

Mutual respect between cops, citizens essential for security



Amazon UK urges customers to throw away hoverboards



'Star Wars' rediscovers its Force, say critics as film opens



River scrape into Club World final with nervy win



COURT SAYS COED BAN IN LINE WITH CONSTITUTION

ASSEMBLY APPROVES ANIMAL RIGHTS BILL



Min 07°
Max 19°
High Tide 02:25 & 16:35
Low Tide 09:57 & 22:07

AMNESTY: KUWAIT SLIDING INTO REPRESSION

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Amnesty International urged Kuwait yesterday to release political prisoners and warned that the state was at risk of sliding deeper into repression. In a report titled "The Iron Fist Policy: Criminalization of Peaceful Dissent in Kuwait", Amnesty said more than 90 government critics were either in jail or on trial for charges such as insulting or offending HH the Amir or top officials. The report was released during a press conference held at the Kuwait Society for Human Right in Shuwaikh.

"Scores of peaceful critics have been arrested and imprisoned simply for speaking out against a specter of widespread repression," said Amnesty's deputy director for the Middle East and North Africa, James Lynch. "The authorities have resorted to a mesmerizingly complex web of laws in an attempt to throttle freedom of expression," he told a press conference. "It is not too late to reverse this downward spiral of human rights violations. Kuwait is at a critical juncture, the government has a clear choice between allowing the country to slide into deeper repression or taking urgent steps to prove that its public commitments to human rights are more than just hollow promises," Lynch added.

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KUWAIT: Amnesty International researcher Drewery Dyke speaks during a press conference at the Kuwait Human Rights Association yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The constitutional court, the highest court in the country, ruled yesterday that a 19-year old legislation that bans the mixing of male and female students at universities is in line with the constitution and turned down a challenge against it. The challenge was filed in February by two male students and a lawyer, contesting that the law violates gender equality stipulated in the constitution and overburdens the government with highly expensive additional costs.

The law was passed by the National Assembly, which was controlled by Islamist and conservative MPs, in 1996, and gave the government five years to implement it. It requires the government to completely separate male and female students at lecture halls, labs, restaurants and other activities. It also stipulates that the government must take into consideration these requirements while building new universities.

The Assembly again passed another law in 2000 to extend the ban on coeducation to private universities which started coming up at that time. The court said that it found no contradiction between the law and the constitution and accordingly threw out the petition, the first of its kind against the law. Liberal MPs repeatedly tried to get the law amended in the Assembly, but all their attempts were thwarted by Islamist and tribal MPs who insist that segregation of the sexes is part of implementing the Islamic sharia law. The door is not completely shut for fresh attempts against the law as new

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SAMAWA, Iraq: A picture taken on Dec 14, 2015 shows a camel standing in this southern desert in an area used by Iraqi herdsmen to graze their stock. — AFP

TURKEY TO SET UP QATAR MILITARY BASE

SAUDIS TO BOOST AID, INVESTMENT TO EGYPT

News

in brief

Kuwait Airways scraps New York-London route

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways is no longer selling tickets for flights between New York's John F Kennedy airport and London's Heathrow, after the US Transportation Department threatened legal action for its refusal to sell tickets to Israelis, reported USA Today. "Today, Kuwait Airways informed the US DOT that they will be eliminating service between JFK and London Heathrow," Namrata Kolachalam, a department spokeswoman, said Tuesday. "Sorry, we were unable to process your request due to either no operating flight or no seats available," the airline's website replied Tuesday, when asked for flights from JFK to Heathrow. But other flights directly to Kuwait City or to other destinations connecting through Kuwait are available. The end of the route came after the Transportation Department investigated the airline's refusal to sell Eldad Gatt, an Israeli citizen, a ticket from JFK to Heathrow in 2013.

Kuwait expects budget deficit between KD 5-6bn

KUWAIT: Kuwait expects the actual 2015-16 budget deficit to be between KD 5 and 6 billion (\$16.5-\$19.8 billion), the Finance Ministry Undersecretary Khalifa Hamada said yesterday, lower than the KD 8.18 billion the country was projecting previously. Hamada also told journalists in Kuwait City that Kuwait planned to unify corporate taxes on local and foreign companies at 10 percent, and expected revenues from such a move to exceed KD 2 billion a year. The official also said that Kuwait was still studying better management of fuel subsidies, but any changes would begin with petrol. He said that better management of fuel subsidies would earn the country KD 1 billion in savings.

DOHA/ RIYADH: Turkey will establish a military base in Qatar as part of a defense agreement aimed at helping them confront "common enemies," Turkey's ambassador to Qatar said yesterday. Establishment of the base, part of an agreement signed in 2014 and ratified by Turkey's parliament in June, intensifies the partnership with Qatar at a time of rising instability and a perceived waning of US interest in the region.

The two countries, both economic heavyweights, have provided support for the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, backed rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian president Bashar Al-Assad and raised the alarm about creeping Iranian influence in the region. Both have condemned Russia's intervention on the side of Assad's forces

fighting in Syria. The envoy, Ahmet Demirok, told Reuters that three thousand ground troops would be stationed at the base - Turkey's first overseas military installation in the Middle East - as well as air and naval units, military trainers and special operations forces.

The "multipurpose" base will primarily serve as a venue for joint training exercises and Qatar was also looking at setting up its own base in Turkey, he said in an interview. "Turkey and Qatar face common problems and we are both very concerned about developments in the region and uncertain policies of other countries ... We confront common enemies. At this critical time for the Middle East cooperation between us is vital," Demirok said.

Continued on Page 13



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah Al-Sisi (right) meets Saudi Arabia's Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman on Tuesday. — AP

US CONGRESS REINS IN VISA-FREE TRAVEL

WASHINGTON: The US Congress struck a huge spending deal overnight including a measure that will tighten the Visa Waiver Program (VWP) by excluding certain travelers deemed by Washington to be a risk. Republican and Democratic negotiators included the measure in a catchall spending package agreed to late Tuesday and unveiled in the dead of night that sets federal expenditures at \$1.149 billion through September 30, 2016, the end of the fiscal year. The text, which is expected to be voted on by Thursday, includes the legislation adopted by the House

of Representatives last week which excludes citizens from VWP countries who are also dual nationals from Iran, Iraq, Syria and Sudan.

It would also exclude anyone from the 38 participating nations - including 30 in Europe - who has travelled to those four countries, or to a country Washington has listed as supporting terrorism, since March 2011. Such foreign nationals will not be barred from travelling to the United States, but they will be required to obtain a visa prior to their visit through standard means, which includes a face-to-face interview at a US consulate.

About 20 million people each year come to the United States without a visa for stays of less than 90 days, including about 13 million Europeans. European diplomats, led by European Union ambassador to Washington David O'Sullivan, have warned of potential retaliation against the United States, arguing the program is based on reciprocity. Non-profit groups have called the measure discriminatory since it punishes certain European citizens based on their national origin from Muslim-majority countries.

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26 QATARI HUNTERS KIDNAPPED IN IRAQ

BAGHDAD/KUWAIT: About 100 gunmen kidnapped at least 26 Qatari hunters in southern Iraq, officials said yesterday, the second high-profile abduction of foreigners in the country in three months. Turkey, which like Qatar is at odds with various Iraqi groups over regional issues, had 18 of its citizens abducted in Iraq in early September. They were eventually released unharmed. Reports late yesterday said nine of the hunters, some of them injured, were released and had arrived in Abdaly in Kuwait.

Dozens of gunmen "kidnapped 27 Qatari hunters... when they were in a camp near the Bassiyah area," Faleh Al-Zayadi, the governor of Muthanna province where they were seized, told AFP. "All of those kidnapped are Qatari and a number of members of the ruling family in Qatar are among them," Zayadi said, adding that the kidnappers used more than 50 vehicles mounted with machine-guns. Two Iraqi officers providing security for

the party were also taken but later released, he said. Other officials put the number of people kidnapped at 26.

"Twenty-six Qatari hunters were kidnapped at about 3:00 am (0000 GMT) by unknown gunmen," a police major from Muthanna said. A local council member from the province gave the same number, saying that the kidnappers were in dozens of pickup trucks. Qatar's foreign ministry has contacted the Iraqi government to obtain "details about the kidnapping of the Qatari citizens and to work to release them as quickly as possible," it said in a statement carried by the official QNA news agency.

Assistant Foreign Minister for Political Affairs, Mohammed Al-Rumaihi, has been dispatched to Baghdad to coordinate with Iraqi authorities "to ensure the safety of the Qatari nationals," it said. The hunters entered Iraq with an "official permit" from the interior ministry, the Qatari statement said. — Agencies

FED ANNOUNCES RATE HIKE, KUWAIT FOLLOWS

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve announced yesterday its first interest rate increase in more than nine years in a landmark move signaling the US has finally moved beyond the 2008 crisis. The Fed raised the benchmark federal funds rate, locked near zero since the Great Recession, by a quarter point to 0.25-0.50 percent, saying the economy is growing at a moderate pace and should accelerate next year. Kuwait's Central Bank immediately followed suit, raising the discount rate by 0.25 percent to 2.25 percent. The bank said the decision will come into effect from today. KUNA cited the Central Bank governor as saying the decision to raise the rate was to guarantee the currency's competitiveness and attractiveness.

The US move was widely expected but nevertheless marked the end of an era in which the Fed pumped trillions of cheap dollars into the US economy to fuel what turned out to be a very long recovery. The move initiates what will be a series of slow rate increases which the Federal Open Market Committee, the Fed's policy board, promised would be "gradual" and follow the pace of the economy. The move to raise rates was also a momentous point in the near two-year tenure of Fed Chair Janet Yellen, who inherited the easy-money policies of predecessor Ben Bernanke with a mandate to get back to a normal monetary policy footing as soon as the economy was strong enough to do so. — Agencies



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah checks one of the awards that KRCSC Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer received from Takreem foundation. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Deputy Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament Fadli Zon.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets Falah Bin Jame'a.

AMIR RECEIVES KRCSC CHIEF

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Chairman of the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCSC) and Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital (KACCH) at Bayt Abdullah hospice Dr Hilal Al-Sayer on the occasion of winning awards from Takreem foundation in health and children fields.

During the meeting, His Highness the Amir hailed Al-Sayer's achievement, and the pioneering humanitarian role played by Bayt Abdullah in caring for children. Sayer, speaking to reporters following the meeting, said he was proud of this award, which is an addition to Kuwait's achievements. He added that the award was a source of honoring to Kuwait.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received Speaker of the National Assembly Marzuq Ali Al-Ghanem, and the visiting Deputy Speaker of the Indonesian Parliament Fadli Zon, along with his accompanying delegation. The meet-

ing was attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Bilateral ties

Zon, along with an accompanying delegation, arrived in Kuwait yesterday starting an official visit to the country. During a meeting with Ghanem in the speaker's office, the two sides bilateral relations between the two countries and ways of developing them in all aspects, especially the parliamentary one, in addition to the latest regional and international developments.

The meeting was attended by Deputy Speaker Mubarak Al-Khurainej, and chief of the mission of honor and head of the Kuwaiti-Indonesian parliamentary friendship committee Dr Khalil Abul and Indonesian Charge d'affaires to Kuwait.

Earlier, His Highness the Amir received 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, and First Deputy Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-

Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Falah Bin Jame'a, chief of the Awazem

tribe. He also received His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Markets Authority

In other news, His Highness the Prime Minister received at Bayan Palace Dr Nayef Falah Al-Hajraf, the Chairman of the Capital Markets Authority (CMA) and CMA staff. They presented His Highness the Premier with the fourth annual report for the 2014-2015 fiscal year, the CMA new bylaws along with the amendments.

His Highness was briefed about the strategic action plan for the coming years, designed to overhaul the financial market. His Highness also received Dr William Lafontaine, IBM's deputy executive manager, along with an accompanying delegation. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah meets Dr William Lafontaine, IBM's deputy executive manager.

AMIR CONGRATULATES CBK GOVERNOR ON UAB AWARD

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Tuesday sent a congratulatory cable to Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Governor Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel on his win of the 'Visionary Award - Central Bank Governor for the Year 2015'.

Hashel was awarded the prize during the annual conference of the Union of Arab Banks (UAB) held in Beirut. In his cable, His Highness the Amir hailed Al-Hashel's achievements and efforts in establishing monetary policies and regulatory frameworks in the State of Kuwait. 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 and National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem sent the CBK governor similar congratulatory cables. — KUNA



Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel

GCC ECONOMIES AFLOAT DESPITE UNSTABLE OIL PRICES: FORMER FM

KUWAIT: In spite of diminishing oil prices, it is expected that Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries would continue to keep their economies afloat for the immediate future, as a result of adaptive strategies implemented by GCC countries, former Foreign Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Sabah stressed.

Dr Mohammad, who is also a leading economist and politician made the remarks at a public lecture to a group of academic researchers on Tuesday at Al-Shaheed Park. The lecture, based on an article written by Dr Mohammad in 1987, was organized by the American Political Science Association MENA in partnership with Al-Salam Center for Development and Strategic Studies.

These strategies would prove futile if they are able to not only meet economic structural changes, but cope with the instability of the oil market and the political landscape of the countries, Dr Mohammad noted. As global oil prices continue to plummet, he raised the question if oil-dependent economies can ensure a prosperous future, or would they fall victim to what is known as the 'resource curse'?

Oil shock

Delving into the annals of history, Dr Mohammad spoke about incidents of 'oil shock' where there was a significant increase in the price of oil. Then, it was common perception amongst nations with oil-dependent economies that oil would lead them to prosperity.

As a result of excessive wealth due to the surge in oil prices, global government spending had increased. Nowhere was this more evident than in Kuwait where average individual earnings jumped by KD 406 in the years 1969-1970 to KD 1,800 in the years 1979-1980. There was also an increase of 80 percent in average individual paychecks from the years 1972 to 1978.



KUWAIT: Dr Mohammad Al-Sabah (center) speaks at a public lecture to a group of academic researchers on Tuesday at Al-Shaheed Park. — KUNA

In the 1970s, as a sign of increased wealth, 4 percent of Kuwait's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was designated for foreign financial aid, a precursor to Kuwait being ultimately named as a global humanitarian center.

Negative consequences

While an increase in oil wealth did pay economic dividends, there were also some negative consequences as a result of this wealth. Uneven distribution of wealth plagued countries such as Ecuador and Nigeria, who were entirely dependent upon oil revenue to keep their economies stable. This abundance of oil wealth is viewed as a double-edged sword as evident by the sudden

collapse of oil prices in the 1980's, highlighting the fragility of oil-dependent economies.

With that in mind, Dr Mohammad tackled the notion of the 'resource curse' and whether oil-rich nations could cope with the effects of unpredictable oil prices. He asserted that Kuwait has always been well-equipped with avoiding the undesired effects that could result from heavy dependence on oil revenue, by establishing future generation fund.

Wary of potential obstacles, Kuwait initiated a fund that would allocate 10 percent of annual oil revenue for future generations. The fund is a mean of the 'future generation taxing the present', the former Foreign Minister said. — KUNA



WASHINGTON: Kuwait's envoy Abdulhamid Al-Failakawi is pictured with Governor General of Canada David Johnston. — KUNA

PLENIPOTENTIARY AMBASSADOR TO CANADA DELIVERS CREDENTIALS

WASHINGTON: The State of Kuwait Envoy Abdulhamid Al-Failakawi has delivered his credentials to the Governor General of Canada David Johnston, as Kuwait's Plenipotentiary Ambassador and the State Representative to the nation. Ambassador Failakawi relayed greetings to Kuwait top leaders who expressed good wishes to him, his country and the friendly Canadian people.

The Governor General expressed cordial feelings toward His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, the State of Kuwait and the Kuwaiti people. He noted His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad's notable humanitarian role. He also lauded the good ties bonding the two friendly countries, hoping that they be cemented further at various levels. — KUNA

KUWAIT HAILS IAEA REPORT ON IRAN NUCLEAR PROGRAM

VIENNA: Kuwait on Tuesday hailed the International Atomic Energy Agency director general's final assessment report about pending issues on Iran's nuclear program, noting to its high professionalism and neutrality.

In a speech, the Second Secretary of the Kuwaiti mission to international organizations' Sheikh Jarrah Al-Sabah said that diplomacy and dialogue were the only means to a long term solution to the matter. He told an IAEA Board of Governors extraordinary meeting that his country encourages all nations to positively contribute to these efforts.

Kuwait also welcomes the July 14 joint comprehensive working plan reached between Iran and the P5+1 (UNSC permanent members, the US, Britain, France, China and Russia, plus Germany) and the Security Council resolution number 2231 adopted the same month, which he believes will aid a peaceful solution.

Kuwait has been informed that Iran is carrying out all of the agreed activities it had been tasked with according to the proposed timeframe, including the presentation of relevant pending documents, written clarifications and responses to various agency inquiries about the issue.

The IAEA Board of Governors meeting earlier adopted a draft resolution, submitted by the P5+1, for the closure of the case regarding the so-called possible military dimensions (PMD) of Tehran's nuclear program.

It reaffirmed that Iran cooperates fully and in a timely manner with the IAEA, through the implementation of and providing access to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement and Additional Protocol. — KUNA



SHARJAH: Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah attends the 18th meeting of the Arab tourism Ministerial Council. — KUNA

KUWAIT STANDS BY EGYPT, TUNISIA IN BID TO REGAIN TOURISM STATUS

SHARJAH: The 18th meeting of the Arab tourism Ministerial Council has expressed its support of Egypt and Tunisia in their endeavors to regain their tourism status after unforeseen tumbles, said Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah yesterday.

In a statement to KUNA after the meeting, he said that among the recommendations of the meeting was the need to pair culture and history in Arab tourism and to consider tourism as an industry of prime importance well positioned to boost Arab economies. He noted in a speech at the meeting that Kuwait has joined the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the

Intangible Cultural Heritage in its keenness to combine heritage or history with culture as vital ingredients for meaningful tourism.

Moreover, he expressed Kuwait's chagrin at what has befallen Egyptian tourism due to the crash of the Russian airplane over Sinai desert last Oct. 31 with its negative ramifications especially the receding inflow of tourists to Sharm El-Sheikh. In a gesture to shore up that situation, Kuwait implemented a direct air-route from Kuwait to Sharm El-Sheikh beginning on December 5 in a bid to encourage tourists to fly to that vacation spot in Egypt, he said. Sheikh Salman headed a Kuwaiti delegation to yesterday's one-day meeting. — KUNA

AMBASSADOR HONORS KUWAITI PARTICIPANTS IN UNGA SESSION

NEW YORK: Kuwait's permanent envoy to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi honored Kuwaiti diplomats in appreciation of their efforts in the 70th session of the UN General Assembly. In a statement to KUNA after a ceremony held late Tuesday, Otaibi said the Kuwaiti mission's participation was prominent, noting that the event held in New York, came in time with the UN's conference on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, which was also attended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The official added that Kuwait was also represented by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, Otaibi said that as part of participating in the meeting, the Kuwaiti delegation underwent a two-day training course where they learned of the work systems of different UN bodies. Furthermore, the diplomats were tasked with submitting reports on speeches performed by leaders and the results of meetings held in the event, the ambassador said. — KUNA

DOCTOR SENTENCED TO 4-YEARS IN JAIL FOR TORTURING MAID

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The court of appeal yesterday annulled a previous verdict acquitting a 55-year-old female Kuwaiti doctor from charges of torturing her housemaid, and sentenced her to four years in prison with labor. The doctor had been accused of torturing the maid, causing her permanent disability as the maid lost vision in her left eye. The doctor had also detained the maid for four years, preventing her from leaving her house in Adan and tortured her on a daily basis. Checking the doctor's record, she was found accused of similar charges in 2007 when the maid she had at that time managed to escape her house and reported the matter to authorities.

NGOs law

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's (MSAL) Assistant Undersecretary For Legal Affairs Dr Zaki Al-Selaimi stressed that a proposed bill to organize non-

governmental organizations (NGOs) and which has been discussed recently in local media was still under study for amendments, adding that the ministry was still preparing an integrated project including all NGOs, charities and voluntary work societies. Selaimi added that the bill would go through proper constitutional channels (the legislative power) before it becomes an applicable law. He added that the details of the bill recently published in some newspapers had been reviewed by all NGOs and some activists and that the ministry had taken their remarks into consideration. Selaimi slammed criticizing the new law in terms of NGOs' membership although that particular article was present in the law that had been in effect for decades. "NGO members include working people, Kuwaitis over 21 who are entitled to attend the general assembly and run for board elections, and nominal ones - non-Kuwaitis who are only entitled to NGO services and have no right to attend general assembly meetings," he explained.

MUTUAL RESPECT BETWEEN POLICEMEN, CITIZENS ESSENTIAL FOR HOMELAND SECURITY: OFFICIAL

KUWAIT: Establishing a mutual respect between policemen and citizens is so essential for the protection of homeland security, a security official said yesterday. Policemen have been and will always be vigilant against all challenges and able to face problems and difficulties, Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash, Director of the General Department of Public Relations and Moral Guidance at the Interior Ministry, said in a press statement.



Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash

higher political leadership which provides every support and care to security in Kuwait.

Homeland security and stability is a fateful responsibility that requires everyone to protect this country in order to continue with the march of building the next generations and preserve their rights, and hoisting Kuwait's name higher in regional, Arab, and international arenas, Hashash said.

Security men shoulder a heavy responsibility in preserving security of the country's stability and citizens, he said, adding that they also exert unlimited efforts under the patronage of the

Hashash called on all citizens and residents to cooperate with the policemen in order to contribute to the success of their missions and duties, stressing the importance of that success for

the security of citizens, residents, and public properties. Security media strives to back communication bridges between the security institution and the people, promote its role in the community, boost humanitarian ties between policemen and people, and create a positive image in the public's mind about security men, he noted.

Meanwhile, Hashash indicated that the ministry is to mark the Arab Police Day on December 18th, adding that a celebration will be organized by the ministry under the auspices of Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah.

This celebration has become an annual tradition, embodying the vital role of policemen and security bureaus and highlighting the importance of security action, he said, noting that the society always needs a mutual cooperation between security men and citizens in order to achieve further development and accomplishments on various arenas. — KUNA

GOVT KEEN ON FIGHTING CORRUPTION: MINISTER

KUWAIT: The Government under guidance of His Highness the Prime minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is moving forward in the fight against corruption, said Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sane yesterday.

Speaking to journalists on sidelines of the parliamentary session, he explained that a new relevant law had been presented to the Anti-Corruption Authority and the legislations development committee at the Ministry of Justice as well as a number of other government departments.

The Ministry, in coordination with the Legislative and Legal Affairs Commission, has decided to be prudent to spare the Constitutional Court unnecessary criticisms regarding the appeal, to be cross-examined on Sunday. The minister stressed on the government keenness on the Anti-Corruption Authority law, adding that it ensures greater protection and independence for the authority.

Meanwhile, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Ali Al-Omair said that the government was keen on answering parliamentary inquiries in accordance with the constitution and statute of the Parliament.

In the Parliament's session, Omair said that the Cabinet agreed in previous sessions to hold a special meeting with the Assembly's bureau to discuss issues connected with parliamentary inquiries addressed to the government.

He affirmed that the government respected any questions from the parliamentarians regarding ministers' performance, noting that the absence of several ministers in previous legislative sessions was not an attempt to avoid MPs' questions. — KUNA

MILITARY PERSONNEL'S COMPENSATION THEFT REPORTS BASELESS: INTERIOR

KUWAIT: Reports on social media alleging theft of funds allocated to military personnel are baseless and untrue, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said yesterday. In a press statement, Ministry of Interior Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic Major General Abdullah Al-Muhanna said that he "has not given any instructions for exchange of monetary compensation for holiday allowance for military personnel ineligible for financial compensation."

Muhanna had previously ordered a probe into the exclusion of some military personnel from monetary compensation, the statement added. The Ministry of Interior reserves the right to initiate legal proceedings against those responsible for spreading false and malicious content, the Assistant Undersecretary for Traffic asserted. — KUNA

KFAED SIGNS KD 6 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT WITH NIGER

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) signed yesterday a KD 6 million loan agreement with Niger to fund a transportation project. A statement by KFAED said the loan will fund construction of a 92 kilometer-long road northeast of Niger, adding that the project will facilitate traveling and movement of goods in the country. This is the 12th loan to Niger. KFAED had provided 11 loans to the African country-worth KD 28.2 million (around \$96 million). The fund also provided grants worth around KD one million and also technical assistance worth KD 85,000. The Kuwaiti Government, through KFAED, had provided KD 1.4 million to help a fund for decent living in Niger. — KUNA

HAJRI DEMANDS NEW PREMISES FOR HANDICAPPED EMPLOYEES

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Handicapped Sports Club (HSC) Shafi Al-Hajri demanded the designation of a special premises for people with special needs who use wheel chairs at the Handicapped Public Authority (HPA) in order to reduce their waiting time.

Hajri said HSC sent an official letter to HPA to write to the Civil Service Commission (CSC) to have all government bodies to exempt the handicapped employee who suffers from severe or medium disability from the electronic print, and be satisfied with manual signature. This is because of the difficulties they face to reach the print place then having to wait, he said.



Shafi Al-Hajri



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry's Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad chaired a meeting yesterday for senior ministry officials concerned with securing the reopening ceremony for the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium tomorrow. Lt Gen Fahad said in a statement that authorities were given instructions to show no tolerance towards those who carry out any action that could disturb security during the event.

KPC ADDRESSES FUNDING POLICIES

KUWAIT: Board of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) and its subsidiary companies discussed funding policies for the 2016-2020 fiscal year as well as plans to cope with current conditions in the international oil markets.

KPC official spokesman Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said in a statement yesterday that the board meeting, headed by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister and acting Minister of Oil Anas Al-Saleh, discussed several strategic issues namely merger among Al-Zour refinery, the third olefins complex and the second aromatics complex.

He added that participants in the meeting held on Tuesday tackled some projects of Kuwait Oil Company, namely the ones concerning development of oil fields in southeastern Kuwait, northeast of the country in addition to a number of feasible petrochemical

ventures. In other news, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Oil Sheikh Talal Nasser Al-Athbi Al-Sabah will head the Kuwaiti mission in the 95th meeting of OAPEC Council of Ministers to be held in Cairo on December 20. The meeting will discuss the organization budget, OAPEC's activities, economic and technical studies and the annual report of OAPEC's subsidiaries, the ministry said in statement on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, the ministry said that the meeting, to be chaired by Qatari Minister of Energy and Industry Mohammed Al-Sada, will also discuss recommendations of OAPEC's Executive Office. Moreover, it noted that Kuwait will chair the Executive Office and the Council of Ministers in 2016. OAPEC, established in 1968, includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Libya, UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Algeria, Egypt, Syria and Iraq. — KUNA



Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah



Minister of Industry and Commerce Dr Yousef Al-Ali

KUWAIT CALLS ANEW FOR ADOPTING ARABIC BY WTO

KUWAIT: Minister of Industry and Commerce Dr Yousef Al-Ali has underlined necessity of including the Arabic language among the languages adopted by the World Trade Organization (WTO). The Ministry of Industry and Commerce said in a statement yesterday that the minister made the proposal during a meeting of the Arab ministers of commerce, held on sidelines of the 10th WTO ministerial meeting, calling on Arab delegates at the organization to present an official request to adopt Arabic. The WTO 10th ministerial meeting got underway in the Kenyan capital on Tuesday. — KUNA

DAD SAYS STEPDAUGHTER RAPED BY FIVE MEN

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A Somali man told police that his 24-year-old stepdaughter was kidnapped and raped by at least five people. An investigation was opened into the case.

Woman swindled

An Egyptian woman told Jahra police that an unidentified person swindled her after her brother was sent for deportation. A friend told her about someone who can help her. The man took KD 550 but did not get her brother released, nor did he return the money.

33 suspects arrested

General security officers in Hawally arrested 33 suspects in Hawally. The detainees are wanted to authorities on civil and criminal cases. Some detainees are also wanted for absconding, failure to have a valid residency and on suspicion of drugs' possession.

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CAIRO: Members of the Arab Female Media Union and guests stand outside the Arab League's headquarters in Cairo, Egypt.



A scene from the union's inauguration ceremony.

ARAB FEMALE MEDIA UNION LAUNCHED

CAIRO: The Arab female media personalities union was launched last Sunday in the presence of Arab female media people from 16 Arab countries taking part in the initiation, under the patronage of the Arab League. Advisor to the Secretary General of the Arab League Falah Al-Mutairi in a statement underscored the significance of the occasion. "The formation of this union would prove instrumental to bolstering the media sector in the Arab world."

"The union was established to provide a platform for dialogue and communication, further contributing to the development of the Arab media's performance," Mutairi said, noting that Arab media is dealing with a host of legitimate obstacles and is in need of assistance from Arab media organizations. "Terrorism is the major challenge and a scourge stigmatizing Arabs and Muslims," he added.

Moreover, Arab Female Media Union's President Asmaa Habshi hoped that "the union would represent a method of cooperation

amongst Arab nations." She also said that "it would be a forum to exchange ideas and information in a slew of media issues including journalism and broadcasting."

Habshi also vowed to increase the efficiency of Arab media through a series of workshops, training courses and seminars in all Arab nations. She added that the union will select an Arab city every year to host its annual meeting, announcing that Kuwait has been selected to host the union's inaugural forum next year.

Rabe'ah Hussein Makki Jum'ah, Arab Female Media Union's Vice President and head of Kuwait's office said that "the dream to establish the union has become a reality due to the efforts of media personalities from different Arab states." She added that the union was not established to categorize the Arab media based on gender, "but to provide more spaces of joint work to present a distinguished Arab media on par with the global unbiased media."

The initiation ceremony honored many notable persons including Arab League Secretary General Nabil Al-Araby and Chairman of Kuwait's Annahar newspaper Imad Boukhamseen. In addition to Habshi and Jum'ah, the union's board includes Dina Bader (Vice President for Training Affairs), Amani Habshi (Secretary General), Iman Abdulrahman (Treasurer), Hassan Abu Al-Ula (Executive Director) and Ahmad Rabie'a (Relations and Planning Manager). The union's member list includes prominent female Arab journalist including Egypt's Sakina Fuad, Iraq's Lina Mathloul, Lebanon's Giselle Khouri, Algeria's Thuraiya Abu Amama, Morocco's Fatima Al-Nuwali and Bahrain's Badriya Abdullatif. The union's headquarters office is in Cairo, Egypt.



Imad Boukhamseen (left) and Rabe'ah Hussein Makki Jum'ah attend the ceremony.



Rabe'ah Hussein Makki Jum'ah speaks at the event.

KUWAIT EAGER TO USE IDB SERVICES: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Kuwait is keen on making use of the financing services offered by the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), said Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh in a statement opening a workshop yesterday on IDB's gamut of services.

The workshop informs those interested in IDB's multitude of financing services which it offers to member states with stakes in the operations of the bank, said Saleh. He appreciated the participation of both the public and private sectors in Kuwait in the activities of the workshop, noting that IDB was established in 1974 with a capital of \$2.8 billion which subsequently catapulted to the current level of \$140 billion, consecrating its core activities on assisting member states with their growth and development plans.

Further, he underscored the fact that Kuwait was one of the bank's founding shareholding members with a 7 percent stake in the bank's capital. He stressed that the ministry of finance in Kuwait was interested in consolidating its cooperation with IDB and was amenable to the latter's expertise on augmenting the relationship between the public and private sectors in Kuwait.

Also speaking at the opening of the workshop today was IDB's President

Ahmad Mohammad Ali who said that the total of IDB financing operations in Kuwait since the bank's inception has topped \$1.5 billion. He further said that IDB and the ministry of finance have worked together on laying out a strategy for Kuwait's vision



Anas Al-Saleh

of its economic status by the year 2035. Taking part in the one day workshop were representatives of IDB and those from the Kuwaiti public and private sectors. —KUNA

UNITED FISHERIES JOINS OVER 60 PARTICIPANTS IN HORECA

KUWAIT: Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development announced that more hospitality, catering and hotel equipment companies have so far announced their intention to take part in Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition, which it organizes in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company. On that regard, Leaders Group announced that Untied Fisheries of Kuwait is joining over 60 companies that had so far joined the exhibition.

United Fisheries' General Manager, Abdul Kareem Sobhy stressed that the Horeca event had proved the significance of specialized exhibitions in promoting trade exchanges among companies. He also hailed the ideal environment the exhibition provides in the line of hotel, hospitality industry and catering equipment services, and stressed that it has been attracting local, Middle Eastern and international companies. Sobhy also noted that United Fisheries was always keen on taking part in various specialized food industries' exhibitions to follow up with the market's latest needs of fresh and frozen sea foods. Further, Sobhy explained that United Fisheries had over four decades of experience and takes pride in leading the fishing, manufacture and sale of sea food items in both Kuwait and the Middle East.

Sobhy added that United Fisheries of Kuwait is owned by Danah Al-Safat Foodstuff Group, a public shareholding company listed in the stock market with a paid-up capital of around \$100 million, and that the group includes several companies operating in the field of food industries and restaurants. "If it is great seafood, it can only be Danah. As the nation's leading seafood supplier, we

provide more than 20 fresh seafood options annually at our 28 national retail Danah outlets. We distribute our frozen products through various channels, including everything from our retail outlets to local grocery stores. All our products are ISO-certified," Sobhy underlined.



Abdul Kareem Sobhy

He pointed out that the company owns a fishing fleet fully equipped with the latest detection and fishing equipment in addition to high quality onboard fridges to keep the catch until it reached the company's developed ISO and HACCP-certified factories in Shuwaiba and Doha.

Horeca Kuwait 2016 is due to be held under auspices of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah at Badriya Ballroom, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa in the period of January 18-19, 2016.



KUWAIT: KCCI Chairman Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem is pictured with members of the Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Committee. —KUNA

KCCI CHAIRMAN MEETS FRIENDSHIP COMMITTEE

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem discussed bilateral economic cooperation between Kuwait and Iran with members of the Kuwaiti-Iranian Friendship Committee, a statement by the Chamber said on Tuesday.

The statement noted that with the appropriate investment environment in

Iran, Kuwaiti investors would be eager to invest there in such areas as natural resources, tourism, and industry. It highlighted the need to foster partnerships with the Iranian business communities to further cement bilateral relations, said the statement. The committee members the statement was referring to is made up of a number of Kuwaiti high-placed officials. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) hosted a graduation ceremony Tuesday organized by the Institute of Banking Studies for banking sector employees who enrolled in training programs during its 2014 - 2015 professional accreditation certificate program. —Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

ABK PARTICIPATES IN 'INSTITUTE OF BANKING STUDIES' TRAINING PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced that ten of its employees have participated in a training program for banking and finance executives, delivered by the Institute of Banking Studies (IBS). The employees were honored during a graduation ceremony held at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Tuesday, to celebrate the successful completion of it.

The training program presented the Bank's employees with three certificate programs. They are the Certified Credit Management (CCM), the Certified Bank Branch Manager (CBBM) and the Risk Management Certificate (RMC). The ABK Management and Learning and Development Unit joined the Bank's graduating employees at the ceremony to celebrate their achievement.

ABK's participation is in line with the Banks' focus to support the education and development of its employees' skills, and its commitment to further build on their existing knowledge and experience.



KUWAIT: The Institute of Banking Studies celebrated the graduation of a group of National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) employees who recently attended a series of training programs offered by the institution for banking sector workers during its 2014 - 2015 professional accreditation certificate program.

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Crime

Report

TWO FUGITIVES ARRESTED

KUWAIT: A female citizen was arrested over two cases - insulting a public employee and a money-related case. Police stopped the woman and when they checked her ID, she was found wanted by the juvenile police for a KD 1,700 debt. She was sent to concerned authorities. Meanwhile, Capital (Asima) police arrested an Egyptian man wanted to serve a 15-year-jail sentence on drugs charges. The suspect fled as soon as he saw police approaching, so policemen pursued him until they caught him. He kept on resisting, but was controlled and placed in the patrol car. He was taken to the criminal implementation department to serve his sentence.

Absconder detained

Policemen suspected a woman in Sharq who was walking in a dark area, so they asked her for her ID. She said she forgot it at home and gave them a false name. But her fingerprints revealed her identity, and she was found to be reported missing by her family. The girl, in her twenties, was arrested and transferred to Firdous police station for further action.

Radio device missing

A police officer lost his wireless radio device at a checkpoint in Farwania governorate. The first lieutenant told a police station that he was surprised with the disappearance of his walkie-talkie and expressed fear it may be used illegally. Detectives are investigating.

Ex-wife accused of theft

A citizen accused his ex-wife of stealing his furniture from his Sabah Al-Salem house, but she said the furniture is hers and she paid for it. Investigations are underway.

Man robs neighbor

Mubarak Al-Kabeer detectives arrested a citizen who stole a mobile phone, personal items, documents and cheques from his neighbor's car. A citizen went to Mubarak Al-Kabeer police station and told them his car was broken into, and detectives' investigations led to his neighbor's involvement. The neighbor confessed to committing the act. —Al-Rai

KUWAIT IN FRONTLINE OF ALLIANCE: MINISTER

KUWAIT: State Minister for Cabinet Affairs and acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah said "Kuwait welcomes the Saudi initiative for an Islamic military alliance to face terrorism in the region", adding that "Kuwait will be among those on the frontlines of the alliance." He said following a National Assembly session Tuesday that "Kuwait welcomes this major initiative which came from a brotherly country that is affected by terrorism much more than us." Sheikh Mohammad said this initiative is an important move, and will lead to confrontation of elements "alien to our societies". He said efforts in this field will have positive results with regards to facing terrorism in the region. —Al-Rai

News

in brief

Customs department looking for 'suspicious vehicles'

KUWAIT: An official source at the customs detectives said the department provided all its branches at all land border checkpoints with the numbers of wanted Kuwaiti and Gulf cars, because their owners are involved in terrorist or security cases. The source said the number of wanted cars is around 20. He said customs officers intensified their search for them at various outposts, adding there is cooperation and coordination with the Interior Ministry to tighten control at border outposts and providing customs with all information about persons who may attempt to get into the country to carry out operations. —Al-Qabas

Terror funding

KUWAIT: Sources at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) strongly denied that any of the terrorists responsible for the Paris attacks had received funding from donations collected in Kuwait, and stressed that residents caught collecting funds in violation of Kuwaiti laws would be immediately deported. The sources highlighted that all charities in Kuwait were committed to laws and regulations and that they fully cooperate with MSAL to have more control over collecting donations and spending them. "No violations were found recently," underlined the sources. —Al-Rai

North Zour's stages

KUWAIT: An informed source said the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects plans to merge the third, fourth and fifth stages of the North Zour power plant into one and name it the final stage due to their low production capacity. The source said the partnership authority designated Jan 17 as the final date to submit financial and technical offers for north Zour station (second stage), adding that "the technical conditions in this stage are not different from the previous ones, only in raising the production capacity from 1,500 to 1,800 megawatts (MW) expected to be produced by the first stage after its completion. The source said the authority decided to raise the production capacity to 1,800 MW in coordination with concerned authorities after noticing the offers of the consortium that competed for the first stage. —Al-Rai



Al-Qabas

MUSLIMS, TRUMP AND ZUCKERBERG

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

A sane man cannot but reject and condemn the statements of US presidential candidate Donald Trump on his intention to ban Muslims from entering America "should" he be elected president. The suggestion is clumsy and utterly racist, and is very difficult to implement, because it is not easy to decide who is a Muslim, as the majority of countries do not mention religion in travel documents.

What interests us here is not the statement itself, which received what it deserves in condemnation from nearly all world countries - rather its content and the reason of making it by a personality that is not stupid, and knows what he says, and his confidence that his stand will find people who welcome it inside and outside his country from rightist and extremists, or from those who suffered from the fires of our issues and problems.

So, should we give the statement of Trump the importance it deserves? The man is a billionaire, and his chance to be nominated by the Republicans is still big, so we should ask: Why did he say what he said? Is it because he hates Muslims because they are Muslims, or is it because and other superpowers' leaders are fed up with all this fear, worry and chaos created by some Muslims in general in all world countries and their security apparatuses at land and sea border posts and in tens of thousands of airports, to a point where the name of a Muslim became synonymous to terrorism?

Trump's demand, despite its silliness, must be an alarm for all Muslim countries. The world has suffered from the behavior of some of their children, either as a result of bad education and upbringing, and not only turning a blind eye to the activities of extreme religious parties in their countries. But rather in many cases, caring for those parties and even giving them important key government posts, with the knowledge of those Muslim countries of what intentions those parties have in wishing to impose their religious agenda, even if this leads to burning down the world around them, as the religious text allows them to do so according to their interpretation.

Look and wonder with me: What did Muslims gain from the huge and terrifying number of thousands of religious institutes and schools that worked without supervision for the past five decades? Nothing. What is the real role of more than two million clerics working in Muslim countries in its development and stability?

And on this occasion, the stand of Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, draws attention, though I mistakenly said in an earlier column that he donated 99 percent of his shares in Microsoft, and the correct company is Facebook. He sent a message to hundreds of millions of Muslims, users of Facebook, following Trump's statements. He said that he adds his voice to those who support Muslims in his society and around the world, following the Paris attacks and the messages of hatred that came out earlier in the week.

He said: "As a Jew, my parents taught me that we must stand up against attacks on all communities. Even if an attack isn't against you today, in time, an attack on freedom of anyone will hurt everyone. If you're a Muslim in this community, as the leader of Facebook I want you to know that you are always welcome here and that we will fight to protect your rights and create a peaceful and safe environment for you." Now, are not we in need of following this man's example and learn from him some forgiveness, away from all this madness that some of us are insisting to live in. —Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

TAXES AND STRIKES

By Saad Al-Motesh

Despite governmental confirmation that they will not affect people with limited income, many citizens are very skeptical about the taxes everybody is nowadays talking about. Well, a few people actually know that some people were already exerting efforts without being noticed or defended.

By this I mean successful people in their diverse areas of work such as the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud, his undersecretary Tareq Al-Mezram and assistant undersecretary Sheikh Fahd Al-Mubarak, who used his own money to pay for broadcast rights of foreign songs produced by an American company that monopolizes those rights.

The success achieved since Mezram came to office is noticeable and tangible for everybody. Nevertheless, some hidden underground 'fingers' are trying to vandalize such success. A few days ago, Kuwait Radio stopped broadcasting for about

a minute. The same happened more than once over a period of ten days. Well, in media norms and regulations, this is an unforgivable disaster and those responsible for it have to be held accountable.

For instance, the Russian army is trained to be deployed all over Russian streets if radio broadcast stops for 19 seconds because it would possibly mean a coup is in progress. Therefore, I would like to draw the information minister's attention to such a problem, especially as I know for sure that he had repeatedly ordered solving technical problems behind such mishaps. He even offered to personally pay the expense needed from his own money when he was told that the available budget was not enough, but those offers fell on deaf ears.

That is why I wish to warn the minister, Mezram and Sheikh Fahd that 'some people' wish to have you pay for the success you have so far achieved by plotting some 'strikes' against you.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

EXPAT GOVT EMPLOYEES OVER 50 TO BE TERMINATED BY MARCH 1

KUWAIT: The Civil Services Commission (CSC) has received instructions to terminate all expatriate government employees aged 50 and above effective as of March 1, 2016, said well-informed sources, explaining the decision includes all nationalities. The sources also explained that the decision includes jobs that can be done by Kuwaitis listed on long government employment waiting lists.

Responding to a question whether the decision includes expats working in the judiciary, medicine and education, the sources said that expats would remain in jobs with special nature as the government had noticed that the numbers of expat government employees aged 50 and above are much more than the 20,000 citizens with university, medium and lesser degrees who are on employment waiting lists. —Al-Anbaa

11,000 TREATED ABROAD AT COST OF KD 230M IN 2015

NUMBERS JUMPED 500% IN FOUR YEARS

KUWAIT: According to unofficial statistics, the numbers of Kuwaitis sent for treatment abroad jumped by over 500 percent over the past four years. Statistics also showed that 11,825 citizens were treated abroad in 2015 alone. In addition, local and international economic reports showed that Kuwait had spent over KD 400 million on treatment abroad in 2013, when 3,044 citizens were sent abroad to receive medical treatment at the government's expense. The report also said that the number was 2,580 in 2012 and jumped to 5,531 in 2014.

However, despite lack of accurate figures about the total cost, well-informed health sources stressed that the Ministry of Health (MoH) had

to pay KD 230 million out of its budget for treatment abroad this year alone. The sources stressed that treatment abroad was 'draining' the MoH budget and overburdens the state budget, especially since many of cases dispatched for treatment abroad are not critical enough to deserve being dispatched. "Some cases were sent abroad for 'loss of appetite', weak eyesight or spondylosis, which can all be treated easily in Kuwait," stressed the sources, noting that the ministry pays the cost of sending patients and their companions abroad for treatment although several international doctors are visiting Kuwait monthly.

The sources explained that the

process has been affected by interference by some lawmakers and that seeing many of them regularly visit the treatment abroad department was becoming a regular scene, where they mediated to send some of their family members, supporters or constituents abroad for treatment of simple ailments, while citizens with more critical cases who actually need the service remain in Kuwait.

In addition, the sources explained that the allowances paid per patient and companion were usually given to dispatched 'patients' on arrival to their destinations, which means that they get the money even before seeing doctors or checking into hospitals or medical centers. —Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa

LIBERTY AND CHAOS

By Zaben Al-Bathal

With the growing use of modern technology by various people, especially using social media networks such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others, many people are confusing the meaning of liberty or freedom with that of chaos. There is definitely a very thin line of difference between both. Some people believe that violating others' privacy and insulting them is a form of liberty of speech and is a normal thing to do, while others view this as chaos, violation and rudeness that ought to be incriminated by law.

The concept of freedom and liberty of speech is the same worldwide, but in some countries that have political parties and blocs, those parties have been adopting and customizing liberties and democracy according to their own needs and interests in various stages and attitudes. This used to happen before social media and modern technology breakthroughs, when it became much easier to 'surf' the entire world nowadays through devices small enough to fit in one's pockets.

We all know that social media played a major role in toppling many Arab regimes and governments during the Arab Spring where things ended up tragically and proved not to be leading any springs at all. They all resulted in loss, displacement and destruction, thanks to such modern inventions.

What matters in this regard is our own country and people. We have suffered much criticism, injustice, conflicts and insults exchanged between different people with the excuse of "democracy, freedom and freedom of expression". Well, we cannot blame all people, especially those who drifted with Twitter tides and started retweeting various posts and recklessly attacking and criticizing others without any solid proof. Others even discussed honor and many people followed them thinking that was part of freedom and democracy without realizing that it was actually a sort of backbiting and defaming others' reputation that had nothing to do with freedom or democracy.

Therefore, I wish people would realize the true essence of moderate freedom that causes no harm to others and true democracy and freedom of expression that allows criticizing people's positions and professional performance without discussing their personal lives merely for the sake of having more followers retweet their posts and thus gain more fame. It is difficult to entirely control such practices, but what is more important are the people who use such networks themselves. They have to consider what to take and what to ignore. They have to realize the difference between freedom of expression and chaos!

—Translated by Kuwait Times



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) sponsored a ceremony to honor Bahraini school graduates, which was organized recently by the cultural attache in the Kingdom of Bahrain's Embassy on the occasion of Bahrain's national day.

Kuwait Times International

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Pakistan vows revenge one year after school massacre

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ON RAINY SCOTTISH ISLE, SYRIANS STRUGGLING TO ADAPT

Page 10



LAS VEGAS: Donald Trump watches as Ted Cruz speaks during the CNN Republican presidential debate at the Venetian Hotel & Casino. — AP

MULTIPLE CLASHES SOUR INTENSE REPUBLICAN DEBATE NATIONAL SECURITY, IMMIGRATION AND IS IN THE SPOTLIGHT

LAS VEGAS: Sens Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio clashed sharply over national security and immigration in Tuesday's Republican presidential debate, thrusting their evolving feud to the forefront of the GOP race. Front-runner Donald Trump stood firmly behind his provocative call for banning Muslims from the United States, saying, "We are not talking about religion, we are talking about security."

For former Florida Gov Jeb Bush, the fifth GOP debate was an opportunity to find his footing after months of uneven performances. He appeared more comfortable than in previous debates in taking on Trump, though it's unclear whether his stronger showing will change the trajectory of his sluggish campaign.

The prime-time debate was the first for Republicans since the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, which heightened fears of terrorism in the United States. The attacks have ignited a political debate about President Barack Obama's campaign to defeat the Islamic State in the Middle East and the nation's security posture in preventing attacks in the US.

Trump's call for temporarily banning Muslims from the US - a proposal roundly criticized by his rivals - dominated much of the discussion through the debate and into the next morning. "He doesn't have a plan, he's not a serious candidate," Bush said Wednesday, speaking on MSNBC. "The idea that you can just prey on people's fears is not who we are as a nation, not who we are as a party."

'Totally committed'

In a moment that might help ease anxiety among Republican leaders, Trump pledged he would not run as an independent. If he should lose the nomination, some fear he would make such a move, possibly preventing the nominee

from defeating the Democratic challenger. "I am totally committed to the Republican Party," Trump said.

He was largely spared from criticism by Cruz and Rubio, who said they understood why Trump had raised the idea of banning Muslims. Instead, they focused on each other, engaging in lengthy debates over their differences on national security and immigration, among the most contentious issues in the Republican primary.

Rubio, of Florida, defended his support for eventually providing a pathway to citizenship for some people in the US illegally, an unpopular position within the Republican Party. Rubio was a co-author of comprehensive Senate legislation in 2013 that would have created that pathway, but he has since said the nation's immigration crisis must be addressed in piecemeal fashion, with legalization only an option after the US-Mexico border is secured.

Seeking to draw a sharp contrast with Rubio, Cruz went further than he has previously in opposing legalization for people in the US illegally. He declared, "I have never supported legalization and I do not intend to support legalization."

The two senators - both Cuban-Americans in their 40s - have been sparring from afar for weeks, and their rivalry could become one of the dominant forces in the race as the first voting contests in February draw near. The Texas senator is on the rise, particularly in Iowa's kickoff caucuses, and is casting himself as a more electable alternative to Trump, while Rubio is seeking to straddle the divide between his party's establishment and more conservative wings.

Rubio positioned himself as the hawk on national security, defending American efforts to oust dictators like Syria's Bashar Assad from the Middle East. He also accused Cruz of weakening the government's ability to track terrorists because he voted in favor of legislation to eliminate the National Security

Agency's bulk phone-records collection program and replace it with a more restrictive effort to keep the records in phone companies' hands.

"We are now at a time when we need more tools, not less tools," Rubio said. "And that tool we lost, the metadata program, was a valuable tool that we no longer have at our disposal." Cruz argued that his vote helped "reform how we target bad guys" by allowing the government to search more phone numbers. "Marco knows what he's saying isn't true," he said. "What he knows is that the old program covered 20 percent to 30 percent of phone numbers to search for terrorists. The new program covers nearly 100 percent."

Beginning after the Sept 11, 2001, terror attacks, the NSA secretly collected the daily calling records - but not contents of conversations - for most Americans, including people never suspected of any crime. A new law, called the USA Freedom Act, passed in June with broad, bipartisan support. It ordered the NSA to end bulk collection after a six-month transition that expired last week.

Islamic State

The senators also displayed differences in their strategies for targeting the Islamic State. The extremist group claimed responsibility for the Nov. 13 attacks in Paris, and one of the shooters in California pledged allegiance to the group on Facebook short-

ly before she and her husband shot and killed 14 people at a holiday party.

Cruz called for using "overwhelming air power" to destroy the Islamic State, while Rubio said airstrikes would have to be supplemented by ground troops, including American special operations forces. President Barack Obama has largely relied on airstrikes to target the militants in Iraq and Syria. However, he's also sent troops to Iraq to help train and assist local forces and recently approved sending special operations forces into Syria.

New Jersey Gov Chris Christie, who has been on the rise in New Hampshire, sought to assert himself in the national security discussions. He called for a no-fly zone over Syria and vowed to shoot down a Russian plane if it were to violate that space.

"Not only would I be prepared to do it, I would do it," he said. "We would shoot down the planes of Russian pilots if, in fact, they were stupid enough to think that this president was the same feckless weakling that the president we have in the Oval Office is right now." The debate's focus on national security was a detriment for retired neurosurgeon Ben Carson, who has struggled on complex international matters. He punted on questions about surveillance and his own qualifications for being commander in chief.

Also on the main stage Tuesday night were former business executive Carly Fiorina, Ohio Gov John Kasich and Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul. Four lower-polling candidates appeared at an earlier event: former Arkansas Gov Mike Huckabee, former Pennsylvania Sen Rick Santorum, former New York Gov George Pataki and South Carolina Sen Lindsey Graham. — AP

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SUNNIS FEAR REVENGE ATTACKS IN IRAQI TOWN ATTACKED BY IS

HARSHAM CAMP: The Islamic State militants who stormed into the Iraqi town of Sinjar last year, massacring members of the Yazidi minority and forcing women into sexual slavery, are gone. But Sunni Muslims who lived alongside the Yazidis there for generations say their own nightmare is far from over. After Kurdish forces and Yazidi militants backed by US-led airstrikes drove the extremist group from the town last month, there were widespread reports of vandalism and the looting of Muslim homes. Many Sunni Muslim residents have yet to return, saying they fear revenge attacks.

"They said they were against Sunnis, but are all Sunnis with Daesh?" said Amer Eido, a Sinjar-born Sunni Muslim now living in a refugee camp, referring to IS by its Arabic acronym. "We fled with (the Yazidis) because

of Daesh on the day that they came. We are in the same situation. There is no reason for them to loot our houses." For the past year, the 42-year-old and his family have lived in the Harsham camp for displaced persons on the outskirts of the Kurdish regional capital, Irbil. Like many of the camp's residents, he says he fears the Yazidi militias as much as the Islamic State group.

Killed thousands

There is no evidence that Kurdish or Yazidi forces have committed crimes on the scale of the IS group, which captured or killed thousands of Yazidis in Sinjar, including hundreds of Yazidi women who were conscripted into sexual slavery. The Sunni extremists of IS view the Yazidis - who follow an ancient Mesopotamian

Zoroastrianism - as pagans or devil-worshippers.

