

Ambassador announces media trip to Sharm El-Sheikh



Sanders regains access to voter files after fight over data breach



Gandhis get bail after rare court date in graft case



Hiddink sees Chelsea win, Norwich imperil Van Gaal



UN UNANIMOUSLY BACKS SYRIAN PEACE PROCESS

OPPOSITION REACTS COOLLY TO INITIATIVE



Min 07°
Max 18°
High Tide 05:52 & 18:57
Low Tide 00:18 & 12:31



AMIR IN MOROCCO ON PRIVATE VISIT



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen off at the airport by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as he leaves yesterday for Morocco on a private visit. — KUNA

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council threw its unanimous support Friday behind a plan to end Syria's brutal civil war by summoning rebels and the regime to the negotiating table. The US and Russian initiative, which emerged from talks with a 17-nation group, foresees a rapid ceasefire in the almost five-year conflict, perhaps as early as next month. If the plan brings Bashar Al-Assad's regime to the table with the armed opposition, it will allow Russian and US-led forces to focus their firepower on the Islamic State group.

"In January we hope and expect to be at the table and to be able to implement a full ceasefire," US Secretary of State John Kerry told reporters. "And that means all the barrel bombs will stop, all the bombing, all the shooting, all the attacks on either side." The Security Council met Friday after the latest round of talks by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), which had gathered in New York to renew its push for peace.

Attention now turns to Moscow and Riyadh, as Russia pressures Assad's regime to agree to a ceasefire and Saudi Arabia wrangles the opposition to form a negotiating team. The UN special envoy on the conflict, Staffan de Mistura, said he would send out invitations to talks in January. The United States and Arab allies remain convinced Assad must leave office as part of the process, but his allies Moscow and Tehran insist this is a decision for the Syrian people. The resolution does not touch on this vital issue.

"Only a Syrian-led, inclusive dialogue can put an end to the untold suffering of the Syrian people," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned the Security Council. Nevertheless, Kerry -who has "agreed to disagree" with Moscow on Assad's fate - said the vote would act as a springboard for forging ahead with peace talks. He emphasized that victory over the Islamic State group, also known by the Arabic acronym Daesh, hinges on a peaceful settlement in the broader Syrian civil war.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti man takes a selfie with a falcon after the opening ceremony of the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat (See Page 2)

ERDOGAN MEETS MESHAAL IN ISTANBUL

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan met with Khaled Meshaal, leader of Palestinian militant group Hamas, yesterday in Istanbul, a day after Israel and Turkey said they were close to patching up five-year political rift. A source from Erdogan's office said Meshaal "briefed Erdogan on the latest developments in the region", without giving further details. Islamist Hamas controls the Gaza strip.

Israeli officials said late on Thursday that a deal with Turkey was struck to normalize ties following high-level bilateral talks in Switzerland. Turkish officials said a final agreement was yet to be sealed, but that given the progress it would not be

too long. Israel's once-strong ties to Turkey soured in 2010 when Israeli commandoes killed 10 Turkish activists when storming the Mavi Marmara, a ship in a convoy seeking to break an Israeli naval blockade of the Palestinian territory of Gaza.

Turkey had demanded Israel apologise over the assault, pay compensation and lift the Gaza blockade. For Israel, limiting Hamas activity in Turkey has been key. Under the preliminary deal between the two countries, Saleh Al-Aruori, a senior leader in the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas who has been living in Turkey, would be barred from the country, the Israeli official had said. — Reuters



ISTANBUL: Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) and Palestinian Hamas leader Khaled Meshaal pose for a photo yesterday. — AP



US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter speaks to US and French troops on the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle in the Arabian Gulf yesterday. — AP

CARTER VISITS FRENCH, US WARSHIPS IN GULF

ABOARD THE CHARLES DE GAULLE: US Defense Secretary Ash Carter met yesterday with naval commanders on US and French warships in the Arabian Gulf, saying that there will be more to come in the battle against Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. Carter visited the French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle, which is expected to begin launching airstrikes against IS soon. He also talked to American troops on the USS Kearsarge, an amphibious assault ship that's been supporting coalition missions in Iraq and Syria.

Carter's visit to the Charles de Gaulle underscores France's increased participation in the fight, in the wake of the Paris attacks last month. IS militants claimed responsibility for the Nov 13 attacks that killed 130 people and wounded hundreds. "We are completely aligned with France on the mission of defeating ISIL," said Carter, using another acronym for Islamic State militants. "France's willingness to do more as we do more, both in the air and on the ground, and here at sea ... I was very gratified to see that in action out aboard the Charles de Gaulle."

France's only aircraft carrier was conducting 10-15 missions daily for about 10 days from the Mediterranean Sea before moving into the Arabian Gulf on Friday. Cmdr. Lionel Delort, French Navy spokesman on the carrier, said the ship will begin launching airstrikes into Iraq and Syria "in the coming hours or days". He said the "intense rhythm" of the

airstrikes launched when the ship was in the Mediterranean will continue as the ship begins operations in the Gulf. The ship, which is about two-thirds the size of America's aircraft carriers and carries 26 fighter jets, but the aircraft were not flying yesterday during Carter's visit because the ship had just arrived in the area and was not yet positioned for launching operations.

According to officials, the French are the second highest contributor of airstrikes in the coalition's campaign against IS, with the US providing the vast majority. The officials could not say what percentage the French provide. The US and French militaries operate routinely together, and Carter was able to meet with a number of US forces who are stationed on the Charles de Gaulle. And while on board he spoke by phone with French Minister of Defense Jean-Yves Le Drian.

Carter flew from the French ship to the USS Kearsarge, which was about seven nautical miles away. He met with the ship's commander, Navy Capt Larry Getz and later spoke to sailors and Marines saying the ship is playing an important role in the effort to quickly defeat IS. The ship visits come at the end of a weeklong trip to the region, including stops in Iraq, Turkey and Afghanistan. The theme of Carter's visit has been the need to accelerate the fight against the Islamic State group, and he has been meeting with foreign leaders and his military commanders all week, exploring new ideas. — AP

ARABIC LESSON IGNITES ANGER IN BIBLE BELT

VERONA, Virginia: With the nation already on edge after the attacks in California, a teacher's lesson on Islam in Virginia's Bible Belt sparked an angry meeting of outraged parents that mushroomed into a national denunciation of the educator in the form of thousands of angry emails and social media postings. As a result, an estimated 10,000 students in Augusta County's public school system got a one-day jump on the Christmas break as a precaution. The cancellation of classes Friday also wiped out a holiday concert and weekend sporting events.

Some of the tens of thousands of emails and Facebook posts "posed a risk of harm to school officials" and threatened protests, Superintendent Eric Bond said in a message to parents and employees Friday. Augusta County Sheriff Randall D Fisher said the emails slowly began arriving, but picked up in volume and vitriol after a national conservative radio personality discussed the lesson. "They started becoming very threatening, very profane," he said. "There was a lot of hate being spewed in these emails."

Some, Fisher said, had images of beheadings. Fisher said security has been assigned to Bond, the school's principal and teacher Cheryl LaPorte, who created the lesson. LaPorte is worried about herself and her family, Fisher said. The school closings came one week after the teacher gave Riverheads High School students an assignment that involved practicing calligraphy and writing a statement in Arabic - the

Continued on Page 13

ASSAD MAKES RARE VISIT TO CHURCH



DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and his wife Asma pose for a picture with a Syrian man as they attend a Christmas choral presentation at the Lady of Damascus Catholic Church in the Syrian capital on Friday. — AFP

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad attended Christmas choir preparations in an ancient church close to a frontline area in the capital Damascus where his army is engaged in heavy fighting with rebels, state media said yesterday. State television showed footage of Assad and his wife Asma making the visit overnight to the Notre Dame de Damas Church, where he was shown chatting to the choir. He took a seat near the altar and listened to a recital of Christmas poems in the main cathedral hall.

The surroundings of the church in the old part of the ancient capital were hit by mortar fire on Friday, officials said. The church is only 2 km away from Jobar, a neighbourhood of the rebel-held eastern Ghouta suburb of Damascus that has been the focus for months of heavy aerial bombardments and more recently Russian bombing that have left dozens of mostly civilian casualties. Rebels have also frequently targeted government-controlled residential parts of central Damascus.

Continued on Page 13



Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Daifallah Sherar and officials tour the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village.



KUWAIT: Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah is pictured in a group photo during the opening ceremony of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



A traditional items shop at the village.



A falconer trains his bird in preparation for a falconry competition to take place as part of the festival.



Vintage cars displayed at the village.



Citizens enjoy a day out at a camp in the village.



An artificial lake built at the village.

HERITAGE VILLAGE OPENS UNDER AMIR'S AEGIS

GCC HERITAGE FESTIVAL KICKS OFF

KUWAIT: The opening ceremony of Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village started yesterday under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The event was mainly attended by Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah who was received by Advisor at the Amiri Diwan and General Supervisor of the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village Mohammad Daifallah Sherar.

In a keynote speech, Sherar said the village had been established upon the directives of His Highness the Amir, appreciating the support of the GCC member countries for this heritage facility. He thanked His Highness the Amir for ordering the village to be reflective of all the GCC sons' amity and belonging, saying they share traditional and historical commonalities.

He also voiced thanks and gratitude to all those who contributed to the successful establishment of this village, especially the GCC countries which have set up impressive pavilions there, along with artists, craftsmen, salesmen and workers. The general supervisor further highly commended the supervisory committee of the village, who actually want nothing but only to serve their nation.

On the project, he elaborated that the village covers more than 25 kilometers and encompasses six separate GCC pavilions, a function hall, 11,000-meter lake, a bazaar, palaces, traditionally-designed gates, restaurants, cafes, sports fields, family tents, gardens and a mosque. He boasted the village as an eye-catching national traditional facility, which is named after His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The sponsors of the opening ceremony of the project were then honored.

GCC festival

Meanwhile, the 6th Gulf Popular Heritage Festival kicked off yesterday under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh



Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Advisor at the Amiri Diwan Mohammad Daifallah Sherar are seen during an awarding ceremony held as part of the event.

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The event is held at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Heritage Village amid huge official and popular attendance.

The event is driven by His Highness the Amir's keenness on offering Kuwaitis and GCC people an opportunity of enjoyment, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah told reporters after the opening.

He lauded the distinguished efforts by the festival's higher organizer committee and other government and private bodies that created the Village a landmark tourist site, a source of joy and delight for Kuwaitis and Gulf people. Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah underlined that the Gulf participation led to emergence of heritage museums to be opened in

January, reflecting unity among the Gulf states.

In a similar statement, head of the Kuwaiti Farmers Union Hadi Al-Watari said that their pavilion at the festival is ready to offer produce of Kuwaiti farms. He added that the Gulf Popular Heritage Festival bears a social and a national message, namely to disseminate love and brotherhood among the people of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.

Sheikh Ali Al-Jarrah, Advisor at Amiri Diwan Mohammed Daifallah Sherar, who is also the Village's General Supervisor, and deputy head of the higher organizer committee Sheikh Sabah Fahd Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, and senior guests toured the village and opened some of its facilities. — KUNA



A falconer kisses his falcon.



A police officer salutes the Kuwaiti flag.



Citizens sit near a traditional ship.



A duck swimming in the artificial lake.



A man prepares a traditional Omani sweet.

LIFTING FUEL SUBSIDIES, RATIONALIZING ENERGY WAITING OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

MP WARNS MINISTER OVER JAHRA'S 'SUSPICIOUS CAFÉS'

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A decision to lift fuel subsidies and apply the new water and electricity consumption prices is ready and only waiting for an official announcement, well-informed sources said. However, the sources stressed that the government was waiting for the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to decide on effective execution measures to monitor prices and prevent inflation once the decision is put into practice in order to avoid consequences similar to those after lifting diesel subsidies.

The sources added that the government asked the commerce ministry and other departments to give a clear vision about monitoring and accountability to prevent price increases at various retail outlets, restaurants and construction material stores.

Power subsidization
The Gulf Cooperation Council's (GCC)

electric grid authority's CEO Ahmed Ali Al-Ibrahim stressed that the annual total cost of subsidizing the power sector in GCC states was \$160 billion. Ibrahim explained that the sum includes subsidizing fuel and power.

Financial statement

Chairman of the parliament's budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad said that the committee discussed the finance ministry's final statement for the fiscal year 2014-2015 and the Audit Bureau's remarks on it. Abdulsamad said that the committee agreed to establish an internal auditing department at the finance ministry to follow up certain issues like not activating revenue stamps in several cases and lack of documents needed for paying retired Kuwait Airways employees the sum of KD 45 million. The committee also called for coordination with the foreign ministry concerning foreign loans and grants in addition

to classifying the government's overdue debts with various governmental bodies and deciding whether they were collectable. "Some of those debts go way before the Iraqi invasion", said sources familiar with the meeting. Moreover, the sources stressed that the committee stressed the importance of strictness in collecting all forms of tax revenues and fees for using government owned properties as a means to diversify the sources of income.

Private sector

Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh is expected to brief the parliament's public fund protection committee about a list of companies that are set to be sold to the private sector in accordance with Kuwaiti laws, such as Kuwait International Fair Company.

Jahra's cafés

MP Mohammed Tana Al-Enezi threatened to hold commerce ministry officials

accountable and grill the minister himself unless something was done to stop suspicious cafés in Jahra. "We have previously warned of vice inside some of those cafes and I was told that a cafe recently busted by the vice squad was not closed down," he said, urging the commerce ministry to act immediately.

Jaber Hospital

A delegation consisting of Ministry of Public Works (MPW) and the Supreme Planning Council is due to visit the Jaber Hospital project today to check work progress on the site.

Down Chemical

Well-informed governmental sources said that the government decided to refer the Dow Chemical case to the public prosecution in January once a legal brief was made about the case in view of the parliamentary decision in this regard.

Local spotlight

MARGINAL LABORERS



By Muna Al-Fuzai

muna@kuwaittimes.net

The subject of expatriate workers has become a major issue in the Gulf not only due to their increasing numbers, which is a defect in demographics, but because of the so-called employment of marginal workers. These marginal laborers pose a social, security and economic problem that threaten the safety of Gulf societies. This file must be opened and solved.

The problem of marginal laborers is serious. A lack of income would surely lead to the spread of crimes such as robberies and the proliferation of street vendors, as well as their possible involvement in the drug trade and prostitution. In addition to the social impact, these unemployed people will have a sense of hatred because they don't hold suitable jobs and cannot live like their peers in the community.

The reason behind this phenomenon in Kuwait is due to administrative corruption, lack of enforcement of laws and allowing some company owners to bring in thousands of people without real work contracts and leaving them in the country without an income and without shelter. It is natural that these people will tend to do any work, whether legal or not, to secure an income, which contributes to the spread of crimes. Another reason is related to visa traders, who could be owners of small businesses, but they are permitted to apply for the employment of a large number of workers, more than what they actually need. On the arrival of these workers to the country, they let them go to look for a job. Some of them find one, while some of them remain a security and economic burden.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor has taken a decision to reduce the number of marginal workers, which requires reducing expatriate workers by 100,000 every year to reduce their numbers to a million workers within 10 years. But this decision alone is not enough, and there must be practical ways to implement these decisions in humane ways. After all, these people are victims of visa traffickers, who are the real criminals.

Reducing the number of expatriate workers in Kuwait should not be an exclusionary policy by nationality, but according to the labor contract and type of work. Because I do not, for example, agree to prevent Pakistanis from entering the country as doctors, engineers or professionals, yet allow an Arab laborer to enter with no real work just because his country is not on the banned list. The law should emphasize that there is no place for marginal labor in the Kuwaiti labor market, regardless of nationality. Statistics issued by the General Directorate of Immigration on the number of expats in the country show that Indians are in the first place, with Egyptians second. Bangladeshis are ranked third, Filipinos fourth and in fifth place are Syrian workers.

There is a need to search for a mechanism through which the state can be sure of the professionalism of an applicant in order to eliminate the phenomenon of fraud in skilled professions, which is another reason for this huge increase in workers, causing a defect in the labor market.

The latest census of the population of Kuwait by the end of 2012 showed a total of 3.824 million people, of which expats amounted to 2.311 million, representing about 60.7 percent of the total population. The migration of expat workers to Gulf Council Countries is increasingly linked to projects and plans for economic development and the construction of infrastructure, which is normal, but state intervention is required now to confront the marginal ones. All the Gulf states including Kuwait will remain open to expatriates with practical skills, such as doctors, teachers, technicians and others who have real jobs, but not marginal workers.



KUWAIT: Speaker of the National Assembly of Tajikistan Shukurjon Zuhurov arrived yesterday on an official visit to the country. The Tajik senior lawmaker was received by National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim, head of the honorary delegation MP Saud Al-Harji, Tajik Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Zubaydov Zubaydullo Najotovic, and other officials. —KUNA



A concrete mixing transport truck pictured following an accident at Kabd Road yesterday.

SAUDI PRINCESS LAUDS KUWAITI EFFORTS TO SUPPORT THE DISABLED

KUWAIT: Kuwait has made significant strides in promoting the rights of people with disabilities, Chairwoman of the Saudi Society for Parents with Disabilities Princess Latifa Al-Saud said yesterday. After an inter-Arab meeting called for broader rights for females with visual impairment on Thursday, organized by the Institute of Female Development and Peace, Princess Latifa stressed the need of supporting visually impaired females.

Moreover, Chairwoman of Kuwait Institute of Female Development and Peace Kawthar Al-Jouan, said that the meeting shed light on some of the common social obstacles that people with impaired vision face. These people deal with tremendous difficulties in a range of issues from education to parenthood, she noted.

The institute strives to protect the rights of those with visual impairment, Jouan asserted. However, she underscored these efforts would be fruitful only with support from the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. Jouan thanked Arab partners who participated in the meeting, all of whom contributed with research papers and suggestions in a bid to bolster the rights of visually disabled people. The Institute of Female Development and Peace looks to implement these suggestion to bring the plight of visually impaired females to the forefront of prioritized issues, she said. —KUNA

MAN ARRESTED WITH 6,000 TRAMADOL PILLS

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A man was arrested on drug possession and trafficking charges in Khaitan yesterday. The Egyptian national was reportedly lured to a trap where he was arrested selling 250 tramadol pills to an undercover agent. Following his arrest, officers moved to the suspect's house where they found an additional 5,750 pills, bringing the total to 6,000. The suspect was taken to the Drug Control General Department and then to the Public Prosecution to face charges.

Driver injured

A truck driver was injured when his concrete mixing transport truck flipped over at Kabd Road yesterday morning. Firefighters rushed to the scene and helped the Asian man out of the vehicle, then handed him over to paramedics who transported him to the nearest medical facility. An investigation was opened to determine the circumstances behind the accident.



The suspect pictured with the drugs in this handout photo.



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met yesterday with directors and staff of Adan ambulance station. The governor lauded the station's efforts in providing assistance during national celebrations and other events held around the governorate.



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) recently concluded two training courses on basics of fire prevention and dealing with traffic accidents. Twenty nine trainees from the KFSD, Interior Ministry and other departments attended the courses.

CAPITAL MARKET ENDS FOURTH PHASE OF AWARENESS WORKSHOP

KUWAIT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has finalized fourth phase of its awareness workshop designed to promote its amended executive by-laws, effective since November 10th, in tune with issuance of the CMA constituent laws.

In a statement released yesterday, the authority reiterated that its five-stage awareness workshop—each phase lasts for one week—has been accompanied with issuing daily SMSs and statements on diverse social media means.

Participants in the workshops have discussed rules governing bonds and sukus (Islamic bonds), defining authorities and parties that issue them, types of sukus and various related trades and transactions. They have also tackled definition of the "best stocks," regulations on the parties that own and trade in these shares; profit assembling, voting rights, profit sharing, asset surplus, transfer rights, auctioning, sustainable liabilities, revelations, financial statements and relevant notifications.

The participating experts have also addressed other issues, such as companies of special target that issue securities; defining these companies as those established with aim of issuing bonds, sukus or other securities, as well as rules governing their establishment.

Other topics that were examined were financial safekeeping, regulations governing various related matters, companies' enlisting, amendments regarding Kuwaiti joint stock companies, namely those that get CMA approval for floating their stocks through public subscription, regulations on enlisting bonds and sukus of foreign source, enlisting of foreign funds, establishment of investment funds and collective enterprise.

The marathon awareness program

is scheduled to conclude on Monday, with the execution of the fifth and last part of the work. During the upcoming session, the experts will look into various other regulations for the financial market, trades and transactions.

The CMA shed extensive light on the activity, which had gotten underway by addressing topics such as proportions of sales and purchase by the

shares in investment portfolios or e-accounts, regulations of securities' transactions and times for banning operations, subscription floatation and other terms governing securities, conditions for enlisting and various forms of investment in the bourse. The Authority has affirmed that enactment of its bylaws constitutes a major event at the local finance market.



KUWAIT: A scene from a workshop organized by the Capital Market Authority to promote amended executive by-laws. —KUNA

"party in control at the listed companies," ceiling of sell-offs or purchases, durations, revelations' terms for traded shares through affiliate companies.

As to the second workshop, it tackled general regulations regarding revelations, transparency terms for the listed companies, rules for the board meetings during trading and mechanisms of posting information on the internet. The third one dealt with interests' disclosure, voting with respect of

The workshop agenda included clients' funds and assets, matching records with accounts, defining measures in defaulting cases, terms of contracts and accords between the client and the licensed individual, type and objective of the portfolio, fees and commissions, work ethics, types of clients, provisions governing compulsory acquisitions, duration for assembling stocks and rules for voluntary acquisitions. —KUNA



Ooredoo Kuwait CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani speaks at the panel.

OOREDOO KUWAIT CEO SPEAKS AT TELECOM REVIEW SUMMIT IN DUBAI

OOREDOO VOLUNTEERS PROGRAM WINS AWARD

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani, stressed on the importance of customer satisfaction and experience on an ICT Leadership Panel, which took place in Dubai on December 13th, 2015. Sitting alongside twelve of the regions' leading innovators, he described the company's vision and strategy for deploying high speed LTE mobile infrastructure in Kuwait and how this has helped Ooredoo Kuwait surprise and delight customers across the country.

Optimum experience

Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani, said: "Ensuring an optimum customer experience is at the heart of everything that we do. Kuwait is a very sophisticated and competitive market, and our customers are aware of the latest trends in technology. This is why we study the latest trends in the global telecommunication to ensure giving our customers the best and latest services and technologies."

He added: "When we launched the first LTE+ network in Kuwait last year - providing the fastest mobile data with the highest quality and the most efficient cost - we took care to deploy the right technologies at the right time and we have benefited from this approach"

Ooredoo Kuwait's data services are amongst the fastest growing in the region and traffic has grown by over 600% since the introduction of LTE. 'Data services' now account for a strategic proportion of Ooredoo Kuwait's overall sales and is having a positive ripple effect on data-hungry device sales such as smart devices and tablets. The panel was moderated by Ghazi Atallah, Managing Director at consultancy firm NexGen, who specializes in helping telecommunications service providers and Smart Cities realize business value out of their technology investments.

In addition to participating in a leadership panel discussion on Digital transformation, Ooredoo Kuwait's CEO also accepted the Telecom Review Excellence Award for "Best CSR Program" from the CEO of Trace Media International, Toni Eid, for Ooredoo's Ooredoo's Volunteer Program, which attracted more than 800 volunteers across Kuwait last summer. The award was presented at a gala event held at the Intercontinental Festival City Hotel in Dubai, following the summit, in front of hundreds of officials from the telecommunications and ICT industry.

Volunteerism culture

Commenting on the recognition Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani, said: "I am so grateful to receive this award,

which I dedicate to our 800 volunteers, our partners at the Kuwait Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Ministry of Youth, Kuwaiti Red Crescent, and our own team who worked so hard on this initiative. We feel responsible towards the youth segment, and we wanted from this initiative to help in developing a culture that of volunteerism in this important segment."

Ooredoo Kuwait launched the Ooredoo Volunteer Program alongside Kuwait's Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, the Ministry of Youth and Kuwaiti Red Crescent, in 2015. The Program offers professional training to young Kuwaitis with the aim of enhancing the impact of volunteers contributing to good causes in the country.

"This year's award winners represent the absolute best in our industry and we are very proud to honor these winners with such a distinguished award," said Toni Eid, CEO of Trace Media International and founder of Telecom REVIEW series.

This is the second time that Ooredoo Kuwait's Volunteer Program has been recognized at a regional telecoms ceremony. It was previously shortlisted at the Comms MEA Awards, which also took place in Dubai. This and other initiatives reflect the company's community spirit and corporate values.

Commenting on the gathering of industry leaders, Jeff Seal, Managing Partner of Telecom Review North America noted, "Once again Telecom Review has brought together the leaders of the ICT/Telecom industry from around the world for the most anticipated executive networking event of the year. We look forward to hosting the world's industry leaders at next year's event."

Best gathering

The Telecom Review Summit is organized by Trace Media and is now in its sixth year. The conference promotes itself as the region's best and largest gathering of high level executives of ICT from around the region, and around the world. Trace Media also publishes Telecom Review, the ICT industry's premier journal in the region.

Other speakers at the Telecom Review Summit included the CEOs of the Etisalat Group, Du, Ooredoo Oman as well as the senior representatives from PCCW, Qualcomm, Huawei, Google, Ericsson and the Special Envoy of the International Telecommunications Union's Broadband Commission, Suvu Linden.

The Telecom Review Summit is a one-day conference and took place at the Intercontinental Hotel Festival City, Dubai-UAE. For more information please visit <http://www.telecomreview.com/summit/summit-2015/>.



Ooredoo Kuwait CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani receives the award.



Ooredoo Kuwait CEO and General Manager Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani poses with the award.

AMBASSADOR ANNOUNCES MEDIA TRIP TO SHARM EL-SHEIKH

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atef announced that the initiative 'Egypt is Safe' launched by a member of the Egyptian community in Kuwait supports and promotes the tourism sector in Egypt. During a press conference last Thursday at the Egyptian Embassy, Atef announced that the initiative includes a visit to Sharm El-Sheikh, organized by the embassy in coordination with the Ministry of Tourism in Egypt and EgyptAir, by a number of official Kuwaiti personalities and the media, led by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

"The trip to Sharm el-Sheikh will take place from December 23 to 26 with a large number of Kuwaiti journalists as part of the 'Egypt is Safe' initiative by Hossam Imam, a member of the Egyptian community in Kuwait," he said. Atef said that the number of tourists from Kuwait to Egypt in the 10 months of this year reached 118,000, an increase of 23 percent, noting that Kuwaiti tourists are one of the most important tourist arrivals to the country. "Kuwait is one of the most important countries supporting Egyptian tourism," he said, hailing Sheikh Salman for visiting the Heritage Village in Sharm El-Sheikh as part of Kuwait's support for Egyptian tourism.

He revealed that the embassy will hold an Egyptian cultural tourism week in Kuwait in March 2016, in addition to a number of other cultural events in the same year on the occasion of the selection of Kuwait as a "Capital of Islamic Culture". Atef pointed out that "2010 was the most prosperous year for tourism, when Egypt received 14.4 million tourists, who booked 147 million tourist nights and revenues amounted to \$ 12.5 billion". He said Egypt enjoys



KUWAIT: Egyptian Ambassador to Kuwait Yasser Atef is seen at the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

security and safety, and it is taking additional security procedures at all Egyptian airports by competent authorities after the Russian plane crash, as well as raise the proportion of foreign security guards at the exits and entrances of airports.

Regional Director of Egyptair Fathi Nazez explained that the company has 29 weekly flights between Kuwait and Egypt, and it supports all efforts to promote tourism through a range of programs that contribute to reducing expenses. "There are two flights a week to Sharm el-Sheikh, every Saturday and Wednesday, and there is big demand and bookings after December 20," he said, noting that the airline flies from Kuwait with a number of comfortable planes including the Boeing 800-737.



Chairperson of Al-Nowair Initiative Sheikh Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah in a group photo with Gulf University for Science and Technology's team.

AL-NOWAIR TO HOLD 3RD ROUND OF CONFERENCE ON POSITIVE THINKING

KUWAIT: Chairperson of Al-Nowair Initiative Sheikh Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah announced signing a memorandum of understanding with the Gulf University for Science and Technology to hold the third chapter of the convention, "think, live and work positively" in April.

Sheikha Intisar said that the university would host, for the second time, the activity, which is aimed at promoting peoples' positive thinking and approach as well as means of accomplishing objectives in a positive fashion.

The convention tackles, she added, interesting issues such as ways of establishing "excellent relationships, managing time soundly, turning conflicts at work" into something positive and how to live happily."

Sheikha Intisar while noting that Al-Nowair Initiative is the sole activity of such kind in the whole Middle East, said Harvard University conducted studies proving that looking at life from a positive perspective is an individual option. "The matter is very simple but very much inspiring for sound living," she said. The conference would be held on April 22-24. - KUNA



KUWAIT: Chairperson of Al-Nowair Initiative Sheikh Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah signs the memorandum of understanding with Gulf University for Science and Technology. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

'HEADING GLOBAL 2016' BASED ON AMIR'S VIEW

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) is organizing an event titled 'Heading Global 2016' as part of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's view of bolstering competitiveness of Kuwait's economy to develop the country into a financial hub, spokesperson Fatma Al-Azmi said yesterday.

The PAAET is hard at work preparing for the event which is slated for November 2016, Azmi added. It will mainly address knowledge economy. Numerous academics and specialists, both Kuwaitis and foreigners, will take part in the conference, she said. It is part of

the PAAET vital role for serving the society and pushing ahead the wheel of development as a grand academic institution concerned with causes of the nation, Azmi stressed.

PAAET aims to put forward issues that are likely to help realize sustainable development and the strategic goals of national plans as well as boosting scientific research through the use of technology. Azmi pointed to the accelerating changes introduced to the economic and business theories almost on daily basis, and the effect on all aspects of life. — KUNA



Fatma Al-Azmi

GULF BANK TO PARTICIPATE IN JUDGE'S PANEL AT AUM'S CAPSTONE BUSINESS PROJECT COMPETITION

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank will take part in the American University of the Middle East's (AUM) Capstone Business Project Competition, scheduled to take place on Monday, 21 December 2015 from 10:00 am - 3:00 pm. Kevin Smith, Chief Financial Officer at Gulf Bank, will be among the senior panel of judges for this competition.

AUM's Capstone Competition will include around 30 groups of five students from all business majors, who have developed unique business ideas. Each group will present their project,

which should include a full study on starting their business including: A financial study; a marketing plan; a human resources component addressing compensation plans and recruitment procedures; as well as other details pertaining to their business plan. During the competition, the judges will choose the best five groups out of the 30 participating in the competition. One winning team will be awarded an internship at Gulf Bank.

Gulf Bank will be the only bank at the event. Also attending

the event on behalf of the Bank will be Barry Stokes, Assistant General Manager for Human Resources, and Laila Al-Qatami, Assistant General Manager for External Communications.

Capstone projects are important because they require students to use the knowledge and research skills they've gained over their education to solve real-world business problems or draft a business plan for an entrepreneurial effort. They also equip students with a hands-on opportunity to build leadership and use problem-solving skills. Capstone project presen-

tations are the final step in the Capstone process. The process begins when students first submit their proposals to the faculty mentors. Once their topic is approved, they begin their research and data gathering for their final written presentations. Then, they present their work to a panel of judges.

Gulf Bank is happy to be part of the competition this year and looks forward to the event. Gulf Bank is strongly committed to supporting youth events and initiatives and doing its part to help empower the next generation of Kuwaitis.

E-NEWSPAPER CAMPAIGNS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS CITIZENS' RIGHTS

KUWAIT: The Alamal Voluntary Electronic Newspaper Group, which mainly targets people of special challenges and covers their issues, has launched a campaign dubbed 'tara egdar' (sure I can) aimed at demonstrating support for this segment of the Kuwaiti community on long term basis.

The media group founder, Abdullah Al-Shemhari, said in an interview with Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) that the campaign aims at supporting people of special needs, particularly in cases where their rights are breached or their special facilities are exploited, occupied or tampered with by the others. The handicapped rights should be safeguarded as stipulated by Kuwait Constitution and the laws, said Shemhari, calling for harshest possible penalties against violators. The relevant laws must be enforced to the letter, so that the disabled can practice their activities freely and without any harassment, he stressed.

Up to 150 eminent figures, including the parliament speaker, the information minister and Al-Farwaniyah governor, have taken part in the campaign, with the intention to aid this seg-

ment of the society and nudge the concerned officials shoulder their responsibilities in this respect.

The campaign, due to proceed till end of this month, has grouped a large number of people of special challenges, their families, activists, supporters, art and sports celebrities, he said, adding that it also aims at supporting the families and encouraging them demonstrate skills and talents of their dear ones.

Alamal electronic newspaper was founded in 2009 with aim of serving this segment and aiding them to be as able as other citizens in serving the society. The newspaper was honored by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah with Al-Subah Award (first place) in 2009. It was also honored with the Diamond Award, presented by Burgan Bank as the best voluntary group that serves people with special needs in 2011. It came in third place in the best electronic containment in Kuwait electronic Award by the Kuwait Center for the Advancement of Science in 2012. In the same year, it received the Sharjah Award for voluntary work as the best voluntary group in the Arab world. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) celebrated the graduation of employees who successfully underwent training programs organized recently by the Institute of Banking Studies.



NEW DIMENSION FOR YOUR NEXT VISIT...
CROWNE PLAZA KUWAIT AL THURAYA CITY
IS NOW OPEN



#AlThurayaCity

20 DECEMBER 2015



CROWNE PLAZA
KUWAIT AL THURAYA CITY

التحسس

Al-Qabas

THEIR DONATIONS AND OUR DONATIONS

By Ahmad Al-Sarraf

What comes to mind when hearing the name Mark Zuckerberg? May be nothing - it is even difficult to pronounce it, much less remember it! But it may tell us about the religion or identity of its holder, and if we met him at a doctor's clinic and noticed the Jewish kippa which he wears on his head, we would avoid talking to or even get close to him, especially since he seems unlikable with his red hair and childish look, that does not tell that he is 30.

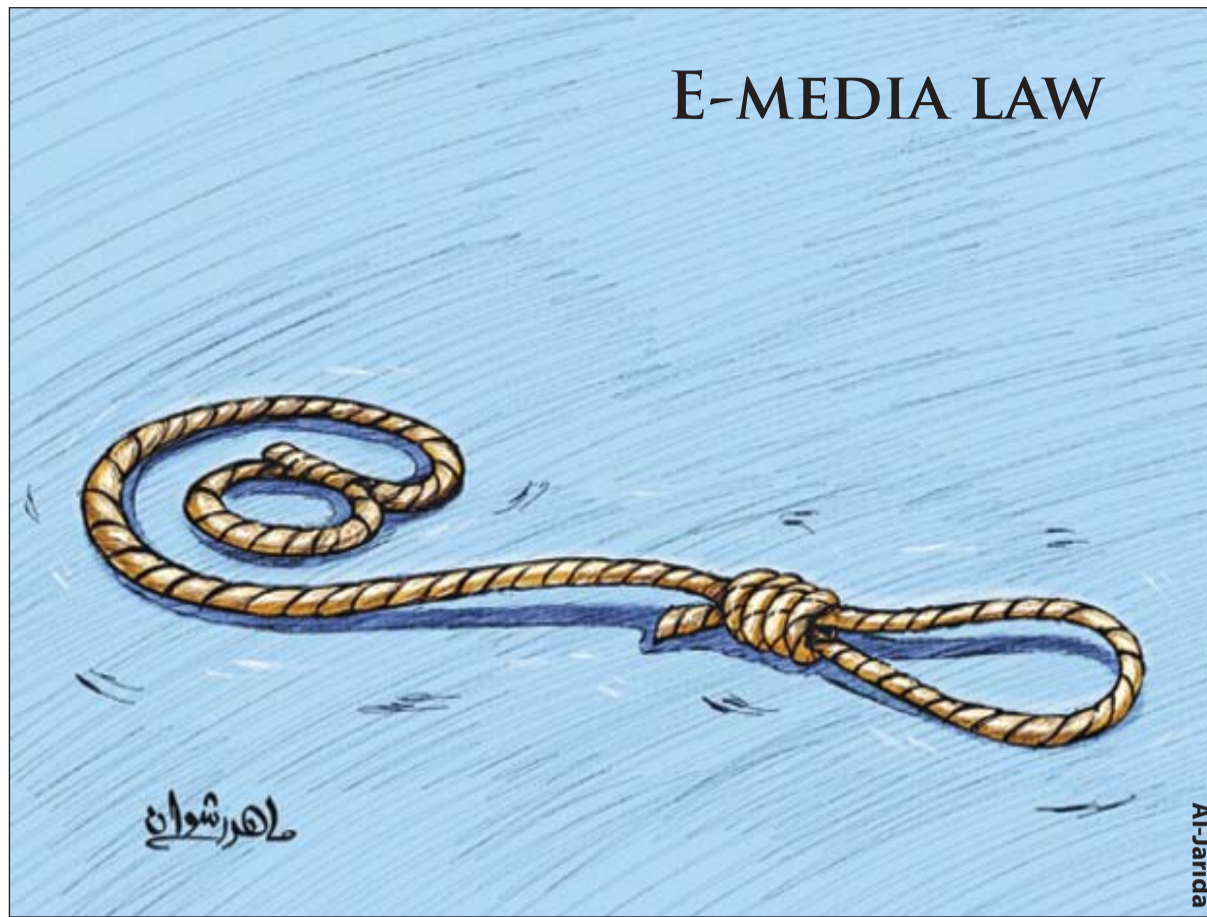
The reason for our avoidance of him goes back mostly to our upbringing that taught us the hatred of Jews and rejecting mixing with them, and being cautious because they are backstabbers, have a special odor and strange rituals. They are lowly, misers and hate us and want us to die, so if they catch us, they would eat us, and if any of them is caught by the "braves of Daesh" or "Qaeda", his fate will be definite death, not only because he is a Jew, but because he is also an American, rich and corrupt.

Mark Zuckerberg is one of the founders of Facebook and its CEO. It is a company that was founded in California 11 years ago and has 15,000 employees, and does not have many buildings, assets or vehicles, and despite this its market value is between \$230 billion and \$250 billion! This "distasteful Jew" who does not mean anything and is hated by most of us due to our upbringing, exposed with a stroke of a pen our faults and our bragging that we are the best of people, and others are only a bunch of people and grandchildren of monkeys and pigs, who only deserve severing their necks, by his large donation, while he is only 30, of 99 percent of his shares of Facebook for charity.

This represents more than \$40 billion, and a large part of this amount will be spent on medicine research for many diseases our people are suffering from, and we will be among the largest beneficiaries from his donation, and despite this we will pray for his death and demise! The donation of this Jewish youth was not liked by many of the psychologically sick among us, and they said the donation is really for his charity establishment, which will benefit from the shares' returns, and by this he will avoid paying any income tax on his profits! And that his charity establishment is not totally charitable. Rather it has other activities, and it decides the names of areas that may benefit from its donations, and that may be used for the establishment's private matters.

These, of course, are silly justifications, and even if they are true, it is enough for the man to spend one billion out of his own money to be a distinguished person that deserves all respect from us. The stand of some of us is strange, who are not satisfied by not donating anything for charity, and if they do, it will be for a terrorist organization. Rather they attack and criticize someone who donates, just because he is a Jew.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



E-MEDIA LAW

النواب

Al-Anbaa

PRINCE OF UPPER EGYPT

By Sami Al-Nisf

On days like these one hundred years ago, critical incidents took place and changed the history of the Egyptian ruling family at that time, and later changed that of Egypt and the entire region as it directly brought a weak king - King Farouq - to the throne. And when the US found him incapable of stopping regional communist expansion, Kermit Roosevelt and Miles Copeland arranged the July 23, 1952 military coup.

In 1914, Great Britain had dismissed the governor of Egypt, Khedive Abbas II Hilmi, the son of Khedive Ismael, who had been also deposed for taking the Turks' side during World War I and replaced Sultan Hussein Kamel who died in 1917. Kamel's crown prince and son, Prince Kamal El-Din Hussein, rejected the throne while Egypt was still under British mandate, thinking that Turkey would win the war. His brother prince Ahmed Fouad was appointed Sultan, then King of Egypt and Sudan. This lasted till his death in 1936 and his son Farouq did not take the throne until 1937 because he was still a minor then.

In the summer of 1952, a coup took place and the US prevented Britain from foiling it by its troops quartered in the Suez Canal. King Farouq gave up his throne to his baby son, Prince Ahmed Fouad, but took him along in exile in Europe, which made the revolution's leading council offer the throne of Egypt and Sudan to Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who arrived in Egypt and was received at the airport as a king by President Mohammed Naguib and his PM Gamal Abdul Nasser.

The sheikh also saw off King Idris Al-Sanoussi of Libya alone at the airport on concluding a visit to Egypt in 1953. It is said that Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber apologized and refused the throne on advice from the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, who foresaw the major challenges Egypt was about to face, such as expelling the British from the Suez Canal and the possibility of Sudan's separation. Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber was not into collisions and confrontations in nature.

In June 1953, the revolution council scrapped the monarchy and appointed Mohammed Naguib as the first president (though school history books later said that Nasser was the first president). In Nov 1954, the revolution council dismissed Naguib after he saw off the king of Saudi Arabia, who had come to bridge the gaps amongst the officers. Thus, the presidency remained vacant from 1954 to 1956 when Nasser was elected president by 99.99 percent of the votes; a magical percentage that recurred with other Arab revolutions and was only broken by Saddam Hussein who won 100 percent of the votes of the living and the dead before he was toppled. During his life, King Farouq held many titles acquired by powers of the royal decision number 71/1933 that stated that the Crown Prince Farouq would be known as the Prince of Upper Egypt, which mimics British norms in naming the crown prince as the 'Prince of Wales'. Farouq came to the throne at the age of 18 and gave it up at the age of 32, while Nasser came to power at the age of 32 and passed away while in office at the age of 50.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

النواب

Al-Anbaa

THAT IS HOW WE GOT MARRIED

By Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi

Decades ago, particularly in the years before oil was struck in Kuwait, a man's mother and some of her female neighbors and relatives usually went to propose for a certain girl (kannah as we used to call her) on his behalf without even seeing her. A groom usually depended on the mother-led delegation's description of the bride and once he approved the selection, a dazza (some household items, presents and a dowry) was sent to the bride's house.

It is noteworthy to mention that the dowry never exceeded 100 rupees (the equivalent of KD 7 at that time's exchange rate). In this regard, I recall that the dowry paid for a well-known Kuwaiti lady, Fatima Hussein, was only a quarter dinar. After that, the marriage contract was usually signed on a Friday evening at a mosque or at the husband's house. On the wedding's evening, male family and friends gathered at the mosque to pray Isha prayers, then celebrate on the way to the bride's house in a parade amidst

women's zaghroutas (traditional ululations) and men beating drums, especially if the groom was a sailor.

The groom then stayed as a guest at his bride's house for one whole week, during which he had breakfast and lunch with them and dinner with his family. During this week, the bride's family allocated a special housemaid (locally known as hawwafa) to serve the groom.

Once the first week was over, the bride was taken in a celebratory march to her permanent residence at her husband's house. This process was known as tehwal (shifting or transfer). Three days after tehwal, the groom's mother and female relatives visited the bride's family on the day known as 'thaleth' (third).

Three days later, the bride's mother repaid the visit on the 'thuwaithe' day. Oh, that was how we used to get married without seeing our wives until the wedding day. We then got used to them and they became the best mothers, giving birth to our nation's glory!

— Translated by Kuwait Times



ABK RECEIVES 'BEST CALL CENTER' AWARD FROM BANKER MIDDLE EAST

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently won the 'Best Call Center' award from Banker Middle East, one of the region's leading banking industry magazines. The award, which was won in recognition of the exceptional customer service of the Bank's main Call Center, was received by Sawzan Ali, Senior Manager Alternative Delivery Channels and Faisal Al-Tamimi, Assistant Manager Call Center.

Commenting on this award, Othman Tawfiqi, AGM Retail Banking Division said, "We are very pleased to receive the 'Best Call Center' award from Banker Middle East.

This year we have been recognized on a number of occasions with awards, and we are very proud of these achievements. Such recognition serves as a strong motivator for every member of the ABK staff especially, in this case, our Call Center team".

ABK's commitment to excellence, simplicity and transparency and integrity is demonstrated through such awards and is supported by the Bank's 'Simpler Banking' strategy, which focuses on presenting customers with banking solutions that make their experience as simple and easy as possible.

PUBLIC PROSECUTOR DETAINS SIX EMPLOYEES FOR FINGERPRINT FORGERY

KUWAIT: Following initial investigations, the public prosecutor decided to detain six suspects charged with fingerprint forgery for 10 days pending further investigations. The public prosecutor also referred the suspects to the central prison and asked forensic experts to examine the plastic fingerprints they had been using and to report accordingly.

Informed sources said that the public prosecution would summon about 350

Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) employees who had benefited from the fake fingerprints and allegedly had the suspects sign in and out on their behalf. Moreover, the sources said that the prosecution was now examining CCTV cameras showing the suspects signing in and out on behalf of others. "Both the suspects and the beneficiaries will be legally held accountable and the sums they unlawfully received will be recovered," explained the sources. — Al-Jarida

FEMALE EMPLOYEES PREFER LOWER WAGES TO WORKING WITH MALES

KUWAIT: Many families still insist that their employed female members do not mingle with male colleagues at work. Many of them with graduate and postgraduate degrees are deprived of special cadres and allowances because they prefer working in departments that require lower degrees and qualifications simply because they prefer not to deal with male colleagues or members of the public.

