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No Zika virus cases detected in Kuwait: Health Ministry



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Egypt actress Youstra aims to raise Mideast AIDS awareness



McIlroy inspired by 'unreal' Djokovic



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PACI TO INCREASE CIVIL ID FEES TO KD 5 FROM APRIL 1

SILK CITY TO BE FINANCED THROUGH BOT, PPP



Min 07°
Max 21°
High Tide 07:38 & 18:33
Low Tide 01:16 & 12:22

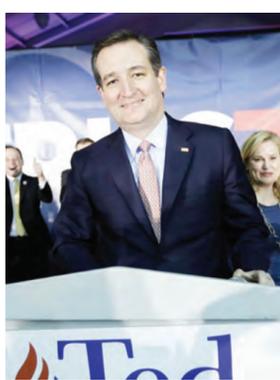
WHITE HOUSE RACE WIDE OPEN

CRUZ BESTS TRUMP, RUBIO • CLINTON EDGES SANDERS

DES MOINES, Iowa: The US presidential race looked suddenly wide open yesterday after frontrunners Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton suffered chastening evenings in Iowa, the first step on the long road to the White House. It was a particularly humbling experience for Trump, who cut a forlorn figure after Republican archrival Ted Cruz streaked to victory in the Iowa caucuses, staking his claim as the new standard bearer for the conservative camp going on to New Hampshire.

And if she was in any doubt before Iowa, former secretary of state Clinton now knows that she has a real fight on her hands in the shape of Bernie Sanders, after she saw off the self-proclaimed Democratic Socialist by the thinnest of margins. The months-long presidential contest now kicks into high gear, with Democratic and Republican debates this week building up to next Tuesday's New Hampshire primaries.

Trump, the billionaire real-estate mogul and reality television star



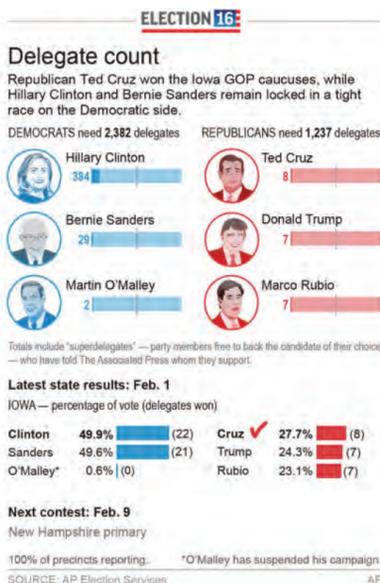
DES MOINES, Iowa: (Left) Republican presidential candidate Sen Ted Cruz speaks during a caucus night rally at the Iowa State Fairgrounds on Monday. (Right) Democratic presidential candidate and former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks to supporters during her caucus night event at the Olmsted Center at Drake University on Monday. — AP/AFP

whose populist campaign turned conventional politics - and wisdom - on its head, also now faces a second genuine threat: From Marco Rubio,



who chalked up more than 23 percent to Trump's 24 percent in the Iowa caucuses.

Continued on Page 13



By A Saleh and B Izzak

KUWAIT: Director of The Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) Musaed Mahmoud Al-Asoussi said that PACI will increase the charges collected for issuing civil ID cards from KD 2 to KD 5 and the charges for issuing a replacement from KD 10 to KD 20 from April. Asoussi explained that the fee increases had been recommended by the Audit Bureau because the actual cost of issuing ID cards exceeds KD 4.5, while the current fee is only KD 2.

Asoussi said PACI had accordingly finished adjusting its systems and that the recommendation had been reviewed by the fatwa and legislation department and PACI's board of directors before Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah decided putting the new fees into effect from April 1.

Asoussi added that PACI has around 136,000 cards ready for collection and urged citizens and expats to hurry up and collect them because the new fee would be applied even if the card had been issued before April 1 but collected after this date. He said PACI would soon receive a new printer to meet growing demand. "PACI issues around 9,000 ID cards and distributes 8,000-10,000 cards daily," he underlined.

Meanwhile, head of the National Assembly priorities committee MP Youssef Al-Zalzal said yesterday that the mega Silk City project will be funded through several means of finance including the Build-Operate-Transfer and Public Private Partnership schemes. The lawmaker said the project is very huge, which involves building a new city in Subbiya besides other facilities. The project is scheduled to be debated by the Assembly on Feb 9 along with government proposals to lift or cut subsidies.

The government is expected to brief the Assembly with a comprehensive plan to cut spending and introduce economic reforms after the finance ministry announced the 2016/2017 budget with a record budget of over KD 11.5 billion.

Continued on Page 13

ISRAEL RAZES EU-FUNDED BUILDINGS

TATA RENAMES 'ZICA' CAR AS VIRUS SPREADS

NEW DELHI: India's biggest carmaker Tata Motors said yesterday it would rename its new Zica hatchback as global alarm grows over an outbreak of the identical-sounding Zika virus. Tata Motors has in recent weeks been heavily promoting the small Zica - whose name stands for "zippy car" - with a marketing campaign starring Barcelona footballer Lionel Messi. But its launch comes at an unfortunate time, with the mosquito-borne Zika virus spreading rapidly through Latin America, where it has been blamed for a surge in brain-damaged babies.

"Empathizing with the hardships being caused by the recent 'Zika' virus outbreak across many countries, Tata Motors, as a socially responsible company, has decided to rebrand the car," the company said in a statement. The car, aimed at young people, is due to go on public show at India's Auto Expo 2016 which opens in New Delhi this week. "While it carries the 'Zica' label for the duration of the event, the new name will be announced after a few weeks, ensuring all necessary consumer/branding and regulatory aspects are addressed, and the launch will take place thereafter," the statement said.

