastructure development, which have also witnessed increased participation from the private sector. He highlighted the progress on strategic initiatives such as Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's Environmental Fuel Project, the Clean Fuels Project, Al-Zour Refinery and Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, among others, which will accelerate the country's journey to a new era of economic and energy sector diversification.

He also provided an overview of the progress achieved in the nation's focus on driving clean and renewable energy, and the emphasis on energy sector diversification and efficiency. He said the investments in infrastructure will further catalyze the economy and align it further with the vision of New Kuwait.

Hind Al-Sabeeh said that just as it is important to focus on infrastructure development, human capital development and community well-being was equally central to the New Kuwait strategy. She said implementing an anti-corruption strategy is central to the vision, as it enhances transparency and investor confidence. She said an integrated, operational

roadmap is in place already, in addition to implementing electronic government services that too will add to governmental efficiency and transparency.

Among the highlights of the progress report presented by the ministers at KIF 2018 are:

- Facilitating ease of starting business through the Kuwait Business Center; it facilitated an increase number of companies with limited liability growing from 5,621 in 2016 to 9,682 in 2017 nearly double.
- Al-Shaqaya Renewable Energy Complex aims to increase the capacity available for power plants; total completion rate of the project is 80 percent and is due to be completed in 2022.
- Olefins-Aromatics complex at Al-Zour Refinery to enhance status of the petrochemical industry in Kuwait and diversify the company's products by adding specialized products. Goal is to produce 945,000 tons per year of polypropylene, 1.4 million tons of aromatic paraxylene; and 421,000 tons of benzene; among others. The overall achievement of the project is 8.6 percent and is due to be completed in 2023
- Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Co (KIPIC) to expand production to 615,000 barrels per day; scheduled for completion in 2020
- Clean Fuels Project, an overhaul of the Mina Abdullah and Mina Al-Ahmadi refineries, will increase oil production and development of reserves; returns on investment on project is expected at 11.5 percent; total completion of project now at 84.8 percent
- Sheikh Jaber Causeway will serve as link between Kuwait City and Sabiya, reducing traffic jam; overall achievement at 83.6 percent
- Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port to have 24 berths and capacity of 8.1 million TEUs; 51.5 percent completed
- Kuwait International Airport expansion on scheduled to welcome 25 million annual visitors
- 75 percent progress achieved in the Municipal Solid Waste Treatment plant

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).

Air Arabia receives ATN's Corporate Editor Choice Award

SHARJAH: Air Arabia, the Middle East and North Africa's first and largest low-cost carrier (LCC), has received the 'Corporate Editor Choice Award' at the 2018 Air Transport Awards organized by Air Transport News held this year in Dubai, UAE. The accolade is a demonstration of Air Arabia's continued commitment to passenger satisfaction and development within the industry.

Air Arabia picked up the prestigious award at the Air Transport Awards which remains to be the only international prizes that award all the main categories of the air transport industry.

The jury for the judging process comprised of prominent leaders from the field of aviation, government and air transport bodies. Nominations submitted were evaluated by jury members with the final winner per category being adjudged on overall consensus.

Adel Al Ali, Group Chief Executive Officer of Air Arabia, said: "We are very pleased to be awarded the ATN Editor Choice Award recognizing the achievements that Air Arabia has accomplished over the years. We are



Adel Al Ali, Group CEO, Air Arabia receiving ATN's Corporate Editor Choice Award

proud to see that millions of customers continue enjoying our value driven services since we introduced low-cost travel to the MENA region almost 15 years ago. Such prestigious awards remind us of the good work we continue to do over the years. I thank ATN for this award which I dedicate to our customers and staff all over the world."

Air Arabia, currently operates flights to 147 routes across the globe from five hubs located in the Middle East and North Africa, and continues its mission to create an ever-expanding network of diverse destinations, allowing for high-quality and cost-effective travel

approached Goldman Sachs vice-president Richard Gnodde-unsuccesfully-and has considered offering the top job to Unicredit chief Jean-Pierre Mustier or Standard Chartered boss Bill Winters.

Cryan has launched the bank on a massive restructuring at the same time as trying to clear up the legacy of its massive global expansion in the years before the financial crisis, which has cost Deutsche billions in fines and compensation.

But investors have grown impatient, with shares in Frankfurt-based Deutsche losing almost a third of their value since the start of the year. Earlier this month the bank reported it had made a higher loss than initially thought in 2017, at 751 million euros-its third annual loss in a row. It has blamed the red figures on President Donald Trump's corporate tax reforms in the United States, which it said hit it with a one-off loss. Meanwhile the partial stock market flotation of its highly-regarded asset management unit DWS, which raised around 1.4 billion euros last week, was overshadowed when finance director James von Moltke warned of headwinds for the struggling investment banking division.—AFP

Deutsche Bank stock gains on reports of new CEO search

FRANKFURT: Shares in Germany's biggest lender Deutsche Bank gained yesterday after a newspaper reported that the troubled financial giant was seeking a new chief executive as it struggles to right itself.

The stock added 1.0 percent to trade at 11.30 euros (\$14.06) by 0830 GMT, after British newspaper The Times reported chairman Paul Achleitner had been sounding out senior industry figures to take over from John Cryan, at the helm since 2015. "It is quite clear the relationship is broken between the chief executive and the chairman," a senior source told the paper.

A spokesman for Deutsche Bank declined to comment on the report. According to his contract, Cryan is slated to stay on until May 2020. But The Times said Deutsche has

No spring in H&M's profits after cold snap

STOCKHOLM: Hennes and Mauritz (H&M) saw its profits plummet once again after unusually cold weather in key European markets brought sales of spring garments down, the Swedish retail giant said yesterday as it released first quarter results. Net profits for the three months from January were down 44 percent to 1.37 billion Swedish kronor (135 million euros, \$168 million) from 2.46 billion this time last year.

In Germany, H&M's main market, sales were down six percent. In France, the high-street fashion giant's fourth market, they plunged 10 percent. "The start of the year has been tough," CEO Karl-Johan Persson said in a statement. "The high level of clearance sales combined with unusually cold winter weather had a negative impact on the sales of the spring garments," he added.

H&M's share price plunged 6.3 percent in yesterday's trading on the Swedish stock market following the earnings announcement, dropping to 119.48 kronor per stock, its lowest level since 2005.

But the company, one of the hardest hit by what analysts have termed the "retail apocalypse" sparked by the online shopping revolution, says it is doing its utmost to ride out the storm.—AFP

Technology

UK MPs demand Zuckerberg testify on data row after he offers deputy

50 million users' data are alleged to have been taken from Facebook

LONDON: British MPs renewed demands yesterday to interview Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg over a data privacy row that has rocked the social media giant, after he responded to an earlier request by offering to send one of his deputies.

Damian Collins, the chairman of the House of Commons digital, culture and media committee, said the seriousness of the allegations meant it was "appropriate" for Zuckerberg to offer an explanation himself, whether in person or via video-link. His comments came amid renewed pressure from the European Union to disclose more details about how up to 50 million users' data are alleged to have been taken from Facebook and used in political campaigns.

clear from our correspondence.

"And if he is available to give evidence, then we would be happy to do that either in person or via video link if that would be more convenient for him." The EU has given the social media giant two weeks to answer its own queries over the scandal, which has heavily hit Facebook's share price and raised major questions over how social media companies use private data.

Address questions 'at senior level'

Facebook insists it did not know the data taken from its site were being used by a British company, Cambridge Analytica, which worked on US President Donald Trump's election campaign among others. However, its rules at the time allowed an app developed by an academic researcher, which was downloaded by an estimated 270,000 people, to take information from millions of their friends. In her letter, Rebecca Stimson, head of public policy for Facebook UK, revealed that the tech giant was working with regulators around the world to assess how many people in each country were affected.

"We can now confirm that around one percent of the global downloads of the app came from users in the EU, including the UK," she wrote. Amid investigations by lawmakers in Europe and the United States, Zuckerberg has taken out adverts in US, British and German newspapers in recent days apologizing for the "breach of trust". But the company is struggling to contain the growing crisis.

US consumer protection agency, the Federal Trade Commission, on Monday confirmed it had opened an investigation into whether Facebook mishandled private data or violated a 2011 agreement which settled an earlier probe. In her letter to the



Given two weeks to answer

'Give evidence'

In a letter published by the British committee yesterday, Facebook offered to send chief technology officer Mike Schroepfer or chief product officer Chris Cox to London next month to provide answers. "We'd be very happy to invite Mr Cox to give evidence. However we would still like to hear from Mr Zuckerberg as well," Collins said at the start of a committee hearing yesterday. We will seek to clarify with Facebook whether he is available to give evidence or not, because that wasn't

EU justice commissioner Vera Jourova wrote to Facebook chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg, asking what measures the company plans to take to prevent a similar scandal. She also asked whether stricter rules were needed for companies like Facebook as exist for traditional media, and whether it would change its approach on transparency toward users and regulators.

newspapers in recent days apologizing for the "breach of trust". But the company is struggling to contain the growing crisis. US consumer protection agency, the Federal Trade Commission, on Monday confirmed it had opened an investigation into whether Facebook mishandled private data or violated a 2011 agreement which settled an earlier probe. In her letter to the



NEW DELHI: This photo illustration taken yesterday, shows apps for Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other social networks on a smartphone in the Indian capital. — AFP

British committee, Stimson said: "Facebook fully recognizes the level of public and parliamentary interest in these issues and support your belief that these issues must be addressed at the most senior levels of the company by those in an authoritative position to answer your questions." As

such, Mr Zuckerberg has personally asked one of his deputies to make themselves available to give evidence in person to the committee." She said either Schroepfer or Cox could attend "straight after the Easter parliamentary recess", meaning April 16 at the earliest. — AFP

Twitter to ban crypto ads

LONDON: Twitter is to ban cryptocurrency advertising, joining Facebook and Google in a clampdown on the industry over the risk of giving publicity to potential fraud or large investor losses. The prohibition will cover advertising of initial coin offerings (ICOs) - crowd-funding used to raise cash by creating new coins - as well as token sales and crypto-wallet services, San-Francisco-based firm told Reuters.

The policy, whose implementation date was not announced, will also stop crypto-exchanges from advertising, with limited exceptions. Twitter said this month it was taking measures to prevent crypto-related accounts from "engaging with others in a deceptive manner", but had faced calls to go further after bans from Facebook and Google. Facebook restricted crypto-related adverts in February, while Google announced a ban that comes

into force in June earlier in March.

Regulators have stepped up warnings that bitcoin and other virtual currencies are highly speculative, some potentially fraudulent and that investors should be prepared to lose everything. But last week the G20 group of rich nations failed to reach a consensus on how to supervise them. "With the increasing number of ICOs coming to market it is an impossible task for anyone, much less platforms like Twitter or Facebook, to keep on top of which ICOs and cryptocurrencies are genuine versus frauds," said Zennon Kapron, director of financial consultancy Kapronasia.

"Although certainly ICO advertising must have been a significant source of revenue for Twitter, the repercussions of fraudulent activities just weren't worth the risk." The price of bitcoin has fallen more than half to around \$8,000 from a December peak of almost \$20,000, as fears of a regulatory clampdown spooked investors. News of the Facebook and Google bans also knocked the price. Cryptocurrencies Ethereum and Ripple's XRP have tumbled this year too. — Reuters

Yuri Gagarin's death shrouded in mystery

MOSCOW: Yuri Gagarin, feted as a Soviet national hero for being the first man in space, was killed in a plane crash 50 years ago but the details of his death remain shrouded in mystery. On March 27, 1968, at 10:18 am, Gagarin was preparing for a training flight in his MiG-15 plane at the Chkalovsky aerodrome near Moscow, his former cosmonaut colleague Vladimir Aksyonov recalls. "Yuri and I consulted the same doctors and listened to the same weather forecasts, my takeoff was due an hour after his," the 84-year-old tells AFP.

