

Two nabbed in 'largest' marijuana raid

4



Waste spill buries buildings in China, 91 missing

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Israeli director's latest movie is in Farsi

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Panthers edge Giants in ill-tempered thriller

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NOD TO NEW ANTI-GRAFT BILL, KD 600M FOR KAC

DEFENSE BUDGET, GRILLING TOP ASSEMBLY AGENDA



Min 07°
Max 19°
High Tide 09:37 & 20:50
Low Tide 03:05 & 14:52

MOI REAFFIRMS SECURITY OF CHURCHES

KUWAIT: Ministry of Interior Undersecretary Lt Gen Sulaiman Al-Fahd yesterday reiterated keenness on the security and safety of Christians and their places of worship, thanking them for interacting with such efforts. Fahd received representatives of churches in Kuwait as part of coordination meetings with religious bodies and sects in the country, the ministry's security media department said in a statement. These are a part of efforts to enhance preventive measures and take security and precautionary steps, as well as exchanging views at a time that requires further caution and cooperation to support the ministry's efforts.

During the meeting, Fahd conveyed greetings by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah to the representatives, and stressed eagerness that all people in Kuwait enjoy freedom of faith and of practicing religious rituals in stable conditions dominated by tolerance, love and peaceful coexistence, the statement added. Fahd congratulated the representatives on their feasts, expressing pleasure for the good and fruitful meeting.

For their part, the representatives of churches expressed appreciation of the efforts by the Interior Ministry to guarantee security and safety for all people in Kuwait. They underlined the fact that Kuwait "will always remain a land of tolerance and peaceful coexistence". — KUNA



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Sulaiman Al-Fahd receives representatives of churches in Kuwait yesterday. — KUNA

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The Cabinet in its weekly meeting yesterday approved a new draft law for the Anti-Corruption Authority which was declared unconstitutional by the constitutional court on Sunday. The Cabinet sent the new bill to HH the Amir for his approval before sending it to the National Assembly urgently. The Assembly's legal and legislative committee was scheduled to discuss today the anti-corruption draft law but it delayed the discussion because the government did not send it quickly enough.

It was not clear however whether the committee will discuss the draft law today to be ready for the Assembly debate either today or tomorrow, or it could leave it until after the New Year break. The Cabinet also dissolved the Anti-Corruption Authority and scrapped all decisions and functions that were carried out by the authority after the cancellation of the decree forming it. A new setup is expected to be announced immediately after the Assembly approves the bill. Five MPs also submitted a draft law on the same issue.

The Cabinet also approved and referred to HH the Amir a draft bill that allows the government to withdraw KD 600 million from the monetary reserves to boost the capital of Kuwait Airways, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah said.

The Assembly today starts its two-day session, the last before the New Year break, and is scheduled to discuss a host of important issues including the grilling of the health minister, a government request for additional defense

Continued on Page 13

BLATTER, PLATINI GET 8-YEAR BANS

ZURICH: A FIFA ethics tribunal yesterday banned Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini for eight years, saying they had abused their positions over a suspect 2 million Swiss franc payment. The court strongly criticized the FIFA president and vice president, saying there was "no legal basis" for the payment that Blatter authorized for Platini in 2011. While full-blown corruption charges were dropped, both men angrily rejected the verdict and vowed to appeal. Blatter said he felt betrayed and declared: "I will fight to the end."

French legend Platini called the verdict a "masquerade" for an attempt to exclude him from world football. The ban, which starts immediately, could however bring an inglorious end to 79-year-old Blatter's four decades with FIFA. It is also a devastating blow to Platini's hopes of taking over as head of football's world governing body in an election on Feb 26. "I think this is punishment enough, because it means they can never come back," former UEFA president Lennart Johansson told the Swedish daily Expressen.

Continued on Page 13



ZURICH: Suspended FIFA president Sepp Blatter holds a press conference yesterday after the world's football governing body announced its verdict banning him from football for eight years. — AFP (See Page 18)

TALEBAN BOMBER KILLS 6 US TROOPS AS VIOLENCE RISES

KABUL: A motorcycle-riding Taliban suicide bomber killed six US soldiers near Kabul yesterday, in a brazen attack as the resurgent militant group battled to seize a key southern district in Afghanistan's opium-growing heartland. The bombing during a joint patrol with Afghan forces near Bagram, the largest US military base in Afghanistan, marks one of the deadliest attacks on foreign troops in the country this year. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the assault, which underscores a worsening security situation a year after NATO formally ended its combat operations in Afghanistan.

"Six (NATO) service members died as a result of a vehicle-borne improvised explosive device attack," the US-led coalition said in a statement, adding that three others were wounded. A US official said all six soldiers killed were Americans. The attack came as Taliban insurgents in Helmand were closing in on the strategic district of Sangin, tightening their grip on the volatile southern province.

Local residents reported crippling food shortages in the district, long seen as a hornet's nest of insurgent activity, after the Taliban began storming government buildings on Sunday. "The Taliban have captured the police headquarters, the governor's office as well as the intelligence agency building in Sangin," deputy Helmand governor Mohammad Jan Rasoolyar told AFP. "Fighting is escalating in the district," he said, claiming the number of soldiers killed in clashes is "unbelievably high".

Continued on Page 13



BEIRUT: Hezbollah members carry the coffin of Samir Kantar as others wave the Palestinian flag during his funeral procession in a southern suburb of the capital yesterday. — AP

HEZB HOLDS MARTYR'S FUNERAL FOR KANTAR

BEIRUT: Lebanon's Hezbollah group yesterday gave a "martyr's" funeral in Beirut for Samir Kantar, who was killed in a suspected Israeli air strike in Damascus. Fighters manned checkpoints as Kantar's coffin, draped in the movement's yellow-and-green flag, was carried to its burial place in the capital's Ghobeiri area, a bastion of Hezbollah support. "The Israelis still haven't learned that with all these assassination attempts on leaders they are committing a huge mistake," senior Hezbollah official Hisham Safedine said.

A thick crowd chanted "Death to Israel!"

Death to America!" and waved the Palestinian, Lebanese and Hezbollah flags, as the coffin was carried to a mausoleum reserved for "martyrs". A day after rocket and artillery fire was traded over the border with Israel, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah later yesterday gave an address on the killing of Kantar, who commanded operations for the group in Syria's occupied Golan. "Samir is one of us and a commander of our resistance and it is our right to retaliate for his assassination in the place, time and a way we see appropriate.

Continued on Page 13



LAS VEGAS: Miss Philippines 2015 Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach (right) reacts as she is crowned the 2015 Miss Universe by 2014 Miss Universe Paulina Vega (center) during the 2015 Miss Universe Pageant at The Axis at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino on Sunday. Miss Colombia 2015 Ariadna Gutierrez (left) was mistakenly named Miss Universe 2015 instead of first runner-up. — AFP (See Page 40)

OIL PRICES HIT 11-YEAR LOW

NEW YORK: Brent crude oil prices hit their lowest in more than 11 years ye, while US crude flirted with seven-year lows on more signs that swelling global supply looked set to outpace tepid demand again next year. Global oil production is running close to record highs and, with more barrels poised to enter the market from nations such as Iran and Libya, the price of crude is set for its largest monthly percentage decline in seven years.

Brent's premium over US crude narrowed further as the market braced for the end of a 40-year ban on US crude exports. US President Barack Obama signed a law on Friday that will end the ban. US crude futures fell 53 cents at \$34.20 by 11:14 a.m. EST (1614 GMT) after bouncing off an intraday low of \$33.98. Brent futures were down 61 cents at \$36.27, falling as much as 2 percent during the session to a low of \$36.04 a barrel, its weakest since July 2004.

Brent has dropped nearly 19 percent this month, its steepest fall since the collapse of failed US bank Lehman Brothers in Oct 2008. "The fundamentals are pretty bearish," said Phil Flynn, an analyst at Price Futures Group in Chicago. "Warm temperatures are killing the markets right now and the oversupply is weighing on prices."

Heating oil futures fell to their lowest since July 2004 as US and European weather modes forecast warmer-than-expected weather through year end.

While consumers have enjoyed lower fuel prices, the world's richest oil exporters have been forced to revalue their currencies, sell off assets and even issue debt for the first time in years as they struggle to repair their finances. OPEC, led by Saudi Arabia, will stick with its year-old policy of compensating for lower prices with higher production, and shows no signs of wavering, even though lower prices are painful to its poorer members.

"With OPEC not in any mood to cut production ... it does mean you are not going to get any rebalancing any time soon," Energy Aspects chief oil analyst Amrita Sen said. "Having said that, long term of course, the lower prices are today, the rebalancing will become even stronger and steeper, because of the capex (oil groups' capital expenditure) cutbacks ... but you're not going to see that until end-2016." Oil market liquidity usually evaporates ahead of the holiday period, meaning that intra-day price moves can become exaggerated. Those moves may be further exacerbated by the expiration of the front-month WTI contract yesterday. — Reuters



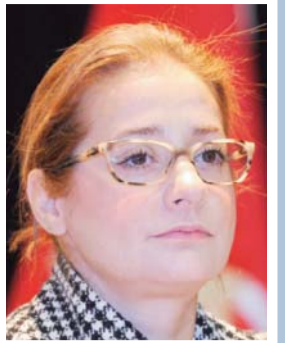
KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Prime Minister, Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh. —KUNA



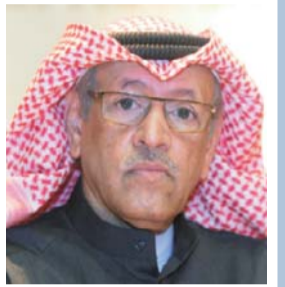
Nasser Al-Subaih



Rania Mashlab

KUWAIT RESPECTS INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW: AMBASSADOR

KUWAIT: Kuwait has always respected international humanitarian law, Director Coordinator of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Nasser Al-Subaih said yesterday. Subaih made the statement during a seminar entitled 'Kuwait and International Humanitarian Law,' which was organized by the Diplomatic Institute in conjunction with Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).



Anwar Al-Hasawi

The seminar is a forum that aims to showcase Kuwait's exemplary humanitarian efforts as the Geneva Conventions obligates nations to generate awareness on international humanitarian laws, Subaih said. The Ambassador called on nations to combat prevalent violations of humanitarian laws amid deteriorating humanitarian conditions across the globe.

Moreover, Subaih underscored that Kuwait has always been a bastion of humanity on a regional and international scale. Kuwait has in recent years, hosted three international conferences for Syrian refugees, for which a total of \$7.7 billion was amassed. Kuwait has donated a sum of KD 1.3 billion in aid to Syrian refugees, he noted.

Deputy Chairman of KRCS Anwar Al-Hasawi asserted that abiding by humanitarian law is not a choice but an obligation, calling on increased efforts to protect human rights in light of rampant armed conflicts that have plagued the region.

Deputy Head of Operations of the ICRC Rania Mashlab said that the world this year celebrates 50 years of recognition of humanitarian work, citing Kuwait being ultimately named a 'Humanitarian Center' for its persistent efforts towards humanitarian causes. She also noted that more than 160 nations have approved the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols.

In September 2014 United Nations (UN) Secretary General Ban Ki Moon paid tribute to Kuwait by naming His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah a 'Humanitarian Leader' and Kuwait a 'Humanitarian Center'. —KUNA

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif palace yesterday Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received Deputy Prime Minister,

Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Al-Saleh, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Electricity and Water Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, as well as Chairman of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Al-Ali Al-

Sabah. Meanwhile, Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad met with Vice Minister of Chinese International Department of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China Liu Hongcai, along with his accompanying delegation. They discussed issues of common interest during

the meeting which was attended by Minister Anas Al-Saleh, and the Ambassador of China to Kuwait Wang Di. It was also attended by members of Supreme Council of Planning Ahmad Baqer, Abdulfattah Ma'rafi, Sayyah Bu Shayba and Khaled Bin Shebaan. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah chairs the cabinet's meeting yesterday. — KUNA

CABINET WELCOMES SAUDI-LED ANTI-TERROR ISLAMIC COALITION

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti cabinet yesterday welcomed a recent Saudi decision to form an Islamic coalition to fight terrorism and to establish a joint operation center in Riyadh. The anti-terrorism coalition is based on the principles and objectives of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC), aiming to fight all forms and manifestations of terrorism, the cabinet said in a statement following its weekly meeting.

In this context, the cabinet appreciated the great efforts exerted by Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud in the fight against terrorism and terrorist groups which commit brutal acts that have nothing to do whatsoever with Islam.

Saudi Arabia had announced the formation of an Islamic military coalition to fight terrorism. The Saudi-led coalition

groups 34 Islamic countries and will have its joint operations center based in Riyadh where it will coordinate anti-terror military operations and develop the necessary mechanism in this regard.

Libyan deal

Meanwhile, the cabinet welcomed a recently concluded UN-brokered agreement to form a national unity government in Libya. The cabinet hailed the agreement as a practical step that would contribute to putting an end to the armed conflict in Libya, and to restore security and stability to the whole of Libya. In this context, the cabinet urged all Libyan parties to abide by the agreement, to ensure their

country's interest, and to harness their efforts to rebuild their nation, maintain its territorial integrity and fulfill the Libyan people's hopes.

Libyan political leaders had met in Skhirate city in west Morocco and signed the agreement after more than a year of UN-led negotiations. The accord was signed in the presence of UN Special Representative and Head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Martin Kobler, Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation Salaheddine Mezouar and his peers from Spain, Italy, Qatar, Tunisia and Turkey, as well as representatives of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council and the European Union. —KUNA



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his Tajik counterpart Shukurjon Zuhurov shake hands after signing an agreement of strategic partnership between the Kuwaiti and Tajik parliaments. —KUNA

KUWAIT, TAJIKISTAN SIGN PARLIAMENT PARTNERSHIP DEAL

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem held discussions yesterday with his Tajik counterpart Shukurjon Zuhurov, who is on an official visit to the country. The discussion tackled bilateral relations and ways to bolster cooperation in various fields, mainly parliamentary ones. Both officials also discussed recent regional and international events

and issues of mutual concern.

Ghanem and Zuhurov signed an agreement of strategic partnership between the Kuwaiti and Tajik parliaments. Senior officials from both nations were also present in the meeting, including Parliament's Observer MP Abdullah Al-Tamimi, and the Tajik Ambassador to Kuwait Zubaydullo Zubaydov, amongst others. —KUNA

ZAIN DIAMOND SPONSOR OF SHEIKH SABAH AL-AHMAD VILLAGE COMPANY CEO TOOK PART IN INAUGURATION CEREMONY

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its diamond sponsorship of the national project entitled 'Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Village'. The cultural initiative, held for the second year, comes under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and runs from December 2015 - March 2016.

Zain took part in the village's inauguration ceremony, where Sheikh Ali Jarah Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, presented the honoring token to Zain Kuwait's Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan, to highlight Zain's support of this national initiative. The village, a national project that currently runs for the second year, aims at connecting the past and the present through a unique location that uses traditional Kuwaiti architectural design.

The village aims at being the ideal internal touristic destination, and offers visitors a wide variety of services and activities, including stores, cafes, restaurants, playgrounds, a motor-sport circuit, a football pitch, a dedicated section for young entrepreneurs to showcase their products and services, as well as a small scaled museum for GCC countries to showcase their heritage and local traditions. Zain stressed its keenness on providing the



needed support and encouragement to all activities and initiatives that further pushes the national economic and touristic development wheel. The company is committed to continu-

ing to support all kinds of national projects that support the national economy and offer innovative ideas that contribute to the further progress of Kuwait.

ISLAMIC FORUM AIMS TO COMBAT RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM: MAATOUQ

KUWAIT: A forum on 'Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies' aims to combat widespread religious extremism and radicalization, which would in turn, bring forth a more moderate mindset, a senior United Nations (UN) and Amiri Diwan official said yesterday.

Amiri Diwan Advisor and UN Secretary General's Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq made the comments in a statement to KUNA after the forum's inaugural meeting in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) city of Abu Dhabi.

Maatouq explained that the meeting stressed the importance of initiating events and gatherings that would help shed light on Islam's true image, one that is void of terrorism and violence. The UN Secretary General thanked the UAE leadership for supporting the forum, which was organized to showcase some of humanity's brighter attributes.

Moreover, Maatouq addressed the prevalence of the fatwa, religious edicts that often incite youth into committing acts that are unreflective of Islam's true nature, he said. This leaves leaders of the Muslim faith with no choice but to cooperate and fight the scourge of terrorism, Maatouq added. Islam's image has been marred by extreme ideologies that do not represent the faith in any way, Maatouq said. The forum was put together to rectify this and showcase the true benevolent face of Islam, he added. —KUNA



ABU DHABI: Amiri Diwan Advisor and UN Secretary General's Envoy for Humanitarian Affairs Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq (right) is seen during the forum's inaugural meeting in the United Arab Emirates city of Abu Dhabi. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi speaks at the ceremony.



Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi honors one physician. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



KUWAIT: Communications Ministry's Undersecretary Hameed Al-Qattan, Huawei Technologies CEO Trevor Liu and other officials inaugurate the project. —Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

HEALTH MINISTER HONORS PHYSICIANS

KUWAIT: Minister of Health Dr Ali Al-Obaidi affirmed keenness of his ministry on developing a cadre of highly trained physicians in the framework of the comprehensive healthcare system. "The Civil Service Commission (CSC) approved increasing the number of internships this year," he said Sunday night at a ceremony to honor 100 interns who have finished a specialized medical training course in the framework of Kuwait Board Program for 2015-16.

The ceremony was held under aegis of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. The minister appreciated the graduates for their perseverance in gaining expertise and urged them to do their utmost to promote the medical profession.

Meanwhile, Secretary-General of Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialization (KIMS) Dr Ibrahim Hadi said the kind patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister for this ceremony indicated that the government attaches great importance to building the capacity of the medical personnel.

"There are 800 interns, males and females, who will graduate in the next five years and shoulder the responsibility of promoting the medical services, whether in the prevention or treatment sectors" he revealed.

KIMS, an affiliate of the Ministry of Health, is responsible for organizing all aspects of post-

graduate training of medical practitioners and other health professionals in Kuwait; it also supervises the overseas internships, he noted.

He added that an agreement was reached with the University of Ottawa on a fellowship

program for the Kuwaiti doctors. The interns honored include 92 doctors, males and females who got the certificates of the Kuwait Board Program, and eight physicians who got medical specialization fellowship program. —KUNA



A group picture for some of the doctors honored during the event.

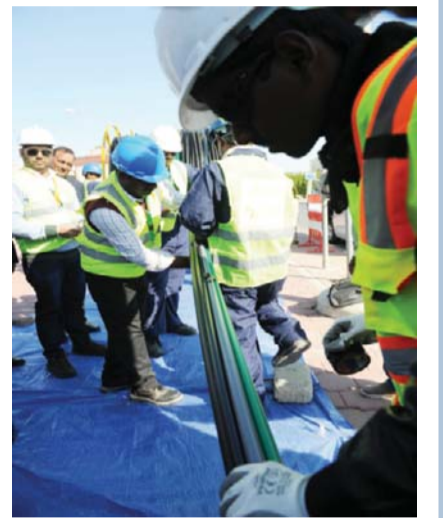
MINISTER LAUNCHES PHASE 2 OF FIBER OPTIC-OPERATED NETWORKS

KUWAIT: Phase two of distributing fiber optic-operated internet to 34 areas in the country has begun, Minister of Communications and of State for Municipal Affairs Essa Al-Kandari said yesterday. In a speech inaugurating the distribution, he said that the Ministry is working in accordance to a pre-set time-frame, adding that the Ministry will be replacing all traditional landline networks with these fiber optic-operated systems.

The new systems will provide high quality phone services and high speed internet, adding the new systems will provide new service such as digital TV cable. The Ministry's Undersecretary Hameed Al-Qattan pointed out that the fiber optic network will provide fast streaming of audio and video files, up to 70 megabits.

Newly residential areas that are still lacking phone service will have a priority to have these new network installed. He called on citizens and residents to cooperate with the Ministry during the installation process.

Meanwhile, Huawei Technologies CEO Trevor Liu said his company, which is supervising the project, is able to provide the Ministry with all needed technologies and equipment to complete this project as soon as possible. Phase Two of the project will include 34 residential areas: Mishref, Bayan, Midan Hawally, Sabah Al-Salem, Al-Adan and Al-Qusoor, to name a few. — KUNA



Workers install fiber optic lines as part of Phase two of distributing fiber optic-operated internet in Kuwait.

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URGENTLY REQUIRED

Position	Job Description	Requirements
Public Relations Manager (Kuwaiti National)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Huawei PR strategy in Kuwait and ensure to deliver the key messages to our customers, especially government through daily work, PR activities, CSR and so on. • Develop cordial working relationships with key governments and medias, monitor and maintain the relationships. • Develop and implement strategic programs to achieve significant increases in awareness of Huawei Brand • PR manager should have strong understanding of local cultures and community. • Research on local business communities and provide national environment watch especially on policy, business and mega projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Degree holder or above in corporate communications, public relations. • Self-motivated, excellent communication and interpersonal skills, high flexibility and adaptability in work • Presentable with strong project management skills • Outstanding English/Arabic writing and verbal communication skills • Comfortable working in a global company with a high degree of cultural diversity.
Service Manager (Kuwaiti National)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Approval Support: Support Huawei terminal products in the Middle East market pre-sale technical approval testing to make the TA process get through successfully and timely. • Requirement Collection: Responsible for acquiring, confirming and clarifying pre-market product software requirements • Test execution: Execute the internal test such as the software version test as well as field testing. Assist troubleshoot issues. Be responsible for the product quality. • Technical communication: Provide technical assistance in products pre-sale period • Customer Interface: Set up and keep good relationships and cooperation with technical engineer team of customers. • Technical Training: Provide technical training including training material and presentation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Experiences in field testing and protocol testing • Good communication and coordination skills • Responsible and detail oriented • Must be able to work in a fast paced, rapid change and stressful environment • Primary Language skill: English, • Secondary Language skill: Arabic or mandarin Chinese is welcome. • Basic knowledge on CDMA, GSM, UMTS LTE • Good knowledge and skills with Qualcomm QXDM, QPST tools.
Facility/Government Relations Manager (Kuwaiti National)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counsel the managers on issues leading to license implications. • Review company's law and apply the roles and regulations related to trade licenses and municipality licenses. • Monitor the implementation of procedures involved in securing/renewing the Government licenses to establish and operate the group. • Review documentation prepared by the Officers, Government Relations Commercial to secure a Import License, Municipality and Freighting license prior to submitting to the Ministry of Commerce and Chamber of Commerce for approval and registration. • Register the company name and logo in the Chamber of Commerce records after securing the license from the Ministry of Commerce. • Monitor updating of record of all government licenses and business permits. • Formulate the updated list of all the government licenses due for renewal and ensure related procedures are completed on time. • Formulate and submit the Management Information Reports to the AT. • Review the latest legislations affecting the company's licensing and its business. 	<p>Educational Qualifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Primary: Bachelor degree or equivalent with 6 years of experience. • Linguistic Abilities: English and Arabic is a must.
Telecom Engineers (Kuwaiti National)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under guidance, support projects including: pre-sales & bidding, startup, monitoring and support • Support and track strategies to achieve the project's business objectives • Track and report progress towards agreed objectives • Ensure compliance with quality objectives • Be responsible for the quality of the project • Support the relationship with customer • Able to take small projects and lead a small team • Manage issues and escalate as required • Support identification, tracking and managing of risk • Drive the project acceptance and invoicing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good peer and team relationship and good communications skills • Ability to conceptualize and perform sequencing and planning • Broad understanding of technology and some understanding of integration processes • Possess good leadership, team building and cross-cultural communication abilities • At least 1 year of project management experience in Telecom
Training Manager (Kuwaiti National)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By analyzing customer requirements and competitors, determine locations of the training center and region and product coverage schemes, organize to make long-term strategies and planning, satisfy training requirements, and increase the brand value. (Training brand) • According to training strategies and prediction of demand for training, organize and direct the building of software and hardware environments for training of the Regional Division, to provide sites, devices, facilities, courses, and logistics service for training of customers, cooperation partners and employees, and ensure training is held as required. (Building the platform) • According to requirements of contracts and training, provide end-to-end before-sales support for training and deliver training, oversee training quality and manage the process, and ensure timeliness and satisfaction of training. (Managing delivery of training) • According to strategies and plans of product sales, organize to recruit, train, and cultivate trainers, cooperative trainers, and part-time trainers of the Regional Division, evaluate and manage skills, build and provide sufficient resources of trainers with high-quality, and ensure timely delivery and satisfaction at training. (Cultivating employees) • By researching job responsibilities and skill requirements of people to be trained, organize to develop relative courses, improve quality of course design and training materials, and increase customer satisfaction. (Developing courses) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding of demand for training raised by customers of the region • Understanding of training operation mode of competitors of the communications industry • Familiarity with businesses and processes of customer training, training and certification for cooperation partner, and employee training • Basic management knowledge and ability for communication and coordination • Basic knowledge of telecommunications • Ability to communicate effectively, orally, and written • Ability to work in cross-cultural environment • Ability to make budgets and control expenses

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The suspects arrested for cultivating and trading in marijuana.



An amount of marijuana and firearms found with the suspects.



Senior Interior Ministry officials examine marijuana seedlings busted in the house of one of the suspects.



A man arrested for unlicensed weapons' possession is pictured with his relative who was also detained for keeping the firearms in his house.

In my view

A DAY WITH AN EXPAT

By Talal Al-Ghannam



local@kuwaittimes.net

Good morning my dear and honorable readers. It has been so long since I wrote my previous article. Today I would like to narrate a story or an experience I had encountered few months back here in Kuwait. This experience depicts the misery of many of our expat brothers and sisters who have come here to make a decent living escaping from the harsh conditions in their countries and yet face more critical situations.

My article's title is 'A day with an expat,' and by looking at the title you would get a hint that the story would be addressing misery and unfortunate conditions. A few months back I was invited by an expat friend who lives somewhere in Kuwait in a tiny and grave-like room. You would not imagine how that room could accommodate the rest of the necessities which should be put in the kitchen rather than in a partition room. That room contained a closet, a mini fridge, a dresser, a TV, satellite receiver, cassette player, hangers, a shoes rack, a clothesline, a tiny stove, spices rack, pots, plates, cups, milk cans, a tea kettle, and many more which I do not remember, not forgetting the person himself.

I came in and sat on the bed and was entertained with coffee and some snacks, and then I asked him how he manages to survive in this place? He replied with tears shedding from his eyes that he was a runaway because he did not receive his salary for almost 6 months, in addition to bad treatment from his sponsor who left him abandoned in the desert with almost nothing for him to survive. He said he used to borrow things from neighbors in order to survive, where his employer would come once a week to inspect the camp and leave him with KD 5 to buy his groceries.

The other thing which I had noticed that the long queue for the restroom, where this poor man would have to wait for at least half an hour in order to use the facility. As for his current work, he said that he does not have a permanent and stable job but he has got few cars which he washes and gets KD 5 for each, saying this helps a bit. When I asked him about his future plans, he replied that he was willing to give himself up to the authorities, but was waiting to collect some money to help his family, including his sick parents.

After a few hours, he wanted to entertain me for an ice cream, so we went down to the grocery shop which he knows and as he entered the shop, he took the worker to a corner and whispered in his ears, which I understood it was about the money which he could not afford at the moment.

The day ended with a big hug and plenty of tears shedding from both of us for the kind of misery some people go through in Kuwait. Many sponsors must always put Allah in front of their eyes when treating a human being before Judgment Day; when each one of us would stand along before the Creator of the universe and is asked about those helpless people.

Until the next article Insha Allah

TWO ARRESTED IN 'LARGEST' MARIJUANA RAID

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The information technology department of criminal detectives discovered what they described as the largest quantity of marijuana in Kuwait, and arrested two people, Canadian and Kuwaiti, in the process. Information was received that the suspects traded in marijuana, so a team was formed to collect information. Based on the investigations, detectives raided the Canadian man's residence and found 39 marijuana seedlings, along with other quantities ready for sale,

in addition to marijuana seeds. The citizen was arrested with eight seedlings and half a kilogram of the drugs, in addition to seeds and fertilizers. He also had an unlicensed firearm. Both suspects confessed to selling marijuana, and the citizen said he got the seedlings from the Canadian who also gave him instructions on how to plant them. Both were sent to concerned authorities.

Drug suspect caught

Jahra detectives arrested a citizen in his thirties wanted to serve a 27-year jail

sentence on drugs cases. The man was found with possession of drugs including 17 grams of heroin, 80 grams of heroin injections ready for use in addition to 25 Captagon tablets and a firearm. He was sent to concerned authorities.

Weapons possession

The weapons detectives department arrested a citizen with possession of unlicensed weapons and ammunition. Investigations led to discovering that the citizen had a quantity of AK-47

rounds in his relative's house. The firearm and four magazines were also confiscated. The suspect and his relative were sent to concerned authorities.

Residency violators

Residency detectives arrested several residency violators in Jleeb Al-Shuyukh, after information was received about them working in houses without official permission. Seventeen women and three men who make them work in houses were arrested. They were sent to concerned authorities for deportation.

ICG JOINS HORECA AS SILVER SPONSOR

KUWAIT: Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development announced that more and more hospitality, catering and hotel equipment companies have so far announced plans to take part in Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition. In this regard, the International Center Group foodstuffs company (ICG) announced joining Horeca 2016 as a silver sponsor, stressing that the exhibition had proved the significance of specialized exhibitions in promoting trade exchanges amongst companies. Speaking on the occasion, ICG's Development Manager Riyadh Al-Atri said that ICG was in the process of enhancing its status in the local market, and expanding its activities both locally and regionally, especially since it has earned full trust of local hotels and restaurants thanks to its 46-year long experience.

Atri added that ICG has several subsidiary companies such as Al-Mohannad for Food Stuff; the exclusive agent of international brands such as Nodrex, Luna, Alshifa Honey, subulah, Heinz, Bakemark, Komplet, Bega, Vonk, Cooperlat, Gargil, Gelita-Pavoni, Aviko, Lazaya, France Burrer, RS olive Oil, Silikomart, FO and GSM.

Atri also noted that another ICG subsidiary is the Universal Center for Hotel Supply that supplies central kitchens and central equipment companies with French equipment brands like Roller Griller, Italian like CIMA, FORNI, LAMIC and STARMIX and Chinese like INKRICH, KINKOOL and UKERS.

Further, Atri added that the company has a sweets line providing pastry chefs with pastry raw material and tools. He added that ICG also owns the first experimental kitchen in GCC through which it invites world cooking experts and chefs to explain how to use raw material and train pastry chefs in various hotels on the best use of such material. Leaders Group is organizing the event in cooperation with Hospitality Services Company. The event is due to be held under auspices of Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah at Badriya Ballroom, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa in the period of January 18-19, 2016.



Riyadh Al-Atri

SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER DISSOLVES TWO CHARITIES

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih yesterday issued two decisions on dissolving two charities. According to the decisions, one of the charities was dissolved upon its officials' request because they do not have enough time nor funding to keep it running, whereas the second was dissolved for violating charity rules. Munira Al-Kandari, Charities Department Director at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor said that 80 citations had been reported in 2015 about unlicensed or unauthorized expat individuals collecting charity donations and that special measures were taken against them and against their sponsors.

Fake fingerprints

Eleven Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) employees currently arrested over charges of using fake fingerprints to sign in and out of

work on behalf of 350 other employees were yesterday interrogated by the public prosecution.

Rainy weekend

The Kuwait Meteorological Center expected rainfall over the weekend starting tomorrow and ending on Friday, in addition to high-speed winds.



Minister Hind Al-Subaih

Abuse of power

Following up a previous complaint about two senior officials at the citizen service centers who had been abusing their powers against female employees, the chairman of the Ministry of Interior's civilian employees syndicate Bader Al-Enezi stressed that despite the complaint filed against them, one of the officials summoned the female employees and interrogated them in an attempt to intimidate them.

Landfill sites

The cabinet's committee for rehabilitating landfill sites urged the municipality to contact the municipal council to reallocate liquid industrial waste landfill sites along Mina Abdullah and Wafra road. In this regard, committee chairman Lt Gen Mohammed Al-Bader pointed out that the municipal council decided allocating the site after waiving it for the Public Authority for Industry and PAAAFR.

NO IMMEDIATE IMPACT OF LIFTING BAN OF US OIL EXPORT: ACADEMIC

KUWAIT: The decision to lift the ban on exports of US crude oil, signed by President Barack Obama on Friday, will not have an immediate impact on the world oil market, said a Kuwaiti academic yesterday. The Gulf Cooperation Council countries (GCC) decision to continue oil production at the same rates of those before the prices started to fall "is sound, and it's an anticipation of what is happening now; the US dumping of the oil market," said Dr Ahmad Bader Al-Kouh, member of the faculty at College of Technological studies, the Department of Petroleum Engineering Technology. Impact of the US decision to lift the ban on the oil export, which had lasted 40 years, will be seen in the future, he told KUNA.

Kouh praised GCC oil exporting countries' decision not to reduce the oil production and their commitment to maintain their market share. US and Canadian oil companies, Russia, Iran and Venezuela will suffer most from the declining oil prices, as compared to the GCC countries that will be the least affected due to the low cost of production. Surplus in Kuwait annual budget, posted when the oil prices were bullish, "might cover what we lost now," he added. It is expected that the deterioration of oil prices will continue until middle of next year. —KUNA

TWO ARTIFICIAL ISLANDS TO BE CONSTRUCTED WITHIN JABER AL-AHMAD BRIDGE PROJECT

KUWAIT: Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works for roads sectors Engineer Ahmad Al-Hassan said on Monday that the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad bridge project includes two artificial islands for investment and government buildings, and that one of them will contain a marina.