The World Health Organization on Monday declared an international health emergency over the Zika virus, which has spread to more than 20 countries and territories. It said the disease was "strongly suspected" to be linked to a large number of babies

Continued on Page 13

JERUSALEM: Israeli forces demolished 24 Palestinian buildings in a disputed military zone in the West Bank yesterday, including 10 funded by the European Union, leaving families homeless, authorities and residents said. Soldiers destroyed the structures in and around the village of Khirbet Jenbah south of Hebron, the Association of Civil Rights in Israel said. Israeli officials said the buildings were illegal. An EU spokesman denounced the demolitions

and said that 10 of the buildings had been constructed with funds from ECHO, the European Commission's humanitarian arm.

The soldiers arrived at around 7:00 am (0500 GMT) and carried out the demolitions, leaving 12 families temporarily homeless, said Nidal Younes, head of the local council of a neighboring village. "In total it is around 80 people," he told AFP.

Continued on Page 13



GOLAN: Ultraorthodox Jewish youths (left) argue with Arab boys at the Israeli Mount Hermon ski resort on the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights on Jan 21, 2016. — AFP

SKIING IN GOLAN, ON EDGE OF SYRIA'S WAR

MOUNT HERMON: The snowy ridge of Mount Hermon separates two worlds. In one, Syria's war rages. In the other, Israeli tourists slalom down ski slopes or drink mulled wine to the sound of techno music. On a clear day Damascus is visible from the top of the ski lift 2,200 m above sea level in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights where tourists reap their sunscreen. The Syrian capital is only 40 km away but there is no access to it as Israel and Syria are still officially at war.

Israel seized most of the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed the territory in a move never recognized by the international community. For Israelis, the Hermon range, straddling Lebanon and the Syrian and Israeli-held sectors of the Golan, is a highly strategic area under close surveillance. But every year when the snowflakes fall, Mount Hermon becomes a ski resort unlike perhaps any other in the world.

Skiers thinking of venturing off-piste are discouraged by the large signs warning of landmines, while in the distance antennas mark vast Israeli military bases. Soldiers are everywhere. Chair lifts are

close to military outposts where soldiers scan the horizon with binoculars. "If Syrians want to infiltrate here then they should be very good skiers," jokes Nabir Abu Saleh, head of the ski patrol station, pointing to the steep slope forming a natural buffer adjacent to the Syrian side. "And if it is summer, they would have to be motocross champions."

The Israeli army is less fearful of infiltration than of stray shells fired by the Syrian military or rebels. "We have already had to evacuate the site on several occasions. We're very well organized," Liron Mills, the director of the site, told AFP. "We do not feel the war here. It is protected. There is the army, the police and we are in complete coordination with them," says Mills, who is also a ski instructor with reservists for the Israeli army.

In his spare time, he introduces young conscripts deployed to the area to ski basics. Despite their white camouflage dress, soldiers are easily identified on the slopes, rifles strapped around their necks as they carefully practice manoeuvres amid more skilled skiers.

Continued on Page 13

NEW OIL DEAL CAN DRAW LESSONS FROM '98

LONDON: After a year of secret diplomacy and hushed-up private talks around the world, OPEC's mighty Saudi Arabia and rival Venezuela were persuaded to cut a deal by non-OPEC Mexico which overcame mutual acrimony and led to a much-needed rise in oil prices. It was 1998, trust had long broken down within the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and it took outside mediation as a last resort to stop the squabbling to clinch deals at secret meetings in Riyadh, Madrid and Miami.

Now, with oil prices touching their lowest level since 2003, OPEC officials and deal brokers are looking back nearly two decades and asking whether a behind-the-scenes deal to curb oil output between OPEC and non-OPEC Russia could be struck. Some see OPEC rifts as insur-

mountable and Russia as a wild card that cannot be trusted, but others say economic necessity to boost oil revenue could overcome acrimony and distrust and lead to a global deal to cut supply and mop up the glut.

There are plenty of reasons, however, to dispel optimism. Unlike in 1998, the challenge goes beyond rebuilding bridges between just two OPEC producers. It pitches the interests of Saudi Arabia alongside fast-rising OPEC producers Iran and Iraq as well as non-OPEC Russia, the world's largest oil nation. All four are involved in conflict in the Middle East but also desperately need money to keep their oil-dependent economies afloat and meet social costs.

"The 1997/98 deal brokered between Saudi, Venezuela and Mexico took over a year to negotiate and it was touch and go as to whether it

would get done or not," said veteran OPEC-watcher Yasser Elguindi of Medley Global Advisors. But low prices are making producers desperate. Prices sank to below \$30 per barrel this year from as high as \$115 a barrel just 18 months ago due to one of the worst oil gluts in history.

This perfect storm was due to a boom in the extraction of oil from shale rock in the United States and a decision by the Saudi ruling elite to ramp up crude supply to regain market share from higher-cost producers. Saudi Arabia has pushed its output to record highs over the past year above 10 million barrels per day, almost equal to Russia. Iraq also raised production sharply above four million bpd over the past months as foreign investment in oil fields paid dividends.

Continued on Page 13



MUSAFIR JENBAH: Palestinian children search for toys in the remains of their home after it was demolished by Israeli bulldozers in this area which includes several villages, south of the West Bank city of Hebron yesterday. — AFP