



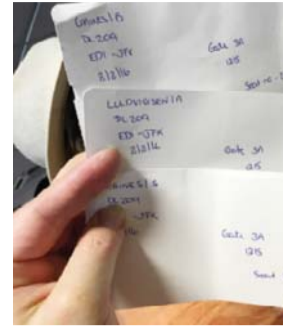
Cabinet irked at Kuwait's absence from Rio Games



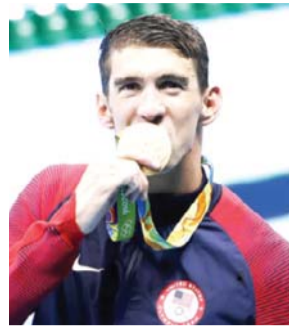
A star rises from poverty, killed defying Pakistan norms



Power outage at Delta causes cancellations, flight delays



Gold for Phelps as records tumble in Olympic pool



FUEL REFORM WILL SERVE FISCAL POLICY: MOODY'S

MOVE TO BOOST KUWAIT FINANCES HIT BY OIL PLUNGE



Min 32°
Max 48°
High Tide 03:50 & 15:48
Low Tide 10:05 & 22:10

150 FILS
NO: 16957
40 PAGES



HIJABI FENCER MAKES US OLYMPICS HISTORY

RIO DE JANEIRO: American Ibtihaj Muhammad looked like all the other fencers when she stepped on the piste, save for the nondescript black scarf covering her head. With that small gesture, Muhammad made history. Muhammad became the first American athlete yesterday to compete in the Olympics with a hijab, which she wears to adhere to the tenets of her Muslim faith. Muhammad, ranked eighth in the world in sabre, beat Ukrainian Olena Kravatska 15-13 in her first match before falling to France's Cecilia Berder 15-12 in the round of 16.

Muhammad will compete again on Saturday in the team sabre event. "I feel like it's a blessing to be able to represent so many people who don't have voices, who don't speak up," Muhammad said. "It's just been a really remarkable experience." Muhammad, a New Jersey native and three-time NCAA All-American from Duke, became an instant star when she qualified for her first Olympics earlier this year.

Muhammad embraced the spotlight, which helped make her an unlikely face of the US team given how little publicity fencing typically receives. "It represents who she's been her entire life. Ever since she was a little girl, she never let anything hold her back. She never set limits. She's always striving to be the very best," said Ibtihaj's brother Qareeb, who was overcome with emotion when he saw his sister compete. "Despite the adversity she's faced; being a Muslim, being an African-American, being a female, she's still confident in her ability to be successful. She's my hero."

Continued on Page 13



RIO DE JANEIRO: US' Ibtihaj Muhammad celebrates winning against Ukraine's Olena Kravatska in their women's individual sabre qualifying bout as part of the fencing event of the Rio 2016 Olympic Games yesterday at the Carioca Arena 3. — AFP (Full Olympics coverage on Pages 17-20)

KUWAIT: The recently-approved restructuring of fuel prices by Kuwait will be helpful for implementing the state's belt-tightening policy and lowering spending, according to the internationally-renowned Moody's Corporation. These fuel price reforms are credit positive for the sovereign state because they will lower current expenditures and bolster government finances dented by the downturn in global oil prices, while reducing wasteful overconsumption. The Cabinet approved a series of fuel-related subsidy reforms, including an 83 percent increase in higher quality ultra-premium petrol prices and a 42 percent increase in lower-quality octane-91 petrol prices, which will go into effect on Sept 1.

Kuwait, also according to Moody's report, has been slower than regional peers in developing its non-oil and private sectors and is particularly vulnerable to oil price declines because oil- and gas-related revenues have historically accounted for around 80 percent of government revenues, although this decreased to 70 percent in 2015 because of the sharp drop in oil prices.

Total revenues declined by approximately 41 percent in 2015, and it is forecast to decline another 14 percent this year. At the same time, total expenditures declined 16.5 percent in 2015, but they are budgeted to increase by 1.8 percent in 2016. Although fiscal gains this year from subsidy reform are likely to be moderate, it is forecast that gains to accelerate should oil prices increase because the government will review prices every three months to ensure that they move in tandem with global rates.

Kuwait budgeted about 7.8 billion, or 6.4 percent of GDP, to cover the cost of all subsidies in 2015, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). On top of this direct cost, the IMF estimates that the opportunity cost from low energy prices in Kuwait was 7.4 percent of GDP in 2015. The inflationary effect of fuel subsidy reform will likely be moderate because energy products make up only 2.63 percent of the Kuwaiti consumer price index basket. — KUNA



TOKYO: People look at a big video screen on the street as a speech by Japanese Emperor Akihito to the nation is televised yesterday. — AFP

JAPANESE EMPEROR HINTS AT ABDICATION

TOKYO: Emperor Akihito said yesterday his advancing age and weakening health mean he may no longer be able to carry out his duties, setting the stage for Japan to prepare for an historic abdication. "There are times when I feel various constraints such as in my physical fitness," the 82-year-old said in a national address. "As we are in the midst of a rapidly ageing society, I would like to talk to you today about what would be a desirable role of the emperor in a time when the emperor, too, becomes advanced in age," he said. Speculation about Akihito's future emerged last month with reports he had told confidantes that he would like to step down in a few years, in what would be the first abdication from the Chrysanthemum Throne in two centuries. "I am worried that it may become difficult for me to carry out my duties as the symbol of the state with my whole being as I have done until now," he said, wearing a dark suit and sitting at a table in the pre-recorded video.