In an interview with daily Al-Anbaa, Al-Hassan said that the first section of the project is the South Island which is located west of Kuwait City, pointing out that work in this project is completed, adding that work to improve the soil is now underway which will be allocated for investments.

He said that the other island is 74 percent near completion and is located near the city of Subbiya on the same path of the project, saying it will be designed for administrative buildings and a number of government agencies and a marina in the future.

He said the bridge project is located in Kuwait Bay between Kuwait City and Subbiya which is almost 36 km long and is considered one of the largest projects in the field of transport and infrastructure in Kuwait and the region and one of the longest maritime bridges in the world. —KUNA

OBITUARY



Mr. P.Z. Kurian (Age 80)

Passed away on Dec 19, 2015 at Kochi, Ernakulam Dist, Kerala India.

He was a well-known figure in the Kuwait Indian community as he helped several individuals find gainful employment during his 40-year-long work with KRFMFCO as Personnel Manager until retirement in 2002.

He was survived by wife Mary Kurian, and children Anthony Kurian (Reuters, Bangalore), Tina Kurian and husband Dr Alex Punnoose (Idaho, US), Iija Kuran (New York, NY), and Albert Kurian (Montreal, Canada). The funeral will commence at 2:30 pm on the 22nd of December at his residence in Kaloor, Kochi followed by service at St Kuriakose Krasaya Church, Vazhakala, Kochi.

CONSORTIUM CLOSES IN ON LONDON CITY AIRPORT

KUWAIT'S SOVEREIGN FUND PART OF CONSORTIUM

LONDON: A mega-consortium of some of the world's most powerful sovereign wealth and pension funds is among the leaders in the £2 billion race to buy London City Airport.

A team made up of five suitors, including Wren House Infrastructure, which is an arm of the Kuwait Investment Authority, is believed to be on a shortlist of bidders that will be invited to make second-round offers for the airport in February. The group also includes Canadian funds Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan (OTPP), Borealis Infrastructure, AIMCo and Hermes, the British investment manager.

Borealis, which co-owns the high-speed rail link between London and the Channel Tunnel with OTPP, and AIMCo originally linked up with Allianz to consider a proposal. However, it is thought that the German insurer is now no longer interested in buying the airport, prompting the two Canadian

funds to team up with a rival consortium.

Private-equity giant Global Infrastructure Partners (GIP) announced in August that it was selling City, and hopes to fetch around £2 billion for it.

It has sparked a frenzy of activity in the infrastructure world, with bidders drawn to City amid a relative dearth of assets for sale. The scarcity value of the airport, which is considered a prize asset, is likely to drive up the price. It is unclear which other suitors have also been shortlisted. However, Cheung Kong Infrastructure (CKI), the vehicle of Hong Kong billionaire Li Ka-Shing, is rumored to have submitted a first-round bid.

Close to Canary Wharf and easily accessible from the Square Mile, the airport is popular with business travellers and carried 3.7 million passengers last year.

—The Telegraph

FIFTEEN WOMEN FROM THE GCC DISCOVER BEAUTY OF OMAN'S MOUNTAINS DURING EXCITING TREK

MUSCAT: The Oman Ministry of Tourism in cooperation with the Al-Jebel Al-Hajariya Travel and Tourism (Husaak Adventures) has successfully concluded the Western Hajar mountain range trek, which was held recently in Muscat, Oman. The hike featured a total of 15 female representatives who have gathered together from across the GCC countries to conquer the summit of Jebel Shams. Standing at over 3 km above sea level, Jebel Shams is the highest peak in the GCC where the hikers stood to send a message of love and unity under the slogan "One Nation."

The trip was organized as a demonstration of the unity of the GCC in an adventurous gathering that showcased the stunning landscape of Oman. The women hikers who joined the event braved the challenging trail and trekked for two days to the top of Jebel Shams. The hikers represented their GCC countries and raised their flags in celebration of completing the challenging trek.

Asma Al-Hajri, Deputy Director General, International Tourism Promotions, Oman Ministry of Tourism, said: "This trek provided a wonderful platform for athletic and adventurous women across the region to strengthen their ties with their sisters from neighboring countries in a dynamic and truly unforgettable experience that is both mentally and physically challenging. The trek started on December 10 at the meeting point in Muscat where the ladies then transferred to the location to begin the hike. This adventure stretched over a 20 kilometers path that is suitable and safe for walking and climbing. The ministry's support of this event is part of its active efforts to promote and encourage adventure tourism, which defines the beauty that the Sultanate enjoys."

Thirst for adventure

Ali Husain, Founder of Al-Jebel Al-Hajariya (Husaak Adventures), commended the female group of mountain hikers and their thirst for adventure: "At Husaak adventures, we try to push people out of their perceived boundaries so that they can enjoy nature and appreciate the beauty of the environment while challenging themselves physically. We are all proud of these ladies that attempted and hiked this majestic mountain successfully proved that outdoor adventure can be enjoyed by everyone. We look forward to seeing more people from the GCC enjoy the beauty of Oman, the hidden jewel of the Arabia."

Among those who were included in the hiking trip was Linda Al-Muqaimi, Rumaitha Al-Busaidi and Salsabeel Al-Busaidi representing Oman, Lulu Al-Awadhi, Dalal Al-Omar, Sabika Al-Ayar, Nourah Al-Sabah, Hind Al-



Khatrash, and Aseel Shaheen from Kuwait, Nada Jamsheer, Hadeyah Fathallah and Fatima Fathallah from Bahrain. In addition to Nahid Al-Dosary from Saudi Arabia, Ghaida Al-Suror and Jawaher Al-Mutawa from Qatar and finally Aysha Al-Mamari and Moza Al-Hasani from the UAE. The participants expressed their pride at successfully meeting the summit, which they consider both a personal accomplishment and a fulfillment of their role as citizens of their respective nations.

In this regard, Nahed Al-Dosary from Kingdom of Saudi Arabia said: "I am proud and delighted to represent my country with my fellow GCC sisters as a celebration of the unity of our nations and the power of women to overcome obstacles. We reinforced this message from the summit of Jebel Shams, which is the highest peak in the GCC at the same time that the Summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was being held in Riyadh. I would like to

thank the team of Husaak for organizing this great trip and giving us the opportunity to reach this milestone."

Withstand the challenges

Kuwait representative Noora Al-Sabah, added: "For the past three months I have dedicated myself to achieving this goal. I needed to prepare myself adequately for it so I followed an intensive fitness program and nutrition plan to help my body endure and withstand the challenges in this trek as well as the weather in Oman. Before beginning the journey, I tried to recall the previous difficulties that I had to overcome with team Husaak. This inspired me to put myself in the same mindset to overcome these difficulties. We represented our GCC countries and climbed the summit with determination and persistence, sticking together and making sure to never leave a single person behind. The highlight of this trek

was proudly raising my country's flag and I was thankful that the whole thing was documented so we can cherish such a memory. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to team Husaak for organizing the trip as well as to our team leaders, Lulu Al-Awadhi, Dalal Al-Omar and Sabika Al-Ayar who inspired everyone to push their limits."

Linda Al-Muqaimi from Oman said: "The trip brought together the most beautiful women in the Gulf. Our steadfast cooperation and determination drove us during this climb and our collective ability to overcome the obstacles we faced fills me with pride. This is characteristic of the Gulf women of today and this proves that we can be whatever we want to be." Salsabeel Al-Busaidi, also representing Oman said: "The Jebel Shams trek was beautiful and truly unforgettable. I want to thank the leaders in Husaak team who organized this trip and pushed us to our limits. They inspired

me to defy my mental and physical boundaries reach the top of the mountain with the help of God. Once we were on the summit we proudly raised the flags of our countries and it was my great honor to meet those beautiful women, work with them hand in hand and encourage each other to build this strong cooperation spirit between us. Gulf Women are strong our ability to achieve is not defined by our age or size. With patience faith and hard work we can achieve any goal in life. I will never forget this trip; it has given me so much positive energy that renewed my confidence. I encourage everyone to visit Jebel Shams and enjoy the charming scenery. Oman is rare gem and has its own unique landmarks. When I was on my way to the top, I stood and pondered over the mountains of Oman soaking in all the beauty of nature and life that I witnessed. I thank the Ministry of Tourism for their efforts to promote effective natural tourism in Oman locally and internationally, and thank the Ministry of Environment for their efforts to spread environmental awareness and preservation. Greeting of gratefulness and love to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said (May God Protect Him) for his permanent support for the Omani women in all aspects, including adventure, sports and defying the odds."

National duty

Qatar representative Jawaher Al-Mutawa and Ghaida Al-Suror says, "This trip provided us with the platform to perform our national duty and raise the flag of Qatar up high. It is not merely a spectacular event set at the highest Gulf peak, it represented the persistence of Qatari women and prove its position and gratitude in light of the celebrations of the country with its National Day."

Aysha Al-Mamari the representative of the UAE said: "The Jebel Shams journey was a big challenge for me. My goal was not just to reach the summit but it was a test to my abilities and enjoy the charming nature of the Oman Mountains, as well as to meet my sisters from the Gulf countries. I was impressed with professionalism of the highly skilled guides and mentors who accompanied us on the trip. I am proud that this is a professionally organized GCC event led by GCC nationals. I also want to extend my gratitude to the Ministry of Tourism in Oman and their efforts in coordinating this trip and ensuring our comfort. I was surprised when Omani police patrol car stopped next to us where I had thought that we committed a traffic violation and was surprised to know that they wanted to show their support and stay with us in case of any emergency. I love to travel and I have traveled to more than 35 countries, however, I can say that this trip is the best travel experience I had."

MUBARAKIYA SCHOOL MARKS 104TH 'VERSARY

KUWAIT: Over the last 104 years Al-Mubarakiya School continued to be a landmark of modern education and enlightenment for all sons of Kuwait away from any form of discrimination. Founded on December 22, 1911 as the first modern education facility training students on arithmetic and commercial skills, the school was named after Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. It was followed by Al-Ahmediya School - the first English school in Kuwait, established in 1921. Sheikh Yousof Bin Isa Al-Qena'e, the first principal of Al-Mubarakiya School, was one of the icons of the intellectual enlightenment who advocated compulsory education. He was succeeded by Youssof bin Humoud, Omar Asem Al-Azmeiry, Abdulaziz Al-Rashid and Mohammad Kharashi Al-Manfalouty.



Teachers and students of Al-Mubarakiya School in a group photo.

The School continued to provide teaching until 1985 when its building was chosen as venue of the Central Library. Three intellectuals spearheaded lobbying for the launching of the School; these are Sheikh Yousof Bin Isa Al-Qena'e, Sheikh Nasser Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Yassin Al-Tabtaba'ei.

Beacon of knowledge

Speaking to KUNA on the occasion of the School's anniversary, Suleiman Boland, director of the antiquities and museums department of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), said the School used to be a beacon of knowledge that turned to be a platform for Kuwaiti intellectuals.

"The School played a great role in the cultural and scientific



The first principal of Al-Mubarakiya School Sheikh Yousof Bin Isa Al-Qena'e



Al-Mubarakiya School alumnus Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi

advancement enjoyed by Kuwait at present. It depended on personal donations and with Al-Qena'e donating 50 rupees and then generous contributions by philanthropic Kuwaitis followed," Boland said.

On December 22, 1911, the opening day of the School, a total of 254 pupils were enrolled and the enrolment grew to 341 five years later, he noted. Teaching at the School used to focus on Arabic reading and writing, arithmetic, commerce, and the Holy Quran sciences, until the 1936-1937 semester when a more modern curriculum was introduced and foreign teachers were employed, he went on. "The alumni of the School played a great role in the progress of Kuwait in all fields, Boland said, noting that the School was annexed in 1979 to NCCAL which turned it into the Central Library. On January 23, 2012, the site was turned into a museum for the history of education in Kuwait," he added.

Financial difficulties
In similar statements to KUNA, Dr. Saleh Al-Ojairi, an alumnus of the School, recalled his memories in the School and its wonderful architecture. He said Ibn Ibrahim, a Kuwaiti merchant who lived in India, contributed 15,000 rupees, the biggest donation, to the launching of the School. "Despite the generous donations of the Kuwaiti people, the School faced financial difficulties in the early years before the discovery of oil. Nevertheless, it was able to overcome these difficulties and continued to offer proper teaching until 1936 when teachers and books were brought from Palestine, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Bahrain and Lebanon," Dr Al-Ojairi added. — KUNA

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Crime

Report

TEENS BEAT-UP WAITER IN SALMIYA

KUWAIT: Three juveniles wreaked havoc in a Salmiya cafe after they ganged up against a waiter and beat him severely, until they were caught by police who held them prior to sending them to the juvenile protection department.

Liquor possession

Ahmedi police caught an Indian man in Mangaf with 39 bottles of locally-made liquor, and he was sent to the Drugs Control General Department (DCGD). The arrest was made when a patrol found the man roaming the area at night, so police stopped him and found the liquor in the trunk of his car. In another case, a drug user who was asleep in his car was awakened by police, then sent to the DCGD. Police received a call earlier about an unconscious person in his car in Riqqa, so they went and awakened him, and found drugs.

'Missing' girl found

A citizen told Farwaniya police that his daughter has gone missing. Detectives took over the case, and were able to trace her with the use of the GPS to a popular cafe in industrial Ardhya, where she was arrested and taken to concerned authorities.

Attempted kidnap

A beautician lodged an attempted kidnapping complaint against a man after she refused his offer to give her a ride in Abu Halifa. A security source said a Filipina told Abu Halaifa police that when she left the salon, a person stopped and offered her a ride, but she refused, so he attempted to take her by force, but she was able to free herself. Ahmedi detectives are investigating.

Fight exposes thieves

A fight between two citizens in Salwa exposed a theft they had committed. The men exchanged blows over the division of the loot. Both were arrested. A call was made about a fight in a Salwa parking lot, and when police arrived, the two fled, but were chased on foot and arrested. The two said they were fighting over items they stole from a car.

Forgery

A citizen obtained a replacement civil ID for his wife using her nationality certificate without her knowledge. A citizen in her forties told Surra police that she was a victim of forgery, claiming that her husband got a duplicate ID as well as her nationality certificate, which he used to get the ID. The case was sent to prosecution.

Domestic violence

A citizen told Waha police that her husband beat her and caused the injuries stated in the medical report she submitted. The citizen said her husband, who works for the social affairs ministry, beat her with a sharp metal object at Jahra cemetery and smashed her car's windshield, before leaving. Police attempted to call her husband but he did not answer. Police are investigating. — Al-Rai

EXPAT DOCTORS' CHILDREN ADMITTED TO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education has agreed to admit children of expatriate doctors working in various public hospitals and clinics to public schools starting from the next school year. According to ministry conditions in this regard, the schools accepting those students would be determined by the ministry regardless of the doctors' residence address and according to classroom densities in those school. The ministry also conditioned that the maximum number of doctors' children to be accepted in public schools would be 250. — Al-Anbaa

SUNKEN SHIPS TO BE REMOVED FROM MUBARAK PORT PASSAGE

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said that a technical committee composed of elements from the oil ministry, MPW, MOC and EPA is currently coordinating and discussing the removal of two Iraqi oil tankers that had sunk in the 1990s in Mubarak Port's water passage that is being currently built by MPW. The sources added that the concerned bodies had held several meetings over the past few months to determine the best and safest ways to remove the two tankers without causing any damage to the marine environment, especially since both tankers - Rumailah and Ain Zalah - still have oil waste and harmful materials resulting from its shipment's decomposition over years. Further, the sources said that EPA had visited the sunken ships site at Khor Abdullah years ago to decide how polluted the waters there were prior to launching the project and that MPW had conditioned that the company winning the port project would have to remove the two tankers. — Al-Rai

POWER PLANTS' TENDERS OPENED

KUWAIT: The Central Tenders Committee opened tenders number 54 and 55 to supply, install and operate the Subbiya and south Zour power generating stations. Informed sources at electricity and water ministry said the Subbiya station project is in the first stage of turning gas turbines to the joint cycle system and the south Zour station is in the third stage of turning gas turbines into the joint cycle.

Sources said the tenders were sent to MEW to form a technical committee to study them and prepare a technical recommendation to issue the awarding decision according to the public tenders law. They said each project is supposed to produce 250 megawatts to be added to the country's total production, which is more than 15,000 megawatts, in order to provide the necessary energy to face the growing demand for electricity in old and new residential areas. — Al-Rai



Al-Jarida

Fighting corruption

التعبير

Al-Qabas

WE WANT MORE

By Iqbal Al-Ahmad

In the midst of fears, doubts, hassles and challenges, then waiting for the event, Kuwait celebrated with its people and guests under skies colored by fireworks and our music and that of Gulf singers, as fans at Jaber Stadium interacted with the guests and international athletes. This was an achievement that we waited many years for, and received much talk and criticism. The words of the late Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad took us years back when he stirred the feeling of love and longing to him while he was being treated abroad. With HH the Amir's smile, we the people of Kuwait, lived the moments of hope which we cling to every moment and second, despite all the tough circumstances we are going through.

