



16 Amir attends opening of Kuwait Motor City



10 Israel warns it may use lethal fire on Gaza border protests



19 KGL reports KD 5.9m profit, KD 39m revenues for 2017



13 Kuwait cricket team ready for ICC World Cup T20 qualifiers



Zain approves cash dividend of 35 fils per share at AGM

Bader Al-Kharafi: Group aims to be a trendsetter in digital revolution



KUWAIT: Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi (center) speaks as Chief Financial Officer Ossama Matta (right) and Group CEO-Operations Scott Gegenheimer look on during the group's annual general meeting.

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa announced the holding of its Annual General Assembly (AGM) at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh yesterday. After satisfying the legal quorum requirements with 74.97 percent, the shareholders approved the distribution of 35 fils per share (\$0.11) for the financial year ending Dec 31, 2017 to shareholders registered on the company records.

SEE PAGES 20 & 21

Additionally, after passing a number of items on the agenda, the AGM saw the election of two new members to the Zain Group Board of Directors for the next two years, namely Abdulrahman Mohammad

Al-Asfour and a Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) representative.

Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi said operators need to be innovative and perform at their optimum to survive. He said the group is aiming to become one of the leading trendsetters in the digital revolution in the region. A remarkable turnaround in Zain Saudi Arabia saw the operator reporting its first-ever net profit, as Zain remains vigilant and agile to market opportunities that create value. Kharafi said continued investment in network upgrades coupled with data monetization initiatives are yielding growth in data revenues, adding the Zain logo was refreshed to reflect the digital dynamism of the world around us. He also said Zain in moving ahead with a focus on women and youth empowerment initiatives.

Taxing expat remittances is legal: Ashour

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Rapporteur of the National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee MP Saleh Ashour said yesterday that imposing charges or taxes on money transfers by expatriates is in line with the constitution despite warnings by the Central Bank and experts. Ashour said the proposed tax is like the fees collected by banks and moneychangers when they make such transfers. The lawmaker's statements come as the financial committee is studying four proposals to impose taxes on expatriates' remittances.

Head of the committee MP Salah Khorshid said recently that the committee will soon make a decision to select one of the four proposals it is considering for introducing the charges. He said if the tax is imposed, between KD 50 and 60 million will be collected every year and the revenues will go to state coffers. Khorshid also strongly denied that the proposals breach the constitution.

The Assembly's legal and legislative committee had rejected the proposals and the principle of taxing expatriate money transfers only, saying it involves discrimination banned under the constitution. The Central Bank had also warned against imposing such taxes, saying it will be counterproductive and will encourage black market transfers. But Ashour insisted that the constitution allows imposing fees and taxes on expatriates in line with existing laws, provided some consideration should be given to low-income people, who could be exempted.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Adel Al-Damkhi called yesterday for putting an end to the case of the National Assembly building storming by approving a general amnesty law that should cover a well-defined duration. Damkhi said the proposed general amnesty should deal with political crimes that took place several years ago amid a highly-charged situation, during which nationalist activists protested against corruption that led them to enter the Assembly building.

Damkhi was referring to a demonstration in mid-November 2011 when hundreds of activists took to the streets to protest against corruption by over a dozen lawmakers who allegedly accepted millions of dinars in bribes. The government referred 70 of the activists to court. They were all acquitted by the criminal court but the appeals court sentenced 67 of them to between one and nine years in jail. Two were given suspended jail terms while charges against one were dropped due to his death. A large number of those convicted spent three months in jail while the case was being referred to the court of cassation, which freed them pending trial.

Opposition lawmakers have called for the Assembly to pass a law granting all the activists a general amnesty. Several MPs however opposed the move and demanded a wider amnesty law to cover other prisoners.

UN chief urges MBS for political solution in Yemen

UNITED NATIONS: Saudi Arabia on Tuesday presented a \$930 million cheque to the UN for humanitarian aid in Yemen as the UN chief pushed for an end to the war in which Riyadh leads a military coalition. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres thanked Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman for the contribution, but stressed that the war in Yemen requires a political solution, and not just a humanitarian response.

"There is no humanitarian solution for humanitarian problems," Guterres said after receiving the cheque, which also came from the United Arab Emirates. The Emirates plays a major role in the coalition, which intervened militarily three years ago to support Yemen's government against Iran-backed Houthi rebels. "The solution is political and we are entirely at your disposal to work to find a solution" that will "end the suffering in Yemen," Guterres said.

The United Nations is making a fresh push for peace talks in Yemen, where the coalition acted to support the internationally-recognized government after the Houthis seized the capital. About 10,000 Yemenis have been killed in the war. The UN calls it the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 22.2 million people in need of

Continued on Page 11



NEW YORK: Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman presents a cheque for \$930 million to United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the United Nations on Tuesday. — AFP



BEIJING: China's President Xi Jinping (right) and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shake hands during their meeting on March 26, 2018. — AFP (See Pages 9 & 12)

Kim shows unity with Xi, pledges commitment to denuclearization

BEIJING: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was given a lavish welcome by Chinese President Xi Jinping during a secretive trip to Beijing as both sides try to repair frayed relations before Pyongyang's landmark summit with Seoul and Washington. US President Donald Trump welcomed the Beijing meeting and said there was now a "good chance" Kim would scrap his nuclear weapons - but warned that sanctions must stay in force in the meantime.

On his first trip abroad since taking power, Kim and his wife were greeted by an honor guard and a banquet hosted by Xi, according to state media, which confirmed the "unofficial" visit

yesterday only after Kim had returned by train to North Korea. The two men held talks at the stately Great Hall of the People during which they hailed their nations' historic relations, with Kim pledging he was "committed to denuclearization" on the Korean peninsula, according to China's Xinhua news agency. Kim also expressed willingness to hold the summits with Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in, it said. Trump tweeted that Xi had sent him a message on Tuesday to say his meeting with Kim "went very well and that KIM looks forward to his meeting with me".

Continued on Page 11

Facebook tweaks privacy tools to ease discontent

WASHINGTON: Facebook Inc has adjusted privacy settings to give users more control over their information in a few taps, it said yesterday, after an outcry over a whistleblower's allegations that members' data was used to sway the 2016 US election. It put all the settings on one page and made it easier to change and more straightforward to stop apps using data. Until now changing settings had been complex, spread over at least 20 screens, which had frustrated users.

The world's largest social network said in a blog post it had been working on the updates for some time but sped things up to appease users' anger over how the company uses their data and as lawmakers

around the globe called for strong regulation. "Last week showed how much more work we need to do to enforce our policies and help people understand how Facebook works and the choices they have over their data," Facebook wrote in the blog post yesterday.

Facebook's shares were up 1.2 percent at \$154 yesterday. They are still down almost 17 percent since March 16, when Facebook first acknowledged that user data had been improperly channeled via a third-party app to political consultancy Cambridge Analytica, which was hired by Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign.

Continued on Page 11



MOSCOW: An illustrative picture taken through a magnifying glass yesterday shows the icon of the social networking app Facebook on a smartphone screen. — AFP

Amir meets heads of GCC motorsports federations



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at the newly opened Kuwait Motor City the heads of the GCC motorsports federations. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah were present at the reception. — KUNA



Speaker Ghanem, IPU President discuss 138th assembly agenda



GENEVA: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and international organizations headquarters in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim poses with members of the Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation. — KUNA



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Gabriela Cuevas.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Deputy Chairman of Oman's Shura Council Mohammad Al-Ghassani.

GENEVA: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Gabriela Cuevas discussed the agenda of the 138th Assembly of the IPU yesterday. Ghanem also met with Deputy Chairman of Oman's Shura Council Mohammad Al-Ghassani in Geneva on the sidelines of the assembly held from 24 to 28 March. The two sides discussed unify-

ing the GCC and Arab stance on topics in the assembly's agenda. MP Safaa Al-Hashem attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and international organizations headquarters in Geneva Ambassador Jamal Al-Ghunaim held a dinner banquet in honor of Ghanem and his accompanying parliamentary delegation.

Cuevas, IPU Secretary General Martin Chungong, presidents and senior officials at GCC parliaments, UN and the Arab Parliament, GCC Ambassadors to the UN and Kuwaiti MPs Nayif Al-Ajmi, Ali Al-Diqbasi, Khaleel Abul, Al-Humaidi Al-Subaie, Safaa Al-Hashem, Omar Al-Tabtabai, and National Assembly Secretary General Ali Al-Kandari attended the banquet. — KUNA



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem speaks during a dinner banquet.

Kuwait supports Arab audit bloc

TUNIS: Acting President of Kuwait's State Audit Bureau (SAB) Adel Al-Sarawi said yesterday his country is one of the biggest supporters of ARABOSAI, a joint body of Arab audit state bureaus. Kuwait is also keen on contributing to ARABOSAI's development for the benefit of Arab citizens. Sarawi said on the sidelines of the 56th meeting of ARABOSAI's executive council in Tunis. SAB has made several initiatives to enhance regulatory and auditing practices in the Arab world, said the Kuwaiti official.

Meanwhile, Sarawi mentioned that the 56th meeting had hosted a science forum with AFROSAL, a joint body of African audit state bureaus. At the

forum, SAB took part in a workshop on steps state financial regulators and audit bodies could take to reach sustainable development goals, also known as SDGs, he added.

The workshop reviewed the expertise gathered on the matter by Kuwait along with several Arab and African counterparts, he said, and determined the standards of assessing the implementation of SDGs. This ARABOSAI-AFROSAL cooperation is a result of SAB's initiative, submitted during an ARABOSAI meeting in Doha, Qatar in 2017. The SAB had suggested signing a cooperation deal with AFROSAL to benefit from its expertise, said Sarawi. On the executive council meeting, he said it would review reports by three important Kuwaiti-chaired committees at ARABOSAI: strategic schemes, standards, and the environment. — KUNA



TUNIS: Officials attend the 56th meeting of ARABOSAI's executive council in Tunis. — KUNA

KFAED sign KD 23 million agreements with Bangladesh, Djibouti

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed two loan agreements with Bangladesh and Djibouti, totaling KD 23 million (about \$78 million), for financing development projects in the two countries. The project in Bangladesh estimated at KD 15 million (about \$51 million) aims to contribute to the enhancement of social and economic development projects through improving facilities in 53 areas. KFAED said in a statement on Tuesday. It includes execution works required to the urban infrastructure development containing the establishment of bridges, roads, umbrellas on roads and others, it added, expecting that the scheme is expected to end by 2021.

This is the 24th loan in its kind provided by KFAED to Bangladesh, the previous

23rd ones were estimated at KD 165 million in total (about \$556 million) for financing projects in all sectors, according to the statement. Concerning the deal with Djibouti, the project seeks to set up a power plant to meet demands for electricity in order to lessen cutting of electrical services and importing of fuel and electricity, the fund added in a statement.

The plan also includes the digging of 10 wells for producing vapors and power plants empowered by thermal power.

It is the 15th loan of its kind offered by the fund as the 14th previous ones were estimated at KD 78 million (about \$260 million) for financing development projects in various sectors. The first deal was signed by KFAED's deputy director manager Hamad Al-Omar and Bangladesh's minister of finance.

While the second agreement was inked by KFAED's deputy director general Hesham Al-Wagayyan, and Djibouti's minister of finance Ilyas Dawaleh and head of the establishment of geothermal production energy Kayad Ahmed. Established on December 31, 1961, the fund provides and manages financial and technical aid to Arab and developing countries, as part of Kuwait's foreign policy which enhances its global status. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait close to finalizing agreement to purchase Iraqi gas: Oil Minister

Iraq is the gateway towards cooperating with Europe: Rasheedi

By A Saleh and Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait is getting closer to reaching a final agreement to purchase Iraqi gas in the next two months, Minister of Oil and Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheedi said. Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a ceremony organized by the Embassy of Bangladesh to celebrate its national day, Rasheedi stressed that the final agreement will be based on a previous initial one already signed with Iraq.

Responding to questions about power outages, especially as summer is approaching, Rasheedi said that the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) is ready for the summer with a surplus of power capacity. He also noted that the recent outages happened because of technical problems that can happen in any power grid worldwide. Responding to another question about linking Kuwait's power grid with that of Iraq, which already has related problems, Rasheedi said that Iraq would be the gateway towards cooperating with Europe, adding that GCC states are currently negotiating with Iraq to start linking GCC grids to Turkey and Europe. Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait S M Abolkalam stressed that Kuwait-Bangladesh relations are historic and reminded that Kuwait was the first GCC state to acknowledge Bangladesh's independence.

Three contracts

In other news, Rasheedi yesterday signed



KUWAIT: Minister of Oil and Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheedi (right), Ambassador of Bangladesh to Kuwait S M Abolkalam (center) and the Ambassador's spouse cut the cake during a reception held to celebrate Bangladesh's national day. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

three contracts to conduct annual maintenance operations at West and East Doha and Shuwaikh power plants. Informed sources said that the maintenance operations will include periodic maintenance of various machinery and distillation units, in addition to providing the needed spare parts to ensure high performance. The sources added that West Doha plant will cost KD 19,729,234 and the project is scheduled to be completed within 60 months. They added that the East Doha plant project will cost KD 15.5 million and is also expected to be completed within 60 months. The Shuwaikh plant project will

cost KD 9,979,979 and will be completed in the same period.

New board

Separately, the Oil and Petrochemical Industries Workers Confederation's (OPIWC) Secretary General Rashed Ali Al-Marri stressed that the oil sector workers' syndicates strongly expressed themselves and their general assemblies by supporting a new board for the confederation. Marri expressed gratitude to OPIWC's general assembly members for their trust and support following the meeting held on March 27, 2018, when the general assembly approved



Guests attend the event.



the new board formation to include Mohammed Hamad Shafi Al-Hajri as chairman, Khaled Fahd Al-Enezi as vice chairman, Rashed Ali Al-Marri as secretary general, Faleh Abdullah Al-Fuwaisel Al-Hajri as assistant secretary general, Saud Hamad Al-Ajmi as treasurer, Abdullah Mashout Al-Ajmi as

foreign affairs secretary, Abdullah Zakariya Al-Salem as domestic affairs secretary, Fahd Al-Mutawwa as the institute's board chairman, Yousif Al-Kandari as vice chairman and Adel Al-Fadhli, Hamad Al-Mutairi, Mubarak Al-Hajri, Ahmed Al-Ansari, Mae' Al-Enezi and Abdullah Al-Ajmi as board members.

Three Syrians jailed for Kuwaiti citizenship forgery

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday sentenced three Syrians to prison followed by deportation over charges of forging documents to receive Kuwaiti citizenship several years ago. The court abstained from sentencing a citizen who helped them because he died long ago. Informed sources explained that a Syrian had made an agreement with a citizen to add his three sons to his citizenship file as his own in exchange for KD 50,000 per child, which he did. The children grew up, did their schooling, graduated from university and worked at the MoI as citizens. The sources added that citizenships of the three brothers and over 20 others (their wives and children) were withdrawn. The criminal court also acquitted Sheikh Meshal Al-Malek Al-Sabah from charges of violating the national unity law and spreading false news. The court sentenced former MP

Abdulhameed Dashti to five years with labor for forgery.

'Fashionista' loses custody

The family court yesterday removed children from the custody of a 'fashionista' and decided handing the kids over to their father on grounds that the mother has been travelling often, which led to a deterioration in the children's performance at school.

Traffic awareness

The Ministry of Education (MoE) plans to allow electricity and electronics teachers to teach high school students traffic awareness, said informed sources, noting that MoE Undersecretary Haitham Al-Atahri approved a proposal to make use of those teachers to teach traffic awareness after they pass relevant tests and interviews.

Social media rumors

The Ministry of Interior's (MoI) acting assistant undersecretary for traffic affairs Maj Gen Fahd Al-Shuwaye stressed that expats are only deported when they drive without licenses or when unlawfully providing taxi services. He also denied social media rumors claiming the total driving licenses issued to Egyptians are 330,000, explaining the actual number is only 195,000.

Interior Ministry stresses need for anti-drugs awareness

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah chaired a meeting in the presence of acting ministry undersecretary Lt Gen Essam Al-Naham and other field assistant undersecretaries and leaders of the Drugs Control General Department. The minister stressed the importance of the awareness and preventive aspects by preparing an integrated awareness program for all age groups to deliver a message that has a direct effect on the individual. He also spoke about deterrence factors and implementing them to protect youth from the danger of drugs. He asked for two work programs to be prepared and submitted soon. He said the private and public sectors should cooperate in awareness campaigns on the harm of drugs and to protect our youth.

Naham said the interior minister is expanding personnel training to have the largest number of security elements in the field of drug fighting and to boost their experience. Meanwhile, assistant undersecretary for criminal security Maj Gen Khalid

Al-Dayeen said the criminal detectives sector is working according to an integrated system that has contributed to solving several drugs cases, adding that there are specialized training courses for DCGD men on the latest methods of drugs smuggling.

Mechanics and traffic systems

The Kuwait Scientific Club (KSC) concluded an event on mechanics and traffic systems, which was held in cooperation with the interior, education and social affairs ministries, and with the support of the Kuwait Foundation for Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). The concluding ceremony was held under the patronage of the interior minister, who was represented by acting assistant undersecretary for traffic affairs Maj Gen Fahd Al-Shuwaye, in the presence of KFAS Director General Adnan Shihabeldeen and KSC Chairman Talal Al-Kharafi. Four exhibitions were organized on the sidelines of the closing ceremony by the general security, najda, traffic and relations and security information sectors.

SUBSCRIBE OR RENEW

KD 25

*** your subscription for one year for only kd 25 and get 4 free tickets to Paintball Kuwait valued at kd 37**

50+
طلاء
Paintballs

1
تذكرة
Entrance Ticket

* This campaign is limited to participants in Kuwait only. Ministries and their departments, companies and NGOs cannot enter the festival.
* Kuwait Times employees, spouses and their second-degree relatives also cannot participate.

Call now +965 248 33 199 - 248 333 58 Fax: +965 248 35 620 - 248 35 621
www.kuwaittimes.net

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A bird's-eye view of fishing boats at the 'Shamlan Harbor' in the Sharq district of Kuwait City. — KUNA photo

KFH pioneer in recruitment, raising bar of Kuwaiti youth

MOU with GUST for further cooperation and coordination

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the career fair held at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) as part of its keenness to support the efforts of qualifying national cadres while offering them suitable job opportunities. This also comes as part of KFH's efforts in the educational field to support and encourage Kuwaiti youths to work at the private sector.

GUST President Professor Donald Bates applauded KFH's participation, and considered it essential for the success of the annual event. Bates added that KFH is keen to encourage the recruitment of Kuwaiti youths, and to boost the labor market. He explained that this highlights the fact that KFH is considered to be one of the most important local and global economic entities that assume a key role in the social and economic fields.



KFH participated in GUST Career Fair

KFH takes part in most events held by GUST throughout the academic year, and supports various student groups and activities. KFH recently signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with GUST, in continuation of the efforts to further provide a framework for cooperation and coordination, while boosting a constructive connection between the two organizations.

It is worth noting that the fair includes a wide array of private and public sector companies that offer jobs for new graduates. Such events allow the youth to be aware of the privileges and benefits of working for various companies that take part in the fair, in order to find a job that suits their qualifications. In addition, the fair allows those graduates to recognize the jobs required in the labor market.



KUWAIT: GUST President Professor Donald Bates honors KFH.

ABK celebrates Mother's Day

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) celebrated Mother's Day in an initiative that aims to enhance the bank's relationship with its employees and customers and to spread the joy of this occasion across its branches. Mother's Day gifts were presented to female staff members and customers who visited the head office and the bank's branches on the day.

ABK marked the event in appreciation of mothers and the vital role they play in building the family home, raising children, and the daily encouragement given by mothers to their children to guide their careers and build a future.

The bank also celebrated this occasion with the elderly by sponsoring the Ministry of Social Affairs' Mother's Day event, which was held at the elderly home. The event aimed to spread joy amongst senior citizens in the midst of a fun ambience with gifts distributed to elderly mothers on this special day.

Commenting on this occasion, Fawzy Al-Thunayan, General Manager of Board Affairs at ABK said: "It is our pleasure to congratulate all mothers on their day and to express our respect and appreciation to them for the important role they play in raising good children and building a family and therefore contributing to our society. Our celebration to award female staff and customers is made in an effort to recognize the sacrifices they make on a daily basis to care for their children, who are the future of Kuwait."

The Corporate Communications team also distributed gifts to all female bank staff at the Head Office and branches and took team photos which will be handed to them as Mother's Day memorabilia to remind them of the important role they play in the society.



ABK is committed to social responsibility and respects the sacrifices mothers make to come to work on a daily basis while also ensuring the wellbeing of their families. Events such as these reiterate the bank's commitment and gratitude towards its employees.

KISR strikes energy deal with South Korean firms

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) has partnered with a pair of South Korean companies as part of its strategy to pursue projects related to alternative energy, the independent organization said yesterday.

The agreement with KEPCO Engineering and Construction Company and SAM UN aims to develop an efficient solar energy system given the region's soaring



KISR's director general Dr Samira Omar

demand for fuel, KISR's director general Dr. Samira Omar said after the deal was sealed.

The deal, which features a series of planned workshops and courses, allows KISR and the South Korean companies the chance to share scientific research over alternative energy production, she pointed out. Meanwhile, Omar added that KISR is eager to embrace clean energy sources, which include

solar and wind power, having conducted extensive research in that field for the last three decades. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research officials meet with the South Korean delegation. —KUNA

Local

Historical sites need to be protected, says minister

Discoveries include an ancient burial site consisting of several layers of rock



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri is seen during a tour at the newly discovered historical site. —KUNA photos



Kuwait University archeology professor Dr Fahad Al-Wehaibi inspects the site of an ancient cemetery recently discovered near the shores of the Arabian Gulf.



The site of an ancient cemetery recently discovered near the shores of the Arabian Gulf.

KUWAIT: It is imperative to preserve Kuwait's archeological sites given the significance the places hold, Kuwait's Minister of Information Mohammad Al-Jabri said yesterday, just days after rare antiquities were found in a popular eastern resort.

The archaeological sites carry an important message for future generations, Jabri, who also serves as minister

of state for youth affairs and the president of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), said as he surveyed an ancient cemetery recently discovered near the shores of the Arabian Gulf. He added that the archeological finds prove how instrumental the region has been in the growth of human civilization, pointing out that the area had once been a vibrant trade zone that linked

regions across eastern Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, Dr Fahad Al-Wehaibi, professor of history and archaeology at Kuwait University, revealed that among the new discoveries is an ancient burial site consisting of several layers of rock. He was amazed at how the excavation had withstood decay, surmising that the immense size of the rocks indicate the grave must have belonged to a notable

personality. The location is reminiscent of a bronze age culture known as 'Um Al-Nar', which existed around 2,500 BC in the area of modern-day United Arab Emirates and northern Oman, Wehaibi noted. The NCCAL has carried out extensive archaeological surveys on unexplored landscapes, which led to the discovery of tens of 'unprecedented' graves and engraved items last week. —KUNA

ICDO honors KFSD chief with high officer medal

DOHA: The International Civil Defense Organization (ICDO) honored Director General of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) General Khaled Al-Mekrad with an international medal with the rank of officer. The honoring took place during the 23rd meeting of ICDO's General Assembly in Doha yesterday, in appreciation of Kuwait's support for the organization through joint projects. ICDO also named Kuwaiti retired Brigadier Youssef Al-Ansari as special envoy of the secretary-general of the ICDO to the Gulf States.

Mekrad said he was proud for receiving the medal, and he also welcomed Ansari's new title. Kuwait has recently completed a joint project with ICDO to translate the organization's official website to Arabic, said Mekrad. He added that KFSD provides international

firefighting departments with equipment needed to control fires.

Meanwhile, Mekrad noted that ICDO's General Assembly meetings would play a role in boosting international cooperation to face the impact of crises and natural disasters on people and properties. He called on ICDO member-states to take part in conducting research in the field. Mekrad also stressed on the importance of establishing a forum where members can share experience.

During the three-day meeting, ICDO has approved a number of laws on developing its work. It also set the theme for the World Civil Defense Day 2019 under the title "children are our responsibility" and the 2020 theme will be "a firefighter for every house." The meetings also saw the re-electing of current Secretary General Vladimir Kuvshinov for another term. 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



DOHA: The International Civil Defense Organization (ICDO) honors Director General of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) General Khaled Al-Mekrad. —KUNA

The Best Easter Deals

Offer valid from 28.03.2018 to 07.04.2018 or until stocks last. Purchase Limit May Apply.

<p>3.790 2.690</p> <p>Tilda Grand Extra Long Basmati Rice 5kg</p>	<p>2.580 1.875</p> <p>Lipton Yellow Label Tea Bags 100's x 2</p>	<p>1.225 0.925</p> <p>Nescafe 3 in 1 My Cup Stick 20gm 24's</p>	<p>0.990</p> <p>Kitco Potato Chips Assorted 167gm 2 + 1 Free</p>
<p>1.560 0.995</p> <p>Al Wazzan White Meat Tuna 90gm 6's</p>	<p>0.800 0.595</p> <p>KDD Tomato Paste 135gm 8's</p>	<p>0.145</p> <p>KFMC Macaroni Assorted 500gm /Pc</p>	<p>4.560 2.995</p> <p>Nestle Quality Street Chocolate Tub 750gm</p>
<p>3.975</p> <p>Norwegian Whole Salmon /Kg</p>	<p>6.290</p> <p>White Pomfret (Medium) /kg</p>	<p>2.690 2.190</p> <p>New Zealand Chilled Lamb Forequarter /kg</p>	<p>0.495 0.345</p> <p>Cucumber Box</p>
<p>5.780 3.240</p> <p>Tide Washing Powder 3kg 2's</p>	<p>3.180 1.890</p> <p>Dac Disinfectant 3Ltr 2's</p>	<p>129.900 85.900</p> <p>Apple iPad New</p>	<p>255.000</p> <p>Samsung Galaxy Smart Phone S9</p>
<p>1.240 0.940</p> <p>Kraft Cream Cheese Spread 235gm 2's</p>	<p>0.645 0.495</p> <p>Potato Bag</p>	<p>249.900</p> <p>Apple iPhone 8 Plus</p>	<p>255.000</p> <p>Samsung Galaxy Smart Phone S9</p>

HYPERMARKETS. www.luluhypermarket.com
 SUPERMARKETS. [LuluHypermarketKw](http://www.LuluHypermarketKw)
 DEPARTMENT STORES. [luluhyperkw](http://www.luluhyperkw)
[luluhyperkw](http://www.luluhyperkw)
www.luluwebstore.com

Buy better.





Poland buys Patriot anti-missile system

Canadian man pleads guilty to Quebec mosque murders

Page 9

Page 8



ASH SHURAYJAH: Yemeni fighters loyal to the government backed by the Saudi-led coalition gather around the destroyed turret and body of a tank, near the town of Al-Shurayja in the southern Lahij province, about 66 kilometers southwest of the city of Ta'ez. —AFP

Yemen crisis escalates; Saudis to show restraint

Houthi missile salvo at Saudi cities heightens tensions

RIYADH: A missile attack this week on Riyadh has raised the risk of an escalation in the Yemen war in a region riven with interwoven conflicts, but a direct confrontation between arch-foes Saudi Arabia and Iran still appears unlikely. Saudi Arabia's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, now touring the United States, must balance animosity towards Iran with the need for stability as he pitches the kingdom's economic transformation plan to foreign investors and drums up support for containing Iran's regional influence.

However, Iranian authorities - facing the prospect of a more hawkish US administration with Donald Trump's appointments last week of John Bolton and Mike Pompeo as national security adviser and secretary of state - might crank up pressure in the Yemen war as a form of deterrence, diplomats and analysts say.

Saudi Arabia sharpened its rhetoric against Tehran after Saudi forces shot down a flurry of missiles launched by the Iran-aligned Houthis on Saudi cities late on Sunday. One of the missiles caused the war's first casualties in the Saudi capital Riyadh when falling debris struck a home and killed an Egyptian man and injured two others. Saudi King Salman, in comments carried by state media, pledged on Tuesday to "firmly and decisively thwart any hostile attempts" targeting the kingdom's security and stability.

A day earlier, the spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition fighting the Houthi movement accused it of using Iranian-made missiles and said that Saudi Arabia reserved the right to respond to Iran when and how it deemed appropriate. The coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 in a campaign to restore its internationally recognized government after it was driven into exile by Houthi forces. "Iran is the appendicitis in the body of the

world and should fix itself or else the world will fix the Iranian situation," spokesman Colonel Turki Al-Malki said. Iran has repeatedly denied giving missiles to the Houthis.

Few military options

Analysts said that in the short term, the Saudi leadership is unlikely to respond aggressively amid increased international scrutiny of the three-year-old Yemen conflict, which has given rise to the world's most urgent humanitarian crisis. "Prince Mohammed would like to be viewed as a more restrained and composed leader" while touring his closest Western ally, the United States, according to Ehsan Khomen, MENA strategist at MUFJ consultancy.

"(He) may leverage the recent Houthi missile attacks to strengthen his narrative that Iran's encroachment is undermining regional stability and that a more concerted international effort is needed to contain Iran." The Yemen conflict pits a coalition of Western-friendly states led by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates against the Houthis, who are sympathetic to Iran but deny being a pawn of its Shi'ite Muslim theocracy. Yemen's war fits into a broader decades-long struggle for supremacy between Middle East powerhouses Iran and Saudi

Arabia, which fund and train proxy forces in Iraq, Syria and Lebanon and accuse each other of backing terrorism.

Military escalation in response to the latest rocket salvo could mean more coalition air strikes - which have been widely criticized for killing civilians - or mobilizing the Saudi National Guard from a mostly static position along the border to undertake a concerted ground assault inside northern Yemen. Diplomats and analysts say that the coalition has few other options short of direct action against an Iranian target, something that remains unlikely unless a Houthi rocket takes out a valuable Saudi asset. Last year, when the Houthis fired missiles at Riyadh that were intercepted, the coalition responded by shutting Yemen's airports and ports. The United Nations said that blockade raised the danger of mass starvation, and it was partially lifted.

"They may make similar moves in order to be seen to be doing something, but it won't really change the dynamics of the conflict," said Jane Kinninmont, Middle East expert at Chatham House in London. "My concern is that they could be tempted to take some action directly against some Iranian target, and that any such course of action could escalate further." Consultancy Eurasia Group said that a successful Houthi strike on a prized

Saudi target would probably prompt a firm military response from Riyadh to try to deter Iran. Analysts said that while a direct Saudi-Iranian showdown is unlikely, miscalculation remains a risk.