The IS group has also massacred thousands of Sunni Muslims who oppose its rule in Syria and Iraq. But because many Sunni Arabs initially welcomed IS as liberators from a Shiite-led government in Baghdad seen as corrupt and sectarian, many Shiite and Kurdish Iraqis view the country's Sunni Arabs with suspicion. In Sinjar, those suspicions also extend to Sunni Muslim Kurds.

The UN Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights has expressed concern about reports of abuses carried out against Sunni Arabs in parts of Iraq freed from IS control. "Reports indicate that Iraqi security forces, Kurdish security forces and their respective affiliated militias have been responsible for looting and destruction of

property belonging to the Sunni Arab communities, forced evictions, abductions, illegal detention and, in some cases, extra-judicial killings," the Geneva-based body said in a recent statement about Sinjar. In January, Amnesty International said 21 residents had been killed, dozens abducted and several houses burnt by Yazidi militiamen in the Arab villages of Jiri and Sibaya, near Sinjar, in an apparent revenge attack. Kurdish and Yazidi officials in Sinjar acknowledge that looting took place in the chaotic aftermath of the battle with IS, but say most of it was Yazidis reclaiming their own property.

"These things will happen every time when there's an absence of authority or when areas are liberated," said Sheikh Shamo, a Yazidi member of the Kurdish regional parliament. "You will always have sick-minded

people who take advantage of situations like this and who will steal things."

Looted and burned

Khaidi Bozani, a Yazidi representative of the Kurdish Ministry of Endowments, said civilians were killed in the first days after the town was liberated, and that houses were looted and burned. He did not provide exact figures. "Most of the Yazidis only took broken sofas and some household goods, and it was mainly their own things. But there were other people from outside Sinjar who took the valuable items," he said.

Shamo Aido, a Yazidi militia commander in Sinjar, said Muslim residents of the town who had nothing to do with IS are welcome to return, and insists that many Muslim families have already done so.

FRAGILE CEASEFIRE HOLDS IN YEMEN AS RIVALS MEET

BOTH SIDES TRADE BLAME FOR VIOLATIONS

A DEN: A fragile ceasefire between Yemeni pro-government forces and Iran-backed rebels appeared to be generally holding yesterday despite breaches, as UN-sponsored peace talks entered a second day in Switzerland. Although fighting has subsided, both sides traded blame for violations that have left at least 24 people dead since the truce began at midday Tuesday.

series of raids on various provinces". This mutual animosity underscored the challenge facing delegates at the talks which started in Switzerland on Tuesday. Previous ceasefires have collapsed, and earlier UN efforts have failed to narrow differences between the warring rivals. In one positive sign, tribal and military sources said loyalists and the rebels were expected to

Cross in Sanaa, which was involved in a previous prisoner swap, said the organization was "not aware of such an exchange".

The UN envoy to Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, has called the truce "a critical first step towards building a lasting peace in the country". A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition, Brigadier General Ahmed Al-Assiri, said that

country, and has also sent in ground troops. Yesterday, military sources reported mortar and gunfire by rebels in several parts of the besieged provincial capital of Ta'ez.

Pro-Hadi forces also attacked rebel positions in the city, a military source said, and fighting was also reported in Marib province east of the capital. The coalition also said a Saudi soldier was killed "while protecting the kingdom's borders from aggressing rebels" in the kingdom's southwestern Najran area, SPA state news agency reported. On Tuesday, just hours after the truce came into effect, rebel artillery and tanks killed seven civilians and wounded 15 in Ta'ez, witnesses and medics said.

Rebels also killed 17 loyalist fighters and wounded 20 in Marib, a military source said. Hadi said he wants a seven-day truce to coincide with the peace talks to be "renewed automatically if the other party commits to it", the coalition said. Little news has emerged from the open-ended talks in Switzerland. UN spokesman Ahmad Fawzi told reporters on Tuesday that 12 negotiators and six advisers made up each of the two delegations attending the talks.

"These consultations seek to establish a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire, secure improvements to the humanitarian situation and a return to a peaceful and orderly political transition," he said. A ceasefire is much-needed in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest nation, where the UN says an estimated 80 percent of the population requires humanitarian aid. The World Health Organization representative in Yemen, Ahmed Shadoul, said the agency had received assurances that it was free to distribute medical supplies while the truce holds. More than 5,800 people have been killed in Yemen-about half of them civilians-and more than 27,000 wounded since March, according to the UN. —AFP



TA'EZ: A Yemeni tribesman from the Popular Resistance Committees, supporting forces loyal to Yemen's Saudi-backed President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, holds a position in the country's third city. —AFP

The Saudi-led coalition supporting embattled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi accused the Houthi Shiite rebels of flouting the ceasefire from its very first hours, and acknowledged that it had "responded to these violations". The rebels, meanwhile, accused the coalition of breaking the truce immediately after it began by carrying out "a

exchange hundreds of prisoners yesterday after weeks of mediation. Mokhtar Al-Rabbash, a member of the prisoners' affairs committee which is close to the government, said an agreement was in place to swap 375 rebels for 285 pro-Hadi fighters. There was no immediate confirmation from the rebels. The International Committee of the Red

alliance's leadership "realizes that this is an important and crucial phase to find a peaceful solution, but has a military commitment to respond to violations".

Saudi soldier killed

The coalition launched an air war against the rebels in March after they forced Hadi to flee the

SAUDI BLOGGER'S WIFE ACCEPTS EU PRIZE FOR JAILED HUSBAND

STRASBOURG: The wife of jailed Saudi blogger Raif Badawi yesterday accepted the European Parliament's prestigious Sakharov human rights prize on his behalf, urging Arab countries to abandon theocratic diktats and embrace free speech. Ensaf Haidar told the packed assembly that her husband, sentenced to 1,000 lashes and 10 years in prison for insulting Islam, believed "freedom of expression is like the air that we breathe."

"It would have been nice if my husband could have received the prize personally," Haidar said as his award was placed on an empty chair. Haidar entered parliament in the eastern French city of

Strasbourg to sustained applause, carrying a framed photograph of her husband and calling for a minute's silence to mark the victims of last month's deadly jihadist attacks in Paris.

Parliament head Martin Schulz called on Saudi King Salman "to grant mercy to Raif Badawi and without further ado release him and allow him to return to his family". Schulz blasted Saudi Arabia's rights record despite it having signed up to the UN Declaration on Human Rights and expressed dismay at this year's more than 150 executions, usually carried out by beheading with a sword.

"This is not a valid way of proceeding in the 21st century," he said, stressing that nothing-con-

siderations of security cooperation, the country's vast oil wealth-would stop the EU speaking out when human rights are under threat.

Badawi, 31, was arrested in 2012 and his initial public flogging of 50 lashes in January sparked an international outcry against Saudi Arabia and its human rights record. He co-founded the Saudi Liberal Network Internet discussion group which promoted free speech and sought an end to the influence of religious leaders on public life in one of the world's most conservative countries.

'Blasphemy, decadent' free speech

Haidar, who now lives in Canada with the couple's three children, said progress depended on a country allowing freedom of thought, urging Arab rulers to embrace the future instead of clamping down. "An intellectual in an Arab country has always had to beat about the bush to get his message across. In some, their views are considered blasphemy, decadent," she said, warning of an exodus of free thinkers. "In the Arab world under the yoke of theocratic regimes they call on citizens to nod and accept everything religious leaders tell them," she said, speaking in Arabic.

Amnesty International welcomed the award as shining a "clear light" on Saudi Arabia's rights record but berated the EU for a "deafening silence" when it comes to seeking his release. "By cooperating with Saudi Arabia and failing to simultaneously and publicly condemn their human rights violations, the EU is essentially giving the green light for abuses to continue," it said in a statement.

The Sakharov human rights prize is worth 50,000 Euros (\$54,000) and awarded every year to honor individuals who combat intolerance, fanaticism and oppression. Past winners include Pakistani education campaigner Malala Yousafzai, late South African rights icon Nelson Mandela and Myanmar activist Aung San Suu Kyi. —AFP



STRASBOURG: Ensaf Haidar holds a picture of her husband Raif Badawi after accepting the European Parliament's Sakharov human rights prize on behalf of her husband, at the European Parliament. —AFP



TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani speaks during a press conference in his office in Tehran yesterday. Iran will not accept any limitations on its missile programme, Defence Minister Hossein Dehghan said after UN experts accused Tehran of violating a Security Council resolution. —AFP

IRAN'S MISSILE FIRING VIOLATED SANCTIONS

UNITED NATIONS: Iran's firing of a medium-range ballistic missile in October violated UN sanctions banning the Islamic Republic from launches capable of delivering nuclear weapons, UN experts said in a new report.

The report submitted to the UN Security Council and seen by The Associated Press on Tuesday said the launch used ballistic missile technology banned under a June 2010 resolution. The Oct 10 launch was the first test of a ballistic surface-to-surface missile after Iran and six world powers reached a landmark nuclear deal on July 14. The Security Council endorsed the deal in a resolution on July 20 that also called on Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Iran says none of its missiles are designed to carry nuclear weapons.

The report said the missile had a range of at least 1,000 kilometers and up to 1,300 kilometers, and a payload of at least 1,000 kilograms and up to 1,400 kilograms. But the panel said a missile with a range of at least 300 kilometers and a payload of at least 500 kilograms - far smaller than the one launched on Oct 10 - is considered by expert guidelines to be capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction.

'Appropriate action'

The United States, France, Britain and Germany asked the Security Council on Oct 21 to investigate and take "appropriate action" against Iran for the Oct 10 missile launch. The Dec 11 report by experts from the council committee monitoring sanctions against Iran supports the contention of the four countries that the firing violated UN sanctions. Whether the Security Council takes any action remains to be seen.

US Ambassador Samantha Power accused some unnamed council members of refusing to take action against Iran for sanctions violations in recent months, but said the United States will keep pressing for enforcement. "Instead of an effective, timely response the Security Council has dithered," she told a council meeting considering a report from the Iran sanctions committee.

She pointed to the lack of action on the Oct 10 missile launch, a visit to Moscow by Quds Force commander Qasem Soleimani, who is subject to a UN travel ban, and the interception off the coast of Oman of a banned shipment of arms from Iran in late

September. "This council cannot allow Iran to feel that it can violate our resolutions with impunity," Power said, stressing the importance of sanctions enforcement for "a credible, enforceable nuclear deal."

Under the July nuclear deal, most sanctions on Iran will be lifted when its provisions are implemented in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But the experts' report noted that "ballistic missile launches would be covered" under the July 20 resolution.

Atomic arms

Meanwhile, the UN nuclear agency closed the books Tuesday on its decade-long probe of allegations that Iran worked on atomic arms, and Tehran proclaimed that within weeks, it would finish cutbacks on present nuclear programs that the US fears could be turned into making such weapons.

The probe had to be formally ended as part of the July 14 deal between Iran and six nations that involves the removal of economic sanctions on Tehran in exchange for its commitment to crimp its nuclear program. A resolution was approved by consensus of the 35-nation board of the UN's International Atomic Energy Agency meeting in Vienna.

Despite Iranian denials, the US and its allies continue to believe that Tehran did work on components of a nuclear weapon. But their overriding interest is moving ahead to implement the July 14 deal. The dispute over the ballistic missile launch indicates lingering questions about Iran's weapons programs. Iran's Defense Minister Gen. Hossein Dehghan, said at the time of the Oct 10 launch that the missile, named Emad or pillar in Farsi, was a technological achievement for Iran - able to be controlled until the moment of impact and to hit targets "with high precision." He said it "will obviously boost the strategic deterrence capability of our armed forces." The panel said it has not yet investigated a subsequent Iranian ballistic missile launch reported by the media on Nov. 21 and therefore "cannot determine whether it was another Emad test."

Based on video footage of the Oct 10 launch, the panel said the Emad delivery system was identified as "the Ghadr-1 medium-range single stage liquid-fueled ballistic missile." It said the Ghadr-1 is an advanced version of Iran's Shabab-3 ballistic missile system and the reentry vehicle possesses a guidance system and steerable fins. —AP

SYRIAN TROOPS CAPTURE STRATEGIC MOUNTAIN IN COASTAL PROVINCE

BEIRUT: Syrian government forces captured a strategic mountain in the country's northwest yesterday, inching closer to a rebel-held stronghold in the coastal province of Latakia, state media and a monitoring group said. State TV quoted an unnamed military official as saying that Syrian troops and pro-government gunmen took the Noba Mountain in Latakia early yesterday "after destroying the terrorists' positions and fortifications."

Government troops have been on the offensive in different parts of the country under the cover of Russian airstrikes, which began on Sept. 30. Capturing the mountains of Latakia would reduce threats to the coast - a key stronghold of President Bashar Assad. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the taking of Noba Mountain opens the way for government

forces toward the rebel-stronghold of Salma. The Observatory said government troops were backed by fighters from Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group, which sided with Assad in Syria's civil war.

In Lebanon, Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV quoted one of its reporters, embedded with Syrian troops, as saying that government forces raised the Syrian flag on the mountain overlooking an array of rebel-held areas in Latakia.

Meanwhile, in the central Syrian city of Homs, a convoy of 18 trucks carrying food, medical supplies and construction material began entering the rebel-held neighborhood of Waer, according to Pawel Krzysiek, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross. Krzysiek said the convoy is organized by the ICRC and the Syrian Arab Red Crescent. —AP



SAN FRANCISCO: In this Dec 11, 2007, file photo, billionaire investor Warren Buffett helps Democratic presidential candidate, then-Sen Hillary Clinton, D-NY, raise campaign funds. —AP

FAMED INVESTOR BUFFETT TO GIVE APPROVAL TO CLINTON

OMAHA: Like many Americans, Warren Buffett can write a \$2,700 check to support his favorite presidential candidate. But as one of the wealthiest Americans, he can also unleash immense financial clout by giving untold millions to super PACs supporting his preferred contender in the race.

When the billionaire joins a rally with Hillary Clinton in Omaha, Nebraska, a question humming in the background will be whether Buffett, one of the world's premier investors, will throw more of his fortune behind her candidacy than he's been comfortable spending in politics in the past.

In either case, his public appearance with Clinton is aimed at offering his stamp of approval to the Democrat's economic message of inclusive capitalism and toughness against Wall Street excess. He will also join Clinton at a private fundraiser. The "Oracle of Omaha" has referred to Clinton as a "hero of mine" and predicted last year that she would succeed President Barack Obama, whom he also supported. "I will bet money on it," he said. "And I don't do that easily."

Democrats say Buffett carries a rare dual appeal on Wall Street and Main Street. The investment guru's annual shareholder meeting is dubbed "Woodstock for Capitalists" and drew an overflow crowd of more than 40,000 people from around the globe in the spring.

'Respected business man'

"He's one of the few highly respected business people who average people view as one of them," said Marc Lasry, a New York hedge fund manager and Democratic donor. "He's liked by lots of different kinds of people." Buffett supported Clinton's first Senate campaign in 2000, raised money for her presidential campaign in 2008 and later endorsed Obama and appeared at fundraisers for the president.

A donor can contribute up to \$2,700 to a candidate during the primaries and again during the general election. But more can be given to candidate-friendly groups and, among those organizations, super political action committees can accept unlimited donations. Buffett has voiced his displeasure with the growth of unlimited money in politics and the emergence of the super PACs. But he made his first donation to a super PAC last year, giving \$25,000 to the pro-Clinton Ready for Hillary group, raising hopes among some Democrats that he might open his wallet again and in an even bigger way.

Clinton's campaign said the two plan to discuss their "shared belief that we need to build an economy that works for everyone, not just those at the top, and their shared commitment to tax reforms that ensure that the wealthiest Americans pay their fair share." Left unsaid is what Buffett might do in the months ahead, as a big-dollar fundraiser, a presence with Clinton on the trail, or both.—AP

EMAILED THREATS HIGHLIGHT WORRIES US SCHOOLS FACE

NY, LA SCHOOLS CLOSE DUE TO HOAX

LOS ANGELES: When it comes to assessing threats, New York City and Los Angeles schools likely have more experience than most other districts in the country. But their reactions were dramatically different Tuesday to the same threat of a large-scale jihadi attack with guns and bombs - LA dismissed all its classes while New York dismissed the warning as a hoax.

The divergent responses from the nation's two biggest K-12 public school systems reflected what many in school security know: That deciding whether or not a threat is credible is hardly a mathematical process and the stakes in staying open or closing are high. It is one that school district officials around the country have weighed heavily in the wake of school shootings and threats.

Across the nation, small and large districts regularly encounter the age-old challenge of deciphering threats, complicated today by more sophisticated technology that can make them harder to trace. Even when a threat is determined to be a hoax, the consequences can be a severe, with the safety of thousands of children, millions of school funding, and the message each decision sends on the line.

Lingering unease

It's extremely rare for a major US city to close all its schools because of a threat and it reflected the lingering unease in Southern California following the attack that killed 14 people at a holiday luncheon two weeks ago in San Bernardino. "If this was not ISIS, not a terror organization, they're nonetheless watching," Rep Adam Schiff, D-Calif, said yesterday on MSNBC's "Meet the Press Daily." "And if they come to the conclusion that they can literally mail it in, call it in and disrupt large cities, they're going to take advantage of that."

A 2014 analysis by National School Safety and Security Services, a Cleveland-based consulting firm, found a 158 percent increase in the number of threats schools received over the previous year. About 37 percent of the threats were sent electronically and nearly a third resulted in schools being evacuated. Nearly 10 percent of the threats closed school for at least one day.

Ken Trump, president of the firm, said schools leaders faced with a threat they don't believe is credible sometimes let community anxiety rule the decision to evacuate or close, even though children might be safer in school than sent home where they could be left unsupervised. "It's often better to keep them in school," he said.

In LA, the threat came in the form of an email

to a school board member. Authorities in New York reported receiving the same "generic" email and decided there was no danger to schoolchildren. Mayor Bill de Blasio concluded the threat contained "nothing credible." New York Police Commissioner William Bratton said that it looked like the sender of the threat had watched a lot of the Showtime terrorism drama "Homeland."

Extra patrol

Los Angeles officials announced Tuesday evening that schools would reopen with all city police officers ordered to be in uniform and extra patrol at schools. Officials in LA defended

"Los Angeles doesn't have that same kind of experience," he said. "So you take the investment New York has and you take the nervousness that Los Angeles is feeling because it's an hour away from San Bernardino, and that creates a situation where I would expect the two cities to react differently."

LA schools commonly get threats, but Los Angeles Superintendent Ramon Cortines called this one rare and said the San Bernardino attack influenced his decision to close the entire district. The threat "was not to one school, two schools or three schools," he said at a news conference Tuesday morning. "It was many schools, not specifically identified. ...



VAN NUYS: A gate to Birmingham Community Charter High School is locked with a sign stating that school is closed. — AP

the move to shut down its entire district, with that city's police chief dismissing the criticism as "irresponsible." "We have suffered too many school shootings in America to ignore these kinds of threats," Chief Charlie Beck said.

Victor Asal, chair of public administration at the State University of New York at Albany, said the decision each district made was reflective of their respective experiences. New York has invested heavily in homeland security and terrorism response, which might make it easier to process how big a threat is, he said.

That's the reason I took the action that I did."

The threat disrupted the routines of many Los Angeles families and sparked nerves in a region already on edge. Lupita Vela, who has a daughter in the third grade and a son who is a high school senior, called the threat "absolutely terrifying" in light of the San Bernardino attack. "I don't want this to be in the back of her head," she said. "Who knows what it does psychologically to kids? Is this going to cause her some kind of trauma so that she's not going to feel safe at school?" —AP

US EXECUTIONS LOWEST LEVEL COUNT SINCE '91

WASHINGTON: The number of people executed in the United States this year dropped to the lowest level since 1991, as states impose fewer death sentences and defendants in capital cases get access to better legal help. The Death Penalty Information Center, a nonprofit organization that opposes capital punishment and tracks the issue, said 28 inmates were executed as of Dec 15, down from 35 last year and far below the peak of 98 in 1999.

Another 49 criminal defendants received death sentences this year, down 33 percent from 2014 and the lowest number since the early 1970s. The numbers reflect a steady decline in death sentences over the past 15 years and a broad shift in public attitudes that has made capital punishment increasingly rare, said Robert Dunham, the group's executive director. "What we're seeing is the cumulative effect of falling public support for the death

penalty," Dunham said.

About 61 percent of Americans support the death penalty in murder cases, according to a Gallup poll in October, but that share has inched downward while opposition has crept up. While capital punishment remains legal in 31 states, only six states accounted for all the executions this year - Florida, Missouri, Georgia, Oklahoma, Texas and Virginia. That's the fewest since 1988. —AP

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ROTHESAY: A Saltire flag, the national flag of Scotland, flies from the prow of a ferry as it approaches the town of Rothesay on the Isle Of Bute, an island off the west coast of Scotland is seen from a ferry. — AFP

ON WINDSWEEP SCOTTISH ISLE, SYRIANS STRUGGLING TO ADAPT

'IT'S HARD. WE DON'T KNOW ANYONE!'

ROTHESAY: From war-torn Syria to a windswept island off the west coast of Scotland, nine newly-arrived refugee families are struggling to adjust to new lives in a very unfamiliar world. "It's hard. We don't know anyone!" said a woman from Aleppo, who was helping a fellow refugee from Homs pick out tea cups and bowls in a charity shop on the seafront in Rothesay on the Isle of Bute. The other woman, who wore a black headscarf, said she could not find Arabic coffee, roast pumpkin seeds or "Mate", a caffeine-rich drink popular in Syria. Heavy winds and rain have lashed the island this month and several refugees said they were struggling with the Scottish weather.

The Syrians-around 40 of them in total with six more families expected to arrive in 2016 — were previously living as refugees in Lebanon. The Syrians were flown to Glasgow last month and took the one-hour boat crossing from mainland Scotland to the island, population 7,000. At the Co-Op supermarket near Rothesay Castle, a man from Daraa looked dazed as he wandered along the aisles with his crying two-year-old son. A local woman jovially pinched the little boy's cheek saying: "I live next door to you!"

'Rain will chase them off'

The refugees spent their first few days on Bute registering children for school and signing up for doctors, working out currency conversions and how to top up their new mobile phones to keep in touch with friends and family left behind. They are among the first Syrians to settle in Britain since Prime Minister David Cameron announced in September that 20,000

refugees from camps on Syria's borders would be brought in by 2020.

Britain has opted out of EU quotas for taking migrants and dispersing them around the bloc. Cameron has resisted pressure for Britain to do more amid calls to share the burden in Europe's biggest migrant crisis since World War II, which has put pressure on frontline states. Germany, by comparison, is expected to record one million asylum-seeker arrivals this year, and much smaller Netherlands 60,000.

Local volunteers and officials have tried to keep media attention away out of concern that details about their identity could endanger family and friends, and to give them time to adapt. Under a government scheme, the refugees are given five years humanitarian protection status, free housing and social welfare, as well as permission to work from the day they arrive.

Some locals are skeptical as to whether the Syrians will stay on their island and others harbour darker concerns, reflecting wider preoccupations about Syrian refugees in Europe and the United States.

"It's ok as long as they don't fight," muttered one bearded local man who was buying half a liter of vodka and two energy drinks in a shop. "The rain will chase them off," said another man in a sailor's cap waiting for a ferry in a harbor decked out in Christmas lights looking across the Firth of Clyde to snow-capped mountains of the mainland. Craig Borland, editor of The Buteman weekly paper, said there was "a fear of the unknown" in the predominantly white, Christian community but that "an overwhelming

majority" had welcomed them.

'Baked beans'

Zavoroni's Italian ice cream shop on the shore speaks to an earlier wave of immigration in Scotland, but the arrival of a large group of Muslims from the Middle East in Rothesay is unheard of. "It reminds me of when my parents moved to Scotland," said Tariq Iqbal, a volunteer with the Scottish Communities Initiative who is trying to help with cultural mediation between refugees and islanders.

Ahead of their arrival, Iqbal-whose parents immigrated from what is now Pakistan-travelled to Bute from Glasgow to prepare the volunteers and there have been classes on Syria and Islam in local schools. Iqbal said he was planning a much-needed halal meat shipment to Bute, and to set up a regular supply. The first delivery finally arrived on Tuesday.

"They don't even know what baked beans are!" he said, referring to a British culinary staple. He said one of the main reasons for picking Bute was the availability of housing—a reflection of the island's economic decline in recent decades.

Once known as the "Scotland's Madeira", the island was a seaside resort for Glaswegians until cheap air travel made warmer destinations more affordable. Tim Saul, himself an "immigrant" from England who runs a jazz cafe and used to live in Bahrain, said he was looking forward to meeting the new arrivals. "I've got my crib sheet [cheat sheet] behind the bar to brush up on my conversational Arabic in case one of them comes in for a coffee," he said. — AFP

GERMANY INTRODUCES NEW COUNTER-TERRORISM UNIT

BERLIN: Germany yesterday introduced a new police unit that officials said will be better armed, outfitted and trained to deal with terrorism, based on an analysis of the country's security in the wake of deadly attacks in Paris earlier this year.

Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere said that, after the series of attacks in January centered on the Charlie Hebdo satirical newspaper in which 17 people were killed, security officials reassessed the situation in Germany. Their conclusion that assailants would likely be highly aggressive, well-prepared, well-armed and capable of carrying out concurrent attacks was reinforced by the Nov 13 attacks that left 130 dead in Paris.

"The danger in Germany from international terrorism is high, as it is across Europe," de Maiziere told reporters at a police base in Blumberg, outside Berlin. "It was high, it is high, and it will remain high for the foreseeable future." Some 250 more officers will be added to the

national police force's special arrest units, known as the BFE, and based at five locations around the country.

Unlike the country's elite GSG9 SWAT teams that are only deployed as emergency response units, the so-called BFE+ police will also be involved in day-to-day operations, filling a gap between the special unit and regular police, de Maiziere said. The BFE+ police will be based in areas where the national police have helicopters, meaning they can be brought into situations quickly, de Maiziere said as he presented the first group of 50 new officers.

Police union spokesman Rainer Wendt says additional specially trained officers are "money well-spent" but told the dpa news agency ordinary patrol officers also must be properly equipped, saying all should have helmets and high-quality body armor. "It would be irresponsible to do nothing for the ordinary patrolman," he said. — AP

30 KILLED IN BOKO HARAM RAID ON NIGERIA VILLAGES

KANO: Brutal weekend attacks on three villages by Boko Haram Islamists in the restive northeast of Nigeria have left 30 dead and 20 others wounded, a vigilante told AFP. "Most of the victims were slaughtered and most of the wounded (had suffered) machete cuts," Mustapha Karimbe, a civilian helping the Nigerian military fight Boko Haram, said of Saturday's attacks in the villages of Warwara, Mangari and Bura-Shika in Borno state.

News of the attacks has been slow to emerge because telecom masts in the area have been destroyed in previous Boko Haram raids, hindering communication. The Islamists invaded the villages, hacking and slaughtering their victims before setting the villages on fire. The villages are near Buratai, the hometown of Nigeria's highest military chief Tukur Yusuf Buratai.

Warwara, where 20 people were killed, was the worst affected, said Musa Suleiman, another vigilante. The attackers killed six people in Bura-Shika and another four in Mangari, he said. The latest deaths take the number of people killed in Nigeria since President Muhammadu Buhari took office in May to more than 1,530, according to an AFP tally.

Residents of the villages fled to Bui, 30 kilometers away. Buratai and nearby settlements have recently been the targets of

deadly raids by Boko Haram, which have left scores dead and entire villages looted and burnt down. Residents believe the attacks are in response to the pressure that the army chief is exerting on Boko Haram in counter-insurgency military operations.

On Thursday Boko Haram insurgents killed 14 people—decapitating some of them—when they raided Kamuya village, the hometown of the army chief's mother, and burnt it down. Nigeria's government has vowed to end the Boko Haram insurgency by this month but the deadline looks likely to be missed as attacks persist.

The Islamists' grip on the region has suffered as a result of offensives launched by local armies, leading to raids like Saturday's becoming rarer. There has, however, been a spike in suicide attacks in Nigeria and neighboring Cameroon, Chad and Niger. At least 17,000 people have been killed since the conflict began in 2009.

A new 8,700-strong Multi-national Joint Task Force (MNJTF) comprising troops from Nigeria, Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Benin was supposed to have been deployed in late July. But the African Union-backed force has yet to start operations, with no reason given for the lengthening delay and questions over whether the countries have the resources to commit. — AFP

SPAIN BRACING FOR A MESSY BALLOT RESULT

LISBON: The Portuguese recently lived through 50 days of political drama, when the party that lost an October general election outmaneuvered the winner and took charge of the country. With a Sunday ballot likely heralding the end of two-party politics in neighboring Spain, possible post-election permutations also make the future of the

European Union's fifth-largest economy hard to predict. Spain, too, could end up with a "coalition of losers" in power.

"It's never happened in Spain before, but there again, it had never happened in Portugal before either," says Carlos Barrera, a political analyst at Spain's University of Navarra. Here's how forming

a government works in Iberia.

A Portuguese surprise

On the night of Oct. 4, Portugal buzzed with speculation about whether Socialist leader Antonio Costa would resign after his party lost that day's general election. The next month, he was sworn in as prime minister.

Costa's Socialists got about 32 percent of the vote but he outflanked the incumbent center-right government, which won with 38 percent, by creating an unprecedented alliance of leftist parties whose common denominator was a commitment to dismantling austerity measures. Those parties pooled their votes in Parliament to create a majority and unseat the government.

That thrust Portugal's president into the spotlight. Though the head of state has no executive power, the president has the right to choose - taking into account election results - which party to install in government, though the nominated party needs to win a vote of confidence in Parliament.

President Anibal Cavaco Silva, mindful that debt-heavy Portugal is still recovering from its 78 billion-euro (\$85 billion) bailout in 2011, balked at the anti-austerity alliance. But he ended up granting it permission to run the country because his only other option was to install a caretaker government that nobody wanted.

Suspense in Spain

A spectacular surge in support over the past year for two new parties challenging the traditional heavyweights has made this election one of Spain's closest ever. That could spell an unpleasant

surprise for the winner as, just like in Portugal, a narrow win would likely leave the triumphant party at the mercy of a coalition of its defeated rivals.

Recent opinion polls have placed the ruling conservative Popular Party and the main opposition Socialist Party roughly level with the centrist newcomer Ciudadanos party. The far-left Podemos party is lagging behind but could turn into a powerbroker.

The expectation is that no single party will collect enough votes to obtain an overall majority of 176 lawmakers in the 350-seat Parliament. That will likely bring a tense period of political horse-trading as parties negotiate to create a government that has enough parliamentary votes to enact its policies without concessions to rivals.

"Government formation is going to be tricky, as in the case of Portugal," said Antonio Barroso, a London-based analyst with the Teneo Intelligence consultancy. "It's clear that no party's going to have an absolute majority so the key question is, what can you have?"

King Felipe's role

After the election King Felipe VI will become the focus. The monarch holds talks with the leaders of each party that has won seats in Parliament. Then, article 99 of the Constitution requires him to nominate one of them for government. But the nominated party leader must then win a vote of confidence in Parliament in order to take office.

In a first vote, the candidate must get more than 50 percent of the full 350 votes in order to form a government. If he falls short, he must get more votes for him than against him in a second ballot 48 hours later. That's a lower bar which

allows parties to abstain, letting a rival into power in return for concessions. If there is still deadlock after two months, the monarch calls a new election.

Historically, the king has simply nominated the election winner as prime minister. But, as Barrera of Navarra University points out, "that is not written down anywhere. It's just a custom." The king has to consider which party has a real possibility of winning the parliamentary confidence vote and forming a stable government. Felipe will find that out during his talks with the parties. It would not be illegal or unconstitutional for an alliance of the second- and third-placed parties to get the nod, Barrera said. That has often happened in Spanish regional and local elections, but never in a general election.

Potential election outcomes

As opinion polls stand, various possibilities - and impossibilities - stand out. Business-friendly Ciudadanos could cut a deal with the Popular Party - but one of Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera's conditions is that incumbent Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy does not stay on for a second term.

The Socialists are unwilling to consider a grand coalition with the Popular Party, but they could also join forces with Ciudadanos, though Rivera doesn't want to join a coalition in which he is the junior member. The Socialists might ally with Podemos, but the far-left party has ruled out a coalition with the Socialists if the Socialists get more votes. Ciudadanos and Podemos are ideologically opposed and are highly unlikely to join forces with the Socialists. — AP



MADRID: In this Sunday, Dec 6, 2015 photo, two girls stamp their hands with paint on a paper wall during a Spanish Podemos Party rally, ahead of the Dec 20 national election. — AFP

This 17th December marks 4th anniversary of the passing away of the Great Leader General KIM JONG IL. On this occasion below is published an anecdote about him.

Son of the People

The following happened while I, leader KIM JONG IL, and his fellow students from KIM II, SLING University were taking part in a project to widen the road between Moran dong and Pyongsong, Pyongsong, in 1961.

One day an old woman appeared at the construction site, carrying an empty bucket and a shovel. She was planning to dig up the pieces of coal that were sometimes discovered at the site. A student approached her, and asked her whether she had run out of coal.

The old woman replied, "No, I haven't. But it would be a waste to leave them here."

The student arranged for an excavator to dig up the coal and move it to a safe place so that people could collect and take it to their houses. Then he personally shoveled some into the old woman's bucket.

The old woman, when she discovered later that the student was President KIM IL SUNG's son, came back and said, "You did such manual work for an ordinary old woman."

Holding her two hands, KIM JONG IL said, "I am also a son of the people. How can I mind doing such manual work if it is for them? There is nothing more worthwhile in the world than working for the people."

SOUTH SUDAN: TURMOIL OF CIVIL WAR GOES ON

LEER: Mary Nyak Chot has been left with nothing; South Sudan's civil war took everything. "All my children were killed. The youngest two were burned in their home; the other four were bombed by artillery. My husband also died," she says, clutching a food ration card in Leer town, an area facing famine, during the first food distribution there since July. Tuesday marked two years since the civil war began in South Sudan, a nation which is itself only four years old. The violence continues with a peace deal signed more than three months ago having yet to bear fruit.

"The situation still remains the same," said Daud Gideon, a member of the Remembrance Project which is collecting names of those lost in the war. "A lot of killing still is happening in different parts of the country, and the lives are being lost on a daily basis." The war started on December 15, 2013 after a skirmish between soldiers in a barracks in Juba, the capital. Soldiers loyal to President Salva Kiir, an ethnic Dinka, perpetrated organized ethnic killings of Nuer, the tribe of Kiir's political rival Riek Machar, according to an African Union commission report.

The Juba Massacre prompted an uprising of Nuer in the country's northeast led by Machar, a Kiir's former vice president. The insurgents committed

revenge massacres which rivaled the Juba killings in their horror, spurring a cycle of violence. The United Nations says tens of thousands have been killed while other estimates range up to 100,000.

Brutal fighting

The brutality of the fighting has shred South Sudan's social fabric, exposing buried ethnic fault lines and creating new ones which have made attempts at reconciliation unsuccessful. "Trust is not there. People are identifying now by their tribes," says the Rev. James Ninrew, a peace activist in Juba. "Even in one community, you will find Nuer are divided, or the Dinka are divided." Over 2 million people have fled their homes, including hundreds of thousands seeking refuge in neighboring countries. About 180,000 people shelter in squalid United Nations bases rife with disease and violence. Others hide in remote swamps and forests, too afraid to go home. "I'm running away every day," says Nyalen Top, who ventured out of the hinterlands of Leer, the birthplace of Machar and one of the country's most devastated parts of the country, to seek medical help for her two sick children. "It is better to hide yourself in the bush, because if the men get you they can rape or kill you." — AP



LEER: Some of more than 30,000 people who flocked into Leer town, South Sudan, to receive food from the International Committee of the Red Cross. — AP

MALALA SLAMS TRUMP'S 'IDEOLOGY OF HATRED'

BIRMINGHAM: Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai condemned Donald Trump's views on Muslims on Tuesday, at a somber ceremony to remember the 134 children killed in a Taliban attack on a Pakistani school a year ago.

"Well, that's really tragic that you hear these comments which are full of hatred, full of this ideology of being discriminative towards others," Malala said, in response to recent comments by the US Republican presidential candidate. Trump has been heavily criticized for calling for a ban on all Muslims entering the United States after a Muslim husband and wife killed 14 people in a shooting rampage in California, an incident classified as a terrorist act.

Speaking at the ceremony in the city of Birmingham, central England, Malala's father Ziauddin Yousafzai also criticized Trump's comments. "It will be very unfair, very unjust that we associate 1.6 billion with a few terrorist organizations," he said, referring to the number of Muslims worldwide.

The event was organized by peace prize winner Malala and her family, and two survivors of the attack, Ahmad Nawaz, 14, and Mohammed Ibrahim, 13,

took part. The massacre saw nine extremists scale the walls of an army-run school in the northwestern Pakistani city of Peshawar, lobbing grenades and opening fire on terrified children and teachers.

"There are these terrorist attacks happening, for example what happened in Paris or what happened in Peshawar a year ago," Malala said, referring to last month's Islamic State attack in Paris that killed 130 people. "It's not just needed in Pakistan but across the world. If we want to end terrorism we need to bring quality education so we defeat the mindset of terrorism mentality and of hatred."

Nawaz, dressed in a traditional shalwar kameez, recounted the horror of the December 16, 2014 Peshawar attack, in which 17 adults were also killed. "I saw my teacher burned alive in that incident and the friends with whom I was playing," he told AFP. "I was surrounded by the dead bodies of those friends. So it was the horrifying experience of my life and I still have nightmares." Nawaz was shot in the arm. His brother was killed.

Ibrahim was in a wheelchair, having been paralyzed from the waist down.

The Taliban assault dredged up painful memories for Malala's family: she was shot in the head by the Taliban in 2012 after she had publicly advocated education for girls.

"When I was watching all these graphics and all these news on television, my wife was crying, I was crying," Malala's father told AFP. "It was unbearable. It was very hard to watch. Our own trauma revived," he said. "We don't curse people, it's a sin to curse and we never cursed Talebans for attacking our daughter, but I must say we cursed them that day." — AFP

INDIA LACKS POLITICAL WILL TO STOP RAPES: VICTIM'S FATHER

NEW DELHI: The father of a student who died after being gang-raped in New Delhi three years ago said yesterday politicians still lack the will to end India's rape crisis and criticized one attacker's imminent release. Speaking on the anniversary of the 2012 assault on his daughter that sparked global outrage, the father said it was unclear if the attacker had reformed after serving the maximum legal term for a juvenile.

The national government introduced tougher penalties for rapists and other measures after the crime unleashed a wave of public anger and grief against India's high levels of sexual violence. But the father, who cannot be named for legal reasons, said the government had still not spent funds promised to upgrade safety for women in the capital.

"It was meant to install CCTV cameras, light up dark streets and deploy more policemen," he told reporters in New Delhi. "The government has the time and the money but not the will to do anything to improve the safety and security for women. We don't know how to awaken the conscience of the government."

A group of four adults were convicted and handed death sentences in 2014 for the attack on the 23-year-old student on a moving bus. Their appeals are pending in the Supreme Court. The juvenile, who was 17 at the time of the attack, was sentenced to three years in a detention facility for his role and is set to walk free in the coming days.

"Almost every day we read about small girls being raped. If criminals like him are let off I fear what will happen to society," the father said. Women's rights groups have also opposed his release, mainly on the grounds that it was unclear if he had been rehabilitated and was ready to be reintegrated into society.

"According to what the daughter told her mother, he was the most brutal among her attackers," said Ranjana Kumari, head of the Centre for Social Research think-tank in New Delhi. "We'd like to know if he repents what he did and whether he can live amongst us in society and not be a threat." The National Commission of Women has also protested, saying his release would do nothing to tackle a culture of impunity for perpetrators of sexual violence.

The victim died of grievous internal injuries on December 29 after being lured on to the private bus by the gang following a cinema trip with her male friend. India recorded 36,735 rape cases in 2014, with 2,096 of them in Delhi alone, although experts say those figures are likely to represent only the tip of the iceberg. Since the 2012 attack India has repeatedly hit the headlines for a series of brutal rapes including those of children and foreign women. — AFP



LAHORE: Pakistani teachers and students hold burning candles during a vigil to pay tribute to the victims of the Peshawar school massacre of December 16, 2014, the deadliest terror attack in Pakistan's history, ahead of the first anniversary. — AFP

PAKISTAN VOWS REVENGE ONE YEAR AFTER SCHOOL MASSACRE

LOSS 'SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE DESCRIBED'

PESHAWAR: Pakistan's leader called yesterday for vengeance under portraits of children killed by Taliban bullets as the country marked the first anniversary of a school massacre that left 151 people dead in its worst-ever extremist attack.

Families of the victims along with military and political leaders attended an emotional ceremony at the army-run school in the northwestern city of Peshawar to mark the assault, which mostly claimed the lives of schoolchildren and has been termed a "mini-9/11" for the country.

Relatives were accompanied by students bearing images of their loved ones as they spoke one by one of children with bright smiles who worried about their hair and handwriting but had dreams of being artists and engineers.

"My children, today I make this promise to you, that I will take revenge for every drop of your blood," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said, addressing the victims directly. The ceremony, which a military official said was attended by some 2,500 guests including celebrities and sports stars, was broadcast live on state television. Powerful military chief Raheel Sharif and opposition leader Imran Khan

were also in attendance.

Earlier, the parents of the 134 children killed in the hours-long siege visited their children's graves in Peshawar. "We think a lot about the students who lost their lives," Abu Bakar, a teacher who was shot three times as he threw himself in front of fleeing children during the siege, told AFP, saying the loss was "something that cannot be described".

"This should not have happened to them, they were innocent students," he said. "They came here for studies, they were not at war with anyone." On social media, Pakistanis were changing their profile pictures to an image depicting an Army Public School uniform with a bloody bullet hole resembling a poppy, and a caption reading: "Some stains don't wash out." Two survivors of the massacre attended a somber ceremony Tuesday in the British city of Birmingham organized by Nobel prize winner Malala Yousafzai. She survived a 2012 Taliban attack, retribution for advocating education for girls.

Hardened resolve

The Taliban have said they carried out the attack in retaliation for an army offensive on extremists in the tribal areas. The mastermind Khalifa Umar Mansoor stated: "If our women and children died as martyrs your children will not escape." But the attack hardened public opinion against extremism and prompted a military-led crackdown that has improved security, with 2015 on course for the fewest deaths linked to extremist violence since 2007, the year the Pakistani Taliban were formed.

However critics say long-term steps are not being taken to eradicate extremism. Pakistan deployed paramilitary forces and police in major cities for the anniversary. In Peshawar, the area surrounding the school was designated a red zone, and army helicopters hovered as hundreds of soldiers guarded main junctions.

Army Public Schools across the country were open for ceremonies marking the anniversary, even though a security official told AFP Tuesday they were "particularly under threat". One year on, a veneer of normality has returned to the Peshawar school, where children play while soldiers stand atop recently fortified walls.

"All the people of Pakistan are with us and they are trying to support us and helping us to move towards the future and to just forget this incident," Muhammad Hamza, a 17-year-old student whose brother died in the attack, told AFP. But the trauma lingers for many, with parents of the slain children saying they are still seeking answers about how the security apparatus could have failed them so completely.

In August, after a military trial behind closed doors, the army announced that six militants linked to the Peshawar assault would be executed, while a seventh was given a life sentence. Four were hanged on December 2. Some parents are demanding a full judicial inquiry, complaining that no government, security or military official has yet been held publicly accountable. At least a dozen families boycotted yesterday's ceremony in protest.

At the school, the prime minister declared December 16 a national day of education, promising he would not let extremists "burn out the flame of knowledge". Teachers and students told AFP that education was their best revenge. "The Taliban want us to quit our studies and become ignorant like them," 13-year-old Uzair Khan said. "We don't want to do that. God willing, we will continue our education, move forward and avenge them." — AFP

PENTAGON: VIOLENCE IS ON RISE IN AFGHANISTAN

WASHINGTON: Violence in Afghanistan is on the rise, according to a new Pentagon report to Congress that says the Taliban was emboldened by the reduced US military role and can be expected to build momentum from their 2015 attack strategy.

The number of effective insurgent attacks rose this year, causing increased casualties among Afghan security forces, the report said. While Afghan forces have demonstrated a will to fight and to learn from their battlefield mistakes, the report said the Taliban's resilience has made security fragile in key areas and at risk of deteriorating in others.

Sen Bob Corker, the Republican chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told reporters that it was "probably the most depressing assessment" of the direction in which the country is headed that he has heard in a "long, long time." "We're certainly not in a positive trajectory right now in Afghanistan," Corker said. "In fact, I would say currently, my assessment would be that it's a very negative trajectory."

The Pentagon report, the latest in a regular series of Pentagon war updates required by Congress, also said the Taliban-led insurgency has been emboldened by the US transition from direct combat operations to a train-and-advise role. "As a result, the Taliban will continue to test the (Afghan forces) aggressively in 2016," it said. The US now has about 9,800 troops in Afghanistan, some of which are involved in counterterrorism missions.

announced that he would keep troops levels steady through most of next year. By the end of 2016, rather than draw down to a Kabul-only US military presence of about 1,000 troops as previously planned, Obama decided the US will maintain 5,500 troops in Kabul and Bagram. Tuesday's report said Obama's decision reflects the need to give Afghans more time to develop a credible army.

"The resilient Taliban-led insurgency remains an enduring threat to US, coalition, and Afghan forces, as well as to the Afghan people," the report said. The report covers the second half of 2015, which is the first year that Afghan forces have fought without US troops alongside them on the battlefield. The Afghans largely stood their ground, or managed to recover territory they temporarily conceded, but the report credited the Taliban with "improving their ability to find and exploit" Afghan vulnerabilities. The Taliban also are using the Afghan-Pakistan border as sanctuary, it said.

To illustrate the point that security conditions are still unsatisfactory, the report said the number of casualty-causing Taliban attacks from January through November rose by about 4 percent over the comparable period in 2014. The number hovered around 1,000 per month during the year before decreasing in September.

The report also said Al-Qaeda, which used Afghanistan as a base from which to launch the Sept 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, has a "sustained presence" in eastern and northeastern Afghanistan and remains a threat to the United States. It did not estimate how many al-Qaeda fighters are in the country. — AP

Troop levels steady

In October, President Barack Obama

TOP INDIA COURT BANS DIESEL CARS IN CAPITAL

NEW DELHI: India's top court yesterday ordered a temporary ban on large new diesel cars in New Delhi as part of a series of tough measures aimed at cleaning up the world's most polluted capital. The Supreme Court also doubled a tax on diesel trucks entering Delhi and barred those older than 10 years altogether, as scathing public criticism mounts over the city's toxic air.

Chief Justice TS Thakur ordered the ban on registration of new diesel vehicles with engine capacity of two liters or more—typical of SUVs, jeeps and other luxury cars.

Delhi would be among the world's first cities to introduce such strict measures after Lebanon banned diesel vehicles in 2001. Paris plans similar action in future to cut diesel exhaust fumes which are considered more harmful than petrol ones.

India's courts are pushing authorities to act over Delhi's filthy air, ranked as the world's worst in a World Health Organization (WHO) survey last year of more than 1,600 cities. Delhi's air routinely worsens in winter months as millions of poor people light fires to stay warm and

cooler air and clouds trap pollutants. Leading environmentalist Sunita Narain, who was in court, said judges also ordered city-based taxis to move from diesel to CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) by the end of March and banned the burning of rubbish.

'Health emergency'

"There cannot be anything more fundamental than the right to clean air and what the court has recognized today... (is) this is a public health emergency," Narain told reporters. "There is now a ban on the

registration of diesel vehicles above 2000cc across NCR (the National Capital Region)," she said, referring to the engine capacity. The ban will last until March 31.

The court also barred thousands of diesel trucks which only enter the city every night en route to other parts of the country, in order to bypass toll roads around Delhi. Car sales are soaring as incomes rise, with 1,400 extra vehicles pouring onto the city's already crowded roads every day.

More than 23 percent of the cars on Delhi roads run on diesel, which is cheaper than petrol, according to the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment think tank. Shares in one of India's largest diesel carmakers, Mahindra & Mahindra, tumbled four percent on the Mumbai exchange following the ban. Anand Mahindra, chairman of the Mahindra Group, said on Twitter his company would honour the court's decision.

Toxic soup

Delhi has been enveloped in a toxic soup in recent weeks, cutting visibility and pushing PM 2.5 levels more than 10 times over the WHO's recommended safe limit.

These extremely fine particles—less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter—are linked to increased rates of chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease.

Facing flak over the crisis, the city government earlier this month said private vehicles would only be allowed on the

roads on alternate days for a trial period in January. In a separate ruling this week, the country's environment court slapped a ban on new registration of all diesel vehicles for nearly four weeks in New Delhi, although it was unclear if authorities were carrying out the order. — AFP



NEW DELHI: In this photograph taken on October 15, 2015, commuters in their vehicles clog the roads. — AFP

SALE OF USED FORMWORK MATERIALS

Major Contractor invites sealed bid offers for purchase of used formwork materials on «as is where is» at their Project Site located at the Shadadlyah Campus of Kuwait University. The bill of approximate quantities with the terms and conditions for the sale on «as is where is» basis are stipulated in the Tender documents.

Interested parties may obtain detailed Tender Documents including the bill of materials, item wise quantities and pictures between the hours of 8.00 AM and 4.00 PM Sunday through Thursday at the location stated. Materials can be inspected by prospective bidders at their own cost and arrangement, Sunday through Thursday from 8.00 AM to 3.00 PM. Sealed Bids shall be submitted before 4.00 PM Thursday 24 December 2015.

Material Location: Contractors Storage Area, Near Gate No. 3, Sabah Al-Salem University City, Kuwait University, Shadadeya,

Further Information may be obtained from:
Mr. Nader +965 50706003, 60081152,
or Mr. Noushad +965 69977134

NORTH KOREA JAILS CANADIAN PASTOR FOR LIFE

SEOUL: A North Korean court has sentenced a Canadian pastor to life imprisonment with hard labor, while rejecting a prosecution call for the death penalty after his conviction on sedition charges. South Korean-born Hyeon Soo Lim, pastor at the Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto, is the latest in a series of foreign missionaries to be arrested, deported or jailed for allegedly meddling in state affairs. "The defendant Lim admitted all the charges against him including viciously defaming our system and our supreme dignity as well as plotting to overthrow our state," the North's official KCNA news agency said.

According to KCNA, the prosecutor had asked the Supreme Court to hand down a death sentence, arguing that the pastor's crimes merited "the sternest punishment." Lim was detained by North Korean authorities in January after arriving from China. The specific actions that resulted in the sedition allegations have never been detailed. According to his church in Toronto, he was on a purely humanitarian mission and had visited the North on numerous occasions to support work with orphanages and nursing homes.

Church 'confession'

In August the North released a video showing Lim attending a Sunday service at Pyongyang's Pongsu Church and confessing to various charges in an address to a small congregation that included a number of foreigners. "I committed the gravest crime of insulting and defaming the top dignity and the leadership of the republic," Lim said in the video.

Detained foreigners are habitually required to make public and officially scripted pronouncements of their guilt in order to help secure their eventual release. "The trial demonstrated again what kind of miserable fate awaits people like Lim—the followers of the US and South Korean regimes that ceaselessly try to annihilate our socialist system and defame the supreme dignity of our sacred republic," KCNA said.

Pyongyang views foreign missionaries with deep suspicion, though it allows some to undertake humanitarian work. A number of Christian missionaries—mostly ethnic Koreans who are US citizens—have been arrested in the past, with some of them only allowed to return home after interven-

tion by high-profile US political figures. Although religious freedom is enshrined in the North's constitution, it does not exist in practice and religious activities are restricted to officially recognized groups linked to the government.

Suspect foreign missionaries

Foreign missionaries arrested in North Korea can find themselves facing punishing jail sentences, or used by Pyongyang as leverage to extract concessions or high-profile visits to ensure their release. In November last year Kenneth Bae—a US citizen who, like Lim, was born in South Korea—was released two years after being sentenced to 15 years' hard labour.

Bae, who had been convicted of plotting to overthrow the North Korean regime, was released along with another American detainee as the result of a secret mission to Pyongyang by US intelligence chief James Clapper. In March last year an elderly Australian missionary, John Short, was deported after being held for 13 days.

Short signed a detailed "confession" and apology after his arrest for distributing reli-



PYONGYANG: Hyeon Soo Lim who pastors the Light Korean Presbyterian Church in Toronto, is escorted to his sentencing. — AP

gious material in the North's capital. A South Korean missionary arrested in the North in October 2013, Kim Jeong-Wook, is currently serving hard labor for life for allegedly spying and operating an under-

ground church. Lim's sentence was announced just days after high-level talks between the two Koreas aimed at improving cross-border ties broke up in mutual recrimination. — AFP



MANILA: A woman walks through floodwaters in suburban Manila yesterday. — AFP

PHILIPPINE TYPHOON DEATH TOLL CLIMBS AS RESCUERS STRUGGLE

WIDESPREAD FLOODING CUTS POWER FOR MILLIONS

MANILA: Rescuers on speedboats hauled rain-soaked residents off rooftops in the Philippine countryside yesterday after Typhoon Melor killed at least 11 people and cut power for millions. The typhoon tore in off the Pacific Ocean on Monday afternoon and caused widespread flooding across the northern and central regions of the island nation and dumped heavy rain on the sprawling capital of Manila.

Head-high floods in the central islands began to subside yesterday, but parts of the rice-growing north were inundated with one-meter (three-foot) deep waters as torrents from mountain provinces cascaded downstream. Residents chased by fast-rising floodwaters to their rooftops swamped police lines overnight on Tuesday with frantic calls for rescue, said Senior Inspector Jemorie Vergara, police chief of the fishing town of Baco.

Baco is located on Mindoro, a farming and fishing island of 1.2 million people, 120 kilometers south of Manila, which was pummeled by Melor Tuesday night. "The water rose so fast, people had no choice but to run to their roofs. They were crying for help," Vergara said.