One of such female employees stressed that men seek lawmakers' and senior officials' waste to have their daughters or wives transferred to male-

free departments or ones where they would not have to deal with male members of the public for transactions.

A female employee at the Ministry of Interior, working at an archive department said that although she holds a degree in accounting, she did not get the accountants' cadre because her husband refused having her work at the treasury department to avoid dealing with men. "My senior offered to retain my name at the treasury so as not to lose the cadre, but I refused because this would be haram", she underlined.

Crime

Report

Girl escapes family seeking 'more freedom'

KUWAIT: A female citizen, who had been reported missing, was recently arrested at a Salmiya cafe, said security sources. Case papers indicate that a citizen recently informed Mubarak Al-Kabeer police that his daughter had fled the house at night and had not been answering her mobile phone. Tracking her phone's signal, police used GPS technology to locate the girl in a Salmiya cafe, where they arrested and returned her to her family. The girl said that she fled her family's house seeking 'more freedom'.

Fatal accidents

An Indian man was instantly killed while two others were severely injured when their vehicle lost balance and it turned turtle along Mina Abdullah road. A case was filed to investigate the circumstances behind the accident. Meanwhile, a man was killed while four others were injured when their vehicle lost balance and rolled over several times along Subbiya highway. All attempts to save the deceased's life at Jahra Hospital's intensive care unit failed.

Murderer speaks out

In an interview with Kuwait Arabic daily Al-Anbaa, an Asian man accused of murdering an Afghan national at his sponsor's house in Saaed Al-Abdullah two months ago said that he did not mean to kill the victim. He explained that they had a financial dispute as he had given him KD 3,000 to invest it for him, but he neither returned the money nor returned his inquiry calls. "We argued and a knife happened to be on the scene, so I used it and stabbed him three times. I also cut myself in the fight," he said.

Delivery man mugged

A delivery man was recently assaulted by two young men in Jahra, where they stabbed him to the back and stole KD 120 from him, said security sources. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Break-in and robbery

A citizen reported that after returning from a family visit, he found that unidentified robbers had broken into his apartment in Salmiya and stolen some jewelry and KD 3,800 in cash. Meanwhile, a female citizen reported that an unknown person smashed her vehicle's glass while it was parked outside a wedding hall in Sabahiya and stole her purse with KD 700, a valuable diamond ring, two smart phones, civil IDs and credit cards inside. Cases were filed.

Fugitive caught

A citizen wanted in eight cases including kidnapping a minor and fraud, was recently arrested in Fintas, said security sources. Case papers indicate that patrol officers had pulled the man over when they found him driving a vehicle that carried no license plates. Officers had to chase the suspect with their patrol vehicle and force him to stop. On checking the man's identity, policemen found out that he had been wanted.

Suspected scam

A citizen reported to police that he had agreed with a person who claimed he wanted to start a business with him, and gave him KD 6,000 to import ladies' gowns from India within two weeks. The complainant said that the Indian man started avoiding him after the two weeks' period ended and had not been returning his calls. A case was filed and the suspect is being summoned for further investigations.

Drugs, liquor possession

A GCC national was recently arrested in Salmiya with possession of myth and homebrewed liquor, said security sources, noting that police patrol officers suspected the man who was walking bare-footed and holding a co-op plastic bag with him.

LINKING MGRP TO EXITS DETECTS FAKE EMPLOYEES

KUWAIT: The Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) recently found that considerable numbers of citizens were involved in fake employment with various companies, while they actually lived abroad. In this regard, informed sources said that the cases were discovered through inspections and exchanging information with the interior ministry, namely the border exists department, which showed that considerable numbers of citizens were registered in private sector companies and were paid, while exit records showed they were out of the country.

The sources added that MGRP was currently making lists of the violating citizens and companies pending referring them to the public prosecution in a bid to fight fake employment. Moreover, the sources explained that MGRP was currently in process of linking its systems to those of Kuwait University, various private universities and Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) institutes to prevent some students' manipulation of public funds by getting student allowances while at the same time being paid as employees in some private sector companies. — Al-Jarida



The remains of a vehicle are seen following a fatal accident in Kuwait earlier this year.

90,000 ACCIDENTS, 375 KILLED IN ROAD ACCIDENTS IN 2015

KUWAIT: Once more, the Interior Ministry warned of the increasing numbers of road accident victims, noting that 375 citizens and expats had so far been killed in over 90,000

road accidents since the beginning of 2015. Well-informed security sources stressed that most victims were young people and that most of the accidents happened because some-

one was not paying enough attention. The sources added that 35 percent of the victims were citizens aged 21-30, followed by a larger number in the age category of 31-40. — Al-Qabas



Cameron cornered on EU migrants as referendum looms

TALEBAN REJECTS ISLAMIC STATE LEADER'S CLAIM TO BE 'CALIPH'



YUBDO: People mourn the death of Dinka Chala who was shot dead by the Ethiopian forces in the Yubdo Village, about 100 km from Addis Ababa in the Oromia region. Dinka Chala was accused of protesting, but his family says he was not involved. — AFP

AT LEAST 75 KILLED IN ETHIOPIA PROTESTS

SECURITY FORCES SHOOT DOZENS OF PROTESTERS IN SHEWA

NAIROBI: At least 75 people have been killed during weeks of protests in Ethiopia which have seen soldiers and police firing on demonstrators, Human Rights Watch said yesterday. "Police and military forces have fired on demonstrations, killing at least 75 protesters and wounding many others, according to activists," HRW said in a statement. Rights groups have repeatedly criticized Ethiopia's use of anti-terrorism legislation to stifle peaceful dissent, with Washington expressing concern over the crackdown and urging Addis Ababa to employ restraint.

There was no immediate response from Ethiopian government, which has previously put the toll at five dead. Government spokesman Getachew Reda said the "peaceful demonstrations" that began last month had escalated into violence, accusing protesters of "terrorizing the civilians." The protests began in November when students opposed government proposals to take over territory in several towns in the Oromia region, sparking fears that Addis Ababa was looking to grab

land traditionally occupied by the Oromo people, the country's largest ethnic group. Demonstrations have taken place in the towns of Haramaya, Jarso, Walliso and Robe among others.

'Dozens' shot

"Human Rights Watch received credible reports that security forces shot dozens of protesters in Shewa and Wollega zones, west of Addis Ababa, in early December," HRW added. "Several people described seeing security forces in the town of Walliso, 100 kilometers southwest of Addis Ababa, shoot into crowds of protesters in December, leaving bodies lying in the street." HRW also said "numerous witnesses" described how "security forces beat and arrested protesters, often directly from their homes at night."

Pictures have appeared on social media, apparently showing bloodied protesters and armed police firing tear gas at student demonstrators. "The Ethiopian government's response to the Oromia protests has resulted

in scores dead and a rapidly rising risk of greater bloodshed," HRW's Leslie Lefkow said. "The government's labeling of largely peaceful protesters as 'terrorists' and deploying military forces is a very dangerous escalation of this volatile situation." With at least 27 million people, Oromia is the most populous of the country's federal states and has its own language, Oromo, distinct from Ethiopia's official Amharic language.

US 'deeply concerned'

In a statement issued yesterday, which did not directly refer to the HRW figures, Washington expressed grave concern over the unrest. "The United States is deeply concerned by the recent clashes in the Oromia region of Ethiopia that reportedly have resulted in the deaths of numerous protesters," said the State Department. "We urge the government of Ethiopia to permit peaceful protest and commit to a constructive dialogue to address legitimate grievances," it said, also urging protesters "to refrain from violence and to be

open to dialogue." Writing on Twitter on Friday, Washington's UN envoy Samantha Power spoke of "concerning rhetoric" from Ethiopia's prime minister, insisting the government "must use restraint" in its response to the Oromo protests.

Britain's Foreign Office also expressed concern over the protests in a statement issued on Friday, noting that some had "turned violent, resulting in casualties." "There have been heavy clashes including gunfire between protesters and security forces" on December 17, it said, warning Britons against all but essential travel to western and southwestern parts of Oromia. Some foreign-owned commercial farms have been "looted and destroyed" in the protests near Debre Zeit, some 50 kilometers southeast of Addis Ababa, HRW said. HRW said the protests-and bloody crackdown-echoed protests in April and May 2014 when police were accused of opening fire and killing "dozens" of protesters. The government said eight people died in the 2014 unrest. — AFP

DEATH TOLL CLIMBS TO 41 AS PHILIPPINE FLOODS SPREAD

MANILA: Heavy rains pummeled the entire Philippines yesterday, flooding more areas as the government declared a "state of national calamity". The death toll after a week of devastating weather has risen to 41, according to confirmed reports from national and local disaster monitoring agencies. Poor farming communities in the main southern island of Mindanao were flooded Saturday after at least two rivers burst their banks, local disaster officials said. The storm, locally named Onyok, had weakened into a low pressure area after hitting land late Friday but continued to bring more rains to Mindanao and the central Visayas islands.

Cold monsoon winds blowing from the northeast brought rains to Luzon, the main northern island, where large farming communities have been submerged in mostly waist-deep floods from Typhoon Melor, which hit at the start of the week. Areas inundated by Melor have barely recovered from floods brought by Typhoon Koppu in October. "Almost the entire Philippines is experiencing rains. More floods are possible," state weather forecaster Robert Badrina said. "We expect the rains to peak today. The weather will start to improve tomorrow," he said. President Benigno Aquino ordered state agencies to "hasten the rescue recovery, relief and rehabilitation efforts" in a statement declaring a state of "nation-

al calamity".

The government will control prices of basic goods in affected areas, the statement read. The weather bureau issued a warning of up to 30 millimetres of rain per hour in the central islands of Cebu, Negros and Bohol, while residents were advised to be on alert for possible evacuation. The three Visayas islands, with a combined population of 7.4 million people, are home to major tourism, trading and agricultural hubs. Close to 10,000 people were evacuated from the poor farming region of Caraga in Mindanao before the latest storm. In Agusan del Sur province, large portions of the national highway were inundated after a nearby river burst its banks, regional civil defense officer Manuel Ochotorena said.

Another river in Davao del Norte province, roughly 100 kilometers away, also burst its banks, forcing residents out of their homes, provincial disaster officer Romulo Tagalo said. In Luzon, 140,000 people displaced by floods and landslides triggered by Melor remained in evacuation centers. The Philippines, a nation of 100 million, is battered by an average of 20 typhoons per year, many of them deadly. In 2013, Super Typhoon Haiyan wiped out entire fishing communities in the central islands, leaving 7,350 people dead or missing. — AFP

OBAMA ADMITS 'CHALLENGE' OF STOPPING ISLAMIC STATE

WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama admitted that "lone wolf" jihadist attacks present a vexing new security challenge Friday, even as he assured Americans the Islamic State group can be defeated. Obama capped a week in which he has tried repeatedly to reassure a jittery Americans that his administration can neutralize the terror threat, with an end-of-year press conference that only underscored the tough task ahead.

"It is very difficult for us to detect lone wolf plots," Obama acknowledged as officials continue to piece together how a couple shot 14 people dead at a party in California. "Despite the incredible vigilance and professionalism of all our law enforcement... you don't always see it." "This is a different kind of challenge than the sort that we had with an organization like Al-Qaeda," Obama said before leaving for San Bernardino, the site of the shooting, and on to Hawaii for Christmas. "Essentially, you have ISIL trying to encourage or induce somebody who may be prey to this kind of propaganda."

Obama is under intense pressure to quickly and decisively end a threat that may take years if not decades of military, security, diplomatic and economic effort to neutralize. Part of the puzzle, he said, was to end the brutal war in Syria that has created fertile soil for the Islamic State to grow. "Our view has been that you cannot bring peace to Syria, you cannot get an end to the civil war unless you have a government that is recognized as legitimate by a majority of that country. It will not happen."

President Bashar Al-Assad, Obama said, "is going to have to leave in order for the country to stop the bloodletting and for all the parties involved to be able to move forward in a non-sectarian way. He has lost legitimacy in the eyes of a

large majority of the country." Working with Assad against Islamic State-as suggested by Russia and Iran would make the United States "even more of a target for terrorist activity," he added. But even as Obama tried to prod one Middle Eastern leader toward the exit, he was left to defend previous US actions in the ever-more-volatile region.

Obama admitted "a failure on the part of the entire international community" in Libya, where the Islamic State now has a foothold. "I think that the United States has some accountability for not moving swiftly enough and underestimating the need to rebuild government there quickly," he said. "As a consequence, you now have a very bad situation." But from Egypt to Syria to Libya, Obama cautioned against "revisionist history" that blames the United States for creating instability by toppling regimes. "We didn't trigger the Arab Spring," he said pointing to regimes who failed to address the wishes of the people. In Libya, Muammar Gaddafi "had already lost legitimacy and control of his country," Obama said.

In Egypt "we did not depose Hosni Mubarak. Millions of Egyptians did, because of their dissatisfaction with the corruption and authoritarianism of the regime." During the press conference, Obama again made the case that closing the controversial Guantanamo prison would take a way one tool for Islamic State recruiters. He refused to rule out bypassing Congress in shutting the facility by executive order if needed, vowing to "steadily chip away" at the number of inmates being held there. "I'm not going to automatically assume that Congress says no," Obama said. "I think we can make a really strong argument." But he admitted, "it will be an uphill battle." — AFP

SHOOTING OF TEEN ATTACKERS SPARKS CONCERN AT ISRAELI USE OF FORCE

QALANDIYA: Palestinian mother Maleeha Awwad still cannot explain what happened the day her 14-year-old daughter stabbed a man with scissors and was shot dead by police. As far as she knew Hadeel had walked to school with her cousin Norhan, 16. Instead

the two girls went to Jerusalem's central market and carried out the attack. Nearly a month later, Israeli authorities finally released Hadeel's body on Friday to enable the family to bury her. "I still don't understand what happened," Awwad said at her home on the edge

of the Qalandiya refugee camp near Ramallah, shaking her head and close to tears.

The United Nations and human rights groups have voiced concern that Israeli security forces are responding to attacks with excessive force. The Israeli police officer who shot the teenagers has been placed under investigation—the first such probe since a wave of violence began on October 1. Security camera footage from the incident on November 23 appears to show the two girls in school uniform chasing a man with scissors before being shot.

Police said the girls had stabbed and lightly wounded a 70-year-old Palestinian nearby, apparently mistaking him for a Jew. The footage shows both girls shot and on the ground. The policeman runs back towards one of them—apparently Norhan—and opens fire despite her being curled in a ball. Norhan was seriously wounded, but survived and has been charged with attempted murder. Lawyers for the policeman have said he was concerned that the girls may have been wearing explosive belts. Suicide bombings were common during the second Palestinian intifada between 2000-2005, but have not occurred in the current unrest.

Split-second decisions

At least 120 Palestinians and 17 Israelis have been killed in over two months of stabbing, shooting and car-ramming attacks by

Palestinians, as well as clashes between Palestinian youths and Israeli soldiers. Over half of the Palestinians killed have been attackers. This week a UN spokeswoman voiced deep concern over the "unacceptable" wave of attacks, as well as "reports of excessive use of force by Israeli forces." "The response from Israeli security forces has resulted in alleged attacks, protesters and even bystanders being killed and injured," said Cecile Pouilly, spokeswoman for the UN human rights office.

Amnesty International's Philip Luther welcomed the probe by the justice ministry as a positive development but warned other cases did not appear to be getting the same treatment. "The fact that this is the first such investigation into killings by police since... October is deeply troubling, particularly given the strong indications that many Palestinians were killed when they were not posing an imminent threat to life or of serious injury," Luther said.

Earlier this year Luther accused Israel of carrying out "extrajudicial executions". The Israeli police dismissed the criticism. "What does Amnesty understand about split-second decisions that police officers have to make when there is a terrorist holding a 30-centimetre knife in front of their face, just about to cut their throat?" police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. "Each attack is different and each different scenario is a split-second reaction," he said when asked about the November shooting.

A deterrent?

The case has also turned the spotlight on a series of measures adopted by Israel to quell assaults, including the demolition of the homes of some attackers and withholding their bodies. Some politicians have also encouraged Israeli Jews to carry guns at all times. Critics say many of the suspects could be tasered and arrested—as was done this month in London when a man stabbed three people in a train station. Prominent Palestinian politician Hanan Ashrawi said Israel's reaction to attacks is worsening the situation. Israel's "shoot-to-kill" policy actually "creates more resentment, more anger and is a driving force behind individual cases of revenge," she said. "When you kill somebody's friend, cousin, sister... there are people who will go out and seek revenge," she added.

Hadeel's brother was shot in the head and killed two years ago during a protest against the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas has said that the surge of attacks since October was a reflection of anger at Israel's occupation and the failure of the peace process. Yoram Schweitzer, a former Israeli military counter-terrorism chief, agreed that the lack of progress in peace talks was a factor but said Palestinian assailants cannot escape responsibility. "The Palestinians should stop ramming and stabbing and inciting to kill Israelis. That is what the Palestinians should do," said Schweitzer, a senior research fellow at the Institute for National Security Studies. —AFP



WEST BANK: Palestinians stand next to a car, used by Palestinians in an attempted ramming attack against Israeli soldiers, in the Qalandiya refugee camp near the West Bank city of Ramallah. —AFP

FEARS OF NEW ISLAMIST THREAT EMERGE IN NORTHERN NIGERIA

DOZENS DEAD AS ARMY, RADICAL SHIITE GROUP CLASH

LAGOS: Nigeria, which is still battling Boko Haram militants, now risks unleashing a new Islamist threat after violent clashes between the army and a radical Shiite group, experts say. Though no official death toll was released, at least a dozen members of the Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) were killed in confrontations with the army during a religious procession last week in the northern city of Zaria. IMN leader Ibrahim Zakzaky was seriously wounded and arrested by the army while his number two was killed during the clashes.

The military was forced to put out a denial after rumors spread that Zakzaky's wife died in custody. The violence mirrors the bloody beginning of the Boko Haram insurrection in 2009, when the former leader of the Sunni militant group was executed in police custody and the sect took up arms against the Nigerian government. Nigeria's highest Muslim authority, the Sultan of Sokoto, on Monday urged the authorities to show "restraint." "Don't create a new Boko Haram," warned Alhaji Muhammad Sa'ad Abubakar in a statement.

"The past, with cataclysmic consequences that Nigeria is yet to recover from, should not be allowed to repeat itself," he added. Battling Boko Haram is a priority for Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari, who has vowed to end the insurgency that has claimed 17,000 lives. Boko Haram has shifted its strategy from raiding villages to relying on deadly bomb attacks in its quest to overthrow the government and create a hardline Islamist state in the north-east of the west African nation of some 170 million people.

Risk of escalation

Zakzaky, who founded IMN in the 1980s, has been monitored by Nigerian security forces for years on suspicion

that he is trying to create an independent Shiite state. As a defiant preacher in the late 1970s, he described the country as being run by thieves. "The IMN attracts impoverished Muslim youths by preaching defiance of Nigeria's secu-

lar authorities and offering a social infrastructure that is not provided by the state," said Malte Liewerscheidt, Africa analyst at Verisk Maplecroft, a research and investment firm.

"Like other Shiite movements

around the world, the IMN enjoys political and financial support from the Shia regime in Iran," Liewerscheidt said. The army says the headline rhetoric boiled over into violence in Zaria, with the Shiite worshippers allegedly attacking the convoy of army chief Yusuf Buratai—a claim denied by IMN. Soldiers attacked and destroyed a mosque, while Zakzaky was severely injured and his house was destroyed. The total toll of the clashes, which continued between soldiers and hundreds of Shiite faithful for two days, is unknown, but it is likely to amount to dozens of deaths, according to testimony gathered by AFP.

"Whilst the final death toll is unclear, there is no doubt there has been a substantial loss of life at the hands of the military," said M K Ibrahim, director of Amnesty International in Nigeria, who called for a "impartial investigation" into the Zaria events. "Since Nigeria's security forces are ill-equipped and trained to deal with riot control, the escalation of a local confrontation with the IMN was just a matter of time," said Liewerscheidt. "The risk of escalation will be compounded if the military response spirals out of control and if due process is ignored in the handling of Zakzaky and his followers who are in custody."

However, not everyone sees IMN as a nascent insurgency. "Nigeria's small Shiite minority is generally well integrated within Nigerian society," said Roddy Barclay, analyst at strategy firm Africa Practice. "It is important to note that Zakzaky's Shiite followers would find little affinity with Boko Haram's ultraconservative Sunni fighters," he said. "However, the personal cult around Sheikh Zakzaky has been a source of tension." "They are small in numbers and somewhat isolated as a grouping, limiting prospects for an emergent insurgency parallel to that of Boko Haram," said Barclay. —AFP



LAHORE: Pakistani Shiite Muslims carry placards of Ibrahim Zakzaky, a Nigerian Shiite radical who wants to set up an Islamic Republic, at a protest against the killing of Shiite Muslims in Pakistan and Nigeria. Hundreds of supporters of the pro-Iranian Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) marched through the streets of Kaduna's Unguwar Nupawa area, calling for the release of Sheikh Ibrahim Zakzaky, who has been detained by the military since December 13. —AFP

'RWANDA VOTE' GRANTS KAGAME EXTRA TERMS

KIGALI: Rwanda has overwhelmingly voted to change the constitution to allow President Paul Kagame to potentially rule until 2034, election officials said yesterday citing partial referendum results. "We have seen the will of the people. It's clear that what the people want, they can achieve," said National Electoral Commission chief Kalisa Mbanda, announcing 98.1 percent had voted "yes" with preliminary results in from some 70 percent of the country.

"They called for the change of the constitution and they have made it," the pro-government New Times newspaper quoted him as saying. Kagame, 58, could now be in power potentially for another 17 years. "What is happening is the people's choice," he told reporters after casting his vote on Friday. The amendment allows Kagame to run for a third seven-year term in 2017, at the end of which the new rules take effect and he will be eligible to run for a further two five-year terms. The United States and European Union have denounced the proposed amendments as undermining democracy in the central African country.

Opposition 'won't give up'

On Friday, the EU delegation in Kigali said there had been a lack of "sufficient time and space for debate" on the issue, with the date for the referendum only announced on December 8 and the draft of the changes "only published publicly less than one day ahead of the vote." "The short time between the announcement and the holding of the referendum left little or no opportunity for all parties to present their arguments," the EU said. Kagame has run Rwanda since his ethnic Tutsi rebel army, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF), ended a 1994 genocide by extremists from the Hutu majority, when an estimated 800,000 people were massacred, the vast majority of them Tutsis.

The issue of long-serving rulers clinging to power

has caused turmoil in Africa, where some leaders have been at the helm for decades. Kigali's pro-government New Times newspaper said in an editorial yesterday that Rwandans had spoken out "regardless of the lame attempts to pour water on the process by Rwanda's closest development partners" in an allusion to US and European criticism.

The country's tiny opposition Green Party also protested that it was impossible to organize a counter campaign at such short notice. "The opposition would have won," Green party president

Frank Habineza said in a statement yesterday, adding the party "will not give up on the struggle to make Rwanda a vibrant democracy." Some Rwandans said they had boycotted the vote as the outcome was already known. Carina Tertsakian, of Human Rights Watch (HRW), noted that after "years of government intimidation... open expressions of dissent are rare" and that approval of the referendum was no surprise. "As one man told us: It would be stupid to vote 'no' because it won't change anything," she added. —AFP



KIGALI: A poll agent removes ballot papers for counting in an election office in Kigali. —AFP



Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally on Dec 16, 2015 in Mesa, Arizona. —AP

REPUBLICAN DONOR ADELSON, TRUMP 'ALIGNING' FOR ISRAEL

MACAU: Top Republican Party donor Sheldon Adelson said on Friday he met presidential candidate Donald Trump earlier this week and that the two American billionaires broached the issue at the heart of Adelson's political agenda: support for Israel. While the mega donor didn't disclose his degree of backing for the front-runner in the race for the Republican nomination, he did say he found Trump to be "very charming" and called his standing in the crowded candidate field "unheard of." "It was very nice," the gambling tycoon said in a rare interview in Macau when asked if he had met Trump, who leads in opinion polls of Republican voters. "He was very charming."

Hours later, Trump returned the compliment to Adelson, telling Reuters, "Sheldon and I have been friends for a long time. He is an amazing man. I am the only one who doesn't need his money. But I would love his support." On the subject of Israel, Trump added, "Sheldon knows that nobody will be more loyal to Israel than Donald Trump." The meeting and Trump's pro-Israel stance — coming after more ambiguous remarks a few weeks ago — could pave the way for a deeper relationship between the two men, a month and a half before the first Republican nominating contest in Iowa.

Israel is, by far, the most important issue to Adelson, a fierce supporter of the nation and close friend of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Adelson also owns the newspaper with the largest circulation in Israel, a free daily. The 82-year-old chief executive of Las Vegas Sands Corp., the world's biggest gambling company by market value, made his comments a few days after hosting the latest debate among Republican Party presidential candidates at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas, where and his Israeli-born wife, Miriam, an accomplished medical doctor and philanthropist, live.

Adelson said much of his discussion with Trump was about Israel. "He (Trump) had talked about potentially dividing Jerusalem and Israel, so I talked about Israel because with our newspaper, my wife being Israeli, we are the few who know more about Israel than people who don't," Adelson said. Courtied by most of the Republican candidates and widely expected to be the party's top donor in the November 2016 presidential election, Adelson said earlier on Friday during a news conference that he may wait until February's primaries to decide who to back. He described the field of Republican candidates as "all very good."

Recovering from a misstep

Some 14 candidates are still in the race for the Republican Party nomination. The latest Reuters/Ipsos poll showed Trump leading the field with support of 31 percent of Republican voters, followed by Texas Senator Ted Cruz at 17 percent, pediatric neurosurgeon Ben Carson at 13 percent, Florida Senator Marco Rubio at eight percent and former Florida Governor Jeb Bush at seven percent.

"We like a lot of the candidates, some more than the others," Adelson said during the interview in Macau, the world's largest gambling hub, ahead of the formal opening of his new St Regis hotel in the former Portuguese colony, "It's changing every day. I saw in the news today that Trump said his percentage approval was 41 percent. Out of 14 candidates, 41 percent is unheard of." Asked what characteristics he would like the Republican party's nominee to embody, Adelson said, "They have got to be able to win."

Trump's brash, off-the-cuff style has not dented his popularity, despite predictions to the contrary. But on Israel, he did find himself in trouble two weeks ago, and he also angered prominent Jewish leaders with his comments on Muslims. Speaking to the Republican Jewish Coalition in Washington, Trump wavered in answering a question about whether he would consider Jerusalem the undivided capital of Israel, drawing boos from the crowd. Palestinians want East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, for their future state. Israel regards all of Jerusalem as its indivisible capital, a claim not recognized internationally.

A week after Trump spoke to the gathering of Jewish leaders, and in the wake of a shooting by two Muslim radicals in California that killed 14, Trump proposed barring all foreign Muslims from entering the United States. His call drew the immediate ire of some prominent Jewish Republicans. Trump does, however, have deep ties to the Jewish community. He is the only presidential candidate who lives, makes deals and hobnobs among some of the world's most prominent Jewish power figures on the Upper East Side of Manhattan. He's also the only Republican candidate with Jewish grandkids: his daughter, Ivanka, became Orthodox after marrying real estate scion Jared Kushner. The family keeps kosher, observes the Sabbath and attends the upscale synagogue Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun.

Buys Las Vegas newspaper

In Macau, Adelson also made his first public comments confirming his family's acquisition of the Las Vegas Review-Journal newspaper. The \$140 million deal to buy the largest paper in the state of Nevada, an important swing state, had been shrouded in secrecy. Described by Forbes magazine as the 15th richest man in the United States, Adelson said his family had bought the paper as a financial investment, dismissing speculation the deal was aimed at controlling media in the United States. "The Review-Journal is already on my side of the political spectrum," Adelson said. "This newspaper has been making money...we left the (everyday) operation in the hands of the owner from who we bought it." "We are not going to hire an editor, we left it up to them (current management), period. We may take some of the positive characteristics of our Israeli newspaper and add them to there but that's all just suggestions." —Reuters

SANDERS REGAINS ACCESS TO US VOTER FILES AFTER FIGHT

WASHINGTON: US Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders regained access to crucial voter files on Friday after taking the Democratic National Committee to court and accusing party leaders of trying to undermine his White House bid and help rival Hillary Clinton. The DNC had blocked access to the voter data after a Sanders campaign staffer improperly accessed Clinton's voter files, prompting charges of theft from the Clinton campaign and setting off a bitter political fight in what had been a relatively peaceful Democratic nominating race.

The DNC agreed to restore access to the files after Sanders sued the committee in US District Court, accusing it of improperly suspending the campaign's access to the voter data. The DNC said the Sanders campaign had supplied information about the breach and promised to cooperate with an investigation. "Based on this information, we are restoring the Sanders campaign's access to the voter file, but will continue to investigate to ensure that the data that was inappropriately accessed has been deleted and is no longer in possession of the Sanders campaign," DNC Chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz said in a statement.

The political brawl came one day before a debate between the presidential rivals, fueling rising tensions and highlighting complaints from Sanders and his liberal allies that the DNC is trying to help Clinton, particularly

by limiting the number of debates and scheduling them on low-viewership periods like Saturday nights. "In this case it looks like they are trying to help the Clinton campaign," Sanders campaign manager Jeff Weaver said at a news conference on Friday afternoon before filing the lawsuit. He accused the DNC of taking the Sanders campaign "hostage" by blocking its access to the files. "We need our data, which has been stolen by the DNC. That's what we want back," Weaver said.

Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook told reporters in a conference call the Sanders staff had taken vital data that constituted a "strategic road map" for the campaign's voter turnout models and strategies. "The Sanders campaign stole data from our campaign," Mook said. "There is some damage here that cannot be undone."

The Sanders campaign said the breach of the confidential files, which contain information such as past voting and donation history, was an isolated incident and fired a staffer involved. It blamed the breach on the DNC's software vendor, Washington-based NGP VAN, for dropping the firewall between the various Democratic candidates' data.

The DNC rents access to its master voter list to campaigns, which augment the data with their own information. The firewalls are supposed to block campaigns from spying on their rivals. An audit released by the

Clinton campaign showed the breach was more extensive than the Sanders campaign described, with at least 24 occasions when the Sanders campaign "saved" lists of Clinton data, from four different users.

"We are asking that the Sanders campaign and the DNC work expeditiously to ensure that our data is not in the Sanders campaign's account," Clinton campaign spokesman Brian Fallon said. Sanders campaign spokesman Michael Briggs called the allegation of theft "outrageous" and said the campaign did not keep or use any of the voter data. "We are not aware of one piece of data in the possession of our campaign that resulted from the DNC vendor's firewall failure," Briggs said.

Full Access for Weekend

He said the campaign would have full access to the voter files again on Saturday morning, in time for a weekend of campaigning. The incident comes at a bad time for Sanders, the US senator from Vermont who is trying to stop the heavily favored Clinton from running away with the party's 2016 presidential nomination. Sanders has been lagging behind Clinton, with 29 percent support to her 60 percent in recent Reuters/Ipsos polling.

Sanders, Clinton and a third candidate, former Maryland Governor Martin O'Malley, will debate at St Anselm College in

Manchester, New Hampshire, on Saturday night. Stu Trevelyan, chief executive officer of DNC software vendor NGP VAN, acknowledged the breach in a statement and called it a "brief isolated issue" that was fixed and is now being reviewed.

According to his LinkedIn account, Trevelyan is a former campaign and White House staffer for Hillary Clinton's husband, former President Bill Clinton. He also donated \$403.20 to Ready PAC - an outside group

then known as Ready for Hillary PAC that supports Clinton - in December 2013, according to records filed with the Federal Election Commission. Josh Uretsky, the Sanders campaign staffer fired for accessing the voter file, told MSNBC that his intent was to document and understand the scope of the problem so it could be reported. "To my knowledge, we did not export any records or voter file data that were based on those scores," he said. —Reuters



Democratic Presidential hopeful Bernie Sanders



GUANTANAMO BAY: Journalists are given a tour of the detention facility on Guantanamo Bay US Naval Base in Cuba. —AP

WHY 9/11 ATTACK CASE GRINDS ON SO SLOWLY AT GUANTANAMO

GUANTANAMO: Five men accused of directing and financing the Sept 11 plot were back in their high-security cellblock at the Guantanamo Bay detention center after a pretrial hearing when the general in charge of prosecuting them delivered a somber message for families of people killed in the attack. "I pledge to you that the nation will never forget, will never lose interest," Army Brig Gen Mark Martins said last week to a handful of reporters who traveled to this US base to view the latest proceedings. "And your government will continue to pursue justice under law for however long that takes."

It could be a very long time. The prosecution of the "9/11 five" has been unfolding incrementally at a courtroom built specifically for the proceedings on an abandoned airfield. And it is likely to be years before Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, the Al-Qaeda commander who has claimed responsibility for the Sept 11, 2001, attack, and his four alleged co-conspirators go before a jury of military officers. The four days of hearings that ended last Friday was the 14th round of pretrial sessions since the May 2012 arraignment on charges that include nearly 3,000 counts of murder in violation of the law of war for deaths in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania on Sept 11.

'Aren't going anywhere'

The case is often portrayed as the most complex and expensive terrorism prosecution in US history. It may ultimately be the longest. That reality has sparked anger and frustration among some observers, including the small groups of victims' relatives chosen by lottery to attend proceedings. More often, the reaction is like that last week of John Olson from Rockville Centre, New York, who is simply resigned to the situation. "These guys aren't going anywhere," said Olson, whose wife, Maureen, was killed at her job on the 96th floor of the North Tower of the World Trade Center. "Quite frankly, if they stay here the rest of their lives that wouldn't bother me."

There are a number of inter-related reasons the case has advanced slowly. Mostly, though, it stems from the fact that the defendants face trial at Guantanamo amid a broader debate over whether to close the detention center and that they are being tried by military commission, a hybrid system that has been used throughout US history to prosecute battlefield offenses during war time but never for a case like this one. The defendants were transferred in September 2006 to Guantanamo from CIA detention facilities, where they were subjected to what the government called "enhanced" interrogation, now widely regarded as torture.

President George W. Bush directed they be tried by military commission and they were arraigned about 18 months later. The case was still in the pretrial stage when President Barack Obama took office pledging to close the Guantanamo jail. He sought to move the case to a civilian court in New York, but ran into intense political opposition. The administration backtracked and sent the case back to a military commission with some added legal protections

for the accused, and they were arraigned for a second time 31/2 years ago. Congress later prohibited sending any Guantanamo detainees to the US for any reason, including trial.

US military trials

The Guantanamo commissions, which combine elements of the civilian and military justice systems, are the first held by the US in decades and the law has evolved in those years, meaning many basic issues must be litigated. The court, presided over by an Army colonel who has handled some of the most prominent recent US military trials, has wrestled with what elements of the Constitution apply to defendants held at Guantanamo or whether a defendant can represent himself, issues long resolved in civilian courts.

Last week, the judge finally considered but didn't rule on a defense motion filed days after their arraignment that the charges should be dismissed because statements by Obama, Bush and other senior officials about the defendants may have improperly swayed proceedings. Many of these matters are being argued with an eye to later appeals that are likely to last years, and ultimately reach the Supreme Court. "There are so many issues around the structure of the military commissions and around discovery that there's almost an incalculable amount of work to be done, to work our way through all these problems," David Nevin, a civilian lawyer for Mohammad, said in an interview.

The government is barred by law from using evidence obtained by coercion during the defendants' time in CIA prisons. Prosecutors are expected instead to rely on statements the defendants made to the FBI and others at Guantanamo. Lawyers for the defendants say anything the men said while in custody is tainted by their harsh treatment, a contention that will likely form the core of the defense in either the trial or the penalty phase if they are convicted.

The secrecy

Issues surrounding the secrecy, and the government's desire to protect classified information about their time in CIA custody, are responsible for much of the slow movement. Proceedings came to a near halt for 18 months while the judge tried to determine if an FBI investigation into potential security breaches on one of the five defense teams created a conflict of interest.

The case also detoured when the defense discovered microphones disguised to look like smoke detectors inside meeting rooms and when several defendants recognized a new Arabic interpreter as someone they encountered at a secret CIA prison. Defense lawyers routinely deny they are seeking to delay a trial for men who could get the death penalty if convicted. Walter Ruiz, who represents Saudi defendant Mustafa al-Hawsawi, said he wants to get on with it to prove his client was at most a minor participant in the plot. "He has been in captivity since 2003," Ruiz said. "At some point there is a desire for finality." —AP

CUBAN MIGRANTS IN LIMBO AS C AMERICA SUMMIT ENDS

COSTA RICA PULLS OUT OF SICA OVER MIGRANT CRISIS

SAN SALVADOR: A summit of Central American leaders in El Salvador on Friday failed to break a regional impasse over the fate of 5,000 US-bound Cuban migrants blocked in Costa Rica for weeks. "There was no solution at this summit to the problem with the Cuban migrants. There was no consensus over what should be done—each country has its own point of view on the matter," Nicaragua's deputy foreign minister, Denis Moncada said.

He added that his country's view was that the United States should step in to offer a solution. The Cubans—another 1,200 of whom are also stranded in Panama—have been left in limbo for a month, since Nicaragua closed its border to them on November 15 and posted soldiers and police to ensure none slipped in. The migrants are the tail end of a stream of Cubans leaving their island in a bid to reach America, driven by a fear that thawing Washington-Havana ties might put an end to a Cold War-era US policy of accepting Cubans who step foot on US soil.

No consensus

That stream spiked higher this year, before Ecuador ended its visa-free entry for Cubans this month. That shut the door on their principal entry point to mainland Latin America before an overland slog through Central America and Mexico to the US border. Costa Rica, which in November dismantled a people-smuggling ring the Cubans had been relying on, has been trying in vain to get other Central American states to take in the migrants and let them continue their journey.

Nicaragua, though, has been steadfast in refusing them in. Its stance spoke to longstanding tensions with Costa Rica over border disputes, one of which was this week ruled in Costa Rica's favor by the International Court of Justice. Nicaragua's alliance with Cuba's government is also seen as a factor. Nicaragua's deputy foreign minister said Costa Rican President Luis Guillermo Solis held bilateral meetings Friday with counterparts and Nicaragua's official handling the issue, but no agreement was found. "Nicaragua has given its position in

the matter: That the situation should be resolved not by Central America but by the United States since it is the one that has prompted many Cubans to want to try to get to it," Moncada said.

Costa Rica frustrated

In a sign of Costa Rica's frustration, Solis left the summit before its close without making a promised speech on the Cuban migrant issue. Nicaragua's government issued a statement to reporters after the summit that "demands that the United States find a solution for the

immediate and safe transfer to its territory of the thousands of Cubans blocked on this dangerous transit route." Several of the other countries represented at the summit, which included host El Salvador, Guatemala, Panama, Belize and the Dominican Republic, called for a solution, but offered nothing concrete beyond insisting a consensus was needed. The thousands of Cubans are being put up in schools and tents in northern Costa Rica, near the Nicaraguan border, waiting for their chance to continue their odyssey north. —AFP



SALVADOR: (Left to right) Nicaragua's Vice-Chancellor Dennis Moncada, Panama's Vice-President Isabel Saint Malo, Guatemala's President Alejandro Maldonado, Costa Rica's President Luis Guillermo Solis, Salvador's President Salvador Sanchez Ceren, Honduras' President Juan Orlando Hernandez, Dominican Republic's President Danilo Medina, Belize's Foreign Minister Wilfred Erlington and the Secretary General of the Central American Integration System (SICA) Victoria Velasquez pose for the official picture of the XLVI Summit of Heads of State and Government of the SICA, at the Foreign Affairs Ministry in San Salvador on December 18, 2015. —AFP

TEXAS POLICE IN MANHUNT FOR 'AFFLUENZA' TEENAGER

WASHINGTON: Police have launched a manhunt for a wealthy Texas teenager described as suffering from "affluenza," after he apparently violated the terms of his probation for causing a deadly drunk-driving accident in 2013. Ethan Couch was 16 when he crashed his pickup truck into a group of pedestrians and another vehicle, leaving four dead and several seriously injured. He had a blood-alcohol level of nearly three times the legal limit.

The son of millionaire parents, Couch made headlines during his trial when a psychologist testifying on his behalf claimed he suffered from "affluenza"—a neologism coined from affluence and influenza, implying that financial privilege made him unable to understand the consequences of his actions. The manhunt began after the now 18-year-old missed a mandatory meeting with his probation officer last week. The FBI and US Marshals Service, which specializes in chasing fugitives, joined the search after authorities put Couch on the country's most wanted list. "You can run, but you're always going to be looking over your shoulder," Tarrant County Sheriff Dee Anderson told CNN on Thursday.

"We're not going to give up. We're going to come after you. We're going to find you, wherever you are," he added. Prosecutors had sought 20 years in prison for Couch, but judges handed him a surprise sentence of mental-health treatment and a decade of probation. The leniency shocked many Americans, especially because the teen expressed no remorse and spent not even a night behind bars. The controversy reignited this month after the emergence of a video showing Couch at a party taking part in a drinking game, which violated the terms of his probation.

Police showed up at his home to find it

empty with no forwarding address. The teenager's flight, apparently with his mother, has prompted outrage across the country. "This is egregious. 'Affluenza' aside, Ethan Couch appears to show blatant disregard for the law, and he must be held accountable," said Colleen Sheehy-Church, president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), in a

statement. Sheriff Anderson admitted the young man had slipped through the net. "He got a big jump on us because he was gone before any of us knew that he was missing," he said. "This is a family that knows how to game the system and has done so from the start," he added, saying Couch may have fled the country. —AFP

TURKEY KILLS 69 MILITANTS IN SOUTHEAST OFFENSIVE

DIYARBAKIR: Sixty-nine Kurdish militants and two Turkish soldiers have been killed in four days of fighting across southeast Turkey as security forces ramp up operations against the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), security sources and the military said yesterday. The military said Turkish warplanes taking off from their southeastern base in Diyarbakir had also bombed PKK camps in northern Iraq on Friday, destroying shelters and weapon posts.

A two-year ceasefire between Turkey and the PKK fell apart in July, shattering peace talks and reviving a conflict that has afflicted the mainly Kurdish southeast for three decades, killing more than 40,000 people. One Turkish soldier was killed and another was lightly wounded yesterday in clashes in Sur district, which has remained under a police curfew for the past two weeks, in the predominantly Kurdish Diyarbakir province.

One of two soldiers wounded in the border town of Cizre on Friday also succumbed to his injuries, the army said. It said the number of Kurdish militants killed in four

days of operations in Cizre and Silopi, near the Syrian and Iraqi borders, had risen to 69. The towns, both under curfew, are central targets in Turkey's latest anti-PKK offensive, in which media reports say 10,000 police and troops, backed by tanks, are taking part. The head of the armed forces, General Hulusi Akar, visited troops in the region yesterday and was briefed on the operations, security sources said.

Although traditionally rooted in the countryside, the group has shifted its focus in recent years to towns and cities in the southeast, setting up barricades and digging trenches to keep security forces away. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan said this week that Kurdish militants would be "annihilated" in their trenches and houses and that the operations would continue until the area was "cleansed" of the militants and their barricades destroyed. Peace talks between jailed PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan and the state ground to a halt early this year. The PKK is designated as a terrorist group by Turkey, the United States and the European Union. —Reuters

AFRICAN UNION TO SEND 5,000-STRONG FORCE TO BURUNDI

ADDIS ABABA: The African Union will send a 5,000 strong force to stop violence in troubled Burundi, giving Bujumbura a four-day deadline to agree but warning it would send troops anyway. The move comes as international alarm grows over spiraling violence in the tiny, landlocked nation which has been mired in bloodshed since April, sparking concern it was sliding towards civil war.

The AU force "shall have an initial strength of up to 5,000 military personnel and police," the AU's Peace and Security Council (PSC) said in a statement late Friday. Burundi has so far dismissed proposals for any peacekeeping force, but the AU said if it refuses to accept the troops, the bloc would "take additional measures" to ensure its deployment. And it underlined its "determination to take all appropriate measures against any party or actor... who would impede the implementation of the present decision."

Burundi descended into bloodshed in April when President Pierre Nkurunziza announced his intention to run for a controversial third term, which he went on to win in July. Nkurunziza is an ex-rebel and born-again

Christian who believes he has divine backing to rule. The force is mandated to "prevent any deterioration of the security situation" as well as to protect civilians and "contribute to the creation of the necessary conditions for the successful holding of the inter-Burundian dialogue." Talks between the government and opposition have repeatedly collapsed. No details were given as to which countries might send troops-or when they would be deployed.

The new force, dubbed MAPROBU-the French acronym for the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi-will have an initial renewable mandate of six months. The bloc urged talks among its members, including those in its regional East African Standby Force (EASF), "to generate the troops and police elements needed to quickly reach the authorized strength." The 10-nation EASF includes Burundi itself, and is one of five AU regional bodies with a mandate to boost "peace and security". It has never deployed and is currently a force in principle only, with the AU calling on the UN Security Council "to support the deployment".

