

KFAED contributes \$1bn for Sinai projects



Democrats hit Trump, clash over jihadist fight



Bale scores four as Real stick 10 past nine-man Rayo



Messi, Suarez fire Barca to third Club World Cup



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ANTI-GRAFT BODY SCRAPPED, MPs RUSH TO FILL VACUUM

PANEL CUTS ADDITIONAL DEFENSE BUDGET TO KD 3.2BN



Min 07°
Max 18°
High Tide 07:52 & 19:53
Low Tide 01:42 & 13:40

TOP HEZB MILITANT KILLED IN ISRAELI RAID

BEIRUT: Samir Kantar, a Lebanese who was convicted of carrying out one of the most notorious attacks in Israeli history and spent nearly three decades in an Israeli prison, has been killed by an Israeli airstrike near the Syrian capital, the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah group said yesterday. Hezbollah said Kantar, known in Lebanon as "The Dean of Lebanese Prisoners" for being the longest-held prisoner in Israel, was killed along with eight others in the strike in the Damascus suburb of Jaramana Saturday night.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV said two Israeli warplanes that violated Syrian airspace fired four long-range missiles at the residential building in Jaramana. It aired footage of what it said was the building, which appeared to be destroyed. Kantar's brother, Bassam, confirmed his "martyrdom" in a Facebook post yesterday. Syrian state news agency SANA said Kantar was killed in a "terrorist and hostile missile attack on a residential building." SANA did not mention Israel in its report on the strike, which it said killed several people.

Late yesterday, at least two rockets were fired into Israel from the Hezbollah heartland of south Lebanon, security sources on both sides of the border said. There were no immediate reports of casualties. "Two Katyusha rockets were fired from a Lebanese village five kilometers from the border with Israel," the Lebanese source told AFP. A statement from Israel's military suggested that three rockets were fired.

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A bulldozer clears debris from the site of a reported Israeli air raid that killed a senior figure in the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah, Samir Kantar, in Jaramana, southeast of the Syrian capital Damascus. (Inset) In this July 16, 2008 file photo, Kantar salutes people during celebrations in the coastal border town of Naqoura in Lebanon after his release from Israel. — AFP



By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The constitutional court yesterday ruled that an Amiri decree establishing the Anti-Corruption Authority is not in line with the constitution, which means the existence of the authority is illegal. The court said that the decree was issued in 2012 as an emergency decree in the absence of the National Assembly, adding that there was no urgency in issuing the decree and the government should have waited for the Assembly to meet.

The establishment of the authority, hailed as a landmark achievement for Kuwait, started operations about a year ago after completing the appointment of its staff. It launched its operations by demanding that all ministers, MPs and top bureaucrats submit their wealth disclosures in accordance with the law. Those who submitted their wealth disclosures include the prime minister and Assembly speaker and many ministers and MPs. The authority had also begun investigations into a number of alleged corruption cases.

The government and Assembly were supposed to issue a new law for the authority last week but decided to delay any action until after the ruling. A number of MPs demanded after the ruling that the government must issue a new law immediately in order to fill the legislative vacuum, which effectively means that the authority has no legal status. The government is scheduled to submit a new draft law on corruption today which will be reviewed and approved by the legal and legislative committee and then sent for debate to the Assembly tomorrow. The approval of the law means that the anti-corruption authority can continue operations.

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MOMBASA: An Air France flight from Mauritius to Paris is grounded at Moi International Airport yesterday after a suspected bomb was found on board. — AFP

FAKE BOMB SCARE ON AIR FRANCE FLIGHT

PARIS: A suspicious object made of cardboard and a kitchen timer sparked a bomb scare on an Air France flight yesterday, forcing it to make an emergency landing in Kenya. A passenger alerted crew members to the item found inside a toilet cubicle on board the Boeing 777, which was carrying 459 passengers and 14 crew members from Mauritius to Paris. "After analysis it has been indicated that (the bomb scare) was a false alarm," Air France chief executive Frederic Gagey told a press conference in Paris.

"All the information we have at this stage shows that the object was not capa-

ble of causing an explosion that would damage the plane but was rather a mixture of cardboard, pieces of paper as well as a timer," he said. He said the "deduction" was that the item had been placed in a toilet cupboard by one of the passengers.

France is on high alert after jihadist attacks in Paris in November left 130 people dead, and is one of many countries taking extra security precautions. Airlines are especially jittery after Islamic State jihadists who claimed the Paris attacks also said they were responsible for downing a Russian jet in Egypt in October after

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FURY AS DELHI GANG-RAPIST FREED

MALAYSIAN 'HALAL' AIRLINE TAKES OFF

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia's first Islamic-compliant airline Rayani Air began operations yesterday with its maiden flight taking off from the capital to the resort island of Langkawi, local media reported. In-flight meals served on board its flights are completely halal, with alcohol consumption strictly prohibited. Muslim flight crew must don the hijab while non-Muslim crew are to be decently dressed, managing director Jaafar Zamhari told reporters. There will also be prayer recitals before takeoff.

"We are the first Malaysian airline to be sharia-compliant based on guidelines by relevant authorities. We are proud of this," Jaffar was quoted as saying by The Star newspaper. "The sharia-compliant aspects will be refined as time goes by," he added, using the Arabic word for Islamic law.

There are already other sharia-friendly carriers operating around the world, and UK-based Fimas Airways is planning to offer similar flights next year, according to a Bloomberg news agency report. Under the concept of halal - meaning "permissible" in Arabic - pork and its by-products, alcohol and animals not slaughtered according to Islamic procedures are all "haram" or forbidden. Halal standards also apply to products such as cosmetics, which may contain animal-derived ingredients, and the conditions under which they are prepared and stored.

Muslim-majority Malaysia has long practiced a moderate form of Islam but conservative attitudes are rising. A company recently introduced halal bottled mineral water in Malaysia, and Islamic speed dating sessions - where single women are chaperoned - have been embraced. A halal convention in Kuala Lumpur earlier this year, which drew thousands of delegates and hundreds of exhibitors, showcased products ranging from food and cosmetics to collagen produced from yaks in Tibet. — AFP

NEW DELHI: The youngest convict in an infamous fatal gang-rape in New Delhi has been released from a youth correctional facility, police said yesterday, sparking furious condemnation from the victim's parents. Only days after the third anniversary of the attack on a moving bus, Indian police confirmed that the rapist - who is now aged 20 - had completed his spell behind bars even though a court ruling on an appeal against his release is due to be heard today. He is now being supervised by a non-governmental agency, effectively

meaning he is a free man.

The prospect of the attacker walking free has revived public anger over the attack, with fresh protests being held yesterday near the iconic India Gate monument in the center of the capital. "The convict was handed over to an NGO. He is no longer under the jurisdiction of the police," Delhi police spokesman Rajan Bhagat told AFP. "He has been given a new identity and his criminal record has been expunged," a police source added.

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NEW DELHI: Indian demonstrators shout slogans during a rally held yesterday to protest the release of a juvenile rapist. — AFP



ABU DHABI: A man walks his camel yesterday across the Liwa Oasis, southwest of the Emirati capital. — AFP

2015, THE YEAR THAT IS TERROR WENT GLOBAL

PARIS: From the blood spilled in the streets of Paris to the San Bernardino shootings, the world in 2015 showed its vulnerability to the brand of terror perpetrated by Islamic State jihadists. Over the past 12 months, the group that took root in Iraq and in the chaos of the Syrian war has turned its focus from territorial gains to hitting at "distant enemies." "The Islamic State... has gone global," said Richard Barrett, a former head of Britain's global counter-terrorism operations who is now vice-president of the New York-based think-tank Soufan Group.

Barrett told AFP that politicians find the issue of the IS group "really difficult to deal with." "The public is frightened, and that's the point of terrorism - to make the public frightened. And it's very difficult for the politicians to deal with a constituency which is frightened. But at the moment, running around in circles and sending more bombers (to Syria and Iraq)

is not solving the problem, it's even making it a little bit worse."

Perhaps the key difference between IS and the extremist groups that have gone before it, is that it can call on agents that it dispatches from its self-declared "caliphate" as well as sympathizers in the countries it is attacking. As the year closed, even California appeared to have become a target, when the married couple Syed Farook and Tashfeen Malik killed 14 people in San Bernardino. Although the investigation is still ongoing, the couple appears to have become radicalized alone before carrying out their rampage without having direct contact with IS.

The added threat comes from hardened jihadists such as the Kouachi brothers who in January carried out the attack on the Paris offices of the satirical newspaper Charlie Hebdo that left 12 people dead.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah is seen in a group photo with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, as well as Chairman of the House of Representatives of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Tajikistan Shukurjon Zuhurov and his accompanying delegation. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah meets UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace Wilfried Lemke.

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES TAJIK SPEAKER, UN SPECIAL ADVISOR

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif palace yesterday Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and the visiting Chairman of the House of Representatives of the Supreme Council of the Republic of Tajikistan Shukurjon Zuhurov and his accompanying delegation.

The meeting was also attended by Protocol Chief at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, and head of the Mission of Honor accompanying the Tajik official, MP Saud Al-Haraji.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Deputy Amir received Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and UN Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace Wilfried Lemke. His Highness the Deputy Amir lauded Lemke's regional and international efforts in sports, especially towards suspension of sports in Kuwait. His Highness the Deputy Amir pointed out that Kuwait is a "country of constitution" that respects all international laws and regulations of sports and does not accept any "infringement" of these laws from anyone, reiterating that Kuwait will always abide

by the law and the constitution and will "rise above all."

He expressed hope that all sports sectors in Kuwait will cooperate to resolve this situation, and wishing that Kuwait sports will shine again at regional and international venues. "This is my wish, and the wish of every Kuwaiti who loves his or her country," His Highness the Deputy Amir said. The meeting with Lemke's was attended by chief of protocol at His Highness the Crown Prince's Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.

PM receives officials

In the meantime, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace President of the Kuwait-Tajik Parliamentary Friendship Committee Saudi Nashmi Al-Hurajji, accompanied by Speaker of the Tajik Parliament and his delegation.

His Highness the Prime Minister also received Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, who was accompanied by Lemke. Director General of the Public Authority for Sports Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended the meeting. First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-



First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets UN Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace Wilfried Lemke.

Sabah also met Lemke, in presence of Director-General of the Public Authority for Sports (PAS) Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah, the deputy premier and foreign minister's office ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and other officials.

Also yesterday, His Highness Sheikh

Jaber Al-Mubarak received the visiting Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Sahar Nasr. The meeting was attended by Director General of the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) Abdulwahab Al-Bader and Undersecretary at His Highness the Prime Minister's Diwan Sheikh Etamad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah meets Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Sahar Nasr.

Jaber Al-Mubarak, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammed Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammed Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. — KUNA

KFAED CONTRIBUTES \$1 BN FOR EGYPT'S DEVELOPMENT

AFESD, EGYPT SIGN KD 45 MILLION LOAN AGREEMENT

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) held a meeting yesterday to review development projects in the Sinai Peninsula in Egypt and present them to other Arab funds. "KFAED has earmarked \$1 billion for Egypt for three years divided to approximately \$300 million every year," KFAED General Director Abdulwahab Al-Bader noted. "I hope this amount will increase in the future. Setting the percentage of this amount for Sinai depends on the Egyptian government."

The projects will be in various fields. "This will provide the best economic and social development. Through these projects, we aim to bring

Sinai Peninsula to the level of other Egyptian provinces in all aspects. KFAED's financing portfolio for Egyptian projects has until now reached \$21 billion," added Bader. KFAED organized the meeting after receiving a demand to review the development of Sinai Peninsula by the Egyptian government in October. "The Egyptian institutions in charge presented numerous studies for the development programs that they intend to carry out," he added.

Various sections

Dr Sahar Nasr, Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation, said that the projects in the Sinai Peninsula include complete projects in various sectors such as housing, education and agricul-

ture development. "These projects are of a total value of \$1.5 billion. These projects focus on services in all areas, investing manpower in these promising areas," she pointed out.

"The purpose of my visit is to bring together the efforts of the Arab funds and provide solutions for arranging the necessary financing. The Egyptian government is keen to have projects and investment opportunities focusing on economic and social purposes. Also, the government is interested in executing these projects quickly and conducting feasibility studies along with the documents and licenses to avoid any obstacles that may delay the time of delivery," added Nasr.

Loan agreement

A loan agreement was signed between the Egyptian government and the Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) for KD 45 million to participate in financing a sewage project in the neighboring areas of the Al-Rahawi drainage facility. This project aims to limit the pollution of Nile's river water that directly affects drinking water.

The annual interest of this loan was set at 3 percent. The fund will allow Egypt a five-year period to start paying the debt. With this loan, the participation of the fund in the development projects in Egypt will reach approximately KD 1.3 billion. After signing the agreement, Nasr stated that the loan interest was decreased from 3 to just 1 percent due to the current situation in Egypt. But the repayment period remains the same (five years). "The Kuwaiti fund will provide various loans of a total value of \$1 billion over three years with different interest rates depending on the nature of each project," she explained.



KUWAIT: Dr Sahar Nasr, Egypt's Minister of International Cooperation (right) speaks during a press conference with KFAED General Director Abdulwahab Al-Bader yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: Dr Hanan Hamdan, Head of the UNHCR office in Kuwait (right) and Shadi Ghrawi, Private Sector Partnership Officer attend the press conference. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

UNHCR LAUNCHES 'WARM THEIR HEARTS' CAMPAIGN FOR REFUGEES

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Kuwait launched a campaign yesterday called "Warm Their Hearts" that aims to provide for the needs of Syrian refugees in Lebanon and other countries.

During a press conference, the Head of the UNHCR office in Kuwait Dr Hanan Hamdan said more than half of the one million Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in bleak and sub-standard shelters (tents, unfinished buildings, garages and shops), and last winter, they faced low temperatures that set in as early as November and persisted until late March, with several villages witnessing repeated snowfall, strong winds and heavy rain. So this campaign aims to provide winter needs such as stoves, heavy blankets, fuel for schools and winter clothing. It also aims to provide four months of cash grants to more than 161,000 families, which will allow refugees to make purchases like fuel for heating.

"Through the Warm Their Hearts online donation program, UNHCR aims to cooperate with individuals in the region who are able to contribute to this winter program and make a

difference in refugees' lives," Hamdan said. She pointed out that last winter, Kuwait donated \$31 million to support Syrian refugees in Lebanon and 46,000 refugee families received the necessary winter support. Hamdan noted 195,000 families will suffer in winter this year, mostly poor households.

She added that UNHCR has doubled the number of people who will receive winter support in Lebanon this year because of the increased level of vulnerability among the refugee population, pointing out that the campaign aims to help 20,000 families or approximately 100,000 people. Shadi Ghrawi, Private Sector Partnership Officer, said, "The commission has so far supported 3,670 out of 20,000 families that are the target of this campaign," adding that the estimated amount needed to help the Syrians families is up to \$150 per month per family. He said UNHCR is also running a "Lifeline" campaign in Jordan, and this campaign has helped 6,000 refugee families who are struggling to pay for basic life essentials including rent, food and health-care. He explained that the percentage of grants and donations from Kuwait is the highest at the individual level according to recent statistics conducted by UNHCR.



KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Guard celebrated the graduation of officers from three different courses on crises management, human resources management and English language.



KUWAIT: Head of Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah received UK Ambassador to the State of Kuwait Matthew James Lodge in his office at Seif Palace yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT PORTS AUTHORITY'S SYNDICATE SUSPENDS SIT-IN

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Upon promises by Director Sheikh Yousif Al-Abdullah to take their demands into full consideration, the employees' syndicate at the Kuwait Ports Authority suspended a sit-in that had been scheduled for yesterday. Syndicate Chairman Captain Abdullah Al-Serhaid announced suspending the sit-in until further notice in a press conference held at the Ports Authority headquarters, where he stressed that the authority's board of directors had authorized Sheikh Yousif to meet the demands of port approach guides who had been on partial strike since last Thursday. Serhaid explained that the demands made included allowances that had been suspended since 2010 in addition to danger, sailing, achievement and job nature allowances.

Not affected

Further, Serhaid said that the partial strike had not affected marine traffic and that ships at Shuaiba and Shuwaikh ports were not delayed. He also expressed willingness to cooperate with foreign port approach guides the ports authority hired to support their Kuwaiti colleagues.

On his part, the chairman of Kuwait Municipality employees' syndicate and the Arab Union for Municipality Employees Syndicates Mohammed Al-Arada stressed that people were

the most important elements of production and that workers' demands had to be met in order to develop production and reward them. He also slammed any legal measures or threats made against laborers demanding their due rights, according to ILO laws since 1948.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Yousif Al-Abdullah stressed that port approach guides were assured that their demands were being taken into full consideration, but stressed that a decision on some of the demands depended on other bodies like the finance ministry and CSC. He also noted that any rebellion was worthless and would not achieve any demands. He also condemned threats to suspend work at various ports and stressed that the authority will not be intimidated. He also noted that an emergency team was immediately formed to facilitate work at various ports.

Sheikh Yousif added that the authority received various calls from GCC ports directors expressing criticism of the strike and offering help in providing Kuwait with 170 port approach guides from various GCC and Arab countries, although Kuwaiti ports only need 30. He added that KOC also offered providing the authority with 25 guides within 24 hours. "We have already received seven guides from Abu Dhabi," he underlined, thanking the syndicate for suspending its strike and realizing that demands could not be achieved by strikes.

Full support

In a statement carried by Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) yesterday, the Kuwait Ports Authority (KPA) declared full support of the legitimate rights of its employees, as it stressed commitment to the smooth workflow of ports and that it would hold accountable those who would undermine the country's interests. The statement was made in response to reports alleging that the KPA did not respond to employee demands.

The KPA carries out its responsibilities in the most able manner according to legal procedures, it underlined. This stems from its responsibilities as a government body that is run according to an organized set of rules that seek to offer an appropriate working environment to its employees, the statement went on to explain.

The KPA "will not hesitate to carry out the necessary on endorsing any employee-related demands, including incentives and the shift from the grade system to contracts." In recent years the authority has keenly worked to respond to employee demands in relation to merits for incentives, through reporting these demands to relevant bodies - namely the Finance Ministry and the Civil Service Commission - in the belief of its commitment to the legitimacy of these demands, said the statement.



A gasoline transport truck engulfed in flames following at Sixth Ring Road yesterday.



Captagon tablets found with a passenger who tried to smuggle them through the airport.

MAN KILLED IN FIGHT OVER TRAFFIC DISPUTE

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A non-Kuwaiti man was killed and another was injured during a fight with two others along the Seventh Ring Road yesterday, said security sources, noting that the two suspects were still at large. The sources added that the fight started with an argument over traffic rights and soon developed into a fight, in which one of the assailants used a knife to attack his foes. A case was filed and search is on for the suspects.

Truck catches fire

Three persons escaped death during an accident that saw a gasoline transport truck flip

over. The accident took place at dawn yesterday between the truck and a Kuwait municipality vehicle on the Sixth Ring Road. Firemen who arrived three minutes after the accident fought the fire resulting from the collision.

Warehouse blaze

Firemen controlled a fire in a rice warehouse in industrial Shuwaikh yesterday. Industrial Shuwaikh and Capital fire centers responded. Two persons suffered smoke inhalation and were treated by paramedics.

Smuggling foiled

Airport customs officers foiled an attempt to

smuggle 100,000 Captagon tablets. Airport customs supervisor Suleiman Al-Fahd said the officers caught a Syrian man who attempted to smuggle the tablets hidden in sweets' boxes. He was sent to concerned authorities. Meanwhile, Nuwaiseeb customs found 120 electronic cigarettes, that are banned in Kuwait.

Blogger released

The court of appeal yesterday decided to suspend an earlier verdict to imprison blogger Hamed Buyabes over charges of slandering Saudi Arabia, and released him pending its final decision.

HUMAN RIGHTS OBSERVED AT PRISONS: INTERIOR MINISTRY

GCC INMATES WEEK UNDERWAY

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Correctional Facilities Affairs Major General Khaled Al-Deyyeen stressed that human rights are being fully observed in various correctional facilities and prisons. Speaking on the sidelines of the 'Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Inmates Week' activities which kicked off yesterday, Deyyeen said that Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and his Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahd have always been keen on observing humane values in all correctional facilities programs.

Meanwhile, the correctional facilities' director Major General Ibrahim Al-Essa announced that a special program would be launched soon to provide inmates with job opportunities in order to practically, scientifically and psychologically rehabilitate them and prepare them to integrate into societies after doing their time. Also speaking on the occasion, Deputy Director of the Public Authority for Youth and Sports (PAYS) Dr Humoud Faliteh stressed the importance of sports in fighting drugs amongst youth.



NGOS SLAM PROPOSED LAW

KUWAIT: Representatives of none-governmental organizations (NGOs) held a meeting at the Women's Cultural Society last Thursday to discuss the proposed NGOs law, which the Ministry of Social Affairs plans to pass through the National Assembly. Attendees at in the meeting criticized the new items in the law, and the possible unconstitutionality of the proposal, saying that it may compromise the social and voluntary work and limit the actions of NGOs in the civil society. Furthermore, they said it was strange to introduce such proposal which contradicts the which Kuwait constitution that calls for more freedoms. They also said that the proposal should be withdrawn due to its negative effects on the popular social and voluntary work.

Legalese

TERMINATION INDEMNITY

By Fajer Ahmed

There are different terms used in law and by the general public to refer to Termination Indemnity, some of our readers use "End of service benefits" and "termination indemnity" interchangeably, and because I want to make this as simple as possible I will not get into the specifics of each term and instead just use "Termination indemnity".

I decided today to write about termination indemnity as I have received multiple questions on the matter. I put together the most frequently asked questions, in hopes that my readers could benefit from reading the answers.

1) My company refuses to pay my termination indemnity, claiming that termination indemnity is only for foreigners, is this true?

Everyone working in the private sector should be considered for termination indemnity, regardless of their nationality. Unfortunately, from experience I can tell you that some companies are very sneaky when it comes to paying termination indemnity for both Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis.

I know of big multi-million companies that unlawfully claim to their Kuwaiti employees that they are not entitled to termination indemnity because the company is paying their social security. That is not true. Social security is a monthly payment that companies and employees each pay a percentage of every month. Companies are legally required to pay a certain percentage of the full social security amount. If the company decides to pay the full amount that is their choice, so unless there is an agreement that the company will pay on behalf of the Kuwaiti employee and therefore deduct those payments from the termination indemnity, those companies need to pay up.

2) If I terminated my contract, do I still deserve termination indemnity for the years that I have worked?

The answer to this question depends on the type of contract as well as how many years of service you have with the company. If you end a fixed term contract you could possibly owe the company money and therefore that will be deducted from your final termination indemnity. With that said, after three years of service your contract shall be considered legally as an open term contract, even if your contract is fixed term.

If you have less than three years of service, you don't deserve termination indemnity regardless if your contract has a fixed term or not. As for employees that have more than three years of service, please read the answer to question 3.

3) How do I calculate my termination indemnity?

Although usually lawyers don't do the calculations and allow accountants the honor of crunching in the numbers, I think the formula to calculate your termination indemnity can be mastered by anyone. I will try my best to explain it in the simplest of forms in a table that is easy to read. This is for employees that get paid on a monthly basis, which from experience is the most common method of payment in Kuwait.

Years of Service at the Company	Employee is terminated from the company	Employee submitted resignation
Under 3 years	15 days salary for every year worked	N/A
3-5 years	15 days salary for every year worked	Half of the 15 days salary for every year worked
5-10 years	One month salary for every year worked	Two thirds of the 30 day salary for every year worked
More than 10 years	One month salary for every year worked (not exceeding one year and six months of payment)	One month salary for every year worked (not exceeding one year and six months of payment)

You can calculate your daily salary if you get paid monthly by dividing your monthly salary by 26 days and not 30 days because according to the law there are 26 working days within a month, even if you work less.

4) What legal options do I have if the company is not paying my termination indemnity? How can I legally force them to pay and how long does it take?

Well my advice is always to get a lawyer at this stage, from experience companies and/ or responsible governmental entities are more likely to respond when the employee has a legal representative.

Unfortunately, companies know that the legal process can cost time and money to the employee and therefore are extremely reluctant about paying what is due to their previous employees. From experience I have seen all types of companies try to get out of paying termination indemnity and unfortunately a lot of companies get away with it. I hope that responsible institutions have more strict laws/bylaws regarding the payment of termination indemnity by companies, causing awareness and enforcement.

Once you get a lawyer, you should ask the lawyer to always start with a negotiation. On average a case will take eight months to one year at court, that is a lot of time to wait, especially for those leaving the country or for those employees that are not from Kuwait. Therefore it is always best to start with a negotiation, that is what I always do for my client, saving both parties time and legal fees. If the company refuses to pay, then the case is taken to the Ministry of Social Affairs where an official legal process starts. I put together a flow chart to explain the process.

Process of Labour Dispute





Gulf Bank and Alghanim Industries employees participate in the first workshop session.

GULF BANK, ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES HOLD WORKSHOPS ON '3-D NEGOTIATIONS'



Professor Andrew Wasynczuk of Harvard Business School speaks at the workshop.

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank and Alghanim Industries recently held two joint interactive workshops on negotiating for select employees conducted by Harvard Business School Professor Andrew Wasynczuk. The '3-D Negotiations' workshop was aimed at creating a deep understanding of the negotiation process and to sharpen critical skills needed for effective and successful negotiations.

Alghanim Industries and Gulf Bank both believe that a key to success in their respective businesses relies upon attracting and retaining the best human capital and talent. As part of their ongoing commitment to invest in their staff and provide opportunities to further their personal development and professional skills, the Human Resources departments of both companies organized the workshop to hone participants' strategic perspectives and interpersonal skills. The workshop was attended by approximately 120 executives from both Alghanim Industries and Gulf Bank.

Very important
Salma Al-Hajjaj, General Manager for Human Resources at Gulf Bank, said: "Workshops such as these are very important to the ongoing development of staff from Gulf Bank and Alghanim Industries. Negotiating is an essential part of being an effective manager and this approach to negotiating and can be used by employees in various job functions and in everyday life. Skilled 3-D negotiators can uncover hidden sources of value and then create agreements that might otherwise be out of reach. This Harvard Business School course content and expert instruction by Professor Andrew Wasynczuk has helped to equip our respective staff with the skills they need to excel professionally and personally."

Hashim Gillani, Alghanim Industries' Vice President of Corporate Strategy, Business Development, and Mergers and Acquisitions, who participated in the workshop said: "The workshop by Professor Wasynczuk was extremely helpful in building a negotiation

nomenclature, conceptual framework for negotiations, and a tool kit for practical applications.

Team members from Alghanim Industries and Gulf Bank learned about value claiming, value creation, and negotiation set-up. combination of teacher instruction, case studies, simulations and interactive negotiation sessions provided valuable lessons in a classroom setting. We confident that the participants are now more aware of the multi-dimensional aspects of negotiations and will be more effective in their jobs using the skills learned."

Behavioral dynamics

The workshop began with an explanation of the ideas behind '3-D Negotiations' and which were then put into practice through individual and group negotiating sessions. The three dimensions of negotiation were explored through a combination of structured negotiation simulations and cases studies that highlighted key analyti-

cal issues and important behavioral dynamics. This 3-D approach to negotiating removes common barriers to deals and offers useful approaches to adapting styles to the bargaining process, framing your case persuasively, managing counteroffers, and avoiding common pitfalls.

The first dimension focuses on tactics with the focus on people and processes, the approach is how to improve interpersonal processes and tactics. The second dimension focuses on deal design with the focus on value and substance, the approach is to unlock creative deals which create value. The third dimension focuses on the setup, emphasizing the scope and sequence of the negotiation to create a more favorable scope and thus outcome.

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OOREDOO WINS TWO TROPHIES AT REGIONAL COMMUNICATION AWARD

DUBAI: Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Department has been recognized for excellence multiple times at the Middle East Public Relations Awards which took place in Dubai last week.

The Kuwait arm of the international Ooredoo Group received awards for its Internal

are deeply honored to have been recognized by our peers at the Middle East PR Association. These awards celebrate the hard work of the entire team, following the rebranding of Ooredoo Kuwait. We have been inspired by the vision of our CEO, and by the Ooredoo Group and our motivation to continue to push the

Communications team has recently relaunched the intranet website in addition to an employee-exclusive Instagram account, to keep employees engaged in all campaigns and activities internally.

Ooredoo Social Media executive Yasser Mohammad was recognized as an Outstanding Young Communicator and was presented an award by David Tully, a Senior Professor from Middlesex University in Dubai which sponsored the category.

Eve Stubbs, Program Coordinator of Middlesex University Dubai's School of Media and Performing Arts said: "We are proud to sponsor the Middle East PR Awards and especially the Outstanding Young Communicator category. Each year the quality of candidates continues to surpass expectations. They provide exciting prospects for the future of the industry and great role-models for the generations to follow."

The Middle East PR Awards are organized by the Middle East PR Association (MEPRA) and are in their fifth year. This year's awards were judged by a panel of experts including representatives from Rolls Royce, Falcon and Associates, The Ritz Carlton hotel chain and Motivate Publishing.

Carine Duvignaud, General Manager of the Middle East PR Association said: "The Middle East PR Awards ceremony is the event of the year for professional communicators. This year has been our largest and most successful gala event, doubling the previous year's attendance. We congratulate all the winners and the short-listed entries for helping to raise the bar to global standards and beyond."

Ooredoo Kuwait has recently received awards for Corporate Social Responsibility at the Telecom Review Excellence Awards and for Social Media at the Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Informatics Awards.



Fajer Al-Matrouk and Yasser Mohammad at the Middle East Public Relations Awards.

Communications department, and one of its young communicators was honored for outstanding performance.

Mijbil Alayoub, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said: "We

boundaries has been reinforced."

Ooredoo Kuwait received the Bronze Award in the Employee Engagement category and was collected by Fajer Al-Matrouk, PR and Internal Communications Executive. The Internal

FOOD CHOICE JOINS HORECA KUWAIT 2016 AS GOLDEN SPONSOR

KUWAIT: Marwan Fares, Food Choice Company's CEO, highly praised the Horeca Kuwait exhibition and its ability to attract companies specializing in hospitality, food industries and hotel requirements in addition to travel, transport, oil and construction companies.

With that in mind, Food Choice decided to repeat its golden sponsorship to Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition, Fares added. "It is of great significance to take part in this exhibition in order to improve the company's expansion after it has already expanded in the Middle East and Canada," he underlined.

Further, Fares stressed that following the success it has been achieving ever since establishment, Food Choice intends to continue growing and expanding internationally using

various unique creative ideas, while at the same time being keen on supporting new creations and observing healthy quality standards according to

HACCP standards.

Food Choice was established in 2005 to supply Kuwaiti market with international standard food products, Fares noted, adding

that the company soon gained a good reputation for its keenness on finding innovative solutions and providing various services for hotels, restaurants and department stores that went side by side with introducing international high quality meat, pastry, cheese, seafood and beverage brands such as Monin, Valrhona and Bonn Maman to local markets.

Horeca Kuwait 2016 is set to be organized by Leaders Group in collaboration with Hospitality Services Comcoany at Badriya Ballroom, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa in the period of January 18-19, 2016 under auspices of the Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.



Marwan Fares

KUWAIT'S EXPORTS DOWN 45.1% IN Q3

KUWAIT: In July-September 2015, Kuwait's exports were KD 4.1 billion with a 45.1 percent decrease and imports were KD 2.3 billion with a 3.9 percent increase compared with July-September 2014, according to foreign trade statistics.

In July-September 2015, balance of trade was KD 1.8 billion while it was KD 5.3 billion in July-September 2014 with a 65.7 percent decrease. In the same period, volume of trade decreased 33.9 percent compared with the third quarter of 2014. Trade of volume was KD 6.5 billion in July-September 2015 while it was KD 9.8 billion in July-September 2014, the statistics showed.

Coverage rate was 178.6 percent in July-September 2015, while it was 338.2 percent in July-September 2014. In the

third quarter of 2015, coverage rate (excluding oil) was 18.1 percent while it was 19.9 percent in the third quarter of 2014, they said. In July-September 2015, the main partner country for non-oil exports was Saudi Arabia with KD 60.6 million. For exports, Saudi Arabia was followed by China (KD 58.7 million) and India (KD 57.8 million).

The top country for Kuwait's imports was China (KD 358.1 million), records for imports range from UAE (229.4 million), United States of America (KD 212.5 million) and Japan (KD 162.2 million), according to the statistics. As compared with the same quarter of the previous year, exports to the GCC countries were KD 137.3 million, increased by 12.5 percent. —KUNA

KUWAIT TO HOST PETROLEUM ECONOMIST ENERGY STRATEGY FORUM

KUWAIT: Petroleum Economist, the global energy magazine, and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation will officially co-host the second annual Energy Strategy Forum at The Sheraton Hotel, Kuwait City on Tuesday 26 January. National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) have confirmed as a Gold Sponsor of the conference. This VIP, invitation-only forum brings together a 300-strong audience of regional policy makers, national oil companies, international oil companies, financiers, investors and other key market players.

The second in this series of energy strategy forums will explore the contention that the hydrocarbons industry is facing a combination of disruptive forces, which have the potential to radically change the way the industry works.

Commenting on the forum announcement, Victoria Behn, director of Petroleum Economist Events said: "We are looking forward to returning to Kuwait to work with our key partners - Kuwait Petroleum

Corporation and National Bank of Kuwait. We have a line-up of excellent speakers from the region and further afield who will join our editorial team to shed light on how the markets are changing and how the GCC countries must adapt to the new global energy landscape."

Anas al-Saleh, Kuwait's minister of finance and acting minister of oil will open proceedings and will be joined by Nizar M Al-Adani, deputy chairman and chief executive officer of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and Bakheet Al-Rashidi, president and chief executive officer of Kuwait Petroleum International (KPI). Pradeep Handa, general manager of the foreign corporate, oil, trade and project finance group at National Bank of Kuwait will also speak at the event. High level speakers from National Bank of Kuwait, Guinness Asset Management, Manaar Energy Consulting, Petronas and APICORP, among others, are also confirmed.

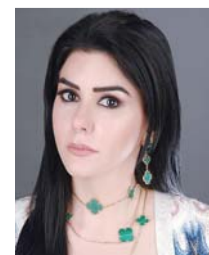
MOBILE DENTAL CLINIC LAUNCHED IN RAWDA

KUWAIT: A mobile dental clinic has been launched to serve residents of Al-Rawdha area, a senior Ministry of Health (MoH) official announced on Saturday. The mobile

clinic, which caters to the elderly, is a product of donations received by Al-Rawdha Cooperative Society, Director of Capital Health Zone Dr Afrah Al-Sarraf said in a press statement. The service, the first of its kind in

the country, comes as part of efforts to enhance medical services in the Capital Governorate.

The clinic is comprised of a moving vehicle that transports a dental specialist from Al-Rawdha clinic, who would attend to the bed-ridden, as the service is expected to be introduced to other areas of the Governorate, Sarraf said. Moreover, Chairwoman of the clinic Dr Mariam Al-Asousi revealed that the elderly make up 3 percent of the 36,276 population of Al-Rawdha. The clinic had provided 4,558 different home services to the elderly in the area this year, she added. —KUNA



Dr Afrah Al-Sarraf



KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa and senior education ministry officials tour a school for people with special needs. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

KUWAIT TO OVERHAUL SPECIAL EDUCATION



KUWAIT: Kuwait is exerting efforts to develop the teaching system for special needs' students and enhance teachers' skills to deal with this category of society in the best way possible, said Minister of Education and Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa.

The ministry is working on developing educational facilities of disabled students, while also holding specialized training courses for teachers in these schools, Minister Essa told reporters after a tour on exams' committees at schools for people with special needs yesterday.

Acting assistant undersecretary for special education Fahad Al-Ghais said in the meantime that special challenges' students started their final exams last Thursday, simultaneously with the tests at ministry's public schools. Meanwhile, chairman of the special education schools

administration Abdullah Al-Ajmi noted that the ministry has 18 schools with 1,700 students of all types of disabilities. He said that the ministry is setting a plan to provide each school with a specialized supervisor depending on the type of disability cases the school deals with. — KUNA

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التبليغ

Al-Anbaa

THE SOLUTION

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

I was reading the newspapers on Saturday morning as I usually do every morning, and when I went through the pages of Al-Anbaa newspaper, I found a column on the business page with the title "Diversifying sources of income in Kuwait... possible or not?" by Dr Abdullah Fahd Al-Abdeljader. The column began with a comprehensive and summarized panorama of Gulf countries and what they have in other income sources than oil that may replace oil in the future provided that the countries' officials shed the light on and use those resources through their development and work on them to be a source of wealth for the state.

I will not make a summarization of what Dr Abdeljader has written, rather I am going to rewrite his lines about Kuwait, because what he wrote are only lines that cover a future strategic plan that revealed what Kuwait has in diversified sources of income. These words in my opinion as a Kuwaiti citizen today, I send a message through my column, that it should be under the consideration of state officials - rather our institutions must use the help of Kuwaitis to get their future with their own hands and not resort to foreign agendas. Dr Abdeljader said in his column:

"But Kuwait, what does it have? And it can be said here that Kuwait has the ability to have an industry and tourism, direct foreign investment and economic reform, but it needs a quick and serious decision that must be implemented, and must stop the government's squandering and financial corruption, while implementing the comments and recommendation of the Civil Service Commission.

"It also must support the private sector by providing job opportunities for citizens and provide them with job stability and security, through getting the private sector involved in its projects, and implement privatization that is in the interest of both sides and review the government employment policy which led to the inflation of the state budget.

"But it is important that we all know that diversifying sources of income is not solved by increasing prices of gasoline, kerosene and diesel, and not burdening citizens with the increase of electricity and water consumption and government transaction fees, as they are all procedures that increase the burdens of their living, especially those of limited income among them."

A last word: We hope that the message was delivered to our officials, from us to them.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Jarida

Oil prices....

التبليغ

Al-Anbaa

CHICKENPOX-STRICKEN LANDS

By Salah Al-Sayer

I almost choke to death with this feeling whenever, out of daily life routine or out of the wish to conduct some historic studies, I go into Kuwait's deserts. Going to the desert, one can easily see the major ordeal fungal life has been through there. Grass, bushes, sand dunes and stones are no longer safe from manipulation and this tiny sad desert really deserves the Nobel Prize for Peace for tolerating such agony and devastation.

Ever since Kuwait's modern breakthrough, Kuwait's environment has been paying the price of development. Violating Kuwaiti wildlife started with the early days when 'hassaya' (people who used to collect gravel from the desert for unknown commercial reasons at that time) started collecting gravel that was of significant importance to hold the soil together. In addition, sand and gravel quarries were later dug for construction reasons with the result of turning the desert's terrain to look like a chickenpox-stricken face!

Vicious environmental violations continued with campers and sheep and camel herders who have been overgrazing their animals for years before Saddam's

armies and troops arrived with their heavy weaponry and machinery and tanks to destroy wildlife, dismantle the soil, remove floral canopies, raise dust storms and cause considerable damage to ecological balance, and eventually left the desert land only watered by our rain-like teardrops.— Translated by Kuwait Times

Ever since Kuwait's modern breakthrough, Kuwait's environment has been paying the price of development

TWELVE RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADJUST DEMOGRAPHIC STRUCTURE

LINKING EXPATS' RESIDENCY TO EDUCATIONAL LEVEL

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Planning Hind Al-Subaih stressed that a draft will be ready by the beginning of the new year on a schedule needed to implement the Cabinet's instructions concerning adjusting Kuwait's demographic structure. Subaih added that a committee formed by the Cabinet had set 12 recommendations including linking expatriates' residency to their educational level and qualification, limiting the number of domestic laborers and increasing related fees once the limit is exceeded, with an exception to families that have disabled members, granting absconders a three-month grace period to legalize their statuses, increasing absconding fines, issuing strict laws against those who hire absconders and activating fingerprint scanners at various border exits to make sure deportees do not return to Kuwait after changing their passports.

Speaking at press conference on the sidelines of presiding the supreme demographic structure committee meeting with representatives from

the planning and development secretariat general, the Census Central Department, Manpower and



Minister Hind Al-Subaih

Government Restructuring Program (MGRP), Manpower Public Authority, Public Authority for Civil Information (PACI) and the ministries of commerce, health, interior and foreign affairs, Subaih said that some bodies had made their own suggestions and agreed to set a timetable to put the

measures agreed in practice and determine bodies responsible for carrying them out during 2016.

Subaih added that possible effects of each of the measures agreed upon on the labor market would be studied and an indicator would be set to weigh cons and pros so that immediate, short term and long term actions could be made within a maximum of four years.

Subaih added that the recommendations included automating the procedures followed on bringing workers from abroad with the aim of fighting visa manipulations, imposing strict measures on workers working in jobs other than those they had been hired and brought to Kuwait to do, mandating contractors to repatriate workers after concluding projects, encouraging citizens to take part in production and vocational businesses, encouraging youth to start small and medium projects, automating the process of assessing companies' need of labor and setting restrictions on dependent and family visit visas.— Al-Rai

US SINGLE MOMS SUE KUWAITI, GCC ALLEGED FATHERS OF THEIR KIDS

KUWAIT: In view of the growing number of single mothers in the US, a number of American women with children recently decided to sue Arab students who they claim are the real fathers of their kids and the result of extramarital relationships.

The women seized the opportunity of the creation of a new website named 'Children Left Behind' to upload dozens of stories about American single mothers reporting that their kids were the result of affairs with Saudi, Kuwaiti, Qatari and Emirati students, saying that the fathers abandoned them and disappeared. Creators of the website, which has English and Arabic interfaces, stressed that it mainly aims at highlighting those mothers' ordeals and help them reunite with their kids' legitimate fathers.

One of the website's administrators said that the number of American single mothers contacting the website to share their experiences was steadily growing. The website, which has so far been visited by over 1.5 million people, said that the phenomena started back in the 1980s, dropped a little in the 1990s, then gradually increased later on after so many GCC university students abandoned their companions.— Al-Rai



This photo published by Al-Rai yesterday shows what the newspaper says a collage taken from the website showing some of the single mothers with their children.

الراي

Al-Rai

WHEN AN EXPAT SNEEZED IN MY FACE

By Mohammed Al-Atwan

Yesterday I went to Hawally, aka 'the capital of fog', or you may call it 'Kuwait's New York', where I met an expatriate friend working at a simple cafe with a very long menu of beverages you can order. But you only end up having tea or coffee with some other types of beverages from time to time that are served according to what my friend believes best suits the customer's mood.

Sitting in the cafe yesterday, we both exchanged silent looks without any salutation or talking. He served me my coffee and then we went back to be as silent as if birds had landed on our heads. "It is difficult to be a stranger!" he suddenly said. "But you can pass your time serving customers and observing the way they look," I told him. He gave me a strange long look as if he was going to sneeze in my face and said: "You have to name things as they really are. I am not passing my time - I am wasting my life. I have been standing still for six years now!"

His answer really shocked me and I felt like a hurricane was tearing my mind and soul. It felt as if he actually sneezed in my soul and not in my face. I then wondered in a most philosophic manner that matches the cap I always wear (check my miserable photo). Is it possible that we play with words and not use real names of things?! There is a huge difference between 'pass my time' and 'waste my life', you know!

Well, it does seem that we do deceive ourselves with unreal names. The hair removal female expert (locally known as haffafah) is now known as a 'makeup artist', a promotion saleslady is now known as a 'fashionista' and he who trades in simple expat laborers' sweat and years-long work is known as a 'visa trafficker'. If we, instead, use their real names, this last one would be best known as a 'human dreams trader' because he shares every minute of work and every hour of sleeping with laborers. He would even tax and charge them to achieve their dreams!

What absurdity! We claim to dignify human beings and protect them and this is why we fight drug traffickers because they ruin people's lives and future, while we do not fight visa traffickers as severely while they are ruining people's present! It takes KD 1,200-1,500 to ruin those people's lives. It also costs them KD 300 to renew this misery every year. A very fruitful trade for sponsors, especially when they are dealing with people who are afraid of everything because they willingly left their kids and loved ones to avoid seeing them in tears of agony; people who had promised their moms and wives lots of good to bring from the land of good.

Although this 'good' would be cut out of his own flesh and blood just the way a block of shawarma would look more delicious and tender the more we cut from it. He still cannot utter a single word of dissatisfaction lest he might be deported.

We are a generous people ruled by a generous family on a generous land. There is no use in beautifying our image abroad while it is domestically disfigured by the practices of visa traffickers. Do get rid of this trade before it ruins our nation's reputation. I do hope minister Hind Al-Subaih would stay longer in office because she is working hard to eliminate this phenomenon despite her enemies and we urge her to exert more efforts.

Sorry for speaking long about visa trafficking, but as soon as I finished my coffee and wrote my article, I gathered my papers on my way out. "Since we agreed to disguise our real life, from now on, you are not a restaurant handyman, you are buffet in-charge," I told him, wishing him sweet dreams on my way out. He suspiciously looked at me with his narrow eyes and said: "Why does it always have to be dreams? Why don't you wish me a happy real life?!" That statement seemed like the second shocking sneeze in my face, and how painful those two 'sneezes' were to me!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

GUARANTEE COMPLICATES BEDOONS' UMRAH

KUWAIT: The Hajj Affairs Sector at the Awqaf Ministry will write to accredited umrah agents in Saudi Arabia in order to ease hajj conditions on offices that take bedoons for umrah, most importantly the bank guarantee of KD 20,000 on each office that accepts bedoons. Informed sources said this condition caused many offices to reject registration of bedoons who want to perform umrah because of the large amount which may not be refunded if the bedoons do not return. They said that officials at the Awqaf Ministry held a meeting to negotiate with umrah agents to ease this condition, in addition to coordinating with the commerce ministry to create a mechanism to make it easier until the law of hajj and umrah is passed.— Al-Qabas

FAKE PSYCHIATRIC PATIENTS, DOCTORS WON'T ESCAPE PRISON AND FINES

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources at the public prosecution's office warned that severe penalties are currently being prepared for those pretending to suffer from psychiatric diseases or disorders as well as doctors who give them such certificates. "Penalties will vary between prison and fines," said the sources.

The sources added that a government bill in this regard was meant to protect psychiatric patients' rights and at the same time put an end to using such disorders as excuses to escape legal accountability after suspects commit crimes or felonies, do not report to work punctually or even get financial privileges or incentives.

The sources added that the bill due to be referred to the parliament soon would state the necessity to form more than one medical and psychiatric committee by MoH and the forensic medicine department including three forensic medicine psychiatrists to independently report on each case's mental state. On his part, the parliamentary health affairs committee rapporteur MP Saoudun Hammad said that the committee was ready to discuss the bill. He added that MoH had set its priorities, including the psychiatric diseases issue, last week.— Al-Rai

Crime

Report

WIFE SLASHES MAN'S 'SENSITIVE PARTS'

KUWAIT: A citizen was placed in the intensive care unit by urologists at a hospital after he was attacked. He was seen bloodied outside his house with an injury in his lower abdomen, and told police his Filipina wife caused it. The medical report said there was a cut in a very sensitive part of his body. The man underwent surgery, then was placed under intense observation. His wife was arrested and is being questioned about her actions.

Fugitive caught

Asima (Capital) detectives arrested a citizen in Sulaibkhat wanted over an armed robbery. He was sent to criminal detectives. The suspect is also an ex-convict.

Employer robbed

Detectives arrested an Egyptian woman in Maidan Hawally for stealing money and documents from his company following a dispute with his sponsor. The citizen told police the woman took the money and disappeared, and gave them her details. The woman confessed to the charges.

Drug possession

Policemen arrested a citizen in Adan with a combination of drugs, including 13 pieces of hashish and joints ready for use. He was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

Under the influence

A police source said Mubarak Al-Kabeer police suspected a man in a parking lot, and when he attempted to escape, he was stopped. He was found to be under the influence of drugs.

Neighbors' row

A dispute between three female neighbors led to exchanging blows, injuring one of them in the process, who went to the police station and lodged a complaint. The Egyptian woman told Salmiya police her neighbors ganged up on her and beat and insulted her due to disputes between them. The two neighbors were called in and questioned.

Traffic dispute

A citizen was insulted by an indecent gesture by a man as they differed over the right of way in Fintas, so he lodged a complaint at Fintas police station. Ahmadi detectives are working on the case.

Shop robbed

Criminal evidence men went to a sweetshop in Jabriya as part of an investigation of a theft that took place there. The store manager, Jordanian, told police that workers found the door was broken, and the cash register was taken with KD 650 in it. He did not accuse anyone in the theft.

Motorcycle stolen

Jahra detectives are searching for a black and orange-colored motorcycle that was reported stolen by its owner, who works as a teacher. The motorcycle was stolen from his house.— Al-Rai

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Democratic debate hits Trump, jihadist extremists

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SPAIN VOTES IN LANDMARK POLLS TO END TWO-PARTY GRIP

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BERN: UN special envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed speaks during a press conference at the end of peace talks yesterday. — AFP

CLASHES SHAKE YEMEN AS PEACE TALKS END

DELEGATES ADMIT 'THE NEGOTIATIONS HAVE BASICALLY FAILED'

ADEN: Fighting raged yesterday between Yemen's warring factions on the final day of UN-backed peace talks that have made no major breakthrough in the face of repeated ceasefire violations. UN special envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed was expected to announce a new round of meetings, likely starting in mid-January, to try to end the conflict, according to a source close to the rebel delegation.

A halt to the violence is sorely needed in the Arabian Peninsula's poorest nation, where the UN says fighting since March has killed thousands of people and left around 80 percent of the population needing humanitarian aid. The sides, who have been meeting since Tuesday behind closed doors, agreed Saturday to create "a neutral military committee" to monitor the collapsing ceasefire and another

committee to oversee the delivery of humanitarian aid, sources from both sides said.