Mediation efforts

Western countries have urged Saudi Arabia and its Gulf Arab allies to protect civilians and find a quick end to Yemen's war. But they also support Riyadh's argument that it needs to defend itself from cross-border strikes and limit the spread of Iran's imprint in territory overlooking important trade routes. The United Nations says more than 10,000 people have died in the war, and 22.2 million Yemenis - three-quarters of the population - need relief aid. More than 1 million cholera cases have been reported, the worst outbreak in modern history. Analysts said that while Saudi Arabia will probably double down on its military campaign in Yemen to oust the Houthis from the capital Sanaa and reinstate President Abd Rabbu Mansour al-Hadi, it may continue to support mediation efforts.

However, the appointments of Bolton and Pompeo in Washington could encourage Iran to ramp up activities in Yemen to signal its ability and willingness to undermine the United States and its partners, Eurasia Group said. Economists have played down the impact of the Houthi attacks on the Saudi economy, which Prince Mohammed is trying to wean off oil exports with a slate of reforms that include cutting energy subsidies and expanding the private sector. Investors may have already largely priced in risks from Houthi missile strikes. But an intensification of the Yemen conflict and certainly an escalation to direct conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia could scare off foreign investors. —Reuters



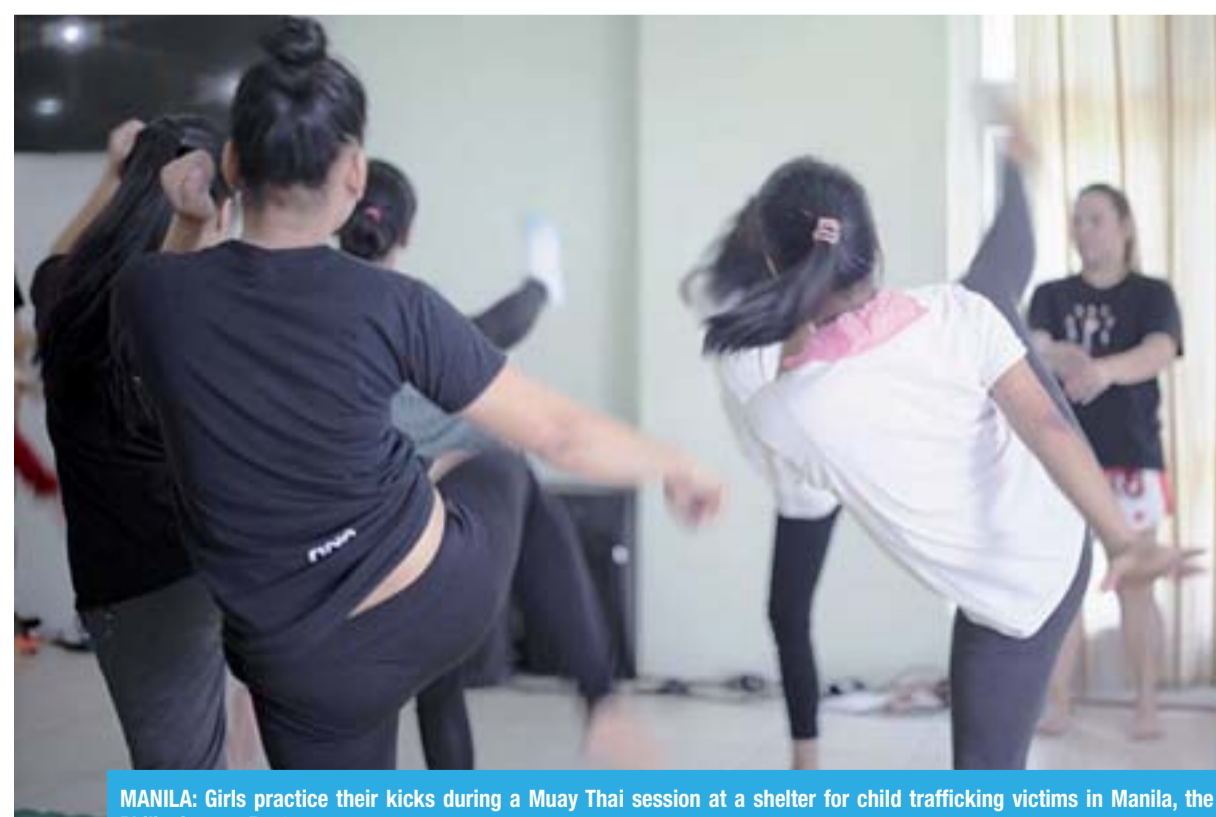
Direct Saudi-Iran conflagration seen unlikely

Do you know who made it? Young Asians campaign to stop slavery

BANGKOK: Young campaigners in Asia are taking to social media to urge their peers to think twice about purchasing products from T-shirts to phones, as part of a campaign to end modern slavery. About 40 million people are trapped in slavery around the globe, and it is most prevalent in Asia, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the charity Walk Free Foundation. A rise in spending power in Asia has also driven up the demand for cheap labor in factories making products that range from garments in Bangladesh to shoes in Cambodia and Vietnam. Young consumers are now being urged pressure manufacturers to end the exploitation of workers under a campaign called "Do you know who made it?", which was launched on Tuesday in Bangkok by IOM X.

The group is backed by the International Organization for Migration and the United States Agency for International Development. "We need to ask ourselves: is this product important to us and can we shop better?" said Kamonnart Ongwandee, a 26-year-old Thai designer who promotes ethical fashion on her blog. "Behind the fashion you see on all the glossy magazine covers, there are stories of someone being exploited." Surabot Leekpai made a video showing how a T-shirt with the slogan "Happy" was made under sweatshop conditions, which he shared with the nearly 5 million followers of his YouTube channel.

"Before all these products get into our hands, there are so many stories behind them," said the 30-year-old Thai



MANILA: Girls practice their kicks during a Muay Thai session at a shelter for child trafficking victims in Manila, the Philippines. —Reuters

YouTube star, better known as Pleum, at the campaign launch. Illegal profits from forced labor in Asia, including those from the manufacturing sector, total an estimated \$52 billion per year, according to ILO figures. People employed in manufacturing often work excessive hours,

are underpaid, live in substandard housing and have their documents withheld to prevent them from leaving their jobs, according to IOM X. "It often leaves them not better off than where they started," said IOM X program leader Tara Dermott. —Reuters

Brothel owners jailed for life for trafficking kids

CHENNAI: Two Indian brothel owners have been jailed for life for the trafficking, rape and sexual abuse of children, an unprecedented sentence in a country where fewer than two in five trafficking cases ends in a conviction. Prosecutor Sunil Kumar said Pancho Singh and his wife Chhaya Devi, who ran the brothel in Gaya in the eastern state of Bihar, were found guilty on evidence from "brave survivors" and given the maximum punishment under existing anti-trafficking laws. The court in Gaya heard testimonies from four of nine girls who were rescued from the brothel during a police raid in 2015.

"In most cases, once the girls are rescued, they go home and never come back to testify," Kumar told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in a phone interview. "But here, some of the girls came back and described in detail the horrors they had been through. They told the court about forced abortions, the rapes and how some girls had even committed suicide." Among them was a teenager from Howrah in West Bengal state who was kidnapped at the age of 11 and forced to have sex with at least 20 men a day for the three years, he said.

The teenager, who won a bravery award in 2017 for spotting one of the two traffickers at a railway station which helped lead to his arrest, was among those who testified in court. The court awarded compensation of 450,000 Indian rupees (\$7,000) to each of the four victims who testified in recognition of their bravery in coming forward and 300,000 rupees (\$4,600) to the other survivors. —Reuters



SAVE UP TO KD 2,000 FOR 7 DAYS ONLY!

THE LEXUS CERTIFIED EVENT
25th – 31st MARCH



Come along to our Lexus Certified Event in Shuwaikh showroom from the 25th to 31st March and take advantage of the amazing deals. You'll also benefit from guaranteed low mileage, a minimum one-year warranty, full service history from AISayer and a comprehensive 75-point service check. It's an Event not to be missed!*

- **Save Up To KD 2,000**
- **Comprehensive Insurance** (On selected models only)
- **Car Registration**
- **High Trade-in Value**

BOOK A TEST DRIVE TODAY

The image displayed is for advertising purposes only. *Terms & conditions apply.



MOHAMED NASER ALSAYER & SONS EST. CO. W.L.L.
A SUBSIDIARY OF ALSAYER HOLDING

Tel. 1830030

www.lexus.com.kw
f t i s LexusKW

International

A year away from Brexit, Britons' views still as entrenched as ever

Britain split over whether to exit; Polls suggest little change in views

GREAT YARMOUTH: Leaning over the counter of his seafood stall in the English seaside town of Great Yarmouth, Darran Nichols-George says those still moaning about the British vote to leave the European Union need to stop complaining. "At the end of the day we live in a democracy and therefore they've had the vote," said 51-year-old Nichols-George, peering over cartons of prawns, crabs, mussels and jellied eels. "We voted out so we're going to go out."

The fishmonger was one of the 17.4 million Britons who voted to quit the EU in a 2016 referendum, giving the Brexit campaign victory over the 16.1 million voters who wanted to stay. Since then, Brexit has never been far from the headlines, from difficult talks with the EU and leaks of government forecasts that Britain will be worse off, to fish dumped into the River Thames by fishermen angry at European quotas. A year before Britain leaves the bloc in March 2019, allegations that the main campaign for leaving the EU broke the law have revived memories of the bitter referendum battle.

Despite the issue dominating discussions in parliament and the pages of newspapers, voters' views seem entrenched as ever. "People now think of themselves as Leavers or Remainers and see developments from that perspective," Sara Hobolt, a professor of poli-

tics at the London School of Economics, told Reuters. She estimates that 80 to 90 percent of Britons have not changed their minds since 2016. Some senior figures, such as former Prime Minister Tony Blair, have demanded a second referendum on the final deal agreed with the EU, so people could have a say in full knowledge of the possible outcome. But polls and research suggest there is no overwhelming sup-

'No messing around'

Great Yarmouth has the country's lowest percentage of college graduates - 14.2 percent - and a high rate of unemployment. In 2016, 71.5 percent of votes cast here were for Leave, putting it in one of the top 10 Brexit-supporting areas in the country. "I think we should all get out of [the EU] now, straight away, no messing around," said Philip Blake, 60, between chopping cuts of prime British beef for display at his family-run butchers. "They're taking too long over it now. Just go. Hard Brexit, whatever, I don't mind."

While an EU flag flies in tatters beside Great Yarmouth's seaside promenade, in the affluent university city of Norwich just 21 miles (34 km) away, the sentiment about Europe could hardly be more different but the intransigence is the same. "I hate it, I really do," said Gaye Sorah, 59, who was close to tears at the thought of Brexit. "One year to go, it's a disaster. I just wish we could rewind the clock." Norwich, where tourists wander between the market's stalls, chattering in a variety of tongues while students cycle down medieval cobbled streets, bucked the trend for the region with 56 percent of voters backing staying in the EU.

Pro-EU posters adorn the whole foods stall owned by Gareth Butcher, 69, and his 66-year-old wife Jane Wirgman, who proudly wears a "We are Europe" badge. "I could see no advantage in leaving, particularly not on a dream of empires past," Butcher said. "I've not changed my mind at all and it's a source of some amusement to me that as the ramifications become clear ... that a lot of



UK to leave EU in March 2019

port for another vote. Even if there was another plebiscite, the surveys show Britons are still deeply divided and most would probably vote the same way. "Tony Blair-he should keep his snout out," said retired 68-year-old Michael Cutting, who voted Leave and has lived in Great Yarmouth his whole life. His view is shared by many in the rundown holiday resort, a once bustling fishing port some 140 miles (200 km) northeast of London, where paint peels off windswept ferris wheels and mainly elderly visitors wander past its "Golden Mile" sandy beach and drab amusement arcades.



BIRMINGHAM: A campaigner wears a T-shirt bearing the slogan "I'm Turning My Back On The EU" as he attends an Anti-EU (European Union) United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) pro-Brexit campaign event in Birmingham, central England. —AFP

other people's minds are being concentrated." Expressions of such regret are hard to find, but dishing out bags of chunky fries from his van in Great Yarmouth, Robin Platten thinks he was wrong to vote to leave.

"I've been thinking maybe I might have made a mistake," Platten, 60, whose family have run the Brewer Chip Saloon takeaway stall in the town's market since 1902. "It's a great big tunnel with no light at the end of it, as far as I'm concerned," he told Reuters.

"I think maybe everybody should be given a second chance for the mistakes that they've made. But I don't think that's going to happen." Even some voters who backed remain have no desire to see the process dragging on, however-despite their continued misgivings. "I think we may as well get on with it now," said Kathryn Fabian, 20, a student in Norwich. "I feel like we had our say back then, it's been decided. Let's just move on." —Reuters

From Russia to sex: Scandals shake US first family

NEW YORK: A porn star is suing the president. A former Playboy model has apologized to the first lady for sleeping with her husband. The eldest son is divorcing and the scandal-plagued son-in-law's security clearance has been downgraded. Seventeen months after Hillary Clinton told America that the one thing she respected about Donald Trump was his "incredibly able and devoted" children, any gloss attached to the uber-groomed first family is wearing off. On election night in November 2016, the entire clan stood on stage, dressed to the nines and beaming after their father pulled off the unthinkable and won the most powerful job on the planet.

Since then, they have been photographed only infrequently all together. First Lady Melania Trump dealt with porn star Stormy Daniels's prime-time television interview by enjoying spring break with her 12-year-old son in Florida, 1,000 miles from her husband, who was holed up in the White House. As the nation reeled from allegations that a 27-year-old porn star spanked the future president's bottom and was likened to his daughter Ivanka, the first lady's spokeswoman urged restraint.

"While I know the media is enjoying speculation & salacious gossip, I'd like to remind people there's a minor child who's [sic] name should be kept out of news stories when at all possible," tweeted Stephanie Grisham on Sunday night. Asked whether 47-year-old Melania had watched the interview, Grisham told US media: "She's focused on being a mom and is quite enjoying spring break at Mar-a-Lago while working on future projects." When Trump moved to Washington, his two eldest sons officially stayed behind in New York to run the family business, while Ivanka and her husband, the real estate scion and magazine publisher Jared Kushner, joined him as White House advisors.

Ivanka is photographed on a near-daily basis in a parade of expensive clothes by paparazzi camped outside her Washington home. She appears to operate largely as a free agent, hand-picking pet projects and representing her father overseas at events such as the Winter Olympics, but she has drawn criticism for standing by her old man over allegations of sexual harassment. "I think I have that right as a daughter to believe my father," she told NBC News as many women her age jumped on the #MeToo bandwagon.

While Kushner was once the golden boy, whom Trump said could bring peace to the Middle East, he is reportedly under investigation for trying to get foreign investors to finance his company during the presidential transition and he is implicated in the Russia collusion probe. Last month, his security clearance was downgraded. While Kushner remains in the White House-for now-commentators believe he is increasingly marginalized. There has also been much tabloid glee over Donald Jr and wife Vanessa filing for divorce and revelations that he romanced a pop star on his dad's reality TV show, until a pregnant Vanessa found out and his father allegedly told him to "knock it off." "We have this snowball rolling downhill of scandals surrounding Trump himself and his children one way and another," says Katherine Jellison, professor of history at Ohio University.

For the president, rumored infidelity is nothing new. He won the 2016 election despite boasting about groping women. Nor is he the first US commander-in-chief accused of being unfaithful. Last Thursday, former Playboy model Karen McDougal apologized to Melania for a 10-month affair she claims to have had with Trump in 2006-07. "I'm sorry, I wouldn't want it done to me," she told CNN. If the first lady has adopted a generally frosty, stand-offish stance, and the couple are believed to have separate bedrooms, few expect the Trumps to bust another presidential taboo and divorce in office. On March 22, Melania posted a picture of herself with the president at a snowy White House, both of them smiling, on Twitter, which he later retweeted. —AFP

Poland buys Patriot anti-missile system

WARSAW: Poland signed yesterday a \$4.75 billion (3.8-billion-euro) contract to purchase a US-made Patriot anti-missile system, a move that is likely to irk Russia as East-West tensions rise. The weapons deal is the largest-ever by NATO-member Poland. The first deliveries are expected in 2022 with the system due to become operational a year later. The Patriot is a mobile air-defense system made by US defense firm Raytheon with elements from aerospace firms Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman. It is designed to intercept tactical ballistic missiles, low-flying cruise missiles and aircraft.

Moscow has complained about the prospect of the deployment of Patriot systems in Poland and Romania, which it says violates a 1987 arms treaty and could be tailored to shoot missiles at Russia. Tensions with Moscow have been high since the Ukraine crisis and Kremlin's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and the current diplomatic spat over the nerve agent attack on a former Russian spy in Britain has done nothing to calm matters. NATO ally Romania approved the purchase of a Patriot system worth nearly four billion dollars last November.

'Historic' deal

Warsaw insists the system's deployment as part of its medium-range "Wisla" program is purely defensive in nature. "We are signing today a contract to deliver a modern system that has proven itself in numerous countries and thanks to which we are joining an elite group of states which have an efficient weapon that guarantees security," Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak told reporters at the signing ceremony at a radar production facility in the Polish capital Warsaw.

In February, Poland's neighbour and NATO ally Lithuania accused Russia of permanently deploying nuclear-capable Iskander ballistic missiles to its Kaliningrad exclave on the Baltic that also shares border with Poland. Poland's President Andrzej Duda dubbed the missile deal "historic" and told reporters at the signing ceremony in Warsaw that US President Donald Trump said Poland could expect "good terms" during his visit to



WARSAW: Polish Defense Minister Mariusz Blaszczak (left) speaks with the US Ambassador to Poland Paul W. Jones after signing a contract to buy a US-made Patriot anti-missile system yesterday in Warsaw. —AFP

Poland in July of last year. Last week Poland signed a 10-year offset deal ahead of the final agreement on the Patriot system under which US investment in Poland will help compensate for the cost of the big-ticket purchase. Offset deals with Raytheon and Lockheed Martin Global are worth a respective 53 million and 172 million euros.

Russian adventurism

US Ambassador to Poland Paul W. Jones yesterday called the Patriot deal a "milestone for Poland and NATO", adding that the NATO ally was "joining 15 countries" equipped with Patriot anti-missile systems that are "the foundation of US missile defense and compatible with NATO". Jones added that "in April we'll begin negotiations on phase two, and in phase two, Poland will get the most modern 360-degree radar, but also more missiles and bat-

teries." The first phase of the deployment under the contract signed yesterday provides for the delivery of two batteries with the IBCS system.

These include four AN / MPQ-65 radars, four ECS engagement control stations, six EOC engagement operation centers and sixteen M903 launch systems as well as 208PAC-3MSE missiles and 12 IBCS radio lines. US Vice President Mike Pence in July raised the possibility of deploying Patriots in nearby Estonia. Baltic NATO members bordering Russia hope the alliance will agree on additional air defense capabilities for the region during a Brussels summit in July. Last year, NATO deployed four multinational battalions to Poland and the Baltic states as tripwires against possible Russian adventurism, while the US military sent a Patriot battery to Lithuania for drills. —AFP

France honors gendarme who sacrificed his life in Islamist attack

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron led national tributes yesterday to the gendarme who switched places with a woman hostage during an attack on a supermarket in southern France last week and was killed by the Islamist militant gunman. Lieutenant-Colonel Arnaud Beltrame's heroism has helped reassure a nation left shaken and in mourning after Moroccan-born Radouane Lakdim's killing spree, an attack that reignited a debate over how France deals with suspected radical Islamists.

Tributes for Beltrame began with a minute's silence in gendarme barracks across France, before the gendarme's Tricolor-draped coffin was driven through Paris in heavy rain to Les Invalides, a former military hospital. Crowds lined the streets and gendarmes stood to attention as the cortege passed. In the cobbled courtyard of Les Invalides, Macron solemnly addressed the nation. "To accept to die so the innocent can live: that is the essence of what it means to be a soldier," he said. "Others, even many who are brave, would have wavered or hesitated."

Lakdim's rampage began when he shot

dead the occupant of a car he stole and fired on a group of police joggers, wounding one. He then headed to a supermarket in Trebes, east of the popular medieval tourist city of Carcassonne, where he killed an employee and a customer. Beltrame, 44, led the team of gendarmes who arrived first on the scene. He persuaded Lakdim to release a woman he was holding as a human shield, laying down his weapon and putting his mobile phone on a table with the line surreptitiously left open. When three shots later rang out, elite police stormed the building and shot dead Lakdim. Beltrame was found with bullet wounds to an arm and foot and a grave knife wound to the neck. He died the following morning in hospital.

French state and Islam

Colleagues of Beltrame have paid tribute to the gendarme's sense of duty, calmness under pressure and a generosity which inspired those serving beside him. "In serving the country he gave his life," General Denis Favier, former senior official in the National Gendarmerie told BFM TV. "He showed he was a man of values, a man of honor who went beyond the call of duty to fulfill his mission."

The attack has once again exposed secular France's struggle to integrate Europe's largest Muslim community and deal with the threat posed by home-grown militants and foreign jihadists. Lakdim had been on a government watch list-known as FICHE S-since 2014 because of suspected links to local Salafist net-



PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron places his hands on the flag-draped coffin of Lieutenant-Colonel Arnaud Beltrame after awarding him posthumously with the Legion of Honor during a national ceremony yesterday. —AFP

works. But he had recently received a summons from the DGSJ spy agency and was to be informed he was no longer viewed as a security risk, Interior Minister Gerard Collomb said. Friday's attack was the first since Macron, in power since May, lifted a two-year state of emergency imposed after Islamist militants killed 130 people in coordinated attacks on Paris in November 2015.

Political opponents have pressed Macron to deal more firmly with radical preachers and Salafist mosques. Macron

has pledged to redefine relations between Islam and the state to foster a more homegrown form of Islam that would better fit with France's firm separation of church and state. Far-right party leader Marine Le Pen and opposition leader Laurent Wauquiez have both called for foreigners on the FICHE S list to be expelled and the most dangerous French nationals on the watch list to be imprisoned. "We must fight our battle within the bounds of the law," Philippe told lawmakers on Friday. —Reuters

International

Malaysian bid to redraw the electoral map sparks anger

Hundreds protests as Malaysia approves redelineation plan

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia approved yesterday plans to redraw boundaries for more than a third of its parliamentary seats, changes that critics say will help Prime Minister Najib Razak cruise to a victory in a general election likely to be called within days. Hundreds of protesters marched to parliament ahead of the tabling of the redelineation motion and opposition lawmakers raised their objections in the House of Representatives - with one member calling Najib a "thief". But the motion, which will change the voter demographic in nearly 40 percent of parliament's 222 seats, was approved by a simple majority within five hours of the tabling by Najib. Opposition lawmakers chanted "cheat, cheat" as the motion was passed.



Critics say the move ensures victory for PM

Critics say the new boundaries will benefit Najib's Barisan Nasional (BN) coalition, which is facing arguably its toughest polls since independence more than 60 years ago, by assigning larger number of opposition-leaning voters to fewer seats and dividing constituencies along ethnic lines. "Today, parliament was asked to pass a motion to save Najib and the ruling government," said Lim Kit Siang, veteran leader of the opposition Democratic Action Party. Lim had earlier denounced Najib as a "thief" and was asked to leave the house by the speaker for disrupting proceedings. Najib is under pressure to deliver an emphatic victory, as he grapples with a scandal at state fund IMalaysia Development Berhad (IMDB), and public anxiety over rising living costs.

The recommendation to modify electoral boundaries was made in a report by the Election Commission (EC), which has for years been accused by the opposition of taking instructions from the prime minister. The EC and the government have both said the recommendation for change in electoral borders was free from political interference. "The government did not disturb or influence the EC in their work, and respects decisions made by EC in the interest of the people and the country," Najib told parliament.

'Manipulating the rolls'
Maria Chin Abdullah, former chairwoman of pro-democracy group Bersih, and one of about 200 protesters who had marched earlier in the day, said the commission's report was being used to unfairly force through the boundary changes. "They want to bulldoze the report that contradicts the constitution, ignores the rule of law and manipulates the electoral rolls," she said. Former premier Mahathir Mohamad, who at 92 is the opposition candidate for prime minister, should Najib, his former protege, be defeated, briefly joined the protesters.

Electoral boundaries were last changed in 2003, under the leadership of then-premier Mahathir. He, too, was accused of manipulating the process in favor of the ruling coalition, which has held power since independence from Britain in 1957. The latest changes will not alter the number of seats in the parliament or state assemblies, but will modify the size of several constituencies. Selangor - the country's richest state and one of the few controlled by the opposition - will see voter demographics change in 18 of its 22 parliamentary



KUALA LUMPUR: Protesters display placards during a rally organized by election reform group Bersih (Clean) against a bill to redraw electoral boundaries near Parliament House in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. —AFP

seats. Johor state, where the ruling coalition is expected to face a tough battle, will see changes to 19 of its 26 parliamentary seats.

The redrawing of boundaries will mean some pro-opposition constituencies will grow to include more than 100,000 voters, while pro-government ones are much smaller. For instance, in Selangor outside Kuala Lumpur, the biggest par-

liamentary constituency would be Damansara - held by the opposition - with 150,439 voters, while the smallest would be Sabak Bernam - held by BN - with 37,126 voters. Earlier in the week, the government tabled a bill seeking to outlaw "fake news", with fines and up to 10 years in jail, raising more concern about media freedom in the wake of the IMDB scandal. The bill is expected to be passed today.—Reuters

Kim Jong Un: The princeling taking a diplomatic turn

SEOUL: Six years after inheriting power from his father, Kim Jong Un has established his authority domestically, taken North Korea to unprecedented nuclear heights, and is now looking to flex his muscles abroad. Kim's shock visit to Beijing—traditionally Pyongyang's strongest backer, although the relationship has soured during his time in power—is the first time he is known to have set foot outside the impoverished North since he assumed the leadership.

But Kim, who is in his mid-thirties, has repeatedly shown an ability to stamp an outsized footprint on the global stage without ever leaving home. The third member of the Kim dynasty to rule the North, he has turned his country into a bona fide nuclear power with intercontinental ballistic missiles he says can reach across the globe, including the United States—with state media regularly picturing him overseeing launches.

And he secured a major diplomatic breakthrough for his ostracized regime earlier this month when US President Donald Trump said he would be willing to hold summit talks with the young leader. It is a marked contrast to the situation when he took over in his 20s, when he was considered untested, vulnerable and likely to be manipulated by senior figures in an opaque and ruthless country. But he has proved his mettle in dealing harshly—sometimes brutally—with any sign of dissent, even at the highest levels, while maintaining an aggressively provocative stance with the international community.

Canadian man pleads guilty to mosque murders

QUEBEC CITY: A Canadian man known for his far-right, nationalist sympathies pleaded guilty yesterday to the killing last year of six worshippers at a Quebec mosque - a surprising turn of events in a case that shocked the country. The rampage on January 29, 2017 was one of the worst attacks on an Islamic place of worship in the West, and also left more than 30 injured. Described in the immediate aftermath by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as a "terrorist attack," the shooting spree was a brutal blow to Canada's multicultural society, and to a nation that welcomes tens of thousands of refugees each year.

Alexandre Bissonnette, 28, opened fire on a cold, snowy night at the end of Sunday prayers at Quebec City's Islamic Cultural Center, a mosque located in a normally quiet neighborhood. He had initially pleaded not guilty at the start of the trial on Monday on the advice of his lawyers, but apparently had a change of heart. "I've decided to plead guilty to all of the charges ... in order to prevent the families of the victims from having to relive" the horrors of the attack, said Bissonnette, who also faced six counts of attempted murder.

Sobs erupted in the courtroom as Judge Francois Huot accepted Bissonnette's guilty plea, following a court-ordered psychiatric assessment. "I find you guilty of these murders," he said. Bissonnette, who was a university student at the time of the shooting, could now face a life sentence, or a minimum of 25 years in prison. In court yesterday, Bissonnette - who police say called an emergency line and confessed shortly after the shooting - read aloud from a crumpled piece of paper, saying: "I bitterly regret what I did, the lives that I destroyed. I am neither a terrorist, nor an Islamophobe," he said. "I do not know why I did a foolish thing like that, and still today I'm having a hard time believing it." —AFP



Alexandre Bissonnette

Rivals purged

At home Kim has amassed absolute control over both the party and the military, at times ruthlessly purging potential rivals. The most senior victim was his uncle and mentor Jang Song Thaek, who was suddenly executed in 2013, denounced by state media as "despicable human scum" and proclaimed guilty of a variety of colourful crimes and political sins. Then there was the brazen daylight assassination last year of his half-brother Kim Jong Nam, sprayed with a deadly nerve agent as he walked through Kuala Lumpur's international airport, in a hit most analysts say could only have come from Pyongyang.

Rights groups say abuses are rampant in the North, where between 80,000 and 120,000 prisoners languish in political prison camps. But Kim has also been keen to project a softer side, at least in official propaganda. Unlike his father, who rarely smiled or spoke in public, the carefully vetted images of Kim Jong Un's heavily choreographed appearances show a more garrulous figure, laughing and joking with officers, soldiers and civilians during field trips, as well as giving speeches to packed halls of party functionaries. He has noticeably modeled his image on that of his grandfather Kim Il Sung, appearing to mimic his hairstyle, dress, mannerisms and public speaking style.

Lap of luxury

But unlike the North's founder, whose youth was dominated by the anti-Japanese struggle, Kim Jong Un has led a life of luxury. He was born to his father's third wife, Japan-born ethnic Korean dancer Ko Yong Hui, who is believed to have died of breast cancer in 2004. Much of his early history is still surrounded in mystery—so much so that even his precise date of birth is unclear.

Kim was sent to school in Switzerland, where he was looked after by his maternal aunt Ko Yong Suk and her husband. School staff and friends, who were reportedly

Kim, Xi break the ice with wine and secret pageantry

BEIJING: For a hush-hush "unofficial visit", North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's trip to China bore all the trappings of a state reception: honor guards, bouquets, red carpets, and a banquet served on imperial yellow porcelain. Chinese and North Korean state media yesterday finally broke the secret about Kim's meetings with President Xi Jinping in Beijing with a slew of images that provided some clues about the state of the complex relations between the old allies.

Kim had never met a foreign leader before, and the secrecy—a standard security measure during past North Korean state visits to China—allowed both countries to stage manage any potential embarrassing errors. Kim discreetly rolled into Beijing on Monday in a slow-moving, forest-green train with tinted windows similar to those used by his father and grandfather, known to have bullet-proof carriages. Upon arrival, he was offered tissue-wrapped flowers and escorted away in a motorcade led by a fleet of motorbikes, according to photos from North Korea's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper.