But Aksyonov's flight was cancelled. At 10:30 am, when he returned to his base, Gagarin and his co-pilot Vladimir Servogin were no longer responding to radio calls. At 2:50 pm, helicopter crews searching for the plane said they found parts of the wreckage 65 kilometers from the aerodrome. Gagarin's body was found the next day. He was 34.

'Gagarin is dead!'

Sergei Kravchinsky, 74, remembers learning of Gagarin's death when he was a young space engineer and had just finished a gymnastics class. "We heard a scream in the corridor: 'Guys, Gagarin is dead!'" "It was a shock, all the women were crying," he recalls. For the first time in Soviet history, a day of national mourning was declared for someone who was not a head of state. The engineers knew Gagarin was training on a MiG and that he had already experienced landing problems. When they heard the investigation commission give its conclusions, they were perplexed.

According to the official version, the plane's crew had to make a sudden manoeuvre because of a "change in the situation in the air", which led to the crash. "The report of the official commission, which was 29 volumes, was never published," Alexander Glushko, a historian studying the Soviet space industry, told AFP. "This pushed colleagues and experts to start their own research."

Rumours

At the time, wild rumours surrounding



MOSCOW: Sergei Kravchinsky (Serguei Kravtchinski), 74, who was young manufacturer of space machines, speaks during an interview with AFP journalist at the Museum of cosmonautics. — AFP

Gagarin's death were circulating around the Soviet Union: that he was killed by the Kremlin, drunk in the cockpit or kidnapped by aliens were just some popular theories. In 2011, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Gagarin's historic 1961 flight into space, the Kremlin released some fresh information on his death.

Newly declassified documents said "one of the probable reasons" for the crash was a sharp maneuver made to avoid a weather balloon after which Gagarin and Seryogin lost control of the aircraft. "One of the probable reasons! This wording does not mean anything. None of the documents from the 29 volumes of the investigation was published in full," said historian Glushko. He believes that the secrecy around Gagarin's death was retained to hide "the flaws in the organization and the functioning of the Soviet space sector," a symbol of the USSR's might. "In the absence of the truth, rumors are multiplying and continue to circulate to this day," he added.

The second plane theory

"My parents always assured me that Gagarin died because he was drunk," says

Alexander Volodko, a policeman from the Siberian city of Novokuznetsk, on a recent visit to Moscow's Museum of Cosmonautics. Volodko tells AFP that he would like "the truth to be finally revealed". He said he personally believed the version put forward by legendary cosmonaut Alexei Leonov—the first ever to go on a spacewalk—after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991.

According to Leonov, who was a member of the 1968 investigation commission, a Sukhoi plane approached Gagarin's planned route, passing less than 20 meters from his plane. This would have caused Gagarin's aircraft to spin and crash. In June last year, 83-year-old Leonov repeated this version: "I saw a declassified document of the investigation that confirmed (this)," he told state news agency RIA Novosti.

Leonov believes the commission covered up the truth to protect the Sukhoi plane's pilot, whose name he refuses to reveal but describes as "quite famous" and currently "old and sick". "This is no longer a secret: it is about negligence and a violation of aviation rules," he insists. But until the investigation's official documents are made public, said historian Glushko, "this claim is just a hypothesis". — AFP



HONG KONG: Singapore-based Global Crypto Offering Exchange (GCOX) chief communications officer Evan Ngow shows a slide presentation as he speaks at a GCOX press conference. — AFP

Spotify warns of slower sales growth

STOCKHOLM: Spotify, the world's leading music streaming site, said Monday that its sales growth was likely to slow this year, but that it still expected to post a narrower annual loss. Only days ahead of its New York Stock Exchange debut, the Swedish music giant said revenues were projected to rise between 20 and 30 percent in 2018 to between 4.9 and 5.3 billion euros (\$6.1 billion to \$6.6 billion) compared with

growth of 38 percent last year and 53 percent in 2016.

Spotify, which has not posted a profit since its creation in 2008, said unfavorable exchange rates were the main reason for the growth slowdown. Its operating loss was expected to come in between 230 and 330 million euros, down from 378 million in 2017. The company also said it aimed to boost its subscriber numbers by 30 to 36 percent this year. Spotify will go public on April 3 on the New York Stock Exchange. In an unusual move, the company is not issuing new shares as in a traditional initial public offering. It instead will directly list its shares on the New York Stock Exchange, allowing its founders to maintain control and avoiding the cost of Wall Street underwriters. — AFP

Arizona puts brakes on Uber self-driving car

SAN FRANCISCO: The governor of Arizona on Monday put the brakes on Uber's self-driving car program in that state, citing "disturbing and alarming" dashcam footage from a fatal crash in that state. Arizona governor Doug Ducey sent Uber chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi a letter saying he has directed transportation department officials to suspend Uber's ability to test or operate self-driving vehicles on public roads.

"I found the video to be disturbing and alarming, and it raises many questions about the ability of Uber to continue testing in Arizona," Ducey said in the letter, a copy of

which was posted online. Uber put a temporary halt to its self-driving car program in the US after the March 18 accident that resulted in the death of pedestrian. "We proactively suspended self-driving operations in all cities immediately following the tragic incident last week," an Uber spokesperson told AFP. "We continue to help investigators in any way we can, and we'll keep a dialogue open with the governor's office going forward."

Dashcam footage of the first fatal self-driving car crash involving a pedestrian shows the Uber vehicle operator appearing to be distracted, then gasping in horror seconds before the impact. The driver can be seen looking down at something for nearly five seconds before finally gazing up the instant before the car hit a woman in the city of Tempe. Police there released the footage, along with dashcam video of the road in the final seconds before the pedestrian, who was walking with a bicycle, is struck on a poorly lit highway. The car was in autonomous mode.

Police chief Sylvia Moir told the San Francisco Chronicle last week that, while the investigation continued, "it appears that the Uber would likely not be at fault," mainly because the pedestrian was not using a crosswalk.

"It's very clear it would have been difficult to avoid this collision in any kind of mode based on how she came from the shadows right into the roadway," Moir told the Chronicle. The crash has raised concerns about whether lives are put at risk by allowing companies to use public roads as testing ground for self-driving vehicle technology.

Meanwhile, advocates of autonomous cars contend they have the potential to make roads safer by avoiding mistakes made by human drivers. Arizona and California have been particularly encouraging, hoping that companies developing autonomous technology in those states will create local jobs and facilities devoted to a promising new industry. — AFP

Health

Land decay to displace tens of millions, global survey warns

MEDELLIN: Land degradation will unleash a mass migration of at least 50 million people by 2050 — as many as 700 million unless humans stop depleting the life-giving resource, more than 100 scientists warned Monday. Already, land decay caused by unsustainable farming, mining, pollution, and city expansion is undermining the well-being of some 3.2 billion people — 40 percent of the global population, they said in the first comprehensive assessment of land health.

Land depletion threatens food security for all Earth's citizens, and access to clean water and breathable air regulated by the soil and the plants that grow on it. The condition of land is "critical," alerted the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). "We've converted large amounts of our forests, we've converted large amounts of our grasslands, we've lost 87 percent of our wetlands... we've really changed our land surface in the last several hundred years," IPBES chairman Robert Watson said.

"Land degradation, loss of productivity of those soils and those vegetations will force people to move. It will be no longer viable to live on those lands," he told AFP. The lowest number of 50 million migrants is a best case scenario. It assumes "we've really tried hard to have sustainable agricultural practices, sustainable forestry, we've tried to minimize climate change," Watson explained. The high projection is based on a "business-as-usual" approach in which rampant global warming wreaks havoc with the land-fueling desertification and drought.

Last frontier

By 2050, said the analysis, land degradation and climate change will reduce crop yields by 10 percent globally-up to half in some regions. The report covers the entirety of Earth's land, as well as the lakes and rivers it supports. It estimated that land degradation cost the equivalent of 10 percent of global economic output in 2010. "Every five percent loss of gross domestic product... is associated with a 12 percent increase in the likelihood of violent conflict," warned the report. Already, in dryland areas, years of extremely low rainfall see an estimated 45 percent rise in violent conflict. The main drivers of land degradation, said the assessment, were "high-consumption lifestyles" in rich countries, and rising demand for products in developing ones, fuelled by income and population growth.



SYDNEY: Protesters gather next to a large blow-up figure of the earth at an environmental rally. — AFP

Less than a quarter of land has managed to escape "substantial impacts" of human activity—primarily because it is found in inhospitable parts of the world—too cold, too high, too dry, or too wet for humans to live in. Even this small repository is projected to shrink to less than 10 percent in just 30 years' time. "People are pushing into those frontiers," Bob Scholes of the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, a co-author of the paper said.

Global warming permits people to move into the icy, subarctic Boreal region, for example, while technology now allows us to pump water from deep aquifers in the extreme desert. Crop and grazing lands now cover more than a third of the Earth's land surface. This means not only a loss of soil, but also populations of wild plants and animals, and forests that suck up planet-warming carbon dioxide and produce oxygen.

"Biodiversity loss is projected to reach 38-46 per-

cent by 2050," said the report, warning that Earth is in the beginnings of a sixth mass extinction—the first since the demise of the dinosaurs 65 million years ago. The IPBES assessment took global experts three years to compile, analyzing all the available scientific data.

Climate change

The report identified land degradation as a major contributor to climate change, and vice versa. Deforestation alone contributes about 10 percent of human-induced greenhouse gas emissions. And by releasing carbon once locked in the soil, land decay was responsible for global emissions of up to 4.4 billion tons of carbon dioxide per year between 2000 and 2009. "Without urgent action, further losses of 36 gigatons of carbon from soils especially from sub-Saharan Africa is projected by 2050," the scientists warned. This is equal to about 20 years of global transport emissions. — AFP

Are lonely hearts prone to disease?

PARIS: Feeling lonely contributes less to the risk of cardiovascular disease than recent research suggests, scientists said yesterday, but social isolation really does up the odds of dying after a heart attack or stroke. The alleged link between loneliness and heart disease essentially disappears once other well-known risk factors — smoking, drinking, poor diet, lack of exercise — are factored in, according to a study that monitored nearly 480,000 men and women in Britain for seven years.

Likewise the supposed impact of feeling friendless on premature death. But even after dodgy lifestyle habits are taken into consideration, social isolation — time actually spent alone — boosted the risk of dying by about thirty percent in people who suffered a stroke or heart attack, according to the study, published in *Heart*, a medical journal. "Social isolation, but not loneliness ... remained as an independent risk factor for mortality," the researchers, led by Christian Hakulinen, a professor at the University of Helsinki, concluded.

Earlier efforts to tease out the influence of a solitary existence on cardiovascular disease and heart-related mortality had produced mixed results, in part due to the relatively small number of people covered. For the new study, Hakulinen and his team drew from the so-called Biobank cohort, in which 479,054 people aged 40 to 69 were monitored for seven years. "To the best of our knowledge, our study is the largest on the topic," they wrote.