But delegates said substantial progress had proved elusive. "The negotiations have basically failed," said a source with the delegation representing both the Iran-backed Houthi Shiite rebels and renegade troops still loyal to wealthy ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh. He told AFP that the ceasefire, which was meant to facilitate the delivery of desperately needed humanitarian aid, was "still-born". "We have not achieved any results," agreed a source in President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi's government delegation.

The talks have among other things stumbled on the question of prisoners, with the rebels demanding swaps, while the government wants the Houthis to first liberate a number of its captives, including the presi-

dent's brother, several sources said. The Houthis advanced from their northern strongholds to occupy the capital in September 2014. The conflict has escalated dramatically since Saudi-led air strikes against the rebels began in March, with more than 5,800 people killed and more than 27,000 wounded since then, according to UN figures.

No end to violence

Loyalists yesterday attacked rebel positions in the northern Jawf province after seizing the provincial capital two days earlier from the Houthi rebels, pro-government militia sources said. Coalition air strikes hit a rebel rocket launch pad in Jawf, rebel positions in the north of the western Hodeida province and an army camp in the rebel-held capital Sanaa.

Rebels meanwhile claimed to have caused

casualties and equipment damage in a rocket attack on a coalition military base in Marib province east of Sanaa, their sabanews.net website reported. The coalition did not immediately confirm this. Military sources said that pro-government forces attacked rebel positions in southern Shabwa province, most of which is under loyalist control. They reported casualties as the troops sought to retake the oil-rich Usaylan region from the Houthis.

Saudi Arabia meanwhile said a missile fired from Yemen on Saturday struck the border city of Najran, killing three civilians—a Saudi and two Indian workers. Pro-government forces kept up pressure in Sanaa province's Nihm district this weekend after significant gains in Marib province east of the capital. Forces loyal to Hadi, and allied tribes in the area, laid siege to Nihm's Fardha military base northeast of the capital.

Despite the proximity, the roughly 40 kilometers separating Nihm from Sanaa is mostly rugged mountainous terrain. A ceasefire which began with the peace talks on Tuesday and was set to continue for at least seven days has failed to hold. At least 68 people were killed on Thursday near the northern town of Haradh, which loyalists seized the same day, military and tribal sources said. The UN envoy to Yemen was "deeply concerned at the numerous reports of violations of the cessation of hostilities", his office said late Friday. Ould Cheikh Ahmed "urges all parties to respect this agreement and allow unhindered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance to the most affected districts of Yemen," the statement said. The special envoy has held several sessions with participants during the talks, the statement added. — AFP

TOLL 'TOPS 100' AS TURKEY PUSH MAJOR OFFENSIVE AGAINST PKK

DIYARBAKIR: The number of Kurdish rebels killed in a massive Turkish military offensive in the restive southeast has jumped to 102, a security source said yesterday, as the operation entered its fifth day. At least 20 soldiers and five civilians have also been killed in the fighting, the source said.

An earlier toll released on Saturday put the figure at 70 dead in the unprecedented police and army operation, with the military saying all were suspected members of the rebel Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Some 10,000 troops backed by tanks have been deployed in the southeast to try to rout young PKK supporters from urban areas, according to local media.

The operation, which has targeted the towns of Cizre and Silopi in the province of Sinak as well as a neighborhood in Diyarbakir, the largest city in the region, began on Wednesday, according to the army. On Friday, the military also carried out air strikes on alleged PKK hideouts and weapons sites across the border in northern Iraq, where the outlawed group has its rear bases.

Images published by the Anatolia news agency show heavily armed soldiers backed by tanks going house-to-house in the towns and firing from street corners. Army forces chief General Hulusi Akar visited Sinak province on Saturday for a briefing by the local military command.

The Turkish government says the operation is needed to eliminate mili-



ANKARA: Members of Turkey's leftist unions and politicians stage a protest outside the parliament in Ankara, calling for the end of military operations against Kurdish militants in southeastern Turkey, on December 19, 2015. The banner reads: "No to war, we will defend the peace". — AFP

tants who were effectively taking over the towns by building barricades and digging trenches. But Kurdish activists and politicians have accused the army of acting with impunity and pounding large parts of the towns to rubble. In the eastern city of Van yesterday, police fired rubber bullets and teargas to disperse around 1,000 demonstrators who gathered to condemn the military operations, the Dogan news agency reported.

'Attempt to unleash civil war'

The army said that two schools that had been used by the PKK as hideouts had been rendered inoperable while a stash of arms had been seized in Silopi. The education ministry recalled teachers from the area and schools were closed, as were health services due to a lack of doctors who have fled the conflict zone.

The operations mark a new escalation in five months of fighting between

the army and the PKK since a two-and-a-half year truce collapsed in July. Although analysts have called for peace talks, the authorities led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, buoyed by the victory of his Justice and Development Party (AKP) in the November 1 election, have said Ankara must eradicate the PKK.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu yesterday condemned what he said was "an attempt to unleash a civil war". He warned that the military operations, criticized by some members of the political opposition and rights groups, will last until the towns targeted are completely "cleansed". "We are faced with a barbaric organization which is trying to exploit young people to affect their lives by installing these barricades," he told a gathering in Ankara of young people from the ruling AKP.

He also promised financial help to residents forced to flee the conflict zone as well as businesses that have been hard hit. But Turkey's Human Rights Association protested that the operations and "the systematic recourse to curfews, represent an unacceptable collective punishment". The PKK launched an insurgency against the Turkish state in 1984, initially fighting for Kurdish independence although it is now pressing more for greater autonomy and rights for the country's largest ethnic minority. The conflict has left tens of thousands of people dead. — AFP

STRIKES KILL SCORES IN REBEL-HELD IDLIB

BEIRUT: Air strikes believed to have been carried out by Russian warplanes killed scores of people in the centre of the rebel-held city of Idlib in northwest Syria yesterday, rescue workers and residents said. They said at least six strikes had hit a busy market place in the heart of the city, several government buildings and residential areas. Rescue workers said they had confirmed 43 dead but that at least 30 more bodies had been retrieved that had still to be identified.

"There are a lot of corpses under the rubble," Yasser Hammo, a civil defense worker, said via an Internet messaging system, adding that volunteers and civil defense workers were still pulling bodies out. Footage on social media and the pro-opposition Orient TV station showed makeshift ambulances rushing with injured civilians through an area where people were searching for survivors among the debris of collapsed buildings.

One local resident, Sameh Al-Muazin, said he had seen mangled bodies in the main Jalaa Street of the city, adding that people feared a further round of intensive bombing. "Everyone is afraid that this is just the beginning," he said. Russia began a major aerial campaign on Sept. 30 in support of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, its ally, who earlier in the year had suffered

a series of setbacks including the loss of Idlib province and areas near the coasts which are of crucial strategic importance.

Moscow says its targets Islamic State militants but rebels and residents say they are causing hundreds of civilian casualties through indiscriminate bombing of areas well away from the frontlines. Residents say they distinguish Russian planes that fly at high altitudes in sorties from Syrian helicopters that mainly drop indiscriminate barrel bombs at much lower heights.

A coalition of Islamist rebels took Idlib city, the capital of a northwestern province of the same name, earlier this year. It had previously been largely spared by the Russian warplanes. Idlib was part of a United Nations-brokered ceasefire deal reached in September by warring parties. This allowed for the eventual withdrawal of rebel fighters holed up in a border village near Lebanon in return for the evacuation of civilians from two Shiite villages under rebel siege in Idlib province. Under the deal there was a tacit understanding it fell under the ceasefire arrangements. Idlib has attracted thousands of ordinary Syrians displaced by the fighting in areas in northern Syria and has also become the centre for a local administration run by Islamist insurgents. — Reuters



SAN BERNARDINO: President Barack Obama delivers a statement at Indian Springs High School after meeting with families affected by the shootings. —AP

VICTIM FAMILIES SHARE TEARS, STORIES IN OBAMA MEETING

SAN BERNARDINO: At a table inside the Indian Springs High School library, Mandy Pifer sat alone, the last name of her boyfriend killed in the San Bernardino terrorist attack printed on a label in front of her. Nearby, relatives of the 13 other people killed sat and waited anxiously. Some clutched memorial service programs with the photos and biographies of their deceased. One held the invitation to President Barack Obama's 2009 inauguration his brother-in-law had gleefully obtained. Pifer wrote out a sign with the words, "I got you."

When Obama and first lady Michelle Obama entered the room and made their way from one table to the next, spending about 10 minutes with each family Friday evening, the grief, sadness and frustration of the last 17 days were firmly on display. Some shed tears. Others asked questions. Everyone got a hug.

"It just felt like they were really present in their conversation with me," Pifer said. "They are sick and tired of doing these things, meeting our families." For nearly three hours, the Obamas met with relatives of the nine men and five women killed Dec 2 when a married couple opened fire on the husband's colleagues at a work holiday gathering in San Bernardino, about 60 miles (100 kilometers) east of Los Angeles.

The couple, American-born Syed Rizwan Farook, 28, and his wife, Tashfeen Malik, 29, of Pakistan, pledged allegiance to a leader of the Islamic State group on Facebook, moments before the shooting, authorities said. Both were later killed in a

gunfight with police. Consoling the victims of gun violence has become a grim ritual throughout Obama's presidency.

"My brother will never get his daughter back," said George Velasco, whose niece, Yvette Velasco, 27, was killed. "But at least we know they are taking it very seriously." When Obama approached the Velasco family's table, he told them he knew nothing he could say would ever truly comfort them, but that he was sincerely sorry for their loss, Velasco said. The victim's father told Obama how proud he had been of her work as an inspector with the county Department of Environmental Health. Obama told them he and his wife were parents too and that, "they cannot imagine a loss like ours." "I couldn't believe that he was spending that much time with us," Velasco said. "It was heartfelt. I could feel it. It was something he really felt and believed."

Rhetoric and bigotry

The mood in the room was somber, though each family seemed to perk up when Obama arrived at their table. For some, it was the first time they got to meet many of the other families with a relative killed in the attack. The meetings with Obama largely focused on grief, but a few also touched on gun violence and efforts to ban military-style assault weapons. Farook and Malik were armed with two assault rifles and two pistols, investigators have said. Karen Fagan, whose ex-husband Harry Bowman, 46, was killed, said they also spoke about ending hateful rhetoric and bigotry. —AP

DEMOCRATIC DEBATE HITS TRUMP, CLASH OVER JIHADIST EXTREMISTS

'TRUMP IS BECOMING ISIS'S BEST RECRUITER'

MANCHESTER: Hillary Clinton and other Democratic presidential hopefuls used Donald Trump as a political bogeyman Saturday to highlight their own calls to defeat jihadist extremists without using the bigotry and bluster employed by their top Republican rival.

Former secretary of state Clinton, Senator Bernie Sanders and Maryland ex-governor Martin O'Malley each hit on the need to boost national security, raise the minimum wage and protect rights of women, minorities and the disadvantaged as they faced off in New Hampshire. But they had heated exchanges on the economy, guns, tackling the terrorist threat, and the role of the United States abroad.

With just over six weeks before the first votes are cast in the nomination race, on February 1 in Iowa, Sanders and O'Malley are running out of time to blunt the momentum of the former secretary of state, who is 25 points ahead of rival Sanders in national polling compiled by RealClearPolitics.com.

Trump punching bag

O'Malley trails them both badly. It was their party's third debate of the primary election season—the last of 2015 and their first since the attacks in San Bernardino, California, where a radicalized married couple killed 14 people. But the candidates also took turns hitting the Trump punching bag, as they hurled outrage about the Republican's fear-mongering and recent controversial comments about immigrants in particular, his call for a ban on Muslims entering the United States.

Americans, Clinton said, "need to make sure that the really discriminatory messages that Trump is sending around the world don't fall on receptive ears." "He is becoming ISIS's best recruiter," Clinton said of the self-declared Islamic State extremist group, claiming that jihadists are "showing videos of Donald Trump insulting Islam and Muslims in order to recruit more radical jihadists."

O'Malley also offered a harsh rebuke to the "political danger"

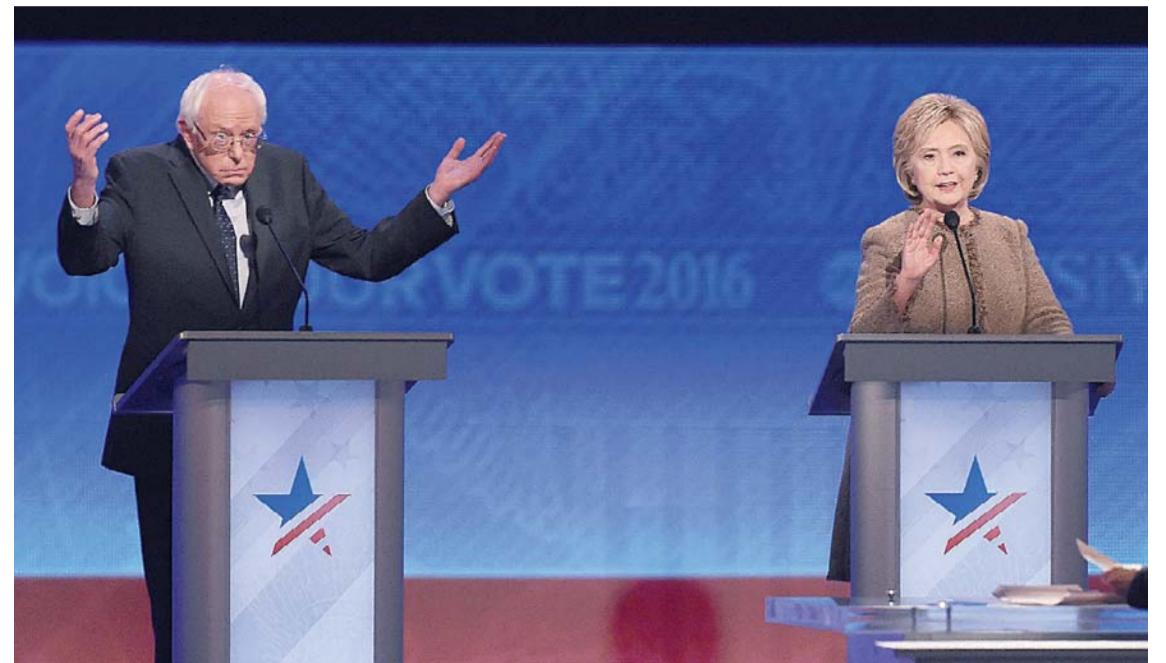
wielded by Trump and other "unscrupulous leaders (who) try to turn us upon each other." The country will rise to the challenge of the IS extremists, but only if Americans never surrender their values "to the fascist pleas of billionaires with big mouths. We are a better country than this." Trump's apparent popularity has only grown in recent weeks since his most contentious remarks. The political neophyte tops most Republican national polls and is putting establishment candidates like Jeb Bush in knots.

Assad and ISIS," he said. "ISIS now is the major priority. Let's get rid of Assad later."

O'Malley pointedly looked back at how several US-backed regime changes fomented chaos. He singled out Libya in 2011, when Clinton was the top US diplomat and supported ousting Moamer Kadhafi, only to see the country descend into chaos, with large swaths now susceptible to becoming jihadist safe havens. "We probably let our lust for regime toppling get ahead of the practical considerations for stability in that region,"

one Sanders staffer took advantage of a computer glitch to peek at Clinton voter information. But on stage Saturday Sanders apologized to Clinton, saying "this is not the type of campaign that we run," and the issue quickly deflated.

Data and IT are uncomfortable topics for Clinton, who was the center of an uproar after it was revealed she used a personal email account and server while secretary of state. Republican National Committee chairman Reince Priebus lashed out at Clinton's performance in the debate, saying she



MANCHESTER: US Democratic presidential hopefuls Hillary Clinton (right) and Bernie Sanders participate in the Democratic Presidential Debate hosted by ABC News at Saint Anselm College. —AFP

'Lust for regime toppling'

While the Democrats united against Trump, Sanders clashed at length with Clinton over how to tackle extremism, opposing her call for a no-fly zone over Syria and for focusing on ousting that country's President Bashar Al-Assad.

Sanders, who is more comfortable talking about economic inequality and financial abuse, topics that are the cornerstones of his campaign, was deeply skeptical. "The United States at the same time cannot successfully fight

O'Malley said.

Sanders piled on, reminding viewers of Clinton's 2002 Senate vote authorizing president George W Bush's use of military force in Iraq. Clinton insisted she was not ready to send US boots into Syria and Iraq, saying she had a strategy to "combat and defeat ISIS without getting us involved in another ground war."

The debate unfolded amid a minor scandal between the Clinton and Sanders campaigns over an apparent data breach when at least

"once again proved inconsistent on the issues and out-of-touch with the American people."

The debate occurred, perhaps not coincidentally, on a Saturday night at the height of the Christmas shopping rush, and on the first weekend of the release of the latest highly-anticipated Star Wars movie, likely ensuring a downsized viewership compared to previous debates. Clinton wrapped up the event with a nod to the flick: "Thank you, good night, and may the Force be with you." —AFP

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BURUNDI REJECTS AU'S PEACEKEEPING FORCE

NAIROBI: Burundi's government said yesterday it would not agree to the deployment of African Union (AU) peacekeepers, warning that they would be seen as "an invasion force". The announcement came a day after the 54-member bloc said it would send a 5,000-strong force to halt spiraling violence in the tiny central African country as fears grow that it is rapidly sliding towards civil war.

It gave the government in Bujumbura a four-day deadline to agree to the offer, but warned it would send troops anyway. "Burundi is clear on the matter: it is not ready to accept an AU force on its territory," deputy presidential spokesman Jean-Claude Karerwa said. "If AU troops came without the government's approval, it would be an invasion and occupation force, and the Burundi govern-

ment would reserve the right to act accordingly."

Burundi has so far dismissed proposals for any peacekeeping force on its territory and Karerwa said any such move by the AU would have to be approved by the UN Security Council. "The Burundi government believes the AU resolution cannot be automatically applied and must first be endorsed by the UN Security Council," he said.

The Security Council late Saturday urged all Burundian stakeholders to cooperate with the proposed African Union peacekeeping mission. It condemned violence on all sides and the "persistence of impunity, as well as of the inflammatory statements made by Burundian political leaders". The standoff comes as international alarm grows over soar-

ing unrest in Burundi where at least 87 people were killed on December 11 in a crackdown by security forces after an attack on three military bases. Many of the dead were youths who were shot dead by the security forces.

'Arbitrary killings'

Burundi has been in crisis since April, when President Pierre Nkurunziza began seeking a third term in a move that even some in his own camp judged unconstitutional. The situation deteriorated when Nkurunziza was re-elected in July in a poll that was boycotted by the opposition. The country has since spiraled into violence and there are fears in the international community this could deteriorate into genocide.

In a strongly-worded statement issued on Saturday, the AU said it would "take additional measures" to ensure the new force's deployment. It underlined its determination "to take all appropriate measures against any party or actor... who would impede the implementation of the present decision".

The announcement came two days after the bloc's Peace and Security Council met over the crisis and agreed it would not allow "another genocide" on African soil. No details have been given about which countries might send troops or when they would be deployed. The AU has urged talks with its members including regional countries in the AU's 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. AU rights investigators last 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 it had reports of "arbitrary killings and targeted assassinations" as well as arrests, detentions and torture. Karerwa said both chambers of the national parliament would hold an extraordinary meeting on Monday to debate the African Union move, adding that "Burundi always reaches out to the international community". — AFP



MADRID: Pablo Iglesias, (center right) leader of Podemos party, waits his turn to cast his vote for the national elections. — AP

SPAIN VOTES IN LANDMARK POLLS, THAT MAY END TWO-PARTY GRIP MOST CLOSELY-FOUGHT CONTESTS IN MODERN HISTORY

MADRID: Spanish voters went to the polls yesterday in what is expected to be one of the most closely-fought contests in modern history as two dynamic new parties take on the country's long-established political giants.

The general election caps off a year of electoral change in southern Europe after far-left party Syriza was swept to power in Greece in January and a coalition of leftist parties in Portugal pooled their votes in parliament to unseat the conservative government in October after an inconclusive election. Spain has been dominated for more than three decades by the conservative Popular Party and the main opposition Socialists, who have alternated running the government. But this time around many voters are expected to cast their ballots for two upstart parties vying for change: the centrist Ciudadanos and the anti-austerity Podemos, a close ally of Greece's Syriza.

"We are on the threshold of a new democratic transition, a new era," said Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera after he cast his ballot in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat in the northeastern region of Catalonia. Polls predict Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's Popular Party will win the largest share of the vote but not enough to retain its absolute majority in parliament.

Such a result would force it to form an uneasy alliance with another political grouping or attempt to rule as a minority government. And all bets are off regarding who will come second in the legislative elections, as the Socialists could end up neck-and-neck with Ciudadanos and Podemos, which would

give these new parties unprecedented influence on the political scene.

'Tectonic shift'

"The fact that a tectonic shift is about to shake up the Spanish political system is testified by the expected 80 percent turnout... compared to 69 percent in the 2011 election," said analysts at UniCredit, calling yesterday's polls "historic".

Sky-high unemployment, inequality, corruption and an ever-rising separatist drive in the northeastern region of Catalonia are just some of the issues at stake in a country deeply scarred by a financial crisis. "The Popular Party and the Socialists became complacent and they have forgotten about us. We have to give the new parties a chance," said truck driver Francisco Perez, 53, after voting for Podemos in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat.

Ana Salazar, head of research and strategy at consultants Red Lines, says the shake-up in Spanish politics started when Podemos emerged in 2014 on the back of an "Indignados" movement fed up with austerity-triggered inequality and corruption. Then came Ciudadanos, which was formed in 2006 in Catalonia but only truly emerged nationwide last year.

"Now we have... the old versus the new," said Salazar. Rajoy, austere, grey-bearded 60-year-old premier, has positioned himself as a safe pair of hands who dragged the country away from economic collapse when he took power in 2011 and put it on the path of recovery. After years of recession, the govern-

ment predicts the economy will grow 3.3 percent this year to the envy of many of its European neighbors. But unemployment remains stubbornly high at more than 21 percent, and Rajoy's rivals point to glaring inequalities brought on by his drastic spending cuts, tax rises and health reforms.

'Reasonable change'

Socialist (PSOE) chief Pedro Sanchez, the 43-year-old economist who only last year took over a party still reeling from its 2011 defeat, has promised to reinstate the rights of workers and immigrants he says have been trampled on.

Ciudadanos chief Rivera, who at 36 is the youngest of the four main party leaders, wants "reasonable change" and pledges to do away with precarity in the workplace. But the question mark of the elections remains Podemos, whose pony-tailed, 37-year-old leader Pablo Iglesias is now a household name.

Seen as running out of steam just months ago, the party appears to be gaining ground again thanks to Iglesias's down-to-earth appeal and his move away from the more radical, far-left ideals Podemos once espoused. So much so that polls suggest Podemos may even replace the long-standing Socialists as the country's main left-wing party. "These years were horrible but they had one good outcome: that lots of people became interested in politics," said Jonathan Pozo, 27, after voting for Podemos in L'Hospitalet de Llobregat. — AFP

ACROSS EUROPE, REFUGEES CLING TO HOPE IN TEMPORARY HOMES

LEEUWARDEN: Seven-month-old Adam's nights are restless. The din and chatter of 600 other asylum seekers sharing a "camp" in the north of the Netherlands keeps this youngest resident awake, and his parents anxious. "Home"—their fifth in three months—is a flimsy plywood cubicle they occupy with two other Iraqi families in a cavernous exhibition centre-turned-shelter. But there is no door, no ceiling and no chance for more sleep when the huge white lights go on each day at 7:00 am.

"This isn't life. How can I explain it?" says Adam's 27-year-old father Ahmad. "It's like a bird in a cage. It eats and drinks but it's not happy." All is a far cry from the vision that kept Ahmad and his hazel-eyed wife Alia, 26, going as they trod, baby in sling, the migrant route to Europe last September, with a team of AFP journalists in tow. Three months on, they feel trapped in a labyrinth of sluggish, soulless administrative steps—though the joy of watching Adam grow out of harm's way encourages their patience. "Our journey is not over," says Ahmad, sitting on the edge of his unmade bed. The boy can almost stand, and he can now say "Mama, Baba". His playfulness is a welcome break both for his parents and some fellow asylum seekers, who like Ahmad and Alia left all behind.

Feeling unwanted

The young Iraqi owned an upscale garment shop in Baghdad. Now, like the others in the shelter, he has to wear a blue plastic bracelet when he goes out to identify him as a "camp" resident. "We still don't know what fate has in store for us... whether or not we will have a residence permit," he says.

Ahmad understands the Netherlands is "crowded" with a record number of asylum requests, but he can't shake the fear that Dutch authorities may one day send them back to Iraq. He also worries that attitudes towards refugees have changed since the deadly Paris attacks. "People used to say hello to us on the

street, they used to welcome us. Now they don't any more," he says. His family's situation mirrors that of hundreds of thousands of others, uncomfortably accommodated by overwhelmed European authorities who have commandeered sports halls and other civic buildings.

Nearly a million people fleeing war and misery reached Europe's shores this year. When Ahmad and Alia survived a bomb attack in Baghdad in 2014, they too decided to risk all and crossed the Aegean Sea this summer. Through seven countries in as many days at the peak of the migrant crisis, they slept rough in the Balkans, dodged arrest and handed smugglers their life savings — 9,000 euros (\$10,000) — to have a chance at life in Europe.

Their goal was the Netherlands, where they have family in Utrecht, a city whose picturesque setting is far from the makeshift shelters they've passed through before they were assigned to Leeuwarden, a town of some 100,000 residents where they arrived on October 16. It took authorities five weeks to register the couple's asylum request. "I felt that the Netherlands didn't want us, like it was telling us to leave," said Ahmad. With 54,000 requests registered in 2015 by mid-November, the authorities concede they are overwhelmed. "We have a backlog, and that sometimes causes friction," says Alet Bowmeester, spokeswoman for the Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers.

Breaking the routine

With little to do but wait, the couple look for ways to lift their spirits. "Every morning, my friends and I get together in a room that we have assigned as the make-up room. We go there to get dressed, put on make up and do our hair," says Alia, who still bears scars on her face from the 2014 bombing. Once a week the family goes to Mouni, a kebab restaurant in the heart of Leeuwarden that is popular among refugees. — AFP



LEEUWARDEN: Iraqi refugees Ahmad, his wife Alia and their baby Adam get ready in their bedroom, shared with other refugees, at a temporary refugee center. — AFP

SLOVENIANS VOTE IN GAY MARRIAGE REFERENDUM

KOPER: Slovenians were yesterday voting in a referendum on whether to allow the largely-Catholic EU member state to become Europe's first ex-communist country to allow same-sex marriage. Polling stations opened promptly at 7:00am (0600 GMT), although hardly anyone could be seen coming to vote in the first hour, an AFP correspondent in the southwestern port city of Koper said. More than 1.7 million people are registered to cast their ballots on the issue which has stoked heated debate in this former Yugoslav republic. In March, Slovenia's parliament approved legislation redefining marriage as a "union of two" instead of being a "union of a man and a woman", granting homosexual couples the same rights as their heterosexual counterparts, including the right to adopt children. But opponents immediately launched a campaign to reverse the changes, meaning the legislation never came into force and no same-sex couples were able to tie the knot.

A group called "Children Are At Stake" managed to gather the 40,000 signatures necessary to force a referendum on the matter. "I voted yes. Love is love, regardless of everything," said a 24-year-old woman called Ida. Another voter said he was also in favor of the changes, but argued that putting the matter to a referendum was a waste of public money. "It should be experts or the government deciding about this. They should not leave it to us," said Vojko, a pensioner. "This is throwing money away. Of course I'm for it, but if it turns out to be a 'no', the world will laugh at us." But the issue has divided this country with a population of around two million. On the wall of a church centre near the polling, someone had scrawled a question. "Would you take a homosexual donor's blood to save your child?" it read.

'Marriage yes, adoption no'

Another pensioner said that while gay cou-

ples should be given equality as far as marriage was concerned, that should not include the right to adopt children. "They are people like us, they should be given all rights, but not (the right to adopt) children," said a 76-year-old woman called Ema. "It has to end with a 'no'."

Ahead of the vote debate has been heated, and even Pope Francis has waded in, urging Slovenians to stand up for traditional family values. Speaking to a group of pilgrims, he said he encouraged "everyone, especially those with public responsibility, to support the family, a structural reference point for the life of society."

A final poll released by state television on Friday gave the "No" vote 55.5 percent support, with a projected turnout of 46 percent. In order for the result to be valid, the winning side must include at least 20 percent of eligible voters. Other surveys have indicated a tighter result, however. If the "No" vote prevails, then the civil code will be changed back, although existing legislation, which allows registered civil partnerships but not the adoption of children, will remain in force. This is not the first such referendum on the subject, with Slovenian voters rejecting gay marriage in an earlier plebiscite in 2012, although turnout was low. Polls close at 9:00 pm, with preliminary results are expected shortly afterwards.

Genderless marriage?

Slovenia has long been ahead of its peers, joining the EU back in 2004 — nine years before neighbour Croatia and the Euro-zone in 2007 as its first ex-communist member, but its society retains a strong traditionalist streak. President Borut Pahor and Prime Minister Miro Cerar's ruling Modern Centre Party (SMC) support the "Yes" camp, saying gay marriage would eliminate discrimination and grant equal rights to all citizens in the two-million-strong country. — AFP

CHRISTIE SAYS 'SHOW TIME' OVER IN NEW HAMPSHIRE

EXETER: Republican presidential candidate Chris Christie says it's time for voters to start getting serious about the election as they head into the new year. The New Jersey governor returned to New Hampshire Saturday to kick off a four-day bus tour across the early-voting state, where he's been drawing new interest and gaining in polls.

"It's game time," Christie told a crowd of supporters gathered in an Exeter automotive garage, where he made a dramatic entrance in a new silver bus, emblazoned with his name and tagline, as the theme song from Star Wars played. "I've had a fun summer and fall. It's been incredibly entertaining," said Christie, running through a list of rivals that includes senators, current and former governors, and "a real character" — a shot at billionaire businessman and reality TV personality Donald Trump. But now, Christie said, "Show time is over. It's time to pick a president. We're not picking a legislator-in-chief. We're not picking an entertainer-in-chief. We're not casting a TV show. This is real."

Christie, once seen as a top GOP contender, had struggled early on to stand out in a crowded field that includes former Gov. Jeb Bush and Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida as well as Trump, who has been sucking up most of the oxygen in the race. But Christie has earned new attention from voters following the attacks in Paris and San Bernardino and after

several well-regarded debate showings.

Tested leader

Christie painted himself Saturday as a tested leader with executive experience many of his rivals lack. He singled out two senators in the race — Rubio and Texas Sen Ted Cruz — criticizing Rubio for missing Friday's year-end budget vote. "I mean, Senator Rubio, listen, if you're going to say you're opposed to something, how about showing up to work and voting no?"

Christie asked in Exeter.

"He didn't go to work!" Christie continued at an evening town hall in Bedford. Christie has faced criticism in New Jersey for the time he's spent out of state. Rubio's spokesman said in a statement Friday that the senator was campaigning in Iowa. "Marco has consistently voted against those sorts of bills, but the truth is that it's not going to change until we elect a new president," spokesman Alex Conant said. "That's why Marco is meeting voters in Iowa today."

Christie also mocked his "buddy" Cruz for talking a tough game by threatening to carpet-bomb Syria while backing the USA Freedom Act, which ended the NSA's bulk collection of phone records. "That's really tough talk," Christie said. "Except this year, when it came time to decide whether we were going to give our intelligence community all the tools they needed to protect us against terrorism, Sen Cruz voted to weaken America, to make America more vulnerable. He decided that it was more important to score political points than it was to protect the American people."

Cruz argued during the last GOP debate that the current system is better than the one under the old Patriot Act because it includes cellphone records. Christie, who was marking his 53rd day in the state, went on to compare his rivals to shiny new cars, saying they that haven't proven themselves as he has as a prosecutor who took office not long after the 9/11 attacks and as New Jersey's governor during Superstorm Sandy.

"I'm the old truck in the race, everybody," said Christie, who argued he would be most prepared to take on Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton if she wins. "You want that old truck on stage, you want the truck that can go forward and go in reverse no matter how much mud she throws, because she's going to be throwing the mud, you know it, that's the Clinton playbook," he said. — AP



EXETER: Republican presidential candidate New Jersey Gov Chris Christie shakes hands with potential supporters as his wife Mary Pat watches during a campaign stop. — AP

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You will be responsible for handling any of the above responsibilities reporting to the Accounts Supervisor/ Asst Manager - Accounts & Control, to be an effective team player and contribute to the timely delivery of accurate accounting information, as well as, maintaining compliance with company policies in the area assigned.

Apply Now **JB3425511**

Customer Retention Advisor
 OSN Networks
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for contacting existing and potential OSN regional customers according to preset outbound campaigns and outbound calling, handling customer inquiries, complaints, billing and service requests, building trust, as well as, increasing customer retention and winning back customer loyalty.

Apply Now **JB3424516**

X Ray Doctor
 The Salhiya Medical Pavilion
 Kuwait

You will be responsible for using medical imaging technologies, such as X-rays, CT scans and MRIs, to diagnose and make treatment decisions regarding patients' health problems, as well as, getting clear imaging results, which requires proper use of the equipment and keeping patients calm and informed throughout the x-ray procedure.

Apply Now **JB3420111**

Head of Business Development - Saudi
 Advanced Research Corp - KSA

You will be responsible for contributing to the development and refinement of Company's vision and strategy, supporting the overall process of management and corporate decision-making to ensure the organization maximizes its short, medium and long-term profitability & developing, reviewing, and reporting on the business development division's strategy.

Apply Now **JB3431653**

Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
 Manpower Middle East
 KSA

You will be responsible for guiding and directing financial accounting, general ledger, accounts payable, account receivable, fixed assets, payroll, project & cost management, accounting, treasury management, as well as, managing the daily operations/activities of the Finance department so as to encourage optimum utilization of its services.

Apply Now **JB3431711**

Marketing Manager
 SAMNAN Holding Co.
 KSA

You will be responsible for assisting in establishing strategic marketing plans to achieve corporate objectives, developing and executing marketing programs to achieve stated objectives regarding revenue, profitability, and market share, helping manage marketing budget, as well as, planning and overseeing execution of promotional activities.

Apply Now **JB3431709**

Head of HR
 Mackenzie Jones
 KSA

You will be responsible for clarifying and taking action on management strategy to address key gaps in delivery of training and development, providing strategic partnering, mentoring, coaching and leadership development to management and staff, as well as, driving employees to achieve desired performance goals and ensure retention of top performers.

Apply Now **JB3431611**

VP Property Management
 Mackenzie Jones
 UAE

You will be responsible for leading the Property Management Division and all Facilities Management function, managing assigned property portfolio in a professional and customer focused way, leading the team to conduct periodic property inspection and preparing reports and action plans, as well as, developing and strategising the growth of Division.

Apply Now **JB3431683**

Lead Ambassador
 Teknip Technologies
 UAE

You will be responsible for supporting the Brand Ambassadors by assisting them in identifying their potential, continuous monitoring and coaching of their performance, maintaining a professional working relationship with the external clients, as well as, ensuring that KPIs set by client are met.

Apply Now **JB3431657**

Managing Consultant
 ND & Associates
 UAE

You will be responsible for pro-actively generating leads and establishing a solid network across diversified industries, calling, arranging and attending meetings with prospective clients in the region, negotiating contracts and closing agreements with clients, as well as, managing the entire recruitment process and prioritizing workload.

Apply Now **JB3325905**

Head of Strategic Sales - UAE
 Manpower Middle East
 UAE

You will be responsible for developing and keeping an appropriate account strategy for each nominated customer, achieving aggressive Corporate sales targets across market and segments, aggressively managing the Corporate sales pipeline ensuring the accurate and timely reporting of results, as well as, collaborating with Marketing and New Product Development.

Apply Now **JB3431713**

Global Head of Cash Management
 Mackenzie Jones - Qatar

You will be responsible for ensuring the cash management teams working closely with relationship management teams internationally, playing a leading role in developing the broader Transaction Banking offering for the bank internationally, managing and developing teams across the world, as well as, driving the development of the cash management platform offering of the bank.

Apply Now **JB3431673**

Contracts Manager
 Adept Personnel
 Qatar

You will be responsible for advising and reporting on contract interpretation, payments, changes in scope of works, variations and final accounts, preparing claims, assisting on delay analysis and loss and expense claims, advising on Contract Law and dispute resolution, as well as, assessing the risks of claims on each sub-contract and assisting the engineering site team.

Apply Now **JB3431442**

Director IT and Business Improvement
 Jaidah Group - Qatar

You will be responsible for the selection, design, implementation, administration, effective utilization and evaluation of the information technology infrastructure for the Company, as well as, managing operational improvement initiatives aimed at improving staff engagement, efficiency/productivity & customer/client satisfaction.

Apply Now **JB3414911**

Contracts Manager
 Adept Personnel
 Qatar

You will be responsible for advising and reporting on contract interpretation, payments, changes in scope of works, variations and final accounts, preparing claims, assisting on delay analysis and loss and expense claims, advising on Contract Law and dispute resolution, assessing the risks of claims on each sub-contract and assisting the engineering site team in recording information.

Apply Now **JB3431442**

FIRST PHASE COMPLETE IN LANDMARK HABRE TRIAL

DAKAR: The first phase of former Chad dictator Hissene Habre's history-making trial for atrocities during the 1980s concluded in Senegal this week, with the regime's victims giving at times traumatic and horrifying evidence. Habre, who held power between 1982 and 1990, is charged with crimes against humanity, war crimes and torture—the first time a despot from one African country has been called to account by another.

The 73-year-old—once backed by France and the United States as a bulwark against Libya's Moamer Kadhafi—has been in custody in his adoptive home of Senegal since his arrest in June 2013. An investigating commission found that well in excess of 40,000 people were killed during an eight-year reign marked by fierce repression of his opponents and the targeting of rival ethnic groups.

At stake is whether or not it can be proved that Habre personally knew about the abusive and often deadly punishments meted out to prisoners by Chad's feared secret police, the Documentation and Security Directorate (DDS).

"The trial has been fair and vivid, with moments of real courtroom drama," said Reed Brody, a lawyer for Human Rights Watch (HRW) who has worked with victims of Habre's regime for 16 years. "There

was powerful testimony about torture, rape, sexual slavery, mass executions, prisoners forced to live with rotting corpses and entire villages destroyed." Habre is being tried by the Extraordinary African Chambers, a special court established in Dakar by the African Union under an agreement with Senegal, led by a judge from Burkina Faso.

'E for execute'

Delayed for years by Senegal, where Habre has lived since being ousted in 1990, the hearings set a historic precedent as, until now, African leaders accused of atrocities have been tried in international courts. More than 4,000 "direct or indirect" victims have been registered as civil parties to the case and the court has heard from more than 90 witnesses.

The trial opened amid dramatic scenes on July 20, with Habre brought by force into the dock, refusing to speak in a court whose authority he doesn't recognize, forcing a 45-day adjournment. The hearings resumed on September 7 with Habre appointed a defence team by the court and the prosecution spelling out some of the abuses suffered by detainees. These included the infamous "Arbatachar", a grim method of tying all four limbs behind the victim's back to cause agonising pain

and paralysis. Torture of suspects under his regime included electric shocks, gas sprayed into prisoners' eyes, spice rubbed into their private parts and waterboarding, the tribunal heard. One-by-one, witnesses recounted the horror of life in Chad's prisons, with the climax of a dramatic opening few weeks the evidence of Bandjimi Bandoum, a remorseful top official in the DDS.

"Records of the questioning of detainees came back from the presidency with annotations: E for 'execute'; L for 'set free' or V for 'seen,'" he told the tribunal. "Once a statement was prepared by the DDS on a prisoner, only the president could request a release," he said, adding that Habre was "aware of everything that was happening" in the department's detention centers.

'Unfinished business'

The trial heard from Clement Abaifouta, a prisoner for four years in N'Djamena dubbed "The Gravedigger", who described how he was forced daily to bury fellow inmates, sometimes in their dozens.

Habre's defence team has with every new testimony attempted to cast doubt on the idea of their client as an all-knowing, all-powerful head of the

DDS, suggesting he may have been unaware of abuses on the ground. But Brody, the HRW lawyer, said the trial's Internet streaming and television broadcast in Chad, as well as widespread press coverage, has allowed the public to evaluate for themselves testimony suggesting otherwise.

"The prosecution and the victims' lawyers presented evidence to show that Habre wasn't a distant ruler who was unaware of the crimes that were being committed in his name," Brody told AFP. Jacob Blaise, a member of an association of victims in Chad, praised the process for allowing former detainees some catharsis and providing Chadians at home with an insight into the workings of Habre's regime.

"The victims at least had the opportunity to testify in front of their alleged torturer, but the silence of Habre leaves a sense of unfinished business in this trial," added Issa Mahamat, who teaches at the University of N'Djamena. If Habre is convicted, he can expect a sentence ranging from 30 years to life with hard labor, to be served in Senegal or another African Union country. The trial resumes with the prosecution's and defense's final statements on February 8, with a verdict expected in late May 2016. — AFP

US: BOMBERS DIDN'T INTEND FLY OVER CHINA-HELD ISLAND

BEIJING ACCUSES US OF 'SERIOUS MILITARY PROVOCATION'

BEIJING: The United States said its two B-52 bombers had no intention of flying over a Chinese-controlled man-made island in the South China Sea, after Beijing accused Washington of "a serious military provocation" in the strategic waters with overlapping claims.

China's Defense Ministry on Saturday accused the US of deliberately raising tensions in the region, where China has been aggressively asserting its claims to virtually all islands, reefs and its surrounding seas. It reiterated that it would do whatever is necessary to protect China's sovereignty.

Pentagon spokesman Mark Wright said that the Dec 10 mission was not a "freedom of navigation" operation and that there was "no intention of flying within 12 nautical miles of any feature," indicating the mission may have strayed off course. The US uses pre-planned freedom of navigation operations to assert its rights to "innocent passage" in other country's territorial waters. "The United States routinely conducts B-52 training missions throughout the region, including over the South China Sea," Wright said in an email to The Associated Press. "These missions are designed to maintain readiness and demonstrate our commitment to fly, sail and operate anywhere allowed under international law."

Wright said the US was "looking into the matter." The US takes no official stance on sovereignty claims in the South China Sea, through which \$5 trillion in international trade passes each year. However, Washington insists on freedom of navigation and maintains that China's seven newly created islands do not enjoy traditional rights, including a 12-nautical-mile territorial limit.

'Military provocation'

China's Defense Ministry demanded that Washington immediately take measures to prevent such incidents and damage to relations between the two nations' militaries. "The actions by the US side



BERLIN: The Foreign Minister of China Wang Yi attends a news conference with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier during a meeting. — AP

constitute a serious military provocation and are rendering more complex and even militarizing conditions in the South China Sea," the ministry said in a statement. The statement said that Chinese military personnel on the island went on high alert during the overflights by the B-52 strategic bombers and that they issued warnings demanding the aircraft leave the area. As is China's usual practice, the Foreign Ministry took a more diplomatic tone, saying the situation was stable.

Speaking to reporters on a visit to Berlin, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi drew a contrast between the situation in the South China Sea region and the chaos and turmoil in other parts of the world. "The situation in the South China Sea is essentially stable

overall," he said. Wang also said that while China understands the concerns of nations from outside the region a clear reference to the US - they should "do more to benefit peace and stability and support efforts to find a resolution through talks, and not manufacture tensions or even fan the flames." "We don't think this is a constructive approach and will not receive the support and welcome of relevant nations," Wang said. The Foreign Ministry said it had "lodged solemn representation with the United States" over the incident. China's latest protest comes amid a simmering dispute over Washington's approval this past week of the first arms package in four years offered to Taiwan, Beijing's self-governing rival. — AP

AFGHAN OFFICIAL WARNS HELMAND PROVINCE MAY FALL TO TALEBAN

KABUL: Afghanistan's Helmand province could fall to the Taliban after months of heavy fighting, with 90 members of the security forces killed over the past two days, the deputy governor of the volatile southern province warned yesterday.

Mohammad Jan Rasulyar said unless President Ashraf Ghani took urgent action, the province, a centre of opium production and a Taliban heartland that British and American troops struggled to control for years, would be lost. "Your Excellency, Helmand is standing on the brink and there is a serious need for you to come," he wrote on Facebook.

The highly unusual public plea from a serving official painted a picture strikingly similar to the situation that led up to the fall of the northern city of Kunduz in late September, when Taliban fighters seized and held on to for several days before government troops regained control.

If Helmand were to fall, it would deliver a blow to government claims that Afghan security forces, fighting largely alone since international troops ended combat operations last year, are controlling the insurgency, in spite of setbacks such as the fall of Kunduz.

Army spokesman Mohammad Rasool Zazai said he had no comment on the post, but said Helmand would never collapse, while police chief Abul Rahman Sarjang said: "We have strong forces in Helmand. In some places, we leave areas for tactical reasons, but all forces are working together well and very soon we will have major achievements to report."

Ghani's government, backed by billions of dollars in international aid and training assistance from thousands of NATO troops still stationed in Afghanistan, is pushing to re-open talks with the Taliban. Over the past six months, Helmand has been the

scene of battles between insurgents and security forces that have complained of being abandoned by the US-backed government.

Foreign forces

"We don't provide food and ammunition to our forces on time, do not evacuate our wounded and martyred soldiers from the battle field, and foreign forces only watch the situation from their bases and don't provide support," Rasulyar wrote.

Since Thursday, there had been 90 casualties near Gereshek, a junction on Highway 1 near the provincial capital Lashkar Gah, and in Sangin district to the north, a level of losses which was "an everyday issue", Rasulyar added. He said Sangin was "on the verge of collapse" with 44 casualties overnight. The Taliban, which has not let a bloody internal leadership battle interrupt its campaign in Helmand, posted statements on its website detailing attacks on checkpoints as well as other operations including a suicide attack against the Gereshek police chief.

With army and police units badly weakened by desertions and lack of supplies, the Taliban has seized the districts of Musa Qalah and Now Zad in the north of the province and has threatened Lashkar Gah. Government forces said they had recaptured the district of Khanishin on Friday, but yesterday, the Taliban said it had won back the centre.

Underlining the gravity of the situation, US Special Forces have been reported to have taken part in fighting in Helmand in recent weeks. NATO headquarters in Kabul has not confirmed the reports. A Pentagon report to Congress last week highlighted major shortcomings with Afghan security forces, despite billions of dollars of foreign aid and training. — Reuters

WEEK-LONG ASSAULT CAPTURES EXTREMIST CAMP IN PHILIPPINES

ZAMBOANGA: A week-long assault by Philippine troops ended with the capture of a Muslim extremist camp and the deaths of 26 militants and three soldiers, a military spokesman said yesterday. Soldiers captured the Abu Sayyaf camp in a forested area on the southern island of Basilan but an improvised explosive device left behind by the rebels, injured 12 soldiers on Sunday, said Major Filemon Tan.

"After we captured the camp, they were clearing the bunkers when the IED exploded," he said. About 300 soldiers, backed by artillery and attack helicopters, launched the attack on the Abu Sayyaf group on strife-torn Basilan about 885 kilometers from Manila today, starting days of intense combat. The battle involved as many as 150 members of the Abu Sayyaf group, according to the military, which also reported militant deaths that could not be verified. A total of 26 Abu Sayyaf fighters were slain, Tan said but the military was unable to recover their bodies. "The populace of the area, they confirmed it. They were buried at once according to Muslim tradition. Others were seen by our troops, being shot, falling

and not getting up," he said. The rest of the Abu Sayyaf members fled in different directions before dawn on Sunday, he said.

Sixteen Abu Sayyaf fighters were also wounded along with 14 soldiers before the IED blast on Sunday, Tan added. Pursuit operations were continuing against the remnants of the Abu Sayyaf group and its leaders in Basilan, he said.

The captured camp, measuring 30,000 square meters could accommodate about 250 people with 28 structures including fortified bunkers, the military said. Basilan, an impoverished island of about 400,000 people, has long been a stronghold of the Abu Sayyaf, a group formed in the 1990s with the help of Al-Qaeda founder Osama Bin Laden. The Abu Sayyaf is infamous for kidnapping people, including foreigners and demanding huge ransoms for their release. The group has also been blamed for the worst terror attacks in the country, including the firebombing of a ferry off Manila Bay in 2004 that killed over 100 people. Last year, Abu Sayyaf leaders pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group, which controls vast swathes of Syria and Iraq. — AFP

INDONESIAN POLICE FOIL STRING OF 'JIHAD' PLOTS

JAKARTA: Indonesian counter-terrorism police said yesterday they had arrested suspected Islamist militants in locations across the island of Java, foiling separate plots to bomb minority Shia communities and target Christmas and New Year celebrations.

Bomb-making materials and 'jihad manuals' were seized after the arrest of six men in central and west Java who were either members or supporters of the Sunni militant group Islamic State, the Jakarta Globe daily said on its website. Chemicals and weapons were found buried under a tree at one raid site in the city of Solo.

National Police Chief General Badrodin Haiti told the Globe that the raids to round up the men, which began on Friday, were prompted by intelligence from the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Australian Federal Police. The Globe said their plan was to launch attacks in Java and neighboring Sumatra on communities of Shia, who represent a tiny minority in Indonesia.