The Jaber Stadium celebration was a dose of patriotism mixed with joy and happiness which we had missed for many years. All efforts of the Ministry of

Interior and the organizing committee were up to the mark, and proved that when we insist on success, we really say and do it, but if we do not want it, then we will lose.

We are waiting for the opening of the Jaber Al-Ahmad and Abdullah Al-Salem cultural centers in Shuwaikh and Shaab to announce boosting Kuwait's tourism, culture and art, and waiting for the arrival of music and cultural bands to cut with them the ribbon of going up to the world of taste and advancement, as culture and art are the language of advanced people, and they are the means of civilized people.

We in Kuwait are in need of gathering around achievements that restores our confidences in our country, and proves to us that bygone is bygone, and what is coming is much better and more beautiful.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

NBK OFFERS VISA CARDHOLDERS CHANCES TO WIN TRIPS TO FAVORITE DESTINATIONS

VALID UNTIL 29TH FEBRUARY 2016

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched its "Win a trip to your favorite destination" campaign dedicated to its Visa Cardholders.

This exclusive campaign runs until 29th of February 2016. NBK Visa Credit, Prepaid and Debit Cardholders will have a chance to win a customized trip to their favorite destination alone or with their beloved ones, including airfare, accommodation and transportation from and to the hotel. Eight draws will be held and one winner will be announced every week.

NBK customers will get one chance to enter the weekly draws for every transaction made locally by using NBK Visa Credit and Prepaid Cards only. Customers will get three chances when using their NBK Visa Credit, Prepaid and Debit Cards abroad. "NBK pioneered many firsts in both the

local and regional markets by offering innovative products and value added services," said Mohammad Al-Othman, NBK's Deputy Manager, Consumer Banking Group.

Othman added: "NBK's leadership in the cards market in Kuwait has been established by consistently delivering superior value to our customers. We always strive to develop promotions to reward our customers. The more NBK Visa Cardholders use their cards during the promotion period the more chances they get to win one of the valuable prizes."

NBK Cards are accepted worldwide and are the safest, most convenient and rewarding way to pay. For more information log onto nbk.com or contact NBK Call Center on 1801801, or follow NBK on Twitter @NBKPage, and on Instagram @NBKPage.



Mohammed Al-Othman

BEC, AL-TAMIMI AND COMPANY TEAM UP FOR ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING TRAINING SESSIONS

KUWAIT: Dedicated to its continued compliance with Kuwait and international laws and protocols, the Bahrain Exchange Company (BEC) teamed up with Al-Tamimi and Company (Yaqoub Yousef Al-Munayae) in Kuwait for the second year running and arranged training sessions aimed at the continued education of BEC's employees regarding the company's commitment to the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing. The sessions were structured and led by Philip Kotsis, a partner in Al-Tamimi and Company's Kuwait office, who presented on matters related to compliance with Kuwait's laws and instructions against money laundering and terrorist financing. The sessions took place over the course of a month and were attended by over 550 BEC employees and management.

Mathews Varghese, General Manager of BEC and Tipu Sultan, its Senior Manager Compliance and MLRO introduced the sessions, which included key note addresses by key management personnel of BEC, discussed the importance of AML and Counter Financing of Terrorist compliance and BEC's commitment to adhering to Kuwait laws and regulations and by all its employees.

Speaking on the Kuwait laws, Philip Kotsis applauded BEC's dedication to

continued education and knowledge on these matters stating: "Through sessions like these, BEC demonstrates that it has established strong principals and policies of continuous training for its new and existing employees and management and is committed to compliance with Kuwait AML and CFT laws

and regulations and that it was an honor to be a part of these seminars."

Within the State of Kuwait, Al-Tamimi and Company operates through a joint venture with registered licensed lawyer Yaqoub Yousef Al-Munayae and is headed by Partner Alex Saleh.

BEC currently has 38 branches across

Kuwait and specializes in sending money around the globe safely and quickly to over 44,000 locations in 30 countries through its own money transfer product - EzRemit. Its global reach is extended to over 200 countries through its partnership with MoneyGram an international remittance company.



النبا

Al-Anbaa

A LITTLE BIT OF QUIET

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

One, at this time, longs for quietness that he runs after, but regretfully does not find it when needed. This is our issue today - "quietness" - as we live in an era surrounded by worries and problems, be it externally or domestically. Although we live in the era of technology and luxury, if we compare between our era and the eras of those who preceded us, who did not have what we have in luxury and technology, we will find that previous eras had a large percentage of psychological calmness, but for us, in the midst of development and civilization, our era is characterized by psychological tension.

The human being had much time before to think about and enjoy things, words and actions came out after study and thought, and this is because there was enough time of quietness despite his suffering from not having much things. Despite this, we find that action, before it was made, had gone through enough study, but today, with tension and loss of psychological calmness, we find that the majority acts without thinking and studying the action, which results in some people regretting what they have done.

Where does calmness come from? All week long we hear and read about many disturbing events, and they are directly heard and seen by the individual, which results in psychological tension, along with pressure, international conflicts, collapse of behaviors and many decisions and their cancellation, which make the individual psychologically tense, resulting in his inability to take the right decision in the future, and here many come looking for calmness. Some attend business courses that seem to them to have quietness, and believe that when one gets into those courses, he will find calmness.

We find some people say that some types of sports remove tension from the individual, so he goes to them, but to no avail. Many means are offered and advertised under the slogan of calmness, but after the individual carries out all those means that remove psychological tension, he goes out to the society once again, and hears and sees events, and loses the small percentage of quietness he got. The situation remains the same, and the majority is looking for some calm! The last word: We do not adore solitude, but we have become comfortable with it, and seek it.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

BUREAU DEMANDS INCOME SOURCES DIVERSIFICATION

KUWAIT: The State Audit Bureau demanded that sources of income should be diversified and efforts should be made on mending the structural defect in the state's budget by reducing dependence on oil revenues through working towards increasing non-oil income and increasing the rate of its contributions to public revenues to reach stability in public finances if Kuwait's oil production dropped or export prices go down.

The bureau recommended, in its report to the National Assembly, to reform the tax system and increase tax revenues through restructuring the current tax system. It also called for amending the fees and financial costs law in exchange of using public facilities and general services, in addition to reviewing the prices of various uses of state property.

The report stressed that the oil sector should achieve its goals and policies with regards to increasing production capacity and work on solving the issue of halting activities in the joint operations zone. The report revealed a new actuarial deficit estimated at KD 8.9 billion, revealed by the 12th test of the financial status of the social security institution in March 2013. — Al-Qabas



Malaysian family holiday turns to tragedy; 13 killed

CHRISTMAS CAROLS BRING SOLACE TO LIBYA'S FEARFUL CHRISTIANS

HUGE CHINA LANDSLIDE LEAVES 91 MISSING

SHENZHEN: At least 91 people were missing after a giant mound of mud and construction waste spewed out of an overfull dump site in a southern China boomtown and buried 33 buildings in the country's latest industrial disaster. The site should have been closed down in February, but according to local workers, mud and waste had continued to be dumped there, a news portal run by the city government in Shenzhen said.

Premier Li Keqiang ordered an official investigation into Sunday's landslide in Shenzhen, just across the border from Hong Kong. The mudslide smashed into multi-storey buildings at the Hengtaiyu industrial park in the city's northwestern Guangming New District, toppling them within seconds in collisions that sent rivers of earth skyward. Villager Peng Jinxin said the mud came like "huge waves", as residents ran out of the way. "At one point the running mud was only ten meters away from me," Peng told the official Xinhua news agency.

The frequency of industrial accidents in China has raised questions about safety standards following three decades of breakneck growth in the world's second-largest economy. Just four months ago, more than 160 people were killed in huge chemical blasts in the northern port city of Tianjin. State television showed scenes of devastation in Shenzhen, with crumpled buildings sticking up from heaps of brown mud which stretched out across the industrial park.

Over a year ago, a government-run newspaper warned Shenzhen would run out of space to dump the waste left behind from a building frenzy. Besides new buildings, a network of subway lines is being built in Shenzhen, and mounds of earth are being excavated and dumped at waste sites. "Shenzhen has 12 waste sites and they can only hold out until next year," the official Shenzhen Evening Post, published by the city government, said in October, 2014.

Once a quiet fishing village, Shenzhen was chosen by Beijing three decades ago to help pioneer landmark economic reforms, and it has boomed ever since. The mudslide at the business park had covered an area of more than 380,000 square meters and was 10 meters deep in parts, Shenzhen Vice Mayor Liu Qingsheng told reporters, according to Xinhua. Almost 3,000 rescuers were at the scene, Xinhua said, with sniffer dogs and drones. Rescuers were focusing on several areas where sensors had detected signs of life, it added.

Unstable Waste Mountain

The Ministry of Land Resources said the accumulation of a large amount of waste meant that mud was stacked too steep, "causing instability and collapse, resulting in the collapse of buildings". Local media said no foreign companies were believed to have been affected. A nearby section of China's major West-East natural gas pipeline exploded, state television added, though it was not clear if this had any

impact on the landslide. Xinhua said the pipeline was owned by PetroChina, China's top oil and gas producer, that the 400-meter-long ruptured pipe "has been emptied" and a temporary pipe will be built.

PetroChina wrote on its microblog the

pipeline blast had hit at least one industrial user, a Hong Kong power plant operated by Castle Peak Power Co Ltd, a company majority owned by a subsidiary of CLP Holdings, that has now switched to coal for power generation. Fourteen factories, 13 low-rise buildings and

three dormitories were among the buildings flattened. Xinhua said 14 people had been rescued and more than 900 people had been evacuated from the site by Sunday evening. State television said the 91 missing included 59 men and 32 women. —Reuters



SHENZHEN: In this aerial photograph, Chinese rescuers work at the site of a landslide that hit an industrial park in Shenzhen in south China's Guangdong province yesterday. —AFP

OBAMA'S FINAL YEAR TO TEST PRESIDENTIAL POWERS

WASHINGTON: Barack Obama has revealed in defying predictions that 2015 would make him a lame duck president, but securing his final year goals—from closing Guantanamo to enacting gun control—will test the limits of White House power. The last year of a US presidency can be a pitiful thing. Many a commander-in-chief who bestrode Washington like a political Colossus can struggle to command much at all. New crises erupt, and victories won in the spring of an administration unexpectedly provoke a winter of discontent.

In their final years, George W Bush watched the economy fall off a cliff, Ronald Reagan was ensnared by the Iran-Contra scandal, Bill Clinton was impeached and Woodrow Wilson had a stroke. For Obama, a long-avoided morass in Syria and a costly quagmire in Iraq may come to define 2016, as fears grow about the threat from the Islamic State group. But Obama has offered Americans an alternative vision for his own eighth and final year in the Oval Office. "I've never been more optimistic about a year ahead than I am right now," he said before heading to Hawaii for an end of year family vacation. "In 2016, I'm going to leave it out all on the field." Obama has proved himself remarkably adept at cauterizing the loss of power. In 2015, he thwarted a recalcitrant Republican-controlled Congress to reach a landmark nuclear deal with Iran and inked a global environmental accord that, in his words, can begin to "solve the climate crisis." He watched the Supreme Court enshrine gay marriage into law and tentatively agreed a vast trans-Pacific trade deal that gives teeth to his "pivot to Asia" and could shape geopolitics in the Pacific for generations.

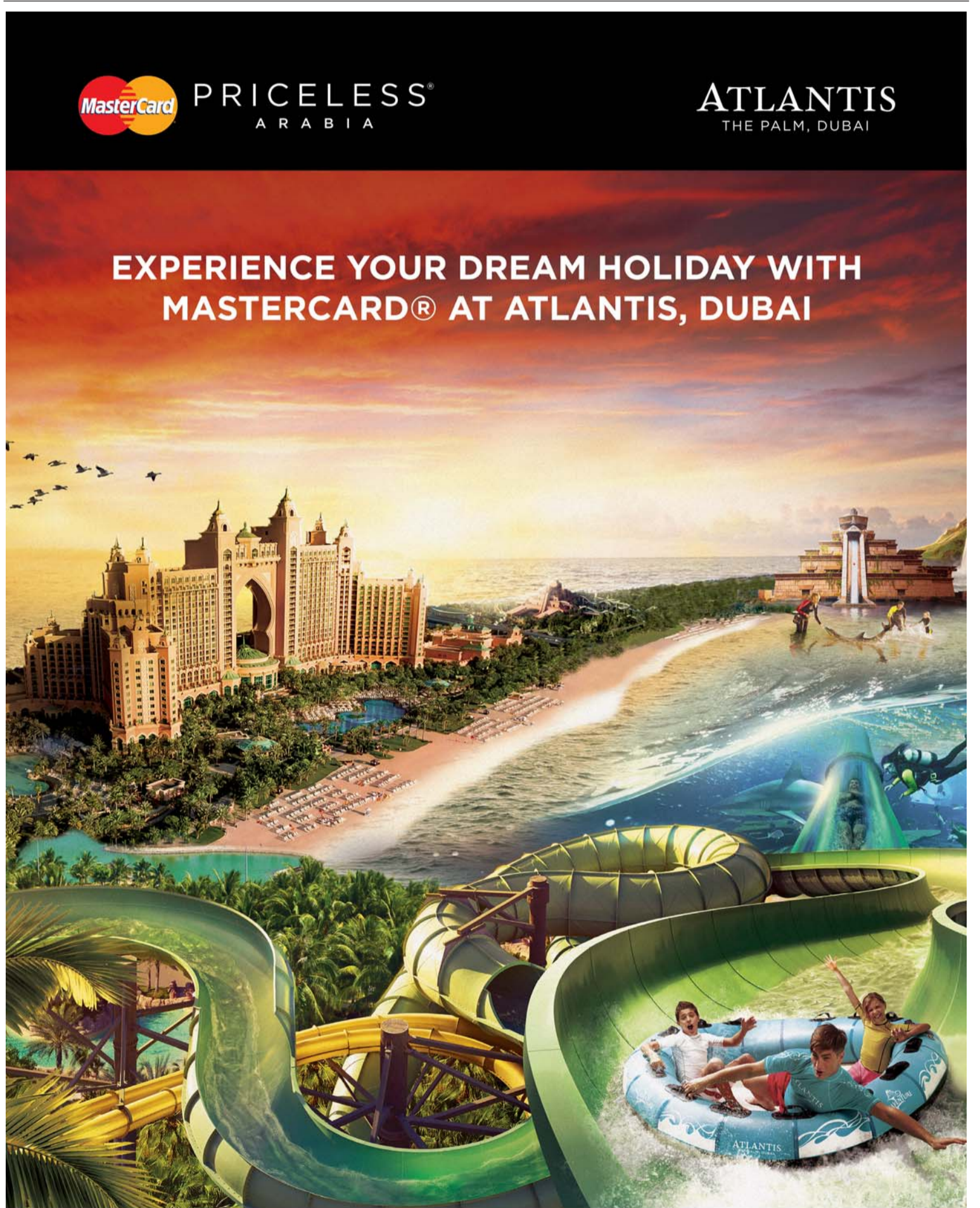
His approval ratings—although dented by fears about Islamic State terror after the San Bernardino attack—are around 45 percent, higher than Bush's and roughly the same as Reagan's at the same point. In 2016, Obama will try to keep momentum by deploying all the tools and trappings of office—from the bully pulpit to high-profile presidential visits. His voice will echo across the 2016 campaign, as he hits the road in support of expected nominee Hillary Clinton and a Democratic third term that would emboss his presidency.

Before that, he is likely to become the first sitting president since Calvin Coolidge to visit Cuba. But even that short trip across the Strait of Florida illustrates how much Obama's final year success is out of his hands. A trip to the land Fidel Castro would be rich in symbolism, an echo of Reagan's first visit to the Soviet Union in 1988, or Richard Nixon's visit to China. But without Congress's willingness to end the embargo on Cuba, a visit would not thaw the last frosty remnants of the Cold War in the Americas. Equally, ratifying the landmark trans-Pacific trade deal still requires reluctant Democratic lawmakers to vote in favor. That may have to wait until after the November election.

Ready to deal

Publicly, at least, Obama is optimistic about dealing with the opposition-dominated Congress, even after being repeatedly burned—even if it is an election year, and even if disdain for the 44th president is a rare issue upon which Republicans can all agree. Yet recent agreements on taxes, the budget and early childhood education have left the White House more hopeful that progress can be made on issues like criminal justice reform. It is a cruel irony that America's first African-American president has struggled to improve race relations, or address sentencing laws that see a disproportionate number of young black and Hispanic men go to prison. "There is a confluence of interests, I believe the time is ripe for this issue," said a senior administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity. "There is a process and it is on track."