No North Korean flags lined the roads, however, though China typically plasters the city in the standard of the country whose leader is visiting. At the Great Hall of the People just off Tiananmen Square, Kim and his wife



BEIJING: Photo shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju posing for a picture in Beijing. —AFP

unaware that he was a member of North Korea's ruling family, remembered him as a shy boy who liked skiing, Hollywood tough guy Jean-Claude Van Damme and basketball. He is said to have known that he would become North Korea's leader from his eighth birthday, when he received a general's uniform and the country's military top brass bowed to him. But Kim only entered the public eye in 2008 when his father suffered a stroke and Pyongyang revved up plans for the nation's second dynastic succession. Pyongyang is extremely sensitive and protective when it comes to the image of the ruling family, and Kim's father and grandfather are ubiquitous, their portraits adorning every home and office in the country while their bodies lie in state at the capital's Kumsusan Palace. Despite his overseas education, Kim Jong Un is not known to have made any previous foreign trips since coming to power, and the most prominent American he has met is his basketball idol Dennis Rodman, who has made multiple visits to Pyongyang. —AFP



BEIJING: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (center) waves from his train as it prepares to depart from Beijing railway station. —AFP

Ri Sol Ju watched a bayonet-wielding honor guard march and salute alongside Xi and first lady Peng Liyuan, dressed in a striking white coat patterned with black blotches. Footage of talks that followed between Kim and Xi from Chinese state broadcaster CCTV cut pointedly between shots of the Chinese leader speaking and Kim studiously taking notes. Xi referred to Kim as "Comrade Chairman" as he expounded on the two countries' "common ideals and beliefs", according to China's official Xinhua news agency.

The two leaders and their spouses also watched an art performance and attended a welcome banquet. CCTV footage showed technicolour adornments decorating 10 round tables put out in a high-ceilinged, chandelier-topped room—including bright fruit baskets piled with grapes and tangerines and crowned with green and orange ornamental birds. In the middle of the largest, central table where the two couples sat was a decorative diorama of a lake park complete with

pagodas, a bridge and frolicking doves and swans. A photo from Rodong Sinmun showed the two leaders toasting, with Xi appearing to have chosen red wine and Kim white.

'Little brother'

Hua Po, an independent Chinese political commentator, told AFP he felt Kim had appeared "very humble" before Xi, like "a little brother calling to pay his respects to his big brother." Yet despite the warm welcome ceremony, "the overall atmosphere of the talks was tepid, because the two sides couldn't fully accept each other emotionally," he assessed. Xi has backed UN sanctions to punish Kim's regime over its nuclear and missile tests, including during key political events hosted by China last year, straining relations between the longtime allies.

In recent years, Kim has done "a range of things to anger, frustrate and disrespect both Xi personally and China," explained Michael Kovrig, senior advisor for northeast Asia at the International Crisis Group. —AFP

News in brief

Beckham tackles bullying

LONDON: Football legend David Beckham has visited Indonesia - where one in three children have been physically attacked in school - to see how his charity, the 7 Fund, is combating bullying. The A-list celebrity and former England captain launched the fund to protect the world's most vulnerable youngsters in 2015 with the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF). "I feel very proud to see how my 7 Fund is helping UNICEF tackle bullying and violence in schools in Indonesia, and is ultimately keeping children, especially girls, safe in their schools so they can continue their education," he said. Bullying and violence are among the biggest worries for young people in Indonesia, with more than 1 in 5 teens aged 13 to 15 - or 18 million students - experiencing it, leading to mental health problems and school dropouts, UNICEF said.—Reuters

Thai family massacre

BANGKOK: Six men were sentenced to death yesterday for the massacre of a Thai village headman and seven members of his family, including three children, over a land dispute. The execution-style murders, which caused widespread public horror, saw the masked gunmen storm into the local leader's compound in the southern province of Krabi in July 2017 and take his family hostage with handcuffs and blindfolds. They held the group for several hours while waiting for village chief Worayuth Sanlang to return. Then they shot him in the head along with seven family members. Three others were injured but survived, including a woman who played dead after a bullet passed through her ear. The court said the massacre was motivated by a land dispute between the village headman and the lead gunman, Surikfat Bannopwongsakul.—AFP

Knife attacker kills 3

KHARTOUM: A man attacked worshippers with a knife inside a mosque in Sudan's eastern state of Kasala on Tuesday, killing three people and wounding several others, a police officer said. Kasala police chief Yahi Sulayman said it took place when worshippers had gathered for evening prayers in a mosque in Kasala city which borders Eritrea. "Three people have been killed and several wounded," Sulayman said. A medic at a hospital where the wounded were brought said they had been stabbed. Residents said the attacker had tried to address worshippers who refused to listen to him and then started stabbing them. "People in the mosque then retaliated and killed the attacker," Sulayman said, adding that the identity of the attacker had not been established. Since January Sudan has shut its eastern border with Eritrea, days after Khartoum declared an emergency in the state of Kasala.—AFP

Ethiopia names new PM

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's ruling coalition voted in Abiyeh Ahmed as new prime minister on Tuesday following the resignation of Hailemariam Desalegn last month, the state-run Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation said. The state-run channel said the 180-member council of the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) chose Abiyeh to succeed Hailemariam as the chairperson of the coalition, meaning he automatically became premier. "In today's session, the council held a vote and elected Abiyeh Ahmed as chairperson," said the EBC presenter, without giving further details. State-affiliated outlets said Abiyeh won over 60 percent of all votes in the council. Abiyeh, who hails from the Oromo ethnic group, will take over the government of Africa's second most populous country. The ruling coalition has struggled to contain persistent and violent unrest since 2015, the biggest challenge to its hold on power since 1991.—Reuters

International

Egyptian voters receive payments, food and incentives to go to polls

Sisi seeks big turnout, likely to win 2nd term

CAIRO: Egyptian voters said they had received payments, food and other incentives to go to the polls as authorities sought yesterday to achieve the high turnout President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi wants to legitimize his all but guaranteed victory. As voting went into the third and final day, turnout was seen as the critical factor in an election where any contest was eliminated through the arrest or intimidation of the former military commander's most serious challengers. Sisi said he wanted more opponents to stand, but instead faced just one who has been dismissed as a dummy candidate.

The election commission has said the vote is free and fair. Sisi, who led the military overthrow of freely-elected Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in 2013, has promised security and stability and to revive the economy after unrest that followed a 2011 popular uprising. Sisi's key allies include the United States and the powerful Gulf monarchies of Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. In the first two days of voting, turnout was estimated at well below the 47 percent of the electorate who backed Sisi for the first time in 2014. Authorities appeared desperate to garner a higher percentage.



Egyptians vote for third day

name for fear of reprisals by authorities. Other women, who also declined to be named, said they had been promised bags of food containing rice and vegetable oil in exchange for votes. "They told me that if I voted and showed them (the ink on) my finger I will get a bag," said one, who also declined to be named.

The women did not say who exactly had given them money or bags of goods. Managers at a government financial institution gave employees half of Monday off and ordered them to vote, one employee told Reuters. Employees were told to "not come back without ink on their fingers" and had their hands inspected the next day, the employee said. Asked for comment, the presidency spokesman said this was not a matter for the presidency to address and referred Reuters to the National Election Commission and spokespeople for the presidential campaigns. Officials at the election commission and the government's foreign press centre did not immediately respond to calls and Whatsapp messages requesting comment.

Some people needed no inducement to vote. Noha Al-Nemr, voting in Cairo's middle-class Mohandiseen district,

said: "I voted for Sisi of course, because it's enough that because of him, my family and I live in safety - even if there's hardship." Incentives for voting were made more public in other areas. In Beheira province, governor Nadia Abdou told Mehwar private TV channel on Monday: "Whoever municipality has the most votes, we will fix their water, sewage and electricity ... We will reward those people who came out in large numbers." Pro-government media, meanwhile, portrayed failure to vote as a betrayal of Egypt, the most populous Arab country.

Incentives

Voters interviewed by Reuters in the first two days of polling said they had been offered money, boxes of basic food and services to cast their ballots, or to at least ink their fingers to make it look as if they had. "I've never voted before, and I didn't intend to this time either," a woman in Cairo's working-class Ward estate said. "I just went and dipped my finger in the paint and took the 50 pounds (\$3)," she said. The woman declined to give her



GIZA, Egypt: An Egyptian woman riding on a motorcycle with her family shows her ink-stained finger after voting during the 2018 presidential election in the capital Cairo's western Giza district yesterday, on the third day of the 2018 presidential elections. —AFP

Betraying the martyrs

Hosts of state-run radio programs told listeners that if they did not vote, they would be "betraying the blood of the martyrs in Sinai", a reference to a military campaign against Islamist militants in the northern Sinai Peninsula. An elderly woman in the Mohandiseen neighborhood of Cairo said she decided to vote after listening to the radio shows.

The vote virtually guarantees Sisi a win. His only opponent is an obscure politician loyal to the incumbent.

More serious challengers were forced to step down and several opposition politicians called earlier this year for an election boycott. Sisi has said he had nothing to do with opposition candidates pulling out, and has repeatedly urged the electorate to vote in great numbers.

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. —Reuters

Israel deploys 100 sharpshooters on Gaza border

JERUSALEM: The Israeli military has deployed more than 100 sharpshooters on the Gaza border ahead of a planned mass Palestinian demonstration, Israel's top general said in an interview published yesterday. Organizers said they expect thousands in Gaza, including entire families, to answer their call to gather in tent cities in five locations along the sensitive border from Friday in a six-week protest for a right of return of Palestinian refugees to what is now Israel.

Citing security concerns, the Israeli military enforces a "no go" zone for Palestinians on land in Gaza adjacent to Israel's border fence. Lieutenant-General Gadi Eizenkot, the military's chief of staff, told the Yedioth Ahronoth daily that the military would not allow "mass infiltration" or tolerate damage to the barrier during the protests. "We have deployed more than 100 sharpshooters who were called up from all of the military's units, primarily from the special forces," Eizenkot said in the interview. "If lives are in jeopardy, there is permission to open fire."

Israeli soldiers are confronted by frequent violent Palestinian protests along the Gaza border and have used tear gas, rubber bullets and live ammunition against demonstrators who the military said hurled rocks or petrol bombs at them. Organizers said the protest is supported by several Palestinian factions, including Gaza's dominant Islamist Hamas movement, which is dedicated to the destruction of Israel. Nikolay Mladenov, the UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, called on all sides "to exercise restraint and take the necessary steps to avoid a violent escalation". In a statement emailed to Reuters, he said: "Children in particular should not be put at risk at any time by anyone."

Rising tension

Israeli cabinet minister Tzachi Hanegbi, speaking on Israel Radio, said Hamas had avoided direct conflict with Israel since the end of the 2014 Gaza war. But he said that pressure Hamas was now feeling from Israel's destruction of some of its network of attack tunnels near the border, coupled with harsh economic conditions in Gaza, were "a formula for rising tension". The start of the demonstration was symbolically linked to what Palestinians call "Land Day", which commemorates the six Arab citizens of Israel killed by Israeli security forces in demonstrations in 1976 over land confiscations. The week-long Jewish holiday of Passover, when Israel heightens security, also begins on Friday.

The protest is due to end on May 15, the day Palestinians call the "Nakba" or "Catastrophe", marking the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the conflict surrounding the creation of Israel in 1948. Palestinians have long demanded that as many as 5 million of their compatriots be granted the right to return. Israel rules this out, fearing an influx of Arabs that would eliminate its Jewish majority. Israel argues the refugees should resettle in a future state that the Palestinians seek in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip. —Reuters

Pressure mounts on Syria rebels to quit Ghouta holdout

BEIRUT: Pressure was mounting yesterday for rebels to accept a negotiated withdrawal from their final holdout in Syria's Eastern Ghouta, as hundreds boarded buses to leave another part of the battered enclave. Thousands of opposition fighters and civilians have agreed to quit the former rebel bastion of Ghouta, target of a five-week-long assault by the regime. Syrian troops have recaptured more than 90 percent of Ghouta, and are draining the last opposition pockets with negotiated pull-outs mediated by Russia.

Moscow has secured two such deals already and has been pressing Jaish al-Islam, the rebel faction in control of the third and final pocket of the enclave near Damascus, to leave too. The group holds Ghouta's largest town of Douma, whose population has swelled to an estimated 200,000 with people displaced from other devastated districts. Jaish al-Islam had hoped to reach a settlement that would avoid their evacuation, but they were now facing the specter of a renewed blitz on Douma. Syrian troops were clustering around the town for a second day yesterday. Syria's Al-Watan daily reported. "The Syrian army amassed further around Douma to increase pressure on Jaish al-Islam to accept a reconciliation deal, like those in neighbouring towns and cities in Eastern Ghouta," it said. The armed faction was also under growing pressure from Douma's residents, several hundred of whom descended into the town's main square yesterday. They marched down streets lined by crumbling buildings, demanding to know how negotiations with Russia were going and calling for the release of people held by Jaish al-Islam, residents told AFP in Beirut.

Russia hardball

Jaish al-Islam had been in talks with Russia to reach a settlement whereby they could stay in Douma as government-provided water and electricity returned to the town. Russian military

Rapes, ethnic attacks rising in DR Congo's lawless east

GOMA: Sexual and ethnic violence are alarmingly on the rise in Democratic Republic of Congo's lawless east, spawning a humanitarian catastrophe with millions forced to flee their homes. At least 13.1 million Congolese need humanitarian aid, including 7.7 million who are severely food insecure, the UN Security Council said last week in a unanimous statement which the Kinshasa government dismisses as a gross exaggeration. As the spat continues with the DR Congo shunning a massive donor conference in Geneva next month aimed at raising \$1.7 billion (1.37 billion euros) to tackle the crisis, rapes are increasing in the volatile region. "In 2015, we noticed a noticeable decrease in sexual violence," said celebrated gynaecologist Denis Mukwege, a three-time Nobel Peace Prize nominee for his work with gang rape victims from the conflicts that have ravaged his homeland.

"Since the end of 2016 and 2017, there has really been a rise," he told AFP at his 450-bed Panzi Hospital in the city of Bukavu where rape victims undergo reconstructive surgery and receive holistic care. One of the survivors is a

10-year-old girl wearing a Minnie Mouse T-shirt who was raped by militiamen in February when they attacked her village of Kabikokole. Mukwege said the profile of sexual violence has changed. "Now the majority of sexual violence in South Kivu is committed by civilians and no longer by security forces and armed groups," he said. However, many of the civilians were former rebels, the Panzi Foundation said.

'Amputations quite common'

Meanwhile, various conflicts in the region among ragtag militias, rebel groups, vigilantes and the Congolese army are claiming more and more lives. According to the Congo Research Group, the "uncivils"—a euphemism for Congolese troops—were alone responsible for 106 deaths and 80 kidnappings in North Kivu in February. In the North Kivu capital Goma, the Bethesda Hospital run by the Red Cross tends to people with bullet injuries. "Since the middle of 2017, the number of patients has increased. We had 64 beds and now we have 92," a medic said, adding: "Amputations are quite common here."

Avenging exploitation?

In the southeastern province of Tanganyika, clashes between Pygmies and Bantus from the ethnic Luba group have also forced thousands to flee. Pygmies from the ethnic Twa group regularly come into conflict with Bantus who regard them as second-class citizens. Tensions between them stretch back to before DR Congo gained independence from Belgium in 1960, with the land-owning Bantus accused of exploiting the hunter-gatherers, giving them



KALEMIE, DR Congo: Young Congolese are seen inside a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) in Kalemie, Democratic Republic of the Congo. —AFP

meager wages or paying them with alcohol and cigarettes for agricultural labor.

For their part, Bantus have endured horrendous attacks that have seen entire villages being burnt, pregnant women disemboweled and people killed with arrows. Aid workers say up to 650,000 were displaced by a spike in violence in 2016-17. Today, around 67,000 displaced Bantus live in 12 camps surrounding the provincial capital Kalemie. Kavumbu Sidiki, 62, says his 45-year-old wife Marcelina Kisumbole was six months pregnant when Pygmy attack-

ers cut open her stomach. "The Pygmies arrived at our village around midnight," he said. "I jumped out of the window and escaped. My wife couldn't and they killed her." Another man opens his mouth to show a missing incisor that he says the attacking Pygmies extracted. "Have pity on us!" he said. "The Pygmies are beating the living daylight out of us. We're suffering terribly." The governor of Tanganyika, a stronghold of President Joseph Kabila, said he was baffled by the resurgence of violence. —AFP



HAZEH, Syria: A Syrian child roams the streets in the town of Hazeh in Eastern Ghouta, on the outskirts of the Syrian capital Damascus. —AFP

police, but not Syrian government forces, would have a presence in the town. But negotiations faltered over the group's demands that Syria's regime grant them a general amnesty and allow Douma's residents to move freely across the country, a source with knowledge of the talks said.

"At the end of their meeting Monday, the Russians gave Jaish al-Islam two choices: surrender or face an attack," another source close to the talks said. Anticipating further bombardment, hundreds of civilians fled Douma into government territory via a humanitarian corridor yesterday, state media reported. Determined to clear rebels out of their six-year bastion of Ghouta, President Bashar al-Assad launched a military assault on the suburb on February 18. He pursued a divide-and-conquer strategy, seizing most of the enclave then breaking up what was left of it into three pockets each controlled by a different group. Moscow stepped in to negotiate a deal for each area.



Visitors pose for photos besides 3D paintings on display at the Museum of Illusions in Hollywood, California on Tuesday. The pop-up museum contains a series of optical illusions giving the visitor a chance to produce unusual 3D images of themselves. —AFP

Kim shows unity with Xi, pledges...

Continued from Page 1

"In the meantime, and unfortunately, maximum sanctions and pressure must be maintained at all cost!" he tweeted. Trump also said there was now "a good chance that Kim Jong Un will do what is right for his people and for humanity" and denuclearize. "Look forward to our meeting!" he added.

Kim told Xi there was "no question that my first foreign visit would be to the Chinese capital", according to North Korea's official KCNA news agency. "This is my solemn duty as someone who should value and continue the DPRK-PRC (North Korea-China) relations through generations." KCNA said Xi accepted an invitation to visit Pyongyang in what would be his first trip to the North Korean capital since he took power in 2012.

The two men had not met since Kim took over after the death of his father, Kim Jong Il, in Dec 2011. Relations have been strained as China has backed a series of tough UN sanctions against Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile tests. But Xi underscored the importance of developing ties, saying it was "a strategic choice and the only right choice" and that he was willing to maintain frequent contact with Kim "under the new circumstances", according to Xinhua.

Xi and Kim shook hands and sat across from each other at a long conference table, both flanked by officials, at the Great Hall of the People, according to television images which showed the North Korean leader taking meticulous notes. Later, Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, waved goodbye while Kim and his spouse, Ri Sol Ju, smiled as they left in a black car. Analysts said Xi likely wanted to see Kim to ensure North Korea does not cut a deal with Trump that hurts Chinese interests during a summit expected to be held in May.

Kim's visit puts China back in the diplomatic game after appearing sidelined by Pyongyang's approaches to Seoul and Washington. "It shows that at this crucial juncture, Kim and Xi believed that it was time to seize

the opportunity to consult," Bonnie Glaser, a China expert at the Washington-based Center for Strategic and International Studies, told AFP. "Both likely concluded that further deterioration in relations would be harmful." Deng Yuwen, an independent Chinese international relations scholar, said North Korea needed to turn to its old ally ahead of the US summit, as Kim will be skeptical that Trump will provide his regime with security guarantees. "North Korea needs the big brother to protect it at a crucial moment," Deng said.

South Korea said last month after talks with Kim in Pyongyang that he would consider abandoning his nuclear weapons in exchange for US security guarantees, and would halt weapons tests while talks were underway. "The issue of denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula can be resolved, if South Korea and the United States respond to our efforts with goodwill, create an atmosphere of peace and stability while taking progressive and synchronous measures for the realization of peace," Kim said, according to Xinhua.

Chinese special envoy Yang Jiechi will travel to Seoul today to brief Moon about the Kim-Xi summit, the South's presidential office said. Confirmation of the visit ended 24 hours of speculation about the identity of a mysterious North Korean visitor after Japanese media spotted a green train, similar to the one used by Kim's father, arriving in Beijing on Monday and departing the following day. Despite the news blackout a heavy police presence at key venues, barricades and mysterious motorcades hinted at his presence. North Korea's official Rodong Sinmun newspaper yesterday featured photos of Chinese officials greeting Kim and his wife with flowers at the train station.

His visit to China came as a surprise given the state of relations between the Cold War-era allies, which fought together in the 1950-53 Korean War. China chaired six-party talks on North Korea that collapsed in 2009 but its calls to revive that forum have not been heeded so far. Frustrated by its neighbor's nuclear weapons program and under pressure from Trump, China has used its economic leverage to squeeze Kim's regime. At the same time, Beijing fears the collapse of the regime in Pyongyang would send waves of refugees into China and place US troops stationed on its border in a unified Korea. — AFP

Amazon slumps after Trump wants to curb its power

WASHINGTON: Amazon.com Inc shares fell as much as 7.4 percent yesterday, briefly wiping about \$53.6 billion from its market value, after news website Axios reported that US President Donald Trump is obsessed with the world's largest online retailer and wants to rein in its growing power. Trump has talked about using antitrust law to "go after" the company because he is worried about mom-and-pop retailers being put out of business by Amazon. Axios reported, citing five sources it said had discussed the issue with him.

Trump also wants to change Amazon's tax treatment, the report said, an issue the president raised publicly last year when he called for an internet tax for online retailers, even though Amazon already collects sales tax on items it sells direct to customers. In response to questions about the Axios report, a White House official said no specific policy changes related to Amazon were known, but it was

always looking at different options on a range of policy issues. Another administration official confirmed to Reuters that Trump has been complaining about Amazon in private, believing the company has become too powerful. The official said Trump links this to Amazon Chief Executive Jeff Bezos' private ownership of the Washington Post, which he has called "fake news" and effectively a mouthpiece for Bezos' business interests. Amazon could not be reached immediately for comment.

Trump has criticized the big e-commerce company over taxes and jobs in the past, without offering evidence. Tech stocks are already under pressure after Facebook Inc acknowledged this month that user data had been improperly harvested by a consultancy. "Capitol Hill wants Facebook's blood, but President Trump isn't interested. Instead, the tech behemoth Trump wants to go after is Amazon," Axios reported.

Changing Amazon's tax treatment or using antitrust law to thwart Amazon would be difficult. "In my many years of being an antitrust lawyer, I'm not aware of a scenario where an individual company was singled out by the president of the United States with a strong encouragement to the Department of Justice to file an antitrust case," said Jeffrey Jacobovitz of the law firm Arnall Golden Gregory LLP. — Reuters

Facebook tweaks privacy tools...

Continued from Page 1

The data leak has raised investor concerns that any failure by big tech companies to protect privacy could deter advertisers - Facebook's lifeblood - and lead to tougher regulation.

Analysts said the revamps Facebook rolled out yesterday looked more like tweaks than big changes, making data management more transparent rather than changing the way the company does business. "It doesn't seem that the changes that have been proposed are particularly meaningful," Pivotal Research Group analyst Brian Wieser said. "There are several problems and one needs to address operationally what Facebook is doing to provide confidence that personal data is protected."

Facebook Chief Executive Mark Zuckerberg has repeatedly apologized for the mistakes the company made and has promised to crack down on abuse of the Facebook platform and restrict developers' access to user information. The changes Facebook announced yesterday let users add more layers of protection, control what they share and delete it if they want to, control the ads they see, and manage who sees their posts and profile information.

There is also a new page - Access Your Information - where users can see the information they've shared and

manage it. "The biggest difference is ease of access in settings, which fulfills Mark Zuckerberg's promise to make the privacy process and permissions more transparent to users," Wedbush analyst Michael Pachter said. It was uncertain whether the changes will satisfy lawmakers. They were announced ahead of a stringent European Union data law which comes into force in May. It requires companies to give people a "right to portability" - to take their data with them - and imposes fines of up to 4 percent of global revenue for companies breaking the law.

Lawmakers in the United States are still clamoring for Zuckerberg himself to explain how users' data ended up in the hands of Cambridge Analytica. He plans to testify before Congress, a source briefed on the matter said on Tuesday. Facebook has said it has received invitations to testify and that it is talking to legislators. Zuckerberg and the CEOs of Alphabet Inc and Twitter Inc have been invited to testify at an April 10 hearing on data privacy. The US House Energy and Commerce Committee and US Senate Commerce Committee have also asked Zuckerberg to appear at a hearing. The US Federal Trade Commission has opened an investigation into Facebook and attorneys representing 37 states are also pressing Zuckerberg to explain what happened.

Earlier this month, whistleblower Christopher Wylie revealed Cambridge Analytica created psychological profiles on 50 million Facebook users via a personality prediction app. The app was downloaded by 270,000 people, but also scooped up their friends' data without consent - as was possible under Facebook's rules at the time. — Agencies

UN chief urges MBS for political...

Continued from Page 1

aid, a growing risk of famine, and a severe outbreak of cholera. It was the second meeting between the UN chief and the crown prince, who has bristled at Guterres' description of Yemen as a "stupid war" that is harming the interests of the countries involved.

Prince Mohammed said Saudi Arabia was working to uphold UN principles which he said meant "not interfering in the affairs of other countries", an apparent ref-

erence to Iran's support for the Houthis. "We try as much as we can to solve the problems of the Middle East politically and if things get out of control, we try as hard as we can to avoid all the other impacts," said the crown prince, speaking through a translator. "We will continue to comply, as we always have, with international law," he said.

The UN chief has appointed a new peace envoy, Martin Griffiths, who was in the rebel-held capital Sanaa this week for talks on kick-starting the political process, following a first round of meetings in Riyadh. UN diplomats believe the new effort could succeed because Iran has sent signals that it is willing to pressure the Houthis to seek a settlement. Guterres will travel to Geneva for a donors' conference hosted by Switzerland and Sweden to raise funds for Yemen. — AFP

Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call:
+965 248 35 616 / 617
E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net
ads@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

SALE

It's Shopping Time!

Midea
MST1MB1-24CR
24000 BTU/hr

169
199

SHARP
AF-A18SCM
18000 BTU/hr

91
106

Midea
AC120-S
Multifunction Fan

26
29

2018/03/29 10:00 AM - 2018/03/29 11:59 PM

best
AL-YOUSIFI

Credit: Start from 500 • Up to 48 month • Instant approval

Shop Online www.best.com.kw Free Delivery

1809 809

• Kuwait 1 (The New str.) • Kuwait 2 (Panasonic Tower) • Hawalli 1 (Tunis str.) • Hawalli 2 (Bin Khalid str.) • Shuwaikh (4th Ring road) • Al-Rai (4th Ring road) • Salmiya (Salem Al-Mubarak str.) • Farwaniya (Behind police Station) • Fahahel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

Analysis

Kuwait Times
Established 1961
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL : info@kuwaittimes.net
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Uber seen girding for battle with Ola in India ahead of IPO

Uber's decision to exit Southeast Asia, where it was bleeding money, should give the global ride-hailing giant more firepower to focus on India, where it's locked in a fierce battle with local rival, Ola, industry analysts say. With Uber considering a public offering in 2019, it would make sense for the company to pitch India's growth potential to investors, said one industry source, adding it also needs to balance that by showing profitability.

Uber and Ola are both backed by a common investor, SoftBank, which pushed behind the scenes for the merger between Uber and Grab Holdings in Southeast Asia. But it's not clear that SoftBank intends to spur another Uber consolidation in India, an under-penetrated market with a population of 1.3 billion people. Executives from Uber and Ola met at least twice over the last 12 months, sources aware of the meetings told Reuters, the most recent just weeks before Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi's visit to India in February.

Among other things, Uber brought up a potential merger between the two companies with Uber in the driver's seat, two of the sources said. Ola's spokesman said the company "is always actively looking for opportunities for expansion of its footprint," adding that Ola has the backing of its investors, including SoftBank. If any consolidation has to happen in the Indian ride-sharing industry, Ola would lead that conversation, he said.

Uber declined to comment on the meeting, but said in a statement its deal with Grab will allow it to double down to invest aggressively in core markets, which includes India. SoftBank declined to comment for this article. For his part, Khosrowshahi, in a statement after the Grab deal, said he has no plans for another sale in which Uber consolidates its operations in exchange for a minority stake in a rival. "There has been a clear conversation that this is the last deal where Uber will take a minority stake," said a source familiar with Uber's thinking. "For future deals with any global competitors, if they happen, Uber will have the controlling stake," said the source.

Merger of equals

Uber's decision to sell its business in Southeast Asia to Grab for a 27.5 percent stake in the local ride-hailing company was its first major move after SoftBank's recent multi-billion dollar investment in the US-based company. SoftBank owns stakes in most major global ride-hailing firms, and executives have indicated they favor consolidation. SoftBank's Vision Fund Chief Executive Rajeev Misra has already urged Uber to focus less on Asia and more on profitable markets such as Latin America, a person familiar with the matter had said.

In India, which makes up more than 10 percent of its global rides, Uber has to battle just one rival, Ola, whereas in Southeast Asia and China it was up against multiple local operators. "The situation in India is different (from Southeast Asia)," said Frederic Giron, vice president and research director, of consultancy Forrester. "The market is much bigger and they (Uber) do not have the same profitability issues that they faced in Southeast Asia."

But to win in India, Uber will need to fight harder than it has in recent months, during which it has lost some ground to Ola, industry analysts said. Uber operates in about 30 Indian cities and has more than 35 percent share of the taxi market. Ola, which is in 110 cities, has more than a 45 percent share, according to Counterpoint Research. It also has its own digital wallet called Ola Money and offers services such as Prime Play - an in-car entertainment platform for longer trips.

Counterpoint analyst Neil Shah says Uber's slower pace in India is not so much about its commitment to the market but more about the recent turmoil at its headquarters, the new CEO's style of managing the business and the pressure he faces to show profits to shareholders. While Uber's operations in India are more profitable than Ola's, according to Counterpoint, the latter's revenues are bigger and it has a wider range of products, including autorickshaws - an important mode of transport in smaller towns.

In a show of commitment, Uber recently signed one of India's most expensive celebrities, Indian cricket team captain Virat Kohli, as its brand ambassador for five years. But it needs to fill dozens of vacancies in the country, including naming new heads for its car leasing business and public policy. "Uber is not going to quit any time soon," said the industry source who has worked with ride-hailing companies. "I believe they will focus on India more strongly. India continues to be two-horse race at least for the next couple of years." — Reuters

Cartoon for the Soul



Kim seen as building global status

Accompanied by his wife, greeted by honor guards, and entertained at banquets, Kim Jong Un made his international debut as North Korea's leader by being wined and dined in the capital of the world's most populous country. Kim's "unofficial" visit to China this week marks his first known trip outside the North since taking power in late 2011, and it helped burnish the image he has recently been cultivating as a leader who has to be shown respect by the world's most powerful.