Indonesia has the world's largest Muslim population, the vast majority of whom practice a moderate form of the religion. Separately, police said four men suspected of being weapons specialists and strategists of the Al Qaeda-affiliated Jamaah Islamiah group had been arrested in east Java.

"They had made plans for actions in the near term, in relation to Christmas and New Year," Budhi Herdi Susianto, chief of police in the east Java regency of Mojokerto told Metro TV. He gave no details of their plans. News agency AFP reported that, according to arrest documents, they were planning a suicide bombing in Jakarta, the country's capital, during New Year celebrations.

A police source said that, in all,

there were "interlinked" arrests in five cities across Java. The Globe said that in one raid, police had seized bomb-making material, including detonators, lengths of piping, nails and buckshot, and various chemicals. They also found a book on waging jihad and a map of the Greater Jakarta area.

Militant resurgence

Indonesia saw a spate of militant attacks in the 2000s, the deadliest of which was a nightclub bombing on the holiday island of Bali that

killed 202 people, most of them tourists. Police have been largely successful in destroying domestic militant cells since then, but officials now worry about a resurgence in militancy inspired by groups such as Islamic State and Indonesians who return after fighting with the group.

Authorities plan to deploy more than 150,000 security personnel and several religious organizations to safeguard churches and public places around the country during Christmas and New Year's Eve celebrations, the country's military chief said on Friday.

Security and surveillance had already been stepped up in some areas following the attacks in Paris last month that killed 130 people and for which Islamic State has claimed responsibility. Indonesia is home to an estimated 25 million Christian people, roughly 10 percent of the total population. They live mostly not on smaller, more remote islands, not on the two most populated islands of Java and Sumatra. — Reuters



SHENZHEN: Rescuers search for survivors amongst collapsed buildings after a landslide in south China's Guangdong province yesterday. The landslide collapsed and buried buildings at and around an industrial park in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen on Sunday authorities reported. — AP

PIGGY BANK DONORS KICK START TAIWAN ELECTION

TAIPEI: Tsai Ing-wen, widely tipped to become Taiwan's next president, kicked off a one-month election campaign yesterday, with supporters bringing donations in piggy banks to a rally held by her opposition party.

About a thousand people gathered outside the headquarters of the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) in the capital Taipei to hear a speech made by Tsai—who would become Taiwan's first female president if elected — with many holding green plastic piggy banks stuffed with coins and bank notes.

The ruling Kuomintang (KMT) is expected to be unseated from power in the upcoming January elections as the public becomes increasingly fearful of warming ties with China—which sees Taiwan as a renegade province to be brought back into its fold. The KMT is struggling to regain public support after its worst-ever local election defeat last

year, with its China-friendly policy under current president Ma Ying-jeou a major factor.

There are fears that Beijing's influence on the island is growing, with opponents riled by Ma's recent high-profile meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping. The DPP first started using piggy banks during campaigning for the 2012 election, describing itself as a party funded by the people, contrasting its grassroots appeal with the wealthy KMT.

"I believe people are donating their pigs because they hope it can usher in a new political era," Tsai said, addressing the rally. "The DPP is a party held up by the people... We don't run any private businesses or rely on big corporate donations," she added. Tsai is currently ahead by a wide margin with over 46 percent support in a poll this month conducted by Taiwan Indicators Survey Research, while KMT's candidate Eric Chu lags at about 16 percent. — AFP



An Afghan vendor throws water over harvested carrots in Jalalabad yesterday. — AFP

TOP HEZB MILITANT KILLED IN ISRAELI RAID

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"Sirens sounded in northern Israel. Initial report suggests three rockets hit northern Israel. Forces are searching the area," it said. The Israeli military later said it shelled unspecified targets in south Lebanon. "The Israel Defense Forces have responded with targeted artillery fire following the rockets that hit Israel earlier today from southern Lebanon," an English-language army statement said.

Israeli Cabinet minister Yuval Steinitz said he was not sorry about Kantar's death but could not comment on the accusations that Israel was behind the killing. "If something happened to him I think that no civilized person can be sorry. But again I learned it from the reports in the international media and I can make no concrete reference to it," he said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not comment about the strike in his weekly Cabinet meeting. The Israeli news website Ynet ran a headline yesterday saying: "The account is now closed."

Although Al-Manar said Israeli warplanes violated Syrian airspace, the Lebanon-based Al-Mayadeen TV station, which is close to Hezbollah and the Syrian government, said two Israeli warplanes fired the four missiles while flying over northern Israel. Al-Mayadeen said that Farhan Al-Shaalani, a senior commander with the anti-Israeli "resistance" movement in the Golan Heights, was also killed in the air raid together with an aide to Kantar.

Israel possesses long-range air to surface missiles that conceivably could have been fired from Israeli-controlled airspace. The Golan Heights are only about 40 km from Damascus. Israeli warplanes have struck targets inside Syria several times during the country's nearly five-year conflict although it has rarely confirmed its involvement.

Kantar's killing, however, would mark the first Israeli assassination of a senior figure inside Syria since Russia launched its military operations in Syria on Sept 30 in support of President Bashar Assad. Israel's defense minister has said that Russia and Israel have worked out an open communication system "to prevent misunderstandings." That raises the question of whether the Russians would have been informed by Israel about the operation to assassinate Kantar. The Russian Defense Ministry declined comment on the airstrike.

Lebanon's state-run National News Agency said Israeli forces were on high alert near the border with Lebanon and moved patrols far from the border fence. NNA added that UN peacekeepers have intensified their patrols in the border areas. Hezbollah legislator Ali Ammar vowed that Kantar's death will not go unpunished adding that military commanders will decide how to avenge the killing. Al-Manar TV said Hezbollah chief Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah will make a televised statement today evening.

Kantar and four Hezbollah guerrillas were freed in 2008 in exchange for the bodies of two Israeli soldiers captured by Hezbollah in 2006, whose capture sparked a 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah. His release was highly controversial in Israel, where he is believed to be the perpetrator of one of the most grisly attacks in Israeli history. As a teenager, Kantar joined a Palestinian militant group known as the "Palestine Liberation Front" at the height of Palestinian-Israeli violence in the Middle East and at a time when most Palestinian groups were based in Lebanon.

Kantar was imprisoned in 1979 in Israel and sentenced to three life terms after he and three other Lebanese infiltrated the Jewish State in 1979 and staged an attack in the northern coastal town of Nahariya, killing a policeman and then kidnapping a man, Danny Haran, and his 4-year-old daughter and killing them outside their home. Israel says Kantar, who was 16 at the time, beat the girl to death by bashing her head with a rifle butt. He denies this, saying the girl was killed in the crossfire. As the attack unfolded, the girl's mother, Smadar Haran, hid inside a crawl space inside their home and accidentally smothered their crying 2-year-old daughter, fearing Kantar would find them. The widow, Smadar Haran, told Israel's Army Radio yesterday that Kantar's killing was a "historic justice".

Israel held on to Kantar for decades, hoping to use him as a bargaining chip to win new information about an Israeli airman whose plane crashed in Lebanon in 1986. It ultimately traded him in 2008 along with four other Lebanese prisoners in exchange for the bodies of two of its soldiers. Nasrallah insisted at the time that Kantar be included in any swap. Kantar, 53, received a hero's welcome upon his return to Lebanon. Assad awarded him the country's highest medal during a trip he made to Damascus that year.

Soon afterward, Kantar, a Druze, joined Hezbollah, his role growing quietly within the group's ranks particularly following the group's involvement in the civil war in Syria in support of Assad's forces. In September, the US State Department added Kantar to its Specially Designated Global Terrorist over his work with Hezbollah. Kantar is the most high profile Hezbollah fighter to be killed since last year.

In January, the Lebanese group accused Israel of carrying out an airstrike on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, which killed several Hezbollah members and a prominent Iranian general. Among the Hezbollah members was Jihad Mughniya, the son of Imad Mughniya, a top Hezbollah operative assassinated in 2008 in Damascus. Al-Mayadeen TV said Kantar had been living in the targeted building for a year. — Agencies

2015, THE YEAR THAT IS TERROR WENT GLOBAL

Continued from Page 1

Said and Cherif Kouachi had both been placed under surveillance at some point but had slipped off the radar and appeared to be no longer a threat before they suddenly launched an attack.

The last 12 months have shown that security forces in the countries targeted, despite beefed-up resources, are struggling. "Every European security service that I have talked to in the last year is petrified of the issue of foreign fighters, and there is almost no solution to it," said Bruce Riedel, of the Brookings Institution in Washington. Hundreds of European citizens are joining IS in Syria and Iraq - often through the relatively easy route of Turkey - every month and some are then returning home radicalized and hardened after spending time on the battlefield. Keeping tabs on all of them, Riedel argues, is impossible. "It's a serious problem. It's what I call task saturation," he said.

In December, Saudi Arabia announced the creation of a 34-country coalition dedicated to fighting IS, but a coordinated

international strategy to combat the threat the group poses still seems some way off, said Jean-Pierre Filiu, a professor at the Sciences Po university in Paris. "The attacks in Paris and in San Bernardino have shown Western countries that Daesh (another name for IS) can hit at any time," he said. "And you can see that France, despite support from Britain and Germany, is far from having the active support of other European countries." The United States, meanwhile, is pursuing a long-term approach to attacking IS "which is allowing the group to develop its transnational networks", Filiu said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin has deployed substantial weaponry in Syria, insisting its military campaign there is aimed at destroying IS and other jihadist groups. But members of a US-led coalition complain that Russia is mainly hitting groups fighting President Bashar Al-Assad, and NGOs have reported high civilian casualties. For the time being, the attacks by IS gunmen and bombers have failed to have the one effect that the group is seeking perhaps more than anything else - the stigmatization of Muslim communities who would then swing their support behind the group.

FAKE BOMB SCARE ON AIR FRANCE FLIGHT

Continued from Page 1

smuggling a bomb onto the plane, killing all 224 people on board. Gagey said there had been three bomb scares on Air France planes in the United States since the attacks.

Flight AF 463 left the Indian Ocean island of Mauritius at 9:00 pm (1700 GMT) on Saturday and had been due to arrive in Paris Charles de Gaulle at 5:50 am (0450 GMT) yesterday. But it made an emergency landing at Moi International Airport in Kenya's southern port city of Mombasa at 12:37 am (2137 GMT) "after a device suspected to be a bomb was discovered in the lavatory," police spokesman Charles Owino said. "An emergency was prepared and it landed safely and all passengers evacuated."

When the plane landed, passenger John Stephen said crew members helped safely evacuate people using emergency slides. "We felt the crew member was pretty tense, something was probably wrong at that time. When

the plane stopped, he told us to run away to take the slide, to run away from the plane," Stephen told reporters. "We don't know anything more about this bomb or not, but something that looked like a bomb was in the toilet."

Navy and police bomb experts were called in to determine if there were any explosives aboard the plane. Air France's chief executive Gagey said the object was found "in a small cupboard behind the mirror" in the toilet. He said the bits of cardboard and paper and what "appeared to be a kitchen timer" were not items normally found on board. Gagey said crew members had also indicated that in their routine check of the plane before the flight the cupboard had been empty. He said Air France was waiting to hear from Kenyan authorities but that "we will request an investigation to clarify" what had happened.

Kenyan Interior Minister Joseph Nkaissery, who arrived in Mombasa, said police were questioning a number of passengers but did not say how many. "They are speaking to the passengers... who were near where the device was," Nkaissery said. — AFP

FURY AS DELHI GANG-RAPIST FREED

Continued from Page 1

News of the release was immediately condemned by the parents of the victim, a medical student who died of her injuries in a Singapore hospital nearly two weeks after the attack on Dec 16, 2012. "Our fight was all about this convict not being allowed to walk free. If he has come out, what is the point of the hearing at the Supreme Court?" her mother told reporters. "We want justice for our daughter. I have come out on the streets because I am very disappointed today. We don't know if we will ever get justice now. Our justice system has left us disillusioned."

Speaking at the India Gate protest yesterday evening, the victim's father said the release is "really upsetting". "The fact that he has been released shows there is no justice in this country," he said. Scores of students attended the protest holding placards and banners defying prohibitory orders put in place by police. One placard read "When will Nirbhaya get justice" referring to the nickname given to the victim by the media.

India media said the rapist, who cannot be named for legal reasons, had been handed over to a charitable organization yesterday, but police sources said the move had

actually taken place some days ago. The name of the NGO has not been released over fears that their offices could be attacked. News of the release came only hours before a hearing today at India's Supreme Court where a women's rights group will file a petition against the release.

The parents and women's rights groups have been opposing the release of the youngest attacker, mainly on the grounds that it was unclear if he had been rehabilitated and was ready to be reintegrated into society. The attacker was the youngest of a group of men who brutally assaulted the 23-year-old student on a bus, triggering global outrage and protests in India over the country's high levels of violence against women. He was sent to a correctional home for three years under India's juvenile laws while four others were convicted and given the death penalty in 2014. Their appeals against hanging are pending in the Supreme Court.

The student, who succumbed to her injuries two weeks after the attack, was publicly named by her mother on the third anniversary of her death last week, in an effort to end the stigma facing sex attack victims in India. Under Indian law, the victim of a sex attack cannot be named even after their death. — AFP

ANTI-GRAFT BODY SCRAPPED, MPS RUSH TO FILL...

Continued from Page 1

In another major development, a joint meeting by four Assembly committees yesterday approved a request by the government for special additional funds for the military, but cut the allocations to just KD 3.2 billion, MP Adnan Abdulsamad said. The government had requested in a special draft law KD 6.2 billion to be spent over the next 10 years to strengthen defense purchases in the light of regional turmoil and armed conflicts.

The committees which met included those of budgets, financial and economic affairs, interior and defense and foreign relations. Abdulsamad said that the meeting, which was attended by the defense minister, agreed to the KD 3 billion in a special budget allocation and

approved KD 200 million more to be added to the current fiscal year's accounts. The meeting also decided to debate the bill in the Assembly tomorrow, to which Abdulsamad objected and walked out of the meeting.

Kuwait has been discussing several arms purchases, including warplanes, helicopters and others, to strengthen the armed forces. It was not immediately known whether there was a verbal agreement on requiring the government to request any additional funds it may need in the future on top of the approved allocations.

The Assembly is also expected to debate the grilling against Health Minister Ali Al-Obaidi over alleged violations. MP Hamdan Al-Azemi one of the two lawmakers who filed the grilling, said he will organize a public rally today to explain the reasons for the grilling.



A couple poses under an illuminated tunnel yesterday to celebrate the upcoming Christmas and New Year holidays at the Garden of Morning Calm in Gyeongju, South Korea. — AP

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PUTIN PRAISES
'BRIGHT & TALENTED'
DONALD TRUMP

STEPHAN

Focus

SHERPAS FACE RUIN AFTER QUAKE, BLOCKADE HIT EVEREST INDUSTRY

By Andrew MacAskill

Phurba Tashi Sherpa, the most accomplished high-altitude climber in history, holds a bucket and crowbar as he claws through the rubble of his home seven months after Nepal's earthquake shattered the country. Despite years of guiding wealthy foreign clients up Mount Everest, something he has done 21 times - a joint record - the 44-year-old has been left penniless. Phurba Tashi's predicament is shared by many Sherpas, whose homes, lodges and restaurants were destroyed in the April disaster and who complain of a slow response from the government despite billions of dollars of Western aid.

Some retired guides must return to the peaks to earn money. Others are pulling their children out of schools in Kathmandu and hotel owners are firing staff. To make matters worse, bookings so far point to a sharp drop in foreign mountaineers heading for Nepal in 2016, deterred by ruined infrastructure and an economic blockade along its border with India that threatens supplies of fuel and equipment. "Everything I worked for was destroyed in a minute," said Phurba Tashi, standing in his village of Khumjung, a cluster of 80 stone houses perched on a plateau surrounded by breathtaking 7,000-m mountains.

The earthquake that killed almost 9,000 people destroyed his eight-bedroom trekking lodge, badly damaged his house and caused a deadly avalanche nine miles away on the world's tallest peak. The remote villages under Everest, which prospered in recent decades thanks to the booming climbing business, suffered some of the heaviest destruction in Nepal's deadliest disaster.

'Terrible Years'

The Everest industry is in a state of upheaval following avalanches in 2014 and 2015 that killed 35 people, in the two most deadly incidents since climbers began ascending. In 2013, there was an unprecedented mass brawl between Sherpas and climbers that exposed deep-rooted frustrations over a lack of recognition of the risks local guides take to get foreigners up and down the fabled summit. They want a bigger slice of Nepal's \$360 million-a-year adventure travel industry, of which Everest is the cornerstone. Bookings to scale the world's tallest mountain in 2016 have been a third to half lower than previous years, according to interviews with 18 of the largest climbing firms. This would be the biggest drop since commercial climbing began on Everest in the early 1990s, and could leave hundreds of struggling Sherpas without work. "It has been two terrible years for Everest: we have had no summits and lots of fatalities," said Garrett Madison, who runs Seattle-based Madison Mountaineering. The team doctor died this year on the mountain and three Sherpas working for him were killed in 2014. "It will take time to restore confidence."

In the past, deadly accidents have done little to dent Everest's popularity, with risk being part of the allure. But next year could be different, as threats to the industry take on a political dimension. An economic blockade of Nepal's border with India could disrupt expeditions and deter would-be climbers, who typically pay a non-refundable fee of \$35,000 to \$100,000 for a chance to scale the peak. Nepal has been facing an acute fuel crisis for three months since protesters in the lowland south, angered that a new constitution fails to reflect their interests, prevented supply trucks from entering from India. This is crippling the landlocked Himalayan nation as it tries to recover from the earthquake that displaced millions in the central and eastern regions.

Catastrophe

Mountaineering firms say the blockade threatens the climbing season because there may be a shortage of fuel to air-lift equipment, operate emergency rescue flights or provide enough cooking gas cylinders to survive for two months on the mountain. "It is a crisis at the moment. It is going to be a catastrophe if this embargo continues," said Phil Crampton, the owner of the New York-based Altitude Junkies.

Near the warren of royal palaces and temples in central Kathmandu's bustling old town, Gobinda Bahadur Karki, the director of Nepal's tourism department, is more upbeat. He predicts the blockade will be over before the spring and says he is "expecting a good number of climbers" next year, because mountaineers used to assessing risks will not be discouraged by a rare natural disaster. Back in Khumjung, the resentment is not just about the blockade tripling the cost of building materials that need to be carried from an airport three days' walk away. In a rural community where nine of 10 homes were damaged or destroyed by the earthquake, anger is rising over the government's failure to spend \$4.1 billion of reconstruction money donated by foreign governments six months ago. "We hear the politicians in Kathmandu are eating the money," Phurba Tashi said.—Reuters

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GULF WAR BEGAN JAPAN'S RETREAT FROM PACIFISM

By Tim Kelly and Nobuhiro Kubo

As the first Gulf War raged in February 1991, Japanese army major Nozomu Yoshitomi was supposed to be playing war games with US officers at a military facility in Tokyo. But the Americans appeared distracted, watching the conflict live on CNN. On another TV, local news showed Japanese troops sculpting ice figures at a snow festival. "They asked how Japan could be a true US ally if it hadn't sent troops," said Yoshitomi, recalling the shame he felt watching Japanese personnel build snowmen as US-led coalition soldiers fought to evict the Iraqi army from the Kuwaiti desert.

Unable to send troops because of its war-renouncing constitution, Japan, which at the time bought 90 percent of its oil from the Middle East, instead contributed \$13 billion to help fund the military operation. For a generation of Japanese military planners and policymakers including Yoshitomi, who went on to advise the cabinet from 2005 to 2007 before retiring as a major general in April this year, that humiliation was a pivotal moment.

While many assume today's more muscular security policy has been driven solely by conservative Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, interviews with dozens of current and former Japanese military officers and government officials show it has much deeper roots, and is therefore likely to remain robust after he leaves office. The 1991 experience firmed Japan's resolve to move away from the state pacifism that had defined the country since its defeat in World War Two, the officials involved told Reuters.

"We learnt from the Gulf War that just sending money and not people would not earn us international respect," said Tetsuya Nishimoto, then a senior Japanese Ground Self Defense Force general and now retired. Abe in September pushed through legislation allowing Japanese troops to fight abroad for the first time since World War Two. But rather than in distant lands, it's in nearby waters that Japan's military is flexing its muscles under an evolving strategy backed by Washington that could

counterbalance China's growing naval might. "The roots of Abe's changes lie in the Gulf War, but the driver of change is the serious challenge posed by China," said Yoshitomi, now a professor at Nihon University in Tokyo.

China Rising

While Japanese officers and policymakers felt humiliated by the Gulf War, China was shocked at the scale and precision of US firepower. Soon after, Beijing embarked on a bold program to modernize its military. Chinese bitterness over Japan's World War Two aggression has grown since Abe - seen by critics as a revisionist who wants to play down the dark side of his country's wartime past - and his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) returned to power in late 2012.

Sino-Japanese ties have also been frayed by a dispute that flared up shortly before Abe took power, over tiny isles in the East China Sea. Japan's shift to counter China, however, was well under way before Abe returned to power for a second term in 2012. In late 2009 the defence, foreign and finance ministers in a government led by the Democratic Party of Japan responded to years of double-digit growth in China's defence spending with a strategy to make the defence of Japanese islands in the East China Sea a priority.

Legal Steps

Calls for the shift had emerged under previous LDP administrations, but opposition from military sectors that feared cuts had blocked the change, said Akihisa Nagashima, who was senior vice minister for defence in that DPJ government. The DPJ also proposed creating a National Security Council, now a key component of Abe's security architecture, and eased a ban on overseas arms sales that Abe fully lifted in April 2014. "The changes in defence posture weren't made because Abe is prime minister, it was something we had to do. It just happened to be when Abe is prime minister," said LDP lawmaker Ryota Takeda, who served as Japan's Vice Minister of Defence for a year until September 2014.

Former general Nishimoto was one of many who felt embarrassed by Japan's chequebook diplomacy in 1991. In January 1991, when Operation Desert Storm kicked off, Nishimoto was at home watching television. As the first cruise missiles slammed into Baghdad, he jumped on a bicycle and rode to defence ministry headquarters in Tokyo. "I kept thinking this is going to end before Japan is able to do anything," said Nishimoto. As a direct consequence of that perceived humiliation, Japan in 1992 enacted a contentious law allowing its military to take part in UN peacekeeping operations.

Nishimoto, then Japan's army chief, oversaw the dispatch of 600 army engineers to Cambodia to rebuild bridges and roads, and two small contingents to help monitor a peace accord in a country still traumatised by Khmer Rouge rule from 1975-1979. "That was the starting line," he said. A year later Nishimoto became chairman of the Joint Staff Office, Japan's most senior military officer.

By 1994 a regional crisis was brewing, with the United States on the brink of war with North Korea after Pyongyang began harvesting weapons-grade plutonium from its Yongbyon nuclear plant. In preparation for conflict, the commander of US forces in Japan, General Richard Myers, gave Nishimoto requests ranging from shelter for civilians evacuated from the Korean peninsula to security for US bases in Japan that would be used in any attack on the plant. "We thought it would be doable because it was a basic question of how many blankets, how many tents," Nishimoto said.

But without a legal framework allowing rear-guard logistic support even close to home, Nishimoto had to turn down most of what Myers wanted. "The Americans were pounding tables. All we could do was apologise," Nishimoto said. Diplomacy averted war, but for Nishimoto and other senior officers, the experience was a re-run of the first Gulf War and firmed their resolve to stretch the limits of the constitution. In 1997, Japan and the United States revised defence cooperation guidelines to expand the scope for Japan's rear support. Two years later, in a further stretching of the lim-

its of the pacifist constitution, parliament passed a law allowing logistics support in areas close to Japan.

A Burden Lifted

After the Sept. 11 attacks, Japan passed another one-off law allowing its tankers to refuel US and other allies' warships supporting the invasion of Afghanistan. Japan's air force also flew supplies into Iraq from a base in Kuwait in 2003 following the ouster of Saddam Hussein. Under US pressure to put "boots on the ground", Tokyo also enacted a law permitting the dispatch in 2004 of military engineers on a reconstruction mission in Iraq. Tight curbs on weapons use meant the 550 troops stayed behind the perimeter fence of their base in southern Iraq much of the time.

That same year China overtook Japan to become Asia's biggest military spender, and by last year Beijing was second only to the United States globally, spending more than triple Japan's defence budget. "The biggest impetus under which the Japanese people are now living is this obvious surge of Chinese power," said Tomohiko Taniguchi, an adviser to Abe on foreign policy.

Laws enacted in September allow Japanese forces to aid friendly countries under attack, relying on the Abe government's reinterpretation of Japan's constitution. Such collective self-defence was banned by previous governments as a violation of the post-war charter. "For the first time, we are just about to be able to exercise collective defence with the US and others, so the feeling is we have finally been able to get the (Gulf War) burden off our shoulders," said Taniguchi.

In 2012, Kenneth Pyle, then a professor at the University of Washington, described Japan's post-1945 security policy as the "eight noes": no overseas deployments, no exercise of collective self-defence, no power projection capability, no nuclear arms, no arms exports, no sharing defence technology, no military spending above 1 percent of GDP and no military use of space. Now, says Pyle: "The 'eight noes' are all gone, except the nuclear option." —Reuters

NO SIGN OF PEACE FOR KURDS AFTER ERDOGAN WIN

By Ayla Jean Yackley

The shepherd's widow no longer asks God for peace. Like many Kurds in Turkey's southeast, Sevgi Gezici, 22, believed President Tayyip Erdogan might relent in a clampdown against Kurdish militants after his party won back its majority in an election in November. Three days after the vote, her husband Engin, just back from seven months tending sheep, was shot dead in the street, caught in the crossfire as he ventured out of their house to find help for their children during a curfew, she said. His aunt was fatally shot minutes later after rushing to him.

"I used to pray for peace, for God to help Turks and Kurds," said Gezici cradling their two-year-old daughter beneath her husband's portrait, which was covered in a thin scarf. "After this, I have no hope. God can do what he wants. We are forsaken," she said. Before the Nov 1 vote, the view among some of Turkey's Kurds was that Erdogan had engineered a new conflict with the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) to win over Turkish nationalist voters and help the AK Party he ruled, but no longer formally leads, return to the single party rule it had lost in an earlier vote in June. Erdogan rejects such a plot.

'Wolf's Teeth Have Tasted Blood'

Nearly two months after the second election achieved a stronger-than-expected single party majority for the AKP, swathes of Turkey's mainly Kurdish southeast are still under lockdown. Battles once fought in the countryside are now waged in densely populated urban areas. Erdogan vowed this week security forces would "annihilate" militants in their "houses". The operations are aimed at "protecting residents from terrorism and restoring public order", authorities have said. Turkey, along with the United States and the European Union, list the autonomy-seeking PKK as a terrorist organisation. It is reviled throughout much of the country for its use of violence.

Armoured police vehicles guard the entrance to Tekel, the Gezicis' working-class neighbourhood in the town of Silvan.

Facades of apartment blocks are riddled with bullet holes, and interiors are charred black from fire. Graffiti legible beneath whitewash reads: "The wolf's teeth have tasted blood. Be afraid." The governorate described Engin Gezici, 24, as a PKK member, as it has with others that rights group said were civilians. His family denies he was in the PKK, saying he was the breadwinner for eight people.

More than 130 civilians have been killed in the southeast since the PKK abandoned a two-year ceasefire in July, according to the Human Rights Association (IHD). The government has not given a civilian death toll, but says 3,000 rebels have been "neutralised" in Turkey and rebel camps in northern Iraq. Dozens of soldiers and police have perished in the strife. Raci Bilici, head of the IHD in Diyarbakir, the southeast's largest city, said that rather than use the power gained from its election victory to restart the peace process, the government took it as a mandate to crack down harder.

"Voters said: 'Fight'. The election showed the government has support for its crackdown, so why relent?" he said. "But with violence spreading to cities, the fear is we may cross the threshold of civil war." As he spoke, gunfire could be heard ringing out from Sur, a district of the city that has been under curfew for two weeks. While the lockdown made it impossible to enter Sur, the view from a police barrier on the edge showed garbage piled up in the street and businesses shuttered.

Police in fatigues and masks carried assault rifles, prowling past Diyarbakir's massive 4th century Roman walled fortress, part of a UNESCO World Heritage site whose monuments are now badly damaged. Last month, lawyer Tahir Elci was gunned down at a historic mosque in the district.

'They're Coming through the Walls'

The conflict in Turkey has complicated the international campaign against Islamic State fighters in neighbouring Syria. Turkey's 15 million Kurds identify closely with their Syrian Kurdish kin, who have proven the most capable allies on the

ground of the US-led bombing campaign against Islamic State. NATO member Turkey is a member of the coalition against Islamic State, but hostile to the Syrian Kurds, believing they could inspire separatism at home.

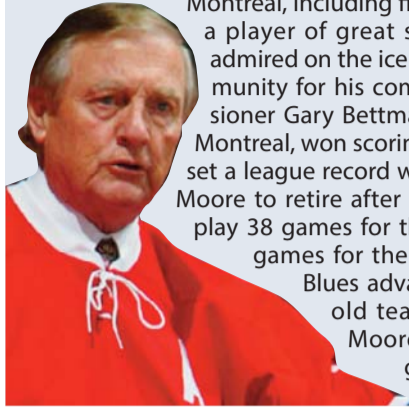
The spasm of violence wrecked peace talks once touted by the AKP as the best chance yet to end one of Europe's longest-running insurgencies. Some 40,000 people have died since the PKK took up arms against the state in 1984. This time, the PKK has largely abandoned its traditional rural battleground to take the fight to the city, recruiting a new generation of militants who dig trenches and use heavy weapons in populated areas to keep police at bay.

If the PKK's shift to urban warfare sought to force a return to talks, it has so far failed. Authorities have imposed curfews and cut power, water and phone coverage to root out militants. On his way to Brussels this week, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu vowed to pursue the PKK until the area is "cleansed". Turkey aspires to join the European Union. "Gross human rights violations are happening on both sides," said Kati Piri, European Parliament rapporteur on Turkey after a visit last week. She called the building of barricades by the PKK "unacceptable" and the response "excessive". "It seems like mass punishment. The danger is it will only radicalise more people," she said.

Some 1.3 million people in 17 towns and cities have been affected by 52 curfews so far, according to official figures. Up to 200,000 people are displaced by the fighting, the People's Democratic Party, which has Kurdish roots, says. In Silvan, 11,000 people fled, said Mayor Kerem Canpolat. He took office after his predecessor became one of two dozen mayors jailed for "undermining state unity" for backing calls for Kurdish autonomy. The new mayor himself spent a decade in jail, beginning in 1992 at age 16, on terrorism charges during an earlier phase of the insurgency. "Prison taught me the solution to the Kurdish matter has to be political. This war will only end in peace," he said.—Reuters

HOCKEY GREAT DICKIE MOORE DEAD AT 84

MONTREAL: Hockey Hall of Fame member Dickie Moore, a six-time Stanley Cup winner and one of the greatest National Hockey League players of all-time, passed away on Saturday, 18 days before his 85th birthday. Inducted into the Hockey Hall of Fame in 1974, the Montreal Canadiens left wing twice won Art Ross Trophy as NHL leading scorer and won six Stanley Cups with Montreal, including five in a row from 1956. "Dickie Moore was a player of great skill and even-greater heart, someone admired on the ice for his will to win and adored in the community for his commitment to good deeds," NHL commissioner Gary Bettman said in statement. Moore, a native of Montreal, won scoring titles in 1957-58 and 1958-59, when he set a league record with 96 points in 70 games. Injuries forced Moore to retire after the 1962-63 season, but he returned to play 38 games for the 1964-65 Toronto Maple Leafs and 27 games for the 1967-68 St. Louis Blues. He helped the Blues advance to the Stanley Cup final against his old team, the Canadiens. In 14 NHL seasons, Moore had 261 goals and 608 points in 719 games.—Reuters

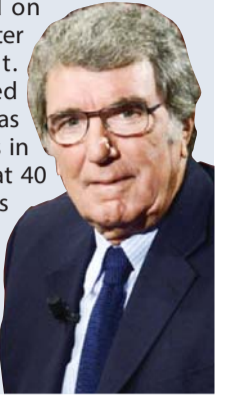


BANGLADESH GIRLS WIN AFC U-14 CHAMPIONSHIP

KATHMANDU: Bangladesh yesterday clinched the AFC U-14 Girls' Regional Championship title for the south and central zone, defeating holders and home favourites Nepal 1-0. Marzia, who uses just one name, scored the winning goal in the 16th minute to help Bangladesh win the title for the first time. "We are very, very happy and proud to bring the title home," Bangladesh's skipper Krishna Rani Sarkar told AFP after receiving the winner's medal from Nepal's Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli. "We worked so hard for this," Sarkar said. On the way to the title clash, Bangladesh defeated Iran while Nepal got the better of India in the semi-finals held in April. The final was earlier scheduled to be held on April 25, the day a powerful 7.8-magnitude quake shook Nepal killing almost 8,900 people. Seven teams, including India, Bhutan, Maldives, Iran and Sri Lanka, participated in the championship. —AFP

ZOFF RELEASED AFTER LENGTHY HOSPITAL STAY

MILAN: Italian goalkeeping legend Dino Zoff returned home yesterday following a lengthy spell in hospital, reports said yesterday. Zoff, who won six Serie A titles with Juventus before coaching the club to the 1990 UEFA Cup, was admitted to hospital in early November after being "struck by an unspecified neurological problem which has left him with difficulty walking". The 73-year-old was released on Sunday and told Gazzetta dello Sport: "I'm feeling better and want to thank everyone for their support. Fortunately, the worst is over." Zoff was considered among the best goalkeepers of his generation and, as captain of Italy, led the Azzurri to World Cup success in 1982 — becoming the oldest winner of the trophy at 40 years, 4 months and 13 days. Zoff played the bulk of his club career at Juventus from 1972-1983, where he won six Serie A titles, two Italian Cups, a UEFA Cup and reached two European Cup finals in 1973 and 1983, in the process becoming the oldest player, at 41 years and 86 days, to play in a European Cup final. —AFP



GulfRun Honoring 2015

ZAIN MAIN SPONSOR OF GULFRUN FOR SECOND YEAR RUNNING

COMPANY AWARDS WINNING TEAMS OF KARTING ENDURANCE RACE

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its main sponsorship of the 11th edition of GulfRun, the region's most anticipated motorsport activity. The event kick-started last weekend, and will continue until March 2016, involving several thrilling activities taking place in Kuwait and Bahrain. GulfRun is considered a safe alternative to street racing which threatens youth's lives. Motorsport enthusiasts can now showcase their talents within professional and certified circuits while gaining professional

guidance based on worldwide safety procedures. On this occasion, Waleed Al Khashti, Zain Kuwait's Corporate Communications and Relations Director said: "Zain's support to this much anticipated event for the second year running stems from its utmost responsibility of youth's talent development and the sports sector, which comes in line with our Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, especially that this exciting race was established by a group of Kuwaiti youth". Al Khashti added: "we are proud to con-

gratulate 'Zain Racing' team for winning the second place title, and we wish them all the best of luck during next February's 12 hour karting endurance race". Al Khashti added: "We were keen on taking part in this exciting event yet again after the passion we found from the youth during last year's event. Zain is also highlighting its dedication to applying safety measures while driving as GulfRun is considered an ideal and safe alternative to street racing which threatens youth's lives." GulfRun involved a Karting Endurance

race, which was held at Kuwait's SIRBB Circuit over a straight period of 24 hours. The activity witnessed tremendous success gathering many enthusiasts of this sport alongside the public. The event will also include an exciting car show, where participants will be showcasing their exquisite high-speed cars to thrill seeking individuals. Following the car show event, participants will be flying over to the Kingdom of Bahrain to take part in several training procedures in preparation for the final race at the Bahrain International Circuit. Participants will be

able to gain valuable insights with the help of qualified trainers and professional instructors who have a long-track of motorsport experience. It is worth mentioning that GulfRun is an annual motorsport event which was established in 2005 by a group of Kuwaiti youth who are simply passionate about automobile racing. The race extinguishes itself from any other motorsport race by promoting a safe and secure environment to race and train, as well as spreading awareness to limit street accidents.



Officials seen at the closing ceremony with the winners.

SHEIKH JABER AL-ABDALLAH AL-SABAH SHOOTING TOURNAMENT CONCLUDES

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Annual Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Shooting tournament concluded on Saturday with a closing ceremony held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex in the presence of Sheikh Abdallah Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Abdallah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Engineer Duajj Khalaf Al-Otaibi, Kuwait Shooting Sport Board Members Engineers Mohammad Misfer Al-Ghurba and Hussam Al-Roumi. Engineer Al-Otaibi said in his closing speech the shooting community is pleased and the success of the opening of Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium, with HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad in attendance along with HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He congratulated the organizing committee and all those who participated in the success of this major sports event. He also congratulated Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the Sports Authority for their good efforts. Al-Otaibi

said KSSC Board of Directors has always been keen on organizing Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Cup each year in appreciation of his generous contributions to the development of the sport of shooting since its beginnings adding that his continued support have a great effect on shooters making the achievements they made so far. The tournament attracted a large number of Kuwait shooters who competed cleanly while exerting all efforts to be among the winners who will be able to represent Kuwait abroad. Meanwhile Sheikh Abdallah Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah said he is honored to represent Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in the closing ceremony and wished Kuwait Shooters all success.

Results of the tournament are as follows:

Air Pistol - Men: Hamad Abdallah Al-Namshan was able to win first place and the gold medal followed by Saad Al-Ajmi, as place went to Ali Al-Mutairi.

Air Rifle - Men: Abdallah Al-Harby won first place, Mohammad Abdelrahman was second and Sultan Al-Osaimi

third. **50 meter Rifle - Men:** First place went to Bader Nasser, as Torky Al-Shimmari was second and Khalis Al-Subaie third.

50 meter Pistol - Men: Mideth Al-Sahaly first, Abdallah Al-Mulla second and Hassan Al-Mulla third.

Air Pistol - Women: Israa Bahman snatched first place as Israa Dashty was a close second and Mriam Shihab third.

Air Rifle - Women: Heba Irzouqi was first followed by Mariam Irzouqi and Zahraa Al-Saffar was third.

Air Rifle - Women - Junior: Heba Irzouqi first, Duaa Al-Duwaikhi second and Shurooq Al-Duwaian third.

Archery - Men - Compound: Musallam Faisal first, Ahmad Al-Shatti second, Salem Al-Saeed third.

Archery - Men - Olympic: Abdallah Taha first, Abdallah Al-Harby second and Bader Al-Mutairi third.





HAMILTON: Brendon McCullum of New Zealand plays a shot (R) as Dinesh Chandimal of Sri Lanka (L) looks on, on day three of the second Test cricket match between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday. — AFP

WILLIAMSON HAS NZ ON BRINK OF VICTORY

HAMILTON: Kane Williamson had New Zealand on the brink of victory after a spectacular Sri Lanka collapse on the third day of the second Test in Hamilton yesterday.

On a day when 16 wickets fell, New Zealand were 142 for five at the close of play, requiring a further 47 runs to claim the Test and sweep the series. Shortly before lunch on the third day their hopes of a win seemed remote with Sri Lanka 126 runs ahead and with all second innings wickets in hand.

But the tourists' fortunes swung from commanding to catastrophic when 10 wickets fell for 62. New Zealand went from being 55 behind on the first innings to chasing a target of 189 to win. Williamson was not out on 78 at stumps, in sight of his 13th Test century with BJ Watling yet to score.

New Zealand left-arm seamer Neil Wagner called the day "bizarre" while Sri Lanka bowling coach Champaka Ramanayake was not happy his side did not bat safely as instructed. "Right throughout the short ball was key to get wickets and for us what happened was we hooked," he said.

"Somehow they went to the middle and didn't do the right thing. We were trying to go for big ones and it didn't work and we're very disappointed," Wagner said the short ball strategy came as they felt Sri Lanka were getting away.

"It was a pretty bizarre day, wasn't it? A lot of wickets fell and to start the day off Sri Lanka were in a strong position," he said. The ultimately successful short-pitched strategy was a gamble because "if you don't get it right you're going to get hurt, like a couple I bowled didn't get up high enough and ended up going over the bank for six".

The one bright spot for Sri Lanka was the emergence of Dushmantha Chameera as a genuine wicket-taker. The right-arm pace-man took four for 45 in New Zealand's second innings to give him nine wickets in the match. Openers Tom Latham and Martin Guptill fell cheaply as Chameera had New Zealand 11 for 2 before Williamson and Ross Taylor (35) revived the innings with 67 for the third wicket.

Brendon McCullum (18) followed Taylor to the crease for a fourth-wicket stand of 52. On a firm pitch offering good bounce, Trent Boult was the first of the 16 wickets and last in New Zealand first innings on the sixth ball of the morning.

SOUTHEE BURST

The inability to control short, accurate deliveries on a firm wicket featured in six of Sri Lankan dismissals—and all six New Zealand wickets yesterday. Taylor was caught in a clever piece of fielding at long leg by

Jeffrey Vandersay. When the substitute fielder took the ball he threw it high as his momentum took him over the rope and he then returned to the field to complete the catch. Sri Lanka had made a good start to building on their first innings advantage with Kusal Mendis and Dimuth Karunaratne putting on 71 in the highest opening partnership for Sri Lanka in 12 months.

But when Doug Bracewell claimed Karunaratne for 27 it ignited the Sri Lanka collapse. Bracewell had Udara Jayasundera two balls later and Wagner dismissed Dinesh Chandimal for one as Sri Lanka tumbled to 77 for three.

Mendis and Angelo Mathews held the innings together to reach 85-3 at lunch before it completely unravelled after the interval. Mendis had equalled his Test best 46 when he top-edged Tim Southee and was caught on the boundary by Mitchell Santner.

It was the start of a remarkable burst for Southee in which he took four for 10 in 27 balls. In a day built around the short-ball strategy, Rangana Herath was the only player to be bowled.

Milinda Siriwardana tried to belt the side out of trouble racing to 26 before he slogged at a rare full delivery from Wagner and was caught by Boult at deep mid-wicket. Southee finished with four for 26. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

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

Sri Lanka 1st innings 292 (A. Mathews 77, M. Siriwardana 62; Southee 3-63)		M. Siriwardana c Boult b Wagner	26
New Zealand 1st innings (overnight 232-9)		K. Vithanage c Bracewell b Wagner	9
M. Guptill c Mathews b Herath	50	R. Herath b Southee	0
T. Latham c Karunaratne b Chameera	28	D. Chameera run out (Boult/Wagner)	2
K. Williamson c Lakmal b Chameera	1	S. Lakmal not out	1
R. Taylor c Chandimal b Chameera	0	N. Pradeep c Watling b Southee	0
B. McCullum c Mendis b Herath	18	Extras:(b4, lb2, w7, nb3)	16
M. Santner c Chandimal b Pradeep	38	Total (all out, 36.3 overs)	133
B. Watling c Vithanage b Lakmal	28	Fall of wickets: 1-71 (Karunaratne), 2-71 (Jayasundera), 3-77 (Chandimal), 4-87 (Mendis), 5-110 (Mathews), 6-123 (Siriwardana), 7-123 (Herath), 8-131 (Vithanage), 9-133 (Chameera), 10-133 (Pradeep)	
D. Bracewell not out	35	Bowling: Boult 7-1-30-0 (w1), Southee 12.3-2-26-4 (nb1), Bracewell 8-1-31-2 (w2, nb1), Wagner 9-2-40-3 (nb1)	
T. Southee c Jayasundera b Chameera	4	New Zealand 2nd innings	
N. Wagner c Vithanage b Chameera	17	T. Latham c Pradeep b Chameera	4
T. Boult c Herath b Pradeep	0	M. Guptill c Karunaratne b Chameera	1
Extras: (lb3, nb7, w8)	18	K. Williamson not out	78
Total (all out, 79.4 overs)	237	R. Taylor c sub (Vandersay) b Chameera	35
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), 10-237 (Boult)		B. McCullum c Mathews b Chameera	18
Bowling: Lakmal 16-4-48-1 (w1, nb1), Mathews 11-7-25-0, Pradeep 17.4-4-39-2 (w1, nb5), Herath 22-1-75-2, Chameera 13-3-47-5 (w2, nb1)		M. Santner c Chandimal b Lakmal	4
Sri Lanka 2nd innings		B. Watling not out	0
D. Karunaratne c Southee b Bracewell	27	Extras (nb2)	2
K. Mendis c Santner b Southee	46	Total (for 5 wickets, 42 overs)	142
U. Jayasundera c Watling b Bracewell	0	Fall of wickets: 1-4 (Latham), 2-11 (Guptill), 3-78 (Taylor), 4-130 (McCullum), 5-142 (Santner)	
D. Chandimal c Guptill b Wagner	4	Bowling: Chameera 13-1-45-4 (nb1), Lakmal 10-3-19-1, Herath 9-0-39-0, Pradeep 9-1-35-0 (nb1), Mathews 1-0-4-0.	
A. Mathews c Watling b Southee	2		

SMITH A STEADY HAND AT START OF AUSTRALIA REBUILD

MELBOURNE: A year on from taking the reins from an injured Michael Clarke, Australia captain Steve Smith has passed most of the tests presented in leading a team in the throes of transition.

While Smith's formal coronation followed Australia's stinging Ashes defeat in England, his first taste of the captaincy came during last year's home series against India, a baptism of fire for the nation's youngest skipper in 35 years. With Australia still rocked by the death of batsman Phillip Hughes, the then-25-year-old Smith smashed 133 in the second test at the Gabba to drive the hosts to a four-wicket victory. He struck centuries in both the final tests to lead the team to a dominant 2-0 series win over Virat Kohli's side. Since taking over from Clarke permanently in August, Smith has known little but success on the field, leading Australia to a one-day international series win in England and sealing a 2-0 victory in the recent test series against New Zealand.

He will be hopeful of wrapping up another series against lowly West Indies with a win in the traditional Boxing Day test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground which starts on Saturday.

The solid run of results has masked the challenges Smith has faced in building cohesion in a team bereft of confidence from the morale-sapping Ashes loss and drained of experience by the string of retirements that followed.

A chance to bed down a squad of rookies

on a two-test tour of Bangladesh was dashed by security concerns in the South Asian country, leaving the more challenging task of a confident and tenacious New Zealand side.

Although Smith has faced a steep learning curve, the new faces in the dressing room have also offered him a chance to imprint his authority, and the man that has emerged from under the wing of Clarke is quite different to his predecessor. Smith has carried on Clarke's dedication to attacking cricket but weeks after his permanent appointment in August, pointedly declared he would seek former skipper Ricky Ponting's tips on how to manage a team.

Rumours of dressing room discord were a hallmark of Clarke's four years in charge after taking over from Ponting, who was seen as a less inventive tactician but a more capable man manager.

"It probably is the toughest part," Smith told the ESPNcricinfo website of managing his players. "All the on-field stuff is probably easier. Not everyone's going to get on. There's going to be times when there'll be arguments. We're together for pretty much 300 days of the year, so it's going to happen."

Smith's honeymoon period is unlikely to be ended on home pitches by a shambolic West Indies team, who were beaten in three days in the series-opener in Hobart. His captaincy will face its biggest challenge on tour, starting with a New Zealand side itching for revenge in February, with a testing trip to Sri Lanka in July and August to follow. — Reuters

FIELDING HOWLER ADDS TO WINDIES WOES IN DRAW

GEELONG: An embarrassing fielding blunder added to the woes of the beleaguered West Indies in their final hit-out yesterday before the second Test against Australia on Boxing Day. The Caribbean tourists, who were hammered by an innings in the first Test in Hobart, declared overnight at 303 for eight in their two-day game with a Victoria XI in Geelong.

The inexperienced locals were 169 for three in reply when play was abandoned on the final day by rain, with an unprofessional piece of fielding from Jerome Taylor helping their cause.

Jake Hancock finished 80 not out but should have been dismissed on 22. Skipper Jason Holder was bowling in the 14th over when Hancock hooked the ball to fine leg where Taylor was fielding.

He awkwardly attempted to stop the

ball but it bounced past for a dispiriting boundary. Hancock could not believe his luck. "It was pretty good that. I definitely got away with one there," Hancock said.

"I couldn't really see what happened. He wasn't even on the field, was he?" (The West Indies) had a little chuckle. "They sort of just brushed it off really and kept going. They didn't seem too fazed by it."

Victoria XI v W Indies scores

Scores after the final day of the two-day tour match between a Victoria XI and the West Indies in Geelong yesterday:

West Indies 303-8 declared (K. Brathwaite 78, J. Blackwood 69; J. Hart 4-93).

Victoria XI 169-3 (J. Hancock 80 not out; D. Bishoo 2-60). Match drawn. — AFP



SINGAPORE: Singapore Slammers team members celebrate with the trophy after winning the International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) in Singapore yesterday. — AFP

STAN WAWRINKA INSPIRES SINGAPORE TO IPTL VICTORY

SINGAPORE: Stan Wawrinka showed his class in both singles and doubles to lead the Singapore Slammers to victory in the International Premier Tennis League (IPTL) final in front of a delighted home crowd at the Indoor Stadium yesterday.

Matches in the Asia-based mixed team tennis league are decided by games won in five one-set shootouts over various formats and Switzerland's Wawrinka played brilliantly to ensure the Slammers overcame the Indian Aces 26-21 in a gripping finale.

Carlos Moya got the home side off to a perfect start with a 6-4 victory over French shot-maker Fabrice Santoro in the 'Legends Singles', the Spanish veteran coming out on top of five straight breaks of serve after he had opened a 3-2 lead.

Swiss starlet Belinda Bencic stretched the advantage by a game after the 18-year-old fought off a gritty challenge from Russia's Svetlana Kuznetsova to claim the women's sin-

gles, 6-5.