Obama is even holding out hope, however unlikely, that congressional Republicans will relent in their opposition to gun control and on closing Guantanamo. On both issues, the White House is already considering executive orders to bypass Congress and enact reforms, something that would ignite a political and legal firestorm. Obama's efforts to bring a generation of immigrants out of the shadows offers a preview of what those fights could look like. Experts predict lengthy court battles and a possible political backlash, all of which could leave supporters in limbo and a key Obama policy goal in the hands of the Supreme Court. —AFP



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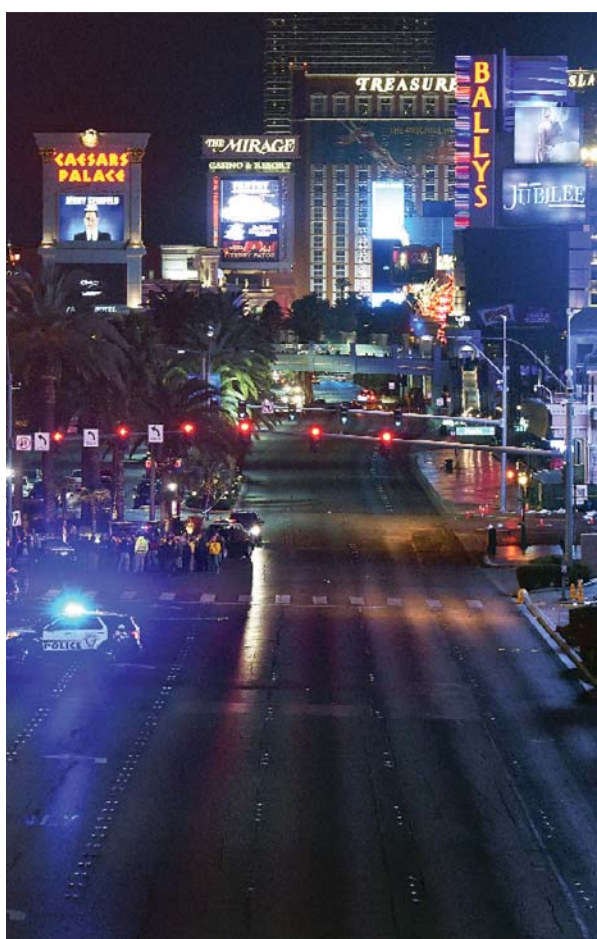
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LAS VEGAS: Vehicle traffic on the Las Vegas Strip is closed as police investigate the area after a car crashed into a group of pedestrians on the sidewalk in front of the Paris Las Vegas and Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino reportedly injuring at least 35 people and killing one. —AFP

1 DEAD, 26 HURT AS CAR CRASHES INTO LAS VEGAS STRIP SIDEWALK

LAS VEGAS: A woman with a toddler in her car deliberately and repeatedly rammed into pedestrians on the packed Las Vegas Strip Sunday, killing one person and injuring at least 26 others, police said. "This was not an act of terrorism... we've ruled that out," Deputy Police Chief Brett Zimmerman told reporters. But "we have determined that this is an intentional act." The Las Vegas Strip, lined with casinos and fancy hotels, attracts throngs of tourists from around the world and is usually abuzz with activity. The incident occurred on the same night that Las Vegas hosted the popular Miss Universe pageant, which saw the crowning of Miss Philippines.

Witness Rabia Qureshi, a tourist from Wisconsin, told the local NBC station KSNV that the vehicle in question looked like "a bowling ball and the human bodies were like pins." "You think it's a show, because you're in Vegas," Qureshi was quoted as saying. "But then I saw some people fly in the air." The suspect was in custody, speaking with detectives and undergoing several tests, including for alcohol. Police-urging more witnesses to come forward-described her as an African American woman in her 20s who was driving a 1996 Oldsmobile with Oregon license plates. The toddler in the car was unharmed, they said. "She went up off the street, onto the sidewalk, two or possibly three times," Las Vegas police Lt Dan McGrath told reporters.

He said the woman had yet to be charged. Zimmerman told reporters that one person had been killed and that 26 people were taken to area hospitals after the incident. He said six of those injured and listed in critical condition were now stable. Police had earlier put the number of people hurt at 37. Local media outlet 8 News NOW reported that the incident occurred shortly after 6:30 pm between Planet Hollywood, where the Miss Universe pageant took place, and the Paris Las Vegas Hotel. "There were men running after her trying to stop the vehicle. They couldn't get to her. They were yelling stop, and she wasn't trying," one witness told CNN.

The suspect initially left the scene, police confirmed. Another local media outlet, KTNV, reported that the University Medical Center, one of three hospitals where the injured were taken, said most of its patients were from Montreal in Canada. Cars were diverted near the Paris Las Vegas hotel, where the Strip was shut down as first responders rushed to the chaotic scene, according to CNN. Images from the scene showed a slew of ambulances and medical personnel attending to the injured amid the backdrop of the city's world famous hotels. Authorities said it was likely that the Las Vegas Boulevard would remain closed for most of the night as the probe into what happened continued. Hours after the incident, live footage showed the usually bustling Strip taped off and eerily still. —AFP

EU EXTENDS SANCTIONS AGAINST DEFIANT RUSSIA

BRUSSELS: The EU extended damaging economic sanctions against Russia yesterday amid sharp differences over relations with Moscow which struck back with a furious tirade and its own import ban against Ukraine. Russia said the move, prolonging sanctions imposed over the Ukraine conflict, gave the lie to EU claims of wanting better relations with Moscow to counter common threats such as terrorism. "It is necessary to point out that instead of building constructive cooperation to counter the key challenges of our times such as international terrorism, the EU in Brussels prefers to continue its short-sighted game of sanctions," the Russian foreign ministry said in a statement.

For its part, the European Council of all 28 EU member states said it rolled over the economic sanctions because the peace accord, agreed by France, Germany, Ukraine and Russia at talks in the Belarusian capital Minsk, would not be fully implemented by the end of this year as required.

"Since the Minsk agreements will not be fully implemented by 31 December 2015, the duration of the sanctions has been prolonged whilst the Council continues its assessment of progress in implementation," it said.

EU officials say that while there has been an improvement on the ground in eastern Ukraine where pro-Moscow rebels hold sway, Kiev still does not have control of the border with Russia, a key element in the Minsk accord. There can be no let up in sanctions until Russia uses its influence with the rebels to ensure the ceasefire holds for good, they say. The announcements came as top EU, Ukrainian and Russian officials met in Brussels for talks on the introduction of a free trade pact between Kiev and Brussels from January 1, part of a wider association agreement.

Russia bitterly opposes the 2014 EU association agreement, which sparked the overthrow of Ukraine's pro-Moscow president Viktor Yanukovich, and says the free trade deal will allow a flood of cheap EU products into one of its key markets. Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said: "Neither Ukraine nor the European Union are ready to sign a legally binding agreement which would take into account Russia's interests." —AFP

CHINA'S MOST WANTED LIVE OPENLY IN US AND CANADA

OFFICIALS PLEDGE TO TRACK DOWN AND REPATRIATE CHINESE FUGITIVES

NEW YORK: US and Canadian officials have pledged to work with China to track down and repatriate Chinese fugitives living abroad. But that cooperation is proving to have clear limits. So far, only one person on China's Operation Sky Net list of 100 most wanted fugitives - 46 of whom were believed to be in the United States and Canada - has been returned to China from either country. Another woman on the list chose to return to China from the US herself, and at least one more is in a US immigration detention center awaiting deportation. Reuters found that many of the remaining North American suspects on the list, like Florida businessman Wei Chen and British Columbia mushroom farmer Wang Qingwei, are living openly as legal immigrants and have heard nothing from the US or Canadian governments since the Sky Net list was published in April. "The list has ruined my life, but I'm not hiding," said Chen, a US citizen since 2005, in an interview with Reuters. "I don't know about the other 99 people, but I didn't do what they said." Liu Jianchao, China's minister in charge of repatriating corruption suspects said that 17 of 100 Sky Net fugitives have been returned so far, mostly from countries with close ties to China, including Singapore, Malaysia, Cambodia and Uganda.

Cooperation with limits

Neither the United States nor Canada has an extradition treaty with China, partly because they question the integrity of its judicial system and treatment of prisoners. That has meant that the only people on China's list who have so far faced deportation in North America are those found to have committed crimes or immigration violations since arriving. One of them, Yang

Xiuzhu, 69 said she entered the US on a fake passport. She is in custody awaiting deportation proceedings and has filed for asylum.

The one corruption suspect on the wanted list returned to China from North America so far was Yang's brother, who was deported for US immigration violations in September. The United States has carefully calibrated its public statements on the assistance it will offer China. A spokesman for the Department of Justice said the US will "vigorously pursue prosecutions" against fugitives sought by China "where there is alleged money laundering or other criminal activity in this country." However, US officials have also made clear that they would need to see China's evidence of crimes before offering full cooperation.

A former US security official, who asked not to be named, said China has provided virtually no evidence so far against the alleged fugitives. Canada, which elected a new federal government in October, has said it will continue to work on a deal with China to return corrupt officials in exchange for a share of the assets seized, which would be considered proceeds of the individual's crimes. While Canada does not have an extradition treaty with China, if an individual is found to have lied on a visa application - as in falsely stating that money brought into the country was obtained legally when it was not - residency can be revoked.

At least one corruption suspect in Canada and one in the US have been awarded citizenship, and many more have been granted permanent residency. Those located by Reuters questioned why they were on the list. Miami businessman Chen is accused by China of misappropriating public funds while working at the

state-owned Haomen Group. Chinese authorities declined requests from Reuters to elaborate on the charges.

Speaking publicly for the first time, Chen denied the allegations to a Reuters reporter. Chen said he suspects that officials blame him for the overall decline of Haomen's business after it entered into a poorly-fated joint venture with French company Danone group. He said he expected to hear from US officials after finding himself on the list but has not. He received a call last month from a Chinese anti-corruption officer only after Reuters made inquiries about his case there. Chen said the official would not elaborate on why he is on the list.

Huang Hong, Chen's ex-wife, is also on the Sky Net list. Chen confirmed that Hong is in the US and said she had not been contacted by either Chinese or US officials. He said she never worked at Haomen but declined to talk more about her. Hong did not reply to messages left by Reuters. Evaluating Chen's assertion of innocence or China's accusations is difficult, since the events took place more than 20 years ago. Another of the corruption suspects, Wang, wanted by China for alleged accounting fraud, operates a small mushroom farm in the Canadian town of Chilliwack. He was out making deliveries when Reuters visited, but his brother confirmed that Wang is the man on the Sky Net list and said he was unaware of Wang having been contacted by authorities.

When asked about the allegations against Wang, the brother declined to comment, but gestured toward a sagging 1920s farmhouse, its back porch littered with inexpensive children's shoes and muddy work boots. "He's a farmer," he said. Another man on the list, want-

ed for alleged corruption and bribery, lives in a modest townhouse outside Seattle. He asked not to be identified because he didn't want to attract additional attention to his situation. His wife, who answered the door to two Reuters reporters recently, said he has not been contacted by Chinese or US authorities. She declined to comment on the charges except to say, "If you offend the leadership, the leadership will retaliate."

Hunted across continents

To be sure, some individuals on the list have been pursued more aggressively. Canadian authorities for years denied Vancouver property developer Michael Ching Mo Yeung citizenship, which he claimed in a lawsuit because of corruption charges leveled against him by China. He has since applied for refugee status. Yang Xiuzhu, the woman arrested and held since last year on immigration violation charges, spoke to Reuters recently at a New York detention facility. Wearing an orange prison jumpsuit, Yang said she was arrested at her sister's New York apartment just a month after she arrived in the United States on a false passport last year.

Yang, accused of stealing \$39 million while deputy mayor of Wenzhou, in Eastern China, denied the charges against her. She called the list a political document targeting enemies of the current regime rather than a roster of true criminals. "I suspect I am a pawn between US and Chinese negotiators," she said. When her brother was returned to China, state-owned media showed him handcuffed, flanked by policemen, being led off a private jet at Fuzhou airport in southeastern China. He has not been seen in public since. —Reuters



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RETIRED POLICEMAN HELD OVER FAKE AIR FRANCE BOMB

PARIS: French police yesterday detained a retired policeman over the discovery of a fake bomb on board an Air France flight which made an emergency landing in Kenya, a legal source said. The 58-year-old man was taken into custody by border police upon his return to France while his wife was also being questioned as a witness, a day after their flight from Mauritius to Paris was diverted to Kenya. The source gave no further details about the couple, including their nationalities. A passenger alerted crew members to the device found inside a toilet cubicle on Sunday on board the Boeing 777, which was carrying 459 passengers and 14 crew.

The plane landed in Mombasa where passengers were evacuated using emergency slides before navy and police bomb experts were called in to examine the suspicious item. The object, made up of cardboard, paper and a kitchen timer, was found to pose no danger to the aircraft or its passengers, Air France chief executive Frederic Gagey said on Sunday. He said the "deduction" was that the item had been placed in a toilet cupboard by one of the passengers and said the bomb scare appeared to be the result of a "bad joke". Several passengers were questioned in Mombasa before a plane was sent to return all those on board to France.

An Air France spokesman said the airline had taken legal action after the discovery of the suspi-



MOMBASA: Passengers of an Air France plane which made an emergency landing at Moi International Airport walk in front of the airport after being evacuated from the plane in Mombasa. — AP

cious object. The airline "filed a legal complaint against unknown persons for endangering the life of others," the spokesman said. 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 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 in the past 15 days. Mauritius Prime Minister Xavier Luc Duval said airport security in the country had been boosted as a "precaution".

"All procedures at the airport have been reviewed and it was confirmed that they are scrupulously respected," Duval said after he met with security and airport chiefs.

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. — AFP



MOLENBEEK: Abaaoud name is shown on the doorbell on the house of the family of militant Abdelhamid Abaaoud in Molenbeek, Belgium. — AP

PARIS ATTACKS SUSPECT GOT PAST THREE POLICE CHECKS

BRUSSELS: Wanted fugitive Salah Abdeslam, suspected of involvement in last month's Paris attacks, got past three police checks in France as he fled to Belgium just hours after the terror assaults, a source close to the Belgian investigation said Sunday. Confirming a report in the French daily Le Parisien, the source quoted Hamza Attou, suspected along with Mohammed Amri of driving Abdeslam to Brussels the day after the coordinated November 13 attacks in which 130 people died. At the first checkpoint Attou and Amri admitted to police that they had just smoked marijuana, but were let go, the source said. All three are from the gritty Brussels suburb of Molenbeek.

The news came as Belgian police on Sunday arrested two people in connection with the probe into the Paris attacks following a raid in Brussels. Abdeslam sent a text message asking Attou and Amri to come for him, and they found him "agitated... uneasy... unwell", the source said. Then came a threat: "He told us to take him back to Brussels or he would blow up the car," Attou said, according to the source. To underscore the threat, Abdeslam bragged about killing people with a Kalashnikov, adding that his brother Brahim had blown himself up. Seven attackers blew themselves up or were killed by police in the course of the evening on November 13. Five of them have been identified.

'Not the priority

To avoid police checks, Abdeslam asked Attou and Amri to take minor roads, but they got lost and wound up on a motorway, Attou said. At the first checkpoint they were asked if they had "consumed" any substances. Abdeslam was in the back seat and said nothing, while Amri and Attou replied "yes" because they had just smoked marijuana. "The policeman said that was not good, but it was not the priority today," Attou said, according to the source.

They were not asked for their papers, but they were at the second and third police checkpoints. At the third stop, near Cambrai in the far north of France,

Abdeslam even gave his address in Molenbeek. They stopped for petrol and Abdeslam went to the toilet, walking back with his jacket open, revealing that he was not carrying the explosives which Attou and Amri had been led to believe he had on him, the source said.

Abdeslam had told them he left his brother's ID card in a car—he did not say which car—"so that he would be known the world over like Coulibaly". He was referring to Amedy Coulibaly, who killed a policeman in Paris on January 8 as part of the series of attacks that began with the massacre at the offices of the satirical weekly Charlie Hebdo. The following day Coulibaly took hostages at a kosher supermarket, killing four before being gunned down in a police operation. The three days of horror in January left 17 people dead.

'It's on, we've started'

The investigation into the November gun and suicide attacks, claimed by the Islamic State group, is being conducted in both France and Belgium, the home country of several of the attackers. A French source close to the investigation confirmed Le Parisien's report that one of the attackers at the Bataclan concert hall where 90 people were massacred sent a text message to a Belgian number saying "It's on, we've started". Two men are in detention in France on suspicion of providing lodging to the presumed mastermind of the attacks, Abdelhamid Abaaoud.