Police on wooden-hulled boats braved strong flood currents on Tuesday night to rescue children and infants from rooftops, according to Vergara. Others were forced to stay on their roofs throughout yesterday and only came down late

in the day when floods subsided to knee-deep.

Disaster repeat

However in the northern provinces of Nueva Ecija and Bulacan, floodwaters rose swiftly yesterday as water from mountain regions inundated by Melor overnight cascaded down, causing rivers and streams to swell. The same areas were flooded in October by Typhoon Koppu, which left 54 people killed and destroyed vast swathes of rice farms.

Office supplies salesman Sem Sangoyo watched helplessly as pens and papers in his office supplies store in Cabanatuan, the capital of Nueva Ecija, floated in one-meter-deep floods. "We did not expect this at all. We have barely recovered from the last typhoon," Sangoyo told AFP by phone from the second floor of his store, where he ran for safety. Sangoyo said he was trapped in the same building for three days when Koppu hit.

"I think I'll be trapped here again," he said. "I'm not even thinking about Christmas, I'm too worried about my lost inventory." Intense rain in Manila on Tuesday night submerged some roads and caused traffic chaos, although flooding in the megacity of 12 million had subsided by yesterday morning. The death toll climbed to 11 yesterday after local authorities in Mindoro and neighboring Romblon, a chain of three small

islands known for its marble reserves, reported six deaths.

The national disaster council also reported one more death due to drowning on Samar, an impoverished island of 1.5 million people in the eastern Philippines where Melor first made landfall. Five people have now been confirmed killed on Samar. Millions of people were also without power in the eastern Philippines and the central islands, with no guarantees electricity would be restored before Christmas. And 226,000 people remained in storm shelters, the national disaster council said.

Melor's gusts weakened to 130 kilometers per hour as it moved further away to the South China Sea yesterday. However a new, albeit weaker, storm was forecast to hit the poor farming region of Canada in the main southern island of Mindanao late Friday, the weather bureau said. The storm would likely have winds of around 100 kilometers an hour when it make landfall, according to the state weather agency.

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 typhoons a year, many of them deadly, with the strongest often happening towards the end of the year. In November 2013 one of the strongest storms on record, Super Typhoon Haiyan, flattened entire communities in the central region with tsunami-like waves, leaving 7,350 people dead or missing. — AFP

FREEDOM OF SPEECH REACHES NEW LOW IN JUNTA THAILAND

BANGKOK: Thailand's military seized power last year with a promise to eventually restore democracy. But a crackdown against critics of the monarchy and junta suggest the country is locked on a darker trajectory, say UN officials and human rights activists.

On Sunday, a student was taken from hospital by plainclothes agents and charged with defaming Thailand's widely revered royalty. On Monday, it emerged that a factory worker was charged with sedition and mocking King Bhumibol Adulyadej's dog. If found guilty, he faces decades in prison. And on Tuesday, a military court sentenced a single mother to seven years in jail for posting material on the Internet insulting to the monarchy.

Human Rights Watch said the cases underscore how freedom of speech has reached a new low in the Southeast Asian country. Since taking power in 2014, the military has made full use of Article 44 of the interim constitution which gives junta leader Prayuth Chan-ocha absolute power to give any order deemed necessary to prevent acts seen as undermining national security. It also allows soldiers to detain people for up to seven days without a court warrant.

Rights groups and critics of the junta say a draconian law designed to protect Thailand's royal family has been broadened considerably and is being applied with greater fervor. "The travesty of law enforcement under the junta's rule reached a new low when Thanakorn was charged with lese-majeste for ... comments that Thai authorities considered as mocking the king's dog," Sunai Phasuk of Human Rights Watch told Reuters, referring to factory worker Thanakorn Siripaiboon, 27.

Major worries

Junta spokesman Colonel Winthai Suvaree

defended the royal insult law. "We haven't used this law in a harsher manner but in this period there may have been more people who violated this law so authorities have to deal with them accordingly," Winthai told Reuters. "We need this law in Thailand in order to protect the monarchy which is the love of all Thais," he said.

All this comes amid worries over the health of King Bhumibol Adulyadej, who turned 88 this month, and concerns over an eventual succession - a subject that cannot be openly discussed because of the lese-majeste law that makes it a crime to defame, insult or threaten the king, queen or heir apparent, but one that continues to dominate political developments in Thailand.

The king's son and heir, Crown Prince Maha Vajiralongkorn, does not command the same level of devotion as his father. Diplomats and foreign journalists have also been caught up in the military crackdown on anyone perceived as critical of the junta or royal establishment.

On Tuesday, the Thai printer blocked publication of a report in the International New York Times on the king's dog defamation charges, the third time in a month that it has left a Thailand article blank, and the US Ambassador to the country is being investigated over accusations he violated the strict lese-majeste law.

"The UN High Commissioner has stated he is appalled by the shockingly disproportionate prison terms handed down this year in lese-majeste cases in Thailand," the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights told Reuters in an e-mail. The office said prison terms handed down for lese-majeste this year were the heaviest recorded since 2006, when it began documenting cases of individuals prosecuted for lese-majeste offences. — Reuters

SYDNEY HIT BY SEVERE STORM

SYDNEY: Australia's biggest city Sydney was smashed by a tornado-like storm yesterday, with hail as big as golf balls and winds gusting at 200 kilometers an hour causing havoc. Two people required treatment-one for shock and one for a head wound-in the hardest-hit suburb of Kurnell, an ambulance official said.

One resident of the suburb, where wind gusts of 213 kilometers per hour were recorded, said the storm sounded "like a freight train going through." "Total destruction," he told Sky News of the aftermath of the tempest, which downed trees and power lines and damaged buildings, including a desalination plant, and flooded roads. Another man who called in to Sydney talk radio described a scene of extreme damage in Kurnell, images of which showed a truck overturned and building parts flung around. "My neighbor's roof is gone, the trees are all down in the front yard," he told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation.

"There's trees down out the front of his

house which have landed in my front yard. It's just a mess." The weather bureau said warnings for destructive winds, large hail stones and heavy rain were in place for central Sydney, its airport and the Sydney Harbor Bridge. "Very destructive winds associated with a possible tornado affected the Sydney coast around Kurnell at 10:30 this morning," the bureau said of the earlier lashing. "We don't get situations like that without it being a tornado," the bureau's Michael Logan added. "It is what's called a super cell thunderstorm and they're one of the most dangerous thunderstorms we get."

The bureau said surrounding areas to the north and west of Sydney were in line to be affected as the storm, which comes at the start of the southern hemisphere summer, moves north. The airport remained open, but delays were expected as ground crews struggled to cope with the weather, a spokeswoman said. — AFP

PROTESTERS RALLY AHEAD OF CONTROVERSIAL HK DEBATE

HONG KONG: Activists rallied yesterday in Hong Kong as lawmakers prepared to start a highly anticipated debate over a copyright bill, which has been criticized by opponents as curbing freedom of speech.

Around 300 people, including students and protesters from the creative industries, gathered outside the Legislative Council complex carrying banners that read "Fight for the freedom of the next generation". The debate was due to start yesterday evening or today and could last for days before a vote. Fears are growing over the erosion of freedoms in the semi-autonomous Chinese city, with concerns that Beijing's influence is increasing.

The city remains deeply divided after mass pro-democracy rallies last year failed to force Beijing to scrap its restrictions on political reforms. The government says the bill—already shelved in 2012 after opposition is necessary to help fight online piracy. But critics slam it as "Internet Article 23" referring to an anti-subversion bill dramatically dropped in 2003 after half a million protesters took to the streets.

"It hinders Hong Kong people's freedom of speech," university student Glacier

Kwong, 19, of protest organizers Keyboard Frontline which campaigns for Internet freedom, said. "The government... will make use of the updated law to politically prosecute those who disobey," she added. Political satire using a pastiche of song lyrics and movie scenes has long been common on the city's Internet forums and social networking websites.

Opponents fear the bill will set the stage for harsher government censorship online, although exemptions for parody, satire and commentary have been introduced since the original bill was shelved. Protester Tinki Lo, a middle school student in uniform, said: "The thing about this bill is that you don't know when you've broken the law and when you're within your rights."

Hong Kong was handed back to China by Britain in 1997 under a "one country, two systems" deal that guaranteed the retention of its civil liberties and capitalist lifestyle for 50 years. But attacks on journalists, court cases against democracy activists and government interventions in education have heightened concerns that cherished freedoms are being lost. — AFP

TOKYO: Japan's Supreme Court ruled yesterday that requiring married couples to have the same surname is constitutional, dealing a blow to a longtime effort for gender equality in choosing names. The law does not say which partner must give his or her name in marriage. In practice it has almost always been the woman who took the husband's name. Some women say that is unfair and feel as though their identity is lost.

In traditional marriage, one person, usually the woman, enters the household of the partner and is registered as a member of that household. Men are seen as more powerful in Japanese traditional culture. But as women increasingly have careers, some argue that changing surnames is confusing.

Some Japanese women continue to use their maiden name professionally, even after their surnames are legally changed following marriage. Some couples simply don't register their marriages. Kaori Okuni, one of the plaintiffs, said she was deeply disappointed.

"This has consequences for the future, meaning suffering for those who plan to marry and those who are set to be born," she told a news conference. In a separate case, the Supreme Court ruled that prohibiting women from remarrying for six months is unconstitutional. The thinking behind that requirement was to prevent a woman who was possibly pregnant by one man from marrying a different person.

JAPAN COURT: REQUIRING SAME SURNAME IN MARRIAGE IS LEGAL



TOKYO: Tomoshi Sakka (second right) a lawyer for a plaintiff woman who is not present, and her supporters hold a banner reading: "unconstitutional judgment" after their victory in a court case in front of the Supreme Court. — AP

The court said that was outdated because of advances in science, such as DNA testing, that provide proof of the biological parent, Tomoshi Sakka, a lawyer

for that case, told reporters outside the courtroom. "The policy degraded women, and this is a step toward gender equality," he said. — AP



Bahrainis wave their national flags as they drive down a street celebrating Bahrain National Day in Sakhir, south of Manama, yesterday. — AFP

AMNESTY: KUWAIT SLIDING INTO REPRESSION

Continued from Page 1

Online activists who launched a campaign on Twitter on Tuesday in solidarity with people facing prosecution said that as many as 626 Kuwaitis face criminal charges for expressing their views peacefully. Amnesty said that opposition leader and former MP Musallam Al-Barrak, who is serving a two-year jail term for publicly offending the Amir, faces 94 criminal prosecutions.

Amnesty also criticized the government for closing media outlets and revoking the citizenship of a number of leading opposition activists including Abdullah Al-Barghash, a former member of parliament, and Saad Al-Ajmi, spokesman of the opposition Popular Action Movement who was later deported to Saudi Arabia. The watchdog urged Kuwait to review and repeal a number of laws that hinder freedom of expression.

Amnesty will follow up on these issues. "It's possible to issue new announcements next year depending on the situation. Maybe we will document a case to have them released if we believe they are prisoners of conscience. We have also done surveys and issued reports from other Arab countries on freedom of expression, but we didn't compare it with Kuwait," researcher Drewery Dyke told the Kuwait Times.

Lynch spoke about the history of the clampdown, which began in 2011 in reaction to demonstrations staged by members of the bedoon community. Yet it was amidst the outpouring of expression during the series of Karamat Watan (Nation's Dignity) demonstrations in 2012, when thousands took to the streets to oppose a new electoral law and protest alleged government corruption, that the government acted to restrict freedom of expression in Kuwait, in violation of its international obligations.

As protests continued and were accompanied by a surge of criticism on social media, the Cabinet announced an "iron fist policy" in 2014, promising "a decisive and firm confrontation with whatever could undermine the state, its institutions and constitution". In particular, in recent years, there has been an upsurge in prosecutions over comments deemed "offensive" or "insulting" to HH the Amir of Kuwait and other Arab rulers, or comments perceived to "undermine" government officials. In the last two years, more than 90 cases have been reported in Kuwaiti media of people facing such charges in court.

"No one should be sent to prison merely for peacefully voicing his or her opinion, however objectionable their views may seem to those in power. Laws that stifle freedom of expression are at complete odds with international law. Instead of responding defensively, the Kuwaiti authorities should acknowledge criticism and view such comments as opportunities for debate and discussion," said Lynch.

According to the UN Human Rights Committee,

political figures including heads of state are "legitimately subject to criticism and political opposition". According to Lynch many of those imprisoned in the ongoing crackdown are prisoners of conscience targeted solely for peacefully exercising their right to express themselves freely. "Some activists face numerous charges and are mired in multiple, costly lawsuits, facing court proceedings and jail sentences on a cyclical basis. Court processes can sometimes drag out over prolonged periods sometimes years - due to regular delays and trial adjournments," Lynch pointed out.

Dyke noted that "many activists find themselves hampered by seemingly endless 'red tape' legal proceedings, which appear to be part of a deliberate government strategy to harass peaceful activists into quiet submission by wearing them down, and to warn others against speaking out". He mentioned Barrak as an example. "He is serving a two-year jail sentence on various charges for undermining and insulting the Amir after he delivered a critical speech. At one point last year he was facing 94 separate criminal prosecutions simultaneously, in a clear bid by the authorities to harass and intimidate him into silence," stressed Dyke.

"A group of 67 people who took part in a peaceful rally to express solidarity with him in April 2013, by repeating his speech, were arrested when security forces dispersed the protest. They were later charged with "insulting the Amir," he added.

Kuwaiti law even goes as far as to criminalize using specific means to communicate "insulting" messages. A new cybercrimes - or electronic crimes - law, due to come into force in early 2016, potentially offers the authorities further options to prosecute critics for peacefully expressing their opinions online. Amnesty International is calling on the government to urgently review this law and postpone its application.

On Dec 9, the Ministry of Interior's Twitter account reminded Kuwait's Twitter users of their requirement to abide by "public morals and the laws of the country" in their tweets, warning there will be no laxity in enforcement of the law "for all that is harmful to the country". Rana Al-Saadoun was sentenced to three years in jail in June 2015 for posting a speech by Musallam Al-Barrak on YouTube. She is currently appealing the sentence.

During a review of Kuwait's human rights record at the UN Human Rights Council in June 2015 the Kuwaiti government promised to accept nine specific recommendations committing them to upholding international standards relating to freedom of expression. So far there has been no sign that these commitments have been delivered. "Instead of rounding up critics as criminals the Kuwaiti authorities must prove they are serious about human rights by urgently releasing all prisoners of conscience, repealing or revising laws used to clampdown on freedom of expression and fulfilling their international human rights obligations," concluded Lynch.

US CONGRESS REINS IN VISA-FREE TRAVEL

Continued from Page 1

"Once again, members of Congress are using the government funding bill to pursue their extremist agendas," said Anthony Romero, executive director of civil liberties group ACLU. "Sneaking damaging and discriminatory riders into a must-pass bill usurps the democratic process and is irrespons-

ble." Some US lawmakers had sought to kill or amend the measure, expressing concerns that European nations would offer reciprocal treatment against US travelers. But supporters of the measure in Congress argued it is vital to tighten the program in the wake of deadly terror strikes in Paris, where some of the attackers were French and Belgian nationals who likely could have boarded a plane to the United States without a visa. —AFP

TURKEY TO SET UP QATAR MILITARY BASE

Continued from Page 1

One of the wealthiest countries in the world, Qatar is home to the largest US airbase in the Middle East, Al Udeid, where around 10,000 military personnel are stationed, though US interest in the region is perceived to be lessening. Demirok said 100 Turkish troops were currently in Qatar training the Gulf state's military. He did not say when the new Turkish base would be completed.

"Today we are not building a new alliance but rather rediscovering historic and brotherly ties," he said, referring to the Muslim Ottoman Empire which, before its collapse in 1920, stretched from eastern Europe to the Arab Gulf. With the perceived disengagement by the United States from the Gulf, what we are witnessing now is a diversification of potential allies," said Jean-Marc Rickli, a professor at King's College London teaching at Qatar National Defence College.

"If you are a small state like Qatar you have an interest in hosting several allies on your territory because it provides you with an indirect security guarantee from your ally. Moreover, it increases the costs for the aggressor of any potential attack." Qatari officials were not immediately available for comment.

Separately, Saudi Arabia has pledged a total of eight billion dollars in investment and aid to Egypt over the next five years, as

Riyadh looks to boost military and economic ties with its ally. Saudi's King Salman "ordered that Saudi investments in Egypt exceed 30 billion riyals (\$8 billion)" and that the kingdom "contribute in providing Egypt with its needs for petrol," said a statement published by the Saudi Press Agency. In addition, Saudi ships would "support" traffic in the Suez Canal, Saudi defense minister and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman announced on Tuesday during a visit to Egypt.

The pledges come despite a sharp fall in Saudi Arabia's income from oil, which makes up over 90 percent of public revenues, due to the global decline in crude prices since June last year. OPEC kingpin Saudi Arabia has offered billions of dollars in aid to Egypt since the 2013 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi. In March, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates each offered \$4 billion in investment and aid.

Egypt is taking part in a Saudi-led coalition that has been battling Iran-backed rebels in Yemen since March. It is also participating in a 34-member alliance to fight "terrorism", which was announced on Tuesday by Prince Mohammed. During his visit, Sunni Islam's leading seat of learning, Al-Azhar, urged all Muslim countries to join the new coalition. Cairo is fighting a swelling insurgency led by the Islamic State group in the Sinai Peninsula. — Agencies

COURT SAYS COED BAN IN LINE WITH...

Continued from Page 1

challenges can be submitted to the constitutional court by other students or lawyers.

The same court however accepted a challenge against a provision in the new domestic helpers law which requires that owners of maids recruitment offices must hold at least a higher secondary certificate. The petition was filed by owners of 19 offices saying that the requirement is irrelevant. The court accepted the challenge and scrapped the provision.

The Assembly meanwhile decided to delay amendments to the law governing the Anti-Corruption Authority in order to wait for a scheduled ruling by the constitutional court on the law on Sunday. MPs decided on Tuesday that they would study and approve the amendments in yesterday's session as a precaution for what the constitutional court would do in a bid to prevent any legislative vacuum. But the legal and legislative committee told the Assembly yesterday that it has decided that it would be better to wait for the constitutional court's judgement before altering the

law. The Assembly agreed. The delay was backed by a majority of MPs under the condition that the legal committee must meet and amend the law on Sunday if the court nullifies the law.

In other developments, the Assembly yesterday approved an unprecedented law for the rights of animals in the country, which regulates breeding of animals and bans the import of wild and dangerous animals. A report by the parliamentary public utilities commission said the law says that animal owners must provide suitable shelters and care, and sets strict requirements and terms to keep an animal. It also aims to secure animal welfare and protect people from wild animals that have been owned and announced for sale on social media without supervision by the competent authorities. During the session, MP Saleh Ashour called on the minister of social affairs and labor to apply stricter controls on fundraising activities to ensure that charity funds do not land in terrorists' hands. Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh insisted that the ministry applies the law and makes sure that charity money goes to the intended beneficiaries in cooperation with the foreign ministry.



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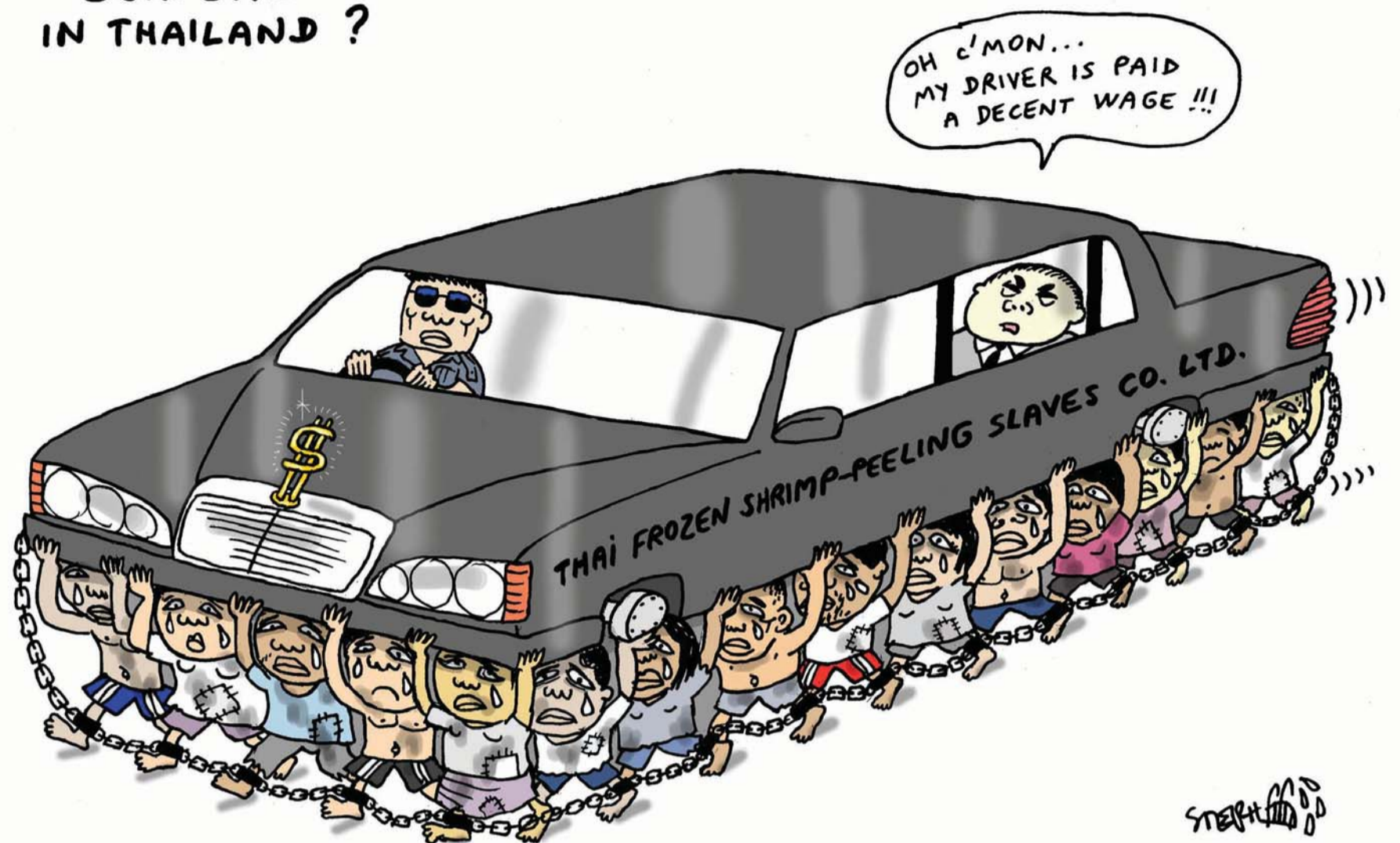
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IN THAILAND ?POLAND: NO
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By Bernard Osser

For most refugees arriving in Poland, it is only a stop on the way to wealthier and more welcoming European Union members. The small percentage who choose to stay on in the devoutly Catholic country are faced with a population whose majority is hostile to migrants, especially Muslims, and an integration policy that only exists on paper. "No one wants to stay here," said a Muslim Chechen in her 30s and single mother of three who wanted to keep her face hidden and remain anonymous for fear of repercussions. "Impossible to find a job, an apartment. There's practically no financial help. That's why everyone leaves," she told AFP.

Christian refugee Adnan Saad, who came to Poland with his family along with 200 other Syrians thanks to a Christian non-profit organisation, wanted at first to stay in Poland - unlike the others who left for Germany. Today, he is coming around to their point of view. The Polish authorities "did our papers, they did our situation to be legal. This is good. Now we need some support. Here is good but I think it's not enough," said the Damascus native. "In the four months I've been here, I've had my eyes opened. Those who left for Germany were probably right." Last year, more than 6,500 people requested refugee status in Poland, the majority of them Chechens.

'Almost Inhuman'

After making their refugee claim, they are taken to a welcome centre like the one in Linin. Located in a well-appointed former barracks, the centre is currently accommodating 217 people, most of them Muslim Chechens. More than half are children. The refugees receive three meals a day, a bus takes the children to school while the adults can attend language lessons. Each person also receives 70 zloty (\$18) a month in pocket money, a sum that the young Chechen mother called "almost inhuman".

The hard part comes after they leave the centre. "While the (immigrant) reception policy may work, the integration policy only exists on paper," said Daniel Brzezinski from the local Praktycy Kultury non-profit organisation that works with immigrant children. "It's the NGOs and local authorities who try to take over from there." After they leave the centre, the state only offers each refugee 100-270 (\$110-300) a month for a year. They are then left to their own devices, supported only by non-profit organisations that offer language lessons or help them overcome administrative hurdles. "The lack of housing and resulting risk of homelessness, the lack of work and financial benefits that are higher in western Europe discourage refugees from staying in Poland," the national audit chamber NIK said in a November report.

'Treated Like Lepers'

"The absence of any integration policy by the state is a policy itself. I think it's a deliberate choice," said Piotr Bystrianin of the Ocalenie (Salvation) foundation that helps integrate migrants. A cause for concern is the increasing hostility with which immigrants are viewed by most Poles, as well as the nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party that has been in power since October. Poland welcomed 90,000 Chechens without incident in previous years but "in the last year, six months, the attitude has changed," Brzezinski said.

Polling figures back him up. According to a survey by the Warsaw-based CBOS institute, the number of Poles opposed to welcoming migrants more than doubled in the six months running up to October, going from 21 to 43 percent, while those in favour dropped from 72 to 54 percent. "Before, they were well-regarded. Now, especially after the Paris attacks, they're practically treated like lepers," Brzezinski said, adding that the immigrant issue is now being exploited for political ends.

The refugee question became one of the hot topics in the run-up to the general election, which the PiS won after eight years in opposition. PiS leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski tapped into the public's fear of the unknown, even warning that migrants could spread diseases such as cholera, dysentery and "all sorts of parasites" that could "endanger local populations". "Today refugees are afraid, they feel threatened," said Bystrianin. "And it's the children of immigrants who suffer the most. The terms 'refugee' or 'migrant' have become the worst insults among schoolchildren."

A Warsaw demonstration organized by the far-right under the slogan "Poland for the Polish" drew tens of thousands of protesters on Nov 11, Poland's independence day. "When we're at the store, people give us dirty looks. Some insult us, treat us like dirty foreigners. That wasn't the case two years ago," said the young Chechen mother of three. "Schools didn't want to take in my kids because they're Chechens. I finally had to beg a principal to let them in. This is not a country for refugees," she said. —AFP

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BUSH STRONG IN DEBATE, BUT MAY NOT MATTER

By Steve Peoples

Jeb Bush finally delivered a powerful debate performance. But it may not matter. The son and brother of former presidents repeatedly took the fight to front-runner Donald Trump on Tuesday night as the 2016 Republican presidential candidates met for one of their last debates ahead of the primary season. Bush called the billionaire businessman "the chaos candidate," insisted Trump couldn't "insult his way to the presidency" and dismissed Trump's proposal to block all Muslims from entering the country as dangerous and "not serious".

Yet with little more than six weeks before primary voting begins, Bush is struggling for relevancy in a presidential election that has begun to leave him behind. Trump, meanwhile, beat back repeated attacks from his Republican rivals in the primetime faceoff to ensure a central role in the 2016 contest, fueled by deep anti-establishment frustration among the party's angry electorate. With the Democrats increasingly coalescing behind the candidacy of Hillary Clinton, some Republican leaders worry that Trump's controversial rhetoric will make him all but unelectable if he wins the nomination.

Trump seized on Bush's dismal standing in recent polls and largely shrugged off the criticism. "I know you're trying to build up your energy, Jeb, but it's not working very well," Trump countered. "Donald, you're not going to be able to insult your way to the presidency. That's not going to happen," Bush responded. The exchange was recorded as the "top social moment" of the debate on Facebook, according to the social media organization. It was the kind of moment Bush supporters had been desperate for in the year's first four primetime debates. That it took several months to materialize highlights Bush's weakness as a candidate, despite having every advantage money could buy.

It wasn't supposed to happen this way.

Exactly one year ago, Dec. 16, 2014, Bush shook up the political world by declaring he would actively explore a presidential bid. Backed by much of the Republican establishment, the former Florida governor quickly amassed a mountain of campaign cash - more than \$100 million - that was supposed to scare off potential rivals and offer an easier path to his party's presidential

dential candidates, is firmly entrenched as his party's frontrunner. With tens of millions remaining in the bank behind Bush, however, there were modest signs of optimism after Tuesday night's debate performance.

"I think it's interesting that none of the other candidates saw fit to challenge Mr. Trump," Bush campaign manager Danny Diaz said after the

Yet as the crowded 2016 Republican contest continues, Bush increasingly seems like a candidate whose time has passed. As was the case Tuesday in Las Vegas, Bush's rivals have adopted a more measured approach with Trump recently, declining to attack him too aggressively while embracing the anti-establishment sentiment fueling his candidacy. Bush, however, continues to take direct aim at Trump and his brash policies. Most of the Republicans on the debate stage, for example, disagreed with Trump's recent call to block all Muslims from entering the United States to help combat terrorism. But no one condemned the plan more pointedly than Bush. "Look, this is not a serious proposal. In fact, it will push the Muslim world, the Arab world, away from us at a time when we need to re-engage with them to be able to create a strategy to destroy ISIS," Bush charged, calling Trump "a chaos candidate." "And he'd be a chaos president. He would not be the commander in chief we need to keep our country safe."

At the same time, Florida Sen Marco Rubio showed little sign he was concerned about Bush, considered his chief Republican opponent not long ago. Rubio all but ignored his Florida rival and instead aimed his most pointed barbs at Texas Sen Ted Cruz. Both senators, Cuban-Americans in their 40s, have been rising in some polls and are vying to emerge as the main alternative to Trump. With precious little time remaining before voting begins, the Cruz-Rubio dynamic seems far more likely to define the next phase of the contest than a Bush comeback.

And Trump seems more than happy to engage with Bush. "This is a tough business to run for president," Bush charged early on in the debate. "Oh, I know. You're a tough guy, Jeb. I know," Trump slapped back before pointing out Bush's sharp fall from frontrunner status. "You're moving over further and further," Trump continued. "Pretty soon you're going to be off the end." —AP



Republican presidential candidate former Florida Gov Jeb Bush speaks during the Republican Presidential Debate, hosted by CNN, at the Venetian Las Vegas on Tuesday in Las Vegas. —AFP

nomination. It didn't work.

Bush's allies have spent more than a quarter of their massive fundraising haul running television ads for three consecutive months. Still, his weak poll numbers haven't moved. And Trump, who has spent by far the least of the major presi-

debate. "From our perspective, we wanted to highlight the difference between the candidates: one who is prepared, one who has a depth of knowledge for the job and one whose erratic behavior and reckless rhetoric raises real questions."

DISILLUSION RIFE 5 YRS AFTER TUNISIA UPRISING

By Ines Bel Aiba

A giant portrait of the Tunisian street vendor who started a revolution watches over the town where he set himself alight in a desperate act of protest. But five years later, pride has been replaced by disillusion. "The revolution? This is what it brought me," said Nessim, showing his empty pockets to laughter from friends in Sidi Bouzid, epicentre of the revolt that touched off the so-called Arab Spring regional uprisings. "Studying doesn't get you anywhere. So you have a choice between vocational training or construction work. In both cases you will still be despised by society," said the 20-year-old, who is taking a course in refrigeration and air conditioning.

On Dec 17, 2010, Mohamed Bouazizi, a 26-year-old university graduate who eked out a living as a fruit seller, torched himself to protest police harassment and unemployment. His act, from which he died weeks later, ignited the 2011 revolt that toppled dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali and spread to several other Arab capitals, bringing down other autocratic regimes. Today, the fifth anniversary of the start of the uprising, the authorities are due to lay the first stone of a "museum of the revolution" in Sidi Bouzid.

Tunisia, which held democratic elections at the end of last year, is often hailed as a rare success story of the Arab Spring. But it faces a growing jihadist threat and the economy is stuck in the doldrums. Unemployment stands at more than 15 percent. About 32 percent of young graduates are out of work - a figure that rises to more than 46 percent in the Sidi Bouzid

region of the neglected Tunisian interior, long overlooked for investment.

'Nothing has Changed'

The freedom gained with the revolution "is good but it does not give us food," said a woman in her 50s who sells second-hand clothes and did not want to be identified. Like many people, Mohamed Azri misses the Ben Ali era. "I don't glorify the person but you have to admit that it was better before. My daughter graduated in fine

chemicals but she hasn't found work. Sometimes I'm forced to sell a sheep to pay the bills," said the farmer. "Nothing has changed. Prices have just increased."

Sidi Bouzid governor Mourad Mahjoubi said he understood the disappointment. "The people are right. They say I staged a revolution... mainly because of the inequality between regions, and still I don't see change," he told AFP. But you also have to take into account the exceptional circumstances that followed the revolution, he



A Tunisian man rides his cart on Tuesday on a street of the impoverished central town of Sidi Bouzid, ahead of the fifth anniversary of the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi, a young street vendor, which sparked the revolution that ousted a dictator and ignited the Arab Spring. —AFP

'We're Afraid'

In the meantime, Tunisia is grappling with a growing extremist threat that has seen three major attacks claimed by the Islamic State group this year targeting foreign tourists and security forces. The beheading of a 16-year-old shepherd near Sidi Bouzid last month also horrified the country. Jihadists claimed responsibility for killing the teenager on behalf of IS, accusing him of informing the army about their movements, and forced his young cousin to take his head to the family. "He was my pillar of strength and terrorism took him from me," said the shepherd's mother Zaara, who lives with her family at the foot of the mountain where her son was killed.

The authorities are building her a new house, just next to the two rooms without running water where she now sleeps on a thin mattress on the floor. Work is also under way to build a proper road to the isolated hamlet, surrounded by olive trees and prickly pears. "We're afraid, but we will not leave," said Jilani Soltani, a brother of the murdered youth. Although a military truck sits on a nearby hill, Soltani wants a gun licence to "defend ourselves if the terrorists come down to our homes," he said. —AFP

FORD EXTENDS BATH CONTRACT

LONDON: England fly-half George Ford has signed a new four-year contract with Bath, the English Premiership club announced yesterday. The 22-year-old, capped 17 times by England, joined Bath from Leicester in 2013 and has to date scored 637 points for the club in 59 appearances. "It sounds like a cliché, but it really was an easy decision to stay here at Bath," Ford told the Bath website. "It's a great set-up and the squad are working so hard to achieve our goals. There is a real focus on developing each and every player here and that is a hugely inspiring environment to be part of. I am really looking forward to the next two years and playing my part in an exciting time for the club." News of Ford's new deal comes just three days after he kicked a match-winning conversion from on the touchline to earn his side a 25-23 victory over Wasps in the European Champions Cup. "Bath's re-emergence as a competitive force coincided with George's arrival at the club," said Bath coach Toby Booth. "He is the epitome of a true modern-day professional and retaining and recruiting quality players like him is paramount to our further progression. —AFP



ADIDAS MULLS 'ALTERNATIVES' TO SPONSORING FIFA

FRANKFURT: The head of German sportswear giant Adidas hinted for the first time yesterday at the possibility of cutting links with FIFA in the wake of the corruption allegations dogging the bidding process for the 2006 World Cup. "If FIFA succeeds in reforming itself and in my view they're making good progress here-then we will continue," Adidas chief executive Herbert Hainer told the business daily Handelsblatt. Adidas has sponsored FIFA for more than 40 years and the current contract runs until 2030. But if FIFA fails to get its house in order, "we will have to think about what the alternatives are," Hainer said. German football has been engulfed by claims that a 6.7 million euro (\$7.2 million) payment to FIFA was used to purchase the votes of four members of FIFA's executive committee in 2000 — days before Germany narrowly won the right to host the 2006 finals. FIFA chief Sepp Blatter has been suspended by the organisation he has headed for 17 years, and faces a hearing at the ethics committee over allegations of corruption. While a number of other major sponsors, such as Coca-Cola and VISA, have called on Blatter to go, Adidas has so far taken a more conciliatory tone. Hainer's comments to the Handelsblatt are the first time he has hinted at rupturing ties with FIFA. —AFP

S LANKA SAYS 'CONSPIRACY' IN PERERA NZ DOPING CHARGE

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's sports minister defended yesterday wicketkeeper Kusal Perera who was suspended from the ongoing New Zealand tour after failing a drugs test, hinting at a conspiracy against the cricketer. Dayasiri Jayasekera told parliament that authorities will send a "B" sample for testing after the International Cricket Council announced last week that Perera tested positive for a banned steroid during a random check. "We are doing all we can to defend him," the minister said. "We are wondering if this allegation is a conspiracy to keep him out of next year's T20 World Cup." Defending champions Sri Lanka are contenders to retake the title when the World T20 takes place from March to April in India next year. Jayasekera said Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena had spoken to Perera who was abruptly pulled from the series in New Zealand involving two Tests, five ODI games and two T20 matches. Perera is Sri Lanka's second international player to fail a doping test. Left-hander Upul Tharanga was suspended for three months after testing positive during the 2011 World Cup. Tharanga blamed a "herbal remedy" that he had taken for a long-standing shoulder injury for failing the doping test. —AFP



NICKLAUS SEES BIG CHALLENGE FOR WOODS

NEW YORK: Jack Nicklaus believes Tiger Woods will resume his chase of the Golden Bear's all-time record of 18 major professional golf titles but believes he may have trouble with the emerging young guns. Nicklaus, in New York to accept the Muhammad Ali Legacy Award presented to him by Sports Illustrated magazine on Tuesday, said he thought Woods should make sure he is healed from his back woes before returning to competition. "I don't know how much he'll return next year. I don't know whether his health will allow him to return next year," Nicklaus told Reuters before being given the award for embodying the ideals of sportsmanship, leadership and philanthropy. "I know he'll want to, but I think he needs to be patient. Don't come back too soon, let him get healthy." Woods, who will turn 40 this month, recently revealed he had undergone a second procedure in less than two months on his lower back and third in 18 months and did not know when he would

be able to return to practice. "He's such a great athlete and such a good competitor. I think he'll come back, but don't hurt yourself. Be patient. He's got a lot of good golf left in him," said Nicklaus. That said, Nicklaus believes Woods will find the competition stiff upon his return. "We've got a bunch of young players that are really good. They have benefitted from Tiger's misfortune," Nicklaus said of the likes of Jordan Spieth, Jason Day and Rory McIlroy. "Instead of Tiger just dominating the game, they've had the ability to learn how to win without having somebody dominate over them. "I firmly believe Tiger will be back and when he does, he's going to have a bunch of guys that are pretty hungry and trying to win and know how to do it." Asked if he thought his record haul of 18 was safe from Woods, the 75-year-old Nicklaus said: "Who knows? I don't know whether it's safe or not. If it isn't, it's OK. I think Tiger will come back and he's got more to win." — Reuters



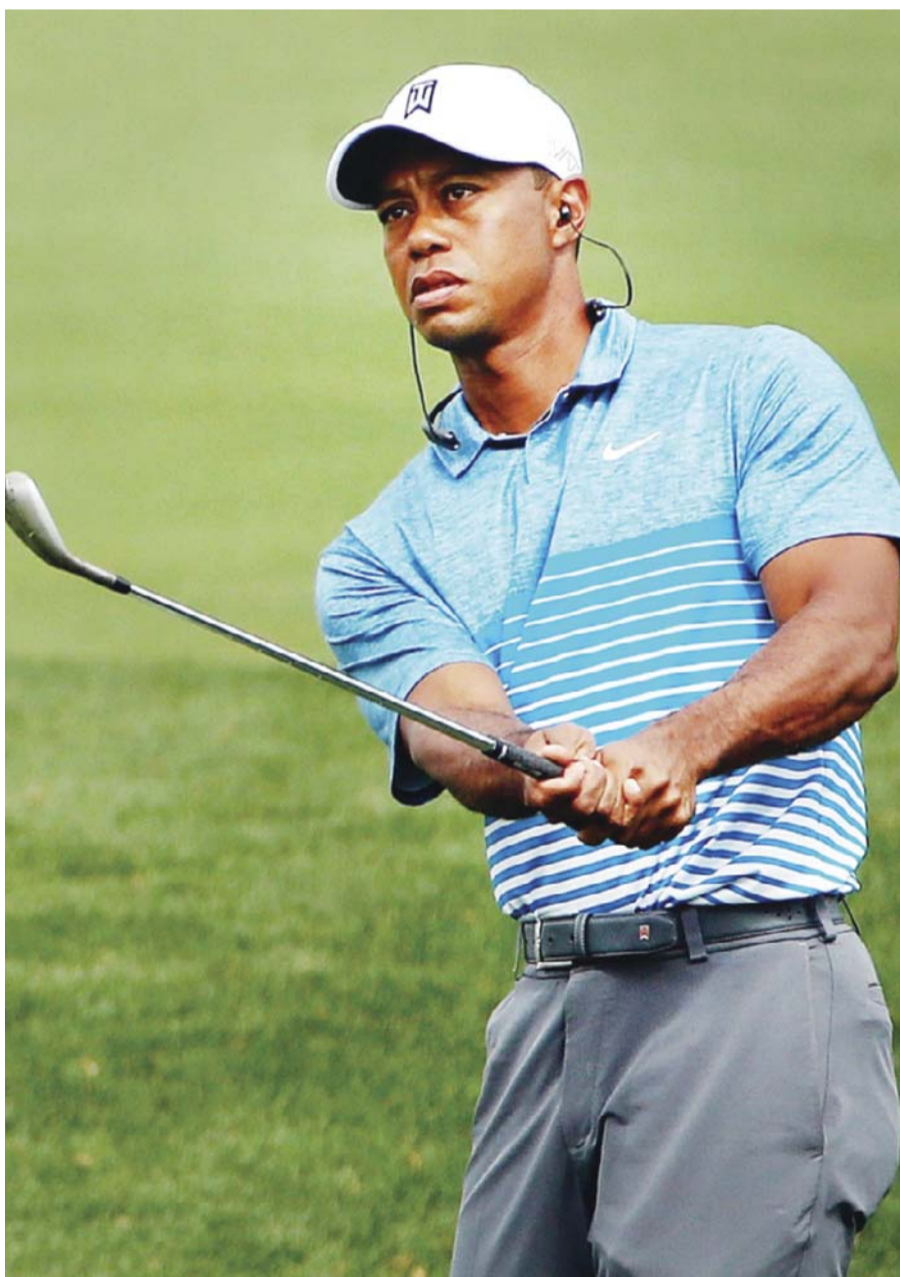
ST ANDREWS: A file photo United States' Jordan Spieth plays from the rough on hole 16 during a practice round at the British Open Golf Championship at the Old Course, St. Andrews, Scotland. — AP

ASIAN TOUR IN BOARD SHAKE-UP AMID EUROPE MERGER TALKS

HONG KONG: The Asian Tour announced a major shake-up of its board of directors yesterday, hard on the heels of its CEO's resignation after deep divisions emerged over a proposed tie-up with Europe's golf body. Former European Tour chief executive Ken Schofield was among those to lose his seat as four prominent Asian businessmen were named as non-playing directors of the region's main golf organisation. In a statement sent to AFP, three player members were also removed and Asian Tour chairman Kyi Hla Han was named as "interim Tour Commissioner". No reasons were given for the sweeping changes, which follow fierce debate over plans to merge the Asian and European Tours' business dealings and memberships and create a mega-tour straddling the two continents. Some Asian pros have voiced concerns that they will lose opportunities to play and make a living as they are squeezed out of tournament spots by European rivals. Of the four new non-playing directors, two are from companies-Yeangder and ICTSI-who hold title sponsorships for Asian Tour tourna-

ments. "The quartet are prominent businessmen and industry leaders in their respective countries, avid golfers and have the desire and vision to grow the Asian Tour," said the statement, which did not refer to the merger. **'Difficult time'** Schofield had been on the board since 2011. Also gone are long-standing director and Hong Kong-based Canadian businessman Rick Siemens, who was appointed in 2005, and Gautam Thapar, founder of India's Avanthar Group. In comes Taiwan's Emmet Hsu, chairman of the Yeangder Group-sponsors of the Asian Tour's Tournament Players Championship which carries a prize purse of \$500,000. Joining him is Enrique K. Razon Jr who is chairman of Philippines container company ICTSI-the sponsor of this week's \$300,000 Philippines Open. The other two new directors are Jimmy Masrin, president and CEO of Indonesian chemicals and mining firm PT Caturkarsa Megatunggal, and Jaturon Himathongkom, sports marketing director for Thai brewing giant Singha Corp. Han's new

duties as interim commissioner will include "enhancing the playing opportunities for its members", the statement said. The board shake-up follows last week's announcement that Asian Tour chief executive Mike Kerr, a strong supporter of the merger, had resigned for undisclosed reasons. Among the playing directors, only Chinese veteran Zhang Lianwei survives with Lam Chih-Bing of Singapore, Australia's Scott Barr and Thailand's Boonchu Ruangkit all out. Zhang has been joined by senior Indian player and EurAsia Cup captain Jeev Milkha Singh, with two more playing directors set to be nominated by the tournament players committee. Lam, one of the playing directors to leave the board, said earlier this month that he was in favour of the merger but was facing opposition from fellow players. "Since the merger proposal I have been having a difficult time convincing players of the merits of the union," he told Singapore's New Paper. "I feel that there are benefits from the merger, but some players still feel that it is not a good move. Because of this my golf has been suffering, so I felt I should step down and concentrate on my game." — AFP



Tiger Woods

RENAULT SEE MUCH IMPROVED 2016 ENGINE WITH ILMOR HELP

LONDON: Renault tripped themselves up this year in the rush to improve their troubled Formula One power unit but 2016 should be much better with the added assistance of Ilmor engineering, operations director Remi Taffin said yesterday. Reviewing the French engine manufacturer's season, their last before returning as a constructor after taking over Lotus, Taffin said the first test of 2015 had revealed the extent of the problems. "We genuinely thought we had done a good job," he told the Renault Sport F1 website. "It was the case in certain areas, but we were caught out in three principal ways." Taffin listed them as a significant reliability problem with the pistons, a malfunctioning part inside the power unit electronics and taking last-moment decisions on development. Renault's under-powered and unreliable engine had been eclipsed in 2014, the first year of the V6 turbo hybrid units that replaced the old V8s, by dominant Mercedes who won both titles. "We wanted to make up the gap so badly that we pulled the rug out from under own feet," he said. "But this particular cocktail of problems did allow us to learn a lot and make sure that the same issues will not

reoccur in the future." Renault provided engines to Red Bull and Toro Rosso this year and will again supply two teams in 2016, with Lotus switching from Mercedes while Red Bull's unit will carry Tag Heuer branding. Ilmor, the performance engineering company with decades of experience in Formula One and IndyCar, has been drafted in to assist. "They were able to bring different concepts to the table, such as a different combustion concept, and now we will continue with them into 2016," said Taffin. "We will continue to develop a lot in-house but with partners such as Ilmor we have a greater bandwidth and a richer experience and expertise. "We did not see the full extent of the collaboration in 2015 for various reasons, but now they are under our control and we have a clearer direction we should see this more in 2016 and beyond." Taffin said the 2016 unit to be used in next year's season-opener in Melbourne in March would be running on the test dyno this month and the specification for the first race had been fixed and seemed reliable. "We are in much better shape now than we were at this point last year," he said. — Reuters

17TH XEROX GOLF CHALLENGE CONCLUDES IN RAS AL-KHAIMAH

DUBAI: The 17th Xerox Corporate Golf Challenge has concluded the two-day Grand Final at the Al Hamra and Tower Links golf courses in Ras Al Khaimah, UAE. The event, sponsored by Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority for the second year running, witnessed 80 qualifiers compete in the final, where the team that scored the most Stableford points (both days combined) was declared the 2015 Champion. Winners of the annual tournament with a score of 107 are Nasir Norhalim and Yusri Yousoff from Saudi Arabia, who as well as taking away the overall winner's trophy and Callaway Drivers, will join the Xerox Emirates team in one of two, PGAs of Europe sanctioned, On Course Golf Pro Ams to be played in the UAE early 2016. Second prize was claimed by Anand Kapoor and Akash Kumar from the UAE (score: 105), and the third place trophy was lifted by Wael Al Lawati and Fadia Emadi of Kuwait (score: 102). Other runners-up included Sidney Desouza and Sergio Desouza from the UAE (98), and Mohammed Fauzi Adnan and Nasaruddin Mohammed from Oman (97). Andrew Horne, General Manager, Xerox Emirates, said: "The 17th edition of the annual Xerox Corporate Golf Challenge was a landmark one, with excellent participation and strong competition from all the countries where we had our qualifiers, and the winning teams show this diversity as well. Ras Al Khaimah once again outdid itself as the host for the Grand Finals, and the emirate is now firmly established as one of the premiere golfing destinations. We congratulate all our winners, players, sponsors, and partners for another successful edition of the Xerox



2015 XCGC GF winners.

Corporate Golf Challenge." Haitham Mattar, CEO of Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority said: "Hosting the annual Xerox Corporate Golf Challenge in Ras Al Khaimah is part of our ongoing commitment to golf tourism in the emirate. The tournament, for the second year, brought together professional golfers from across the region, to play on our world-class golf courses and experience the authentic destination."

Winners will choose from one of two On Course Golf Pro Ams to be played early 2016. The first Pro Am will be played in Abu Dhabi, 25th to 29th April and second On Course Dubai Pro-Am played April 30th to May 4th (2016). Sponsors supporting the Xerox Corporate Golf Challenge this year included Prestige Wealth Solutions (PWS - the Dubai-based firm of financial advisors), long-term partner Ecco, RAK Tourism, and first-time sponsor, Aramex.

CAS TO RULE ON BULGARIA OLYMPICS BAN BY END-JANUARY

SOBIA: Sport's highest court expects to announce a final decision on Bulgaria's appeal against an Olympics ban on its weightlifters for a string of doping offences by the end of January, it said on Monday.

Last month, the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) said the Balkan country's athletes would be absent from next year's Rio Olympics following a high number of doping cases.

The Bulgarian Weightlifting Federation (BWF), which appealed to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) last week, was also fined \$500,000.

"The CAS is expected to issue its decision by the end of January 2016," the Swiss-based court said in a statement. "Until then, the qualifications for the Rio 2016 Olympic Games will not become final."

Eight male lifters, including three

European champions, and three female lifters, tested positive for the banned anabolic steroid stanozolol during a training camp in Tbilisi, Georgia in March. Bulgaria found it tough to find suitable replacements for the banned lifters but still competed at the world championship in Houston last month and finished 21st in the team standings. Bulgaria has already said it is optimistic the Olympics ban will be overturned in time

for its lifters to compete at next year's Games. "Bulgaria's chances of participating in the Olympics are very good because this punishment contradicts existing IWF regulations," the BWF's lawyer Boris Kolev said.

The Black Sea state will have three spots for the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro if the ban is overturned. Bulgarian weightlifting has suffered repeated embarrassment due to doping cases and

the national organisation was temporarily stripped of its licence in 2009.

A year earlier the country withdrew its team for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing because of 11 failed doping checks. Bulgaria's reputation was also tarnished at the 2000 Olympics in Sydney where the team were stripped of three gold medals and sent home in shame following positive drug tests. — Reuters



NEW YORK: US Tennis player Serena Williams (C) receives the Sports Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year trophy from her sister Venus Williams as their mother Oracene Price (L) looks on during a ceremony in New York on Tuesday. — AFP

FOR SERENA, GRAND SLAM IS ONE FEAT TO STILL CHASE

NEW YORK: Serena Williams says completing a Grand Slam is a goal she'd like to accomplish. For now, her focus is on winning another major tournament, not four in a row.

Williams was two victories away from sweeping all four in the same year when she was stunned by Roberta Vinci in the US Open semifinals in September. Her dominant season earned her Sports Illustrated Sportsperson of the Year honors, and she was feted late Tuesday at a banquet in Manhattan.

Asked if the Grand Slam is a goal in 2016, Williams said: "It is, obviously; I've never done it." "We'll see," she added. "I'm not putting any pressure on it. I'd have to have a good year in the beginning, win Australia, win French - I've only won the

French three times, so that's going to be a little difficult to do."

Williams hasn't played competitively since that upset in New York, resting elbow and knee injuries. She says it was driving her nuts to watch the tour's Asia swing on TV so she had to stop. Her workouts are back to full throttle, and the 34-year-old woke up at 6 a.m. Tuesday to train in Florida before catching a plane.

In her acceptance speech, Williams listed the many obstacles she's overcome, mentioning "controversies" then adding, with a laugh, "horses" - a sly reference to the debate about whether US Triple Crown winner American Pharoah should have instead received the award. She closed her speech by quoting the Maya Angelou poem "Still I Rise." — AP



DUBAI: Poland's Agnieszka Radwanska and teammate Indian Sania Mirza attend their teammates' tennis match in the International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) yesterday in Dubai. — AFP

ARGENTINE RUGBY FRANCHISE ANNOUNCE JAGUARES NAME

SAN ISIDRO: Argentina's Super Rugby franchise making its debut in 2016 will be called the Jaguares, the Argentine Rugby Union's (UAR) general manager Greg Peters said yesterday. The southern hemisphere Super Rugby championship is expanding from 15 teams to 18 for the new season with Japan's Sunwolves and Southern Kings of South Africa joining the Jaguares in boosting the competition's numbers. The Super format is also changing to ensure teams play a greater number of matches against their nearest rivals.

New Zealander Peters confirmed the Jaguares squad would be made up entirely of home-grown players. "There will be no foreign players in Los Jaguares," he said at Wednesday's press conference.

"It is incredible what Argentina rugby has done in the past years." Hooker Agustín Creevy, who last played for Worcester in England, will be the new captain while former international fly-half Felipe Contepomi will be one of head coach Paul Perez's assistants.

Already 30 players have signed Jaguares contracts including the likes of Nicolas Sanchez and Juan Martin Hernandez, both of whom turned out for European champions Toulon last season.

Jaguares will eventually name a 45-man squad before the Super 18 season

gets underway. Creevy, who is also captain of the Argentine national team, the Pumas, said Super Rugby is the equivalent to basketball's NBA. "We will continue to train with the same sense of sacrifice (as the Pumas)," said Creevy.