On the brink

Earlier this week UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said he was dispatching an envoy for urgent talks to end the crisis, warning that Burundi was "on the brink of a civil war that risks engulfing the entire region." Ban has also raised the option of deploying UN peacekeepers to quell the violence but recommended that a UN team be first sent to bolster dialogue. The upsurge in violence has raised fears of a return to civil war, a decade after the end of a 1993-2006 conflict between rebels from the Hutu majority and an army dominated by minority Tutsis, which left 300,000 people dead. The violence escalated dramatically last week with the killing of 87 people in clashes in Bujumbura, many of them youths shot dead by the security forces. AU rights investigators this week returned from a fact-finding mission to Burundi expressing "great concern" after witnessing some of the heaviest fighting in the troubled country for months. The AU team said they had reports of "arbitrary killings and targeted assassinations" as well as arrests, detentions and torture. Their concerns have been widely echoed.—AFP



BUJUMBURA: Burundian soldiers withdraw from the restive Cibitoke neighborhood in Bujumbura after a police operation during the celebrations. — AFP

UK'S CAMERON CORNERED ON EU MIGRANTS AS REFERENDUM LOOMS

EU LEADERS VOICE THEIR CONCERNS

LONDON: British Prime Minister David Cameron is rolling over his EU renegotiation bid into 2016, as member nations seek a deal on the contentious issue of welfare handouts for migrants. Cameron hinted after a Brussels summit on Friday that he wants to hold Britain's long-awaited in-out referendum on membership of the European Union next year. Press reports yesterday suggested that Cameron was eyeing a June/July referendum, which would follow British local elections in May.

It looks like Cameron will however have to give ground on his demands on curbing welfare payments for citizens from other EU countries arriving in Britain, in the face of opposition from a string of other European leaders who see his proposals as discriminatory. French President Francois Hollande warned Cameron that the plan was "unacceptable".

While German Chancellor Angela Merkel is seen as generally supportive of Britain's position, she stressed that "the fundamental achievements of European integration" such as freedom of movement and non-discrimination were not up for debate. This left Cameron talking of a "tough" road to a deal at the next summit in February after Thursday's crunch dinner dominated by the issue.

EU President Donald Tusk said other leaders had "voiced their concerns" but were willing to "compromise". "Cameron faces deadlock over EU benefit plan" was The Guardian newspaper's headline Friday, while The Sun ran with "Cam pole-axed". That was a pun on the opposition to his plans from Poland, one of the eastern European nations whose citizens have moved to Britain in their hundreds of thousands. "Cameron has made a rod for his own back with his promise" on benefits, said Professor Simon Hix of the London School of Economics. "He may now have to concede on that issue in return for a compromise deal."

'Still more questions'

While Cameron is pushing for reforms of Britain's relationship with the EU in four areas, it is the issue of benefit payments to European migrants which is the most problematic. He wants to force those migrants from EU countries who have jobs in Britain to wait four years before they can claim state benefits in a bid to



BRUSSELS: British prime minister David Cameron, arrives for a press conference, as part of an extraordinary council at the European Union (EU) headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

make the country—which saw record net migration last year—a less attractive destination.

With other European leaders pushing back against that, sources and commentators suggest several alternative ways for Cameron to address the issue.

One could be to impose an emergency brake on migration into Britain, allowing Cameron to limit migration from the 27 other EU states if its public services were overwhelmed or welfare system was being abused.

Another is to withdraw such benefits from young Britons as well as EU migrants. "There are still more questions than answers but it looks like everyone now has their sights on reaching a deal in February," said Stephen Booth, co-director of think tank Open Europe. "Whether that's the case will likely depend on whether this broad political impetus is sufficient to see the process through," he said. In his closing press

conference on Friday, Cameron insisted that "good progress" had been made at the Brussels summit and seemed to suggest that the referendum could be held in 2016.

Reports in Britain suggest June next year is his preferred date. No date has been officially set, though it must by law happen before the end of 2017. "I believe 2016 will be the year we achieve something really vital, fundamentally changing the UK's relationship with the EU and finally addressing the concerns of the British people about our membership," Cameron said. Opinion polls suggest the British public is finely balanced on whether they want to remain in the EU or leave. Seven months after his May election victory which ensured the EU referendum would become a reality, Cameron now faces another long, hard slog in 2016 if he is to secure the result he wants—Britain staying in the EU, but with reforms.—AFP

FAR ABOVE ARCTIC CIRCLE, A SKI RESORT HOSTS REFUGEES

RIKSGRANSEN: Far above Sweden's Arctic Circle, two dozen refugees stepped off a night train onto a desolate, snow-covered platform, their Middle Eastern odyssey abruptly ending at a hotel touted as the world's most northerly ski resort. It was Sweden's latest attempt to house a record influx of asylum seekers. No one was here to greet them. Only a few, swaying lights flickered on the otherwise empty platform as women fruitlessly wrapped hijabs around their faces to protect themselves from the mountain blizzard. "Where are we? Is this the final destination?" said Alakozai Naimatullah, an Afghan who worked as a US military translator. He wore tennis shoes, buried in the snow.

His words went unanswered in the disorder of arrival. Their bare hands frozen, husbands, wives and children bent over to drag plastic bags filled with worldly possessions over a steep, snowy path to hotel lights a hundred meters below. They joined another 600 refugees, mainly from Syria and Afghanistan, holed up for two months in Riksgrensen. It is some 124 miles north of the Arctic Circle and a two-hour bus ride to the nearest town—if the road is not closed by snow. It is an example of the extremes Sweden is going to in order to house some 160,000 refugees this year in a country of 10 million people. Shelters range from heated tents to adventure theme parks, straining resources.

The sun never rises in Riksgrensen at this time of year and temperatures can plummet to minus 30 degrees Celsius. But the hotel offers food, shelter and security after a dangerous month-long trip from the Middle East by boat, train and bus. The jovial hotel manager Sven Kuldkepp has helped arrange temporary classes and free sledges for children. There is a gym and boxing classes for adults. A room once used for meditation has been turned into a mosque. Yoga mats now face Makkah. But the hotel mostly has the feel of an airport lounge with a delayed flight—with a two-month wait. Riksgrensen will be home until the ski season starts in February, but many face more than a year's wait until they get news of asylum requests.

Smartphones

Some refugees, only a hundred metres from ski slopes, still dream of Syrian beaches. Wael Al-Shater was a chef at a 60-table restaurant called Sky View in Homs, specializing in chicken. He had aspirations and applied to study as a chef in Cyprus, but never got a visa. He had friends in Dubai but didn't want to live outside Syria. "Life

was so easy. I made \$1,200 a month," Al-Shater said. "It was so safe that my friends and I used to drive 60 kilometers to the beach just to have a coffee late at night at two in the morning and return home." But war came. His work day was cut in half as fighting erupted in the streets, and his father died of a suspected heart attack during fighting in Homs. "I could not take him to hospital. He died on the street," Al-Shater said. He paid \$1,200 to be smuggled by boat to Greece some 25 days ago and ended up in Riksgrensen with his wife, an English teacher. "In the end I had no option but to leave or join the killing. Or become a protester and get killed. I had to leave."

Sitting along dark corridors, refugees' faces are illuminated by flickering smartphone screens. Some play video games, others Skype friends. Most, like Al-Shater, are eager to share memories, using their phones to swipe through photos. One elderly man showed pictures of his wife and daughter at the beach in the Syrian town of Latakia, a seaside resort and near a Russian military airbase. Smoking outside in the freezing dark, he raised his face to the sky, as if bathing in Latakia's imaginary sun. "Please turn on the sun again," he laughed. Another pale, old man had charmed hotel staff with tales of his perfume shop in Syria before he was moved to a Swedish hospital due to a heart ailment.

Memories

Trauma and illness abound. Flu and chicken pox already spread through the hotel. But the most common ailment is insomnia, a sure sign, say nurses, of war trauma. To make matters worse, few refugees venture outside, spending days in rooms. Many fear taking children out in such freezing temperatures, despite tourists spending thousands of dollars to visit a place famed for views of the northern lights. "This place is like a desert island," said nurse Asa Henriksson in a makeshift clinic by the spa's swimming pool. "It is surrounded by a wall of mountains." "When the aurora comes, we tell people to go outside, lay down in the snow, and look up," she added. "The refugees don't. Many people here think their children could die in this cold." There have been cases of bus loads of refugees arriving in the north overnight, having a glance at the surroundings and refusing to get off, insisting on returning to warmer regions. Some return to southern Sweden while others, like most in Riksgrensen, accept their lot. In Riksgrensen, many still want to visit the nearest town of Kiruna.—Reuters

SUSPENSE AS SPAIN ELECTION CAMPAIGN DRAWS TO A CLOSE

MADRID: Marked by an acrimonious debate, a punch in the face, star turns on TV and four very different main contenders, Spain's election campaign came to an official close Friday ahead of this weekend's general election. For two weeks, incumbent Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and his rivals have criss-crossed the country on a mission to seduce voters whose disillusionment over corruption and austerity measures has fuelled the rise of dynamic new parties that could make a splash in Sunday's polls.

"There's a lot more enthusiasm for politics than four years ago, and everything indicates that... there will be high levels of participation," the centre-right El Mundo daily wrote in an opinion piece ahead of the legislative election. Polls predict that Rajoy's ruling, conservative Popular Party (PP) will win the largest share of the vote but without an absolute majority, which will force it to get into bed with another political grouping to wield any kind of power.

But whether it will manage to do so—and with whom—remains a mystery as the main opposition Socialists are expected to come neck-and-neck with two upstart parties campaigning for change, the centrist Ciudadanos and anti-austerity Podemos. "I'm convinced that the Spanish will ask for change," Ciudadanos's 36-year-old leader Albert Rivera told supporters in Madrid's old town at the close of his campaign, after coming onstage to rousing music and applause. "I'm convinced that these years of weariness, of corruption... are coming to an end," he said as people clad in orange scarves—the color of his party—looked on.

One in four undecided

Jose Pablo Ferrandiz, head of polling group Metroscopia, says that at the last

elections in 2011, the PP's absolute majority win came as no surprise. "But now, just two days ahead of the election, one in four voters remains undecided," he adds. And that is the main change in this campaign—from a long-standing bi-party political scene, Spanish voters now have four very different groupings to choose from as well as the usual spattering of smaller-scale contenders.

Sky-high unemployment, rising inequalities, corruption scandals and an independence movement in Catalonia are just some of the issues broached during the campaign. Rajoy, 60, has positioned himself as a safe pair of hands who dragged the country away from economic collapse and put it on the path of recovery, as evidenced by Christmas shoppers vying for space in the centre of Madrid. Voters should not accept the image of a "black Spain which certain people want to paint, it is a lie," he said at a rally in the eastern city of Valencia. Later during his final rally in Madrid Rajoy warned that Spain "could not afford" to "play with experiences, with novelty".

Socialist chief Pedro Sanchez, 43, has promised to reinstate the rights of workers and immigrants whom he says the PP trampled on with its spending cuts, tax rises and controversial health reforms. Pablo Iglesias of Podemos, 37, promises to defend "the lower classes" while Rivera pledges "reasonable change", more investment in education and less precarity in the workplace. Podemos, which had lost steam after a highly-publicised rise on the national scene in 2014, appears to be gaining ground again and could even replace the Socialists as the country's main left-wing party, polls suggest. Yesterday is an obligatory "day of reflection" ahead of the vote and no campaigning is allowed.—AFP

CYPRUS REFUGEES HOPE COURTS END 17-YEAR WAIT ON UK BASE

DHEKELIA SOVEREIGN BASE AREA: When Taj Bashir saw land after days adrift aboard a ramshackle fishing trawler, he thought his treacherous journey from persecution in Sudan to sanctuary in Europe was finally over. But 17 years later, he and dozens of fellow passengers remain stranded on a British military base on the Mediterranean island of Cyprus, unwitting participants in an international dispute that has lasted nearly half his life. "We get used to waiting," says Bashir, 43, outside the corrugated steel bungalow that serves as his family home in Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area, on Cyprus's southern shore. "We don't have most of our civil rights because we are in a military base. Most of the families here have been affected physically and psychologically," he says.

Bashir and 74 other asylum seekers—mainly Syrian and Iraqi Kurds—set sail from Lebanon in 1998 but were marooned off another British base on Cyprus, RAF Akrotiri, from where Britain is now launching air strikes against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. They were moved along the coast to Dhekelia, where around half were given refugee status on the base, and told their accommodation—1960s prefabricated huts perched on a scrub-covered hill overlooking a firing range—was only temporary.

But their stay has been anything but. "We are like the leftovers that you throw to the dogs," says Mustafa Shirmus, 41, a stateless Syrian Kurd who was on the same boat as Bashir. "I wish the people of the UK knew what was happening here." Although Dhekelia is officially British sovereign territory, the refugees have been refused permission to resettle in Britain. While they could in theory claim asylum in Cyprus, many on the base say they have little prospect of finding work or permanent residency on the island.

The dispute has rumbled on for so long that many of the refugees have married and had children, all within the boundaries of the seven-square-kilometer outpost, although they are able to go outside. Now, after 17 years in limbo, six of the families are seeking a judicial review challenging Britain's position. "Our clients wish to have the opportunity to settle and make a life in

the United Kingdom," says Tessa Gregory, of Leigh Day solicitors, acting for the families. "They want to work and contribute positively to society."

'Tomorrow like today'

Although Britain signed a refugee agreement with Cyprus in 2005, Gregory believes London's stance—that the refugees may stay on British territory but not resettle in Britain—contravenes international humanitarian law. The government must respond by January, and the case is expected to be heard in London early next year. Those on Dhekelia accuse Britain of seeking to force them from the territory by gradually cutting amenities. Their children used to go to school on the base but must now travel outside by bus for classes. Medical provisions were withdrawn and even the children's play area at the foot of their pot-holed "main street" has

been left to rust.

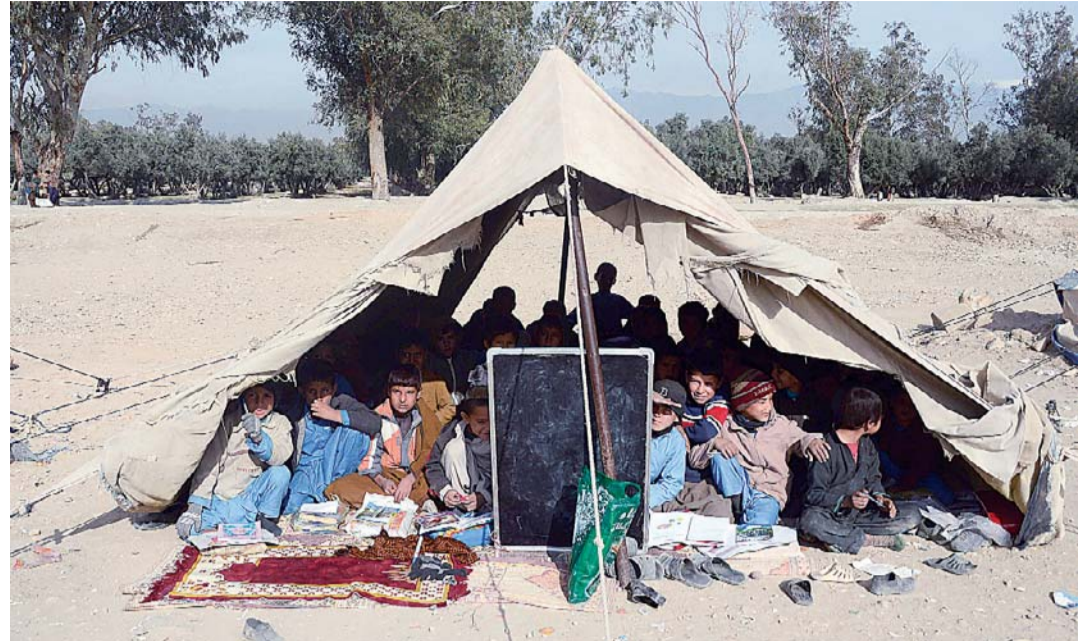
"The Cypriots say we are nothing to do with them and that we are the base's responsibility," says Kovan al-Merza, a 20-year-old originally from Iraq's Mosul. "The base says the exact same thing. Each one just throws us away to the other." Kovan was just an infant when his family reached Cyprus. He graduated from high school last year and says there is now nothing for him to do. "You know that tomorrow is going to be like today," he shrugs. In the sitting room of their bungalow, a Kurdish flag draped on the yellowing wall behind her, Kovan's sister Iman says she dreams of studying at university. The 14-year-old is one of several refugee children born on Dhekelia, but she is old enough to realise that her situation makes future planning difficult. "I don't want to stay here. I have nothing-no rights, no future," she says.—AFP



DHEKELIA: Stateless children refugees Farah (left) and Belin crack walnuts to eat in a street in Dhekelia Sovereign Base Area, along the coast of Larnaca in Cyprus's southern shore.—AFP



JALALABAD: Internally displaced girls hold babies after their family left their village in Behsood district of Jalalabad east of Kabul, Afghanistan. It is a makeshift camp with thousands of people who left their homes to escape what is turning out to be an increasingly vicious war for control of the region between the Taliban and fighters of Afghanistan's Islamic State group affiliate. —AP



JALALABAD: Afghan students attend a school class under a tent in Jalalabad, capital of Nangarhar province, Afghanistan. —AP

IS EXPANDS AFGHAN FOOTPRINT WITH TERROR CAMPAIGN

JALALABAD: Rahman Wali's younger brother was one of 10 Afghan men forced by Islamic State militants to kneel over bombs buried in the soil in a lush green valley in eastern Nangarhar province. The extremists then detonated the bombs, turning the pastoral countryside into a scene of horror. The August killings were recorded on camera and posted on social media like so many IS atrocities across the Mideast - reflecting how the Islamic State is exporting its particular brand of cruelty as the group seeks to enlarge its footprint in Afghanistan.

It was through the macabre video that 44-year-old Wali learned the fate of his brother, Rahman Gul, an imam in their remote Shinwar district bordering Pakistan. Gul had been kidnapped weeks earlier, together with his wife and six children who were quickly set free. After his brother's death, Wali and his family fled to the provincial capital of Jalalabad, seeking refuge in a makeshift camp with thousands of others who left their homes in the valleys hugging the border to escape what is turning out to be an increasingly vicious war for control of the region between the Taliban and fighters of Afghanistan's IS affiliate.

Reports of an IS presence in Afghanistan first emerged early this year in southern Helmand province, where recruiters believed to have links to the IS leadership in Syria were killed by a US drone strike in February. In the

summer, extremists pledging allegiance to IS also surfaced in Nangarhar, where they challenged the Taliban in border clashes. After see-sawing between the two groups, four districts - Achin, Nazyan, Bati Kot and Spin Gar - fell under IS control, according to Gen John F Campbell, the US commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan.

So-called 'caliphate'

Campbell said in an interview this week that IS loyalists in Afghanistan are now trying to consolidate links to the mothership - the so-called "caliphate" proclaimed on territory IS seized in Syria and Iraq after its blitz there in the summer of 2014. For the present, IS ambitions for Afghanistan seem focused on setting up what it calls "Khorasan Province," taking the name of an ancient province of the Persian Empire that included territories in today's Afghanistan, Iran and some Central Asian states. It parallels names for affiliates elsewhere, such as the IS branch in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, which is known as "Sinai Province."

"I think ISIL is really trying to establish a base in Nangarhar ... and establish Jalalabad as the base of the Khorasan Province," Campbell said, using an alternative acronym for IS. Several residents who fled the four Nangarhar districts say IS's "reign of terror" there includes extortions, evictions, arbitrary imprisonment and forced marriage for

young women. Beheadings and killings with "buried bombs" - such as the gruesome slaying of Wali's brother - are filmed and posted on social media to instill fear, they said. Some spoke on condition of anonymity, fearing reprisals for relatives back in the districts.

Mimicking IS's media outreach in Syria and Iraq, the Afghan branch also set up a radio station in Nangarhar, "Radio Caliphate," broadcasting at least one hour a day to attract young Afghan men disenchanted by dim job prospects in a war-torn country with an overall 24 percent unemployment rate. The joblessness is even higher among youths targeted in the IS recruitment drive. Meanwhile, the Afghan government forces, busy fighting the Taliban elsewhere, left the two militant groups to battle it out. And battle they did. Hundreds of Taliban fighters - disillusioned with the 14-year war to overthrow the Kabul government - switched allegiance to IS.

Though estimates say that IS fighters number a few thousand nationwide, they are still far outnumbered by the Taliban, who have anywhere between 20,000 to 30,000 in their ranks, according to Afghan political analyst Waheed Muzhdah, who worked in the Taliban foreign ministry during their 1996-2001 rule. Still, many admit the IS Afghan branch could pose a serious threat to the unstable nation. In a report released this week, the Pentagon referred to the "Islamic

State of Iraq and the Levant - Khorasan Province" as an "emergent competitor to other violent extremist groups that have traditionally operated in Afghanistan." "This may result in increased violence among the various extremist groups in 2016," the Dec 16 report said.

Campbell said some foreign IS fighters have joined the Afghans from Iraq and Syria. Former residents said they spotted gunmen from Pakistan and Uzbekistan, as well as Arabic speakers flush with money and apparently better armed than the Taliban. Nangarhar is attractive to IS for its mix of insurgent groups, some of which are based across the border in Pakistan, and criminal gangs involved in lucrative drugs and minerals smuggling. Alarm bells rang when students at the prestigious Nangarhar University staged a pro-IS demonstration on campus in August, sparking arrests by the Afghan intelligence agency and a crackdown on universities nationwide.

Fighters of the black flag

Governor Salim Kunduzi put IS's battleground strength in Nangarhar at around 400 fighters. The province's mountainous terrain provides perfect ground for an insurgency, and militants can easily resupply from Pakistan, he said. The province can also serve as a staging ground for a push north, along the eastern border and eventually on to

Kabul, just 125 kilometers (77.5 miles) to the west, he added.

Both Campbell and Kunduzi agree IS may see Jalalabad as its base for expansion in Afghanistan. "I do not think Daesh will focus only on the east," Kunduzi said, using the Arabic language acronym for the Islamic State group. Nangarhar's chief refugee official, Ghulam Haidar Faqirzai, said that at least 25,200 families - or more than 170,000 people - have been displaced across the province, either directly by IS or by perceived threats from the group. As the winter sets in, needs of the displaced are intensifying, he warned.

In a camp on Jalalabad's eastern outskirts, 70-year-old Yaqub, who like many Afghans men uses only one name, said he left his village in Maamand Valley in Achin district six months ago, after "fighters of the black flag" - the Islamic State's banner - dragged him and his son into prison where they were beaten and tortured. He said he still does not know why. "They covered my head with a black bag so I couldn't breathe while they beat me for a whole day, and every day they said they were going to kill me," he said. Yaqub and his son were released after the family paid their captors 200,000 Pakistani rupees, or almost \$2,000 - a fortune in Afghanistan, where the average annual income is around \$700. "Anything is better than going back there," said Yaqub. —AP

PAKISTAN'S TALEBAN REJECTS ISLAMIC STATE LEADER'S CLAIM TO BE 'CALIPH'

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Pakistan's Taliban has rejected Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's claim to be the global leader of all Muslims, the movement said in a statement seen by Reuters yesterday. The Pakistani Taliban's statement comes after a similar rejection by the Afghan Taliban following pledges of allegiance from low-level commanders of both Islamist movements to the Middle East-based Islamic State (IS).

Last year, IS, an Al-Qaeda offshoot, proclaimed its leader as "caliph" - the head of the state. Al-Baghdadi aspires to establish a global caliphate with himself at its head. The latest statement from the Pakistani Taliban comes amid speculation that the movement's leadership, whose goal is to topple the government of prime minister Nawaz Sharif and set up a sharia state, is actually wary of IS, which is driven by different ambitions that have little to do with South Asia.

"Baghdadi is not Khalifa (caliph) because in Islam, Khalifa means that he has command over all the Muslim world, while Baghdadi has no such command; he has command over a specific people and territory," the Pakistan Taliban said in a statement. "Baghdadi is not a Islamic Khalifa because his selection is not according to Islamic rules," the statement said, adding that the IS leader had little control in Muslim countries like Egypt, Libya, Yemen and Afghanistan. The Pakistani Taliban operate separately from the Afghan insurgents of the same name, but are loosely aligned with them. Late last year, a few breakaway factions of the Pakistani Taliban declared allegiance to Islamic State and ordered mili-

tants across the region to join its campaign to set up a global Islamic caliphate.

Pakistani authorities say IS has no financial ties with any Pakistani group. But there are concerns about further turmoil in the region as US-led foreign troops withdraw from Afghanistan, with groups like the Haqqani network and IS likely to exploit the security vacuum.

The entry of Islamic State, while its numbers remain small, will also complicate Pakistan's fight against indigenous Islamist militants fighting to overthrow the government. The Pakistani Taliban have been beset by bitter internal rivalries in the recent past, with the influential Mehsud tribal faction of the group refusing to accept the authority of Mullah Fazlullah, who came to power in late 2013.

IS, in an effort to extend its global reach, could exploit these rivalries to its advantage, wading into a region ripe with fierce anti-Western ideology and full of young unemployed men ready to take up guns and fight for Islam. In its latest statement, the Pakistani Taliban, like the Afghan Taliban, also condemn the 'barbarity' of Islamic State's rule. "Baghdadi's caliphate is not Islamic because in a real caliphate you provide real justice while Baghdadi's men kill many innocent mujahideen (fighters) of other groups," the statement said. Earlier this year, the Afghan Taliban sent a letter to Al-Baghdadi to stop recruiting in Afghanistan, saying there is room for only "one flag, one leadership" in their fight to re-establish strict Islamist rule. —Reuters



NEW DELHI: Vice-President of India's Congress Party Rahul Gandhi (right) waves as he walks with his mother and party President Sonia Gandhi towards a media briefing inside All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters in New Delhi yesterday, after a court appearance by the pair. —AFP

INDIA COURT GRANTS BAIL TO SONIA AND RAHUL GANDHI IN GRAFT CASE

GHANDIS ACCUSED OF ACQUIRING NEWSPAPER ASSETS ILLEGALLY

NEW DELHI: An Indian magistrate granted bail to opposition leaders Sonia and Rahul Gandhi minutes after they arrived at a Delhi court yesterday, over allegations they illegally acquired a newspaper's assets. The Congress party leaders, scions of India's famous Gandhi-Nehru dynasty, arrived at the Patiala trial court waving to their supporters as hundreds of police and paramilitaries stood guard outside. "Bail was granted, the matter stands adjourned until February 20," defense lawyer RS Cheema, who was inside the courtroom, told reporters. After brief proceedings a magistrate granted the mother-son duo bail without conditions on a personal bond of 50,000 rupees (\$754) each, the lawyer said.

Sonia's daughter Priyanka Gandhi and former defense minister AK Antony provided sureties, the lawyer said. Three others accused in the case were also granted bail. The Gandhis were summoned by the court after a politician from the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) filed a private criminal complaint accusing them of misappropriating assets of the now-defunct National Herald. They fiercely deny Subramanian Swamy's allegations and accuse Prime Minister Narendra Modi of waging a political vendetta against them and their embattled party, which has been struggling since a bitter electoral defeat last year.

"I have no doubt that the truth will come out. We are well aware of the campaign of attacks and criticism that our political rivals follow," Sonia Gandhi said at a press conference following the hearing. "They are targeting us and making full use of the state agencies," she said. It followed a tumultuous week in Indian politics which saw members of the embattled Congress and their allies throw parliament into chaos several times in protest at the case. The intensely bitter spat between the parties looks set to stall the progress of a landmark sales tax reform in parliament.

National Herald

Separately, Modi clashed with Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, head of the anti-corruption Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) after federal investigators searched the city administration's headquarters, with Kejriwal branding the premier a "psychopath". The AAP in turn caused a storm by accusing Finance Minister Arun Jaitley of presiding over financial irregularities when he controlled the capital's cricket association-a claim he vehemently denies.

Swamy first filed the case against the Congress bosses in 2001. He accused them of illegally

acquiring the now-defunct newspaper's assets after buying its publisher through a new private company, Young Indian, using a loan from party funds. He alleged that the Gandhis aimed to grab property worth \$332 million owned by the publishing firm, Associated Journals, using fraudulent papers. Both Gandhis are directors of Young Indian, owning a 76-percent stake in it and the remaining shares. Sonia and Rahul were first summoned in the case in June 2014, based on a complaint by Swamy but refused to appear in court in person, sending their lawyers instead.

On December 7 the Delhi High Court turned down a plea by the Gandhis to quash the latest summons and exempt them from appearing in person. The National Herald was founded by Jawaharlal Nehru who went on to become India's first prime minister. It first published from the northern city of Lucknow in 1938 and played a prominent role promoting nationalist sentiment before India's independence from Britain in 1947. Sonia Gandhi, widow of Nehru's grandson Rajiv, later became the chief patron of the trust that ran it. But dogged by bad management, poor circulation and falling revenue, she finally decided to close the publication in 2008. —AFP



MARIB: Armed Yemeni tribesmen from the Popular Resistance Committees, supporting forces loyal to Yemen's Saudi-backed President Abdrabbho Mansour Hadi, fire as they hold a position in the area of Sirwah, west of Marib city. A Yemen ceasefire appeared to have collapsed as government forces captured two towns from rebels and an allied Arab coalition accused insurgents of escalating the conflict by firing ballistic missiles. —AFP



TOKYO: Members of a group of men calling themselves 'losers with women', march as they shout anti-Christmas slogans at Shibuya shopping district in Tokyo yesterday. Angry Japanese men hit the streets of downtown Tokyo calling the 'sham' Christmas festive mood for happy couples be smashed. — AFP

ANGRY SINGLE MEN STAGE ANTI-CHRISTMAS RALLY

TOKYO: Anti-Christmas protesters calling themselves "Losers with Women" marched through Tokyo's streets yesterday, bashing the upcoming holiday as a capitalist ploy that also discriminates against singletons. The group of about 20 - part of the Communist-inspired group that routinely protests Western holidays-marched under angry banners that read "Smash Christmas!" in Tokyo's Shibuya district, where couples and families strolled for holiday shopping.

The scrooges-mostly single men-said they were against capitalism and were opposed to the commercialization of Christmas. "In this world, money is extracted from people in love, and happy people support capitalism," said the head of the organization, formally called Kakumeiteki Hi-mote Domei, or the

Revolutionary Losers' League. "Christmas is the most symbolic event for this," he added. The man, who identified himself only by the pseudonym MarkWater, said the rally was also in support of unloved men.

"Unpopular men, who don't have a girlfriend or are not married, are overly discriminated. We want to break this barrier," he said amid the shouting protesters. In Japan, Christmas is not an official holiday and is mostly celebrated informally as a romantic event for couples, while the New Year's day is an occasion for family reunion. The Christian population remains small in the Asian country, stores offer special holiday sales and people decorate Christmas trees at home. The group has held past marches to denounce imported Western holidays, including rallies against Valentine's Day. — AFP

S KOREA PRESIDENTIAL HOPEFUL APOLOGIZES OVER RACIST JOKE

KIM LIKENS SKIN COLOR OF AFRICAN STUDENT TO COAL

SEOUL: The frontrunner to be South Korea's next president has apologized after sparking a public uproar for jokingly likening the skin color of an African student to coal. Kim Moo-Sung, the leader of the country's ruling conservative Saenuri Party and the leader in polling ahead of December 2017 elections, issued the apology in the face of public criticism over the gaffe.

"I failed to realize that showing friendliness this way could hurt someone's feelings," Kim wrote on his Facebook page on Friday. "I am really sorry and there is no excuse. I sincerely

apologize from the bottom of my heart." He made the quip while delivering coal briquettes to the needy in Seoul alongside a group of foreign exchange students earlier on Friday. The event was part of a charity program which drew around 40 students from 27 countries as well as 50 young members of the Saenuri Party. "Your face color is the same as the briquettes' color," the 64-year-old said to a Nigerian student while laughing.

The student, Babalola Joushua Adekunle, said he did not take offence. "I don't give any special meaning to it," Adekunle told local

news outlet Focus News. "He said it jokingly. He was laughing." "Personally I'm a black man... It's nothing that I am ashamed of." Asked whether he thought Kim should apologize to him, Adekunle replied in Korean: "Guenchanayo (No problem)". The 26-year-old student is attending a local university on a South Korean government scholarship. Kim topped a Real Meter survey published last week on support levels for various presidential hopefuls with 22.5 percent of respondents backing him. Moon Jae-In of the main opposition party was second on 16.1 percent. — AFP

SEYCHELLES PRESIDENT SCRAPES A WAFER-THIN THIRD-TERM WIN

VICTORIA: Seychelles President James Michel won a third term in power by the narrowest of margins of just 193 votes, with the opposition calling for a recount, the election commission said yesterday. "Today the people made their choice. The people have said that they wish that I continue on the path that I have commenced... for me to continue to lead Seychelles forward in stability, peace, and prosperity," Michel said in a broadcast on national SBC television. "The election has tested the maturity of our democracy," Michel, 71, won 50.15 percent with 31,512 votes in the unprecedented second round run-off on the Indian Ocean archipelago, compared to opposition leader Wavel Ramkalawan's 49.85 percent, according to official results.

"At this point in time, it is necessary, more than ever, that we continue to create more unity in our country. Today, more than ever, we need to work together as Seychellois, we need to ensure we bring our people together," Michel added. But Ramkalawan, 54, an Anglican priest, said there were "several irregularities", according to the Seychelles News Agency (SNA), and referring to reports of cash being given to voters ahead of the polls. "We do not accept the results of the elections because we thought we were participating in an election-but it turned out to be an auction," Ramkalawan said, according to SNA.

'All must work together'

He said he had written to the electoral commission asking for a recount, while calling for people to "remain calm and peaceful and to refrain from provocations." Electoral Commission chief Hendrick Gappy has called for all citizens to "respect the results and to maintain a peaceful atmosphere." Michel, who won elections in 2004 with 54 percent of the vote and in 2011 with 55 percent, also called for calm. "The president that has been elected is the president of all Seychellois, and we all need to work together for our Seychelles," Michel said. Turnout was high, with 87 percent of registered voters casting their ballots in each of the two rounds. Michel has pledged to boost the economy and eradicate poverty in the Seychelles, long seen as a tax haven for the world's super-rich.

Balloting on more remote islands began on Wednesday but the main vote took place Friday on the main islands of Mahe, Praslin and La Digue, home to most of the Seychelles' estimated 91,000 citizens. Tourism and fisheries are the pillars of the Seychelles' economy, with its white-sand beaches and tropical forests a favorite with well-heeled newly-weds. A former British colony, the Seychelles is made up of 115 islands lying off the coast of east Africa, some scattered up to 1,000 kilometers from the capital Victoria. World Bank data estimated 2014 per capita gross national income at \$13,990 (around 13,000 euros today), one of the highest in Africa. — AFP



BEIJING: Children pass by the Forbidden City during a blue sky day in Beijing. — AP

CHINA NAMES AND SHAMES 5 TOURISTS OVER BAD BEHAVIOR

BEIJING: China's tourism authority named and shamed another five tourists for bad behavior and says it is working with airlines on a possible flying ban. Those added to the list of "uncivilized behavior" by tourists include two women and a man who brawled after one woman's seat was bumped during boarding of a flight from Cambodia to the western city of Chengdu. The three were forcibly removed from the plane under captain's orders and the flight was delayed for one hour, the China National Tourism Administration said.

Another man was listed after he was arrested in Japan for assaulting a convenience store clerk whom he accused of disrespecting his wife. The

last was a woman who attacked her tour guide with hot tea after learning the price of her son's ticket to a western China scenic site was not included in the package. Their names and a description of their alleged misbehavior were entered onto the administration's list and will remain there for one to three years. Over that period, they can be refused service by travel agents, airlines, hotels and scenic sites. In a further step, the administration said it was working with major Chinese airlines on "enacting definite restrictive measures" against those on the list, which currently includes 16 names in total.

The government has grown concerned about

the negative impact on China's image stemming from numerous incidents of bad behavior by Chinese tourists at home and abroad, ranging from fighting with air crews to defacing cultural artifacts. Social media platforms have spread descriptions and video clips of the incidents, prompting widespread derision among the public and occasional online campaigns to identify the perpetrators. Rising incomes, relaxed regulations and cheap flights have permitted record numbers of Chinese to travel in recent years. Among other frequent complaints are line-cutting, smoking where banned, littering and fouling public toilets. — AP

BEIJING SLAMS 'PROVOCATIVE' US SOUTH CHINA SEA FLYPAST

BEIJING: Two US B-52 bombers flew close to islands in the flashpoint South China Sea last week in a "serious military provocation", Beijing said yesterday, as tensions simmer in the disputed waterway. China insists it has sovereignty over virtually all of the resource-rich sea, conflicting with the various claims of several neighboring nations, and US activity in the area has provoked Beijing's ire several times in recent months. "In the morning of 10 December, two US B-52 bombers entered air space over the Chinese Nansha islands and nearby areas without authorization," Beijing's defense ministry said, using the Chinese name for the Spratly Islands.

"This behavior is a serious military provocation which complicates the general situation in the South China Sea, (contributing) to the militarization of the region," the ministry said in a statement on its website. During a mission by the two B-52 bombers last week, one of the aircraft unintentionally flew within two nautical miles of an artificially constructed island, the Wall Street Journal quoted Pentagon officials as saying Friday. This may have been because of bad weather conditions, according to officials

quoted in the newspaper.

Beijing's defense ministry added: "The United States has continuously sent military ships and planes to make a show of force and create tensions in the waters and airspace" of the South China Sea. "The Chinese army will take all necessary measures to defend the sovereignty and the security of the country." The United States is critical of China building artificial islands in the disputed sea, and has flown other B-52 bombers and sailed a guided-missile destroyer near some of the constructions in recent months.

Washington has said China's transformation of the geographical features in the Spratly Islands poses a threat to freedom of navigation in the critical body of water. China's military conducted war games in the area this week, with warships, submarines and fighter jets deployed over a "range of several thousand kilometers", the People's Liberation Army Daily said. Beijing insists it has sovereignty over virtually all of the resource-rich South China Sea, conflicting with the various claims of Vietnam, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Brunei. — AFP

VIETNAM'S DEVELOPMENT ORIENTATION

KUWAIT: The 12th National Congress of the Communist Party which is scheduled to be held in Jan 2016. However, political analysts share the perspective that Vietnam will keep actively participating with the world's economic growth trend. Over the past 30 years, under the leadership of Communist Party, due to the process of innovation and economic development, Vietnam's foreign relations and international integration is increasingly intensive and effective. Vietnam so far has established diplomatic relations with over 185 nations and signed more than 90 bilateral trading agreements and 10 FTAs excluding WTO. Vietnam has been recognized by 59 countries as a market status economy country with its products presented in above 230 nations and territories.

According to those achievements, there is no doubt the upcoming 12th National Congress will keep directing Vietnam to make enthusiastic and active international integration on the foundation of equality and mutual benefit; to complement all commitments in ASEAN and WTO and take part in new free trade agreements. Vietnam will also intensify

the cooperative relations.

In order to guarantee successful integration, Vietnam is required to optimize internal resources, closely associate and promote the improvement of comprehensive national power and competitiveness. It will continue to diversify and multilateralise international economic cooperation and maintain not to be dependent on any particular market or partner as well as consider Middle East as the area Vietnam prioritize to cooperate in the future.

In term of economic developing orientation, the Communist Party claim to follow the model of market-oriented economic model. The model is seen as an advanced and progressive; complying with the market principles, government's management and Communist Party's leadership; taking the goal of maintaining rich people, a strong country, an equitable, democratic and civilized society", specifically: The annual economic growth during 2016 - 2020 is as high as 6.5 - 7%; by 2020, the gross domestic product will reach from \$3200 to 3500; the proportion of industry and service sector in GDP will exceed 85%; the social labor productivity

will increase by 4 - 5%; the urbanization rate will reach 38 - 40%.

According to the current economic model, all subjects of Vietnam's economy are equal, cooperate and compete under law rules. The role of the people in economic - social development is protected and promoted. Vietnam will keep focusing on industrialization and modernization in agriculture sector and rural areas; developing the knowledge economy, improving the competitiveness in science and technology; improving the system of regulation and enhancing economic management.

Moreover, Vietnam is growing the modern service sector with higher rate than that in manufacturing sector and the GDP growth. The development concentration will placed in advantageous sectors; promoting potentials and favorable conditions in each local area; constructing a number of economic zones to boost growth and testing breakthrough models of local economic development. In general, Vietnam's developing orientation will keep directing its socialist-oriented market economy to flourish and push its integration with world's economy.



TOKYO: (From left to right) Indonesia's Defense Minister Ryamizard Ryacudu, Indonesia Minister of Foreign Affairs Retno Marsudi, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Defense Minister Gen Nakatani pose for photographers during a meeting at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo. Japan and Indonesia agreed December 17 to begin talks on the transfer of defense technology to Jakarta and to help reduce tensions in the South China Sea. — AFP



Children swim in a swollen creek under a flyover in Manila yesterday. Heavy rains pummelled the entire Philippines yesterday, flooding more areas as the government declared a state of national calamity. — AFP

IRAN CLOSES SCHOOLS DUE TO AIR POLLUTION

TEHRAN: Iran is to close schools for two days in Tehran, an official said yesterday, following air pollution three times the acceptable level that has blanketed the city in smog. Air quality in Iran's capital was the worst for at least nine months this week, media said, and airborne particles from car emissions were at "seven times the standard level". "All schools will be closed today in Tehran and in the... towns of Shahr-Rey and Islam-Shahr (both south of the capital)," said environment official Mohammad Hadi Heydarzadeh.

"If the pollution continues, schools will also be closed on Monday," he said on state television. Traffic will be limited in the city center and some factories will be closed, media reported. The official IRNA news agency said that schools

will also shut in Alborz province, west of Tehran. Authorities have asked state employers to grant mothers time off to look after children who will be unable to go to school and urged the elderly, children and sick people to avoid going outdoors. Emergency services have also been mobilized.

In Dec 2014, almost 400 people were hospitalized with heart and respiratory problems caused by heavy pollution in Tehran, with nearly 1,500 others requiring treatment. The Air Quality Index on Monday showed an average reading of 162 - a "red status" warning that the air is unhealthy for everyone, according to World Health Organization standards. Yesterday, it had dropped slightly to 148, still well above the normal healthy level of

between zero and 50. Peak pollution hit 180 in some areas of Tehran, where poor air is worsened due to high altitudes - between 1,100 and 1,700 m above sea level - in a basin surrounded by mountains.

Visibility was low yesterday as a grey fog blanketed the capital, a megacity of an estimated 14 million people, and authorities said they expect pollution to worsen in the coming days. Exhaust fumes from five million cars and almost as many motorcycles that ply Tehran's roads each day make up 80 percent of its pollution, which increases in winter as emissions fail to rise above cold air. "We cannot breathe. My eyes are itchy and my head hurts," said a taxi driver who only gave his first name, Khosro. "Traffic is get-

ting worse each day, it is stifling. It is like there is a grey haze hanging over the city. We can't see the mountains," he said, referring to the snow-capped Alborz range that overlooks Tehran.

Iran's government has tried to cut pollution by supplying lower emission fuel in large cities, Masoumeh Ebtekar, a vice president responsible for environmental protection, said this week. In 2012, pollution contributed to the premature deaths of 4,500 people in Tehran and about 80,000 in the country, the health ministry said. According to the office in charge of monitoring air quality, the air in Tehran was "pure for only 219 days" during the past 16 years. — AFP

ASSAD MAKES RARE VISIT TO CHURCH

Continued from Page 1

Assad has portrayed himself in recent interviews with the Western media as a protector of Syria's minorities, saying his rule was an example of religious tolerance in a country threatened by Islamist insurgents who have taken swathes of territory and seek to

impose their version of strict Islam. The church visit came at around the same time as the United Nations Security Council unanimously approved on Friday a resolution endorsing an international road map for a Syria peace process, a rare show of unity among major powers on a conflict that has claimed more than a quarter million lives. — Reuters

ARABIC LESSON IGNITES ANGER IN BIBLE BELT

Continued from Page 1

shahada, a profession of faith recited in Muslims' daily prayers. The statement translated to: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is the messenger of Allah." The teacher's lesson was drawn from instructional material that also includes Judeo-Christian assignments. School officials said the aim of the lesson was to illustrate the complexity of the written Arabic language, not to promote any religious system, and a different sample text will be used in the future.

But some in this deeply religious area in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains said the lesson angered them, especially because of what they said were efforts to marginalize Christianity in the schools. Jackie Duff, a Baptist, said LaPorte should have been mindful of the slayings of 14 in San Bernardino this month by a couple who had become radicalized. "I

think their wanting to take prayer away from school, their wanting to take God out of textbooks, that was really like a slap in the face," Duff said over dinner at a fast-food restaurant outside Staunton. She did not agree, however, with the hateful emails directed at LaPorte. "I don't think that they should be attacking her in that manner," Duff said.

At a forum Tuesday, one parent said the assignment promoted a false religious doctrine, while other parents expressed outrage. Some demanded the teacher be fired. LaPorte declined comment. A Facebook group supporting her had more than 2,000 members Friday. Many in this Shenandoah Valley community defended LaPorte and the school district. "I think people are making a big deal about it for no reason at all," said 18-year-old Hannah Carey, a former student of LaPorte who lives in Waynesboro. "We learned about all different cultures, and she was a great teacher." — AP

UN UNANIMOUSLY BACKS SYRIAN PEACE PROCESS

Continued from Page 1

"We know that Daesh can never be allowed to gain control in Syria so we have a global imperative here to deal with a terrorist entity but also to end the civil war," he said. "President Assad in our judgment... has lost the ability, the credibility to be able to unite the country and to provide the moral credibility to be able to govern it." Kerry said that most ISSG members agreed that Assad would have to go, and many said so, notably France. "How could somebody bring together a whole people when he has massacred so many?" Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius demanded.

The resolution enshrines the plan developed by the ISSG countries in a series of meetings in Geneva and Vienna. "We have a timeframe. That transitional process needs to try to be achieved within the target time of six months," Kerry said, arguing that the UN vote gave the plan legal force. "The election needs to take place within 18 months, the same start time, so that after six months of the transition you're about a year away, or less, from an election." British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond hailed the plan as a "great step forward".