Abaaoud was killed in a police raid a few days after the attacks. In Belgium, eight men have been jailed including four accused of helping Abdeslam get away in the hours after the attacks. Belgian police on Sunday searched a home in the centre of Brussels and made two arrests in connection with the probe, federal prosecutors said. Special forces and federal police were involved in the raid, which lasted around five hours and took place close to the city's popular tourist centre. Suspected accomplices have also been arrested in Austria. Abdeslam, a 26-year-old French national, remains at large. — AFP

FLU-STRICKEN POPE FRANCIS ISSUES 'CATALOG OF VIRTUES'

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis urged Vatican bureaucrats yesterday to show more honesty, humility and sobriety as he issued a Christmas-time "catalog of virtues" for them to follow after having excoriated them last year for a host of sins. A flu-stricken Francis referred repeatedly to scandals that have been convulsing the Vatican in recent months during his annual Christmas greeting to the Vatican administration, showing he was keenly aware of the impact they were having in the broader Catholic world.

At the start of his speech to the cardinals and bishops who run the Holy See, Francis joked that after last year's public diagnosis of the "15 ailments of the Curia" he should have come up this year with the "Curial antibiotics" to treat them. In a way he did, issuing a list of virtues he said should guide their work, including honesty, sobriety, respect and humility. While the speech was more encouraging than last year's astonishing dressing down, it nevertheless implied that problems remained.

He reminded the prelates, for instance, they shouldn't take bribes. He said an honest person "does not act virtuously only

when he or she is being watched; honest persons have no fear of being caught since they never betray the trust of others." It was at the usually jovial affair last year that Francis accused the cardinals and bishops of the Vatican bureaucracy of using their careers to grab power and wealth, of living "hypocritical" double lives and of forgetting - due to "spiritual Alzheimer's" - that they're supposed to be joyful men of God.

The past year has seen two blockbuster books based on leaked internal documents detailing waste and mismanagement in parts of the Vatican, the greed of some cardinals and bishops and Francis' efforts to clean it up.

A high-ranking Vatican monsignor is among five people on trial over the leaks. One of the most egregious scandals that emerged was that the Vatican-owned Bambino Gesù pediatric hospital paid 200,000 euros to renovate the apartment of the former Vatican No. 2. This past weekend, the cardinal involved again insisted he knew nothing of the payment but pledged a 150,000 euro donation to the hospital to make amends. — AP

PODEMOS VICTORY IN CATALONIA A BLOW FOR STRUGGLING SEPARATISTS

ANTI-INDEPENDENCE PARTIES WELL AHEAD SEPARATISTS

MADRID: Left-wing newcomer Podemos, which opposes a split of Catalonia from Spain, topped polls in the northeastern region in Sunday's Spanish general election, dealing a blow to Catalan separatists already struggling with divisions in their movement. Podemos, the only national party to back a Catalan referendum on independence from Spain although it has said it would recommend voting against secession, won 12 parliamentary seats in the wealthy region of 7 million.

Altogether, parties opposing a Catalan split from Spain, including the Socialists, Ciudadanos and the People's Party (PP), garnered 30 seats. That compared with the 17 seats won by the pro-independence camp - nine for leftist party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and eight for centre-right Democracia i Llibertat, the party of acting regional government head Artur Mas. Podemos' strong showing in Catalonia echoed its robust results across the country where it surged to register third in number of parliamentary seats, beating fellow newcomer Ciudadanos into fourth place. Catalans hope a new coalition government in Madrid will soften the headline stance of the centre-right PP administration towards the region, leading to greater autonomy if falling short of full-blown independence. But it is still unclear whether that outcome would be an incentive for Catalan separatists to park their divisions and take advantage of the lack of a strong government in Madrid to push their cause. They could also choose to seek a renewed dialogue with the central government and capitalize on the fact that their combined 17 seats will likely be needed to secure a majority in an investiture vote in Madrid.

"The message in Catalonia is that the pro-independence parties have won less votes than in September's elections," said Lorenzo Navarrete, a professor of sociology at Madrid's Complutense University. "The situation of Catalonia is bad for the nationalists because the vote is split and it's



MADRID: Left wing party Podemos leader Pablo Iglesias gestures as he speaks during a press conference about the results of Spain's general elections in Madrid yesterday. — AFP

not possible to move towards independence if there is no majority of the people," he added. The separatist movement has become more muddled since the fervor at the height of the economic crisis in 2012 when frustration over taxes, unemployment and recession drove more than one million people onto the streets of Barcelona to clamor for independence. Pro-independence parties in Catalonia voted through a controversial resolution last month calling for secession from Spain and declaring judicial decisions made

at a state level not applicable in the region. But they have also failed to agree on a joint regional government. Fringe left-wing party CUP, which did not present at a national level, is due to announce later this month whether it backs Mas, who has led the region since 2010. If the extreme left party, which rejects Catalan membership of NATO and the European Union, opts to support centre-right Mas, the region can form a government. If not, fresh regional elections would have to be held by March. — Reuters

INDIA AND RUSSIA EYING NUKE, HELICOPTER DEALS

RUSSIA, HIT BY SANCTIONS, TRIES TO REGAIN INDIAN MARKET

NEW DELHI: India's prime minister is expected to promote deals for Russian nuclear reactors and military helicopters worth billions of dollars on a trip to Moscow next week, attracted by promises to transfer technology that Western nations have been slow to make. Russia and India will manufacture 200 Kamov-226T helicopters in a joint venture, a Russian and an Indian government official said, in the first big step for Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's campaign to build a domestic industrial base and reduce the military's dependence on expensive imports.

Modi, who heads for Moscow on Dec 23, will also offer Russia a site in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh to build six nuclear reactors of 1,200 megawatts (MW) each, the same sources added. That is in addition to the six Russia is constructing in neighboring Tamil Nadu state, said the officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to speak to the press. New Delhi has turned to Russia as US firm General Electric and Westinghouse, a US-based unit of Japan's Toshiba, are still weighing an entry into India's nuclear energy sector because of a law that makes reactor suppliers liable in case of an accident. Modi's "Make-in-India" push for a military that has been the world's biggest importer for the last four years has also made little headway, with negotiations stalled over issues including technology transfer and the local assembly of equipment. For Russia, India offers an alternative, fast-growing outlet for its exports as sanctions imposed by the West squeeze the economy. "While others are making promises, Russia is moving forward with the Make-in-India program," the Russian government source said.

Russia let dominance slip

Moscow, which has maintained close ties with India since the Cold War, has in recent years slipped behind the United States and Israel in securing orders in the Indian defense market,



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi

estimated to be worth \$130 billion over the next seven years. Now Russian President Vladimir Putin is banking on India's drive to manufacture at home to regain market share. "The objective is that whatever we do with Russia, that will have a 'Make-in-India' component," said Amitabh Kant, the top Indian bureaucrat leading the push to turn India into a global manufacturing base. Under an inter-government agreement to be signed during Modi's trip, Moscow will set up a production line for the light helicopters that will supply the Indian military but also eventually Russia, the Russian official said.

India's state-run Hindustan Aeronautics and Anil Ambani's Reliance Defense are in the running as local partners for the deal for the 200 twin-engined helicopters, estimated at \$1 billion, to replace India's ageing fleet of Cheetah and Chetak helicopters. "The choice of the Indian partner has been left to the Indian government. We will work with anyone the government nominates," the official said. India is also turning to Russia to secure overseas energy assets to help

fuel its economy. Indian Oil Corp and Oil India, both state-owned, are in talks with Russia's Rosneft to buy up to a 29 percent stake in a Siberian oil project, two sources said on Friday.

Russia has the advantage

The helicopter deal would be the first major contract under Modi's drive to build weapons at home that has excited local defense companies but failed to deliver any significant tenders. As some Indian manufacturers look to Western firms for the tie-ups needed to bring in technology and build locally, Reliance is forging closer ties with Russia to jumpstart its nascent bid to develop a defense business from scratch. A Reliance executive, who asked not to be named, said negotiations to win the joint helicopter venture would not start until the two governments had agreed the deal. Hindustan Aeronautics did not respond to a request for comment.

A source close to Rosoboronexport, Russia's state-owned arms exporter, said India would produce 140 of the choppers and Russia the remaining 60. Pre-contract work is underway and the two sides expect to clarify the agreement during Modi's visit, the source said. An Indian government official confirmed the plan to sign the helicopter deal as well as the proposed offer of Andhra Pradesh as the location of the next set of reactors to be built by Russian state-owned nuclear firm Rosatom.

The two sides have not given any value for the deal. Rosatom spokesman Sergey Novikov said there were no plans yet to sign any contracts during Modi's visit. Nandan Unnikrishnan, an expert on India-Russia relations at the Observer Research Foundation, said that despite New Delhi's tilt towards the West for military hardware in recent years, Russia retained an edge in many areas. "Russia has a distinct advantage over everyone in understanding how Indian bureaucracy works, given the level of trust that exists in the Indian establishment vis-a-vis Russia," he said. — Reuters



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ISLAMIC STATE TRIES TO BUILD STRENGTH TO REPLACE TALEBAN

IS RADIO SHOW SEEKS NEW RECRUITS IN AFGHANISTAN

JALALABAD: Islamic State militants in eastern Afghanistan have taken to the airwaves to win recruits as they try to build strength and replace the Taleban as the leading force in the Islamist insurgency. Officials have been increasingly concerned by the broadcasts, which encourage young people to find a sense of direction in the radical movement. If the broadcasts take hold, officials fear they will feed off a growing sense of hopelessness among many injured to war and struggling to get by in an increasingly tough economic climate. "Most of our people are jobless and this radio will encourage lots of people to join their ranks," said Ahmad Ali Hazrat, head of the provincial council in Nangarhar.

"Now Daesh are seven kilometers outside Jalalabad city and if the government doesn't act soon it will expand its broadcast and recruit even from Kabul," he said, using the term widely used for Islamic State. The 90-minute daily Pashto language broadcast, called "Voice of the Caliphate," consists mainly of interviews, messages and songs about Islamic State. It can be heard in Nangarhar, the eastern province where Islamic State has established its stronghold. It controls several districts wrested from the Taleban, who are seeking to re-establish their hard-line Islamist regime after being toppled by US-led military intervention in 2001.



JALALABAD: Afghan children play with tires in a village on the outskirts of Jalalabad in Nangarhar province. — AFP

In one program, an Islamic State member said the broadcasts were to counter the negative public image of the group fostered by reports of extreme violence. "There are many projects to defame us," the member, identified as Jan Aqa Shafaq, said.

"Most of our young generation, these 'lipstick young' who shave closely and wear the kind of clothing that does not distinguish them from females, create such propaganda." Islamic State is a relatively new force in Afghanistan and there is some dispute about how strong it is, how many members it commands and how closely it is linked operationally to the movement's main arm in Iraq and Syria.

Security officials say many members are former Taleban fighters who have fallen out with the current leadership or who are seeking a more extreme form of militant activity.

Last week, the commander of international forces in Afghanistan, US General John Campbell, said there were between 1,000 and 3,000 members of the movement in Afghanistan and he said its influence would spread if left unchecked. Officials in Nangarhar say they had so far been unable to block the broadcasts, which appear to shift location regularly. "They move from one place to another," said Attallah Khogyani, a spokesman for the Nangarhar governor. "It makes it difficult for us." — Reuters

SUPREME COURT REJECTS PLEA TO REVERSE GANG-RAPIST'S RELEASE

'JUSTICE HAS FAILED US,' INDIAN GANG-RAPE VICTIM'S FATHER SAYS

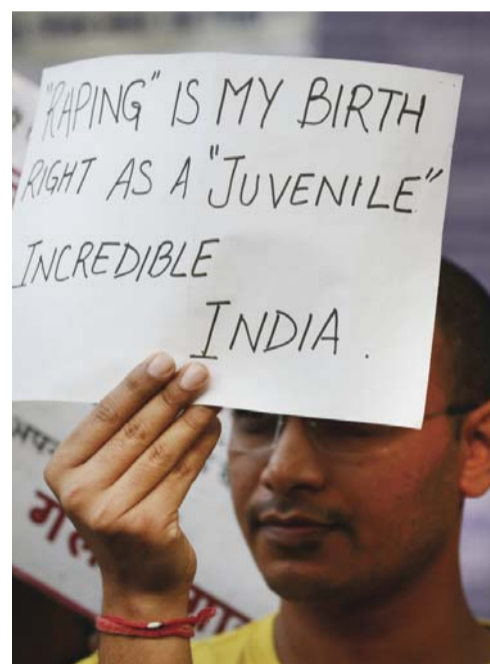
NEW DELHI: India's Supreme Court yesterday rejected an appeal against the release of the youngest convict in a fatal gang-rape, sparking fury from the victim's parents who said the ruling was a betrayal of women. Amid growing outrage at the freeing of the 20-year-old, judges said there were no legal grounds to allow a petition by the Delhi Commission for Women, which wanted to reverse his release from a youth correctional facility.

At a hearing presided over by Justice AK Goel and UU Lalit, the court said "there is nothing in the law" that would allow them to order him back behind bars and he therefore could not be detained any longer. The ruling was greeted with despair by the parents of the victim, 23-year-old Jyoti Singh, who has become the symbol of the plight of women in a country with frightening levels of sexual violence.

The father of a student who died after being gang-raped said the family had been failed by Indian justice. "What can I say? There are no words to describe our disappointment," Badrinath Singh, the father of the victim Jyoti Singh said. "We don't understand all these laws. We only know that the system has failed us: Her rape and subsequent death from internal injuries three years ago sparked some of the biggest demonstrations in India's recent history, which intensified after being broken up by heavy-handed police tactics.

It also triggered deep soul-searching about the treatment of women in a country where rape victims are often stigmatized and frequently pressured by police and relatives to drop allegations. "There are no words to describe our disappointment," her father Badrinath Singh said. "We don't understand all these laws. We only know that the system has failed us: The convict, who cannot be named for legal reasons, was one of a group of six who abducted the young physiotherapy student after she had spent an evening at the movies with a male friend.

They lured her onto an off-duty bus and then took



NEW DELHI: An Indian protester holds a placard during a demonstration against the release of a juvenile rapist in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

it in turns to rape her and violate her with a metal rod before throwing her onto the road. She died of her injuries nearly a fortnight later in a Singapore hospital. One of the six committed suicide while on remand and the other four adult attackers were given the death penalty, although the sentence has yet to be carried out pending an appeal.

The youngest of the convicts was sent to a juvenile

correctional facility for a three-year term—the maximum allowed under Indian law. Jyoti's mother, Asha Devi, said Monday's ruling showed India had "not learned any lessons from this case" and urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to introduce laws with tougher sentences for sex attacks. "They have basically handed young criminals a licence that says before the age of 18 you can rape girls, do whatever you want, because our laws do not have any provisions to punish you," she said. "They only care about men... women are only betrayed, like they always have been."

Both parents were briefly detained on Sunday after police broke up a protest against the release on security grounds. But they attended a fresh demonstration Monday near parliament that drew crowds from far and wide. "Modi is our prime minister and I have just one question for him: 'If a case like my daughter's is being ignored, then what kind of murder, what kind of a rape, will it take for the law to be changed?'" the mother said as she arrived at the rally. Some protesters wore T-shirts with slogans such as "Hang the Rapist" while others carried placards with drawings of a noose.

Vikash Sharma travelled from the neighboring state of Haryana to show his solidarity with the parents. "He should at least have been given life imprisonment," Sharma said. "The law must be amended to send the message that those who commit heinous crimes can't get away with it if they are minors." News that he had been freed from the correctional facility and was now being sheltered by a charity was only revealed on Sunday when the juvenile justice board signed his release papers. However police sources said he was in fact handed over to the charity—which has not been named over fears of an attack on its premises on December 9. Under Indian law, the victim of a sex attack cannot be named but the parents last week called for people to use Jyoti's name in a bid to end the stigma often attached to victims. — Agencies



CHIANG MAI: Thai rescue workers try to find survivors following a bus crash in Doi Saket district, 30 kilometers from the northern city of Chiang Mai. — AFP

MALAYSIAN FAMILY'S HOLIDAY TURNS TO TRAGEDY; 13 KILLED

KUALA LUMPUR: A horrific bus crash in Thailand which killed 13 Malaysian tourists and severely injured several others left four members of the same family dead, while two survived, a report said yesterday. The four dead spanned three generations, including an 85-year-old grandmother and her 39-year-old granddaughter, according to the The Star newspaper. "We are all in shock," a relative of the family in Malaysia told the paper.

Some 22 Malaysians, mostly elderly, had gone to Chiang Mai on December 17 for a five-day tour organized by Malaysian operator Chiu Travel. The accident occurred on Sunday in Doi Saket district 30 kilometers from the northern city of Chiang Mai. Images posted online by local news outlets showed scene of devastation as rescuers battled to reach those trapped inside the smashed bus, which had come to rest in thick foliage with its roof caved in.