The participants provided detailed information on their ethnic background, education level, income and lifestyle, as well as any history of depression. They were also asked to gauge their levels of loneliness — a subjective feeling — and social isolation, which measures the amount of time spent alone or in the company of others. Nearly 10 percent of the respondents qualified as socially isolated, six percent as lonely, and one percent were both.

The researchers cross-checked this personal data with the people who suffered first-time strokes or heart attacks, as well as those who died. But once health-wrecking lifestyle habits were accounted for, only the link with social isolation remained. Earlier research has shown that people who live alone die younger, succumb more quickly when they get cancer, and are generally in poorer health. — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE





248 33 199



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What's On



LuLu Hypermarket launches Food Expo 2018



LuLu Hypermarket, the leading regional retailer, launched its eagerly awaited annual 'Food Expo' on 21 March at its Al Rai outlet. Indian Celebrity Chef Vicky Ratnani inaugurated the function in the presence of top management at LuLu Kuwait, a large gathering of customers, well-wishers and media personnel. The 11-day promotion period, which will end on 31 March, is being held across all LuLu hypermarkets in the country and features a variety of competitions and fun activities for shoppers, as well as unique food displays.

Several food-related competition, including Cookery Contests, Junior Chef Contests, Wow

the Master Chef Contests, Taste & Win Contests, Make And Eat Competition, Kitchen Queen Contests and Cook Without Fire Competition, as well as live-cooking demonstrations, are being held as part of the festival at the hypermarket's outlets since 20 March. The competitions allow budding and seasoned chefs to try their hand at creating appetizing dishes. The Chit Chat with Master Chef allows fans to meet with Indian celebrity chef Ratnani to discuss his exciting career and ask questions about his cooking styles.

Among the food festival highlights that will be on display from 21 to 27 March are record-breaking food presentations, including a giant muffin,

the longest kebab sandwich, the longest shabiya, the longest cake, the biggest Orange Cake, the longest shawarma, a pizza mountain and the longest basboosa.

LuLu Hypermarket has always aimed to live-up to its brand image as a company that meets customers' expectations for high-quality products at competitive prices. Attractive campaigns, such as the ongoing Food Festival, which help garner the interest of shoppers and increase support for the brand, are part of the Hypermarket's customer-oriented approach to business and its endeavor to present a unique shopping experience for patrons.



Marina Hotel supports Earth Hour for the seventh consecutive year

Marina Hotel Kuwait celebrated Earth Hour for the seventh consecutive year by switching off the hotel's lights on 24th March 2018 for 60 minutes to raise awareness on climate change. The hotel joined millions of people and many organizations around the world to draw attention to the worldwide issue of global warming. The activity has a significant impact and involves everyone in the hotel to participate together with all the guests in their rooms and public areas.

Employees of each department including

Sales & Marketing, Front Office, Food & Beverage, Housekeeping, Engineering, Finance, IT, Admin, Human Resources along with the General Manager, Mr Nabil Hammoud were present, assisting with candlelit celebrations around the hotel and creating awareness for guests to contribute to global environmental change.

Nabil Hammoud, General Manager, Marina Hotel commented on this occasion: "We are committed towards our surrounding environment and keen on supporting any program

which helps save the Earth. This environmental initiative is part of our approach to corporate social responsibility and it encourages our guests and employees to participate in saving energy and having green and sustainable future".

By participating in the Earth Hour, Marina Hotel Kuwait joins the growing list of supporting businesses that are committed to take a stand on climate change and create a cleaner, safer and more secure future.

Earth Hour is a charitable organisation based out of Singapore and was started as a lights-off event in Sydney, Australia in 2007. Created by WWF and other volunteer organizations, Earth Hour's greatest strength is the power of people to take on climate change.



CBK Mother's Day celebrations

In celebration of the Mother's Day, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) organized a cook-

ing training course for its female clients and account holders with Chef Susan. In this regard, the head of CBK's individual banking services unit, Noura Kayed said that over 30 clients registered to undergo the three-day course and enjoyed cooking some amazing and healthy dishes with chef Susan before they all shared a dinner with the dishes they themselves prepared.



Burgan Bank ties-up with Baskin Robbins

As part of its ongoing commitment to enhancing customers' experience, Burgan Bank is pleased to announce its new partnership with Baskin Robbins which is one of the popular ice cream destinations in Kuwait.

This new tie-up provide customers a 10% discount on ice cream purchases when using their Burgan Bank credit or debit cards at any of the 43 Baskin Robbins branches in Kuwait. The offer is valid only through store purchases. Widely known as the preferred brand for ice cream lovers, "Baskin Robbins" owns 7000 stores across the world and is the largest Quick Service Restaurant brand serving high-quality ice cream, specialty-frozen desserts, and beverages and boasts an incredible recipe library of 1200 flavors presently.

TV



01:15 Street Fighter
03:05 Star Trek Beyond
05:20 Independents' Day
07:05 Hunting The Phantom
08:40 San Andreas Quake
10:10 Street Fighter
11:55 Star Trek Beyond
14:05 Rumble
15:45 San Andreas Quake
17:15 The Bodyguard
18:50 Starship Troopers: Traitor Of Mars
20:25 The Transporter
22:00 A Good Day To Die Hard
23:40 Death Race 2050



00:45 O'Shea's Big Adventure
01:40 Bad Dog
02:35 Predator's Prey
03:00 Snake Sheila
03:25 Pit Bulls & Parolees
04:15 Cats vs Dog
05:02 Wildest Islands
05:49 Untamed & Uncut
06:36 Escape To Chimp Eden
07:25 Predator's Prey
07:50 Snake Sheila
08:15 O'Shea's Big Adventure
09:10 Bad Dog
10:05 Wildest Islands
11:00 Predator's Prey
11:28 Snake Sheila
11:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
12:50 Cat vs Dog
13:45 Bad Dog
14:40 Wildest Islands
15:35 Untamed & Uncut
16:30 The Animals' Guide To Survival
17:25 Pet Nation Renovation
18:20 The Pool Master
19:15 Bad Dog
20:10 Snake Sheila
21:05 Pet Nation Renovation
22:00 The Pool Master
22:55 Wildest Islands
23:50 Untamed & Uncut



00:40 Our Girl
01:35 Death In Paradise
02:30 Top Of The Lake
03:25 Doctors
03:55 Doctors
04:25 Father Brown
05:10 Doctor Who
06:00 Holly City
07:00 Doctors
07:30 Doctors
08:00 EastEnders
08:30 EastEnders
09:00 Holly City
09:55 Holly City
10:55 Death In Paradise
11:50 Doctor Who
12:40 Stella
13:30 Holly City
14:25 Holly City
15:25 Death In Paradise
16:20 Doctor Who
17:10 Stella
18:00 Doctors
18:30 EastEnders
19:00 Death In Paradise
20:00 Our Girl
20:55 The Durrells
21:45 Death In Paradise
22:40 Doctors
23:10 EastEnders
23:40 Our Girl



00:00 Evil Up Close
01:00 Evil Up Close
02:00 The First 48
03:00 It Takes A Killer
03:30 It Takes A Killer
04:00 Evil Up Close
05:00 Evil Up Close
06:00 Cold Case Files
07:00 The First 48
08:00 It Takes A Killer
08:30 It Takes A Killer
09:00 Cold Case Files
10:00 Cold Case Files
11:00 Cold Case Files
12:00 The First 48
13:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
14:00 Homicide Hunter
15:00 Homicide Hunter
16:00 Cold Case Files
17:00 Robbie Coltrane's Critical Evidence
18:00 It Takes A Killer
18:30 It Takes A Killer
19:00 Cold Case Files
20:00 Cold Case Files
21:00 Cold Case Files
22:00 Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids
23:00 Homicide Hunter



00:05 Nightcap
00:30 Teachers
00:55 This Is Not Happening
01:20 Why? With Hannibal Buress
01:45 Tosh.0
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
02:35 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
03:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
03:25 Tosh.0
03:50 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
04:15 Comedy Central Presents
04:45 Key And Peele
05:10 Detroiters
05:35 Disaster Date
06:00 Ridiculousness Arabia
06:25 Comedy Central Presents
06:55 Punk'd (Bet)
07:17 Punk'd (Bet)
07:40 I Live With Models
08:05 Key And Peele
08:30 Disaster Date
08:55 Workaholics
09:20 Comedy Central Presents
09:50 I Live With Models
10:15 Detroiters
10:40 Friends
11:05 Key And Peele
11:30 Disaster Date
11:55 Ridiculousness Arabia
12:20 Friendszone
12:45 Key And Peele
13:10 Friends
13:33 Friends
13:55 Disaster Date
14:20 Workaholics
14:45 Detroiters
15:10 Friends
15:35 Key And Peele
16:00 Comedy Central Presents
16:30 Friendszone

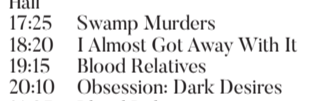
16:55 Friends
17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
19:00 Friends
19:25 Friendszone
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper
22:00 Why? With Hannibal Buress
22:25 Al Madrigal: Why Is The Rabbit Crying
23:15 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
23:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah



00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 The Next Great Magician
02:10 Risking It All
03:00 Nextworld
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Ultimate Survival
07:50 How It's Made
08:15 How It's Made
08:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
09:30 Tanked
10:20 Nextworld
11:10 The Know It All Guide To...
11:35 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
12:00 The Quick And The Curious
12:25 The Quick And The Curious
12:50 How It's Made
13:15 How It's Made
13:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
14:30 Tanked
15:20 Ultimate Survival
16:10 Nextworld
17:00 The Know It All Guide To...
17:25 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
17:50 What Happened Next?
18:15 What Happened Next?
18:40 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:05 Kids Do The Craziest Things
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Tanked
21:10 The Know It All Guide To...
21:35 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
22:00 What Happened Next?
22:25 What Happened Next?
22:50 Nextworld
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:45 Obsession: Dark Desires
01:40 Killed Before Dawn: People Magazine Investigates
02:35 Murder In The Heartland
03:30 Evil Lives Here
04:25 Swamp Murders
05:20 I Almost Got Away With It
06:10 Blood Relatives
07:00 California Investigator
07:25 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
08:15 Swamp Murders
09:10 Blood Relatives
10:05 Obsession: Dark Desires
11:00 Reel Crime/Real Story
11:55 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
12:50 I Almost Got Away With It
13:45 Blood Relatives
14:40 Obsession: Dark Desires
15:35 The Perfect Murder
16:30 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
17:25 Swamp Murders
18:20 I Almost Got Away With It
19:15 Blood Relatives
21:05 Obsession: Dark Desires
22:00 Evil Lives Here
22:55 Married With Secrets
23:50 True Conviction



00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:30 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
03:20 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:10 Alex & Co.
04:35 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:00 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
05:50 Rolling With The Ronks
06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
06:25 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
07:20 Stuck In The Middle
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bunk'd
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
09:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
09:25 Loloirock
09:50 Loloirock
10:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
10:40 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
11:05 Hank Zipzer
11:30 Alex & Co.
11:55 Alex & Co.
12:20 Loloirock
12:45 Loloirock
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
13:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
13:55 Walk The Prank
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 Right Now Kapow
15:10 Elena Of Avalor
15:35 Bizaardvark
16:00 Tangled: The Series
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
16:50 Raven's Home
17:15 Stuck In The Middle
17:40 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
18:05 K.C. Undercover
18:30 Bunk'd
18:55 Descendants Wicked World
19:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 Jessie
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 Tangled: The Series
20:45 Bizaardvark
21:10 Hotel Transylvania: The Series