The pair put on an absorbing display despite never looking comfortable on serve, with three breaks apiece in the opening 10 games sending the contest into a "shootout" (identical to a tiebreak), which Bencic claimed 7-3 to put Singapore 12-9 ahead.

"I was lucky that Charlie (Moya) won and did a great job and I could also make a lead," Bencic said in a court-side interview. "It's not much but we will try to keep winning the matches."

The Aces, however, struck back in the mixed doubles with their strong Indian pairing of Sania Mirza and Rohan Bopanna storming to a 6-2 victory over a shell-shocked Dustin Brown and Karolina Pliskova to put the defending champions 15-14 ahead.

Wawrinka, the highest-ranked player in the final, was then called on to turn the tie around and he duly obliged, helping the Slammers reclaim the lead with a 6-3 win over Bernard

Tomic before teaming up with Marcelo Melo to seal the contest.

Australia's Tomic matched the world number four shot-for-shot until the double grand slam champion called on his trademark one-handed backhand to forge a break of serve in the sixth game and open a 4-2 lead.

He consolidated the break to love and then served out the set two games later to put the Slammers 20-18 ahead going into the deciding men's doubles.

Wawrinka had warned to the task and looked as accomplished as his doubles world number one partner from Brazil, the pair dominating Bopanna and Ivan Dodig 6-3 to set off wild celebrations in the middle of the court.

"I just came along at the end and helped the team," Wawrinka said. "The team had done an amazing job in the two weeks leading to the final and I was just really happy to finish it off playing with a great player and friend Marcelo." —Reuters

KERALA SUPER LEAGUE TO COMMENCE IN 2016

OMANI FOOTBALLERS TO PARTICIPATE IN KSL

MUSCAT: Passions in soccer mad Kerala are likely to get re-ignited with the setting up of the Kerala Super League (KSL), during the first quarter of 2016.

A brainchild of the Kerala Football Association (KFA) and the Celebrity Management Group (CMG), KSL is a concept that will take the game's popularity to soaring levels in Kerala as well as in India. KSL will be the biggest domestic soccer venture ever undertaken in India at the State level.

Some of the striking features of KSL will include the roping in of extremely skillful overseas players, the chance for budding home grown talent to make their mark on the big stage and of course, the opportunity to provide top class entertainment to audiences starved of quality football in their own backyard.

The KSL will consist of 8 Franchised City teams during the inaugural season which will run for about 10 weeks. Each Franchise will play against each other at home and away, the top 4 Franchises of the league will contest the semifinals and a total of 63 matches will be held

throughout the State and telecast "live".

Each Franchise squad will comprise a maximum of 30 players comprising maximum 4 overseas players and a minimum of 5 Catchment and U-20 players each.

KSL will involve teams owned and controlled by professional companies, business entities and entrepreneurs with a deep and abiding love of the great game of soccer.

One such entrepreneur is based here in Muscat and who a few days ago had pledged his full support to this fledgling enterprise with the franchise purchase of the club representing KOZHICODE (also known as CALICUT), the Mecca of Kerala football. Nabeel Najeeb, General Manager of Ships Agency and International Logistics Co LLC, Oman (SHIPCO OMAN) has just arrived back in Muscat after attending the recently organized Franchise purchase ceremony held in Cochin.

Kozhikode, the premier city of the Malabar region of Kerala has always been famous for its non-partisan and vociferous crowds. Soccer is almost a religion in this part of the world. In fact,



even before the creation of this tiny state and especially during the glorious days of Indian football, particularly the 50's and 60's when the country was a force to reckon with in Asia. The city had in the 60's and 70's hosted the wildly popular Sait Najeeb tournament at the famous Corporation Stadium, a tourney that had witnessed a galaxy of Indian stars dazzling their way into thousands of hearts with their sorcery and skills.

Nabeel Najeeb fondly hankers for a revival of those golden years and has

taken the first step in making that dream a reality. For the moment, he is in close discussions with famous Indian Football Clubs to join hands along with sponsorship negotiations with potential corporates and major companies. "The Eight Year Franchise would bring about exciting footballing opportunities for the youth in my home district", Nabeel went on to state. While nurturing the local talents, KSL would provide opportunities to play with celebrated national players and getting exposure to experienced

coaches and trainers. Nabeel sought full cooperation from local media in Kerala and abroad to popularize the project seeking support from sponsors and associates.

In keeping with the close diplomatic links that Oman and India have shared for over six decades, Nabeel is keen on associating with the Oman Football Association. It is envisaged that the OFA could consider the idea of permitting Omani footballers to participate in this League.

HIRSCHER BECOMES FIRST TO WIN ALTA BADIA GS 3 STRAIGHT YEARS

LA VILLA: Marcel Hirscher became the first skier to win the challenging Alta Badia giant slalom in three consecutive years yesterday, reclaiming the overall World Cup lead from Aksel Lund Svindal in the process.

Erasing a slim first-run disadvantage, Hirscher finished 0.19 seconds ahead of Henrik Kristoffersen of Norway on the steep and twisty Gran Risa Course.

"I skied totally my 100 percent," Hirscher said. "I think Kristoffersen was a little bit smoother but I pushed harder." Kristoffersen beat Hirscher in a slalom in Val d'Isere, France, last weekend and feels he can do the same in GS.

"I'm getting closer and closer to Marcel," Kristoffersen said. "Soon somebody has to beat him, so why not me?" Opening-leg leader Victor Muffat-Jeandet of France ended up third, 0.86 behind. "It's a new experience starting the second run in the lead," Muffat-Jeandet said. "It was a really strong emotion. If I want to fight with them I need two really crazy runs. But that will come." Olympic and three-time world champion Ted Ligety moved up from 10th after the morning run to finish fourth, missing the podium by nearly half a second.

"It was a nice step in the right direction," said Ligety, who has been struggling since missing a month of training due to back and hip injuries after the season opener in Soelden, Austria. "I'm just trying to get healthy again and get the feeling back." Ligety has won twice on the Gran Risa and been on the podium six times. Italian great Alberto Tomba holds the course record with four GS wins. Hirscher also has four victories in Badia, although one of the

Austrian's wins came in slalom in 2011. "It's better to think about that when I retire," Hirscher said. "Every victory, every podium is nice."

UNBELIEVABLE SKIING

Hirscher has finished on the podium in every race he's entered this season, including his first career super-G victory in Beaver Creek, Colorado, two weeks ago.

"Marcel is skiing unbelievable," Kristoffersen said. "For sure he's the best technical skier right now and also one of the greatest of all time."

Tomba's wins on the Gran Risa came in 1987, '90, '91 and '94. Kalle Palander of Finland and Massimiliano Bardonone of Italy also each have three GS wins in Badia. The 36-year-old Bardonone finished 22nd Sunday - which was an accomplishment with the No. 56 bib - then told the crowd it was his last time racing the Gran Risa. He plans to retire at the end of this season.

In the overall standings, Hirscher moved 20 points ahead of Norwegian rival Svindal, who finished 28th. Kjetil Jansrud, who is third overall, didn't qualify for the second run in 37th. It was Hirscher's 35th World Cup win and puts him back on track to become the first man to win five consecutive overall titles.

Ligety led a strong day for the U.S. Ski Team, with Tim Jitloff finishing seventh and Tommy Ford placing 12th after posting the fastest second run by a large margin.

Alta Badia is celebrating its 30th anniversary of World Cup racing, with Swedish great Ingemar Stenmark having won the first race on the Gran Risa in 1985. — AP



ALTA BADIA: Marcel Hirscher of Austria competes in the FIS Alpine Skiing World Cup Men's Giant Slalom yesterday in Alta Badia, northern Italy. — AFP

BREM BEATS GUT TO WIN WOMEN'S WORLD CUP GS

COURCHEVEL: Austrian skier Eva-Maria Brem safely protected her lead from the first leg to win a World Cup giant slalom race yesterday, denying Swiss racer Lara Gut a third straight race victory.

Gut, who has now overtaken American Lindsey Vonn for the overall World Cup lead, finished tied for second place with Norway's Nina Loeseth, who secured a

career-best result. Gut had won Saturday's downhill and Friday's super-combined in the French Alpine resort of Val d'Isere. Brem collapsed to the ground celebrating her second career win and 10th podium. The other was also a GS in Aspen, Colorado last year. Vonn was 10th in the morning first run but finished 13th with sunny conditions fading on the Emile-Allais course. — AP



COURCHEVEL: From left, Lara Gut and Nina Loeseth, who tied for the second place, celebrate on the podium with winner Eva-Maria Brem, after an alpine ski, women's World Cup giant slalom in Courchevel, France, yesterday. — AP



BUFFALO: Matt Moulson #26 of the Buffalo Sabres skates after the puck against the Chicago Blackhawks at the First Niagara Center on Saturday in Buffalo, New York. — AFP

KANE LEADS BLACKHAWKS TO 3-2 SHOOTOUT WIN OVER SABRES

BUFFALO: Patrick Kane made his Buffalo homecoming a winning one by scoring the tying goal in the final minute and then adding the lone shootout goal in leading the Chicago Blackhawks to a 3-2 victory over the Sabres on Saturday. Kane tied it with 34 seconds left while the Blackhawks enjoyed a 6-on-3 advantage. Dennis Rasmussen also scored for Chicago, which improved to 6-2 in its past eight. Ryan O'Reilly and Cody Franson scored for Buffalo, which is 0-7-1 in its past eight games against Chicago.

AVALANCHE 5, OILERS 1

Semyon Varlamov made 39 saves, Jarome Iginla scored his 598th career goal and the Avalanche beat the Oilers for their fifth consecutive win. Varlamov tied his career high with his sixth victory in a row and improved to 7-1 in December. Tyson Barrie had a goal and an assist, and Blake Comeau and Nick Holden also scored for the Avalanche. Colorado (17-16-1) is above .500 for the first time this season. Andrej Sekera scored for the Oilers, who have lost three in a row following a six-game winning streak.

BLUES 3, FLAMES 2

Vladimir Tarasenko had a goal and two assists, lifting the Blues to a win over the Flames. Colton Parayko and Jori Lehtera also scored and Brian Elliott made 36 saves for the Blues (20-10-4), who have won three straight. Sean Monahan and Mark Giordano scored for Calgary and Karri Ramo made 19 saves.

MAPLE LEAFS 5, KINGS 0

Jonathan Bernier stopped 26 shots in his first win of the season as the Maple Leafs beat the Kings. Bernier, who was 0-8-3 in his first 11 appearances, was helped out by a strong defensive game but also made some memorable saves. Michael Grabner and Leo Komarov each scored twice in a dominant performance with linemate Nazem Kadri. Byron Froese had his first NHL goal for the Maple Leafs (11-13-7), who extended their point streak to five games - tying a season high.

COYOTES 1, ISLANDERS 0

Louis Domingue stopped 25 shots for his first NHL shutout, Oliver Ekman-Larsson scored and the Coyotes bounced back from their worst defensive performance of the season to beat the slumping Islanders. Two nights after a 7-5 loss to Columbus, the Coyotes stymied the Islanders despite entering the night allowing a league-worst 4.6 goals per game in December. The Islanders have managed two goals in a three-

game skid that followed a 10-game winning streak. Jaroslav Halak stopped 28 shots for the Islanders.

STARS 6, CANADIENS 2

Jamie Benn had two goals and an assist and the Stars beat the Canadiens in a matchup of first-place teams. Benn regained the NHL lead with 22 goals, passing the Blues' Vladimir Tarasenko. Jason Spezza had a goal and two assists, and Tyler Seguin and Patrick Sharp each had a goal and an assist. Patrick Eaves added a power-play goal. Stars goalie Antti Niemi made 21 saves. Daniel Carr scored on the power play for Montreal, and Paul Byron added a short-handed goal.

DUCKS 2, DEVILS 1

Chris Stewart and Ryan Kesler each scored first-period goals and Frederik Andersen stopped 21 shots as the Ducks beat the Devils. Mike Cammalleri scored late in the third period to spoil Andersen's shutout bid. Keith Kinkaid made 16 saves for the Devils, who dropped a second straight game, both at home.

HURRICANES 2, PENGUINS 1

Jordan Staal and John-Michael Liles scored first-period power-play goals to lead the Hurricanes over the struggling Penguins. The Penguins have lost five straight, including four

since hiring Mike Sullivan as coach to replace the fired Mike Johnston. Cam Ward made 37 saves in his second start in as many nights. Evgeni Malkin ended Pittsburgh's 0-for-19 power-play drought with his 15th goal of the season in the second period. Matt Murray stopped 24 shots in his first NHL start for Pittsburgh.

BLUE JACKETS 3, FLYERS 2, SO

Brandon Dubinsky scored in the sixth shootout round, rookie Joonas Korhonen got his first NHL win and the Columbus Blue Jackets beat the Philadelphia Flyers 3-2 on Saturday night. Cam Atkinson also scored in the shootout for Columbus. Brandon Saad and Ryan Murray scored to give Columbus a 2-0 lead. Korhonen had 30 saves before the shootout, where he stopped 5 of 6 shots. Scott Laughton and Jakub Voracek scored for Philadelphia in the third period. Former Blue Jacket Steve Mason stopped 35 shots.

PREDATORS 3, WILD 2

Mike Ribeiro had a goal and an assist to lead the Predators to a victory over the Wild. Filip Forsberg and James Neal also scored for Nashville, which snapped a three-game losing streak. Shea Weber had two assists, and Pekka Rinne stopped an early penalty shot. Zach Parise and Jason Zucker had goals for the Wild, who had won three in a row. — AP

NHL Results/Standings

Chicago 3, Buffalo 2 (SO); St. Louis 3, Calgary 2; Toronto 5, Los Angeles 0; Anaheim 2, New Jersey 1; Carolina 2, Pittsburgh 1; Columbus 3, Philadelphia 2 (SO); Dallas 6, Montreal 2; Nashville 3, Minnesota 2; Arizona 1, NY Islanders 0; Colorado 5, Edmonton 1.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference							
Central Division						Atlantic Division							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Dallas	24	7	2	114	85	50	Montreal	20	11	3	103	82	43
St. Louis	20	10	4	87	81	44	Boston	18	9	4	102	82	40
Chicago	19	11	4	92	80	42	Detroit	16	9	7	82	83	39
Minnesota	17	8	6	86	73	40	Ottawa	17	11	5	102	97	39
Nashville	16	11	6	85	85	38	Florida	17	12	4	88	76	38
Colorado	17	16	1	95	90	35	Tampa Bay	16	14	3	81	78	35
Winnipeg	15	15	2	90	97	32	Buffalo	14	16	4	79	89	32
							Toronto	11	13	7	77	86	29
Pacific Division						Metropolitan Division							
Los Angeles	20	10	2	81	71	42	Washington	23	6	2	96	67	48
San Jose	16	15	1	85	87	33	NY Rangers	19	11	4	98	84	42
Arizona	15	15	2	87	102	32	NY Islanders	18	11	5	91	80	41
Calgary	15	15	2	85	108	32	New Jersey	16	13	4	78	82	36
Vancouver	12	14	8	85	97	32	Philadelphia	14	12	7	70	89	35
Edmonton	14	18	2	88	105	30	Pittsburgh	15	14	3	71	82	33
Anaheim	12	14	5	58	77	29	Carolina	13	15	5	79	99	31
							Columbus	13	19	3	86	107	29

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

DOUGLAS DOUBLE FIRES HIROSHIMA TO BRONZE

YOKOHAMA: Brazilian substitute Douglas scored a late double as Japan's Sanfrecce Hiroshima stunned Asian champions Guangzhou Evergrande 2-1 to finish third at the Club World Cup yesterday.

Former Spurs midfielder Paulinho headed the Chinese in front after just four minutes in Yokohama, celebrating by racing to the bench to hold up the shirt of teammate Zou Zheng, who broke his leg in the 3-0 semi-final defeat by Barcelona.

But Douglas stooped to nod home a deserved equaliser for the Japanese champions in the 70th minute after some poor defending. He then headed in the winner seven minutes from time to complete a dramatic turnaround.

"It was very important to finish third," said Hiroshima's supersub. "We didn't want the game to go to penalties

because it would have given them another chance to win it. We should have beaten River Plate in our last game but this makes up for it a little."

Hiroshima coach Hajime Moriyasu, whose side were narrowly beaten 1-0 in their midweek semi-final, praised his players for their staying power after a punishing month.

"We have played six matches in the past few weeks but when the going got tough this team is very resilient," said Moriyasu, whose side captured a third J-League crown earlier this month.

"To go toe-to-toe with the Asian champions and win will be a big confidence boost for us as we continue to build for the future." Luiz Felipe Scolari's Evergrande had been overwhelming favourites to win the bronze medal but they wilted badly after a strong start.

"Physically and technically

Hiroshima deserved to win," said former Brazil coach Scolari. "We looked a tired team. Our thoughts go to poor Zou, who had surgery in Japan on his leg and we hope to have him back with us as soon as possible."

Sanfrecce became the third Japanese team to win the third-place playoff after Urawa Reds in 2007 and Gamba Osaka in 2008. Pint-sized striker Hisato Sato was Hiroshima's most potent attacker in the first half but Evergrande's towering goalkeeper Li Shuai brilliantly thwarted the J-League's joint record goal scorer on three occasions. Evergrande defender Zhang Linpeng saw a shot deflected on to the post, while Mei Feng cleared superbly off the line from Takuya Marutani at the other end in a see-saw game which really caught fire when Douglas came off the bench. — AFP



TOKYO: Sanfrecce Hiroshima's Douglas of Brazil, center, cheers after scoring against Guangzhou Evergrande during their match for the third place at the FIFA Club World Cup soccer tournament in Yokohama, near Tokyo, yesterday. — AP



ARLINGTON: New York Jets free safety Marcus Gilchrist (21) watches as strong safety Calvin Pryor (25) intercepts a pass intended for Dallas Cowboys' Dez Bryant, left rear, in the second half of an NFL football game, Saturday, in Arlington, Texas. — AP

JETS TOP COWBOYS 19-16, KEEP PRESSURE ON IN AFC WILD CARD

ARLINGTON: Ryan Fitzpatrick and the New York Jets are keeping the pressure on Pittsburgh and Kansas City in the race for two wild-card spots in the AFC. Randy Bullock kicked a 40-yard field goal with 36 seconds left and the Jets moved a half-game ahead of the Steelers and Chiefs with a 19-16 victory over the Dallas Cowboys on Saturday night. Fitzpatrick's 43-yard pass to Kenbrell Thompkins put the Jets (9-5) in position for a win. Kellen Moore replaced an ineffective Matt Cassel at quarterback and gave the Cowboys (4-10) a spark, but it wasn't enough to keep the defending NFC East champions from being eliminated with two games remaining.

Eric Decker caught a 3-yard scoring pass to set a franchise record with Brandon Marshall with 21 combined touchdowns receiving as the Jets won their fourth straight for the first time since 2010.

Fitzpatrick threw his first interception since Nov. 22 to give the Cowboys a field goal and a 139 lead in the third quarter, but came back to direct a 70-yard drive to Decker's score. Decker and Marshall broke the franchise mark of 20 combined TDs that they shared with Art Powell-Don Maynard (1960) and Al Toon-Wesley Walker (1986). Dan Bailey tied it at 16 on a 50-yard field goal that caromed through off the right upright

with 1:55 remaining. Moore got the tying drive by sneaking a pass behind Buster Skrine for a 23-yard gain to Cole Beasley.

The first play after a near-fumble by Fitzpatrick on a sneak for a first down was held up on review, Thompkins got behind rookie cornerback Byron Jones along the sideline before stepping out of bounds at the Dallas 26.

The last chance for the Cowboys ended on Moore's third interception when his desperation heave for Dez Bryant went over the outstretched arm of the All-Pro receiver and was caught by Marcus Williams. The Cowboys had four interceptions overall.

Cassel was replaced after two bumbling plays in the first half. On the first, he stumbled trying to change directions after faking a throw and threw to blindly to a spot where Darrelle Revis was by himself for the easy interception. Cassel came out the series after taking a 19-yard sack, which wasn't long after he left the field to loud boos following a three-and-out.

Moore's second pass was intercepted Marcus Gilchrist before he beat a New York blitz by slinging the ball in the flat to Bryant, who got around Revis for the touchdown and a 10-9 lead.

Moore had a chance to add to that lead but threw his second interception to Calvin Pryor in the end zone in the third quarter, shortly before Fitzpatrick threw it directly to Terrance Mitchell.

It was the first interception by a Dallas cornerback this season, and came from a seventh-round pick from last year who was signed to the practice squad and activated this week after a hamstring injury sidelined Morris Claiborne.

New York's first touchdown came after a near-fumble by Decker when the receiver's left leg turned awkwardly and he dropped the ball just as he knee was hitting the turf. He left the game briefly with a knee injury.

The Cowboys challenged the ruling that he was down, but it was upheld on review. Two plays later, Bilal Powell scored easily on a 12-yard run. — AP

KNICKS BEAT WEARY BULLS FOR FOURTH STRAIGHT WIN

NEW YORK: Carmelo Anthony scored 27 points and the New York Knicks beat the weary Chicago Bulls 107-91 on Saturday night for their fourth straight victory. A night after losing a four-overtime game in Chicago, the Bulls started well and had a strong third quarter, but the rest of the night mostly belonged to the Knicks. Arron Afflalo added 18 points for New York, which got back to .500 at 14-14 after winning just 17 games last season. Lance Thomas scored 13 off the bench. Joakim Noah had a season-high 21 points for the Bulls in his first start of the season. Rookie forward Bobby Portis had the best night of his brief career with 20 points and 11 rebounds.

THUNDER 118, LAKERS 78

Kevin Durant had 22 points and eight rebounds, Enes Kanter had 19 points and 14 rebounds and Oklahoma City beat Los Angeles for its eighth straight home victory. Russell Westbrook added 13 points and 11 assists for his 18th double-double of the season for Oklahoma City. The Thunder won for the fifth straight time against the Lakers. Kobe Bryant sat for Los Angeles with a sore right shoulder, and the Lakers started seldom-used rookie Anthony Brown in his place. Lou Williams scored 20 points and Jordan Clarkson added 15, but the Lakers lost for the 15th time in 17 games.

ROCKETS 107, CLIPPERS 97

Dwight Howard had 22 points and 14 rebounds and Houston built a huge lead early and rolled to a 107-97 win over Los Angeles. Houston led by as many as 26 points in the first half and was up by 12 after three quarters. The Rockets opened the fourth with an 8-2 run to make it 91-73. Marcus Thornton highlighted that spurt

when he drove into the lane, evaded Blake Griffin and finished with a layup. Houston pushed the lead to 95-76 with about 7 1/2 minutes left when Howard blocked a shot by Austin Rivers, and Trevor Ariza grabbed the ball and dished it to Howard, who finished with a dunk on the other end. The starters for both teams sat down a few minutes after that.

GRIZZLIES 96, PACERS 84

Marc Gasol had 19 points and 12 rebounds, Matt Barnes finished with 15 points and 10 rebounds and Memphis beat Indiana. Mike Conley added 20 points and eight assists as the Grizzlies snapped a two-game skid. Mario Chalmers had 12 points for Memphis and Jeff Green added 11. Paul George led the Pacers with 29 points, despite going 8 of 22 from the field. Monta Ellis scored 13 points and Rodney Stuckey had 11 points. Jordan Hill finished with 10 points and 13 rebounds. The loss snapped Indiana's three-game winning streak.

WIZARDS 109, HORNETS 101

John Wall had 27 points and 12 assists, Garrett Temple scored a career-high 21 points and Washington beat Charlotte. Wall scored 20 points in the first half and then drilled a key jumper with just over 2 minutes left in the game after the Hornets nearly erased a 15-point deficit. Cody Zeller's layup cut the lead to 99-98 with 2:24 to play. Jared Dudley matched a season high with 19 points and Marcin Gortat had 18 points for Washington. Kemba Walker led Charlotte with 18 points, and Jeremy Lin had 15. In the teams' first meeting of the season, the Wizards scored just six points in the fourth quarter in a 101-87 loss on Nov. 25. — AP

NBA Results/Standings

Oklahoma City 118, LA Lakers 78; Washington 109, Charlotte 101; NY Knicks 107, Chicago 91; Memphis 96, Indiana 84.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference				
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division				
W	L	PCT	GB	Oklahoma City	Utah	Portland	Minnesota	
Toronto	17	11	.607	-	18	9	.667	
Boston	14	13	.519	2.5	11	14	.440	
NY Knicks	14	14	.500	3	11	15	.423	
Brooklyn	7	19	.269	9	11	17	.393	
Philadelphia	1	27	.036	16	10	16	.385	
Central Division				Pacific Division				
Cleveland	17	7	.708	-	Golden State	26	1	.963
Indiana	16	10	.615	2	LA Clippers	16	12	.571
Chicago	15	10	.600	2.5	Phoenix	12	16	.429
Detroit	16	12	.571	3	Sacramento	10	16	.385
Milwaukee	10	18	.357	9	LA Lakers	4	23	.148
Southeast Division				Southwest Division				
Miami	15	10	.600	-	San Antonio	23	5	.821
Orlando	15	11	.577	0.5	Dallas	15	12	.556
Charlotte	15	11	.577	0.5	Memphis	15	14	.517
Atlanta	16	12	.571	0.5	Houston	14	14	.500
Washington	11	14	.440	4				

NFL Results/Standings

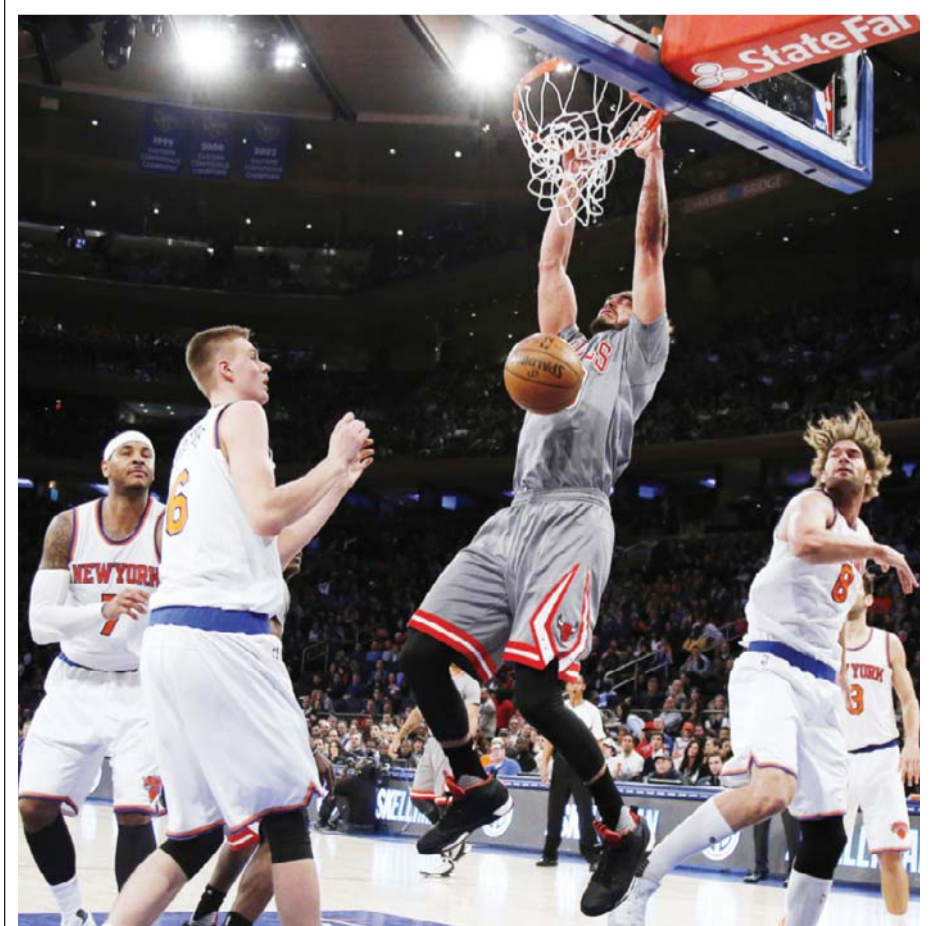
NY Jets 19 DALLAS 16

American Football Conference							National Football Conference							
AFC East							NFC East							
W	L	T	OTL	PF	PA	PCT	Washington	Philadelphia	NY Giants	Dallas	Green Bay	Minnesota	Chicago	Detroit
New England	11	2	0	1	402	253	.846	6	7	0	1	281	307	.462
NY Jets	9	5	0	0	344	272	.643	6	7	0	0	301	322	.462
Buffalo	6	7	0	0	316	301	.462	6	7	0	1	338	320	.462
Miami	5	8	0	0	264	331	.385	4	10	0	2	246	324	.286
AFC North							NFC North							
Cincinnati	10	3	0	0	354	229	.769	9	4	0	0	317	245	.692
Pittsburgh	8	5	0	1	344	260	.615	8	5	0	0	258	255	.615
Baltimore	4	9	0	1	278	326	.308	5	8	0	2	272	314	.385
Cleveland	3	10	0	1	240	357	.231	4	9	0	0	267	336	.308
AFC South							NFC South							
Indianapolis	6	7	0	1	275	356	.462	13	0	0	0	411	2431	.000
Houston	6	7	0	0	259	291	.462	6	7	0	1	279	295	.462
Jacksonville	5	8	0	1	326	357	.385	6	8	0	0	311	353	.429
Tennessee	3	10	0	0	253	326	.231	5	8	0	1	323	397	.385
AFC West							NFC West							
Denver	10	3	0	0	281	225	.769	11	2	0	0	405	252	.846
Kansas City	8	5	0	0	331	243	.615	8	5	0	2	340	235	.615
Oakland	6	7	0	0	299	326	.462	6	8	0	1	241	294	.429
San Diego	3	10	0	0	250	334	.231	4	9	0	0	188	315	.308

Bundesliga results/standings

Hertha Berlin 2, Mainz 0; Cologne 2, Borussia Dortmund 1; Eintracht Frankfurt 2, Werder Bremen 1; FC Ingolstadt 04 0, Bayer Leverkusen 1; Hamburg SV 0, FC Augsburg 1; Hanover 96 0, Bayern Munich 1; VfB Stuttgart 3, VfL Wolfsburg 1.

P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts	Hamburg SV	FC Ingolstadt 04	FC Augsburg
Bayern Munich	17	15	1	1	46	8	46	17	5
Borussia Dortmund	17	12	2	3	47	23	38	17	5
Hertha Berlin	17	10	2	5	26	18	32	16	4
Bayer Leverkusen	17	8	3	6	25	20	27	17	4
Schalke 04	17	8	3	6	23	23	27	17	4
VfL Wolfsburg	17	7	5	5	26	21	26	17	4
Moenchengladbach	16	8	2	6	31	28	26	17	4
Mainz	17	7	3	7	23	23	24	17	4
Cologne	17	6	6	5	18	21	24	17	2



NEW YORK: Chicago Bulls' Joakim Noah, center, dunks between New York Knicks' Kristaps Porzingis (6) and Robin Lopez (8) during the third quarter of an NBA basketball game Saturday, in New York. New York defeated Chicago 107-91. — AP

KALOU STRIKES AS HIGH-FLYING HERTHA STAY THIRD

BERLIN: Hertha Berlin finish 2015 third in the Bundesliga after Ivory Coast striker Salomon Kalou netted in yesterday's 2-0 home win over Mainz to continue their impressive run of results.

The three points gives capital club Hertha their 10th win from 17 league games this season and leaves them behind only runaway leaders Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga table.

Hertha took the lead at Berlin's Olympic Stadium when Vladimir Darida fired home off his left boot on 34 minutes. The hosts doubled their tally when a superb diagonal pass from Vedad Ibisevic

put Kalou into space and the Ivory Coast striker held off his marker to fire home off his right on 54 minutes for his ninth goal of the season.

Earlier in the day, Bayern confirmed Pep Guardiola will leave them at the end of the season, to be replaced by Carlo Ancelotti, as they finished the year with an eight-point lead in the table after their 1-0 win at Hanover on Saturday.

Thomas Mueller converted a 40th minute penalty for his 14th league goal of the season after a handball from Hanover captain Christian Schulz as Bayern produced another jaded display, but still managed to claim their 15th win in 17

league games.

The defeat left Hanover second from bottom with 11 defeats in their 17 games. Second-placed Borussia Dortmund dropped further behind after crashing to a 2-1 defeat at Cologne as the hosts scored twice in the final 10 minutes.

Greece centre-back Sokratis Papastathopoulos headed Dortmund into an 18th minute lead which Thomas Tuchel's side threw away in the closing stages. Cologne took the three points when Simon Zoller fired home from close range on 83 minutes before Anthony Modeste hit 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 to move out of the relegation zone when captain Alex Meier

and Stefan Aigner scored in their 2-1 win at home to fellow strugglers Werder Bremen.

Vfb Stuttgart also climbed out of the drop zone on goal difference after a 3-1 home win over VfL Wolfsburg in Saturday's late game which led to caretaker coach Jurgen Klammay getting the job permanently yesterday.

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

LIVERPOOL BEATEN BY BUOYANT WATFORD



LONDON: Odion Ighalo scored twice as buoyant Watford won 3-0 at home to Liverpool yesterday to consolidate seventh position in the Premier League, only one point behind the top four.

It was a bad blow for Jurgen Klopp's side, who would have overtaken them with a win but remained ninth, having taken only one point from three games. Nathan Ake, the Dutch Under-21 international on loan from Chelsea, scored in only the third minute after a howler from Hungarian goalkeeper Adam Bogdan, who was deputising for the injured Simon Mignolet.

Bogdan was soon beaten again on an unhappy league debut when Watford captain Troy Deeney sent leading scorer Ighalo away to net for the fourth game in succession. The Nigerian made it 12 for the season five minutes from time.

It was the first time since April 1987 that Watford, promoted to the top flight again this season, have won four successive games at this level of English football.

"It was an amazing victory against an amazing team," Quique Sanchez Flores, Watford's manager, told the BBC. Yet the Spaniard was keen not to get too carried away with his side's progress. "We should be humble, we have a lot of matches to play," he added.

"Four wins back-to-back is massive and starts our so-called tough run that everyone's talking about," a jubilant Deeney added on Sky Sports. "We're just doing our stuff and people have got to be worried to come here now."

WRONG DECISION

Deeney and Ighalo have now scored 17 of the team's 21 goals between them this season. The captain, who plays just behind his team-mate, offered an insight into their understanding when describing the first goal.

"I was fighting for the ball but I know he's going to make a run. He makes it easy for me because he's so quick and strong."

"I know when he gets the ball, he will play it behind the defence," added Ighalo, which was just what happened.

The predictability of the move did not please Klopp, who criticised his team's "bad reaction" to conceding twice in the opening quarter of an hour.

He insisted the first goal should not have been allowed, however, claiming that Bogdan had both hands on the ball after initially dropping it from Ben Watson's corner. "I think it's a foul, it was a wrong decision, but our reaction was really bad," he said. "We lost our mind and lost a very easy second goal, when we can defend better. Ake's goal, stabbed over the line from barely a metre, was the left-back's first in English football, confirming the good impression he has made at Watford."

Watford's second did not reflect well on Martin Skrtel, who seemed to have forced Ighalo wide from Deeney's pass but allowed him shoot from a wide angle.

Skrtel limped off before half-time and Divock Origi came on hoping to make an impression as dramatic as last weekend's when his goal in the sixth minute of added time earned Liverpool a draw against West Bromwich Albion. The Belgian's presence contributed to an improvement in the second half as the visitors finally made some chances.

Alberto Moreno hit the side-netting while Heurelho Gomes saved from Origi, Jordan Henderson and Emre Can but Watford remained dangerous in counter-attacks.

Ighalo's second in the 85th minute rounded off a fine move that had flowed through Deeney and then Swiss midfielder Valon Behrami. So Watford continue to confound critics who forecast a grim struggle against relegation following a return to the Premier League in May after an eight-year absence.

In 2007 they lasted one season, winning only five games and finishing bottom. This eighth victory from 17 games leaves them handsomely placed although a tricky programme awaits over the festive period with games against Chelsea, Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City. — Reuters



MODENA BRAGLIA: Juventus' Mario Mandukic, center, scores past Carpi's Simone Romagnoli, right, and Carpi's Luca Marrone, during their Serie A soccer match at Modena's Braglia stadium, Italy, yesterday. — AP

NAPOLI, FIORENTINA, JUVE AND ROMA KEEP PRESSURE ON INTER

MILAN: Gonzalo Higuain took his Serie A goals tally to 16 from 17 games as 10-man Napoli moved to within a point of leaders Inter Milan with a 3-1 away win at Atalanta yesterday. With a four-point cushion on Fiorentina and Napoli before the final Serie A games of 2015, Inter Milan will start the New Year top of the pile irrespective of their result against Lazio in Sunday's later clash. But Roberto Mancini's men were given a reminder of what lies ahead in the second half of the season after Napoli, Fiorentina, Roma and Juventus all won their respective final games before the league takes a two-week break. Juventus had moved up to second earlier with a patchy 3-2 win at Carpi that gave the champions their seventh consecutive victory as they continue to make amends for a disastrous start to the campaign.

Massimiliano Allegri's men are now fourth, at three points behind Inter and two behind Fiorentina and Napoli, following respective wins for the pair. In Florence, Nikola Kalinic broke the deadlock in the 20th minute with an angled shot that squirmed under Albano Bizzarri's legs. Strike partner Josip Ilicic doubled Fiorentina's lead with a fine dipping strike from outside the area that beat Bizzarri at the 'keeper's far post to wrap up the points for Paulo Sousa's hosts.

Atalanta, who stunned Roma 2-0 in the Italian capital a fortnight ago, had pledged to make life

hard for Napoli in Bergamo and for a time the visitors toiled.

But seven minutes after the restart Napoli captain Marek Hamsik fired in off the crossbar to beat Davide Bassi from the penalty spot after Dutch defender Marten De Roon handled a cross floated in for Higuain. Atalanta pulled level two minutes later thanks to Alejandro Gomez's low strike, only for Higuain to restore the visitors' lead with a flicked-on header that beat Bassi at the keeper's near post.

LATE CHANCE

The Argentinian celebrated stretching his league-leading tally to 15 goals by running half the length of the pitch to hug coach Maurizio Sarri, who has been credited with Napoli's title push this season. Higuain later told Sky: "Few teams have come here and played well, but we did you can see from the result."

"I'm happy for the goals, I'm working hard and if I'm feeling good then it's all down to the coach, to the club and to my teammates." Napoli's Brazilian midfielder Jorginho saw red for a studs-up challenge, but Higuain put the result beyond doubt when he powered down the right and held off his marker to beat Bassi with an angled strike. Hamsik spurned a late chance to make it four, firing a second penalty over after Gabriel Paletta had been sent off for pulling

down Dries Mertens as he was about to pull the trigger in front of goal.

Edin Dzeko was sent off for dissent in the second half at the Stadio Olimpico, where Alessandro Florenzi's close-range volley gave the embattled hosts a 42nd minute lead against Genoa.

But 18-year-old Umar Sadiq, who replaced Mohamed Salah eight minutes from the end, eased any late nerves when he ghosted in at the back post to head past Mattia Perin to score his maiden Serie A goal and spark wild Roma celebrations. The 2-0 win ended a four-game winless streak for Rudi Garcia's men, who remain in fifth spot at four points behind Inter and one behind Juventus. Florenzi followed his goal by hugging under-fire Garcia, who said afterwards: "Of course we're emotional, but it shows how important it was for us to give it everything tonight to try and win this game. "We went down to 10 men for the last 15-20 minutes, so the lads deserve all the credit for holding on and coming up with the second goal. Sadiq is learning his trade from some of the top players in the league." Inter will restore their four-point advantage later Sunday if they overcome a struggling Lazio side at the San Siro.

Lazio are on a seven-game winless run that has dropped them to 12th place at 16 points behind Inter. — AFP

EPL Standings

Swansea City 0, West Ham United 0; Watford 3, Liverpool 0.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts		P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Leicester City	17	11	5	1	37	24	38	Stoke City	17	6	5	6	14	16	23
Arsenal	16	10	3	3	29	13	33	Southampton	17	5	6	6	21	21	21
Manchester City	16	10	2	4	32	17	32	West Bromwich	17	5	5	7	17	23	20
Tottenham	17	7	8	2	28	14	29	Bournemouth	17	5	4	8	22	32	19
Manchester	17	8	5	4	22	14	29	Chelsea	17	5	3	9	21	27	18
Crystal Palace	17	9	2	6	23	16	29	Norwich City	17	4	5	8	20	29	17
Watford	17	8	4	5	21	16	28	Newcastle	17	4	5	8	19	32	17
West Ham 17	6	7	4	25	21	25	25	Swansea City	17	3	6	8	15	24	15
Liverpool	17	6	6	5	20	22	24	Sunderland	17	3	3	11	18	33	12
Everton	17	5	8	4	31	24	23	Aston Villa	17	1	4	12	14	31	7



WATFORD: Watford's goalkeeper Heurelho Gomes celebrates their third goal during the English Premier League soccer match between Watford and Liverpool at Vicarage Road stadium in Watford, yesterday. — AP

CHENNAIYIN WIN ISL

FATORDA: Chennaiyin were crowned Indian Super League (ISL) champions after two late goals gave them a 3-2 comeback victory over FC Goa in the tournament's final.

Colombian striker Stiven Mendoza scored the winning goal in the third minute of injury time to complete a stunning turnaround and break the hearts of the home supporters who had packed Goa's Jawaharlal Nehru

Stadium. The home side had appeared set for victory when a freekick from midfielder Joffre gave them a 2-1 lead with only three minutes of normal time left. But Goa goalkeeper Laxmikant Kattimani, who had earlier saved two penalties, then punched a cross into his own net in the 90th minute before Mendoza completed the scoring by waltzing through a shell-shocked Goa defence. — AFP

HAMMERS HOLD SWANSEA



SWANSEA: Swansea City and West Ham United found no solution to their recent travails in a lacklustre 0-0 Premier League draw at a sodden Liberty Stadium yesterday. Swansea, still without a manager following the dismissal of Garry Monk, created the better chances, but Ki Sung-Yueng and Jack Cork were both thwarted by visiting goalkeeper Adrian.

The Welsh club have now gone seven league games without a win and remain in the relegation zone, two points from safety ahead of the Boxing Day visit of West Bromwich Albion.

West Ham's form is equally bleak as Slaven Bilic's injury-ravaged side have also gone seven league games without winning, drawing their last three matches 0-0.

Andy Carroll has joined a casualty list that already featured Dimitri Payet, Manuel Lanzini, Diafra Sakho and Winston Reid, but they are nonetheless only four points below the Champions League berths. Swansea caretaker manager Alan Curtis made only one change to the team cruelly beaten 2-1 at Manchester City last weekend, when Swansea went down to a stoppage-time strike by Yaya Toure that looped in off team-mate Kelechi Iheanacho.

Bafetimbi Gomis replaced Wayne Routledge and lined up alongside Andre Ayew up front ahead of a diamond midfield, with Gylfi Sigurdsson at number 10. Swansea had belied their recent strug-

gles with a courageous display at the Etihad Stadium and they attacked this game in the same vein.

Gomis and Ayew both threatened inside the first 10 minutes, while West Ham goalkeeper Adrian had to save with his legs from Ki Sung-Yueng, who was teed up by Gomis, and Ayew placed a right-foot shot narrowly wide. Jack Cork went close to putting Swansea ahead in spectacular fashion with a stunning 20-yard volley on the hour, only for Adrian to fling himself across his goal

and save.

Moments later the hosts felt they should have had a spot-kick when Ki's shot struck James Collins on the arm, but referee Lee Mason pointed to the corner flag rather than the penalty spot.

Swansea's failure to take their chances left them vulnerable to a sucker-punch. Enner Valencia almost landed one with a vicious shot from the left that Lukasz Fabianski had to tip over the bar, while Collins headed wide from a corner. — AFP



SOUTH WALES: West Ham United's English midfielder Mark Noble (R) vies with Swansea City's Icelandic midfielder Gylfi Sigurdsson during the English Premier League football match between Swansea City and West Ham United at The Liberty Stadium in Swansea, south Wales yesterday. — AFP

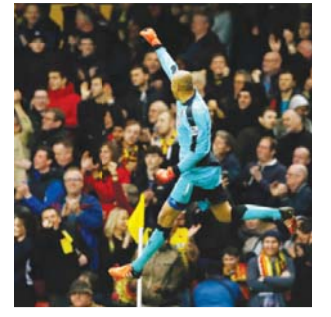
Sports

Stan Wawrinka
inspires Singapore
to IPTL victory

16

Liverpool beaten
by buoyant
Watford

19



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JETS TOP COWBOYS 19-16, KEEP PRESSURE ON IN AFC WILD CARD Page 18



YOKOHAMA: Barcelona players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Club World Cup football final against River Plate in Yokohama yesterday. — AFP

MESSI, SUAREZ FIRE BARCA TO THIRD CLUB WORLD CUP

YOKOHAMA: Lionel Messi marked his return from illness with a brilliant goal as Barcelona beat Argentina's River Plate 3-0 to capture a record third Club World Cup yesterday. The Spanish giants welcomed back Messi after a bout of kidney stones and the mercurial Argentine scored with a clinical finish on 36 minutes, before a lethal Luis Suarez double destroyed River's hopes in a spiky Yokohama final.

"We came here to win the title and it was important to get the job done," said the prolific Suarez, who picked up the player of the tournament and golden boot award after finishing with five goals.

"Leo's goal opened up the game and in the second half we controlled things and had more chances," added the Uruguayan, who has struck 24 goals in 24 games

this season, including 17 in his last 11.

Neymar, himself returning to the side after a groin strain, was instrumental in Barcelona's opener, climbing to knock down a Dani Alves cross for Messi to steer past River goalkeeper Marcelo Barovero with a deft flick of his left boot.

Suarez, who scored a hat-trick in Barca's 3-0 semi-final win over Guangzhou Evergrande, scored a second with a fierce low drive four minutes into the second half.

The former Liverpool striker grabbed his second of the night when he dispatched a thumping header past Barovero after a pinpoint cross from Neymar. "Our aim is to win titles but what is also important is the style we do it in," said Barca coach Luis Enrique. "The process behind it is important to me.

"We try to keep improving, not just on the pitch but as people," he added. "That is also something that's expected of players at Barcelona.

"Two days ago, Messi was a doubt for the final but he demanded to play. Neymar was also desperate to play. That kind of determination rubs off on all the players."

River Plate's starting eleven cost a total of some six million dollars while Barcelona paid \$85 million for Suarez alone, and the gulf in class showed.

The Catalans, who had already bagged the European Champions League, La Liga, the Copa del Rey and European Super Cup this year, tore River to shreds in the second half. Neymar also came close to scoring with a curling effort that shaved the bar.

Barcelona goalkeeper Claudio Bravo was a spectator

for much of the game on a cold night but made an acrobatic save from River substitute Gonzalo Martinez seven minutes from time to deny the South Americans a consolation goal.

Messi, who forced a smart save from Barovero in the early skirmishes and could himself have finished with a hat-trick, became the first player to score in three finals after leading Barca to victory in 2009 and 2011.

River manager Marcelo Gallardo apologised to the estimated 15,000 fans who made the long journey from Buenos Aires to Japan.

"We had a plan but when Messi scored, it went out of the window," he said. "We let the fans down but we can be proud that we did our best. Barcelona were simply too good." — AFP (See Page 18)

ANCELOTTI TO REPLACE GUARDIOLA AT BAYERN

BERLIN: Pep Guardiola will leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season after the Spaniard decided not to extend his contract at the German champions, who announced yesterday that multiple Champions League winner Carlo Ancelotti had signed a three-year deal to replace him.

Bayern Chief Executive Karl-Heinz Rummenigge confirmed the much-anticipated change in manager, thanking Guardiola for his work and confirming that a deal for Italian Ancelotti, who has been out of a job since leaving Real Madrid in the close season, had been completed. "We are thankful to Guardiola for all he gave our club and hope to celebrate more success in the current season," Rummenigge said in a statement.

"I am convinced that Pep and the team will work harder to reach the big sporting aims of the club, especially now that it is clear that Pep will leave." Bayern had repeatedly said they wanted Guardiola to stay at the club, but his departure had been widely predicted, with media reports saying a move to the Premier League was on the cards.

A number of top English clubs are likely to be eyeing up the 44-year-old, who has consolidated his standing as one of Europe's top coaches since joining Bayern in 2013 after winning a remarkable 14 titles in four years at Barcelona.

The Spaniard, who has yet to comment on his decision to quit the club and has already left Munich for a winter holiday, took over after Bayern's treble-winning season under Jupp Heynckes in 2012-13.

He has maintained their domestic dominance with back-to-back league titles and a German Cup in his first two seasons in charge, while also overhauling the playing squad.

Homegrown talents like club icon Bastian Schweinsteiger and Toni Kroos have left on Guardiola's watch while Spaniards Thiago Alcantara and Xabi Alonso have been among the arrivals.

Bayern, however, have maintained their stranglehold on the Bundesliga, winning titles and breaking records in the process.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

One blot on Guardiola's copybook has been his failure to win the Champions League with Bayern losing in the semi-finals on their previous two attempts. His arrival was intended to herald the start of an extended period of European domination after Heynckes clinched



This combination of pictures created yesterday shows Bayern Munich's Spanish head coach Pep Guardiola (L) and Real Madrid's Italian coach Carlo Ancelotti (R) gesturing during the UEFA Champions League. — AFP

Europe's elite club competition in his final season at Bayern. Guardiola will have one last shot at clinching the Champions League with Bayern this season after his side comfortably reached the knockout stage, while they remain on course to win another domestic title and top the table by eight points heading into the winter break.