In one picture white sheeting had been draped over victims' remains. Chiu Travel manager Terence Yung said that the company had flown 15 Malaysian relatives of victims to Thailand and they were expected to reach Chiang Mai

Monday evening to help identify bodies. Thai police said a total of 14 people were killed in the accident, 13 Malaysians and one Thai. Malaysia's foreign ministry and Chiu Travel confirmed the number of Malaysians killed in the crash as 13. Chiu Travel said one Thai tour guide had died as well. The Malaysian foreign ministry said in a statement Monday that four Malaysians were severely injured while another five sustained injuries which are "not life threatening".

Yung said his company was still trying to find out how the accident happened but said, based on information he had received from Thailand, the crash was a result of the driver trying to overtake another vehicle. "The only way we can stop these accidents is for the tour leader to ensure the local (Thai) drivers don't drive recklessly," he said. Prime Minister Najib Razak expressed sadness on his Facebook page. "I am saddened to hear news of the accident in Chiang Mai where 13 Malaysians died and express my condolences to the victims' families," he wrote. "The government would ensure every effort is made in bringing home the victims' bodies and help the victims' families." — AFP

INDIAN FINANCE MINISTER SUES DELHI CHIEF OVER GRAFT CLAIMS

NEW DELHI: India's finance minister yesterday filed a defamation suit against Delhi's leader who had accused him of large-scale corruption in his former role as head of the capital's cricket association. Arun Jaitley personally went to a Delhi court under tight security to sue Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal and five other members of his Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for making "false and defamatory" statements against him and his family members.

The minister sought 100 million rupees (\$1.5 million) in damages over Kejriwal's "baseless and wrong" allegations that he misused funds during his 13-year tenure as president of the Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) that ended in 2013. "Jaitley has not taken any pecuniary advantage from DDCA at all. There are DDCA records which can be summoned," his lawyer Siddharth Luthra told the court, according to the Press Trust of India.

"These statements by the AAP leaders are politically motivated," he added. A bitter war of words erupted between the two last week when federal investigators raided Kejriwal's Delhi office in connection with a corruption case

involving his principal secretary. Kejriwal in turn accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of waging a political vendetta and branded him as "a coward and a psychopath", alleging officers were sent to find files related to "the DDCA scam that implicates Jaitley". Jaitley has since rejected the claims repeatedly and has described them as the chief minister's "propaganda technique to deflect attention when you yourselves are in the dock".

Kejriwal hit back at the minister on Twitter after the criminal and civil suits, asking Jaitley to prove his innocence to an independent enquiry committee. "Jaitley should not try to intimidate us with court cases. Our fight against corruption will continue," he posted. The party of the firebrand activist-turned-politician seized power in February on the platform of providing a corruption-free government in the capital. But Kejriwal has faced flak several times from opponents over a series of scandals involving his party members. In October he sacked one of his ministers for alleged bribe-taking, months after his law minister resigned following his arrest for acquiring a fake law degree. — AFP



DHAKA: In this photograph taken on April 25, 2013, Bangladeshi volunteers and rescue workers are pictured at the scene after an eight-storey building collapsed in Savar, on the outskirts of the capital. — AFP

BANGLADESH COURT ORDERS MASS ARRESTS OVER FACTORY DISASTER

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court yesterday ordered the arrest of 24 people and seizure of their assets after they failed to turn up to face murder charges over the collapse of a garment factory that killed more than 1,100 people. Senior judicial magistrate Mohammad Al Amin issued the warrants after his court accepted the murder charges against the 24 fugitives for the collapse in April 2013 of the Rana Plaza factory compound, one of the world's worst industrial disasters.

"The court accepted the charge sheet against 41 people who have been charged with murder over the Rana Plaza disaster," prosecutor Anwarul Kabir said. "The court issued arrest warrants against 24 of them as they have absconded. It also ordered the seizure of their property," he said, adding police have been asked to report on their arrests by January 27. Kabir said the court had accepted the charges against four government factory and building inspectors despite attempts by their departments to shield them from prosecution by citing public servant immunity rules.

The case was delayed by "several months" due to the non-clearance by the various departments, Kabir said, adding that prosecutors now expect the trial to start by April next year. Among the 41 who have been

charged with murder is Sohel Rana, the owner of the nine-storey complex on the outskirts of Dhaka which collapsed on April 24, 2013, at the start of the working day. Rana, who is in custody awaiting trial, became Bangladesh's public enemy number one after survivors recounted how they were forced to start work despite complaints about cracks developing in the walls the previous day.

At least 1,138 people are known to have died in the tragedy, the worst in the country's history. Rescue workers struggled for weeks to retrieve the bodies from the ruins but several people are still unaccounted for. More than 2,000 people were injured, including many who lost limbs. Seven owners of factories housed in the complex and 12 government officials responsible for safety and inspections were also charged with murder.

Workers 'slapped'

Rana's parents, who jointly owned the building with him, and the mayor and councillor of the town of Savar where it was located, were also charged. Those facing arrest including "associates of Rana" who "slapped and forced" the workers to join the shift,

Kabir said. In a separate case Rana and 41 others have been charged with violating building codes and with illegally extending the six-storey building, which was initially approved as a shopping mall, into a nine-storey factory complex. The disaster highlighted appalling safety problems in Bangladesh's \$30 billion garment industry and triggered global concern as protesters marched to demand action from Western retailers.

A host of such retailers had clothing made at the five factories housed at Rana Plaza, including Italy's Benetton, Spain's Mango and the British low-cost chain Primark. The disaster prompted sweeping reforms including new safety inspections and higher wages in the industry which employs about four million workers. Two groups of top retailers such as Walmart and H&M have since launched drives to clean up the sourcing factories. They hired engineers to review fire, building and electrical safety in thousands of garment plants. Under the clean-up campaign, engineers have identified safety problems in each of the plants, and drawn up recommendations for upgrades as well as setting deadlines for the owners to implement remedial measures. — AFP



A fisherman runs on a rocky reef in the Mediterranean sea near the Lebanese border yesterday. — AFP

HEZB HOLDS MARTYR'S FUNERAL FOR KANTAR

Continued from Page 1

We will exercise this right God willing," Nasrallah vowed. Israel has welcomed news of Kantar's death without claiming responsibility for the air strike that killed him, allegedly with four missiles fired from Lake Tiberias in northern Israel. Shortly after Kantar's release from an Israeli prison in 2008, however, a top Israeli security official had warned he was a "target". Hezbollah played a key role in Kantar's release after he had spent 30 years in Israeli jails, becoming known as the longest-serving Arab prisoner. Shortly after his release, he joined Hezbollah.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said he became "head of the Syrian resistance for the liberation of the Golan", a group launched two years ago by Hezbollah in the region, most of which Israel seized in the 1967 Middle East war. "In his seven years of freedom, Samir was involved in the resistance (against Israel) in Lebanon and when the first signs of resistance appeared on the occupied Golan front, he was one of the first to join up and Israel tried six times to kill him in Lebanon and Syria," his brother Bassam said in an article published in Lebanese daily Al-Akhbar. — AFP

TALEBAN BOMBER KILLS 6 US TROOPS...

Continued from Page 1

Rasoolyar's comments come a day after he posted a desperate plea on Facebook to President Ashraf Ghani, warning the entire province was at risk of falling to the Taliban. The government in Kabul said reinforcements had been dispatched to Sangin, while denying claims of large casualties and rejecting that the district was at risk of being captured. But trapped residents told AFP that roads to Sangin had been heavily mined by insurgents and exhausted soldiers besieged in government buildings were begging for food rations.

The grim assessment bore striking similarities to the security situation that led to the brief fall of the northern city of Kunduz in September - the biggest Taliban victory in 14 years of war. The fall of Helmand would deal another stinging blow to Afghan forces who have struggled to rein in the ascendant insurgency without the full backing of NATO forces. Sangin, a strategically important district at the center of Afghanistan's lucrative opium trade, has been the scene of fierce fighting for years between the Taliban and NATO forces. British troops fought deadly battles in Sangin for four years to little effect, before US marines replaced them in late 2010 and finally pulled out themselves last year. — AFP

NOD TO NEW ANTI-GRAFT BILL, KD 600M...

Continued from Page 1

funding and the approval of the new anti-corruption law. It will be left for MPs to decide whether to debate the grilling today or tomorrow and then discuss the other two important issues. Health Minister Ali Al-Obaidi still has the right to request a two-week delay for the debate.

MPs Rakan Al-Nasef and Hamdan Al-Azemi have submitted the grilling claiming that the minister committed a number of financial and administrative violations including not taking any action against companies that were charging Indian nurses for jobs in Kuwait's hospitals. The Cabinet

yesterday made no reference to the grilling, a normal practice on the eve of any grilling, which may be an indication that the grilling is not likely to be debated this week. In this case, the grilling will be delayed until after the New Year break.

The Assembly is scheduled to debate a government draft law requesting KD 6.2 billion in additional funding for arms purchases in light of the regional turmoil. Four committees met on Sunday and decided to cut the funds to KD 3.2 billion without any government objection, but still there were differences on whether the allocations should be included in the state budget or in a special budget.

BLATTER, PLATINI GET 8-YEAR BANS

Continued from Page 1

Blatter, FIFA's president since 1998, was fined 50,000 Swiss francs (\$50,000) while Platini, the head of UEFA, Europe's governing body, was fined 80,000 Swiss francs. FIFA suspended the pair and launched an inquiry in October after Swiss prosecutors placed Blatter under investigation for criminal mismanagement over the two million Swiss franc payment that was caught with special software.

A statement by the FIFA tribunal said Blatter and Platini were guilty of "abusive execution" of their powers over the payment the two men said was for consultancy work carried out between 1999 and 2002. The judges said there was a conflict of interest and "no legal basis" for the transfer in any written agreement. "Neither in his written statement nor in his personal hearing was Mr Blatter able to demonstrate another legal basis for this payment. His assertion of an oral agreement was determined as not convincing and was rejected by the chamber." The court said: "Mr Blatter's actions did not show commitment to an ethical attitude, failing to respect all applicable laws and regulations as well as FIFA's regulatory framework."

The judgement was even more damning of the French legend Platini. "Mr Platini failed to act with complete credibility and integrity, showing unawareness of the importance of his duties and concomitant obligations and responsibilities." Neither Blatter nor Platini can go near the FIFA headquarters in Zurich. Blatter cannot speak on behalf of the world body and Platini cannot even act as a television commentator for the European Championships he has helped to organize in France next year.

Both strongly deny any wrongdoing. Blatter spent eight hours before a FIFA court last Thursday while Platini boycotted his hearing on Friday saying he had been "condemned" in advance. Blatter told a press conference he felt he had been "betrayed" and used as a "punching ball". He said he would go to FIFA's appeal committee, the Court of Arbitration for Sports and the Swiss courts if necessary. "Something that is not true cannot be proven," he said. "I will fight for me and I will fight for FIFA," said Blatter,

unshaven and with a sticking plaster on his cheek, but defiant. He said FIFA's ethics committee had no right to relieve him of his duties. The committee operates independently of FIFA; its members are appointed by the FIFA Congress and cannot be members of any standing committees. He even ended the press conference, held symbolically at FIFA's old headquarters, with Arnold Schwarzenegger's old line: "I'll be back."

Blatter was campaigning for reelection in 2011 but insisted he had not offered a bribe to Platini. "Never in my life I would offer money to get something. This hurts me really in my heart," he said. Platini said in a statement that the FIFA decision was a "masquerade" intended to "sully" his name. He said he would go to the Court of Arbitration for Sport and civil courts. "This verdict is just a pathetic cover-up for a desire to eliminate me from the world of football."

FIFA said that they had 10 days to appeal to its judiciary. Blatter would be fighting for his reputation. For Platini, the ban rules him out of the FIFA election to be held on Feb 26. The deadline for candidates to be registered and pass an integrity check is Jan 26. With FIFA's reputation in tatters after the arrest of several top officials, Blatter announced four days after winning re-election to a fifth term in May that he would stand down and call a new election.

Seven FIFA officials were arrested in a luxury Zurich hotel two days before the election congress. Now US authorities have charged 39 football officials and sports business executives over more than \$200 million in bribes for football television and marketing deals. Swiss prosecutors are in parallel investigating FIFA's management and the award of the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar. Facing pressure from governments and the International Olympic Committee for major reforms, there are currently five candidates to take over FIFA: Asian football head Sheikh Salman bin Ibrahim Al-Khalifa of Bahrain, South African politician and tycoon Tokyo Sexwale, former FIFA vice president Prince Ali bin al Hussein of Jordan, UEFA general-secretary Gianni Infantino and Jerome Champagne, a former FIFA assistant general secretary from France. — Agencies

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P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
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Focus

SANDERS STRUGGLES
TO GAIN EDGE IN
PRESIDENTIAL BID

By Lisa Lerer

The third Democratic presidential debate opened with an apology and ended with compliments. For months, the Democratic primary contest has been a relatively civil affair - offering a tone that party leaders see as a much-needed contrast to the raucous Republican field. A day after a raucous dispute over a breach of private campaign data by Vermont Sen Bernie Sanders' campaign rolled the Democratic Party, a political truce between Hillary Clinton and Sanders largely held - even as Sanders' aides seemed itching for a more aggressive confrontation with the frontrunner. "I apologize to Secretary Clinton," said Sanders. "This is not the type of campaign that we run."

Mindful of the grassroots support she'll need to fuel a general election bid should she capture the nomination, Clinton accepted his apology, instead, keeping her criticism carefully aimed at her GOP rivals - particularly businessman Donald Trump. "I'm very clear that we have a distinct difference between those of us on this stage tonight and all of our Republican counterparts," she said, in her opening remarks. "We have to prevent the Republicans from rolling back the progress that we've made."

Clinton's brush-off of the data breach controversy underscores her confidence in a race in which Sanders is struggling to regain momentum as it shifts away from an economic message - the core of his campaign - to one over national security, because of attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California. Sanders' pledge to avoid personal attacks in favor of policy disputes has seemed to frustrate his aides at times, who have occasionally gone on the offensive on their own. Earlier this month, they pulled digital ads linking Clinton to Wall Street. Sanders also apologized earlier this year after his senior staffers publicly remarked that Clinton would make a good vice president.

The Sanders campaign's handling of the data breach this week emphasized the apparent disconnect between the candidate and his staff. His aides came out swinging on Friday after revelations that their staffers stole some of Clinton's voter data, using a clumsy response by the Democratic National Committee to charge party leaders with favoritism and insinuate that her campaign also lifted some of their information. Sanders did not follow their lead. Instead, he chose to forgo the political opportunity, just as he did in the first debate when he dismissed controversy over Clinton's use of a private email server as secretary of state.

Challenges

The apparent distance between Sanders and his aides may be designed to benefit their candidate by disassociating him from the kind of political tactics that could undermine his truth-telling reputation. But it also highlights the organizational challenges Sanders faces as he tries to turn an insurgent candidacy into a campaign that can topple a world famous political celebrity with a solid double-digit lead.

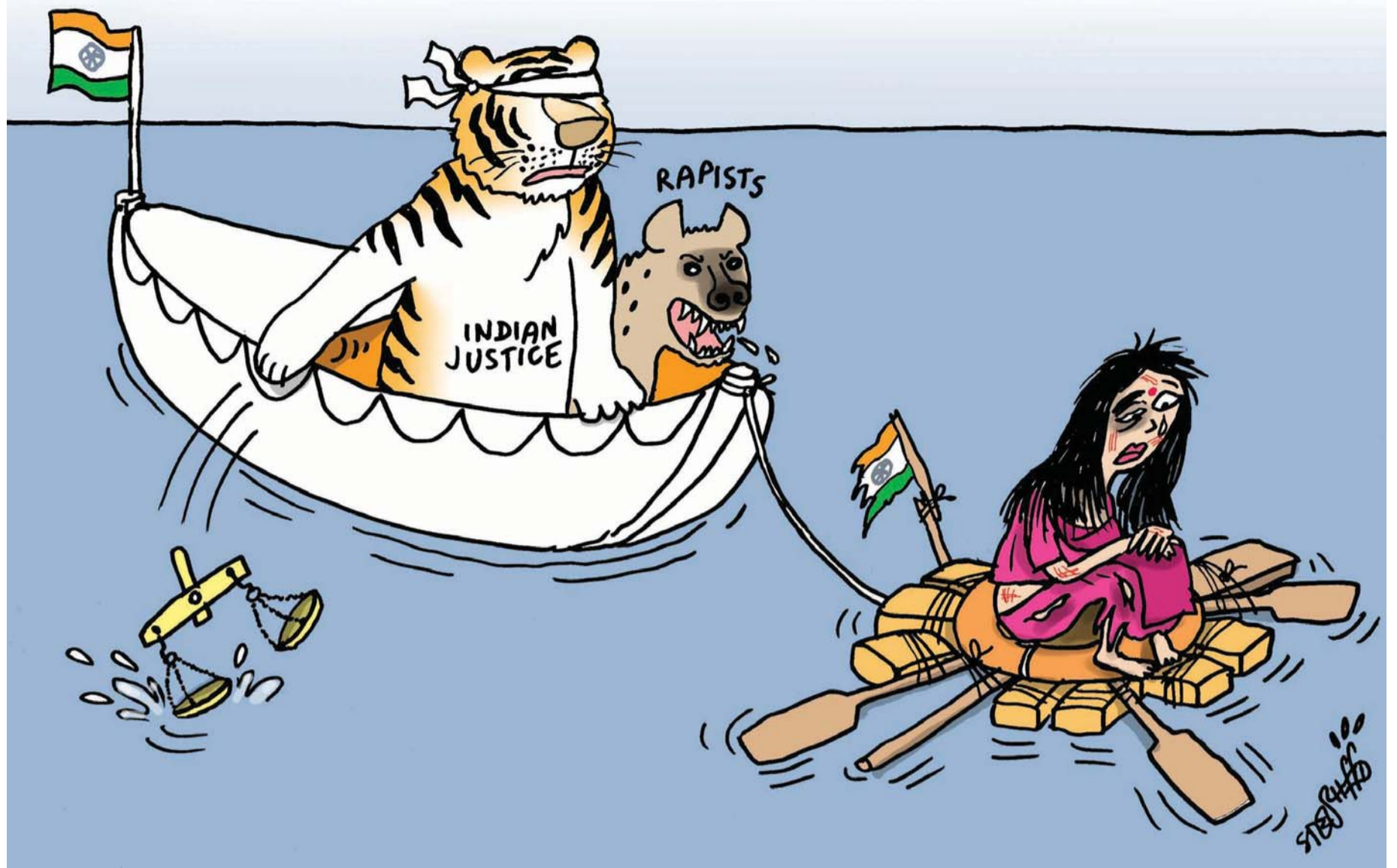
Clinton has moved quickly to capitalize on the new focus of the race, touting her experience as secretary of state and casting herself as an experienced hand in a dangerous world - an argument her aides believe will play well against both Sanders and non-establishment GOP contenders like Trump. She also tackled economic issues, emphasizing differences, not so much with her Democratic rivals, as with the GOP. "Now, this is getting to be fun," said Sanders, after Clinton resisted efforts by the moderators to cut her off during a dispute over taxes.