Akihito spoke obliquely - never mentioning the word abdication and stressing he is legally prevented from commenting on the imperial system - but analysts and media said his intention was clear. "His majesty the emperor hints at abdication", read a two-page extra edition by the top-selling Yomiuri Shimbun daily. The comments will now allow the government to begin creating the legal

mechanism for a royal departure, which currently does not exist.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, in a swift response, said the government would take his remarks "seriously". "Considering the emperor's duties, as well as his age and the burden (of the job), we have to firmly look at what we can do," he said. Tomitaro Hashimoto, an assistant professor at Reitaku University, said while the emperor did not use the word abdication, "his message clearly called on the public to concretely consider the way for that in the future." "Legally, he can't request a revision of law," said Hashimoto, an expert on the imperial system. "That's why he can't ask directly."

Any eventual move by Akihito to step down, which would see him replaced by his eldest son Crown Prince Naruhito, appears to have wide support. A survey by the Asahi Shimbun daily published yesterday showed that 84 percent of people surveyed backed the idea.

Akihito has had surgery for prostate cancer and heart problems, both of which he alluded to in his address, though he stressed that he currently enjoys good health. Public reaction to the speech was sympathetic. "Since his majesty is getting so old, I was worried about his health, but he made his intention clear and the abdication issue came up," said 20-year-old Ryota Utsumi.

Continued on Page 13

70 KILLED IN PAK HOSPITAL BLAST

AMIR CONDEMNS TERROR ATTACK CLAIMED BY TALEBAN

News

in brief

No hacking of Kuwait Central Bank systems

KUWAIT: None of the Central Bank of Kuwait computer or electronic systems has been hacked, the Central Bank said yesterday. Anwar Al-Ghaith, in charge of the IT department, said in a statement that the Central Bank's cyber and electronic systems are well secured and protected against any possible outage. In response to reports about infiltration of Central Bank networks, he affirmed that the Central Bank operates advanced security systems to abort any hacking attempts.

Family of clock teen sues school

CHICAGO: The family of a Muslim teen arrested for taking a homemade clock to school - only to have it mistaken for a fake bomb - filed a lawsuit yesterday claiming his civil rights were violated. "Those are violations of his civil rights," Ahmed Mohamed's attorney Susan Hutchison said at a press conference announcing the lawsuit. "The only justice we have in our American legal system is money. So, we are suing for justice." The family has received no apology. "I got a lot of support in the beginning, but it's the hate that sticks," Mohamed told the news conference.



Ahmed Mohamed

QUETTA: Pakistan's prime minister called for security forces to "decimate" terrorists after a Taliban suicide bomb tore through a Pakistani hospital yesterday, killing at least 70 people. The bomber struck a crowd of some 200 gathered at the Civil Hospital in the Balochistan provincial capital Quetta after the fatal shooting of a senior local lawyer earlier in the day. More than 100 were wounded, officials said. Video footage showed bodies strewn on the ground, some still smoking, among pools of blood and shattered glass as shocked survivors cried and comforted one another.

Many of the victims were clad in the

black suits and ties traditionally worn by Pakistani lawyers. An AFP journalist was about 20m away when the bomb went off. "There were huge black clouds and dirt," he said. "I ran back to the place and saw dead bodies scattered everywhere and many injured people crying. There were pools and pools of blood around and pieces of human bodies and flesh."

Nurses and lawyers wept as medics from inside the hospital rushed out to help dozens of injured, he said. "People were beating their heads, crying and mourning. They were in shock and grief," added the journalist.

Continued on Page 13



QUETTA: Pakistani lawyers and security officials gather around the bodies of victims of an explosion at a government hospital yesterday. — AFP

'BRING US HOME,' PLEAD STRANDED FILIPINOS

JAKARTA: Thousands of Filipino workers stranded in Saudi Arabia due to a massive layoff triggered by a slump in oil prices have pleaded to the Philippine government to expedite their repatriation. Some have not been paid for months and have been forced to scavenge in bins for food, a migrant support group said. Manila said last Friday a team would be sent to the kingdom, which has about 1 million Filipino migrant workers, to provide humanitarian and legal assistance.

The team, which will arrive tomorrow, will focus on those "without food and in dire need of medical care and other support serv-

ices", according to a foreign affairs department statement. "That is the initial relief but we are telling the government to concentrate on the repatriation," Mario Ben, the head of Filipino migrants group Migrant International in Saudi Arabia told the Thomson Reuters Foundation from Riyadh. "It is better for the workers to go home as soon as possible. They want to go back and look for jobs elsewhere again."

Ben said the repatriation should be done immediately while the Philippine and Saudi governments work out a deal to recover wages owed to the Filipino workers which are typical-

ly around \$400-500 a month. Some have not been paid for up to eight months. Saudi Arabia has seen an unprecedented influx of migrant workers during the oil boom, with the number almost doubling from 5.3 million in 2000 to 10.2 million in 2015 according to UN figures.

But the world's largest crude exporter's economy has taken a knock since late last year as a sharp drop in oil prices forced cuts in state spending. Construction companies, hit by the downturn, have laid off tens of thousands of laborers, leaving many with no money for food let alone for tickets home.

Continued on Page 13