21:35 Bunk'd
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:50 Loloirock
23:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:35 Binny And The Ghost



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Henry Hugglemonster
01:05 Loopdidoo
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 Calimero
01:50 Henry Hugglemonster
02:05 Art Attack
02:30 The Hive
02:40 Loopdidoo
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:10 Art Attack
03:35 Loopdidoo
03:50 Calimero
04:05 Art Attack
04:30 Henry Hugglemonster
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:00 Art Attack
05:30 Henry Hugglemonster
05:45 Loopdidoo
06:00 Henry Hugglemonster
06:15 Calimero
06:30 PJ Masks
07:00 Trulli Tales
07:30 Jungle Junction
08:10 PJ Masks
08:30 Vampirina
09:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
09:30 Micky Mouse Clubhouse
10:00 Puppy Dog Pals
10:30 Puppy Dog Pals
11:00 The Lion Guard
11:30 The Lion Guard
12:00 Sofia The First
12:30 Sofia The First
13:00 PJ Masks
13:30 PJ Masks
14:00 P-King Duckling
14:30 Vampirina
15:00 Puppy Dog Pals
15:30 Sofia The First
16:00 PJ Masks
16:30 Mission Force One
17:00 The Lion Guard
17:30 Puppy Dog Pals
18:00 Trulli Tales
18:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
19:00 Sofia The First
19:30 The Lion Guard
20:00 Vampirina
20:30 PJ Masks
21:00 Trulli Tales
21:30 Sofia The First
22:00 P-King Duckling
22:30 Puppy Dog Pals
23:00 Mission Force One
23:30 PJ Masks



00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Street Justice: The Bronx
01:50 Goblin Works Garage
02:35 Cuban Chrome
03:20 Extreme Engineering
04:05 Flying Wild Alaska
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 How Do They Do It?
06:00 Classic Car Club
06:23 Dallas Car Sharks
06:45 How Do They Do It?
07:10 How Do They Do It?
07:35 Flying Wild Alaska
08:20 Classic Car Club
08:45 Dallas Car Sharks
09:10 Dirty Jobs
09:55 How Do They Do It?
10:20 How Do They Do It?
10:45 Goblin Works Garage
11:30 Cuban Chrome
12:20 Classic Car Club
12:43 Dallas Car Sharks
13:05 How Do They Do It?
13:30 How Do They Do It?
13:55 Dirty Jobs
14:40 Alaskan Bush People
15:30 Cuban Chrome
16:15 Goblin Works Garage
17:05 Cuban Chrome
17:50 Flying Wild Alaska
18:40 Dirty Jobs
19:25 Alaskan Bush People
20:15 Impossible Engineering
21:00 Heavy Rescue
21:50 Railroad Australia
22:40 Outback Truckers
23:30 Flying Wild Alaska



06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow
07:15 Mech-X4
07:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
07:45 Walk The Prank
08:35 Right Now Kapow
09:25 Mighty Med
10:20 Star Wars: The Freemaker Adventures
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Kid vs. Kat
12:25 Two More Eggs S2
12:30 Kid vs. Kat
12:55 Kirby Buckets Warped
13:45 Supa Strikas
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Supa Strikas
14:40 Right Now Kapow
15:30 Milo Murphy's Law
15:55 Two More Eggs S2
16:00 The Suite Life Of Zack & Cody
16:25 Lab Rats
16:50 Walk The Prank
17:15 Mech-X4
17:40 Marvel's Spider-Man
18:05 Kickin' It
18:30 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
18:45 Kickin' It
19:10 Mini Ninjas
19:25 Walk The Prank
19:50 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
19:55 Mech-X4
20:20 Ben Zero: Part Time Hero
20:45 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
21:10 Kid vs. Kat
21:35 Marvel's Rocket And Groot
21:40 Disney Mickey Mouse
21:45 Lab Rats
22:35 Phineas And Ferb
23:00 Programmes Start At 6:00am



00:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
01:50 E! News
02:50 WAGS

03:40 WAGS
04:35 WAGS
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 So Cosmo
06:55 E! News Middle East
07:10 So Cosmo
08:10 E! News: Daily Pop
09:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
10:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
11:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
12:00 E! News Middle East
12:15 WAGS Atlanta
13:10 WAGS Atlanta
14:05 WAGS Atlanta
15:00 E! News Middle East
15:15 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
17:10 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
19:00 E! News
20:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
21:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
22:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
23:00 E! News Middle East
23:15 Botched



00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 The Chase
03:25 Murdoch Mysteries
04:20 Murdoch Mysteries
05:15 Royal Recipes
06:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
07:10 The Chase
08:05 Murdoch Mysteries
09:00 Murdoch Mysteries
09:55 Royal Recipes
11:00 Who's Doing The Dishes?
11:50 The Chase
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Who's Doing The Dishes?
15:10 The Chase
16:00 Victoria
16:55 Broadchurch
17:50 Royal Recipes
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase
21:00 Victoria
21:55 Broadchurch
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street
23:40 Coronation Street



00:00 Ancient Top 10
01:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
02:00 The Universe
02:50 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
03:40 UFO Files
04:30 The Lost Evidence
05:20 Million Dollar Genius
06:10 The Universe
07:00 Ancient Top 10
08:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
09:00 The Universe
10:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
11:00 UFO Files
12:00 The Lost Evidence
13:00 Ancient Top 10
14:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
15:00 The Universe
16:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
17:00 UFO Files
18:00 Ancient Top 10
19:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
20:00 The Universe
21:00 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence
22:00 Pirate Treasure Of The Knights Templar
23:00 The Lost Evidence



00:00 Ice Road Truckers
00:50 Forged In Fire
01:40 Swap People
02:30 American Pickers
03:20 Biggie: The Life Of Notorious B.I.G.
04:10 Forged In Fire
05:00 Swap People
06:00 Ice Road Truckers
06:50 Forged In Fire
07:39 The Curse Of Oak Island
08:30 Forged In Fire
09:20 Ice Road Truckers
10:10 Alone
11:00 Forged In Fire
11:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
12:40 Forged In Fire
13:30 Ice Road Truckers
14:21 American Pickers
15:10 Alone
16:00 American Pickers
16:50 The Curse Of Oak Island
17:40 Detroit Steel
18:30 Ice Road Truckers
19:20 Forged In Fire
20:10 American Pickers
21:00 Counting Cars
21:25 Car Hunters
21:50 Project Impossible
22:40 Forged In Fire
23:30 Ice Road Truckers



00:15 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
00:45 David Rocco's Dolce India
01:10 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
01:40 Chasing Time
02:05 Chasing The Sun
02:35 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
03:00 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
03:30 Croatia's Finest
03:55 Croatia's Finest
04:25 Mega Food
05:20 Miguel's Feasts
05:45 John Torode's Asia
06:15 Confucius Was A Foodie
07:10 Chasing Time
07:35 Chasing The Sun
08:05 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
08:30 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
09:00 Croatia's Finest
09:55 Mega Food
10:50 Miguel's Feasts
11:15 John Torode's Asia
11:45 Confucius Was A Foodie
12:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
13:05 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia

13:35 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
14:00 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
14:30 Croatia's Finest
14:55 Croatia's Finest
15:25 Mega Food
16:20 John Torode's Korean Food Tour
17:15 Confucius Was A Foodie
18:10 Eat Street
18:35 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
19:05 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
19:30 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
20:00 Croatia's Finest
20:30 Croatia's Finest
21:00 Mega Food
22:00 John Torode's Korean Food Tour
22:55 Confucius Was A Foodie
23:50 Eat Street



00:10 Yukon Gold
01:00 Wicked Tuna
02:00 Air Crash Investigation
03:00 Fish Tank Kings
04:00 Yukon Gold
05:00 4 Babes A Second
06:00 Mega Breakdown
07:00 Inside
08:00 India's Mega Kitchens
09:00 4 Babes A Second
10:00 Miracle Hospital
11:00 Four Mums In A Boat
12:00 Living Wild
13:00 Mega Breakdown
14:00 India's Mega Kitchens
15:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
16:00 Miracle Hospital
17:00 Jane
18:00 The Two Million Year Old Boy
19:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
20:00 Miracle Hospital
20:50 Jane
22:30 Years Of Living Dangerously
23:20 India's Mega Kitchens



00:20 Lion vs. Giraffe
01:10 Hooked
02:00 Night Of The Lion
02:50 Monster Fish
03:45 Snakes In The City
04:40 Natural Born Monsters
05:35 Night Of The Lion
06:30 Monster Fish
07:25 Snakes In The City
08:20 Natural Born Monsters
09:15 Jaguars vs. Crocs
10:10 Predator Fails
11:05 Wild Untamed Brazil
12:00 Pond Stars
12:55 Lion Warrior
13:50 Hooked
14:45 Snakes In The City
15:40 World's Weirdest
16:35 Inside The Pack
17:30 Philly Undercover
18:25 World's Weirdest
19:20 Snakes In The City
20:10 World's Weirdest
21:00 Inside The Pack
21:50 Philly Undercover
22:40 World's Weirdest
23:30 Pond Stars



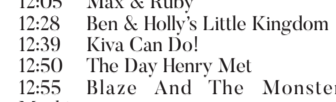
00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig
01:48 Sanjay And Craig
02:12 Winx Club
02:36 Winx Club
03:00 Harvey Beaks
03:24 Harvey Beaks
03:48 The Loud House
04:12 The Loud House
04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
05:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:12 SpongeBob SquarePants
06:36 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
07:24 Rabbids Invasion
07:48 Get Blake
08:12 Harvey Beaks
08:36 Sanjay And Craig
09:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
09:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
09:48 Henry Danger
10:12 Game Shakers
10:36 Regal Academy
11:00 Winx Club
11:24 SpongeBob SquarePants
11:48 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
12:12 The Loud House
12:36 Rabbids Invasion
13:00 Breadwinners
13:24 Massive Monster Mayhem
13:48 I Am Frankie
14:12 The Thundermans
14:36 Sanjay And Craig
14:59 Rabbids Invasion
15:24 Harvey Beaks
15:48 SpongeBob SquarePants
16:12 Henry Danger
16:36 Henry Danger
17:00 Kids' Choice Awards 2018
18:12 The Thundermans
18:36 The Thundermans
19:00 School Of Rock
19:24 Game Shakers
19:48 The Thundermans
20:12 Harvey Beaks
20:36 SpongeBob SquarePants
21:00 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
21:24 Sanjay And Craig
21:48 Rabbids Invasion
22:12 Breadwinners
22:36 Harvey Beaks
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
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03:00 Harvey Beaks
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04:36 Breadwinners
05:00 Breadwinners
05:24 Get Blake
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21:48 Rabbids Invasion
22:12 Breadwinners
22:36 Harvey Beaks
23:00 SpongeBob SquarePants
23:24 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles

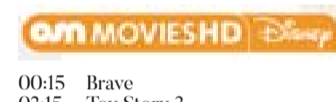


00:05 Max & Ruby
00:28 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:39 Kiva Can Do!
00:50 The Day Henry Met
00:55 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:18 Blaze And The Monster Machines
01:41 Paw Patrol
01:53 Kid-E-Cats
01:57 Kid-E-Cats
02:03 Shimmer And Shine
02:25 Nella And The Princess Knight
02:36 Paw Patrol
02:59 The Day Henry Met
03:05 Max & Ruby
03:28 Dora The Explorer
03:51 Sunny Day
04:13 Nella The Princess Knight
04:35 Shimmer And Shine
04:58 Wallykazam!