Guardiola is revered among Bayern fans for his knowledge of the game and his team's ruthless efficiency that has seen them break several records en route to their last two league titles.

He has, however, also faced criticism for his run-in with a former long-time Bayern doctor, who once accused the Spaniard of blaming the medical staff for a defeat, and for allowing club great Schweinsteiger to leave last season. — Reuters

BALE SCORES FOUR AS REAL STICK 10 PAST 9-MAN RAYO

MADRID: Gareth Bale scored four times as Real Madrid came from behind to beat nine-man Rayo Vallecano 10-2 in a wild game at the Santiago Bernabeu to close the gap on La Liga leaders Barcelona and Atletico Madrid to two points. It is the first time in 55 years that a team has scored 10 goals in a La Liga game. However, the Madrid fans still voiced their disapproval towards under fire coach Rafael Benitez after Real found themselves 2-1 down inside 12 minutes. Red cards inside half an hour for Tito and Raul Baena opened the floodgates, though, as a double from Cristiano Ronaldo and a hat-trick for Karim Benzema added to Bale's most prolific day in three years as a Madrid player.

Atletico have the chance to extend their lead at the top back to five points later on Sunday when they visit Malaga. Barcelona aren't in La Liga action this weekend as they sealed the Club World Cup with a 3-0 win over River Plate earlier in the day. "We conceded the goals early, but then the team reacted," said Benitez. "I am not going to judge the decisions of the referee, but from the sending-off the team did what it had to do, try to play well and score goals." However, Rayo boss Paco Jemez said the referee's decisions made a mockery of the league as whole.

"La Liga has lost credibility. We feel trampled upon and humiliated," he said. "It is a long time since I have something so grotesque and shameful that doesn't benefit us or Madrid. All of us lose credibility." Madrid president Florentino Perez had restated his support for Benitez in midweek after rumours suggested he was one defeat away

from the sack after losing 1-0 at Villarreal last weekend.

Real had won their previous 14 meetings against their humble rivals from across Madrid and looked well set for another routine afternoon when Bale teed up Danilo for the opener after just three minutes. Yet, Madrid's defensive deficiencies in recent weeks were exposed again when Antonio Amaya rose highest to head home Roberto Trashorras's corner. And the defending was even worse from Danilo as he allowed Jozabed to head home from close range two minutes later.

With the Madrid fans on the verge of full revolt, the hosts were handed a huge break when Tito needlessly lunged in on Toni Kroos and was rightly shown a straight red card. Danilo then made amends for his poor defending with a sensational cross for Bale to head home the fourth goal of the game after just 25 minutes. More controversy was to follow when Baena was penalised for a pull on Sergio Ramos and was harshly shown his second yellow card to leave Rayo with nine men.

Ronaldo made no mistake from the spot and Bale then exploited a huge gape in the Rayo defence to gallop clear and slot home his second. The one way traffic continued after the break as James Rodriguez teed up Benzema for his sixth goal in his last four games. Benzema did well to duck out of the way of Rodriguez's next cross to allow Ronaldo to register his 23rd goal of the season with a thumping header. Ronaldo then turned provider as his low cross was swept home by Bale for just his second ever hat-trick for Madrid. — AFP

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China to devalue its currency further

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FED RATE HIKE TO HAVE MINIMAL IMPACT ON GULF ECONOMIES

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LUQUE: Economy and Foreign Ministers of Mercosur members take part of a preparatory meeting for the Mercosur Summit in Luque, Paraguay, yesterday. Presidents of Argentina, Uruguay, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela and Surinam are scheduled to meet today. —AP

PROSPECTS SLIM FOR MAJOR GLOBAL ECONOMIC PICKUP US GROWTH AND INFLATION OUTLOOK BLEAKER THAN FORECAST

LONDON/BRASILIA/BENGALURU: The world economy may be set for another year like 2015, with modest growth in developed economies offsetting persistent weakness elsewhere but generating very little inflation and keeping interest rates low.

The US Federal Reserve's long-awaited rise in rates from zero showed confidence in the world's largest economy, but rival China is still struggling for a foothold with rate cuts. Although some countries, such as Brazil, have mainly home-grown inflation troubles, the Fed's first post-crisis rate hike is an unlikely cure for what ails the rest of the world.

With exchange rates dominating the policy debate in many countries, what happens to the dollar will matter a lot. "The key question is whether the US economy is finally robust enough not only to sustain its own recovery but also to lift world trade and global growth enough to allow the external deflationary pressures weighing on US inflation to wane," outlined HSBC economists Janet Henry and James Pomeroy.

Along with an abrupt downturn in the volume of global trade and a continuing fall in commodity prices, the dollar's rise this year has brought US industrial growth to a near-standstill, keeping a lid on inflation pressures from abroad.

The other extreme, according to HSBC, is that the United States, "via a strong US dollar, will simply become the latest victim of the deflationary pass-the-parcel which has plagued the global economy for a decade, and find itself following all of the other developed market central banks which raised rates but soon found they had to reverse course."

"The outcome, we believe, is likely to be somewhere in between." A Reuters poll of 120 economists on Friday forecast the Fed would hike rates again in March, but probably won't move as quickly next year as policymakers have suggested. Other recent Reuters surveys of hundreds of analysts worldwide do not offer hope for a pickup in inflation, even in the United States where the central bank says it is reasonably confident this will happen. Even the most optimistic core inflation fore-

casts are not far above 2 percent.

The polls point to global growth averaging only 3.4 percent next year with scant prospect of touching 4 percent given the slowdown in China and the gloom surrounding emerging markets.

Nor is it easy to find analysts expecting broad weakness in the dollar, with the most aggressive views suggesting the euro could even fall below parity.

China's renminbi, now a reserve currency, has fallen each day for most of the past two weeks, with many bracing for further devaluation by Chinese authorities still looking for ways to stimulate the debt-laden economy.

SOME HOPE EMERGING

The US growth and inflation outlook is bleaker than forecast this time last year, even after a sharp fall in unemployment. Wage inflation has picked up, but by less than many had thought it would.

Wall Street stock indexes are trading near their

levels of a year ago, confounding predictions of a solid rise in 2015, with strategists still expecting them to climb despite downward pressure on earnings.

Over the past year, global fund managers have cut their recommendations for equity holdings to near their lowest since the financial crisis, even as they ramped up bond holdings.

US Treasury yields are not far from where they were this time last year either, but they too are expected to climb, as has been the forecast for many years now, although by less this year than one might expect.

Since crude oil prices began falling sharply 18 months ago from above \$100 a barrel to below \$40 now, the number of analysts predicting a rebound has dwindled. Some are now saying \$20 is more likely than a sizeable move higher.

But there are some bright spots. Underpinned by the European Central Bank's 60 billion euros a month of bond purchases, the euro zone is finally generating modest growth and unemployment

has begun to fall. Inflation remains well below target, however, and so ECB stimulus, including the negative deposit rate, will remain in place for all of next year. That puts the world's largest trading bloc—and most other central banks—on an opposite policy path to the Fed. Some emerging market economies are performing better, too. India is forecast to grow at a decent clip, underpinned by rate cuts earlier this year during a window of low inflation. And optimism about Mexico has grown as it slowly starts to take advantage of a recent historic reform in the energy sector.

But much can still go wrong. Food prices have already pushed Brazil's inflation above 10 percent during a deep recession and could rise further. "As if predicting exchange rates and interest rates wasn't hard enough, a strong El Niño may be arriving," warned BofA-ML head of global emerging markets fixed income strategy, Alberto Ades. "So economists and investors will need to keep an eye on the weather, too." —Reuters

MOZAMBIQUE'S ECONOMY DRIFTS ON TO THE ROCKS

MAPUTO: "There'll be no festive season," grumbles a greengrocer in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, where the economy has taken a nosedive and the local currency has hit a historic low against the dollar.

Lourdes Mutembene hopes to sell a kilogram of tomatoes for 60 meticals (1.1 euros / \$1.2), compared with 35 meticals a few months back, but her stall has become too costly for most customers. Hard times have fallen on the southern African country because of a fall in world prices of raw materials coupled with some much-criticized public spending.

"At Zimpeto (a Maputo suburb) where we fetch our supplies, they say that everything has gone up because of the dollar and the rand" in neighboring South Africa, Mutembene explains, leaning on her counter. At the next stand, Abou Sangare, a tailor from Ivory Coast, points to his reels of fabric with equal bitterness. "All the stuff we buy here comes from South Africa and all the prices have gone up," he says.

The Mozambican metical has dropped by more than 40 percent against the US dollar since the beginning of the year, marking the worst ever decline by an African currency except for the Zambian kwacha, according to Bloomberg's financial information service. The outcome has been a hike in domestic prices, particularly inevitable in a country like Mozambique, which has to import an enormous proportion of consumer goods.

Mozambique exports natural gas, coal, cot-

ton and aluminium, but the prices for such raw materials have fallen over several months. Economic prospects depend largely on exploiting vast reserves of gas, which were discovered in the north since 2010 by the Italian oil and gas corporation ENI and the US firm Anadarko.

But both corporations have pushed back their investment plans for 2016 because of the steep fall in the price of the fossil fuel. "Since the rate of these projects is slower, the economic dynamics of Mozambique are not up to our expectations," says Rogerio Nkomo, a spokesman for the economy and finance ministry questioned by AFP. Meantime, prices rocket. "We should work to compensate for imports. After all, we're an agricultural country, but also a trading route for several landlocked nations that need our ports, rail links and roads," central bank governor Ernesto Gove said.

'Money spent uselessly'

Though the average annual growth rate has been seven percent for 20 years, the poverty level is stagnating at 54 percent of the population, former prime minister Luisa Diogo pointed out. "The structure of our economy remains fragile."

Indeed, for the first time in a decade, Mozambique turned to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) at the end of October for a loan of \$286 million to improve the financial situation. Then last Monday, parli-

ment approved cuts in the 2016 budget.

However, observers are most concerned by a lack of foreign currency reserves. On November 30, the central bank announced a ceiling on cash withdrawals abroad in a measure to avoid currency flight. Critics blame former president Armando Guebuza, in charge from 2005 to 2015, for wasting money on questionable investments. They include a giant bridge in the capital and an unfinished ring road around the city, both more costly than planned. Equally controversial is the acquisition of a tuna fishing fleet by state-owned firm Ematum. Financed by a state-guaranteed bond of \$850 million, the deal caused uproar once it emerged that much of the money was actually being spent on surveillance vessels and military equipment ordered from France.

Under pressure from international donors, the government finally shifted \$500 million of the loan into the official defence budget. The sum was therefore counted as part of the country's public debt, which is expected to soar to 62 percent of gross domestic product at the end of the year, compared with 38 percent in 2011, according to financial services firm Fitch.

"The boats have still not been used and are rusting in the harbour," protests Ivone Soares, the head of the parliamentary opposition group. "The money has been spent uselessly and nobody is able to say what it was for." —AFP

SAUDI OIL EXPORTS RISE TO 7.364M BPD IN OCTOBER

KHOBAR: Saudi Arabia's crude oil exports in October rose by 253,000 barrels per day from September to 7.364 million bpd, official data showed yesterday. The oil exporting heavyweight maintained high output and jumped 10.276 million bpd in October, slightly higher than September's 10.226 million. Monthly export figures are provided by Riyadh and other members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) to the Joint Organizations Data Initiative (JODI), which publishes them on its website.

Domestic refineries processed 2.028 million bpd of crude, lower than the September level of 2.501 million bpd, the JODI data showed. Exports of refined oil products dropped to 1.093 million bpd from 1.190 million bpd in September. Rabigh refinery and petrochemical complex was shut down for maintenance for 50 days from October to December.

In October, crude oil directly burnt to generate power fell from the month before to 667,000 bpd, the JODI data showed, reflecting a decline in electricity consumption from the hot summer months when air conditioning use is high.

Tourism project

A Saudi businessman is in talks with Egyptian authorities over a \$4 billion tourism resort in Egypt's Red Sea region of Sharm el-Sheikh, Egyptian tourism minister Hisham Zaazou told Saudi newspaper Okaz.

Zaazou declined to name the prospective investor, the newspaper reported yesterday, but said the project would be the largest resort in the Red Sea town, a popular beach

and diving holiday destination. The minister did not elaborate on what stage these talks were at.

Egypt's vital tourism industry has suffered from the political instability that followed the uprising against Hosni Mubarak in 2011. It took a further hit after a Russian airliner flying out of Sharm el-Sheikh crashed on Oct. 31, killing all 224 people on board. Russia's FSB security service has said it is certain a bomb brought down the Airbus jet, a conclusion shared by Britain and the United States. Egypt said earlier this month it has found no evidence so far of terrorism or other illegal action linked to the crash.

Since the crash, some airlines have suspended flights to Sharm el-Sheikh for security reasons.

Saudi Arabia, along with Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates, has invested billions of dollars to support Egypt's economy and maintain stability since 2011. Zaazou has said he plans to make up for the loss of international business by encouraging local tourism, largely from wealthy Gulf Arab visitors.

Zaazou said around 450,000 Saudi tourists visited Egypt until Nov. 30, of this year, according to statistics he cited, compared to 400,000 last year. Saudi Arabian Airlines (Saudia) said in November it planned to increase the frequency of its flights from the kingdom to the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh from Feb. 2016. Kuwait Airways was also due to launch direct flights to Sharm el-Sheikh starting on Dec 1 to support Egypt's tourism sector, the minister of information was quoted as saying in November. —Reuters

BRAZIL FIRMS CUT INVESTMENTS, STASH CASH FOR AN UGLY 2016

LOSS OF CREDIT RATING SEALS BRAZIL'S FALL FROM GRACE

SAO PAULO/BRASILIA: Brazil's economy is reeling from its worst year in a quarter century, and judging by major companies' investment plans for next year, things are about to get worse. The biggest names in Brazilian retail, construction, steel, autos and oil are slashing capital spending budgets as they abandon hopes of a swift recovery in Latin America's largest economy and in global commodity markets.

Mining giant Vale SA plans to cut investments by a quarter and oil company Petrobras by a fifth in 2016. Brazil's biggest retailer, GPA SA, is cutting investment as much as 40 percent in 2016 to the lowest level in seven years.

Although Brazil's other corporate titans, such as power utility Eletrobras SA and debt-laden telecoms provider Oi SA haven't yet given forecasts, there are growing signs that they will also be making steep cuts. Interest rates at 14 percent and rising have made private financing difficult for many projects. Brazil's interventionist policies and generous public financing - once the backbone of corporate investment plans - are also in sharp retreat.

The loss of Brazil's prized investment grade credit rating on Wednesday sealed its fall from grace after a high-flying commodities boom in recent years, and will push up borrowing costs as more investors back away from the country.

Yet the biggest obstacle to new investment may be Brazilians' own confidence in a recovery, which dissipated this year as policymaking stalled amid efforts to impeach President Dilma Rousseff.

"The outlook for 2016 is awful," said Mario Bernardini, a director at national heavy machinery trade association Abimaq. "In a recession like this, companies are protecting their cash."

Capital investment in Brazil has fallen for nine straight quarters and economists widely expect that streak to continue through next year, with an accumulated drop between 6 and 12 percent from an already weak 2015.

That would represent a decline on the scale of 60 billion to 130 billion reais (\$17-34 billion) in fixed investments, or around 1-2 percent of gross domestic product, according to Reuters calculations.

As Brazilian blue chips further cut budgets in recent weeks, more economists slashed their 2016 outlook. Many now expect another year of economic contraction on par with the more than 3 percent drop forecast for 2015.

"The economy is bad and next year looks worse," said GPA's Chief Executive Ronaldo Labrudi, in blunt comments last week. The owner of supermarket chains Pao de Acucar and Extra has already cut capital spending 10 percent this year from 2014.

'WAR ECONOMY DECISIONS'

Economists at Banco Bradesco tracking news of capital spending saw about half as many corporate investments announced this year compared with three years ago. Among the sectors monitored, less than 50 percent had

investment news in recent months, down from a peak above 80 percent in 2010.

Crumbling consumer confidence has forced homebuilders and carmakers to stockpile inventory, leading to a glut of unused capacity. Nearly a quarter of industrial capacity is currently idle, according to the National Confederation of Industry.

The pullback is affecting foreign as well as domestic players. Honda Motor Co put off opening a new Brazilian factory early next year. Production of heavy trucks, a key capital good, has also fallen by half this year. Demand for agricultural machinery is down by a third.



BRASILIA: Brazil's President Dilma Rousseff, left, talks with former President Jose Sarney during a ceremony where she signed a presidential decree giving tax breaks to companies that join the "Green Free Trade Zone" at Planalto presidential palace in Brasilia on Friday. For companies to be part of the Green Free Trade Zone, they must use local raw materials. —AP

Both drops accelerated in recent months, according to data from national automakers' association Anfavea. The group's president, Luiz Moan, said sales should continue falling in 2016, putting off hope of a recovery to the end of next year.

Cement and steel groups also forecast shrinking demand in 2016. Steelmaker Cia Siderurgica Nacional SA, or CSN, plans capital spending of 1.5 billion reais (\$385 million) or less next year, compared to 1.7 billion reais in the first nine months of 2015.

Benjamin Steinbruch, CSN's chief executive, said sacrificing investments was one of many "war economy decisions" he faced. Vale, the world's largest iron ore miner, is also cutting 2016 investments to about three-quarters of what it spent in 2015 and half what it invested in 2014, after iron

ore prices plunged about 70 percent in two years.

The few bright spots are concentrated among select exporters, such as wood pulp producers Fibria SA and Klabin SA, who gained competitiveness from a stronger dollar without suffering a collapse in the prices of their commodities.

SNARED BY SCANDAL

Plunging oil prices and a devastating bribery scandal have also upended investment plans at state-run oil company Petroleo Brasileiro SA, or Petrobras. Chief Executive Aldemir Bendine already slashed the capital spending

budget to \$19 billion in 2016, down from \$23 billion this year and more than \$40 billion in 2014. He said in recent days there is a good chance of another cut early next year.

For much of the past decade, Petrobras was investing more than any company on earth and its spending on refineries and offshore oil fields was the cornerstone of President Rousseff's signature "Accelerated Growth Program".

But the oil giant and its contractors were snared this year in Brazil's biggest corruption investigation ever, with senior executives convicted of contract fixing and political kickbacks. The graft probe has paralyzed projects at Petrobras and Brazil's biggest engineering groups, which also account for the lion's share of civil construction in the country. —Reuters

News

in brief

US dollar firms vis-a-vis Kuwaiti dinar at 0.303

KUWAIT: The US dollar stabilized vis-a-vis the Kuwaiti dinar in yesterday's trading at KD 0.303 and the euro at KD 0.329, as compared to Thursday's rates, the Central Bank of Kuwait said. Sterling pound dropped to reach KD 0.452, while the Swiss franc stood at KD 0.305 while the Japanese yen firmed at KD 0.002.

Gold price stays at \$1,060 per ounce

KUWAIT: Gold price reached \$1,060 per ounce in global markets despite US central bank's decision to raise interest rate by a quarter points, said an economic report yesterday. The price performance is different from analysts' predictions, where they have forecast that it will be below USD 1,000 per ounce, Sabyik Al-Kuwait Company said in the report. It reached \$1,079 per ounce when the interest cut was declared, after it fell to \$1,048 before the announcement, the report added. The prices will remain close to current levels or will be moving in a narrow range next year, due to forecast effects of raising the interest rate, where the yellow metal higher resistance will be at \$1,150 per ounce and the lowest support point at \$1,050 per ounce. Silver price was up by 36 cents to reach \$14 per ounce. Other precious metals also rose at the end of last week.

Oman Jan-Oct budget deficit widens to \$8.5bn

MUSCAT: Oman posted a budget deficit of 3.26 billion rials (\$8.5 billion) in the first 10 months of this year, against a 189.6 million rial surplus a year earlier, because of lower oil export prices, provisional Finance Ministry data showed yesterday. Oman's 2015 budget plan envisaged government expenditure of 14.1 billion rials and a deficit of 2.5 billion rials, assuming an average oil price of \$75 per barrel.

Egyptian pound steady at forex sale

CAIRO: The Egyptian pound held steady at an official foreign currency auction yesterday and on the black market. Egypt, which depends on imported food and energy, is facing a dollar shortage and mounting pressure to devalue the pound. The central bank surprised markets when it strengthened the pound on Nov. 11 by 20 piasters against the dollar. It sold 39.4 million dollars at a cut-off price of 7.7301 pounds to the dollar, unchanged from Thursday. The official rate is still far from the black market, which was around 8.58 pounds to the dollar yesterday, unchanged from Thursday.

EARLY CLOSURES OF 2015 TO BOOST TRADE VALUE AT KSE

KUWAIT: Two Kuwaiti economists have agreed that early closures of several portfolios and investment funds of the year at the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) is likely to boost liquidity if market makers join the trading.

In separate interviews with KUNA, they shared the view that it is usual for the market at that time of the year to experience exceptional trading, unless pressing factors exist, such as arbitrary selling or focusing on cheap stocks below 50 fils.

Portfolios and investment funds will be in an unenviable situation over this week and the next, with approaching end of the year, Murabahat Investment Deputy CEO Mohannad Al-Mesbah told KUNA. Prices of many shares have plummeted and efforts are expected to "beautify them." According to Al-Mesbah, market trading through the year has been weak for the continuity of the same reasons and findings, either on the technical level or the general investment climate.

The market still lacks obvious orientation and investment vision, he said. Though companies and banks have made good profits during the past three quarters, investment reactions were not satisfactory and many investors turned to

other markets such as real state.

For his part, financial analyst, Ali Al-Namash said that the closures of the year will see huge pressures, adding that "beautification of shares" will be on a tight scale since the market has not moved toward a positive direction through the year.

For Al-Namash, the current level of liquidity, KD 10-12 million, is a good one for reasons related to other countries' economies, besides the falling of oil prices. However, the targeted level is KD 20-25 million daily.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) ended yesterday's session in the red zone as the price index lost 51.76 points reaching 5,571.93 points, the weighted index inched down by 0.94 points reaching 380.46 points and the KXS 15 lost 0.14 points to stand at 902.02 points. Number of trades stood at 2,008, value of traded stocks at KD 7,586,302.5. Meanwhile, share turnover amounted to 54,132,366. Top gainers were (FOOD), (BPCC), (IFAHR), (CABLE) and (ALRAI), while the top volume shares were (ALMADINA), (INVESTORS), (SECH), (ADNC) and (NBK). — KUNA

ITALY LOWER HOUSE OKAYS TAX-CUTTING BUDGET

ROME: Italy's lower house of parliament has approved a tax-cutting budget, the government said yesterday, clearing the way for voting in the upper house Senate which must approve it by the end of the year. Prime Minister Matteo Renzi has proposed cutting a tax on primary residences, reducing some corporate levies and raising spending on culture and on security to combat the militant threat to Europe.

Renzi's government raised its budget deficit target last week to 2.4 percent of gross domestic product, above the 2.2 percent target it has pledged to the European Commission. Before the deficit hike, the European Union said Italy's plans

risked breaking its rules and reserved a final judgement on whether to approve it until spring of 2016. The budget document will move to the upper house today, for reading and approval by senators.

After jihadists killed 130 people in Paris in November, Renzi said he planned to direct state funds towards bursaries for study, developing poor urban areas, and giving 18 year-olds money to spend on theatre and concert tickets. Italy is lobbying the EU to let it exclude spending on the migration crisis, which looks set to bring 1 million people to Europe by land and sea this year, from deficit calculations.

Initial plans also included proposals to scrap levies on agricultural and

industrial equipment.

The Bank of Italy's deputy governor said on Saturday that the vast majority of the country's banks are in a better state than the small lenders whose failure and subsequent rescue this year wiped out the savings of thousands of retail investors. The government salvaged Banca Marche, Banca Etruria, CariChieti and CariFe at the end of November, using 3.6 billion euros from a crisis fund financed by healthy banks. In the process, people who had bought shares and junior debt took heavy losses, drawing criticism of Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's government, the Bank of Italy (BOI) and the financial market regulator. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.		
COUNTRY	SELL DRAFT	SELL CASH
ASIAN COUNTRIES		
Japanese Yen	2.512	
Indian Rupees	4.590	
Pakistani Rupees	2.906	
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.124	
Nepali Rupees	2.871	
Singapore Dollar	216.570	
Hongkong Dollar	39.280	
Bangladesh Taka	3.867	
Philippine Peso	6.424	
Thai Baht	8.440	
GCC COUNTRIES		
Saudi Riyal	81.243	
Qatari Riyal	83.688	
Omani Riyal	791.320	
Bahraini Dinar	809.090	
UAE Dirham	82.947	
ARAB COUNTRIES		
Egyptian Pound - Cash	37.700	
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.955	
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.422	
Tunisian Dinar	150.520	
Jordanian Dinar	428.960	
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.030	
Syrian Lira	2.171	
Morocco Dirham	31.231	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		
US Dollar Transfer	304.500	
Euro	333.430	
Sterling Pound	457.510	
Canadian dollar	220.170	
Turkish lira	103.920	
Swiss Franc	309.140	
Australian Dollar	220.460	
US Dollar Buying	303.300	

GOLD	
20 Gram	217.860
10 Gram	111.620
5 Gram	56.500

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

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD	
GCC COUNTRIES	
US Dollar	304.750
Canadian Dollar	220.235
Sterling Pound	454.700
Euro	332.330
Swiss Frank	303.340
Bahrain Dinar	806.235
UAE Dirhams	83.215
Qatari Riyals	84.430

Saudi Riyals	81.945	
Jordanian Dinar	429.300	
Egyptian Pound	38.808	
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.126	
Indian Rupees	4.582	
Pakistani Rupees	2.908	
Bangladesh Taka	3.862	
Philippines Peso	6.420	
Cyprus pound	580.455	
Japanese Yen	3.510	
Syrian Pound	2.610	
Nepalese Rupees	3.860	
Malaysian Ringgit	71.805	
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.375	
Thai Bhat	9.405	
Turkish Lira	104.170	

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY		
COUNTRY	SELL CASH	SELLDRAFT
Europe		
British Pound	0.448333	0.457333
Czech Korune	0.004233	0.016233
Danish Krone	0.040281	0.045281
Euro	0.326142	0.334142
Norwegian Krone	0.030859	0.036059
Romanian Leu	0.087349	0.087349
Slovakia	0.009104	0.019104
Swedish Krona	0.031670	0.036670
Swiss Franc	0.300869	0.311069
Turkish Lira	0.099686	0.109986
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.210250	0.221750
New Zealand Dollar	0.199217	0.208717
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.213247	0.221747
US Dollars	0.300400	0.304900

US Dollars Mint	0.300900	0.304900
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003465	0.004065
Chinese Yuan	0.045310	0.048810
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037187	0.039937
Indian Rupee	0.004325	0.004715
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002430	0.002610
Kenyan Shilling	0.003165	0.003165
Korean Won	0.000248	0.000263
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066981	0.072981
Nepalese Rupee	0.002887	0.003057
Pakistan Rupee	0.002702	0.002982
Philippine Peso	0.006408	0.006688
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.212476	0.218476
South African Rand	0.014273	0.022773
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001767	0.002347
Taiwan	0.009148	0.009328
Thai Baht	0.008122	0.008672
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800802	0.808802
Egyptian Pound	0.034721	0.037847
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.425485	0.432985
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022135	0.046135
Nigerian Naira	0.001259	0.001894
Omani Riyal	0.784488	0.790168
Qatar Riyal	0.082927	0.084140
Saudi Riyal	0.080313	0.081263
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.146220	0.154220
Turkish Lira	0.099686	0.109986
UAE Dirhams	0.081923	0.083072
Yemeni Riyal	0.001376	0.001456

CHINA TO DEVALUE ITS CURRENCY FURTHER

By Camille Accad
Asiya Capital Investments Co Analysis

In the last twelve months, most emerging markets' currencies depreciated against the US dollar, helping improve their competitiveness. However, economies with a US dollar peg appreciated against other currencies. These include the export-intensive GCC countries, Hong Kong and China, which may face additional appreciation pressure after the Federal Reserve raised interest rates.

China has already acted to reverse the appreciation trend. In August, the central bank devalued the yuan following a change in the way it determines the country's foreign exchange rate, which includes taking into consideration other major currency movements rather than just the US dollar. Since then, the yuan depreciated around 4% against the US dollar, the largest five-month drop in over twenty years. Ten days ago, the central bank unveiled a new currency index: the China foreign exchange trade system (CFETS) RMB index. The index will be

based on a basket of 13 currencies, with the US dollar given a weight of 26.4%, the yen 21.4% and the euro 14.7%. The CFETS RMB index will be used as an additional reference point for the central bank to determine the value of the yuan and to manage market expectations.

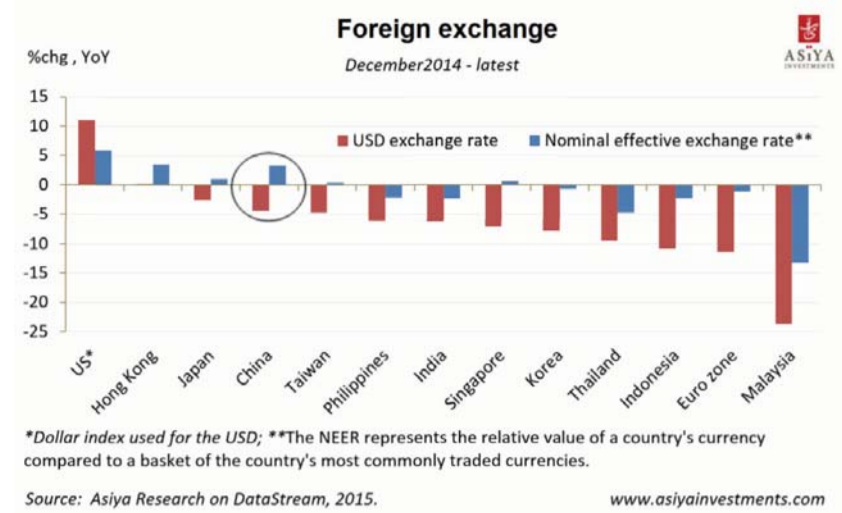
The release of the CFETS RMB index is a signal to the market that the central bank still considers the yuan as overvalued. In the last twelve months, the index appreciated 2.9 percent, compared with a depreciation of 4.4 percent for the yuan against the US dollar. The index was also introduced one week before the Federal Reserve decided to raise interest rates, a move that is expected to appreciate the US dollar further - and hence the Chinese yuan against its trade partners' currencies. China's move can be read as a central bank signal to the market that it plans to devalue its currency further.

China needs the stimulus boost from a currency devaluation. Exports have been contracting in nine out of the eleven first months of this year, forcing some companies to cut prices and subsequently lower wages in order to become more competi-

tive. Moreover, in order to maintain the soft peg, the central bank has been using foreign exchange reserves to buy yuan from banks, draining liquidity from the financial system and leading to a 10 percent decline in foreign reserves compared to last year.

A more flexible exchange rate is also in line with China's long-term objective to liberalize its currency and remove capital controls. Having already joined the IMF's SDR basket, China's willingness to reduce its currency link to the US dollar is a step forward in the yuan's internationalization process. Monetary policy would also become less dependent on the Federal Reserve. By letting the yuan devalue, the central bank would have to intervene less in the foreign exchange market allowing for the more complete transmission of Chinese monetary loosening. Given the policy divergence between China and the US, the effect on the economy would be evident.

The announcement of the CFETS index is an implicit warning to markets that the central bank is planning to devalue the yuan as China needs to



strengthen its large export sector without causing market stress. By not having to intervene in forex, monetary policy easing could have a greater effect on the economy and China's goal to internationalize the yuan will remain on track. However, the country still has a long way

to go before it can free-float its currency as destabilizing capital outflows as a result of removed capital controls remain a significant risk. For now, China is focusing on stimulating the economy before it resumes its gradual implementation of reforms.



PHNOM PENH: Cambodians walking around the Aeon Mall in Phnom Penh. —AFP

FROM GHOST CITY TO BOOMTOWN, PHNOM PENH SOARS HIGH

PHNOM PENH: From glitzy malls and high-rise flats to five-star hotels, a luxury building boom in Phnom Penh is transforming a capital once reduced to a ghost town into one of Asia's fastest growing cities.

Inside the recently opened Aeon Mall in the heart of Phnom Penh, Cambodia's first mega shopping centre, shoppers and curious residents flock to see the latest Levi's and Giordano handbags, snapping selfies in front of a giant Christmas tree.

It is a common scene across much of Southeast Asia but was previously unimaginable for many in Cambodia where around 20 percent of people still live on less than \$1.25 per day.

But while poverty remains entrenched, a fast-growing middle class and elite are increasingly looking for local ways to spend their cash. "I am glad we have such a modern mall in Phnom Penh. It shows the city is growing," says 20-year-old Bopha, a well-heeled university student who said her family made more than \$1 million in a recent land sale. Bopha said she used to have to travel to Thailand and Singapore for her shopping trips but that was now changing. "Their cities are crowded with high-rise towers. I think we are heading in the same direction to be like them," she beamed.

The \$200 million Japanese-built mall is just one of dozens of new shopping complexes, condominium projects and hotels springing up in Phnom Penh as Cambodia rides a wave of high economic growth rates in recent years.

The capital is second only to Laos in East Asia for the fastest rate of urban spatial expansion, according to the World Bank, and its economy is expected to grow at 6.9 percent this year.

Rise of the high-rise

All across the city luxury high-rise condos are popping up with names like "The Peak" and "Diamond Island", complete with billboards promising aspirational taglines such as "Sophisticated Urban Living".

According to the government, Cambodia drew construction investment worth \$1.75 billion in the first nine months of 2015, a 13.7 percent rise from a year earlier.

Many of the new entrants into the

kingdom's building market are developers from Japan, China, South Korea and Singapore. The 39-storey Vattanac Capital Tower, Cambodia's first skyscraper which was finished in 2014, is designed in the shape of a dragon and incorporates Chinese traditional feng shui principles.

A few kilometres (miles) away, the local Overseas Cambodia Investment Corporation is drawing from the country's past, building Parisian-style apartments framed by a replica of the Arc de Triomphe on a riverside complex in downtown Phnom Penh.

But some are worried where the construction frenzy will leave a city once famed as the "Pearl of Asia".

In its French colonial heyday Phnom Penh was regarded as one of the loveliest cities in Southeast Asia thanks to its wide European-style avenues, carefully manicured gardens and picturesque stately homes.

Just a few decades later, the buzzing city was reduced to a ghost town when

Pol Pot's brutal Khmer Rouge army seized control of the capital and ordered its two million people to evacuate.

The city has been coming back to life since the radical communist regime was toppled in 1979 but the surge of activity and change to its landscape has intensified in recent years.

Poor pushed to city fringes

Silas Everett of The Asia Foundation in Cambodia fears the city's original charm is fast disappearing with villas and stately buildings from the colonial era being torn down to make room for lucrative new construction projects. "Phnom Penh's architectural heritage is world renowned... Yet the rate of destruction of these buildings of significant cultural heritage is alarming," said Everett, mourning in particular the loss of buildings designed by famed Cambodian architect Vann Molyvann.

And while wealthy Cambodians are lining up for a chance to live in some of the city's most coveted new addresses,

the urban poor are increasingly relegated to the edges of the capital where many were evicted to make way for commercial developments.

Critics of strongman premier Hun Sen, who has ruled with an iron fist for the last 30 years, say he has turned Cambodia into a notoriously corrupt fiefdom where those loyal to him are handsomely enriched. But he remains unapologetic about the capital's rapid transformation.

Phnom Penh, he said during a speech in November, would have been a "coconut plantation" had the Khmer Rouge remained. Instead, he added, "an already dead city survived through the bare hands of our people". Not everyone has benefited, however.

Strolling through Aeon Mall, Seng Seat, 60, says most of the products remain outside her budget. "The price of some clothes and shoes at the retail brand shops is too expensive," Seat said. "I just had a look at the price and left immediately." —AFP



PHNOM PENH: An overhead view of Phnom Penh. From glitzy malls and high-rise flats to five-star hotels, a luxury building boom in Phnom Penh is transforming a capital once reduced to a ghost town into one of Asia's fastest growing cities. —AFP

AS US OIL BOOMS, CONGRESS LIFTS 40-YEAR OIL EXPORT BAN

NEW YORK: The United States lifted a 40-year ban on oil exports on Friday, marking a historic shift for the booming US oil industry. The measure was included in a massive \$1.1 trillion spending bill that easily passed Congress and now heads to the desk of President Barack Obama for his signature.

While many Democrats opposed it, some joined Republican lawmakers and major oil companies who lobbied hard for lifting the ban, arguing it would create US jobs and boost the security of Washington's European allies. "The facts are clear: lifting the ban is good for consumers, our economy, national security and energy security," said Senator Heidi Heitkamp of oil-rich North Dakota.

"By opening up US crude oil to the rest of the world, we would not only provide our allies with a more stable energy trading partner, but we would also reduce the power of countries like Russia, Venezuela, and volatile regions of the Middle East that use their energy dominance to exert influence over our nation and our allies," she said.

Environmentalists are concerned the move will encourage continued reliance on oil over clean energy, despite US pledges at the Paris climate summit to cut its carbon footprint.

"Dirty, dangerous fossil fuels need to be kept in the ground and liberalizing our export policy is exactly the wrong direction to take," said Friends of the Earth.

The nongovernmental organization also contended that the ban's repeal would "increase the frequency of exploding trains and oil spills across the country and in international waters."

Born of oil shock

The ban was first imposed in 1975 as the United States was reeling from the 1973-1974 Arab oil embargo, which dealt a heavy shock to the US economy and sent global prices shooting up.

Arab members of the Organization of the

Petroleum Exporting Countries had banned oil exports to the United States in retaliation for Washington's support of Israel during the Arab-Israeli war.

Seeking greater energy independence, the United States created an emergency stockpile of crude oil, the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, in 1975 and banned most crude oil exports.

The export ban had a few exceptions. Some 491,000 barrels per day of crude were allowed to be exported from Alaska and California to Canada for domestic use, and imported crude could be re-exported. With the end of the ban, all 9.2 million barrels produced in the United States a day and the 490.7 million barrels stockpiled commercially are

available for export.

The president can still limit exports in case of a "national emergency," for national security reasons, or if exports cause domestic oil shortages or drive US prices sharply higher than world market levels.

But those conditions have receded in recent years as US oil production has boomed.

According to the Department of Energy, the United States could become a net exporter of crude oil in the next decade or so.

At nearly 282 million barrels per day in September, output is approaching its 1970 record of 310.40 million bpd and is almost double US production levels during the 2008 financial crisis which sank to about 147 million bpd.



BOSTON: A container is loaded onto a ship from China at Massport's Conley Terminal in the port of Boston. A drop in exports of petroleum and other US goods increased the deficit in the broadest measure of US trade in the July-September quarter. The US lifted a 40-year ban on oil exports on Friday, marking a historic shift for the booming US oil industry. —AP

OWN A 2016 CRUZE AT KD 3,995 OR CAPTIVA AT KD 5,555

EXPERIENCE THE UTMOST ELEGANCE

KUWAIT: From powerful rides to elegant drives, Yusuf Ahmed Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait, provides its customers with a wide array of cars that suit every style and taste at amazingly affordable prices. If you are looking to own a stylish, sleek and elegant drive, look no further than the 2016 Cruze that is starting at only KD 3,995 or the Captiva that starts at a mere KD 5,555.

The sleek and advanced 2016 Chevrolet Cruze is more than 100 kilograms lighter than the old model, despite also being longer and having more passenger and luggage room for any compact. That is a stunning amount of weight to remove from a car this size, especially in a new model that adds features, space and safety. Lighter weight should translate to higher fuel economy and lower costs, better handling and snappy performance. The Cruze's longer wheelbase and roomier interior should make it a leader in the compact car category. An extra two inches of rear legroom builds on what was already a Cruze strength, as will a larger trunk. The Cruze pulls out all the safety stops, with available safety systems and driver aids including blind spot and cross-traffic alerts, lane-keeping to prevent the driver from wandering out of their lane and driver alerts to avoid frontal collisions. A backup camera will be standard equipment. Chevy promises highway fuel economy with its all-new 1.4L turbocharged engine's output of 150 hp and 177 pound-feet of torque that delivers strong performance. The outgoing first-generation Cruze has attractive but conservative looks. The 2016 breaks the mold with a sleek look. It is 2.7 inches longer and an inch less tall than the 2015 model, sporty proportions that give the car a totally new feel.

Designed for those who seek safe, family-friendly drives, the royally designed Captiva has the strength and space of a sports utility vehicle and the style and practicality of a family car. The Captiva was designed entirely in-house at GM Korea's Design Center in Incheon. Since then, however, the car's styling has been refined at various GM studios around the world, including the Opel HQ at Russelsheim in Germany. Captiva is available in two outstanding variants - the LT (Manual Transmission) for those who always like to be in control and enjoy the stick-shift action and LTZ (Automatic Transmission) for the laid-back offering you the ultimate driving comfort. This soft-roader is

tough on the inside and suave on the outside both designed to make your drive smoother and steadier than any other SUV. The Chevrolet Captiva has a 2.2L four cylinder engine with high-pressure common rail and integrated turbo charging technology which delivers 188.5 PS power and 424 Nm torque and is powered by a four-cylinder VCDi Engine. This fireball of a car not just owns the road, it flies on but is also strong and sturdy. With its well-refined engine that keeps the noise intrusion in the cabin to a minimum and advanced technology ensuring maximum fuel economy and low emissions, this is one SUV to reckon with. The Chevrolet Captiva is a complete package with Stylish Alloy Wheels that command attention, LED Tail Lamps that is not just a safety feature but also a style statement, ABS (Anti-Lock Braking) with EBD (Electronic Brakeforce Distribution) keeps the car in control when braking on low friction surfaces (like wet or gravel surfaces).

Amongst its other features the Chevrolet Captiva also offers Traction Control, Hill Descent Control, Rear Parking Assist, Rain Sensing Wipers, Heated mirrors outside and Steering mounted Cruise Control that automatically controls the speed of the car while you cruise effortlessly on the highway. The Chevrolet Captiva designed for the perceptive eye, is a real head turner on the road. It's adaptive all-wheel drive and level ride control help you maneuver through city traffic as well as winding hilly trails and open highways with the same comfort. Road trips take on a whole new meaning when you are cruising through in the Chevrolet Captiva. One look at the luxurious and spacious interiors and it'll leave you craving for more.

All customers who purchase a Chevrolet from Alghanim will receive the benefits of the Chevrolet Care, which entails new levels of post-sale support and trust. The Chevrolet Care is an exceptional customer service that is based on four main pillars: competitive and transparent service costs (especially for four-wheel drive vehicles), scheduled service appointment booking with same day delivery, quality service by certified technicians and 3yr/100,000km warranty with 24x7 roadside assistance. Customers are welcome to visit any of Chevrolet Alghanim's showrooms today in order to take a full advantage of this exclusive offer that grants you the 2016 Cruze starting at only KD 3,995 and Captiva that starts at a mere KD 5,555.

TURKMENISTAN TO BEGIN ISSUING BONDS AMID ECONOMIC STRAINS

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan is set to begin issuing government bonds for the first time, state television reported Saturday, as the hydrocarbon-rich central Asian country grapples with the impact of plunging commodities prices.

Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov on Friday signed off on a resolution "on the issue, sale and redemption of government bonds" and ordered the government to make the appropriate changes to legislation, state television reported.

The report did not specify when the government of the reclusive country expects to begin issuing these five-year

bonds. An opposition-run media outlet speculated the bonds will be used to pay the salaries of state workers including teachers, as the government struggles to cope with the loss of revenue due to low prices for its oil and gas exports.

The former Soviet republic of Turkmenistan is home to the fourth largest known reserves of natural gas but has limited infrastructure to export its energy resources.

It currently supplies around half of China's total natural gas consumption through a pipeline built by the China National Petroleum Company that began operation in 2010. —AFP

SLIDING OIL PRICES COULD SMUDGE YEAR-END STOCKS RALLY

WALL STREET WEEKAHEAD

NEW YORK: With Wall Street heading into its usually buoyant year-end period, continued weakness in oil prices presents a major wildcard that could spoil any holiday cheer for stock investors. With seven full trading days left in the year, plus a shortened Christmas Eve session, some investors say the market remains poised for its traditional

strength to close out what has been a sluggish 2015, having moved past the Federal Reserve's historic decision to raise interest rates.

While the S&P 500 index is down 3 percent this month, December ranks as the best-performing month on average for the index since 1950, according to the Stock Trader's Almanac. Since 1969, the

last five trading days of the year, plus the first two of January, have resulted in an average 1.4 percent rally.

But the recent and persistent slide in oil prices raises some doubts. The price of crude has closely correlated with the S&P 500 over the past 20 sessions as the commodity has slid toward multi-year lows.

"For whatever reason, this has been the theme pretty much ever since oil got under \$50: that lower oil prices are bad for the market," said Eric Kuby, chief investment officer at North Star Investment Management Corp. in Chicago.

For the year, the S&P is down about 2 percent. At 2,016 as of mid-day Friday trading, the benchmark US index would need to rally more than 4 percent to reach the median year-end forecast of 2,100 (a 2 percent gain for the year) from 46 strategists polled earlier this month by Reuters.

As US crude prices have dropped about 20 percent since late November, deepening their 1-1/2 year freefall, the S&P 500 has pulled back more than 3 percent. The energy sector, the worst-performing S&P group, slumped more than 12 percent over that time.

Oil price risk

Goldman Sachs said on Thursday it sees a high risk of oil prices declining further. "The oil story is not going away," said Quincy Krosby,

market strategist at Prudential Financial in Newark, New Jersey. "As (US crude) continued to push downward, it is affecting the market."

While low oil prices have been thought to be a potential stimulant for the economy by lowering gas prices and putting more money in consumers' pockets, the recent drop has apparently sent a negative signal to the market. "I think people interpret lower oil prices as a weakness to the overall world economy and therefore if there's not a real strong demand for energy, the economy is getting weaker," said Gary Bradshaw, a portfolio manager with Hodges Capital Management in Dallas.

Although stocks have slid after an initial rise, the Fed's decision on Wednesday to raise rates was largely expected by investors and signaled faith in the U.S. economy.