More than 250,000 people have died since Syria's conflict erupted in March 2011, and millions more have fled their homes. Friday's New York talks were the first by the ISSG since Saudi Arabia gathered a coalition of Syria rebel groups to form an opposition negotiating team. Jordan's foreign minister presented a draft list of "terrorist" groups that the ISSG nations will agree to exclude from the talks. This would include, but may not be limited to, the Islamic State group and the Al-Qaeda-linked Al-Nusra Front.

Kerry said that there were still sharp disagreements

between the ISSG parties, some of which sponsor armed factions on the ground, as to which groups should be banned. "There was a very rigorous discussion this morning, as you might imagine, about who might or might not qualify as a terrorist," he said. He said it was "impossible to reach consensus" in the time available and that other countries would now help Jordan redraft the list in the weeks to come.

Iran said it would work with Russia, Oman, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and France to prepare a list of extremist groups it wants to see banned from talks. "Terrorist groups have no place in this national dialogue," Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir Abdollahian was quoted by the official IRNA news agency as saying.

Syria's main opposition group, the Syrian National Coalition, warned that hopes for a ceasefire by Jan 1 were unrealistic and demanded that Russia halt its air strikes as part of that truce. Najib Ghadbian, the SNC's envoy to the United Nations, said opposition groups need "a month or so" to prepare for the political talks that would begin in tandem with a ceasefire.

The plan was also described as unrealistic by the Istanbul-based National Coalition, the main Syrian opposition grouping. The resolution "undermines the outcome of the meetings of revolutionary forces in Riyadh and waters down previous UN resolutions concerning a political solution in Syria," coalition head Khaled Khoja said on Twitter. Fellow coalition member Samir Nashar said bombing by the regime and Russia must stop for there to be a sustainable ceasefire. "Given the reality on the ground and the impasse on the fate of Bashar Al-Assad, the agreement is absolutely not applicable," he said. — Agencies

Kuwait Times

Premier Brands

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

Season Greetings

Q-7 SUNDAY

Price Per Piece

Bluetooth Time Machine With DUAL USB Charging Station

9 Price per piece
K.D. .900

2xUSB Charging, FM, AUX INPUT

Christmas prices

ICON mini Bluetooth Boombox GB-3800

Bluetooth, USB Charger, USB MP3, AUX INPUT, FM, Rechargeable Lithium Battery

14 Price per piece
K.D. .900

GB-5000D

Bluetooth, Rechargeable, USB, MP3, FM

19 Price per piece
K.D. .900

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

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

1809 809

Kuwait Times
THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

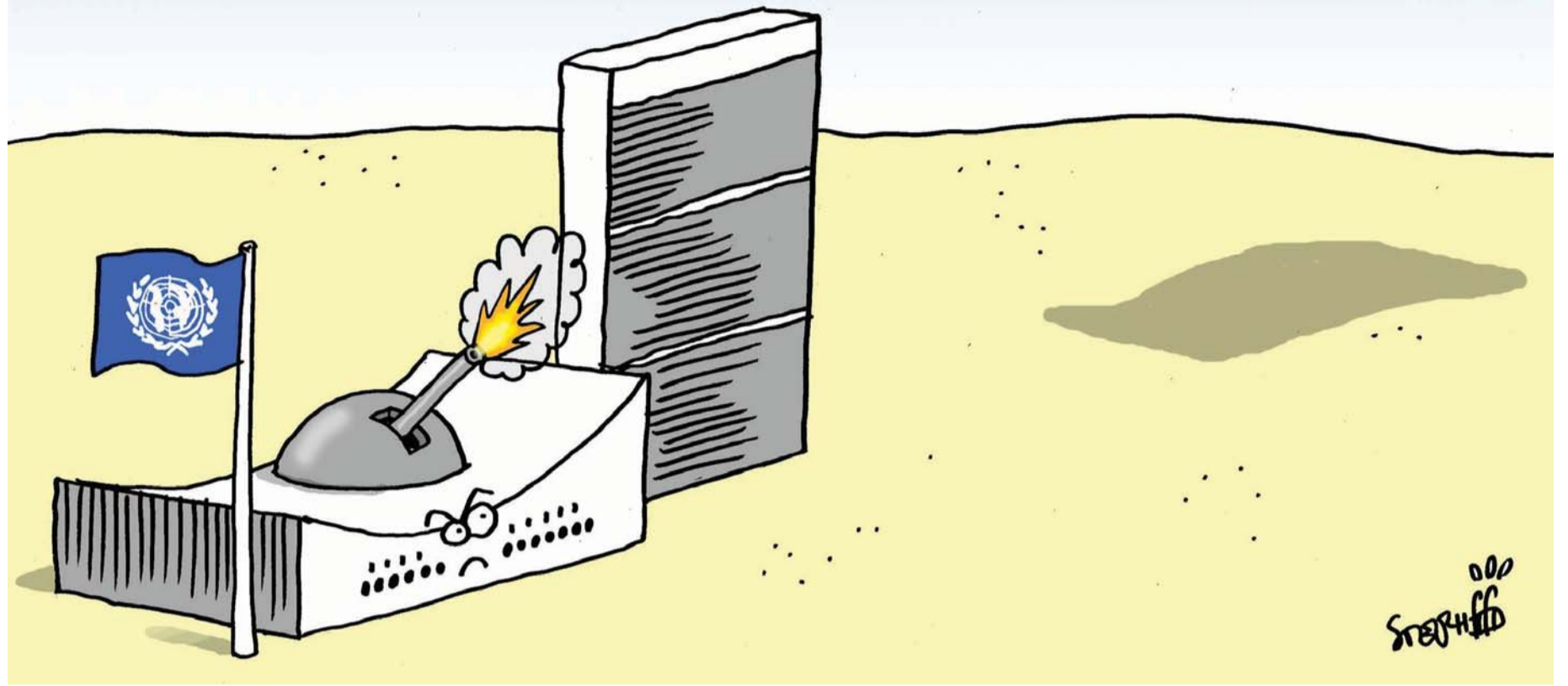
Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

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

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

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

UN ADOPTS RESOLUTION TARGETING DAESH FINANCES



Focus

CATALONIA BID 'HOT POTATO' OF SPANISH POLLS

By Daniel Bosque

Catalonia's bid for independence from Spain has thrust the region's separatist movement to the forefront of Sunday's general election, forcing parties to come up with a range of proposals on how best to meet its demands. Years of inaction by Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's conservative government, whose ruling Popular Party refused any form of negotiation or compromise with the separatists, "have caused a lot of harm," says Catalan historian Andreu Mayayo.

Backed by hundreds of thousands of protesters, a majority of lawmakers in the regional parliament have called for a Scotland-style referendum on self-determination - a demand that has systematically been rejected by Rajoy. One of Spain's 17 semi-autonomous regions with its own language and customs, Catalonia already enjoys a large degree of freedom in education, health and policing but it wants more, particularly where taxation is concerned, complaining it pays more to Madrid than it gets back.

A 2010 decision by Spain's Constitutional Court to water down a statute giving the wealthy, 7.5-million-strong region more powers has added fuel to the fire. From 20 percent five years ago, support for independence has shot up to more than 40 percent. To try and force Madrid's hand, Catalonia president Artur Mas called parliamentary elections in September. He formed the Together for Yes coalition that went on to win an absolute majority in the regional parliament with the support of CUP, another more radical separatist party.

In November, pro-independence lawmakers approved a resolution launching a process for independence they say will culminate in 2017. The resolution was later annulled by Spain's Constitutional Court but Catalonia's government has vowed that the motion is here to stay, creating a deadlock ahead of Sunday's vote.

What Solutions?

Rajoy and his three main rivals have all broached the issue during the election campaign, putting forward starkly different solutions. Anti-austerity party Podemos, for one, has said it would allow an independence referendum, like those held in Scotland in 2014 and in Quebec two decades before that, both of which resulted in "No" votes. The Socialists have suggested implementing a US-style federal state, while the centrists at Ciudadanos - which emerged in 2006 in Catalonia to fight nationalism - want to re-visit the powers given to Spain's regions. Most of these measures, though, would imply a change to Spain's 1978 constitution, which underpinned the country's transition to democracy after decades of dictatorship under Francisco Franco. "Once a new government is formed in Spain, we will without a doubt have to talk" to find a solution, Rajoy said Thursday.

Spain's constitution says two-thirds of the lower-house Congress and upper-house Senate would have to approve a process for change, following which new elections would be called, said political analyst Jaime Lopez. After that, two-thirds of the newly-formed chambers would have to give their seal of approval, and a national referendum be organized. "The chances are very slim," Lopez says - and Gabriel Rufian, a pro-independence activist standing for office on Sunday, agrees. "To change the Spanish Constitution we need the seven dragon balls and a unicorn's blood," he said recently, in reference to a famous Japanese manga series and Harry Potter novels. But for Mayayo, the time of non-action appears to have come to an end. "There will have to be a constitutional reform," he says.

'Wake-up call'

On the streets of Barcelona, passers-by agree that something needs to be done. Toni Duran, a 48-year-old employee at an insurance company, says the government had ample time to initiate reforms. "But it's too late now," he adds. But others like Laura Alvaredo, a 26-year-old designer, believe the situation can still be salvaged. "I'm going to vote for Podemos," she says. "I'm not a separatist but until there is a referendum no one will stop talking about this and problems will never be properly solved." Polls show Podemos topping the poll in Catalonia on Sunday with Ciudadanos close behind. "Some may see Podemos as a good strategic vote to put pressure for a referendum," says Lluís Oriols, a political scientist at Madrid's Carlos III University.

But national polls also predict that the PP will win overall, though without an absolute majority, which may see the anti-independence Ciudadanos party play the role of kingmaker. "A PP-Ciudadanos pact would be the worst hypothesis," says Jordi Matas, politics professor at the University of Barcelona. "There would not be much action over Catalonia and that could further frustrate those who still hope for an agreement between the Catalan government and Madrid." —AFP

All articles appearing on these pages are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein. Kuwait Times invites readers to voice their opinions. Please send submissions via email to: opinion@kuwaittimes.net or via snail mail to PO Box 1301 Safat, Kuwait. The editor reserves the right to edit any submission as necessary.

Washington Watch

TRUMP AND CO DEEPENING THE DIVIDE

By Dr James J Zogby

Donald Trump and his GOP colleagues have exposed the depth of the divide in attitudes over the role of American Muslims in US society. The results of a recent Zogby poll establish that the divide is more existential than merely rhetorical, and is more demographic than simply partisan. It has become a matter less of competing political philosophies and more a question of the attitudes of the groups that now make up the mainstream of each party.

To be clear, fear of Muslims is not just a function of what this or that candidate says, because what the candidates are saying is a reflection of what the significant parts of the constituent base each party believes. And the two major parties are increasingly defined by the distinct demographic groupings of Americans that make up their core supporters.

When Republican candidates, for example, maintain that Muslims should not be trusted, that Muslim immigrants be banned, or that Muslims should be profiled, or when candidates pledge to block President Obama's commitment to bring Syrian refugees to the US, or claim that Obama is a closet Muslim - they are echoing the views of a strong majority of Republican primary voters. Our polling bears this out and it is a reality that must be understood and addressed.

The poll of slightly over one thousand likely voters was conducted by Zogby Analytics in the days after Trump made his comments calling for a ban on Muslim immigrants into the US. It found that Trump continues to hold a substantial lead over the rest of the GOP field with the support of 38 percent of Republican likely voters and Hillary Clinton at 56 percent maintains a commanding lead over her Democratic rivals.

We also asked all respondents a series of questions about their attitudes towards Arab Americans and American Muslims. The results were deeply disturbing, with the overall views of Democrats and Republicans being near mirror reflections of one another. For example, while Democrats had a 51 percent favorable view of Arab Americans compared with 23 percent who held unfavorable views and had a 44 percent/28 percent net favorable view of American Muslims, Republican attitudes of Arab Americans were 34 percent favorable/44

percent unfavorable and a 26 percent/53 percent net unfavorable rating for American Muslims.

Similar divergent views were found with regard to whether or not voters felt confident that an Arab American or an American Muslim could faithfully carry out their responsibilities in a government position. In each case, Democrats agreed that they could, while a majority of Republicans felt that Arab or Muslim Americans would be unduly influenced by their ethnicity or their religious faith.

And the same divide could be found in response to questions regarding whether Arab Americans and American Muslims should be profiled or whether Syrian refugees should be admitted to the US, with six in ten GOP voters saying that Arab Americans and American Muslims should be profiled and the same percentage rejecting the president's goal of accepting 10,000 vetted Syrian refugees a year.

The most striking gap occurred in response to the question about the president's religion with only one in ten Democrats believing that Obama might be Muslim and almost seven in ten Republicans asserting that he was either a Muslim (49 percent) or had no faith at all (19 percent).

In each instance, this partisan split masks a deep demographic divide, with older, white, less educated voters, especially those who are self-defined as "born again Christians" making up the largest proportion of Republicans, and African American, Hispanic, younger, and more educated voters making up the Democratic side.

Behavioral Characteristics

The poll also defined two important behavioral characteristics that, in addition to demographics, helped to shape attitudes of voters on these issues: voters' sources of news and whether or not they know any Arab and Muslims. As expected, those who rely on Fox News held largely negative views on all these issues, but the same was also true of CNN viewers. On the other hand, the 30 percent of voters who rely on Internet or other news sources had significantly more favorable views on all the questions covered in the poll.

Similarly, the 30 percent of all voters who knew Arabs and Muslims had substantially more favorable views of

both communities and were more opposed to profiling them than the population, at large. And, once again, in each instance, we observed the same demographic divide in the make-up of each group.

As significant as this Democratic/Republican divide might be, it becomes even more dramatic when we compare the attitudes of the sub-set within each camp who are supporting their party's leading candidates. While 53 percent of Trump supporters have negative views of Arab Americans and 68 percent have negative views of American Muslims, 69 percent of Clinton supporters have favorable views of Arab Americans and 63 percent view American Muslims favorably. And while only 6 percent of Trump supporters believe the President Obama is a Christian (60 percent claiming he is a Muslim), only a handful of Clinton supporters say the president is Muslim while 74 percent believe Obama is Christian.

The Zogby poll identifies the magnitude and contours of the problem. It is, to be sure, grave, for American Muslims and for my community of Arab Americans, as well. Not only that, it is dilemma for the Republican Party and for America - with no easy answers in sight.

A short while ago, I had a leading Republican strategist on my weekly TV show. I asked why the GOP establishment wasn't more decisive in confronting Trump. His responses were telling. On the one hand, because Trump, Carson, and Ted Cruz are running against the establishment, attacks by that very group would only strengthen their appeal. And with these three candidates garnering almost 60 percent of the GOP vote, the establishment is concerned about the risks involved in alienating such a substantial base of their party. While that may be their concern, mine has to be for my community and my country.

In recent weeks, some Republican leaders have denounced Trump's more outrageous positions (though some were careful not to denounce Trump, himself). Senator Lindsay Graham, however, distinguished himself with a full-throated rejection of Trump and his views. Because we are caught up in a horrific situation that we must be relentless in confronting - for our present security and for our future stability - we can only hope that more GOP leaders will follow Graham's example.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

TRUMP MIX MAKES FOR UNORTHODOX BID

By Julie Bykowitz and Jill Colvin

It can be hard to see where Donald Trump the business ends and Donald Trump the presidential candidate begins. When rivals level political attacks, the Republican frontrunner's company attorney threatens lawsuits on corporate letterhead. When his campaign needs event space, private businesses sometimes provide it free. The political novice's use of corporate resources - both his own and those of others - is another tool in his asymmetrical bid for the White House. But it has drawn the attention of federal regulators, as well as campaign-law experts who say some of what he's doing could be illegal.

"The entanglements with his business and his campaign are certainly unusual, and maybe unprecedented," said Kenneth Gross, an attorney who previously led the Federal Election Commission's enforcement division. "Use of a candidate's own corporate resources is highly, highly regulated activity." At the FEC's demand, Trump's campaign on Thursday provided regulators with the names of employees at his real estate and entertainment company who are doing work for his campaign - mostly security and communications aides.

Trump's personal brand is fused with his business, making his campaign's navigation of election law a particular challenge. He is not the first candidate in this position. Former New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg and past presi-

dential contender Steve Forbes both run companies bearing their name. "From day one, there was no use of any corporate assets in any way, shape or form," said Bill Dal Col, who ran Forbes' unsuccessful 1996 and 2000 White House campaigns. "That way you don't have to walk the maze of campaign law, and you don't expose business or campaign to any liability."

Bloomberg also took "enormous care" not to commingle his business and campaign, said Gross, who was his campaign attorney. Trump is taking a different path, testing an area of election law as no other candidate has before. Reports filed by Trump's campaign covering its activities through Sept 30 show hundreds of thousands of dollars in payments to cover reimbursements for campaign space at Trump's Manhattan office tower, political use of the corporate jet and the salaries of Trump Organization employees.

Trump himself appears to be personally paying for the jet and salaries, and candidates are allowed to spend as much of their own money seeking election as they wish. But none of the Trump Organization lawyers, including general counsel Alan Garten, are being paid through the campaign. Garten has fired off angry letters when a rival candidate or group attacks Trump.

This month, Mike Fernandez, a billionaire Miami donor backing Jeb Bush's White House bid, called Trump "a destroyer" in newspaper ads. Garten warned him and the treasurer of an unrelated pro-Bush group that if the "ads

contain any false, misleading, defamatory, inaccurate or otherwise tortious statements or representations concerning Mr. Trump, his business or his brand, we will not hesitate to seek immediate legal action to prevent such distribution and hold you jointly and severally liable to the fullest extent of the law for any damages resulting therefrom ... and will look forward to doing it."

Recipients of similar letters from Garten include a group backing the candidacy of Ohio Gov. John Kasich and the conservative group Club for Growth, which spent about \$1 million on TV ads calling Trump "the worst kind of politician". Political candidates rarely respond to attacks by threatening legal action, because the law gives wide protection to speech made against political figures, a group that now includes Trump. The Trump Organization argues it has a right to protect its brand, which means protecting Trump.

"Those rights are not forfeited by virtue of Mr Trump's candidacy," said Hope Hicks, a Trump campaign spokeswoman (and Trump Organization employee). The defense of his brand, she said, "is in no way any form of campaign activity and does not run afoul of federal election laws." Bob Biersack, who worked for the FEC for 30 years and is now a senior fellow at the Center for Responsive Politics, called such reasoning "kind of silly". He said he had never heard of a business person invoking brand protection as a guard against public policy arguments.

Corporate Resources

Some of those who have received Trump Organization warnings have in turn slammed him for what they contend is his illegal use of corporate resources. "Trump and his agents have explicitly directed his corporate attorneys at the Organization to do the dirty work for the campaign," wrote Charlie Spies, the attorney for groups backing Bush, in a reply to Garten. "Just as your client is attempting to quickly learn the basics of foreign policy, we wish you personally the best in your attempts to learn election law."

Spies also has filed an FEC complaint along those lines. Gross said Trump's use of his own company resources, if properly documented and reimbursed at a fair market rate, could be permissible, if unusual. What's murkier is his campaign's use of the resources of other companies. On Wednesday, Trump held a rally held at an airport hangar owned by International Air Response, a specialty aerial services provider run by Travis and Bill Grantham in Arizona. "They gave us a very good deal," Trump bragged at the event. "You know what it is? Nothing. Thank you, fellas."

That might come as a disappointment to former Texas Gov Rick Perry, whose campaign in June paid \$40,000 to lease an aircraft from the same company to use as a dramatic backdrop as he launched his ill-fated presidential bid. Bill Grantham said fees for the 67,000-square-foot space that Trump used run from "free to tens of thousands of dollars", depending upon the circumstance. —AP

EX-NY GIANTS PLAYER GETS 30 DAYS IN JAIL

NEW YORK: Former New York Giants player Luke Petitgout (PEHT'-ih-goo) will serve 30 days in jail after being convicted of harassing his estranged wife and her date. The 39-year-old former offensive tackle was sentenced Friday after being convicted of a harassment charge in Manhattan Criminal Court. Petitgout was found not guilty of misdemeanor assault. Authorities alleged Petitgout punched his estranged wife and her date during an altercation at a Manhattan cocktail lounge in June 2014. The Daily News of New York reports (<http://nydn.us/1NBQitV>) that Petitgout's attorney said his client didn't throw any punches. In addition to the jail sentence, a judge ordered Petitgout to complete 26 weeks of a batterer's counseling program. Petitgout played college football at Notre Dame and spent eight seasons with the Giants and one with the Buccaneers. — AP



QATARI OWNER BLASTS 'WELL-BEHAVED' FANS

PARIS: Owner Nasser Al-Khelaifi has hit out at Paris Saint-Germain's fans for being too "well-behaved" in an interview published yesterday. Speaking to Le Figaro newspaper, the Qatari billionaire said he wants the club's supporters to make more noise in cheering on their dominant heroes at the Parc des Princes. "We need more atmosphere in the stadium. Sometimes our fans are a bit too well-behaved," moaned Al-Khelaifi. "We give our time, our heart, our passion for the fans. I'd like them to be constantly behind us, from the first minute to the last." Before Al-Khelaifi took control of PSG in 2011, the Parisians had endured serious problems from violent hooligan groups that more often fought amongst themselves than with those ultras of rival teams. Al-Khelaifi even supported the supporter pacification process begun in 2010 by his predecessor, aimed at rooting out the violent, but noisy, hooligan groups, a move which saw the Boulogne Boys and Tigris Mystic disbanded along with several other notorious groups. In the interview, Al-Khelaifi also ruled out bringing in new faces during the January transfer window. "Our team is very strong, therefore we won't need new players; we need every player (already) in this team, so we won't be selling anyone," he added. Going into Saturday's trip to Caen, PSG are 17 points clear at the top of Ligue 1 and unbeaten in a club record-equalling 27 league matches. — AFP

HARYANTO SEEKING \$16M TO REALISE F1 DREAM

JAKARTA: Indonesian Rio Haryanto needs to raise 15 million euros (\$16.29 million) to realise his dream of racing in Formula One with the Manor Marussia team next season, the Jakarta Post reported yesterday. The newspaper said Youth and Sports Minister Imam Nahrawi was lobbying businesses and state-owned enterprises to garner support for the 22-year-old, who tested for Marussia in Abu Dhabi this month. It added that while Haryanto can count on some 5 million euros from sponsors Pertamina, the state-owned Indonesian oil and gas company, he had less than three weeks to raise the remainder. "I need to find a perfect formula for Rio's financial support to meet Manor team's requirement," Nahrawi was quoted as saying in a statement after meeting State-owned Enterprises minister Rini Soemarno. Nahrawi had issued a statement earlier in the month stating that his ministry would guarantee the money in return for branding to promote Indonesia and associated companies. — Reuters



NORTHAMPTON: Northampton's scrum-half from New Zealand Kahn Fotuali'i places the ball in the scrum during the European Rugby Champions Cup rugby union match between Northampton Saints and Racing Metro 92 in Northampton on Friday. — AP

FELIX TRAINING TO RUN 200, 400 AT OLYMPICS ON SAME DAY

NEW YORK: American sprinter Allyson Felix's training is all geared toward the finish line in the 200 and 400 meters at the Rio Olympics. Schedule allowing, she hopes to be in the starting blocks for both races.

Problem is, those events are scheduled to happen 75 minutes apart. To facilitate Felix's pursuit, USA Track and Field recently petitioned the governing body of the sport to amend the Olympic track program, which currently has the 200 preliminaries taking place just over an hour before the 400 final in Rio on Aug. 15.

That would leave little opportunity for the six-time Olympic medalist to recover. She won't be deterred, though, should the rescheduling not happen. She still plans on attempting to make the U.S. squad in both events at the Olympic Trials in June and go from there.

"I think she can make the team in both. I think she's capable of medaling in both. I think she has a great opportunity to win gold medals in both," her longtime coach, Bobby Kersee said in a phone interview. "She's very dedicated to it. She's committed to the challenge."

A change to the schedule is not without precedent, even at this late date. Michael Johnson campaigned for a rearrangement of the 200 and 400 events leading up to the 1996 Summer Games in Atlanta. The program was altered, and he became the first male to win both at the Olympics. International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach said four months ago that the Olympic track program remains flexible.

USATF CEO Max Siegel went to bat for the 30-year-old Felix by contacting the International Association of Athletics Federations to set the wheels in motion for a switch. "Such an achievement would elevate the sport at the Games, and as a federation we owe it to her and to the sport as a whole to make the request," Siegel said in a statement.

"They're currently in a holding pattern. An email was sent to the IAAF to determine the next step. Sebastian Coe, the head of IAAF, said over the summer that the organization would be willing to investigate such a schedule change."

Kersee has Felix working as though this kind of double could take place. They started training in October, and Felix will run a limited indoor schedule this winter to stay race sharp. She may also compete at the world indoor championships in Portland, Oregon, in March.

"I don't want her to sit around," Kersee said. "So we're treating indoors more like spring training. We're going to perform a couple of times and shut it down and get ready for outdoor."

Asked what his ideal timetable would be for her to reasonably compete in Rio - two hours?

Six hours? A day? - Kersee didn't commit. "I'm just going through our major channels - asking the powers that be to talk to the other powers that be," he said. "I'm a better track coach than politician."

"It's been done before. It's nothing new. If you look at the history and look at the schedule, you know what's fair and you go from there." This 200-400 undertaking by Felix has been in the works for the last five years. Felix tackled

the sprint-distance double at the 2011 world championships in South Korea, winning silver in the 400. A few days later, she lacked her customary kick and was clearly exhausted in the 200, her signature event. She wound up with bronze.

Felix didn't attempt that endeavor at the 2012 London Games. Instead, she ran the 100 and the 200, winning gold in the latter. She also won gold in both relays.

She's much stronger now, Kersee said, pointing to her performance at worlds last summer in Beijing. Focusing on the 400, Felix won the event and then helped the relay teams to silver medals. Her leg of the 4x400 relay was particularly strong.

"Last season, she was (in her best shape ever)," Kersee said. "Barring injury, we can build off of that. We know we have a task ahead of us. We're committed to it."

"If we have an athlete that's capable of maybe wanting to try that, why not give them the opportunity? That's my Perry Mason argument." — AP



BEIJING: In this Aug 28, 2015, file photo, women's 400-meter gold medalist Allyson Felix celebrates on the podium at the World Athletics Championships at the Bird's Nest stadium in Beijing. Felix's training is all geared toward the finish line in the 200 and 400 meters at the Rio Olympics. — AP

FORMER RUGBY STAR HAYNE EMBRACING 49ERS' SQUAD

SANTA CLARA: The 49ers thought so highly of former Australian rugby league star Jarryd Hayne that he was their opening night punt returner despite playing football for just over seven months. But after three fumbles on punt returns, including his first ever attempt in the season opener, Hayne now finds himself on the practice squad.

"He needs to learn how to play football," said Thomas McGaughey Jr., the 49ers' first-year special teams coach. "To learn how to run and cover kicks and protect punts. That kind of stuff, that's going to be invaluable for him with his overall skill development."

Hayne was released on Halloween after appearing in six games before clearing waivers and signing to the practice squad two days later. He broke camp as the team's punt returner after averaging over 18 yards on returns in the preseason thanks to his quick feet and elusiveness in the open field.

"If I could come this far in seven months, just five me 12 or 14,"

Hayne said. With his preseason performance, Hayne became one of Australia's biggest sports stories after converting from the National Rugby League's Parramatta Eels, where he was one of the country's biggest stars.

Hayne exceeded his initial goal by making the 49ers' roster for Week 1. He was disappointed about his demotion, but is embracing his opportunity on the practice squad, where he's received more practice reps than he did as the fourth-string running back.

"It's definitely been a great year. I overachieved what I ever expected," Hayne said. "I think what people don't realize that every day for me is like a month to everyone else because of the way I pick things up and the way I learn."

PRACTISE SQUAD

"I just feel like in these short six weeks that I've been on the practice squad, I learned so much. There was two weeks where I literally took every single rep in the look-card squad. That was

huge. The most reps I took in a row (before that) was probably three or four." Hayne fumbled his first attempt at a punt return in the team's Week 1 win over the Vikings, and then again against Green Bay in Week 4 and the Ravens in Week 6. "He just needs to learn the game from the inside and out," said McGaughey. The 49ers dealt with injuries to their top three running backs, losing Carlos Hyde to a stress fracture in his left foot and Reggie Bush to knee surgery for the season. Rookie Mike Davis was placed on injured reserve with the return designation after surgery to repair a fracture in his hand.

All the while, San Francisco passed over chances to bring Hayne back to the active roster, instead opting for Shaun Draughn and Travaris Cadet, who were free agents after being released by the Browns and Patriots, respectively.

"I'm starting to realize when to play slow and when to play fast," Hayne said. "That's what the best do." — AP

RENOLDS MAINTAINS LEAD IN PHILIPPINE OPEN

MANILA: Canada's Lindsay Renolds kept his lead and stayed on track to win his first Asian Tour title, shooting a second round four-under-par 68 at the Philippine Open on Saturday. The Phuket-based Canadian was followed closely by Scott Barr of Australia, who shot a 66 at the Luisita Golf and Country Club. "It is exciting to be in this position. My game feels good and I feel good. I'm not really worried or nervous," said 29-year-old Renolds, who needs to win the tournament to keep his Asian Tour card next year. "Obviously there's a lot on the line tomorrow but if I play good golf then things will work out the way it should," he said.

The Philippine Open, which was slashed to 54 holes due to a one-day delay from

Typhoon Melor, will end today.

Second-placed Barr needs to improve his 64th place Order of Merit ranking by a notch to keep his Asian Tour card next year. "I'm pleased. Obviously this is a huge week," said Barr, who said he got a "great" putting lesson with old Asian Tour member Ahmad Bateman. "Obviously when the putter starts rolling, the fairways get wider and everything gets easier," he said.

Home favourite Miguel Tabuena shared third place with five-time Asian Tour winner Gaganjeet Bhullar of India, Kalle Samooja of Finland and Giwhan Kim of Korea.

Leading scores:
134 - Lindsay Renolds (CAN) 66-68
135 - Scott Barr (AUS) 69-66

136 - Kalle Samooja (FIN) 69-67, Miguel Tabuena (PHI) 67-69, Giwhan Kim (KOR) 68-68, Gaganjeet Bhullar (IND) 67-69

137 - Keith Horne (RSA) 69-68, Khalin Joshi (IND) 70-67, Chinnarat Phadungsil (THA) 67-70, Niall Turner (IRL) 69-68, Jeunghun Wang (KOR) 67-70

138 - Simon Griffiths (ENG) 70-68, Tirawat Kaewsiribandit (THA) 68-70

139 - Mardan Mamat (SIN) 68-71, Charlie Wi (KOR) 70-69, Charles Hong (PHI) 71-68, Janne Kaske (FIN) 71-68, Adam Groom (AUS) 70-69, Jovic Pagunsan (PHI) 68-71, Brett Munson (USA) 70-69, Orlan Sumcad (PHI) 72-67, Goh Kun Yang (SIN) 70-69. — AFP



DALY CITY: In this Saturday, April 25, 2015 file photo, Juli Inkster hits out of a bunker onto the fifth green of the Lake Merced Golf Club during the third round of the Swinging Skirts LPGA Classic golf tournament in Daly City, Calif. Juli Inkster said being the US Solheim Cup captain was one of the biggest thrills of her career. Inkster was introduced as captain Friday during a surprise announcement at Des Moines Country Club, the Iowa course that will host the 2017 matches. — AP

WALLABY MOORE EYES FOURTH WORLD CUP

SYDNEY: Wallabies skipper Stephen Moore says he has set his sights on a fourth World Cup after signing a new three-year deal with Australian rugby.

Moore's new contract with the Australian Rugby Union, penned Friday, commences in 2017, the same year he joins his former club, the Queensland Reds. The 32-year-old stunned his current ACT Brumbies team on Thursday when he advised them the 2016 Super Rugby season will be his last in Canberra.

Moore, who was a major influence in the Wallabies getting to this year's World Cup final against New Zealand in London, said he preferred to stay in Australia so he could build on the recent Wallabies' successes and improve on his 102 Test caps.

"I really feel we are building something special at the Wallabies under 'Cheik' (Michael Cheika) and his coaching staff but there's a lot more we want to achieve and I really wanted to be a part of that," Moore said in a statement late Friday. "I'll be 36 at the next World Cup (in Japan) and obviously form and a lot of other factors come into it."

"If I am playing well and healthy and I'm the right fit for the team when the time comes, I'd love the opportunity to play at another World Cup. "It's extremely rare for a player to play in four World Cups and I'm under no illusions that it's not going to happen for me without a lot of those factors working in my favour."

Moore said he decided to return to Queensland to be closer to family and finish his career where it all began, rather than chase a more lucrative stint in Europe as a host of other players have. — AFP

DIACK DENIES FUNDING SENEGAL PRESIDENT'S CAMPAIGN

PARIS: Former world athletics chief Lamine Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

Diack has been charged in France with accepting Russian bribes to cover up positive drugs tests when he was president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

On Friday he was quoted in Le Monde newspaper claiming Russia had donated 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) to help Sall depose Abdoulaye Wade, who was Senegal president from 2000 until his defeat to Sall in March 2012.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

Diack has been charged in France with accepting Russian bribes to cover up positive drugs tests when he was president of the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF).

On Friday he was quoted in Le Monde newspaper claiming Russia had donated 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) to help Sall depose Abdoulaye Wade, who was Senegal president from 2000 until his defeat to Sall in March 2012.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

FUNDING CAMPAIGN

On Friday, Le Monde published quotes from Diack, 82, in which he said former Russian Athletics Federation president Valentin Balakhnischev, an ex-IAAF treasurer, had made the payments to help Sall's campaign.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

On Friday, Le Monde published quotes from Diack, 82, in which he said former Russian Athletics Federation president Valentin Balakhnischev, an ex-IAAF treasurer, had made the payments to help Sall's campaign.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.

Diack denies helping fund Senegal president Macky Sall's election campaign in 2012, his lawyers said yesterday.



WINNIPEG: Connor Hellebuyck #30 of the Winnipeg Jets grabs the puck in second period action in an NHL game against the New York Rangers at the MTS Centre on Friday in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. — AFP

MOUNT UNION WINS 12TH FOOTBALL TITLE

SALEM: Taurice Scott threw three touchdown passes and ran for another score and Mount Union won its NCAA-best 12th football title, beating St. Thomas of Minnesota 49-35 on Friday night in the Division III championship game.

Logan Nemeth ran 220 yards and two touchdowns for the Purple Raiders (15-0), who were appearing in the Amos Alonzo Stagg Bowl for the 11th consecutive season.

Jordan Roberts ran for 135 yards and two touchdowns for St. Thomas (14-1). The Tommies also played for the title in 2012, losing 28-10 to Mount Union.

The Purple Raiders took command in the third quarter with three four-play touchdown drives sandwiched around a turnover and a three-and-out by the Tommies.

In the 21-0 third-quarter burst, Scott hit Roman Namdar for 63 yards to highlight the first drive, a fumble recovery set up the second, and Nemeth had a 42-yard run on the third drive before Scott's 18-yard scoring run.

St. Thomas fluky touchdown came when Nick Waldvogel fumbled on run up the middle, and the ball bounced sideways and into the hands of quarterback John Gould, who outran the defense

55 yards. Mount Union, which was driving into a gusting wind in the third quarter, let Nemeth do most of the heavy lifting in the final quarter as it chewed time off the clock.

Unable to generate any offense moving into the stiff wind in the first quarter, Mount Union scored on its first two possessions of the second quarter with the wind at its back.

The Tommies got help from a pass-interference call in converting a fourth-and-6 play from the Mount Union 30.

The ball as he passed through the end zone, but a review ruled he gained possession in time for a touchdown and a 7-0 lead. It was the largest deficit the Purple Raiders have faced this season, and the Tommies doubled it in the second quarter, again with help.

VATRANO, BERGERON LEAD BRUINS PAST PENGUINS

PITTSBURGH: Frank Vatrano had three goals for his first career hat trick, Patrice Bergeron scored twice, and the Boston Bruins beat the Pittsburgh Penguins 6-2 Friday night to sweep the teams' home-and-home series.

shot, and then Dave Dziurzynski fired the rebound back at net. Stalock got a piece of Dziurzynski's shot but left the rebound right on the goal line for Pageau to poke in.

CANUCKS 4, RED WINGS 3, SO

Linden Vey, making his season debut, scored in the seventh round of the shootout to give Vancouver a win over Detroit. Jared McCann, Sven Baertschi and Andersson, Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg scored for the Red Wings, and Jimmy Howard had 37 saves.

Andersson, Pavel Datsyuk and Henrik Zetterberg scored for the Red Wings, and Jimmy Howard had 37 saves. Zetterberg tied the game at 3 with 1:07 to play, taking a Pavel Datsyuk pass and beating Miller on the stick side.

JETS 5, RANGERS 2

Bryan Little scored two first-period goals, Blake Wheeler had four assists and Winnipeg beat New York. Little scored his 11th and 12th goals of the season in a 2:31 span for a 2-0 lead.

PANTHERS 2, HURRICANES 0

Roberto Luongo made 24 saves, Willie Mitchell scored 4:09 into the third period and Florida beat Carolina for its third straight win.

NHL results/standings

Boston 6, Pittsburgh 2; Washington 5, Tampa Bay 3; Florida 2, Carolina 0; Ottawa 4, San Jose 2; Vancouver 4, Detroit 3 (SO); Winnipeg 5, NY Rangers 2.

Western Conference

Table with columns W, L, OTL, GF, GA, PTS for Western Conference teams.

Eastern Conference

Table with columns W, L, OTL, GF, GA, PTS for Eastern Conference teams.

Metropolitan Division

Table with columns W, L, OTL, GF, GA, PTS for Metropolitan Division teams.

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).

Sullivan replaced Mike Johnston as the team's head coach last weekend. Overall, Pittsburgh has lost four in a row (0-3-1) and six of its past seven to sit 12th in the Eastern Conference.

Radim Vrbata scored in regulation for the Canucks, who were without injured captain Henrik Sedin.

CAPITALS 5, LIGHTNING 3

Alex Ovechkin and T.J. Oshie both finished with two goals and two assists and Marcus Johansson got the tiebreaking goal with 5:44 left to help Washington rally from three goals down and beat Tampa Bay.

SENATORS 4, SHARKS 2

Bobby Ryan had a goal and an assist, Craig Anderson made 31 saves and Ottawa got its fourth straight home win.



ROME: People stand around the 18th-century Baroque-style Trevi fountain before the start of a show to promote Rome's candidacy for the 2024 Olympic Games, on Friday in Rome. The cities in the bid to host the 2024 Olympics are Budapest, Hamburg, Los Angeles, Paris and Rome. — AFP

SPORTS QUOTES FOR 2015

TENNIS

"I don't want to talk about how disappointing it is for me. If you have any other questions, I'm open for that." Serena Williams after her shock US Open semi-final loss to Roberta Vinci which ended her bid for a calendar Grand Slam.

"There was one time I was at the pizza joint in Palm Beach and I did fall and hit my neck and head. I don't know if that counts as one. I came to the next morning. Anyways, that was it. The pizza never fell. It was perched perfectly in my hand as I slept."

Serena Williams after being asked if, like Eugenie Bouchard, she has ever suffered a concussion. "Have you ever played tennis? You did? You probably weren't very good."

CRICKET

"I have no personal issues with Amir, it's my personal opinion that I can't share the dressing room with someone who hurt my country's integrity." Pakistan batsman Mohammad Hafeez refusing to play in same Twenty20 team in Bangladesh with Mohammad Amir, the bowler who was jailed after being found guilty of spot-fixing on the Pakistan tour of England in 2010.

"He's still living off the fact that he coached a team that anyone, even my dog Jerry, could have coached to world domination."

Ex-Australian Test captain Michael Clarke slams former coach John Buchanan, following the latter's criticism of his captaincy. "We envisioned the future of having lost your first two games, but not by this much."

GOLF

"This has been the most unpleasant golf tournament I've seen in my life. I mean, the man who designed this golf course had to have had one leg shorter than the other."

Golf legend Gary Player ranting at the very hilly Chambers Bay Golf Course in Washington State which hosted the 2015 US Open. "It would be having a more open, honest relationship with my ex-wife."

What Tiger Woods replied after being asked what he would change most in his life and career as he approaches 40 on December 30. "Luckily, that amount of money doesn't sort of mean much to me anymore."

FOOTBALL

"I'm a totally normal guy. I'm the Normal One."

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp as he faced the media for the first time when asked how he would describe himself, after Chelsea manager Jose Mourinho famously said he was "a special one" in his first press conference in English football in 2004.

"I am a mountain goat that keeps going and going and going. I cannot be stopped, I just keep going." Sepp Blatter before his reelection for a fifth term as FIFA president.

"That is someone who should be given the Nobel Peace Prize. His contribution to the global humanitarian sphere is colossal."

His contribution to the global humanitarian sphere is colossal."

Russian President Vladimir Putin on suspended FIFA boss Sepp Blatter, who is facing corruption allegations. "I have pictured it a few times, but I have to say I never thought it would work out so well!"

Carl Lloyd after scoring the fastest hat-trick in a World Cup final match in the first 15 minutes as the United States beat holders Japan 5-2 in the women's tournament. "I wasn't happy with my medical staff because even if you are a medical doctor or secretary on the bench, you have to understand the game."

Jose Mourinho blasts team doctor Eva Carneiro who left the club in September and is now seeking a claim for constructive dismissal. "I'm not under pressure, the refugees are under pressure."

Jose Mourinho refused to accept he was in the midst of a full-blown crisis. "I feel like my work was betrayed." Jose Mourinho accuses his players of betraying him in a 2-1 defeat at Premier League leaders Leicester City, his final match before his sacking.

RUGBY UNION

"We talked about what we wanted to do at half-time. It must have been a terrible speech."

Canada coach Kieran Crowley after his side fell to the biggest comeback in World Cup history, losing to Romania. "It is like kissing your sister." Springbok coach Heyneke Meyer gives his view on the joy of having to play a third place playoff match.

BOXING

"You're boring and I want to get you out of the heavy-weight division. You have about as much charisma as my underpants. Zero."

Tyson Fury before ending Vladimir Klitschko's four-year reign as undisputed world heavyweight champion.

CYCLING

"If I change all the seconds for firsts, there's not a team that can pay me." Slovak cyclist Peter Sagan.

NFL

"You have to be mean to be a football player. Some of the best players don't know how to be mean, and that's why they can't get their team to the next level. I'm superman on the field. If my mom was out there, I'd run over her." Seattle Seahawk defensive end Michael Bennett.

ATHLETICS

"This whole case smells of a political hit job and nothing more."

All-Russia Athletics Federation lawyer Artyom Patshev after a World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) report revealed rampant state-sponsored doping in Russian athletics.

"We don't deny that we have problems but they exist around the whole world; we have the same percent as all countries do."

Russian sports minister Vitaly Mutko on the WADA report which resulted in Russian athletes being suspended from international competition. — AFP

ICC SHOULD FIX WINDIES CLUB V COUNTRY ROW: CLARKE

SYDNEY: The world governing body should do more to prevent a repeat of the club versus country player crisis that threatens to turn the West Indies-Australia Test series into a farce, Michael Clarke said yesterday.

The former Australian skipper said international cricket must remain the priority for players over participation in the raft of lucrative global Twenty20 tournaments now available to high-profile stars. But he accepts Tests will only remain the pinnacle of the game if authorities find a

balance that allows top players to also take part in competitions such as the Indian Premier League and Australia's current Big Bash League.

"The players that are here playing in the BBL (Big Bash League) I think it's really disappointing they're not part of the West Indies Test team," the recently retired Clarke told the Sydney Morning Herald. "There's a number of players in Australia who would be in their number one picked Test team. I think it's disappointing for the game and Test match cricket.

"I'd like to see that changed. That will come down to the ICC (International Cricket Council) and West Indies Cricket Board trying to get together to make it work."

The worst fears for the West Indies series in Australia were realised when they crashed to an innings defeat inside three days in the first Test in Hobart last week.

There is little confidence the Caribbean tourists can lift their game for the feature Boxing Day and New Year

Tests in Melbourne and Sydney. Anticipated easy wins for Australia has also turned off fans, with speculation that the Boxing Day crowd on Australian cricket's biggest day of the calendar could be the lowest in 16 years. While there is widespread discontent with the West Indies board, a lack of money in the Caribbean game is also seen as a key factor for many senior players turning their backs on Tests to chase the riches on offer in T20s. The Windies' national team are playing the three-Test series without for-

mer captains Chris Gayle, Dwayne Bravo and Darren Sammy who are all on duty with their Australian Big Bash franchises, along with fellow Windies players Andre Russell, Samuel Badree and Lendl Simmons.

"I think international cricket has to be the priority," said Clarke, who rarely played in domestic T20 competitions during his Test career. "T20 tournaments are important and fantastic to watch, but I think there's nothing more special than representing your country." — AFP

LYON HOPING TO SHOW WHITE BALL FORM AHEAD OF WORLD T20

MELBOURNE: Australia spinner Nathan Lyon fought hard to cement his place in the test team and now hopes to convince selectors of his white ball prowess in time for the World Twenty20 in India.

Lyon celebrated his 50th test against West Indies in Hobart last week but played the last of his eight one-day internationals more than a year ago and has yet to represent Australia in a T20 international.

The 28-year-old will have a chance to impress on Sunday when he bowls for the Sydney Sixers in the domestic 'Big Bash' T20 tournament, a match pitting him against the Hobart Hurricanes' Cameron Boyce, the incumbent spinner in the national team. Lyon collected eight wickets from his four Big Bash (BBL) matches last season and was one of the Sixers' best in their opening loss to cross-town rivals Sydney Thunder on Thursday. Although he made his test debut in 2011, it took Lyon nearly three years to nail down a permanent place in the side after a number of false starts and setbacks. Proving himself a contender in the shorter formats has also been a slow process and he was omitted from the squad that secured a fifth 50-over World

Cup victory for Australia in March.