Despite recent chilly relations between the neighbors, Chinese President Xi Jinping rolled out an actual red carpet for Kim, who arrived from Pyongyang in a 21-car bulletproof train. "Just look at Kim's big smile on his face while he's shaking hands with Xi," said Kim Yong-hyun, professor of North Korean studies at South Korea's Dongguk University. "Although it was Kim's first trip outside North Korea since he took power, he looked quite confident, posing himself as a world player equal to China's Xi." The surprise visit to Beijing comes as Kim has launched a diplomatic offensive, proposing upcoming summits with South Korean President Moon Jae-in and US President Donald Trump.

Lavish reception

In line with the previous three visits by Kim's father to China, the Chinese government described the trip as unofficial, with no North Korean flags hung around Beijing's Tiananmen Square as happens with state visits. But Chinese state television gave similar coverage to Kim's meetings with Xi as they did to Xi's meetings with Trump last year, with an unusually long 14-minute report of what Xi and Kim discussed and where and how they met, though the initial secrecy of the trip meant no live coverage of the welcome ceremony. The images showed the two men chat-

ting in a friendly way, and Xi's wife Peng Liyuan also greeting Kim's wife, Ri Sol Ju. Kim and Ri were shown waving out of a window as their car drew away. In making the trip to Beijing in the customized train, Kim sought to highlight his place as the heir to his father Kim Jong Il, said Aidan Foster-Carter, an honorary senior research fellow at Britain's Leeds University. His father had also gone to China by train on his visits. "Ordinary mortals just take the plane," he said. "The train sets the precedent of following in daddy's footsteps." But by making his wife a key figure in the Beijing trip, Kim parted from his father's behavior and mirrored the ways of today's modern country leaders. Kim Jong Il had never been seen abroad with any of his wives, though he was believed to have been accompanied by the woman suspected of being his fourth wife on visits to China and Russia, yet it was never announced officially. "Unlike his father, Kim Jong Un presented Ri Sol Ju as first lady of North Korea, emphasizing her status and portraying his image as a normal leader," said Dongguk University's Kim. "It appears to be a well-calculated tactic that would help turn Kim's hostile and unfavorable image to a gentle and sane one."

Legitimacy at home and abroad

As the leader of a country often called reclusive and strange, Kim is also much younger than many world leaders, a difference that gets additional resonance in Asia, where respectful deference to elders is widely upheld. Estimated to be 34, Kim is decades younger than 64-year-old Xi, 65-year-old Moon, and Trump, who is 71. Frosty relations between Beijing and Pyongyang since Kim took office had seen state-to-state relations deteriorate, but the two sides have always maintained party-to-party ceremonies and traditions, such as



China's President Xi Jinping, his wife Peng Liyuan, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and his wife Ri Sol Ju walk in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on March 26, 2018. — AFP

sending envoys to share the outcomes of key party meetings, according to diplomats. Kim officially cast his visit in the same light, saying he felt obligated to come congratulate Xi in person on his recent re-appointment as president, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry's account of the trip. China's most senior party diplomat, Politburo member Yang Jiechi, attended the main meeting between Xi and Kim, along with Wang Huning, the party's top theoretician. The government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, was also there, though at the far end of the table.

From the North, Kim Jong Un brought with him the country's most high-profile officials, including vice chairman of the Workers' Party Central Committee Choe

Ryong Hae, Politburo member Ri Su Yong, Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, and Kim Yong Chol, a former intelligence chief who now handles inter-Korean affairs. Taking nearly all of his closest aides highlights the confidence he may be feeling now that he has secured his position, showing that he doesn't fear there could be a coup against him during his time away, said Yang Moo-jin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul. "We saw many high-ranking officials with Kim, but almost none from the military. One could worry about a military coup, but the fact that he made this trip as he did shows he's completely in charge of the military as well as all of North Korea's internal networks," Yang said. —Reuters

Hopes high new Ethiopia PM will ease turmoil

For the first time, Ethiopia has picked a leader from the Oromo ethnic group that drove years of anti-government protests, and analysts say Abiy Ahmed faces a tricky task of reconciliation and reform. The 42-year-old former minister of science and technology will take the reins of one Africa's fastest growing economies after more than two years of protests and political turmoil that led to Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn's shock resignation last month. But analysts say Abiy cannot stabilise Ethiopia unless he convinces the country's long-serving ruling coalition to change its authoritarian ways.

First on his agenda, they say, should be repealing a widely criticized state of emergency imposed after Hailemariam's resignation last month. "Lifting the state of emergency is, I think, the first and most important step. Without that, there is no reform agenda," said Awol Allo, an Ethiopian political commentator who teaches law in Britain. Ethiopia's spiral into crisis began in late 2015 when Oromo activists who have long complained of marginalization condemned a government development plan they felt was unfair.

This sparked protests that would spread across the country and cause hundreds of deaths and tens of thousands of arrests. Their grievances were targeted at the all-powerful

Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), the coalition of four ethnically based parties which has ruled Ethiopia since chasing the communist Derg regime from power in 1991. The government declared a 10-month state of emergency in Oct 2016 to stop the protests, but many from the Oromo and the second-largest ethnic group the Amhara still feel alienated from a government they criticise for locking up dissidents and ignoring the demands of local communities.

"His priority should be to calm the country and, secondly, he needs to address the questions of the youth because the young people are the ones that can help our country," Hana Dabele, a data encoder in the capital Addis Ababa, said of Abiy.

After organising a mass release of jailed politicians and journalists last January in a reaction to the public disenchantment, Hailemariam made the surprise decision to resign. Shortly after, Abiy was elevated to the top post of the Oromo Peoples' Democratic Organization (OPDO), the party representing Oromos in the EPRDF, as the coalition scrambled to find a successor. Long seen as a tool of more powerful EPRDF factions, the OPDO had raised its political clout last year by reaching out to the protesters.

Abiy, then a top OPDO official, was part of that outreach, and Awol said believes he will continue that reform push as prime minister. "When you look at the change that has taken place within the OPDO as an organization, I think there is every reason to believe that Ahmed will ... push some of the reform agenda set up by his own party," Awol said. Abiy's election as party chairman was made by 180 top EPRDF officials in a vote behind closed doors about which few details have been released. —AFP

One year from Brexit, transition to absorb shock

With Britain just a year away from leaving the European Union, the transition deal agreed between the two sides is viewed as a key element to absorbing the Brexit shock. British Prime Minister Theresa May kick-started divorce proceedings one year ago, and March 29, 2019, has since been set as the date the UK will leave the bloc. Early optimism quickly faded of agreeing on the details of the historic separation, in addition to the complex deal on a future trade relationship within just two years.

The two sides agreed a transition period as a solution, giving citizens and businesses greater certainty while also allowing London and Brussels more time to tie up post-divorce plans. "The transition is simply to allow us to do the stuff we don't have time to do (within two years)... We'll be ready for transition but we won't be ready for after transition," said Anand Menon, European politics professor at King's College London. Britain has agreed to pay into the EU budget during the transition and will continue to access to the European single market, but will have no decision-making powers.

On Brussels' insistence, freedom of

movement for EU citizens will also continue as before. The short-term solution was signed after tense negotiations in Brussels and some fear it is merely delaying problems which are incredibly hard to resolve. "The real question is what if neither side is ready by 31 December 2020 when the transition period comes to an end?" said law professor Catherine Barnard, from the University of Cambridge.

With the future beyond 2020 uncertain, businesses have already started preparing for the possibility of delays in signing a trade deal or a breakdown in talks between Brussels and London. A study by law firm Pinsent Masons found 51 percent of large British businesses have adopted contingency plans, including the possibility of moving staff to the continent. The majority of those who are yet to put plans in place are expected to do so by the end of this year. Britain's finance ministry has also set aside billions of pounds to prepare for Brexit.

The transition deal will not be finalized unless Britain and the other 27 EU countries agree on divorce terms by October, Brussels' deadline to wrap up talks. EU leaders approved guidelines last week for negotiating the future deal, while warning Britain to respect commitments made so far. "Nothing is agreed until everything is agreed," the guidelines say. Britain has so far vowed to quit the single market and customs union, while at the same time aiming to keep the closest possible ties with the bloc. —AFP

Sports

Kuwait cricket team ready for ICC World Cup T20 qualifiers

Last five weeks of training were really challenging

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Kuwait's cricket squad is ready for the qualifier due to take place in Kuwait next month, announced Kuwait's coach, South African cricket legend Herschelle Gibbs. The tournament is three weeks away but the 20-strong team - all Kuwaitis - is ready for the match, said Gibbs, who arrived in Kuwait to train the team for the International Cricket Council World Cup T20 qualifiers scheduled to take place from April 20-27. The United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and Maldives are set for the qualifying rounds in Kuwait. The ICC T20 World Cup takes place in Australia in 2020, with the West Indies as the defending champions from the 2016 edition in India.

Speaking at the South African Embassy in Kuwait, Gibbs said he wants to see results of his month-long training with the Kuwait team. "The last five weeks of training were really challenging, but a lot of positivity and energy is emanating from the Kuwait team. This tournament is a stepping stone for the Kuwaiti team to make a name in cricket. I am confident that the team is ready," he said.

Mzolisa Bona, South African Ambassador to Kuwait, said he is happy that the Kuwaiti team trainer is a well-respected South African legend. "His profile will speak for itself - he is well known all over the world. I am sure Kuwait will qualify for the T20 World Cup. My mission as ambassador is to make sure to maintain a well-balanced

relationship on all fronts, including sports. I hope that the sports cooperation agreement will be signed soon, because I believe that sport is a vehicle to facilitate people-to-people contacts and strengthen good relations and understanding between countries," he said.

"The engagement between our countries in terms of sports has been growing - there have been some delays due to FIFA's problems with Kuwait. Like South Africa, Kuwait is into soccer, cricket and rugby, so we want better bilateral cooperation in this field," he added. When Gibbs came to Kuwait more than a month ago, he was given a rousing welcome at the airport by Kuwait's cricketering officials and council members.

Sajid Ashraf, Director General of Kuwait Cricket Federation, said Kuwait is continuously catching up in the world of cricket. "Cricket is in the blood of Kuwaitis as we have been associated with

Indians from way back in history. This is like spicy food to Kuwaitis - cricket was there and is still there; we just have to train our young talents and we will emerge as the best. If we introduce this sport early from a young age, of course we'll see Kuwait on top. We are hopeful in this upcoming tournament. Remember that from around four million people in Kuwait, a solid 1.5 million are cricket fanatics," he said. For the large Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi expatriate community in Kuwait, the qualifying tournament will be another sporting activity to be remembered that will unlock the potentials of the Kuwaiti team.

“Cricket is in the blood of Kuwaitis”

LG pulls plug on Warner deal, IPL ban follows

SYDNEY: Multinational electronics company LG has opted not to renew its contract with David Warner following the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa and the banned Australian was also barred from this year's Indian Premier League (IPL) yesterday.

Former Australia captain Steve Smith and vice-captain Warner have both been slapped with 12-month bans from international and domestic cricket for their role in a scandal that has rocked the sport.

Cameron Bancroft, who was caught on camera attempting to scuff up the ball with improvised sandpaper during the Cape Town test, was banned for nine months. Even before Cricket Australia banned Warner and announced he would never be considered for a team leadership position again, LG said yesterday the company would not be giving 31-year-old a new deal.

"LG's current sponsorship of David Warner is in the final weeks and in light of recent events, we have decided not to renew our partnership," an LG spokeswoman said in a statement.

Opening batsman Warner first started working with LG as the South Korean company's brand ambassador in 2014. Several of CA's major sponsors, including cereal maker Sanitarium, have said they would await the results of a full investigation into the scandal before deciding on the future of their deals with the governing body.

Later yesterday, Warner's IPL franchise, Sunrisers Hyderabad, announced he had stepped down as captain. That was before IPL chairman Rajeev Shukla said both Smith and Warner have been banned from this year's competition beginning in Mumbai on April 7.

"We respect the decision of Cricket Australia, now they have banned these players for one year, keeping that in mind we have also decided in IPL these two players can't play," Shukla said. The teams will be allowed replacement players, he added.

Warner, who led the Sunrisers to their maiden IPL title in 2016, had agreed a 120 million Indian rupees (\$1.84 million) deal in January to remain with the team in 2018. Smith stepped down as captain of the IPL's Rajasthan Royals team on Monday. — Reuters



KUWAIT: (From left) Mzolisa Bona, South African Ambassador to Kuwait, coach Herschelle Gibbs and Sajid Ashraf, Director General of Kuwait Cricket Federation seen holding trophies. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat.



Sunrisers Hyderabad captain David Warner

How Lehmann ethos hurt Aussie cricket

SYDNEY: Coach Darren Lehmann appears to have survived the ball-tampering scandal that has rocked Australian cricket, even as the win-at-all-costs mentality he instilled in the team comes under fresh scrutiny.

Lehmann was hailed as a saviour when he took over in 2013, but critics now accuse him of overseeing a toxic culture that has dented the reputation of the famed Baggy Green cap. After being appointed, Lehmann's response when asked to list his top three priorities was telling:

"Probably win, win, win, for a start," he told reporters. Cricket Australia (CA) had other ideas when it gave him the job. "Discipline, consistency of behaviour and accountability for performance are all key ingredients that need to improve," chief executive James Sutherland said at the time. "And we see that the head coach is ultimately responsible for that." If part of Lehmann's brief was to improve the Australian team's behaviour, there is little doubt he has failed.

'OUT OF CONTROL'

Players were once considered role models for children, but the situation has become so bad that CA is setting up an independent review into the team's conduct and culture. Even Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has weighed in to criticise the practice of sledging-taunting opponents verbally with the aim of distracting them. "It has gotten right out of control. It should have no place," Turnbull told reporters this week, lamenting the demise of a sport once regarded as the epitome of fair play. CA insists Lehmann had no prior knowledge of the plot to doctor the ball in the third Test against the Proteas. But Australian Broadcasting Corporation senior cricket commentator Jim Maxwell said the coach had to accept some blame for an "arrogant" team culture where some players felt cheating was preferable to losing honourably. "He's done a very good job with the side but has a very narrow view of the way players should conduct themselves," Maxwell said. "Teams can no longer get away with being in the face of the opposition in the way they have in recent years."

BOOF AND THE BOYS

Lehmann became national coach in dramatic circumstances after Australia sacked the first foreigner to hold the post, Mickey Arthur, on the eve of the Ashes. A respected former batsman who played 27 Tests and 117 one-dayers for Australia, he was seen as an antidote to the disciplinarian Arthur.

Whereas his South African predecessor asked players to provide written self assessments, Lehmann was an insider who had come through the Australian ranks. A clue to his knockabout appeal lies in his nickname "Boof", short for boofhead-Australian slang for an amiable prankster, one of the boys in the dressing room.

"It's important to talk about the game whether it's with a beer or a Diet Coke," Lehmann said after taking the job. Australia lost Lehmann's first Ashes series in charge but later in 2013, after he had stamped his mark on the team, they crushed England 5-0 in ruthless fashion. While the plaudits rained down, there was also discomfort among some Australian fans at their team's conduct, particularly Lehmann's baiting of England paceman Stuart Broad. "I hope the Australian public give it to him (Broad) right from the word go for the whole summer and I hope he cries and goes home," he said in a taunting tone not heard before from an Australian coach. It was a dark side Lehmann also displayed as a player in 2003, when he yelled a racial insult in the dressing room after being dismissed in a one-day international against Sri Lanka. Under Lehmann, unsavoury antics have become common as players took the Steve Waugh-era goal of "mental disintegration" and turbo-charged it with vitriol.—AFP



ICAI organizes first cricket tournament

KUWAIT: The Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (Kuwait Chapter) organized its first cricket tournament exclusively for its members at Boulevard, Salmiya. Four teams Ledgerdary, Accountables, Auditaholics and Red Inks registered for the tournament.

The winners received the ICAI-Kuwait Chapter rolling trophy and medals. CA Mukhtar Sajjanlal presented the man of the match awards; CA Saibal Basu, CA Sai Devata, CA Noel Cherian and CA Kaizar Shakir presented the medals to the players of the vic-

torious team followed by the trophy being presented by CA Ramesh Khanna. The commentators for the tournament were two young Chartered Accountants - CA Trisha Dalmia and CA Ajai Kothari who kept the crowd engrossed in the proceedings with their witty commentary.

CA Noel Cherian, Vice Chairman of ICAI Kuwait Chapter proposed the vote of thanks. The ICAI-Kuwait Chapter is especially indebted to Al Tijaria Company for the excellent facilities provided at Boulevard and Kuwait Cricket for providing qualified umpires Umesh Rai and Francis Viegas and scorer Sudhir Kumar. This fun filled event was well appreciated by all the members. It was organized by the Youth committee of the ICAI Kuwait comprising of CA Shweta Chipra, CA Trisha Dalmia, CA Rabin Gonsalves, CA Aditya Danuka, CA Umesh Soni and CA Ajay Kothari. The Kuwait Chapter of ICAI has over 400 members and conducts continuing education and knowledge sharing programs for the benefit of its members.

Ban on trio means they miss mouth-watering series with India

CAPE TOWN: The lengthy bans meted out to Australia's Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft yesterday rule them out of an end-of-year series against top-ranked India that could rival the intensity of their scandal-ridden tour to South Africa.

Smith and Warner will not be available for Australia until April next year, while Bancroft's nine-month ban will last until early 2019. The next 12 months will continue a busy list of commitments for Australia, according to the International Cricket Council's (ICC) future tours programme, not least a mouth-watering match-up with India, including the traditional Boxing Day test in Melbourne and equally well-attended New Year's affair in Sydney.

The match-up of Smith's captaincy and batting acumen against that of Indian skipper Virat Kohli is now lost in the wake of the punishment for the ball-tampering scandal in South Africa.

It should have some diminishing effect on a series that will still be vital to India's status as the top ranked test-playing nation and the growing belief this generation is the best test side the country has yet produced. But Indian touring teams have traditionally struggled Down Under and any claims India have to being the best would be severely tested on the Australian wickets.

Over the next 12 months, Australia have 12 test matches, 29 One Day Internationals and seven Twenty20 internationals scheduled. The bans, announced by Cricket Australia in the wake of the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town at the weekend, are due to end before next year's World Cup in England and Wales, which starts on May 30, followed by the Ashes series in England.

Australia are next due to travel to England for five ODIs and a single T20 game in June. Warner had captained Australia's T20 team.

The ICC then has Australia down for a test and three ODIs in Zimbabwe but this is not likely to happen given the precarious financial state of the game in Zimbabwe, Reuters has learnt. Australia then host Bangladesh in two tests and three ODIs in August before playing away against Pakistan in a five match ODI series and then hosting South Africa in a similar limited overs series in November.—Reuters

Sports

Heat scorch Cavs as NBA leading Rockets romp, Warriors lose

DeRozan records 15 points to help Toronto edge visiting Denver

LOS ANGELES: The Miami Heat led from the outset and routed the visiting Cavaliers 98-79 on Tuesday, holding Cleveland to its lowest point total of the season. Miami's Kelly Olynyk scored a game-high 19 points and grabbed five rebounds in 25 minutes off the bench. James Johnson and Josh Richardson each had 15 points for the Heat. Dwyane Wade had 12 points, four assists and four blocks in just 17 minutes while Goran Dragic added 10 points. LeBron James scored 18 points with six rebounds and seven assists—but six turnovers—for Cleveland, and Rodney Hood had 15 points off the bench. Jordan Clarkson and Jose Calderon each scored 11. Cleveland center Kevin Love took an elbow to the face from Miami center Jordan Mickey while trying to draw a charging foul just 1:22 into the first quarter. Love left the game and had a front tooth visibly loose after the collision. He came back to play briefly and scored just one point in seven first-half minutes before sitting out the second half.



Barnes scores 20 points to lead visiting Dallas over Sacramento

TRAIL BLAZERS 107, PELICANS 103
Damian Lillard scored 28 of his 41 points in the second half as visiting Portland defeated New Orleans. Jusuf Nurkic added 21 points and 10 rebounds, Evan Turner scored 14 and Al-Farouq Aminu had 10 points and 10 rebounds for the Blazers. Jrue Holiday had a triple-double for New Orleans, finishing with 21 points, 11 rebounds and 11 assists. Anthony Davis had team highs with 36 points and 14 rebounds.

ROCKETS 118, BULLS 86
Eric Gordon scored 31 points and his backcourt mate Chris Paul added a double-double as host Houston rolled past Chicago. Playing without James Harden and Clint Capela, both of whom got the night off to rest, the Rockets nonetheless found little resistance en route to their 10th consecutive victory. The

Rockets have their third double-digit winning streak on the season, and Houston has won 27 of its past 28 games. Houston extended its home-court winning streak to 18 consecutive games, the second-longest streak in team history. The Bulls, who got 22 points from Lauri Markkanen, lost their sixth in a row.

RAPTORS 114, NUGGETS 110
DeMar DeRozan recorded 15 points and eight assists, and Jonas Valanciunas and Fred VanVleet also scored 15 points apiece to help Toronto edge visiting Denver. Serge Ibaka added 13 points while Jakob Poeltl and Pascal Siakam scored 12 apiece for the Raptors. Kyle Lowry had 11 points and eight assists for Toronto. The Raptors blocked 16 shots—including four apiece by Ibaka, Lowry and Valanciunas and three by Lucas Nogueira. Nikola Jokic had 29 points, 16 rebounds and eight assists for the Nuggets, who lost their second straight game. Paul Millsap added 20 points.

WIZARDS 116, SPURS 106
Markieff Morris scored 15 points on 7-for-7 shooting from the floor to lead six teammates in double-figure scoring as Washington rolled to an easy win over visiting San Antonio. Otto Porter Jr. added 14 points for the Wizards, who snapped a three-game losing streak. Jodie Meeks scored 13 points, Marcin Gortat, Kelly Oubre Jr. and Ramon Sessions hit for 12 each, and Mike Scott tallied 11 for Washington. Spurs forward LaMarcus Aldridge, who scored a team-high 13 points, exited for good in the second quarter due to a left knee contusion.

MAVERICKS 103, KINGS 97
Harrison Barnes scored 20 points and Dennis Smith Jr. added 19 to lead visiting Dallas over Sacramento. Skal Labissiere had 19 points to lead the Kings, who have lost three of four. Dallas snapped a five-game



MIAMI: LeBron James #23 of the Cleveland Cavaliers handles the ball against the Miami Heat on Tuesday at American Airlines Arena in Miami, Florida. — AFP

losing streak by holding Sacramento to 40.9 percent shooting from the floor, including 26.1 percent from 3-point range. Doug McDermott had 15 points off the bench for the Mavericks.

PACERS 92, WARRIORS 81
Indiana tightened the defensive screws on Golden State in the second half, limiting the defending NBA champions to 33 points in the final 24 minutes en route to a victory in Oakland, Calif. The Warriors fell for the second straight game with Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson, Kevin Durant and Draymond Green out of action. Victor Oladipo had a game-high 24 points for the Pacers. Nick Young led the Warriors with 12 points.

CLIPPERS 105, BUCKS 98
A 13-0, fourth-quarter run enabled Los Angeles to rally for a win over visiting Milwaukee. Down 88-83 after Milwaukee's Tyler Zeller canned two free throws with 8:17 left, the Clippers rallied behind Austin Rivers. The son of coach Doc Rivers accounted for the first 10 points in the run, scoring seven and assisting on Tobias Harris' tiebreaking 3-pointer with 5:32 left. Harris paced the Clippers with 19 points. Lou Williams came off the bench to score 16, while DeAndre Jordan added 12 points and 16 rebounds. Giannis Antetokounmpo scored a game-high 26 points for the Bucks, adding nine rebounds, seven assists and five blocked shots. — Reuters



KEY BISCAZYNE: Alexander Zverev of Germany plays a forehand against Nick Kyrgios of Australia in their fourth round match during the Miami Open on Tuesday. — AFP

Zverev battles past Kyrgios after Isner shocks Cilic

KEY BISCAZYNE: Alexander Zverev capitalised on a fast start against Australian Nick Kyrgios to grind out a 6-4 6-4 victory in a battle between two of the sport's brightest prospects to advance to the quarter-finals of the Miami Open on Tuesday.

The 20-year-old German is looking to win the third Masters event of his career and advanced to a last-eight showdown against Croatia's Borna Coric, who ended the run of Canadian prospect Denis Shapovalov 7-6(2) 4-6 6-4 in a tight encounter. The fourth-seeded Zverev had battled through a pair of three-set wins in his opening two rounds but was keen to make short work of Kyrgios when he broke serve in the first game and stormed to a 5-1 advantage.

The 22-year-old Kyrgios battled back to win three straight games to make it 5-4 but Zverev held his nerve and serve to close out the opener in 34 minutes. Kyrgios, who had reached the Miami semi-finals in the previous two years, saw his hopes of at least matching that feat evaporate in the second set after his opponent secured the only break in the fifth game and rode it out for a well-earned win.

Earlier, big-serving American John Isner overcame second-seeded Croatian Marin Cilic 7-6(0) 6-3 to advance to the quarter-finals, where he will face South Korean Chung Hyeon, who dominated Joao Sousa in a routine 6-4 6-3 win.

In a battle of power against power, it

was Isner's booming serve that made the difference as the towering 32-year-old fired 12 aces while never giving Cilic a look at a break point on a hot, windy day. "I was very happy with how I played, especially with how I served," Isner told reporters. "That's certainly the best I've served all year."

DEL POTRO TRIUMPHANT
Isner took firm control of the match in the first set tiebreaker, where he stepped up his return game to shut out the world number three before finally breaking Cilic's powerful serve in the second set and cruising to the win.

Chung needed a little more than an hour to see off the Portuguese Sousa, who could not find an answer to the 19th-seeded South Korean's relentless all-court game. With the win, Chung advances to his second consecutive quarter-final after also making the last eight in Indian Wells, where the 21-year-old lost to Swiss Roger Federer. Also advancing was Juan Martin del Potro of Argentina, who defeated Filip Krajinovic 6-4 6-2 for his 14th consecutive victory as the fifth seed looks to back up his Indian Wells title triumph with another tournament win. "I will try to keep going and see how far I can go," said Del Potro, who next meets big-serving Milos Raonic after the Canadian cruised to a 6-3 6-4 victory against an overpowered Jeremy Chardy of France.

Del Potro beat Raonic in last week's semi-finals in California before edging out Federer in the title match. "It'll be a difficult match," Raonic admitted. "He's been the best player in the world for the past four, five weeks."

Elsewhere, Spaniard Pablo Carreno Busta crushed compatriot Fernando Verdasco 6-0 6-3 to reach the second Masters 1000 quarter-final of his career. He will face South Africa's Kevin Anderson, who used his big serve to full effect in a 7-6(3) 6-4 win over 20-year-old American Frances Tiafoe. — Reuters

Stephens cracks world top 10 with semi-final run

KEY BISCAZYNE: American Sloane Stephens had cause for a double celebration Tuesday after beating Germany's Angelique Kerber 6-1, 6-2 to set up a Miami Open semi-final clash with former world number one Victoria Azarenka.

The US 13th seed's comprehensive triumph in tricky wind conditions over the former world number one ensured Stephens reached the last four at Key Biscayne for the first time. It also means the reigning US Open champion will finally be named in the world's top 10 when the WTA release their rankings next week. She will meet two-time Australian Open champion Azarenka for a place in Saturday's final after the Belarusian beat fifth-seeded Karolina Pliskova 7-5, 6-3. "I am so tired of hearing that I am number 11 in the world," said a smiling Stephens. "It's very exciting to get there, something I have wanted to do for a while. Getting into the top 10 is pretty special and something I have worked on for a long time."

Azarenka, meanwhile, is enjoying her best tournament run since the birth of her first child last December and faces Stephens just three weeks after the pair met in Indian Wells, a match won by the American 6-1, 7-5. In an error strewn clash with world number six Pliskova, Azarenka, who was given a wildcard into the tournament thanks to a ranking of 186, was broken when serving for the first set only to break back straight away and take control.

The pattern continued at the start of the sec-

Kim puts old putter back in bag for ANA event

CALIFORNIA: Kim In-kyung will put her old putter back in the bag for this week's ANA Inspiration tournament after being reunited with the stolen club last week. The putter was one of several clubs Kim got back more than a month after her entire set went missing following a flight. Kim used a complete set of new clubs at last week's Kia Classic, but has decided to go with the old putter for the first major of the year, at Mission Hills in Rancho Mirage, California starting today. "I have just spoken to a policeman. He told me they found out who did it," the 29-year-old told Reuters in a telephone interview on Tuesday.

The clubs disappeared from the baggage claim area at San Diego Airport after an American Airlines flight in January, Kim said. They were found at a local second-hand sports store by some golf fans who saw Kim talking about her predicament in a television interview. "It's been distracting for a while," Kim said,

and, yet the 28-year-old held her nerve to reach the last four of a tournament she won in 2009, 2011 and 2016 and complete a return to the top 100 when the WTA rankings are updated this Monday. "It wasn't easy with the conditions but I had to fight it out and adjust my game a bit," Azarenka said on court afterwards. "I am so happy to be back playing and at this stage of my career I just want to progress."

"I need to play better than the last time I played Sloane. I will need to cut out the errors and play my best tennis." Stephens' previous best here came with a quarter-final run in 2015, so the emotions on display at the end of what was an ultimately straightforward win over the world number 10 were understandable. Since her debut Grand Slam triumph at the US Open last September, the 25-year-old has struggled to follow on. Stephens arrived at Key Biscayne having not beaten a top-50 player since the run at Flushing Meadows. But this week has seen the American, who was raised in South Florida, get back to her roots—and to winning ways.

Reigning Wimbledon champion Garbine Muguruza was emphatically dispatched in straight sets Monday before Kerber received similar treatment. Wind hampered both players, but it was Stephens who adapted far better—the power of her groundstrokes and superior movement leaving Kerber frustrated and unable to find a way into the encounter. "The wind is uncomfortable for both of us. But it can help push you outside of your comfort zone. You just have to embrace it," Stephens said. Stephens took just 23 minutes to wrap up the first set as Kerber looked sluggish from the start.

'STICK WITH IT'
Kerber was deep in conversation with coach Wim Fissette during the break, being urged to assert herself. Kerber saved four break points in the fifth game but Stephens was did not allow her opponent into the match and a 22nd winner

sealed the triumph. "You have to execute your game well and make sure you stick with it," Stephens said. "It's easy to start doing other things so I just need to keep to my plan and make sure I didn't venture off."