Perez has set the team very broad goals for their first participation in the Super Rugby competition, which comes four years on from the national team's inclusion in the Rugby Championship, formerly the Tri-Nations of New Zealand, Australia and South Africa.

He wants the team to "develop a style, understand this competition and go as far as possible." The UAR had previously said that only players contracted to the Jaguares, or rather those playing in Argentina, would be eligible for the national team but scrum-half Tomas Cubelli has been allowed to remain with Australia's Brumbies.

But those players plying their trade in Europe rather than Super Rugby, such as Racing 92 wing Juan Imhoff and versatile Saracens back Marcelo Bosch, will no longer be picked for the Pumas.

The team will play at the 50,000-capacity Estadio Jose Amalfitani, home of the Velez Sarsfield football team in Buenos Aires. Matches will be televised on ESPN in Latin America. In October, Argentina reached the World Cup semifinals for only the second time. — AFP

CUBAN DEFECTORS RETURN HOME ON MLB GOODWILL TRIP

HAVANA: Cuban baseball stars Yasiel Puig and Jose Abreu returned home Tuesday for the first time since defecting to play in America, as part of an unprecedented Major League Baseball tour made possible by the thaw in US-Cuban relations.

Baseball is a shared passion in the United States and Cuba-but also a source of acrimony in their decades-long estrangement. To play under the bright lights of a Major League Baseball stadium, Cuban stars have to flee their homeland, as did Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Puig in 2012 and Chicago White Sox first baseman Abreu in 2013. Both are returning home with an MLB delegation that will host workshops and meet with Cuban baseball officials on a four-day tour of the communist-run island.

"I feel very happy to be in Cuba, and that they gave me the opportunity to return to my country," Puig, 25, told AFP. The trip comes as Washington and Havana mark the first anniversary of the historic rapprochement announced by Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro last December 17.

Since then, the two countries have restored diplomatic ties, reopened embassies in each other's capitals and taken the first steps to patch up their relationship after decades of Cold War animosity. But Cuban ballplayers still cannot play in the United States without fleeing their country, which then bans them from returning. MLB has organized events in Cuba in the past, including a 1999 exhibition game between the Baltimore Orioles and the Cuban national team. But this is the first time that players who defected have been allowed to return.

The delegation also includes Cuban-born player Alexei Ramirez, a free agent who left Cuba legally by marrying a Dominican in 2007. Some 20 Cuban-born players are currently active in the Major Leagues. Several non-Cuban stars are also along for the trip, including Miguel Cabrera of Venezuela, Nelson Cruz of the Dominican Republic and American Clayton Kershaw.

The delegation is led by Hall of Famers Joe Torre, the MLB's chief baseball officer, and Dave Winfield, of the MLB Players' Association. "Major League Baseball is very fortunate to have an opportunity to play a constructive role in the improvement of our country's relations with Cuba," MLB Commissioner Robert Manfred said in a statement. "Baseball represents a pivotal common bond in our cultures, and the impact that Cuban ballplayers have made on our game is undeniable. I am hopeful that this tour will represent the beginning of a longstanding relationship." MLB has said it hopes to organize pre-season games in Cuba next year, as it used to do until 1960, the year after the Cuban Revolution.

LONG ESTRANGEMENT

It is an emotionally charged homecoming for both Puig and Abreu. Puig fled by boat via the Bay of Pigs, a harrowing journey in the hands of people-smugglers. Abreu, who signed a \$68-million, six-year contract with the White Sox in 2013, has a five-year-old son in Cuba he has not seen since defecting.

The Cuban government has reportedly agreed to allow both men to visit with family members at their hotel.

The homecoming will be almost as sweet for Cuban fans, who saw the players develop as young talents but have not been able to watch them since. "To be able to see these stars again



HAVANA: Cuban professional baseball shortstop Alexei Ramirez, center, signs a cap for a fan at the Hotel Nacional in Havana, Cuba, Tuesday. A lineup of Cuban baseball superstars including some of the most famous defectors in recent memory made a triumphant return to Cuba as part of the first Major League Baseball trip to the island since 1999. — AP

who came up in our country and are now shining at the highest level of baseball in the world, like Abreu and Puig, will be magnificent," local fan Pedro David told AFP. Cuba's national baseball commissioner, Heriberto Suarez, has said the game is being "lacerated" on the island by defections and attempted defections. More than 100 players have defected this year or found a way to leave legally.

Castro's government began allowing athletes to sign with foreign teams outside the United States in 2013, for the first time since 1961. About a dozen baseball players have signed with teams in Mexico, Japan, Canada and Colombia. But the trade and financial embargo the US has imposed on Cuba since 1962 still means Cubans cannot play in the United States without fleeing. — AFP

ROSE DISAPPOINTED LIFE BAN STAYS BUT LOVES GAME

LOS ANGELES: US all-time hits leader Pete Rose said Tuesday he was disappointed that his life ban from Major League Baseball remains in place.

Rose spoke in Las Vegas a day after major league commissioner Rob Manfred said he would not end Rose's lifetime banishment for betting on baseball as the Cincinnati Reds manager, a punishment imposed in 1989. Rose, 74, works for Mandalay Bay casino in Las Vegas and says he has his gambling under control, but Manfred was unhappy that gambling remains a major portion of Rose's life.

Rose thanked Manfred for meeting with him last September and said he knew he put the first-year commissioner "in a tough spot to make a judgement on my situation."

"I'm disappointed, obviously disappointed," Rose said. "But I will continue to be the best baseball fan in the world. ... I'm a baseball player. I'm a baseball person, and that's never going to change." Rose says he has changed greatly from the person who committed the violations in 1986 that led to his banishment.

"I've worked hard at it," Rose said. "I've got it under wraps the last several years. I'm under control right now. Unlike 30 years ago, when I was out of control as a gambler."

"I live in Las Vegas because that's where my job is. I'm a recreational gambler. I don't bet every day. I'm not a casino guy. I don't play blackjack, roulette, dice, all that stuff. I occasionally like to bet on horses because I used to be a horse owner and have a lot of respect for people in that industry. But everything I do is legal. I'm very selective with people I associate with now."

Rose said he still hopes for a chance to be elected into the Baseball Hall of Fame, but consideration would require his ban to be overturned. "I think I can teach lots of people not to make some mistakes I made, to learn from my situation," he said. "People headed down the wrong path can learn from my situation."

Rose has applied for reinstatement twice before with other commissioners. He ended his playing days in 1986 with a record 4,256 hits and managed the Reds until 1989.

"I'm just looking to be friends with baseball," Rose said. "It would be nice to just have the opportunity to go to the Hall of Fame. I've led a Hall of Fame life by association with the teammates I've had. I'll try to be a better person every day, to where they'll eventually want me back." — AFP



DUBAI: Britain's Andy Murray of OUE Singapore Slammers hits a return to Australia's Bernard Tomic of Micromax Indian Aces during their tennis match in the men's singles of the International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) yesterday in Dubai. — AFP

BJORKMAN NO LONGER PART OF MURRAY'S TEAM

LONDON: World number two Andy Murray will not be working with Swede Jonas Bjorkman next year after his French coach Amelie Mauresmo resumed her role following the birth of her son.

Bjorkman joined Briton Murray's team in March. "Nice to have Amelie back in the team out in Dubai," Murray, who is competing in the International Premier Tennis League, said on his Facebook page yesterday.

"Thanks to Jonas for helping out this year. I enjoyed working with one of the nicest guys on the tour, bring on 2016." Former world number one Mauresmo gave birth in August but will

return to work with Murray for 22 to 24 weeks next year. "Amelie did come in at a difficult time, when I had just come back from back surgery, which was tough," Murray, who will become a father in February, told the BBC.

"When I started working with her officially I was ranked 11 in the world-I had just dropped out of the top 10 for the first time in eight years-and I'm now back up to number 2, which is my highest ranking." Andy Murray could leave the Australian Open early in order to be present for the birth of his first child, he revealed in a British newspaper interview published yesterday. The

Australian Open runs from January 18-31, with Murray's first child not due until February.

But the world number two said that he will leave Melbourne and return to Britain if his wife, Kim, goes into labour earlier than expected. "I'd go home. For sure, yes," Murray told the Daily Mail. "It's obviously important. I want to make sure at the beginning I am there as much as I can be to try and help out, just be there for whatever is really required of me." Murray, who inspired Great Britain to Davis Cup glory against Belgium last month, has been a beaten finalist at the Australian Open on four occasions. — AFP

N ZEALAND MULL TWO SPINNERS FOR SECOND TEST

WELLINGTON: New Zealand are toying with the possibility of playing an extra spinner in the second Test against Sri Lanka starting in Hamilton tomorrow, despite their commanding victory in the series opener.

Bowling coach Dmitri Mascarenhas spiced up competition in the bowling ranks by suggesting the line-up could be shaken up at the expense of either Neil Wagner or Doug Bracewell, both of whom were impressive in the first Test in Dunedin which New Zealand won by 122 runs. "The boys bowled exceptionally well on a really flat wicket and it's about time we took 20 wickets," Mascarenhas said Wednesday, as the squad began preparations for the second Test at Seddon Park. "I think we just showed what we are capable of doing, but now it's time to keep that consistency up and move forward."

Mascarenhas rated Bracewell as "probably the best bowler" in the first Test but without having the same success as Wagner who, on his recall after a year out of Test cricket, bagged the key wicket of Sri Lankan captain Angelo Mathews in the second innings.

Wagner took five for 143 from 42 overs in the match while the more miserly Bracewell bowled 10 fewer deliveries and finished with one for 88. Mascarenhas said a pitch inspection would determine whether New Zealand keep both seamers or replace one with Mark Craig as a second spin option to back up Mitchell Santner.

"We could," he said of the possibility of playing two spinners. "But we haven't seen the wicket yet. From my point of view you pick the best team to get a win in the conditions." Captain Brendon McCullum said the bowling options remained wide open. "When (Wagner) is in your team you know that you've got those overs when you are going to be able to create some opportunities," he said.

"Mark Craig comes back into calculations as well but Doug Bracewell, I thought he bowled absolutely brilliantly throughout the Test match and all through Australia as well and just hasn't got the rewards at the moment. "We'll look at the surface and work out the combination and the dynamic we are after and then we'll make a decision." Mascarenhas expected a more resolute performance from Sri Lanka who are still bedding in a clutch of newcomers after the retirement of several seasoned players in the past 18 months, notably Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara. "We saw some really good signs from their batters. They've got some really talented and skilful players," he said. "We know they've lost a couple of big players but the ones coming in are having opportunities and taking them." — AFP

DWAYNE BRAVO SAYS WEST INDIES BOARD NEEDS SHAKE UP

MELBOURNE: Out-of-favour all-rounder Dwayne Bravo yesterday lamented the sorry state of West Indian cricket and said those running the game needed to take a long hard look at themselves. Bravo was stripped of the one-day captaincy a year ago then left out of the West Indies' World Cup squad after the team he skippered walked out of their tour of India last year in a row over contracts.

He has not been picked for one-dayers since and quit Test cricket this year after being ignored by selectors.

In Australia to play for the Melbourne Renegades in the Twenty20 Big Bash League, Bravo said it was painful to see what had happened to the once-formidable West Indian team.

"Times change and I think that is one of our problems, we tend to hold on too much to the past and not focus on the future. That has been our downfall," he said. "It's painful to see the state of our cricket." His comments come amid stinging criticism about the tourists' inept performance in the first Test of their current series against Australia, who won in Hobart by an innings inside three days on Saturday. Bravo joined a host of fellow former greats in blaming the West Indies Cricket Board for the current malaise.

'MORE HONESTY NEEDED'

"We've got the players to be up there with the best in the world but there's a lot of things going on," he said.

"Those in charge have to look into

themselves. We don't have proper grounds, proper nets or a proper academy. All these things are a part of our downfall.

"The relationship between players, board members and management staff-it needs to get stronger and tighter. They (the board) need to have a lot more honesty." His remarks follow pace great Michael Holding on Tuesday saying the West Indies Cricket Board was "dysfunctional, untrustworthy and not liked by the employees", while Brian Lara blasted its "bad governance". Bravo said despite wanting to play Test cricket again earlier this year, he was now no longer interested.

"Until earlier this year I was still interested to play Test cricket but I have yet to hear anything from any selector, what their plans are for me, what my position is," said 32-year-old Bravo, who has played 40 Tests. "I just decided it's time to move on with my life and try to channel my energy in different places.

"I would have loved the opportunity to play Test cricket again but since being dropped back in 2010 I never got the chance and I just decided to call it a day."

Despite this and his row with the West Indian board, he has not given up hope of again playing the shorter forms of the game at international level.

"I'm not shutting down my opportunities to represent the West Indies, I still 100 percent want to play for the West Indies in one-day internationals and T20s," he said. — AFP



CHICAGO: Artemi Panarin #72 of the Chicago Blackhawks controls the puck as Erik Johnson #6 of the Colorado Avalanche closes in at the United Center on Tuesday in Chicago, Illinois. The Avalanche defeated the Blackhawks 3-0. — AFP

KANE'S POINT STREAK ENDS AT 26 AS AVALANCHE BLANK BLACKHAWKS

CHICAGO: Semyon Varlamov stopped 29 shots for his first shutout of the season, leading the Colorado Avalanche to a 3-0 victory over Chicago on Tuesday night and snapping Blackhawks star Patrick Kane's points streak at 26 games. Matt Duchene had a goal and an assist for the Avalanche, who won their third straight to cap a perfect four-day road trip to Nashville, St. Louis and Chicago. Zach Redmond scored in the second period and Gabriel Landeskog added an empty-netter with 1:57 left. Varlamov was sharp when needed in earning his 19th career shutout and third against Chicago. But for most of the game, Colorado limited Chicago's chances - and Kane. Kane's franchise-record streak was the longest since Mats Sundin's 30-game stretch in 1992-93. The Chicago right wing had 16 goals and 24 assists during the run, and has points in all but three of the Blackhawks' 32 games.

STARS 5, BLUE JACKETS 1

Tyler Seguin broke open a tight game with two second-period goals 30 seconds apart in Dallas' victory over Columbus. Karl Lehtonen improved to 11-1-0 by making 34 saves. He also notched his third assist of the season on Seguin's first goal. Defensemen Johnny Oduya and Alex Goligoski each scored to give the Stars one-goal leads in the first and second.

Scott Hartnell scored on the power play for Columbus at 4:32 of the second before Goligoski's goal at 13:02 gave the Stars a lead they never relinquished. Seguin's 16th and 17th goals came at 16:26 and 16:56. Columbus rookie Joonas Korhonen had 23 saves before Curtis McElhinney replaced him for the third period. McElhinney stopped six shots but gave up a goal to rookie Mattias Janmark.

BLUES 4, JETS 3

Paul Stastny scored the tiebreaking goal with 3:38 left in regulation, and St. Louis fought back from a two-goal deficit to defeat Winnipeg. After Jets forward Mark Scheifele hit the post with a shot, the Blues moved the puck the other way and Vladimir Tarasenko fed a pass across to Stastny. He put a shot off the post and past rookie goalie Connor Hellebuyck.

Alexander Steen and Tarasenko each scored on the power play, and Troy Brouwer also had a goal for St. Louis. Jake Allen stopped 33 shots. Steen, Tarasenko and Kevin Shattenkirk had two assists apiece. The loss halted a three-game home winning streak for the Jets, who got goals from Scheifele, Chris Thorburn and Drew Stafford. Hellebuyck made 22 saves. Winnipeg had a 3-1 lead in the second period before the Blues mounted their comeback.

SHARKS 3, CANADIENS 1

Joe Pavelski scored once and added an assist as San Jose beat Montreal to snap a six-game skid. Patrick Marleau and Dainius Zubrus also scored for the Sharks. Martin Jones made 26 saves for his 13th victory of the season. Dale Weise had the goal for Montreal.

Dustin Tokarski, making his third consecutive start, stopped nine of 12 shots before being pulled midway through the second period. Mike Condon stopped all six shots he faced in relief. San Jose, which earned its first victory in December, is 12-0 when leading after two periods.

RANGERS 4, OILERS 2

Rick Nash and Mats Zuccarello each had a goal and an assist as New York ended Edmonton's six-game winning streak.

Dylan McIlrath scored his first NHL goal and Jesper Fast added an empty-netter in the final seconds to help the Rangers snap a three-game slide. Keith Yandle finished with two assists, and

Henrik Lundqvist stopped 18 shots. Taylor Hall and Jordan Eberle scored for the Oilers.

FLYERS 4, HURRICANES 3, OT

Shayne Gostisbehere scored 1:42 into overtime, lifting Philadelphia past Jeff Skinner and the Carolina Hurricanes. Yakub Voracek had a goal and two assists, and Brayden Schenn and Sean Couturier also scored for the Flyers, who won their seventh in 11 games while improving to 7-6 in overtime. Skinner had his second hat trick in three games and the third of his career for the Hurricanes. He has nine goals in his last six games. Gostisbehere netted the game-winner after receiving a backhand pass from Voracek. Gostisbehere also had the winning goal in overtime in Philadelphia's 3-2 victory over Carolina on Nov. 23. Michal Neuvirth, Philadelphia's backup, made his 14th start and third straight. He finished with 29 saves while improving to 8-4-2.

FLAMES 2, PREDATORS 1, OT

Kris Russell scored 1:23 into overtime and Calgary beat Nashville for its sixth straight victory. TJ Brodie also scored for Calgary, which opened a three-game road trip in style. The Flames improved to an NHL-best 8-1 in overtime and won for just the fourth time away from home this season. Cody Hodgson scored on his first career penalty shot for Nashville, which lost its second straight at home. Russell finished a 2-on-1 with a wrist shot past Pekka Rinne on an assist from Johnny Gaudreau for the defenseman's second goal this season. The Flames hadn't won on the road since Nov. 13 when they beat Washington in overtime.

WILD 6, CANUCKS 2

Thomas Vanek scored one of Minnesota's three power-play goals and added three assists, leading the Wild to a romp over road-weary Vancouver. Mikko Koivu also scored and had three assists, Zach Parise added a goal and two assists and backup goalie Darcy Kuemper turned in another sharp performance for the Wild, who improved to 5-0-3 in their last eight games. Jason Zucker scored, too, giving the Koivu-centered first line with Vanek on left wing a nine-point night. Defensemen Ryan Suter and Marco Scandella tacked on the last two goals for the Wild in their largest output since a 6-3 victory over St. Louis last March 21. The Wild raised their home record

this season to 11-3-1. Ryan Miller gave up six goals in two periods before being pulled at the second intermission.

Jannik Hansen and Daniel Sedin scored for Vancouver, and linemate Henrik Sedin assisted on each one. The Canucks fell to 1-6-3 in their last 10 games away from home. Their only win in that stretch was at Minnesota on Nov. 25.

DEVILS 2, SABRES 0

Cory Schneider made 25 saves to earn his second shutout of the season and lead New Jersey past Buffalo. Lee Stempniak and Jiri Tlustý scored for the Devils, who earned a point for the fifth time in their last six road games and improved to 6-0-2 against Atlantic Division teams this season. Adam Henrique returned to center the Devils' top line after missing two games with an upper body injury, and had an assist on Stempniak's goal. Mike Cammalleri also had an assist, his team-leading 20th of the season. Linus Ullmark made 19 saves for the Sabres, who had a two-game win streak snapped.

PANTHERS 5, ISLANDERS 1

Reilly Smith, Aleksander Barkov and Aaron Ekblad all scored in the second period to lead Florida. Vincent Trocheck and Jonathan Huberdeau added goals in the third period, and Roberto Luongo finished with 33 saves for the Panthers. Florida beat New York for the second time this season, along with a shootout win at home on Nov. 23. Brock Nelson had his 10th goal of the season for the Islanders, who snapped a five-game home winning streak and a 10-game stretch (8-0-2) without a loss in regulation. Jaroslav Halak had 12 saves.

LIGHTNING 5, MAPLE LEAFS 4, OT

Vladislav Namestnikov scored 2:01 into overtime to give Tampa Bay the win. Nikita Kucherov, Anton Stralman, Mike Blunden and Jonathan Marchessault had Tampa Bay's goals in regulation. Andrei Vasilevskiy stopped 33 shots. Tyler Bozak, James van Riemsdyk, Morgan Rielly and Daniel Winnik scored for the Maple Leafs, who played for the first time since beating New Jersey last Tuesday. Toronto goalie Jonathan Bernier stopped 22 shots while giving up more than four goals for the fifth straight start and remaining winless on the season (0-8-2). — AP



Dwayne Bravo

AUSTRALIA BRING SRIRAM, HUSSEY FOR WORLD TWENTY20

SYDNEY: Australia have recruited former India player Sridharan Sriram to help their team prepare for the conditions they will face in the World Twenty20 in India early next year, Cricket Australia said yesterday.

Sriram, an all-rounder who played eight ODIs for India between 2000 and 2004, worked with Australia A on their tour of India earlier this year and was slated to travel with the test side to Bangladesh in October before the trip was postponed.

The 39-year-old will work with the Australia side during their three warm-up matches against South Africa prior to their arrival in India for the March 8-April 3 tournament.

Former Australia batsman Mike Hussey will also work with the side for two weeks of the tournament, bringing to bear his experience of playing on the subcontinent in the India Premier League competition.

"Sriram's focus will be on getting the players as prepared as possible for what they will face in India," Cricket Australia's Pat

Howard said in a news release.

"Mike has been one of our most successful players at transitioning between the different formats and his advice and support in this area will be of great benefit to the players who have played a large amount of test and ODI cricket in the last 12 months."

Australia have played just one Twenty20 international in 2015, with the triumphant 50-over World Cup campaign and test cricket taking priority. The World Twenty20 is the one major international prize that has eluded Australia, whose players in the past have struggled to combat spin bowling on the slow decks of the subcontinent.

"As a proud Australian cricketer I am delighted to be involved in Australia's campaign for the World T20 title," said Hussey. "I'm really looking forward to working with the boys and assisting in any way possible with their preparation and match day plans." Australia play New Zealand in Dharamsala on March 18 in their opening match of the tournament. — Reuters

NHL results/standings

New Jersey 2, Buffalo 0; Florida 5, NY Islanders 1; NY Rangers 4, Edmonton 2; Philadelphia 4, Carolina 3 (OT); Tampa Bay 5, Toronto 4 (OT); San Jose 3, Montreal 1; Calgary 2, Nashville 1 (OT); Minnesota 6, Vancouver 2; St. Louis 4, Winnipeg 3; Colorado 3, Chicago 0; Dallas 5, Columbus 1.

Western Conference						Detroit							
Central Division						Ottawa							
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	Boston							
Dallas	23	6	2	107	80	48	Tampa Bay	16	13	3	78	73	35
St. Louis	18	10	4	82	78	40	Florida	15	12	4	81	75	34
Minnesota	16	7	6	79	68	38	Buffalo	13	16	3	74	86	29
Chicago	17	11	4	85	78	38	Toronto	10	13	6	68	81	26
Nashville	15	10	6	81	81	36	Metropolitan Division						
Colorado	15	16	1	88	88	31	Washington	21	6	2	89	63	44
Winnipeg	14	15	2	85	95	30	NY Rangers	19	9	4	94	74	42
Pacific Division						NY Islanders		18	9	5	90	77	41
Los Angeles	19	9	2	78	66	40	New Jersey	16	11	4	76	75	36
San Jose	15	14	1	78	79	31	Pittsburgh	15	11	3	68	71	33
Arizona	14	14	2	81	95	30	Philadelphia	13	12	6	66	86	32
Calgary	14	14	2	80	104	30	Carolina	12	14	5	77	96	29
Edmonton	14	16	2	87	96	30	Columbus	11	19	3	76	100	25
Vancouver	11	13	8	81	92	30	Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).						
Anaheim	11	13	5	56	73	27							
Eastern Conference						Atlantic Division							
Montreal	20	9	3	101	73	43							

LITEX THROWN OUT OF BULGARIAN LEAGUE FOR WALKING OFF PITCH

SOFIA: Litex Lovech have been expelled from the Bulgarian league after the players walked off the pitch in protest at refereeing decisions in Saturday's match against Levski Sofia, the Bulgarian Football Union (BFU) said. "It was the only possible decision according to (the BFU's) disciplinary rules," the union's disciplinary commission chairman Yuri Kuchev told reporters yesterday. Litex were down to 10 men when referee Georgi Yordanov sent off a second player and awarded

Levski a penalty near the end of the first half, prompting the visitors' sporting manager Stoycho Stoilov to order the players off the field. Litex, one of most successful clubs in Bulgaria in the last two decades after winning four league titles and four domestic cups since 1998, were also fined 20,000 leva (\$11,167). They can appeal against the BFU decision within seven days. Litex president Trifon Popov was fined 15,000 leva after admitting that he ordered Stoilov

to instruct the players to leave the pitch. Kuchev said that the BFU had yet to decide if Levski would be awarded a 3-0 win as is widely expected. After the highly-charged game on Saturday, Litex said they wanted foreign referees to run their matches against the Sofia-based side in future while champions Ludogorets threatened to quit the league because they said referees favoured their closest title rivals. "We'll probably quit the championship if such precedents in favour of Levski continue," Ludogorets owner Kiril Domuschiev said. "Is this the way they want to win the title?" Ludogorets top the standings with 38 points from 20 matches followed by Levski who have 35 from 19. It was not immediately clear if Litex would be allowed to continue in the Bulgarian Cup, where they have reached the semi-finals. Levski Sofia have been ordered to play their next home match behind closed doors following crowd trouble in their two matches against Litex. — Reuters



BOSTON: Cleveland Cavaliers' J.R. Smith makes a move on Boston Celtics' Evan Turner (11) during the third quarter of a NBA basketball game in Boston Tuesday. — AP

JAMES SCORES 24 POINTS AS CAVS BEAT CELTICS



BOSTON: Boston Celtics' Jared Sullinger goes to the basket during the first half of the Cleveland Cavaliers 89-77 win over the Boston Celtics in a NBA basketball game in Boston Tuesday. — AP

BOSTON: LeBron James scored 24 points and the Cleveland Cavaliers won their third straight game, 89-77 over the Boston Celtics. James capped a 12-0 third-quarter run with a reverse slam dunk as Cleveland (16-7) established a lead they would never relinquish. Forward Kevin Love, whose 2015 postseason ended when he was injured by Boston forward Kelly Olynyk, scored 20 points and added eight rebounds and five assists.

NUGGETS 112, TIMBERWOLVES 100
Kenneth Faried had 19 points and 10 rebounds and backup guard Randy Foye added 19 points off the bench as the Denver Nuggets found their shooting range to beat the Minnesota Timberwolves 112-100. The Nuggets came into the game shooting just 42.8 percent from the floor, 25th in the league. But against the Timberwolves, Denver shot 56.2 percent and 55.6 percent from 3-point range. Foye was particularly lethal, going 5-of-6 from behind the arc.

LAKERS 113, BUCKS 95
Kobe Bryant scored 22 points in three quarters, allowing the Los Angeles Lakers to snap a six-game losing streak by defeating the Milwaukee Bucks 113-95 at Staples Center. Rookie D'Angelo Russell came off the bench to score 19 points and record seven assists as seven Lakers reached double figures in scoring. Guard Lou Williams scored 16 points, forward Julius Randle finished with 14 points and 14 rebounds and center Roy Hibbert added 12 points and a season-high 11 rebounds for Los Angeles, which won for only the second time at home this sea-

NBA results/standings				
Cleveland 89, Boston 77; Denver 112, Minnesota 100; Sacramento 107, Houston 97; LA Lakers 113, Milwaukee 95.				
Eastern Conference		Western Conference		
Atlantic Division		Northwest Division		
	W	L	PCT	GB
Toronto	16	10	.615	-
Boston	14	11	.560	1.5
NY Knicks	11	14	.440	4.5
Brooklyn	7	17	.292	8
Philadelphia	1	25	.038	15
Central Division		Pacific Division		
Cleveland	16	7	.696	-
Chicago	14	8	.636	1.5
Indiana	14	9	.609	2
Detroit	14	12	.538	3.5
Milwaukee	10	16	.385	7.5
Southeast Division		Southwest Division		
Charlotte	14	9	.609	-
Miami	14	9	.609	-
Orlando	13	11	.542	1.5
Atlanta	14	12	.538	1.5
Washington	10	13	.435	4
Oklahoma City	16	8	.667	-
Denver	11	14	.440	5.5
Utah	10	13	.435	5.5
Portland	11	15	.423	6
Minnesota	9	15	.375	7
Golden State	24	1	.960	-
LA Clippers	15	10	.600	9
Phoenix	11	15	.423	13.5
Sacramento	10	15	.400	14
LA Lakers	4	21	.160	20
San Antonio	21	5	.808	-
Dallas	14	11	.560	6.5
Memphis	14	12	.538	7
Houston	12	14	.462	9
New Orleans	6	18	.250	14

son. Michael Carter-Williams had 19 points and Khris Middleton chipped in 16 to lead Milwaukee.

KINGS 107, ROCKETS 97
DeMarcus Cousins scored 26 points and grabbed 11 rebounds, and point guard Darren Collison made up for the absence of team mate Rajon Rondo with 14 points and 13 assists.

Collison started for only the third time all season and played 41 minutes after Rondo was suspended for one game for hurling gay slurs at referee Bill Kennedy during a game against Boston in Mexico City on Dec. 3. Omri Casspi scored 19 points and added six assists and the Kings won their third straight to match the longest win streak of the season. — Reuters

JAPAN'S SAWA, 2011 WOMEN'S PLAYER OF YEAR, TO RETIRE

TOKYO: Japanese midfielder Homare Sawa, who has been a key part of the national squad for two decades and was named FIFA women's player of the year in 2011, is to retire, her agent said yesterday. The 37-year-old scored 83 goals in 205 appearances for Japan in a career that extended over six World Cups including Japan's 2011 victory. She also competed in four Olympic Games and won a silver medal in London in 2012. Her agent gave no details but said Sawa would address the media on Thursday. Sawa has long been one of Japan's most admired athletes on and off the pitch. She was the skipper in Japan's successful campaign to secure the World Cup trophy in Germany in July 2011, when she became the top scorer with five goals and the most valuable player of the tournament in victory over the United States. The spectacular victory through a penalty shootout triggered an explosion in the popularity of women's football in Japan, which was hungry for good news after the Fukushima nuclear crisis four months earlier. Sawa was called up to Japan's international squad at age 15 and quickly became a core player in what was then a minority sport as men's football steadily gained widespread popularity.



Homare Sawa

But the success of the Japanese women's national squad stunned the world and delighted their disaster-hit country. Sawa also joined Japan's campaign to defend the World Cup crown in Vancouver earlier this year, but the Americans claimed a 5-2 victory. "I'd decided this would be my last World Cup and I've got no regrets," she said after Japan's defeat. — AFP

PELE, ZICO, LEAD CALLS FOR FEDERATION CHIEF TO RESIGN

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil legends Pele and Zico have signed an open letter calling for change in the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), starting with the departure of its president who is facing corruption charges in the United States. "We demand the definitive resignation of (CBF president) Marco Polo Del Nero and his directors, followed by free and democratic elections," read a statement following an initiative by Bom Senso FC ("Common Sense FC"), a collective of current and former players led by 1994 World Cup winner Rai. Among the 130 signatories of the letter were the recently-retired goalkeeper Rogerio Ceni, the coach Tite and the prominent singer-songwriter Chico Buarque. The letter also called for the elections to be held "without the current electoral threshold, a mechanism which prevents the emergence of independent positions in the system because it demands candidates obtain eight signatures from federations and five from clubs."



Pele

Del Nero, 74, asked to be placed on leave at the beginning of this month "in order to dedicate himself to preparing his defence" in the US case and a separate FIFA ethics inquiry. The US corruption investigation has targeted Del Nero as well as his predecessors at the head of the CBF, Jose Maria Marin (2012 to 2015) and Ricardo Teixeira (1989 to 2012). The letter also called for the Brazilian authorities to open their own



Zico

investigation into the corruption allegations. The CBF was due to meet on Wednesday to appoint a vice-president in place of Marin—who was arrested by Swiss police in Zurich along with six other FIFA officials on May 27 and has since been extradited to the United States—and Del Nero should he not return to his position. "We believe in his innocence and will continue to do so," said CBF general secretary Walter Feldman. — AFP

FIFA OFFICIALS PLEAD NOT GUILTY IN SOCCER CORRUPTION PROBE

NEW YORK: A sprawling US bribery prosecution that has scandalized soccer's governing body took another step forward on Tuesday, with the former president of Honduras and a former FIFA vice president pleading not guilty at their first court appearance and authorities announcing that two other defendants would be extradited to face charges as well.

Former president Rafael Callejas, a current member of FIFA's television and marketing committee, was ordered held without bail at a hearing in federal court in Brooklyn. A judge agreed to release for-

mer FIFA vice president Juan Angel Napout on \$20 million bond with various restrictions, including electronic monitoring and home detention.

Both men are facing racketeering conspiracy and wire fraud charges for their alleged roles in a bribery scheme involving lucrative broadcasting and hosting rights for the World Cup and soccer's other biggest events. Their lawyers left the courtroom on Tuesday without speaking to reporters. Callejas' appearance came after Honduras officials say he decided to travel to the United States on the advice of his lawyers. Napout, a former president

of the South American confederation from Paraguay, had consented to extradition from Switzerland, where he was arrested on Dec. 3.

The two were among 16 new defendants, most from Central and South America, named in a revised indictment that was unsealed earlier this month. U.S. prosecutors charged 14 others, including seven top FIFA officials arrested at Baur au Lac hotel in Zurich, in May.

On Tuesday, authorities announced that two of the original 14 - Nicolas Leoz, another former head of the South American football confederation and

Eduardo Li, former head of the Costa Rican football federation - would be extradited to the United States. A Paraguay appeals court approved Leoz's extradition, while Li withdrew his appeal and agreed to depart Switzerland and be turned over to US authorities.

The indictment alleges that in 2012 a marketing firm wired \$500,000 to a Panama bank account so it could be paid as bribes to Callejas and another soccer official in exchange for broadcasting rights to qualifier matches for the 2022 World Cup. The indictment identified Napout as a member of a bloc of soccer

officials known as the "Group of Six" that would receive annual bribes in exchange for supporting FIFA contracts with another marketing firm.

In a year-end letter to 209 FIFA member federations, suspended FIFA President Sepp Blatter has written he is "bewildered" by allegations he faces and will go before the FIFA ethics committee on Thursday with "a strong belief in justice." He wrote that "although I have been suspended I am not isolated and will certainly not be silenced." Callejas served as president of Honduras from 1990 to 1994. — AP

BETIS KNOCK GIJON OUT OF KING'S CUP

BARCELONA: Ricky van Wolfswinkel scored twice in a pulsating 3-3 draw at Sporting Gijon on Tuesday as Real Betis booked a place in the last 16 of the King's Cup with a 5-3 aggregate victory.

It was a spirited performance in the return match from Gijon, who had lost the first leg 2-0, especially in the second half with substitute Alen Halilovic grabbing a double, including a penalty.

Bernardo Espinosa nodded Gijon in front with a free header from a corner after 14 minutes but Van Wolfswinkel finished clinically four minutes later at the other end after a good team move. Barca youth product Halilovic came on at halftime and slotted home almost immediately.

He was then on target again, sending keeper Daniel Gimenez the wrong way with a penalty following a handling offence by Alfred N'Diaye after 72 minutes.

Gijon, though, left gaps at the back and

the visitors took advantage with a Van Wolfswinkel header and an effort from Alvaro Cejudo.

Juan Dominguez headed Deportivo La Coruna in front against second-tier Llagostera but he was also guilty of conceding a penalty, scored by Jordi Lopez, in a 1-1 draw that took the top-flight side through 3-2 on aggregate. Burgui and Felipe Caicedo netted as Espanyol came from behind after a Verza opener to beat Levante 2-1 and win 3-2 overall.

Ciro Immobile and Jose Antonio Reyes gave Sevilla a comfortable 2-0 win over Logrones, 5-0 on aggregate. Holders Barcelona are already through after beating Villanovense, the tie having been brought forward due to their participation in the Club World Cup. Real Madrid have been thrown out after fielding the ineligible Denis Cheryshev in their first leg against Cadiz. — Reuters



MUNICH: Darmstadt's goalkeeper Christian Mathenia, top, saves the ball besides Bayern's Thomas Mueller during the German soccer cup (DFB Pokal) match between FC Bayern Munich and SV Darmstadt 98 at the Allianz Arena stadium in Munich, Germany, Tuesday. — AP

ALONSO THUNDERBOLT PUTS BAYERN IN CUP QUARTERS

BAYERN STARS WAIT ON GUARDIOLA'S DECISION

BERLIN: A thunderbolt of a volley from Spain international Xabi Alonso booked Bayern Munich's place in the German Cup quarter-finals on Tuesday after a 1-0 win over Darmstadt. The 34-year-old midfielder launched a long-range strike from outside the area with 40 minutes gone at Munich's Allianz Arena which hit the top left-hand corner and gave Darmstadt goalkeeper Christian Mathenia no chance.

Having knocked out holders Wolfsburg in the previous round, Pep Guardiola's remain the team to beat in the cup. Bayern could have made it 2-0 when Robert Lewandowski headed against the post later in the first half.

However, it was enough to put Bayern through despite another below-par performance from the German league leaders, who were equally unimpressive during their 2-0 Bundesliga win against Ingolstadt on Saturday.

There was a seven-goal thriller at Borussia Muenchengladbach as Werder Bremen claimed a shock 4-3 win over the hosts to progress to the last eight. With the scores locked at 2-2 with 15 minutes left, Peru striker Claudio Pizarro, 37, proved again that age is no barrier by netting before Bremen's Nigerian striker Anthony Ujah added Werder's fourth three minutes later.

Gladbach fought until the end as Sweden striker Branimir Hrgota pulled one back in stoppage time by grabbing his second goal of the game. Javier Hernandez claimed his 16th goal in just 13 games for Bayer Leverkusen when he scored in their 3-1 win at fourth division

Unterhaching. The minnows had dispatched top-tier side Ingolstadt and second division RB Leipzig en route to the last 16 and stunned Leverkusen by taking an early lead.

But Leverkusen hit back with goals by Hernandez and Germany striker Stefan Kiessling before Unterhaching had Ulrich Taffertshofer sent off for a dangerous tackle. Germany winger Karim Bellarabi added Leverkusen's third to put them in the quarter-finals.

Second-division side Heidenheim also went through after they enjoyed a 2-0 win at third-division Erzgebirge Aue. On Wednesday, Borussia Dortmund will be without injured Germany winger Marco Reus for their third-round tie at Augsburg.

AWAITS DECISION

Meanwhile, Bayern Munich's flagging stars admit they are relishing the chance to rest during the forthcoming winter break when they discover whether Pep Guardiola will stay or go at the end of the season. Guardiola's current three-year contract expires next June and Bayern's head coach has said he will announce "before Christmas" whether he will extend his stay or leave, having been linked to a host of English clubs. Guardiola has stayed tight-lipped, giving no indication either way as to what he will decide, but Spanish sports daily Marca reported on Wednesday that Guardiola has already told the Bayern directors that he will leave at the end of the season. According to the Madrid-based

paper, Guardiola believes both he and the club would benefit from a change of scenery due to his intense work ethic that can wear players down. Last month, Barcelona daily Sport claimed Guardiola had already given his word to former Barca colleagues Ferran Soriano and Txiki Begiristain, now Manchester City's chief executive and director of football respectively, that he will join them at the Etihad next season.

Bayern laboured to a 1-0 German Cup win over Darmstadt on Tuesday, thanks to a spectacular Xabi Alonso volley, to book their place in the quarter-finals and keep alive their dreams of winning the treble of Champions League, Bundesliga and cup titles this season.

The Bavarian giants hold a five-point lead in the German league ahead of their final game of 2015 at Hanover 96 on Saturday, but the sense of anticipation is building in the Bayern squad over Guardiola's impending announcement. "I can't look inside his head and I'm excited about the decision," said Germany goalkeeper Manuel Neuer. Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge has said he will do all he can to keep the Spaniard in Munich. On behalf of the squad, Bayern captain Philipp Lahm has already told Guardiola, who has won 19 titles as coach of either Barcelona or Bayern, he should extend his stay. "I have already said all there is to say. What I believe or think doesn't really matter now," said Lahm. Darmstadt coach Dirk Schuster says he hopes Guardiola, 44, remains in Germany's top flight, for the sake of the league. — AFP



NEW ORLEANS: US midfielder Carli Lloyd moves the ball past Meghan Klingenberg, right, Julie Johnston, behind, and Kelley O'Hara, left, during a practice session for Wednesday's international friendly soccer match against China, in New Orleans on Tuesday. — AP

CHENNAIYIN FC SET UP ISL FINAL WITH ZICO'S GOAL

KOLKATA: Chennaiyin FC reached the final of the Indian Super League with a 4-2 aggregate win against champions Atletico de Kolkata despite a dramatic 2-1 semi-final second leg defeat yesterday.

Chennaiyin, who are coached by ex-Italy defender Marco Materazzi, will face former Brazil great Zico's FC Goa in Sunday's show-piece. Dejan Lekic gave the hosts the lead in the 22nd minute and Iain Hume doubled their advantage with a stunning goal in the 87th to give Kolkata hope of taking the match into extra-time. Yet substitute Fikru Teferra's strike in the final minute sealed the tie for Chennaiyin. Needing to overturn a disappointing 3-0 loss from the first leg, Kolkata dominated from the start in front of a vociferous home crowd of over 68,000 and were rewarded for their early pressure when Serbian striker Lekic scored after a defensive lapse.

An alert Lekic latched on to Chennaiyin

defender Bernard Mendy's weak header back to Ediel Bete and got a deft touch on the ball before it could reach the goalkeeper.

Yet Bete, who played for Kolkata last season and made a huge contribution as they claimed the title, overcame the setback and denied his former team on numerous occasions during the course of the match.

Lekic continued to trouble the Chennaiyin defence and set up Hume to make it 2-0 with a rasping left-footed volley that gave the goalkeeper no chance. With three minutes remaining and another five minutes of stoppage time to be added on, the raucous crowd sensed another Kolkata goal that would have levelled the tie at 3-3.

Hume hit the crossbar with a header from a free kick in the 90th minute but their hopes were dashed when Fikru, who also played for Kolkata last season, scored to make it 4-2 on aggregate for Chennai. — Reuters

INTER CRUISE, ALESSANDRIA PRODUCE MORE CUP SHOCKS

MILAN: Serie A leaders Inter Milan cruised into the quarter-finals of the Italian Cup Monday with a 3-0 win over Cagliari as third division Alessandria claimed another top flight scalp on their way to the last eight.

Rodrigo Palacio's close-range tap-in opened the scoring on 24 minutes for Roberto Mancini's league leaders against Serie B side Cagliari, who despite ousting Sassuolo in the last round were outplayed for long periods at the San Siro.

Marcelo Brozovic had scored a superb long-distance effort in Inter's 4-0 win at Udinese on Saturday and hit another in the 71st minute to leave keeper Alessio Cragno rooted to the spot.

Ivan Perisic came off the bench in the latter stages and completed the scoring with a fine individual effort of his own nine minutes from time. A fortnight after ending Palermo's interest in the competition with a shock 3-2 win in Sicily, Alessandria stopped Genoa's progress thanks to Riccardo Bocalon's 113th minute winner in the second period of injury time gave the third division club a 2-1 win over the Serie A strugglers.

Inter will now meet the winner of Napoli v Verona, played when defending Cup champions Juventus host city rivals Torino. Alessandria will meet Roma if they overcome Spezia at the Stadio Olimpico, with fellow Serie A title hopefuls Fiorentina in action later at home to Carpi. Today Lazio, last season's beaten finalists, host Udinese and AC Milan are away to Sampdoria. — AFP



MILAN: Cagliari's Simone Benedetti, top, challenges for the ball with Inter Milan's Rodrigo Palacio during the Italian Cup soccer match between Inter Milan and Cagliari at the San Siro stadium in Milan, Italy, Tuesday. — AP

Sports

For Serena, Grand Slam is one feat to still chase

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Avalanche blank Blackhawks

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OSAKA: River Plate forward Lucas Alario (2nd R) scores against Sanfrecce Hiroshima during their Club World Cup semi-final football match in Osaka yesterday. — AFP

RIVER SCRAPE INTO CLUB WORLD FINAL

OSAKA: South American champions River Plate overcame their anxiety to reach the Club World Cup final with a jittery 1-0 win over Sanfrecce Hiroshima yesterday, keeping alive the dream of a meeting with Barcelona.

River did not really look like scoring until Hiroshima goalkeeper Takuto Hayashi failed to clear Leonardo Ponzio's free kick and Alario headed home the loose ball in the 72nd minute.

But goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero was the real hero as he kept the Argentine side in the game with a flurry of first-half saves. River, backed by 15,000 fans who made the marathon trip in the hope of seeing their side meet Barcelona in the final, must now rely on the European champions to avoid a shock defeat against Asian counterparts Guangzhou Evergrande on Thursday.

Hiroshima, who qualified for the tournament thanks to a

rule which awards a place to the champions of the host nation, had knocked out Auckland City from Oceania and African champions TP Mazembe in a surprise run to the last four.

Although the Club World Cup is given scant regard in Europe, teams from South America regard it as the pinnacle of club football. They often struggle to beat supposedly lesser opponents in the semi-final when the prize of meeting a top European side is tantalisingly close.

SMALL DETAILS

River coach Marcelo Gallardo's relief was palpable after the game. "We needed a lot of patience and intelligence and it was decided on the small details," he told reporters. "It was not easy to carry this huge responsibility but we didn't allow it to make us lose our heads."

"There were 10 minutes in the first half when we lost our

organisation and they could have caused us a lot of damage." River, whose supporters outnumbered the home fans by at least four to one, had plenty of early possession but struggled to create openings and looked very vulnerable to Hiroshima's quick counter attacks led by Brazilian striker Douglas. The Argentines completely lost their shape midway through the first half but Barovero, one of several journeymen professionals in their team, came to the rescue. The 31-year-old, who has never played for Argentina, did well to block Yusuke Minagawa's shot after the Hiroshima forward got clear of the River defence.

Minagawa, always a threat, failed to connect with a Douglas pass from another counter attack and then saw an effort brilliantly turned away by Barovero after getting free of two defenders.

In between, Barovero also tipped over Yusuke Chajima's

effort after he cut inside a defender to make space for the shot. River had their first real chance just after halftime but Rodrigo Mora skied his shot over from close range. The Argentines did not really look like scoring until Alario popped up with the winner late in the second half, sending the huge River contingent in the stadium wild with delight.

Earlier, Dario Benedetto and Martin Zuniga scored first-half goals as Mexico's Club America beat TP Mazembe 2-1 to finish in fifth place at the Club World Cup.

Benedetto put the CONCACAF champions ahead in the 19th minute and Zuniga widened the lead 10 minutes later when he tapped in a loose ball from close range. Rainford Kalaba pulled one back for the African champions with two minutes remaining in the first half. The tournament features the top clubs from FIFA's six continental confederations plus the champion of the host country. — Agencies

SPEZIA STUN ROMA IN ITALIAN CUP

MILAN: Serie A title hopefuls Roma were knocked out of the Italian Cup yesterday as second division Spezia caused a last 16 upset to advance to the quarter-finals on penalties.

Fiorentina, second in Serie A right now, went down 1-0 at home in a later upset to second-bottom Carpi, for who Antonio Di Gaudio scored a 76th minute clincher.

At Roma after two periods of extra-time failed to produce goals, home midfielder Miralem Pjanic and then striker Edin Dzeko fired over the crossbar as the Serie B visitors took a 2-0 lead from the spot.

Italy midfielder Daniele De Rossi then French left-back Lucas Digne made amends by slotting their spot-kicks past Leandro Chichizola in the Spezia goal.

But it was too little too late as the second division side advanced 4-2 to set up a quarter-final tie with Lega Pro side Alessandria.

A fortnight after ending Palermo's interest in the competition with a shock 3-2 win in Sicily, Alessandria stopped Genoa's progress on Tuesday thanks to a 113th-minute winner that gave the third division club a 2-1 win over the Serie A strugglers.

Inter Milan progressed to the quarters on Tuesday with a 3-0 home win over Cagliari and will now meet the winner of Napoli v Verona, played on Wednesday when defending champions Juventus host city rivals Torino.

Also yesterday, Fiorentina are in action later at home to Carpi while today sees Lazio, last season's beaten finalists, host Udinese and AC Milan visit Sampdoria. — AFP



ROME: Roma's William Vainqueur, left, and Spezia's Francesco Migliore vie for the ball during their Italian Cup soccer match at Rome's Olympic stadium, yesterday. — AP

PLATINI TO BOYCOTT FIFA ETHICS COMMITTEE HEARING

PARIS: Suspended European soccer chief Michel Platini will not attend Friday's FIFA ethics committee hearing in protest at what he condemns as a political process designed to prevent him running to lead the world governing body, his lawyers said yesterday.

Platini was provisionally suspended for 90 days on Oct. 8, alongside outgoing FIFA president Sepp Blatter, over a suspicious payment from FIFA to Platini, deepening a corruption scandal that has engulfed soccer's ruling body.

The ethics panel is set to rule on their cases, and could impose much longer bans than the provisional suspensions if it finds the men guilty of violations. Blatter is due to appear on Thursday. Both men have denied any wrongdoing.

Platini's lawyers objected to comments in French newspaper L'Equipe by ethics committee spokesman Andreas Bantel that the former France captain would be sidelined for "several years".

"Michel Platini ... has decided not to attend his hearing at the FIFA ethics committee on Dec. 18, 2015, as the verdict of this ethics committee has been announced in the press last weekend by one of its spokespersons, Mr Andreas Bantel, in disregard of all fundamental rights, starting with the presumption of innocence," the lawyers said in a statement.

By his decision to boycott the hearing Platini "intends to show his deepest indignation towards a process which he

considers as uniquely political and designed to prevent him from putting himself forward for the FIFA presidency," the lawyers said in their statement.

FIFA said they noted Platini's decision but his lawyers were still welcome to attend the hearing, which would be handled in "an unbiased manner".

"Mr Platini would miss the opportunity to present his points of view vis-a-vis the adjudicatory chamber in person," FIFA's ethics committee said in a statement. "However, his legal representatives would be fully able to present his case at the hearing."

It added: "We would like to clearly stress that the adjudicatory chamber of the ethics committee will deal with the present case in the same way as with any other procedure independently and in an unbiased manner."

Platini, who has been head of European soccer's governing body UEFA since 2002, had registered as a candidate to replace Blatter in a vote on Feb. 26. He had been seen as a frontrunner for the job before he was suspended as part of an investigation into the payment of 2 million Swiss francs (\$2 million) he received from FIFA in 2011 for work he completed between 1998 and 2002.

Last Friday, he failed in an appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) to have the suspension lifted, meaning he was unable to attend Saturday's draw for the Euro 2016 Championship in France. — Reuters

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HONG KONG: Workers set up artworks during a preview of the Christie's auction house autumn sales in Hong Kong. — AFP

HK AUCTIONEERS GO EXPERIMENTAL AS SALES STRUGGLE

HONG KONG AUCTION HOUSES HUNT FOR NOVEL WAYS

HONG KONG: Hong Kong auction houses are looking for novel ways to keep their sales buoyant in the face of China's economic slowdown from creating boozy bidding parties to selling items from outer space. The recent sales season in the city saw the familiar glittering parade of art, jewelry and rare wines. But although billionaire Asian collectors have grabbed headlines with recent mega-buys, takings were down at major Hong Kong auction houses. Now auctioneers are trying to develop fresh strategies to woo increasingly picky collectors.

New Hong Kong auction house Dragon 8 says it is trying to break the traditional mold of stuffy auctions by creating invite-only sales fuelled by good wine and food. "I'm up there putting on a show for these people," said founder Gil Lempert-Schwarz. "I serve them wine, we eat food. There's a set-up limit: around 45 seats around tables." Most buyers are from Hong Kong and China, bidding for high-end lots of diamonds, fine art, wines and

whiskeys. One spent thousands of dollars on a bottle of champagne then shared it with the room at Dragon 8's inaugural auction last month, said Lempert-Schwarz.

Money shot

Dealing in rare coins and paper money may be at the less sparkly end of the auction spectrum-but leading US-based numismatic auction house Stack's Bowers added an interstellar element to its sale in Hong Kong this month. It featured a coin and stamps taken onboard China's unmanned Shenzhou 1 spacecraft, sent into orbit in 1999. Stack's Bowers said there was a growing desire among Chinese collectors to repatriate heritage items. "We're finding Chinese and Asian coins from all over the United States and the vast majority are being sold to Chinese and Asian buyers," said president Brian Kendrella. "Our collectors want to repatriate these collectibles that have left the country, now that specifically mainland China is in a place where wealth is growing quite rap-

idly." The space collectibles failed to sell-but a Chartered Bank of India, Australia and China note from 1863, issued in Hong Kong, went to an Asian collector for more than US\$100,000, five times the estimate.

Trendy tipples

Auctioneers are also trying to spot potential new niches. Wine and whiskey expert Daniel Lam of Bonhams Asia predicts collectible sake could be the next big thing for booze fans. "I think we will see more sake auctions and even Chinese kaoliang (strong sorghum wine) auctions, already happening in Hong Kong and Taiwan," says Lam. While the market for wine remains healthy, prices have dropped and whiskey has taken over as "the hippest drink in the world," he adds. Bonhams set two world records at its Hong Kong whiskey auction in August. But Lam says it is important to look ahead, and sake could meet the demand in Asia for rare luxury items. "They only sell super premium sake by allocation, and there are often not

more than 100 bottles," says Lam. "The scarcity and the limited bottling push up the demand. Getting the most highly regarded product is a status symbol."

Buyer caution

November saw Chinese tycoon Liu Yiqian buy Modigliani's "Nu Couché" in New York for \$170.4 million. The same month, Hong Kong billionaire Joseph Lau snapped up diamonds worth almost \$80 million at Sotheby's and Christie's in Geneva. Yet auction houses say the overall mood is cautious, says Nicolas Chow, Sotheby's deputy chairman for Asia. "If you compare the market to where (it) was in 2010, 2011, when there was a lot of hot money coming in from China... everything sold," he said. "People were just throwing money around... We're very far from that climate today."