"You're going to have to ask Rod Marsh and the rest of the selectors about that one," Lyon told reporters on Saturday of his fleeting appearances in limited-overs cricket. "I want to be the spinner in all three formats. I don't know how many times I have to say it.

"That's my goal and the T20 World Cup is definitely on my radar. I just have to come out here and perform well for the Sydney Sixers and enjoying bowling in the BBL." Lyon will also have to battle for his spot in the squad for the March 8-April 3 World T20 against spin-bowling all-rounder Glenn Maxwell and Ashton Agar, who forced his way into the one-day team on the tour of England this year. A former groundsman at Adelaide Oval, Lyon surpassed Hugh Trumble's 141 test wickets in June to become Australia's most prolific off-spinner and now has 175 to his name. He said he felt confident he could thrive with "red ball, white ball or pink ball."

"It doesn't faze me what game I'm playing in, I just want to do well for the team I'm playing for and get the right result." — Reuters



HAMILTON: BJ Watling of New Zealand (R) plays a shot during day two of the International Test cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

CHAMEERA'S BLITZ PUTS SRI LANKANS ON TOP

HAMILTON: Sri Lanka fought their way back into the second Test against New Zealand with a destructive burst by young quick Dushmantha Chameera on day two in Hamilton yesterday. Chameera took his first five-wicket bag as New Zealand slumped from 81 without loss in reply to Sri Lanka's first innings score of 292 to be 232-9 at stumps.

Doug Bracewell was not out 30 after a ninth-wicket stand of 31 with Neil Wagner (17) who was dismissed on the last ball of the day. The 23-year-old Chameera, bowling at up to 146 kilometres per hour (90.6 mph), was used sparingly by captain Angelo Mathews, taking three for 17 in his first spell and two for 30 in his second.

In partnership with the wily 37-year-old Rangana Herath, playing his 67th Test, they took New Zealand apart when it seemed openers Tom Latham and Martin Guptill were settling in.

New Zealand lost four wickets for eight runs in four overs as Chameera claimed the scalps of Latham, Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor while Herath removed Guptill.

Brendon McCullum tried to steer his side out of trouble and put on 39 for the fifth wicket with Mitchell Santner before he became Herath's second wicket. Chameera, who in his second spell removed Tim Southee and Wagner, was delighted with his performance.

"This is my fourth Test and I get five wickets so I am very happy," he said, adding the wicket he treasured most was Williamson. The lean fast bowler said Sri Lanka worked out the batsmen would fall for the leg-side trap "because that's the way they naturally play". Guptill believed New Zealand were not out of the Test. "We're not where we'd like to be. Obviously we had to weather a bit of a storm after lunch when Sri Lanka bowled very well," he said. "But the fight we showed down the order through Dougie (Bracewell), Mitch (Santner) and BJ (Watling) we are still in this game." Sri Lanka's first innings wrapped up quickly on the second day with only 28 further runs added, half of them by top scorer Mathews who was out for 77, caught at third slip by Latham off Southee.

Brisk start
Latham and Guptill made a brisk start for New Zealand as they cruised through to 81, giving New Zealand three consecutive half-century opening stands for the first time in 14 years. Chameera had been kept out of the attack for most of the partnership but when he came in he was on the money almost immediately, having Latham caught by Dimuth Karunaratne at leg gully for 28. In his next over he took out New Zealand's batting kingpin Williamson for one.

Again targeting the leg side, as he did with Latham, Chameera tempted Williamson into a pull shot which was skied to Suranga Lakmal at deep square leg.

Guptill, who had looked solid as he reached 50, escaped the wrath of Chameera only to fall to Herath,

playing across the line and getting an edge which was smartly taken by Mathews at first slip. Chameera completed the four-over rout to have Taylor caught by Dinesh Chandimal without scoring.

McCullum, who put away his natural attacking instincts, was initially given out on 17 off 47 balls when caught by Udara Jayasundera in the deep. He was called back as he headed off the field as television replays showed Nuwan Pradeep's delivery was a no ball. But he failed to make the most of the reprieve with his eventual dismissal coming one run later when he was neatly caught one-handed by Kusal Mendis at short leg. Santner made 38 and Watling 28 as New Zealand tried to recover but they still ended the day 60 runs behind with only one wicket remaining. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

HAMILTON, New Zealand: Scoreboard at stumps on day two of the second Test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka in Hamilton yesterday:

Sri Lanka 1st innings (overnight 264-7)		New Zealand 1st innings	
D. Karunaratne c Watling b Southee	12	M. Guptill c Mathews b Herath	50
K. Mendis c Watling b Southee	31	T. Latham c Karunaratne b Chameera	28
U. Jayasundera run out Santner/Watling	26	K. Williamson c Lakmal b Chameera	1
D. Chandimal c Watling b Bracewell	47	R. Taylor c Chandimal b Chameera	0
A. Mathews c Latham b Southee	77	B. McCullum c Mendis b Herath	18
M. Siriwardana c Taylor b Boult	62	M. Santner c Chandimal b Pradeep	38
K. Vithanage c McCullum b Boult	0	B. Watling c Vithanage b Lakmal	28
R. Herath run out (Williamson)	4	D. Bracewell not out	30
D. Chameera c McCullum b Bracewell	4	T. Southee c Jayasundera b Chameera	4
S. Lakmal c Williamson b Wagner	4	N. Wagner c Vithanage b Chameera	17
N. Pradeep not out	2	T. Boult not out	0
Extras: (lb11, w12)	23	Extras: (lb3, nb7, w8)	18
Total (10 wickets; 80.1 overs)	292	Total (9 wickets; 78.4 overs)	232
Fall of wickets: 1-39 (Karunaratne), 2-44 (Mendis), 3-115 (Jayasundera), 4-121 (Chandimal), 5-259 (Siriwardana), 6-259 (Vithanage), 7-264 (Herath), 8-284 (Mathews), 9-288 (Lakmal), 10-292 (Chameera)		Fall of wickets: 1-81 (Latham), 2-83 (Williamson), 3-86 (Guptill), 4-89 (Taylor), 5-128 (McCullum), 6-168 (Santner), 7-196 (Watling), 8-201 (Southee), 9-232 (Wagner)	
Bowling: Boult 20-2-51-2, Southee 21-5-63-3 (w1), Bracewell 22.1-4-81-2 (w1), Wagner 9-1-51-1 (w2), Santner 7-0-34-0, Williamson 1-0-1-0.		Bowling: Lakmal 16-4-48-1 (w1, nb1), Mathews 11-7-25-0, Pradeep 17-4-34-1 (w1, nb5), Herath 22-1-75-2, Chameera 12.4-3-47-5 (w2, nb1).	



SINGAPORE: France's Kristina Mladenovic of UAE Royals hits a return against Australia's Jarmila Gajdosova of Philippine Mavericks during their women's singles tennis match at the International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) tournament in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

INDIA RECALLS YUVRAJ, NEHRA

NEW DELHI: Veterans Yuvraj Singh and Ashish Nehra yesterday returned to India's Twenty20 side for next month's limited-overs tour of Australia, where it will play five one-day internationals and three Twenty20 games.

The 34-year-old Yuvraj, who last played international cricket at the World Twenty20 in Bangladesh during March-April 2014, was selected after some fine performances in domestic one-day games this

month.

Yuvraj, remembered for his six sixes in an over to Stuart Broad during the inaugural edition of the World Twenty20 in 2007, was picked as India looks for a finisher batting at number six or seven for the World Twenty20 to be held in India in March-April.

Nehra, 36, last played for India in the 2011 World Cup but has been fairly consistent over the years in the Indian Premier League. — AP



SINGAPORE: India's Rohan Bopana (L) is watched by Croatia's Ivan Dodig (R) of Micromax Indian Aces as he plays a return against Brazil's Marcelo Melo and Australia's Nick Kyrgios of OUE Singapore Slammers during their men's doubles tennis match at the International Premier Tennis Match (IPTL) in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

BRATHWAITE, BLACKWOOD IN THE RUNS BUT WINDIES COLLAPSE AGAIN

GEELONG: Opener Kraigg Brathwaite carried on his Test form but the West Indies' woes were exposed again in another batting collapse in their tour game against a Victoria XI in Geelong yesterday.

The Caribbean tourists, who were smashed by an innings and 212 runs in last week's first Hobart Test, were looking to rediscover some confidence ahead of the second Test, starting at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Boxing Day. But after reaching 226 for three the Windies collapsed losing 5-31 on the opening day of their two-game in oppressive heat. Brathwaite and Jermaine Blackwood were the only batsmen to pass 50 as the West Indies reached 303 for eight at stumps on day one. Denesh Ramdin finished 38 not out.

Both teams toiled as the temperature reached over 44 Celsius (112 Fahrenheit), making it the Victorian provincial city's hottest day in December on record. Blackwood described it as the most stifling playing conditions he has endured in a match.

"I was so tired after running some threes," he told reporters. "At one point I

was kind of losing concentration. I had to put that behind me and just focus on each ball." Brathwaite, who scored 94 in his side's miserable second innings of 148 in the first Test, picked up where he left off in Bellerive. The 23-year-old retired on 78 at tea, having faced 175 balls in a valuable hit-out.

Blackwood scored 69 before he was trapped lbw by legspinner Jeremy Hart. Darren Bravo, who posted a century in the first Test, was rested but otherwise it was a full-strength batting order that misfired. Marlon Samuels, who was promoted to first drop in the absence of Bravo, scored 45 off 39 balls before paceman Jackson Coleman had him out edging. Hart, who is yet to play first-class cricket, snared four wickets for 93 and sliced through the middle order.

It was the latest sorry story in what has been a woeful tour. "We got some starts... we just need to convert those starts now," Blackwood said. "We'll just have to go back into the nets and continue to work hard. "We're just putting in the work and hopefully it will pay off in the next Test match." — AFP

IBRAHIMOVIC WONDERGOAL AS PSG BREAK POINTS RECORD

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain go into the winter break with a Ligue 1 record points haul of 51 after a 3-0 away win at Caen lit up by a thrilling Zlatan Ibrahimovic strike yesterday. Already 1-0 up from an early Angel di Maria goal Ibrahimovic produced a stunning 25-yard snap-shot which flew into the top corner of the Caen goal on 36 minutes.

As the stadium rose to acclaim the

giant Swede for the simple power and precision of his split-second effort, even the beaten 'keeper was left smiling. The win lifted PSG to a massive 20 points clear of Angers, in action on Sunday at Saint-Etienne. It also extends the star-studded Qatar-backed club's unbeaten record in the league to 28 games since March. Summer-signing Di Maria rounded off the scoring with his sixth Ligue 1 goal since

joining from Manchester United, making it 3-0 as he rounded off a slick team effort on 50 minutes.

Caen 'keeper Remy Vercoutre deserves a special mention himself after saving four stinging shots in a bewildering first-half goalmouth scramble, two of them spectacular stops with the feet from Lucas Moura and Ibrahimovic. Not to be outdone PSG's German 'keeper Kevin Trapp

then saved an 84th minute penalty from Caen's Andy Delort as the champions shone in every area against a side who went into the game in fourth place. Third-place Monaco end a turbulent 2015 at Troyes later Saturday, with the bottom club still looking for a first win of the season. Among the other fixtures is a Brittany derby between Guingamp, who are in the relegation zone, and a Rennes side with just

one win in their last 13 league games. Marseille will look to end a difficult year on a high note when they visit Bordeaux on Sunday night in the last match before France takes a two-week winter break over the festive period.

On Friday teenager Olivier Boscagli sent Nice into the French winter break on a winning note as he struck the only goal in a 1-0 victory at home to Montpellier. —AFP



HANNOVER: Bayern's Thomas Mueller scores the opening goal by penalty during the German Bundesliga soccer match between Hannover 96 and FC Bayern Munich in Hannover, Germany, yesterday. —AP

BAYERN GO 9 PTS CLEAR, WAIT ON PEP DECISION

BERLIN: Bayern Munich opened a nine-point lead in the Bundesliga yesterday with a 1-0 win at struggling Hanover as the Bavarians wait to learn whether Pep Guardiola will leave at the end of the season.

Guardiola's contract as head coach expires in June and the club say an announcement on the 44-year-old's future plans will be made today when the German league begins the month-long winter break.

Daily newspaper Bild insist Guardiola will leave in May and claim Bayern have already made a verbal agreement for Carlo Ancelotti to take over.

Regardless of who will coach them next season, Bayern finish 2015 nine points clear after Thomas Mueller converted a 40th minute penalty for his 14th league goal of the season when Hanover captain Christian Schulz conceded the spot-kick after the ball hit his arm.

"It was clear that Hanover weren't going to give any points away, so we're delighted to get the win," Mueller told Sky. But after sealing Bayern's 15th win in 17 league games, Mueller said Guardiola has given no indication to the squad as to whether he will stay or go. "We'll see what happens. Regardless of who is coach, the squad just wants to keep winning," added the Germany forward. "We haven't heard anything, it could be that he stays. Besides the media normally find out before we do."

But this was the third game in succession where jaded Bayern have laboured to victory although the Bavarians have still only dropped five points from their 17 games so far for a season's tally of 46.

Second-placed Borussia Dortmund are

now nine points behind Bayern after crashing to a 2-1 defeat at Cologne as the hosts scored twice in the final 10 minutes.

Dortmund took the lead after just 18 minutes when Greece centre-back Sokratis Papastathopoulos headed home a corner swung in by Henrik Mkhitaryan.

But Cologne took the three points when Simon Zollner fired home from close range on 83 minutes before Anthony Modeste earned a yellow card for ripping off his shirt, yelling a primal scream, after hitting the 90th-minute winner.

Bayer Leverkusen climbed to fourth in the table with a 1-0 win at Ingolstadt as Mexico striker Javier Hernandez kept up his stunning scoring run.

"Chicharito" claimed his 17th goal in Leverkusen's last 14 games in all competitions when he stabbed home his 11th league goal of the season since joining from Manchester United.

Europa League side Augsburg picked up their third straight win to move away from the relegation places into mid-table with a 1-0 victory at Hamburg thanks to Jan Moravek's headed equaliser.

Eintracht Frankfurt picked up their first win in eight matches when captain Alex Meier and Stefan Aigner scored in their 2-1 win at home to fellow strugglers Werder Bremen which left both teams just above the relegation places.

Schalke are up to fourth in the table thanks to Friday's 1-0 win against struggling Hoffenheim when Cameroon forward Eric Choupo-Moting was credited with a goal which deflected off Hoffenheim's Czech defender Pavel Kaderabek. —AFP

PENALTY KING MAHREZ KEEPS LEICESTER TOP



LIVERPOOL: Two penalties from Riyad Mahrez and a fine finish from Shinji Okazaki helped Premier League leaders Leicester to a 3-2 win over Everton at Goodison Park yesterday. Claudio Ranieri's surprise title contenders again underlined their collective strength with a wonderful team effort that ensures Leicester go into the Christmas period at the top of the table after their 11th win in 17 matches. A quiet opening was the last thing anyone expected as these two sides are amongst the most attacking in the Premier League. Leicester went into the contest as the league's leading scorers with 34 goals in 16 league games this season, while the Toffees were joint third on that list with 29.

But rainy conditions did not help matters as both teams failed to settle and take control of the contest. The game was 10 minutes old before the first real threat was posed as Leicester's Marc Albrighton fired in a low cross that Okazaki reacted to quickest but his flicked effort flew over Tim Howard's crossbar. At the other end, a last-ditch tackle from Albrighton on Gerard Deulofeu stopped his shot from causing any real damage before Ross Barkley miscued a volley inside the box.

However, it was Leicester who took the lead after 27 minutes when Okazaki was wrestled to the ground by Ramiro Funes Mori to concede a penalty. It was clumsy

rather than anything more malicious but that did not concern Algeria winger Mahrez who stepped up and calmly converted from 12 yards out. The goal actually sparked Everton into life and they equalised five minutes later courtesy of in-form striker Romelu Lukaku.

POOR CONDITIONS

Barkley was calm inside the box as he tried to beat Kasper Schmeichel from six yards out and

ninth goal in his last eight matches and he became the first Everton player to score in eight successive matches in all competitions since Dave Hickson achieved the feat in 1954. After the break, Everton settled faster although the poor conditions again prevented the encounter from developing into a classic. Leicester striker Jamie Vardy, the Premier League's star man at present, didn't get his first opportunity until the 58th minute when his

and pushed the ball past Howard who clearly tripped him. Referee Jonathan Moss had little option but to award the penalty and Mahrez was again successful from the spot.

Leicester's third then arrived almost immediately as Everton fell to pieces at the back. A weak clearance was pounced upon by Vardy inside the area and after feigning to shoot he calmly slotted the ball for Japanese forward Okazaki to finish emphatically.



LIVERPOOL: Leicester City's Japanese striker Shinji Okazaki (C) shoots past Everton's English defender Leighton Baines to score their third goal during the English Premier League football match between Everton and Leicester City at Goodison Park in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. —AFP

although the Leicester goalkeeper did well to block Barkley's first effort - and Andy King did just as well to control the rebound - nobody could stop Lukaku smashing home the loose ball from six yards out. Lukaku's finish was his

curled effort beat Howard but also drifted wide of the far post. However, Vardy was involved shortly afterwards when he won Leicester's second penalty with 64 minutes on the clock. Vardy sprinted into the box

Everton did managed to pull one back in the 89th minute when Kevin Mirallas rifled a low effort past Schmeichel, but although the Goodison crowd urged the Toffees to find an equaliser, it would not come. —AFP

BOURNEMOUTH BEAT 9-MAN WEST BROM 2-1



WEST BROMWICH: James McClean and Salomon Rondon were sent off for West Bromwich Albion as Bournemouth claimed a third straight Premier League victory with a 2-1 away win yesterday. Hot-tempered Irish winger McClean saw red for a rash 34th-minute foul on Adam Smith, who put Bournemouth ahead early in the second half at The Hawthorns. Gareth McAuley levelled with a header, but left-back Charlie Daniels's emphatic 87th-minute penalty gave Bournemouth victory before Rondon was sent off following an altercation with Smith.

Having beaten Chelsea and Manchester United on their two previous outings, Eddie Howe's Bournemouth tasted top-flight victory for the third game running — a first since promotion in May.

Unbeaten in five league games, having lost the previous four, they are now just a point below Tony Pulis's West Brom, who have gone four games without a win and remain 13th.

Howe submitted an unchanged team, but Josh King, the match-winner against United, injured his hamstring in the warm-up, which saw Glenn Murray, scorer of the winning goal at Chelsea, come into the start-

ing XI. There were early chances for both teams, West Brom goalkeeper Boaz Myhill parrying from Junior Stanislas and James Morrison forcing Artur Boruc to scramble at the other end with a dipping half-volley.

Murray also had a shot deflected behind, but there was little to separate the teams until the red mist descended for McClean. The Republic of Ireland winger completely cleaned out Smith with a wild, dangerous challenge and referee Mike Dean immediately brandished the red card.

Bournemouth are not a team who need encouragement to attack and they quickly sought to exploit their numerical advantage, Murray testing Myhill and Matt Ritchie heading Stanislas's cross wide from six yards.

West Brom threatened to go ahead early in the second half when Rondon's volley was tipped over by Boruc, but it was the visitors who drew first blood as Smith ran across the box before drilling home a low shot.

The 10 men levelled with 11 minutes left, McAuley flicking in a near-post header from a corner, and Craig Dawson should have put them ahead when he headed wide from Craig Gardner's free-kick.

Instead it was Bournemouth who took the points, Daniels slamming a penalty home after Darren Fletcher was adjudged to have fouled Dan Gosling right on the edge of the area.

Venezuelan striker Rondon compounded West Brom's frustration in stoppage time when he was sent off after fouling Gosling and then leaning his head towards Smith's in the ensuing stramash. —AFP



SOUTHAMPTON: Harry Kane marked his 100th Tottenham appearance with the clinical finish that lifted his side into the Premier League's top four with a 2-0 win at Southampton yesterday. England striker Kane bagged the 47th goal of his Tottenham career five minutes before half-time and young midfielder Dele Alli added the second moments later to give the north Londoners their first win in four Premier League matches. It was the perfect response from Mauricio Pochettino's team after last weekend's surprise home defeat against Newcastle ended their 14-match unbeaten league run.



SOUTHAMPTON: St Mary's Southampton's Victor Wanyama, left, and Tottenham Hotspur's Harry Kane, centre, in action during the English Premier League soccer match at St Mary's, Southampton, England, yesterday. —AP

Tottenham climb above Manchester United into fourth place following Pochettino's second win in three meetings with his former club since quitting Southampton in May 2014. Mid-table Southampton are without a win in their last six matches in all competitions, a barren spell that includes four defeats in their last five league games. Saints manager Ronald Koeman had been criticised for adopting a cautious approach in recent weeks as he frets about a potential slide towards the relegation zone and this error-strewn display will do nothing to silence the doubters. Initially, it seemed they had refound their rhythm and Senegal winger Sadio Mane's early shot was deflected over by Toby Alderweireld. However, Mane wasted an even better chance when he met Dusan Tadic's low cross with a tame shot that was too close to Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris. Those misses proved fatal because, after a quiet opening, Tottenham took charge from the moment Alderweireld headed onto the roof of the net from Christian Eriksen's free-kick.

Kane had his first sight of goal with a low drive from an angle that was well saved by Paulo Gazzaniga.

NEVILLE LOOKING FOR 1ST LIGA WIN WITH VALENCIA

MADRID: Gary Neville is still searching for his first La Liga win as Valencia boss after Los Che twice fought back from a goal down to draw 2-2 at home to Getafe yesterday. All four goals arrived in a 25 minute period in the first-half as Paco Alcacer cancelled out Pablo Sarabia's opener.

Angel Lafita then put Getafe back in front only for substitute Santi Mina to level once more. A point leaves Valencia still six points off the top four, but does at least preserve their unbeaten home record in the league stretching back to November last year.

Neville had managed to get his first win in three attempts against third-tier Barakaldo in the Copa del Rey in midweek. But, just as against Eibar in his first taste of La Liga action last weekend, Valencia make a poor start and were behind after just 10 minutes. Goalkeeper Jaume Domenech has been Valencia's player of the year so far this season, but he reacted late to Sarabia's free-kick and couldn't prevent the ball finding the top corner despite getting a hand to it. —AFP

Sports

Chameera's blitz puts Sri Lankans on top

17

Trailblazer Hill dies aged 87

18



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015

PENALTY KING MAHREZ KEEPS LEICESTER TOP

Page 19



LONDON: Chelsea's Branislav Ivanovic, left, scores his side's first goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Chelsea and Sunderland at Stamford Bridge stadium in London, yesterday. — AP

FANS JEER AS CHELSEA EARN POST-MOURINHO WIN

HIDDINK RETURNS TO CHELSEA AS MANAGER



LONDON: Chelsea's fans turned on their own players and chanted support for ex-manager Jose Mourinho as his successor Guus Hiddink watched them ease to a 3-1 win over Sunderland.

Mourinho was sacked on Thursday and Dutchman Hiddink re-appointed to reprise his role as interim manager a couple of hours before yesterday's Premier League match kicked off.

Hiddink has returned to Chelsea as manager "until the end of the season" following

the sacking of Mourinho, the struggling Premier League champions announced. The experienced Dutch coach, 69, returns to a role he previously performed in 2009, when he led Chelsea to glory in the FA Cup. "I am excited to return to Stamford Bridge," Hiddink said in a statement on the Chelsea website. "Chelsea is one of the biggest clubs in the world, but is not where it should be at the moment. However, I am sure we can all turn this season around."

"I am looking forward to working with the players and staff at this great club and especially renewing my wonderful relationship with the Chelsea fans."

But Chelsea's fans were far from happy, regularly chanting in support of the Portuguese, and not a single seated supporter could be spotted when they sang "Stand up for the Special One!"

They had booed the names of Cesc Fabregas and Diego Costa when they were read out on the tannoy prior to the game, sin-

gling the Spain pair out as bearing responsibility for Mourinho's demise.

One banner read "You let Jose down, you let us down," and after Branislav Ivanovic and Pedro Rodriguez had put Chelsea 2-0 up inside 13 minutes, there was a deafening chant of: "Where were you when we were s..."

Nevertheless, Chelsea produced arguably their best performance of the season against a Sunderland side struggling in the bottom three. The hosts added a third goal in the second half through Oscar's penalty before Fabio Borini pulled one back.

With caretaker Steve Holland taking charge of the team while Hiddink watched from the stands along with former Chelsea favourite Didier Drogba, the home side needed only five minutes to take the lead.

Ivanovic's header from Willian's corner gave him his first goal of the campaign and just eight minutes later, Chelsea scored their second. They were helped by a defensive error from Yann M'Vila, who failed to clear Ivanovic's

cross, and Pedro capitalised to beat Costel Pantilimon for his first goal since September.

Chelsea continued to attack, with Willian seeing an effort deflected wide, and after Sunderland's Sebastian Coates had gone off to be replaced by Adam Johnson, Oscar was denied a third by a fine Pantilimon save.

Sam Allardyce's side were not helping themselves, another defensive mistake from captain John O'Shea letting in Costa, who shot wide. The Spanish forward then headed off-target from Oscar's cross.

Chelsea's confidence was slowly returning and Pedro saw a shot deflected into the arms of Pantilimon just before the break.

Borini was sent on for Ola Toivonen for the visitors at the break, but the game was up in the 50th minute when Pantilimon brought Willian down in the area. Oscar coolly slotted home the spot-kick.

The chants for Mourinho continued, but Sunderland pulled one back two minutes later as Borini tucked home after Thibault Courtois

had failed to gather Younes Kaboul's header from Patrick van Aanholt's free-kick.

For the first time in the game, Sunderland had some momentum and Jermain Defoe and Borini both missed the target, producing mumbblings of discontent from the Stamford Bridge faithful.

The visitors were much improved, with Defoe driving wide again after Duncan Watmore had headed down Pantilimon's long ball. But Chelsea continued to attack as well, Oscar finding the side-netting from Willian's pass and Pedro miskicking from Ivanovic's cross. Despite the result, Fabregas was booed by a section of fans as John Mikel Obi came on in his place and Costa also met with a few jeers when he gave way for Loic Remy.

The impressive Willian was denied again by Pantilimon and Pedro missed a glorious chance after being freed by Willian, while Thibault Courtois thwarted Defoe at the other end after Nemanja Matic had given the ball away. — AFP

VAN GAAL BOOED AGAIN, NORWICH STUN UNITED



MANCHESTER: Louis van Gaal's position as Manchester United manager will come under increased scrutiny after relegation-threatened Norwich secured a shock 2-1 win at Old Trafford yesterday.

Goals from Cameron Jerome and Alex Tettey either side of half-time gave Alex Neil's team a 2-0 lead and Anthony Martial's reply for United couldn't stop Norwich climbing out of the relegation zone thanks to their first victory at United since 1989.

United were booed off at full-time by their disgruntled supporters and a run of six matches without a win in all competitions, a sequence that includes elimination from the Champions League and falling out of the Premier League's top four, will lead to fresh questions about Van Gaal's suitability for the job. The Dutchman was taunted by Norwich supporters with chants of "Jose Mourinho: He's taking your job", a reference to the former Chelsea manager, who is free to seek another role after being sacked on Thursday. Van Gaal has faced growing criticism from fans and former United players over the cautious style of his team's play.

And although they made a lively start before

falling behind, they failed to create enough pressure to merit victory. Norwich defended doggedly in the face of early United pressure and ensured that goalkeeper Declan Rudd was well protected. Wayne Rooney, making his 500th United appearance, did have the ball in the net in the 10th minute, but both he and Marouane Fellaini were rightly ruled offside in the build-up.

Memphis Depay looped an effort over the bar from 20 yards, before Rooney rolled a shot wide after Juan Mata had brushed aside Gary O'Neil. Norwich did fire a warning when midfielder Tettey easily sidestepped a Chris Smalling challenge before rolling a tame shot wide. But more home pressure followed, with Rooney's outswinging cross from the right aimed at Depay eight yards out, and it needed a well-timed Russell Martin challenge to deny the Netherlands international.

CONFIDENCE

Norwich, having survived the opening 30 minutes without conceding, began to pose more of a threat as they grew in confidence. And they took the lead seven minutes before half-time, as Nathan Redmond burst forward and played in Jerome, who broke the challenge of Ashley Young before beating David De Gea, who could have done better with a shot that was well within his reach.

As the second half began in pouring rain, United soon found themselves two goals down. Rooney lost the ball to Tettey, who played the galloping Jerome forward, and continued his own run to collect the striker's return pass and drive a low shot beyond the stationary De Gea.

United captain Rooney attempted to make amends with an ambitious overhead kick over the



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Anthony Martial, left, fights for the ball against Martin Olsson of Norwich City during the match. — AP

bar, while the home fans demanded the introduction of Ander Herrera - who was brought on with 30 minutes to go. The home side pulled one back within five minutes of the change, as Rooney got a flick to Young's right-wing delivery and Martial sidestepped the challenges of Robbie Brady and Ryan Bennett to lash a shot high into the net. That was the signal for Van Gaal's team to increase the pressure in the game's final quarter, but a big chance for an equaliser came and went as Young's low right-wing ball rolled across goal, with Rooney unable to stretch to get a touch. — AFP

NEWCASTLE AND ASTON VILLA SHARE THE SPOILS



NEWCASTLE: Ghana forward Jordan Ayew rescued Aston Villa with a stunning equaliser in his side's 1-1 draw at Newcastle yesterday, but the Premier League strugglers remain deep in trouble. Ayew's second half curler cancelled out Newcastle captain Fabricio Coloccini's first half opener at St James' Park to give Villa only their third point in six matches since Remi Garde replaced the sacked Tim Sherwood. Yet Ayew's fourth Villa goal since his £8 million move from French club Lorient in July hardly left his team singing in the Tyneside rain. Villa's players will sit down for their Christmas dinner next week with the team bottom of the table and 10 points from safety.

They are on a woeful 16-game winless run in the league, the longest streak without a victory in Villa's history. The only consolation for Villa is the teams that were bottom of the Premier

League on Christmas Day in each of the last two seasons-Leicester and Sunderland-managed to avoid relegation. Newcastle could take little more encouragement from a result that ruined the momentum of successive wins against Liverpool and Tottenham and left them one place and three points above the relegation zone.

As torrential rain lashed down on Tyneside,

both sides struggled to establish any momentum in a first half riddled with misplaced passes. Newcastle striker Papsis Cisse should have done better than head straight at Villa keeper Brad Guzan from Daryl Janmaat's cross and that was the Senegal international's last contribution as he limped off with a hamstring injury. His replacement Aleksandar Mitrovic saw a header tipped over by Guzan in the 38th minute and from the resulting corner, Newcastle took the lead. Jack Colback's delivery reached the unmarked Coloccini at the far post and, with Villa making little effort to clear, the Argentina defender's scuffed shot beat Guzan for his first goal at St James' Park since January 2011. Villa could hardly have been worse in the first half but they emerged after the break with a more dynamic look and Jordan Veretout's low strike from the edge of the area was parried away by Rob Elliot.

With players slipping and sliding on the slick surface, it was no surprise Ayew fired wildly over the bar when he attempted an ambitious volley. But that turned out to be just a sighter for Ayew, who scored Villa's equaliser in the 61st minute with a superb strike after Siem de Jong had somehow headed wide from close-range seconds earlier. Cutting in from the left side of the Newcastle area, Ayew took advantage of Janmaat's failure to get tight to him and curled an unstoppable shot into the far corner.

Steve McClaren's side had a golden opportunity to snatch the points when Ayoze Perez teed up Georginio Wijnaldum, but the Dutchman's miscued effort was easy for Guzan. And in the end, Newcastle were indebted to Elliot for a fine save to keep out Rudy Gestede's header in the closing minutes. — AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015

US rates on path to normality

Page 22

Kuwait equities remain under pressure

Page 24



Real estate exhibitions offer opportunities for investors

Page 23

INFINITI HOSTS VIP EXECUTIVES FROM KUWAIT AT DUBAI MOTOR SHOW 2015

Page 26



NEW YORK: A shopper walks past a store with a "Help Wanted" sign in the window, in New York. The Labor Department said on Friday that jobless rates fell in 27 states, rose in 11, and were unchanged in 12 states. —AP

US CONGRESS CLINCHES HUGE BUDGET DEAL FISCAL FIGHTS END, OBAMA SIGNS \$1.8 TRILLION SPENDING BILL

WASHINGTON: Brushing aside concerns about deepening the budget deficit, US lawmakers approved \$1.8 trillion worth of federal spending and tax breaks on Friday in a rare case of bipartisan action after years of damaging fiscal fights in Congress.

The Senate voted 65-33 to approve sweeping legislation that averted a government shutdown, locked in billions of dollars of tax breaks and scrapped a 40-year-old ban on the export of US oil.

Negotiations on Capitol Hill were mostly free of the acrimony that has blighted similar talks for the past five years and forced lawmakers to produce a succession of stopgap measures just to keep the government running. "I think the system worked" this time, President Barack Obama said during a White House news conference.

He later signed the bill into law in a low-key Oval Office ceremony. It was a win for new House of Representatives Speaker Paul Ryan, who managed to keep fiscal hawks in his Republican caucus under control during weeks of talks and avoid the kind of infighting that plagued his predecessor, John Boehner.

Obama gave Ryan's efforts a nod during a White House news conference. "Kudos to him as well," Obama said, along with "all the leaders and appropriators who were involved in this process." The Democratic president acknowledged he still had basic policy differences with Ryan but described "a good working relationship" between the two.

At more than 2,000 pages long, the spending portion of the bill funds the government through next September, preventing a shutdown and effectively taking difficult budget disputes off the table as the 2016 presidential campaign enters the primary season.

Most of the US senators running for the White House voted against the bill, including Republicans Ted Cruz and Rand Paul and Democrat Bernie Sanders. Republican Lindsey Graham voted in favor. Republican Senator Marco Rubio, who had been criticized by campaign rivals for missing votes, was absent from Congress on Friday.

Dozens of previously temporary tax breaks will now be permanent under the tax segment of the bill, which will cost \$680 billion over 10 years and was promoted by corporate lobbyists and low-tax Republicans. Middle-class Americans also gain. Students, low-income parents and teachers will receive tax aid, attracting support for the legislation from the White House and congressional Democrats.

Lawmakers also lifted a four-decade-old ban on US crude oil exports, a historic move that nevertheless will have little immediate effect on oil markets.

DEFICIT WORRIES

"I'm not wild about everything in it," Obama said of the legislation. "I'm sure that's true for everybody. But it is a budget that, as I insisted,

invests in our military and our middle class without ideological provisions that would have weakened Wall Street reform or rules on big polluters." Some Republicans worry that the \$1.15 trillion spending provisions add to the federal budget deficit and erode the fiscal discipline that House Republicans have championed, particularly since lawmakers aligned with the conservative Tea Party movement did well in 2010 congressional elections.

But Tea Party momentum has slowed as the federal deficit drops from its peak of \$1.41 trillion in 2009 due to the economic recovery. The deficit was \$439 billion for the fiscal year that ended on Sept. 30. The congressional Joint Committee on Taxation estimates the legislation passed on Friday will increase the 2016 fiscal year budget deficit by \$157 billion and by \$95 billion in 2017.

Tim Huelskamp of Kansas, a leading House Republican fiscal hawk, said the bill was "an early Christmas present for Donald Trump," the billionaire businessman seeking the Republican presidential nomination, because it will fuel the anti-establishment mood in the country.

Conservatives complained that Republican leaders agreed on the bill's spending and tax provisions behind closed doors and then rushed the bill through the Senate on Friday morning.

"A rotten process yields a rotten result, and this 2,000-page, trillion-dollar bill is rotten to its core," Republican Senator Tom Cotton of



WASHINGTON: President Barack Obama closes the folio box after signing the budget in the Oval Office of the White House on Friday in Washington. — AP

Arkansas said. "Corporate lobbyists had a field day, but working Americans lost out," Cotton said. Some Democrats criticized the tax cuts, saying they give more aid to large corporations and wealthy business owners than to working families.

The largest component of the tax package

is the business research and development tax credit, which will cost \$113 billion over a decade in lost government revenues. The bill ratifies International Monetary Fund reforms aimed at boosting the representation of emerging economies within the international lender. —Reuters

SAUDI DEPUTY CP DRAWS UP NEW ECONOMIC REFORMS

SPENDING REFORMS, SUBSIDY CHANGES, PRIVATIZATION, TAXES

DUBAI/RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's deputy crown prince has privately outlined plans to reshape the economy to withstand low oil prices, sources said, in what could be the biggest policy shake-up since the kingdom's economy was last hurt by cheap oil over a decade ago.

The strategy was presented by Mohammed bin Salman at a meeting this week with senior officials, businessmen and economists. It includes state spending reforms and privatizations in the world's top oil exporting country, the sources said. The plans, expected to be made public in the next few weeks and probably in January, represent a shift of authority over economic policy to Mohammed bin Salman, the Council of Economic and Development Affairs which he chairs, and the Ministry of Economy and Planning, the sources added.

The two sources, from the private financial and business sectors, declined to be named because of political sensitivities. Officials have been talking about some of the reforms discussed at the meeting for years, but they have been blocked by political opposition, bureaucratic inertia and technical challenges. Under previous administrations, institutions such as the Ministry of Finance dominated policy, but they have now been partially sidelined as pressure on the economy has grown because oil prices have dropped.

The government has been running an annual budget deficit of over \$100 billion, forcing it to liquidate over \$90 billion of foreign assets in the past 12 months to pay its bills - a pattern that is not sustainable for more than a few years, the International

Monetary Fund has warned.

Officials at the Ministry of Economy and Planning could not immediately be reached for comment. The ministry and other state bodies have generally declined to comment on economic policy in recent months. Under the reforms described by Mohammed bin Salman, the government would become more cautious about spending. The Ministry of Finance would fund new projects only with the approval of the economic council, a powerful new body created by the deputy crown prince's father when he ascended the throne in January, and decisions would be closely tied to the government's financial situation, the sources said.

Some state bodies would be privatized to try to spur growth, create jobs and cut the financial burden on the public sector. Last month, the civil aviation authority said it aimed to start privatizing airports and related services in 2016. In another apparent attempt to reduce the burden on the government, the creation of non-profit organizations would be encouraged, especially in health care and education.

A system of water and electricity subsidies, which cost the government billions of dollars annually, would be restructured so the benefits went to middle- and lower-income people, not the wealthy.

The government would do more to diversify its sources of revenue beyond oil, which the IMF estimates will provide over 80 percent of revenues this year. Taxes, such as a levy on tobacco imports, might be increased. In principle, the government would try to cover its deficit by issuing bonds rather than by

drawing down its reserves, said one of the sources, who attended this week's meeting. It is not yet clear whether the new administration will be able to overcome the obstacles that have stood in the way of such reforms in the past.

But Mohammed bin Salman, who is in his early 30s, looks set to bring a more aggressive, performance-oriented approach towards managing the economy. Ministries and state agencies will regularly be given "key performance indicators", and officials will be held accountable if they do not meet these targets, the meeting was told.

A range of Western consultants have been brought in to advise on policy. One such consultancy, McKinsey & Co, released a report this month saying Saudi Arabia could double its gross domestic product and create jobs for 6 million Saudis by 2030 if it managed a "productivity- and investment-led transformation".

Reforms to the labor market, business regulation and management of the state budget would be needed to achieve this. Otherwise, the kingdom could face rapid economic deterioration over the next 15 years, McKinsey said. This week's meeting coincided with new signs that Mohammed bin Salman's council would take on politically sensitive social welfare problems, such as the provision of affordable housing and health care. Past administrations have struggled to solve such problems. A commentary published on Friday by the Saudi Gazette, a local newspaper, asked whether the Ministry of Housing was necessary and suggested the council should take over its role. — Reuters

EMERGING POWERS RISE IN IMF, US UNBLOCKS REFORMS

WASHINGTON: China, India and Russia will soon speak with a louder voice at the International Monetary Fund. After years of opposition, the US Congress has dismantled the final barrier to reforms that will give the emerging-market powers more say in the affairs of the 188-nation global crisis lender.

The IMF reforms are part of a \$1.1 trillion spending package approved by Congress on Friday, and signed into law by President Barack Obama. Adopted in 2010 by the international community, the reforms were expected to take effect in 2012.

But with the United States holding by far the largest share of voting rights at the IMF, Congress's refusal to approve the reforms had held up their implementation, to the consternation of IMF management and members. The blockage has been a sore point between President Barack Obama's Democratic administration and the opposition Republicans who control Congress.

Republicans had rejected the slightest favorable gesture toward the multinational organization, the object of some criticism in Washington for its largesse toward Greece.

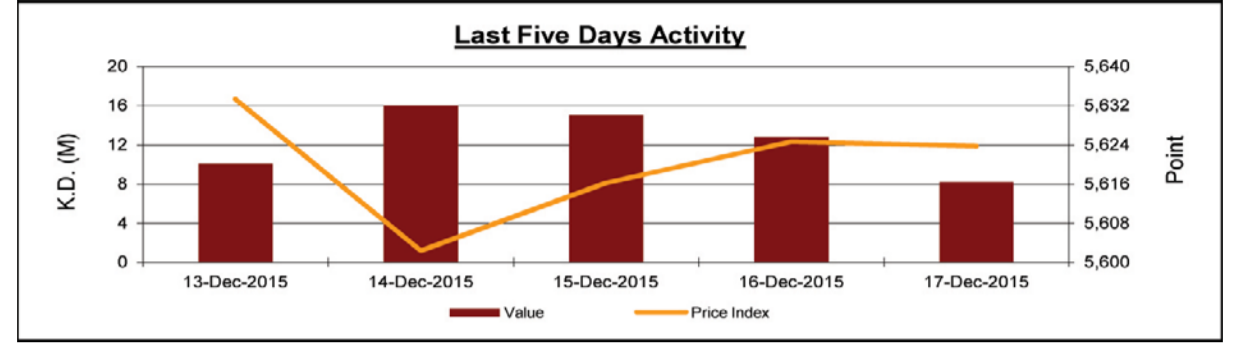
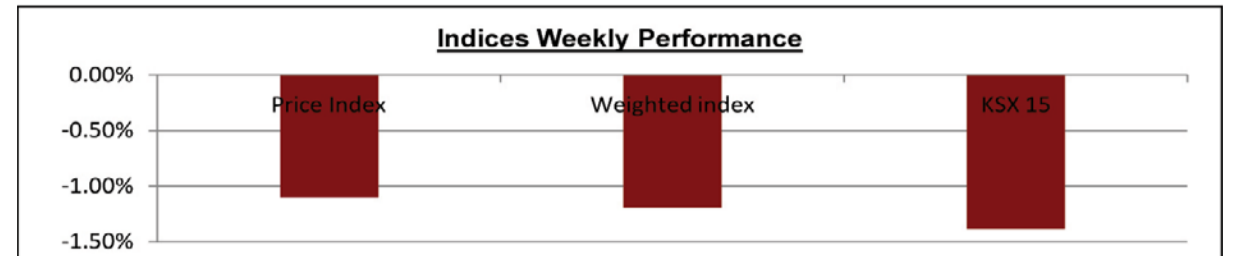
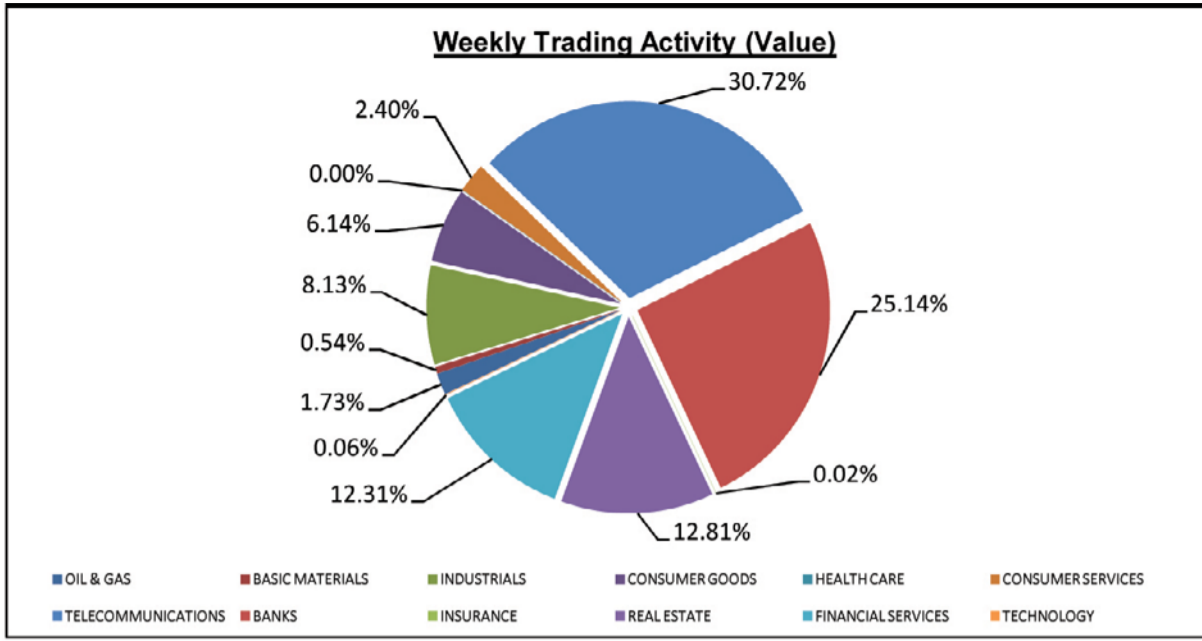
In recent years, international summits have unfailingly included a pointed reminder about the stalled reform process - seen as all the more frustrating since the United States was among the first countries to call for an IMF overhaul in 2010 amid the global financial crisis.