Kerber admitted coming through a grueling three-set win over qualifier Wang Yafan the day before had left her flat. "I was really feeling a little bit tired today," Kerber said. "It was windy, it was tricky, but I've played so many matches in the last three months that I was feeling it a little bit in my body." — AFP

Kim now to focus on golf again as she seeks to add to her two-stroke victory at last year's Women's British Open. "I feel better with my clubs. I'm getting used to them and I'm just happy I was able to play well last week," she said, referring to her tie for fourth at the Kia Classic on Sunday. The personable Kim, known in the English-speaking world by her initials, I.K., is perhaps still best known for a tiny putt she missed at Mission Hills six years ago. The putt, from barely a foot, 18 inches at most, caught the right edge of the hole and spun out and a shocked Kim subsequently lost a playoff to compatriot Yoo Sun-young. Much like Scott Hoch, famous for the two-footer he missed that would have won the 1989 Masters, and Doug Sanders, who missed a three-footer for victory at the 1970 British Open, Kim had to learn to live with the constant reminders of her mistake.

"People will always remind me but I'm okay with it," Kim said of the missed putt. "You have to accept everything. Sometimes you have to let it go. It certainly wasn't easy for me. Nobody really cares at end of the day if I missed it or not missed it but it mattered to me. "I learned not to take it personally. I'm proud of myself. It's not the worst thing can happen in life." The British Open victory at least directed the arc of her career narrative in a more positive direction. "I



KEY BISCAZYNE: Sloane Stephens of the United States plays a backhand volley against Angelique Kerber of Germany in their fourth round match. — AFP

stopped really caring about what other people think, because I wanted to keep playing golf," she said. "I love what I do." — Reuters

Kim In-kyung



Kim In-kyung

stopped really caring about what other people think, because I wanted to keep playing golf," she said. "I love what I do." — Reuters

Sports

Isco nets hat-trick as favourites Spain hit Argentina for six

Argentina were without injured Lionel Messi

MADRID: Spain blew Argentina away on Tuesday but coach Julen Lopetegui insists they can take nothing for granted at this summer's World Cup. A 6-1 demolition, which included an Isco hat-trick at the Wanda Metropolitano, underlined Spain's credentials as one of the tournament favourites in Russia, while exposing Argentina, who were without the injured Lionel Messi.

Diego Costa was back in Spain's starting line-up for the first time in eight international matches and he marked his return with the opening goal. Isco then scored twice either side of what proved to be no more than a consolation from Argentina's Nicolas Otamendi, before Thiago Alcantara, substitute Iago Aspas and Isco's third completed the rout. "I am very satisfied with a win against the finalists of the previous World Cup," Lopetegui said. "It is an opponent that has a fantastic history, but nothing else, it does not change anything, we have to start the World Cup with zero points (in the group stage)."

As irresistible as Spain were going forward, Argentina were lamentable at the back and coach Jorge Sampaoli will have questions to answer with the World Cup less than three months away. "I have to take responsibility," Sampaoli said.

He might cling to the hope of Messi, whose hamstring strain meant he was not even in the squad, instead left to watch on from the stands. "Leo trained with us, he had a very good week of workouts but still had some discomfort in his leg," Sampaoli said.

Sergio Agüero and Angel Di Maria were also out injured but Argentina's problem was less creating chances than containing Spain's as Costa, Isco and Marco Asensio simply proved too quick to catch. Asensio is likely still to give way to David Silva but Costa showed he is ready to be Spain's main striker,

this game completing his reintegration after an autumn disrupted by his Chelsea departure.

HARROWING NIGHT FOR ARGENTINA

It was a harrowing night for Argentina but perhaps not a good one either for Alvaro Morata. Costa's goal, coming before Aspas entered as a substitute to score one and set up two more, meant the Chelsea forward was hardly missed. "We decided to put Diego in, we

thought it was what we needed," Lopetegui said. "In the second half, Diego had a problem and we wanted to see Iago. They will both be full of confidence, along with all the players that come with us." The victory also means Spain have now scored in all their 18 games under Lopetegui, a new record for a Spanish coach. Without Messi, Gonzalo

I have to take responsibility, says Sampaoli

Higuain was the visitors' principle threat up front, with Ever Banega, Maximiliano Meza and Giovani Lo Celso given the chance to impress behind him in a 4-2-3-1 formation.

For Spain, Lopetegui adopted a 4-3-3, with Isco and Asensio either side of Costa, and Thiago, Andres Iniesta and Koke again forming an attacking midfield trio. In a week where the Catalan crisis continued to dominate the Spanish headlines, Barcelona's Gerard Pique was whistled by the home fans whenever he received possession.

There were applause too from some sections of the crowd and the jeers were temporarily drowned out by cheers when a thundering Pique tackle prevented a threatening Argentina break. For the first goal, Costa put his body where others might not, bundling the ball in between the leaping Fabricio Bustos and goalkeeper Sergio Romero, the latter forced off as a result and replaced by Willy Caballero. Caballero was then at fault for Spain's second, as his poor clearance landed



MADRID: Spain's defender Sergio Ramos and Spain's defender Dani Carvajal (R) challenge Argentina's midfielder Maximiliano Meza (C) during a friendly football match between Spain and Argentina at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium in Madrid on Tuesday. — AFP

at the feet of Thiago. Three passes later, the last from Asensio, allowed Isco to sidefoot home.

Argentina pulled one back before half-time when Otamendi headed in Banega's cross but their defence would only keep them competitive for so long. With

Costa substituted, Aspas made an instant impact, setting up Isco and then Thiago, before scoring himself after De Gea's long pass. Isco guided into the corner for his hat-trick in the 74th minute. Argentina looked relieved when the final whistle blew. —AFP

Gulf Bank in finals of Kuwait Banking football league

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank advanced to the Kuwait Banks Club football league finals after beating KFH 2-0. The final match between the Gulf Bank and Boubyan Bank will be held tomorrow on Friday 30 March at the Sabah Al-Salem Stadium in Al-Arabi Club at 7 pm under the patronage of Majed Al Ajeel, the President of the Kuwait Banking Association, and Gulf Bank CEO Antoine Daher as well as Adel Al Majed, the CEO of Boubyan Bank. The game will also be shown live on KTV 3.

Gulf Bank advanced to the finals for the second consecutive year, having won the trophy in the 2016/17 season.

Gulf Bank is committed to supporting its soccer team to achieve its goals and encourages its employees to take part in sports related activities to cultivate team spirit and to lead active and healthy lives.



Brazil on form but history shows restraint may be wise

SAO PAULO: Brazil's 1-0 win over world champions Germany gave the South Americans a modicum of revenge for their 7-1 semi-final humiliation four years ago but the confidence boost comes with a caveat for the five-times World Cup winners.

Coach Tite was delighted with the way his players overcame the Germans in Berlin, particularly in the second half, when the under-strength home side fought hard for an equaliser. The performance ended Germany's 22-game unbeaten run and bolstered Tite's record of just one loss in 19 games.

Both coach and players played up the psychological aspect of the win and insisted beating the Germans at home helped Brazil regain their rightful place in a world elite that many felt was questioned after the disastrous end to their home World Cup in 2014 and poor performances at consecutive Copas America.

"There's a little bit of a feeling we've regained some self-esteem," Tite said. "There's a component of pride." Thiago Silva echoed that sentiment immediately after the game, insisting the most successful World Cup nation be taken more seriously. "This shirt demands more respect," the PSG defender said. Students of history, however, may cringe at the overt shows of confidence less than three months before Brazil take on Switzerland, Costa Rica and Serbia in Group E. Historically, Brazil tend to do better at the World Cup when they go there as underdogs. In 1970, 1994 and 2002 the Selecao was slated at home by fans and press and yet they rose to the occasion, most memorably in 1970 when a Pele-led side wowed the world with one of the most memorable teams ever to play the game. Conversely, the much-favoured teams of 1982 - with Zico, Socrates, Falcao and Junior - and 2006 - featuring Ronaldo, Kaka, Adriano and Ronaldinho - crashed out early. Tite is nothing if not shrewd and he will focus on maintaining a balance between encouraging his side and keeping their feet on the ground.—Reuters

Asian Cup berth 'catalyst' to grow Filipino football

MANILA: The Philippines football team's captain said yesterday he hoped their historic first-ever qualification for the Asian Cup could be a catalyst for growth of the sport in the basketball-mad nation.

Nicknamed the Azkals—slang for mongrel dogs—the Philippines qualified for the Asian Cup with a 2-1 come-from-behind win over Tajikistan in Manila in an emotional game on Tuesday night. "When there's success in any sport people would talk about it and the most we can do is bring football as much success," Azkals captain Phil Younghusband, a former Chelsea youth player, told AFP.

"Hopefully this will be the catalyst for the growth of Philippine football," he added. "Maybe the lack of success in the last eight years has slowed down the growth." The Philippines had been a bit-player on the Asian stage but turned heads by reaching the 2010 AFF Suzuki Cup semi-finals. The victory sparked interest in football in the Philippines, a nation that treats basketball almost as a religion.

Tuesday's game began with a goalless opening half but Kevin Ingreso later headed home to level for the Azkals who then made sure of their place in next year's tournament with a last-minute penalty that was converted by Younghusband. It happened to be the 50th international goal of Younghusband. "It was so emotional because of the way the game went. It's the happiest football moment so far in my professional career," he said. "All I was thinking about is we qualified for the Asian Cup. Anything else is a bonus."

Younghusband, who has been playing in Philippines football for 13 years, described the Azkals' journey to being among the top 24 teams in Asia as a "rollercoaster ride". He said the victory would prompt more interest in football in the Southeast



MANILA: Phil Younghusband (R) of the Philippines celebrating after scoring the winning goal against Tajikistan. — AFP

Asian nation ahead of the World Cup in Russia in June. "Football will again be on people's minds and attract new fans, bring back old fans and with the World Cup coming up, this is the perfect timing," he said. Younghusband urged for fan support, adding the Azkals will be going up against teams in the Asian Cup where football is the main sport. "I grew up in England where football is a big sport but rugby, cricket are also popular. It can be the same in the Philippines. It just needs good organisation and a lot of support." —AFP

Salah-less Egypt lose to Greece in World Cup warm-up

JOHANNESBURG: Liverpool goal machine Mohamed Salah sat on the bench as Egypt barely created a chance when losing 1-0 to Greece Tuesday on a mixed night for African World Cup hopefuls. Tunisia and Morocco won for the second time during the FIFA international window, but Senegal drew again and Nigeria lost after winning last weekend. Reigning African Footballer of the Year Salah has scored 36 goals in 41 appearance for Liverpool this season — 11 less than the record held by Ian Rush.

But Egypt coach Hector Cuper deemed the striker surplus to requirements in Swiss city Zurich and his decision backfired as the Pharaohs were outplayed. The lone goal came after 29 minutes when Nikos Karelis soared unmarked to nod a cross into the net.

Greece dominated the second half against the seven-time African champions, who are back at the World Cup after a 28-year absence. Salah scored last Friday against Portugal before Egypt conceded two stoppage-time goals to Cristiano Ronaldo and lost 2-1 against the European champions.

Tunisia, returning to the global showpiece after missing the last two tournaments, edged fellow qualifiers Costa Rica 1-0 in French city Nice. Wahbi Khazri, on loan to Ligue 1 outfit Rennes from English second-tier strugglers Sunderland, scored the winner nine minutes before half-time. It was the second solitary goal victory within five days for the Carthage Eagles after an own-goal brought success over Iran, another Russia-bound nation. Ayoub el Kaabi, the nine-goal star of the recent African Nations Championship for home-based footballers, opened the scoring as Morocco overcame Uzbekistan 2-0 in Casablanca.

Victory for the Atlas Lions followed a win over Serbia in Turin and maintained impressive recent form under French coach Herve Renard. After surprisingly winning in Poland, Nigeria disappointed when falling 2-0 to Serbia in London, where Aleksandar Mitrovic bagged a brace. "We are a work in progress," admitted Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr after a match controlled by the Serbs, who will not be going to the World Cup. Senegal drew 0-0 with Bosnia and Herzegovina in French city Le Havre having also drawn with Uzbekistan in another World Cup warm-up. In a match not involving World Cup qualifiers, Tanzania mocked the FIFA world rankings by beating the Democratic Republic of Congo 2-0 in Dar es Salaam. Mbwana Samatta and Shiza Kichuya scored for the Taifa Stars, who are 107 places below the Leopards. —AFP

13 Kuwait cricket team ready for ICC World Cup T20 qualifiers



14 Heat scorch Cavs as NBA leading Rockets romp, Warriors lose



15 Isco nets hat-trick as favourites Spain hit Argentina for six



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and other state officials view a model of the Kuwait Motor City — Amiri Diwan photos

Amir opens Kuwait Motor City

Project aimed at developing motorsports in the country

KUWAIT: Under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the ceremony for the opening of Kuwait Motor City was held in Arifjan yesterday.

Upon arrival, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah and Amiri Diwan Administrative and Financial Chief Abdulaziz Eshaq received His Highness the Amir.

The ceremony was attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy National Assembly Speaker Ouda Al-Ruwaia and senior state officials. The ceremony included a documentary on the motor city and a show executed by different types of vehicles and motorbikes.

His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince received presents during the ceremony. Speaking at the event, minister Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah congratulated the country's leadership and people on the opening of the Kuwait Motor City, a project aimed at developing motorsports in the country as well as providing gear enthusiasts with an outlet to practice their passion and hobby.

Kuwait Motor City is a dream that came true due to the care and support by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah who indicated that the country's youth could uti-

lize their energy in a positive way. The Amiri Diwan had the pleasure to execute this unique project that meets regional and international standards for motorsports, said Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah. The minister hoped that the venue would be organizing regional and international motorsport events, affirming that the facility is up to the task. Local motorsport athletes will highly benefit from Kuwait Motor City where they can test and develop their skills, said Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah.

The Amiri Diwan official thanked all those who took part in the construction of the Motor City, saying that their efforts will stand as a testament to the robust Kuwaiti spirit.

Amiri Diwan Administrative and Financial Chief Abdulaziz Eshaq said that the Motor City was constructed in 14 months on an area of 2.6 million square meters. Kuwait Motor City was the vision of the Amiri Diwan, which was brought to reality by German engineer and circuit designer Hermann Tilke, said Eshaq, adding that the project encompassed seven circuits and tracks catering to the needs of various motorsport disciplines.

The main track — at a length of 5,610 — will host the chief racing events, which will be held in the Motor City, said Eshaq who indicated that the venue has side-tracks for drag race events.

He went on to say that, there was a 1,750-meter track which could host international Kart racing events,



A model of the new Kuwait Motor City in Arifjan.

adding that Motocross, rally, and dune racing tracks were also part of the Motor City.

The Motor City could receive around 8,000 specta-

tors and houses VIP halls in addition to 32 vehicle repair shops and a parking lot for around 3,300 automobiles. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a memento during the ceremony.



Fireworks' show held during the ceremony.



Smith, Warner banned for 12 months

JOHANNESBURG: Sacked Australia captain Steve Smith and David Warner have both been banned for 12 months for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town, Cricket Australia (CA) announced yesterday, after uncovering a web of lies told by the players after they were caught.

Opening batsman Cameron Bancroft was banned for nine months following the scandal, which has outraged the fans, jolted the sponsors and prompted CA to send the players home from South Africa. The trio will be allowed to compete in

club cricket, but cannot take part in state or international games for the duration of their bans. "David Warner will not be considered for team leadership positions in the future," CA said in the statement, having fingered him in developing the plot. Smith and Bancroft will have to wait two years before they are considered for leadership roles, and even then it will "be conditional on acceptance by fans and the public", according to CA.

Each player must also complete 100 hours of community service before being considered for future selection, while it was confirmed that the cheat had been confined to the trio only, exonerating team mates and coach Darren Lehmann of any wrong-doing.

"This is a terrible situation. There are three guys going home that have been offered sanctions that are life-changing," Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland told reporters yesterday. — Reuters

Business

THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2018

18 VIVA holds its AGM for 2017, reports net profit of KD 40m**19** KGL Logistics reports KD 5.9m in net profit and KD 39m revenues for 2017**20** Zain Group aims to be a trendsetter in digital revolution, says Al-Kharafi

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank management addresses the Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meeting at the KIPCO Tower.

Burgan Bank holds AGM, Shafafiyah Forum

Bank to pay a cash dividend of 7% and 5% in bonus shares

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank held its Ordinary and Extraordinary General Assembly meeting and Al-Shafafiya Investors forum yesterday at the KIPCO Tower, wherein the Board of Directors presented the bank's financial earnings report for the year ended December 31, 2017 and agreed to pay a cash dividend of 7 percent and 5 percent in bonus shares.

The bank closed the financial year 2017 confirming a strong financial and operational position locally and regionally. Burgan Bank's solid performance is a direct result of the resilient business model and focused execution.

Shafafiya forum

Following the Annual General Assembly Meetings, Burgan Bank held its annual Shafafiya forum which serves as a platform for the bank's management to present the main events for 2017 to shareholders.

During Shafafiya, The Group Chief Executive Officer, highlighted to the shareholders and analyzed the set of results for the period ending in 31st December 2017

which reflected Burgan Bank's continuous focus on maximizing returns for shareholders, delivering high quality earnings, improving operating efficiencies, and to further improve asset quality and risk profile. Reported net income for the year 2017 reached KD 65.2 million (\$214.9 million). Earnings per share reached 25.4 fils.

On underlying bases, Burgan Bank net income (excluding precautionary provisions and after AT1 cost) reached KD 76.2 million (\$251.4 million) and return on tangible equity (ROTE) reached 12.5 percent for full year 2017.

In 2017, Operating income grew by 2 percent year-on-year to reach KD 239.4 million (\$789.8 million). Operating efficiency continued to improve with operating expense declining by 4 percent to reach KD 109.2 million (\$360.2 million). The high quality earnings clubbed with across the board efficiencies, enabled the bank to grow its operating profit by 8 percent year-on-year to reach KD 130.2 million (\$429.5 million). Asset quality registered significant improvement with Non-performing loans (NPL)



Majed Essa Al-Ajeel



Eduardo Eguren

ratio declined to reach 2.7 percent with Coverage ratio of 155 percent and a lower cost of credit that reached 0.9 percent.

All the group's subsidiaries in Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Iraq and Tunis are growing, profitable and well capitalized. International Operations are contributing 45 percent of the Group's operating income.

The Shafafiya Forum is an annual event that is held amongst Kuwait Projects Company's (KIPCO) subsidiaries, and reflects a strong corporate governance and



investor relations practices, which promotes corporate fairness, transparency and accountability. The forum provides an ideal platform to discuss financial reports and outlook as well as market predictions openly with shareholders.

SoftBank Vision Fund, Saudi to create world's biggest solar firm

NEW YORK: SoftBank Group Corp's Vision Fund will invest in creating the world's biggest solar power project in Saudi Arabia, it said on Tuesday, stepping up its involvement in the kingdom and expanding beyond technology.

The project is expected to have the capacity to produce up to 200 gigawatts (GW) by 2030, SoftBank Chief Executive Masayoshi Son told reporters in New York. That would add to around 400 GW of globally installed solar power capacity and is comparable to the world's total nuclear power capacity of around 390 GW as of the end of 2016.

By investing in solar power, Saudi Arabia, the world's biggest oil exporter, can reduce the amount of crude it currently uses to generate power and increase its overseas shipments. The move illustrates the commitment by the de facto Saudi ruler, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to transform the country's economic status quo.

The final investment total for the 200 GW of generation, including the solar pan-

els, battery storage and a manufacturing facility for panels in Saudi Arabia, will eventually total around \$200 billion, Son said.

The initial phase of the project, for 7.2 GW of solar capacity, will cost \$5 billion, with \$1 billion coming from SoftBank's Vision Fund and the rest from project financing, he said.

Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 reform plan, which aims to reduce the country's economic dependence on oil, was a good match for the fund's long-term vision for innovation, said Son.

"These two visions have come together to create clean, sustainable, low-cost and productive renewable energy," he said. "The Kingdom has great sunshine, great size of available land, and great engineers..."

Despite being one of the world's sunniest countries, Saudi Arabia generates most of its electricity from oil-fired power plants.

Saudi's entire installed power capacity is currently around 60 GW. Adding 200 GW would create enormous excess capacity that could be exported to neighbors or used by industry, although the kingdom will still require other forms of power generation for night-time back-up.

Industry estimates say around 300,000 to 800,000 barrels per day of crude oil are burnt for Saudi power generation. Exporting that oil could increase Saudi's annual oil revenues by between \$7 billion and \$20 billion, at the current price for benchmark Brent oil of almost \$70 per barrel.

Post-fossil fuel

"Saudi Arabia is clearly preparing for a post-fossil fuel dependent economy in terms of domestic energy consumption, and this huge bet on renewables would free up a lot of domestic output of oil for exports, while probably saving domestic gas resources as well," said Peter Kiernan, lead energy analyst at the Economist Intelligence Unit in Singapore.

"Up until now, progress in building solar capacity in the kingdom has been very slow, but this deal might give it the kick start it needs. But 200 GW by 2030 though, that's another question," Kiernan said. Last May, Softbank said it raised over \$93 billion for the Vision Fund, the world's largest private equity fund with backers including Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund, Apple Inc and Foxconn, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry.

The Vision Fund has funnelled \$27.5 billion into 20 tech firms as of the end of December, transforming SoftBank from a Japanese telecoms upstart into one of the world's biggest technology investors.

The Saudi investment is Softbank's second major global solar project. The company has said it will invest up to \$20 billion along with Foxconn and Bharti Enterprises in solar projects in India, which has an ambitious target to generate 100 GW of power from solar by 2022. SoftBank estimated the electrification drive could create a requirement for over 150 GW of additional power. — Reuters

OPEC seeks 'very long-term' cooperation with other oil exporters

BAGHDAD: OPEC is seeking "very long-term" cooperation with other crude exporters, the secretary general of the oil exporting group said yesterday.

Mohammad Barkindo was commenting on news that top OPEC producer Saudi Arabia and non-OPEC Russia were working on a long-term pact that could extend controls over world crude supplies by major exporters for up to 20 years. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced the plan in an interview with Reuters on Monday.

Russia, the world's biggest oil producer, has worked with the 14-member Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in previous oil gluts to rein in supplies and push up prices, but a 10 to 20-year deal between the two would be unprecedented. "We are looking for a very long-term cooperation between OPEC and non-OPEC producing countries," Barkindo told an energy conference in Baghdad. OPEC states, Russia and several other non-OPEC producers agreed to cut supplies from January 2017 to lift oil prices that plunged from above \$110 a barrel in 2014 to below \$30 in 2016.

A deal to extend the pact, which has boosted prices to around \$70 now, was agreed in November. The output cuts are now due to run until the end of 2018. "In addition to the 24 countries that came to sign the declaration of cooperation in November, we have six more producing countries who came to show solidarity," he said. Several oil exporters have suggested a six-month extension to the supply pact, Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luaibi told the conference, without identifying the countries. Regarding Iraq's own resources, the minister said OPEC's second-largest producer might have oil reserves twice as big as indicated by current estimates of about 150 billion barrels. — Reuters

Business

VIVA holds its AGM for 2017, reports net profit of KD 40m

Total revenues for 2017 reached KD 278 million

KUWAIT: VIVA held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Regency Hotel yesterday and the attendance represented 78.173 percent from the total shareholders.

The AGM approved the board of directors' report, the auditors' report and the sharia committee's report for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2017. In addition, the AGM approved financial statements and board of directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 30 fils among the shareholders representing 30 percent of the capital for the fiscal year ended 31 December 2017 for the shareholders registered in the company's records on the date of the AGM.

The AGM approved the corporate governance report and the report of the Audit Committee provided by the board of directors, the report of remuneration and benefits for the board of directors and executive management for the year ending on 31 December 2017.

The following members of the Board were nominated and elected by acclamation for three years:

- Saudi Telecom Company (STC) (Non - independent Member)
- Gulf STC Holding (Non - independent Member)
- Gulf STC Holding 1 (Non - independent Member)
- Gulf STC Holding 3 (Non - independent Member)
- Kuwait Investment Authority
- Public Institution for Public Security (Non - independent Member)
- Salah Ahmad Meshari Al-Fouzani - (Independent Member)

The Chairman of VIVA, Dr Mahmoud Ahmed Abdurahman, commented that "Despite the high competition witnessed in the Kuwaiti Telecom Market, VIVA was able to achieve a growth in the profitability and sustain the operational efficiency to ensure generating positive return to our shareholders. VIVA achieved these results due to an

integrated management approach by a highly professional team that reinforces VIVA's substantial and positive role as a leading telecommunications company that always provides intelligent communications solutions to satisfy the needs of its customers and meet their needs."

He added that "VIVA has demonstrated its ability to achieve a growth in the net profit amidst the current hard economic conditions and strong competition witnessed in the year 2017 which resulted from the decline in telecom tariffs thus pressurizing the profit margin of all telecom companies in Kuwait. VIVA managed to achieve net profit of KD 40.1 million (earnings per share of 80

fils) during the FY 2017 growing at 1 percent compared to net profit of KD 39.8 million (earnings per share of 80 fils) during FY 2016.

On his part, Eng. Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Badran, VIVA's CEO said that "Results of 2017 came in line with VIVA goals and ongoing ambitions to achieve an increase in its operational businesses and strengthen its leadership in the telecom market".

Al-Badran added that "We have exerted great efforts in 2017 through our integrated team work to establish a solid and strong base that insures the company's continuing successes in light of the strong competition in the Kuwaiti telecom market. VIVA achieved good levels of revenues and record a growth in the profitability in addition to improving the company's financial and operational efficiency.

As a result, VIVA recorded revenues of KD 278 million during FY 2017 and achieved net profit of KD 40.1 million (earnings per share of 80 fils) in 2017, whereas the operating profit has reached KD 42.6 million during the same year. On the other hand, VIVA customer base has reached 2.3 million at the end of December 2017.

On his part, Mohammed Bin AbdulMohsen Al-Assaf, VIVA's CFO, said that "During 2017, VIVA's financial



KUWAIT: VIVA holds its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at the Regency Hotel yesterday.

results reflected its ability to compete and achieve growth in revenues during Q4-2017, and maintain its position as the second largest telecom operator in the Kuwaiti market in term of revenues in the telecom sector.

On the other hand, VIVA managed to sustain healthy profitability ratios in light of intense competition where Return On Assets (ROA) has reached 14 percent while

return on shareholders' equity (ROE) has reached 24 percent in 2017. "We will continue our hard work in implementing our strategy to maintain our competitive edge and achieve further growth and success in the Kuwaiti telecom market through offering innovative products and services in line with the latest technology to meet our customers' needs" he added.

NBK announces quarterly Al-Jawhara winner of KD 250,000

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait announced Binah Mohammad Al-Ajmi as the Al-Jawhara winner of KD 250,000, which is considered the biggest in the Al-Jawhara draw.

Since 2012, National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with Al-Jawhara weekly, monthly, and quarterly prizes reaching up to KD 2,200,000 yearly.

Binah Mohammad Al-Ajmi was announced as the winner of the Al-Jawhara Quarterly prize live on air during a draw that took place at FM 88.8 Kuwait Pulse Radio Station on Tuesday at 1:30 pm. The draw was held in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, as well as representatives from the National Bank of Kuwait.

Binah Mohammad Al-Ajmi commented on winning this valuable prize, declaring her happiness and thanking NBK for this prize and for always delivering the best rewards and services to customers.

During March 2018, NBK has awarded three KD 5,000 weekly winners of the Al-Jawhara: Abrar Suliman Husain Almousa, Ahmed Mohammed Al-Ali, Afaf Ahmad Al-Amer.

Al-Jawhara weekly, monthly, and quarterly draws are all conducted in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry and the name of all the winners are announced. NBK believes in rewarding its most loyal customers through transparent prizes and promotions as part of its long term strategy to create lasting relationships with customers built on trust and confidence.

For every KD 50 deposited into an Al-Jawhara account, the account holder receives one chance in the



draw. Al-Jawhara account holders are automatically entered into draws for the KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and KD 250,000 quarterly grand prizes.

Customers must have a minimum opening balance of KD 400 and a maximum of KD 500,000. If no withdrawal or transfers occur in the account during the required period, customers will get an additional 1 extra chance for each KD 50 held in the account and double their chances of winning.

The National Bank of Kuwait offers a variety of cash prizes and rewards as part of its long term focus on building lasting relationships with customers.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah daily draws

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its Al-Danah daily draw on 25 March 2018 announcing the names of its winners for the week of 18 - 22 March 2018. The Al-Danah daily draws include draws every working day for two prizes of KD 1,000 per winner.

- The winners are:**
- (Sunday 18/03): Fatemah Hani Farouq Alawadhi, Abdulmunem Atteyah Eid Sagheer
 - (Monday 19/03): Khalaf Khaled Abdulmohsen Almekhaizeem, Talal Ganem Rashed Sager
 - (Tuesday 20/03): Majid Ibrahim Hassan Attash, Ahmad Saleh Aadas
 - (Wednesday 21/03): Hani Mousa Mohammad Almousa, Maha Abdullah Awad Alharbi
 - (Thursday 22/03): Manal Abdulqafar H Maarafi, Mohammad Abdullazeez Hasan Ahmad Deyab

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah 2018 draw lineup includes daily draws, with two winners receiving KD 1000 each per working day.

Gulf Bank Al-Danah's first quarterly draw for KD200,000 prize, was held yesterday on 28 March and aired live on the "Diwanayat Al-Yaqout & Al-Ansari" program on Kuwait Pulse (88.8 FM) at 1:30pm.

The second Al-Danah quarterly draw, for the prize of KD250,000 will be held on 27 June while the third quarterly draw, for the prize of KD 500,000, will be held on 26 September. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1 million will be held on 10 January 2019, where the Al-Danah millionaire will be announced.

Gulf Bank encourages you to increase your chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into your Gulf



Bank account using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's Online and Mobile Banking.

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

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

Al-Danah also offers a number of unique services including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which helps account holders deposit their money at their convenience, as well as the Al-Danah calculator to help customers calculate their chances of becoming an Al-Danah winner.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws.

If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/ or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days.

