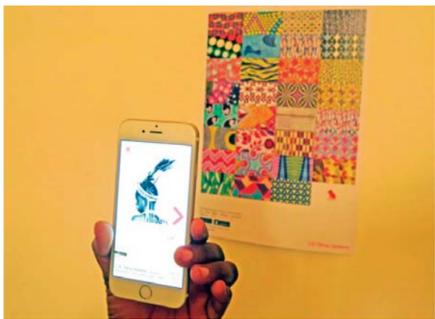




An Egyptian dawn awaker or 'Mesaharati' beats his drum as he rides his donkey to wake up Muslims for a meal before sunrise during the holy month of Ramadan, in Cairo, Egypt, yesterday. Ramadan is the time Muslims believe God started to reveal the Quran to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). — AP

## Benin smartphone app brings museums into homes

Admiring paintings or photographs by Africa's greatest contemporary artists is a luxury in Benin, where museums are scarce and most people lack money to travel farther afield. But a new application developed by a foundation based in Cotonou, the largest city in this West African state, is seeking to bring art to the masses by allowing anyone with access to a printer and smartphone or tablet to turn their place into a museum. "For 10 years, the Zinsou Foundation has been striving to bring contemporary art to people who don't have access to it because we think culture is a right, not a luxury," said Marie-Cecile Zinsou, the Franco-Beninese head of the foundation that created the "Wakpon" app.



Picture of a new smartphone application that allows people to view pictures and works of art at the Zinsou Foundation for modern art in Ouidah.

Budding art enthusiasts need only print out colorful images available on the app's website onto pieces of A4 paper and hang them on the walls of their home, school or government building—just like paintings in a museum. Visitors can then aim at these images with their smartphones or tablets using the app, and a painting by Benin's voodoo artist Cyprien Tokoudagba or a photo of Nigerian hairstyles by J.D. Okhai Ojeikere will pop up, alongside information on the work of art. All in all, 44 pieces by 10 artists are available on the app, all taken from the foundation's collection.

### Low visibility for African art

Zinsou said she convinced her father, who has just been named Benin prime minister, to set up the foundation after she

realized that like many other African countries, there were no museums in Benin to showcase the continent's contemporary art, despite its growing popularity elsewhere. Leading African artists were virtually absent from art sales just a decade ago but now contemporary works feature strongly in several international auction houses. Bonhams in London recently described the continent as "one of our hottest properties on the art block".

Since 2005, the foundation's show room in Cotonou puts on free exhibitions of Beninese and foreign artists, and once showcased US legend Jean-Michel Basquiat—a first in Africa. In 2013, it opened a museum in an old building of the former slave trade hub of Ouidah, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) away from Cotonou. All in all, nearly five million people have visited both places in a decade most of them their children who often come the first time with their schools, return on their own and then bring their families. Zinsou said the Wakpon app—which once downloaded does not need to be connected to the Internet—aims to widen access to a broader population.

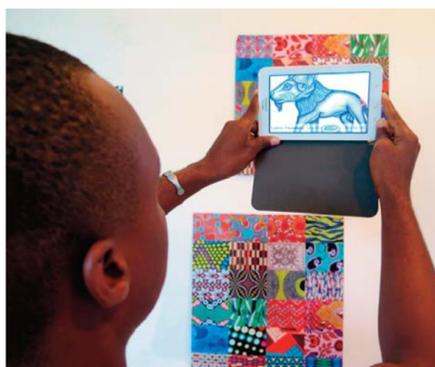
### "Tomorrow's museum"

Mobile phone penetration has been low in Benin, particularly for smartphones, because of poor infrastructure. But competition from international mobile operators and under-sea cables is increasing take-up, as prices come down for both handsets and Internet services. "This application is amazing," said Beninese artist Romuald Hazoume, whose work has been showcased abroad and is also available on the app. "African people will be able to have access to their culture, to their artists who are known around the world but whom they cannot see due to a lack of exhibition sites, of money or visas.