At the end of their last summit in mid-November in Turkey, the Group of 20 economic powers said in a statement that they "remain deeply disappointed" with the delay in reforms and "we urge the United States to ratify these reforms as soon as possible."

The long stall also led the so-called BRICS - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - to set up an economic alternative, launching in July 2014 their own monetary fund and development bank.

The US approval will likely ease their frustrations with the 70-year-old IMF, dominated by the US, Europe and Japan, as well as remove a major headache for the Obama administration.

"The IMF reforms reinforce the central leadership role of the United States in the global economic system and demonstrate our commitment to maintaining that position," US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said in a statement. — AFP



KUWAIT EQUITIES REMAIN UNDER PRESSURE

BAYAN WEEKLY MARKET REPORT

KUWAIT: Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) ended last week in the red zone. The Price Index closed at 5,623.69 points, down by 1.10 percent from the week before closing, the Weighted Index decreased by 1.19 percent after closing at 381.40 points, whereas the KSX-15 Index closed at 902.16 points down by 1.38 percent. Furthermore, last week's average daily turnover decreased by 6.57 percent, compared to the preceding week, reaching KD 12.43 million, whereas trading volume average was 95.05 million shares, recording a loss of 14.89 percent.

The three stock market indicators closed in the red zone for the third consecutive week, as a result of the continued negative factors in controlling the traders' behavior in the market, especially in light of the continued decline in the oil prices and the negative expected future impact of such prices, as the market recorded losses in light of the selling trend that it has been witnessing for some time, and it is including many stocks of different sectors, especially the leading stocks in Telecommunication and Consumer Goods sectors, which were the most declining among all the market sectors during the last week.

As per the daily trading activity for the market, the first session of the week witnessed mixed closings to the three indicators, whereas only the KSX-15 was able to realized limited gains as a result to the random purchasing operations that concentrated on some heavy stocks, whilst the Weighted and Price indices decreased, especially the latter that recorded a noticeable loss due to the continued strong selling pressures concentrated on the small-cap and mid-cap stocks, in addition to the

MARKET ACTIVITY			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Ch. %
Volume	475,248,593	558,418,510	-14.89%
Value (K.D)	62,170,571	66,544,436	-6.57%
Deals	13,787	13,709	0.57%

MARKET CAPITALISATION (K.D.)			
	Last Week	Previous Week	Weekly Ch. %
	25,404,309,308	25,861,791,523	-1.77%
			Annual Ch. %
			-9.21%

TOP GAINERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
GFH	34.00	32.50	1.5	4.62%
MANAZEL	24.00	23.00	1.0	4.35%
ABAR	124.00	120.00	4.0	3.33%
IKARUS	93.00	91.00	2.0	2.20%
MABANEE	950.00	930.00	20.0	2.15%

TOP LOSERS OF THE WEEK				
Company	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Ch. (fils)	Ch. %
ZIMAH	114.00	126.00	-12.0	-9.52%
VIVA	990.00	1,080.00	-90.0	-8.33%
FIRSTDUBAI	44.50	48.50	-4.0	-8.25%
SOKOUK	40.50	44.00	-3.5	-7.95%
ALMADINA	35.50	38.50	-3.0	-7.79%

active speculative operations that has been going on for few week. However on the next session, the market was subject to the continued influence of the strong selling pressures which caused most of the previously traded stocks to decline, therefore the

KSE INDICES				
		Price Index	Weighted index	KSX 15
Weekly	Last week	5,623.69	381.40	902.16
	Previous week	5,686.15	386.00	914.80
	Change (Point)	-62.46	-4.60	-12.64
	Change (%)	-1.10%	-1.19%	-1.38%
Annual	Last year	6,535.72	438.88	1,059.95
	Change (Point)	-912.03	-57.48	-157.79
	Change (%)	-13.95%	-13.10%	-14.89%

three market indices dropped steeply and the Price Index reached its lowest closing level since 2004; such performance was accompanied by an increased liquidity levels that crossed 50 percent.

On Tuesday's and Wednesday's sessions, the market was able to end it with limited gains, which came as a result to the support received by the return of the purchasing operations executed on some leading stocks which declined earlier and reached tempting levels for purchase, in addition to the quick speculations operations that concentrated on a number of small-cap stocks. Also, the market could not, at the end of week session, continue its positive performance that it witnessed in the previous two sessions, to end it with different losses for the three indices, among a noticeable decline in the trading indicators, especially the liquidity level, which dropped by more than 35 percent at the end of the session.

The market capitalization for KSE reached by the end of the last week KD 25.4 billion, declining by 1.77 percent compared to its level in a week earlier, which was KD 25.86 billion. On an annual level, the market cap for the listed companies in KSE declined by 9.21 percent from its value at

end of 2014, where it reached then KD 27.98 billion.

As far as KSE annual performance, the Price Index ended last week recording 13.95 percent annual loss compared to its closing in 2014, while the Weighted Index decreased by 13.10 percent, and the KSX-15 contracted by 14.89 percent.

Sectors' Indices

All of KSE's sectors ended last week in the red zone except for one sector. The Telecommunications sector headed the losers list as its index declined by 6.34 percent to end the week's activity at 589.05 points. The Consumer Goods sector was second on the losers' list, which index declined by 3.29 percent, closing at 1,052.09 points, followed by the Basic Materials sector, as its index closed at 959.96 points at a loss of 3.27 percent. The Industrial sector was the least declining as its index closed at 1,060.26 points with a 0.11 percent decrease. On the other hand, the Health Care sector was last week only gainer, which index grew by 2.46 percent, closing at 968.40 points.

Sectors' Activity

The Financial Services sector dominated a total trade volume of around 173.28 million shares changing hands during last week, representing 36.46 percent of the total market trading volume. The Real Estate sector was second in terms of trading volume as the sector's traded shares were 28.76 percent of last week's total trading volume, with a total of around 136.70 million shares. On the other hand, the Telecommunications sector's stocks were the highest traded in terms of value; with a turnover of around KD 19.10 million or 30.72 percent of last week's total market trading value. The Banks sector took the second place as the sector's last week turnover was approx. KD 15.63 million representing 25.14 percent of the total market trading value. — Prepared by the Studies & Research Department, Bayan Investment Co.

SECTORS' WEEKLY TRADING ACTIVITY				
Sector	Volume	To Market %	Value	To Market %
OIL & GAS	20,215,846	4.25%	1,077,285	1.73%
BASIC MATERIALS	1,472,694	0.31%	335,945	0.54%
INDUSTRIALS	39,864,633	8.39%	5,053,508	8.13%
CONSUMER GOODS	5,436,429	1.14%	3,816,930	6.14%
HEALTH CARE	10,100	0.00%	1,685	0.00%
CONSUMER SERVICES	8,496,511	1.79%	1,495,036	2.40%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	48,469,369	10.20%	19,095,924	30.72%
BANKS	40,496,078	8.52%	15,627,584	25.14%
INSURANCE	57,570	0.01%	11,182	0.02%
REAL ESTATE	136,700,474	28.76%	7,962,169	12.81%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	173,279,788	36.46%	7,656,026	12.31%
TECHNOLOGY	749,101	0.16%	37,297	0.06%

SECTORS INDICES PERFORMANCE				
Sector	Last Week Closing	Previous Week Closing	Weekly Ch. %	Annual Ch. %
OIL & GAS	791.04	796.22	-0.65%	-25.58%
BASIC MATERIALS	959.96	992.43	-3.27%	-15.15%
INDUSTRIALS	1,060.26	1,061.43	-0.11%	-0.94%
CONSUMER GOODS	1,052.09	1,087.85	-3.29%	-14.18%
HEALTH CARE	968.40	945.16	2.46%	2.99%
CONSUMER SERVICES	1,009.97	1,022.37	-1.21%	-6.62%
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	589.05	628.94	-6.34%	3.26%
BANKS	906.49	914.00	-0.82%	-9.81%
INSURANCE	1,089.26	1,093.24	-0.36%	-7.49%
REAL ESTATE	941.33	952.50	-1.17%	-16.69%
FINANCIAL SERVICES	600.58	610.64	-1.65%	-27.83%
TECHNOLOGY	859.48	870.57	-1.27%	-6.20%

US STOCKS TUMBLE ON GLOBAL WORRIES

WALL STREET WEEKLY REPORT

NEW YORK: US stocks plunged across all sectors in the heaviest trading of the year Friday as enthusiasm over a long-awaited increase in US interest rates faded.

Several other negative factors combined to give the market its second big loss in a row, bringing the indexes lower for the week. Bank stocks, which investors had bid up in hopes they would become more profitable as loan rates climbed, fell the most. Technology shares suffered more declines as a bad December got worse for Apple. The world's most valuable publicly traded company sank again, bringing its monthly loss to 10 percent.

Overseas, Japan's market sank after that country's central bank made changes to a stimulus program that fell short of what investors were hoping for. Another drop in energy prices sent oil stocks lower again, and worries about weak global growth weighed on shipping and other transportation companies.

The Dow Jones industrial average dropped 367.29 points, or 2.1 percent, to 17,128.55. The S&P 500 index fell 36.34 points, or 1.8 percent, to 2,005.55. The Nasdaq composite sank 79.47 points, or 1.6 percent, to 4,923.08. All 10 Standard & Poor's 500 sectors fell.

Volatility

US stock trading was even more volatile than usual Friday because of the simultaneous expiration of several kinds of futures and other contracts that investors use to place bets on indexes and individual stocks. As a result Friday was the busiest trading day of the year for stocks.

The market ended a tumultuous week slightly lower. Stocks had rallied over the first three days and jumped Wednesday after the Federal Reserve raised interest rates for the first time in almost a decade. The move was a vote of confidence in the US economy. But over the next two days stocks were hit by some of the worries that have dogged them all year, like weakness in the Chinese economy, slowing global growth, and skidding prices for energy and metals.

While the Bank of Japan plans to spend a bit more on exchange-traded funds for companies that increase hiring and investment, investors were hoping for more, according to Ryan Larson, head of US equity trading for RBC Global Asset Management. "They were looking for more, and when the market's disappointed, this is what you get," he said.

The global market went into a similar slide two weeks ago, when the European Central Bank ramped up its stimulus efforts but didn't do nearly as much as expected. Stocks rallied after ECB President Mario Draghi said the bank is ready to expand its stimulus program further if needed.

Those slumps show that investors will continue keeping an

eye on the words and deeds of central banks in struggling Europe and Japan as well as the US for the foreseeable future.

Banks under pressure

The Federal Reserve had kept interest rates near zero for seven years. Fed Chair Janet Yellen emphasized that despite the boost,

interest rates will remain low for some time. That pleased investors overall, but it eventually put pressure on bank stocks. Banks will benefit from higher interest rates and have and have rallied over the last few months, but the initial benefits won't be great.

Goldman Sachs dropped \$7.12, or 3.9 percent, to \$175.49 and ETrade Financial lost \$1.13, or 3.8 percent, to \$28.82. Citigroup gave up \$1.63, or 3.1 percent, to \$51.21. Tech stocks also slumped. Apple fell \$2.95, or 2.7 percent, to \$106.03. The stock has fallen 10 percent in December and has risen only three days this month. Microsoft fell \$1.57, or 2.8 percent, to \$54.13.

Transportation stocks also fell. Shares of J.B. Hunt Transportation surrendered \$1.96, or 2.7 percent, to \$70.62 and Ryder System lost \$2.59, or 4.6 percent, to \$54.08. Used car dealership chain CarMax disclosed disappointing quarterly results, as its profit and sales both fell short of analyst projections. Its stock lost \$3.66, or 6.4 percent, to \$53.49. The news wasn't all bad. Darden Restaurants, the owner of Olive Garden and other chains, climbed after the company raised its outlook for the year. Olive Garden sales rose and the company's profit was better than analysts were expecting. The stock added \$4.11, or 7 percent, to \$62.50. US crude fell 22 cents to \$34.73 a barrel in New York. Oil is trading at its lowest level in almost seven years and has slumped over the last two days. Brent crude, a benchmark for international oils, slipped 18 cents to \$36.88 a barrel in London. Natural gas, which has sunk to 16-year lows as demand fell, picked up 1.2 cents to \$1.767 per 1,000 cubic feet. Offshore oil drilling companies skidded. Transocean gave up 74 cents, or 5.7 percent, to \$12.26 while Enso lost \$1.08, or 7 percent, to \$14.31 and Diamond Offshore Drilling dipped 70 cents, or 3.3 percent, to \$20.47. Wholesale gasoline rose 1.3 cents to \$1.275 a gallon and heating oil inched up to \$1.107 a gallon. Metals prices also rose Friday. The price of gold edged up \$15.40, or 1.5 percent, to \$1,065 per ounce and silver added 39.3 cents, or 2.9 percent, to \$14.096 an ounce. Copper rose 6.9 cents, or 3.4 percent, to \$2.113 a pound.

US government bond prices rose. The yield on 10-year Treasury note fell to 2.21 percent from 2.23 percent. The euro rose to \$1.0863 from \$1.0805. The dollar dipped to 121.25 yen from 122.85 yen. The dollar had climbed Thursday and is expected to gain strength as the Fed raises interest rates while central banks in Europe and Japan reduce interest rates. — AP



NEW YORK: A Wall Street sign near the New York Stock Exchange in New York. Asian stocks posted broad gains on Thursday after the Federal Reserve ended protracted uncertainty in markets by raising interest rates for the first time in nearly a decade and signaling that further increases will be gradual. — AP

Marketing & PR Manager
 SSA Sports Company
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for developing a keen understanding of the sports market in Kuwait, aiming at a correct positioning of the company's offers, planning and managing an annual marketing program in close liaison with the owner and involved third party companies, as well as, developing the content for all types of marketing messages.

Apply Now **JB3405965**

Internal Auditor
 S.O.S. HR Solutions
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for attending meetings with auditees to develop an understanding of business processes, travelling to different sites to meet relevant staff and obtain documents and information, researching and assessing how well risk management processes are working and recording the results using software such as Microsoft Word and Excel.

Apply Now **JB3382612**

Vice President Wealth Management
 S.O.S. HR Solutions - Kuwait

You will be responsible for contributing to the formulation of e-business plans and budget for the Wealth Management function in line with the strategy to ensure effective performance and achievement of business objectives, as well as, ensuring preparation of the required formalities, forms, and paperwork which will be extended to clients.

Apply Now **JB3359017**

Project Manager
 S.O.S. HR Solutions
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for identifying the best partners to undertake the project, estimating the resources required, cost and time factors etc. independently, negotiation with various entities in terms of cost, quality and time factors, as well as, forecasting the fund requirements and arranging the prompt payments so that the momentum of work is not disturbed.

Apply Now **JB3348215**

Business Development Manager
 Afaq United - Kuwait

You will be responsible for building market position by locating, developing, defining, negotiating, and closing business relationships, identifying trendsetter ideas by researching industry and related events, tracking individual contributors and their accomplishments, as well as, locating or proposing potential business deals by contacting potential partners.

Apply Now **JB3404210**

Commercial Manager
 M.D & Tech
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for examining company rules to make sure they stay relevant and making recommendations for necessary changes, looking for opportunities to grow a business, whether through partnerships or new initiatives, and working to take advantage of those opportunities.

Apply Now **JB3401116**

Crepeaffaire Store Manager
 Dome National General Trading Company - Kuwait

You will be responsible for assisting senior management in driving and delivering sales performance and profit return in line with the business plan, assisting the Operations Manager with the overall operations of the business, as well as, managing the store operations within the company's guidelines.

Apply Now **JB3400210**

Project Manager
 Alshaya Trading Company
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for depending on the project, responsibilities can cover all aspects of a project from the beginning stages through to completion, reviewing progress throughout the department, ensuring resources availability and allocation, as well as, developing a detailed project plan to monitor and track progress.

Apply Now **JB3413214**

Maintenance Senior Leader
 Converting
 Tetra Pak - KSA

You will be responsible for developing safe workplace by following and benchmarking safety guidelines, defining KPI, KMI and KAI for overall maintenance process, ensuring PM, AM & EM are progressing in full methodology spirit, as well as, developing risk identification matrix and correction plan using plant level FMECA.

Apply Now **JB3414112**

Quality Leader - Process
 Tetra Pak
 KSA

You will be responsible for implementing, improving and auditing the product and process control plans, managing the internal claim system, driving the review and implementation of Quality matrices and Statistical Process Control to improve on the Maintenance Loop, as well as, driving implementation of Q matrices and Statistical process control.

Apply Now **JB3414062**

Area Sales Executive or Manager
 Mackenzie Jones - KSA

You will be responsible for planning and prioritizing sales activities and customer, prospecting contact towards achieving agreed business aims, including costs and sales - especially managing personal time and productivity, as well as, planning and managing personal business portfolio, territory, business according to an agreed market development strategy.

Apply Now **JB3413818**

Health & Safety Manager
 Exel Saudi Arabia
 KSA

You will be responsible for undertaking audits of our Health and Safety Integrated Management Systems against the minimum requirements of the client specifications, as well as, undertaking routine monitoring to ensure that HSE controls are being effectively and competently applied on all sites and activities.

Apply Now **JB3412510**

General Manager Treasury - UAE National
 Robert Walters - UAE

You will be responsible for arranging Corporate facilities and leading negotiations with banks and various stakeholders of the business, ensuring adequate committed finance is available to fund the Group's activities, as well as, managing funding requirements for the group and its businesses.

Apply Now **JB3414461**

Head of ICT
 Mackenzie Jones
 UAE

You will be responsible for the management of support for all divisions across the organisation, implementation and maintenance of Information Security standards in line with industry best practice, as well as, defining future technology needs and implementation plans.

Apply Now **JB3413823**

Parts Manager, Automotive
 Al Fahim Group
 UAE

You will be responsible for actively participating in the development of annual Part Department business plan and strategy in-line with the After Sales Department strategy, reviewing Parts Department turnover, profitability and stock status, analyzing, evaluating detailed reports to monitor progress and ensuring department budget/targets are achieved.

Apply Now **JB3413560**

Fitness Branch Manager - Trainee/ Intern
 I-Expatriate - UAE

You will be responsible for assisting the branch manager, managing the front desk and client appointments, establishing and strengthening relationship with customers, promoting and marketing the business, as well as, budget tracking and following up with clients/suppliers on invoices and payments.

Apply Now **JB3413511**

Account Manager
 iHorizons
 Qatar

You will be responsible for managing and developing business relationships with existing iHorizons customers at various levels of seniority, with the objective of assuring customer satisfaction and hence growing the business with each client through up-selling and cross-selling, this is during both project implementation and post implementation, as well as, managing the bidding part of the sales cycle.

Apply Now **JB3414211**

Supervisor, Security
 College of the North Atlantic
 Qatar

You will be responsible for providing the Security & Safety and protection of students, employees and visitors, responding to emergencies, and calls for assistance, conducting safety and security inspections, investigations, patrols, escorts and reports, as well as, conducting investigations of a security nature and report to management as required.

Apply Now **JB3286059**

Head of Electronic Switch Payments - Huxley Banking & Financial Services - Qatar

You will be responsible for working with the System Administrators to implement new hardware/ software applications, overseeing technicians and consultants and vendors as needed, consulting with Program Directors and Management Team to create efficient workflow, as well as, consulting with the Quality Assurance staff to create Performance Measurement Reports for analytical review.

Apply Now **JB3413461**

Facilities Manager - Soft Services - AFGRE
 Al Futtaim Group - Qatar

You will be responsible for daily management of housekeeping service providers, consumables and equipment's, inventory management of Mall-owned spares through facilities management, approving submitted reorder points by service providers for stocks, as well as, approving quality of materials and consumables supplied by service providers/ contractor and monitoring and controlling the budget.

Apply Now **JB3412262**

BITCOIN'S 'BLOCKCHAIN' TECH MAY TRANSFORM BANKING

NEW YORK: The technology that drives the shadowy cryptocurrency bitcoin is drawing interest from the established banking industry, which sees a potential to revolutionize the sector. Although bitcoin and related virtual currencies are limited to a small set of transactions and are often associated with the underground economy, the so-called blockchain technology is gaining currency in the financial world. A blockchain is essentially a shared, encrypted "ledger" that cannot be manipulated, offering promise for secure transactions that allow anyone to get an accurate accounting of money, property or other assets.

"The blockchain, which is the technology behind the encryption and e-certification, that is a technology which might very well be very useful," said Jamie Dimon, chairman and chief executive of JPMorgan Chase at a conference earlier this year. Leah Gerstner, a vice president for public affairs at American Express, said the financial group made its first investment in a

digital currency company called Abra "as a way to get a better understanding of blockchain technology and explore its potential". Gerstner told AFP that "we believe blockchain technology is playing an important role."

The use of blockchain began in 2009 with the introduction of bitcoin and other virtual currencies that are generated by complex chains of interactions among a huge network of computers around the planet, and are not backed by any government or central bank, unlike traditional currencies. The blockchain offers potential to the traditional finance sector due to its ease of transaction with verification from any point on the platform. "You can imagine a number of potential use cases for this technology in financial services across both business-to-consumer and business-to-business transactions - from international money transfers to stored value," Gerstner said.

The Linux Foundation recently announced a new collaborative "Open Ledger" project to advance blockchain

technology, teaming with tech firms such as IBM and Intel, stock exchanges and major banks including Wells Fargo and Mitsubishi UFJ. "Distributed ledgers are poised to transform a wide range of industries" including banking and shipping, among others, said Jim Zemlin, executive director at The Linux Foundation.

Transparency, Lower Costs

Blockchain technology could lower the cost for many kinds of consumer cash transfers that now are handled by companies like Western Union and MoneyGram. The banking industry could save \$15 billion to \$20 billion in transaction costs for international payments by using the technology, according to Banco Santander, which is working on its own virtual currency. A consortium of global banks including Morgan Stanley, HSBC, UBS, Credit Suisse, Barclays, Societe Generale and Commerzbank are working with the finance tech startup R3 to use blockchain technology for a wide range of applications.

Others moving forward include Bank of America, Citigroup and Goldman Sachs, which is working on its own virtual currency that could cut out intermediaries for settlements between financial institutions. The technology could help facilitate instantaneous, secure financial transfers which now sometimes can take days when moving internationally, according to blockchain backers. "This would change the way settlements of securities are traditionally carried out," said Prableen Bajpai, founding director of the India-based research firm FinFix.

The use of a cryptographic currency such as the one being developed by Goldman Sachs "facilitates rapid, secure and confirmed transactions via network, thereby eliminating the need for a third party," Bajpai said. "The results are extremely timely and efficient settlements." Another advantage is that transactions could be made without revealing identities and other information - which could be important for institutions trying to keep per-

sonal data secure from hackers.

But a number of issues need to be resolved before virtual currencies and blockchain technology become mainstream. The anonymity of the transactions is something that concerns regulators seeking to crack down on money laundering, and financing of criminal or terrorist activity. New York state, for example, is pressing to require the identification of those engaging in financial transactions.

Nonetheless, many see blockchain technology as the wave of the future. "Ultimately, blockchain could become a way for those around the world who don't have a bank account to make purchases on the Internet. And that could affect the banks, as well as credit card companies like American Express, MasterCard, and Visa," says Ed Yardeni at Yardeni Research. "Blockchain still needs to show that it can grow to the size of Visa's or MasterCard's networks. But there are certainly many smart folks throwing a lot of money at the technology, which may one day prove disruptive." — AFP



EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey: (Left) New York Jets fan John Laforte watches a virtual reality video during a presentation at the MetLife Stadium in on Dec 13, 2015. (Right) New York Jets quarterback Ryan Fitzpatrick warms up before an NFL football game against the Tennessee Titans as cameras film him at MetLife Stadium. — AP

JETS VIRTUAL EXPERIENCE TO BRING FANS EVEN CLOSER

TECHNOLOGY IS CONSTANTLY EVOLVING

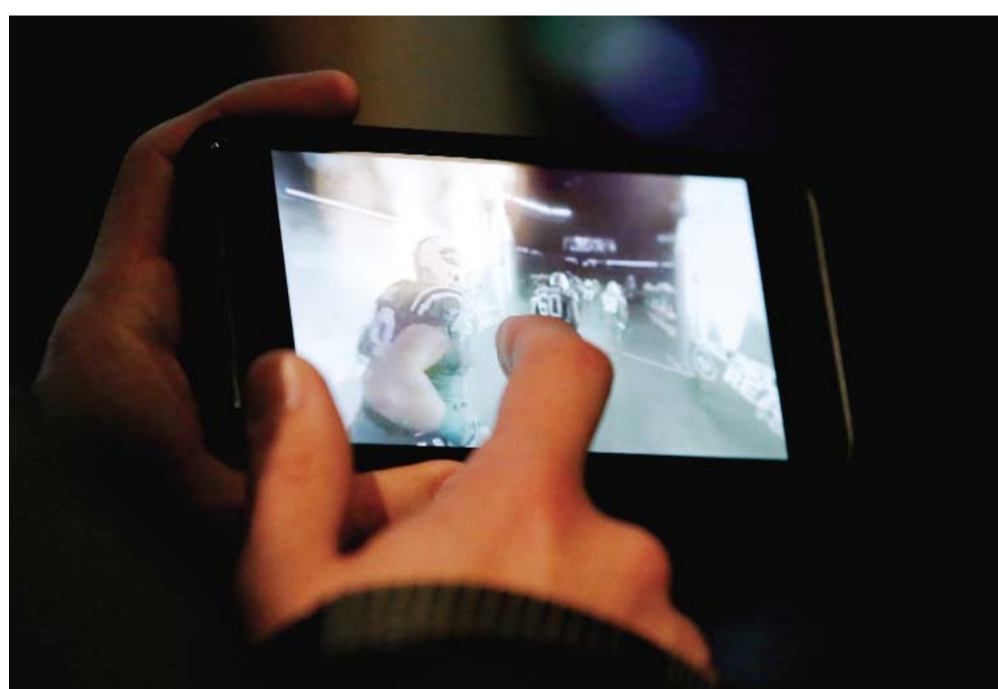
EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey: Ryan Fitzpatrick is so close you could tug on the New York Jets quarterback's beard and wish him luck. Better look out, or you'll be run over by some of those big offensive linemen making their way out to the field. Well, not in reality, but virtual reality. It's all part of a unique experience - "Jets Virtual Sideline" - the team is working on giving to their fans through some cutting-edge technology. "Man, it's cool," said fan Phil Dinhofer of Merrick, New York. "It's the wave of the future."

The Jets certainly think that's the case. Using virtual reality technology from STRIVR Labs, the team conducted a beta test at MetLife Stadium during six home games so far this season. Wearing headphones and Oculus goggles, fans have a choice of six experiences: running out to the field with the team (the most popular); taking part in the coin toss; being on field for the national anthem; standing on the sideline during a touchdown catch by Brandon Marshall; participating in a Flight Crew performance; or being in the crowd for the J-E-T-S chant.

You get 360-degree views and the sounds are vivid, making you feel as though you're right in the middle of the action. It seems like something straight out of "Star Wars". "Oh, it's great," a smiling Dinhofer said. "I was ready to join the cheerleaders and do the dance." The Jets purchased the STRIVR technology in the spring and began using it during training camp for on-field drills. Several NFL and college teams have done the same, helping quarterbacks, in particular, train and improve performance by providing a complete field of vision from practices.

Impetus

"The impetus was the football team," Jets President Neil Glat said. "But we always had in the back of our mind when the decision was made to buy it that we think there's a fan opportunity here as well." The Jets began filming game



New York Jets video director Tim Tubido demonstrates virtual reality video on a cell phone during a presentation at the MetLife Stadium.

day footage during preseason home games in August, using high-tech cameras in various spots. "We kind of worked out the kinks using it for football and figuring out what are the best ways to shoot things and cut things and how fast we could turn it around," said Tim Tubido, the team's video director. "And then, it kind of opened up to where are the areas where we can use it on game day to really give the fans a different type of experience?"

The team ran its first test in MetLife Stadium's Commissioners Club during the home opener - and it was a hit. The Jets have also given sneak

peeks to fans at other locations, including the Coaches Club during pregame. "People's first reaction is just the coolness factor," said Seth Rabinowitz, the team's senior vice president of marketing and fan engagement. "You've never seen this before, so there's a 'wow' factor. We're still getting a lot of different feedback on what people really want. Do they want to do just a minute, just like a little thrill ride? Or, do they want to do a longer form?"

The team is exploring several options on how to most effectively use the technology before it officially rolls it out. The Jets want to completely learn what the technology can do from a fan experience standpoint, what operation issues are involved and what the fans like. It could end up becoming a 10-minute attraction, something in the offseason for fans clamoring for football, used in various areas of the stadium before games - or, all of the above.

"I'd say the short-term vision is an enhancement to a segment of fans at the stadium," Glat said. "That's, to me, No. 1. No. 2 is probably something in and around the offseason. And then, we'll see where we go from there. To me, it's how do we make it better when you're coming out to the stadium?"

The technology is constantly evolving and could potentially someday be run on a handheld device instead of a laptop. "I think you'll see this a lot in the mainstream consumer marketplace, like video games and other things," Rabinowitz said. "You're going to start to see it very quickly and, by spring, it's going to be all the rage." And, Jets fans will be able to reach out and - virtually - touch their favorite team. "This is a walk-before-we-run thing because it's great for a handful of people to check out and get feedback," Glat said. "But if you really want to get hundreds and thousands of people through on game day and we're going to put our name on it, we want it to be really good." — AP

US REVIEWS 'BACKDOOR' IN JUNIPER NETWORKS CODE

WASHINGTON: The US government is investigating unauthorized code inserted in software from Juniper Networks Inc, which experts warned could be a "backdoor" used to spy on the networking equipment maker's customers, an official told Reuters on Friday. A senior US official who declined to be named because of the sensitivity of the matter said the Department of Homeland Security is working with Juniper as it investigates the issue. The official said the White House National Security Council had taken an interest in Juniper's rare disclosure that somebody had inserted rogue code into its software. Outside experts told Reuters it was likely planted by a nation state or sophisticated criminals.

The incident at Juniper comes at the end of a year of several high-profile hacks on Washington, including at the White House, State Department and Office of Personnel Management. Juniper warned customers on Thursday that it had uncovered "unauthorized code" in the software that runs its firewalls, saying it could be exploited to allow an attacker to unscramble encrypted communications. CNN reported Friday that the Federal Bureau of

Investigation was probing the matter. An FBI representative declined comment to Reuters.

A former Juniper security executive said the flaw appeared to be a "backdoor", a reference to rogue code secretly inserted into a product to enable attackers to eavesdrop on users. Juniper's notice to customers did not say whether the company was aware of how the code was inserted in the software. "This shines a light on the fact that kind of attack is something intelligence agencies are probably doing," said Chris Wysopal, chief technology officer with Veracode, a maker of software for uncovering coding bugs.

Juniper said on its website that it had not received any reports of these vulnerabilities being exploited by hackers. "However, we strongly recommend that customers update their systems and apply the patched releases with the highest priority," it added. On Thursday, the Department of Homeland Security's US Computer Emergency Response Team issued a short notice on its website, advising Juniper customers to install the update. Representatives with Sunnyvale, California-based Juniper could not be reached for comment on Friday. — Reuters

COOK BASHES TALK APPLE IS DODGING TAXES

SAN FRANCISCO: Apple chief Tim Cook emphatically rejected accusations that the world's richest company is sidestepping US taxes by keeping bundles of cash overseas, suggesting that the claim was politically motivated. World leaders last month approved a crackdown on tax avoidance by multinationals such as Apple, Google and McDonald's, major firms whose rock-bottom tax bills have provoked widespread outrage in the United States and beyond.

Cook argued that Apple pays the biggest tax tab in the United States and that it keeps more money overseas than other companies because two-thirds of its business is there. Cook's staunch defense of the California-based technology colossus came during an interview with Charlie Rose in a 60 Minutes news program interview to be aired on Sunday on CBS. "That's total political crap, there is no truth behind it," Cook responded when pressed about the highly contentious tax issue in a short preview of the interview. "We pay every tax dollar we owe."

Cook laid the blame on an outdated US tax code, calling for it to be revamped for modern times. "This is a tax code that was made for the Industrial Age, not the Digital Age," Cook said. "It's backwards. It's awful for America." The impassioned response from Cook followed Rose contending that many members of Congress believe Apple is perpetuating a scheme to pay little or no taxes on \$74 billion in overseas revenue.

"I'd love to bring it home," Cook said of cash kept outside the US. "But don't because it would cost me 40 percent to bring it home and I



Tim Cook

don't think this is a reasonable thing to do." It comes a year after the "LuxLeaks" revelations that some of the world's biggest companies - also including Pepsi and Ikea - had lowered their tax rates to as little as one percent in secret pacts with tax authorities in Luxembourg.

US President Barack Obama, Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron joined fellow leaders in endorsing a clampdown drawn up by the wealthy nations' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The OECD calculates that national governments lose \$100-240 billion, or 4-10 percent of global tax revenues, every year because of the tax-minimizing schemes of multinationals. Its 15-point plan, adopted after years of negotiations, seeks to oblige multinationals to pay tax in the country where their main business activity is based. — AFP

NASA SPACEWALK TO FIX ISS RAILCAR

MIAMI: A pair of NASA astronauts will step out on a previously unscheduled spacewalk as early as tomorrow to fix a piece of motorized equipment that stalled outside the International Space Station. The mobile transporter railcar - used to position the station's robotic arm - stalled on Wednesday just 10 cm from where it began its move, said the US space agency in a statement.

The Canadian-made robotic arm is used to reach out and grab approaching US cargo ships and was most recently used for the arrival of Orbital ATK's Cygnus spacecraft on Dec 9. Efforts to correct the problem robotically from mission control in Houston failed. Astronauts Scott Kelly and Tim Kopra will float outside the orbiting lab to move the rail car "so it can be latched in

place ahead of the Wednesday, December 23 docking of a Russian cargo resupply spacecraft," NASA said.

The Progress spacecraft docks automatically so it doesn't need the robotic arm, but a NASA spokeswoman said it is important for the mobile transporter to be latched in place prior to Progress' arrival. "It's currently not latched since it stalled while they were trying to move it," she told AFP. The cause of the stall remains unclear, but "experts believe it may be related to a stuck brake handle," according to ISS mission integration and operations manager Kenny Todd. A time for the spacewalk has not been announced, but NASA said it will happen no earlier than tomorrow, or perhaps Tuesday. A final decision will be made after a mission management meeting today. — AFP

COUPLE WHO USED ONLINE NETWORK TO TAKE IN KIDS FACES JAIL

NEW YORK: A woman who used the Internet to take in unwanted adopted children faces years in prison after a federal jury convicted her Friday on charges of kidnapping and transporting a minor across state lines for the purpose of engaging in sexual activity. The woman, Nicole Eason, 37, was charged after a 2013 Reuters investigation exposed an illicit network where parents offered children they no longer wanted to strangers they met online. Eason's husband, Calvin, 46, pleaded guilty last month to the same charges.

Through a practice called private rehoming, the Easons had taken custody of

at least six boys and girls from 2006 through 2009, lying about their identities to the children's adoptive parents. Reuters found other examples of re-homing across the United States, with no government oversight and at great risk to children. The news agency revealed that the Easons had created fictitious credentials. They never disclosed that Nicole Eason's biological children had been permanently removed from their custody years earlier, after social workers concluded the couple had neglected one child and physically abused the other.

As a result of the Reuters investigation, federal authorities arrested the Easons in

Arizona last spring. They were charged in US District Court in Illinois with kidnapping two of the girls that they took in through re-homing - one in 2007 and the other in 2008. They also were charged with taking one of the girls across state lines with the intent to engage her in sexual activity. The girl, who turned 8 while she was in the custody of the Easons, told authorities that both Calvin and Nicole molested and physically abused her. The other victim said she was expected to sleep next to a naked Nicole Eason but was not molested.

In both cases, the parents who transferred custody of the children to the

Easons had connected with Nicole Eason through Yahoo groups. Parents used the online bulletin boards to discuss their difficulties caring for children they had adopted, and Reuters also found many cases in which parents sought to offload those children to strangers. During a five-year period, Reuters found that on a single Yahoo group, a child was advertised for re-homing on average once a week. Yahoo removed the message boards after the news agency brought them to the company's attention.

Living in Illinois at the time, the Easons presented themselves as a loving, stable family, dedicated to the well-being of chil-

dren in their care. In reality, they had lost custody of both of their biological children. After authorities had removed their second child, a newborn, a sheriff's deputy wrote in his report that the Easons "have severe psychiatric problems as well as violent tendencies." No US federal law specifically prohibits re-homing, and Reuters found that state laws restricting custody transfers and advertising of children rarely prescribe criminal sanctions and are frequently ignored. In response to the Reuters investigation, at least six states have passed new restrictions on advertising children, transferring custody, or both. — Reuters

PAINKILLER POLITICS: EFFORT TO CURB PRESCRIBING UNDER FIRE

BOLD BID TO REIN IN PRESCRIPTIONS HITS ROADBLOCKS

WASHINGTON: A bold federal effort to curb prescribing of painkillers may be faltering amid stiff resistance from drugmakers, industry-funded groups and, now, even other public health officials. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention was on track to finalize new prescribing guidelines for opioid painkillers in January. The guidelines - though not binding - would be the strongest government effort yet to reverse the rise in deadly overdoses tied to drugs like OxyContin, Vicodin and Percocet.

But this highly unusual move - the CDC rarely advises physicians on medications, a job formally assigned to the Food and Drug Administration - thrust the agency into the middle of a longstanding fight over the use of opioids, a powerful but highly addictive class of pain medications that rang up over \$9 billion in sales

officials. The Department of Health and Human Services, which oversees both the CDC and the FDA, said the guidelines are critical to "tackling the opioid epidemic." Frieden acknowledged the limited evidence comparing various treatments. "But there is no way we can wait for better evidence while so many people are dying." Under the proposed guidelines, doctors would prescribe these drugs only as a last choice for chronic pain, after non-opioid pain relievers, physical therapy and other options.

The CDC's logic

The CDC also wants doctors to prescribe the smallest supply of the drugs possible, usually three days or less for acute pain. And doctors would only continue prescribing the drugs if patients show significant

The pain debate

Behind the CDC controversy is a decades-long debate over the use of opioids, which include medications like morphine and codeine and illegal narcotics like heroin. For most of the 20th century, doctors reserved opioids for severe, short-term pain - such as after surgery - or chronic pain from deadly diseases like cancer. But in 1990s that changed, as some specialists argued the drugs could be used safely to treat common ailments like back pain and arthritis. The message was amplified by multimillion-dollar promotional campaigns for new, long-acting drugs like OxyContin, which was promoted as less addictive.

That drug's maker, Purdue Pharma, later agreed to plead guilty and pay over \$600 million in fines for misleading the public about OxyContin's risks. But prescriptions continued to rise - along with deaths. Purdue declined to comment for this story. Deaths linked to misuse and abuse of prescription opioids climbed to 19,000 last year, the highest figure on record, according to the CDC. Heroin and opioid painkillers caused 28,650 fatal overdoses in 2014, or 61 percent of all drug-related overdose deaths. CDC's Frieden says more Americans are "primed" for heroin use because of their exposure to painkillers. Pain care advocates say they were blindsided, though, when the CDC moved to create formal guidelines without first consulting them. "It looks to us like they had a pretty good idea of what they wanted these things to say, and they wanted to minimize feedback that was contrary to that," said Dr. Robert Twillman of the American Academy of Pain Management, a group which represents pain physicians and receives funding from painkiller manufacturers such as Purdue and Teva Pharmaceuticals. Twillman's group has asked Congress to investigate the CDC's handling of the guidelines, including an expert panel of advisers, which it says is "studded with a number of individuals who are publicly on record as opposing the use of opioids."

The CDC had not publicly disclosed the panel's membership, but Twillman and other pain advocates identified several members, including two who are leaders with Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing, a group working to reduce painkiller prescribing. That group is backed by Phoenix House, a network of rehabilitation clinics. The Washington Legal Foundation - a conservative group which frequently represents pharmaceutical interests in court - says CDC is in "blatant violation of federal law" for not disclosing its advisers. The foundation wants the CDC to scrap its current guidelines and start over.

Battle for influence

Many of the patient and physician groups opposing the CDC guidelines are part of a larger coalition called the Pain Care Forum, which meets monthly in Washington to strategize on pain issues. Officials from the White House, the FDA, NIH and other agencies have met with the group over the years, according to documents obtained by The Associated Press under the Freedom of Information Act. The Pain Care Forum presents itself as a leaderless collective that does not take formal positions. But most members receive funding from drugmakers, including OxyContin-maker Purdue, whose chief lobbyist helped found the group and remains at its center. Anti-addiction advocates worry that outside pressure from such groups led the CDC to re-open its guidelines for comment. "Opening a docket will tack months on to the process and increases the likelihood that the guideline might never be released," said Kolodny, an addiction therapist. It's a process advocates say has played out before at the FDA, which as the nation's top drug regulator writes the prescribing labels that accompany prescription drugs. — AP



MONTPELIER: Photo shows OxyContin pills are arranged for a photo at a pharmacy in Montpelier, Vt. In a report released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in December 2015, drug overdoses in the US rose again in 2014, driven by surges in deaths from heroin and powerful prescription painkillers such as Vicodin and Oxycontin. — AP

last year, according to IMS Health. Critics complained the CDC guidelines went too far and had mostly been written behind closed doors. One group threatened to sue. Then earlier this month, officials from the FDA and other health agencies at a meeting of pain experts bashed the guidelines as "shortsighted," relying on "low quality evidence."

They said they planned to file a formal complaint. The CDC a week later abandoned its January target date, instead opening the guidelines to public comment for 30 days and additional changes. Anti-addiction activists worry the delay could scuttle the guidelines entirely. "This is a big win for the opioid lobby," said Dr. Andrew Kolodny, co-founder of Physicians for Responsible Opioid Prescribing, a group working to reduce painkiller prescribing. CDC Director Dr. Tom Frieden said politics did not play a role and the guidelines remain a priority. "We want to make sure we don't go so fast that there are questions about our process, but we certainly don't want to see any further delay," Frieden said.

Frieden said the FDA and other agencies support his effort, despite the negative comments from some

improvement. The CDC's logic: Reshaping how primary care doctors use painkillers would result in fewer prescriptions and, therefore, fewer deaths. By its estimation, deaths tied to these drugs have surged more than four-fold since 1999. But industry-funded groups like the US Pain Foundation and the American Academy of Pain Management warn that the CDC guidelines could block patient access to medications if adopted by state health systems, insurers and hospitals. Such organizations often look to the federal government for health care policies.

The CDC decision to delay its guidelines followed months of lobbying by physician and patient groups aligned with the pharmaceutical industry, who have almost always had a seat at the table in federal discussions on painkillers. As a result, they have had far more influence over federal policy than addiction activists, according to experts. "They're very well-funded and they have a lot of pharma money behind them," said Dr. Lewis Nelson of New York University, an FDA adviser who is also advising the CDC on its guidelines. "And then you have the anti-addiction groups on the other side, which is clearly much less funded and organized."



A new baby orca whale is seen swimming alongside an adult whale in the Haro Strait between San Juan Islands, Wash., and Vancouver Island. — AP

ANOTHER BABY: 8TH ENDANGERED ORCA SPOTTED IN PUGET SOUND

SEATTLE: Whale researchers are celebrating the birth of another baby orca in Puget Sound, the first time in decades the population has experienced such a boom. The new baby is the eighth born since last December to the small, endangered population of killer whales that spend time in the inland waters of Washington state, according to the Center for Whale Research, which keeps a census of the orcas for the federal government.

"It's wonderful," said Ken Balcomb, senior scientist with the center at Friday Harbor. "We're hoping this is the future." Decades ago, there were more than 140 of the unique animals known as southern resident killer whales. That number declined to a low of 71 in the 1970s when dozens of the mammals were captured to be displayed at marine parks and aquariums across the country.

Despite a decade of research, protection and recovery efforts, the animals continue to struggle primarily due to a lack of food, pollution and disturbances

by marine vessels. The population is now at 84. There were 77 animals last December. The newest orca, estimated to be a few weeks old, was spotted earlier this month near San Juan Island by a member of the Pacific Whale Watch Association. Researchers couldn't initially determine conclusively from photographs whether the whale was new.

Photos taken Wednesday, however, helped confirm that the eyepatch and other markings on the baby were distinct. Each Puget Sound orca is identified by unique black and white markings or variations in their fin shapes. The baby is the fifth born to the J-pod, one of three groups of Puget Sound orcas. It was spotted swimming with its mother, grandmother and other family members in Haro Strait. Balcomb said the baby boom could be due to the fairly good salmon year on the Columbia River. "I think that sort of allowed these mothers to bring their babies to full term," he said. Researchers won't know for some time if the baby is male or female. — AP

ISIS PHARMA CHANGES NAME TO AVOID UNWANTED ASSOCIATION

LOS ANGELES: Isis Pharmaceuticals is changing its name to avoid any unwanted association with the Islamic State extremist group, the California company said Friday. It will now be called Ionis Pharmaceuticals, setting it clearly apart from the jihadists, whose acronyms include ISIS, IS and ISIL. "We decided to change our company name because when people see or hear our name we

want them to think about the life-saving medicines we are developing," said Lynne Parshall, chief operating officer at Ionis Pharmaceuticals. Wade Walke, spokesman for the company, said the name became "a big problem" after the Paris attacks last month, which were claimed by the IS extremist group. Ionis Pharmaceuticals is known especially for its drugs for rare diseases. — AFP

BEIJING ISSUES SECOND RED ALERT AS CHOKING SMOG SETS IN AGAIN

BEIJING: Beijing issued its second-ever red alert for smog and put its emergency response plan into action once again as severe pollution hit China's capital yesterday. The notice from the capital's environmental bureau ordered factories to close and pulled half of all private cars off the streets, among other measures, as bad air flooded into the city for the third "airpocalypse" of the month. The red alert, the highest tier of a four-color warning system, will last from Saturday to Tuesday, according to a statement on the Beijing Municipal Environmental Protection Bureau's website.