05:22 Zack & Quack
05:33 The Day Henry Met
05:39 Blaze And The Monster Machines
06:00 Rusty Rivets
06:13 Paw Patrol
06:37 Dora The Explorer
07:00 Nella The Princess Knight
07:21 Kiva Can Do!
07:32 Kiva Can Do!
07:43 Blaze And The Monster Machines
08:05 Paw Patrol
08:29 Shimmer And Shine
08:53 Nella The Princess Knight
09:14 The Day Henry Met
09:20 Paw Patrol
09:43 Rusty Rivets
10:06 Wallykazam!
10:29 Bubble Guppies
10:52 Team Umizoomi
11:15 Kid-E-Cats
11:20 Shimmer And Shine
11:43 Sunny Day
12:05 Max & Ruby
12:28 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
12:39 Kiva Can Do!
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21:14 The Day Henry Met
21:20 Paw Patrol
21:44 Rusty Rivets
22:07 Wallykazam!
22:30 Bubble Guppies
22:53 Team Umizoomi
23:15 Kid-E-Cats
23:21 Shimmer And Shine
23:44 Sunny Day



00:15 Brave
02:15 Toy Story 3
04:15 Alice Through The Looking Glass
06:15 Planes
08:15 Brave
10:15 Toy Story 3
12:15 Alice Through The Looking Glass
14:15 Brother Bear 2
15:45 Cars
17:45 The Parent Trap
20:00 Queen Of Katwe
22:15 Brother Bear 2
23:45 Cars



00:05 Riverdale
01:00 The Catch
01:50 The Last Kingdom
02:40 The Voice
03:20 Star
05:20 The Unit
06:10 Famous In Love
07:00 Good Morning America
09:00 The View
10:00 Star
11:00 The Unit
12:00 Famous In Love
13:00 Chicago Fire
14:00 Riverdale
15:00 The View
16:00 Live Good Morning America
18:00 Famous In Love
19:00 Prison Break - Event Series
20:00 Chicago Fire
21:00 The Voice
22:00 The Flash
23:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.



00:00 Riverdale
01:00 The Catch
01:50 The Last Kingdom
02:40 The Voice
03:20 Star
05:20 The Unit
06:10 Famous In Love
07:00 Good Morning America
09:00 The View
10:00 Star
11:00 The Unit
12:00 Famous In Love
13:00 Chicago Fire
14:00 Riverdale
15:00 The View
16:00 Live Good Morning America
18:00 Famous In Love
19:00 Prison Break - Event Series
20:00 Chicago Fire
21:00 The Voice
22:00 The Flash
23:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.



01:20 The Secret Of My Success
03:15 Tommy Boy
05:00 Are We Done Yet?
06:40 Big Momma's House 2
08:25 My Bakery In Brooklyn
10:10 Men At Work
11:55 Are We Done Yet?
13:35 Big Momma's House 2
15:20 Six Dance Lessons In Six Weeks
17:10 Daddy's Home
18:50 Big Mommas: Like Father, Like Son
20:40 Office Space
22:15 The Bronze



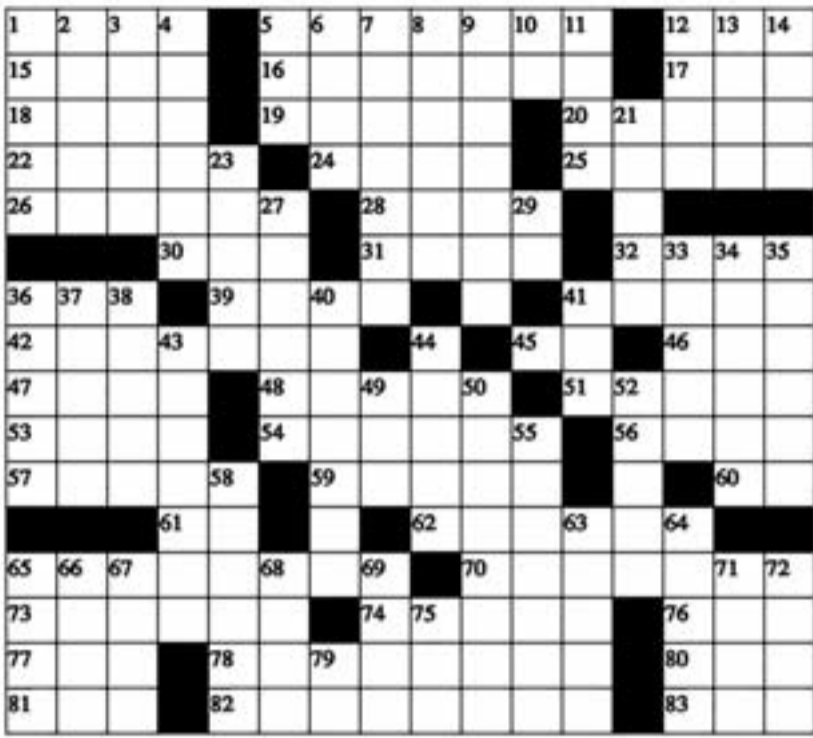
02:05 The Survivalist
03:55 To Kill A Mockingbird
06:25 Noble
08:15 An Inconvenient Truth
10:00 To Kill A Mockingbird
12:10 LA Bamba
14:00 Days Of Heaven
15:40 The Remains Of The Day
17:55 The Quiet Hour
19:30 The Lobster
21:30 The Descendants
23:25 Miami Blues



00:40 The Happy Cricket And The Giant Bugs
02:15 Rock Dog
03:55 Azur & Asmar: The Prince's Quest
05:40 Shopkins - Chef Club
06:40 Monkey King: The Hero
08:15 Freddy Frogface
09:45 Pacific Pirlas
11:15 The Wheelers
12:40 Anila's Secret
1

Stars

CROSSWORD 1869



ACROSS

- 1. United States virologist who developed the Salk vaccine that is injected against poliomyelitis (born 1914).
- 5. Battle in which the ruler of Afghanistan defeated the Maharrattas in 1761.
- 12. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- 15. An elaborate song for solo voice.
- 16. Extravasation of urine into the scrotal sac.
- 17. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
- 18. The fleshy part of the human body that you sit on.
- 19. Held back.
- 20. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
- 22. A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
- 24. (prefix) Half or partial.
- 25. Greek author of fables (circa 620-560 BC).
- 26. All of the inhabitants of the earth.
- 28. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
- 30. 10 hao equal 1 dong.
- 31. Type genus of the Anatidae.
- 32. A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
- 36. An associate degree in applied science.
- 39. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- 42. A short introductory essay preceding the text of a book.
- 45. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
- 46. 100 avos equal 1 pataca.
- 47. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
- 48. Moth having nonfunctional mouthparts as adults.
- 51. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
- 53. An Asian river between China and Russia.
- 54. Of or related to genetically distinguished groups of people.
- 56. Long green edible beaked pods of the okra plant.
- 57. Minute aquatic herbs floating on or below the water surface of still water consisting of a leaflike frond or plant body and single root.
- 59. A form of Japanese poetry.
- 60. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- 61. The square of a body of any size of type.
- 62. Temperature just below the boiling point.
- 65. Having unsuitable feminine qualities.
- 70. Unique or specific to a person or thing or category.
- 73. (of tempo) Very fast adv 1.
- 74. Find repugnant.
- 76. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
- 77. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- 78. An oral beta blocker (trade name Tenormin) used in treating hypertension and angina.
- 80. Preserve of crushed fruit.
- 81. The compass point that is midway between north and northeast.
- 82. Past times remembered with nostalgia.
- 83. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.

DOWN

- 1. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- 2. (Akkadian) Mother and earth goddess in Gilgamesh epic.
- 3. A herbaceous plant genus of the family Linaceae with small sessile leaves.
- 4. The quarter of many North African cities in which the citadel is located.
- 5. (British) Tavern consisting of a building with a bar and public rooms.
- 6. A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
- 7. A pad of paper for keeping notes.
- 8. Someone who cuts and delivers ice.
- 9. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedaling).
- 10. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- 11. A three-tone Chadic language.
- 12. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
- 13. Of or being the lowest female voice.
- 14. A collection of objects laid on top of each other.
- 21. The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
- 23. Squash bugs.
- 27. A football game in which two teams of 11 players try to kick or head a ball into the opponents' goal.
- 29. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
- 33. Of a surface.
- 34. American silversmith remembered for his midnight ride (celebrated in a poem by Longfellow) to warn the colonists in Lexington and Concord that British troops were coming (1735-1818).
- 35. Tall East Indian cedar having spreading branches with nodding tips.
- 37. An edible seaweed with a mild flavor.
- 38. The oily secretion of the sebaceous glands.
- 40. A group of islands off the west coast of Sicily in the Mediterranean.
- 41. A master's degree in business.
- 43. The property of being remote.
- 44. An effortful attempt to attain a goal.
- 49. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
- 50. In a rakish manner.
- 52. Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
- 55. A composition that imitates somebody's style in a humorous way.
- 58. The sodium salt of amobarbital that is used as a barbiturate.
- 63. Common black European thrush.
- 64. Dry red table wine from the Rioja region of northern Spain.
- 66. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
- 67. (used especially of vegetation) Having lost all moisture.
- 68. A tiny or scarcely detectable amount.
- 69. A special way of doing something.
- 71. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- 72. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- 75. Wild and domestic cattle.
- 79. Half the width of an em.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You'd rather be home than anywhere else, including work: a new coworker could be the problem. Being unrealistic seems to be dominant as your mind drifts from one dreamy thought to the next. Commonsense rules as you step up to perform your duties and actually complete a project. You could receive criticism for letting your imagination take such a strong hold and influence in your life; be patient and let your accomplishments speak for themselves. An invitation for lunch with a friend breaks the monotony of the day. Later, you devote some time to someone who loves you. You could find yourself trying out a new route to and from work. Making new memories with old friends is highlighted during the phase of you have entered.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are determined to juggle your work and personal lives in order to continue your growth. You suspect someone of playing mind games at your expense; the truth is soon revealed. You enjoy material abundance and are very willing to share. You treasure the finer things in life and aren't ashamed of it. A very happy customer or client makes your boss or supervisor aware of your abilities and winning attitude. Someone younger warms your heart by giving you a gift that they had a large part in creating; this could also indicate a strong love and appreciation for a pet. Shopping in a favorite place provides comfort and familiarity. Your taste is complimented by a very flattering person. An evening stargazing could result in a romantic exchange.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You feel good about the direction you're headed regarding investments and who you work with on this. You're able to see something no one else seems able to see. A person tries to start an argument regarding the way you do things; you may have to remind this person that this isn't about them. You gain support as you start a new project; this adds to your sense of confidence and capability. Spending some time with someone special is at the top of your priority list. Your input is needed on a project that seems to be way over your head; your confidence level grows and you're certain you can do this. You get to the bottom of a situation and become able to understand exactly what to do. A gathering with excellent food later.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You could experience problems explaining yourself and a boss or supervisor isn't happy. Avoid a confrontation if you can because this passes very soon. You find strong support from coworkers who not only understand, but agree; try not to be too harsh in self-judgment. Being in a position to lead isn't exactly what you want but you get it anyway; you do your best to live up to expectations. Being in love appeals to you now just as being in love is something you desire. Being left alone to hold down the fort applies pressure that actually motivates you more than anything else; you're capable of overcoming distractions now. A new outfit or some other item puts a spring in your step and a smile on your lips. You're quite the fashionable person.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