"That the market absorbed the first rate hike in nearly a decade suggests that we can finish the year on a positive note," said Alan Gayle, director of asset allocation at RidgeWorth Investments in Atlanta. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report



Sunday 20 December 2015

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▼ -51.76	5,571.93	5,623.69	5,623.05	5,567.93
Weighted Index	▼ -0.94	380.46	381.40	380.99	378.81
KSX 15	▼ -0.14	902.02	902.16	902.02	896.06

Volume	54,224,076
Value (KWD)	7,588,640
Number of Trades	2,018

Security	Trades						
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	114	▼ 0.0
IKARUS	93	92	26,260	2,426	2	92	▼ -1.0
IPG	242	242	21,212	5,133	2	242	▼ -6.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	600	▼ 0.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	43.0	▼ 0.0
GPI	53	51	1,299,705	67,041	53	52	▼ -1.0
ABAR	124	116	500	60	5	116	▼ -8.0
Oil & Gas			1,347,677	74,660	62	778.58	▼ -12.46

Security	Trades						
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
SOKOUK	40.0	40.0	59340	2,374	3	40.0	▼ -0.5
KRE	57	57	200,000	11,400	5	57	▼ 0.0
URC	93	93	61,832	5,750	4	93	▼ -1.0
NRE	90	88	236,620	20,931	10	89	▼ -1.0
SRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	350	▼ 0.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	650	▼ 0.0
AREEC	166	166	15,909	2,641	3	166	▼ -10.0
MASSALEH	54	54	10,000	540	1	54	▼ -5.0
ARABREC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	30.0	▼ 0.0
ERESCO	65	63	19,691	1,245	2	65	▼ 0.0
MABANEE	950	940	165,030	155,129	10	950	▼ 0.0
INJAZZAT	84	81	9,600	781	5	84	▼ -2.0
INVESTORS	24.5	24.0	4,974,084	119,831	80	24.0	▼ -1.5
IRC	28.5	28.0	291,500	8,197	9	28.0	▼ -1.0
ALTIJARIA	81	79	585,500	46,616	16	81	▲ 2.0
SANAM	44.5	44.5	20	1	1	44.5	▼ -2.5
AAYANRE	76	76	200	15	1	76	▼ -4.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	▼ 0.0
ALAQARIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	20.5	▼ 0.0
MAZAYA	106	102	10,200	1,061	3	102	▼ -2.0
ADNC	27.5	27.0	3,858,321	104,993	57	27.0	▼ -1.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90	▼ 0.0
TIJARA	42.5	40.5	70,020	2,856	3	42.5	▼ -0.5
TAAMEER	23.5	22.5	49,800	1,136	3	23.5	▼ -0.5
ARKAN	114	112	98,690	11,114	16	114	▲ 2.0
ARGAN	176	174	11,125	1,942	4	174	▼ -4.0
ABYAR	28.5	28.5	110,450	3,148	3	28.5	▼ -0.5
MUNSHAAT	83	82	271,500	22,264	23	83	▲ 1.0
FIRSTDUBAI	46.0	43.5	353,715	15,920	29	43.5	▼ -1.0
KBT	42.5	41.5	989,170	41,305	50	41.5	▼ -1.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	136	▼ 0.0
MENA	23.5	22.0	98,830	2,175	9	23.0	▼ -0.5
ALMUDON	30.5	30.0	1,996,000	60,480	43	30.5	▲ 0.5
MARAKEZ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	21.0	▼ 0.0
REMAL	36.5	36.0	100,100	3,604	3	36.5	▲ 0.5
MASHAER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106	▼ 0.0
Real Estate			14,647,247	647,446	396	928.84	▼ -12.49

Security	Trades						
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	▼ 0.0
BPCC	520	510	21,003	10,718	6	520	▲ 20.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	▼ 0.0
ALQURAIN	188	186	235,442	44,092	12	186	▼ 0.0
Basic Materials			256,445	54,810	18	973.40	▼ 13.44
KCEM	385	385	7,483	2,881	3	385	▼ -10.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320	▼ 0.0
CABLE	375	365	5,010	1,829	4	375	▲ 10.0
SHIP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	148	▼ 0.0
PCEM	1,060	1,060	20,000	21,200	1	1,060	▼ -60.0
PAPER	395	395	50	20	1	395	▼ -25.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	79	▼ 0.0
ACICO	280	260	323,628	85,074	57	260	▼ -25.0
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	530	▼ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	▼ 0.0
KPAK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	390	▼ 0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	▼ 0.0
NICBM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	240	▼ 0.0
EQUIPMENT	57	56	260,250	14,744	9	56	▼ -2.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	▼ 0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	▼ 0.0
SALBOOKH	84	82	133,800	11,033	11	84	▲ 2.0
AGLTY	480	475	420,088	200,371	17	475	▼ -5.0
EDU	216	216	10,000	2,160	2	216	▼ 0.0
CLEANING	39.5	39.0	182,663	7,145	11	39.0	▼ -0.5
CITYGROUP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380	▼ 0.0
KGL	44.0	43.0	72,915	3,193	8	44.0	▼ 0.0
KPCP	216	200	64,005	13,613	5	216	▼ -2.0
HUMANSOFT	970	970	100	97	1	970	▼ -30.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204	▼ 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	325	▼ 0.0
GFC	37.5	35.0	15,977	597	5	35.0	▼ -2.5
MAYADEEN	20.5	20.0	711,123	14,439	19	20.5	▼ -0.5
CGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	790	▼ 0.0
MTCC	66	66	40,999	2,706	7	66	▼ -2.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	700	▼ 0.0
ALAFCO	210	208	1,500	313	2	210	▼ 0.0
MUBARRAD	76	76	20,000	1,520	5	76	▼ -1.0
LOGISTICS	56	55	41,409	2,306	5	55	▼ -1.0
SCEM	83	82	508,087	42,121	7	82	▼ -2.0
GCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	78	▼ 0.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	80	▼ 0.0
KCEM	73	73	88,750	6,479	3	73	▼ -1.0
RKWC	100	95	40,259	3,826	3	100	▼ 0.0
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	88	▼ 0.0
Industrials			2,968,096	437,665	186	1045.12	▼ -15.14

Security	Trades						
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	▼ 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	62	▼ 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	104	▼ 0.0
CATTL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	124	▼ 0.0
DANAH	84	82	30,100	2,483	6	84	▲ 1.0
POULT	176	176	5,000	880	1	176	▼ 0.0
FOOD	1,980	1,980	25,000	49,500	5	1,980	▲ 80.0
Consumer Goods			60,100	52,863	12	1061.40	▲ 9.31
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190	▼ 0.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	▼ 0.0
YIACO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	170	▼ 0.0
Health Care			0	0	0	0.00	▼ 0.00
KCIN	910	900	74,000	66,840	2	900	▼ -20
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	▼ 0.0
SULTAN	70	70	2,371	166	1	70	▼ -1
CABLETV	25.0	22.5	3,593	83	2	22.5	▼ -3
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	310	▼ 0.0
IFAHF	174	174	32,500	5,655	5	174	▲ 6
QILAFUEL	110	108	13,480	1,470	10	108	▼ -6
MUNTAZAHAT	94	90	287,194	26,359	15	92	▼ -3
JAZEERA	900	890	51,202	46,046	4	900	▼ 0
SOOR	108	108	22,105	2,387	8	108	▼ 0
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	▼ 0
ALNAWADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89	▼ 0
ALRAI	158	158	122	19	1	158	▲ 4
ZIMAH	116	112	122,821	13,867	15	114	▼ -0
UFIF	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	150	▼ 0
KOUTFOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	740	▼ 0
Mezzan	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,140	▼ 0
Consumer Services			609,388	162,893	63	1003.22	<

LIFE AFTER THE FIRST INTEREST RATE HIKE

KUWAIT: In the wake of the holiday's season, investors have been unwinding positions, closing their books as year-end approaches and liquidity diminishes. As the Fed missed all other interest rates hike opportunities during the year, they have chosen December, the most illiquid month of the year to start the lift off.

In a historical meeting, the Fed ended the era of zero interest rates by tightening monetary policy by 25 bps, increasing the Fed funds target range to 0.25 percent to 0.50 percent and the discount rate to 1.0 percent, with a unanimous vote.

Although the event didn't generate large volatility for the major five currencies, it happened to be a major episode for emerging market and commodity currencies as we continue to witness lately. For now, commodities and emerging markets continue to hemorrhage as their future will be determined by how the disagreement between the market and the Fed about the pace and extent of hikes gets resolved.

According to the Fed, labor market slack had diminished 'appreciably' and the Fed is 'reasonably confident' inflation will rise to 2 percent in the medium term. The FOMC maintained that future adjustments will be 'gradual' although notably the dot-plot was little changed, suggesting four quarter point hikes next year, while the median long run funds rate is still seen at 3.5 percent. The announcement was perceived to be less dovish than the markets anticipated sending the US dollar up across the board.

Equity markets also rallied on the news, in part as Yellen made it clear the Fed would proceed slowly with further tightening. However, the reaction on the foreign exchange side was different.

After largely outperforming its peers on Wednesday and Thursday, the USD has reversed part of its gains by the end of the week with the Euro rebounding from the 1.08 level. Thursday's few macro releases didn't do much to move the currency. The German IFO survey was as uninspiring as the latest ZEW or Eurozone PMI. The currency ended the week near the low at 1.0870.

In the UK, the Sterling Pound is ending the year on the back foot, as the currency is at risk of slipping to its lowest level since April. Sterling hardly received any relief from the release of relatively strong UK retail sales data on Thursday. UK consumers have been the pillar of the strong UK recovery. But for the pound to reverse recent weakness, the data would need to be accompanied by more visible inflation pressures through 2016, for the moment non-existent.

The Yen had its own part of drama this week. In a usual 8 to one vote, the bank kept the size of its QE programme unchanged aiming at an annual expansion of JPY 80 trillion at the meeting that ended Friday. According to the BoJ, it will extend the average maturity of its government bond holdings to seven-to-12 years, announced a new program for exchange-traded fund purchases and said it will boost the maximum amount it can buy of any

one real-estate investment trust. The initial reaction was a knee jerk reaction spike to 123.50, which was quickly corrected as the market realized that such decision does not convey direct additional stimulus. The cross ended the week at the 121.16 level.

On the commodities side, gold dropped victim of the Fed rate rise. Although gold held steady the day of the FOMC announcement, commodities as a whole fell out of favor as investors continued to assess the rate increase.

Indeed, oversupply still hangs over the oil market with the stronger dollar pressured commodities to fresh multi year lows. Oil dominated the weakness as West Texas Intermediate crude fell below the \$35 and Brent below the \$38 for the first time since February 2009. Moves in precious metals also caught investors' attention with gold closing down 1.98 percent, the biggest daily loss since July at \$1066; holding the five-year lows reached briefly earlier this month.

As a direct result, investors continue to shun commodity currencies with the Canadian, Australian Dollar and the Norwegian Krona falling sharply. The Canadian dollar extended its decline to new cycle low just shy of 1.4000 against the Dollar.

FOMC Meeting

During the press conference, Fed Chair Yellen said that the decision reflected their confidence in the US economy and that they saw an economy that is on the path of sustainable improvement. She highlighted that while developments abroad still pose a risk, these appeared to have lessened since last summer. Yellen also argued once again that the softness in inflation was transitory and that a delay in policy normalization would have meant policy would need to be tightened abruptly later.

According to the Fed statement, the outlook for the US economic activity and the labor market are now being 'balanced', compared to the previous statement of 'nearly balanced'. The focus was also on how the Fed was to determine the timing and size of future adjustments. Although the statement continued to emphasize that "the committee expects that economic conditions will evolve in a manner that will warrant only gradual increases in the federal funds rate" the committee emphasized the dependence on the upcoming economic data.

On a different point, the Fed expects to maintain the current size of its balance sheet "until normalization of the level of the federal funds rate is well under way." The Fed's median forecasts for real GDP growth, unemployment and inflation were unchanged relative to the previous meetings. 2016 GDP growth was revised up to 2.4 percent, while the 2017 and 2018 forecasts were left unchanged at 2.2 percent and 2.0 percent. The unemployment rate is expected to decline to 4.7 percent in the next three years, down from the previous 4.8 percent forecast.

Meanwhile the core inflation rate was

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revised down for this year and next to 1.3 percent and 1.6 percent, it was left unchanged for 2017 and 2018, the latter being the year when the Fed expects to hit its 2 percent target.

According to the dot plot projections, although there had been some suggestions that the 2016 median interest rates path could decline, it was kept however unchanged at 1.375 percent or the equivalent

of Europe, especially Germany.

After dropping in the first two months of the fourth quarter, the euro stabilized in December after the ECB meeting disappointment. As the market expected a further drop in interest rate and an increase in the size and composition of the monthly purchases, the ECB didn't see the necessity to act and deliver on all expectations.

In addition, having become the funding

environment which has become the most persistent theme in Switzerland.

Swiss economic growth is expected to remain low, with consensus at 1.2 percent with the country caught between this slower trade and a recovery in European domestic demand.

Difficult beginning of 2016 for the UK

In the last quarter of 2015, UK economic data disappointed on multiple fronts. While the UK kept printing negative data, Bank of England policymakers expressed their con-

Markets initially reacted positively to the more surprising news that the BoJ is to make additional purchases of exchange traded funds on top of the current +3 trillion of purchases that the BoJ currently makes each year. The accompanying statement showed that the Bank's new additional program will have an annual budget of +300 billion and will be initially tied to the major stock index. The BoJ also announced it will increase the maximum amount of each issue of Japanese real estate investment trust it can buy. Finally, the BoJ announced that it is extending the average remaining maturing of Japan government Bonds purchases to about 7-12 years from the beginning of next year, from 7-10 years currently.

The BoJ has started to realize the little extra benefit of increasing purchases from the current level at least in terms of political risks associated. Moreover, a weaker yen from these levels is not likely to significantly improve exports volumes at the expenses of being called a currency manipulator.

The Australian government announced the budget deficit will be reduced by an extra \$2.3bn in the 2015-2016 fiscal year, as it trimmed forecasts for the economic outlook. According to its Mid-Year Economic and fiscal outlook, the budget deficit is expected to worsen to \$37.4bn, versus the \$35.1bn forecast provided in May.

In different news, the RBA minutes suggested lower interest rates were supporting household spending and that a weaker exchange rate is aiding firms, they also added that a subdued inflation outlook gives further scope to ease policy further

The latest retail sales out of china show that the number rose by 11.2 percent on a yearly basis setting a ten-month high. Industrial production was up 6.2 percent also while fixed asset investment was unchanged at 10.2 percent on a yearly basis. These indicators suggest positive momentum ahead for the Chinese economy.

In other news, the PBoC published last week a new trade weighted exchange rate index for the Renminbi. The statement released said that the intention of this was to 'shift how the public and the market observe the RMB exchange rate movements. The statement goes on to say that it would be more appropriate to measure the performance of the RMB against both the US Dollar and also the basket of trade weighted currencies.

The PBoC expects the new basket of currencies to be a more explicit reference in setting the value of the RMB in the future. Most importantly, they see this as a signal that China does not intend to engage in competitive devaluation.

Given the strength of the US dollar, markets have started to assume that the PBoC is trying to use the basket as a justification to further weaken the renminbi and prop up the Chinese economy

*Kuwait
Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30365
The USD/KD opened at 0.30365 yesterday morning.*



lent of four 25bps hikes. The 2017 median dot was nudged down 25bps to 2.375 percent while the 2018 median dot was down 12.5bps to 3.25 percent. The longer-term neutral rate was left unchanged at 3.5 percent.

Strong retail sales

Initial jobless claims fell 11k last week to 271k against expectation of 275k. In parallel, disappointment came from the December Philly Fed, measure of manufacturing activity, which fell 7.8 pts this month to -5.9 against expectations of increase of +1.0. This marks the third time in the last four months that this index has been in negative territory.

Moreover, the six-month forward index of general business conditions plunged more than 20 points to 23.0 in December from 43.4 in November, and is currently at the lowest level since November 2012.

Diminished expectations may be a function of several influences in the manufacturing sector, including a stronger U.S. dollar, weaker global demand and lackluster domestic business investment.

Europe & UK

The Eurozone economic data surprise index remained resilient throughout Q4 and outperformed the US counterpart. The continuous low currency gave a boost for

currency of choice in 2015, the continued deterioration in emerging and commodity markets helped the euro remain stable in December. As we come close to the holiday's season, traders' reaction to the Fed December meeting is to reduce risk exposure, take positions off and remain on the sideline into year-end.

As their policy has proven to be successful, the ECB is likely to continue to play the same game and not tolerate any Euro movement to the upside, whether by intervening verbally or through their policy decisions.

Switzerland in a deflationary environment

While markets expected further interest rates cut during the December meeting, the SNB left the policy rate on hold at -0.75 percent, versus market for around a 25 percent probability of a 25bp cut. The accompanying statement and press conference were dovish, reiterating willingness to actively intervene in FX markets and cut rates further.

For the SNB, the stability of the exchange rate and avoiding renewed upside pressure on the franc remains key to the monetary policy.

As the Swiss Franc remains the G10's lowest yielder, yearly Swiss growth remains below the 1 percent and the country is comfortably sitting in a deflationary envi-

ronment which has become the most persistent theme in Switzerland.

Swiss economic growth is expected to remain low, with consensus at 1.2 percent with the country caught between this slower trade and a recovery in European domestic demand.

On a more positive note, this week's retail sales volumes were up 1.7 percent from the month before, beating forecasts for growth of 0.5 percent. On the year, sales volumes were up 5 percent, better than the 3 percent growth forecast. The amount spent was also up on the year, by 1.4 percent.

For now, investors are likely to shy away from the UK as concerns over Brexit risk, a tighter local fiscal policy in 2016, and a continuation of weakness in emerging markets are keeping a pessimistic view on interest rates path.

Bank of Japan

This Friday, Bank of Japan surprised markets by keeping policy unchanged at its current level of +80 trillion expansion.

FED RATE HIKE TO HAVE MINIMAL IMPACT ON GULF ECONOMIES

KUWAIT: In a much anticipated move, the Federal Reserve raised interest rates for the first time in almost eight years to a new target range of 0.25 percent to 0.5 percent, up from zero to 0.25 percent since 2008. According to the official statement, the rate hike would be followed by a gradual tightening based on higher inflation levels in the forecast period. According to the official forecast, a rate of 1.375 percent is expected at the end of 2016, implying four 25 bps increase in the target range next year. The move by the Fed was seen as one of the loosest fiscal tightening measures sending a dovish signal to the market. The marginal increase also sent a positive signal, especially for the equity markets, as it gave depositors a marginally higher interest earnings, stemmed investor confidence in the economy and expectations of a little bit higher prices in the near term.

Following the US Fed rate hike announcement, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Bahrain raised their benchmark rates. Saudi Arabia raised its overnight reverse repo rate by 25 bps to 50 bps but left its benchmark repo rate unchanged at 2.0 percent. Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) raised its benchmark discount rate by 25 bps to 2.25 percent, whereas Bahrain, while keeping the repo rate unchanged at 2.25 percent, raised its overnight interest rate by 25 bps to 0.5 percent and its rate for one week also by 25 bps to 0.75 percent.

The move by the three Gulf countries was expected since the GCC countries have pegged their respective currencies against the USD (with the exception of Kuwaiti Dinar which is pegged against a basket of currency dominated by the USD). The rate hike, as also highlighted by Fitch Ratings, is primarily to maintain the currency peg and does not represent any urgency or fiscal/monetary pressure. On the other hand, absence of a rate increase would have put pressure on the local currencies and in the longer run lured investors to sell their local assets in the Gulf region and invest in higher-yielding dollar-based investments.

The rate hikes comes at a time when Gulf economies are suffering from a severe economic slowdown due to the excessive dependence on oil revenues. Also, banks in the Gulf region have been hit with tightening liquidity conditions in the recent months owing to the decline in oil prices. The decline in oil revenues has affected the flow of oil money flowing in the form of bank deposits. Moreover, higher interest rates on bank loans would act as a deterrent for borrowers in the region. Clearly, changes in the benchmark rate affect the behavior of consumers and businesses, as well as the stock market, although the

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impact on the latter is not immediate.

Brace for further impact

Although gradually, interest rates in the US are expected to rise significantly in the near term. According to the official expectations, the medium term rates are expected to reach above 3 percent by as early as 2018, whereas the longer term rates are expected to remain slightly higher but within the 3-4 percent range. According to the Fed's December Summary of Economic Projections, the median monetary policymaker believes that it would be appropriate for the federal funds rate to end 2016 at close to 1.4 percent. Markets would be in for a surprise if, as per the indications of the dot plot, the Fed increases the rate four times during 2016. Nevertheless, the average expectations of policymakers have declined as compared to the September-15 meeting. The average expectation by the end of 2017 is at 2.4 percent as compared to previous expectation of 2.6 percent. Similarly, the average rate projection for 2018 is 3.2 percent, down from 3.3 percent previously. Moreover, according to Bloomberg, markets are expecting a much slower pace of increase to reach just about 1 percent by the end of 2016.

Immediate impact

The marginal increase in rates would be expected to have minimal impact on Gulf economies in the near term. Its effect on the Kuwaiti economy would be insignificant in the short term as it is already priced across asset classes such as equities, bonds and real estate. However, subsequent rate hikes, as indicated by the Fed Reserve, would result in higher financing costs for corporates and therefore would in turn affect corporate profitability and performance in the long-run. It would also keep oil and commodity prices under pressure. Moreover, the apparent flow of higher interest earnings (higher NIM) to banks would fade as demand for financing declines amid higher borrowing costs (it will affect their loan portfolio growth). Consequently, the spread between the yield on investment and the benchmark rate will narrow. Higher rates would affect capital expenditure and will slow down the pace of growth which in turn will spill over to the economy and stock market causing less attractive prices. Lack of growth in the business along with higher financing cost will affect corporates topline and bottom-line results which will lead to sell-offs and therefore drive stock prices down.

Inflation levels in control

Kuwait has maintained inflation levels in a very tight range of 1-3.5 percent over the past few years. This is an ideal range as also targeted by the US Fed and other central banks globally. A higher rate would result in lower inflationary pressure that would in turn result in lower realization for producers. The Kuwaiti government has announced an ambitious capital spending plan for the next five years. Governments' borrowing costs are also likely to increase that would affect infrastructure spending plans in the long run adding to the headwinds facing economic growth. But we feel Kuwait has enough financial cushion to overcome this issue. Kuwait inflation was recorded at 3.2 percent as of last quarter and KAMCO Research expects it to trend at the 4 percent mark especially when the government starts budget rationalization and gradually introduce taxes.

The benefits

Higher cost of financing by the end of 2016 would force corporates to look at other modes of funding. With the current rate hike, cost of bank borrowing will increase for businesses and consumers by at least 12.5 percent. This would provide a push to equity and fixed income financings. On the other hand, higher benchmark rate would increase the yield on bonds and therefore bonds will be selling at a discount, which will be more attractive to investors particularly since equity markets have been extremely volatile over the past one year and are expected to remain so in the next year. In terms of sector performance, the hike would decrease discretionary consumer spending putting pressure on businesses in these sectors. It's likely that businesses in defensive sectors such as education and healthcare to do better as they will be able to pass these increases to the consumer. Businesses with excess cash are likely seek acquisitions in order to continue growing which will spur M&A activities. As for consumers who might be facing decline in their disposable income, savings and capital protected investments shall be increasing gradually to create positive inflation-adjusted returns.

Positive indications

If we look at the opposite view, raising of US rates shows strengthening of US economy which being the biggest economy will have positive bearing on the global economy and trade. On the energy markets too it will have a

lag effect and the markets can react positively. Also taking in a positive view the borrowers who might be sitting without action thinking that rates will remain low will now start to raise debt so that they can raise at lower rates rather than later so we might see more debt issuances and the corporates might hasten their capital expenditure using the lower yielding debt. This can prove to be good for capital expenditure and corporate actions such as M&A which use debt.

Despite the fall in oil prices, Kuwait and most of the other GCC economies have adequate fiscal and monetary tools to deal with monetary policy changes in the US as well as within the region. Measures such as reducing subsidies and introducing taxes have already been implemented, or are being seriously planned. Moreover, in addition to past fiscal surpluses that are now being drawn to finance capital projects, the valuation of sovereign wealth funds of most of the bigger economies in the GCC (Kuwait, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Qatar) have got a boost as the USD is strengthening. This should help in maintaining the creditworthiness of the economies in the region thereby enabling them to maintain/support their credit ratings and to raise additional funds. What is required from policymakers in the GCC and Kuwait is more efforts on fiscal prudence along with monetary policies so that we can create a more broad-based growth economies.

The government has already initiated the implementation of infrastructure projects to energize the private sector to share the burden of creating sustainable jobs. This will be coupled with an increase in public debt (currently zero) and new tax regimes in order to fund these strategic projects. We shall see more stock market delistings, mergers to rationalize operating costs and over performance of defensive sectors. In light of possible further devaluation of Kuwaiti Dinar (expected KWD/USD of 310 fils), investments denominated in major foreign currencies shall witness an increase across the main asset classes such as equities, fixed income and real estate.

It is all about relative value or spreads above the discount rate. As discount rate increase, asset prices decrease assuming spreads remain the same. Nevertheless, these spreads represent the premium investors seek to compensate them for taking the risk. During times of expansion like the current environment, spreads usually contract as excess capital needs to be invested in profitable venues. We shall witness more rational decision making leading to finding bargains in equities and real estate.

AL-TIJARI ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF AL-NAJMA ACCOUNT DRAW

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank of Kuwait held the Al-Najma Account draw yesterday. The draw was held under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce & Industry represented by Saquer Al-Manaie.

The winners of the Al-Najma daily draw are:

Jawad Abdullah Al-Harz-KD 7000, Layla Mohammed Ashkanani-KD 7000, Sabry Abdulsattar Abdulmaoujood-KD 7000, Digna Lacuata Boniog-KD 7000, Fatma Jassim Mohammed Mothfar-KD 7000.

The Commercial Bank of Kuwait announces the biggest daily draw in Kuwait with the launch of the new Najma account. Customers of the bank can now enjoy a KD 7,000 daily prize which is the highest in the country and another 4 mega prizes during the year worth KD 100,000 each on different occasions: The National Day, Eid Al Fitr, Eid Al Adha and on the 19th of June which is the date of the bank's establishment.

With a minimum balance of KD 500, customers will be eligible for the daily draw provided that the money is in the account one week prior to the daily draw or 2 months prior to the mega draw. In addition, for each KD 25 a customer can get one chance for winning instead of KD 50.

Commercial Bank of Kuwait takes this opportunity to congratulate all lucky winners and also extends appreciation to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry for their effective supervision of the draws which were conducted in an orderly and organized manner.

LEW: CONGRESS MISSED 'CRUCIAL' CHANCE TO HELP PUERTO RICO

WASHINGTON: US President Barack Obama's administration slammed Congress for passing a fiscal 2016 spending bill Friday that lacked assistance to Puerto Rico, as the US territory battles a debt crisis.

"Congress missed a crucial opportunity to provide Puerto Rico with meaningful tools to address its fiscal crisis," Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew said in a statement. "The administration has been clear that the situation in Puerto Rico is urgent." The Caribbean island is saddled with unpayable debts of over \$70 billion. Earlier in December the governor of Puerto Rico, Alejandro Garcia Padilla, asked the US Congress to pass a law that will allow Puerto Rico to declare bankruptcy. The Obama administration has repeatedly said it will not bail out Puerto Rico, but it has strongly supported bankruptcy legislation to allow an orderly debt restructuring under court supervision.

"Providing restructuring authority to the people of Puerto Rico will require Congress to confront difficult interests and tough issues, but it is essential to protect the 3.5 million Americans who live in the commonwealth. The administration remains committed to working with Congress to address this crisis," Lew said. Puerto Rico was able to accumulate a massive amount of debt due to US laws that made the debt tax-free for investors who were promised that the island could never default. Despite the inflow of funds in the 2000s, the Puerto Rican economy sank into recession and has not recovered for a decade. — AFP

KIB CHAIRMAN SHEIKH JARRAH AL-SABAH RECEIVES 'GCC CHAIRMAN OF THE YEAR' AWARD FOR 2015

KUWAIT: The London-based premier global banking and finance journal, World Finance named Kuwait International Bank's Chairman, Sheikh Mohamed Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah "GCC Chairman of the Year" for 2015. This success is yet another in the bank's roster of accolades and accentuates Al-Jarrah's significant record of accomplishments achieved throughout the years at various renowned financial institutions, be it conventional or Islamic. Bringing an extensive experience in the financial sector, Al-Jarrah secured senior positions and accomplished one success after the other, which helped raise the performance bar in the banking industry. His leadership and strong vision proved to be vital for the KIB's constant growth and success, positioning the bank at the forefront of the Islamic banking world and setting a good example for others inside and outside Kuwait.

Al-Jarrah expressed his deep gratitude for this honor and recognition from World Finance that is highly

acclaimed as a reliable and independent global business publication specialized in the banking and finance industries regionally and internationally. The business journal conducts a comprehensive analysis of the very best in the banking and financial sector, as well as distinguished individuals and groups who have spearheaded several important advances and made history around the world. It plays a key role in elevating the banking industry at all levels, especially when it comes to the financial services and solutions. He added that the awards judging panel is accurately evaluating and selecting distinguished winners, which makes it one of the most remarkable economic and financial events among the regional and global business. He stated that recipients of the annual World Finance Awards are the most praiseworthy in their field, which embodies their eminent achievements, innovation and brilliance.

Al-Jarrah said, "The receipt of the "GCC Chairman of the Year" Award for



Sheikh Mohamed Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah

2015 is another achievement that will urge us to reach new heights and achieve our goals, especially the 5-year strategy that is set to be implemented from 2015 to 2020 and the new promising transformation strategy that will be completed by the end of 2017. He affirmed that Al-Dawli would spare no effort to innovate and develop forward-thinking Islamic

banking solutions and products, as well as expand its network of branches to cater to the growing needs of the customers and take their Islamic banking experience to the next level.

Sheikh Al-Jarrah pointed out that the World Finance Award and any other awards that were granted to the bank or any of its pioneers act as a solid proof of the bank's excellence in terms of operations, adequate performance and successful strategies. He added, "I would like to take this opportunity to convey my gratitude and congratulations to both the bank's staff and customers, for their continuous loyalty and unparalleled dedication that led to this outstanding recognition and made us a key player in the robust Islamic banking industry locally and regionally". He referred to the "GCC Chairman of the Year" Award for 2015 as the fruit of the joint effort of KIB's departments and the healthy working atmosphere, which also nominated us to win the "Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait" Award for two consecutive years 2014-2015.



NISSAN JUKE AWARDED AS 'BEST COMPACT UTILITY VEHICLE'

DUBAI: Nissan has received a prestigious award for its popular crossover the Nissan Juke, in the yearly ceremony hosted by Middle East Car of the Year (MECOTY) awards.

The well-established annual MECOTY Awards is the biggest and most coveted of its kind in the region and employs a judging jury comprised of no fewer than 12 experts from all over the Middle East. For 2015 the jury awarded Best Compact Utility Vehicle to the Nissan Juke, at the MECOTY Awards ceremony, which took place in Dubai recently after a rigorous three-stage voting process.

"To win at MECOTY is a big deal, and the Juke's victory is incredibly well deserved," says Managing Director of Nissan Middle East, Samir Cherfan. "This region loves the Juke for its many virtues - its compact dimensions, its ease of operation, its intelligent use of space and, most of all, its huge personality. That the MECOTY experts agreed is testament to Nissan's ability to give customers cars that excite as well as perform."

Nissan Juke has proved to be extremely popular in the Middle East since its launch, and its growing sales figures show no sign of slowing down. The Nissan Juke's success has been unprecedented and its rugged, unique looks and compact footprint have made it the ideal compact crossover for young urban motorists with a sense of fun and adventure.



Over the past year, the Nissan Juke has forged ahead with highly impressive sales results. The vehicle now has a six per cent share of the SUV-S market segment - jumping from five per cent a year ago. In the UAE, the Juke's share has jumped from eight to 11 per cent and, in March

2015, it was the best-selling car in its segment in the entire country. It's a success story repeated throughout the region and, as Nissan Middle East looks forward to 2016, it does so from a position of enormous strength through 'Innovation that Excites'.



AUB ANNOUNCES ITS SPONSORSHIP OF ELITE REAL ESTATE CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank has announced its sponsorship of the Elite Real Estate conference and exhibition held between 14-19 December. The event was organized by Eskan Global Exhibitions Group and held at the International Fairgrounds in Mishref.

Through its pavilion at the exhibition, the Bank provided a full explanation of its services and products which are based on the provisions of Islamic Sharia. The Bank highlighted its services in real estate financing which it provides for its clients through a package of facilities and privileges to enable nationals to own their

property, to fulfill their dreams and ambitions, either for residential use or for investment purposes.

The Bank issued a press release on the occasion which clarified that the Bank's participation in such distinguished events stems from its belief in supporting economic activities, including real estate, due to its vital role in helping drive the economy in Kuwait. The Bank added: "We are proud of the excellent turnout of visitors at our pavilion who expressed great interest in the financing products provided by Ahli United Bank".



WORLD'S FAVOURITE JEWELLER, JOYALUKKAS OPENS SHOWROOM IN SHABIYA, UAE

ABU DHABI: The globally renowned jewellery retail chain, Joyalukkas has opened their most awaited, jewellery showroom in Shabiya, ME 11 Mussafah, Abu Dhabi. The showroom was inaugurated by T P Seetharam, Ambassador of India to UAE in the presence of John Paul Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group, Sonia John Paul, Director, Joyalukkas Group, Mary Antony, Director, Joyalukkas Group, Antony Jos, Director, Joyalukkas Group, many local dignitaries and VIP's.

"Firstly a big thank you to Seetharam, Ambassador of India to UAE for taking time of his precious schedule to attend our opening ceremony. Would also like to thank the residents of Shabiya for a very warm welcome. The jewellery showroom in Shabiya offers the best experience in jewellery shopping to residents here. Our promise is the best in choice, designs, value, service and convenience for jewellery lovers here at all times," said Joy Alukkas, Chairman & MD, Joyalukkas Group.

Conveniently located in Shabiya, ME 11 Mussafah, Abu Dhabi, the showroom features the wide range and most exquisite collection of jewellery in all precious form i.e. Gold, Diamond, Precious Stone, Pearls and Platinum. Joyalukkas showroom offers a choice of over One Million designs from around the world to meet all the dreams and expectations of jewellery lovers in Shabiya. The Joyalukkas sales team have also been extensively trained by retail specialists to manage

the superior expectation of the residents of here. 'JOYALUKKAS' is the only jewellery brand that is spread across 10 countries around the world with 110 showrooms and has a following of over 10 million loyal customers world-wide.

"We are delighted to open our jewellery showroom in Shabiya and are extremely grateful to the country and it's lovely residents for the warm welcome they have given us. Our team is eager to serve jewellery shoppers here with the best and widest range in jewellery," said John Paul Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group.

The Joyalukkas jewellery showroom has been designed in the signature Joyalukkas format with stylish and convenient interiors to offer the widest choice of jewellery under one roof.

Joyalukkas is the only ISO 14001-2006 & ISO 9001-2008 certified jewellery retail chain and has been recognised with many awards and accolades for its exceptional standards in jewellery retailing. It's popular Chennai showroom has been recognised by the Limca Book of records for being the largest jewellery showroom in the world. Joyalukkas has been recognized with the 'Superbrand' status 6 years in a row in Dubai and in-addition to this has also been recognized by the Dubai govt. under its Dubai Quality Awards Program for their strict adherence to quality and procedures in all aspects of jewellery retailing. The brand has also won the 'Middle-east retailer of the year' award from Retail ME.

XCITE.COM'S 4TH BIRTHDAY COMES WITH AMAZING OFFERS

GET UP TO 70% OFF ON WWW.XCITE.COM

KUWAIT: X-cite by Alghanim Electronics website plans to celebrate its birthday in the best way possible. On December 20, 2015, Xcite.com will officially turn four years old. In celebration of its big day, Xcite.com will have a mega-sale for one week on its website, www.xcite.com, where customers can enjoy up to 70 percent off on almost everything offered.

Whether you are interested in the latest gadgets and gizmos in the market or are looking to upgrade your electronics at home, on December 20th till 26th is the time to do that as you will get the best electronics offers in Kuwait. All you need to do is visit www.xcite.com or simply download X-cite's app to enjoy up to 70 percent off on the most popular smartphones, tablets, computers, appliances and much more. What more is that X-cite app users will receive exclusive alerts reminding them about limited-time hourly deals. Whether you buy something online or through the app, X-cite will deliver everything you purchased right to your doorstep for absolutely free. Make the most out of X-cite's big day by visiting X-cite's Facebook



page on Facebook.com/XciteAlghanim for a chance to win amazing prizes.

X-cite has the largest network of retail electronic stores in Kuwait and the Middle East. It offers a convenient, dynamic and modern shopping experience that aims to add joyous, entertaining moments to shoppers' time spent in

store and online at www.xcite.com or even through its app. With its engaging and easy-to-use product display that encourages customers to get hands-on with the product of their choice, X-cite's shopping experience is further enhanced with its Easy Credit program, a highly skilled and multi-lingual team of sales professionals and the

CHINESE THINK TANK SAYS GOVT SHOULD EASE MONEY POLICY IN 2016

BEIJING: China's economy in 2016 still faces relatively large downward pressure and the speed of economic growth may fall further, said a top planning body's think tank, recommending more monetary policy easing, the Economic Daily reported yesterday.

The National Development and Reform Commission's (NDRC) think tank recommended that China's government continues to cut interest rates and banks' reserve requirement ratio to bolster flagging growth in the world's second largest economy. China should also give way to pressure on yuan depreciation, the think tank said, in order to boost exports. Beijing has been struggling to reach its economic growth target of around 7 percent this year, despite a raft of policy easing steps in recent months.

China's top leaders have started an annual meeting to map out economic and reform plans for

2016, state media reported on Friday. The central bank has also been notable for its lack of a response to the US Federal Reserve's interest rate hike on Wednesday.

The NDRC think tank predicted that investment growth could fall to about 9 percent in 2016. From January to November this year, fixed-asset investment growth has been 10.2 percent year-on-year.

Real estate investment may be flat, the report said. Consumption growth could face a year of single digit growth in 2016, while exports may grow slightly, said the think tank. The think tank recommended expanding China's fiscal deficit to support major projects and possibly issuing more central and local government bonds. The stock market should be stabilized and efforts made to fend off the risk of large-scale capital outflows, the think tank also proposed. — Reuters

SAUDI RETREATS AFTER OIL DROPS, EGYPT RESILIENT

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabian stocks retreated yesterday after oil prices fell further and as investors sold ahead of the expected publication this week of the 2016 state budget, while Egypt's bourse headed for a fourth straight day of gains.

The Saudi index fell 1.9 percent in early trade to 6,911 points, as the bank sector displayed 2.8 percent after enjoying a strong rally on Thursday.

National Commercial Bank and Al Rajhi Bank dropped 2.9 and 3.3 percent respectively, wiping off most of Thursday's gains, which were due to hopes that higher interest rates would improve lending margins.

"The so-called market euphoria following the US interest rate hike on Wednesday was short-lived," said a Jeddah-based trader. "Some traders turned a quick profit and sold positions, and they are not willing to re-enter the market until the

budget is announced."

Concern that the kingdom's budget will include major spending cuts, as the government tries to narrow a deficit caused by low oil prices, has been weighing on the market for months.

Egypt's economy could benefit from cheap oil and its stock index climbed 0.3 percent in early trade yesterday. Commercial International Bank rose 1.8 percent, adding to a 5.6 percent jump on Thursday after it agreed to sell investment banking subsidiary CI Capital to Orascom Telecom for 1 billion Egyptian pounds (\$128 million). Orascom rose a further 1.7 percent after surging 11.1 percent on Thursday.

Orascom Telecom plans to merge CI Capital with Beltone Financial, which it bought last month for almost 650 million pounds. Beltone rose 8.9 percent yesterday morning. — Reuters

KUWAIT'S MOBILE HANDSET MARKET SET TO SHRINK IN 2016

KUWAIT: The Kuwait mobile handset market is tipped to shrink 6 percent year on year in 2016, according to the latest forecasts from International Data Corporation (IDC). The global technology research and consulting services firm expects the market to follow up respective year-on-year declines of 19 percent and 22 percent in the second and third quarters of this year with a downturn of 17 percent for 2015 as a whole.

"In line with global trends, the market has seen a consolidation of brands, with the likes of BlackBerry dropping off the radar completely," says Isaac T. Ngatia, a mobile handsets analyst at IDC Middle East, Africa, and Turkey. "It is also clear that Kuwait is a brand-centric market where consumers tend to stick with their preferred brands. Various macro factors are also hampering growth, including the expected flattening of the market in general due to declining consumer demand and slowing population growth (mainly of expats). The oil and gas sector in Kuwait accounts for about 95 percent of export revenues and about 60 percent of the country's GDP, meaning falling oil prices are having a negative ripple effect on demand

for goods and services within the wider economy."

Fastest growth rate

Over the past few years, Kuwait has witnessed high growth in the penetration of mobile phones, registering one of the fastest growth rates in the world in terms of handset shipments. Indeed, historical IDC data shows that mobile phone shipments to Kuwait increased 159 percent between 2012 and 2014. This was mainly driven by the strong uptake of smartphones, which saw growth of 272 percent over the same two-year period, primarily courtesy of Samsung and Apple.

Despite the decrease in overall shipments in 2015, two trends that have prevented the market from suffering a faster pace of decline are worth noting. "The trend of owning multiple phones in Kuwait and a shortening of smartphone replacement cycles are the key factors driving shipments to the country," says Nabila Popal, research manager for mobile phones at IDC Middle East, Africa, and Turkey. "A shorter replacement cycle implies people are buying more phones within a short period of time. Kuwait

also has one of the highest ratios of smartphones per person in the world, with about 1.6 smartphones shipped annually per person. It is these trends that are helping to drive smartphone penetration in the country."

Another key trend driving smartphone penetration is the price of such devices. According to IDC, devices below the \$150 price point are seeing higher growth rates than those priced above that level. Shipments of smartphones priced below \$150 grew 275 percent year on year in 2014, while those priced above \$150 grew just 17 percent over the same period. This trend has continued into 2015, albeit at a much slower rate, with shipments of <\$150 devices up 37 percent year on year over the first three quarters of the year, while shipments of >\$150 devices declined 25 percent over the same nine-month period.

The growth in cheaper devices is being spurred by a combination of factors such as new brands launching low-end phones in this price segment. These include VSun, Xtouch, and Obi, among others. Established

brands are also launching models in this segment of the market or lowering their prices. Samsung, for example, has responded by offering a number of models priced below \$150, including the Samsung J1 and the Samsung J1 Ace among others.

Kuwait has a 4G network covering the whole country, and this superb infrastructure presents a significant opportunity for smartphone manufacturers. According to GSMA, Kuwait's mobile broadband penetration rate sits at a high 77 percent, which presents a clear opportunity for heavy data usage, such as video streaming. It is little surprise then that IDC's data shows that LTE devices contributed to 63 percent of all smartphone shipments to Kuwait in Q3 2015. As such, IDC believes that devices that are equipped with the necessary processing capabilities and carry the optimal price point will continue to thrive in this challenging marketplace.

The Research

IDC's Europe, Middle East, and Africa Quarterly Mobile Phone Tracker provides a unique insight into the forces shaping the handset and smartphone markets in Western

Europe, Central and Eastern Europe, and the Middle East and Africa. This tracker service quantifies for clients the trends impacting the mobile phone market, and provides, on a quarterly basis, vendor shares, technology trends, and a host of technical breakdowns that help vendors and industry players define strategies for tracking the future wireless device market.

International Data Corporation (IDC) is the premier global provider of market intelligence, advisory services, and events for the information technology, telecommunications, and consumer technology markets. IDC helps IT professionals, business executives, and the investment community make fact-based decisions on technology purchases and business strategy. More than 1,000 IDC analysts provide global, regional, and local expertise on technology and industry opportunities and trends in over 110 countries worldwide. For more than 50 years, IDC has provided strategic insights to help our clients achieve their key business objectives. IDC is a subsidiary of ICG, the world's leading technology media, research, and events company.

KUWAIT'S PAAET LAUNCHES MICROSOFT OFFICE 365

THE LARGEST DEPLOYMENT OF OFFICE 365 IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: In line with the belief in the importance of leveraging technology to develop employable skills to prepare youth for a stronger future, Microsoft Kuwait has announced that its Microsoft Office 365 product will be deployed by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), to be used by the establishment's students, faculty, and staff.

The new Microsoft Office 365 which was installed at the Public Authority for Applied Education is considered to be the largest deployment of Office 365 in Kuwait. Over 60 thousand users between students, faculty, and staff will be able to make full use of the great benefits this program offers.

Office 365 provides a variety of services, including business class e-mail, cloud storage and file sharing, in addition to the Microsoft Office suite. Students, faculty and staff at PAAET campuses will now be able to work from anywhere, as Microsoft's cutting-edge technology makes it possible to centrally manage connections more easily and efficiently. Facilities now available to all PAAET students and educators include an email account for their college or institute, 1 TB of cloud storage, 15 copies of free Office applications, and some education-focused applications. Office 365 pushes for collaboration between educators and students in and out of the classroom, and drives for collaboration between students.

Dr Ahmed Al-Athari, the Director General of PAAET, said: "Technology is a critical component in ensuring that we deliver the highest quality educational experience to our students, while enabling them, and their teachers, to connect at their convenience. Microsoft offers the best solution for our needs with Office 365, which will empower our faculty, students and staff with greater access to essential functions."



Dr Ahmed Al-Athari, the Director General of PAAET.

Charles Nahas, Microsoft Kuwait's General Manager, said: "Microsoft is committed to supporting the education sector, and Office 365 is proving to be very beneficial for both students and faculty. As a technology enabler, Microsoft works with educational institutions to provide the technology tools that can transform the experience. With the mix of applications and tools in Office 365, PAAET students and faculty will find solutions that will help them be more efficient and effective in their roles."

"Our engagement with the Authority has given us improved insights into the specific require-

ments of public organizations, and how technology can help create efficiencies. We believe that this solution set can be effectively translated into other usage scenarios with other organizations and authorities, directly contributing to the technological advancement of the public sector in Kuwait." Nahas added. Microsoft takes a holistic and long-term approach to supporting education and is working closely with governments, educators, parents, students and NGOs in Kuwait to open up access to technology that can improve the quality of teaching as well as the learning experience for students of all ages.

NEW DAWN OR WILD WEST? 'SHARING ECONOMY' GOES GLOBAL

WASHINGTON: It's a new dawn for transport, lodging and pretty much every service under the sun and it's all about "sharing." The so-called sharing economy gained traction across the globe in 2015 as Uber upended the taxi business, Airbnb disrupted the hotel sector and a host of online and mobile startups let people moonlight as chefs or handymen.

Many see great promise in the collaborative economy, starting with the people flocking to it as way to turn their car or apartment, spare time or hobby, into a source of revenue with far greater flexibility than a conventional job.

A PriceWaterhouse study estimates that the "sharing" or "peer-to-peer" economy will explode from roughly \$15 billion in worldwide revenues at the end of 2014 to \$325 billion by 2025. But critics worry the rising sector is an unregulated Wild West with few safeguards for either workers or consumers, and the trend has raised hackles from incumbents fearing for their survival—cue the taxi driver protests against Uber seen around the world.

Posting on the Uber forum under the handle DaveM, one driver describes a summer gig on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, as idyllic. "I'm making good money. If I put in the hours I can get 18 rides a day," he writes. "Beach all day drive at night=happiness."

But user tales of woe collected on a website called AirbnbHell, tell another side of the story. One lodging guest recounts: "When I got to the house and met the folks they seemed cool. When I went out for dinner, they stole all my stuff and locked me out. To make it worse, they sent me an email saying God bless, Jesus loves you."

Who stands to benefit?

Facilitated by smartphones and geolocation technology, the sharing model offers consumers vastly expanded choices and often lower prices.

Spearheaded by giants like Uber, present in

at least 67 countries, and Airbnb which operates in 190 countries including Cuba, peer-to-peer platforms have the potential "to radically upend both how we consume goods and how we work to afford them," said the PwC report.

Notable platforms include Task Rabbit (running errands), Hourly Nerds (computer consultants), Thumbtack (home repairs), Bon Appetour (home-cooked meals) and Washio (laundry). Services such as Instacart, Postmates and Grubhub deliver meals or groceries.

"I see this as one stage in a progression representing how digital technologies are changing how we organize work, which has been going on for 30 years," said New York University professor Arun Sundararajan, who specializes in the subject. In the United States alone, some 18 million workers now earn a significant portion of their income outside of traditional employment, according to MBO Partners. And a study by financial software group Intuit found that 80 percent of large corporations plan to increase their use of a "flexible workforce" in coming years.

Sundararajan says his research suggests people in digital labor markets often earn more than in traditional jobs. "The evidence I have seen is that wages tend to go up when the work is related to physical presence," as is the case with transportation, delivery or home services, he told AFP. With services that can be outsourced to distant locations, such as web design or translation, wages often fell.

The people who stand to benefit most, said the NYU professor, are those struggling to make ends meet, and who are at or below median income.

"These are people who can afford to take a vacation because they can rent their place on Airbnb, who can afford their car payments because they drive for a ridesharing service."

Backers say the sharing platforms are largely self-regulating: users review providers for quality, providing incentives for good service while weeding out the bad ones. — AFP



CARSON CITY: Gov Brian Sandoval joins state lawmakers and officials from electric car maker Faraday Future to approve a \$335-million incentive package for the company in a signing ceremony in Carson City, Nevada on Saturday. The deal required a four-day special session of the legislature. — AP

NEVADA GOVERNOR SIGNS \$335M DEAL TO LURE ELECTRIC CARMAKER

CARSON CITY, Nevada: Nevada Gov Brian Sandoval approved a \$335 million incentive package to attract upstart electric carmaker Faraday Future's billion-dollar factory to a hard-hit Las Vegas suburb, even though the company has yet to unveil a concept car or bring a product to market.

The move came shortly after the Legislature voted overwhelmingly to support the deal Saturday, after a four-day special session in Carson City. Lawmakers learned last week that Chinese billionaire Jia Yueting was backing the secretive California-based company, which employs some former Tesla Motors executives, and that Faraday plans to bring 4,500 direct jobs to Nevada. "This is a watershed moment," said Democratic state Sen. Pat Spearman, whose district encompasses part of recession-battered North Las Vegas, where the plant will be built. "I will be happy to go back to my constituents and say the darkness that has overshadowed us has lifted." The deal comes a little more than a year after state lawmakers approved a \$1.3 billion incentive package to land a massive Tesla battery factory outside of Reno. Nevada officials said the deals are reshaping and diversifying the state's economy after decades of tying its fate to casinos.

"We're proud of our mining, we're proud of our gaming, we're proud of all those anchor tenants that we've had in our state," the Republican

governor said before signing the bills. "But the world's changing. And I know that you agree with me that we're not going to let it pass us by."

Nevada triumphed over California, Louisiana and Georgia in the bid to land the factory. The state will offer \$215 million in tax credits and abatements, and publicly finance \$120 million in infrastructure improvements at an underdeveloped industrial park in North Las Vegas.

While Nevada is known for its libertarian leanings and lack of a state income tax, people who hammered out the deal say other factors ultimately won the company over.

"It's not just about the tax environment. It's about the education, the workforce development, the willingness that we have to turn on a dime in some senses and say, 'Please come to our state,'" said Republican Assembly Majority Leader Paul Anderson. "We are known now internationally as a place to come and do business. We need to keep the momentum going."

Skeptics included Republican Assemblyman Ira Hansen, who questioned the company's Chinese backing and said he wouldn't trust such an untested firm with his personal investments or with the state's. Nevada officials who negotiated the deal testified that they built protections into the bills that acknowledge the company's short history. Faraday won't be able to tap into all of its abatements until it meets a \$1 billion investment threshold. — AP

CANON HOLDS ANNUAL CONFERENCE FOR MIDEAST, CENTRAL AND N AFRICA

DUBAI: Canon, a world leader in imaging solutions, held its annual Partner Conference for the Middle East and Central and North Africa regions. A key highlight of the conference this year was Canon Europe's announcement of the founding of new "Canon Central and North Africa (CCNA)" business division, which will enhance Canon's business within the Africa region.

The three-day event, held at The Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Dubai, brought together over 150 partners from across 56 markets covering the Middle East and the newly formed CCNA region. The Conference evaluated the growth and performance in 2015 before detailing the moving forward strategy for 2016. Anurag Agrawal, Managing Director, Canon Middle East, said: "Canon Middle East marked a successful year in 2015 where we expanded into new markets and strengthened our offering to meet the evolving requirements of customers."