There are fears that the combination of an economic slowdown in China and an anti-corruption drive by President Xi Jinping could hit the Asia market-both Sotheby's and Christie's posted lower

totals at their autumn sales in Hong Kong than in the two previous years. Christie's described its results as "solid" but said buyers were becoming more selective. Attracting new collectors is key, says Rebecca Wei, president of Christie's Asia. "When we consider the new client penetration rates by Christie's and across all leading auction houses, we find that the figures are still quite low," Wei said.

Educating potential collectors and providing more accessible information to create "a less intimidating buying process" is part of the strategy, says Wei. An uncertain global economy and questions over buyers' willingness to spend make the auction house "cautiously optimistic" about the future, she adds.

"It is slightly early to see the road ahead clearly, however the optimism stems from new buyers enthusiastically entering the market," says Wei. Both Sotheby's and Christie's believe it is more important than ever to carefully curate collections. "For as long as we compose a sale carefully, tidily, I've got a lot of confidence in the years ahead," says Chow. — AFP

US HOUSING STARTS SURGE; PERMITS HIT 5-MONTH HIGH

WASHINGTON: US housing starts in November rebounded from a seven-month low and permits surged to a five-month high, signs of strength in the housing market that could give the Federal Reserve more confidence to raise interest rates yesterday. Groundbreaking jumped 10.5 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual pace of 1.17 million units, the Commerce Department said yester-

day. The strong report came as Fed officials were due to resume a two-day monetary policy meeting. The US central bank is expected to raise its benchmark overnight interest rate from near zero at the end of the meeting in what would be the first rate hike in nearly a decade.

The move is not expected to derail the housing recovery. Prices of US Treasuries held at ses-

sion lows after the data, while the US dollar was flat. US stock index futures were trading higher. November marked the eighth straight month that starts remained above 1 million units, the longest stretch since 2007. Economists expect housing starts to average around 1.1 million units for 2015, which would be the highest level since 2007 and up from 1.0 million units in 2014.

Robust household formation as labor market strength encourages young adults to leave their childhood homes is underpinning the housing market recovery. But the sector remains constrained by a persistent shortage of houses available for sale. This has resulted in home prices rising faster than salaries, pushing more people towards renting. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast housing starts rising to a 1.135 million-unit pace last month. Single-family housing starts, the largest segment of the market, increased 7.6 percent to a 768,000-unit pace. That was the highest reading since January 2008. Activity was probably boosted by mild weather.

Groundbreaking on single-family projects rose 8.8 percent in the South, where most home building takes place. Single family starts in the West jumped 15.1 percent to their highest level since September 2007. Starts also rose in the Northeast, but fell in the Midwest. Starts for the volatile multi-family segment surged 16.4 percent to a 405,000-unit pace. Building permits vaulted 11 percent to a 1.29 million-unit rate last month, the highest level since June. Permits are running ahead of housing starts, which means groundbreaking will remain supported in the months ahead. — Reuters



OKLAHOMA CITY: A new home development is seen under construction from the air near Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. New construction of US homes rebounded in November from an October slump and building permits surged as the housing market continues solid growth, official data showed. — AFP

INDIAN PM SEEN PIVOTING FROM ROADS TO FIELDS IN NEXT BUDGET

NEW DELHI: India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi will recalibrate budget priorities in 2016 to focus on social initiatives, such as the country's first major crop insurance scheme, while capping previously prioritized infrastructure spending, officials say. Modi splurged on roads and railways this year in a strategy to spur economic growth. But it came partly at the expense of federal programs for farmers and the poor, suffering through back-to-back drought years. In the first confirmation of a shift in strategy, a senior government source with knowledge of deliberations for Modi's second full budget said New Delhi would focus more on the social sector following what he described as a "shocking" defeat in last month's state elections in largely rural Bihar.

It was unlikely more money would be freed up for infrastructure when the budget is unveiled in February, he said, because the government is trying to keep spending on track to lower the fiscal deficit. Commitments to raise government salaries, military pensions and to infuse capital into state banks reeling under bad loans have left little room for additional spending. What money is left, sources say, will be earmarked for the social sector - especially rural districts that house three-fifths of voters. The renewed focus on social-welfare programs precedes crucial state elections in heartland farming states such as West Bengal next year and Uttar Pradesh in 2017.

Crop insurance

In what could be the first major scheme for farmers since Modi took office in 2014, the government is planning to launch a fresh version of the national crop insurance program next summer. It would cover the majority of India's 263

million farmers, a farm ministry source said on condition of anonymity. Indian farmers rarely take out crop insurance unless it's needed to secure a bank loan.

Existing insurance plans, based mainly on crop yields, cover 10 percent of farmers. Many farmers barely make a living from small and marginal plots and cannot afford the premiums. The premiums tend to be based on the crop yields of more prosperous farmers who use higher quality seeds, fertilizers and equipment.

Under the plan being considered, a portion of premiums to be paid by farmers would be linked to their capacity to pay, the first source said. To attract more growers, the government could lower the share of the premium farmers pay to up to 30 percent from 50 percent earlier, the agriculture ministry source said. The proposed plan would also limit government support to insurers so that the overall hit to the budget stays low. State and federal governments spend about \$373 million a year on premiums, while total payouts have been less than \$700 million in recent years. The farm ministry source expects only a marginal increase in the total premiums the government pays.

"The prime minister is constantly trying to find new schemes and formulate policies to help the villagers," said a Modi aide who declined to be named. "But the truth is that we are still trying to identify the right strategy ... it's a work in progress." Funding for roads and bridges more than doubled in this year's budget and is now higher than the sum allocated to education. At the same time, funding was halved for a scheme that gives millions of poor children free food, and allocations to make clean water available in rural areas were drastically cut. — Reuters

ASEAN AIR SAFETY REGULATOR MAY STILL BE DECADES AWAY

DIFFERENCES PERSIST OVER AVIATION STANDARDS

BANGKOK: It could take Southeast Asia, one of the fastest growing air travel markets, two decades to set up a regulatory body to oversee safety in an industry blighted by disasters in recent years, say national regulators and airline executives. The need for tougher regulations executed urgency following this month's report by Indonesia's National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC) into the crash of an Indonesia AirAsia A320 passenger jet last year that killed all 162 on board.

Investigators found no single cause for the crash, but listed a combination of factors including a glitch-prone rudder component and pilots' response when things went wrong. The 200-page report has been hailed as a potential turning point as pressure grows for stronger regulation to keep pace with rampant growth in aviation in Southeast Asia. AirAsia founder Tony Fernandes has himself led calls for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to forge a common aviation regulator, saying ASEAN institutions should "step forward, for commonality, and for standardization, and for quality".

But the 10-nation group is already struggling to implement an Open Skies initiative, or single aviation market, to liberalize air services by the end of 2015. That will slip due to differences among the member states, and the difficulty in achieving it illustrates the challenges in taking it a step further and creating common aviation regulatory and safety standards, experts say. Unlike Europe, ASEAN has no legal or executive body to push through liberalization or create regional organizations that oversee safety and air traffic control.

This is mainly because member countries are reluctant to give up their sovereign rights, say

industry experts. "Given the (different) speed of development in each country, I don't think it will be done anytime soon and may take at least 20 years to take shape," Chula Sukmanop, director of the Office of Civil Aviation in Thailand said. A lack of consensus among stakeholders is delaying the process, even as more of the region's 600 million population take to the skies, aided by robust growth of low-cost carriers such as AirAsia and Indonesia's privately-held Lion Air. Both airlines have placed record orders with the main plane makers.

"Malaysia is open and ready, but some other countries are not ready," a senior Malaysian official involved in the ASEAN talks told Reuters, declining to be more specific. Airline executives, too, are divided on how to regulate the industry. In contrast with Fernandes' call for a cross-border regulator, Arif Wibowo, chief of the Indonesian National Carriers Association and CEO of flag carrier Garuda, believes aircraft safety should be left to national regulators. "Each inspector should intensify aircraft maintenance and ensure a high level of scrutiny. Second, regulators in each country should be able to check all airlines in an integrated way. There's no need to raise it to the ASEAN level," he told Reuters.

Patchy, but improving

Air safety standards have improved in much of Southeast Asia, including Indonesia. In 2007, safety standards were so bad that the European Union barred all Indonesian airlines from flying to its member states. That ban was lifted in August 2009 for all the country's airlines except Lion Air. But Indonesia's airline safety record was highlighted again last year with the AirAsia A320 crash. "In Indonesia, the regulators don't seem to understand the bigger picture," said Gerry

Soedjatman, a Jakarta-based aviation analyst.

"A lot of the policies that came out this year after the crash have been knee-jerk reactions." Following this month's AirAsia crash report, Indonesia's transport ministry said it ordered additional safety and training checks, including an inspection of all Airbus A320s operating in Indonesia and more frequent training of pilots in so-called "upset recovery" maneuvers.

In Thailand, Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha ordered officials to improve aviation safety standards after the US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) downgraded the country's safety ratings. Last week, the European Aviation Safety Agency signed up to help Thailand improve its air safety oversight, but did not add any Thai airlines to its blacklist. European officials nonetheless warned they would continue to scrutinize Thailand's safety record, which has been the subject of debate in aviation for years. At a meeting this month, the Thai government said it will hire 86 international specialists to resolve flaws in the country's commercial aviation standards raised by the FAA.

ASEAN's new Open Skies policy includes higher standards of safety and regulations on operating flights. Other measures aim to improve security, air traffic management, civil aviation technology, and air transport regulatory frameworks. "The message that the Air Asia report sent out was that regulatory oversight in Indonesia and in the region needs to catch up with industry standards," said Soedjatman. "It's going to take a long time to achieve uniformity on everything from quality of training to knowledge, safety and commercial regulations. But they have to start." AirAsia has said the whole industry, including manufacturers, has lessons to learn from the report. —Reuters

SOUTH KOREA SETS LOWER INFLATION, GROWTH TARGETS ON ECONOMIC RISKS

SEOUL: South Korean authorities set a new consumer price target and cut economic growth estimates yesterday, as falling oil prices and weak global growth pose greater risks for the economy. The Bank of Korea (BOK) said it was setting its new three-year inflation target at 2 percent, scrapping its current policy of using a targeted band for consumer prices, currently at 2.5 to 3.5 percent, to lift the economy from low inflation. The Ministry of Strategy and Finance separately cut its growth estimates for 2015 and 2016, with exports expected to remain stagnant while high household debt and an ageing workforce undermine improvements in consumer spending.

It forecast the economy would grow by a real 3.1 percent next year, down from 3.3 percent estimated earlier and also revised this year's growth to 2.7 percent from 3.1 percent. "The take-away from the government and central bank's announcements today is that they will maintain their stance to keep the economy buoyed while continuing structural reform," said Yoon Yeo-sam, a fixed-income analyst at Daewoo Securities, who sees rates being cut early next year. Before the current inflation target, South Korea used a midpoint of 3.0 percent within a range of 2.0 to 4.0 percent.

Economists at Australia and New Zealand Banking Group said the central

bank was "serious about combating deflation," while forecasting two interest rate cuts next year. Finance Minister Choi Kyung-hwan said he expected the BOK to manage monetary policy at the level at which it would work to keep inflation near the central bank's new target. South Korea's current policy rate is at a record-low of 1.50 percent after the central bank lowered it in four 25-basis-point steps from 2014, cutting them most recently in June. Analysts are split between no change for a prolonged period of time and another rate cut in early 2016. A BOK official told a news conference the new target did not mean interest rates were going to be synched with inflation.

New Year, same risks

Headline inflation has remained far below the bottom end of the current band for most of the target's existence, sparking criticism from lawmakers and local media. The 2-percent target number was set as underlying inflation had eased to around 2 percent since 2012 due to structural economic changes. The headline consumer price index (CPI), which the central bank's current and next target is based upon, is expected to remain below the new target next year but rise to around 2 percent in 2017 through 2018, the BOK said. The finance ministry sees consumption sending inflation to 1.5 percent next year, up from 1.3 percent estimated earlier.

Consumer sentiment may continue to pick up, but South Korea faces risks from a shrinking workforce that is also ageing rapidly.

The economically-active population is expected to peak next year and start falling in 2017. South Korean households' real average propensity to consume, a measure of how much of their income they spend on goods and services, last year fell to its lowest percentage since 1998, according to Statistics Korea.

Growing household debt may also restrict spending power next year, especially if interest rates start creeping up when US rates start to rise. Exports, which have traditionally driven South Korea's economic expansion, are expected to fall 7.3 percent this year as global demand cools and growth slows in China, its biggest trade partner, the finance ministry said. —Reuters



SEOUL: People walk along the Han River at a park in Seoul, South Korea yesterday. South Korea lowered its growth outlook for 2016 yesterday, citing headwinds for exports from China's slowdown. —AP

National Bank of Kuwait
Financial Markets
Daily Report
At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Global Stock Indices						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Dow Jones	17,368.50	17,524.91	156.41	▲	0.90	-1.67
NASDAQ	4,952.30	4,995.40	43.10	▲	0.87	5.48
SBP 500	2,021.94	2,043.41	21.47	▲	1.06	-0.73
Financial Times	6,017.79	6,069.41	51.62	▲	0.86	-7.56
DAX	10,450.38	10,479.66	29.28	▲	0.28	6.87
CAC 40	4,614.40	4,648.05	33.65	▲	0.73	8.78
Swiss	8,581.56	8,624.67	43.11	▲	0.50	-3.99
Nikkei 225	18,565.90	19,049.91	484.01	▲	2.61	9.16
Topix	1,502.55	1,540.72	38.17	▲	2.54	9.46
Hang Seng	21,274.37	21,701.21	426.84	▲	2.01	-8.07
Straits Times	2,815.52	2,840.92	25.40	▲	0.90	-15.58

MENA Stock Indices						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Kuwait	5,616.18	5,624.60	8.42	▲	0.15	-16.37
Saudi Arabia	6,771.53	6,834.57	63.04	▲	0.93	-18.74
Dubai	2,919.64	2,985.85	66.21	▲	2.27	-22.64
Abu Dhabi	4,014.92	4,065.14	50.22	▲	1.25	-11.35
Bahrain	1,206.70	1,197.06	-9.65	▼	-0.80	-15.41
Qatar	9,789.80	9,862.03	72.23	▲	0.74	-20.32
Oman	5,365.61	5,361.98	-3.63	▼	-0.07	-15.41
Lebanon	1,153.86	1,156.07	2.21	▲	0.19	-2.54
Jordan	2,087.06	2,082.05	-5.01	▼	-0.24	-3.62
Egypt	6,421.00	6,479.72	58.72	▲	0.91	-28.07
Morocco	8,796.65	8,832.14	35.49	▲	0.40	-8.56
Tunisia	4,943.59	4,937.88	-5.71	▼	-0.12	-2.88

Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.2505	3.2787	3.0005	2.1819	3.2452	399.90	4.5563
Saudi Riyal	0.08163		0.2676	0.2449	0.1781	0.2649	32.64	0.3719
US Dollar	0.30500	3.7364		0.9152	0.6655	0.9898	121.97	1.3897
Euro	0.33327	4.0828	1.0927		0.7271	1.0818	133.30	1.5188
Sterling Pound	0.45832	5.6147	1.5027	1.3753		1.4885	183.34	2.0897
Swiss Franc	0.30814	3.7749	1.0103	0.9244	0.6718		123.22	1.4040
Japanese Yen	0.00250	0.0306	0.0082	0.0075	0.0055	0.0081		0.0114
Australian Dollar	0.21948	2.6887	0.7196	0.6584	0.4785	0.7123	87.77	

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30500	3.7364	0.3743	3.6267	0.3832	3.6571	7.7201
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2787		12.2505	1.2270	11.8908	1.2562	11.9905	25.3118
Saudi Riyal	0.2676	0.08163		0.1002	0.9706	0.1025	0.9788	2.0662
Bahraini Dinar	2.6720	0.81496	9.9837		9.6906	1.0238	9.7718	20.6282
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08410	1.0302	0.1032		0.1056	1.0084	2.1287
Omani Riyal	2.6099	0.79603	9.7518	0.9768	9.4655		9.5448	20.1490
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08340	1.0217	0.1023	0.9917	0.1048		2.1110
Egyptian Pound	0.1295	0.03951	0.4840	0.0485	0.4698	0.0496	0.4737	

Global Interest Rates					
Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.00	1.13	1.38	1.56	1.88
US Dollar	0.33	0.35	0.52	0.75	1.07
Euro	-0.26	-0.19	-0.12	-0.02	0.06
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.50	0.58	0.74	1.05
Swiss Franc	-0.82	-0.80	-0.77	-0.71	-0.61
Australian Dollar	2.09	2.15	2.09	2.06	2.02
Canadian Dollar	0.00	0.84	0.84	0.92	0.98

Global Bond Yields				
Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year
United States	0.97	1.70	2.27	2.99
Europe	-0.35	-0.06	0.632	1.40
United Kingdom	0.61	1.28	1.93	2.62

Commodities						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Kuwait Oil	30.81	29.84	-0.97	▼	-3.15	-65.95
Brent	37.77	36.63	-1.14	▼	-3.02	-46.86
West Texas	37.37	37.27	-0.10	▼	-0.27	-43.03
Gold	1060.36	1064.45	4.09	▲	0.39	-11.66
Silver	13.75	13.79	0.04	▲	0.29	-14.25

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.		
COUNTRY	SELL DRAFT	SELL CASH
ASIAN COUNTRIES		
Japanese Yen	2.500	
Indian Rupees	4.553	
Pakistani Rupees	2.903	
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.123	
Nepali Rupees	2.849	
Singapore Dollar	216.970	
Hongkong Dollar	39.265	
Bangladesh Taka	3.862	
Philippine Peso	6.305	
Thai Baht	8.477	
GCC COUNTRIES		
Saudi Riyal	81.190	
Qatari Riyal	83.633	
Omani Riyal	790.800	
Bahraini Dinar	808.560	
UAE Dirham	82.893	
ARAB COUNTRIES		
Egyptian Pound - Cash	37.700	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.929	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.421	
Tunisian Dinar	151.090	
Jordanian Dinar	428.740	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.029	
Syrian Lira	2.170	
Morocco Dirham	31.307	

GOLD	
20 Gram	217.260
10 Gram	111.330
5 Gram	56.350

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL	
Australian Dollar	210.98
Canadian Dollar	225.20
Swiss Franc	313.71
Euro	338.08
US Dollar	304.10
Sterling Pound	463.73
Japanese Yen	2.55
Bangladesh Taka	3.852
Indian Rupee	4.545
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.123
Nepali Rupee	2.837
Pakistani Rupee	2.920
UAE Dirhams	0.08275
Bahraini Dinar	0.8082
Egyptian Pound	0.03874
Jordanian Dinar	0.4325
Omani Riyal	0.7897
Qatari Riyal	0.08385
Saudi Riyal	0.08106

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD	
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.123
Qatari Riyal	83.565
Omani Riyal	790.150
Bahraini Dinar	807.890
UAE Dirham	82.825
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	37.700
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.897

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.420
Tunisian Dinar	151.270
Jordanian Dinar	428.390
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.027
Syrian Lira	2.168
Morocco Dirham	31.345
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.050
Euro	334.760
Sterling Pound	463.370
Canadian dollar	222.100
Turkish Lira	102.530
Swiss Franc	309.940
Australian Dollar	220.130
US Dollar Buying	302.850
GOLD	
20 Gram	219.040
10 Gram	112.210
5 Gram	56.79

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY		
COUNTRY	SELL CASH	SELLDRAFT
Europe		
British Pound	0.459888	
Czech Korune	0.016285	
Danish Krone	0.045502	
Euro	0.335078	
Norwegian Krone	0.036182	
Romanian Leu	0.073834	
Slovakia	0.019095	
Swedish Krona	0.036721	
Swiss Franc	0.310743	
Turkish Lira	0.098173	
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.222335	
New Zealand Dollar	0.208734	

Canada Dollar	0.215993	0.224493
US Dollars	0.300200	0.304700
US Dollars Mint	0.300700	0.304700
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003462	0.004062
Chinese Yuan	0.045938	0.049438
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037172	0.039922
Indian Rupee	0.004330	0.004720
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002410	0.002590
Kenyan Shilling	0.002969	0.002969
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263

BANKS READY TO EXTEND SHORT-TERM LIFELINE TO ABENGOA

LENDERS WANT SPANISH GOVERNMENT, FUNDS TO PARTICIPATE

MADRID: Creditor banks are ready to extend a short-term cash lifeline to debt-laden Spanish energy group Abengoa to avert what would be Spain's biggest-ever bankruptcy, according to sources, but the firm's future beyond January remains unclear. The banks' are prepared to offer the company 210 million euros (\$229 million) so it can pay salaries and maintain current operations, according to the two banking sources familiar with the matter, in the latest twist in talks that began last month to ensure that Abengoa stays afloat. Abengoa declined to comment, as did a steering committee representing its roughly 200 creditor banks worldwide.

The company, which started out 70 years ago as a business to design and make electricity meters in Seville, southern Spain, is now a renewable energy giant operating in a dozen countries across four continents. It has been praised by politicians including US President Barack Obama for its solar-thermal plants which produce clean electricity at a competitive price in places such as the Mojave desert in Arizona and South Africa's Northern Cape province. But its aggressive expansion into the clean energy business since 2007 has been fuelled by taking on huge debts, which finally brought the company to its knees this year when its lenders refused to extend credit lines.

Its market value, which had risen rapidly to top 4 billion euros last year, has since plunged by more than 90 percent - with investors fearing the firm could collapse under its debt, and unsettled by its opaque and tightly-controlled financial structure, still in the hands of the Benjumea founding family. Although there is no official figure for the firm's total financial liabilities, separate sources familiar with the matter say they total at least 25 billion euros, 80 percent of which sits with lenders such as Santander, HSB and Credit Agricole. Under Spanish law, Abengoa has until mid-April next year to reach an agreement with creditors to

avoid a full-blown insolvency process and the country's biggest bankruptcy on record.

The banking sources say the way forward is for them to take a deep haircut on their debt in exchange for a controlling stake in the company so that they can refloat it and sell it at a better price later on in a bid to minimize their losses. "Abengoa has functioning assets turning steady cash, a (project) pipeline worth 8 billion euros and a stake in Abengoa Yield worth more than 600 million euros," said one of the sources, a banker who is involved in the negotiations. "But no other firm I have worked with has the level of sophistication and complexity of Abengoa. It's mainly because of the main shareholder, so that's something that needs to be dealt with," the banker added.

Cash crunch

The sources said Abengoa's current cash crunch was triggered in early August when Spanish banks withdrew 650 million euros in credit lines and guarantees in a matter of hours following the announcement of a rights issue by the group only two days after it had denied such a possibility in an earnings presentation. Abengoa announced on Nov. 13 that it had found an investor to inject 350 million euros but the deal was called off on Nov. 24, forcing Abengoa to enter into pre-insolvency proceedings the following day.

Creditor banks have since asked Abengoa to find alternative funding by its own means, including through a sale of its 43 percent stake in US-listed Abengoa Yield. Although new talks on emergency financing are due to take place, the banks - which could take a big hit on their 2015 earnings if the company goes bust by the end of December - are now working on a plan to get the firm running until January, the sources said. Lenders are ready to disburse 110 million euros in December, as well as an additional 100 million euros next month if Lazard, which is advising



MADRID: A man consults a mobile phone beside a woman begging on the pavement outside a clothes store in Salamanca an upscale neighborhood of Madrid. The number of millionaires in Spain-defined as having a fortune of over a million US dollars excluding their main residence and consumer goods-rose by 40 percent to 178,000 last year from 2008 when the crisis started, according to consulting firm Capgemini. At the same time the number of people living with "severe material deprivation" in the country has doubled since 2007 to just over three million last year, according to a study by anti-poverty agency Oxfam. — AFP

Abengoa, puts forward a credible restructuring plan by Jan. 18, the sources said. — Reuters

The creditor banks

The banks have also approached Spain's government lending arm, the Official Credit Institute (ICO), about a potential loan of 15 million to 20 million euros as part of the 110 million euro credit line, the sources added. The ICO declined to comment. The creditor banks were also

holding talks on Tuesday with international investment funds about a potential participation, although the funds are unlikely to agree, the sources said. There was also further evidence of Abengoa's shaky finances in the latest annual accounts of its majority shareholder, according to a document seen by Reuters on Tuesday.

Inversion Corporativa (IC), the vehicle through which Abengoa's Benjumea founding family and its business partners control the company, put up part of its controlling stake as collateral for a 100

million euro loan last year, the document showed. This meaning that IC, which entered pre-insolvency in November at the same time as Abengoa, could see its control over the energy firm reduced if it fails to repay the loan. Despite repeated attempts, Reuters has not been able to reach the founding family, and Abengoa has declined to provide a contact. IC posted a profit of 63.6 million euros in 2014, of which 12.9 million euros was distributed as a dividend, last year's accounts showed. — Reuters

SPAIN RECOVERS TIMIDLY

MADRID: Spain, which goes to the polls on December 20, is in better economic shape than it was four years ago when the conservatives came to power, although public debt and unemployment remain sky-high.

On the edge of the abyss

In December 2011, when Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy took power after eight years of Socialist rule, Spain was in dire shape. The construction sector, which had been a major engine for growth, had stopped in its tracks after the housing bubble burst in 2008, taking with it banks overwhelmed by the debt of people who could no longer pay their mortgages. Since then, the country has gone in and out of recession and unemployment went through the roof, from 8.57 percent in 2007 to 22.56 percent in 2011. At that time, 1,400 Spaniards lost their jobs every day, Rajoy has repeatedly pointed out. The country's 17 semi-autonomous regions, like the central state, were also heavily indebted.

Drastic measures

Once in power, the ruling Popular Party maintained austerity measures launched by the Socialists in 2009 - spending cuts, tax rises, and salary freezes for civil servants. It claims to have saved 150 billion euros (\$165 billion) between 2012 and 2014, thus avoiding a damaging, Greece-like rescue deal, even if the Spanish banking sector was bailed out by the European Union to the tune of 40 billion euros.

A hint of recovery

The euro-zone's fourth largest economy started growing again in 2014, with a 1.4 percent gross domestic product (GDP) leap, and expects to expand 3.3 percent this year-a better performance than its

euro-zone neighbors. A 2012 reform of the labor market reduced the costs for companies of laying off people. Some sectors such as the automotive industry, which generates 10 percent of the GDP, had also started reducing salaries or working seven days a week.

As a result, the workforce in the industrial sector and in market services cost just 21 euros an hour in the second quarter of the year, according to the Paris-based Coe-Rexcode economic research centre, compared with 36 euros in France and 34 in Germany. That gave Spanish firms a major competitive edge, and they have reported a near 25 percent rise in exports since 2007. The country's unemployment rate is also ebbing and emboldened households have started to spend again. Domestic demand-both from households and companies-is in fact one of the main drivers of growth. Other external factors, such as a drop in oil prices and the depreciation of the euro, have also helped.

Inadequate reforms

But economists say Spain is far from having resolved its problems. Unemployment still stands at more than 21 percent, and some have given up trying to find a job. "The quality of jobs created is debatable," Bankinter analysts say, pointing to many precarious or part-time positions. Under Rajoy's watch, the number of jobless has dropped by just 436,000, to 4.8 million. In 2014, the GDP stood at 1.06 trillion euros, compared with 1.12 trillion in 2008. Spain is also still heavily indebted, with its public debt at 99.3 percent of GDP in the third quarter. Education is also an issue, with a school drop-out rate of 22 percent-a record in the European Union-and a lack of training for the unemployed. — AFP

AUSTRALIAN BANKS AGREE GOOGLE ANDROID PAY DEAL

APPLE PAY STILL FROZEN OUT

SYDNEY: Big Australian banks have agreed to accept payments made on mobile devices using Google Inc's Android Pay, leaving Apple Inc's rival Apple Pay system out in the cold as the tech giant struggles to coax lenders to accept its terms. Banks including Westpac Banking Corp, ANZ Banking Group and Macquarie will accept contactless payments via Android smartphones when Google rolls out the service in first-half 2016, the tech giant said yesterday. Westpac and Commonwealth Bank of Australia already operate their own mobile payment systems.

In contrast, Apple remains locked in talks with big banks in search of a deal to accept Apple Pay. The iPhone maker's system launched in Australia last month, with support for American Express Co cards, but remains adrift from 80 percent of consumers

using other credit cards in a market Westpac sees as worth more than \$2 billion this year. "It's a big bargaining chip for (Australian) banks to use to force a better deal with Apple," said Foad Fadaghi, managing director of technology research firm Telsyte.

An Apple spokeswoman declined to comment. Android Pay will support both MasterCard and Visa credit and debit cards, Pali Bhat, director of product management at Google wrote in a blog post yesterday. Consumer favorites like McDonald's Corp and Domino's Pizza have also signed up, Google said, enhancing Android Pay's appeal. The absence of a deal on Apple Pay hinges on banks' unwillingness to give up a slice of a market for contactless payments they have cultivated that is now much bigger than in many other countries. More than 60 percent of all card transactions in Australia are now contactless,

ANZ bank said in a statement yesterday, announcing the Android Pay tie-up.

In the United States, meanwhile, a survey by Verifone and Wakefield Research released in January 2015 found mobile wallets accounted for just about 4 percent of the overall payments market for in-store retail transactions. Fees in Australia's lucrative mobile payments market remain a bone of contention in Apple's talks with the main banks. Apple is demanding 15 basis points in interchange fees that banks have refused to share, people familiar with such negotiations say. Android Pay has no such charges, the sources said. "The four Australian banks aren't prepared to give up the amount of interchange fees that the US, Canadian and UK banks have done," said Grant Halverson, a payments consultant from McLean Roche. — Reuters

EURO-ZONE RECOVERY STILL ON TRACK

BRUSSELS: Euro-zone private sector business activity slowed slightly in December but still held at a four-and-a-half year high as the recovery remained on track, creating much-needed jobs, a key survey showed yesterday. Data monitoring company Markit said its closely watched Composite Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) slipped from 54.2 points in November to 54.0 in December, but it was still well above the 50-point boom-or-bust line.

"The euro-zone economy enjoyed a comfortably solid end to 2015," Markit's chief economist Chris Williamson said in a statement. But "policy-makers are likely to remain disappointed by the relatively modest pace of expansion and lack of inflationary pressures" given the level of stimulus and the stage of economic recovery, Williamson said. At the same time, "although the PMI edged lower in

December, the fourth quarter as a whole saw the largest increase in business activity for four-and-a-half years," Williamson said.

The European Central Bank launched an unprecedented one trillion euro stimulus program earlier this year but some analysts believe that with inflation-a reflection of consumer demand-well below the ECB's near two percent target level, there is much more to be done. Inflation for November came in at 0.2 percent, according to official figures released separately, up from an initial 0.1 percent. Williamson said the PMI report suggested the 19-nation euro-zone economy expanded 0.4 percent in the last quarter, which would give full-year growth of 1.5 percent. "Most encouraging of all is the upturn in the rate of job creation to the highest since spring 2011, which will hope-

fully pave the way for unemployment to start falling in earnest as we move into 2016," he said.

The upturn suggests that economic growth could accelerate in the coming months, he added. In a country breakdown, Markit said top exporter Germany recorded its strongest quarterly growth for a year and a half as Europe's biggest economy rose gained 0.5 percent in the fourth quarter. In France, by contrast, overall economic activity registered its weakest growth since August, at just 0.2 percent in the last quarter and slowing to near stagnation in December. France's economy, particularly its service sector, was hit by the November 13 Paris attacks which left 130 people dead. The growth rate in France "bodes ill for the coming year, especially in the stalling service sector," Williamson said. — AFP

SPANISH AUTO SECTOR DRIVES RECOVERY

VIGO: Spain's automobile sector has emerged a key driver of the country's economic recovery, as investments in research and development combined with labor flexibility boosted its competitiveness. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy points to the auto revival as proof that his conservative government's reforms are working as he fights to hold onto power in a general election on Sunday. "Even in the worst moments of the crisis, the auto sector managed to overcome difficulties and be a sign of hope and growth for all," Rajoy has said. Spain's total motor vehicle production rose 11.1 percent in 2014, outpacing gains of 3.3 percent in Germany and 4.4 percent in France. With 14 car plants, Spain is the world's ninth biggest automobile producer country in a ranking headed by China, the United States, Japan and Germany.

The country has no nationally-owned carmaker but many major manufacturers including Renault, Nissan, Volkswagen and Ford are present. And when it comes to making auto parts, Spain is a dominant player ranking sixth in the world in terms of turnover. The entire auto sector, which accounts for 10 percent of Spain's economic output, suffered its worst moment in 2008-09 as the global credit crunch hurt demand for new cars across Europe. But production has picked up and it is now one of the motors of the nation's economic recovery along with the tourism and agriculture and food.

Spain posted its first full year of economic growth in 2014 since a property bubble burst in 2008, throwing millions of people out of work. The government has forecast economic growth of 3.3 percent this year after expanding 1.4 percent in 2014. "We are seeing a certain recovery, to levels close to before the crisis," said Fernando Macias, the director for southern Europe of global Spanish auto parts supplier Gestamp. The automotive components sector posted sales of 29.7 billion euros (\$32.6 billion) last year, up from 22.9 billion euros in 2009, according to the Spanish association of auto parts manufacturers Semauto.

It predicts sales will rise by around 7.0 percent this year to nearly



PUERTO BANUS: A man drives a Bugatti in Puerto Banus, near Marbella. — AFP

32 billion euros, close to the level in 2007 before the start of the crisis. The sector lost 80,000 jobs between 2007 and 2009. Auto firms negotiated concessions from unions to help them restructure and limit job cuts. "Above all what was negotiated is flexibility, a wage freeze, lower salaries for new workers, some with the promise that they will be raised in the future, early retirement and in some extreme cases layoffs," said Isabel Fernandez of Spain's largest union CCOO. At a Grupo Copo plant in Mos near the port of Vigo, Galicia's most populous city, workers in grey coats busily fill molds with foam to make car seats. The company also makes arm rests and door panels, and posted losses in 2011 and 2012 but returned to profit in 2013 following a restructuring. "We see the present and future with moderate optimism," said Grupo Copo chief executive Jose Antonio Rodriguez Estevez. The medium-sized company with 770 employees around the world predicts its sales will grow five percent this year, he added. To give it a competitive edge, the auto parts industry is also betting on innovation. — AFP



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We would like to bring to attention of all Residents of Kuwait that there are Fraudsters who are calling or emailing Residents in Kuwait, telling them that they won a lottery or a prize which they can collect from Al Mulla Exchange, and asking them to remit some fees or buy some prepaid phone cards to get the Pin with which they can collect the money from our Branches.

SUCH SCHEMES ARE HOAXES, SINCE AL MULLA EXCHANGE NEVER HAS & NEVER WILL PARTICIPATE IN ANY SUCH SCHEMES WHERE CUSTOMERS ARE TRICKED INTO PAYING FOR PRIZES.

We ask all Residents of Kuwait to reject all such telephone calls and emails in their own interest.

ISSUED IN PUBLIC INTEREST BY AL MULLA INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE CO. (K.S.C.C.)

SHARES CLIMB, DOLLAR DIPS AS US FED PREPARES TO LIFT RATES

TREASURY YIELDS NUDGE HIGHER; BUND YIELDS SAG

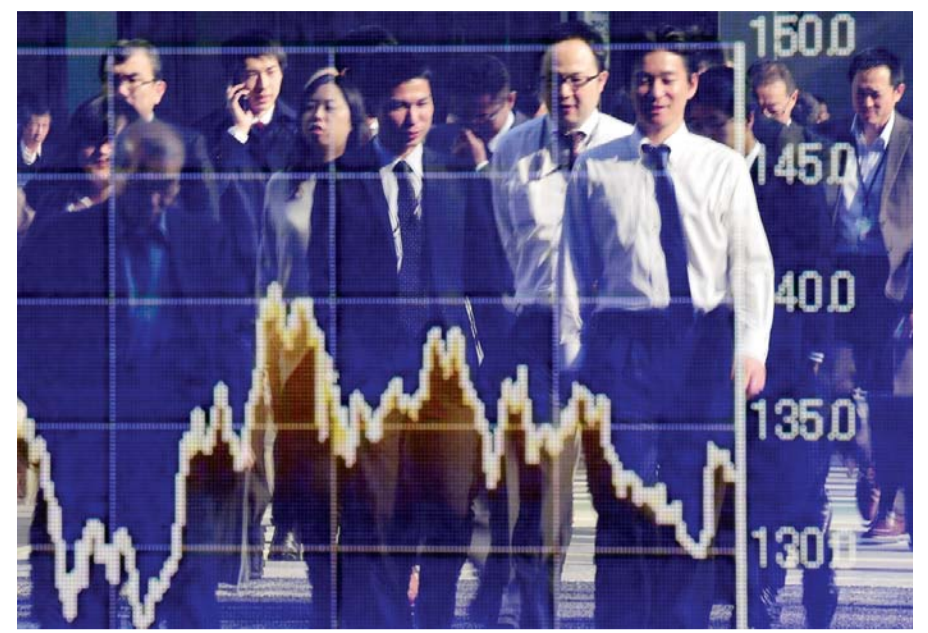
LONDON: Shares and bond markets rose and the dollar dipped yesterday, as investors readied for what is expected to be the first rise in US interest rates in almost a decade. After more than a year of posturing and a couple of false starts, the Federal Reserve is seen raising its rates by a token 25 basis points at 1900 GMT. It will be a highly symbolic move, coming exactly seven years to the day since the US central bank cut them to zero as the post-Lehman crash financial crisis engulfed the world and sent economies spinning into recession. "It is a foregone conclusion that the Fed is going to

raise rates," said Kully Samra, a managing director at US focused investment manager Charles Schwab in London. "But I'm pretty sure too that Janet Yellen is going to use the word gradual (in reference to possible pace of future hikes) quite a few times during the press conference."

That hope that the Fed will stress it plans a softly softly approach was helping soothe jittery markets that have been roiled again over the last couple of weeks by a fresh slump in oil prices and fall in China's increasingly influential yuan. European shares opened broadly flat to consoli-

date sharp gains made on Tuesday and as new data bolstered signs of a gradual pick-up in bloc's confidence. Growth in Germany's private sector slowed a tad this month Markit's PMI survey showed, but it remained a high enough level to suggest Europe's biggest economy can be confident of robust demand going into the new year. Number two economy, the UK, also saw its unemployment rate unexpectedly fall again.

In the currency market it was mainly fine tuning ahead of the Fed decision. The dollar edged back from a near one-week high versus a basket



TOKYO: Pedestrians are reflected on a share prices board in Tokyo yesterday. Japan's share prices rose 395.93 points to close at 18,961.83 points at the morning session of the Tokyo Stock Exchange after a surge on Wall Street. — AFP

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report



Wednesday 16 December 2015

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▲ 8.42	5,624.60	5,616.18	5,633.94	5,616.18
Weighted Index	▲ 0.42	382.00	381.58	383.00	381.16
KSX 15	▲ 0.41	903.66	903.25	907.86	900.59

Volume	108,487,409
Value (KWD)	12,985,198
Number of Trades	2,960

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	114	▲ 0.0
IKARUS	93	89	893,810	81,511	38	▲ 0.0
IPG	250	242	20,388	4,937	2	▲ 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	590	▲ 0.0
ENERGYH	43.0	41.0	10,025	411	2	▲ 0.0
GPI	54	53	1,351,390	71,754	45	▲ 0.0
ABAR	132	114	50,589	6,194	17	▲ 10.0

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
Oil & Gas			2,326,202	164,806	104	▲ 5.69
KFOUC	220	220	20,000	4,400	1	▼ -10.0
BPPC	500	500	101,291	50,646	4	▼ -30.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	610	▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	188	186	44,254	8,231	10	▲ 0.0
Basic Materials			165,645	63,277	15	▼ -32.47

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KCEM	390	390	40,000	15,600	1	▲ 0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	320	▲ 0.0
CABLE	375	370	10,003	3,701	3	▲ 5.0
SHIP	148	148	100	15	1	▲ 20.0
PCEM	1,120	1,120	20	22	1	▲ 2.0
PAPER	415	390	231,200	95,919	5	▼ -20.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	79	▲ 0.0
ACICO	295	290	1,100	320	2	▼ -10.0
GMCM	0.0	0.0	0	0	530	▲ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	132	▲ 0.0
KPAK	0.0	0.0	0	0	390	▲ 0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	210	▲ 0.0
NICBM	240	228	19,826	4,640	3	▲ 2.0
EQUIPMENT	60	57	896,908	51,903	42	▼ -2.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	99	▲ 0.0
GYPNUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	102	▲ 0.0
SALBOOKH	82	80	20,113	1,609	4	▲ 2.0
AGLTY	495	490	466,978	229,225	24	▼ -5.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	216	▲ 0.0
CLEANING	40.0	40.0	193,263	7,731	11	▲ 1.0
CITYGROUP	0.0	0.0	0	0	380	▲ 0.0
KGL	44.0	44.0	28,261	1,243	3	▲ 0.5
KPCP	0.0	0.0	0	0	218	▲ 0.0
HUMANSOFT	1,000	1,000	250	250	4	▲ 50.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	204	▲ 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	325	▲ 0.0
GFC	40.0	40.0	51,500	2,060	13	▲ -2.5
MAYADEEN	22.0	21.5	2,155,334	46,790	36	▲ 0.0
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	780	▲ 0.0
MTCC	69	67	440,750	29,642	20	▼ -1.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	700	▲ 0.0
ALAFCO	210	208	542,565	112,937	7	▲ 0.0
MUBARRAD	77	75	245,388	18,895	11	▼ -1.0
LOGISTICS	57	54	448,614	24,922	27	▲ 3.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	84	▲ 0.0
GCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	78	▲ 0.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	80	▲ 0.0
FCEM	73	73	60,000	4,380	1	▲ 0.0
RKWC	104	102	35,700	3,642	5	▲ -2.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	88	▲ 0.0
Industrials			5,887,873	656,247	224	▲ 1059.48

KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	220	▲ 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	62	▲ 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	104	▲ 0.0
CATTL	134	126	344,528	44,434	24	▲ 128
DANAH	86	82	504,405	41,997	45	▼ -1.0
POULT	176	176	5,000	880	1	▲ 0.0
FOOD	2,000	2,000	25,000	50,000	4	▲ 2,000
Consumer Goods			878,933	137,311	74	▲ 1066.23

MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	190	▲ 0.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	920	▲ 0.0
YIACO	164	164	100	16	1	▲ 10
Health Care			100	16	1	▲ 964.04

KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	950	▲ 0.0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	196	▲ 0.0
SULTAN	70	70	21,350	1,495	4	▼ -2
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	22.5	▲ 0.0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	310	▲ 0.0
IFAHR	170	170	25,500	4,335	4	▲ 4
OULAFUEL	110	108	17,881	1,943	11	▼ -2
MUNTAZAHAT	98	97	43,900	4,263	7	▲ 97
JAZEERA	900	860	65,499	58,459	8	▲ 880
SOOR	110	108	18,153	1,963	9	▲ -10
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	110	▲ 0.0
ALNAWADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	89	▲ 0.0
ALRAI	152	148	40,751	6,193	9	▲ 152
ZIMAH	126	114	1,655,352	197,791	117	▼ -10
UFIG	0.0	0.0	0	0	150	▲ 0.0
KOUTFOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	740	▲ 0.0
Mezzan	1,180	1,160	101,000	117,180	3	▲ 1,160
Consumer Services			1,989,386	393,621	172	▲ 1006.19

ZAIN	350	340	4,270,469	1,478,030	113	▲ 345
OOREDOO	1,040	1,040	103,467	107,606	9	▲ 1,040
HITSTELEC	28.5	27.5	5,002,141	139,860	65	▲ 28.0
VIVA	1,000	990	888,352	687,363	149	▲ -10
Telecommunications			10,064,429	2,412,859	336	▲ 590.50

NBK	820	810	4,333,972	3,513,717	89	▲ 810
GBK	265	265	137,710	36,493	6	▲ 265
CBK	500	500	520,000	260,000	4	▲ 500
ABK	0.0	0.0	0	0	370	▲ 0.0
ALMUTAHED	530	530	80,000	42,400	7	▲ 530
KIB	222	220	15,000	3,310	2	▲ 222
BURG	385	375	37,040	14,100	7	▲ 385
KFIN	550	540	1,148,419	631,595	56	▲ 550
BOUBYAN	440	435	177,577	77,328	12	▲ 435
AUB	208	206	231,491	47,688	10	▲ 208
ITHMR	42.5	41.5	1,575,384	65,604	33	▲ 41.5
WARBANK	200	196	473,048	93,637	101	▲ 198
Banks			8,729,641	4,785,872	307	▲ 904.84

KINS	305	305	4,900	1,495	1	▲ 305
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	750	▲ 0.0
AINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	450	▲ 0.0
WINS	102	102	225	23	1	▲ 102
KUWAIFRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	200	▲ 0.0
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	56	▲ 0.0
WETHAQ	41.5	41.5	5,000	208	1	▲ 41.5
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	355	▲ 0.0
Insurance			10,125	1,725	3	▲ 1094.82

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
SOKOUK	41.0	40.0	69,910	27,902	14	▲ 0.0
KRE	58	57	947,899	54,480	17	▲ 2.0
URC	95	95	50,000	4,750	1	▲ 0.0
NRE	90	86	1,789,007	156,647	59	▲ 4.0
SRE	350	350	30,000	10,500	2	▲ 350
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	650	▲ 0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	176	▲ 0.0
MASSALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	59	▲ 0.0
ARABREC	30.0	29.5	439,250	12,959	11	▲ 30.0
ERESCO	66	64	135,550	8,734	6	▲ 65
MABANEE	960	940	1,259,561	1,193,972	46	▲ 20.0
INIAZZAT	89	82	44,000	3,715	6	▲ 89
INVESTORS	26.0	25.0	4,134,637	105,869	89	▲ 25.0
IRC	29.0	28.5	219,210	6,314	8	▲ 28.5
ALTIJARIA	80	80	190,000	15,200	9	▲ 80
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	47.0	▲ 0.0
AAYANRE	80	80	43,000	3,440	3	▲ 80
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	80	▲ 0.0
ALAQARIA	22.5	22.0	16,500	369	4	▲ 22.5
MZAYA	104	104	95,000	9,880	4	▲ 104
ADNC	29.5	28.0	11,995,925	345,980	186	▲ 29.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	90	▲ 0.0
TIJARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	43.0	▲ 0.0
TAAMEER	24.0	23.0	210,000	5,010	5	▲ 24.0
ARKAN	112	112	20			

AS END OF FED 'FREE MONEY' NEARS, CONSUMERS STILL LIKELY TO SPEND

KOKOMO: Judged by how long it has been going on, the current US economic expansion should be on its last legs, but the mood in this rebounding heartland auto town would not show it. Fiat Chrysler Automobiles has doubled its local workforce to 7,000 amid record industry sales, upscale apartments are being built or tucked into vacant factories, and new small businesses are opening along a quaint Main Street.

As the Federal Reserve meets to begin a likely turn towards higher interest rates, the buzz in places such as Kokomo is one reason policymakers think the US recovery has room to run. This city of 57,000 was hit hard by the recession, but the dynamic developing here is one the Fed sees nationally: more jobs gradually translating into higher wages, and wage growth translating into spending.

"Seven years ago this was considered one of the 'dyingest' cities in America," with mainstay auto companies teetering on the brink and people leaving for Indianapolis to the south and Chicago to the north, said Sandra Young, owner of the Main Street Cafe. She opened three years ago, and now sees a booming corporate catering trade as a good omen that companies and individuals are confident. "Budgets aren't so tight," she said. Compared to other recoveries this one is arguably past middle age, and the Fed has been unusually patient in nurturing it with interest rates held near zero.

Since World War Two the average expansion has lasted just under five years. This recovery has been going on for six and a half, and throughout that time the economy has struggled to move beyond modest 2 to 2.5 percent annual growth. As a result, the Fed has stayed put for a full seven years, about twice as long as the central bank usually waits to begin tightening. Motor vehicles, with sales through November up nearly 7 percent from a year earlier, are not the only part of the retail business doing well. Spending at restaurants and bars grew more than 8 percent compared to the year before. Housing-related sectors are also doing fine, with furniture and home furnishing stores' sales up 5.6 percent, and building materials' sales up 3.9 percent, outpacing overall retail growth of 2 percent.

Autos and auto parts, which account for about a fifth of US retail sales, could prove important to the Fed's success in both "normalizing" rates and keeping the recovery on track. Policymakers, analysts and people like Kokomo's United Autoworkers president say conditions may be aligned to keep the expansion underway. "We've gone from 3,200 members to 7,000 and they are still looking for new stuff to put in the factories," said Carl Greenwood, president of UAW Local 685. Chrysler makes castings and transmissions, including new models for electric cars, in four plants around Kokomo.



NEW YORK: Traders work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) yesterday in New York City. — AFP

Return of the consumer

Between low unemployment, a whisper of evidence that wages are rising, and the savings from low gas prices, greater consumer purchasing power is finally becoming visible after a delay that had mystified the Fed. Demand for autos has been especially eye catching, with record sales of around 18 million this year. The gradual rate hikes the Fed may approve this week and over the next year are not expected to significantly crimp demand, or cool a housing market that has also propped up recent growth.

National new homes sales have risen more than 15 percent in the first 10 months of this year from the year before, and a government index of home prices has been rising at an annual five percent rate for nearly two years. A recent JD Power survey estimated that if rates rise 0.5 percentage points next year it would curb auto sales by just 150,000 vehicles, leaving them well above the average of 15 million a year since 1990. Not only are interest rates likely to remain low by historic standards for perhaps another two years, but members of one key demographic group - the millennials - are starting to spend, said Standard & Poor's chief economist Beth Ann Bovino.

The 16 to 35-year-olds accounted for a fourth of new

auto sales last year and "are the general cohort for which auto sales are growing at the fastest pace." Homebuying among that group is also rising. The current expansion "is old, but economic cycles do not die of old age... there is latent demand out there," Bovino said. Over the last year business investment has contributed little to economic growth, hammered by the cutbacks in the energy sector. Government spending has stagnated, and foreign trade acted as a drag during the weak state of the global economy and strong dollar. Domestic consumption has picked up the slack, and Fed chair Janet Yellen is confident it will continue thanks to further job gains and accelerating wages. That is the hope in Indiana, where the auto upswing has pushed the unemployment rate down to 4.4 percent, below the national average of 5 percent. "If they are doing well everyone else is doing well," said Amber Jordan, who left the auto industry with her husband after more than a decade to open a specialty toy store selling vintage action figures. They recently converted an old downtown hotel, the lobby now lined with Star Wars and other figures. It's a bet that people will, for a while, keep coming in the door. "The jobs go up and down," she said, but for now "to me, things feel stable." — Reuters

S AFRICANS MARCH AGAINST ZUMA AFTER FINANCE U-TURN

MOODY'S CUT SOUTH AFRICA'S OUTLOOK

JOHANNESBURG: Thousands of protesters marched through South African cities yesterday demanding President Jacob Zuma's resignation after he triggered economic turmoil by sacking his respected finance minister. Zuma was left badly bruised when he fired Nhlhlanhla Nene last week in favor of little-known backbencher David van Rooyen, who was himself removed after only four days in office. Zuma's African National

Congress (ANC) party, which has ruled since the end of apartheid in 1994, won a general election easily last year but could lose power in some major municipalities at local polls in 2016.

"We had such hopes in 1994 because of all the struggles to remove apartheid," Theresa Giorza, 55, a university teacher said at the protest in central Johannesburg, which attracted about 2,000 marchers. "There were good leaders

in place, and support for ANC at home and abroad," she said. "Over time, lots of people started to feel it was going wrong. It has gone from bad to worse. Now it's just rotten." The debacle over finance ministers triggered a market rout and fuelled opposition to Zuma, who has been buffeted by corruption scandals, a dire economy and charges of tarnishing Nelson Mandela's legacy.

Handing Van Rooyen the key finance portfolio underlined widespread fears that corrupt Zuma loyalists were calling the shots in government. "This was another attempt to blunt the instruments of democracy," said Zwelinzima Vavi, one of the march organizers. "They were wanting to grab the treasury for the interests of (those) who are eating from the carcass of our state." "Jacob Zuma has demonstrated beyond any reasonable doubt that he doesn't have what it takes to be a leader of a sophisticated democracy and economy."

'Recall Zuma now'

Placards at the march in Johannesburg read "21 Years of Undemocratic Rule" and "Recall Zuma Now". Other protests were held in Cape Town and Pretoria. Last weekend, in one of the biggest crises of his rule, Zuma was forced into a dramatic U-turn, sacking Van Rooyen and re-appointing Pravin Gordhan, a steady hand who was finance minister from 2009 to 2014. During the debacle, the rand collapsed to historic lows as foreign investors pulled out and government bond yields jumped in a bout of pessimism over the future of Africa's most advanced economy.

Yesterday's marches were held on the Day of Reconciliation, an annual holiday on which the president makes a speech promoting better race relations after the era of white-minority rule. Zuma made no direct mention of the financial downturn, saying only work was "continuing to grow the economy so that we can create jobs... under difficult conditions given the global economic climate." Yesterday, Moody's cut South Africa's outlook from stable to negative in the latest downgrade by rating agencies. Hit by power shortages, falling commodities prices and rising debt, the country's economy is set to see growth of 1.4 percent this year, the slowest since 2009. The rand has tumbled 23 percent against the dollar in 2015. — AFP



JOHANNESBURG: Demonstrators display placards calling for the resignation of South African president Jacob Zuma as they cross Mandela Bridge in Johannesburg yesterday. — AFP

SAUDI SHARES RISE ON INTEREST RATE HIKE OPTIMISM

DUBAI: Saudi shares rose yesterday as optimistic investors as an upbeat global backdrop helped bolster fragile regional investor sentiment. Saudi bank shares rose, with the sector's measure up 3.5 percent on prospects of bank lending margins increasing if the US Federal Reserve hikes interest rates. The overall sentiment and performance however, is expected to be volatile until there is clarity on government expenditure when the kingdom announces its 2016 fiscal budget next week.