"It's like a bait. People will know works of art, their story, and they will want to see them for real. It's tomorrow's museum and it's what all big collections should be doing." In the Cotonou showroom, those who visit are given a Wakpon demonstration at the end of their tour. "Wakpon" means "come and see" in Fon, the most widely spoken local language in Benin. "It's great. My cousin has a good telephone, I'm going to plead with him to activate the application and our entire district will take a look," says Obed, 15, who came with his class. Zinsou said people in Africa had a tendency to think that culture will emerge only once their countries are developed. "But no, culture is essential for development," she added. — AFP



A man holds a new smartphone application that allows people to view pictures and works of art at the Zinsou Foundation for modern art.— AFP photos



## Hungarian supergranny closes in on world chess record

An 87-year-old Hungarian woman aims this weekend to set a world record by beating 1920s Cuban chess grandmaster Jose Raul Capablanca at his own game: simultaneous play. Since the 1950s, Brigitta Sinka, a former top amateur player, has played around 13,000 documented games of simultaneous chess across Hungary, usually on dozens of boards at the one time, taking on all-comers, many of them schoolchildren. With preparations underway for a weekend-long event she calls a "final push," she hopes to play the final few hundred games needed to overtake a total 13,545 — attributed to Capablanca (1888-1942), one of the world's best-ever players.

"Chess is my life, simultaneous play is my passion," grey-haired Sinka said during a short break from a playing excited teenagers inside a circle of 16 tables in a Budapest high school. "In one hour, I've gone round 30 times, you can count how many meters that is, soon it will be kilometers," she laughed. Sinka, whose nickname is Auntie Bici (pronounced "Bitzi"), clocked up thousands of games around Hungary playing at summer camps for schoolchildren hosted by her employer for many decades, a communist-era metal recycling firm. "I love seeing the twinkle in the children's eyes when they play, chess develops their brains like no other game," says Sinka, who gives each of her young opponents a miniature rosette she sews at home as a memento.

### Practice makes perfect

Thirteen-year-old Martin is impressed. "She always sees ahead where I'm going to move, it seems the older you are, the better player you become," the schoolboy said. Neither Sinka's energy nor ambition has been deterred by three heart operations in recent years. In hospital—where she recorded 14 simultaneous games with the nurses—she recalls the doctors advising her to quit playing. "They gave me a walking stick, but it kept falling over when I leaned on the tables with one hand and made my moves with the other, then they realized chess keeps my body strong and my mind sharp."

In 2010, with her total around 9,000 games, a chess historian told her that he had spotted Capablanca's total in a biography of the Cuban great. "I was unaware of it before then, so I thought I'd have a go at beating it," she said. Around a century ago Capablanca played high-speed simultaneous exhibition chess for money but his games, despite being counted, were undocumented. Sinka however has meticulously recorded in scrapbooks every game she has played—where, when, opponent, and result—each signed off by a witness. She hopes the Guinness Records adjudicators will acknowledge her feat as an official world record.

Born in 1928 and raised on a remote farm on the Great Hungarian Plain, her father taught her the chess moves by the age of four. She was twice selected to play at the women's Chess Olympiads, but missed out both times. At the inaugural event in 1957 her passport to leave her then-communist homeland was delayed in the post, then in 1960 Hungary was part of an Eastern Bloc boycott.

Arriving too late to compete in the 1957 event in the Netherlands had a silver lining however, as she was invited to play in a sidelines chess event, her first ever six simultaneous games. "She's been unstoppable ever since," smiles Eszter Erdei, her childhood friend now helping her document the game details. And her victory rate? A whopping 86 percent, with your correspondent—although it won't count for the record—added with impressive ease to her many scalps. — AFP



Hungarian chess master, the 87-year-old Brigitta Sinka, presents a game in her home in Budapest as she has recently played her 12000th simultaneous game that is the highest number of games ever completed by a woman master in simultaneous play.— AFP photos



Brigitta Sinka, presents a game in her home.



Brigitta Sinka poses for a picture as she plays her simultaneous chess game.



Brigitta Sinka plays her simultaneous chess game in the Budenz school.