He added: "Canon's Annual Partner Conference is a strategic opportunity for us to further engage with our partners and strengthen our relationships with them. As the first-point for market feedback, our partners provide us valuable insights on customers. By listening to them and working with them, we

will continue to expand our business in 2016. We see strong growth opportunities in the region and we will continue to add value to all our stakeholders during 2016."

Among the highlights of 2015 is the commencement of direct operations in Qatar and strengthening its facilities in Abu Dhabi. Building on the conference theme of 'One', the event also focused on 'listening forums' that encourage sharing feedback with partners through open communications. Canon has also announced the continuation of its 'Executive Forums' enabling it and partners to work collectively and more efficiently, towards new possibilities and wider horizons.

Launch of CCNA

With the launch of CCNA, all African partners originally under Canon Middle East and Canon South Africa will now transfer to the new entity by January 2016, after which CCNA will be responsible for all aspects of the Africa business. CCNA will meet customers' demands in the rapidly evolving and challenging African market with increased on-ground support from Canon, and a focus on developing the market across all B2B and B2C product categories.



Canon presents its 'President Award' to its partner Genetco from Oman.

Roman Troedthandl, the new Managing Director of Canon Central and North Africa, said: "The formation of Canon Central and North Africa will energise our operations across Africa as we roll out our strategy of growing our reach and engaging our customers. We welcome our partners to this new entity and hope to continue building a mutually beneficial partnership in the days ahead. Our clear strategy and fixed targets will enable us to grow in our target markets and meet the aspirations of

our customers." Canon also held a forum for the participants to discuss industry trends and B2B and B2C social media marketing strategies.

A gala dinner was held at Music Hall at the Jumeirah Zabeel Saray, where 18 Canon partners were recognised. Canon presented its 'President Award' to its partner (Genetco) from Oman."

As a symbolic gesture of the formation of CCNA and the transition of business, a trophy was presented to Roman Troedthandl.



FDA WARNS INDIA'S SUN PHARMA OVER STANDARDS AT HALOL PLANT

MUMBAI: India's largest drugmaker Sun Pharmaceutical Industries Ltd has been warned by US health regulators for violating manufacturing standards at its Halol plant in India, even as it has been working on fixing issues at the plant for over a year. The US Food and Drug Administration's "warning letter" to Sun Pharma indicates the agency is dissatisfied with the remedial measures the company has implemented since last September, when the FDA first notified the company of its concerns after an inspection. That inspection report highlighted nearly two dozen issues the FDA staff found, including problems with aseptic practices and water leaks in the ceiling of the manufacturing area.

The letter, which was publicized by Sun

Pharma itself and has yet to appear on the FDA website, means the US agency could ban imports from the plant if the problems are not resolved. The Halol plant makes up about 15 percent of Sun Pharma's sales in its largest market, the United States. It is critical to the company as it has the capabilities to manufacture injectable products, which are difficult to make and hence a niche and lucrative market for drugmakers.

Sun Pharma said in a statement on Saturday that it had made "significant investments" in automation and training to improve quality systems at the plant, hired consultants, and was updating the FDA on all the corrective measures it was taking. Most of the issues in the warning

letter are the same as those in the report sent in September, Sun Pharma's Managing Director and Indian billionaire Dilip Shanghvi, said in a conference call late on Saturday. The company does not expect any change in the timeline to finish its remediation work and invite the FDA for a re-inspection, he said. The company has not disclosed the timeline.

Approvals on hold

Shanghvi said the warning letter may have been issued because Sun Pharma had not "effectively" communicated to the FDA the extent of remediation work it had already done. "Whether the remediation commitments we made are adequate, whether we need to do more ... these are

issues we need to assess and understand and probably consult with additional subject matter experts," he said. He said the company was also putting together an internal task force to assess how to respond to the issues raised. The warning to Sun Pharma is the latest in a series of FDA actions over the past year against drug manufacturing plants in India, which supply about 40 percent of the medicines sold in the United States. Facilities of multinational firms manufacturing in India have also faced similar US action.

Just last month, India's second-largest drugmaker Dr Reddy's Laboratories Ltd received an FDA warning letter citing quality control issues, including data integrity, at three of its manufacturing

plants in India.

Sun Pharma itself is already grappling with US import bans on five of its other manufacturing facilities in India. The company said it was cooperating with the FDA and willing to undertake any additional steps necessary. Since last September, Sun Pharma has not received any US approvals to launch new drugs made at Halol. The situation will continue until the problems are fixed, Shanghvi said. "Getting the site back in compliance is a major priority and focus," he said. The company did not say when exactly the warning letter was issued. The letters are usually posted on the agency's website a week after they are sent to the manufacturer. — Reuters

NEW RULES BRINGING KIDNEYS TO HARDEST-TO-TRANSPLANT PATIENTS

WASHINGTON: A shake-up of the nation's kidney transplant system means more organs are getting to patients once thought nearly impossible to match, according to early tracking of the new rules. It's been a year since the United Network for Organ Sharing changed rules for the transplant waiting list, aiming to decrease disparities and squeeze the most benefit from a scarce resource: kidneys from deceased donors. Now data from UNOS shows that the changes are helping certain patients, including giving those expected to live the longest a better shot at the fittest kidneys. The hope is to "really level the playing field," said Dr Mark Aeder, a transplant surgeon at University Hospitals Case Medical Center in Cleveland who is chairman of the UNOS' kidney committee.

In Abingdon, Virginia, 8-year-old Marshall Jones was one of the lucky first recipients. A birth defect severely damaged his kidneys and a failed transplant when he was younger left his immune system abnormally primed to reject kidneys from 99 percent of donors. Then last January, after four years of searching, organ officials found a possible match, hours away by plane but available under the new policy - and it worked. "We don't use the word lightly, but this was really a miracle kidney for him," said Dr Victoria Norwood, Marshall's doctor and the pediatric nephrology chief at the University of Virginia. There's a huge gap between who needs a new kidney and who gets one. More than 101,000 people are on the national waiting list, while only about 17,000 kidney transplants are performed each year. Roughly 11,000 of them are with kidneys donated from someone who just died; the rest occur when a patient is able to find a living donor.

The wait for a deceased-donor kidney varies widely around the country, and in 2014, more



CHARLOTTEVILLE, Virginia: In this photo provided by the University of Virginia Health System, taken Dec 9, 2015, Marshall Jones, right, laughs with Dr John Barcia in the Battle Building at the University of Virginia Children's Hospital in Charlottesville, Va. — AP photos

1- fewer transplants are occurring in which the kidney is predicted to outlive the recipient. Now, the kidneys expected to last the longest - as calculated by donor age and medical history - are offered first to the patients expected to survive the longest. That's called longevity matching. Before the change, 14 percent of the longest-lasting kidneys went to recipients age 65

ing list, and boosted transplants among long-time dialysis users, UNOS found. In turn, transplants inched up among African-Americans, who spend disproportionately more time on dialysis.

3- then there are those hardest-to-match patients such as Marshall, about 8,000 of them now on the waiting list. The new policy gives them special priority for organs that can be shipped to a wider area of the country than other kidneys, broadening the search for a super-rare match.

As a result, the percentage of transplants among those patients has risen nearly fivefold, said UNOS senior research scientist Darren Stewart. UNOS is tracking the changes closely to look for unintended problems because more transplants for one group can mean fewer for another. For example, adults younger than age 50 are getting more kidneys since the rule change, but older patients still account for about half of transplants. Another question is how the new policy will work long term as a backlog of the special-case patients starts to clear.

"All of a sudden you got a floodgate that opens because you gave these people a big advantage and you're shipping kidneys across the country to them," said Dr John Roberts, transplant chief at the University of California, San Francisco, one of the largest kidney programs. He praised the rule change but said it may need some fine-tuning. For example, the new policy also offers wider access to the kidneys expected to last the shortest amount of time, because the oldest or sickest patients might choose one for a quicker transplant rather than gambling that a fitter one will become available. But, "we don't have a great way to predict what's coming for a patient" to help them decide, Roberts said. Discards of those less-fit kidneys temporarily increased a bit as the new policy began. Stay tuned. Transplant centers are learning to handle the logistical hurdles of shipping more kidneys around the country, potentially opening additional avenues to alleviate geographic disparities, Aeder said. "There's much more to come." — AP



CHARLOTTEVILLE, Virginia: Marshall Jones poses for a photo in the Battle Building at the University of Virginia Children's Hospital.

than 4,500 people died before their turn. The new kidney allocation system can't alleviate the overall organ shortage. "The only thing to shorten total wait time for everybody is more organ donors," Aeder said. Instead, the policy altered how deceased-donor kidneys are distributed, shifting priorities so that how long you've been on the waiting list isn't the main factor. Among the changes:

or older. That dropped to 5 percent as the new policy kicked in, according to UNOS monitoring.

2- the less time spent on dialysis, the better patients fare after a transplant. Yet where you live still plays a big role in how quickly you're put on the transplant list, with minorities and those in rural and poorer areas spending more time on dialysis first. The new policy gives people credit for that dialysis time, moving them up the wait-

AGING BEAR AT CENTER OF COURT FIGHT IS EUTHANIZED IN OHIO

MEDINA, Ohio: A toothless, 41-year-old bear in the middle of a permit dispute between his owners and the state was euthanized after finishing a last meal that included a cream-filled doughnut. The black bear named Archie had been in failing health for months and wasn't expected to live through hibernation, said owners Jeffrey and Debra Gillium.

He was euthanized by a veterinarian Friday after the Gilliums gave him a big breakfast of dog food mixed with tapioca pudding and a doughnut. "He usually doesn't get stuff like that, but today was a special day and he loves his sweets," Debra Gillium told the Medina Gazette. "He licked the tapioca off my fingers." The Gilliums had fought to keep Archie despite failing to get a permit when Ohio tightened rules for keeping dangerous animals. They argued that the bear was old and unlikely to escape his fenced enclosure near Lodi, roughly 40 miles southwest of Cleveland. They said that moving or tranquilizing him could threaten his life and that denying their permit wouldn't serve the public interest. But the Ohio Department of Agriculture said it couldn't grant a permit because the

application was submitted long after the deadline.

The Gilliums said they had cared for the bear since 1981 and had proper permits and licenses until the law changed and their last permit expired in 2013. They argued that they weren't adequately notified about the changes when the Department of Agriculture took over enforcement on such matters and they believed they were grandfathered into the new permit system.

Debra Gillium said she took steps to meet the new requirements, including applying for a permit and trying to have Archie tagged by microchip. The department said the Gilliums simply hadn't complied with current law. The restrictions on ownership of dangerous and exotic animals were enacted after a Zanesville-area man released dozens of exotic animals, including African lions and Bengal tigers, at his property before killing himself in 2011.

A judge last May dismissed a civil case by the couple. "It's been hard on us physically," Debra Gillium told The Gazette. "We got too attached to Archie. I can say that I never regretted one day of taking care of him 'cause he was just so sweet and loving." — AP



LODI, Ohio. This March 13, 2015 photo shows Archie the bear in Lodi. — AP

US LOBSTER EXPORTS TO EUROPE ARE DOWN FOR CHRISTMAS SEASON

PORTLAND, Maine: There will be fewer claws for Christmas in Europe this year. Less of the record lobster catches that have been a boon for the American fishing industry are making it onto European tables, where they have long been a holiday tradition, from lobster Thermidor in France to Italy's La Vigilia, known in America as the Feast of the Seven Fishes.

But a strong US dollar and a less-than-festive economy overseas mean a weak year for American shippers like Mike Tourkistas. Tourkistas said lobster's status as a luxury item, coupled with a rising price because of competition from Chinese importers and a weak euro, is motivating some consumers to stay away - even if they can afford it. For middle-aged, white Washingtonians, a troubling death-rate trend A big hole opens up, and Russell Wilson takes it in for a touchdown - a play that is called back on a hold against the Seahawks. "Nobody wants to be seen with a lobster claw hanging out of their mouth when the economy is really suffering," said Tourkistas, who is based out of Topsfield, Massachusetts. Canada and the US export the same species of lobster to Europe - the American lobster, known for its big, meaty claws and popularity with summer New England tourists. European waters have their own species of lobster, which has evolved as a

cultural totem for generations in Europe. Eugene Delacroix's nearly 200-year-old painting, "Still Life With Lobsters," hangs in the Louvre in Paris.

Exporters started shipping large amounts of lobster to Europe in the early 1980s when airspace became available, Tourkistas said, but it has been a popular food item on the conti-



YORK, Maine: In this Thursday, Dec 10, 2015, photo, Jamie Lane packs live lobsters for overseas shipment at the Maine Lobster Outlet in York, Maine. — AP

nent for centuries. Lobster is popular in stew in Spain, stuffed in the shell with Gruyere as lobster Thermidor in France, and with risotto in Italy. Some in the American lobster industry suspect European business will be off more than 25 percent this year. The recent trend reflects the deepening of a longer slide in the amount of lobster the U.S. is sending to Europe, where supermarkets rely on the crustaceans to draw shoppers around the holidays.

Shipments of live and frozen lobster from the US to Spain valued more than \$63 million in 2007 and fell to less than \$40 million last year. In Italy, where lobster is sometimes part of the traditional Christmas Eve seafood feast, American lobster imports fell nearly a fifth to less than 8.2 million pounds last year. John Sackton, publisher of market analytics website Seafood.com, said he expects lobster to eventually come back strong in Europe. But this year, the value of live lobster shipments to Europe through October has dipped compared to last, he said.

"I would say the expectation is this will be one of the weaker lobster export Christmases to Europe," Sackton said. The drop in sales to Europe is happening as New England fishermen are catching more lobsters than ever, especially in Maine, the country's biggest lobster producer. American fishermen typically

caught 60 million to 90 million pounds of lobster per year in the 1990s and 2000s but have topped 140 million pounds for three straight years.

Longtime lobsterman William Adler said he's not that concerned about the European market's slip because consumers farther east are making up for it. American lobster exports to China climbed from \$2.1 million in 2009 to more than \$90 million in last year, federal statistics show. "There's growth in Asia," Adler said. "Whatever happens in Europe happens." — AP



YORK, Maine: A rubber band used to keep handlers safe marks a lobster caught in American waters at the Maine Lobster Outlet in York.

IN BUDGET DEAL, HEALTH LAW FOES TOOK A DIFFERENT PATH



WASHINGTON: In this June 25, 2015, file photo, students cheer as they hold up signs, outside of the Supreme Court in Washington, supporting the Affordable Care Act after the Supreme Court decided that the ACA may provide nationwide tax subsidies. — AP

WASHINGTON: Republican foes of President Barack Obama's health care law may be able to get more by chipping away at it than trying to take the whole thing down at once. That's one lesson of the budget deal passed by Congress and signed by the president last week. It delayed a widely criticized tax on high-cost employer health insurance plans that hasn't taken effect yet. And it temporarily suspended two taxes on industry already being collected, which are also part of the health law. In contrast to frontal attacks on "Obamacare" that have repeatedly failed, this tactic could well succeed. Delays and suspensions have a way of becoming permanent.

Polls show that the public remains deeply divided over the Affordable Care Act, or ACA. Opponents are already looking for other provisions that could be separated from the law. Next could be the "employer mandate," a requirement that larger companies offer coverage or risk fines. Part of the mandate is a

controversial definition of a full-time worker as someone who averages 30 hours a week. Critics say it discourages companies from hiring full-time employees. "Maybe Republicans have come to grips with the idea that the basic structure of the ACA has been in place long enough that simple repeal is not possible," said economist Joe Antos of the American Enterprise Institute, a business-oriented think tank. Perhaps the budget deal "is practice" for more changes, he added.

Particular things

Supporters of the health care law are trying to downplay the consequences of the budget deal as superficial dings. It did not touch coverage provisions that have reduced the nation's uninsured rate to a historic low of 9 percent. Indeed, Obama himself announced that 6 million people have already signed up for 2016 coverage, with more than a month left in open-enrollment season. "I think you can make too much of

these particular things," said economist Paul Van de Water of the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, referring to the deal. "They don't actually have any effect on the ACA's coverage expansion. In that sense, it's not a blow against the ACA at all." The center advocates on behalf of low-income people.

Yet not too long ago a top White House adviser was vigorously defending the health law's tax on high-cost coverage, known as the Cadillac tax. The tax is 40 percent of the value of employer-sponsored plans that exceeds certain thresholds: \$10,200 for individual coverage and \$27,500 for family coverage. In its first year, 2018, it would have affected 26 percent of all employers and nearly half of larger companies, according to the nonpartisan Kaiser Family Foundation. Since the tax is indexed to general inflation, which rises more slowly than health insurance premiums, it would have affected a growing share of health plans over time. — AP

'CONCUSSION' FILM STIRS NFL BRAIN INJURY DEBATE

WASHINGTON: The film "Concussion," tracing a forensic pathologist's quest to expose the truth about brain injuries in the NFL, casts a spotlight on an issue that has roiled America's most popular sports league. The movie also may give parents pause, according to the filmmakers and some former players, about allowing their sons to play the violent sport of football. "I love football. It's graceful. We have a lot of beautiful football in this film, purposefully," said Peter Landesman, the director and writer of the movie, due in US theaters on Dec. 25. "We're not trying to wag our finger and say, 'Don't do it.'"

Landesman added, "Sometimes the things that we love in life are the things that kill us. We just have to make difficult decisions about what we do with that." Rick Walker, who played nine seasons in the National Football League including on the Washington Redskins team that won Super Bowl XVII in January 1983, said he hopes women, particularly mothers, see "Concussion" because they have the ability at the grassroots level to make the sport safer.

"Dads have already been aware of the situation, and most men will play no matter what," said Walker, now a sports commentator in Washington. "When you're young, moms are taking you to Pee Wee and Pop Warner (youth leagues)." "Mothers can be such a big influence. If they combine their forces, they have the power to bring about change. They will protect their babies. But with dads, it's always a macho issue," Walker added.

The movie tells the story of Dr Bennet Omalu, played by Will Smith, who fought the NFL's campaign to conceal his research on the brain damage suffered by football players who sustain blows to the head during games and practice. Several dozen of the game's top players, including Hall of Famers Mike Webster and Junior Seau, have been diagnosed after they died with chronic traumatic encephalopathy (CTE), a progressive degenerative brain disease associated with repetitive blows to the head. CTE currently is diagnosed only through brain examinations after death.

'Trend in the right direction'

Jeff Miller, the NFL's senior vice president of health and safety policy, said he would be happy if the film spurs conversation on how to prevent brain injuries. Miller said recent rules changes, such as penalizing helmet-to-helmet hits, have helped

reduce the number of concussions in regular season games by 34 percent over the past three years. "While that number does not represent success in our minds, it certainly is a trend in the right direction," Miller said.

Miller said when the NFL changes rules or makes it a "point of emphasis" to limit the amount of head contact in a game, colleges, high schools and even youth leagues take note. The league's concussion policies came under renewed scrutiny last month when St. Louis Rams quarterback Case Keenum was allowed to continue playing after suffering a concussion in a game. The NFL said it would review why Keenum was not taken off the field for evaluation by a team doctor or an independent neurotrauma physician as required by its concussion protocols.

Some 5,000 former players sued the NFL over brain injuries, claiming the multibillion-dollar league concealed the dangers of repeated head trauma. The players agreed to a settlement that could cost the league \$1 billion, but the settlement remains tied up in the courts. Smith, nominated for a Golden Globe award for his performance in "Concussion," said that as a football dad, he was conflicted about starring in the movie because he had been unaware before meeting Omalu of the scientific research.

"I had watched my son play football for four years, and I didn't know. And just as a parent I felt like I had to be a part of this," Smith said. Smith said Omalu's quest for the truth "became our quest also to deliver the truth. People have to know," Smith said.

In 2011, lawyer Jason Luckasevic filed the first two lawsuits against the NFL on behalf of more than 120 retired players over their brain injuries. "This is not the story of the guy who is crying the blues about his one concussion," Luckasevic said. "This is the story of guys like Mike Webster who suffered repeated trauma, practice after practice, day after day, game after game." Luckasevic said in light of the movie "people will now have to make their informed choices knowing that football is not really different from boxing, that you can get (brain injuries) from hitting your head thousands of times during the course of a season."

Walker, who retired from the NFL after the 1985 season, said the league "is filthy rich and needs to focus on the survival of its players." All three of his boys played football. "I know I'm happier that they're no longer playing," Walker said. — Reuters



NEW DELHI: In this photograph taken on December 18, 2015, Indian commuters travel on a polluted road near a bus terminus in the Anand Vihar District of New Delhi. — AFP

ANGER, FEAR AT DELHI'S POLLUTION GROUND ZERO

'I DON'T SEND MY CHILDREN TO THE PARK TO PLAY'

NEW DELHI: For 12 hours a day, Raju Misra stands at his snack stall in the world's ultimate pollution hotspot, inhaling toxic fumes and railing against India's politicians for failing to clean up the filthy air. Anger and alarm are rapidly rising throughout sprawling New Delhi over the air quality that the World Health Organization (WHO) has ranked the most hazardous on the planet. But life is measurably more dangerous for Misra and the myriad of other street vendors and rickshaw drivers who scratch a living at ground zero—a bus terminus in the city's bustling Anand Vihar suburb.

Surrounded by major roads clogged with old trucks, along with the interstate bus station, dust-generating construction and not far from a coal-fired power station, the area's air routinely tests far worse than the rest of Delhi. "In the morning, you can see the smog and smoke in the air from the pollution,"

Misra said, struggling to be heard over the buses. "We want the number of cars on the road to be cut. Common people, politicians have to come together to reduce Delhi's pollution," the 60-year-old said from behind his counter.

Delhi has been shrouded in a toxic soup in recent weeks as winter sets in, cutting visibility and pushing PM 2.5 levels more than 10 times over the WHO's recommended safe limit. These fine particles less than 2.5 micrometers in diameter are linked to higher rates of chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease as they settle into the lungs and can pass into the bloodstream. Expert Anumita Roychowdhury said the elderly and children are most vulnerable, particularly those from poor families who live in areas of Delhi highly exposed to the particles.

Irreversible lung damage

"Children take in more air than the

rest of us. And studies show the damage to their lungs can be irreversible," Roychowdhury, from the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) think-tank, told AFP. In the narrow, dark alleys near the bus station where simple homes are clustered, Janki Devi's three children stay indoors after school rather than run around outside. "I don't send my children to the park to play. I don't want them to fall ill and get fever or cough because of the dust," said the 28-year-old, who has lived in Anand Vihar for 15 years.

Devi, whose husband earns 8,000 rupees (\$120) a month toiling in a factory, said she works hard to keep her small home dust-free, but feels powerless once they step outside the front door in the poor neighborhood. India's courts are pushing governments to act over the mounting crisis, last week ordering a moratorium in the city on large diesel luxury cars whose fumes

are partly blamed for the pollution. "Why should a rich man be travelling in a diesel car and pollute the environment?" Chief Justice T.S. Thakur told the court, which also banned the burning of garbage.

The court also barred the thousands of diesel trucks that storm through Delhi every night to avoid tolls on roads around the city en route to the rest of the country. Politicians are belatedly jumping on board, with the Delhi government announcing this month cars will only be allowed on its congested roads on alternate days in January. There are already more than 8.5 million vehicles on Delhi's roads with 1,400 new cars being added every day as incomes rise. Experts remain sceptical about how the plan will be enforced given that the police answer to the national government, which shares an acrid relationship with its Delhi counterpart. — AFP

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YOKOHAMA 'SAVE & BE SAFE' PROMOTION

Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons Co (MNSS), one of the Al Sayer Group of Companies held the second draw to select the winners of "Save & Be Safe" promotion at the Yokohama Center in Canada Dry, on 9 December 2015.

Consumer protection affairs along with Interpal Singh Senior Manager, Tire Sales from Al Sayer Yokohama and Mohammad Amin Nasimi, Senior Manager After-Sales Marketing. "Globally leading Yokohama tires is a top choice for customers in Kuwait backed by technologically advanced tire pattern as well as promising range of product line. Moreover the durability and capability to withstand adverse

heat and cold makes Yokohama a trustworthy brand. We thank all our customers for choosing Yokohama and through this promotion we aim to offer them great value featuring fabulous cash prizes along with purchase of new Yokohama tires" said Krishna Kumar, General Manager Al Sayer Tires Oil and Paint division. Yokohama "Save & Be Safe" promotion commenced on 4 October 2015 and will be valid

until 4 January 2016. During the offer period for every KD 20 spent on purchasing Yokohama tires customers will get a coupon entitling them to enter one of the three monthly draws to win fabulous cash prizes. Yokohama tires are the finest offering responsiveness, dependability and durability. The leading Japanese technology that goes in to the design and build means you get no

unwanted surprises on road, just great grip, stability and tread life. Al Sayer Group congratulates all winners from the second draw. Customers can take advantage and benefit from final draw of this promotion which will be held on 7 January 2016. Last date to enter the draw will be 3rd January 2016. All Yokohama models are included in the promotion.



ASSE KUWAIT CHAPTER ORGANIZES PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2015

American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), Kuwait Chapter is a premier voluntary, non-profit making Health, Safety and Environmental organization, which strives to provide professional guidance, training, consultancy and resources to the industrial and social sectors in the region.

As a part of continuous efforts in its professional journey, ASSE Kuwait Chapter organized the 8th International HSE & Loss Prevention Professional Development Conference (PDC) and Exhibition on 9th - 10th December 2015 at Radisson Blu Hotel, under the patronage of Minister of oil, State of Kuwait. The two day conference with the Theme "Sharing Experience to Enhance the HSE Culture" was inaugurated by His Excellency Sheikh Talal Al Sabah, Acting Undersecretary, Minister of oil, State of Kuwait.

The inaugural session was attended by Mohammad Husain, President & CEO, EQUATE, Mohammad Ghazi Al Mutairi CEO, Kuwait National Petroleum Company, Ismail Abdullah Deputy CEO, Support Services Kuwait Oil Company and several other dignitaries from oil sector companies and other distinguished guests attended the

function.

Major General Yousef Al Ansari Director, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Michael Belcher, President ASSE USA, Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait, Ashok Garlapati Global Region, Vice President ASSE USA, also participated in the inaugural ceremony.

G Sampath Reddy, President of the ASSE Kuwait Chapter in his welcome address highlighted the activities of the Chapter and welcomed everyone to this prestigious event. Engr Fadhel Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait Chapter in his opening address stated the importance of the conference. Vasudevan, Director of the ASSE Kuwait Chapter's 8th International HSE & Loss Prevention Professional Development Conference (PDC) and Exhibition, briefed the highlights of the conference, which was organized by the volunteer efforts of the Chapters members.

After the inaugural ceremony an executive panel discussion was held with the participation of Mohammad Husain President & CEO, EQUATE, Mohammad Ghazi Al Mutairi CEO, Kuwait National Petroleum Company, Ismail Abdullah Deputy CEO, Support Services Kuwait Oil Company and Michael Belcher, President ASSE USA. Fadhel Al Ali,

Chairman ASSE Kuwait, Vasudevan, Director Professional Development Conference (PDC) also participated in the discussions with question and answers. Bala Siva Srikanth Deputy Director of the Professional Development Conference (PDC) moderated the discussion.

At the end of Executive Panel discussion, Riaz Mohammed Shareef, past president of ASSE Kuwait Chapter and Advisory Committee member was awarded as the chapter safety professional of the Year- 2015. During the two day conference, symposiums on Process Safety Management, Sustainable Energy and plenary session where 68 technical papers on topic related to the Occupational Health & Industrial Hygiene, Process Safety, Personal Safety, Fire Safety, Environmental Engineering & Management, Loss Prevention, Industrial Security, Behavior Based Safety (BBS), Ergonomics etc were presented. E-poster exhibition on various topics were presented.

An exposition by major industrial suppliers and service providers were organized during this two day conference which was a major event where the conference delegates had an opportunity to get accustomed to the latest safety and fire equipments in the market.

The conference was sponsored by Equate, KOC, KNPC and RIMSCO as platinum sponsors. The conference was endorsed by International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC), National Examination Board occupational Safety & Health (NEBOSH) and supported by Board of certified Safety professionals (BCSP), Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), Centre for chemical Process Safety (CCPS).

More than 350 delegates including Managers, Team Leaders, Consultants, Specialists, Engineers, Physicians, Coordinators and Inspectors and Supervisors of various disciplines from oil sector and other companies attended the conference. AUM students who attended the conference and were given free registration for their participation.

The closing ceremony of the conference was held on the afternoon on 10th December. Feedback from the internal and external participant and dignitaries were taken during the closing ceremony. Bala Siva Srikanth, Deputy Director for the 8th International HSE & Loss Prevention Professional Development Conference (PDC) and Exhibition gave the vote of thanks.

KIA MOTORS IMPRESSES CAR FANS AT TEST DRIVE EVENT

The second KIA Road Show (test drive event) of 2015 was declared a "great success" by National Agencies Group, a subsidiary of Abdulaziz Al Mutawa Group of companies & the Authorized Distributor for KIA Motors in Kuwait, where visitors test drove their favorite KIA model, won valuable prizes and enjoyed exciting family fun at Marina Crescent on Friday, November 27, 2015.

Live music, engaging activities and friendly staff created the special atmosphere that KIA Roadshows have become famous for. "The KIA Roadshow is an extraordinary oppor-

tunity to interact with the public and showcase our award-winning models in an exciting way," explained KIA Kuwait Brand Manager, Omar Gabr. "Friday's event was nothing short of a great success in this respect. I would like to thank the visitors, National Agencies Group Team and Marina Mall Management for making it so." Gabr added that NAG received a great deal of sales inquiries at the event reflecting the heavy demand for KIA models year-round.

A total of nine KIA models were on display and available for on-location test drives, including the Grand Carnival family minivan, Mohave

large SUV (V6 & V8 variants), Sorento midsize SUV, Sportage small crossover SUV, Cadenza large sedan, Carens multipurpose utility vehicle (MPV), SOUL crossover sedan, and Riohatchback compact sedan.

While having fun and test driving amazing KIA cars, road show visitors also received KIA branded give-away gifts, free shopping vouchers for contest winners and got coupons entitling them to enter a draw on valuable gifts: iPhone 6s, Samsung Galaxy S6 Edge and Samsung Galaxy Note 5. The draw took place at KIA showroom, on Monday, December 7 - 11:00 am.





BATELCO WIN GULFRUN 24HR KARTING ENDURANCE 5

GulfRun 24 hour Karting Endurance 5, powered by Zain, took place over the weekend at Sirbb Circuit in Shuwaikh - starting on Friday at 4:30pm ending on Saturday 4:30pm. 20 teams consisting of 180 drivers took part in the practice sessions and the highly competitive and challenging 24-hour endurance race.

After 24 hours of racing in the Elite class, Batelco finished in first place with a total of 1982 laps completed, followed by Zain Racing and Q8 Racing 2. In the Silver class Shamiya Racing team finished in first place with a total of 1967 laps completed, followed by Aston Marting and Ace Racing.

Ahmed Al-Mudhaf of GulfRun said, "We are very proud of the drivers' performance and the atmosphere at the circuit was exceptionally energetic." Ahmed Almajed of Pro-Vision Sports Management added, "We have witnessed an exciting race in which all 20 teams completed the race. The skills of the participating teams have been increasing year on year - and they are capable of competing on an international level." The GulfRun 24HR Endurance Karting 5 is organized by GulfRun and Pro-Vision Sports Management. The race follows international



regulations and certified marshals flew in from the UK to regulate the race in accordance to FIA regulations. The 20 teams comprise of 4 to 12 drivers per team who drive a maximum stint time of roughly 2.5 hours, after which they switch drivers, and keep going for 24 hours of

non-stop racing. The GulfRun Karting Endurance Race was first launched in 2011 to create an exciting competition in Kuwait that aligns with GulfRun's objective to promote automobile racing and training in a safe and secure environment and karting is one of the



pillars of motorsports. GulfRun's and Pro-Vision Sport Management team extend their gratitude to the continuous support by Kuwait's private sector, which acknowledges the important role sport plays amongst Kuwait's youth. GulfRun 24HR Karting Endurance Race is supported by a

wide range of sponsors: Title sponsorship by Zain; GR Karting Pace Car: Audi; Platinum Sponsors Algida and American Tax Bureau; Gold sponsorship by Slider Station, The Correspondent, Al-Sawan and Moonlight Studios, Kidsville.

LULU PLANS \$300M INVESTMENT IN EGYPT, OPENS 1ST HYPERMARKET IN NEW CAIRO

UAE based Lulu Group has set its foot in Egypt by opening its first hypermarket in Cairo, capital of Egypt. The 119th hypermarket of the group was inaugurated by Khalid Hanafy, Egyptian Minister for Trade in the presence of Galal El Saeed, Governor of Cairo, Mohamed Abdul Sayed, Advisor to the Prime Minister, KhalifaThunaiji, Deputy UAE Ambassador to Egypt and other high ranking government and civil officials.

Yusuff Ali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group, Saifee T Rupawala, CEO, Ashraf Ali MA, Executive Director, Mohamed Althaf, Director of Lulu Egypt and other top company officials were also present on the occasion. Apart from this, a large number of people were also found anxiously waiting outside the store to get inside the latest shopping addition in the capital city.

Egypt, a country that links North Africa with the Middle East is considered as a strong economy with high market potentials under the able leadership of President Abdel Fattah El Sisi. The new store is located in Twin Plaza Opposite Police Academy on the Zakir Hussein road extension in the 1st settlement of New Cairo. Spread over an area of 170,000 square feet, the new store is specially designed to offer the residents with a world class shopping experience like never before at fair prices and friendly service. The hypermarket will provide the widest range of quality and value-for-money products all under one roof.

Egypt has been attracting lot of investments especially from GCC countries in vari-

ous sectors including infrastructure, energy and retail following the investment conference held at Sharm Al Sheikh in March where President Abdel Fattah El Sisi opened the

doors for GCC investment in his country. Egypt is viewed as a market for the UAE companies with around 600 companies now operating there. In a hope to stabilize the country, the

UAE has provided Egypt with an unprecedented economic support whether on grant based investments or bringing private sector to the Egyptian market.

Commenting on LULU Group's Egypt plans, Yusuffali MA, Chairman of Lulu Group, said: "We consider Egypt as a very important market for us and our experience of more than four decades of success and accomplishment in the retail industry is sure to help us become the most popular retailer in the region. Egyptians are already well aware of Lulu and we hope to bring world class shopping closer to them in various important location of this great country". As per the plan, we intend to invest EGP 3 billion (US\$ 300 Million) in setting up 10 new hypermarkets in next 2 years across Egypt.

"The hypermarket will also offer a window of opportunity to local community. We will encourage the Egyptian agricultural sector by procuring & promoting local agricultural produce and also export them to our stores across the GCC and Far East. Currently we are exporting EGP 50 million and this will go up to EGP 150 million next year, Yusuffali added. Main exporting products include fruits & vegetables, meat, fish, cheese and pickles. Lulu also plans to set up own food processing plants to further boost the exports.

"We believe that having a strong national workforce is vital to our long-term success as it helps in creating sustainable community living. Currently, there are more than 800 Egyptians employed at our new hypermarket

in Cairo and we intend to employ 10,000 more Egyptians in next 2 years. We already have more than 3,000 working in our operations in GCC countries and continuously train them in our various operations", said Yusuffali.

The new hypermarket provides the widest range of quality and value-for-money products all under one roof. It has separate sections for fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and poultry, dairy products, ready-to-eat products and a live bakery. The outlet also offers a huge area dedicated to electronics, IT products, home appliances, sports, furnishing and furniture, kitchenware, toys, stationery and health & beauty products. The new hypermarket also offers a wide choice of world-class fashion brands and products for men, women and children. A special area is also dedicated for promoting local products and handicrafts of Egypt.

The systematically arranged sections promise customers an easy and hassle-free shopping experience. Extra-wide aisles, extensively laid out counters and ample parking space are some of the distinguishing features of the new store

Lulu Group which currently have 118 stores in GCC and India is embarking on a massive expansion drive into the Far Eastern market. The first hypermarket of LULU will open in Malaysia and Indonesia by March 2016. The Group is also planning to open 15 more hypermarkets in these two countries in the next two years, said a company source.



Khalid Hanafy, Egyptian Minister for Trade inaugurating the 1st Lulu Hypermarket in Cairo, Egypt in the presence of Mostefa Galal El Saeed, Governor of Cairo, Mohamed Abdul Sayed, Advisor to the Prime Minister, Egypt and Khalifa Thunaiji, Deputy UAE Ambassador to Egypt. Also, in the picture, Yusuff Ali, Chairman of Lulu Group, Saifee Rupawala, CEO and other company officials.



MAGICAL FESTIVE CELEBRATION AT MARRIOTT HOTELS

The tree, the glittering decor, the fun and festive ambience all combine to make Marriott Hotels in Kuwait the perfect venues to celebrate Christmas and New Year in style.

Festivities begin with a grand Christmas celebration, diners visiting Kuwait's best steakhouse "Terrace Grill" at the JW Marriott Kuwait City can enjoy an unforgettable holiday dining experience accompanied by the finest certified US Angus beef, wagyu beef cuts and mouth-watering seafood dishes for lunch and dinner. Meanwhile, guests visiting La Brasserie Restaurant at the hotel will be treated to an elegant international buffet featuring traditional Christmas dishes such as turkey roulade with dry apricots, stuffed turkey, veal cordon blue, roasted salmon, almond crusted hamour and a lot more.

Furthermore, guests visiting the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel's renowned "Soul and Spice" Restaurant on Christmas can enjoy an exceptional lunch and dinner filled with Christmas cheer. At the Atrium Restaurant, located in the heart of the hotel's stunning lobby, diners can feast on a huge selection of international Christmas dishes including roasted turkey with cranberry sauce, slow oven roasted Cajun rib-eye steak with pan gravy, yorkshire pudding and a lot more. To top off the captivating Christmas mood, guests are invited to ring in the New Year with live entertainment and a wide range of gastronomic delights at Marriott properties.

The JW Marriott Kuwait City is set to be transformed into the trendiest place in town, with the lively ambience at La Brasserie Restaurant complete with music and sensational

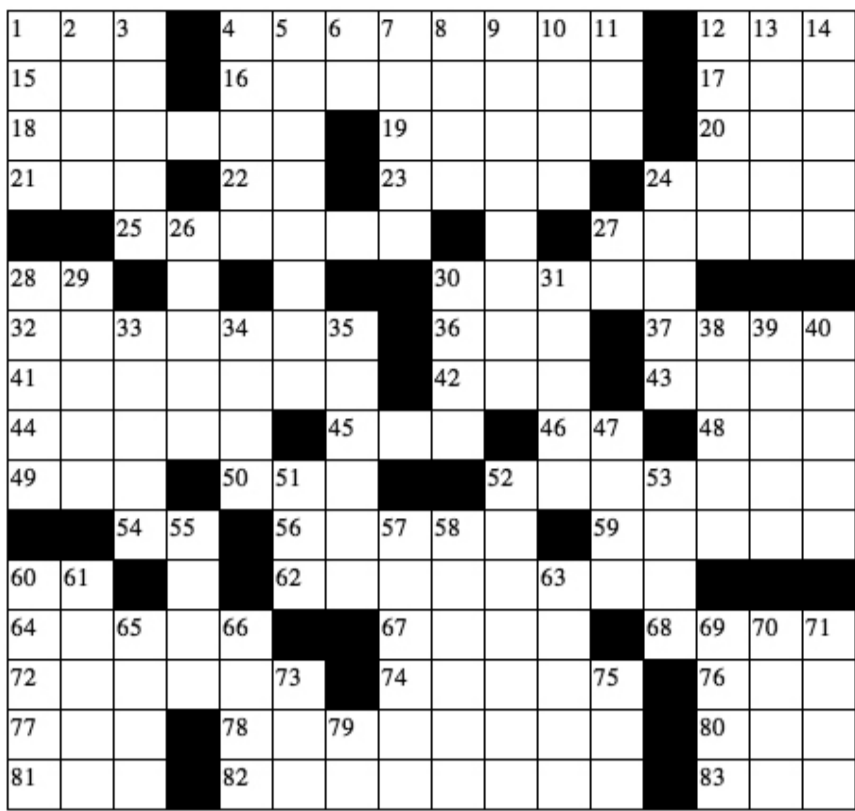
décor, including party poppers, hats and horns. The Terrace Grill Steakhouse will offer mesmerizing live music and delicious food.

In addition, guests at the Courtyard by Marriott Kuwait City will celebrate the countdown to 2016 with elegance and style at Soul and Spice Restaurant with a five-course set menu including beverages, while a special dinner buffet will be served at the panoramic Atrium Restaurant featuring the finest cuisines from all over the world for an unforgettable evening.

"We would like to take this opportunity to wish our guests and their families a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year" said George Aoun, the hotels' Cluster General Manager. "This year we have upgraded our food & beverage menus to provide a high level of guest satisfaction" Aoun added.



CROSSWORD 1116



ACROSS

1. Syndrome resulting from a serious acute (sometimes fatal) infection associated with the presence of staphylococcus.
4. A category in some early taxonomies.
12. A heavy iron lever with one end forged into a wedge.
15. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
16. City in central Iran.
17. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
18. A written statement of the grounds of complaint made to court law asking for the grievance to be redressed.
19. Of or relating to the velum.
20. A form of entertainment that enacts a story by a sequence of images giving the illusion of continuous movement.
21. A federation of North American labor unions that merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955.
22. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
23. (Greek mythology) God of love.
25. Any of a class of weakly acidic organic compounds.
28. A public promotion of some product or service.
32. Propriety in manners and conduct.
36. A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
37. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
41. A member of the Siouan people formerly inhabiting the Black Hills of western South Dakota.
42. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
43. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
44. A popular vacation spot in the Canadian Rockies.
45. A chronic skin disease occurring primarily in women between the ages of 20 and 40.
46. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
48. The habitation of wild animals.
49. Standard time in the 5th time zone west of Greenwich, reckoned at the 75th meridian.
50. An enlarged and muscular saclike organ of the alimentary canal.
54. A Russian river.
56. A shot in billiards made by hitting the cue ball with the cue held nearly vertically.
59. Liquid excretory product.
60. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
62. A peninsula in southwestern Asia that forms the Asian part of Turkey.
64. Spicy fruit of the cubeb vine.
67. Of or relating to the Isle of Man or its inhabitants or their language.
68. God of love and erotic desire.
72. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
74. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
76. The month following February and preceding April.
77. Group insurance that entitles members to services of participating hospitals and clinics and physicians.
78. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
80. A master's degree in fine arts.

DOWN

1. Thin fibrous bark of the paper mulberry and *Pipturus albidus*.
2. Combining form.
3. The skin that covers the top of the head.
4. A long pointed rod used as a weapon.
5. The largest city and former capital of Turkey.
6. A physician who is not a specialist but treats all illnesses.
7. Scar where the umbilical cord was attached.
8. A European river.
9. A port city in northeastern Greece on an inlet of the Aegean Sea.
10. Type genus of the Anatidae.
11. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
12. Fig tree of India noted for great size and longevity.
13. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
14. An expensive vessel propelled by sail or power and used for cruising or racing.
24. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
26. Norse chieftain who became the first duke of Normandy (860-931).
27. (AKKadian) God of wisdom.
29. Remove gas from.
30. Small European freshwater fish with a slender bluish-green body.
31. Syncopated music in duple time for dancing the rumba.
33. The highest part (usually the melody) in a piece of choral music.
34. A flat float (usually made of logs or planks) that can be used for transport or as a platform for swimmers.
35. An insane person.
38. A cushion on a throne for a prince in India.
39. An association of nations dedicated to economic and political cooperation in southeastern Asia.
40. (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
47. Wild sheep of northern Africa.
51. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
52. United States writer of thrillers (born in 1925).
53. A republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
55. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.
57. A winged often one-seed indehiscent fruit as of the ash or elm or maple.
58. A viewer who gazes fixedly (often with hostility).
61. Tropical tree of Central America and West Indies and Puerto Rico having spikes of white flowers.
63. Being seven more than sixty.
65. A bluish made by dirt.
66. A vigorous blow.
69. Projectiles to be fired from a gun.
70. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
71. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
73. An accountant certified by the state.
75. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
79. The azimuth of a celestial body is the angle between the vertical plane containing it and the plane of the meridian.

Yesterday's Solution

F	I	R	A	B	S	T	R	U	S	E	G	C	A
I	D	A	T	E	E	T	O	T	U	M	R	A	M
L	U	I	K	D	S	B	A	L	I	B	A	G	O
E	N	T	E	L	E	A	O	P	L	A	Y	E	R
A	G	A	B	U	P	H	A	L	A	T	H		
C	A	M	B	I	U	M	N	A	A	G	E	E	
A	R	A	A	R	C	O	N	R	A	D	N	D	
C	A	T	C	L	A	W	A	D	A	D	A	R	E
I	N	T	I	L	H	H	I	J	A	C	K	E	R
A	D	E	N	O	S	I	S	A	R	A	U	C	A
C	D	T	C	O	B	B							
D	I	S	H	E	V	E	L	P	B	A	N	A	L
A	G	A	S	E	C	E	D	E	A	L	A	M	O
I	L	K	S	P	A	R	E	R	I	B	B	A	A
S	U	E	A	S	P	A	D	A	N	A	U	H	F

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may take pleasure from a good movie or book or feel like escaping from day-to-day realities for a bit. You comprehend an imaginative approach and may value collective or unconventional ideas. In a religious setting, there may be a need for your help with young people. This could be a choir or youth group. Those around you may appreciate your ability to take charge and organize. You may find your volunteer choices put real magic in your life-this may even be something that you will want to do permanently. Sorting things out and getting them organized keep you busy. You are deeply aware of interconnections between the present and other lives-perhaps history and future brush up against each other as one works with children.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Children, lovers and other people, or the things that are dear to your heart, are accented this day. Knowing that you are appreciated and esteemed for your gifts and talents is a powerful need. Positive communication between close contacts set the example and can bring many pleasant rewards. You may find that someone older stifles your progress and new ideas and insights could be slow in coming-but will eventually develop. It may surprise you when someone comes to you and asks for your guidance. This is a time of volunteering your time and you may encourage your intimate group or family to volunteer their talents for granting the wish lists of those in a nursing home. The time you share with those less fortunate may be a boost to your own group.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You could be looking deeper within yourself for some answers to spiritual questions that you have just now. This should be a good time for analysis, as you will be able to discover new areas of your inner self or mind that have been closed to you before now. You can expect insights into dreams and ideals. Expect a sense of support and helpfulness from those around you. Others may in turn seek you out for your insight. This could conceivably be a time to make some changes in your environment. You may decide to plan an addition to your home... Either an upstairs addition or maybe a porch. You may decide to take a class on a subject you have always wanted to learn. This entire need to change your surroundings and learn new things is a positive.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You attach more importance to friendships and taking part in group activities that center on idealistic goals. You are now setting out on a journey into a land of dreams-not inactive daydreams, but vibrant visions of future adventures. The energies are quite positive for several of your friends or family members to develop a story and actually film the story as a documentary or some other presentation. An experience that you and others have had with regard to a fascinating vacation may be the theme. You must believe and dare to make things happen! This means expanding your mind, your belief system and your whole base of knowledge and experience. It is now time to create that excitement about the possibilities in others. You may have a following.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Striving to be the best that you can be will be uppermost in your life at this time. You enjoy where you are in your life and you enjoy thinking about how to move forward with new ideas. You may become interested in political issues as well as become involved in a bit of decorating your home or perhaps there is a decision to purchase a new home. You also enjoy reading and may find yourself at a book sale or library sometime this afternoon. A good book or movie relaxes and refreshes your creative energies. You will feel a great deal of pride for your accomplishments. You learn a great deal from the leisure time pursuits that you undertake at this time. A fireplace, bright lights and warm drinks chase away any amount of chill this evening.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You would really like to be out and about and socializing with your friends today, but you must be careful, as you could be walking a fine line between good company and discontent. You may find that you are working against the plans of another, going against the proverbial flow of things. You want very much to help but it may be better to make this a day to golf or fish or visit a shop, museum or library. An important relationship, possibly with a young person or someone in your near surroundings, may come into focus later today and you could be quite pleased to be asked for help in caring for this young person while others go out for the evening. Remember, really young kids like to make music with pots and pans or play with or in boxes.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Enlarging your intellectual and spiritual horizons takes on a high priority now. You are intent on seeing the big picture and getting to the point. Travel and further education could help bring this to fruition. Keeping in touch with ideas and people on a large scale helps you keep your mind busy. You may enjoy testing your intuition while riding in some sort of public transportation or moving around in a crowded room; careful, someone intuitive will probably respond to you. This form of practicing with your intuitive mind may also be another form of meditation. This will help you find new ideas for an old problem. The time you spend throughout this day is beneficial to your future and to the future of a few very kind and interested bystanders.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You should find no problem in communicating with regard to groups and society in general. You demonstrate the ability to understand and be sensitive to other people's needs. Your emotional security and stability are due mainly to your friends, morals and social interaction. There may be a need for you to make some important changes in your life, break with the old ideas of the past and move toward anything new, different and unique. You are a very kindhearted and generous person and you like to be recognized for your contributions-as most of us do. You may remember this time as a widespread, aesthetic and possibly even romantic time-one in which you will have a great deal of self-satisfaction and appreciation.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You really use your head to your advantage when it comes to dealing with others. You seem to know just what to do and can act without hurry or worry. You are called upon to make use of your natural abilities and commonsense. For anything to be accomplished in the manner you think it should be could require that you take the initiative today. This is only right, as the projects you may be undertaking may be more important to you. You feel healthy and very capable of handling almost any situation. Intensive and penetrating analysis, especially with a group or in relation to your situation, may be in order. A family discussion may involve voting for the best place to hold a wedding or anniversary reception-how about renting?