"Investors are now just waiting for the budget and surprisingly, the market is holding well given the downtrend in oil prices - this is optimism for the budget to be announced next week," said Asim Bukhtiar, head of research and investment advisory at Saudi Fransi Capital. Saudi's index rose 1.4 percent, trimming year-to-date losses to 17.6 percent. Investors are keeping an eye on next year's government expenditure plans as well as the actual spending for 2015, which will clarify the extent to which a

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

slump in oil prices has affected the major oil-exporting kingdom. Oil fell yesterday on fresh evidence of growing global oversupply with Brent was down 75 cents at \$38.45 as of 1400 GMT.

Global shares meanwhile, rallied as investors readied for what is expected to be the first rise in U.S. interest rates in almost a decade. Shares in Saudi Hollandi Bank surged 7.9 percent having slumped to a 29-month low on Sunday after the lender said it would issue bonus shares. Investors over-bet on an announcement that should provide little material benefit to shareholders. The lender's board wants shareholders to receive one bonus share for each held, a recommendation investors thought was more important than Hollandi's proposal to pay a cash dividend of 0.25 riyals (\$0.06) per share for 2015, a quarter of what it paid for the previous year.

Egypt

Shares in Cairo rose after Saudi King Salman pledged an investment of more 30 billion riyals (\$8 billion) to help the North African country meet petroleum needs for the next five years. Cairo's index gained 1.1 percent, trimming year-to-date losses to 27.3 percent - underperforming all Gulf markets. "The main problem is the tourism sector, which impacts dollar inflows due to security concerns," said Sherif Shebl, Cairo-based foreign equity sales trader at Pharos Securities. Tourism in the country has dampened since the crash of a Russian passenger plane in Sinai that killed all 224 people on board on Oct 31. Egypt said it had found no evidence so far of terrorism involved in the place crash, but Russia and Western governments have said the likely cause was a bomb. "The focus is on the central

bank and foreign reserves, which is why the government is trying to get support from the GCC."

UAE, Qatar

Elsewhere, Dubai led gains but small to mid-sized stocks dominated trading volumes, signaling a risk-averse stance. Any recovery will have to be supported by strong volumes before a sustained trend can take place. Dubai index climbed 2.3 percent, up for a third straight gain since Sunday's two-year low. Abu Dhabi's index rose 1.3 percent in its second gain in three days since Sunday's 12-month low, while Qatar's measure gained 0.7 percent, also up for a third day since Sunday's two-year low. MSCI's emerging market index has lost 17.5 percent this year and some Gulf markets have underperformed this measure. Some investors have reduced their exposure to the region's oil-driven economies as crude prices slumped to near 11-year lows. — Reuters

News

in brief

Endemic tax evasion to cost Italy \$133 billion

ROME: Endemic tax evasion will cost Italy 122 billion euros (\$133 billion) in lost revenue this year, employers' organization Confindustria said yesterday. The bosses' group urged the government to initiate a clampdown, highlighting research which calculated that 99 percent of taxpayers face virtually no risk of being subjected to spot checks. Confindustria in-house think-tank, CSC, calculated that by halving the losses to evasion and returning the savings to taxpayers, the government could have added 3.1 percent to the country's economic output and generated 335,000 new jobs in this year alone. The report suggests the scale of tax dodging in Italy is considerably larger than previously thought with the government's most recent estimate having put the losses at 90 billion euros a year. According to the CSC, the biggest losses, around one third of the total, are incurred because of non-payment of value added tax (40 billion). Non-payment of payroll taxes costs some 34 billion and non- or under-payment of income tax 23 billion. Confindustria's report said the shortcomings of the country's tax administration was the main cause of the losses.

Troubled Rolls-Royce cuts top management

LONDON: British engines maker Rolls-Royce, hit by a series of profit-warnings, announced yesterday changes to its top management structure, resulting in the departure of its head of aerospace. The removal of a layer of senior management represents a first step in a company-wide restructuring announced last month by recently-appointed chief executive Warren East. "The changes we are announcing today are the first important steps in driving operational excellence and returning Rolls-Royce to its long-term trend of profitable growth," East said in a statement. Rolls, which makes engine systems for aircraft and sea vessels, announced the departures of company veteran Tony Wood, president of its Aerospace division, and Lawrie Haynes, president Land & Sea. "Both will remain with the business into 2016 in order to assist with the transition to the new structure," the company said. Rolls said "the new structure will clarify executive accountabilities, intensify leadership focus on operational performance and allow Rolls-Royce to build on its world class engineering capabilities".



SAS shares take off as airline returns to profit

STOCKHOLM: Scandinavian airline SAS reported a return to profitability yesterday, sending its shares flying on the Stockholm stock exchange. SAS said net profit was 956 million kronor (102 million euros, \$112 million) in the 12 months to October, its financial year. It had posted a net loss of 736 million kronor a year earlier. Lower fuel prices and a higher seat occupancy rate were the main factors for the improved performance, SAS said. Shares in the airline rose more than six percent in Stockholm following the announcement, vastly outperforming a slightly firmer overall market. Net profit for the three months to October, the airline's fourth quarter, came in at 517 million kronor, against a loss of 309 million a year earlier.

Halliburton, Baker Hughes merger hits antitrust wall

NEW YORK: Oil-services companies Halliburton and Baker Hughes pushed back the time frame Tuesday for completing their proposed merger after US antitrust officials rejected their latest divestment remedies. The two companies, seeking to combine to take on market leader Schlumberger, set April 30, 2016, as the deadline for completing the deal. In September, the companies had pushed back the time frame by three weeks to December 15. Tuesday's deadline was expected to pass with the Department of Justice neither accepting offers by the companies to divest assets to win approval, nor choosing to sue to block the transaction, Halliburton and Baker Hughes said. "The DOJ has informed the companies that it does not believe that the remedies offered to date are sufficient to address the DOJ's concerns, but acknowledged that they would assess further proposals and look forward to continued cooperation from the parties in their continuing investigation," the companies said in a joint statement. Texas-based Halliburton and Baker Hughes both provide well services and drilling products to large oil companies like ExxonMobil and Total.



ATHENS: Communist-affiliated protesters shout slogans while marching towards the Greek parliament in Athens as MPs vote on a set of reforms demanded by creditors for the release of bailout funds. — AFP

Greece passes bad-loan bill to unlock fresh funds

ATHENS: Greece's parliament has approved a controversial bill allowing banks to sell non-performing loans to the private sector, paving the way for the next payment of bailout funds. International creditors had put pressure on Greece to pass the bill, which is aimed at lightening the load of bad loans on the banks' books, making it a condition for handing over one billion euros (\$1.1 billion). The new law, adopted late Tuesday, will allow private specially-created distressed-debt companies to create a secondary market for non-performing loans. This will be "beneficial both for banks and private citizens", Economy Minister Giorgos Stathakis told parliament. Greece in July accepted a three-year, 86-billion-euro (\$93-billion) EU bailout that saved it from crashing out of the eurozone, but the deal came with strict conditions.

MEMAC OGILVY PR CELEBRATES LANDMARK PERFECT TEN AT MEPRA AWARDS

KUWAIT: Memac Ogilvy PR cemented its dominance as the most awarded agency in the Middle East following a perfect ten at the Middle East Public Relations Association (MEPRA) Awards on December 14. During the annual gala dinner, hosted at the JW Marriot Marquis in Dubai, the agency beat last year's tally by taking home nine category awards and one special award. Within the first 20 minutes of the ceremony, Memac Ogilvy PR had already secured six accolades, including a hat-trick bronze, silver and gold in the Consumer Goods category.

With three gold, five silver, and one bronze awards, plus one special award for Overall Campaign of the Year, the agency was the most awarded of the night, gaining nearly a quarter of the total 44 prizes distributed across 14 categories. Uniquely, Memac Ogilvy achieved 26 shortlisted nominations from 31 entries that spanned the entire Middle East and North Africa region. The agency's expanding network submitted multiple projects from diverse offices ranging from Beirut to Tunisia. Coca-Cola Dubai's dark Iftar campaign, Labels are for cans, not people, scooped up four awards, including gold for Best Use of Social Media and Digital PR, as well as the Overall Campaign of the Year title.

It also maintained its streak as the best-in-class for Healthcare and Services, being recognized for the third consecutive year in the category. The team took home the silver prize for the Roche Media Academy Dubai and the gold for

Roche Breast Cancer Awareness Lebanon.

"It's amazing to be recognized by our peers and industry experts. I am immensely proud of the entire team, and the work they are creating for our clients," said Saada Hammad, Regional Director for Memac Ogilvy PR. "A big thank you goes out to our clients that continue to believe in us and our ideas, as well as empower and enable us to create great work that has such an impact on communities both locally and internationally." Eddie Moutran, Chairman and CEO of Memac Ogilvy added: "These awards are a testament to the great work being done in the PR industry across the region as a whole. Agencies are engaging with audiences in ways they haven't before - using insights and experiences that are personal and memorable, rather than older methods we've relied upon in the past. We would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all the other winners who have shown how much talent we have operating in the Middle East."

The agency, which boasts offices all over the globe, picked up victories across six different categories, taking home bronze, silver and gold in the Consumer Goods category, silver in the CSR and Environmental PR category, silver and gold in the Healthcare and Services category, silver in the Best Launch Event category, gold in the Best Use of Social Media and Digital PR category, and the Overall Campaign of the Year award.



BETHUNE: Photo shows the logo of French telecom operator Orange in Bethune, northern France. French telecoms operator Orange may soon face a crucial choice: Shore up its position at home by gobbling up a competitor or expand its presence abroad by making a play for Telecom Italia. — AFP

FRENCH OR ITALIAN? TELECOMS GIANT ORANGE FACES ACQUISITION CHOICE

PARIS: French telecoms operator Orange may soon face a crucial choice: Shore up its position at home by gobbling up a competitor or expand its presence abroad by making a play for Telecom Italia. While talks have reportedly begun to take over the telecom assets of the Bouygues conglomerate, thus cutting the number of mobile operators in France to three, the time may be ripe to pounce on Telecom Italia as two French companies have been increasing their stakes in the operator.

"Orange has a choice to make, to consolidate the French market or consolidate its position as a global operator with major scale in Europe, as doing both could possibly be complex," said Thomas Coudry, a Paris-based telecoms analyst at Bryan, Garnier & Co. "But it is certain that Telecom Italia is an interesting target for many, not only Orange," he added. Italy is seen as an appealing market for operators as it has been slower in rolling out high-speed Internet, and Telecom Italia has a relatively open capital structure that could see investors take control. Orange has so far refused to confirm its interest in Telecom Italia, as it has to comment on talks on taking over Bouygues Telecom.

But sources say it may be working on a way to do both. "Our merger and acquisition services are working day and night to try to find a solution for January with the scenario being explored that would have Bouygues hold 15 percent of the new company, the French state 19 percent and employees four to five percent," said a union source. The solution for the merger would be an exchange of shares, which would allow Orange to hold on to cash to seek other acquisition prey, perhaps in Italy. That is why one Paris-based analyst, who spoke only on condition of anonymity, said the two operations "should be viewed together".

In other words, Orange could be preparing a two-course meal of Bouygues Telecom followed by Telecom Italia. "Orange is committed to consolidating the European market and Italy is a beautiful opportunity and the company knows it," said the analyst. "It is perfectly possible that an approach for Telecom Italia would be made together with Vivendi," he added. Vivendi, which was previously active in the French telecoms market with the mobile and home Internet operator SFR, owns a 20 percent stake in Telecom Italia.

'Three cushion bank shot'

The possibility of Orange snapping up Telecom Italia has raised concerns in Italy, including in the government which is not

enthused about the idea of another national champion being acquired by a foreign company. "They are right to be afraid as each time an Italian company is bought, the heart of its skills emigrate to where its shareholder is located," said Alessandro Pansa, a professor of finance at Luiss Business School in Rome. "But the government can't do much, it is the consequence of 10 years of poor management of the Italian telecoms market," he said.

But that doesn't mean that nothing can be done to make Telecom Italia harder to take over, which is what the company's current management tried to do on Tuesday. At a general shareholders meeting it sought to have the company's preferred shares, which get better dividend payments but hold no voting rights, converted into regular voting shares. Vivendi succeeded in blocking the project, which would have diluted its shareholding and by creating more voting shares making any takeover costlier. "But if someone really has a strategic interest in such a deal, a couple of hundred million euros won't make a difference," said Pansa.

A wild card

What would make a difference is getting regulatory approval for the mergers. If the European Commission is open to consolidation on the international level, it is concerned about mergers in national markets. "The present EU competition commissioner, Margrethe Vestager, is very concerned that if the number of market players is further reduced in individual countries, consumers will end up paying higher prices, and investment in networks will suffer," said Anne MacGregor, a lawyer specialized in mergers and acquisitions at the Cadwalader firm in Brussels.

Coudry shares a similar view that the Commission appears to be taking a harder line on mergers within countries. "But on the pan-European level, on the other hand, it is sending rather favorable messages about building continental giants capable of competing globally." A wild card in an Orange bid for Telecom Italia is the investment into the company by Xavier Niel, the owner of the upstart French mobile and Internet operator Free Telecom. With a 15-percent stake in Telecom Italia, Niel "is in a position to influence" the terms of a sale of the company, said the Paris analyst who requested anonymity. He said Orange faces what in billiard terms would be a "three cushion bank shot" as Niel is interested in "what Free would get in terms of frequencies and infrastructure" as part of any merger between Orange and Bouygues. — AFP

RABIGH ELECTRICITY AND BANKS IN TALKS FOR \$2 BILLION LOAN TO LAST 20 YEARS

DUBAI: Rabigh Electricity Company, partly owned by state-run Saudi Electricity Co (SEC), is in talks with banks to raise a loan worth up to \$2 billion, two sources with knowledge of the deal said yesterday.

The cash raised from banks will be used to replace the capital the consortium invested to build the Rabigh 1 power plant, for which funding was originally put in place in 2009. Rabigh Electricity, a special purpose vehicle, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The deal comes at a time when Gulf economies are cutting budgets and increasing borrowing to cope with a slump in oil prices. This has squeezed liquidity at a time when companies are also scrambling to agree new financing ahead of possible US interest rate hikes in the coming months.

Rabigh Electricity Company is seeking a loan with a long-term tenure and expects to close the financing in the first quarter of 2016, the sources said, speaking on condition of

anonymity as the information isn't public. "The loan will be in the order of 20 years," one of the sources said, adding that the pricing should be cheaper as the plant is now fully operational. The original project funding of \$1.9 billion was raised in 2009 with a 20-year life span, according to Thomson Reuters data, just after the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008 which triggered a seizure of the world's financial system.

The Rabigh plant was the first in the Kingdom where the contract to build and operate the project was awarded in an open tender process by SEC, which promised to purchase all power produced by the plant for a period of 20 years. Located on the western coast of Saudi Arabia, the plant generates 1,200 megawatts of power per day and has been put into full commercial operation since 2013. A consortium of ACWA Power International and the Korea Electric Power Company were awarded the project and they hold 80 percent of the shares, while SEC owns 20 percent. — Reuters

JAPAN'S COALITION APPROVES \$8 BN EXEMPTION IN 2017 SALES TAX HIKE TAX-HIKE EXEMPTION NEGATIVE FOR FISCAL REFORM

TOKYO: Japan's ruling coalition yesterday endorsed an \$8-billion exemption in a planned sales tax hike, a move widely seen as a bid to lure voters in upper house polls next year - a worrying signal of back-peddling on fiscal consolidation. In the annual tax reform, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and small ally the Komeito party agreed to keep the sales tax on food at the current 8 percent when the nationwide sales tax rises to 10 percent in April 2017.

It would be the first time that Japan is adopting a lower tax rates on food - similar to multiple value-added tax rates in Europe - since the sales tax was introduced in 1989. The move is expected to cause a loss of about 1 trillion yen (\$8.20 billion) in revenue, or about a fifth of that brought by the planned tax hike. The govern-

ment plans to fund the exemption by shelving planned medical care breaks on low-income households worth 400 billion yen. It has not secured other funding sources. "Needless to say, the LDP and Komeito will consider the matter earnestly, with the aim of resolving (the funding issue) toward the end of next year," LDP tax panel chief Yoichi Miyazawa told reporters.

Failure to secure funding sources would threaten Japan's aim of balancing the primary budget - excluding new bond sales and debt servicing - by fiscal 2020 in a bid to curb the heaviest debt burden in the industrial world. Nonetheless, Abe's LDP gave way to Komeito by allowing tax-hike exemptions on both fresh and processed foods to support low-income earners, apparently out of consideration for its ally, whose vote-drawing power is key for many LDP

lawmakers. "The ruling parties' agreement on the tax exemption is negative for fiscal consolidation," said Naomi Muguruma, senior market economist at Mitsubishi UFJ Morgan Stanley.

"The question is whether they can show a political will to secure permanent funding sources, even if that means to implement politically painful steps after the upper house election next summer." The ruling bloc also endorsed a plan to cut the effective corporate tax to 29.97 percent from 32.11 percent now, effective from April 2016, and take it further to 29.74 percent in fiscal 2018, while broadening the tax base to offset revenue loss. The overall annual tax reform in fiscal 2016 will result in cuts worth 20 billion yen in the national tax and another 20 billion yen in the local tax on an average-year basis, Miyazawa said. — Reuters

ZAIN OFFERS 50% DISCOUNT ON INTERNATIONAL CALLS TO GCC

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced a 50% discount promotion on international calls to all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries during the period from 16-19 December. The special offering comes in the occasion of the Kingdom of Bahrain and the State of Qatar's celebrations of their National Days on Tuesday and Friday. On this special occasion, Zain expressed its sincere congratulations to the people of Bahrain and Qatar, represented in their leadership, the embassy, and the Bahraini and Qatari citizens residing in Kuwait. The company took the opportunity to share this special occasion with its customers, becoming the first telecom in the country to offer such discounts.

Zain prepaid and postpaid customers initiating international calls to any GCC country, including the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Bahrain, the State of Qatar, and the Sultanate of Oman, will receive a 50% discount during the period from 16-19 December. As a leading telecommunications company in the region, Zain is keen to participate in the celebrations of different nations. The company considers itself as a core entity within the communities in which it operates, and strives to share the joys of special occasions in its customers' lives.

AHLI UNITED BANK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 'AL HASSAD ISLAMIC SAVING' PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank held its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic Saving program on December 09, 2015. This program offers the biggest prize amount to the largest number of winners. The prize program succeeded in becoming the first and only prize account in Kuwait compliant with the Islamic Shari'a principles. The program has been developed to fulfill the needs of the Bank customers and increase their opportunities in winning sizeable and attractive prizes in addition to enjoying the latest banking advantages that Ahli United Bank provides.

On this occasion, the bank issued the following press release: Al Hassad Islamic Saving program offers the highest amounts of prizes which amount to KD 3.4 Million per year. This Program also offers 26 weekly prizes, with the highest number of weekly winners. The Islamic Hassad Saving Account may be opened by the lowest amount to open an account, which is KD 100. The winner of the weekly grand prize in the amount of KD 25,000/- is: Zainab Abbas Ali.

The Winners Of The Kd 1,000 Prize Each: Mohammad Hayef Katheer, Jassem Mohd Ahmed, Ahmed Hamoud Awad, Mohammad Majed Al Mutairy, Yaqoub Ali Ghluom, Ammar Abboud Al Mansour, Fawaz Sulaiman Al Othman, Emad Marwan Saleh, Saud Jaber

Dhmaid Al Ajmi, Abdurraheem Hussain Ali, Sulaiman Fahad Al Fahad, Qutaibah J H M H Al Fadal, Ali Ghuloom Malek, Nadeen Hasan Al Sadeq, Salwa Yousef Al Sharqawi, Sami Ali Al Ajmi, Mohammed Khaled Mohammed, Sameer Salman Al-Arabi, Mohammed Saleem Alaaidin, Sawsan Abdulhussain Hussain, A Rahman Jassim A Rahman, Omran Zuhair Hasan Ali, Fawzia Abdulla Al Saegh, Fatima Abdulla Hasan, Zahraa Hasan Ebrahim.

The Prize program of "Al Hassad Islamic Saving" from Ahli United Bank offers a weekly grand prize worth KD 25,000/- in addition to 25 weekly prizes worth a total of KD 25,000 distributed to 25 prizes, KD 1,000 for each winner. In addition, prizes of Al Hassad Islamic saving program from Ahli United Bank offer 4 quarterly grand prizes announced in quarterly draws. Each is a "Salary for Life" prize which is worth KD 25,000/.

In general, Ahli United Bank continues to offer innovative tools and means to meet the needs of its customers to match the Bank's long history of distinctive services which extend over 73 years during which the Bank managed to take the lead among local banks. For further information about "Al Hassad Islamic Saving" account, customers may call at any Ahli United Bank branch, or call: "Hayakom" service at Tel: 181 2000.

ETIHAD AIRWAYS APPOINTS THREE UAE NATIONALS TO EXECUTIVE POSITIONS

KUWAIT: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, has announced the appointment of three UAE nationals to key executive roles. Captain Salah Alfarajalla, who has been with Etihad Airways since 2007, becomes Senior Vice President Security and National Pilot Development, Ghudayer Al Dhaheri, who joined the airline in 2013, becomes Vice President Corporate Security, and Sultan Mohamed Al Mahmoud joins the airline as Vice President Corporate Strategy. Ray Gammell, Etihad Airways' Chief People and Performance Officer, said: "I am delighted to announce the new executive roles for Captain Salah and Ghudayer and to welcome Sultan to the Etihad Airways family. Their varied and extensive professional backgrounds reinforce and expand the impressive executive management expertise we have in our team."

Ray Gammell added: "Captain Salah's tenure as Vice President Corporate Security and National Pilot Development - a position he has held since 2010 - has been highlighted by renewed strategic planning and insights. He has played a pivotal role in the successful development and efficiency of our aviation security systems and was the driving force behind the Etihad Airways Cadet Pilot Program ensuring a continuous stream of qualified UAE national pilots to pursue rewarding careers at Etihad Airways." In his new role, Captain Salah will be responsible for aviation and corporate security, and will



Captain Salah

continue to oversee the Etihad Airways' cadet pilot program.

Captain Salah has 36 years' experience in the aviation industry, incorporating 22 years in the UAE Air Force and Air Defense, from which he retired as a Colonel, and 10 years as Deputy Chief Executive for Presidential Flight. At Etihad Airways, he played an instrumental role in managing the aviation security systems including physical, technical, operational and procedural security measures. Under his leadership, the cadet pilot program grew to more than 700 cadets including more than 600 UAE nationals, and became a fully fledged academic program when a unique partnership with Abu Dhabi University was forged in 2011 requiring all cadets to obtain a degree in Aviation Science.

Before joining Etihad Airways in 2013, Ghudayer Al Dhaheri was a



Ghudayer Al-Daheri

UAE Air Force fighter pilot and commander with broad experience both in the UAE and overseas. He was a commandant at the Air Warfare Centre AFAD UAE, and a member of the Royal College of Defense Studies in London, UK. In his new role as Vice President Corporate Security, Ghudayer will report to Captain Salah and will provide strategic policy and management guidance for the implementation of protective and proactive security measures for staff, guests, facilities and other resources within the UAE and in other countries on the network. Ray Gammell said: "Ghudayer has in-depth knowledge of the region's security issues and has demonstrated commitment to the highest levels of security for our people, assets and guests. I am confident he will continue to spearhead efforts that strengthen and reinforce relevant corporate security



Sultan Al-Mahmoud

solutions for Etihad Airways." Sultan Mohamed Al Mahmoud joins Etihad Airways from the Tourism Development and Investment Company (TDIC), where he held a number of director level roles which gave him exposure to various Abu Dhabi tourism development stakeholders. He will put his work insights and experience, gained over the last 14 years, to good use by developing and implementing short, medium and long-term strategies that will see Etihad Airways further strengthen its position as key contributor to Abu Dhabi's GDP and the UAE more broadly. Ray Gammell added: "With his experience and participation in board committees, Sultan will add an exciting dimension to our strategy team, especially as we continue to focus on improving our internal governance and strategic frameworks."

EVERY COUNTRY SHOULD GOVERN ITS OWN INTERNET: XI

WUZHEN, China: Every nation should have independent authority over its own Internet, Chinese President Xi Jinping said Wednesday, telling a government-organized conference that "freedom and order" are both necessary in cyberspace. Rights campaigners have denounced the World Internet Conference as part of China's push to sell its idea of "Internet sovereignty", a concept at odds with a vision of the network as an open global resource.

"We should respect the rights of individual countries to govern their own cyberspace," Xi said in a half-hour speech opening the second forum, whose version last year was greeted with derision by activists who questioned China's motives. "No country should pursue cyber hegemony or interfere in other countries' internal affairs," he added. China censors online content it deems to be politically sensitive, while blocking some Western websites and the services of Internet giants including Facebook, Twitter and Google. Despite the block, participants at the conference were given unfettered access to sites denied to the rest of the country. The policy is one facet of Beijing's strict limits on freedom of expression. Rights groups say it uses state security as a pretext to crack down on political dissent.

"Like in the real world, freedom and order



WUZHEN, China: Chinese President Xi Jinping delivers a speech during the World Internet Conference in east China's Zhejiang province yesterday. — AFP

are both necessary in cyberspace: Freedom is what order is meant for, and order is the guarantee for freedom," Xi said. "We should use moral teachings in guiding the use of the

Internet," he added, adding that China's online presence should strive for a more positive and "uplifting" image. Amnesty International has condemned China's use of vaguely worded

laws to "arbitrarily target individuals for solely exercising their right to freedom of expression online". Hundreds have been jailed on such charges.

Two days before Xi took to the podium, Pu Zhiqiang, one of China's most celebrated human rights lawyers, stood trial over just seven microblog posts critical of the ruling Communist Party that could earn him up to eight years behind bars. "Under the guise of sovereignty and security, the Chinese authorities are trying to rewrite the rules of the Internet so censorship and surveillance become the norm everywhere," said Roseann Rife, East Asia research director at Amnesty International. "This is an all-out assault on Internet freedoms," she added.

'Realm of Control'

The three-day conference in the small eastern town of Wuzhen was attended by a handful of high-profile figures from nations that have been criticized for their records on freedom of speech, including Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Russia's Dmitry Medvedev. Senior executives of companies such as Microsoft, IBM and Apple as well as China's largest Internet companies were also present. On the sidelines of the conference,

Robin Li, chief executive of Baidu, China's largest search engine, admitted the decision on whether to display results for censored websites such as Facebook and Twitter on his company's search engine was simply beyond its remit. "This is completely outside of Baidu's realm of control - the websites that Chinese netizens can access are decided on by China's government and law," Li told AFP. "Baidu is just the tool that offers netizens what they can see." Google terminated most of its mainland operations in 2010 after a dispute with the government over censorship and allegations of cyberattacks.

An October report by the American pro-democracy think tank Freedom House found that China has the most restrictive Internet policies of 65 countries studied, ranking below Iran and Syria. Nonetheless companies such as LinkedIn have agreed to censor their content in exchange for access to the country, while Facebook and other banned companies have lined up to offer the hand of friendship to China's top leaders. When Xi visited the US in September, China's cyber czar Lu Wei appeared along with the head of state in the front row of a "family photo" of America's tech giants, including Amazon's Jeff Bezos and Facebook's Mark Zuckerberg. — AFP

AMAZON UK URGES CUSTOMERS TO THROW AWAY HOVERBOARDS

LONDON: The British branch of online retailer Amazon on Wednesday urged customers to throw away defective "hoverboards", two-wheeled scooters that have become a craze ahead of the Christmas season. In an email, the company warned customers who had bought some models of the electric travel devices through its UK website that they were unsafe and should be disposed of because of "non-compliant" plugs.

"We've received information that your order purchased through the Amazon.co.uk website is unsafe for use as this product is supplied with a non-compliant UK plug," the email said. It urged customers to bring their hoverboards to a recycling centre to be disposed of as soon as possible and said that they would receive an automatic refund in three days.

A separate email was sent advising customers that bought scooters with rechargeable lithium ion batteries that the trading standards body had "raised concerns about the safety of some Self-Balancing Scooters". "As a precaution, we want to share some additional information about lithium-ion batteries, as well as some safety tips for using products that contain them, and UK plugs," the second email read.

It comes after 15,000 hoverboards were seized by National Trading Standards, mainly due to electrical components that were non-compliant and could catch fire or explode. Many of the seized hoverboards had plugs lacking fuses meaning they had a greater risk of overheating, cut-off switches which failed, and chargers and batteries that failed safety standards.

Hoverboards have been linked to a series of fires, prompting the London Fire Brigade to warn the public not to leave the devices charging unattended. Retailer Argos said it had removed its Nevaboard line of hoverboards from sale as it did additional tests. Watchdog the Retail Ombudsman urged businesses to remove the unsafe hoverboards from sale and warned they could be "held liable for any injuries caused by unsafe goods".

"Consumers who have already purchased a hoverboard, perhaps as a Christmas present, should contact the retailer and for their written assurance that it's safe and in particular that it has a compliant plug with a fuse," chief ombudsman Dean Dunham said. It is illegal to ride the self-balancing scooters in public in Britain, because they are vehicles that don't meet regulations requirements. — AFP



DEARBORN, Michigan: Tim Hutten, Corning mechanical engineer, holds a small sample of Corning Gorilla Glass (left) and standard automotive windshield plate glass after they were each hit by an ice ball at the Dearborn Development Center on Dec 14, 2015. — AP

GORILLA GLASS, USED FOR CELL PHONES, IS COMING TO CARS

EXPENSE IS A BARRIER

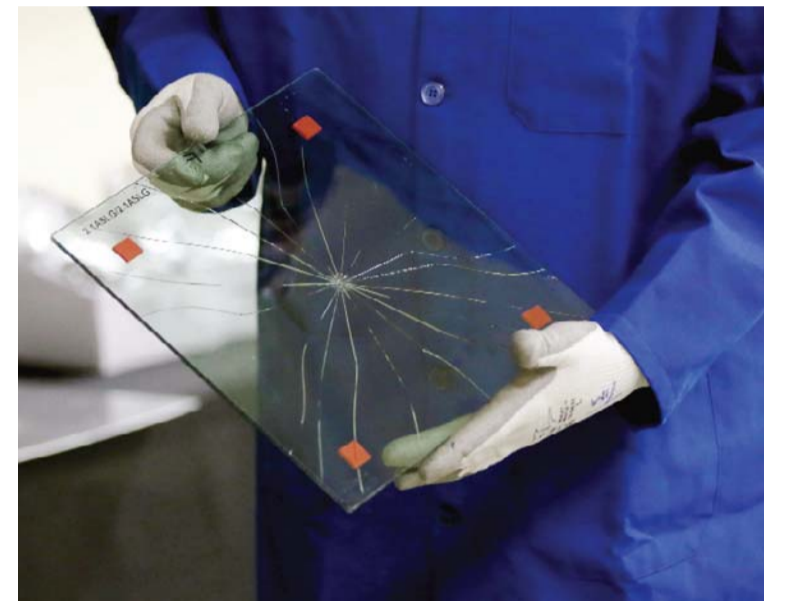
DETROIT: The thin, lightweight glass on your smartphone could soon be found on your car. Corning Inc.'s Gorilla Glass is used for the screens on billions of mobile phones. Now, car makers are using an automotive version to help shave weight off their vehicles and improve fuel economy. BMW AG was the first to use Gorilla Glass last year. The material formed an interior panel in the i8 hybrid sports car. Ford Motor Co will be the first to use it for a windshield and rear window in the new Ford GT sports car, which is scheduled to go on sale next year. The GT also has a Gorilla Glass engine cover.

"It's the newest thing to happen to glass since 1923," said Paul Linden, a supervisor of body exterior mechanisms at Ford. That was the year Henry Ford started using shatter-resistant glass in the Model T. Traditional windshields are made up of two layers of heat-treated

annealed glass with a plastic layer in between. Annealed glass forms a spider web pattern when it breaks, and the pieces are designed to stick to the plastic layer to prevent injury to passengers.

The GT's windshield is a hybrid. It has an annealed glass outer layer and plastic in the middle. But the inner layer is made of chemically-strengthened, automotive grade Gorilla Glass, which is much thinner and lighter than traditional glass. Ford says using Gorilla Glass makes the windshield 32 percent lighter, which saves fuel and improves the car's handling.

The glass meets US safety standards, Corning says, and it has endured automakers' tests on rough roads and in wind tunnels. Ford says it's tougher than traditional annealed glass. When engineers shot pieces of hail at Gorilla Glass, for example, it wasn't damaged. The annealed glass shattered.



(This caption is shared with the image above.)

Gorilla Glass doesn't work everywhere. The side windows of the GT, for example, are made of tempered glass. Automakers tend to use tempered glass on side windows because it breaks into tiny pieces and doesn't have a plastic layer that could hinder someone from exiting the vehicle in a crash. Doug Harshbarger, business director of Corning's automotive glass business, says Corning is working on alternate ways of designing Gorilla Glass for use throughout the vehicle.

Gorilla Glass has been used by the consumer electronics industry in 2007. Ford and Corning began working together on an automotive glass in 2012. Harshbarger says the company is also working with several other automakers that are racing to meet stricter fuel economy standards that go into effect in a decade. "Weight is the enemy," Linden said. Lightweight glass isn't the only

option for saving weight. Toyota Motor Corp uses a high-strength plastic for the moonroof on its Prius V wagon, for example.

One barrier to the wider adoption of Gorilla Glass is expense. Harshbarger says it costs \$2 to \$4 more per pound of weight saved than traditional glass. Ford is saving around 12 pounds on the GT, so that means a \$24 to \$48 premium per vehicle. An expensive supercar like the \$400,000 GT can easily absorb that, but mainstream cars can't.

But Stephanie Brinley, a senior analyst with IHS Automotive, says launching new technology on high-end cars helps companies figure out if it would be feasible on other vehicles. She says Gorilla Glass has a lot of promise, since it's both tougher and lighter. "That's hitting the industry's super sweet spot," she said. Linden says he believes Ford will eventually use Gorilla Glass throughout its lineup. — AP



NEW YORK: Whizboard Store manager 'Mor Loud' demonstrates the Hoverboard on Broadway in Times Square on Tuesday. — AFP

GOOGLE CEO SEEKS TO BRING MILLIONS OF INDIANS ONLINE

NEW DELHI: Google's new chief executive Sundar Pichai used his first official visit to India yesterday to outline plans to bring hundreds of millions of Indians online, including installing free wi-fi at railway stations. The Indian-born Pichai said the first train station, Mumbai Central, would go online in January and the tech giant intended to cover 100 of India's stations by the end of 2016.

India is a vast yet challenging market for Google with only a quarter of its 1.2 billion citizens online, most of whom access the web through cheap smartphones which often run on slow 2G networks. Many Indian Internet users cannot afford expensive mobile data and instead wait for wi-fi connections to go online, making the 10 million people who pass through the target stations each day a captive audience.

"Every day there are thousands of Indian Internet users coming online for the first time, taking their journey in computing," said Pichai, who grew up in Chennai and joined Google in 2004 as a product manager. "We are just barely getting started," said Pichai, who was named CEO in August. "Given that India is embarking on the cutting edge of the mobile revolution, we think what we build in India will apply globally to many, many places."

Google has also made its Maps and YouTube products partially available offline and created data-light versions

of web pages that allow them to load more easily on slow Indian connections. Another challenge is the linguistic diversity of India, which has more than 20 official languages and fewer than 200 million English-speaking

Internet users.

A new virtual keyboard allows users to type in 11 Indic languages including Assamese and Punjabi, while voice searches recognize both Hindi and "Hinglish" - a mix of Hindi and English

heard in many parts of the country. Google also announced a program yesterday to train two million developers in its Android operating system over three years, in partnership with more than 30 Indian universities. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Google CEO Sundar Pichai speaks as he announces the company's plans for expanding products and services in India at a news conference yesterday. — AP

ODOM'S TOPS GOOGLE LIST OF 2015 SEARCHES

SAN FRANCISCO: Lamar Odom's bizarre downfall from a former Los Angeles Lakers star to a lost soul in a Nevada brothel had the world searching Google for answers more than any other topic this year. A four-day binge in October that culminated in Odom being found unconscious in the Nevada "Love Ranch" placed him atop Google's list of hottest searches during 2015. The annual breakdown released Wednesday ranks the inquiries that triggered the biggest spikes in traffic on Google's dominant search engine, excluding queries about sexually explicit subjects.

The interest in Odom eclipsed January's lethal attacks in France at the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo and a mobile game called "Agar.io" that lets multiple players devour cells in a virtual petri dish. In the US, two movies, "Jurassic World" and "American Sniper", ranked behind Odom. Other search engines, social networking company Facebook and short messaging specialist Twitter already released their own takes on this year's collective mindset, but Google's is considered to be the definitive look into what's on people's minds. That's because Google processes two out of every three search requests in the world, a position that translates into trillions of inquiries each year.

Odom's saga fascinated people

who aren't even sports fans because he married reality TV star Khloe Kardashian in 2009 while he was still a key player on a Laker team that went on to win its second consecutive National Basketball Association championship. He hasn't played in the NBA since 2013. During Odom's stay in Nevada, brother workers said they saw him drinking alcohol and taking supplements sold as "herbal Viagra". The brothel's owner said Odom had spent \$75,000 on two women who took him to a VIP suite.

Tragedy tends to generate a lot of searches. The suicide of comedian and movie star Robin Williams made him Google's top search topic last year. Odom, 36, also was Google's most-searched person on its 2015 world rankings, followed by former mixed martial arts bantamweight champion Ronda Rousey and Caitlyn Jenner, who was Odom's father-in-law before transitioning to life as a woman in 2015. Rousey was the most searched athlete in the US, edging out Holly Holm, the woman who pummeled her last month to take her championship title. Google also provided the lists for the top searches in a wide variety of categories, including movies ("Jurassic World"), television ("Big Brother Brazil") and musical artists (Adele). — AP

DISPOSAL OF FETAL TISSUE DEBATED IN COURT, OHIO STATEHOUSE

COLUMBUS: A federal judge has temporarily blocked Ohio officials from taking legal action against Planned Parenthood to enforce fetal tissue disposal rules, and Republican state lawmakers proposed new regulations for such disposal. The actions at the Ohio Statehouse and Columbus federal court comes after state Attorney General Mike DeWine's investigation into Planned Parenthood facilities.

DeWine's office found no evidence that Planned Parenthood made money from aborted fetuses, but his report released Friday instead criticized its facilities for disposing of fetal remains in landfills. He accused the organization of violating a state rule requiring that fetal tissue be disposed of in a "humane manner." Planned Parenthood calls the report "inflammatory." The group says its three facilities that provide abortions follow Ohio law and use the same practices as hospitals and other

providers, which generally contract with companies to dispose of medical waste.

DeWine had planned to file an injunction in state court to prevent Planned Parenthood from disposing of fetal remains as its affiliates have done. But a federal lawsuit filed Sunday by Planned Parenthood complicated his plan. Planned Parenthood sued the state's health director, accusing him of changing the interpretation of the disposal rule. In its lawsuit, Planned Parenthood said it's never been cited by the Ohio Department of Health, which licenses abortion facilities in Ohio, for violating the disposal regulations.

A health department spokeswoman says the agency doesn't comment on pending litigation. Judge Edmund Sargus Jr. issued a temporary restraining order in the case on Monday, effectively blocking any state legal action until Jan 11. He set a Jan 4 hearing in

the dispute. DeWine dismissed the proceedings on the order as largely procedural. "They did not address the central issue of whether the disposal practices of Planned Parenthood were humane," he said in a statement.

Planned Parenthood officials praised the ruling. "We will continue to fight back against these political attacks every step of the way and our doors will remain open to all Ohioans - no matter what," Jerry Lawson, CEO of Planned Parenthood Southwest Ohio, said in a statement. Meanwhile, Republican state lawmakers proposed legislation on Monday to require Ohio hospitals, abortion clinics and other providers to dispose of fetal remains by burial or cremation. The bill sponsors said they are trying to provide clarity as to the meaning of "humane" disposal. The regulation of medical waste is determined on a state-by-state basis, according to the American Hospital

Association. For instance, Georgia law requires licensed abortion clinics to bury or cremate fetal remains, while Tennessee requires physicians who perform abortions to document how the fetal tissue is disposed of. A bill pending in Wisconsin would put new restrictions on the disposal of fetal remains. State Rep Barbara Sears, a Republican from suburban Toledo, said the bill she's co-sponsoring is not restricting a woman's choice to get an abortion. "What we're doing is saying there needs to be a respectful way once that's occurred," Sears told reporters.

Under a separate House proposal, which had been in the works before DeWine's report, women who get abortions would be asked to decide in writing whether their fetuses' remains should be buried or cremated. Should the woman not answer, the clinic would be responsible for the choice and doc-

ument any decision. A similar bill was introduced Monday in the state Senate. The head of the abortion rights group NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio said the bills were intended to "shame women" who get abortions. "It is just the latest in the constantly changing, medically unnecessary legal hoops that abortion providers and their patients must jump through," Kellie Copeland, the group's executive director, said in a statement. House Republicans said their proposals would be formally introduced in the coming weeks. The GOP-controlled state legislature is on break for the holidays and expected to return in January. DeWine and officials in at least 10 other states announced investigations this summer into Planned Parenthood after anti-abortion activists released undercover videos they said showed the organization's personnel negotiating the sale of fetal organs. — AP

WHO'S TOO OLD FOR MAJOR TREATMENT?

AGE NOT ALWAYS A BARRIER

CHICAGO: Irwin Weiner felt so good after heart surgery a few weeks before turning 90 that he stopped for a pastrami sandwich on the way home from the hospital. Dorothy Lipkin danced after getting a new hip at age 91. And at 94, William Gandin drives himself to the hospital for cancer treatments. Jimmy Carter isn't the only nonagenarian to withstand rigorous medical treatment. Very old age is no longer an automatic barrier for aggressive therapies, from cancer care like the former president has received, to major heart procedures, joint replacements and even some organ transplants.

In many cases, the nation's most senior citizens are getting the same treatments given to people their grandchildren's age - but with different goals. "Many elderly patients don't necessarily want a lot of years, what they want is quality of life," said Dr Clifford Kavinsky, a heart specialist at Rush University

the melanoma that was found in August.

The nation's 90-and-up population, about 2 million people, nearly tripled in recent decades, and the pace is expected to continue. Many are struggling with more than one age-related illness that make them poor candidates for aggressive and often costly care. But plenty remain robust enough to give it a try. Lipkin, now 93, had hip replacement surgery two years ago in the Philadelphia area. Arthritis made walking difficult and painful. She'd been a good dancer in her younger days, and had tried to remain active, so her doctor recommended the operation. "Otherwise I was going to be in a wheelchair the rest of my life," Lipkin said. Soon after, she made a video doing a line dance to show how well she was healing.

A normal life

In the winter, she lives in Florida, walks at least half

treatments. Physical and mental health are assessed; so is social support - whether there are family members or friends available to help during treatment and recovery. "We do believe that cancer care should not be limited by age," said Dr Beatrice Edwards. While many elderly patients are healthy enough to tolerate conventional treatments, advances including more targeted, less toxic drugs and minimally invasive surgery techniques are opening the door to others. Gandin, the 94-year-old, was diagnosed more than 10 years ago with prostate cancer. Treatment with radiation and chemotherapy failed to stop cancer from spreading to his lungs and bones. He's now on hormone treatment that he said is controlling the disease.

Disability and death

A retired Exxon Mobil auditor, Gandin helps take care of his wife of 74 years in their assisted living home in Houston and is not ready to give up on treatment. "I'm an eternal optimist - that's what has carried me through," he said. Weiner, a retired furniture manufacturer representative, had a hardened, leaky aortic valve - a common condition in the elderly that can lead to disability and death. Open-heart surgery is a common option for heart-valve surgery, but some doctors hesitate to perform it in the elderly, said Kavinsky, the Chicago heart specialist. Dr Joseph Lamelas, Weiner's surgeon at Mount Sinai Medical Center in Miami Beach, Florida, used a newer approach, implanting a new valve through a small incision on the right side of the chest.

After four days in the hospital last January, Weiner was back home in Boca Raton, Florida, and was well enough to have two big 90th birthday celebrations less than a month later. Organ transplants are less common but not unheard of in the very old. Since 2013, there have been more than 100 kidney transplants in patients aged at least 80, including one in an 88-year-old, according to the United Network for Organ Sharing. Its records show that since 1987, the nation's oldest kidney transplant recipient was a 96-year-old. There are generally no strict age limits on transplants. Dr Dorry Segev, a Johns Hopkins Medicine transplant specialist, said frailty is a more important factor and his center measures it rigorously, including assessing patients' grip strength, walking speed and muscle mass.

Ethical issues complicate decisions on providing treatments costing tens of thousands of dollars to the very old and life expectancy has to be considered, Kavinsky said. "When you start doing procedures on a 90-year old, you have someone who has already exceeded the average lifespan in America," he said. "How far should we go to keep them going?" Dr Joseph Dearani, chairman of cardiac surgery at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, said a good gauge is whether treatment would likely help patients live well for at least another two years. He said costs to the patient, their family and society also should be weighed, so that treatment is given to right patients, and "for the most part, that happens." — AP



FLORIDA: Aortic valve surgery patient Irwin Weiner poses for a photo with his partner, Lauree Gable at their home in Boca Raton, Fla. Very old age is no longer an automatic barrier for aggressive therapies, from cancer care, to major heart procedures, joint replacements and even organ transplants. — AP

Medical Center in Chicago. "They want whatever time is left for them to be high quality. They don't want to be dependent on their family. They don't want to end up in a nursing home." Treatment for Carter, 91, has included surgery, radiation and a new cancer drug with fewer side effects than traditional chemotherapy. It seems to be working - Carter announced Dec 6 that brain scans show no signs of

an hour daily and leads "a normal life." Lipkin says having such major surgery at her age should be an individual decision. Doctors agree. Some 90-year-olds are fitter than some 60-year-olds but they say other considerations need to be in the mix. At MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, the oldest patients are evaluated by geriatricians specialists in medical care of the elderly - to make sure they're able to tolerate harsh



MADRID: A protester wears a medical mask reading 'Public healthcare' during a demonstration against budget cuts and plans to partly privatize medical services in Madrid. — AFP

THE HUMAN COST OF CUTS TO SPAIN'S PRIZED HEALTH SYSTEM

MADRID: "Either we eat or I take my pills," Maximiliano Diego recalled a patient confessing after stopping treatment because cuts in Spain's public health system forced him to pay for medication from his own pocket. "There and then, this man started to cry," the Salamanca-based cardiologist said of the married father who had suffered a second, severe heart attack as a consequence. "He cried with fear at the closeness of death... but above all, he cried with shame at having to lie to his doctor," Diego wrote on the site of an association defending public health, of which he is a member. This is but one example of the human consequences of Spain's financial crisis and subsequent austerity measures that have gnawed away at what the World Health Organization ranked the world's seventh best healthcare system in 2000 - an issue of concern ahead of December 20 elections. "We have seen an increase in waiting times, a deterioration in the quality of services, and a decimated healthcare workforce reporting exhaustion and burnout," says Helena Legido-Quigley, associate professor at Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health, who has researched Spain extensively. "Austerity measures have particularly affected the most vulnerable by losing access to services and by not being able to afford essential medications due to increased co-payments."

'Invisible person'

Spending cuts from 70 billion euros (\$77 billion) in 2009 to around 53 billion euros last year and a 2012 decree that excluded illegal migrants from the system and ended free medicine for pensioners, prompted mammoth protests and strikes. The government argues that the cuts were crucial to drag Spain out of the crisis, and says it managed to save 150 billion euros between 2012 and 2014 - though how much of this comes from the health sector is unclear. In the meantime, though, Legido-Quigley estimates around 500,000 non-documented people residing in the country were suddenly excluded following the

decree. That ended the prized universality of healthcare in Spain, which Sagrario Martin, head of the Spanish division of NGO Doctors of the World, argues is a fundamental human right. "These people buy things and are therefore indirectly paying taxes, so they are contributing to the sustainability of the health system," she adds. People like Rosa Milca Sosa Quijano, a 72-year-old Uruguayan woman who has been living in Spain for 13 years with her daughter. She got urgent heart surgery last year-emergency care is still allowed for those without a health card-but cannot receive the follow-up treatment she needs.

"I'm alone here," she said, crying. "I'm an invisible person for society." The end result, health experts argue, is that like Rosa people end up being given last-resort emergency treatment at a far higher cost than if they had been followed by a GP from the start. Manuel Espinel, an ER doctor in a Madrid hospital, said he had had cases of people coming in with severe illnesses that could have been caught earlier-like a man with tuberculosis. "He had to be in intensive care for 10 days plus more days in normal wards," he said. "That multiplied healthcare costs by twenty or thirty."

'Negotiating with patients'

For Legido-Quigley, the most worrying health reform was the "co-payment" system which saw pensioners pay for part of their prescriptions for the first time - and many of those with jobs fork more money out. In her interviews with doctors, she said some had started "negotiating with the patient over what medication to give or not to give because they cannot afford everything." "We had the experience of a patient dying because he couldn't afford the medication after his transplant." But even those who still have access to the public health system and the means to pay have been affected. "We had patients who were in the emergency room for two, three days because they couldn't go to the floors above, as they were closed as there was no personnel," says Espinel, who saw staff dwindle at the hospital. — AFP

PRESSURE MOUNTS ON AUSTRALIA LEADER OVER JAPANESE WHALING

SYDNEY: Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull vowed yesterday to raise whaling in meetings with Japan's leader Shinzo Abe this week as environmentalists urged him to pressure Tokyo to halt this season's hunt. A Japanese whaling fleet set sail this month for the Antarctic on a mission to resume the hunt after a one-year pause, sparking a "strong" formal protest from 33 countries, led by Australia and New Zealand.

While Turnbull's first visit to key ally Japan as prime minister from Friday will cover a broad range of topics, including defense cooperation and trade, the controversial whale hunt will be on the agenda. "Prime ministers Turnbull and Abe will discuss all aspects of the Australia-Japan relationship," a Turnbull spokesman said. "This includes economic and trade relations, security and defense cooperation, and Australia's concerns about Japan's decision to resume whaling in the Southern Ocean this summer."

In a joint statement, Greenpeace, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, the Australian Marine Conservation Society and activist group GetUp called on Turnbull to abandon diplomacy on the issue. "Japan's hunt is not scientific research, it's nothing more than

commercial whaling, and it's been declared illegal by the International Court of Justice (ICJ)," said Greenpeace Australia Pacific Oceans campaigner Nathaniel Pelle. "When Turnbull visits Japan, he must remind Abe that Japan should accept the jurisdiction of the ICJ, as it promised, and abandon the whale hunt." Tokyo said last month it planned to kill 333 minke whales for scientific research this season in spite of a worldwide moratorium and widespread opposition.

The fleet's departure marked the end of a year-long suspension prompted by a United Nations' ICJ ruling in 2014 that the annual hunt was a commercial venture masquerading as research. It was Australia that hauled Japan before the court in 2010 to try to end the annual hunt. "Prime minister Turnbull must tell the prime minister of Japan to listen to the courts, to listen to the scientists and to bring back the fleet," said the Australian Marine Conservation Society's Kate Simpson. "Australia has stood up to Japan before, they must act again to challenge Japanese whaling." Environmentalists from Sea Shepherd Australia have vowed to pursue the Japanese fleet and aim to intervene in any hunt, as they have done for the past decade. — AFP

WINNERS AND LOSERS IN THE PARIS CLIMATE PACT

LE BOURGET: The climate deal adopted in suburban Paris was the culmination of four years of negotiations on how to get nearly all countries to jointly reduce the greenhouse gas emissions that scientists say are warming the planet. The talks were difficult and sometimes teetered on the brink of collapse. Every country made compromises to get the deal done, but some got more than others by the time the gavel dropped on Saturday. Here's a look at winners in the Paris climate agreement and some who came up short:

Small Islands

The tiniest countries were arguably the biggest winners in the deal. Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Maldives, Kiribati and other island nations pushed hard for two things. First, a global commitment to at least try to limit Earth's warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) compared to pre-industrial times. Second, recognition that they're going to need help to deal with damage caused by rising seas, more extreme weather and other impacts of climate change. They got both, though with some caveats.

United States

The deal in some ways looks like a wish list from U.S. negotiators. It has no new legally binding emissions or financial targets, which would have prevented President Barack Obama from accepting it without approval from the Republican-controlled Congress. It allows countries to set their own emissions targets, rather than having to negotiate them with oth-

er countries. And it requires everyone, not just rich countries, to set emissions targets and be transparent about what they are doing to meet them.

France

Almost everyone involved in the talks heaped praise on France for making the deal come together. With masterful diplomacy, the French built bridges and gave every country confidence that its voice was being heard. France also earned respect for staying the course

despite the bomb-and-gun massacres in Paris just weeks before the climate conference.

China

The world's biggest greenhouse gas polluter didn't have to cross any of its red lines. Though a strict firewall between developed and developing countries is gone, the deal still reflects different capabilities of rich and poor throughout the text, a key Chinese demand. Another win for Beijing is that, unlike at the

chaotic climate summit six years ago in Copenhagen, China wasn't seen as blocking the talks in Paris.

India

Indian Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar blended praise with criticism in his post-deal speech, suggesting he had mixed feelings about the outcome. Knowing its emissions are expected to peak later than those of other major economies, India made sure the text includes some leeway for developing nations. It reluctantly accepted the 1.5 degree goal and failed to get the deal to oblige rich countries to provide clean technology free of intellectual property rights to poor ones.

European Union

The Europeans didn't come out of Paris looking like the leaders they want to be - and in many cases are - on climate change. They helped form a "high-ambition coalition" of rich and poor countries, but it wasn't clear whether the alliance was anything but symbolic. The EU successfully introduced a mechanism in the deal designed to ramp up emissions targets over time, but caved on demands that the targets be legally binding.