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	299.850
Canadian Dollar	233.465
Sterling Pound	426.935
Euro	373.535
Swiss Frank	286.765
Bahrain Dinar	797.410
UAE Dirhams	82.040
Qatari Riyals	83.270
Saudi Riyals	80.855
Jordanian Dinar	424.195
Egyptian Pound	17.000
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.923
Indian Rupees	4.622
Pakistani Rupees	2.598
Bangladesh Taka	3.598
Philippines Peso	5.740
Cyprus pound	17.850
Japanese Yen	3.840
Syrian Pound	1.585
Nepalese Rupees	2.892
Malaysian Ringgit	78.580

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	48.185
Thai Bhat	10.595
Turkish Lira	75.740

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.420050	0.427550
Czech Korune	0.006584	0.015884
Danish Krone	0.045880	0.050880
Euro	0.366620	0.374120
Georgian Lari	0.123099	0.123099
Hungarian 0.001098	0.001288	
Norwegian Krone	0.034822	0.040022
Romanian Leu	0.063008	0.079858
Russian ruble	0.005217	0.005217
Slovakia	0.008904	0.018904
Swedish Krona	0.032385	0.037385
Swiss Franc	0.310028	0.321028
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.222345	0.234345
New Zealand Dollar	0.211572	0.221072
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.227486	0.236486
US Dollars	0.296100	0.300520
US Dollars Mint	0.296600	0.300520
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003184	0.003768

Chinese Yuan	0.046420	0.049920
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036171	0.038921
Indian Rupee	0.004121	0.004762
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002758	0.002938
Korean Won	0.000271	0.000286
Malaysian Ringgit	0.073792	0.079792
Nepalese Rupee	0.002995	0.003165
Pakistan Rupee	0.002451	0.002741
Philippine Peso	0.005663	0.005963
Singapore Dollar	0.223976	0.233976
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001602	0.002182
Taiwan	0.010166	0.010346
Thai Baht	0.009274	0.009824

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.789656	0.798156
Egyptian Pound	0.014052	0.019770
Iranian Riyal	0.000083	0.000084
Iraqi Dinar	0.000202	0.000262
Jordanian Dinar	0.418793	0.427793
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000148	0.000248
Moroccan Dirhams	0.023235	0.047235
Omani Riyal	0.773422	0.779102
Qatar Riyal	0.078168	0.083108
Saudi Riyal	0.078967	0.080267
Syrian Pound	0.001271	0.001491
Tunisian Dinar	0.122447	0.130447
Turkish Lira	0.070798	0.081098
UAE Dirhams	0.080308	0.082008
Yemeni Riyal	0.000975	0.001055

Business

KGL Logistics reports KD 5.9m in net profit and KD 39m revenues for 2017

Logistics firm looking to expand its local and regional business

KUWAIT: The Board of Directors of KGL Logistics held a meeting to approve the financial statements for the fiscal year that ended on 31 December 2017. The meeting reviewed the arrangements for the AGM and its agenda.

The Board of Directors approved the 2017 financial statement, where the company's revenues for the 2017 fiscal year amounted to KD 39 million and the total expenses for the 2017 fiscal year amounted to KD 32.6 million, while the net profit for 2017 was KD 5.9 million.

The board of directors also recommended to the AGM the distribution of free bonus shares for the fiscal year that ended on 31/12/2017 by 5 percent of the company's issued and paid up capital in the amount of 5 shares for every 100 shares.

Commenting on the results, Dr Jafar Ali, Chairman of KGL Logistics, said: "The Board of Directors has made great efforts to develop the company's business to meet the shareholders' aspirations, both in terms of increasing storage space and expanding the customer base in Kuwait along with a regional expansion in the GCC, where the company aims to develop nearly 2 million square meters of storage



Dr Jafar Ali



areas within the GCC and in KSA specifically; the first phase of the development of nearly 200 thousand square meters of storage space in Jeddah will be completed during the second quarter of 2018, according to the highest international standards using the latest technical developments in the field of warehousing in line with the "Saudi Vision 2030".

"KGL Logistics is looking to expand its operations locally and regionally, all while creating new opportunities for future expansion and growth. KGL Logistics will continue to pursue the development and diversification of its storage facilities, logistics services and support to meet local and international market needs."

On the other hand, Dr Jafar stressed that the company attaches great importance to the youth through the development of fresh Kuwaiti graduates and enticing them to work in the logistics sector, within a variety of programs provided by the company's experts on globally adopted principles. He also added that in accordance with the company's corporate social responsibility towards the youth, KGL Logistics is committed to providing training programs for young Kuwaiti nationals.

Dr Jafar concluded by thanking the members of the Board of Directors for their presence and dedication during the past year, especially in light of the company's achievements at the local and regional levels, who results might materialize later this year or in the coming years.



ARCADIA, California: In this photo taken on Dec 19, 2017, a signboard attracts people to the Westfield Shopping Mall. — AFP

US Q4 growth slows to 2.9%; consumer spending surges

WASHINGTON: US economic growth slowed less than previously estimated in the fourth quarter as the biggest gain in consumer spending in three years partially offset the drag from a jump in imports.

Gross domestic product expanded at a 2.9 percent annual rate in the final three months of 2017, instead of the previously reported 2.5 percent, the Commerce Department said in its third GDP estimate for the period yesterday. That was a slight moderation from the third quarter's brisk 3.2 percent pace. The upward revision to the fourth-quarter growth estimate also reflected less inventory reduction than previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had expected that fourth-quarter GDP growth would be revised up to a 2.7 percent rate. There are signs that economic activity slowed further in the first quarter, with retail sales falling in February for a third straight month. Housing data have been generally weak and the trade deficit hit a more than nine-year high in January. Estimates of the first-quarter GDP growth rate are currently just below 2.0 percent. Still, analysts believe the economy will hit the Trump administration's 3 percent annual growth target this year, driven by a \$1.5 trillion income tax cut package and a planned increase in government spending.

That could keep the door open to slightly more aggressive interest rate increases from the Federal Reserve this year. The US central bank raised rates last week and forecast at least two more hikes for 2018. The Fed also lifted its economic growth projections for this year and 2019. The economy grew 2.3 percent in 2017, an acceleration from the 1.5 percent logged in 2016. The government also reported yesterday that after-tax corporate profits increased at a 1.7 percent rate in the fourth quarter after rising at a 5.7 percent pace in the third quarter.

The government said while provisions of the income tax overhaul that came into effect in January had no effect on corporate profits for current production, they had an impact on net cash flow in the fourth quarter. An alternate measure of growth, gross domestic income,

rose at a 0.9 percent rate in the October-December period. GDI expanded at a 2.4 percent rate in the third quarter.

The average of GDP and GDI, also referred to as gross domestic output and considered a better measure of economic activity, increased at a 1.9 percent rate in the fourth quarter. That followed a 2.8 percent rate of growth in the prior period.

Prices of US Treasuries pared gains after the data. US stock index futures were mixed while the dollar was stronger against a basket of currencies.

Robust consumer spending

Growth in consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, was revised up to a 4.0 percent rate in the fourth quarter from the 3.8 percent pace reported last month. That was the quickest pace since the fourth quarter of 2014 and followed a 2.2 percent rate of growth in the July-September period. Imports grew at an upwardly revised 14.1 percent pace instead of the previously reported 14.0 percent rate. That was the fastest pace since the third quarter of 2010 and overshadowed a rise in exports driven by weakness in the dollar.

The resulting trade deficit sliced off 1.16 percentage points from GDP growth last quarter, the most in a year, after adding 0.36 percentage point in the third quarter. Trade will likely remain a drag on GDP growth in the first quarter. The trade deficit widened sharply in January. A separate report from the Commerce Department yesterday showed the goods trade deficit rising slightly in February.

While robust consumer spending curbed the accumulation of inventories, the slowdown in inventory investment was not as steep as previously reported.

Inventory investment rose at a rate of \$15.6 billion in the fourth quarter instead of the previously reported \$8.0 billion pace. Inventories subtracted 0.53 percentage point from GDP growth after adding 0.79 percentage point in the prior period.

Inventories could contribute to growth in the first quarter. The Commerce Department reported yesterday that both wholesale and retail inventories increased solidly in February. Growth in business spending on equipment was revised slightly down to an 11.6 percent rate from the 11.8 percent pace published last month. That was still the best performance since the third quarter of 2014. — Reuters

WTO chief sees no sign of US walking away from WTO

GENEVA: There is no sign that the United States is distancing itself from the World Trade Organization, and negotiations are underway to avert a global trade war, WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo said in a BBC interview broadcast yesterday.

US President Donald Trump has launched a series of tariff-raising moves, upsetting allies and rivals alike. Trump is also vetoing the appointment of WTO judges, causing a backlog in disputes and threatening to paral-

lyse what is effectively the supreme court of trade. Some trade experts have begun asking if Trump wants to kill the WTO, whose 164 members force each other to play by the rules. "I have absolutely no indication that the United States is walking away from the WTO. Zero indication," Azevedo said in an interview on the BBC Hardtalk program, according to excerpts released early by the BBC.

Last month Trump called the WTO a "catastrophe", and complained the United States had only a minority of its judges. The next day Azevedo gently set him straight, noting that the United States had an unusually good deal, since it had always had one of the seven judges. Asked if the WTO should be thinking about a Plan B without the United States, Azevedo told the BBC that he had not heard anything to suggest that such a situation was on the cards. "Every contact that I have in the US administration assures me that they are engaging," he said. —Reuters

Bombardier to shed German rail jobs

FRANKFURT: Train and railway manufacturer Bombardier and German worker representatives said yesterday they had reached a deal that would see the firm shed some 2,200 jobs but stop site closures. The posts are set to fall away at Bombardier by 2020 through voluntary redundancies and ending temporary contracts, the firm and union IG Metall said. Meanwhile three factories in the east of the country producing rolling stock will heighten their specialization in different stages of manufacturing.

Voluntary job losses "could not be avoided given the business situation," IG Metall regional leader Olivier Hoebel said

in a statement, but would be "implemented in a socially manageable way".

"With this program, Bombardier will become significantly more efficient and thus more competitive," Bombardier's rail chief in Germany Michael Fohrer said. The deal marks the end of two years of hard negotiations between executives and worker representatives, after bosses' 2016 announcement that they planned to slash 5,000 jobs worldwide. Unions' protests drew the attention of the German government, which convinced the two sides to seek a compromise.

Yesterday's agreement also includes a mechanism for joint decision-making with workers that would "create the conditions to future-proof jobs and sites beyond 2020," works council chief Juergen Korstian said. The German deal follows an October 2017 promise from French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire that no Bombardier sites would close in France. —AFP

Stock markets under pressure

LONDON: Stock markets in Europe and Asia were mostly lower yesterday as trade war fears continued to niggle at investor confidence, but Wall Street managed modest rebound in early business, traders said. The volatility that has raked trading floors since the start of February shows no sign of abating, they predicted. "Stock markets are likely to remain explosively volatile and

wildly unpredictable amid the ongoing trade drama between the US and China," said Lukman Otunuga, an analyst at FXTM.

Most European markets were down, but London's benchmark FTSE 100 index managed a slight rise. Wall Street was up around 0.5 percent at the opening bell, receiving some support from an upward

revision for fourth quarter US growth, analysts said. In the previous session, the biggest names in the tech sector suffered sharp falls, made worse by reports the US was considering cracking down on Chinese investments in technologies it deems sensitive. Tech sector selling continued on Wednesday, with South Korea's Samsung losing 2.6 percent. "Markets remain under pressure as the sell-off in tech spreads once more to the wider equities space," said Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at IG trading group.

In foreign exchange, the dollar rose against the euro despite talk that the European Central Bank is heading towards winding down its crisis-era stimulus. Markets were then sent into spasms this month when Trump imposed tariffs on steel and aluminium imports, then followed up last Thursday with levies on \$60 billion of other goods from China over intellectual property issues-sparking talk of a trade war. —AFP

FOR RENT FURNISHED VILLAS

SPECIAL PRICE

SPECIAL PROMO ask about our offer

Luxurious and Privileged Compound in Abu Halifa Facing the National Park and the Sea

Duplex & Triplex Villas

3/4 Bedrooms + 3/4 Bathrooms
+ Big Salon + Separate pool
All Master Bathrooms is Marble

Volleyball Court
Basketball Court
Hotel Lobby
Pools + Jacuzzi
Billiard
213 Car Parking Areas

69996992 - 66804222

		Financial Statement for the Year Ending 31 December 2017	
		KD	USD
Operating Income	39 Million	130 Million	
Operating Expenses	32.6 Million	108.6 Million	
Profit	5.9 Million	19.6 Million	
Distribution of Bonus Shares	5%		

Business

Zain Group aims to be a trendsetter in digital revolution, says Al-Kharafi

Q&A with Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

Kuwait Times: You were appointed CEO of Zain Group in March 2017. What are your impressions of the business since taking the helm and what are your priorities in 2018 and beyond?

Al-Kharafi: Being a board member since 2011 and Vice-Chairman since 2014, I was already very familiar with Zain and its operations prior to becoming the Group CEO, and I have always been impressed by the dedication of our people and the organization's culture of innovation. These are two areas I am determined to continue fostering as I believe they are the keys to sustainable progress and success for telecom operators around the world.

In our region, the commoditization of voice, intense price competition, and high levels of mobile penetration means that operators need to perform at their optimum to remain competitive and even survive. All Zain operations have been following an "execution-focused digital lifestyle strategy" based on six transformational initiatives: Customer Experience; Operational Effectiveness; Value Management; B2B opportunities; Digital Frontier and Innovation; and Talent Development.

We continue to believe this is the right direction in our bid to serve consumers and enterprises with a rich lifestyle experience. Our goal is not simply customer satisfaction, but building a base of promoters, knowing that positive customer experience and advocacy drives competitive advantage, leading to faster organic growth and lower cost.

Zain operations continue to focus on prudent management of operational costs where now our Group EBITDA margin is a healthy 40 percent. In tandem, there is an emphasis on the improving in quality of service, network reach and performance, and the growth of data services while maximizing smart city developments, IoT and B2B growth opportunities.

In doing so, Zain's overriding mission today is to have a positive impact on the communities we serve, while undertaking initiatives to take part in and exploit the 4th industrial revolution and promote social innovation. We believe this strategy is resulting in value creation for shareholders.

KT: What have been some of the major business highlights of 2017?

Al-Kharafi: The remarkable turnaround in Zain Saudi Arabia's performance stands out as the operator reported its first ever full-year net profit, amounting to SAR 12 million (\$3.1 million) for 2017. This is a milestone achievement for the company, which commenced commercial operations in August 2008 and this net profit amount reflects a SAR 1 billion (\$264 million) turnaround on the prior year.

This impressive performance is attributed to the disciplined execution of the operator's transformation strategy to increase monetization of data and digital services resulting in strong revenue growth; an ongoing focus to significantly upgrade and improve network coverage resulting in faster download speeds and improving the mobile experience for customers; as well as driving efficiencies and optimization of its cost structure. Increased customer centricity and care also contributed to the operator's best-ever performance.

Zain KSA's overall financial results are even more impressive given the backdrop of a very competitive market in the Kingdom and the general decline in industry revenues, with fewer overall subscribers in 2017 due to exodus of many expats and the implementation of biometric identification measures and a two-sim policy.

We at the Group are fully committed to work close with the management team there to implement a large scale digital transformation exercise in an effort to deliver better customer experiences to the Kingdom's digital savvy community and we remain cautiously confident of continued improvement of all aspects this key operation in 2018 and beyond, and playing our contributory role in the Kingdom's 2030 economic vision.

Furthermore, undoubtedly two major transactions undertaken during the year will have a profound positive effect on the future of the company and our business growth. The acquisition of our treasury shares by Omantel brought immediate tangible benefit that will be further built upon; as well as the ground-breaking agreement to sell and lease back our telecom towers in Kuwait, in a regional first.

The purchase by Omantel of Zain Group's treasury shares amounting to 9.8 percent of the issued shares in August 2017, marked the beginning of a new era for Zain Group as we look to bolster our position as a leading telecom conglomerate in the mobile industry



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS

- Operators need to be innovative and perform at their optimum to survive
- Aiming to become one of the leading trendsetters in the digital revolution in the region
- Remarkable turnaround in Zain Saudi Arabia sees operator reporting its first-ever net profit
- Zain remains vigilant and agile to market opportunities that create value
- Continued investment in network upgrades coupled with data monetization initiatives yielding growth in data revenues
- Moving ahead with a focus on Women and Youth empowerment initiatives
- Zain logo refreshed to reflect the digital dynamism of the world around us

across the region. Omantel later opted to further consolidate its investment in Zain by acquiring an additional share of 12.02 percent of the company's capital.

These transactions mean that Omantel is the second largest shareholder in the Zain Group after the Kuwaiti Government (represented by the Kuwait Investment Authority). We are delighted by Omantel's confidence in our strategic direction and these transactions are set to have a positive impact across operations while creating greater value for our shareholders. We are currently exploring numerous business enhancing and synergistic opportunities with Omantel and we are excited by the value accretive opportunities that lie ahead through this mutually beneficial relationship.

The sale of our towers in Kuwait to IHS Holding Limited, in partnership with Towershare Management Limited, marked the start of a strategy to unlock value from our fixed infrastructure, which can be more efficiently deployed in new technologies and higher yielding investments. IHS is one of the largest tower companies in Africa, Europe and the Middle East managing over 23,300 towers in 5 countries. This also paves the way for further network expansion and infrastructure sharing in Kuwait. The selling of our telecom towers will be replicated in other markets, enabling us to focus on our core business and enhancing customer experience.

Also in Kuwait that was significant during the year, was Zain Kuwait signing a development, management, and operation agreement with the country's Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) to develop interconnectivity support for the Smart Meters System Project. The project budget amounts to KD 22 million (\$73 million), and will see Zain in collaboration with a number of global strategic partners, including EY, Ericsson and NXN, build and install the meters over a two-year period, and then manage and operate the system for the next five years. The project is set to revolutionize the process of obtaining electricity and water readings, which will be taken automatically and tracked in real-time.

KT: Given the successful completion of the Omantel transaction, do you expect to see consolidation in the

telecom market in the Middle East in the near term?

Al-Kharafi: I believe the situation remains the same as it has done for many years now, which is to say telecom entities will continue to look for value creation for their operations, and should an acquisition, merger or sale of assets of any sort help to achieve this goal, it may make sense to progress with it. From a Zain perspective, we are always looking for opportunities to advance our business, but we will only proceed with such a development should it make sense to our stakeholders in a value adding manner.

All regional mobile operators are facing challenging times on multiple fronts and I believe the next major trend in the regional telecom sector is that others will seek to replicate our move in Kuwait and imminent move in Saudi Arabia in selling network towers and unlocking value from fixed infrastructure, thereby paving the way for tower sharing.

Consolidation on a larger scale will occur as operators in small markets will not be able to sustain themselves and it is a matter of time until we witness the first merger or acquisition across the region.

These are exciting times for all stakeholders in the ICT value chain. Going forward Zain remains vigilant and agile to market opportunities that create value. The telco industry is changing rapidly, and we believe it is imperative for us to be forward-looking in our approach to industry changes and grasp opportunities as they arise.

Innovation

KT: What does innovation mean to Zain Group, and how is it developing offerings that reflect this aspect of its business?

Al-Kharafi: We are aiming to become one of the leading trendsetters in the digital revolution in the region and provide our customers an exceptional mobile experience. Innovation is part of our DNA, and if one looks back across the history of the company over decades, one can see we have always strived to bring the latest and best technologies to our markets as soon as practicable.

We have continued that tradition and during the year made several substantial investments and

announced significant developments. We also identified new business areas, value-adding strategic partnerships, accretive acquisition opportunities and synergistic corporate venturing investments which, collectively, will create new revenue streams to fully maximize the Group's high-speed broadband networks, customer assets, network intelligence and payment and billing infrastructure.

Digital services

Within the digital services and innovation area, we are focused on identifying opportunities in the smart city space, e-entertainment, m-health, e-education, online gaming, online commerce, m-advertising, m-payments, m-insurance and other financial technology services domains as well as cyber security.

In a monumental step forward for Zain in our journey to become the premier digital lifestyle provider in the MENA region and to diversify our services and future sources of revenues, we established a joint venture with iflix - a world-class Streaming Video on Demand (SVoD) provider across many of our markets.

During the year we also enhanced our vital Zain Cash service in Iraq and Jordan to support the vast unbanked population estimated at 90 percent in Iraq and 75 percent in Jordan. The platform began with a range of mainly current and debit account, peer to peer transfers, salary disbursements, self and third-party recharge, bill payments, purchase of digital goods and online shopping services. In 2017, Zain Cash added new services such as virtual MasterCard, In-app services, QR code store payments, paying at an agent, loyalty programs, and e-commerce platform. There are plans to introduce this platform to other geographies in Zain's footprint.

Technology

From a technology point of view, we successfully tested 5G technology in Kuwait, achieving maximum throughput speeds of over 70 Giga Bit Per Second (Gbps) over 2GHz spectrum. This speed represents one of the highest-ever recorded in the region, placing us at the forefront of 5G innovation for the benefit of our consumer and enterprise customers.

Big Data Analytics is a crucial factor in our digital transformation journey and we are developing some pioneering capabilities in this area, having established an enablement platform that acts as a foundation for an enterprise-wide Big Data ecosystem at the operational level to execute upcoming technical and business use cases. The project started with technical use cases to enhance operational efficiency by reducing capex/opex of IT Infrastructure.

Customer experience

To provide the best mobile data experience, Zain placed additional resources on transforming our operations from network-oriented to innovative service and customer-oriented centers. In so doing we introduced Service Operation Centers (SOC) across several of our markets. SOCs enable us to monitor the quality of services in addition to network monitoring, and offers us the ability to improve service and customer experience according to customer needs.

Additionally, our customers enjoyed new and enhanced mobile applications, websites, e-shops and web-chat services that allow them to manage their accounts, control their usage, pay and recharge in a straight-forward manner, as well as locate our stores, acquire new devices, receive tailored offers, and much more.

We are pleased to see increased engagement and adoption of new technologies from our customers as we witness our highest customer satisfaction results, driven by simplicity, transparency and convenience.

Partnerships

Through our fully owned global services subsidiary, Mada Communications, Zain became the first telco group in the region to join the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Direct Connect partner program. This allows Zain to connect enterprises directly to the AWS Cloud and builds on Zain's Cloud Connect offering, which provides an innovative platform that connects customers and different cloud service providers in a simple and cost-effective manner.

Strategic investments

We are seeing more profitable traction from our smart city arm NXN (formerly nXgen). Following the smart metering deal with Kuwait Ministry of Electricity and Water in the first half of 2017; NXN also signed a MoU with the National Digitization Unit (NDU) of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, marking the Kingdom's first step towards harnessing open data to help accelerate the digital transformation of the Kingdom. NXN has continued its fast-growing journey as one of the thought leaders within the region's Smart Nation, Smart City and Smart Government advisory and managed services landscape.

Furthermore, our investment in Lebanon mobile solutions provider FOO is proving fruitful on multiple fronts. They have supported us in building our life-enhancing mobile money platform, 'Zain Cash' in Iraq and have developed numerous customer centric mobile apps for several of our operations. In addition, and significant for our business growth and digital lifestyle strategic aspirations, they are building a Group application programming interface (API) in coordination with Apigee (a Google subsidiary) that will be launched in the first quarter of 2018. This API will eventually connect all of our operations across the region into a single enablement platform accelerating innovation and creating market opportunities for global digital players as well as individual developers to launch services to Zain.



KUWAIT: Bader Al-Kharafi (center) speaks as Ossama Matta (right) and Scott Gegenheimer look on.

Business

Zain Group holds AGM with a quorum of 74.97%, approves cash dividend of 35 fils

Board Chairman Ahmed Al-Tahous, Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi



KUWAIT: Zain Group Board of Directors addressing the Annual General Assembly (AGM) at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh yesterday.

KUWAIT: Zain Group, the leading mobile telecom innovator in eight markets across the Middle East and Africa announced the holding of its Annual General Assembly (AGM) at the company's headquarters in Shuwaikh, Kuwait yesterday.

After satisfying the legal quorum requirements with 74.97 percent, the shareholders approved the distribution of 35 fils per share (\$0.11) for the financial year ended 31 December, 2017 to shareholders registered on the company records as of 11 April, 2018. This entitlement date reflects an additional 10 working days period after the holding of the AGM as per new Boursa Kuwait regulations.

Additionally, after passing a number of items on the agenda, the AGM saw the election of two new members to the Zain

Group Board of Directors for the next two years, namely Abdulrahman Mohammad Al-Asfour and a Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) representative.

The Board of Directors met immediately after the election and accordingly the new board is now composed of the following: Ahmed Tahous Al-Tahous as the Chairman of Zain Group, Bader Al-Kharafi as Vice-Chairman and Group CEO, Talal bin Said Al-Mamari, Mehdi Mohamed Jawad Abdullah Abduwani, Saud Ahmed Abdulkarim Al-Nahari, Martial Antoine Marcel Caratti, Nigel Kevin Govett, Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) representative, and Abdulrahman Mohammad Al-Asfour (independent).

During the AGM, Zain Group presented its financial results for the full-year 2017,

with consolidated net income increasing by 2 percent to KD 160 million (\$527 million), reflecting Earnings Per Share of 39 fils (\$0.13). Consolidated revenues amounted to KD 1.03 billion (\$3.4 billion), down 5 percent year-on-year (Y-o-Y), while consolidated EBITDA for the period decreased by 19 percent Y-o-Y to KD 414 million (\$1.37 billion), reflecting an EBITDA margin of 40 percent.

The Group's financial indicators highlighted the strong operational performance of the company's operations for 2017, but challenges associated with the security and economic conditions in several of the Group's markets, as well as the continued impact of currency fluctuations impacted the consolidated financial results for the year.

For 2017, foreign currency translation impact, predominantly due to the 53 percent currency devaluation in Sudan from an average of 8.0 to 16.9 (SDG / USD), cost the company \$494 million in revenue, \$213 million in EBITDA and \$82 million in net income. Excluding the above-mentioned currency translation impact, Y-o-Y revenues would have grown by 8 percent and net income growth would have been 17 percent.

Zain's customer base reached 46.6 million at the end of 2017 with the Group's investments in upgrading and developing its networks paying off as Group data revenues (excluding SMS and VAS) increased by 3 percent during the year, representing 25 percent of the Group's consolidated revenues.



Ahmed Al-Tahous

Foo are fast becoming a FinTech powerhouse in the region and have attained prestigious accreditation with both Visa and MasterCard as an approved Digital Partner, the only FinTech player in the region to have earned such.

ZINC stands out

One initiative that is meaningful from an innovation perspective and makes me very proud is the superlative progress of the Zain Innovation Campus (ZINC) in Jordan. The creative start-up culture and successful commercial launch of many entities out of ZINC is impressive. It was highly gratifying to see ZINC become a recipient of the Mohammed bin Rashid Awards for Young Business Leaders accolade for the Best Social Entrepreneurship Responsibility Initiative in the Arab World.

Our overall goal is to enhance our internal capabilities, support the entrepreneurial ecosystems in our markets, and utilize the best technologies while seeking, building, partnering and investing in new Group-wide digital business opportunities that are viable.

KT: Data services and revenues continued to grow during the year. What is Zain doing to foster this growth area?

Al-Kharafi: By enabling the latest mobile technologies and availing a wide choice of individual and business orientated solutions, Zain is focused on being the data provider of choice across all our operations.

Zain has accordingly adopted a data monetization strategy that is aimed at delivering healthy and sustainable growth in mobile data revenues while enabling our customers to enjoy a truly digital lifestyle.

Group data revenues represent around a quarter of all Zain Group service revenues, and this figure is growing all the time. We see this as a positive trend, though we also believe as more data is consumed, and digital services accessed, there is also a requirement for further investment in network upgrades and resources to aptly serve individual and business customers as well as the responsibility for greater cyber security measures to be put in place.

B2B (Enterprise) is one of the most dynamic and innovative areas at Zain, and a growth engine for our operations. We are addressing the B2B market in a segmented way, serving companies of all sizes, whether they be home offices, small medium enterprises, large corporations or government organizations with dedicated B2B teams.

B2B marketing teams are focused on developing Zain from being a mobile centric operator to a full-service ICT player, developing innovative mobile, fixed-mobile, fixed, IoT and cloud-based solutions for enterprises and governments in each market. One recent focus and success has been introduction of a new data center in

Kuwait, serving the local market with co-location, disaster recovery, Cloud and data center managed services. We aim to replicate this successful venture in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. Our primary focus is on enabling the business growth of our customers.

With the ever-growing threat of cyber-attacks, we introduced a new Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) mitigation technology, through our fully owned global services subsidiary, Mada Communications and application security experts F5 Networks. This will see Zain benefit from next-generation, cloud-ready DDoS mitigation technology and we will be able to monetize this powerful service, which we believe will significantly benefit and safeguard our subsidiary operations and international transit customers.

Youth Empowerment

KT: What was your inspiration for introducing Women and Youth Empowerment initiatives?

Al-Kharafi: We believe we need to revolutionize ourselves - not just in a pure business sense - to survive and move ahead.

We are very proud of the introduction of our all-female empowerment initiative, aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering women in the organization to act, lead, develop, and succeed. The program is already running internally, and was given its unveiling at an event in November, with the view to this meeting becoming an annual event, geared towards producing an annual, actionable implementation plan for the subsequent year.

This program is of enormous personal interest to me given that today women account for less than 25 percent of Zain's workforce; a situation that led me to conclude that decisive action needed to be taken in this area. Championing gender diversity at Zain will create competitive differentiation and ultimately improve the company's bottom line.

Youth development and education are central themes to our corporate sustainability and capacity building activities, and we are firm believers that preparing youth for the future is not just our responsibility, it is our duty.

It is widely accepted that youth development and career guidance are factors that catalyze national and organizational development, and on our part, we remain committed to identifying the most talented young people and offering them a platform to reach their full potential.

It is important for us to support the education system by defining a series of plans aimed at bridging the gap between today's curricular and the future's unpredictable corporate environment.

With this in mind we established a new innovative first-of-its kind in the region educational program in collaboration with Nuqat, a not-for-profit organization established in Kuwait in 2009. Together, we introduced a development initiative dubbed IN•DIG•GO, which is an alternative thematic-based educational program for children between the ages of 6 and 11 years. The program is aimed at strengthening the understanding of the participants, expanding their knowledge, test their

creativity and developing their soft and learning skills. The collaboration is a result of the belief that an educational program capable of equipping future generations with skills and methodologies necessary to face the challenges that lie ahead, is pivotal. We plan to expand this initiative across other markets.

Another example is our 'Generation Z' graduate initiative of bright, young Kuwaitis that will focus on developing their soft skills to foster collaboration and team effectiveness, develop creativity and enable innovative thinking, thereby preparing graduates to enter the workforce and contribute successfully. Now in its 3rd year, we have seen eight graduates join the ranks of Zain Group as full-time employees and their track record to date has been impressive, with one notable achievement in launching Zainiac, an internal innovation program where we provided a platform for all 6,000 plus Zain personnel to offer their ideas, with the aim of fostering creative spirit among our people. The outcome of ideas presented was impressive to say the least. We firmly believe that the youth in our organization will be instrumental in supporting the future development of our digital lifestyle strategy.

Brand positioning

KT: In the latter part of 2017, Zain undertook its first revamp of the corporate brand and its positioning since its debut in 2007. Why change something so successful?

Al-Kharafi: After a decade of successful use, the Zain logo was refreshed, and this evolution reflects the dynamism of the world around us, and mirrors the journey of mobile technology and Zain's own digital lifestyle strategy aspirations. The refreshed logo ensures the brand's relevance, and elevates Zain's brand equity, which is currently valued at over \$2.3 billion.