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A song, story, poem or simply a project may be going on in your head and you seek to carry through and complete your thought process. An outline may begin the process for guiding you to accomplish whatever you set out to do at this time. With the year winding down there are still a lot of errands left for you to tend to this afternoon. Introduction to new communication tools helps you get your ideas over to more people than you can imagine. What you have to say may be of interest to a movie studio so you might want to understand the art of copyrighting in order to secure your art. When getting gifts, you might check out the garden shops as they would have those organic gifts for those friends of yours that love gardening the organic way.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Keeping in touch with friends, being involved socially and keeping your morals above reproach lead to your social interactions now. You have an opportunity to catch up on a few phone calls and visit with friends that have come back to town. You find it a challenge to keep conversations brief and simple because you enjoy long conversations and detailed information about the smallest things. Enjoy a bit of humor and take a timer. Let each person know you are timing the conversation and will get back to them with more news later. This way you will be able to meet your goals for the day and visit with people that you love and do not see often. Abandoned animals have your attention later today and you work to find them homes.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Being able to understand those around you almost assures you of a special time with someone you love. Good feelings and a sense of support and harmony make this a pleasant time. Your almost charismatic behavior and eloquence in communication and speech should find others following your lead, wherever you go. Things are uninhibited for self-expression and work very well with your special ideas and thoughts. Expect a good conversation with someone you love today. Being with others and working together should be particularly nice. Someone older may come to you with a plan for a particular job or project. This person is familiar with your organizational style. You might have the first annual neighborhood garage sale or plant sale.

WORD SEARCH

St. Patrick's Day

Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 34 letters spell a secret message.

S	A	S	E	N	N	I	U	G	E	V	E	N	T	S	P	
I	Y	A	D	I	L	O	H	N	T	Y	P	A	E	P	O	
C	T	H	I	S	T	O	R	E	A	R	P	K	G	O	T	
I	L	S	O	D	A	B	R	E	A	D	A	A	I	R	H	
S	C	O	K	L	H	T	N	E	E	T	N	E	V	E	S	
U	C	I	V	N	V	H	D	E	R	S	O	I	D	E	I	O
M	E	I	C	E	U	A	C	O	N	A	I	T	L	N	B	E
E	L	C	H	E	R	A	N	R	I	E	S	E	K	B	F	S
G	T	H	T	A	L	S	H	R	A	F	S	C	F	E	U	F
A	I	R	P	R	A	E	E	C	T	M	I	E	F	E	D	
T	C	I	G	I	A	L	B	S	E	R	M	B	T	S	G	H
I	C	S	N	N	A	D	A	R	E	R	D	H	T	Y	A	O
R	R	T	R	N	I	F	I	M	A	E	P	I	C	E	B	L
E	O	I	D	E	L	C	I	T	N	T	V	E	K	A	B	Y
H	S	A	S	E	E	L	N	R	I	A	I	R	L	R	A	D
E	S	N	B	H	N	B	O	A	L	O	O	T	L	C	A	
S	H	A	M	R	O	C	K	U	D	C	N	R	N	Y	Y	

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------|--------------|-------------|
| BEER | DANCING | HOLY DAY | POTATOES |
| BELFAST | DUBLIN | IRELAND | SEVENTEENTH |
| BISHOP | EVENTS | IRISH | SHAMROCK |
| CABBAGE | FEAST DAY | LEPRECHAUN | SNAKES |
| CELEBRATION | FESTIVAL | LIMERICK | SODA BREAD |
| CELTIC CROSS | GREEN | MARCH | TRADITION |
| CHRISTIAN | GUINNESS | MISSIONARY | YEARLY |
| CLOVER | HERITAGE | MUSIC | |
| CORK | HISTORY | PARADE | |
| CORNED BEEF | HOLIDAY | PATRON SAINT | |

Yesterday Solution

Types of Music 2

A	R	O	I	A	V	E	L	E	G	S	D	L	S	T	E	U		
H	E	B	E	B	O	P	M	R	B	I	W	N	E	X	M	R		
S	I	P	V	V	B	R	L	U	A	S	L	A	I	P	N	I	B	
I	O	K	I	A	R	N	A	U	R	E	U	E	N	M	D	A	N	
R	P	O	C	T	S	G	A	M	C	L	I	T	R	E	A	G	O	
I	R	I	O	A	E	S	A	P	E	L	I	A	M	S	A	L	B	
Y	R	O	R	N	P	O	E	D	I	M	P	B	C	E	F	L	E	O
S	U	K	R	A	P	O	W	R	E	L	C	O	G	H	R	E	S	
P	E	L	E	T	E	W	N	B	L	A	A	P	O	A	S	A	S	
G	Y	T	O	L	N	E	T	O	L	O	W	A	P	I	C	S	A	
R	R	O	C	A	L	U	M	H	N	D	R	E	P	V	E	N	E	O
E	T	I	L	L	O	R	D	N	A	K	C	O	R	U	R	V		
G	N	T	E	O	R	O	F	F	O	H	P	I	R	T	I	N	A	
G	U	L	D	S	A	L	S	(A)	C	T	D	J	A	Z	Z	K		
A	O	C	Z	Y	D	E	C	O	C	R	E	B	M	A	H	C		
E	C	L	A	S	S	I	C	A	L	E	P	S	O	G	K			

- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| ACID JAZZ | CLASSICAL | GYPSY | REGGAE |
| AFRICAN | COUNTRY | IRISH | ROCK AND ROLL |
| ALTERNATIVE | DOO WOP | MAMBO | SALSA |
| BEBOP | ELEVATOR | MARIACHI | SURF |
| BLUES | EUROPOP | MIDDLE EASTERN | SWING |
| BOLLYWOOD | EXPERIMENTAL | NEW AGE | TECHNO |
| BOSSA NOVA | FOLK ROCK | NEW ORLEANS | TRIP HOP |
| BRAZILIAN | FUNK | OPERA | TROPICAL |
| CELTIC | GOSPEL | POP MUSIC | URBAN |
| CHAMBER | GRUNGE | PROGRESSIVE | ZYDECO |

The hidden message is: ALTERNATIVE ROCK

Daily SuDoku

	5		8			9		
9		7	4	2			3	
8		4				5		
	6		7					
	7			6			5	
					2		6	
		6				3		5
3				5	4	6		2
		2			9		8	

Yesterday's Solution

2	8	1	9	3	5	6	4	7
9	5	4	6	7	1	2	3	8
3	7	6	8	2	4	5	1	9
5	6	2	3	9	8	4	7	1
7	1	8	5	4	2	9	6	3
4	9	3	7	1	6	8	5	2
8	4	7	1	5	9	3	2	6
1	2	9	4	6	3	7	8	5
6	3	5	2	8	7	1	9	4

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Lesotho	00266
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	Niger	00227
Cayman Islands	001345	Nigeria	00234
Central African	00236	Niue	00683
Chad	00235	Norfolk Island	00672
Chile	0056	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
China	0086	North Korea	00850
Colombia	0057	Norway	0047
Comoros	00269	Oman	00968
Congo	00242	Pakistan	0092
Cook Islands	00682	Palau	00680
Costa Rica	00506	Panama	00507
Croatia	00385	Papua New Guinea	00675
Cuba	0053	Paraguay	00595
Cyprus	00357	Peru	0051
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Philippines	0063
Czech Republic	00420	Poland	0048
Denmark	0045	Portugal	00351
Diego Garcia	00246	Puerto Rico	001787
Djibouti	00253	Qatar	00974
Dominica	001767	Romania	0040
Dominican Republic	001809	Russian Federation	007
Ecuador	00593	Rwanda	00250
Egypt	0020	Saint Helena	00290
El Salvador	00503	Saint Kitts	001869
England (UK)	0044	Saint Lucia	001758
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Pierre	00508
Eritrea	00291	Saint Vincent	001784
Estonia	00372	Samoa US	00684
Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
Falkland Islands	00500	San Marino	00378
Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
Grenada	001473	Sri Lanka	0094
Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
Lithuania	00370	Zimbabwe	00263

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw

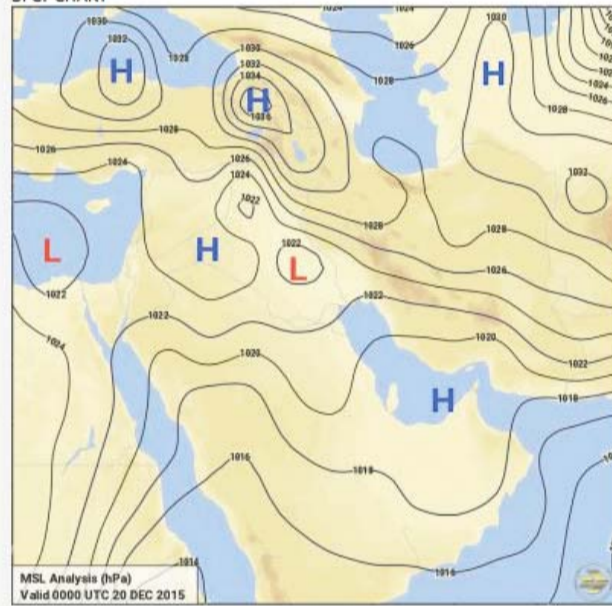
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 20/12/2015-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

MAX Temperature 19 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h with a chance for scattered light rain.
By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 35 km/h.

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday
Expected Weather	partly cloudy	sunny	clouds to increase	partly cloudy+scattered thunder rain
Min Temp °C	09	08	09	10
Max Temp °C	20	19	19	17
Wind Direction	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly to light variable	north westerly to northerly
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 38	15 - 38	08 - 30	12 - 35

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings NO CURRENT WARNINGS

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C REC	Max °C EXP
KUWAIT CITY	14	21
KUWAIT AIRPORT	11	19
ABDALY	09	21
BUBYAN	11	21
JAHRRA	13	21
FAILAKA ISLAND	13	20
SALMIYAH	14	19
AHMADI	15	19
JAL ALIYAH	09	20
QAROH ISLAND	18	21
UMM AL-MARADEM	18	21
NUWAISIB	14	22
WAFRA	13	21
MANAGISH	10	20
SALMY	07	18
MUTRIBA	08	21

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	20
Min Temp (°C)	08
Max Rel Hum (%)	99
Min Rel Hum (%)	60
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	25 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:38
Sunset	16:53

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:13
Sunrise	06:38
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	14:35
Sunset	16:53
Isha	18:16



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	Plastic Surgeons
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24550505 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24550505 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	25736920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abdallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Paediatricians	Endocrinologist
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Dr. Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr. Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Family Doctor	Psychiatrists	Dermatology	Dentists	Neurologists	Gastrologists
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047	Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955	Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581	Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581	Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047	Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2	Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0	Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226	Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581	Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444	Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321	Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557		
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539	Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888		
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406	Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755		
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272	Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111		
Dr. Salem soso	22618787	Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324		
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044	Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875		
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148	Dr. Sami Aman	22636464		
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939	Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030		
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300	Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135		

Mill to lose money and movie role due to court hearing



Meek Mill is unable to star in Will Smith's upcoming movie '2 O'Clock Boys' because of his probation conditions. The hip-hop artist was due to play Wheelie Wayne in the film - about the infamous West Baltimore illegal-dirt-bike riders - but missed out on the role, after he was ordered by Judge Genece Brinkley not to work or perform before his sentencing on February 6 for gun and drug charges. The probation rule prevented Mill from travelling to Hollywood in November to meet with Will's production company, Overbrook Entertainment, because he had to take a urine test, just four days after a previous test. And it's likely the 28-year-old performer will have to cancel a Las Vegas concert he had planned with his girlfriend, 'Anaconda' hitmaker Nicki Minaj. If he misses the event - to be held on New Years Eve - Meek could lose out on his \$140,000 paycheck. What's more, it was hoped the concert would be the first step in getting the star a residency at Drai's Beach Club and bolster his career. A source told Page Six: "He's at a defining moment in his career. And they are prohibiting him from work."



Wyatt's soccer-loving daughter

Kimberly Wyatt's husband claims their one-year-old daughter loves watching soccer. The ex-Pussycat Doll's model spouse Max Rodgers, 33, has stated that their daughter Willow enjoys watching the sport more than typical children's TV shows. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, he said "She

loves the football. She does." However, his 31-year-old wife gave him a disapproving look and quipped: "It's just an excuse so he can watch it. She actually loves Baby TV." Kimberly is still mourning the loss of Sky1's 'Got to Dance' which she was a judge on alongside Ashley Banjo and Adam Garcia. She said: "I'm sad to see

'Got to Dance' go but I'm excited to do 'Taking the Next Step' which I'm a judge on again on CBBC." The show was scrapped after four series but she still has fond memories. Kimberly said: "Being a part of 'Got to Dance' and getting to see kids that need the outlet and get to do what they love is super important."

James Corden gets music offers

James Corden has been offered a recording contract. The 37-year-old presenter's musical segment in the 'The Late Late Show' - called Carpool Karaoke - has seen him show off his vocal abilities alongside the likes of Justin Bieber, Stevie Wonder and One Direction, and he has now been talented spotted by label bosses who want to launch his singing career. The comic revealed: "I've had a couple of record deal offers from both England and America." The British star has been living in Los Angeles since agreeing to take over the reins of the CBS series from departing host Craig Ferguson. But James - who once dreamed of being in a boyband - says he has no plans to switch to a career in music. He told the Sun on Sunday: "No one has to worry - I'm not going to embark on such a thing!" Meanwhile, Kylie Minogue asked the presenter to feature on her festive album 'Kylie's Christmas'. The 47-year-old singer duets with James on 'Only You' and impressed the pint sized star and the album's producers. A source said: "James recorded the track in secret with Kylie after she asked him to feature. It was meant to be the jokey song on the album but producers were so impressed... James is a very good singer and the song is actually a great listen."



Anastacia proud of inspiring music

Anastacia feels proud that her songs have helped young fans deal with some of their problems. The 47-year-old singer believes her sixth studio album 'Resurrection', which was inspired by her battle with breast cancer and decision to have a double mastectomy in 2013, has saved lives because the lyrics are so inspiring. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, she said: "I have a lot of young fans telling me they have a lot of issues with the pressure of life with all the new technology and they were having a lot of suicidal thoughts." The 'I'm Outta Love' hitmaker's powerful lyrics have even inspired tattoo designs, with some fans getting her song title 'Stay' scribbled on their flesh. She explained: "My new album has the song 'Stay' on it, which was literally like, 'I want to stay living on this earth', I have people that have tattooed the word 'Stay' on their body. Anastacia - whose 'Ultimate Collection', greatest hits album is out now - added: "And they're showing it [the tattoo] to me going, 'I'm here today because of you.'"

Smith says counseling helps his marriage

Will Smith says counseling has helped his marriage work. The 'Focus' star - who has children, Jaden, 17 and Willow, 15, with wife Jada Pinkett Smith - has admitted the couple have gone for separate therapy sessions but insists it makes them stronger. He told Access Hollywood:



"Everything that you do that's great is gonna be difficult and the most difficult part about a relationship is that it's really not between two people ... it's between you and you." "What Jada and I have learned is bettering ourselves individually is how you make a relationship work. Individual counseling ... You get yourself together and present yourself to your partner in a higher spiritual and emotional state, and you'll be surprised how much better things can go." Meanwhile, the 47-year-old actor previously admitted his marriage has been "excruciating" at times. He shared: "We've been married 20 years and we've been asking ourselves [what's the secret to marriage] and really at the end of the day it's just not quitting. "You can't expect it to be easy. It's like our marriage was the most difficult, gruelling, excruciating thing that we have ever taken on in our lives. And you know we're just not quitters." "I would say it that we never went into working on our relationship. We only ever worked on ourselves individually, and then presented ourselves to one another better than we were previously." — Bang Showbiz



Lily James: I don't want to 'burn out'

Lily James is afraid she will "burn out". The 'Cinderella' star - who plays Lady Rose in the popular drama 'Downton Abbey' - has been busy in 2015 on various acting projects and is in need of a well-earned "long chunk" of holiday to ensure she doesn't suffer from exhaustion next year. Lily shared: "I'm actually taking Christmas off. I haven't had a really long chunk of time in a really long time. I don't want to burn out. I want to regroup and have just a bit of time to myself before going to New Orleans in February for 'Baby Driver'." In 'Baby Driver' the 26-year-old star plays an American waitress who loves to sing. Despite being good at it herself, Lily confessed she has lost her confidence and will be putting some practice in ahead of filming. She told The Sunday Times Magazine: "She's a real dude. She's always singing. "I'm going to Nashville with a girlfriend. I might go to open-mike events. I love singing, but I've lost my confidence because I haven't done it in a while."



Goldie Hawn never yelled at kids

Goldie Hawn has never yelled at her children. The 70-year-old star admitted that while she would get angry and frustrated with her kids when they were young, she was able to restrain herself and would never raise her voice to Kate Hudson, now 36, Oliver Hudson, 39 and Wyatt Russell, 29. Asked if she had tips for bringing up children, she said: "I never lost control or yelled at my kids. They knew that if my nostrils flared, I was gravely disappointed. The more you get angry the less they listen to you." Goldie - who has been with her partner Kurt Russell since 1983 - works with MindUp, a project that teaches meditation to children in schools. And the blonde bombshell is able to advise families because despite her successful Hollywood career, acting always came second place to raising children. She told The Sunday Style Times Magazine: "I'm a movie star and have all this stuff, but my life was about raising children, period. Of course I got angry when my kids were selfish or rude. Those times when you're sitting beside the sink, trying to calm yourself, I've been there."

Moss launches interior design career

Kate Moss is launching an interior design company. The 41-year-old supermodel - who has a 13-year-old daughter, Lila, with ex-boyfriend Jefferson Hack - has been looking for new challenges and recently registered her new venture with Companies House. A source shared: "Kate is always looking for new projects away from modeling. She loved doing her fashion line and is really getting into acting after filming for the 'Absolutely Fabulous' movie. But to start an interior design company shows she's serious. She loves it and puts a lot of time, effort, thought and money into design." Kate - who is rumored to be dating Nikolai Von Bismarck though she's still married to Jamie Hince - will be advised by her good pal Katie Grove, who already runs her own company, Grove Interiors, according to the Sun on Sunday. And the news comes after Grove asked the stunner to redesign the interior of a £2.5million Cotswold property. Meanwhile the British beauty has been thinking about some simpler resolutions for 2016. Asked her New Year's resolutions, she said: "Peace and love."



Price signs Princess up to modeling agency

Katie Price has signed her eight-year-old daughter up to a modeling agency. The 37-year-old star revealed Princess Tiaamii will go to "a lot of castings" because she loves to act and dress up. Katie shared: "Princess has joined a modeling agency so she has a lot of castings. Anything like a pan-to or acting she would love." The news comes after the former glamour model posted two photographs of her daughter wearing a full face of make-up on social media site Instagram last week. But the mother of five was forced to respond to critics who disagreed that the youngster should be wearing make-up and Katie posted a video of Princess defending herself, in which she said: "It's none of your beeswax". Meanwhile, the stunner isn't bothered by the naysayers and revealed Princess - who is the daughter of her ex-husband Peter Andre - does her own make-up and is "good at it". She told The Sun newspaper: "I do not have to explain anything to anyone... "Am I bothered? No. She loves make-up and is so good at it. We are in a theatre and there is make-up everywhere. When she is here, of course she can experiment. Why not? She is eight and if she wants to wear make-up then she can."



Ecclestone too tired to argue with husband

Tamara Ecclestone "doesn't have the energy to argue" with her husband since becoming a mother. The socialite admits she and Jay Rutland - who she tied the knot with in June 2013 - used to clash before having their daughter Sophia, 21 months, but since her birth they can't be bothered to quarrel. She told new! magazine: "We're a family unit. We used to bicker about small things before Sophia came along, but now those things don't matter. "We just don't have the energy to argue over who left the toilet seat up. We're very settled and happy." While Tamara is thoroughly enjoying motherhood, she isn't keen to have another child just yet and wants a big age gap between Sophia and her sibling. She added: "I want to enjoy Sophia fully. There's four and a half years between me and Petra, and we're really close so I think that's a nice age gap. "I can remember her being born, so I'd like to wait a bit longer. I'm happy with the three of us for now."



A person dressed as a Star Wars character stands in front of the Zion church.



Vicar Ulrike Garve (right) holds up a toy saber next to vicar Lucas Ludewig inside the Zion church in Berlin, on December 20, 2015 during a "Star Wars"-themed church service three days after the world wide premiere of the film "Star Wars: The Force Awakens". —AFP photos



A person dressed as the Chewbacca character sits inside the Zion church.

Berlin church celebrates 'Star Wars' service

A Berlin church celebrated a service with a "Star Wars" theme yesterday, with lightsaber-wielding pastors preaching parallels between Christianity and the blockbuster movie series to costumed parishioners. The Zion Church in the Mitte district seized on last week's world premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens", which is breaking box office records, as a universal parable of good and evil. A few hundred people turned out for the event at the Protestant house of worship four days before Christmas, at

a time when many German churches are struggling to keep up attendance, membership and donations.

An AFP photographer captured images of churchgoers decked out as popular characters from the space epic perched on wooden pews including a few Darth Vaders and a Chewbacca. Pastors-in-training Ulrike Garve, 29, and Lucas Ludewig, 30, brandished red toy lightsabers as they delivered their sermon from the altar. "The more we talked about the films, the more parallels we saw with

Christian traditions," Garve said in a statement ahead of the event. "We want to explain these parallels to visitors of the church service."

Ludewig said he took special inspiration from the Bible passage Romans 12:21: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." Local press reports said the church organist Martin Klemenz played a thunderous rendition of the movies' "da-da-dadada-daaaa-da" theme as clips from the earlier films played on a large screen. Garve

stressed the series' message of the possibility of salvation after a rejection of the Dark Side, the daily B.Z. reported. "The Force Awakens", the seventh movie in the series, has grossed an estimated \$129.5 million internationally since it opened overseas on Wednesday, setting records in Britain, Norway and Sweden as well as Germany. The film raked in an estimated \$120.5 million on Friday, its first full day in US and Canadian cinemas, setting an industry record, according to Disney. — AFP

Minaj performs at Angola concert despite criticism

US rapper and songwriter Nicki Minaj ignored international critics Saturday and performed at a concert linked to the family of Angola's long-ruling President Jose Eduardo dos Santos. The 33-year-old hip-hop star entertained several thousand of people at a Christmas concert in the Angolan capital Luanda despite calls from rights groups to cancel the tour, which they

12,000-seat Coqueiros Stadium where she shared the stage with several local acts. Minaj had come in for criticism for agreeing to perform, with Human Rights Foundation president Thor Halvorssen saying this week that she had "no good reason... to do business with the corrupt Angolan dictatorship and endorse the ruler's family company".

Jeffery Smith of the Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights center also accused Minaj of "following in the footsteps of Mariah Carey, callously taking money from a dictator". Fellow US singer Carey was criticized in 2013 for performing in front of dos Santos, who has governed the southern African nation for 36 years. Smith said dos Santos had mounted a "sustained crackdown on basic human rights" arresting activists, opposition members, journalists, as well as musicians.

Minaj performed a day after a judge ordered the release of 15 Angolan activists, including prominent rapper Luaty Beirao, who were arrested six months ago during a book reading where one of the books on the agenda was about non-violent resistance to repressive regimes. The group of youthful activists return to court next month for the conclusion of their trial on charges of "rebellion" and attempting to carry out a "coup". Dos Santos, 73, has been accused of overseeing corruption, misrule and intimidation in a country that suffers endemic poverty despite being Africa's second-largest oil producer. Angola marked 40 years of independence from Portugal last month, with dos Santos vowing to bring progress to the country, but critics accuse him of ruling through fear and repression. — AFP



Nicki Minaj

saw as an endorsement of the authoritarian rule of dos Santos. The concert was hosted by the Angola's largest mobile phone company, which is part owned by the dos Santos family.

Before going on stage, Minaj posted a photo of herself in a jumpsuit and draped in the black-and-red flag of Angola on photo-sharing service Instagram. Concert organizers said they had sold 6,000 tickets for the concert, which was held in the



Conductors (from left) France's Pierre Boulez, Germany's Kurt Masur and India's Zubin Mehta pose with their trophy during an award ceremony, on December 7, 1992 in New-York city. — AFP photos

Kurt Masur, conductor from Iron Curtain to 9/11, dead at 88

Kurt Masur, the conductor who seized on music's power to ease Germany's reunification and comfort New York after September 11, died Saturday. He was 88. The New York Philharmonic announced the death of Masur, one of its longest-serving music directors who led the orchestra from 1991 to 2002 and was credited with enhancing its global reputation. A German born in what is today Poland, Masur was an unlikely choice to lead one of the New World's pre-eminent orchestras as he had spent his career—both musically and politically—within the confines of communist East Germany and was closely focused on the classical canon.

But Masur won wide praise for polishing the musical bona fides of the New York Philharmonic and raising its profile with 17 tours around the world including a first trip to mainland China, now a key country for the orchestra's overseas activities. "Masur's years at the New York Philharmonic represent one of its golden eras, in which music-making was infused with commitment and devotion—with the belief in the power of music to bring humanity closer together," Alan Gilbert, the outgoing music director, said in a statement. "The ethical and moral dimensions that he brought to his conducting

are still palpable in the musicians' playing, and I, along with the Philharmonic's audiences, have much to thank him for," he said.

Sensing music's role in history

Masur was hailed for mastering the moment after the September 11, 2001 attacks scarred New York. He led the Philharmonic in Brahms' "German Requiem" in a nationally televised memorial service. The conductor requested that the audience hold its applause, turning the concert into a moment for contemplation on the tragedy. Annie Bergen, a host on New York's classical music radio station WQXR, later said of the "German Requiem" performance that "the effect was so profound it was as if it had been composed that day."

Masur was similarly credited with instinctively feeling the sense of history in 1989 shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Then the conductor of the Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and a loyal and acclaimed East German, Masur went on the radio in October that year ahead of a concert to urge calm as protesters amassed. The troops did not open fire and Masur's performance went ahead, helping set the graceful and largely non-violent tone of German reunification. — AFP



US filmmaker George Lucas and Mellody Hobson attend the opening of the European Premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" in central London on December 16, 2015. —AFP

Hollywood loved 'Star Wars,' but Lucas didn't love Hollywood

At the Dec 14 world premiere of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" in Hollywood, the audience gave a standing ovation to George Lucas, since there would be no "Star Wars" without him. However, this is the first film he wasn't directly involved in. But while "Star Wars" itself is an integral part of Hollywood's DNA, Lucas himself remains the ultimate Hollywood insider/outsider. Variety first mentioned him on Jan. 9, 1968, when he scored three nominations in the third annual National Student Film Fest competition. Out of 153 entries and 46 finalists, Lucas had "6-18-67" ("A Desert Poem"); the docu "The Emperor," and, in the dramatic competition, the sci-fi short "THX-1138 4EB." He won for "THX." But for the next few years, it wasn't a smooth ride.

Francis Coppola mentored Lucas, helping him land a deal for a 1971 feature version of "THX" at Warner Bros-Seven Arts. The box office was low and Coppola challenged him to create something for mainstream audiences. So Lucas started "American Graffiti." Universal execs weren't enthused about the screenplay (by Lucas, Willard Huyck and Gloria Katz) but liked the idea of a soundtrack using rock hits from the era (the film centered on high school grads in 1962). Universal agreed to a budget of \$750,000.

Directly to television

With its dim lighting of car interiors and its low-budget look, Universal film execs hated it and considered releasing it directly to television. But two previews with young audiences convinced them to reconsider. The film earned \$115 million domestically, a huge return on a minor investment, and earned Oscar nominations for picture, director, screenplay, editing (Verna Fields and Marcia Lucas) and supporting actress (Candy

Clark). Lucas parlayed his success with "Graffiti" into an amazing deal with Fox. He got 40% of the "Star Wars" profits and retained ownership of the movie, its sequels and the merchandise. In retrospect, it's easy to wonder if the Fox execs were insane, but long-running movie franchises were not that common, and successful merchandising seemed limited to animated characters. With the success of "Star Wars" merchandise, studios quickly learned that the formula could work for other films, including live-action ones.

"Star Wars" and Steven Spielberg's 1975 "Jaws" are often credited with creating the blockbuster mentality of wide releases and heavy marketing. But Lucas' contributions to Hollywood were bigger than that. First, he showed the industry how to rethink movies as a starting point for video games, theme-park attractions, TV animation and, of course, merchandise. And he helped change the way movies are made. Before "Star Wars," visual effects were usually created with miniatures, but he helped move things into digital with Industrial Light & Magic (founded in 1975). He also created THX (which the company describes as "next-generation surround sound") and built up Pixar (which started out as a high-end computer hardware company, before it revolutionized feature animation).

Lucas was born and raised in Modesto, California, obsessed with cars and racing, and wanted to pursue a career in that area. On June 12, 1962, just as he was graduating from Thomas Downey High School, his Fiat was hit by another car; Lucas was thrown out of the car when his seat belt snapped. The Fiat crashed into a tree and if he had remained inside he almost certainly would have died. In the book "Skywalking: The Life and Films of George Lucas," he told biographer Dale Pollock: "You can't have that kind of

experience and not feel that there must be a reason why you're here." Instead of a life devoted to cars, he enrolled in Modesto Junior College and then film school.

Personal reasons

Though friends were skeptical of each move, Lucas trusted his instincts—which served him well when "Star Wars" similarly inspired skepticism. Outer-space movies were not a proven box-office success, and Hollywood in the 1970s was more interested in introspective pieces like Coppola's "Godfather" films. So Fox was a little surprised at the level of "Star Wars" success.

Despite the success, Lucas was angry at the entire Hollywood system, tired of dealing with hostile or indifferent studio executives, lawyers and agents. So he again defied conventional wisdom, creating a film center first in Northern California's Marin County, then at the Presidio in San Francisco. In 1981, Lucas cited "personal reasons" for withdrawing from the Directors Guild of America and the Writers Guild of America. An April 6, 1981, Variety banner story read "Lucas Severs Last Hollywood Ties" (though Lucasfilm remained a signatory to both).

Lucas was unhappy with the DGA, which had fined him because Irvin Kershner's director credit was at the end of "The Empire Strikes Back" instead of at the beginning of the film, as the DGA contract specified. Lucas wanted to thrust the audience immediately into the action, and Kershner was OK with the end-credit placement. Lucas doesn't hang out in LA and doesn't go to a lot of industry events. But when he does attend, it creates a stir; the standing ovation at the "Star Wars" premiere was a reminder that, in a town full of celebrities and power-brokers, he's still in a category all by himself. — Reuters

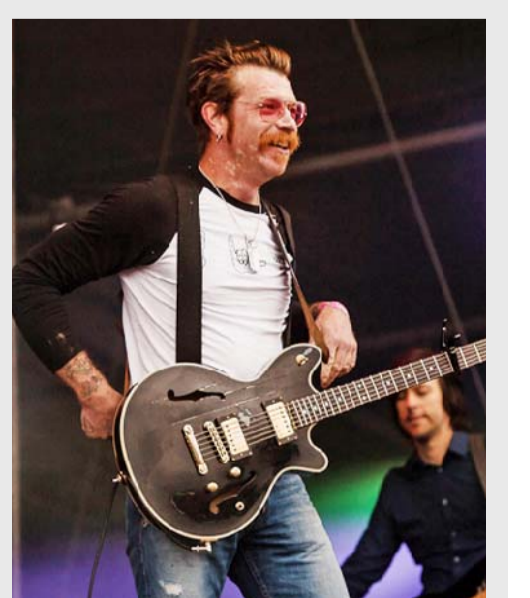
Priest sorry for saying attacked Bataclan gig 'inspired by Satan'

A French priest apologized yesterday for a homily in which he said the Eagles of Death Metal concert that was attacked by jihadists in Paris last month was "inspired by Satan." "I regret fuelling a controversy about some musical genres. It was completely inappropriate and indecent," Francois Schneider told his parishioners in the town of Wissembach in northeastern France, according to his diocese. Shortly after Islamic State jihadists attacked Paris on November 13, Schneider criticized the band playing at the Bataclan concert hall where 90 people were killed.

A total of 130 people died on the night of horror in the French capital, where a team of nine known attackers targeted the national stadium, restaurants and bars as well as the Bataclan. Members of Schneider's congregation complained to his diocese. "Sometimes we are over-

whelmed when faced with the diversity and strangeness of some artistic expressions," the priest said. In a similar case, a priest from the eastern city of Lyon was removed from duty after saying that those who died at the Bataclan were the "Siamese twins" of their murderers.

Despite its name, the American rock band Eagles of Death Metal does not play death metal but rather a hard-charging garage rock. They are known for loud guitars, a heavy rhythm section and tongue-in-cheek humour. "The 'death metal' side is ironic. If they have songs that speak of the devil, it's the devil from cartoons," said Jean-Pierre Sabouret, a rock music journalist who survived the attack by hiding for several hours. "To say that Eagles of Death Metal are a Satanic or metal group would be as idiotic as saying that Mozart played jazz," he told AFP last month. — AFP



Eagles of Death Metal

Is it a dime? Or is it a nail?



This photo provided by Heritage Auctions shows a Roosevelt Dime that was minted onto a nail.

It probably one of the oddest items to come to the world of coin collecting, Dallas-based Heritage Auctions has announced the sale of a Roosevelt dime that was accidentally (or some say deliberately) struck onto a zinc nail. Yes, that piece of iron-mongery used to repair your roof. The dime/nail is estimated to be worth roughly \$10,000.

In the billions of coins it has made over its history, the U.S. Mint has made more than a few errors. There were Lincoln pennies that

were struck onto the material for a dime, Washington quarters struck more than once, wrong dates on coins, etc. Most errors are caught by the Mint, but occasionally a few make it out into circulation. Those error coins have been highly sought by collectors.

This error coin coming to auction in January in Tampa, Florida, is one of the more bizarre errors to come to public attention. In a weird linguistic twist, another name for the 2-inch nail is a sixpenny nail. "It is certainly the most unusual item I have had to catalog in my career," said Mark Borckardt, the senior numismatist at Heritage New York-based Auctions. A numismatist is person who studies or collects coins or bank notes. It is not the first coin printed onto a nail, however, said Fred Weinberg, a coin dealer considered one of the top experts in error coins. A few pennies in the late 1970s were struck onto nails. This dime/nail is undated, so there is no way to tell when the item was created. Weinberg said it is possible the dime/nail was

This photo provided by Heritage Auctions shows a Roosevelt Dime that was minted onto a nail. — AP photos

made on purpose by a rogue Mint employee. Despite it not being one of a kind, Weinberg says, there are probably only about a half dozen coin/nail examples known and only two dimes. He expects the dime/nail to sell for roughly \$10,000, but public interest could raise that amount. A spokesman for the U.S. Mint was unavailable to answer the question of whether the nail/dime is considered valid currency. The Heritage auction that includes the nail/dime also includes several other notable error coins. There will be a 1943 Lincoln penny struck in bronze, which would seem not out of the ordinary except for the fact that the U.S. Mint changed the composition of the penny in 1943 to steel to save copper for the war effort. 1943 bronze pennies typically sell for \$200,000 to \$300,000.

On the flip side, Heritage will also be auctioning a 1944 penny that was struck in steel, not bronze. The auction for the dime/nail will be Jan. 6 as part of a larger Heritage auction. Electronic bidding for the coin has already started, however. The current price for the item is \$3,200. — AP

Nashville offers new museums, hip neighborhoods, fashion



In this June 8, 2015 file photo, people view a multimedia show in a new theater at the Ryman Auditorium in Nashville, Tenn. — AP photos

Nashville is the home of country music, from the Grand Ole Opry to the Bluebird Cafe to the noisy honky-tonks of Lower Broadway. Those venues are an obligatory part of every visit, but while you're here, why not check out the city's emerging fashion scene or explore an off-the-beaten path neighborhood?

What's new

A new small downtown museum pays homage to country music legend Johnny Cash. Exhibits include the amp used to record "Folsom Prison Blues," his custom Gibson J-200 acoustic guitar, and his Future Farmers of America membership card. The gift shop carries all things Cash and the cafe features locally roasted coffee with blends named for Cash songs like A Brew Named Sue.

Nearby, the George Jones Museum's gift shop sells White Lightning moonshine, named after Jones' first No. 1 hit. The museum has a section dedicated to the song that includes Jones' "White Lightning" stage costume with gold embroidered moonshine jugs and rhinestones. Housed in an old warehouse, the complex has a downstairs restaurant and rooftop bar, both overlooking the Cumberland River.

But Nashville isn't only about country music. The city's emerging fashion scene includes designers of jeans, fine leather goods and jewelry. Many of the artisans, like tie- and cap-maker Otis James or weaver Allison Volek Shelton, have retail spaces right in their studios where visitors can see goods being produced.

Classic attractions

The weekly Grand Ole Opry live concert is spending the winter at its longtime former home, the Ryman Auditorium. Known as the "mother church of country music," the Ryman opened a \$14 million expansion last summer that includes new exhibits telling the story of the famed music venue from its 1892 founding as the Union Gospel Tabernacle.

Also downtown is the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Be sure to check out Hatch Show Print, located in the same building. The shop has been producing letterpress posters since 1879. And it's worth spending the extra money to tour RCA Studio B. The squat, concrete-block building may look shabby, but it's where Elvis recorded more than 260 songs.

A few miles east of downtown is The Hermitage, the home of America's seventh president, Andrew Jackson. A preservation group took over the home more than 125 years ago, when Jackson's grandson still lived there, so its original furnishings, wallpaper, clothing and even a carriage have been meticulously preserved. An introductory exhibit explores Jackson's celebrity as a war hero, populist and rock star of his day.

One of the few distinctly Nashville foods is hot chicken, and nobody does it better than the original: Prince's Hot Chicken Shack. It's worth the drive. Just ask the people who have come there from Australia. The proprietors



This Jan 15, 2014 file photo shows people listening to a band in Tootsie's Orchid Lounge in Nashville, Tenn.

won't divulge their recipe, but it's basically really, really spicy fried chicken, served with white bread and pickles. The Germantown neighborhood offers several acclaimed new restaurants with upscale cuisine, but if you want to feel like you're in Nashville and not Brooklyn, Monell's offers traditional Southern food family-style, where you share heaping plates of fried chicken, green beans and biscuits with other guests.

Tips

Yes, you can get around Nashville without a car, and considering the many street closings from construction, you might want to. Uber and Lyft both pick up from the airport. Free electric city buses run on a downtown circuit. Public bicycles can be rented around downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The honky-tonks of lower Broadway are a go-to for live music. Tootsie's Orchid Lounge is the original, but Robert's Western World is also a perennial favorite. If there's a line out the front door, try going around the back. Or

branch out and go see a show in another part of town.

Hanging out

The hip 12 South neighborhood is a good bet for a few hours of shopping and dining. The commercial area encompasses a half-mile stretch along a single street and includes boutiques like the local designer jeans store imogene + willie. The restaurants here are mostly casual and include Burger Up, which features locally raised beef and vegetables with a good selection of cocktails.

Or head across the river to East Nashville where you can catch live music of the non-country variety at clubs like The 5 Spot, The Basement East or The East Room. The pedestrian-friendly Five Points neighborhood is a good place to start. Boutiques at The Idea Hatchery and The Shoppes on Fatherland are within walking distance, and good food abounds from the casual Five Points Pizza to the rustic French and Italian cuisine of Cafe Margot. — AP



In this April 4, 2015, file photo, handmade flies are displayed at Jones Fly Company in the East Nashville area of Nashville, Tenn.

Egypt Tourist authority launches dedicated Arabic campaign



The Egypt Tourism Authority (ETA) has unveiled a new campaign titled "This is Egypt" (#thisisegypt), to launch a major regional campaign to drive growth in the tourism sector. In a change from previous ETA campaigns, #thisisegypt will be digitally-led, focusing on peer-to-peer advocacy and underpinned by digital media spend, whilst traditional advertising methods will form a secondary promotional level.

Targeting the Arabic traveller from the Middle East region, #thisisegypt will harness the power of digital in a region where internet penetration is 5.8% higher at 48.1% than the world average* and social media sites such as

Facebook play a significant role in 88% of internet users' daily lives.

"The #thisisegypt campaign is a powerful movement which we know will resonate with the wider region as it was created initially by the Egyptian people themselves," said Egypt's Minister of Tourism Hisham Zaazou. "We are at a pivotal point in terms of tourism development in the country and the new campaign and branding demonstrates our commitment in attracting travellers from our sister Arab countries to discover our beautiful country."

The campaign focuses on personalising the Egyptian experience by encouraging the wider Arab audience to consider the variety of holiday

which can be enjoyed in Egypt from a vibrant city break in Alexandria or Cairo to luxury beach getaway in Hurgada or Sharm El Sheikh. The campaign will highlight past-times which particularly resonate with an Arabic audience from shopping and dining to enjoying luxury accommodation and exciting nightlife.

The campaign will highlight Egypt's touristic destinations into four main geographic attractions: the Nile Valley, the Red Sea Riviera, the White Mediterranean and the Western Desert. The four destinations will be promoted across different audiences and seasons based on each of the targeted markets' unique attraction points. The hashtag, #thisisegypt, originally

began as a grass-roots movement developed by Egyptians, but now will be adopted and refined by the ETA to boost tourism by portraying an experiential and authentic image of the country to the world. The three-year campaign will focus on attracting and engaging diverse audiences, with a focus on millennials who are driven by personal experience, passion and adventure. Recent studies have shown that millennials take a higher number of trips annually compared to other age groups, driven by the aforementioned factors. Millennials also have the highest level of influence in their respective communities, which indirectly affects the travel decisions of their peers - upon which this cam-

campaign heavily relies.

The campaign comes as Egypt continues to work around the clock to enhance safety and security procedures to ensure the well-being of all travellers. The country recently passed an assessment by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) with inspectors from Russian, Dutch, Emirati and Italian airlines, and is also collaborating with delegations from the United Kingdom, Germany and Russia to implement the strongest security measures possible. As it launches the #thisisegypt campaign, Egypt has pledged to do all that is possible to provide all visitors - internal and external - with a safe and enjoyable experience in the country.



People stand next to a decorated fountain in central Zagreb. — AFP photos



People pose for a picture on Ban Jelacic Square in central Zagreb.



People walk in a park central Zagreb.



People skate on a skating rink in a park in central Zagreb.



People stand around a Christmas tree on Ban Jelacic Square.

Croatia turns to Christmas tourism for economic cheer

With an ice sculpture festival, brass band fanfares and a huge skating rink, Croatia's capital is pulling in growing numbers of winter tourists in the hope of cheering its struggling economy. In a country better known for summer holidays along its pristine coastline, Zagreb is promoting itself as a festive wonderland aiming to rival Europe's traditional Christmas destinations such as Vienna and Prague.

A packed 'Advent in Zagreb' program offers special flight and hotel offers, themed walking tours, dozens of concerts and illuminated market stalls, where mulled wine, hearty sausages and cinnamon donuts are among the big hits. The event, now in its sixth year, has propelled Zagreb to win the title of 'Best Christmas Market' this month from a poll of more than 100,000 travellers on the European Best Destinations website. "This event is something really important for our economy here in Zagreb," said Luka Benko from the city's tourist board, outlining the "huge promotion" of the Advent program in domestic, regional and far-away markets. "Probably you would say Croatia is a country for sea and summer, but then we are a continental country as well, we are very diversified."

Record numbers

Tourism is crucial for the European Union's newest member as it slowly emerges from six years of recession. The sector was hard-hit by Croatia's 1990s war of independence from Yugoslavia, but it has since gradually recovered and now accounts for about 17 percent of gross domestic product. Last year, this Adriatic nation drew in more than 13 million



A general view of Ban Jelacic Square in central Zagreb.

tourists—more than triple its population. While most headed to the coastline dotted with hundreds of islands, the Advent program attracted a record 56,000 visitors to Zagreb in December 2014, marking a 21 percent rise from the previous year. "We are experiencing the same thing this year. We are hoping to achieve at least these numbers but I'm sure we

are going to have much more," said Benko.

Visitors can download a smartphone app to guide them around the attractions on offer from late November until January 10, ranging from children's art workshops to pastry chef demonstrations and tastings. Zagreb's growing appeal is mirrored by the rise in places to stay: since 2006, the number of hostels has

shot up from five to 43, hotels from 38 to 53 and private accommodation options from 42 to more than 900, Benko said. The range of bars and restaurants has also significantly increased amidst the graceful Habsburg architecture of the capital, which is home to 800,000 people. "Zagreb is a city that is big enough to offer all the highlights of a typical

European capital, but small enough to be walkable with a charming neighborhood vibe," said writer Andrea Pisac, who runs the 'Zagreb Honestly' travel blog (travelhonestly.com). She said the Advent program had infused local people with a sense of optimism at a time of economic sluggishness and changed habits in the largely Roman Catholic country, where Christmas has traditionally been celebrated indoors with family. "The festive spirit has spread out into the streets and everything feels more exciting," Pisac said.

Beyond 'sun and sea'

While tourist industry representatives have hailed the Advent program, they say more investments and efforts are needed to diversify what Croatia can offer and encourage year-round visitors. "Croatian tourism's main challenge is to extend the season, and the issue has been on the agenda for a long time," said Nikolina Frklic at the country's largest travel agency, Atlas. She hoped Zagreb's example would inspire other attractions and events beyond the "sun and sea" to lure more visitors. Most Advent guests currently hail from neighbouring Bosnia and Slovenia as well as Italy, but the ambitious marketing push has targeted further afield, including the United States and Asia.

With a return to national growth of around just 1.0 percent forecast for 2015, a broader tourist base would be welcomed by many—but those drawn to Zagreb's relaxed Christmas atmosphere may be hoping that it does not get too popular. "It's very cosy and it has soul," said first-time Italian visitor Franco Rossi, sipping champagne with his wife as a local folk band struck up in central Zrinjevac Square. — AFP



Home Centre's festive collection to bring holiday cheer into homes

Home Centre, the largest home retailer in the Middle East, is all set to bring the celebratory spirit into everyone's homes for the upcoming holiday season. The new seasonal collection not only comprises of red and gold classic designs to add a traditional touch but also has modern creations with rich dramatic colours. Shoppers will be spoilt for choice

with Home Centre's kitchen range, which includes versatile crockery, glassware, and kitchenware, reflecting the merry spirit of the season.

The Acacia wooden board that is ideal for serving cheese and fresh fruit, the colourful cookie cutters, hot chocolate and eggnog mugs, coloured-stem glasses, table runners, and placemats, all in seasonal colours,

are some of Home Centre's tempting must-haves to create joyous festive memories. A one-stop shop for cooking and baking accessories, Home Centre gives customers all that they need to whip up a delicious Christmas meal at home. Create a warm festive ambience this Christmas with Home Centre's new collection available at all stores and let the festivities begin!



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Spain's Mireia Lalaguna Royo wins Miss World title in China

Spain's Mireia Lalaguna Royo was named the winner of the Miss World 2015 competition in the southern Chinese island resort of Sanya, an event dogged by controversy over China's refusal to allow Canada's entrant to attend. Sofia Nikitchuk of Russia was the runner-up and Indonesia's Maria Harfanti took third place in the Saturday night final following a lengthy competition featuring 114 women. Each had won the right to represent their country in a series of local and regional competitions.



Mireia Lalaguna Roza Miss World Spain is crowned after winning the new title at the Miss World Grand Final in Sanya, in southern China's Hainan province. Contestants from over 110 countries compete in the final of the 65th Miss World Competition. — AFP photos



Newly crowned Miss World Mireia Lalaguna Royo from Spain, celebrates at the end of the 2015 Miss World Grand Final in Sanya in south China's Hainan province.

The victory marked the first-ever win for a Spanish contestant. "I think this is a good decision, because Miss World is not looking for our body, they are looking for a soul," said Lalaguna, a 23-year-old model from Barcelona with a degree in pharmacology who plans to pursue a master's degree in nutrition. She placed first in the competition's top model contest and appeared to impress the judges with her public speaking. "I think it's important that they don't want to see only our bodies, they are looking for moral things," she said.

Not present was Miss Canada, Chinese-born Anastasia Lin, who had been prevented from boarding her connecting flight to Sanya from Hong Kong last month after China refused her a visa. Lin is an outspoken critic of Chinese religious policy and a follower of the Falun Gong meditation practice, which was outlawed by China in 1999. She said that after she won the Canadian title, Chinese security agents visited her father, who still lives in China, in an apparent attempt to intimidate her into silence. China has hosted the competition seven times, starting in 2003, as part of its attempts to project a more modern, outgoing image. However, the controversy over Lin's attendance illustrates the authoritarian communist government's determination to do so on its own terms, regardless of the cost to the country's reputation.

Neither Beijing nor the London-based Miss World Organization has commented on the controversy. It was the second consecutive year that outside events intruded on the competition. Last year's contest in London was marred by the murder the month before of Miss Honduras and her sister in that country. The first Miss World contest was held 64 years ago in Britain. — AP



Valerie About Chacra, Miss World Lebanon reacts after entering the semi final.



Catharina Choi Nunes, Miss World Brazil reacts after entering the semi final.



Lu Yuan, Miss World China, reacts after entering the semi-final.



Miss World China, Lu Yuan (center) performs at the Miss World Grand Final.



Margot Hanekamp, Miss World Netherlands reacts after entering the semi final.



Sofia Nikitchuk, Miss World Russia reacts after entering the semi final.



Miss World contestants perform at the Miss World Grand Final in Sanya, southern China's Hainan province.



Newly crowned Miss World Mireia Lalaguna Royo from Spain, third from left celebrates with other contestants at the end of the 2015 Miss World Grand Final in Sanya.