Saudi Arabia

Oil-rich Saudi Arabia argued against the 1.5-degree temperature target and a long-term goal to phase out emissions. It lost both battles. However, the long-term goal doesn't specifically mention emissions from fossil fuels, a small win for the Saudis. — AP



Photo shows ice floes in Baffin Bay above the Arctic Circle, seen from the Canadian Coast Guard icebreaker Louis S St-Laurent. In the annual Arctic Report Card, released by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, a record emerged for sea ice, which appears when Arctic Ocean water freezes. When its extent peaked for the year in February 2015, it was the lowest maximum coverage since records began in 1979. Scientists had previously announced that the minimum extent, reached in September 2015, was the fourth lowest on record. — AP

CLIMATE RESEARCHERS EMPLOY TOOL FROM 1800S: WHALING LOGS

NEW BEDFORD: Maritime historians, climate scientists and ordinary citizens are coming together on a project to study the logbooks of 19th-century whaling ships to better understand modern-day climate change and Arctic weather patterns. Whaling ships kept meticulous daily logbooks of weather conditions during their often yearslong voyages searching the globe for whales, valued for their light-giving oil, said Michael Dyer, senior maritime historian at the New Bedford Whaling Museum, which is supplying much of the data.

Some logs include information about life on board, such as sailors falling overboard, or being disciplined for stealing or other transgressions, and of course, notations whenever whales are spotted. More important for this

project, they include precise longitude and latitude measurements, weather conditions, the presence of icebergs and the edge of the ice shelf. "If they're cruising in the Bering Strait and there's ice, there will be a notation in the logbook that ice fields are present," Dyer said.

The project, called Old Weather: Whaling, is led by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The whaling museum is transcribing and digitizing its own logbooks, as well as original data sources from the Nantucket Historical Association, Martha's Vineyard Museum, Mystic Seaport in Connecticut, and the New Bedford Free Public Library. The digitized logbooks are being posted online so ordinary "citizen-scientists" can help researchers sift

through the vast amounts of information. The museum has about 2,600 whaling logbooks dating from 1756 to 1965, but the project so far includes just about 300 logbooks related to whaling trips to the Arctic from the mid-1800s to the first decade of the 20th century.

One entry from the San Francisco-based whaler Beluga during a two-year voyage to the Bering, Chukchi and Beaufort seas from 1897 to 1899 is typical of the information in the logs. "Lat 61.19. Long. 175.42. Fast to the ice till 6 A.M. then made sail and worked to the NE at 8:45 AM Commenced steaming. Steamed till 1 PM then struck open water. Carrying topsail and fore and aft sails. Steering from NNW to NE as the ice allowed. Wind light and variable first part. Latter part

strong ESE winds thick and snowing. Ther 30. Bar 29.60." On a most basic level, the information from an old whaling logbook can be compared to current conditions; for example, is there sea ice today in the places where whalers saw sea ice 150 years ago?

But the project is much more than that, said Kevin Wood, a climate scientist with NOAA's Joint Institute for the Study of the Ocean and Atmosphere at the University of Washington and a lead researcher on the project. By recovering as much weather data as possible, the information could help create sophisticated computer models of past climate and help predict future conditions. He called it a "virtual time-traveling weather satellite." "We can build an enormously detailed reconstruction of the conditions at

the time ... and we can we can understand how the climate has been changing over a longer period of time," Wood said.

The project launched this month is an offshoot of Old Weather, an ongoing partnership between NOAA and Zooniverse, the citizen science Web portal that is looking at logbooks of other vessels, including merchant and naval ships. Sifting through the documents is where the public comes in. There is just too much data for a small group of scientists to pore over. High-resolution images of historical documents, extracted data and related research products are available online, said Michael Lapedes, the museum's director of digital initiatives. Already, the logbooks of more than 20 whalers are online. The project is expected to take about a year, Lapedes said. — AP

BRITISH COMPANY MISLED CONSUMERS OVER PAINKILLER: AUSTRALIAN COURT COMPANY ORDERED TO REMOVE POPULAR PAINKILLER FROM STORES

SYDNEY: An Australian court has ordered a British consumer goods company to remove several versions of a popular painkiller from stores in Australia after ruling that the company misled consumers about the products' effectiveness. The Federal Court ruled that British consumer goods company Reckitt Benckiser deceived Australians by selling Nurofen painkillers that were marketed to relieve specific ailments, such as back pain, when all of the products contained an identical amount of the same active ingredient, ibuprofen lysine.

Australia's consumer watchdog launched the court action in March, arguing that consumers were being

tricked into thinking that the four products - Nurofen Back Pain, Nurofen Period Pain, Nurofen Migraine Pain and Nurofen Tension Headache - were designed to treat a specific type of pain, when in fact, they were all the same.

"None of the four products is any more or less effective than the others in treating any of the particular symptoms," Justice James Edelman wrote in his judgment. Edelman gave Reckitt Benckiser three months to remove the products from Australian stores. The company markets a variety of health and household goods in Australia. Reckitt Benckiser referred calls requesting comment to its Nurofen unit, which said it would

comply with the order and replace the products with new packaging that clearly states the drugs are equally effective at treating other forms of pain.

"The Nurofen specific-pain range was launched with an intention to help consumers navigate their pain relief options, particularly within the grocery environment where there is no health care professional to assist decision making," Nurofen spokeswoman Montse Pena said in a statement. "Nurofen did not set out to mislead consumers." The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, which started the court action, said the price of Nurofen's specific pain products was nearly double

that of Nurofen's standard ibuprofen painkiller and other general pain relief products sold by competitors.

"Truth in advertising and consumer issues in the health and medical sectors are priority areas for the ACCC, to ensure that consumers are given accurate information when making their purchasing decisions," ACCC Chairman Rod Sims said in a statement. "Any representations which are difficult for a consumer to test will face greater scrutiny from the ACCC." A separate court hearing will be held to determine any fines the company may face. This story has been corrected to show that the banned painkillers were identical to each other. — AP

IN GERMANY, BIRTHRATE PEAKS WHILE MOTHERS BECOME OLDER

BERLIN: German women gave birth last year at the highest rate since the country's reunification in 1990 with 1.47 births per woman, the Federal Statistics Office said yesterday. It is the third consecutive increase of the country's birth rate, which in 1990 was at 1.45 and reached its lowest point in 1995 with 1.25 births per woman. The statistics office said women were also giving birth later. While on average women were 24.8 years old at the birth of their first child in 1990, they were 29.5 years old on average in 2014. Birth rates differ between Germany's eastern and western states even 25 years after reunification, with women in the eastern part of the country giving birth to more children.

Europe's biggest economy struggles with an ageing population in a country where deaths outstrip births since 1972 and no other country in the world has experienced such a constant birth deficit since 1945. Berlin estimates that its working age population will shrink by 6 million people by 2030 and generous pro-family policies by successive governments were aiming to reverse the trend. Some experts also see a possible boost in birth rates and a reduction of average population age by means of the recent migrant influx. Germany expects the arrival of one million asylum seekers this year, the majority of which are under 25 years old. — Reuters



NEW DELHI: A temporary toilet made by farmers for their use is seen near the River Yamuna in New Delhi, India. — AP

WORLD BANK APPROVES \$1.5 BILLION FOR TOILETS IN INDIA

NEW DELHI: The World Bank has approved a \$1.5 billion loan for a state-led sanitation program in India, where millions of people have no access to toilets, the bank said yesterday. The loan, disbursed over a five-year period, will be used to support government efforts to provide toilets in villages and end the practice of open defecation by 2019, it said. More than 500 million Indians, especially in rural areas, continue to defecate in the open, despite decades-long efforts to encourage people to change their habits.

"One in every 10 deaths in India is linked to poor sanitation," said Onno Ruhl, World Bank country director for India. Low-income households bear the brunt of poor sanitation and the "sanitation project would result in significant health benefits for the poor and vulnerable, especially those living in rural areas," Ruhl said. Defecating outdoors increases cases of diarrhea, parasitic worm infections and other public health scourges that experts say contribute to childhood stunting and malnutrition. — AP



MUMBAI: An Indian girl holds a can filled with water and walks past railway tracks to defecate in the open in Mumbai, India. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



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EAT BETTER, LIVE BETTER WITH LA SALADE

We would like to invite you to the event of launching our new menu that entails new breakfast items and protein sweets. La Salade is a restaurant that caters food for various tastes and needs. The mission of our restaurant is to provide light and healthy food away from any fried products. We focus to increase awareness that eating healthy is not a punishment since you can still enjoy your favorite meals with light ingredients and with proper taste. As well the restaurant has a monthly prescription program for weight loss, body builders and fitness. We are very interested to have you in our restaurant for a light buffet since your feedback is highly appreciated.



X-CITE ANNOUNCES THE 7 WINNERS IN THE "WIN MORE THAN \$500,000 CASH" PROMOTION

X-cite by Alghanim Electronics is pleased to announce the names of the third week's winners of the biggest shopping festival in Kuwait, which offers customers the opportunity to win more than \$500,000 Cash in 5 weekly draws with a weekly grand prize of KD 25,000. This one-of-a-kind promotion was launched on November 19th and will last until December 26th.

The third week's winners are:
 1st place winner of KD 25,000: Ahmad Ameen Rashwan
 2nd place winner of KD 5,000: Maha Marzoug Rakhees Al-Barazi
 3rd place winner of KD 2,500: Mayaca Shenamay
 4th place winner of KD 1,000: Hammad Hammoudah Hammad

5th place winner of KD 1,000: Shaima'a Salah
 6th place winner of KD 500: Zahid Ismail
 7th place winner of KD 500: Ghanim Abdullah Al-Sharifi
 First Place winner Ahmad Ameen Rashwan was very pleased with the prize saying, "Thank God for this amazing prize from X-cite. I am very happy and wish the best of luck in the remaining draws!"

You too can be a lucky winner with X-cite! In order to participate and get the chance to win any of the remaining cash prizes, all you need to do is visit any of X-cite's 18 showrooms spread across the country, www.xcite.com, or X-cite's smartphone app, and for every KD 25 you will get one chance to win great cash prizes. The earlier you make a purchase, the greater your chances of winning!

BANGLADESHI EMBASSY CLOSURE

The Embassy of the People's Republic of Bangladesh in Kuwait will remain closed on Wednesday, 16 December 2015 on the occasion of The Victory Day of Bangladesh.

The Embassy will arrange the following program on Wednesday, 16 December 2015 at Chancery to observe the Victory Day of Bangladesh:

Chancery Roof:

- 9 am: Ceremonial hoisting of the National Flag. Multipurpose Hall:
- 9:15 am: Recitation from the Holy Quran
- 9:16 am: Observance of one minute silence
- 9:17 am: Reading out the messages
- 9:30 am: Discussion on the Day
- 10 am: Speech by the Ambassador.

SOUTH AFRICAN EMBASSY CLOSURE

On the occasion of Reconciliation Day, the South African Embassy will be closed on Wednesday, 16 December 2015. The Embassy will resume its normal working hours on Thursday, 17 December 2015, from Sunday to Thursday. Please note that the working hours will be from 8:00 to 16:00 and the Consular Section operation hours will from 8:30 to 12:30. For Emergency calls please contact: 94924895.



BSK RUNS 'WRITER'S CLUB' FOR STUDENTS

The British School of Kuwait has run a 'Writer's Club' for many years but this year the students decided they wanted to create a school newspaper. Dawood Al-Mekhled was nominated as the editor and a group of eager students from Years 6-12 interviewed teachers and students about themselves and

things that are important to them. The newspaper combines articles, school news, sporting achievement, facts, competitions and more, all written by students. After working through the editing process the newspaper was launched on Sunday 13 December. As well as a paper copy, a digital copy of the newspaper will

be sent via email to every parent in the school. The students now feel inspired to create a bigger newspaper next time and other students are also keen to contribute, now they have seen the finished product. It is hoped BSK will produce at least two more papers before June 2016

Birthday Greetings



Happy 2nd Birthday Sean Arnold! Leon To our little boy Sean, we pray to God to shower you with the best of happiness, health and prosperity. We love you baby Sean. Love: daddy, mommy, ate Cia, Ate Lia, lolo's and lola's, family and friends

WHAT'S ON - SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All photos submitted for What's On should be minimum 200dpi. Articles must be in plain text and should include name and phone numbers. Articles and photos that fail to meet these requirements will not be published.

Please send them to news@kuwaittimes.net



CEO and managing director Shiekh Mohammed Al-Thani



Al-Thani welcomes the children of the staff



Some of the staff with Al-Thani



Honoring the staff of the iPhone 6S launch

OOREDOO CONCLUDES YEAR WITH EMPLOYEE OPEN DAY

CELEBRATING THE SUCCESSES OF 2015 AT SIRBB CIRCUIT

Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, held an open day for its employees and their families at Sirbb Circuit last week. The day focused on rewarding employees for their contribution to the company's success and achievements in 2015. This annual event reflects Ooredoo's commitment to its employees and one of the ways the company uses to acknowledge their teams hard work and loyalty.

The open day was attended by management of Ooredoo Kuwait, who thanked attendees for their hard work and ongoing support. Throughout the day, staff members and their families enjoyed a wide range of activities for adults and kids in addition to carting races. The open day also included a special awards ceremony for employee's outstanding performance for third quarter of 2015. The winners were Mohammad Tawfiq and Abdullah Al-Kankouni from Sales, Lama

Barakat and Vardwala Fakhruddin from Customer Care, Balachandar Devrajan from Finance, Hussam Al-Rifai from Business Sales, Fajer Al-Matrouk from Corporate Communication, Marian Awadalla from Human Resources, Gopi Bobba from Marketing, Asha Philip and Karim Makar from Technology, Saad Al-Azemi, Tapan Tripathi and Bharatan Shankar Praveen from across the organization for their contribution to various projects.

Additionally, all the divisions and departments involved in the iPhone 6S launch event on October were awarded for their contribution to the successful event, which garnered positive feedback across the country. Mijbil Alayoub, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait stated: "We aimed at recognizing the contribution of employees this year by hosting this event. We provide our team with a working environment which encourages high teamwork

spirit, collaboration, creativity and commitment. All of these factors contributed to being an organization everyone is aiming to join. We are delighted that our staff and families were able to attend this event and enjoy the variety of activities we have tailored for their interest" Alayoub added that Ooredoo Kuwait had a successful year with many positive turns, and claimed several local and regional awards for its exceptional achievements.



Al Thani, Al-Kukhn and Al-Houti honor Fajer Al-Matrouk



Al-Thani and Al-Kukhn



Honoring distinguished staff



Al-Thani and Salah bin Eidan



The winning team



Part of the Kidzania show

Discovery Channel HD

- 00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
02:00 Dual Survival
02:50 River Monsters
03:40 Auction Hunters
04:05 Property Wars
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 Americarna
05:30 How It's Made
06:00 Ice Cold Gold
06:50 Kindig Customs
07:40 Fast N' Loud
08:30 Auction Hunters
08:55 Property Wars
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 Americarna
10:10 How It's Made
10:35 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
11:25 Dual Survival
12:15 River Monsters
13:05 Auction Hunters
13:30 Property Wars
13:55 Storage Wars Canada
14:20 Ice Cold Gold
15:10 Kindig Customs
16:00 Fast N' Loud
16:50 Americarna
17:15 How It's Made
17:40 Mythbusters
18:30 The Carbonaro Effect
18:55 The Carbonaro Effect
19:20 Outback Truckers
20:10 Property Wars
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 Mythbusters
21:50 The Carbonaro Effect
22:15 The Carbonaro Effect
22:40 You Have Been Warned
23:30 Kindig Customs

Discovery Science

- 00:35 Mythbusters
01:20 How It's Made
01:44 How It's Made
02:08 Food Factory
02:31 Food Factory
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:42 Cosmic Collisions
04:29 Mythbusters
05:16 Food Factory
05:39 Food Factory
06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
06:50 X-Machines
07:37 How It's Made
08:00 How It's Made
08:23 Mythbusters
09:08 Cosmic Collisions
09:53 X-Machines
11:00 How It's Made
11:23 How Do They Do It?
11:45 How Do They Do It?
12:08 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:53 X-Machines
13:38 Mythbusters
14:23 How It's Made
14:46 How It's Made
15:10 Cosmic Collisions
15:57 How Do They Do It?
16:20 How Do They Do It?
16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:31 X-Machines
18:18 Cosmic Collisions
19:05 Mythbusters
19:50 Strip The Cosmos
20:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
21:25 How It's Made
21:50 How It's Made
22:15 Cosmic Collisions
23:00 Strip The Cosmos
23:45 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?

Disney Channel

- 00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Wolfblood
04:35 Wolfblood
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Louk
06:25 Hank Zipzer
06:50 Girl Meets World
07:15 H2O: Just Add Water
07:40 H2O: Just Add Water
08:05 Austin & Ally
08:30 Austin & Ally
08:55 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
09:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A

- Kardashians
07:50 Style Star
08:20 New Money
08:45 New Money
09:15 Giuliana & Bill
10:15 Giuliana & Bill
11:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
11:35 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
12:05 The Grace Helbig Show
12:35 The Grace Helbig Show
13:05 Fashion Bloggers
13:35 Fashion Bloggers
14:05 Dash Dolls
15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
16:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
17:00 The Next Step
17:25 Mako Mermaids
17:50 Girl Meets World
18:15 Dog With A Blog
18:40 Gravity Falls
19:05 H2O: Just Add Water
19:30 Violetta
20:20 The Next Step
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Wolfblood
23:35 Wolfblood

Food Network

- 00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:00 Man Finds Food
02:30 Man Finds Food
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 Man Fire Food
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
07:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Guy's Grocery Games
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
11:30 Barefoot Contessa: Back To Basics
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
15:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
16:00 Chopped
17:00 The Kitchen
18:00 Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy
18:30 Grandma's Secret Cookbook
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Guy's Grocery Games
21:00 Chopped
22:00 Chopped South Africa
23:00 Iron Chef America

ITV Choice

- 00:10 Come Date With Me Australia
00:35 Come Date With Me Australia
01:05 Seven Days With A Friend
02:00 Emmerdale
02:25 Coach Trip
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 Midsomer Murders
05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
05:40 Come Date With Me Australia
06:10 Seven Days With A Friend
07:05 Coronation Street
07:30 Midsomer Murders
09:20 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
10:10 Seven Days With A Friend
11:05 Coach Trip
11:35 Four Weddings UK
12:30 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Come Date With Me Australia
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
15:35 The Jonathan Ross Show
16:30 The Syndicate
17:25 Seven Days With A Friend
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 The Jonathan Ross Show
20:30 The Syndicate
21:25 Seven Days With A Friend
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Four Weddings UK

National Geographic Channel HD

- 00:10 The Border
01:00 Air Crash Investigation
02:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs. South
02:55 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
03:50 The Border

NAT GEO people HD

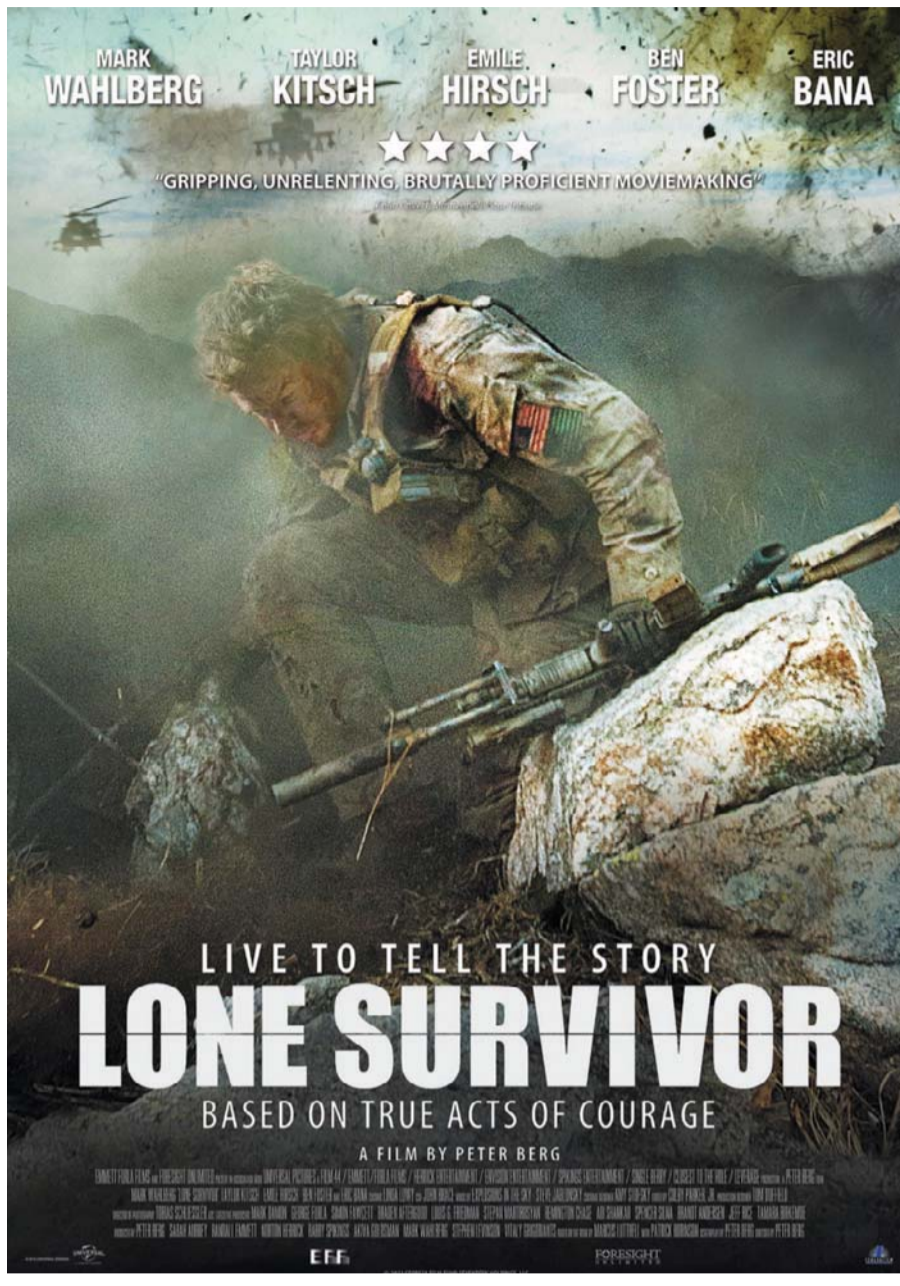
- 00:10 American Food Battle
00:35 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
01:00 Chefs Run Wild
01:25 Tales From The Bush Larder
01:50 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
02:15 The Food Files
02:40 Eat Street
03:05 The Best Job In The World
03:30 The Great Food Revolution
04:20 Bondi Rescue Outback Adventure
05:10 Home Strange Home
06:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
06:25 International Open House
06:50 Chefs Run Wild
07:15 Tales From The Bush Larder
07:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
08:05 The Food Files
08:30 Eat Street
08:55 The Best Job In The World
09:20 The Great Food Revolution
10:10 Bondi Rescue Outback Adventure
11:00 Home Strange Home
11:50 Dog Whisperer
12:40 Chefs Run Wild
13:05 Tales From The Bush Larder
13:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
14:00 American Food Battle
14:30 Eat Street
14:55 The Best Job In The World
15:25 The Great Food Revolution
16:20 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
16:45 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
17:15 Home Strange Home
18:10 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
18:35 International Open House
19:05 The Best Job In The World
19:30 The Great Food Revolution
20:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
20:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
21:15 Home Strange Home
22:05 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
22:30 International Open House
23:00 Chefs Run Wild

NAT GEO WILD HD

- 00:20 World's Deadliest
01:10 Man V. Monster
02:00 Africa's Deadliest
02:50 World's Deadliest Animals
03:45 Animal Fight Club
04:40 Built For The Kill
05:35 Africa's Deadliest
06:30 World's Deadliest Animals
07:25 Animal Fight Club
08:20 I, Predator
09:15 Built For The Kill
10:10 World's Deadliest
11:05 72 Dangerous Animals Australia
12:00 Global Whale Shark Mystery
12:55 Ultimate Animal Countdown
13:50 World's Deadliest Animals
14:45 Animal Fight Club
15:40 How Big Can It Get
16:35 Built For The Kill
17:30 World's Deadliest Animals
18:25 72 Dangerous Animals Australia
19:20 Animal Fight Club
20:10 How Big Can It Get
21:00 Built For The Kill
21:50 World's Deadliest Animals
22:40 72 Dangerous Animals Australia
23:30 Global Whale Shark Mystery

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

- 00:30 Hot In Cleveland
01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
03:30 2 Broke Girls
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon



LONE SURVIVOR ON OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 06:30 My Name Is Earl
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
10:30 My Name Is Earl
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
12:30 \$#! My Dad Says
13:00 Suburgatory
13:30 My Name Is Earl
14:00 2 Broke Girls
15:30 Hot In Cleveland
16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Marry Me
18:30 2 Broke Girls
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Hot In Cleveland
21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
22:00 The League
22:30 The League
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD

- 00:00 Bates Motel
01:00 Blood & Oil
02:00 Supergirl
03:00 Queen Bees
04:00 The Voice
06:00 Unforgettable
07:00 Bones
08:00 Resurrection
09:00 The Voice
11:00 Blood & Oil
12:00 Emmerdale
13:00 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Resurrection
15:00 Unforgettable
16:00 Emmerdale
16:30 Coronation Street
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 The Voice
20:00 Supergirl
15:45 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
17:30 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire-PG15
20:00 Left Behind-PG15
22:00 Lone Survivor-PG15

OSN FIRST HD MORE

- 00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Tyrant
04:00 Helix
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Emmerdale
07:30 Coronation Street
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 Red Band Society
10:00 Emmerdale
10:30 Coronation Street

OSN MOVIES ACTION

- 00:00 The Terminator
02:00 Psycho
04:00 Escape Plan
06:00 The Outsider
08:00 Marvel's Next Avengers: Heroes Of Tomorrow
10:00 Age Of Dinosaurs
12:00 Escape Plan
14:00 Big Ass Spider
16:00 The Outsider
17:45 A Stranger In Paradise
19:30 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire
22:00 Left Behind

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

- 00:00 Psycho-18
02:00 Escape Plan-PG15
04:00 The Outsider-PG15
06:00 Marvel's Next Avengers: Heroes Of Tomorrow-PG
10:00 Age Of Dinosaurs-PG15
12:00 Escape Plan-PG15
14:00 Big Ass Spider-PG15
16:00 The Outsider-PG15
15:45 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
17:30 The Hunger Games: Catching Fire-PG15
20:00 Left Behind-PG15
22:00 Lone Survivor-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

- 00:00 The Hot Chick
02:00 Zoolander
04:00 Foodfight!
06:00 Simon Birch
08:00 Tooth Fairy
10:00 Foodfight!
12:00 Zoolander
14:00 The Ladykillers
16:00 Tooth Fairy
18:00 Planes, Trains And Automobiles
20:00 That Awkward Moment
22:00 Duets

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

- 01:00 InSight-PG15
03:00 At Middleton-PG15
05:00 Wrath-PG15
07:00 A Promise-PG15
09:00 Paranoia-PG15
11:00 Wrath-PG15
13:00 At Middleton-PG15
15:00 The Truth About Emanuel-PG15
17:00 Paranoia-PG15
19:00 Jack Strong-PG15
21:15 As Cool As I Am-PG15
23:00 Her-18

OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

- 01:00 The Hidden Face
03:00 The Bag Man
05:00 1911
07:00 Rushmore
09:00 Tea With Mussolini
11:00 The Bag Man
13:00 Rushmore
15:00 We Are Family
17:00 Tea With Mussolini
19:00 71
21:00 Jersey Boys
23:00 Mobius

OSN MOVIES HD

- 01:15 Ask Me Anything-PG15
03:00 Million Dollar Arm-PG15
05:15 Lizzie Borden Took An Ax-PG15
07:00 The Giver-PG15
08:00 Quartet-PG15
10:45 Divergent-PG15
13:00 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I-PG15

OSN MOVIES KIDS

- 01:30 Hiroku: Defenders Of Gaia
03:00 Bolts And Blip
04:30 Mamma Moo And Crow
06:00 Christmas Is Here Again
07:45 Marco Macaco
09:30 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
11:00 Charlie And The Chocolate Factory
13:00 Bolts And Blip
14:30 Hatching
16:00 The Elf Who Stole Christmas
18:00 Pim And Pom: The Big Adventure
20:00 Minuscule: Valley Of The Lost Ants
22:00 Hatching
23:30 The Elf Who Stole Christmas

OSN MOVIES PREMIERE

- 00:00 Men, Women & Children-18
02:00 Big Hero 6-PG
04:00 No Clue-PG15
06:00 Marvel's Hulk vs. Thor & Wolverine-PG
08:00 So Undercover-PG15
10:00 Hellboy: Sword Of Storms-PG
12:00 Brick Mansions-PG15
14:00 Sabotage-PG15
16:00 So Undercover-PG15
18:00 Vamps-PG15
20:00 A Case Of You-PG15
22:00 The Skeleton Twins-18

OSN NEWS

- 01:00 Live MSNBC Mtp Daily
02:00 Live MSNBC News
03:00 Live NBC Nightly News
03:30 ABC World News With David Muir
04:00 Live MSNBC All In With Chris Hayes
05:00 Live MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
06:00 Live MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
07:00 NBC Nightly News
07:30 ABC World News With David Muir
07:57 NBC Nightly News
08:18 ABC World News With David Muir
08:39 Live ABC Nightline
09:06 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
10:00 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
11:00 Live ABC World News Now
11:30 Live ABC World News Now
12:00 Live NBC Early Today
12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
13:30 Live ABC America This Morning
14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
14:30 MSNBC First Look
15:00 Live NBC Today Show
18:57 MSNBC Hardball W/ Chris Matthews
19:38 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
20:19 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
21:00 Live MSNBC Live With Thomas Roberts
23:00 Live MSNBC Live With Kate Snow

OSN NEWS

- 01:00 Live MSNBC Mtp Daily
02:00 Live MSNBC News
03:00 Live NBC Nightly News
03:30 ABC World News With David Muir
04:00 Live MSNBC All In With Chris Hayes
05:00 Live MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
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07:57 NBC Nightly News
08:18 ABC World News With David Muir
08:39 Live ABC Nightline
09:06 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
10:00 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
11:00 Live ABC World News Now
11:30 Live ABC World News Now
12:00 Live NBC Early Today
12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
13:30 Live ABC America This Morning
14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
14:30 MSNBC First Look
15:00 Live NBC Today Show
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19:38 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
20:19 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
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OSN NEWS

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06:00 Live MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
07:00 NBC Nightly News
07:30 ABC World News With David Muir
07:57 NBC Nightly News
08:18 ABC World News With David Muir
08:39 Live ABC Nightline
09:06 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
10:00 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
11:00 Live ABC World News Now
11:30 Live ABC World News Now
12:00 Live NBC Early Today
12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
13:30 Live ABC America This Morning
14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
14:30 MSNBC First Look
15:00 Live NBC Today Show
18:57 MSNBC Hardball W/ Chris Matthews
19:38 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
20:19 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
21:00 Live MSNBC Live With Thomas Roberts
23:00 Live MSNBC Live With Kate Snow

OSN NEWS

- 01:15 Ask Me Anything-PG15
03:00 Million Dollar Arm-PG15
05:15 Lizzie Borden Took An Ax-PG15
07:00 The Giver-PG15
08:00 Quartet-PG15
10:45 Divergent-PG15
13:00 The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part I-PG15

ANIMAL PLANET HD

- 00:35 Tanked
04:25 Killer Iq: Lion vs Hyena
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 Treehouse Masters
06:49 Shamwari: A Wild Life
07:12 Shamwari: A Wild Life
07:36 Call Of The Wildman
08:00 Call Of The Wildman
08:25 Killer Iq: Lion vs Hyena
09:15 Gator Boys
10:10 Treehouse Masters
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 The Primeval Forest Of Belovezhskaya Pushcha
14:45 Killer Iq: Lion vs Hyena
15:40 Treehouse Masters
16:35 Tanked
17:30 Shamwari: A Wild Life
17:55 Shamwari: A Wild Life
18:25 Killer Iq: Lion vs Hyena
19:20 Yankee Jungle
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Shamwari: A Wild Life
21:35 Shamwari: A Wild Life
22:05 Treehouse Masters
23:00 Yankee Jungle
23:55 Biggest And Baddest
00:50 Gator Boys
01:45 Call Of The Wildman
02:15 Call Of The Wildman
02:40 Yankee Jungle

BBC entertainment

- 03:45 Little Britain
04:15 The Weakest Link
05:00 Teletubbies
05:25 The Green Balloon Club
05:50 Charlie And Lola
06:00 Teletubbies
06:25 The Green Balloon Club
06:50 Charlie And Lola
07:00 Woolly & Tig
07:05 Woolly & Tig
07:15 Jollywobbles
07:20 Jollywobbles
07:30 The Weakest Link
08:15 Up The Women
08:45 Doctors
09:15 Eastenders
09:45 Call The Midwife
10:40 Starlings
11:25 The Weakest Link
12:10 Up The Women
12:40 Up The Women
13:10 Call The Midwife
14:05 Starlings
14:50 Up The Women
15:20 Doctors
15:50 Eastenders
16:20 The Weakest Link
17:05 Up The Women
17:35 Up The Women
18:05 Call The Midwife
19:00 Doctors
19:30 Eastenders
19:50 New Tricks
20:55 DCI Banks: Aftermath
21:45 Stewart Lee's Comedy Vehicle
22:15 Waking The Dead
23:05 Waking The Dead
00:00 The Weakest Link
00:45 Doctors
01:15 Eastenders
01:40 Call The Midwife
02:35 New Tricks

GN CARTOON NETWORK

- 03:14 Grojband
03:35 Johnny Test
05:05 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:27 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:50 Regular Show
06:00 The Amazing World Of Gumball
07:00 Adventure Time
07:25 Teen Titans Go!
08:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
08:35 Ben 10 Omniverse
09:20 Regular Show
10:10 Clarence
10:30 Johnny Test
11:20 Uncle Grandpa
11:40 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
12:05 Teen Titans Go!
12:50 Steven Universe
13:02 Steven Universe
13:15 Regular Show
14:00 Johnny Test
14:50 Adventure Time
15:10 The Amazing World Of Gumball
15:35 The Amazing World Of Gumball
16:00 Ben 10 Omniverse
16:45 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
17:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
17:30 Teen Titans Go!
18:20 Regular Show
19:05 The Amazing World Of Gumball
19:30 Johnny Test
19:40 Johnny Test
19:51 Adventure Time
20:15 Steven Universe
20:27 Steven Universe
20:40 Teen Titans Go!
21:25 Ben 10: Omniverse
21:50 Ben 10: Omniverse
22:15 Uncle Grandpa
22:40 Adventure Time
00:10 Regular Show
00:40 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:02 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:25 Grojband
02:51 Grojband

crime & investigation network

- 03:40 The Killer Speaks
04:35 Gangsters: America's Most Evil
05:25 Crimes That Shook Australia
06:15 Killers
07:05 The First 48
08:00 The First 48
09:00 The First 48
10:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
11:00 Very Bad Men
11:30 Very Bad Men
12:00 Fremenius
13:00 The FBI Files
14:00 Crime Stories
14:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
16:00 Very Bad Men
16:30 Very Bad Men
17:00 The First 48
18:00 Fremenius
19:00 The FBI Files
20:00 Crime Stories
21:00 Very Bad Men
21:30 Very Bad Men
22:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
23:00 Celebrity Ghost Stories
23:55 The Last Goodbye
00:25 The Last Goodbye
00:50 The Ghost Inside My Child
01:45 My Haunted House
02:45 Nightmare In Suburbia



A STRANGER IN PARADISE ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

CLASSIFIEDS



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (17/12/2015 TO 23/12/2015)

SHARQIA-1
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 12:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 3:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 6:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:05 AM

SHARQIA-2
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 1:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 3:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 6:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 12:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 2:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 4:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 6:30 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 8:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 10:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-1
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 12:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 2:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 8:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 11:00 PM

MUHALAB-2
DARK MOUNTAIN 11:45 AM
DARK MOUNTAIN 1:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 3:30 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 5:15 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 4:00 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 7:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 7:00 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 10:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 10:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:05 AM
DARK MOUNTAIN 1:00 AM

MUHALAB-3
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 3:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 6:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:05 AM

FANAR-1
STRIKE ONE 1:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 3:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 7:45 PM
STRIKE ONE 10:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 12:05 AM

FANAR-2
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 2:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 4:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 6:00 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 8:15 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 10:15 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:15 AM

FANAR-3
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 1:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 1:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 3:45 PM
STRIKE ONE 6:45 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 9:45 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 3:45 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 6:45 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 9:45 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 12:45 AM

FANAR-4
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 12:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR-3D 1:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 3:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 6:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 9:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:30 AM

FANAR-5
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM
DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 PM

MARINA-1
DILWALE - Hindi 12:15 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 3:30 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 6:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 8:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 10:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:45 AM

MARINA-2
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 11:45 AM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 2:45 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 5:45 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 8:45 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 11:45 PM

MARINA-3
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 11:30 AM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 1:45 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 4:45 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 7:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 AM

AVENUES-1
DILWALE - Hindi 12:45 PM
STRIKE ONE 2:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 4:00 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 4:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 7:00 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 7:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 10:00 PM
LOAFER - Telugu 10:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 1:00 AM

AVENUES-2
DARK MOUNTAIN 11:30 AM
DILWALE - Hindi 1:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 4:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 7:45 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 11:00 PM

AVENUES-3
THE GOOD DINOSAUR-3D 12:00 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 2:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR-3D 4:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 6:45 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 9:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 11:15 PM

AVENUES-4
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 11:45 AM
DILWALE - Hindi 2:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:15 PM
Special Show "DILWALE - Hindi" 5:15 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 11:45 PM

AVENUES-5
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 1:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR-3D 1:45 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 4:15 PM
Special Show "STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS" 4:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 7:15 PM
Special Show "STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS" 7:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 10:15 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 1:15 AM

AVENUES-6
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM
DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 12:15 AM

AVENUES-7
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 1:45 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 4:30 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 7:15 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 10:00 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 12:45 AM

AVENUES-8
STRIKE ONE 1:15 PM
STRIKE ONE 3:30 PM
ZINZANA (Emirati Film) 6:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 8:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 10:15 PM
STRIKE ONE 12:30 AM

AVENUES-9
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 11:30 AM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 2:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 5:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 8:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 11:30 PM

AVENUES-10
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 2:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 4:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 6:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 8:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 10:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:45 AM

AVENUES-11
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS - DOLBY ATMOS 12:30 PM

STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS - DOLBY ATMOS 3:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS - DOLBY ATMOS 6:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS - DOLBY ATMOS 9:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS - DOLBY ATMOS 12:30 AM

360°1
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 12:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 3:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 6:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 9:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:05 AM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 2:00 PM
Special Show "STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS" 6:00 PM
Special Show "STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS" 9:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:30 AM

360°2
STRIKE ONE 12:15 PM
STRIKE ONE 2:30 PM
STRIKE ONE 4:45 PM
STRIKE ONE 7:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 9:15 PM
STRIKE ONE 11:30 PM

360°3
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 12:45 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 3:30 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 6:15 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 9:00 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 11:45 PM

AL-KOUT.1
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 3:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 6:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:15 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.2
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 2:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 4:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 6:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 8:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 10:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 12:45 AM

AL-KOUT.3
STRIKE ONE 11:30 AM
STRIKE ONE 1:30 PM
STRIKE ONE 3:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:45 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 8:00 PM
STRIKE ONE 10:15 PM
STRIKE ONE 12:15 AM

AL-KOUT.4
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 1:00 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 1:30 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 4:00 PM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS 7:00 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 10:00 PM
IN THE HEART OF THE SEA 12:30 AM

BAIRAQ-1
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 11:45 AM
STAR WARS:THE FORCE AWAKENS-3D 2:45 PM

HOUSE PLOT FOR SALE

House plots available in a gated colony in the heart of the Tripunithara - Kerala, India.

Contact: +91 9562389213
Email: secsanj@yahoo.com

LOST

Original document policy No. 633003315 of Muhammad Mali by the State Life Insurance Corporation Pakistan, Gulf Zone is reported to have been lost. Anyone finding the same or claiming any interest in it should communicate with State Life office Kuwait. Tel: 22452208. (C 5099) 16-12-2015

FOR SALE

Toyota Aurion - Grande - 2011, full options, km 85000, white color, KD 2650. Mob: 50994848. (C 5097)

KIA Mohave jeep - (6 clr) 2013, white color, excellent conditions, km 87000, KD 3100. Tel: 66729295. (C 5098) 15-12-2015

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR CIVIL INFORMATION
Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is 1889988

Prayer timings

Fajr: 05:10
Shorook 06:34
Duh: 11:43
Asr: 14:33
Maghrib: 16:51
Isha: 18:14

Flight Schedule

Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30
DLH	635	Doha	01:35
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25
LMU	510	Cairo	04:05
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25
DLH	170	Bahrain	05:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55
QTR	8511	Doha	06:10
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30
BAW	157	London	06:40
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50
SVL	512	Riyadh	07:50
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25
KAC	344	Chennai	08:30
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20
KAC	1332	Trivandrum	09:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40
OMA	611	Muscat	10:05
IRM	1180	Mashhad	10:10
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10
MEA	406	Beirut	10:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30
AGY	682	Asyut	11:40
NIA	151	Cairo	11:55
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55
KAC	204	Lahore	12:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50
JZR	241	Amman	12:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00
THY	766	Istanbul	13:45
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20
SVL	500	Jeddah	14:30

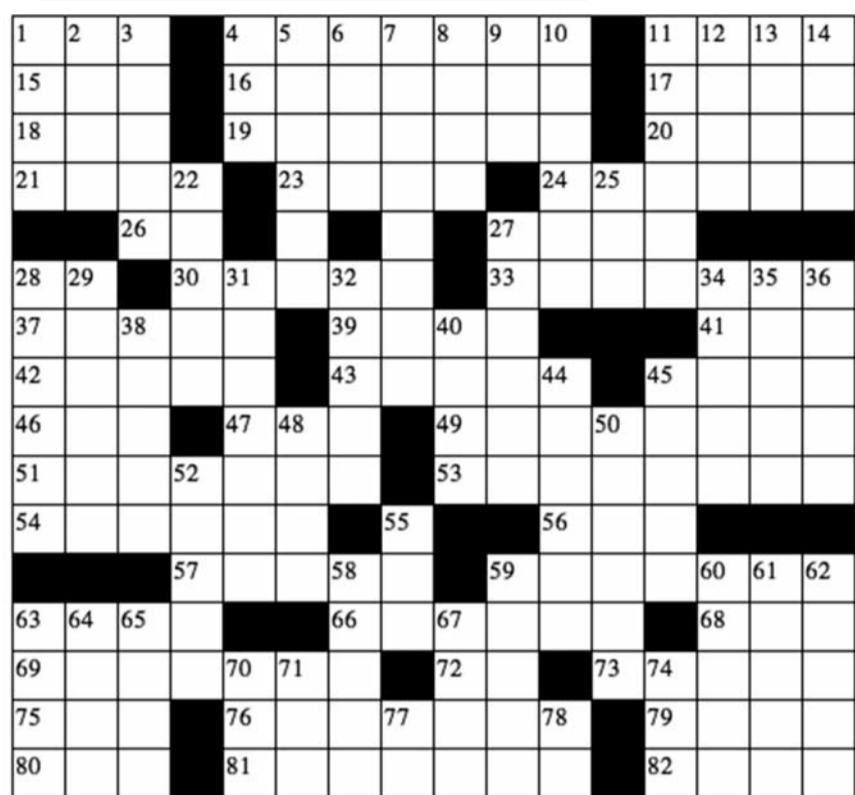
Dhaka	14:45
Dubai	14:45
Jeddah	14:50
Bahrain	15:00
Jeddah	15:05
Muscat	15:30
Alexandria	15:30
Amman	15:40
Sharjah	15:45
Dubai	15:45
Amman	15:55
Cairo	16:10
Jeddah	16:10
Sai	16:10
DLH	16:10
ETH	16:30
KAC	16:30
KAC	16:35
UAE	16:40
PGT	16:55
OMA	16:55
FDB	17:15
MSR	17:30
ETD	17:50
KKK	17:50
QTR	17:50
LMU	17:55
THY	17:55
JZR	18:00
UAE	18:00
FDB	18:05
JZR	18:15
RJA	18:20
THY	18:30
FDB	18:45
JZR	18:55
GFA	18:55
QTR	19:10
Bahrain	19:25
FDB	19:30
BAW	19:35
SVL	19:40
JZR	19:45
JZR	19:45
KAC	19:55
ABY	20:05
KAC	20:05
KAC	20:10
UAE	20:15
KAC	20:20
IRA	20:20
KAC	20:35
ETD	20:50
KAC	20:55
JZR	20:55
FDB	21:20
KAC	21:20
KAC	21:25
KAC	21:40
QTR	21:45
OMA	22:00
IRA	22:05
IRM	22:15
GFA	22:25
MEA	22:25
RBG	22:25
JZR	22:30
UAE	23:15
AGY	23:25
MEA	23:40
NIA	23:45
KAC	23:50
FDB	23:55
MSC	23:55

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

In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers to use seats

Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
KAC	537	Sohag	13:35
JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	767	Istanbul	14:45
KNE	481	Taif	14:50
KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
JZR	124	Bahrain	15:00
QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
AXB	394	Kozhikode	15:20
JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
KAC	617	Doha	15:45
GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
KAC	741	Dammam	15:50
SVL	505	Jeddah	16:00
KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
NIA	252	Alexandria	16:30
OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
JAD	302	Amman	16:40
KAC	563	Amman	16:45
JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KNE	475	Jeddah	17:25
ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
RJA	641	Amman	17:55
SVL	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
JZR	238	Amman	18:50
JZR	554	Alexandria	19:10
FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
UAL	982	Bahrain	19:30
GFA	218	Bahrain	19:30
KAC	353	BLR	20:40
QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
KAC	543	Cairo	20:55
KAC	343	Chennai	21:00
MSR	619	Alexandria	21:05
KNE	461	Riyadh	21:10
ABY	122	Sharjah	21:15
OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
DLH	634	Doha	21:45
FDB	054	Dubai	21:50
DXH	171	Bahrain	21:50
JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55

CROSSWORD 1112



ACROSS

1. A cry or noise made to express displeasure or contempt.
4. Tansy-scented Eurasian perennial herb with buttonlike yellow flowers.
11. Any of the short curved hairs that grow from the edges of the eyelids.
15. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
16. Buffalo grass.
17. A Loloish language.
18. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
19. Belonging to times long past especially of the historical period before the fall of the Western Roman Empire.
20. (criminal law) Money that must be forfeited by the bondsman if an accused person fails to appear in court for trial.
21. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
23. Projectiles to be fired from a gun.
24. Of or in (or relating to) the nose.
26. A form of address for a man.
28. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
30. The eighth month of the civil year.
33. French dramatist (born in Romania) who was a leading exponent of the theater of the absurd (1912-1994).
37. A woman gossip.
39. Having or denoting a low vocal or instrumental range.
41. A person who surrenders to (or is taken by) the enemy in time of war.
42. The protoplasm of the germ cells that contains chromosomes and genes.
43. (football) Defensive players try to break through the offensive line.
46. A resource.
47. A rapid bustling commotion.
49. Used as a lubricant and as a moderator in nuclear reactors.
51. A pan used for frying foods.
53. (aeronautics) Designating an airship having a shape maintained only by internal gas pressure and without a supporting structure.
54. (botany) Especially of plant parts.
56. A United States unit of weight equivalent to 2000 pounds.
57. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
63. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
66. Mar or spoil the appearance of.
68. Having any of numerous bright or strong colors reminiscent of the color of blood or cherries or tomatoes or rubies.
69. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
72. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
73. Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
75. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
76. United States sculptor (born in 1904).
79. The act of scanning.
80. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
81. Indian nun and missionary (born in Albania) dedicated to helping the poor in India (1910-1997).
82. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. South African term for 'boss'.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
4. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
5. Obsolete terms for legal insanity.
6. Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
7. Being or relating to or like a chimera.
8. A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
9. A male human offspring.
10. Type genus of the Tetraonidae.
11. Open to change.
12. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
13. One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
14. An interior passage or corridor onto which rooms open.
22. The people of Great Britain.
25. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
27. A small informal restaurant.
29. With considerable certainty.
31. A three-tone Chadic language.
32. The superior of an abbey of monks.
34. Small branch or division of a branch.
35. Omnivorous mammal of Central and South America.
36. Having an owner.
38. An extreme state of adversity.
40. Used of the language of the deaf.
44. A histamine blocker and antacid (trade name Zantac) used to treat peptic ulcers and gastritis and esophageal reflux.
45. A coarse twilled cotton fabric used for uniforms.
48. A notable achievement.
50. Any tropical African shrub of the genus Protea having alternate rigid leaves and dense colorful flower heads resembling cones.
52. Acquire or gain knowledge or skills.
55. A lyric poem with complex stanza forms.
58. A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
59. A science (or group of related sciences) dealing with the logic of quantity and shape and arrangement.
60. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
61. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
62. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
64. Waterproofed canvas.
65. A former copper coin of Pakistan.
67. The front of the head from the forehead to the chin and ear to ear.
70. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
71. The syllable naming the first (tonic) note of any major scale in solmization.
74. A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
77. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
78. A state in midwestern United States.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Now that your goals are within reach, it is time for some new plans to take form. You enjoy independent thinking and finding solutions without help. Someone is influential in helping you find exactly what you want in your career or self-improvement program. People around you want to help you. Your mind performs better and more efficiently when you are calm and cool-it can lead you to sensible and unbiased solutions. Your mind controls your body and soul, so keep it looking upward and outward. A financial adviser is offering an economic update or review this evening in some form of lecture. This mini-class will feature an industry expert to help the public understand the stock market. It may sound dull, but it's not for even a moment.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Having the ability to get your message across to others is at a high point now. Your timing is perfect. Playing the role of the one who nurtures another, suits you quite well at this time. You may strongly feel the need to care for others. In this case, you are excellent with volunteer work at this time of the year. You value people that have disabilities and know they have a lot to offer society. You seek to help in matters of community gatherings. You may find a good way to help others become organized and to also help create some convenient timesaving ideas. Today, you may succeed in encouraging one or two families to adopt a handicapped person for a couple of hours to show them the lights of the season. Tomorrow, others will also want to be helpful.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are feeling upbeat, healthy and natural. Everything points to your taking the first step in a work project. You should enjoy a great deal of support from those around you. Anything taking precedence in your life now gets your full attention. It's really a great time to be with others and to work side by side. Someone in a superior position may ask your advice. You are capable of managing and directing others and you may be asked to move beyond the usual this week. You should be feeling quite confident with your circumstances. This evening, music may assume a more important role in your life than usual. Perhaps a good friend of yours is just getting started in a music career. Whatever the case, you enjoy and support your friend.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Something may help you to appreciate and discover the beauty that is in your life this morning. Perhaps you did not know that there are owls nested near your walking path. You are at your mental best with sharp ideas and clear thoughts. You will find this an excellent time to put the finishing touches on any decisions or plans you have been thinking about making. You can be your creative self this afternoon with ideas on little munchies or souvenirs that could be sold to hotels and party shops for new year's eve parties. This evening you are able to see the results of your good budgeting. You feel good about being able to spend or overspend now. You will have some intelligent help from a friend regarding finances.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Professional decisions are good but may take a little more time and patience on your part. You complete your tasks efficiently. Prepare to reorient your viewpoint and direction during the next six months. You will close the door on many of the issues that you have been dealing with for the last three years. You need specialized training and tools to do even minor maintenance on a car these days; this afternoon, you join the mainstream of the public to wait in line for a mechanical check of your car. It is always good to be as safe as possible in the winter weather. You may want to get all caught up in the social whirl but your timing would be better for this weekend. Possibly a good book or movie will take on that more than real dimension this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

This is a good time for clear speculation. You are in a serious frame of mind and find yourself dealing with matters of much concern and responsibility. This is a good time to reorganize. You may be feeling a bit on the introverted side this afternoon, however, and just want to spend more time with your lover or with close friends. It may not be a time to be outward or to try to make yourself known in the world. Your feelings are more reflective than expressive just now. To know that you are really wanted and needed helps you to maintain a comfortable feeling; the lack of these things can cause an instinctive feeling of uneasiness. It really is true that no man is an island. You should not have to go it alone, unless you so choose.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You communicate effectively, both professionally and personally. You should find that today is one of those super nice days when things just kind of flow along. You will do particularly well in activities that include children, young people and your home and surroundings. You could feel real rapport and assistance at this time for circumstances and those around you. You may not be expecting it but some kind of a little boost in the form of extra recognition or support will be coming from those around you. You should feel very much in touch with others, as the lines of communication are wide open. All of the support that you could possibly want or need should be there. This evening there is time for a phone conversation from someone far away.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You are an active, imaginative charmer and make social contacts that could take you away from your childhood home. You may leave the nest, but you never let go of your heritage. You may be gullible, too easygoing or just assume that whatever you have and give away can be replenished with hard work. Your troubles are few and can be worked through quickly-especially with your good attitude. Lovers, business associates and friends involve you in situations that are productive. You are called on to speak, lecture or teach today. People expect great things from you. You are an original and have special qualities that help you to move forward and help others. You enjoy the opportunity to celebrate tonight.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your passion for detail puts you in a slumped-over posture for much too long. Stretch and take a break as soon as you can so that you can finish what you start; pull up a stool. You have the ability to think things through to the most positive end. You dislike working for others and may soon decide to go into business for yourself. There may be an opportunity to have a business consultant advise you this afternoon on going into business for yourself. This way you can intelligently decide whether to do a business out of your home or to work from some rental property. Legal problems are not as bad as they seem. A snarled bit of paperwork is the only problem today, resulting in some delay. Tonight is fun!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Go ahead and allow your creative and intuitive sides to surface-there are rewards coming your way. Watch for new solutions to old problems or something very inventive to evolve as a result of all of this. If anyone has a project that they need to have completed by a certain time, you will be the one that they come to for help. You just seem to innately know what others want and need and can take action with very little waste or haste. You will be greatly appreciated for your abilities to manage and direct others. There does not seem to be a problem with too many requests because you are good at saying no when there is no more room or energy for you to be expressive. Do, however, notice if family members are neglected; take time to enjoy them often!