A sweet note sent by someone you helped warms your heart; you love helping deserving people. You could feel disconnected and fuzzy off and on throughout the day; the only blockages and obstacles are in your mind, ignore doubts and pursue your goals. Intuition steers you in the right direction when you need to assign certain people to certain projects. You change your mind on something just in time; this is what happens when you accept something you don't really want. Your imagination runs wild as you let your creative energy have its way. Something's amiss with someone in your circle but you can't quite put your finger on it. An acquaintance unknowingly says something that makes your day. Smiles and laughter and love tonight.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have got the energy and motivation to begin something new that could bring better results than you imagined. You're able to unravel complicated issues and puzzling circumstances by seeing through the jumbled details clearly. Entering a new phase highlights physical changes and activities; you take advantage of this and get much better along the way. A new or existing romance takes on new meaning. You realize someone's trying to help you anonymously; this is someone you have done the same for. Looking forward you see just how far you have come. A new explanation becomes available regarding a personal issue; this is a big relief. Going toward something difficult energizes, encourages you to succeed; stay on this path and you win.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Making plans for your future is front and center: figuring out how to grow your savings and income involves making some specific arrangements you could require help with. Someone that you're close to could try to entice you to skip work and do something fun. You learn something concerning someone from your past that helps you let go of a painful event you're holding on to; a blessed sense of release is the wonderful result. You may feel compelled to let someone know exactly how you feel; your feelings are returned. You dissect a strategy piece by piece until you find the fly in the ointment, so to speak. You're able to look at another point of view and you make much wiser decisions regarding a very difficult situation; this leads to a better result.



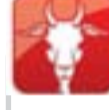
Scorpio (October 23-November 19)

Something you didn't care for seems to change and actually come in handy. You have warm feelings for someone who does you a favor. Daring to call someone out on a serious mistake at work takes courage but you do it very professionally; this isn't the first time this person has damaged productivity. Making plans for a nice getaway lifts your spirits and may motivate you to get your work done; anticipation is sometimes as fun as the trip! A break in routine actually inspires you on something to do with work. Memories of days gone by seem to stick with you and possibly cause a bit of melancholy. Others find your humor and cutting up delightful. Taking in a movie or play, just getting out of the house, is strongly indicated.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You take the opportunity to do something for yourself that you've needed to tend to for some time; you're worth so much more than you even realize. This might be the time you've hoped for, a time for actually reaching goals; the energy of gain is strongly present. A good time for serious study and learning is indicated. You seem very capable to learn as you go and to use what you learn wisely; life seems to make more sense! You take time to reach out to someone who's ill or in some way home bound. If you're not sure which way to move or what choice is best, take your time until the answer makes itself known! Remember, you can never tell from the outside what someone's going through inside. Popcorn and soda for you tonight.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Gaining information on an emotional matter helps add to a growing picture; this could have something to do with your family tree or something similar. You could be quite the story teller as everyone hangs on your every word; giving people something to laugh about comes at just the right time! The spent with a mentor becomes valuable. Your natural charms are at their strongest and seem to attract help from everyone and everywhere. Enjoy! You're a true-blue friend, Happy. Your day dreamy mood could send you straight to the movies or book store. A nice person lends you a hand when you have an issue later; it pays to create good, clean karma. You show up when called to help but it turns out something's being done just for you.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You work with two opposing sides to bring about agreement; the work's not finished, but they have come a good way toward the end. Being able to give examples and reasons help with yet another new project that comes your way. Someone in a position of authority is keeping an eye on you; this person is usually fair and complimentary. Getting from point A to point B could prove a challenge. Having a need to daydream looks very likely throughout the day. You may take some time for reading, writing, painting the deepest of creative endeavors you're able to perform that touches your soul. More than ever now, reaching into the dreamer part of you is positive. You're sensitive to all things of beauty. Relax and smile this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

No matter where you turn you could encounter some uncomfortable energy. Perhaps taking a break and relieving the tension generated by this could be most helpful. Now isn't the time to seek approval from everyone around you; being honest is more important than being liked or agreed with. You have difficulty when trying to get your message across to others; be patient; this is very short in duration! You may feel a strong urge to reexamine how you're going about some things. If you feel that some of your go-to places of comfort have been blocked, simply find new ones! No matter what, you feel certain you're close to figuring out a rather puzzling situation you discover. Over all, your day proves productive when you think about it.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Songs From the Year 2000

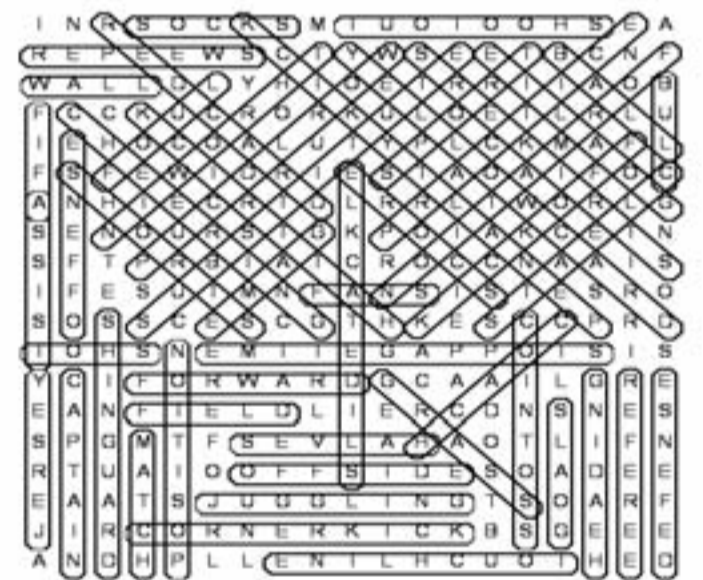
Find and circle all of the songs from the year 2000 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 29 letters spell an additional song title from 2000.



- AMAZED, AMERICAN FEE, BACK AT ONE, BACK HERE, BAG LADY, BE WITH YOU, BEAUTIFUL DAY, BENT, BREATHE, BROADWAY, BYE BYE BYE, CALIFORNICATION, DESERT ROSE, FADED, GIRL ON TV, HIGHER, HOT BOYZ, I LIKE IT, I NEED YOU, I TRY, I WANNA KNOW, I WISH, INCOMPLETE, JUMPIN' JUMPIN', KRYPTONITE, LUCKY, MARZA MARIA, MEET VIRGINIA, MINORITY, MOST GIRLS, MUSIC, NO MORE, OTHERSIDE, PINCH ME, SAY MY NAME, SEPARATED, SHE BANGS, SMOOTH, STAN, STRONGER, THERE YOU GO, TRY AGAIN, WIFEY, WONDERFUL

Yesterday's Solution

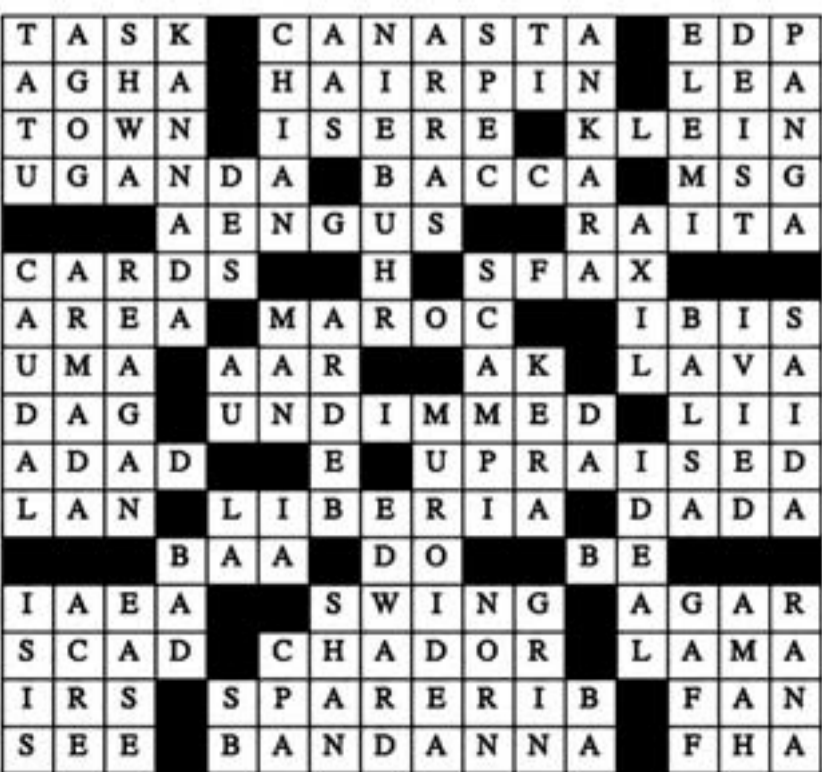
Soccer



- ASSIST, BALL, CAPTAIN, CHEERING, CLEATS, CLUB, COACH, COIN TOSS, CORNER KICK, DEFENSE, FANS, FIELD, FIFA, FORMATION, FORWARD, FOUL, GAME, GOALIE, GOALS, GRASS, HALVES, HAT TRICK, HEADING, JERSEY, JUGGLING, KICK-OFF, MATCH, OFFENSE, OFFSIDE, PENALTY KICK, POSITION, PRACTICE, RED CARD, REFEREE, SCORE, SHIN GUARD, SHOOT-OUT, SHORTS, SLIDE TACKLE, SOCKS, SPORT, STOPPAGE TIME, STRIKERS, SUBSTITUTE, SWEEPER, THROW-IN, TOUCHLINE, WALL, WORLD CUP, YELLOW CARD

The hidden message is: IN MANY COUNTRIES SOCCER IS CALLED FOOTBALL.