It is the second time the highest level alert has been issued since the city established a pollution warning system in 2013. Counts of PM2.5 - harmful microscopic particles that penetrate deep into the lungs - were above 260 micrograms per cubic meter earlier yesterday, according to the US embassy, which issues independent readings. The World Health Organization's recommended maximum exposure is 25 over a 24-hour period.

By mid-afternoon the reading lowered to 140, but the pungent smelling smog still reduced visibility in the capital even though the streets were not as clogged with vehicles as usual.

"Environmental protection is an important objective the Chinese government has been firmly working on," foreign ministry spokesman Hong Lei said at a regular scheduled briefing in Beijing. But, he added: "We are still facing some challenges in environmental protection". The national environmental bureau said that other cities in the region would raise their alert level to red, adding it had urged regional governments to "implement heavy air pollution emergency response measures".

Exercising in smog

The soupy haze did not turn off several elderly people who headed to Beijing's parks and public squares to do their morning exercises. But residents on social media were seemingly more bothered by the latest bout of heavy haze and said the government was not doing enough to tackle the problem. "Whether or not I drive my petrol car has little to do with the main causes of smog," one user on China's Twitter equivalent Weibo said. "If alternating traffic is effective in controlling smog, why not set it up permanently?" said another commenter.

Beijing issued its first-ever red alert on December 7, declaring emergency pollution measures following scathing

public criticism of the city's weak response to choking smog that settled on the city earlier in the month. PM2.5 rates regularly exceeded 300 micrograms per cubic metre during the last red alert. Beijing lifted the alert on December 10, after winds from the north dispersed the bad air, leaving skies clear and blue. During an earlier airpocalypse at the beginning of the month, PM2.5 levels climbed to as high as 600 micrograms per cubic metre but the government did not issue a red alert, prompting strong public criticism.

Most of the country's greenhouse gas emissions come from the burning of coal for electricity and heating - particularly when demand peaks in winter - which is also the key cause of smog. The recurrent pollution has driven Beijing residents to hospitals in growing numbers, according to a report on Internet giant Tencent's news portal. During the last month's periods of severe pollution, it said, trips to medical facilities using hailing app Didi Kuaidi-backed by Tencent went from 3.4 percent of all journeys to 4.1 percent, an increase of more than a fifth. The report also cited online retailer JD.com as saying pollution mask sales soared by as much as 400 percent in response to the bad air. — AFP



SHANGHAI: Heavy pollution hangs in the air over elevated motorways in Shanghai. — AFP

ARCTIC POSTS RECORD WARMTH OVER LAND, LESS ICE IN OCEAN

NEW YORK: The warming Arctic has set another record. The average air temperature over Arctic land reached 2.3 degrees F (1.3 degrees C) above average for the year ending in September. That's the highest since observations began in 1900. The new mark was noted in the annual Arctic Report Card, released Tuesday by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. The Arctic centers on the North Pole and reaches into North America and Eurasia. "Warming is happening more than twice as fast in the Arctic than anywhere else in the world. We know this is due to climate change," NOAA chief scientist Rick Spinrad told reporters in San Francisco at a meeting of the American Geophysical Union.

Another record emerged for sea ice, which appears when Arctic Ocean water freezes. When it reached its peak coverage in February, it was the lowest maximum extent since records began in 1979. The minimum ice coverage, reached in

September, was the fourth lowest on record. The retreat of sea ice is considered a threat to animals like walrus, which use it for mating, giving birth and getting out of the water. Walrus can use land instead to leave the water, but they are crowding onto beaches where a stampede can be devastating for calves, two editors of the report card said.

Walrus have been hauling themselves out on land in northwest Alaska, a recent phenomenon, Martin Jeffries of the federal Office of Naval Research and Jackie Richter-Menge of the US Army Corps of Engineers wrote in a joint email. Snow cover in June in both the North American and Eurasian parts of the Arctic was at the second lowest level since records began in 1967. Reduced snow cover lets more sunlight through to the land, which absorbs the energy and gets warmer. Since 1979, the extent of June snow cover has been dropping by 18 percent per decade, the study said.— AP



LONGYEARBYEN: A house and a car are snow covered as an avalanche hit several houses in Longyearbyen, Norway yesterday. Several people were injured and missing yesterday after an avalanche buried about 10 houses on the Svalbard archipelago in the heart of the Norwegian Arctic. — AFP



Migratory birds fly above wetlands in Hokersar, about 16 kilometers north of Srinagar, Indian controlled Kashmir. — AP

WETLAND LOSS, DEVELOPMENT PUT KASHMIR BIRD MIGRATION AT RISK

SRINAGAR: The cackle and cry of Kashmir's annual bird migration has long been a welcome ruckus for those living in the Indian-controlled Himalayan territory. It signals the summer's end, the coming snows and the global importance of Kashmir's environment for species arriving from as far as northern Europe and Japan. But these days, wildlife experts say they have never seen so few birds - and so few species - feeding and breeding around the wetlands nestled between the region's mountain peaks and plateaus.

A combination of climate change and haphazard urban development are to blame, scientists say. Colorful birds like the whooper swan, stiff-tailed duck and cotton teal have not been seen in the area in recent years. While there has been little scientific study to quantify the falling numbers, former regional wildlife warden Mohammed Shafi Bacha says he counts only 18 species visiting today out of 28 that came three decades ago. Scientists routinely reject the state's

official count of birds as unreliable, but even those numbers show a downward trend: During the winter of 2009-10, authorities said more than 1 million birds visited Kashmir's wetlands. Last year, they counted just over half that number. "The bird numbers have been fluctuating over the years, but now there is a steady decline," Bacha said. He called for an "urgent and massive effort to revive these wetland reserves for protecting the birds."

Scientists say unbridled construction, piled up trash and the changing Himalayan climate - where warmer temperatures are melting snows more quickly and playing havoc with the seasons - are robbing the birds of their traditional watering holes and, in the case of visiting mallard ducks, their nesting areas. Scientists say the Earth's atmosphere has already warmed an average of 0.7 degrees Celsius (1.3 degrees Fahrenheit) in the last century, thanks to the release of heat-trapping greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide. But temperatures are rising more

quickly at high altitudes like the Himalayas. Kashmir itself has warmed 1.3 degrees Celsius in the past century. Local scientists say seasons are shifting from their usual patterns, and precipitation is more often falling as rain instead of snow. "Loss of habitat and climate change are major factors," wildlife department researcher Samina Amin said. The birds have long been a highlight for residents in the famed Kashmir Valley - a vast collection of connected wetlands and waterways known as much for its idyllic vistas and flower-filled meadows as for its decades-long battle for independence that has killed 68,000 people.

The violence has subsided in recent years, with resistance now mostly expressed through street protests. But the mountainous region is still crisscrossed with thousands of miles of barbed wire and patrolled by hundreds of thousands of Indian troops. The tense security situation has made addressing environmental issues harder. Compounding the environmental chal-

lenge is a rapid change in how people are using the land. New neighborhoods are popping up around wetlands, with little regard to maintaining water flow. Swamps are frequently clogged by garbage. Water-logged rice fields are quickly being converted into orchards. Deforestation is unleashing soils that are filling in lakes.

"I clearly remember a coin swinging down into the crystal clear water after I dropped it while crossing a small wooden bridge," said businessman Showkat Dar, who grew up near a vast swamp dense with willow trees and squawking geese that has since become a high-end marketplace in the main city of Srinagar. "That coin must be still buried somewhere under these commercial buildings." The loss or degradation of many wetlands has also left the region unable to absorb and channel floodwaters, leaving it increasingly exposed to flooding. Srinagar was inundated last year in disastrous floods that caused \$17 billion in losses to infrastructure and homes. — AP

OVERDOSE DEATHS IN US HIT RECORD HIGH HEALTH CHIEFS WARN OF A SURGING OPIOID 'EPIDEMIC'

MIAMI: More people died of drug overdoses last year in the United States than ever before, largely due to disturbing increases in prescription painkillers and heroin use, health authorities said Friday. Health chiefs warned of a surging opioid "epidemic" that is ripping families and communities apart. More than 47,000 people died last year from drugs, higher than during any previous year on record, said the report by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Deaths due to opioid overdoses jumped 14 percent in just one year, said the CDC's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report. Six in 10 of all drug overdose deaths were due to opioids, which may include either pill-based medications to dull pain or the street drug heroin. Drug overdose deaths were about 1.5 times more common than car crash fatalities last year, said the report.

"The increasing number of deaths from opioid overdose is alarming," said CDC Director Tom Frieden. "The opioid epidemic is devastating American families and communities. To curb these trends and save lives, we must help prevent addiction and provide support and treatment to those who suffer from opioid use disorders." Drug overdoses have killed almost half a million people in the United States from 2000 to 2014, and the rate of opioid overdoses has tripled since 2000.

Heroin, pills
The CDC said "two distinct but

interrelated trends" are visible in the data: a 15-year rise in prescription painkiller deaths and a more recent surge in heroin use and overdose deaths. Both drugs work in similar ways, and when addicts are unable to get prescription medications to feed their habit, many turn to heroin, which is often cheap and accessible. Drugs like oxycodone and hydrocodone are the most commonly prescribed opioid pain relievers, and "continue to be involved in more overdose deaths than any other opioid type," said the report, noting deaths from these types of drugs increased by nine percent in one year, with 813 more deaths in 2014 than in 2013.

Overdose deaths are up in both men and women, in non-Hispanic whites and blacks, and in adults of nearly all ages, said the report. "Deaths from heroin increased in 2014, continuing a sharp rise that has seen heroin overdoses triple since 2010," it said. Illicitly made fentanyl, a short-acting opioid that is sometimes added to heroin and can make it far more potent, is believed to be responsible for thousands of deaths per year. US health authorities say they are promoting more informed opioid prescribing practices among doctors as a way of curbing the trend, along with improved treatment for this recovery from addiction. Programs are also in place to increase the use of naloxone, a fast-acting antidote that may revive a person who has recently overdosed. — AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
م. ه. فهد علي المخيزيم

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

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



KUWAIT ENGINEERS FORUM TO HOLD KINETIC 2016 ON APRIL 3

Kuwait Engineers Forum (KEF) will hold the 3rd Technical Conference and Exhibition - KINETIC 2016 on April 3, 2016 at Radisson Blu Hotel, Kuwait. KINETIC, an annual event will provide a suitable platform where the engineering community can directly interact with technical experts, research scientists and manufacturers, thereby share knowledge and expertise.

This year, the conference theme is "Sustainable Development - Innovation, Opportunities and Challenges." The conference will highlight the trends and emerging challenges in the areas of Global Economic Sustainability, Corporate Social Responsibility, Clean and Renewable

Energy, Cyber Security, E-learning and Automations; which have a special relevance to Kuwait.

Addressing a press conference, KEF office-bearers said there would be technical presentations by experts, professionals and manufacturers. Executives and technologists from a wide range of industrial sectors will be attending the conference and exhibition. The event offers wide networking opportunities to discuss and exchange new ideas and to establish/renew contacts.

Kuwait Engineers Forum has released their technical exhibitor/sponsorship brochure. This year, KINETIC has

introduced poster presentation for university undergraduates and graduate students, as a unique platform for expressing their talents to present their idea on the conference theme. Further, KINETIC has announced that registration will be free for university students.

The organizers said KEF is looking forward to active participation from technical experts in their respective fields, and also from the industry to exhibit their products and technologies from Kuwait and the region. Kuwait Engineers Forum (KEF), is a registered association of Indian Engineers working in Kuwait.

Prior to the press conference, KEF held a technical semi-

nar on "Role of Engineers in Green Economy" by Joseph Martin, Ernst and Young.

The meeting was presided by KEF General Convener Anil Kumar KV Ex-officio member Santhosh Kumar G, General Convener-designate Sree Kumar G, Convener finance Jayaraj Kallumpurath, Convener organization Thomas George, Convener sponsorship Shyam Mohan, Convener Arts Sony Francis, Convener Data management Jeslin Thalappil, Convener Specialties Edison George, Convener Food George K John and Convener Public Relations, Jyothish Natarajan were also present during the meeting.

MALABAR LAUNCHES 5TH EDITION OF GOLD, DIAMONDS FESTIVAL IN GCC, SINGAPORE AND MALAYSIA SHOWROOMS

Malabar Gold and Diamonds, the prominent jewelry retailer unfurled details of the 5th edition of 'Malabar Gold and Diamonds Festival' in GCC, Singapore and Malaysia. The festival that runs from 16 December 2015 to 31 January 2016 will display distinctive pieces of jewelry from across the world and offers massive gifts and irresistible offers.

A true shopper's delight, Malabar Gold and Diamonds Festival will captivate the customers by exhibiting eye catching designs in gold, platinum, diamonds and precious stones from different parts of the world to flaunt any occasion or event and are well priced too. The festival stands apart from the usual jewelry exhibitions and promotions and as the tag line indicates- 'Everyone Wins', i.e every customer gets a chance to be a winner through this festival.

For every purchase of gold jewelry above KWD 150, the customers get a 'Scratch and Win' coupon through which they can win a guaranteed gold coin or up to 100 gold coins instantly. With every diamond jewelry purchase worth KWD 250, the customers will get 1 gm free gold coin.

To add customer's delight, the group also offers 'Zero Deduction Exchange' scheme through which customers can update their old ornaments to the latest collection of Malabar Gold and Diamonds without any loss. Any 22 ct old gold ornaments can be exchanged with the latest Malabar Gold and Diamonds designs by paying only making charges ensuring they don't lose

any value on the rate of gold. Furthermore, 8 gm gold coins can be bought from their outlets with absolutely no making charge during this period.

Keeping up with customer demands, the jewelry chain offers a fabulous collection of gold, diamond and platinum jewelry to suit the tastes of both resident and international customers, skillfully crafted by jewelry specialists from Italy, Singapore, Turkey, Bahrain and India. This is in addition to their exclusive branded jewelry - Mine- Diamonds Unlimited, Era- Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Ethnix- Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Divine- Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia- Precious Gem Jewelry and the unique jewelry for kids- Starlet.



KFIC SUPPORTS EMPLOYEES RECIPIENTS SPECIALIZED PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATES

A continuity in the company's strategic plan to develop the performance and efficiency of its employees and upgrade their professional qualifications is an element a company always aspires. Mohamed Al-Eiban, the Vice CEO and Head of HR and Admin stated that the company supported its perceptive employees in receiving the CFA degree, a specialized professional certificate awarded by the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute. This support comes in the context of company's efforts to urge their employees and encourage them to develop their skills continuously according to the latest programs and keep themselves updated on the recent developments in order to provide proficient services to KFIC clients. It is noteworthy that KFIC also sponsored the activities of the CFA Society in Kuwait, which is a member of the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute CFA.



STANDOX TECHNICAL TRAINING DESIGNED BY PROFESSIONALS FOR PROFESSIONALS

As part of Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company (AABC), commitment and the continuous support with Standox and Al-Wazzan, has recently conducted a Regional Nissan - Module 1 Training - Train The Trainer concept, in one of the world's most modern Standox training centers in Istanbul, Turkey from November 9 - 11, 2015.

Standox brand is recognized around the world as one of the most high-profile, premium brands of refinishing paint systems. Two Paint Technicians from Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Company (AABC) -NISSAN, KUWAIT successfully complet-

ed Nissan Module 1 Training - Train The Trainer concept, at Standox training center, Istanbul, Turkey.

The training of refinishers is an investment in the future for body shops. Jovani Parina Cerera and Santosh Kumar Damodaran, are both experienced Paint Technicians from (AABC). Participants were shown the latest products, improved latest application techniques and faster refinishing methods to improve the process in the body shop. Hence, achieving the high quality, efficiency and the customer satisfaction desired. Standox helps professional refinishers achieve right-first-time results.

Nissan Al-Babtain is proud of the high quality produced. What really sets Nissan Al-Babtain apart from other body shops though is the excellent team. After all, the technical skills of at Nissan Kuwait refinishers and technicians make customers happy and the business so tremendously successful. Everyone at Nissan Al Babtain does their utmost to make the customers feel welcome and, perhaps more importantly, reassured as they entrust their cars to Nissan Al Babtain care. For any future body repairs jobs on Nissan vehicles please visit NISSAN Body shop centers in Al-Rai and/or Al-Ahmadi area or call 1804 888 for any assistance.

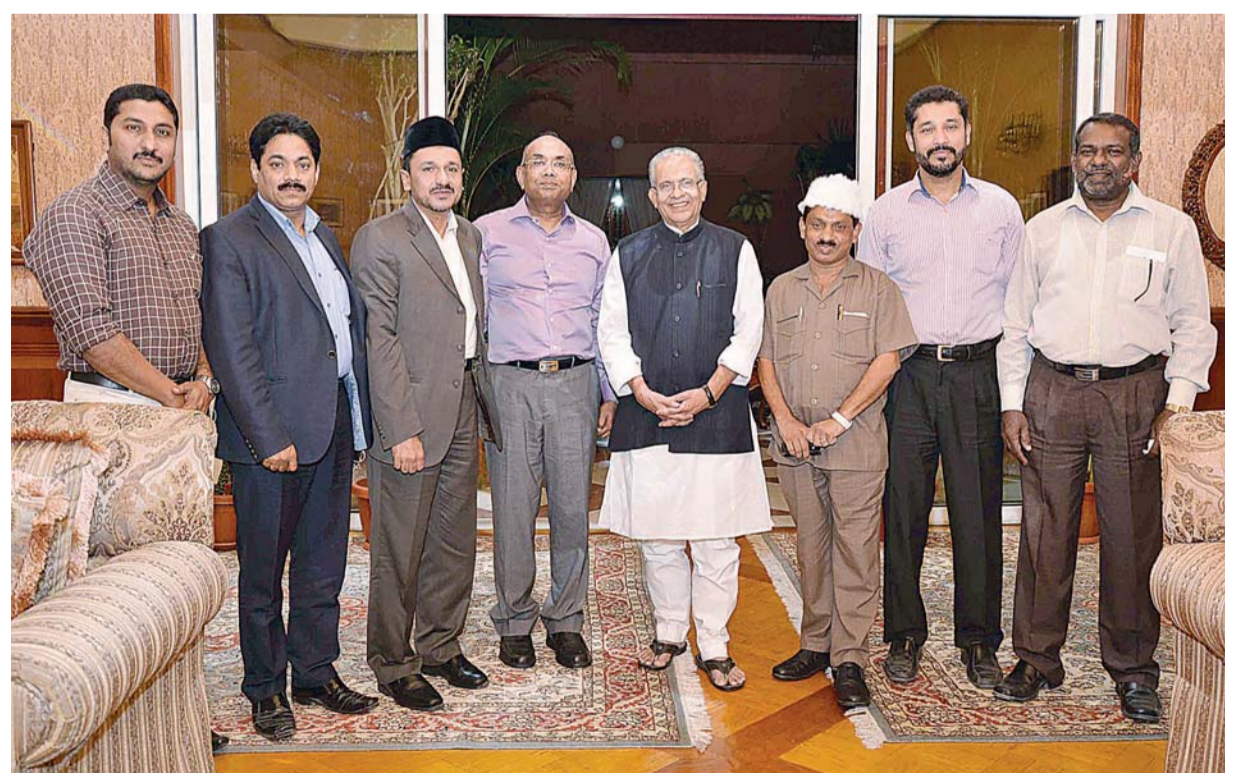
INDIAN MP, KMCC DELEGATION MEET AMBASSADOR

Indian parliament member and former Kerala Education minister E T Muhammed Basheer, Sayed Panakkad Sadikali Shihab Thangal, Sidiqali Rangator held a courtesy meeting with Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain at the Indian embassy. Sharafudheen Kanneth - President, Kuwait KMCC and Director-NORKA Welfare Board, government of Kerala, Basheer Batha, General Secretary, H Ibrahim Kutty -Treasurer and Naser M R were also with the visiting Indian dignitaries during the meeting. The guests were on a visit to Kuwait to attend Kuwait KMCC "Karunaym

2015" mega conference. They had a cordial reception at the embassy. They had a detailed discussion regarding the matters related to Indian community living in Kuwait. The historical and cordial relation between both countries were highlighted. Multiple subjects were touched upon. Muhammed Basheer specifically mentioned the matters related to household sector in specific and labor class. The importance of streamlining the recruitment process was also mentioned. He explained the experiences of his visits to other GCC and Western countries and his

interactions with concerned. He asserted his commitment to the expatriate causes and assured that he would continue to present the matters to state and national levels. The ambassador mentioned the initiatives taken by embassy to improve the plight of Indian community living in Kuwait and his constant interaction with authorities and sought support from the community to better serve them.

He also commented the excellent work being carried out by Kuwait KMCC and other main stream organizations in liaison with the embassy.



MAHAQUIZZER MIDDLE EAST, KUWAIT ON FEBRUARY 5

The 4th edition of annual solo written quiz conducted by National Institute of Technology Calicut Alumni Association (NITCAA-Kuwait) in association with Karnataka Quiz Association (KQA), Bangalore, India named MahaQuizzer Middle East 2016 will be held on Friday, 5th February, 2016 simultaneously at 3 centers namely Salmiya (Indian English Academy School -Don Bosco), Ahmadi (FAIPS DPS) and Jleeb Shyukh (United India

School) from 2:00 pm to 3:30 pm

This is a solo open general written quiz contest for participants, irrespective of age, nationality. The winners will be receiving attractive prizes. All quiz enthusiasts are welcome to test your quiz talent. For further details and free online registration log on to <http://www.nitcaakuwait.org/mahaquizzer>. Registration open from 15th December 2015 to 30th January 2016.



Zeina Ramadan speaks at the event.



ACK SECOND ANNUAL MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

The School of Business at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) recently held its "2nd Annual Marketing Communications Forum" with this year's theme highlighted as "New Trends in Marketing Communications, Challenges and Successes in the Gulf". The forum brought together leaders from sectors such as banking, hospitality management, retail, automotive and advertising.

In coordination with Vigor events, ACK hosted David Allen as its keynote speaker, founder of Actioneer Inc. and writer of the bestseller book "Getting Things Done". Allen highlighted the importance of processing the skills to implement the five steps of getting things done in the right timeframe. These five steps are: capture, clarify, organize, reflect and engage.

Motivational speech

Walid Kanafani President of the International Advertising Association - Kuwait chapter, gave a motivational speech in which he highlighted a new apprentice conference coming soon to Kuwait in 2016. This coming conference will provide a platform for College

students to meet professional recruiting personnel from various fields in order learn the trade.

Shawna Arthurs, the AGM of Consumer Banking Group in the National Bank of Kuwait emphasized the importance of collecting data about the targeted market segment in order to create value for marketing communications. She added that the right targeting techniques are very important for the success of the marketing message. On the other hand, Faten Ismael, Sales and Services Manager of Ahli United Bank, indicated that the focus of AUB on maintaining and reflecting the Kuwaiti cultural values in all the products they offered was a main point of difference for AUB Islamic banking. Also, Anwar Al Baghdadi indicated that AUB marketing strategy will focus on the launch of new exciting and value adding products that will surprise its clients and the local market.

Zeina Ramadan, the Head of Strategy and Innovation at Chalhoub Group, presented the application of multichannel retailing or Omni channel marketing which is the use of a variety of channels in a customer's shopping experience; including retail stores, online

stores, mobile stores, mobile app stores, telephone sales and any other method of transacting with a customer. Ramadan indicated that marketing is undergoing rapid changes and moving from "push" based marketing towards more personalized communication with consumers. Marketers now need to provide a seamless experience, regardless of channel or device. Consumers can now engage with a company in a physical store, an online website, mobile app, through a catalog or through social media.

Speaking on sensory and experience marketing, Dr Sam Toglaw, Assistant Professor at ACK stated that we are moving from information-based marketing to relationship marketing which involves customer's personal experience and senses. However, many brands forge emotional associations in the customers' minds by appealing to their senses. Amal Al Dahouk the Marketing Manager of Elevation Burger indicated that the company's approach to promote green production of organic burgers was not the only success factor of their fast food chain, but its attempt to involve customers senses was a key factor in the expansion of Elevation Burger worldwide.

Multidisciplinary design

Naji Moujaes, Architect and a founding principal of the inter-disciplinary design and architectural practice PAD10 in Kuwait and Beirut, indicated how multidisciplinary design concepts which involved urban architecture, landscaping and interior design helped in the overall scheme of what is called "Servicescape"; an important concept of service marketing.

In relation to experiential marketing, Ahmad Naji, Marketing Manager of Al Zayani Group, indicated that living the driving experience with all senses is essential to influence customer's intentions of purchase. Mike Abu Ani the Managing Partner of 3is Consultants shed the light on the application of experiential or engagement marketing in engaging consumers to participate in the evolution of a brand.

Dr Faidon Theo, Assistant Professor at ACK, presented the role of music in marketing; he manipulated the background music of an advertisement to demonstrate how music can change the advertising message and he suggested what type of music can be used in different service environments in order to posi-

tively affect consumer behavior. Music in advertising creates excitement, attracts attention and establishes an emotional connection with the brand. It alters mood and conveys the advertising message.

As for content marketing, Khalid Al-Zanki, CEO of famous "launch-on-fire" podcasts in Kuwait, indicated that content marketing is more about connecting a customer with a product via value-adding content.

Content marketing is a strategic marketing approach focused on creating and distributing valuable, relevant, and consistent content to attract and retain a clearly defined audience, with the intention of changing or enhancing consumer behavior and, ultimately, to drive profitable customer action.

Finally, Dr Ahmad Khaldi, the Assistant Professor at ACK, spoke about the future of digital marketing. He explained that mobile marketing is the future of digital marketing so there is no question whether it is optional for marketers anymore. Therefore, the real challenge now is to be able to understand and analyze the preferences of mobile customers in order to know how, when, and what to communicate with them.



AOU ORGANIZE TRAINING EVENTS FOR STAFF

The Training Center of the Arab Open University (AOU) organized two training events, titled "How can convictions of geniuses and succeeders work for our favor?" delivered by Saud Al-Farhan, NLP Practitioner at the Society of Neuro Linguistic Programming. The first meeting

held at the AOU-HQ and targeted its staff while the second one was organized in cooperation with Public Authority for Industry (PAI) for its staff.

Addressing several themes on skills development, Farhan coached the participants on a number of topics such as: learning how to

evaluate your convictions and change them, how human mind can generalize its convictions, the seven convictions of geniuses and succeeders and ways of their application, new methods of learning how to adopt behaviors and convictions of your ideal, and how to make your convictions an enjoyable

experience instead of being a challenge.

Farhan started the two events by saying "All studies proved that the way in which we perceive ourselves determines our intelligence, health, sociality, happiness and success." He confirmed, "Convictions are a main roadmap in which we can see the world.

They filter how we can see the world and from which corner we can see it." pointing out, "At early age, convictions are often established through random situations and opinions of people around us whose points of view important, and through ideals, education and environment."



ORIENTAL RESTAURANT CONCLUDES PUNJABI FOOD FESTIVAL WITH GRAND SUCCESS

Dining out is a favorite pastime for citizens and residents in Kuwait and cuisines from all over the world find a comfortable place in the minds and tastes of people in the country. Over the years, Oriental Restaurant has become a name well-etched in the minds of food-lovers in the country, as it is often the preferred dining-out destination for Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis alike. The quality and taste of food at Oriental along with their superior personalized service, soothing ambience and value for money, has made the restaurant a complete package for a great evening out, especially for Indian and Chinese cuisines.

Oriental Restaurant recently organized a Punjabi food festival at their two locations in Sharq and Salmiya. Popular Indian chef Sweety Singh was

brought in to cook and display his culinary art in creating unique Punjabi dishes. The festival was a grand success and received warm appreciation from Indian food lovers in Kuwait.

The Managing Director of Oriental Restaurants and Confectionary, N. Satish Chandra Shetty, expressed his utmost gratitude to all his loyal patrons who helped make the distinctive Punjabi Food festival a great success. He added, "The response of Indian Punjabi food lovers in Kuwait was overwhelming and was indicated by the huge turnout of guests, comprising of our all-time loyal patrons as well as a big number of new guests who tried our dishes for the first time. They were fully satisfied with their visit and were pleasantly amazed with the distinctive taste, the comfy ambience of Oriental that they are so used

to and the impeccable service they've come to expect."

"Some of our customers liked our special Punjabi dishes so much that they came back repeatedly along with new guests. The highlight of this unique festival was when some of our enthusiastic guests and Punjabi food lovers who specially appreciated the unique preparations of Sweety Singh, expressed their desire to approach and meet the Chef personally and applaud his magical expertise in creating such superb, mouthwatering dishes," said Mr. Shetty. He expressed his commitment to continue to offer the best of his services to all distinguished clients of Oriental restaurants at all times.

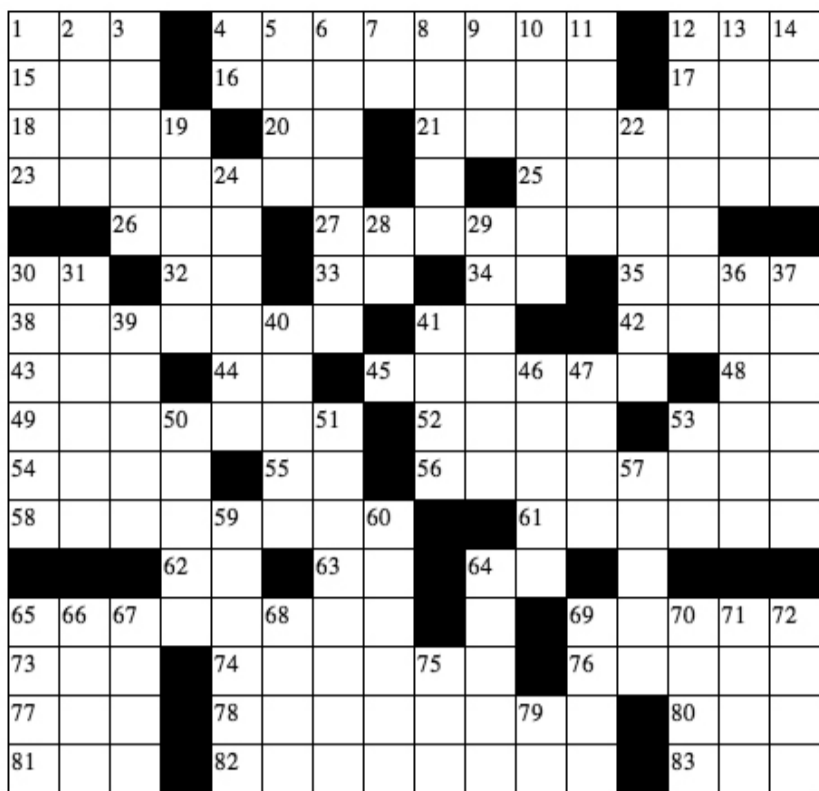
The two Oriental Restaurants in Kuwait are located in Kuwait City and Salmiya, with both featuring a rich

menu of Indian, Chinese and Continental specialties. In Kuwait City the restaurant is located in Sharq, Mubarak Al-Kabeer Street, in Jaza building opposite Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In Salmiya, the branch is located on Hamad Al-Mubarak Street, which is the hub of eateries in the district.

Oriental serves a wide variety of soups, sizzlers, cocktails, main course dishes and desserts from the Indian and Chinese cuisines. Now guests can relish the new Punjabi dishes popularized by Sweety Singh as part of the regular menu at Oriental Restaurant.

Oriental is a place where you will get good value for money. Cherish the dining experience and return again and again to relive the experience with your friends and family. Be there to relish great food, it's a tradition in Kuwait.

CROSSWORD 1115



ACROSS

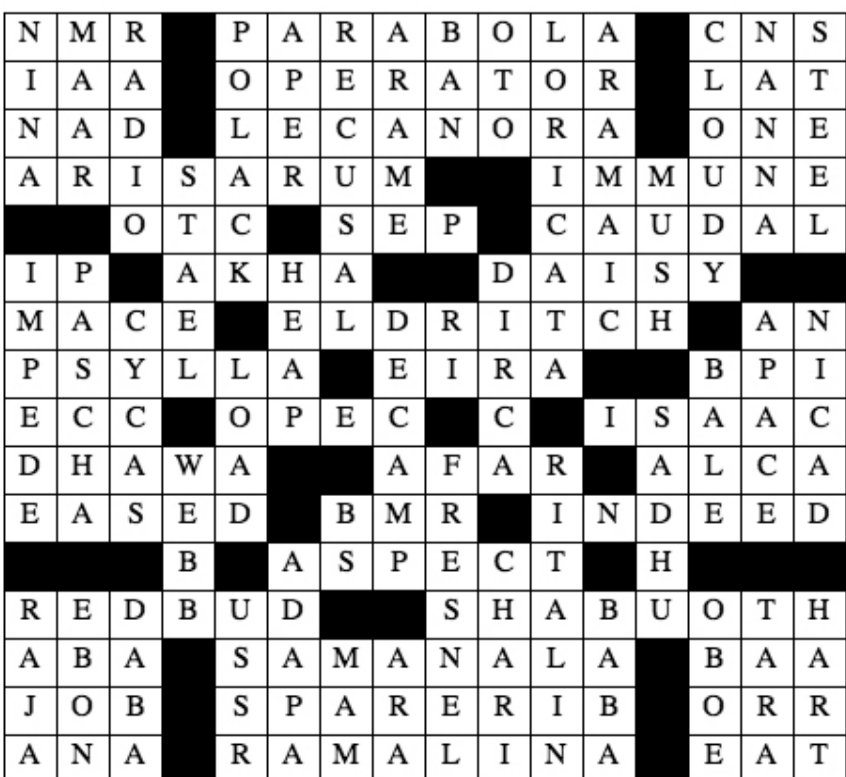
1. Nonresinous wood of a fir tree.
4. Difficult to penetrate.
12. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
15. An agency of the United Nations affiliated with the World Bank.
16. A conical child's plaything tapering to a steel point on which it can be made to spin.
17. The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
18. City in eastern Belgium.
20. An honorary degree in science.
21. Shrubby tree widely distributed along tropical shores.
23. A genus of evergreen shrub that grows in New Zealand.
25. A person who participates in or is skilled at some game.
26. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
27. English aeronautical engineer (1895-1937).
30. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
32. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
33. Being or moving higher in position or greater in some value.
34. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
35. A narrow thin strip of wood used as backing for plaster or to make latticework.
38. Formative one-cell-thick layer of tissue between xylem and phloem in most vascular plants that is responsible for secondary growth.
42. American novelist (1909-1955).
43. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
44. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
45. English novelist (born in Poland) noted for sea stories and for his narrative technique (1857-1924).
48. A yellow trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
49. Erect shrub with small if any spines having racemes of white to yellow flowers followed by curved pointed pods and black shiny seeds.
52. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
54. The basic unit of money in Peru.
55. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
56. A holdup man who stops a vehicle and steals from it.
58. A disorder of the glands of the body.
61. A river that rises in northern Colombia and flows generally eastward to the Orinoco in central Venezuela.
62. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
63. A crystalline metallic element not found in nature.
65. Disarrange or rumple.
73. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
74. withdraw from an organization or communion.
76. The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
77. A kind of person.

78. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
80. The cry made by sheep.
81. French writer whose novels described the sordid side of city life (1804-1857).
82. City in central Iran.
83. 300 to 3000 megahertz.

DOWN

1. A set of related records (either written or electronic) kept together.
2. Goddess of spring and wife of Braji.
3. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
4. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
5. English monk and scholar (672-735).
6. Tropical African and Indian herbs.
7. (astronomy) A measure of time defined by Earth's orbital motion.
8. A mechanism that can move automatically.
9. A reptile genus of Iguanidae.
10. Antibacterial consisting of any of several synthetic organic compounds capable of inhibiting the growth of bacteria that require PABA.
11. The boy whose upbringing was described by Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
12. Common gray wild goose of Europe.
13. An enclosure made of wire or metal bars in which birds or animals are kept.
14. (Roman mythology) God of love.
19. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
22. A narrative song with a recurrent refrain.
24. Of or relating to the lips of the mouth.
28. The sciences concerned with gathering and manipulating and storing and retrieving and classifying recorded information.
29. Malevolent aspect of Devi.
31. A semiautomatic rifle.
36. Small often spiny insectivorous mammal of Madagascar.
37. Old World woody vines.
39. Not reflecting light.
40. A mountain range in western Russia extending from the arctic to the Caspian Sea.
41. The Hebrew patriarch who saved himself and his family and the animals by building an ark in which they survived 40 days and 40 nights of rain.
46. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
47. The sixth month of the civil year.
50. Any activity that is easy to do.
51. A wave that is blown by the wind so its crest is broken and appears white.
53. A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
57. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
59. A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
60. Whitish fibrous membrane (albuginea) that with the cornea forms the outer covering of the eyeball.
64. A drama set to music.
66. An Eskimo hut.
67. A reason for wanting something done.
68. A member of a Finnish people of Russia.
69. A small cake leavened with yeast.
70. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
71. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
72. A shaped mass of baked bread.
75. A doctor's degree in education.
79. Not out.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find a move or some other change in the planning stage at this time. Anticipation and preparation is the type of energy for much of today. Chatting with friends, you may come up with an idea for a new invention or some new experiment you want to try. This could be anything such as carpentry, fishing or designing of clothes styles. You will ponder many questions by analysis and deep or penetrating thought. Someone close to you may come to you for your psychological perceptiveness and comprehension. Putting yourself in a position to gather and share information is always important to you. You understand hypothetical ideas and know how to present them to those around you. Network if possible.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If, for any reason, you have been procrastinating about having a conversation with an authority figure concerning anything that needs changing in your city, now is the time. You could communicate the details of some legal matter that will make the law clear in your area of the state. Perhaps this matter involves a leash law or identification tags for your feline friends. This is a period when you can put your practical insights into words and convey them to others. A little cleaning and putting things away can be a problem with all the decorations lying around; however, you soon have everything looking tip-top shape. You aim to have a place for everything and everything in its place. Step outside to see the beautiful sunset!



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may be feeling very good about yourself just now and appreciating your own better qualities. You may see value in or feel love for an older person or someone in authority. You seem to appreciate feelings and movement in general, and could possibly find yourself looking for a little romance, or at least enjoying some emotional release. You may just want to get active and walk or exercise. It's just a wonderful time to be in the company of others and to work together. A particular job may be just right for someone with your credentials. You may want to consider your path to this new job, beginning with a couple of paragraphs to the manager of that department about how you think you could be an asset. Your ideas are on target!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Taking the novel approach and trying out new ideas and breakthroughs in thinking could be what keeps you busy right now. You just simply feel like trying out something new and unusual. Perhaps you may feel too complacent about your life, or you could be getting bored with the status quo. Adding a little variety to life is what gives it spice and adds interest. You may want to travel a less-traveled path. Perhaps you can write a story about what it would be like. Growth comes from allowing yourself to make changes, allowing yourself to see things differently. Fear not what awaits you on the other side of any adventure-take it by the event and let go.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Self-expression is accomplished through helping others and you will be happy to help someone out if they ask. The challenges that come up today will be more beneficial for you than you think; keep a positive frame of mind. You may be placed in a working situation today where you will be with a group of people in a small place; patience. Plan to do a little exercise later this afternoon, even if it is only to walk the dog. This will create a picture for you to think about if a situation today gets a bit stuffy. You will be very much in tune with your own feelings and the feelings of others. Being patient, creative and understanding is your ticket to a most positive end result. A lover or child is generous or inspiring this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A rather eccentric person may temporarily overshadow your humor today. Your unique qualities are appreciated by those around you and when the time is right, you will be acknowledged once again. The happenings this day should give you some new ways of looking at things or discoveries with respect to your living situation or life circumstances. Feel free to allow yourself to dream. Since you will find these insightful days too often, you should not ignore the opportunity to let your imagination loose. Maybe, later this afternoon, a good book or movie will take on a more than real dimension. Keep exploring the many possibilities that life seems to present to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your warmth and affection attracts many people to you. It is easy for you to make a good impression. Today, when meeting new people, you should avoid very many questions-relax... Have fun. You will want to be sure that you check out the food allergies for those visiting you later today and all will enjoy a grand party or visit in your home. In existing relationships and your natural affection could be put to good use to undo tensions with friends and loved ones. You may find yourself entertaining or asking for wishes of others. It would not be a bad idea to find tours in your area that would be of interest to the type of creative things your guests might appreciate. Perhaps you could suggest a planetarium, imax theater or a museum.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You should find yourself in top condition when it comes to any kind of mental activity. You are full of wit and sharp ideas. Having a clear idea of what the public wants and needs at this time is beneficial to you in making practical decisions with regard to group issues-especially if you find yourself working or volunteering in a group project. Expect to make some decisions that affect others. You may find yourself wading cautiously through some difficulties, blocks or a few hot spots all day long. This afternoon there is just enough time for you to kick back and relax, perhaps a hot tub, beautiful music, a little snack or a nice nap. This evening is for fun and dancing and to enjoy the company of a loved one who understands you.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have your own philosophy about world affairs. Even as a young person, you were empathetic and understood the weakness of human beings and their emotional suffering. As an adult, you are extremely tolerant, perhaps some would say, too intolerant of humanity. You are dramatic and optimistic and attract the love of audiences or groups of people. If there is an injustice or problem, you are the first to help make a correction. Others could learn from your positive attitude and you may be a bit more caring for your own concerns. You will want to be around in the future to push through the wonderful ideas you have that benefit humanitarian interests. Medicine, welfare work and the arts attract you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This morning is a great time for exercise and especially with a friend, perhaps an early morning run. A good breakfast begins your busy day. Congratulations on the recent physical improvements-hard work pays. A hot shower, massage or a little caffeine and you are off to join your friends. Whether you are away from home or at home just now, there are some fun things to enjoy. You will want to seek exciting and stimulating contact with people today. This may mean you visit a tourist interest or go on a shopping expedition. Your intuition is more active at this time. A new project of yours has a special creative vent and proves quite successful.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

When some kind of recognition or extra support comes along it is always nice, but to get that extra boost that you find coming your way today makes life extra special. You may have the feeling that you are very much in touch and in harmony with those around you; the lines of communication are wide open. All of the support that you need will be there for you today. Your taste in art and a curiosity about how things work in general are heightened. Maybe this is the perfect time to pick out furnishings, colors and so forth-the more elegant things in life. Your sense of value is good. This evening is a wonderful time to be around friends and associates and to work together in some sort of effort to make life better-perhaps a charity.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Watch out-an independent streak seems to be surfacing at this time. Others will admire your unique and rather unusual way of understanding. Your sense of humor simply shines at this time, and added to your rather eccentric behavior, should set you apart from the crowd. You should find the benefit of new insights or breakthroughs in your living situation or life conditions. If you are performing in a comedy club, you have probably discovered a completely new set of ideas. Keeping people guessing is part of your allure. People love to be entertained by you. A change of scenery this afternoon is just what you need to lighten your spirit. Get away for the afternoon to some place exciting. An amusement park, perhaps with a loved one, could be just the place.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Types of Music 2

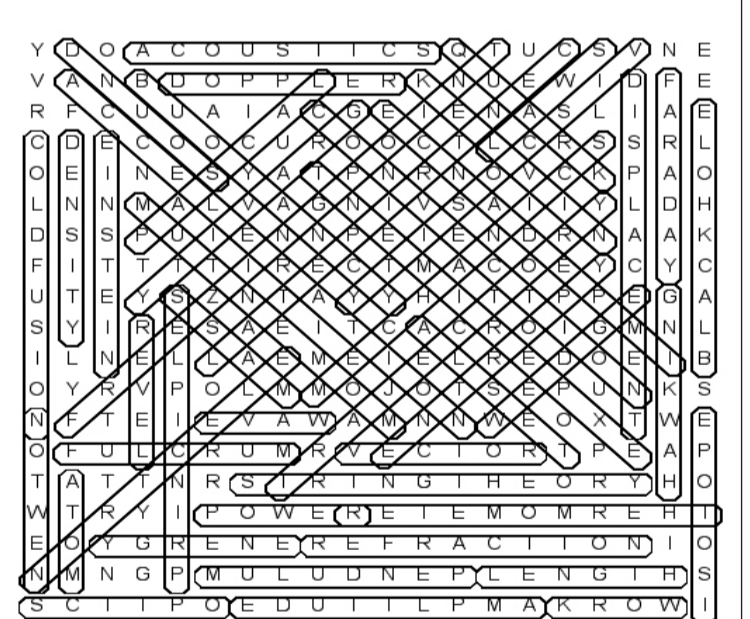
Find and circle all of the different types of music that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 15 letters spell an additional type of music.



- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| ACID JAZZ | CLASSICAL COUNTRY | GYPSY IRISH | REGGAE ROCK AND ROLL |
| AFRICAN | DOO WOP | MAMBO | SALSA |
| ALTERNATIVE | ELEVATOR | MARIACHI | SURF |
| BEBOP | EUROPOP | MIDDLE EASTERN | SWING |
| BLUES | EXPERIMENTAL | NEW AGE | TECHNO |
| BOLLYWOOD | FOLK ROCK | NEW ORLEANS | TRIP HOP |
| BOSSA NOVA | FUNK | OPERA | TROPICAL |
| BRAZILIAN | GOSPEL | POP MUSIC | URBAN |
| CELTIC | GRUNGE | PROGRESSIVE | ZYDECO |
| CHAMBER | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

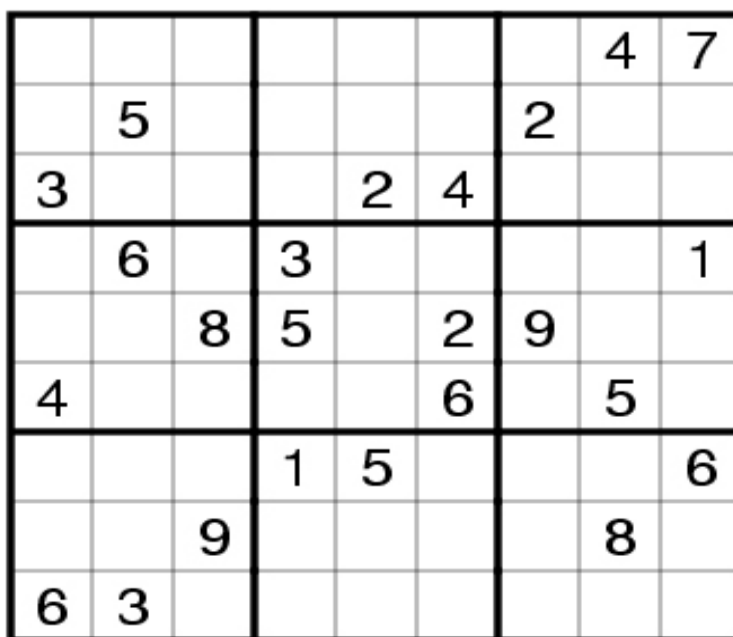
Physics 1



- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------------|
| ACCELERATION | ELECTRON ENERGY | LAWS OF LENGTH | QUARK REFRACTION |
| ACOUSTICS | ENTROPY | MASS | SOUND STRING THEORY |
| AMPLITUDE | EXPERIMENT | FARADAY | MECHANICS |
| ATOM | FREEZING POINT | MOMENTUM | THERMOMETER |
| BLACK HOLE | FULCRUM | NEWTON | TRAJECTORY |
| BUOYANCY | GRAVITY | OPTICS | VECTOR |
| CENTRIPETAL | HAWKING | PASCAL | VISCOSITY |
| COLD FUSION | IMPEDANCE | PENDULUM | WAVE |
| CONVECTION | ISOTOPE | POWER | WEDGE |
| DENSITY | KELVIN | PRINCIPLES | WORK |
| DISPLACEMENT | | | |
| DOPPLER | | | |
| EINSTEIN | | | |

The hidden message is: YOU NEVER FAIL UNTIL YOU STOP TRYING

Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



medium



Refaeli being investigated for alleged tax fraud

The 30-year-old model has been accused of failing to report millions of dollars in income earned abroad and tens of thousands of dollars in "celebrity benefits" and was questioned for several hours at the Tel Aviv offices of the Israel Tax Authority on Wednesday before a court agreed to release her on \$193,000 bail. She must also seek permission if she wants to leave Israel and pay a \$64,000 bond. Bar is accused of trying to hide the fact she was a resident of Israel by living in Tel Aviv apartments registered to her mother Tzipi - who is also under investigation - and her brother. Non-resident Israelis are exempted from having to declare income earned abroad. The tax authority also accused the Israeli 'X Factor' host - who married billionaire Adi Ezra in September - of failing to

report discounts on luxury goods and other benefits that should have been subject to income tax, such as the free use of Range Rover and Lexus cars that weren't registered to her but were provided by companies in exchange for promotional photos. Bar's lawyer insisted she has done nothing wrong. Speaking to website NRG, Giora Aderet said: "There is no drama. In the end, this is just a civil dispute. No-one cheated anyone else. It will all clear up soon."

Tom Arnold has become a father again

The 'Sin City Saints' actor and wife Ashley welcomed daughter Quinn Sophie into the world at 12.39pm on Friday and the little girl weighed in at 7lbs 9oz and measured 22in long. The couple - who also have a son, Jax, two - told People magazine: "Our second miracle has arrived and she is perfect." Tom announced in June he and Ashley were expecting a daughter. He posted a picture of his son holding an ultrasound picture on twitter and wrote: "Jax is very excited, but also a bit confused with the happy news he will have a little sister this fall #grateful (sic)" The 56-year-old actor - who has been married three times before, including to comic Rosanne Barr - has previously been open about his struggles to father a child because of his low sperm count. He previously said: "One day at the hospital I saw a sign asking for sperm donors and it paid \$35. I was psyched because, unlike blood, I believed I could donate this stuff three times a day." Fortunately, they give you a test first and the doctor informed me that I didn't have many 'swimmers.' "However, despite his problems, the 'True Lies' star believes having Jax was fate. Announcing Ashley's pregnancy in 2013, he said: "I've tried with other people, but since there is a God we were unable to conceive. Now God said, 'This is it!'"



Appleton knew Gallagher was being unfaithful



The All Saints singer split from the Oasis rocker - with who she has 14-year-old son Gene - in August 2013 after it emerged he had had a daughter, Gemma, with US journalist Liza Ghorbani but she only discovered he'd been unfaithful when he warned her the news was about to be made public. In a ruling over their divorce settlement, Judge Martin O'Dwyer - who decided the former couple should split their £11 million fortune equally - said: "It was only when publicity was about to occur in April 2013 when Mr. Gallagher told his wife. "The circumstances were extremely unfortunate. The wife was away on holiday and she was informed by telephone by the husband." Nicole was left "greatly distressed" by the news and subsequent breakdown of her five-year marriage. The judge continued: "Ms Appleton was greatly distressed not only because of the earlier incident but also because of the breakdown of her relationship, which was based

upon prolonged deceit." The judge also revealed the divorce has cost the former couple £800,000. He said: "The level of costs in this case, totaling over £800,000, are manifestly excessive for the determination of the dispute, which involves capital sums not much greater at the end of the day than £10 million." He also said that Liam and Nicole, who started living together 15 years ago, had "lived a very good lifestyle". Details of the ruling came after a hearing at London's Central Family Court Friday, which involved the judge deciding just how much of the hearing held in October could be made public. Liam and Nicole had both been photographed arriving separately at the court earlier this year to listen to the hearing, but were not present for Friday's ruling.



Patridge says pregnancy is like having a 'hangover'

The former 'Hills' star revealed on Friday she and fiance Corey Bohan are expecting their first child together, and she has now opened up more about her happy news. She wrote on her website: "So far, I haven't had any morning sickness, I just feel very tired and like I have a major hangover when I wake up, which is a change for me because I'm constantly on-the-go!" she said. "As far as finding out the sex of the baby...We just want it to be healthy:) Girl or boy, we will be ecstatic either way! "Corey's mum wants it to be a surprise, but I don't know if I'll be able to wait! I guess we will just have to wait and see. "God has a plan for us, and even though it is all happening so fast, I am confident that I'm ready to be a mama!" Audrina - who hasn't revealed how far along she is in her pregnancy - told her friends and family she was pregnant before making the news public because she couldn't convincingly explain another reason why she wasn't drinking alcohol at a dinner party. She said: "I told everyone I was on a detox cleanse to cover my lack of alcohol consumption. "With the combination of my poor lying skills and Corey's perma-smile, we were given 'the look' over and over again by our friends and family, so it's safe to say the secret was not a secret much longer!"



Cooper doesn't think he'd be successful if he didn't stop drinking

The 'Hangover' actor stopped drinking alcohol in his late 20s and thinks the decision he made to transform his life was both "beautiful and unbelievable". Speaking to Barbara Walters for her '10 Most Fascinating People of 2015' special he said: "I would never be sitting here with you, no way, no chance. [if I hadn't quit]. "I wouldn't have been able to have access to myself or other people, or even been able to take in other people, if I hadn't changed my life. "I never would have been able to have the relationships that I do. "I never would have been able to take care of my father the way I did when he was sick. So many things." The 40-year-old star was inspired to become an actor after his father, Charles Cooper, showed him 1980 movie 'The Elephant Man' when he was 12 years old. He recalled: "It floored me. First of all, I was devastated by it. I couldn't stop crying." Bradley's father tragically passed away in 2011, meaning he never got to see his son play the title role in the stage adaptation on 'The Elephant Man' on both New York's Broadway or London's West End, or 'American Sniper', the movie he starred in which Clint Eastwood directed. The 'Joy' star said of his success: "I think he wouldn't believe it. "Thank god he was alive for so many of the successes, but like, the Clint Eastwood thing, he would have really loved. That was one of his heroes."

Hudson's 'life-force' is her mother Goldie Hawn

The 'Almost Famous' actress - who has sons Ryder, 11, with ex-husband Chris Robinson, and Bingham, four, with former fiance Matt Bellamy - says her mom is her biggest inspiration and means everything to their family. She said: "As much as she means to other people for other reasons, she is literally the life-force for me and my family." The 36-year-old beauty is preparing for the release of her new lifestyle book, 'Pretty Happy: Healthy Ways to Love Your Body' - in which she shares how she became "healthy, strong and beautiful from the inside out - and hopes the guide provides her fans with "inspiration and motivation" to lead a better life. She told People magazine: "One

thing everyone I know is trying to accomplish is balance. "This book is about being as mindful as possible when it comes to your well-being, but still enjoying your life. I hope it provides some inspiration and motivation for making a shift in our lifestyles for the better." Kate's philosophy in the book is about "simplicity, accessibility, positivity and throwing the idea of 'perfection' out the window." She explained: "I learned a long time ago that trends and fads come and go and are not a long-term solution. "We all have to find what works best for us and allows us to be our own best version of ourselves."



Hudgens has launched her new lifestyle blog

The former 'High School Musical' actress launched Astral & Opal because she couldn't find one specific website she "needed" in her life and hopes it will "guide" her fans to "inspiration, passion and wisdom". She wrote in a welcome letter on the site: "Welcome to Astral & Opal! I love surfing the web but nothing ever stuck with me. So, I thought it was time to create the site I needed in my life. "As for me, I believe that life is as you make it. I want to feel good, look good and live a colorful life full of adventure. You are in the driver's seat, on an open road and only get one lifetime to make it count. We gotta live it to the fullest! "I hope Astral & Opal guides you to inspiration, passion, wisdom and makes your world a little more color-

ful. Enjoy!" Articles on the blog so far include a Christmas gift guide, shopping tips, how to do a soul cleanse, a DIY face mask suggestion, a quiz on finding your "spiritual powers" based on birth date and a winter music festival round-up. The site is curated by Vanessa, but uses content supplied by FanBread, a site which offers up free "engaging and relevant blogs, listicles, galleries, quizzes and memes from our content marketplace".





Gallagher would like Oasis to reform

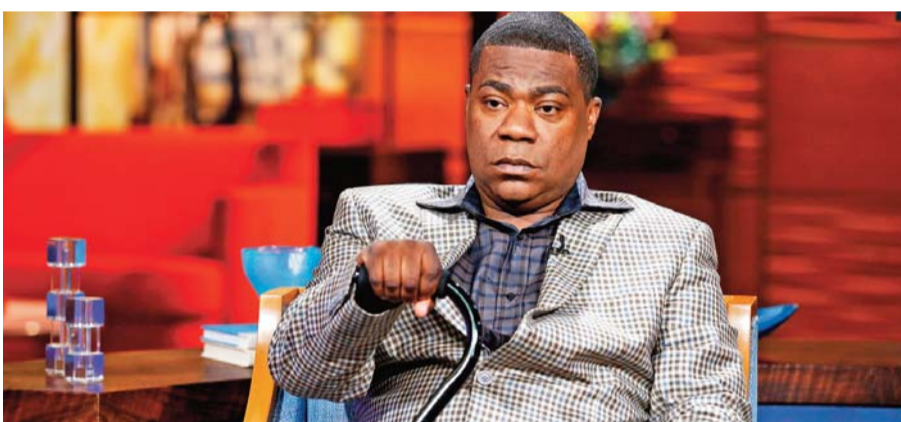
The 43-year-old rocker is keen for his former group - who split in August 2009 following a string of explosive rows between the singer and his brother and bandmate Noel Gallagher - to get back together, but admitted in court evidence relating to his divorce from Nicole Appleton that it is very unlikely to happen. Judge O'Dwyer - who ruled the former couple should split their £11 million fortune equally - said in his ruling: "[Liam] says there are no plans to reform and, although he would like to do so, he does not anticipate there is a possibility currently of any such reform." Subsequent to Oasis, [Liam] formed another group called Beady Eye but they disbanded in 2014. "Although he expressly would like to re-enter the music business, currently he says there is no prospect of that." Liam had stated much of his income comes from his clothing brand Pretty Green, though he also has "acquired a number of properties" and his other sources of income

include the marketing of his back catalogue and touring. And the judge stated he felt the 'Supersonic' singer had "downplayed" his "prospects for earning". He continued: "It is entirely unclear what his potential income is. In his evidence to me he clearly downplayed his prospects for earning in the music business in the future. However I have to base my findings firmly upon available evidence. "I accept that (his) current income is made up from the basics... from his income with Pretty Green Limited and ... from his income from royalties. However, he is a man of worldwide fame. "He has proved both in his membership of Oasis and in the formation of Beady Eye that there is the potential for him to earn much greater sums."

Beyonce, Jay Z beats lawsuit over their song 'Drunk in Love'

Monika Miczura, also known as Mitsou, had accused the couple of using a sample from her song 'Gypsy Life on the Road' - which was released in the US in 1997 - on the single without her permission and had sought unspecified damages. However, Manhattan Supreme Court Justice Cynthia Kern dismissed the case because the singer was suing under the state Civil Rights Law, which only protects a "name, portrait, picture or voice used for advertising or trade purposes without written consent." She wrote: "Courts have consistently held that Civil Rights Law does not apply to works of literary and artistic expression. "It is undisputed that the 'Drunk in Love' song and video are works of artistic expression and, pur-

suant to well established law, they are therefore exempted from the Civil Rights Law." Mitsou had argued the Civil Rights Law applied to the song and video because they were used in HBO ads and a series promoting Beyonce's concert tour but the judge insisted that use "does not vitiate their character as works of artist expression." The Hungarian Roma singer had sued for unspecified monetary damages claiming the "blatant unauthorized use of [her] voice for trade purposes is causing irreparable harm and emotional distress."



Morgan says he survived accident to care for his daughter

The 47-year-old comedian - who has two-year-old Maven with wife Megan Woolover - is convinced God had a "reason" for letting him live after the crash in June 2014, which left him with a traumatic brain injury and broken leg and killed his friend James McNair. He said: "I survived that crash for a reason. I'm still here for a reason. I guess my room wasn't ready. Who knows? Maybe He kept me here to raise my daughter, raise my family." And though he's still recovering from the trauma of the accident, Tracy is feeling very happy with his life. He told Barbara Walters for her '10 Most Fascinating People of 2015' special:

"Happiness is simply having something to look forward to. "[What do I look forward to?] Grabbing a mic, to going home and seeing my daughter and my wife. All of that makes me smile, so it makes me happy." The '30 Rock' star revealed he was blind for a week after the crash, and though doctors have told him he hasn't sustained long-term brain damage, he isn't convinced. He said: "When you take a bump like that on the head, I don't think everything's going to be there 100 percent."

Blanchett frustrated over rumors about her sexuality

The 46-year-old actress is happily married to Andrew Upton, with whom she has three children. However, as she promoted her new movie 'Carol', in which she has a sexual encounter with Rooney Mara, earlier this year, Cate was quoted as saying she had enjoyed relationships with women "many times". Since the interview with Variety magazine was published, Cate has been questioned incessantly about her inclinations, and insisted in a new chat on Friday that she should be allowed to keep her preferences private. She told Australia's 7.30 program: "It really is of no relevance what my sexual persuasion is." Cate continued to insist the media storm that had been caused by her original comments was "really silly". She added it's ridiculous to assume she couldn't play a homosexual character if she herself was straight. Cate explained: "What's been interesting about talking about the film to the media is that people are still interested whether you can play a gay character without being gay? It still somehow has to be one's sexuality if it's seen to be outside the mainstream, which same-sex relationships still are seen to be, I think. "You still have to answer to that. But yet I think the power when people actually see the film and forget all of that stuff is that falling in love is falling in love." In 'Carol', Cate stars as the title character, who becomes involved in a relationship with Rooney's character Therese. The movie has wowed critics and is expected to sweep the board during next year's awards season. Both Cate and Rooney, as well as the film itself, have been nominated for Golden Globe awards at the 2016 ceremony.

Horan looking forward to 'doing nothing'



The 22-year-old singer and his bandmates Liam Payne, Louis Tomlinson and Harry Styles have taken a break from the industry after five years as the world's most famous boyband, and Niall is excited about being able to take a break. Niall said: "I am looking forward to being able to go home and just being able to enjoy the time off. "I'm looking forward to that - I'm looking forward to just doing nothing." As one quarter of One Direction, Niall can rarely go a second without being noticed by fans, but is wondering whether the hiatus will change that. During a chat on celebrity documentary 'Celebrity Bites', Niall said: "I wonder now in January if I walk down the street will people notice me? Is there a switch that flicks on and off? It probably won't happen at all." One Direction took over the world when they were formed on UK television talent show The X Factor in 2010 after auditioning as solo singers. But watching his audition for the program back, Niall admits he comes across as a "cocky little idiot". He said: "There's something about [The X Factor boss Cowell] Simon - everyone sees him as this, like, God or whatever. He is the X Factor. "That's half the reason I was so nervous at my auditions and ended up looking like a cocky little idiot. It was just nerves."



Fey says change in attitude to women in comedy is about money

The amount of interest that female comedic actresses are receiving at the moment is one of the most talked about topics in the industry, and Tina has her own thoughts on what has prompted the change of heart. She said: "I think that really it is a business and the fact that 'Bridesmaids' made a ton of money and was so funny, and because it made money people were more willing to let Amy Schumer make money, because 'Trainwreck' was really funny, and then hopefully, knock on disco, hopefully 'Sisters' will make money. "Once one thing happens people follow the money. I don't think anyone has had an amazing change of heart; it's all about money." Tina's next role sees her star alongside close friend

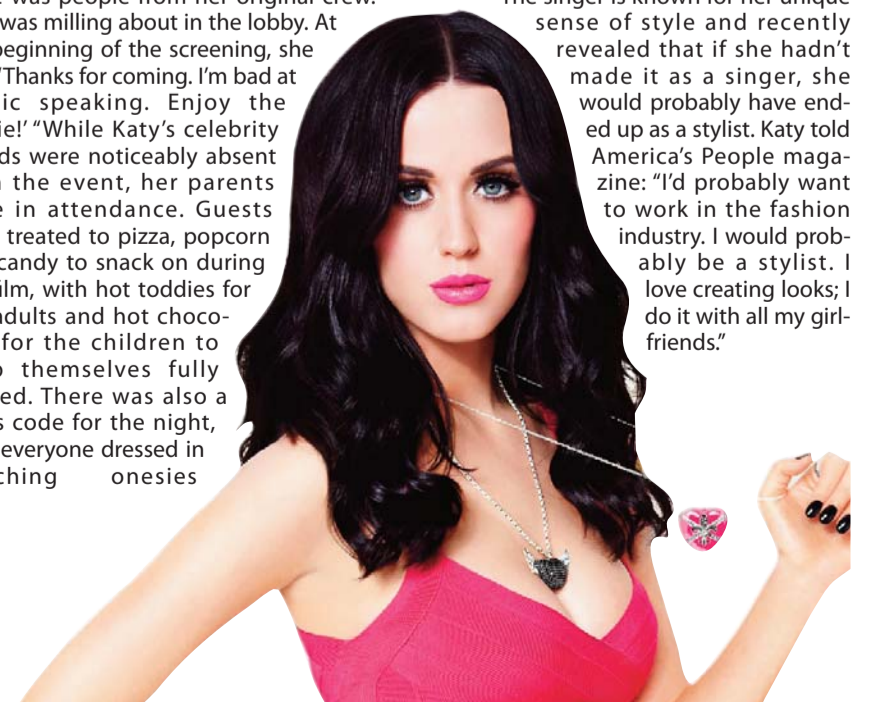
and comedic partner Amy Poehler in 'Sisters'. The pair also hosted the Golden Globe Awards on three occasions, but have handed the reins over to Ricky Gervais for next year's ceremony - something Tina is more than happy about. She said during an interview on 'Alan Carr's Chatty Man': "Amy Poehler and I hosted it three times, and that used to ruin Christmas. They would try a dress on us in early December and we would have to fit in to it for the Globes right after Christmas and that really put a damper on my cheese intake. That is Ricky's problem now. Ricky is doing it this year and I am sure he is starving. I'm sure he is on that treadmill." - Bangshowbiz



Perry dressed everyone in matching onesies to watch 'Home Alone'

The 31-year-old singer reportedly hired out Los Angeles' Vista Theatre to screen the 1990 movie for over 100 of her family and friends. A source told Us Weekly magazine: "It's one of Katy's favorite holiday movies. So she decided to screen it as her holiday party this year." "Everyone there was people from her original crew. Katy was milling about in the lobby. At the beginning of the screening, she said, 'Thanks for coming. I'm bad at public speaking. Enjoy the movie!' "While Katy's celebrity friends were noticeably absent from the event, her parents were in attendance. Guests were treated to pizza, popcorn and candy to snack on during the film, with hot toddies for the adults and hot chocolate for the children to keep themselves fully fuelled. There was also a dress code for the night, with everyone dressed in matching onesies

designed by the 'Roar' singer. The source added: "Everyone got a onesie Katy designed with Beloved to put on when they got there. Even Katy wore one!" Katy teamed up with the company earlier this year to create the one pieces, which retail at \$130 for adults and \$100 for children. The singer is known for her unique sense of style and recently revealed that if she hadn't made it as a singer, she would probably have ended up as a stylist. Katy told America's People magazine: "I'd probably want to work in the fashion industry. I would probably be a stylist. I love creating looks; I do it with all my girlfriends."



'Force Awakens' on track for record \$215M-plus weekend

"Star Wars" fever has spread through movie theaters around the globe, even reaching the White House, as the franchise yet again began topping box-office records with waves of lightsaber-wielding fans.

Following a record \$57 million from Thursday night showings in North America, and packed matinees on Friday, the Walt Disney Co. projected that "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" will surpass \$215 million on the weekend, besting the record domestic opening of "Jurassic World," which debuted with \$208.8 million in June.

Such an outcome would surprise few analysts, but the numbers were nevertheless eye-popping. "The Force Awakens" was heading toward a Thursday night-Friday total of more than \$120 million domestically, said Dave Hollis, head of distribution for Disney. The previous one-day high was \$91.1 million set by "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows, Part 2" in 2011.

In such rarified territory, Disney has been cautious about overestimating the box-office force of J.J. Abrams' seventh chapter in George Lucas' space saga. Based on the early response, many analysts have the film pegged for a weekend total closer to \$250 million - far above "Jurassic World."

Disney's biggest worry has been that moviegoers will be too daunted by sold-out shows and long lines. More than \$100 million advance tickets (also a record) were sold ahead of the opening of "The Force Awakens," much of those going toward Thursday and Friday shows. Today will depend more on traditional walk-up business. Hollis said exhibitors are continually adding more screenings to satisfy demand.

Fan-friendly return
The international rollout for the film, made for about \$200 million, has already brought in an estimated total of \$72.7 million since opening in a handful of countries Wednesday. "The Force Awakens" is simultaneously opening around the world just about everywhere but China, where it debuts in January. It's setting records overseas, too, including the biggest single day ever in the United Kingdom with an estimated \$14.4 million on Thursday.



While "Star Wars" helped create the summer blockbuster, "The Force Awakens" is debuting in the holiday season of December, where the previous top opening was the \$84.6 million debut of 2012's "The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey." By Disney's estimates, "The Force Awakens" - the widest December opening ever with 4,134 theaters - blew past that number by Friday afternoon.

Imax and 3-D screenings are helping to propel the record gross. Disney said that 47 percent of the Thursday box office came from 3-D showings and \$5.7 million from Imax screens. A lot is riding on the film for Disney, which paid \$4.06 billion for Lucasfilm in 2012. Sequels and spinoffs are already in development for years to come, not to mention an entire corner of Disneyland devoted to the franchise.

Strong reviews for the film, which is set 30 years after "Return of the Jedi," have added to the fervor for "The Force Awakens." Critics have hailed it as a fan-friendly return to form for the franchise; the American Film Institute listed it among its top 10 films of the year. Such a positive reaction for "The Force Awakens" may attract the kind of repeat viewings that made James Cameron's "Avatar" and "Titanic" the highest grossing films of all time. Whether "The Force Awakens" can come close to the global hauls of those films (\$2.8 billion for "Avatar" and \$2.2 billion for "Titanic") won't be clear for weeks. — AP

This photo provided by Lucasfilm shows Peter Dinklage as Chewbacca and Harrison Ford as Han Solo in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens'.

'Witcher 3,' 'Fallout 4' lead AP's top 10 games of 2015

Associated Press video game critics Lou Kesten and Derrick J. Lang's favorite titles of the year featured monster hunters, treasure hunters, guardian spirits and murder suspects:

LOU KESTEN

- 1. The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt:** This role-playing drama from Poland's CD Projekt Red set a new standard for weirdness when it sent his hero in pursuit of a flying ghost fetus. For all its baroque touches, Witcher 3 boils down to a domestic drama about a jaded warrior and his impetuous adopted daughter - and it's quite moving.
- 2. Fallout 4:** The latest epic from Bethesda Softworks crams in a bunch of genres - role-playing, first-person shooter, even a civilization-building simulation - and veers from hilarious black comedy to heartbreaking tragedy. It's most memorable for its haunting vision of humanity somehow surviving after nearly destroying itself.
- 3. Super Mario Maker:** Nintendo gives its fans all the tools they need to build two-dimensional challenges starring Mario and his crew. Somewhere out there, kids are learning the ropes on their way to designing the games we'll be talking about 20 years from now.
- 4. Ori and the Blind Forest:** This melancholy yet action-packed adventure follows an orphaned spirit creature as it tries to restore life to a devastated woodland. It's the year's most beautiful game - and one of its most challenging.
- 5. Her Story:** Viva Seifert plays a young wife with a missing husband in this time-hopping mystery that takes place entirely within a police interrogation room. I'm not sure it's even a game, but creator Sam Barlow's clever plotting and Seifert's nimble performance combine to deliver a knockout tale.
- 6. Rise of the Tomb Raider:** Chapter two of the franchise reboot finds young Lara Croft searching for the secret to immortality. It's at its best when the Tomb Raider is, you know, raiding tombs, with clever environmental puzzles that work your brain cells harder than your reflexes.
- 7. Pillars of Eternity:** A character cursed with mysterious visions tries to find out why babies are being born without souls in this indie role-playing game from Obsidian Entertainment. Fans of old-school classics like Baldur's Gate and Planescape: Torment will feel right at home.
- 8. Undertale:** This lo-fi project from Toby Fox turns game conventions upside-down. A human child is trapped underground - but instead of killing all the monsters he encounters, he can negotiate with most of them. It's a thought-provoking approach, and one I hope more big game publishers will notice.
- 9. Rock Band 4:** The ultimate party game returns, inviting you to jam anew with all those fake instruments that have been gathering dust over the last five years. The ability to download songs you purchased for earlier versions is a huge bonus. (Guitar Hero Live, which streams its tunes, is pretty good, too.)
- 10. Until Dawn:** A bunch of teenagers plan a weekend at a secluded cabin. What could go wrong? This thriller initially looks like dozens of slasher movies, but it twists all the familiar tropes into something perversely original.

DERRICK J LANG

- 1. Fallout 4:** Despite its unforgiving density, Fallout 4 was the year's most captivating title. I wanted to stop return-

ing to Bethesda Softworks stylish version of a nuclear-ravaged Boston and the staggering array of choices it presented, but I couldn't stay away from carving out my own destiny in this special role-playing saga.

- 2. The Witcher 3: Wild Hunt:** From the bonus swag in the box to the gratis downloadable content, the third installment in CD Projekt Red's sweeping role-playing series is as much of a love letter to fans of monster hunter Geralt of Rivia as it is to the fantasy genre as a whole. This majestic entry should be remembered for years to come.
- 3. Metal Gear Solid V: The Phantom Pain:** After a stunning 28 years of crafting Metal Gear games, Hideo Kojima's open-world coda brought the walls surrounding protagonist Snake down for the first time. In a year overstuffed with open-world titles, Phantom Pain was the most technically flawless of them all.
- 4. Her Story:** Sam Barlow's voyeuristic mystery is a rarity. The game features a provocative performance by actress Viva Seifert and gameplay that almost anyone can engage with because it involves simply searching for words on a screen. If more developers created games like Her Story, the medium would be taken more seriously.
- 5. Rise of the Tomb Raider:** Lara Croft is on a roll. After a much-needed reboot of the treasure hunting franchise, developer Crystal Dynamics keenly avoids a sophomore slump with a snowy, survival-focused second installment that meticulously builds on what made 2013's Tomb Raider an adventure worthy of the iconic heroine.
- 6. Ori and the Blind Forest:** This luminescent platformer did something that no Super Mario Bros. has ever accomplished. It made me tear up - and that's not just because it's so darn difficult. Moon Studios managed to artfully balance intricate riddle solving with an emotional tale about loss and discovery.
- 7. Sunset:** While most games tell war stories from behind the barrel of a gun, Sunset dared to do so on the other side of a mop handle. Yes, it sounds boring to play as a housekeeper tasked with cleaning - and snooping around - her boss' penthouse. Belgium developer Tale of Tales made it a strangely evocative interactive experience.
- 8. Splatoon:** With an overreliance on a certain bouncy plumber, Nintendo has long been guilty of playing it safe. That totally changed this year with the introduction of the loveable paint-wielding squid kids. A splashy aesthetic and adrenaline-pumping action helped Splatoon successfully roll over all other multiplayer shooters.
- 9. Batman: Arkham Knight:** Rocksteady Studios' apparent swan song in their incredible Arkham series finally unleashed the Dark Knight across all of Gotham - complete with the Batmobile at his disposal - without sacrificing the cerebral storytelling or majestic fluidity of its well-oiled predecessors. Ben Affleck should take note.
- 10. Assassin's Creed: Syndicate:** After last year's buggy and boring edition set amid the French Revolution in Paris, Ubisoft's stealth series rebounded in 2015 with a jolly jaunt to old England. A brilliant recreation of Victorian London - right down to the pubs - was a spectacular playground for quirky twin gangsters Jacob and Evie Frye. — AP



This photo provided by CD Projekt RED shows a scene from the video game, "The Witcher III: Wild Hunt."

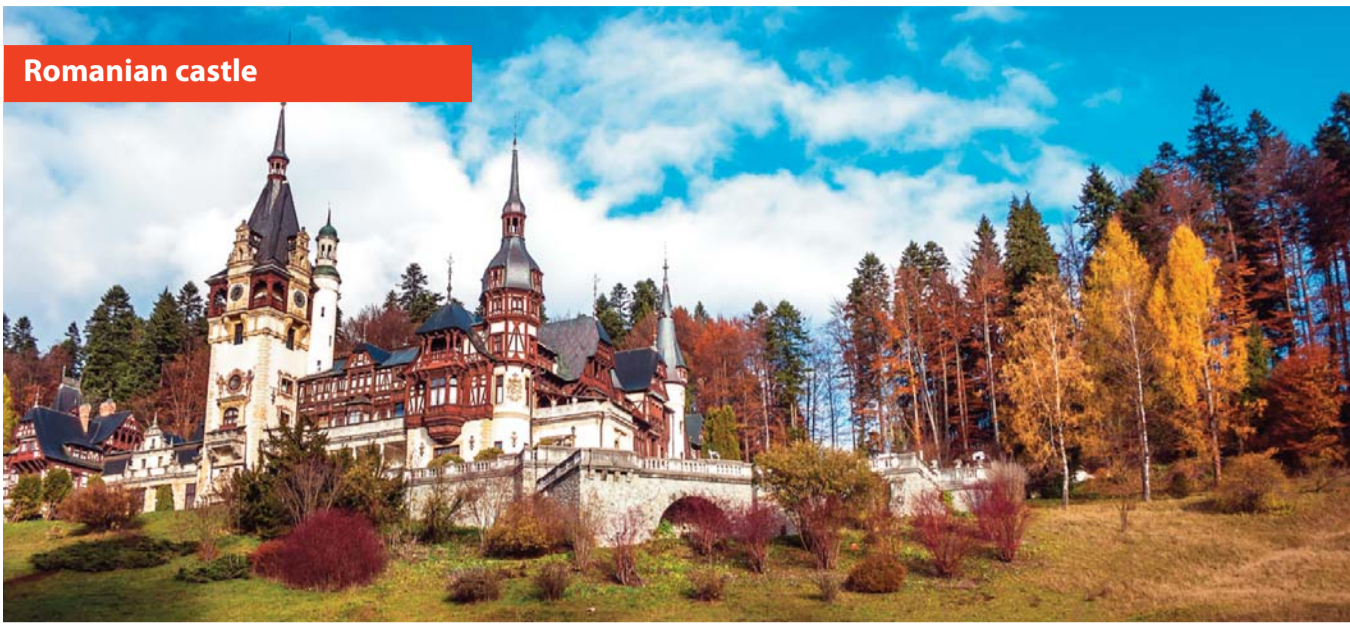


Seventh Bait Hanayen branch opens at Promenade mall in Hawally



The seventh Bait Hanayen branch opened in the Promenade mall in Hawally in the presence of renowned designers, advertising agencies, and social media bloggers. The played calming music blended with the ambiance and luxurious display. The opening was followed by a fashion show displaying the new 2016 autumn / winter collection was the central focus of the opening. It was sponsored by The Makeup Store, who took care of the models' and bloggers' makeup for the show. This selection included the latest high-end designs of Abayas and shawls inspired by the latest fashion trends.





Romanian castle



Unawatuna Beach Sri Lanka

Jet away this festive season with **flydubai**

Planning a winter break but looking for something a bit different this holiday season? flydubai has the destination for you. From Christmas markets in Bucharest to hitting the slopes in Tbilisi, there is a wealth of experiences to get you geared up for the festivities without blowing the budget. Here are just four of the exciting destinations to jet away to with flydubai.

A place to hit the slopes TBILISI, GEORGIA

Things to do: Forget the classic Alpine-European resorts this winter and try something a little different. Just a two-hour drive from Tbilisi Airport, the stunning resort of Gudauri is the perfect getaway for ski aficionados looking for a new adventure. Perched in the heart of the Greater Caucasus and surrounded by a vista of dramatic peaks and breathtaking gorges, skiers both experienced and new can revel in idyllic conditions, challenging terrain and beautiful backdrops. Renowned for offering some of the finest powder in the Caucasus, Gudauri is famous for Heliskiing. Helicopters are granted almost unrestricted access to local mountains, allowing skiers to experience some of the most sublime runs in Europe - including mountain tops and glaciers - at altitudes of between 1,500 and 4,000 metres. But don't worry, you'll be in the hands of highly experienced guides. For those looking for something slightly calmer but no less adventurous, cross-country skiing is available down virgin slopes and across remote valleys - all set within the unforgettable landscape of the Greater Caucasus. For children and beginners, the Sports School offers several tame ski runs. Private lessons are also available.

Where to stay: Check in to the Hotel Gudauri Hut for a touch of friendly, family-run ski lodge hospitality. Situated on the Kudebi mountain within walking distance from the ski lifts in the centre of the resort, the Hut (as the locals call it) has some of the most breathtaking views in Gudauri. It's perfect for anyone looking for small and cosy accommodation with traditional Georgian hospitality.

Where to eat: Refuel after a hard day on the slopes in one of the resorts many restaurants, serving local comfort food favourites such as khachapuri (cheese-stuffed bread) and matsoni (sour yogurt).

Top tip: If you have never skied before or feel a little rusty, then why not stop in Dubai for a couple of days and head to the world's biggest indoor ski slope located at Dubai's Mall of the Emirates for a few lessons before you go?

Flight frequency: Three times a week
Prices: Return flights start from KD 291



Tbilisi



A place to catch some winter sun COLOMBO, SRI LANKA

Things to do: Spend a couple of days in Colombo before heading south to relax on the unspoilt beach. Wander through the sprawling collection of ancient artefacts and colonial-era relics at the must-see National Museum or take a quiet walk through nearby Viharamahadevi Park. If you're looking to bag a few last-minute holiday gifts for friends and loved ones, make your way through the mazes of Pettah Market before relaxing at sunset with a cold drink at the Galle Face Hotel's vintage seaside patio. Craving relaxation? Then escape the city and take an overnight train to Sri Lanka's exotic south coast. Head for the serene Goyambokka Beach in Tangalla, the backpacker's paradise of Mirissa, or to Unawatuna, which is set back from the main road making for a less hectic resort. It'll be tempting to never leave the beach, but give yourself enough time to visit Galle. Wander through the Galle Fort area, and enjoy the rich legacy of the 16th Century walls while shopping for jewellery and handicrafts.

Where to stay: Located in the city centre and overlooking the Indian Ocean, the Hilton Colombo Hotel transforms itself into Santa's grotto with fabulous festive feasts and stunning seasonal décor. For travellers on a limited budget there are more low-key, affordable alternatives. If you're heading down to the coast, stay in one of the hundreds of huts that adorn the country's beaches.

Where to eat: Sri Lankan food is all about fresh herbs and spices, coconut and sesame oil, the national staple of 'rice and curry', seafood and hoppers - fried pancakes served with sweet syrup from the Kitul palm. Colombo has a wide selection of small restaurants serving local hawker-style favourites such as meat patties, fish buns, egg rolls, lamprais, koththu roti and biryani. Meanwhile, when in Galle stop for lunch at the colonial Galle Fort Hotel.

Top tip: Book somewhere to stay as early as possible. During the Christmas to New Year holiday season, in particular, accommodation on the island can be tight due to the huge influx of visitors.

Flight frequency: Daily
Prices: Return flights start from KD 149

A place to shop until you drop BUCHAREST, ROMANIA

Things to do: If you're in need of some festive cheer then head to Bucharest's Old Town and surrounding area to explore its Christmas markets that run throughout the holiday season. Oozing atmosphere and sparkling with lights, the markets are crammed with stalls vying to put on the biggest, brightest and prettiest displays. Choose from carved wooden toys, handmade candles, wooden and enamel music boxes and Christmas tree angels. Not festive enough? Visit the huge Christmas tree in Piața Universității (University Square) in downtown Bucharest.

Where to stay: If you're looking to stay in the lap of luxury, then the Grand Hotel Continental, located a short journey from the Palace of the Parliament, the world's largest civilian building. If you're travelling as a large group then book your very own luxury apartment in downtown Bucharest. They are affordable and come with self-catering facilities if you're craving a home-cooked Christmas lunch.

Where to eat: Indulge in roasted chestnuts or spicy gingerbread and warm cold fingers around a hot drink while browsing the festive markets. Alternatively, experience the hustle and bustle of the Romanian social scene at any of the restaurants and cafés that line the streets of Smârdan, Franceze, ?elari, Sfântul Dumitru, Gabroveni and Covaci in the Historic Quarter.

Top tip: With average temperatures hovering around 3°C, make sure to pack plenty of warm clothing.

Flight frequency: Four times a week
Prices: Return flights start from KD 170

A place to... have an Arabian adventure MUSCAT, OMAN

Things to do: With its open deserts, vast coastline, steep and remote rocky canyons and large sand dunes, Oman is an off-roading enthusiast's dream. Once in Muscat, rent a 4x4 vehicle, stock up on the essentials and head off to discover the Sultanate's many wadis (river beds) which are located in the mountains and lower spots in the desert. The most scenic wadis are in the mountains and many are just an hour or two's drive from Muscat. Located south of the capital, Wadi Tiwi is one of the steepest and narrowest driving experiences in the country leading to the picturesque village of Mibam set among a grove of date palm trees. If it's a classic desert encounter you're after, make for Wahiba Sand where you can arrange an overnight stop in the mountains at a desert camp through one of the many local tour companies.

Where to stay: Set amid the sprawling Omani desert, the Al Raha Camp in Wahiba Sands is the perfect location for an Arabian adventure. The resort has 77 camping style huts with attached bathrooms in addition to nine suites all decorated in traditional Bedouin style. The camp also provides accommodation in 15 luxurious tents. Secluded, and regally appointed in traditional weaves and colours of the desert, these tents have a small Majlis and balcony and can accommodate up to four people.

Where to eat: From lavish BBQ dinners to traditional Bedouin food served under the stars, resorts such as the Al Raha Camp cater all tastes and travellers. Traditional delicacies include goat meat marinated in cinnamon, cloves, pepper and cumin, served on a platter of cardamom-scented rice.

Top tip: While tour companies provide most of the necessary camping equipment, a head torch is a handy extra to take for getting around the camp after dark.

Flight frequencies: Daily
Prices: Return flights start from KD45



Galle Fort, Sri Lanka



Christmas markets in Romania

New Orleans-style mirth marks arrival of 'The Force Awakens'

In a unique mashup of cultures - one from a galaxy far, far away; the other from a New Orleans bar - a Mardi Gras parade club is celebrating the premiere of the latest 'Star Wars' movie with Wookiee and Jedi costumes, a brass band and a parade into the French Quarter.

The Intergalactic Krewe of Chewbacchus (motto: "Saving the galaxy one drunken nerd at a time") planned early screenings of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' for 100 of its officers. The

Thursday evening screening was to be followed by a New Orleans-style "second line" march into the French Quarter. Members in garb from fantasy and science fiction were to be accompanied by a brass band playing a medley of 'Star Wars' tunes - including the jaunty music from the cantina full of aliens in the original film. "It's a big, spinning, crazy nerd party on wheels," krewe co-founder Ryan Ballard said ahead of the march.

Ballard said the krewe's genesis dates back about six years to a conversation he and a friend were having at, fittingly, the Saturn Bar. Topics included the furry co-pilot of the Millennium Falcon spaceship in the 'Star Wars' franchise. "It was a barroom joke," Ballard said. "If there was a nerd krewe, it should be a mashup of Chewbacca and Bacchus, the god of wine."

Chewbacchus was born. And the group grew from a few hundred early participants to roughly 1,000 now. Their annual Mardi Gras season parade generally takes a different meander-

ing route through New Orleans neighborhoods each year. Ballard said Thursday's early "Force Awakens" screenings were arranged for krewe leaders who are instrumental in the group's community outreach efforts, including food drives and programs to help disadvantaged children participate in Mardi Gras events. — AP



Members of the Intergalactic Krewe of Chewbacchus gather in front of a bar in the French Quarter, Thursday, Dec 17, 2015, in New Orleans.— AP



Fans dressed as Star Wars characters parade outside a movie theater showing "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" yesterday in Taipei, Taiwan. — AP

Fired woman's Facebook plea brings help for Christmas

When Elizabeth Garcia looked at the bare area under her Christmas tree and considered the bills that had been mounting since her last job layoff, she knew she had to do something to give her family a merry holiday. She turned to social media.

Garcia, 33, one of thousands of North Dakota residents to lose their jobs during oil's current downturn, went public with her plight on Facebook. She offered to sell a camper she had bought earlier this year for \$500 so that she could give a real Christmas to her son, 8, and daughter, 5.

Although she got no offers for the camper, the replies brought her to tears. A store offered to let her pick out presents for her kids. People donated toys, store gift cards and grocery store cards. "If you saw my Christmas tree right now, it

is absolutely ridiculous how many presents are under there," she said. "If I wouldn't have put the (Facebook) post up, I probably wouldn't have been able to get my kids any presents at all."

Garcia, a single divorced mother who moved to Watford City in the western North Dakota oil patch from Colorado in 2012 to start a new life, was laid off last summer from her job with a company building a natural gas plant. She later was laid off from welding and carpentry jobs. The North Dakota Petroleum Council estimates as many as 20,000 workers have lost their jobs in the current oil downturn.

"There's a new norm," Louis "Mac" McLeod, executive director of the Minot Area Homeless Coalition, said of people struggling and agencies like his working overtime to help them.

"And we don't like the new norm. But it is what it is." Garcia was hired by a local laundry, and she's also selling homemade food to get by until she can find another oil field job. She hopes to make North Dakota her permanent home; she likes the schools and her kids are happy, she said.

And that was before the outpouring of support from her Facebook post. She has lived in many states, she said, and "I don't think this would have happened anywhere else." "There are more warm people here than anywhere else I've ever lived," Garcia said. — AP

Police talk tough on Star Wars spoilers

Philadelphia's police department says it would crack down on online Star Wars spoilers if it could. A photo posted on the department's Facebook page shows two storm troopers seemingly getting arrested on South Street. The caption reads "No, posting #StarWarsForceAwakens spoilers online is not a crime. Yes, it should be." It adds that "any illegal Sith behavior will still be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law." House Speaker Paul Ryan chimed in on the matter Wednesday, pinning the police department's stance to his Twitter feed with the comment "Knew we forgot to put something in the omnibus." The Wisconsin Republican was referring to a bill that requires one vote but combines several measures. — AP



Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival

Camels walk along sand dunes in the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival in the desert near the city of Madinat Zayed, 150 kms west of Abu Dhabi, on December 19, 2015. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a camel beauty contest, a display of UAE handicrafts and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP photos



Emirati competitors take part in the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival.



Emirati men release their Arabian Saluki dogs.



An Emirati man prepares camels for the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival in the desert.