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A feeling of peace and stability on the emotional level comes into play at this time. Being stable and permanent satisfies a deep emotional need. Music could also play a more important role for you than usual and you may find a period of material acquisition satisfying a deep yearning to be free from want. There is a better-than-average chance that you will understand those around you and have a special time with someone you love. A great deal of support and harmony, along with the good feelings that you are having, makes this an exceptionally happy time. Someone younger than yourself comes to you for guidance. You teach the actions and things about which you believe. The best reward of a kindly deed... Is the knowledge of having done it.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may see some positive changes now that have come from some real personal work you have done recently. This may be clearing away some old projects or making the effort to create new friends of co-workers. The young people that did not agree with your methods are beginning to see things your way. Your support system has vastly improved over past situations. Some of the changes could be that you have reversed some of your dreamy thinking and have begun to make realistic goals. You are also more patient than in the past, especially with young people-good for you! You may be called upon to teach today-you will gracefully accept the request because there are excellent rewards. You spend some time in praising others this evening.

WORD SEARCH

Old West 1

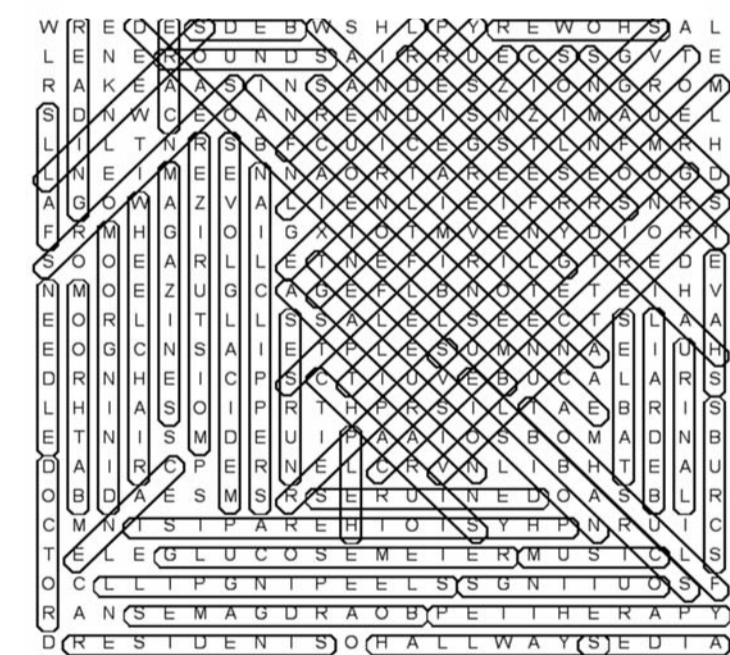
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 25 letters spell a George Eliot quotation.



- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| BANKER | FARRIER | LAWMAN | SALOON |
| BARKEEP | FORT | LIVESTOCK | SHERIFF |
| BILLY THE KID | FURS | MINER | SHOPKEEPER |
| BOOT HILL | GOLD MINE | OUTLAW GANG | SITTING BULL |
| BRAND | GOLD PANNING | PISTOL | STAGECOACH |
| CAMPFIRE | GRAZE | PLOW HORSE | TELEGRAPH |
| CATTLE DRIVE | HIRED GUN | POSSE | TRACKER |
| CHAPARRAL | HOGS | RAILROAD | TRAIL |
| COAL | HOMESTEAD | RANCH | TRAIN |
| CORRAL | HOTEL | RATTLESNAKE | UNDERTAKER |
| COWBOY | JUDGE | RIFLE | WATER TANK |
| DOC HOLLIDAY | LARIAT | SADDLE | WELL |

Yesterday Solution

Nursing Home 1



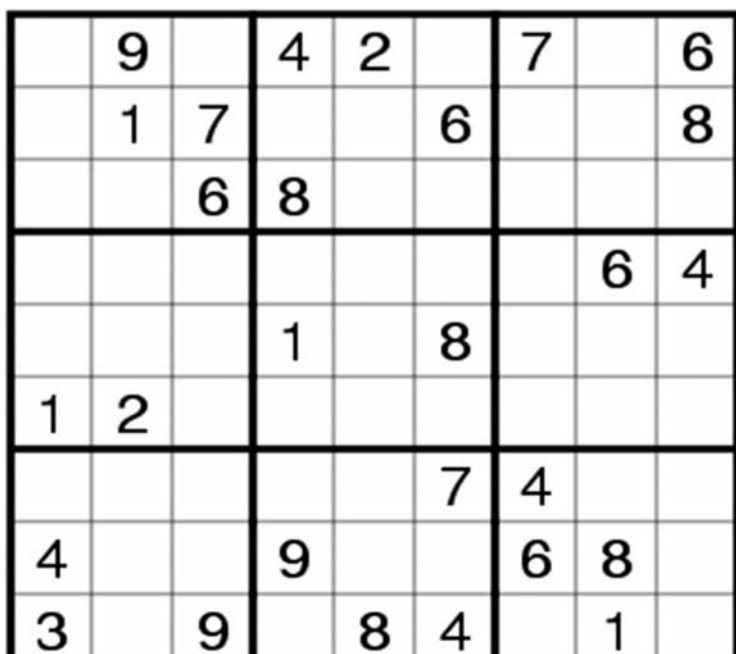
- | | | | | |
|----------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| ACTIVITIES | COMFORT | HELP | OUTINGS | SING ALONG |
| AIDES | DENTURES | LAUNDRY | PET THERAPY | SLEEPING PILL |
| ASPIRIN | DINING ROOM | DOCTOR | PHYSIOTHERAPIST | STAFF MEETINGS |
| BATHROOM | DRUGS | MAGAZINES | PUZZLES | SUPPER |
| BEDRILL | EXERCISE | MEDICAL GLOVES | READING | TABLES |
| BEDS | FALLS | MEMORY LOSS | RESIDENTS | TELEVISION |
| BOARD GAMES | FLU SHOT | MOISTURIZER | SCRIBES | TRANSFER BELT |
| BULLETIN BOARD | FRAIL | MUSIC | SCRUBS | URINAL |
| CANE | GLUCOSE METER | NAIL CLIPPERS | SENIORS | VOLUNTEERS |
| CARE | HAIRDRESSER | NEEDLE | SHAVE | WANDERING |
| CHARTS | HALLWAYS | NURSES | SHOWER | WHEELCHAIR |

The hidden message is: WE SHALL NEVER KNOW ALL THE GOOD THAT A SIMPLE SMILE CAN DO

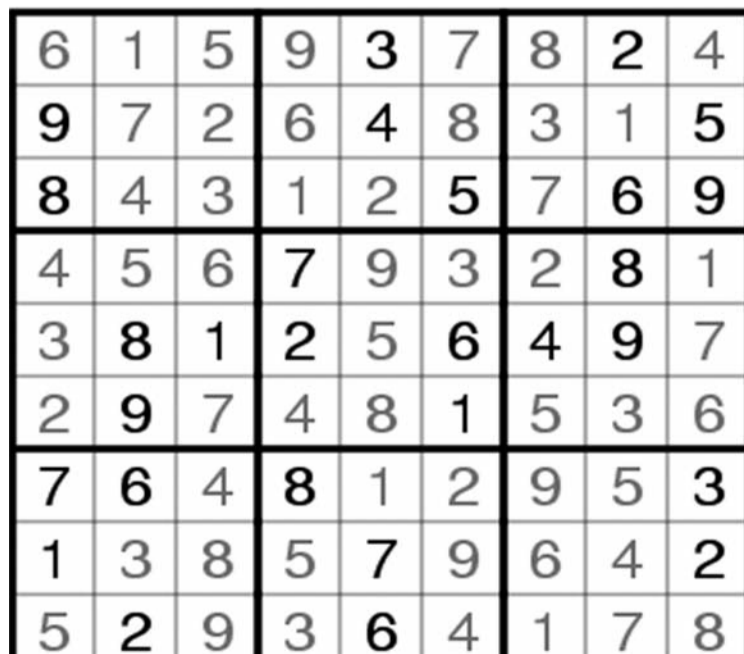
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Daily SuDoku



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Hospitals

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

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaee Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Lesotho	00266
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	Niger	00227
Cayman Islands	001345	Nigeria	00234
Central African	00236	Niue	00683
Chad	00235	Norfolk Island	00672
Chile	0056	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
China	0086	North Korea	00850
Colombia	0057	Norway	0047
Comoros	00269	Oman	00968
Congo	00242	Pakistan	0092
Cook Islands	00682	Palau	00680
Costa Rica	00506	Panama	00507
Croatia	00385	Papua New Guinea	00675
Cuba	0053	Paraguay	00595
Cyprus	00357	Peru	0051
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Philippines	0063
Czech Republic	00420	Poland	0048
Denmark	0045	Portugal	00351
Diego Garcia	00246	Puerto Rico	001787
Djibouti	00253	Qatar	00974
Dominica	001767	Romania	0040
Dominican Republic	001809	Russian Federation	007
Ecuador	00593	Rwanda	00250
Egypt	0020	Saint Helena	00290
El Salvador	00503	Saint Kitts	001869
England (UK)	0044	Saint Lucia	001758
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Pierre	00508
Eritrea	00291	Saint Vincent	001784
Estonia	00372	Samoa US	00684
Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
Falkland Islands	00500	San Marino	00378
Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
Grenada	001473	Sri Lanka	0094
Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
Lithuania	00370	Zimbabwe	00263

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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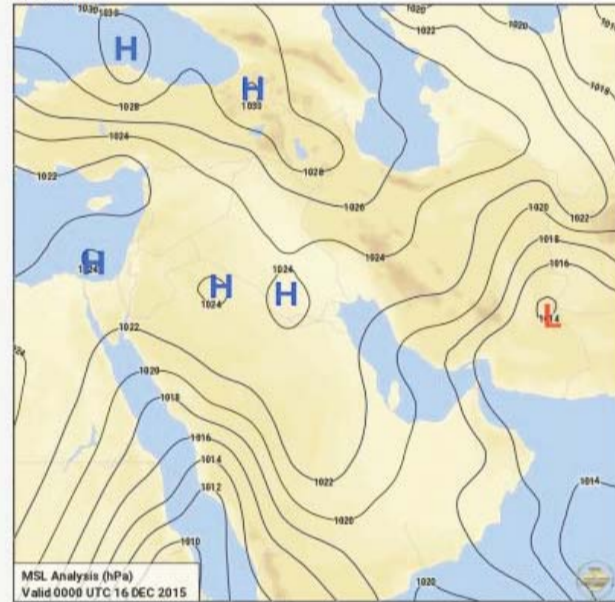
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 16/12/2015-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

MAX Temperature 17 °C

By Day : Sunny with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h
By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 26 km/h with a chance for fog forming early morning

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Expected Weather				
Min Temp °C	09	05	11	12
Max Temp °C	18	19	18	19
Wind Direction	variable	south easterly	south easterly	northerly to north easterly
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 20	08 - 30	08 - 28	12 - 35

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings NO CURRENT WARNINGS

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C REC	Max °C EXP
KUWAIT CITY	11	19
KUWAIT AIRPORT	06	17
ABDALLY	06	17
BUBYAN	08	16
JAHRA	09	18
FAILAKA ISLAND	10	17
SALMIYAH	12	17
AHMADI	11	18
JAL ALIYAH	07	16
QAROH ISLAND	16	19
UMM AL-MARADEM	15	19
NUWAISIB	09	21
WAFRA	07	19
MANAGISH	07	16
SALMY	04	14
MUTRIBA	06	17

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	18
Min Temp (°C)	07
Max Rel Hum (%)	98
Min Rel Hum (%)	47
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	39 W
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

	Sunrise	06:36
	Sunset	16:52

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:11
Sunrise	06:36
Zuhr	11:43
Asr	14:34
Sunset	16:52
Isha	18:14



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	Plastic Surgeons
Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	2455050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	2455050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	25726920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Paediatricians	Endocrinologist
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupje	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Family Doctor	Psychiatrists	Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	Internists, Chest & Heart	Physiotherapists & VD	Rheumatologists:	Internist, Chest & Heart	Consultant Cardiologist
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581	Dr Esam Al-Ansari	22635047	Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330	Dr. Mohammed Akkad	2455050 Ext 210
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60	Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0	Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888	Dr. Mohamed Zubaid	MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC
Psychiatrists		Gynaecologists & Obstetricians		Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924	Assistant Professor Of Medicine	Head, Division of Cardiology
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047	Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581	Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291	Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0	Dr. Verginia s. Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321	Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288	Internist, Chest & Heart	
Family Doctor		Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539	Rheumatologists:		Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581	Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406	Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060	Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Psychiatrists		Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272	Physiotherapists & VD		Internist, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047	Dr. Salem soso	22618787	Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291	Physiotherapists & VD	
Family Doctor		General Surgeons		Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288	Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581	Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044	Rheumatologists:		Internist, Chest & Heart	
Psychiatrists		Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148	Physiotherapists & VD		Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047	Internists, Chest & Heart		Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291	Dr. Mohammed Akkad	2455050 Ext 210
Family Doctor		Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939	Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288	Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581						

Late Michael Jackson breaks new record with 'Thriller'



Michael Jackson has broken another music record even after his death, with "Thriller" certified yesterday as the first album to sell more than 30 million copies in the United States. The Recording Industry Association of America announced that the 1982 work was its first "30 times platinum" album, with platinum defined as selling one million copies-meaning roughly one out of every 10 Americans has a copy.

"What an exceptional achievement and testament to 'Thriller's' enduring spot in our hearts and musical history," the industry group's chairman, Cary Sherman, said in a statement. "Thriller" was considered a musical and marketing breakthrough, with the new "King of Pop" seizing on the possibilities of then nascent MTV to promote his music through videos and glitzy concerts. "Thriller" produced a string of mega-hits including "Beat It" and "Billie Jean" and landed Jackson a record 12 nominations at the Grammy Awards, where he won eight.

The achievement was all the more extraordinary as the music industry was then more racially polarized, with Jackson the first African American artist to enjoy significant airtime on MTV. "It is crystal clear that Michael Jackson is simply the greatest, and biggest, artist of all time," LA. Reid, chairman of

his label Epic Records, said as he saluted the new feat. "Thriller" scored renewed sales with the release of a reissued 25th anniversary edition in 2008 and Jackson's death a year later.

The album was certified as 29 times platinum less than two months after his death. "Thriller" is also the best-selling album worldwide, with no other work coming close. Exact global figures, however, are difficult to quantify. Jackson's estate says that "Thriller" has sold more than 100 million copies worldwide, although some experts believe that figure is inflated. Nielsen Music began systematic sales figures for the United States in 1991.

British ballad singer Adele recently set the record for fastest sales in the United States since at least 1991, with her album "25" selling more than five million copies less than a month since its release. But many experts doubt that any album will ever match "Thriller" in sales, at least in the Western world, with 21st-century fans enjoying instant access to a huge array of digital music. — AFP

Roll over Beethoven, Croatia's 2Cellos go for AC/DC

If you were to list the great cello works, you'd probably say Vivaldi, Bach and Haydn and skip AC/DC, Michael Jackson and Coldplay. But then that would be before you heard Croatian duo 2Cellos tear up the rule book to give the instrument a rock-star makeover. Classically trained cellists Luka Sulic and Stjepan Hauser became overnight Internet sensations when their low-budget video of Jackson's "Smooth Criminal" went viral in 2011, getting three million hits in two weeks.

Fast-forward a few years and they are now worldwide headliners in their own right, and released their third album earlier this year, having performed and collaborated with

likes guitarist Steve Vai, Chinese concert pianist Lang Lang and Italian tenor Andrea Bocelli. "We were young and played classical music with lots of energy, but we always had this rock animal inside of us," Hauser told Reuters before a show this week in London.

The pair cite Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich and English cellist Jacqueline du Pré as early influences. Then their musical tastes expanded to Jackson and later AC/DC with its lead guitarist Angus Young. Hauser goes so far as to incorporate a few Young-style antics into the pair's stage show, - at one point dropping to the floor and circling around on his back, all the while never missing a note.

Young generation

"We've shown all the different possibilities (of the cello), especially when it's combined with classical music. Who would combine (Gioachino) Rossini opera with Iron Maiden," Hauser added, referring to the duo's fusion of the "William Tell Overture" and the metal band's "The Trooper", which opens their new album "Celloverse" and kicked-off the London encores. The show started on a gentle-note with beautiful renditions of songs by Sting and U2, but once the opening notes of "Smooth Criminal" sounded, the crowd went into a frenzy, which only grew as the pair rocked their way through hits from Nirvana, Guns and Roses, and of course AC/DC.

The audience - from children to pensioners - even rushed the stage. A high-energy jaunt through The Rolling Stones' "Satisfaction" saw the two try to beat Mick Jagger and Keith Richards at their own game. But the pair bristles at the suggestion they are a covers band. "When we do something we want it to be something special, something unique, we put our own stamp on it," Sulic said. Sulic said much of the classical musical establishment appreciated what the group was doing. "We introduce classical music, especially to the young generation. The kids love what we are doing, we inspire them so the teachers are happy and the parents are happy."

Cello bows shredded, it was time to take it down a notch in London to end the evening with an impromptu Christmas Carol medley sing along and an elegant rendition of Johann Sebastian Bach's "Air on the G String". Regretting the missed opportunity to collaborate with Jackson, who died in 2009, Hauser said the pair would instead like to work with someone unexpected like American rapper Eminem. "Imagine hip hop and cello. That would be intense," he said with a grin. — Reuters



Cellists Luka Sulic and Stjepan Hauser



Nicki Minaj

Nicki Minaj criticized over Angola concert plans

Rights groups yesterday called on US hip-hop star Nicki Minaj to cancel an upcoming concert in Angola, saying her performance would endorse the authoritarian rule of long-time President Jose Eduardo dos Santos. Minaj is due on stage on Saturday in the Angolan capital Luanda for a Christmas concert hosted by the Unitel communications firm, which is part owned by dos Santos's family.

Fellow US singer Mariah Carey was criticized in 2013 for performing in front of President dos Santos, who has governed the southern African nation for 36 years. "Nicki Minaj is following in the footsteps of Mariah Carey, callously taking money from a dictator... who has effectively and ruthlessly choked free expression," said Jeffery Smith, of the Robert F Kennedy Human Rights center. "This sustained crackdown on basic human rights in Angola has swept up activists, opposition members, journalists, and even musicians."

Dos Santos, 73, has been accused of overseeing corruption, misrule and intimidation in a country that suffers endemic poverty despite being Africa's second-largest oil producer. "Nicki Minaj is a global artist. There is no good reason for her to do business with the corrupt Angolan dictatorship and endorse the ruler's family company," said Human Rights Foundation president Thor Halvorssen. Angola marked 40 years of independence from Portugal last month, with dos Santos vowing to bring progress to the country, but critics accuse him of ruling through fear and repression. Minaj has appeared in a Unitel clip on Facebook, promoting her Angola show. — AFP

Penn thinks 'The Revenant' is a masterpiece reminiscent of 'Apocalypse Now'

As part of this week's cover story on "The Revenant," Sean Penn—who worked with director Alejandro G. Iñárritu on "21 Grams"—shared his thoughts on the \$135 million epic, and why it's success is important to the future of a movie business that thrives on sequels and comic book tentpoles. Penn was Iñárritu's first choice to portray bad-guy John Fitzgerald (now played by Tom Hardy) in the ambitious project about 19th century explorer Hugh Glass (Leonardo DiCaprio) who survives a brutal bear attack.

Sean Penn: I watched the "The Revenant" with Alejandro and four others. I had the great benefit of being able to see it before anything was in the ether, in terms of critics or other trendsetters. I thought it was a masterpiece. I don't think I've had an experience in a movie theater as a kind of stepping cinema forward like that since I saw "Apocalypse Now." To see what happens when bold producers support a bold director who is such an artist on that level with great actors like that—I was compelled throughout.

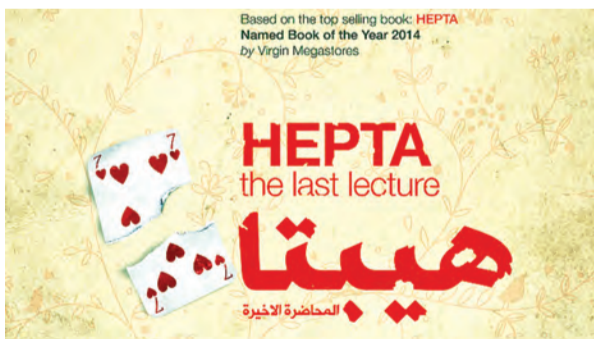
I know it was a couple years ago that Alejandro and I first spoke about it. I remember thinking at the time what a brutal job it was going to be, particularly for the person playing Glass. It was just another thing that I was marveling at watching the movie: what Leonardo DiCaprio put himself through. By the time it was going, I was otherwise engaged. I don't think the movie has lost anything for it. Tom Hardy is extraordinary.

There's a conversation I've heard repeated, when people used to ask David Lean why he took so long to make a movie and he said, "I want to shoot the script." The script is rendered, as a great director's vision might see it. It takes an incredible amount of force of personality in creating confidence in financiers. It takes an extraordinary clarity of vision to make sure you've actually got it and do it with poetry. I think that's what filmmaking ought to be. We've gotten so used to copying filmmaking rather than doing it.—Reuters

Holocaust tale 'Son of Saul' haunts and provokes

"Son of Saul" doesn't just get under your skin - it goes straight to the bloodstream. There, it churns and festers as you try to make sense out of the senseless horror of the Holocaust and the plight of the Sonderkommando - Jewish prisoners forced to assist the Nazis with the genocide. This isn't a movie that's interested in the big picture, redemption or reflection, though. Understanding is not in its vocabulary. This is inhuman cinema of desperation.

It is disturbing. It is immediate. It is haunting. And it's something that few will ever want to see more than once. Hungarian filmmaker László Nemes has created what feels like a new cinematic language to tell this hyper-focused story of a Sonderkommando, Saul (Géza Rohrig) across two days at the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in October 1944.



We rarely leave Saul's point of view. In this way, the film feels like one long tracking shot. The camera watches him from the front and follows him from behind - we grow accustomed to recognizing him from the blood red X messily painted on his back. Things go in and out of focus regularly - possibly as Saul comprehends them. He helps usher the prisoners into the gas chambers. We hear their screams, but we see his face, not theirs. He scrubs the bloody floors clean when it's over.

Proper burial

Everything is loud, harried and chaotic, but somehow methodical, too. The guards scream "work!" "work!" and the Sonderkommando oblige, whether it's stripping off the prisoners' clothes, offering false reassurances on the way to their deaths, or shoveling their ashes into a lake. The Sonderkommando are planning a rebellion of some sorts - doing what they can to document the atrocities, which the Nazis take care to obfuscate as best they can, and coordinating with a contact at a women's work camp. There's a rumor spreading that there's a list being made of Sonderkommando to exterminate, too.

But these are just the background conditions to Saul's story. Early on, Saul spots a boy dying on a slab surrounded by Nazi doctors. After he breathes his final breath, they order an autopsy. This dead boy - who he believes to be his son - becomes Saul's obsession as he commits himself to finding a

Rabbi to say the Kaddish and arrange a proper burial. Saul is a shell of a man, and the self-assigned objective gives him purpose outside of the barbaric tasks he's forced to commit. But whether his quest to give this boy some final respect is one of sincerity, a selfish, desperate attempt to regain some humanity or a manifestation of his madness is a question that only the viewer can answer.

Film progresses

One fellow prisoner accuses him of favoring the dead at the expense of the living. It's hard to argue with that. Saul is both selfish and selfless and maybe, ultimately, he's neither. But confusion is the only reality here. No one speaks the same language - a subtlety lost in subtitles - and order only further dissolves as the film progresses. The filmmaking is extraordinary and somehow, mercifully, not as visually exploitative as it could have been. Nemes, in his first feature, is a bold, experimental voice with a clear vision - a filmmaker to watch and study for years to come.

Ultimately, the nebulous morality of everyone here makes "Son of Saul" a fascinating investigation, but in some ways an unsatisfying one, too. The restraint could be admirable, but it could also be dangerous. Is the one creating a narrative of this horror responsible for neatly presenting a conclusion to the audience? Not making a statement is perhaps the most provocative thing Nemes could have done. "Son of Saul" doesn't tell, it shows, and it places the gnawing burden on the rest of us. "Son of Saul," a Sony Pictures Classics release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "disturbing violent content, and some graphic nudity." Running time: 107 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. — AP



Why DiCaprio has never starred in a sequel

Unless you count the straight-to-video release of "Critters 3" in 1991, which he made as an unknown teenager, Leonardo DiCaprio has never starred in a sequel. It's a rare badge of honor for an A-list movie star, given that Hollywood thrives on action vehicles and comic book franchises with numbers in their titles. In a lengthy interview with Variety for this week's cover story on "The Revenant," directed by Alejandro G. Iñárritu, DiCaprio explained why he hasn't yet headlined a big screen saga with multiple installments (although he was on studio wish lists to play Spider-Man, Robin and Anakin Skywalker in "Star Wars"). — Reuters



Leonardo Di Caprio

'Terminator 2' to get 3D rerelease

China's DMG has teamed up with rights owner StudioCanal to produce a 3D version of James Cameron's "Terminator 2." The pair plan to release the converted film at an unspecified date 2016. They want the release to kick off in China, where "T2" has never been given a theatrical release. China has a special import quota for 3D and IMAX films.

"Next year marks the 25th anniversary of 'Terminator 2' and that seemed like the perfect time to bring it back but this time in an all-new 3D version," said Cameron in a statement. Cameron spent some \$18 million on the 3D conversion of his hit "Titanic." The stereoscopic rerelease earned \$343 million in 2012, including over \$140 million in China. — Reuters

Awards



Tunisian director Leyla Bouzid (center) receives the best fiction Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum during the closing ceremony of the annual Dubai International Film Festival yesterday in the Gulf emirate. Leyla Bouzid is awarded for her movie titled 'As I open my eyes'.



Emirati filmmaker Saeed Salmen (second right) raises his best Emirati feature Muhr award next to Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (center). Saeed Salmen is awarded for his movie titled "Going to heaven". On the right is the chairman of the Dubai International Film Festival, Abdulhamid Juma. — AFP photos

Dubai Film Festival : Leyla Bouzid's Tunisian film 'As I Open My Eyes' wins big



Emirati filmmaker Amena Al-Nowais (left) receives the best Emirati short Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (center). Al-Nowais is awarded for her movie titled 'Omnia'.



Egyptian actress Menna Shalabi (left) poses after receiving the best actress Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum (center). Menna Shalabi is awarded for her role in the movie titled "Nawara".

The 12th Dubai International Film Festival started to wind down yesterday, with a low-key afternoon awards ceremony which saw Tunisian distaff helmer Leyla Bouzid taking home the Muhr best fiction film award with her debut feature, "As I Open My Eyes." When delivering the prizes, jury president Deepa Mehta pointedly made reference to the importance of politics in all worthy artistic endeavors, also acknowledging the strong presence of female filmmakers in this year's festival—both comments especially appropriate for Bouzid, whose critically and popularly acclaimed Venice-premiered pic follows an independently-minded young woman in the final days of Tunisia's recent Ben Ali dictatorship.

Unsurprisingly, political talk was rife this year not only on screen but in the corridors, restaurants and bars of Dubai. Given the wide range of nationalities attending, mostly from the Arab-speaking world, naturally, a key topic of conversation was the impact of terrorism, from Beirut to Morocco, San Bernardino to Paris. Security is a particularly trenchant subject here in the UAE, a country widely seen by Arabs as a haven from the sort of decades-long regional instability that has only worsened in recent months.

Yet DIFF remains a strong reminder that film culture is one of the few effective means of countering the disturbing rise of global Islamophobia, and the casual mingling in Dubai of Europeans alongside local women in hijabs and men in traditional

kanduras and guthras should be a powerful symbol against an ever-increasing polarization demonizing "the other." The Egyptian documentary "We Have Never Been Kids," following an impoverished mother and her children in Cairo from 2003 until today, was awarded best non-fiction film as well as best director for helmer Mahmoud Soliman. The jury prize went to Algerian-French coproduction "Let Them Come," directed by Salem Brahimi, a fiction feature that looks back at Algeria's "dark decade" in the late 1980s and 1990s when religious extremism threatened to tear the nation apart. Top acting kudos went to Egypt's Menna Shalabi for "Nawara," directed by Hala Khalil, and Tunisia's Lotfi Abdelli for Fares Naanaa's "Borders of Heaven."

In terms of numbers, Emirati pics had a stronger presence this edition than in the past, with seven shorts and four features competing for prize money; "Going to Heaven" by Saeed Salmeen Al Murry nabbed best Emirati film. Among the shorts, Basil Khalil's "Ave Maria," a French-German-Palestinian coproduction short-listed for the Oscar, took home the top prize, while the jury award went to Saudi Arabia's Faiza Ambah for "Mariam." Following the award ceremony, Variety's International Star of the Year Jake Gyllenhaall opened up at a cinema chat conducted by Variety VP and exec editor Steve Gaydos. The closing night film is Adam McKay's "The Big Short." — Reuters



Saudi filmmaker Hind Al-Fahad (left) receives the jury special prize in the Muhr Gulf short category from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Hind Al-Fahad is awarded for her movie titled "Peddiers".



Saudi director Faiza Ambah (left) receives the special jury prize in the Muhr short film category from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Faiza Ambah is awarded for her movie titled "Mariam".



Egyptian director Mahmud Suleiman receives the best director Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Mahmud Suleiman is awarded for his movie titled "We have never been kids".



Tunisian humorist and actor Lotfi Abdelli (left) receives the best actor Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Lotfi Abdelli is awarded for his role in the movie titled "Borders of heaven".



Algerian producer and director Salem Brahimi (left) receives the special jury prize in the feature category from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Salem Brahimi is awarded for his movie titled "Let them come".



English Palestinian director Basil Khalil (left) receives the best short Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Basil Khalil is awarded for his movie titled "Ave Maria".



Egyptian director and writer Nasser Al-Dhaheiri (left) receives the best director Muhr award from Sheikh Mansoor bin Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum. Nasser Al-Dhaheiri is awarded for his movie titled "A tale of water, palm trees and family".



This photo provided by Disney/Lucasfilm shows stormtroopers in a scene from the new film, 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'. — AP photos



This photo provided by Disney shows Daisy Ridley as Rey, left, and John Boyega as Finn, in a scene from the new film, 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens.'

'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' is fun fan service

J.J. Abrams may not elevate the language of "Star Wars," but he sure is fluent in it. "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" is no more and no less than the movie that made us love it in the first place. In fact, it's basically the same thing. Isn't that what we all wanted anyway? It's hard to talk rationally about "Star Wars." It is a deeply silly thing, with a genuine, undeniable hold on our culture. Chalk it up to nostalgia, collective arrested development or the ineffable. But for many, the magic of "Star Wars" is inseparable from the magic of the movies and, hey, that's no small thing.

These movies make us lose ourselves in the spectacle. They make us forget our best instincts. They make us love the advertising as much as the art. They make us kids again. In this way, "The Force Awakens," the seventh movie in this improbable yet inevitable series, delivers. It's a movie made by someone who loves "Star Wars" deeply. Someone who can see more clearly than even its creator what made it so special to so many people. Abrams has taken everything that we adore about that first film, delicately mixed up a few elements, and churned out a reverent homage that's a heck of a lot of fun to watch. From the opening scroll to the sequel-setup ending, he manages to hit each beat of its 38-year-old predecessor.

Abrams has essentially passed the torch on to its new cast by making them amalgamations of the originals. You'll know it when you see it. Who cares if it's "Star Wars" Mad-Libs? There's the resistance-affiliated droid, who ends up stranded on a desert planet carrying a secret message (BB-8). There's the nobody with the dead-end job and a Jedi obsession (Daisy Ridley's Rey), who has a life-changing encounter with said droid. There's the reckless kid uncertain of his allegiances (John Boyega's Finn). There's the cocky pilot (Oscar Isaac's Poe Dameron). There's the powerful, masked villain, too (Adam Driver's Kylo Ren).

The plot is as unwieldy and MacGuffin-filled as one might expect. It almost serves no purpose to go into the specifics at this point beyond the fact that the galaxy is in disarray, an evil army is growing (as is a resistance), and a series of coincidences help Rey collect a "Wizard of Oz"-worthy posse to help get BB-8 back to its rightful owners. This time, it's all because of Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill). He's vanished. Those are the

first words on the screen and the last we'll say about the big mystery.

Capable and magnetic

The action is nearly non-stop, as is the humor, which kicks into gear when Han Solo (Harrison Ford) finally shows up. Ford is in his element - delightful, energetic, funny, brash and fully Han, bantering with Chewie and everyone with the same verve he showed nearly 40 years ago. If only the same showcase was given to Carrie Fisher, who is woefully, inexcusably underused as Leia. As for the new characters, Ridley's Rey is a dream. She is feisty, endearingly awe-filled, capable and magnetic. She is the new anchor. She is our Luke, and she's much cooler than he ever was.

Driver's Kylo Ren is also a disarmingly powerful presence, whose wickedness seeps through the mask. Boyega is appealing as Finn, too, even if his character doesn't quite make sense on paper. (How do empathy, guilt and personality develop in a man who has been trained since birth to be a Stormtrooper?) But that's taking things too seriously. Others are less memorable, including Gwendoline Christie's Captain Phasma, and Andy Serkis's preposterous-looking Supreme Leader Snoke.

And while Abrams captures the lively, hokey and practical visual fun of the originals, he occasionally slips into generic blockbuster mode. But those moments pass, and all it takes is a perfect John Williams music cue to transport you back into the cozy blanket of that galaxy far, far away. Loving "Star Wars" without reserve isn't an easily justifiable thing, and neither is the fun of "The Force Awakens." They are intrinsically linked. To love the original is to love this one. On its own, "The Force Awakens" probably isn't much. It's not likely to convert anyone, either. But for the rest of us - even the most casual of fans - it fits the bill just fine. "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association of America for "sci-fi action violence." Running time: 135 minutes. Three stars out of four. MPAA Definition of PG-13: Parents strongly cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13. — AP



Joseph Gordon-Levitt

Joseph Gordon-Levitt brought the force to the Star Wars World premiere red carpet

You might expect an A-list movie star like Joseph Gordon-Levitt to wear a fancy suit on the red carpet, but when it came time for him to attend the world premiere of Star Wars: The Force Awakens in Hollywood on Monday, The Night Before actor arrived in a DIY Yoda costume. Everyone knows Joseph isn't afraid of getting really into character, and his Yoda look was no different.

Complete with a white terry cloth robe, Grinch pajama bottoms, a beanie with pointy ears, and a face full of green paint, he went full-on fanboy, and he wasn't the only one. Rainn Wilson and his son, Walter, also went to the premiere in costume, donning "chubby Jedi" and Boba Fett getups. Keep scrolling to see more photos of the diehard fans! — Reuters



South Korean fans dressed as Star Wars characters attend a Jedi parade before a release of the movie 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' at Lotte Cinema in Seoul yesterday. — AFP photos



Promotional staff dressed as stormtroopers attend the film premiere of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'.



South Korean fans dressed as Star Wars characters attend a Jedi parade before a release of the movie 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'.

'Star Wars' force finally awakens for fans around the world

"Star Wars" fans rejoiced at the chance to see the much-anticipated next installment of the sci-fi saga yesterday as the movie began hitting cinemas worldwide, winning mostly glowing reviews. Donning Stormtrooper and Darth Vader masks, dressed in capes and holding lightsabers, fans young and old turned out for screenings of "The Force Awakens," some queuing for hours to watch the first "Star Wars" film in 10 years. Parisian movie-goers got in line before sunrise. "It is a phenomenon which goes beyond the film itself, it is extraordinary ... An event like this cannot be missed," said Benoit Alix, wearing a Stormtrooper mask.

Most critics heaped praise on the film in the first reviews, published yesterday after an embargo. "As the best 'Star Wars'

anything - film, TV show, video game, spinoff, what-have-you - in at least 32 years, 'The Force Awakens' pumps new energy and life into a hallowed franchise in a way that both resurrects old pleasures and points in promising new directions," The Hollywood Reporter's Todd McCarthy wrote.

Rotten tomatoes.com, which collects film reviews from across the world, had found only three negative notices out of 113 covered by 1400 GMT. The movie, which stars veterans Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher and Mark Hamill as well as many newcomers, has been shrouded in secrecy. "I was brought up with ('Star Wars'), I was practically bottle-fed with it," jedi-dressed Quentin Encina said in Paris. "I have loved it ever since I can remember," added the 24-year-old. "For 'Star Wars', a

sequel is a must," singer Tim Omaji said in Sydney. "The story can't end, not yet and I'm excited to see where it goes."

Eager movie-goers gathered early at London's Leicester Square ahead of the film's premiere in the British capital later yesterday. "I love (that) they could gather all the stars from the original movies together because that brings us a sense that they are staying true to the story and I hope they can achieve that," Louis, a Brazilian exchange student, said. "The Force Awakens" opens in most countries this week. — Reuters



A young fan dressed as a Star Wars character arrives at the Australian premier of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' in Sydney yesterday.



A Star Wars fan waits with his mock light sabre for the start of the movie premiere of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' in Helsinki, Finland yesterday.



A queuing fan wearing a Yoda mask poses ahead of the European Premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" in central London yesterday.



In this photo provided by Courtesy Castle Rock Entertainment via the Library of Congress, a scene from the movie *Shawshank Redemption*, featuring inmates Red (Morgan Freeman), left, and Andy (Tim Robbins) share a quiet moment in the prison yard at Shawshank. — AP photos



In this photo provided by Columbia Pictures via the Library of Congress, a scene from the movie *Ghostbusters*, featuring, from left, Harold Ramis, Dan Aykroyd, Bill Murray and Ernie Hudson.

'Top Gun,' 'Shawshank' added to National Film Registry

It's a bro-centric year for movies added to the prestigious National Film Registry. Two of the most popular male-bonding movies of all time - "Top Gun" and "The Shawshank Redemption" - are being added to the collection of films preserved by the Library of Congress, the library announced yesterday. They'll be joined by an all-male quartet that's about to get an all-female reboot - the gang from "Ghostbusters." Each year, the library picks 25 movies to preserve for their cultural, historic or artistic importance. The list is always eclectic and, as usual, includes titles that are older, experimental or otherwise obscure.

And then there are the crowd-pleasers. "The Shawshank Redemption" is a mainstay atop the Internet Movie Database poll of the top 250 movies of all time. Its exalted ranking - "The Godfather" places second - is somewhat curious. "Shawshank," a deliberately paced, well-crafted prison drama about the friendship between a wrongly convicted man (Tim Robbins) and a savvy fellow inmate (Morgan Freeman), was considered a box-office disappointment upon its 1994 release. It was the first feature for director Frank Darabont, who adapted the screenplay from a novella by Stephen King. Nominated for seven Oscars, it won zero.

High-concept

But its popularity increased thanks to home video and countless airings on cable television, where viewers came to appreciate the elaborate plot, poignant score by Thomas Newman and Freeman's soothing voice-over narration. The almost comically macho "Top Gun" (1986) was an instant blockbuster and remains a cultural 1980s touchstone. Applications to naval flight schools soared post-release, and it elevated Tom Cruise to a new level of stardom. Its visual style, from action maestro Tony Scott, helped influence a generation of directors.



Two years before "Top Gun," director Ivan Reitman's "Ghostbusters" was also a box-office smash, setting a standard for high-concept, effects-driven comedy that was rarely duplicated. Reitman's gift was allowing improvisational comedians including Bill Murray, Dan Aykroyd and Rick Moranis to riff their way through the movie's ridiculous spectral set pieces. "Making 'Ghostbusters' was one of the great joys of my life," Reitman said in a statement. "It's an honor to know that a movie that begins with a ghost in a library now has a spot on the shelves of the Library of Congress."



A new version of "Ghostbusters," with a female spook-hunting crew led by Kristen Wiig and Melissa McCarthy, will be released in July. The film registry, which began in 1989, now includes 675 titles. The library works to ensure that original 35mm negatives will be preserved, either by the library itself or another organization. The library maintains the negatives at its vast audio-visual conservation center built inside a Cold War-era bunker in Culpeper, Virginia. The oldest film added this year dates to 1894. Known as the "Edison Kinetoscopic Record of a Sneeze" or simply "The Sneeze," the frames were

captured by W.K.L. Dickson, who led Thomas Edison's inventor team. Still images were published by Harper's magazine, but it wasn't seen as a movie until 1953.

Motion pictures

Another quirky artifact is "The Story of Menstruation," an educational filmstrip sponsored by tampon maker Kimberly-Clark and produced by the Walt Disney Co. Seen by approximately 93 million American women from its 1946 debut until the late 1960s, it was noted for its progressive, science-based approach. With the advent of sound in motion pictures, Hollywood studios began shooting Spanish-language versions of some titles, and "Dracula" (1931) is one example. Shot at night by a different crew on the same sets used for the English-language "Dracula" starring Bela Lugosi, the Spanish version is considered by some to be superior.

Other titles selected for preservation include the ambitious Peter Sellers comedy "Being There" (1979); "Black and Tan" (1929), a short musical starring Duke Ellington; director Douglas Sirk's lush tearjerker "Imitation of Life" (1959); "The Mark of Zorro" (1920), a silent swashbuckler starring Douglas Fairbanks; "Portrait of Jason" (1967), a groundbreaking study of a gay hustler; and "Winchester '73" (1950), one of several Westerns directed by Anthony Mann and starring James Stewart. The most recent registry addition is the critically lauded film noir "LA Confidential" (1997), bridesmaid to "Titanic" at that year's Oscars. The library has yet to select "Titanic" for preservation. — AP



Dancers wait to perform in the choreography and staging by Vladimir Vasiliev, celebrating his 75th birthday anniversary in the Bolshoi Theater stage in Moscow, Russia.



Maria Alexandrova, right, performs as Vladislav Lantratov and Marianna Ryzhkina, second from left, look at her during a rehearsal. — AP photos

Bolshoi ballet film shows world of dance, Kremlin politics

On the stage of the Bolshoi Theater, the dancers were all elegance and grace, leaping through the air and lifting their partners with seemingly little effort. But up close in a rehearsal hall a few days before the performance, prima ballerina Maria Alexandrova and the other lead dancers were emotional, quarrelsome and at times gasping for breath from the sheer athleticism that ballet demands. This inner, turbulent world of Moscow's famed ballet company is the subject of a new documentary film centered on a shocking 2013 acid attack that nearly blinded the company's artistic director and sent a star dancer to prison.

"Bolshoi Babylon" explores the infighting and political intrigue that culminated in the attack, including the extent of Kremlin involvement in the state theater. But most of all, the film celebrates the resilience of the dancers and the efforts by the Bolshoi to heal and restore its reputation. The theater was torn apart when artistic director Sergei Filin had acid thrown in his face while returning home on a snowy January night and a popular soloist was arrested on charges of organizing the attack.

Special status

Pavel Dmitrichenko was found guilty after a bizarre trial that often focused less on the crime than on Filin's divisive management of the ballet company and his casting decisions. Among those to testify in Dmitrichenko's defense was principal dancer Nikolai Tsiskaridze, who had been publicly critical of the Bolshoi management and had been maneuvering to take over the theater himself. He was fired in the aftermath of the attack.

Alexandrova, the prima ballerina, said it was painful to watch the company being split into camps. She said she refused to take sides because it would have been inconceivable to betray dancers she had known since they were all children. "They were all my partners. I danced with all of them,

with Tsiskaridze, Filin and Dmitrichenko," she said over a coffee latte and fresh orange juice after a rehearsal. "We grew up together." What fascinated filmmakers was that each of the figures engaged in the power struggle within the Bolshoi had powerful, rich and politically connected backers on the outside who wanted to influence the theater.

Russian society

The Bolshoi has a special status in Russia, where it is considered a national treasure and a symbol of Russian culture if not of Russia itself. And as a state theater, it has close links to the Kremlin. "It's hard to imagine that in a theater as famous as La Scala in Milan, for instance, you'd have the president or the head of the government summoning the new director to his office to discuss the theater. Or that you'd have ministers who are behind the scenes kind of lobbying to try to make sure that their candidate is the head of the ballet company," said Mark Franchetti, a veteran Moscow-based British journalist who produced and co-directed the film. "That's what the Bolshoi is like."

The film asks whether the Bolshoi is a mirror of Russian society, where corruption flourishes. Bolshoi general director Vladimir Urin, who was brought in after the attack, speaks openly in the film about the need to curb government interference and make sure "the most talented dancer will dance." Franchetti said the emotional nature of some of the dancers and the drama inside the theater also struck him as very Russian. On the other hand, he said, he found the world of the Bolshoi ballet to be "quite hermetically sealed," inhabited by 250 dancers obsessed with their art.

"We live in a complex country, which puts its mark on everything," Alexandrova, who features in the film, said during the interview. "And it's a complex theater made up of beautiful, strong, ambitious people with strong characters. We have no other kind here." In the week before Alexandrova was to

perform "A Legend of Love," she and the four other lead dancers ran through the full ballet in a rehearsal hall. Their bodies glistened with sweat and their chests heaved from the physical exertion. When a lift or combination was less than perfect, tempers flared.

Incredible physicality

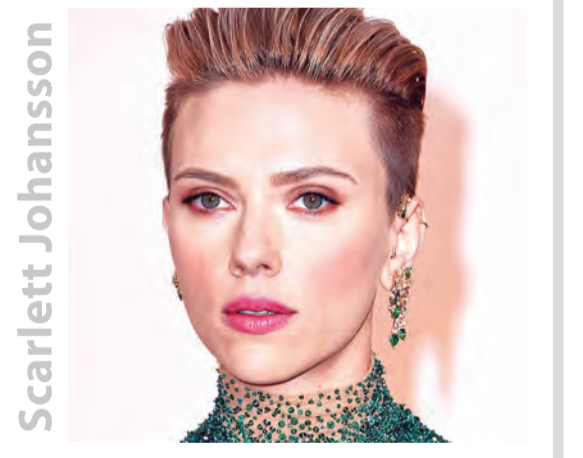
The film's director, Nick Read, said it was this exertion and emotion that impressed him the most. Ballet is usually shot from a wide angle, but he decided to move in close to show the dancers at work. "A lot of the material is there to eulogize their incredible physicality and ability and determination and dedication," Read said, speaking from London. In contrast to the dancers, Filin does not come off well in the film. "He's a very closed character, a very evasive and ultimately divisive character," Read said, noting that it was only when filming was in its final stages that Filin agreed to be interviewed.

Filin describes managing the ballet company as emotionally trying, thankless and "hellishly hard work." He ends by saying he regrets ever taking the job. After the filming was finished, the Bolshoi announced that Filin's contract will not be renewed when it expires in March. He will be replaced by Makhar Vaziev, who directed the ballet at the Mariinsky Theater in St Petersburg before moving to La Scala in 2009. Alexandrova said she has great respect for Vaziev. "To leave sunny, warm Italy, where everything is different - sunny, open and calm - and to choose Russia, where nothing is calm. That's an extraordinary step," she commented. "Bolshoi Babylon" airs on HBO on Dec 21 at 9 pm EST. — AP

Scarlett Johansson to star in comedy 'Move That Body'

Sony Pictures is negotiating with Scarlett Johansson to star in the R-rated comedy "Move That Body." Producers are Lucia Aniello and Paul W. Downs through their Paulilu banner with Matt Tolmach and Dave Becky. Sony acquired the script by Aniello and Downs in a bidding war this past summer. Aniello ("Broad City") is set to direct, while Downs is attached to co-star. The script, which landed on the Black List on Monday, centers on five friends renting a beach house in Miami for a bachelorette weekend and accidentally killing a male stripper.

Johansson will next be seen in the Coen brothers' comedy "Hail, Caesar!" followed by Marvel's "Captain America: Civil War" and Disney's "The Jungle Book." Tolmach's background as a producer and Sony exec includes R-rated comedies such as "The Other Guys," "Step Brothers," "Pineapple Express" and "Superbad." Johansson is represented by CAA, LBI Entertainment and attorney Kevin Yorn of Morris Yorn. The news was first reported by The Wrap. — Reuters



Sony sets three writers for 'Barbie' movie

Sony has set three scribes to pen three different scripts for its "Barbie" movie, the studio's take on the classic Mattel toy. Sources tell Variety the studio is using the multitrack strategy and has hired Bert Royal, Hilary Winston and Lindsey Beer to each write their own scripts for the live-action feature. With Sony already having dated the film for a June, 2017, release, the studio had to try a different strategy after being overwhelmed with the script Diablo Cody recently turned in. Jenny Bicks had also penned a previous draft.

Laurie MacDonald and Walter F. Parkes are producing the project, along with Amy Pascal. Royal wrote the script for the Emma Stone pic "Easy A." He is repped by CAA, R.E.D. and Hansen, Jacobson. Winston has written for various TV shows including "Community," "Happy Endings" and "Bad Teacher," which she also executive produced. She is repped by UTA, Rise Management and Morris Yorn. Beer was part of the recent "Transformers" writers' room, which helped create the outline for the future of the franchise and devised ways to expand it. She is repped by WME. Deadline Hollywood first reported the news. — Reuters



Performers parade in Hong Kong yesterday to promote a funfair and festival taking place during the Christmas festive season. — AFP

Right at Home: Holiday decor with sparkle and dash



This photo provided by Joss and Main shows a Baroque paper poinsettia ball ornament in a midnight hue, trimmed with gold glitter, adds drama to holiday decor.

Even if you practice restraint in your everyday home decor, you might be inclined toward a bit of sizzle and sparkle when the holidays roll around. The season is a great excuse to let your festive flag fly, so to speak, and few things say "festive" like decor that's got some glitz, glitter or gilding. "My go-to holiday look each season? Winter wonderland meets glamour," says New York designer Genevieve Gorder.

She uses metallic and glittery spray paint to add personalized flair. If you're on a budget or are fairly crafty, this is a good option. Jazz up stuff you already have like terra cotta pots, tea light holders, candlesticks, picture frames and serving trays. Valspar has a line of paints that stick to most materials, and come in both opaque and translucent finishes.

If you gather bare branches on a walk or buy some from a garden center, find instructions for glittering them up at www.momtastic.com. After painting them, spray with adhesive, and then dip them in both glitter and clear crystalline sprinkles. The sprinkles add an icy extra touch.

If you're tight on work space (glittering is a messy business), consider glitter in a tube. Jo-Ann craft stores have Sticks, glit-

ter glue that comes in a bunch of colors and is easy to dab or swab.

Making a tabletop holiday village is easy and inexpensive. Got some plastic toy animals lying around? Give them a coat of metallic paint. A stack of newspapers or old magazines? Transform them with a few folds into trees, and spray them with glitter paint.

You can build a few houses out of chipboard, paint and powdered glitter, and create your tableau; it's a fun project to do with kids or friends. Martha Stewart has instructions online.

Z Gallerie offers boxes of gold or silver acrylic "ice gems" that look like ice cubes. In a clear vase, they'd be a great base for white painted branches or greenery. Or scatter them along a faux fur runner with some tiny twinkle lights. The retailer also has a series of silver-plated ceramic penguins, and sexy starburst ornaments with a retro vibe.

Paper poinsettia balls from Joss & Main in a dramatic midnight hue and edged in golden glitter bring baroque élan to the mantel. Filigree-wrapped balls and mini tiara ornaments add royal style.

For those looking to decorate outside the traditional red/green or blue/white realm, Target's got a collection of glittery faux bottlebrush trees in colors like copper, orchid, turquoise, purple and mocha. Seasonal greetings stenciled in metallic sequins bring sparkle to the sofa on throw pillows.

Dress the base of the Christmas tree with an organza skirt dusted with glitter from Kohl's. Or Zazzle has a snazzy one in shimmering lemon yellow. Sparkly ruffles give a little kick to a tree skirt at Brylane Home.

You can set the holiday table with subtle shine using Sandy Chlewick's brass or silver Drift placemats, which have an angular, geometric design inspired by woodblock prints. Add a few slim white, copper or silver glass trees from CB2 for a tablescape that's minimalist yet merry. Bring the bling outdoors, too, with large-scale decorations. Wayfair has a set of sparkly, lighted gift boxes. Frontgate's gold, silver or red ornaments come with fiber-optic and LED lights. — AP



This photo provided by Joss and Main shows ball ornaments that are banded in glittering filigree, that are a chic and elegant addition to the tree. — AP photos



This photo provided by Z Gallerie shows silver plated ceramic penguins that add a dash of chic swagger to holiday decor.



In this photo provided by Z Gallerie, acrylic 'ice gems' look like ice cubes, and would be a cool base in a clear vessel with greenery or bare branches.



In this photo provided by Valspar, designer and television personality Genevieve Gorder suggests embellishing items you may have around the house, like trays and votive holders and picture frames, with glitter and metallic spray paint.

1,000 jogging Santas run for charity in Sweden

More than 1,000 joggers dressed as Santa Claus wearing red suits, boots and long white beards ran through the streets of Stockholm for charity on Sunday. "It was brilliant. I'm a Santa enthusiast and an avid runner, so it's the best of two worlds," said Andreas, a 27-year-old participant. The three-kilometer (1.8-mile) run was organized for various charities including Save

the Children and the Red Cross.

"It was the first I ran as a Santa and it was a lot of fun," said 26-year-old Elin. "The Santa suit was cosy and warm. It was a good opportunity to run as a Santa for good causes." The race had no official winner. In true Santa spirit it had the goal of bringing awareness of the poor and needy during the holiday season. — AFP



Participants take part in the 6th edition of the Santa Claus 'Papa Noel' rally in Turin. Around fifteen thousand people took part in the charity event for the Regina Margherita Children Hospital. — AFP