The logo now appears in a fetching silver metallic shade, while retaining the radiant swirl, replacing the multi-color swirl and black background. Traditional and new outlooks are captured in the enhanced logo with the metallic silver symbolizing innovation, technology and high-tech, as Zain aspires to shine in the digital age.

The new brand positioning strategy - 'Opportunity' - celebrates Zain's positive momentum in transforming society, with the company focused on empowering customers and connecting them to the new opportunities the world offers, as we grow, share and enjoy life.

Zain's brand valuation is a result of the tangible developments occurring within the company, where talent development and customer-centric programs, heavy investment in network upgrades, and technology innovation is impacting customer experience positively. Additionally, Zain's Corporate Sustainability programs and eye-catching marketing and widespread social media campaigns have captured the imagination of the whole region.



Zain Vice-Chairman and Group CEO Bader Al-Kharafi

Technology

Volcanic growth for bitcoin in the chilly heart of Iceland

Ground zero in a digital gold rush for cryptocurrencies

REYKJAVIK: At a secret location in the midst of one of Iceland's breathtaking lava fields stands a warehouse whose nondescript siding belies the fact it is ground zero in a digital gold rush for cryptocurrencies that is burning through more electricity than Icelanders' homes. Iceland's combination of fire and ice not only makes it a stunning site to film parts of the medieval fantasy epic Game of Thrones.

It also offers a unique combination of cheap renewable energy and free air conditioning that is making it a promised land for those "mining" virtual currencies, including bitcoin, using powerful computers that are voracious users of electricity and throw off lots of heat. And noise. The din from shelves and shelves of computers whirring inside the 400-square-meter warehouse rivals a jet during takeoff. Unlike the dollar and the euro, bitcoin is not issued by central banks. Instead it is "mined" or created in computer "farms" like this one. It uses computers souped up with six graphics cards tasked with the heavy lifting of thousands of thousands of calculations needed to solve complex algorithms to process bitcoin transactions and be rewarded with bitcoins in exchange.

Cheap and cool Iceland

"It's possible for everyone to do it at

home. There is no one stopping you (and there are no technical limitations," said Philip Salter, head of operations at Genesis Mining, told AFP. Last year saw a meteoric rise of hundreds of virtual currencies led by bitcoin, which was fetching almost \$20,000 per unit in December as both amateur and professional miners jumped onto the bandwagon.

Home miners often use an old computer,

to set up operations, however, and that choice can have a huge impact on their profits as the price of the electricity to power and cool the computers varies considerably from country to country.

Iceland is attractive for cryptocurrency mining because of its cheap electricity, which has the added advantage of being generated from clean geothermal energy. At a 0.065 euros (\$0.081) per kilowatt per hour before tax, the cost of electricity is nearly half the EU average. This makes Iceland one of the most competitive nations in Europe after Serbia, Macedonia and Bosnia.

But Iceland also has an advantage in its average annual temperature is about five degrees Celsius, meaning mining farms can for most of the time just suck in cool air from the outside instead of running energy-hungry air conditioners. The power usage efficiency "is really good in Iceland because of the natural cooling," said Johann

Snorri Sigurbergsson, director of business development at Iceland's power company HS Orka.

Shocking rise in demand

A growing number of firms like Genesis Mining, which was previously based in Bosnia, have chosen to set up shop in Iceland, which means demand for electricity



Iceland is attractive for crypto mining

have no choice where they operate, and are lucky if they get a fraction of a bitcoin every now and then. Professionals like Genesis Mining need to invest serious amounts to build and equip a facility like this one with a surface area a third of an Olympic-size pool, but which has a much greater chance of catching part of the 12.5 bitcoins created every ten minutes. They can choose where



REYKJAVIK, Iceland: Mining rigs (L) of a super computer and air filters (R) are pictured inside the bitcoin factory 'Genesis Farming' near Reykjavik. — AFP

has shot up. "The demand has been increasing exponentially, especially the last three months," said Sigurbergsson. The increase has come as the price of bitcoin has plunged from its peak of nearly \$20,000 to below \$9,000 currently, with analysts saying that the price decline has made operating costs even more of a concern for miners.

Salter, who fears the growing competition in the sector, said bitcoin's "price isn't a very good indicator on how bitcoin mining industry is doing". He may not have that much more competition from neighbors as Sigurbergsson said HS Orka "will not be able to supply all the demand" from miners wanting to set up operations. — AFP

Indian billionaire proposes funding for Facebook rival

NEW DELHI: An Indian billionaire who promised to help fund a rival to Facebook said yesterday he had been "overwhelmed" with the response as the world grapples with concerns about data privacy. Anand Mahindra, whose Mahindra Group business empire spans everything from cars to real estate, sparked a flurry of brainstorming as Facebook reels from a scandal over the misuse of its user data.

The social media giant has been under pressure to explain how data on up to 50 million users was allegedly taken from Facebook and used in political campaigns. Mahindra earlier this week urged India's tech entrepreneurs to devise "our own social networking company" and offered seed funding to startups to get the better ideas rolling.

The invitation provoked a flood of proposals, even from his own chief digital officer Jaspreet Bindra who was tempted by his boss's offer. "To say I'm overwhelmed by the responses to my call for social network startup proposals would be an understatement!" Mahindra posted on Twitter on Wednesday. "The good thing is that it's clear there's an explosion in entrepreneurial energies in this country. Let the games begin!"

India has the world's highest number of Facebook users with 241 million active members, according to a report published last June by Amsterdam-based firm The Next Web. India's information technology ministry last week formally requested that Cambridge Analytica—the data analysis company at the centre of the Facebook firestorm—provide clarity over its practices by the end of the month.

That followed reports that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party and the opposition Congress had used the firm in previous elections, sparking a series of alleged data abuses which both sides deny. India's IT minister warned Facebook against any abuse of social media in elections. India is preparing for general elections in 2019 and there are also a number of state polls due this year and next. — AFP

Dell EMC enables success in the Age of Digital Disruption

BUDAPEST: Dell EMC yesterday hosted its Executive Summit - 'Expect Moore' - for business leaders in the Middle East, Turkey, and Africa region at the InterContinental Budapest in Hungary. At this event, Dell EMC provided a blueprint for digital success and insight into how transformation initiatives can positively impact business results and functions such as growing revenue, improving products and services, and the speedier introduction of new offerings to the market.

The dawn of the 'Internet of Everything', widely referred to as the next industrial revolution, is transforming the way businesses across industries operate. According to the Digital Transformation Index study commissioned by Dell Technologies, over half (52%) of respondents have already experienced significant disruption to their industries as a result of digital technologies, and 78% of respondents consider digital start-ups as a threat, either now or in the future. The impact of disruption on maintaining a competitive advantage is quite significant today, as 62% of respondents have seen new competitors in their industries as a result of digital technologies and initiatives, adding to the pressure on established companies to remain competitive. The Dell EMC Executive Summit opened



Mohammed Amin, Senior Vice President - Middle East, Turkey, & Africa, Dell EMC

with a welcome note from Mohammed Amin, Senior Vice President - Middle East, Turkey, & Africa, Dell EMC, followed by the keynote by Geoffrey A. Moore, renowned author, speaker, and advisor, whose work is focused on the market dynamics surrounding disruptive innovations. The event also hosted several sessions including a practical guide to making digital transformation real, a closer look at the smart cities of the future, the path to artificial intelligence, and security transformation for a digital era, among others.

Mohammed Amin had this to say. "The next industrial revolution is already here.

Two-thirds of businesses worldwide may be at risk of losing significant market share and market value over the next three to five years, being made obsolete by more agile and technologically-superior competitors. This data either translates into an opportunity or threat depending on the advancement of the organization's digital transformation journey. At Dell EMC, we believe that this monumental change is rich with opportunity, but, for these businesses to play a role in this next industrial revolution, they must take the necessary steps to transform digitally, which are crucial to success in this competitive age."

Race to robot cars continues after another crash

SAN FRANCISCO: The race to perfect robot cars continues despite fears kindled by the death of a woman hit by a self-driving Uber vehicle while pushing a bicycle across an Arizona street. Uber put a temporary halt to its self-driving car program in the US after the fatal accident this month near Phoenix, where several other companies including Google-owned Waymo are testing such technology.

While the Uber accident may be used to advance arguments of those fearful of driverless cars, it does not change the fact that "transformative technology is coming whether we like it or not," according to Adie Tomer, a fellow at the Brookings Institution think tank in Washington. "There certainly will be calls to stop all autonomous vehicle testing, not just Uber's program," Tomer said in a post on the institution's website. "But, technological progress is hard to stop, and I don't expect it to happen in this case."

Furor caused by the Uber accident could keep some cities or states from allowing testing of autonomous cars, or prompt tighter national rules, but there is too much private investment taking place to stop it, according to Tomer. Self-driving cars hold the promise of being more

attentive and quicker to react than humans at the wheels, and would free people to use travel time more productively or pleasantly.

Waymo accelerates

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 the fatal crash. San Francisco-based Uber told AFP that it decided not to re-apply for a permit needed to operate autonomous vehicles on California roads. Arizona and California have been particularly welcoming to self-driving car testing, hoping companies developing autonomous technology in those states will create local jobs and facilities devoted to a promising new industry. Technology giants, automakers, and vehicle parts companies, sometimes in alliance, are racing toward a future where cars driving themselves whisk people wherever they wish.

The competition is fierce and costly, with billions of dollars being spent on research. Waymo and Jaguar Land Rover on Tuesday announced they have joined forces to develop a "premium self-driving electric vehicle" based on a new I-PACE model. Testing of an I-PACE equipped with Waymo self-driving technology will begin later this year, and the goal is to make it part of a Waymo driverless transportation service, according to Jaguar. "This is just the beginning," the Waymo team said in an online post. "The ultimate goal: with Waymo as the driver, products tailored for every purpose and every trip." — AFP

NASA pushes back giant space telescope launch

WASHINGTON: The launch of NASA's next giant space telescope has been delayed until at least May 2020, the US space agency said Tuesday, in the latest setback for the much-anticipated project. The James Webb Space Telescope—which NASA has long expected to replace the fabled Hubble—was initially meant to go into service this year but has faced multiple hitches.

The Webb telescope will be the most powerful ever built—about 100 times more sensitive than Hubble—and is to be deployed on a mission to give astronomers an unprecedented glimpse at the first galaxies that formed in the early universe. The highly-anticipated equipment "currently is undergoing final integration and test phases that will require more time to ensure a successful mission," NASA said in a statement. "Webb's previously revised 2019 launch window now is targeted for approximately May 2020."

NASA said that once a new launch date was finalized, it would "provide a cost estimate that may exceed the projected \$8 billion development cost." Acting NASA Administrator Robert Lightfoot called the Webb project "the highest priority project for the agency's Science Mission Directorate, and the largest international space science project in US history."

But the prospect of the program's going over its already high budget could create more headaches on the path ahead. The project, a joint endeavor with the European and Canadian space agencies, has already drawn scrutiny from lawmakers for its ballooning costs, given that its initial estimated budget was \$3.5 billion.

An independent review board will assess the mission and report back later this year on what needs to be done—and likely how much it will cost. NASA must then provide an update to Congress. "Considering the investment NASA and our international partners have made, we want to proceed systematically through these last tests, with the additional time necessary, to be ready for a May 2020 launch," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate.

The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) will weigh about



HOUSTON: This NASA file photo released on May 16, 2017 shows the primary mirror of NASA's James Webb Space Telescope inside a cleanroom at NASA's Johnson Space Center. — AFP

13,500 pounds. JWST's main mirror will be 6.5 meters in diameter, three times as large as Hubble's. It will carry four instruments, including cameras and spectrometers that can capture extremely faint signals. Infra-red capability will help it observe distant celestial bodies, and its camera shutter will be able to remain open for long periods, NASA has said.

NASA said the telescope will "next undergo environmental testing, subjecting it to the vibrational, acoustic and thermal environments it will experience during its launch and operations," a process lasting a few months. "Engineers then will integrate and test the fully assembled observatory and verify all components work together properly," the space agency said. The James Webb telescope is named after NASA's second administrator, in office from 1961 to 1968. It will be launched aboard an Ariane-5 rocket from French Guiana. — AFP

Health

Five methods to halt 'critical' land decay, protect millions

MEDELLON: Scientists warned that land degradation imperils the health and well-being of billions of people, threatening food and water supplies while fuelling conflict, mass migration and disease spread. But all is not lost, said the mammoth report by the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Humanity can still turn the tide of destruction, but governments, the private sector, international bodies, and individuals all have a role to play.

Restoration

The benefits of restoring decayed land are about ten times the cost, the report said. Measures envisaged by the IPBES report included reflooding drained wetlands, replacing lost trees, and halting pollution at its source—whether from mines, agriculture, or factories. In urban areas, it moots the replanting of native species, developing parks, rehabilitating soil sealed under asphalt, treating and reusing wastewater, and restoring river channels.

Farming

As a main usurper of natural land, the farming sector must take the lead. Even simple changes can make a big difference, said Bob Scholes of the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, a co-author of the first comprehensive assessment of land health. Ploughing, for example, leaves the soil vulnerable to erosion, and releases carbon locked up in it as planet-warming carbon dioxide.

"How frequently you plough, and for instance whether you plough straight up and down the hill slope or on the contour makes a huge difference to how much soil you lose," Scholes told AFP. For IPBES chairman Robert Watson, part of the answer lies in "precision agriculture." "We have to learn how to appropriately use fertilizers, pesticides and water ... give the crops exactly what they need" and no more.

Labeling

The IPBES report advocates a dramatic shift in consumer mentality. Most consumers live far from the ecosystems that produce their food, resulting in "a growing lack of awareness and understanding of the implication" of their purchasing choices, it said. To correct this, merchants must know where products come from and under what conditions they were produced, and inform consumers accordingly.



CALI, Colombia: A girl lights candles and form 60+ sign during the Earth Hour environment campaign in Cali, Valle del Cauca department. — AFP

"Labeling of food products is very important," Luca Montanarella of the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, another report author, told AFP. "If you know from the label on your food product that it's coming from a certain area (where) that production system is having a very large impact on the land, a very negative one, well you might choose to buy something else." This might mean, of course, that the product costs more. "So it means that you must make choices as a consumer to what is best not only for you but for the planet," said Montanarella.

Incentives

The IPBES recommends replacing "perverse incentives" that promote land degradation, with positive ones that reward sustainable land management. One example is subsidized fertilizers. "If it costs the farmer very little to oversupply of course he'll oversupply," said Scholes. This leads to more runoff into rivers. Agricultural subsidies, too, lead

farmers to overproduce at the expense of Nature, said the team.

Policy

The report says governments must take Nature into account in policies across sectors—not only agriculture and the environment, but also the economy, energy, and infrastructure. The issue must also be taken up in the global debate on human development and climate change. "Land degradation, biodiversity loss, and climate change are three different faces of the same central challenge: the increasingly dangerous impacts of our choices on the health of our natural environment," said Watson. The IPBES, which alerted last week that biodiversity was declining in all world regions, warns that on current trends, the world will fail to meet the 2020 "Aichi Biodiversity Targets" on halting species loss. Also threatened are the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, with targets for food and water security, and better human health. — AFP

Antibiotics soars, fuels superbug fears

WASHINGTON: Global consumption of antibiotics has soared since the year 2000, stoking calls for new policies to rein in usage—and fueling fears that the worldwide threat posed by drug-resistant superbugs will spiral out of control, researchers say.

A study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) — based on sales data for 76 countries—shows that consumption of antibiotics increased 65 percent from 2000 to 2015, driven by users in low- and middle-income countries. The research team headed by scientists from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy in the US capital said countries needed to invest in alternative treatments, sanitation and vaccination.

"With antibiotic consumption increasing worldwide, the challenge posed by antibiotic resistance is likely to get worse," said the authors of the study, which was published in Monday's edition of PNAS. "Antibiotic resistance, driven by antibiotic consumption, is a growing global health threat," it said. "As with climate change, there may be an unknown tipping point, and this could herald a future without effective antibiotics."

In the 76 countries studied, the number of so-called "defined daily doses" consumed rose from 21.2 billion in 2000 to 34.8 billion in 2015. Eili Klein, a researcher at the Center for Disease Dynamics, Economics and Policy and one of the study's authors, said the jump signifies "increased access to needed drugs in countries with lots of disease that can be effectively treated with antibiotics." But, Klein warned: "As more and more countries gain access to these drugs, these rates will only increase and that will drive resistance rates higher." One group of experts formed in the United Kingdom in 2014 estimates that in 2016, there were at least 700,000 deaths related to drug-resistant infections.

Over the 16-year period studied, the increase in antibiotics consumption was marginal in the three countries with the highest usage—the United States, France and Italy. But it was a different story elsewhere: in Asia, consumption of antibiotics more than doubled in India, skyrocketed 79 percent in China and rose 65 percent in Pakistan. The three countries are the biggest users of antibiotics among the countries deemed low and middle-income for the purposes of the study. They are also countries that suffer in some areas from poor sanitation, irregular access to vaccines and a lack of cleaning drinking water—all conditions that allow infectious diseases and drug-resistant infections to spread. — AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

248 33 199

Global Medical Center Welcomes Dr. Marzouq Al-Bader

Consultant vascular and general surgery

All general and specialized surgeries such as:

- All critical and non-critical arteries and veins surgeries
- Carrying out delicate procedures such as removing the extra rib
- All methods of treating varicose
- Treating excess perspiration
- Special department for care of injured diabetic foot
- AV connection for dialysis

مركز جلوبال الطبي
Global Medical Center

Telephone: 1871111

Global Medical Center, Bneid Al-Qar
Bour Saeed Street, Block-1, Building-128.

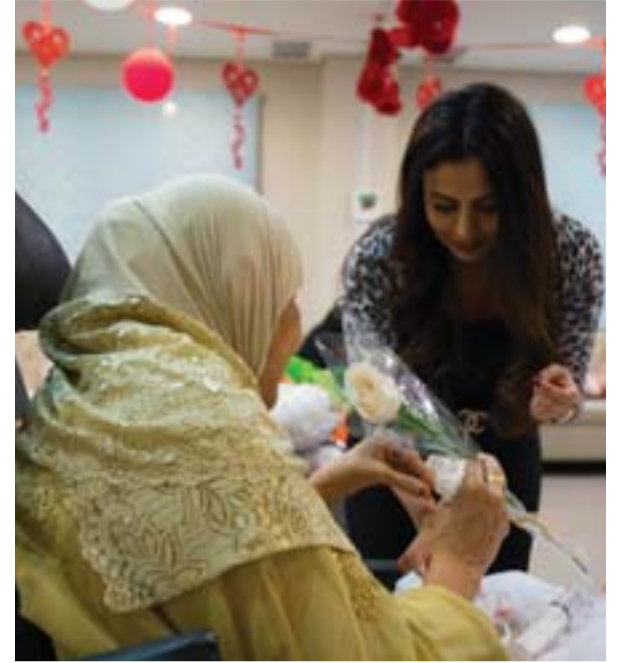
@globalmedcenter
www.globalmed-center.com

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

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

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368

What's On



Ooredoo celebrates Mother's Day with various community activities



Mijbil Alayoub

Out of its commitment to its social responsibility, Ooredoo Kuwait held a number of activities celebrating Mother's Day last Wednesday, expressing its gratitude and appreciation to the incomparable role that mothers play in nurturing the community. The company adorned the screen of its head office in the heart of Kuwait City with the picture of Kuwaiti media personality Aneesa Jaffar, known as Mama Aneesa, who played an instrumental role over several generations

since the 1960's in showcasing the different talents in Kuwait's schools and kindergarten, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education on national television.

In collaboration with Gesha Coffee, Ooredoo gifted flowers, coffee and chocolate to hundreds of women working in the Ministries' Complex to celebrate Mothers' Day, in tandem with the company's deep-rooted belief in celebrating with all segments of society. The company's Corporate Social

Responsibility Department also participated in a celebration event at the Elderly Care Center, where they spent an evening with the elderly citizens staying in the center and distributed flowers and gifts. Ooredoo also celebrated the event with its female staff working in the Ooredoo head office, where it distributed flowers and greeting cards on the occasion, in alignment with the company's internal culture which fosters a one-team spirit.

Commenting on these initiatives, Ooredoo

Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub noted that the celebrations are in alignment with the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging. He added: "It is important for us in Ooredoo to share this happy occasion with all segments of society; it is a humble gesture compared to the great role mothers play in nurturing our society, and we aspire to collaborate with more entities to do more in enriching the community."

An exceptional early bird meeting offer from Symphony Style Hotel

Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait, the jewel of Kuwait City, has your summer social corporate requirements covered with an alluring assortment of special promotions. Book now for a summer meeting, between 15 May and 31 August, 2018, in one of Symphony Style's 18 modern, impeccable meeting rooms and for every 20 people booked you will receive an extra five places free of charge.

Located in the hotel's warm and welcoming Prestige Tower on floors nine to fifteenth, the hotel's meeting rooms are furnished with outstanding facilities that enable organizations to seamlessly conduct business conferences and meetings. The rooms feature stylish and thoughtful interiors with large windows allowing for plenty of natural sunlight and great views. With all crucial details considered, each room is fitted with



state-of-the-art audio-visual and business conferencing technology, high-speed Wi-Fi connectivity, built-in screens and projectors.

In addition to its distinctive meeting rooms, Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait also offers two executive boardrooms on the 16th floor, providing the perfect scene for that stylish meeting or private VIP meetings. As the epicenter of sophisticated social gatherings, the events complex is the city's hotspot for weekday events throughout the summer. Co-located on the second floor Ebreez and Breesim offer the luxury, flexibility and majesty to deliver the perfect event for all occasions.

The ambient Ebreez is the largest of the hotel's two lavish event spaces. Measuring 662msq, Ebreez can comfortably accommodate 650 people for a reception or 450 for a more formal banquet, making it the perfect, versatile venue for a large-scale wedding or corporate gathering. This exceptional space was designed with a meticulously considered color palette to reflect the desert's natural beauty and offers events without pretensions with perfection in delivery. Breesim, with an area of 317msq, can accommodate 150 people, and is the ultimate private space for mid-sized weddings or corporate functions. This masterpiece venue offers a shimmering sight of color to provide magical ambiance, complemented by a delighted curved interior layout.



Symphony Style Hotel brings joy to Farah Specialist Center

Every moment a daughter or a son gaze upon the warmth of their mother's eyes is a moment to be celebrated. Mother's Day merely serves as a reminder for every individual to wholeheartedly treasure every moment spent with the special lady who gives birth and raises strong societies. Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait ensured this special day was celebrated by bringing joy to every mother in the Farah Specialist Center for the care and rehabilitation of elderly.

For its annual tradition, the Responsible Business team went along with representatives from each

department in the hotel to visit the Farah Specialist Center for the care and rehabilitation of elderly, joining the family day event organized in celebration of families and the priceless gift of a mother in each family. Amidst the festivities held on the premises of the elderly care house, Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait distributed flowers amongst all the attendees to further express their gratitude for every special lady attending.

Furthermore, a cake was cut, and pieces given to the audience, spreading the joy in a joyful occasion. It is said that we can never thank our mothers enough for listening to us, protecting, and guiding us. As much as we give our mothers we would never be able to repay them for how much they've endured and struggled to raise us as contributing members of society. However, just as every year, Symphony Style Hotel ensures bringing joy to mothers to reflect to society the need to always cherish every mother with all we have.



KIB celebrates Mother's Day at Yarmouk Nursery

As part of its efforts to commemorate landmark social occasions and events, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently organized a visit to the Yarmouk Nursery to celebrate Mother's Day with children of the nursery and their mothers.

The special celebration included several fun activities and games organized by a team of KIB employees. It also saw the distribution of gifts and flowers to the mothers, as a small token of appreciation and gratitude for their tireless dedication. Moreover, Haboob - the lovable blue bear who is the face of KIB's children's account - was on hand to bring some joy and laughter to the children, distrib-

uting balloons and coloring books and taking part in the fun and games.

On his part, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, said: "We have always been keen on organizing initiatives and activities that reflect the important role KIB plays in supporting the local community." He added: "We believe that these international celebrations present the perfect opportunity for us to give back to all the different segments of our community. Through this event, we were able to show our appreciation for mothers, showing them just how special and valued they really are by the entire community."

Under the umbrella of its leading social responsibility program, KIB always strives to participate in events and organize initiatives that are designed to give back to various segments across the local community. As a core part of its philosophy, the Bank is committed to playing an active role in society, not just as a national financial institution, but as a dedicated corporate citizen as well.



Arab Youth Festival by LAPA

The first phase of the Arab Youth Festival was organized by LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) at Al-Shaheed Park. The event was concluded with a thrilling performance by Egyptian diva Yasmeeen Ali who charmed the audience with her angelic voice - singing wonderful songs. The event was organized in collaboration with NBK.



TV



01:15 Starship Troopers: Traitor Of Mars
02:45 A Kind Of Murder
04:20 Rumble
05:55 A Good Day To Die Hard
07:35 The Bodyguard
09:05 Starship Troopers: Traitor Of Mars



00:45 The Animals' Guide To Survival
01:40 Bad Dog
02:35 Snake Sheila
03:25 Pet Nation Renovation
04:15 The Pool Master
05:02 Wildest Islands
05:49 Untamed & Uncut
06:36 Escape To Chimpanzee Eden



00:40 The Durrells
01:25 Death In Paradise
02:20 Our Girl
03:15 EastEnders
03:45 Doctors
04:15 The Durrells
05:05 Holly City



00:00 Psychic Kids
01:00 My Ghost Story: Caught On Camera
02:00 Jo Frost On Britain's Killer Kids
03:00 Homicide Hunter
04:00 Psychic Kids
05:00 My Ghost Story: Caught On Camera



00:05 Steve Rannazzisi: Manchild
00:55 JB Smoove: That's How I Dooz It
01:45 Tosh.O
02:10 The Opposition With Jordan Klepper

16:35 Friendszone
17:00 Friends
17:23 Friends
17:45 Disaster Date
18:10 Bondi Ink
19:00 Friends
19:25 Friendszone
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood



00:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
00:55 Kids Do The Craziest Things
01:20 The Know It All Guide To...
01:45 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
02:10 What Happened Next?