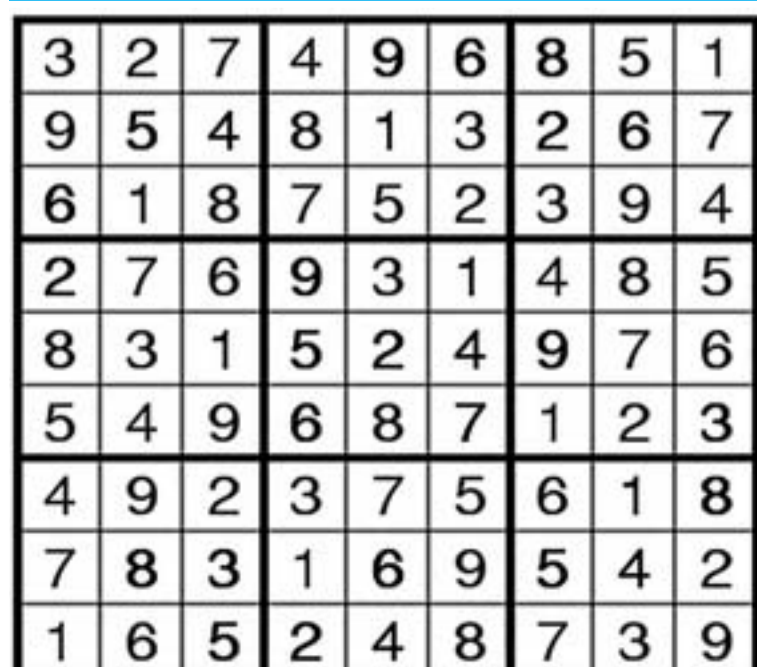
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Classifieds

Wednesday, March 28, 2018

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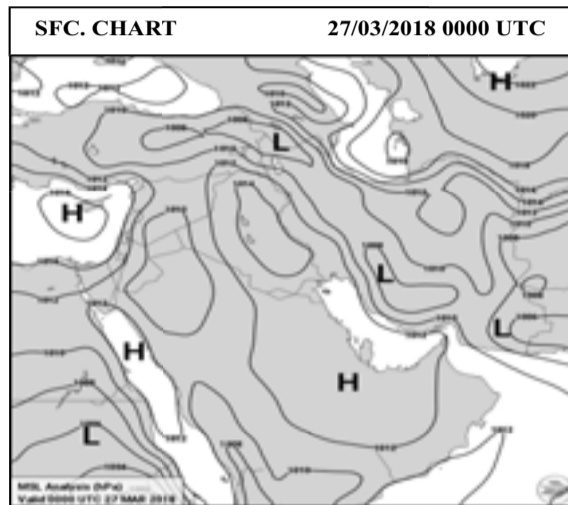
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Relatively hot with light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 20 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Fair with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING	No Current Warnings
-----------------	---------------------

STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	33 °C	22 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	35 °C	15 °C
ABDALY	38 °C	15 °C
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C
JAHRA	39 °C	19 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	32 °C	18 °C
SALMIYAH	26 °C	22 °C
AHMADI	--- °C	--- °C
NUWASIB	34 °C	19 °C
WAFRA	38 °C	18 °C
SALMY	38 °C	16 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	03/28	Relatively hot + high clouds	36 °C	18 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Thursday	03/29	Relatively hot + high clouds	37 °C	20 °C	S-SE	15 - 40 km/h
Friday	03/30	Partly cloudy + dust + rain later on	38 °C	22 °C	SE-NW	25 - 50 km/h
Saturday	03/31	Cloudy + thunder rain	30 °C	23 °C	NW	25 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:24
Sunrise	05:44
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:03
Isha	19:21

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	33 °C
MIN. Temp.	19 °C
MAX. RH	77 %
MIN. RH	17 %
MAX. Wind	SE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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Oilfield Operations Support Admin Coordinator and Billing Executive Indian (M), 18 years experience in Middle East MNCS searching suitable position. Mob: 66539779 / 96046944. Email: john_chetty@yahoo.com (C5389) 27-3-2018

issued on 20.12.2008 at Patna. That the real name & real spelling of deponent should be Sharique Ahmad & real name & real spelling of the deponent father should be Qeyamuddin Ahmad. (C 5388) 26-3-2018

FOR SALE

Mitsubishi - Outlander 2016, full options - Blue Color, 31,000 km, KD 3150. Contact: 50994848. (C 5387) 25-3-2018

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sharique Ahmad S/o Qeyamuddin Ahmad resident of village- Hathauri Tola Ram Nagar, PO- Chhapiya, PS- Hussainganj, Dist.-Siwan (Bihar) do hereby solemnly affirm declare that the name of deponent Sharik Ahmad is wrong in my passport No. H2446155

EMERGENCY
112

Flight Schedule

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 28/3/2018				Departure Flights on Wednesday 28/3/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	JZR	528	Asyut	00:15
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	MSC	406	Sohag	00:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	FDB	072	Dubai	00:35
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	MSC	412	Asyut	01:00
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	JAI	571	Mumbai	01:05
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	504	Luxor	01:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	JZR	142	Doha	01:45
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	285	Dhaka	01:55
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
FEG	931	Alexandria	03:15	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	QTR	1087	Doha	03:40
KAC	796	Madinah	03:50	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55
KAC	382	Delhi	04:15	KKK	1269	Istanbul	03:55
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	LMU	5511	Cairo	05:00
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	QTR	1091	Doha	05:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	KAC	205	Islamabad	05:20
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	QTR	1077	Doha	05:30
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	FDB	070	Dubai	05:45
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	303	Mumbai	06:05
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	JZR	560	Sohag	06:25
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	JZR	786	Riyadh	06:25
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	THY	771	Istanbul	06:50
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	RJA	645	Amman	07:05
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	167	Paris	07:35
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	KAC	501	Beirut	08:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	THY	6376	Dubai/Istanbul	08:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	165	Rome	08:15
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	787	Jeddah	08:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	BAW	156	London	08:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	KAC	117	New York	09:00
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	534	Cairo	09:10
IRC	6552	ABD	09:50	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
KIS	6032	Mashhad	10:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:45
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	671	Dubai	09:45
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	KAC	101	London	09:45
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	ETD	9882	SGN	09:50
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	UAE	856	Dubai	10:00
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:10
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	KAC	773	Riyadh	10:10
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	617	Doha	10:15
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	QTR	1071	Doha	10:20
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:15	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:25
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:35	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
KAC	798	Taif	12:45	JZR	778	Jeddah	10:40
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	ZAV	4101	QA	11:00
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	IRA	674	Lar	11:40
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	WAN	953	Baku	12:00
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:20	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:00
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40	MSC	404	Asyut	12:15
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	QTR	1075	Doha	12:30
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	JZR	606	Kochi	12:45
KAC	618	Doha	14:15	MSC	405	Beirut	12:55

Lifestyle | Fashion

Sanya Dhir, Creative Director, Diva'ni (center) is applauded on stage after the show during the Kuwait International Fashion Week in Kuwait City on March 21, 2018. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Models walk down the catwalk wearing a creation by Diva'ni during the Kuwait International Fashion Week in Kuwait City.

KIFW showcases unique designs tailored to local style

By Sahar Moussa

Kuwait International Fashion Week, the unique event that puts Kuwait on the global fashion map, was inaugurated on Wednesday evening in a glittering event at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, showcasing new styles and fashion surprises.

More than 20 collections for spring and summer of 2018 showcased their designs, featuring 10 local and international designers from Kuwait, Paris, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey and India, to meet expectations of those looking for fine Arab and International designs. The talented designers who participated at the event were: Diva'ni, Fatima Ismail, Salima El-Boussoumi, Christophe Guillaume, Lamsit Fan, Boudi Dib, Pria Kataria Puri, Rasit Bagzibaghi, Anfal Al-Saleh and Dagla.



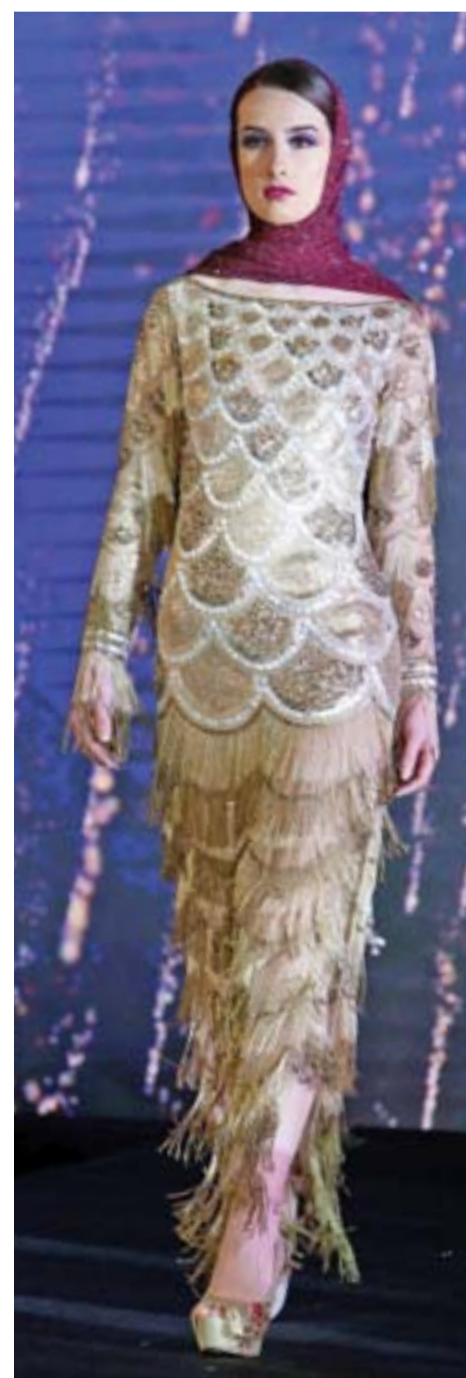
'Kuwait International Fashion Week' 2018 opens in a stunning style at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa's beachfront sponsored by the Title Sponsor 'Lincoln.'

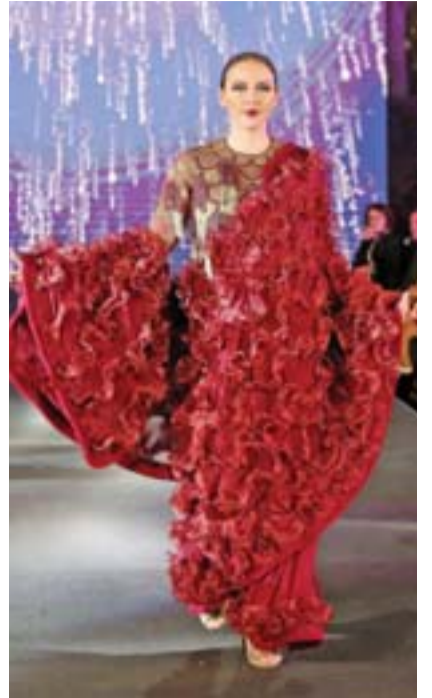
CEO of Kuwait International Fashion Week Rabab Hamadi said that patterns used in many designs combine readymade garments and high-end fashion, and focuses on apparel that is designed according to international fashion standards. She added that one of the event's main goals is to "strengthen Kuwait's role and presence among the fashion capitals of the world, since it has the capabilities, uniqueness and historical style of the Kuwaiti women."

Hamadi also thanked Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa for its cooperation in hosting this luxurious event on the landmark's unique beachfront in Kuwait. She also praised the exceptional organization and facilitation provided by the Hotel team.



KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK 2
أسبوع الموضة العالمية الثاني





Models walk down the catwalk wearing a creation by Diva'ni during the Kuwait International Fashion Week in Kuwait City.



KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK 2

أسبوع الموضة العالمية الثاني

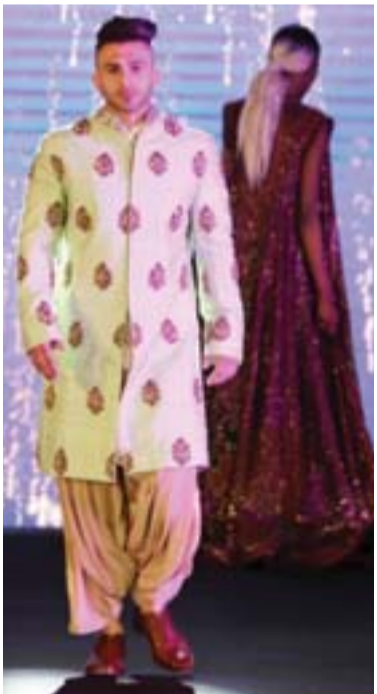
Cars and dresses

Title sponsor Lincoln starred at the event as well, with its latest models exhibited outside the venue, including the 2018 Lincoln Navigator, 2018 Lincoln MKC and 2018 Lincoln Continental while models in the latest elegant garments from local and international designers took it to the ramp.

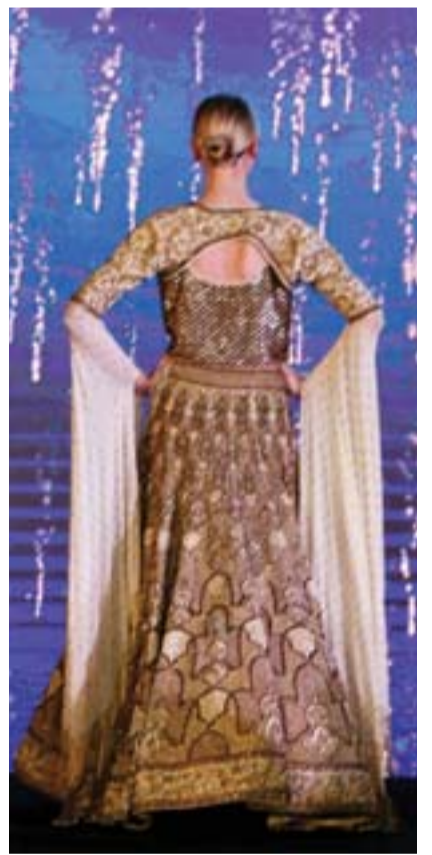
"We were thrilled to partner with Kuwait International Fashion Week," said Nasr Al-Jairoudi, Al-Ghanim Auto, the Lincoln importer-dealer in Kuwait. "We believe that this is a great opportunity to communicate the Lincoln brand's passion for creativity, design, luxury and craftsmanship to the audiences that share the same affinities. In fact, Lincoln has been gaining market share in the luxury segment globally by putting creativity at the service of the overall experience. Lincoln promises an entire experience, not just the product; just like fashion and all other forms of art. We are proud to feature our luxurious line-up from the Lincoln brand, the all-new Navigator, the Continental and the MKC alongside the designers' collections to all fashion lovers in Kuwait."

Divani India opened KIFW Day 1 with its dazzling Indian couture. As Kuwait is a home to a large number of Indians, Diva'ni's collection tried to touch their hearts through traditional Indian patterns, embroidery and authentic colors, reminding them of their heritage and culture. "Though on

an international platform, Diva'ni continues the tradition and is poised to gain credibility and consumer confidence as a catalyst for Global Indian culture" says Sanya Dhir, Creative Director, Diva'ni.



On the song of Sambosa by the Kuwaiti hip-hop artist Daffy, Kuwaiti designer Fatima Ismail opened the show with her women and men's wear collection. Ismail is the first Kuwaiti female designer that has designed men's collection and present it on stage during Kuwait International Fashion Week. "I was given a great opportunity to present my men's collection for the first time on stage; the men's collection have an Arabian and Gulf touch with a rap style taste", Ismail said.



Lifestyle | Fashion



Kuwaiti designer Fatima Ismail (center) is surrounded by models wearing her designs as she is applauded on stage after her show during the Kuwait International Fashion Week in Kuwait City.

KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK 2

أسبوع الموضة العالمية الثاني

Breaking the taboo

The famous Kuwaiti professional body builder Abbas Mahmoud was one of the models presenting Ismail's men's wear, as his first time experience on stage. As a first time model he said, "Fatima Ismail discussed the idea with me and convinced me that as Kuwaitis we should offer our country and the people something new while also highlighting our body builders and designers worldwide. We as Kuwaitis should break this taboo and show that there are capable and talented people in all domains. Kuwait is not like it was before, it's getting more opened minded and we have a lot of young talent that competes with other talents worldwide."

As for her women collection Ismail said, "The colors I have used for this season are pastel and sheeny colors especially the glitter, purple, gold and old rose. As for my designs my dresses have a feminine cut that shows a woman's body without being vulgar."

Makeup and hair

The K-Star makeup artist, Ola, said "The fashion show was sponsored by K-star's make-up. K-stars cosmetics is an Italian brand that is perfect for flawless skin. It can be used for daily and professional cover for TV and photo shoots." "During the show we used nude colors and red lipstick. We had a great experience participating with Kuwait International Fashion Week," she added. Meanwhile, Makeup artist, Brigitte Khoury, praised that the show was well organized as it is developing every year. "We are proud to sponsor KIFW for the execution of the hair and makeup using K-Stars products, this is our second time teaming up with KIFW. We see ourselves as a constant partner of the event and we look forward to participating in similar events."

She added "I like the simple makeup and hairstyle to keep the focus on the dresses where I used the European and Arabian style to satisfy everyone including the models. I love my work that is why I'm passionate and having fun while doing it."

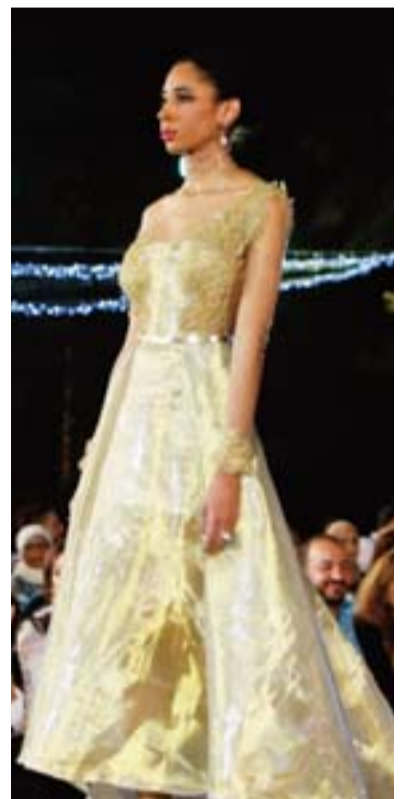
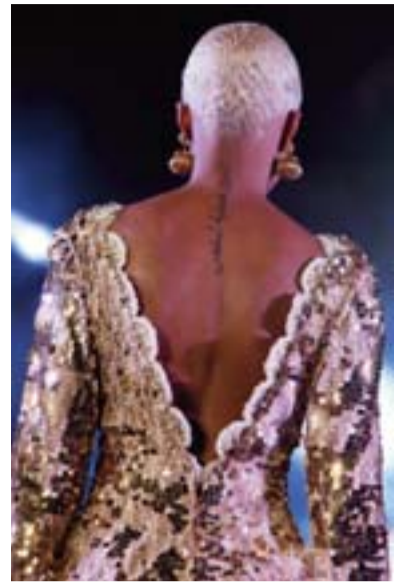
Makeup and hair styles were a hit at the fashion week, popping up with models down the runway was mind blowing. Wavy hair along with elegant accessories were a complete perfection with the designs, shaking up the beauty scene on the runway at Kuwait International Fashion Week.

The Kuwait International Fashion Week sent several important messages, such as removing the stereotype that Arab countries are filled with conflicts, and to instead show the world that the Arab World can reflect an image of creativity, art, elegance and beauty. Royal family members, VIPs, bloggers, Ambassadors and social media sensations attend this high along with buyers.

Kuwait International Fashion Week

would like to thank several leading and important partners who supported the success of the event such as: Brigitte Khoury Beauty and Lounge, Hollywood Smile Clinic, Lotus Clinic, K-Star, RB agency, Saray perfumes, Diet Care, Paparazi Production, beb card, Trunk and Kuwait Times Newspaper as media partner.

The event was covered by Adel Al-Faresi, Paparazi Production.



Models walk down the catwalk wearing a creation by Kuwaiti designer Fatima Ismail during the Kuwait International Fashion Week in Kuwait City on March 21, 2018.



KUWAIT
INTERNATIONAL
FASHION
WEEK 2
أسبوع الخريف
للموضة العالمية
الفاشون



Models walk down the catwalk wearing a creation by Moroccan designer Salima El-Boussoufi during the Kuwait International Fashion Week in Kuwait City.

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018



Models parade creations from the GUVS collection by designer Cheng Hao during China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP



A gull finds food on the rocks near Orchard Beach in New York. — AFP photos



A Brant goose paddles through the water.



A raccoon rests in the hollow of a tree.

Take a walk on New York's wild side

From coyotes in the Bronx to red foxes in Queens, raccoons in Manhattan, owls in Brooklyn and deer in Staten Island, wildlife roams the urban jungle of New York. But coexistence is not always easy between millions of wild animals and 8.5 million humans in a city better known for record-breaking skyscrapers, neon signs and a 24-seven pace of life than for its more than 600 species of wild animals.

And if New Yorkers are animal friendly, their love of wildlife can be challenged when a coyote gobbles up a house pet, a deer chows through tomato plants or a raccoon strews garbage across the street. Wildlife has been increasing for about 30 years in New York, with its 11,735 hectares of park, where hunting is prohibited and there are few natural predators, says Jason Munshi-South, assistant biology professor at Fordham University.

He studied primates in Borneo and elephants in Gabon, but is now an expert on animal life in the US financial capital, North America's most populous city. He estimates that thousands of raccoons live in New York—at least 100 of them in Central Park, together with several thousand deer and 50 nomadic coyotes, mostly in the Bronx, though they sometimes roam elsewhere.

When it comes to marine life, seals have basked on the rocks of Pelham Bay in the Bronx, and the occasional whale has come up for air in the waters around Queens. Each spring, the piping plover—considered in New York and several other US states to be an endangered species—begins arriving to nest in Rockaway Beach.

Coyote not so ugly

"Even if you haven't seen a coyote, the coyote has seen you!" park ranger Kayla Mackey, 25, tells a group of residents at the workshop

"living with urban coyotes" in a Bronx park on a recent, cold sunny Sunday. Mackey explains there is no reason to fear coyotes, which are difficult to spot because they move quietly at night. It is best to keep your distance and not feed them. If one approaches, she advises people to "act big." After the briefing, the group embarks on a long walk in search of coyotes, or at least their tracks and droppings.

"Coyotes don't eat humans. People are not part of their daily diet," Mackey, binoculars around her neck, tells the accompanying group of children and adults. "We have to give people tools to better coexist with wildlife. If you don't know there are 2,000 deer in Staten Island and you drive fairly quickly you're very likely to hit one of those deer," explains Richard Simon, director of the city's wildlife unit.

New York set up the unit in late 2016 and has since implemented a program to sterilize about 95 percent of the male Staten Island deer population—about 1,100 animals according to Simon's estimate. "When there's trouble, it's usually people's fault, not the animals," says Munshi-South. "They should be mostly left alone."

Animals are New Yorkers too

Simon insists that "the city is large enough for both, animals and people." Sometimes, he says, people call and ask for the animals to be taken "back to nature." "But there's no place to take them to. They live here now," he insists. If someone gets scared when they see a coyote and call 911, the police are obliged to respond. They will try to capture it. Some have been killed. A recent city campaign on mass transit featured photos of wild animals next to the strapline "New Yorker" and also urged people not to hand out food.



"There's no reason to feed a squirrel a hot dog or a pretzel," says Simon. Feeding can mean that animals lose their fear of humans. It can also lead to biting. Some raccoons in Central Park can even become aggressive and try to steal food from passers-by. "Some people are surprised, they tell me 'oh, I thought we only had rats here'," says Munshi-South. "When we're doing work in the parks in the summer and it's very hot and there are a lot of mosquitoes it's actually not that different from the way you feel" in Borneo, he joked.—AFP

Wildlife enthusiasts view Harbor Seals through a 15X spotting scope.