00:45 Obsession: Dark Desires
01:40 Evil Lives Here
02:35 Married With Secrets
03:30 True Conviction
04:25 Swamp Murders



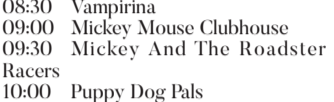
00:00 Hank Zipzer
00:25 Alex & Co.
00:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles



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



00:00 PJ Masks
00:30 Art Attack
00:55 Henry Hugglemonster
01:05 Loopdidoo
01:20 Henry Hugglemonster
01:35 Calimero



00:10 So Cosmo
08:10 El News: Daily Pop
09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Gold Rush
01:28 How Do They Do It?
01:50 Gold Rush: White Water
02:35 Junkyard Empire



06:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
06:25 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
06:50 Phineas And Ferb The Movie
08:15 Disney Mickey Mouse



00:10 Botched
01:00 Botched
01:50 El News
02:50 WAGS

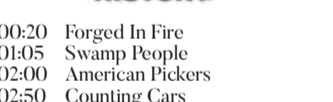
07:10 So Cosmo
08:10 El News: Daily Pop
09:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
10:10 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry



00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street



00:00 Ancient Top 10
01:00 Brad Meltzer's Decoded
02:00 The Universe
02:50 Ancient Aliens: The Ultimate Evidence



00:20 Forged In Fire
01:05 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers
02:50 Counting Cars



00:15 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
00:45 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
01:10 Andy And Ben Eat Australia

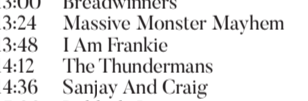
13:35 Maximum Foodie
14:00 Sinfu Sweets
14:30 Gok's Chinese Takeaway
15:25 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen



00:10 Miracle Hospital Jane
01:00 Jane
03:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
04:00 Miracle Hospital



00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig

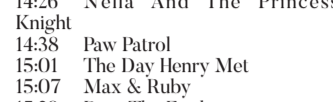


00:06 Max & Ruby
00:28 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:39 Kiva Can Do!
00:50 The Day Henry Met



00:06 Max & Ruby
00:28 Ben & Holly's Little Kingdom
00:39 Kiva Can Do!
00:50 The Day Henry Met

12:52 The Day Henry Met
12:57 Blaze And The Monster Machines
13:19 Blaze And The Monster Machines



13:41 Paw Patrol
13:52 Kid-E-Cats
13:58 Kid-E-Cats
14:04 Shimmer And Shine
14:26 Nella And The Princess Knight



00:15 How I Met Your Mother
00:40 How I Met Your Mother
01:05 Seinfeld
01:30 Seinfeld



01:45 The Parent Trap
04:00 Queen Of Katwe
06:15 Brother Bear 2
07:45 Cars



00:00 DC's Legends Of Tomorrow
01:00 The Catch
01:50 The Last Kingdom
02:40 The Voice

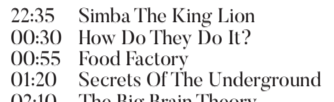


00:00 Scooped
01:30 We're No Angels
03:20 Office Space
04:55 Daddy's Home

11:50 The Remains Of The Day
14:10 African Safari
15:45 Akeelah And The Bee
17:45 Match



23:15 Youth
00:05 Pacific Pirates
01:35 Amila's Secret
02:50 Free Birds
04:25 The Emperor's Secret



22:35 Simba The King Lion
00:30 How Do They Do It?
00:55 Food Factory
01:20 Secrets Of The Underground



23:40 Mythbusters
01:30 Dabang
03:00 Dabang
03:50 The Front ROW



23:30 Veerappan
00:30 House Of D
02:15 Chicago
03:00 Chicago

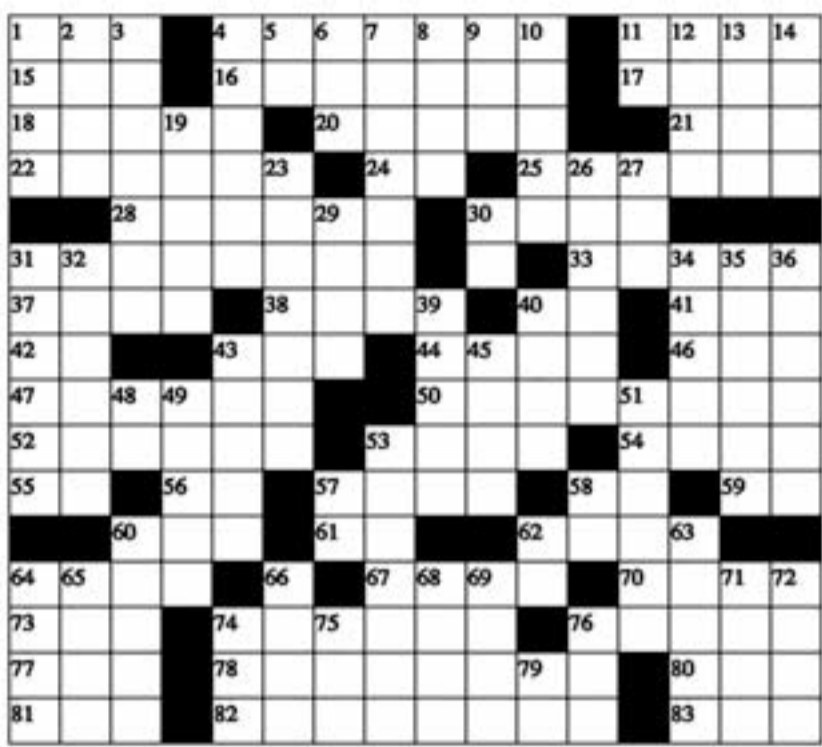


23:45 The Battle Of Shaker Heights
00:00 Cedar Cove
01:00 Cedar Cove
02:00 Grey's Anatomy



23:30 Style By Jury
00:20 Ambulance
01:05 My 3000-Lb Family
01:50 Boiled Up Bodies

CROSSWORD 1870



ACROSS

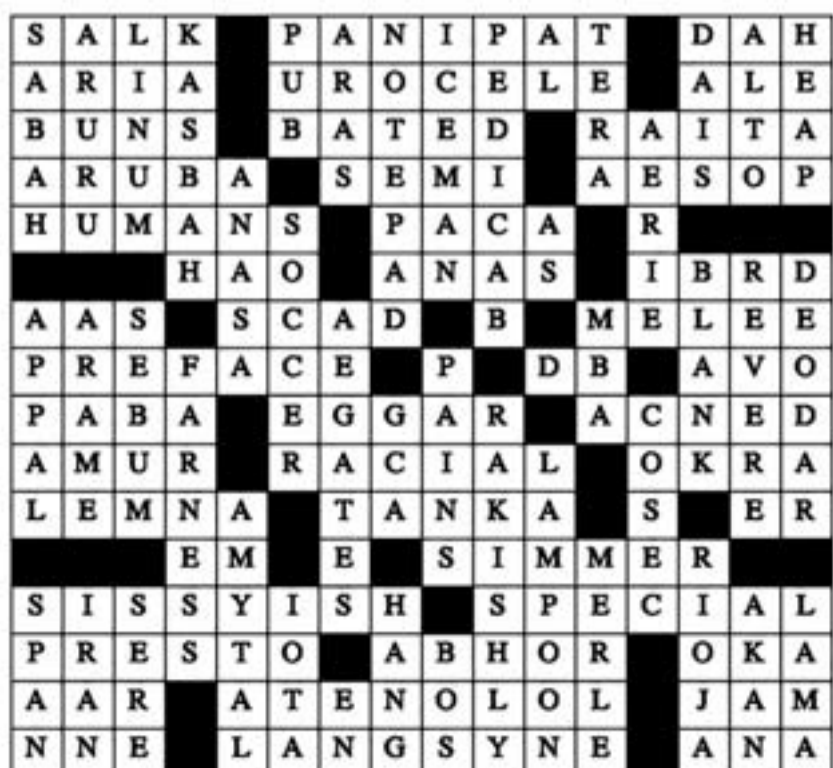
- (folklore) Fairies that are somewhat mischievous.
- A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
- Slightly open.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- Only extant member of the order Rhynchocephalia of large spiny lizard-like diapsid reptiles of coastal islands off New Zealand.
- An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
- A sedimentary rock formed by the deposition of successive layers of clay.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- The 26th letter of the Roman alphabet.
- A card game similar to ecarte.
- 1/1000 gram.
- Filled with the emotional impact of overwhelming surprise or shock.
- Goddess of Nationalist China.
- Study of the literary works of ancient Greece and Rome.
- The 10th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
- (Greek mythology) The Titaness who was mother of Helios and Selene and Eos in ancient mythology.
- A humming noise.
- An associate degree in nursing.
- Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
- Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydrizid) used to treat tuberculosis.
- United States film actress (born in 1949).
- A mountain peak in the Andes in Peru (21,709 feet high).
- The activity of looking thoroughly in order to find something or someone.
- (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
- Half the width of an em.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- Being ten more than one hundred forty.
- Common Indian weaverbird.
- According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
- An anxiety disorder associated with serious traumatic events and characterized by such symptoms as guilt about surviving or reliving the trauma in dreams or numbness and lack of involvement with reality or recurrent thoughts and images.
- A federation of North American labor unions that merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955.
- A strong emotion.
- Resembling an umbel in form.
- A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
- Contemptuous name for a Black man who is abjectly servile and deferential to Whites.
- Consisting of fine particles.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
- A Loloish language.
- A geometric pattern that is repeated at every scale and so cannot be represented by classical geometry.
- Large genus of terrestrial ferns of tropics and subtropics.
- A bivalent and trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

- East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
- Specify individually.
- Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- Empty rhetoric or insincere or exaggerated talk.
- American novelist (1909-1955).
- Tall woody perennial grasses with hollow slender stems especially of the genera Arundo and Phragmites.
- The sacred city of Lamaism.
- An inscription on a tombstone or monument in memory of the person buried there.
- A mountain in the Himalayas in Nepal (27,790 feet high).
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- The persistence of a sound after its source has stopped.
- A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
- Of or relating to or suitable for Lent.
- A small bottle that contains a drug (especially a sealed sterile container for injection by needle).
- A historical region on northwestern India and northern Pakistan.
- A member of the Semitic speaking people of northern Ethiopia.
- A promontory in northern Morocco opposite the Rock of Gibraltar.
- Clothing of a distinctive style or for a particular occasion.
- Foul with waste matter.
- (in Gnosticism) A divine power or nature emanating from the Supreme Being and playing various roles in the operation of the universe.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- Any plant of the genus Erica.
- A flourish added after or under your signature (originally to protect against forgery).
- After the expected or usual time.
- Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
- A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
- The woody part of plants.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- An ancient upright stone slab bearing markings.
- A rounded thickly curled hairdo.
- A visual presentation showing how something works.
- Exhibiting or restored to vigorous good health.
- The sixth month of the civil year.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- Young of any of various canines such as a dog or wolf.
- The compass point that is one point west of due north.
- (Brit) A tough youth of 1950's and 1960's wearing Edwardian style clothes.
- A brittle silver-white metalloid element that is related to selenium and sulfur.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Taking a good, long look at the circumstances of your life is a priority. You could feel left out or overlooked because you weren't included in an outing; remember that just because others go out without you doesn't mean you aren't wanted! An emotional issue could keep you on edge today but you know of something that could help: all you have got to do it take action. Being very unorganized and unable to find things serves to frustrate you immensely. Healthcare and fitness take priority as you're determined to take care of these in the best way. When you join a group you may feel blocked or stymied in some way. An argument could cause you to say something that could work against you: choosing not to lash out is definitely possible.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You are determined to repair and emotional upheaval with someone dear to you: this person could be on that holds grudges and never forgives or forgets. Your practical side does battle with your whimsical side: you decide which side wins. Your thoughtful nature helps to get a distasteful situation taken care of: your sincerity is key. You're on go when it comes to taking care of financial matters that could seem complicated. Being organized and on top of things is important to you now: this could indicate tax information. Making a difference in someone's life is something you attempt and accomplish. Karma's good when you make it so! You're excited and looking forward to being with someone you haven't visited with in quite some time.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You find yourself involved with someone younger who looks to you for answers about life and death: no fear, you'll know exactly what to say as you speak from your heart. Regarding the circumstance of your life, you seek to make something better: something you have dealt with for some time is indicated. Buying new real estate is strongly forecast: this could pertain to domestic or commercial property. You find all eyes are on you as you explain how to operate something at work. Someone surprises you with exceptionally good news. You decide to try a new recipe that you have been curious about: someone could object and be hesitant to give it a try. You especially appreciate the peace and positive energy of your home and belongings.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Someone turns to you for strength and wisdom. A past mistake pays off as you realize what's at the root of your making that decision. You're able to fit a workout class into your very hectic schedule. A day to spend with children unfolds to bring enjoyment to adults: someone younger holds you heart in their hands. There seems to be strong support and encouragement from everyone regarding a new assignment or duty. Your humor is the most prominent thing about you today. Looking deeply into a certain situation uncovers solutions to make this even better than you thought at first. A friend comes to your rescue when you're in need of help in a sensitive circumstance. Becoming aware of an exchange between two people sets you free.



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 come to appreciate something others take for granted: you're experiencing the important role in life played by having your basic needs taken care of. Getting to the heart of the matter is likely now: you're surely able to move forward. You could witness a very unpleasant exchange between coworkers or family members. You have reached a point where you have no choice but to make changes in an important area of your life. You could find it necessary to do more work on your taxes. Spring fever brings you closer to finishing a seasonal project. Finding a simple solution gives you encouragement. A need for intimacy could be fulfilled by someone you reach to for attention: this person truly loves and adores you now and forever.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Something happens at work that reveals someone's true feelings about a project even though they try to hide them: you assure this person you completely understand and they have done nothing wrong. You're able to put the right people in the right places as a brand-new undertaking beings: life is sometimes comparable to a chess game, when pieces are correctly placed you win! You're in a mood to get things done on every level no matter what: someone on your team is by your side and doing their very best to help attain your goals. You no longer allow yourself to be stepped on or over: taking charge of your destiny is no longer difficult. Having a special night with a sweetheart or spouse means more tonight than others as you share a good secret.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You wake up ready to face the day. Something you focus on actually moves ahead of schedule: working with others almost seems to be magic. Your energy is forceful and strong as you listen, then pursue valuable solutions and tricks that make your job easier. You'd like to tell someone a secret but you're not sure how they will react: this might regard something that could seem controversial but really isn't. You're thankful for your position in life. You embrace an opportunity to make your good qualities known to the boss: your value is already well-known by this person. You enjoy sharing new ideas with like-minded people. You try something new you don't like. A new person you're interested in getting to know better gives you a call.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You enter into a detailed conversation with someone who seeks your help. You find yourself attending one social gathering after the next: some are work, some pleasure, but buying new clothes is justified. A new project lets you use your natural talents working on something you're interested in. A focus on your emotional well-being also helps your sweetheart or mate: you can't starve yourself enough to feed anyone! There's a time for everything: the secret to success is knowing which times fit which actions. You could find yourself involved in a lose-lose situation: in other words, there can be no winner in this situation. A new friend shows you a great time! You rest really well with everything in its place, just where you like it.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Not a day to go deeply into anything serious or otherwise: a sort of frivolous day is very strongly indicated. Instead of becoming frustrated when unable to make sense of anything, you decide to take the day off and pursue only lighthearted, almost meaningless tasks. You consider that this is going with the flow. You let someone unburden themselves to you: you could be very surprised with what this person confesses. Being the trustworthy person you are is sometimes a burden, but one you gladly shoulder for those you care about. You stay within safe boundaries as you don't wish to tempt fate. You'd rather be safe than sorry: you know this from experience! You seek balance and stability during the newest cycle you have entered.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You seem to know exactly what's needed in an emergency situation: this isn't serious, just something that needs taken care of. Your feelings grow and deepen regarding a person or perhaps a situation. You may feel as though your hands are tied: take this opportunity to learn lessons in patience! Stay away from shopping no matter how badly you have got the urge: keep your eyes on your financial goals for strength in this. Don't be surprised when you feel as though you're going to explode! Breathing deeply and moving forward go hand in hand: hold tightly to your beliefs no matter what anyone says. A certain person is persistent in questioning something new. You find it most necessary to keep your own secrets close and away from others.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Nothing can take your mind off of getting your business in order. This could indicate financial, domestic, health and job-related matters. Your organizational skills join with your in-born practicality to create successful results. Be mindful of your tendency to take on too much and become frustrated: you can change this energy if you so choose. Joining with others to repair something works well at this time: different opinions and approaches create a good balance for reaching the goal. Your timing is perfect when you appear at someone's doorstep to deliver some good news! You may be surprised at the reaction of someone you help. Others enjoy being with you because of your spontaneity and positive outlook: enjoy your time with these people.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Songs From the Year 2001

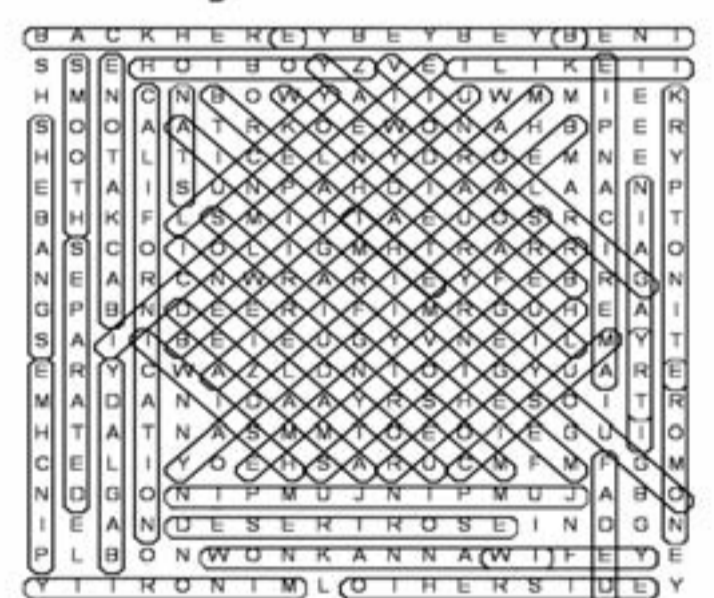
Find and circle all of the songs from 2001 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell an additional song title from 2001.



- | | | | |
|---------------|---------------|----------------|-------------|
| AGAIN | DRIVE | KRYPTONITE | PLAY |
| ALL FOR YOU | EMOTION | LADY MARMALADE | PROMISE |
| ANGEL | EVERYWHERE | LOVE | RIDE WIT ME |
| AUSTIN | FAMILY AFFAIR | MISSING YOU | SOUTH SIDE |
| BE LIKE THAT | FIESTA | MOST GIRLS | STUTTER |
| BEAUTIFUL DAY | FILL ME IN | MUSIC | SURVIVOR |
| BUTTERFLY | FOLLOW ME | MY BABY | THANK YOU |
| CONTAGIOUS | HERO | ONE MORE DAY | U REMIND ME |
| CRAZY | I WISH | ONLY TIME | VIDEO |
| DANCE WITH ME | IRRESISTIBLE | OOCHIE WALLY | WALK ON |
| DIFFERENCES | JADED | OUTSIDE | WHO I AM |
| DIG IN | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Songs From the Year 2000



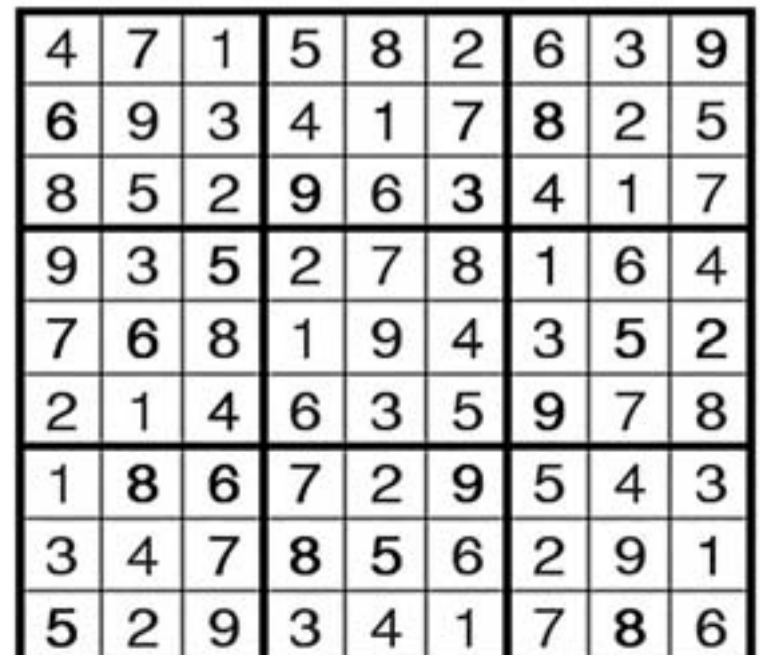
- | | | | |
|---------------|-----------------|-----------------|--------------|
| AMAZED | CALIFORNICATION | INCOMPLETE | FINCH ME |
| AMERICAN PIE | DESERT ROSE | JUMPIN' JUMPIN' | SAY MY NAME |
| BACK AT ONE | FADED | KRYPTONITE | SEPARATED |
| BACK HERE | GIRL ON TV | LUCKY | SHE BANGS |
| BAG LADY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

The hidden message is: SHOW ME THE MEANING OF BEING LONELY

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle | Fashion

French fashion designer Christophe Guillarme (center) walks on the catwalk with models wearing his creations during the Kuwait International Fashion Week, in Kuwait City on March 22, 2018. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Models wear creations by French designer Christophe Guillarme during the Kuwait International Fashion Week, in Kuwait City on March 22, 2018.

KIFW

Where East meets West

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-Boussouni, Christophe Guillarme, Lamsit Fan, Boudi Dib, Pria Kataria Puri, Rasit Bagzibaghi, Anfal Al-Saleh and Dagla.

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.

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.

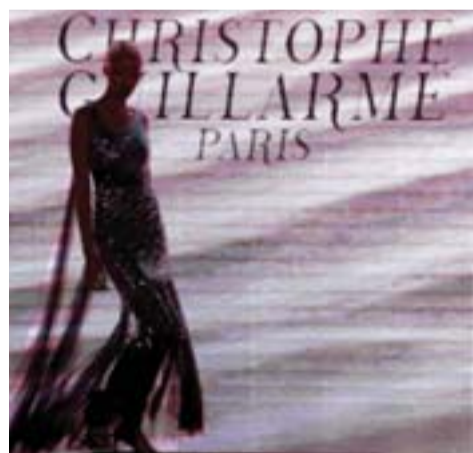
"We were thrilled to partner with Kuwait International Fashion Week," said Nasr Al-Jairoudi, Al-Ghanim Auto, the Lincoln importer-dealer in Kuwait. "We believe that this is a great opportunity to communicate the Lincoln brand's passion for creativity, design, luxury and craftsmanship to the audiences 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."

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

Kuwait International Fashion Week' 2018 opens in a stunning style at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa's beachfront sponsored by the Title Sponsor 'Lincoln.'

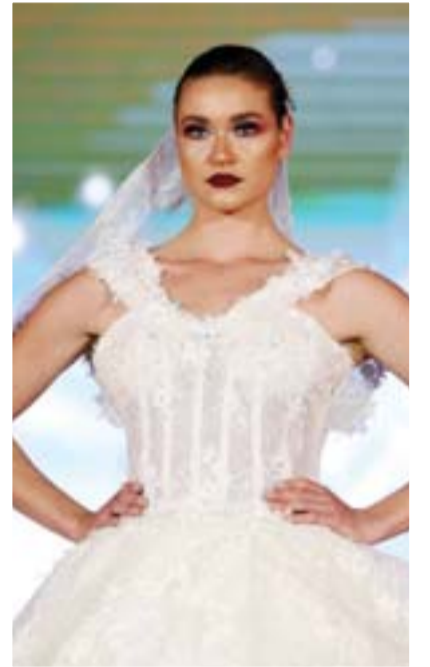
partners who supported the success of the event such as: Brigitte Khoury Beauty and Lounge, Hollywood Smile Clinic, Lotus Clinic, K-Star, RB agency, Saray perfumes, Diet Care, Paparazi Production, beb card, Trunk and Kuwait Times Newspaper as media partner. The event was covered by Adel Al-Faresi, Paparazi Production.



Shimmer & dazzle were the colors this season



Kuwaiti TV presenter, television host and former fashion model wear a creation designed by Lamsit Fan "art touch" boutique, during the Kuwait international fashion week in Kuwait City.



Models wear creations designed by Lamsit Fan "art touch" boutique, during the Kuwait international fashion week in Kuwait City.



By Sahar Moussa, Ben Garcia and Faten Omar

Kuwait's most awaited fashion event was hosted by Bibi Al-Khuodari, a journalist by profession. Al-Khuodari, who has been working with Al-Qabas newspaper from the past 12 years and is also a TV editor said, "This is my first time hosting a fashion event in Kuwait, and the journey has been quite a thrill. I got the chance to meet many local and international designers from all around the fashion industry."

Christophe Guillaume, Paris-based designer was one of the key trend setters at the fashion week. He finds women of Kuwait very interesting and stylish. "This was my first visit to Kuwait. I find the women here to be very stylish, elegant. I've noticed that they like wearing designer wear. Observing their fashion sense has been amazing. The fact that they're always wearing just the right fabric and color highlights that 'they are into fashion.' For them fashion is life, like a full time job; it's a way of life," he said.

He added, "I work with a few boutiques in Kuwait on collaborative basis. When they invited me on this show, I grabbed the opportunity, to share my fashion with Kuwait. Also, I wanted to know how it feels to be a fashion designer here." Guillaume's fashion ideas, inspirations and creations come from his daily experience with people that he meets in different walks of life.

According to Guillaume, this season's summer color will be 'gold'. "People like gold this year. In fact, I want gold, and maybe the color gold will also dominate the next winter season. They want sand colors, and the most popular one is the embroidered sunflowers. Flowers are still very much in and will overpower the color in fashion, the materials are mostly from elegant silk fabric and cotton," he said.

Lebanese designer Boudi Dib said, "My readymade collection is destined to the contemporary man who needs to be fashionable and comfortable at the same time. High end fabrics were used such as linen, cotton and wool, in order to reach the highest level of comfort and durability." As for his experience during the KIFW he said, "Collaborating with KIFW has been an amazing experience that gave me the opportunity to market our vision in the best possible way."

Pria Kataria Puri is an Indian internationally acclaimed fashion designer who has won 30 awards for her contribution in the fashion in the fashion industry, she has single handedly made the Kaftan a 'must have' in

every woman's wardrobe and earned the prestigious title of 'The Kaftan Queen'. Pria showcased 'La Lumiere' glamorous evening wear collection in exotic French crystal fabric for multicultural, multifaceted women of today, who believe in elegant, luxurious, timeless pieces. Pria showcased her signature style such as the glittering Kaftan gowns, shimmering jumpsuits and pantsuits, babydoll cancan frocks and capes were accessorized with ostrich feathers and ostentatious fascinators in classic colors like champagne gold, white, rose gold and black.

"I was very delighted and honored to showcase at Kuwait International Fashion Week, I consider Kuwaiti women as the most fashionable women in the world, who understand luxury, style and quality as they are also avid shoppers, making Kuwait a big market for women's luxury fashion," Pria said.

Turkish brothers Onay and Rasit Bagzibagli, owners of Dervis Bagzibagli stores presented their collection at KIFW 2018. Onay defined his menswear collection as 'exceptional'. He said, "No matter what the trends are, a really strong suit will never be irrelevant." Onay noted that his collection of tuxedo is unique and classic where he used navy, gray, and black jackets made of mixed fabric of silk. "I put everything that I have into a suit while making it," he said.

He revealed his plans to expand and open branches in Europe, England and Dubai. He added, "My first ever visit to Kuwait for the fashion show was short but I'm soon planning to come and study the Kuwaiti market to consider it, especially the Avenues mall."

As for Rasit Bagzibagli's women's wear collection, it was very feminine and he played with a lot of different fabrics and colors. His shimmering yet elegant collection gave great definition to the models' bodies making it visually attractive.



Lifestyle | Fashion

Indian designer Priya Kataria Puri (center) is applauded on stage at the end of her show during the Kuwait International fashion week in Kuwait City.



KUWAIT
INTERNATIONAL
FASHION
WEEK 2
أسبوع الموضة العالمية
الثاني



Models wear creations designed by Indian designer Priya Kataria Puri, during the Kuwait international fashion week in Kuwait City.

Lifestyle | Fashion



Models wear creations designed by Indian designer Pria Kataria Puri, during the Kuwait international fashion week in Kuwait City.



Models wear creations designed by Lebanese designer Boudi Dib (center), during the Kuwait international fashion week in Kuwait City.



KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK 2
أسبوع الذهب للموضة العالمية الثاني

Fashion and dentists
KIFW this year teamed up with dentists to be sponsors at the event in a belief that good and healthy teeth go hand in hand. Dr. Husam Al-Khateeb, Hollywood Smile Dental Center General Manager said, "We became partners with the fashion event on the sole belief that fashion and looks go hand in hand. A person's face should match the dresses that they wear. The best thing is when even though you are not smiling, you are the most beautiful among all. Smile is the best accessory you can wear with a dress. So as a dental clinic, we want to help people wear that kind of confidence. We do aesthetics and cosmetic dentistry surgery," he said. Hollywood Smile Dental Center is located in Salmiya. The second branch will open next year in Fahaheel. "We have doctors that are very popular in dental surgery; Kuwaitis want to look good, and they are all interconnected. If you want to look good, first fix your smile," he added.

Dr. Khalid Al-Kandari, Lotus Clinic General Manager said, "As we were interested in targeting a new segment of beauty seekers, what better than a great fashion show to meet such people and participate in completing their beauty with a touch of health. Our professional team at Lotus clinic gives people the confidence 'to dress to impress' starting with healthy teeth to brighten the look, and to their face and body

health for shining beauty. And yes it was a great experience and we would love to do it again to help our beloved ones to look healthy and beautiful while enjoying their appearance at such a great event."

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.





Photo shows Kuwaiti hostess Bibi Al-Khuodari during the event.



KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL FASHION WEEK 2
أسبوع الذهب للموضة العالمية الثاني



Turkish designers Onay (left) and Rasiit Bagzibagli is applauded on the catwalk at the end of their show during the Kuwait international fashion week in Kuwait City.

Models wear creations by Turkish designer Rasiit Bagzibagli during the Kuwait international fashion week.



Models wear creations by Turkish designer Onay Bagzibagli during the Kuwait international fashion week.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2018



Models from RB agency posing with Kuwait International Fashion Week organizer Sahar Moussa (center) with the creative director Aiden Can (fifth to the left) and the managers of RB agency Hamid Yala (sixth to the left) and Adiane Branci (sixth to the right). — Adel Faresi

First *Van Gogh* in 20 years to go under hammer in Paris

The first Van Gogh painting to go under the hammer in France in more than two decades was unveiled yesterday. "Women Mending Nets in the Dunes", which the Dutch artist painted early in his career at Scheveningen near The Hague, is expected to go for around five million euros (\$6 million) when it is auctioned in June. But with the art market booming, and prices for artists like Vincent Van Gogh rocketing, experts said it was hard to predict exactly when the bidding would stop. The scene dates from the same period in 1882 when Van Gogh painted "View of the Sea at Scheveningen", which was stolen by the Italian Camorra organized crime syndicate from the Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam in 2002 and discovered in Naples in 2016 thanks to a tip-off from a suspected drug trafficker.

The oil on paper, which belongs to a European collector, also graced the walls of the Van Gogh Museum for

several years after being previously on show in Montreal. Bruno Jaubert, of auction house Artcurial, said the work comes from very early in Van Gogh's career, when he was painting working-class people in his homeland. "He had only started painting two years before," he told AFP. Jaubert described the sale as an art market event, "with fewer and fewer Van Goghs coming to the market." The world record for a Van Gogh was for his "Portrait of Dr Gachet", which sold for \$82.5 million in 1990. "Women Mending Nets in the Dunes" will be sold on June 4 along with five minor works by Van Gogh's friend Paul Gauguin. One of them, a portrait of the artist's childhood friend Claude Antoine Charles Favre, is expected to go for between 180,000 and 250,000 euros. — AFP



The painting 'Raccommodeuses de filet dans les dunes' by Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh is presented at Artcurial auction house in Paris yesterday. — AFP

Spy drama 'The Americans' takes final bow, timed to USSR's demise

A hit TV drama "The Americans" prepares for its final jaw-dropping season, set against the backdrop of the fall of the Soviet Union, the Cold War-era spy thriller has never felt more topical. The show's creator, former CIA officer Joe Weisberg, recalls with amusement the question he was asked when he first presented his idea back in 2012: "Who really cares about US-Russia relations?" Since then, Russia went to war with Ukraine, annexed Crimea, backed America's foe Bashar al-Assad in Syria and, according to US intelligence agencies, interfered in the 2016 presidential election with the aim of helping Donald Trump win.

The sixth and final season, set to air from Wednesday on FX, finds Soviet sleeper agents Elizabeth and Philip Jennings still posing as an average American couple in the suburbs, with two kids and jobs at a travel agency. Philip—whose commitment to the KGB has wavered over the years—has left the game of spycraft, but Elizabeth—the idealistic Russian patriot—is all in, and their daughter Paige is along for the ride. Elizabeth is desperate to gather intelligence on the INF treaty that saw the United States and Soviet Union eliminate part of their nuclear arsenals in 1987.

And their marriage is as chilly as the Cold War standoff between Washington and Moscow. "Being a girl and getting to play this character is pretty cool. She's so fierce and single-minded," Russell told Variety magazine's "Remote Controlled" podcast, calling her work on the show "by far my most fun role." "Everything at home that Elizabeth is fighting for is falling apart, is in complete anxiety and turmoil."

'Everyone dies'

This season, Elizabeth finds herself trapped between the reforms championed by Mikhail Gorbachev and the hardliners at the KGB. And she opts to take the hard line. "You're amazing, but this is finally getting to you," Philip tells his

wife. "The Americans" has been one of the most riveting spy dramas ever put on television, but it is also a gripping portrayal of a family, typical at first glance but layered and complex in reality. "This show isn't about spies. It's about two people that are married to each other and happened to be spies," Weisberg said at a screening in New York. Russell, who lives with co-star Matthew Rhys in real life, says, "Set in this weird, heightened spy world, it just allows all of the feelings of a long-term relationship, specifically a marriage, to play out in very big firework ways."



A still from 'The Americans'.

In the world of "The Americans," everything can be read at two or three levels, and nothing is simple, all while remaining faithful to what actually happened in the 1980s—the history, the music, the clothes, the cars. "That's what this show is so good at, the triple meaning of everything. Every conversation, everyone, has so much connotation and further meaning than surface value," Rhys said.

No other network series has dared play out entire scenes in a foreign language—mainly Russian—so as not to betray the realism of the subject matter. Of course, there is a fair bit of action as well, and after more than 70 episodes, Elizabeth and Philip have killed their fair share of adversaries. In that sense, the final season will be the climax. No one associated with the show would reveal any details, but Rhys joked: "Everyone dies. Pretty simple." — AFP