Over the next six weeks, it will become clear if Democratic voters agree. But while most polls have Clinton leading by more than 20 percentage points nationally, the contest remains tight in the crucial early voting states of Iowa and New Hampshire, the latter in which Sanders has an advantage as the longtime senator of neighboring Vermont. His aides believe that wins in those two states would give them momentum heading into the next contests in South Carolina and Nevada, territory where he's struggled to gain traction over the former first lady.

Sanders' campaign has successfully turned grassroots energy into a sizable war chest, announcing last week that it had received 2 million contributions - a milestone only matched by President Barack Obama in his re-election campaign. But to turn that level of early energy into a national victory, Sanders must find a way to expand his appeal in a race in which economic uncertainty is increasingly taking a back seat to security concerns.

Though there were moments of tension over national security in Saturday night's debate, Sanders failed to score a clear hit on Clinton. On national security, he reiterated years-old criticism of her vote for the 2003 Iraq invasion, accusing her of being "too much into regime change". Clinton quickly shot back: "With all due respect, Senator, you voted for regime change with respect to Libya." —AP

INDIA GANG RAPE CONVICT FREED



LEBANON'S TRASH DISASTER CONTINUES

By Philip Issa

Lebanon's trash collection crisis which set off huge protests this summer is entering its sixth month, but you would hardly know it in Beirut. Not only are the capital's streets kept relatively garbage-free, but the country's politicians appear in no hurry to resolve the catastrophe. Instead, trash is pushed to the periphery, piled in hills near the mouth of the city's river, attracting a fly infestation that has plagued Beirut's easternmost residents since early November.

On the other side of the river, trash mounds along the bank reach the height of roadway overpasses. "The situation is disastrous," said Rachid Rahme, a physician at Lebanon's Sacre Coeur Hospital. "I don't like to get involved in politics, but I'm sure they could find a way to deal with it rather than dealing with it in this way."

Frustration over the mounting garbage sparked a protest movement under the banner "You Stink," an epithet aimed at the government, which brought tens of thousands of demonstrators into Beirut's streets over the summer. The collection crisis erupted in July after authorities closed the primary landfill for Beirut and the surrounding coastal governorate without providing an alternative.

The demonstrations were a catharsis of discontent directed at the political class, which has walled itself off from popular opinion and failed to provide other basic services such as water, electricity and drainage. But those

protests have largely fizzled out, owing to a mix of canny political maneuvering and repressive crackdowns. In September, young men openly identifying themselves as supporters of the country's Parliament speaker descended on the protesters, carrying knives and throwing punches and stones. Every time

violence, twenty-five years after the formal conclusion of its civil war, the threat of disorder scared protesters off. "The political authorities played it smart to defuse us," said Assad Thebian, one of the organizers behind the politically unaffiliated campaign. The state's fastidious efforts to keep the capital's streets

Cabinet will deliberate the proposal Monday, but without a president of the republic, Salam has been hesitant to authorize decrees without consensus.

Agriculture Minister Akram Chehayeb, one of the architects of the plan, says the country has no choice but to export after a tortured national process to open new landfills collapsed. "There's no trust in the government, so the people refused to accept sanitary landfills. And until we restart government institutions and elect a president, we are stuck with the most expensive solution," he said. The country has not had parliamentary elections since 2009 and has failed to elect a president since 2014.

With over one million war refugees entering Lebanon from neighboring Syria since 2011 and the country's parties openly allied with rival sides in that conflict, Lebanon's politicians say they have to move cautiously to preserve the fragile political balance. A few municipalities have launched their own recycling initiatives, but many others are simply burning their garbage, often in residential areas. Air contamination in these areas is now more than 400 times worse than pollution in the country's industrial areas, a recent study by the American University of Beirut revealed.

Rahme said the consequences can be disastrous and already gastroenteritis cases are up 30 percent since last year. "There are other diseases that can happen ... It can cause cancer in the long run and asthma in the short term," he warned. —AP



In this Dec 17, 2015 photo, a car passes by a pile of garbage in Karantina in east Beirut. —AP

demonstrators attempted to approach the parliament building, security forces fired their weapons into the air, sprayed tear gas and water cannons, and arrested dozens.

To a country still accustomed to spasms of

clean also helped pacify the population. The latest initiative to solve the crisis, a proposal to export the waste, appears set to run aground, after a minister complained about its exorbitant cost. Prime Minister Tammam Salam's

US POWER GRID VULNERABLE TO FOREIGN HACKS

By Garance Burke

Security researcher Brian Wallace was on the trail of hackers who had snatched a California university's housing files when he stumbled into a larger nightmare: Cyberattackers had opened a pathway into the networks running the United States' power grid. Digital clues pointed to Iranian hackers. And Wallace found that they had already taken passwords, as well as engineering drawings of dozens of power plants, at least one with the title "Mission Critical". The drawings were so detailed that experts say skilled attackers could have used them, along with other tools and malicious code, to knock out electricity flowing to millions of homes.

Wallace was astonished. But this breach, AP has found, was not unique. About a dozen times in the last decade, sophisticated foreign hackers have gained enough remote access to control the operations networks that keep the lights on, according to top experts who spoke only on condition of anonymity due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter.

The public almost never learns the details about these types of attacks - they're rarer but also more intricate and potentially dangerous than data theft. Information about the government's response to these hacks is often protected and sometimes classified; many are never even reported to the government. These intrusions have not caused the kind of cascading blackouts that are feared by the intelligence community. But so many attackers have stowed away in the largely investor-owned systems that run the US electric grid that experts say they likely have the capability to strike at will.

And that's what worries Wallace and other cybersecurity experts most. "If the geopolitical situation changes and Iran wants to target these facilities, if they have this kind of information it will make it a lot easier," said Robert M Lee, a former US Air Force cyberwarfare operations officer.

In 2012 and 2013, in well-publicized attacks, Russian hackers successfully sent and received encrypted commands to US public utilities and power generators; some private firms concluded this was an effort to position interlopers to act in the event of a political crisis. And the Department of Homeland Security announced about a year ago that a separate hacking campaign, believed by

some private firms to have Russian origins, had injected software with malware that allowed the attackers to spy on US energy companies.

Backdoors

"You want to be stealth," said Lillian Ablon, a cybersecurity expert at the RAND Corporation. "That's the ultimate power, because when you need to do something you are already in place." The hackers have gained access to an ageing, outdated power system. Many of the substations and equipment that move power across the US are decrepit and were never built with network security in mind; hooking them up to the Internet over the last decade has given hackers new backdoors in. Distant wind farms, home solar panels, smart meters and other networked devices must be

Corp, a power producer with 82 plants operating in 18 states and Canada.

Private firms have alleged other recent hacks of networks and machinery tied to the US power grid were carried out by teams from within Russia and China, some with governmental support. Even the Islamic State group is trying to hack American power companies, a top Homeland Security official told industry executives in October. The attack involving Calpine is particularly disturbing because the cyber-spies grabbed so much, according to previously unreported documents and interviews.

Cybersecurity experts say the breach began at least as far back as Aug 2013. Calpine spokesman Brett Kerr said the company's information was stolen from a contractor that does business with Calpine. He said the stolen diagrams and pass-

words were old - some diagrams dated to 2002 - and presented no threat, though some outside experts disagree. Kerr would not say whether the configuration of the power plants' operations networks - also valuable information - remained the same as when the intrusion occurred, or whether it was possible the attackers still had a foothold.

The hackers stole user names and passwords that could be used to connect remotely to Calpine's networks, which were being maintained by a data security company. Even if some of the information was outdated, experts say skilled hackers could have found a way to update the passwords and slip past firewalls to get into the operations network. Eventually, they say, the intruders could have shut down generating stations, fouled communications networks and possibly caused a blackout near the plants.

They also took detailed engineering drawings of devices that communicate with gas turbines, boilers and other crucial equipment attackers would need to hack specific plants. Cylance researchers said the intruders stored their stolen goods on seven unencrypted FTP servers requiring no authentication to access details about Calpine's plants. Jumbled in the folders was code that could be used to spread malware to other companies without being traced back to the attackers' computers, as well as handcrafted software designed to mask that the Internet Protocol addresses they were using were in Iran.

Calpine didn't know its information had been compromised until it was informed by Cylance, Kerr said. Iranian UN Mission spokesman Hamid Babaei did not return calls or address questions emailed by AP. Cylance notified the FBI, which warned the US energy sector in an unclassified bulletin last December that a group using Iranian-based IP addresses had targeted the industry.

Homeland Security spokesman SY Lee said that his agency is coordinating efforts to strengthen grid cybersecurity nationwide and to raise awareness about evolving threats to the electric sector through industry trainings and risk assessments. As Deputy Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas acknowledged in an interview, however, "we are not where we need to be" on cybersecurity.

That's partly because the grid is largely privately owned and has entire sections that fall outside federal regulation, which experts argue leaves the sector poorly defended against a growing universe of hackers seeking to access its networks. As Deputy Energy Secretary Elizabeth Sherwood Randall said in a speech earlier this year, "If we don't protect the energy sector, we are putting every other sector of the economy in peril." —AP



In this May 20, 2015 photo, system control center operator Ryan Cox sits at his computer workstation at an AEP Transmission Operations Center in New Albany, Ohio. —AP

remotely monitored and controlled, which opens up the broader system to fresh points of attack.

Hundreds of contractors sell software and equipment to energy companies, and attackers have successfully used those outside companies as a way to get inside networks tied to the grid. Attributing attacks is notoriously tricky. Neither US officials nor cybersecurity experts would or could say if the Islamic Republic of Iran was involved in the attack Wallace discovered involving Calpine

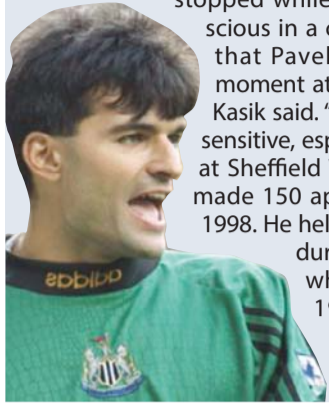
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FORMER NEWCASTLE KEEPER IN CRITICAL CONDITION

PRAGUE: Former Newcastle United goalkeeper Pavel Srnec is in critical condition after the 47-year-old collapsed while jogging in his hometown near Ostrava, a Sparta Prague football team spokesman said yesterday. The hospital declined to provide further details at his family's request but media reports citing his agent said the current Sparta goalkeeping coach's heart stopped while he was jogging and that he remained unconscious in a critical condition. "Unfortunately we can confirm that Pavel Srnec is in a very serious condition at the moment at a hospital in Ostrava," Sparta spokesman Ondrej Kasik said. "We won't be giving any more information as it is sensitive, especially for his family." Srnec, who also had stints at Sheffield Wednesday, West Ham United and Portsmouth, made 150 appearances for the Magpies between 1991 and 1998. He helped Newcastle to win promotion to the top flight during the 1992-93 season. The former international, who was a member of the national squad at the 1996 European Championship when the Czech Republic lost to Germany in the final, was a fan favourite in Newcastle. —Reuters



BOGDAN ACCEPTS BLAME FOR WATFORD GOAL

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool goalkeeper Adam Bogdan has held his hands up and admitted blame for his clanger that led to Watford's opening goal in their 3-0 victory over the Reds on Sunday. Bogdan dropped the ball in his area when trying to complete what should have been a simple take from a corner, allowing Nathan Ake to poke the ball home. And although the Hungarian, who was standing in for regular No.1 Simon Mignolet, claims he was fouled by Ake as he went to grab the loose ball, he accepts that he should have never dropped it in the first place. "I dropped the ball, of course," the 28-year-old told Liverpool's official website. "There's a mistake there. "After that I felt my hand was on the ball and I was going to bring it out. "Obviously he knocked it out of my hand-but we are talking about split-seconds. "Through the bodies of course it's hard (for the referee) to see. I'm not blaming anybody but myself to drop the first ball. "Watford were really good but we-and myself-gave them a head start." Odion Ighalo went on to score a brace as Liverpool lost for the third time under new German manager Jurgen Klopp, who actually has a worse Premier League record this season since taking over from the sacked Brendan Rodgers than did his predecessor.

HAMMETT NAMED AS SUNWOLVES COACH

TOKYO: Former All Blacks hooker Mark Hammett was unveiled as the head coach of Japan's new Super Rugby side the Sunwolves yesterday, along with an experienced 34-man squad. The Tokyo-based franchise will play in a blood orange kit with a reserve strip of grey, it was announced by southern hemisphere governing body SANZAR. They face South Africa's Golden Lions at home in their first match on February 27. Hammett, who made 29 appearances for New Zealand from 1999 to 2003, previously coached the Wellington Hurricanes (2011-14) in his first spell as a Super Rugby head coach. The 43-year-old disciplinarian faces a major challenge to prepare the side for their opening match in Tokyo following an alarming delay in naming their coaching and playing staff. The Sunwolves will join an expanded 18-team competition next year along with the Southern Kings of South Africa and Argentina's first franchise, the Jaguares who will be based in Buenos Aires.—AFP



BATELCO WIN GULFRUN 24HR KARTING ENDURANCE 5!

KUWAIT: GulfRun 24 hour Karting Endurance 5, powered by Zain, took place over the weekend at Sirbb Circuit in Shuwaikh - starting on Friday at 4:30 pm ending on Saturday 4:30 pm. 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 fly 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.

ing even closer ties between the organizing committee and Japan's business community." Also yesterday, Muto said the cost of the games will be much higher than the original estimate of just over 300 billion yen (\$2.5 billion), though he did not give a specific figure, saying officials are still sorting out and compiling cost estimates. Muto denied recent media reports that the latest overall cost estimate has soared to 1.8 trillion yen (\$15 billion), saying comparing numbers without specific breakdowns is "inappropriate."

RENAULT COMPLETES PURCHASE OF LOTUS FORMULA ONE TEAM

LONDON: Renault have completed their takeover of the Lotus Formula One team and paid debts to creditors including the British tax authorities, the London High Court heard yesterday.

"We have a completion of the share purchase," a lawyer for the French car company told the judge, Mr Justice Birss, at a hearing that formally dismissed an insolvency petition that would have put the team into administration. "We have the keys, so to speak," he added. The share purchase agreement (SPA) that made Renault the controlling shareholder had been due for completion on Dec. 16 but the court heard that the acquisition was finalised only late last Friday.

Jeremy Bamford, counsel for the revenue and customs (HMRC), confirmed payment had been received and cleared on Monday. Other petitioning creditors said they had also been paid in full. Lawyers for Proton, the Malaysian car company that owns the Lotus sportscar brand, did not attend the hearing with the court informed that the petitioner had either been paid or reached an arrangement.

"The insolvency procedure has worked in the way intended," Birss said in summing up, with the company saved and debts paid in full.

The case had been adjourned repeatedly to allow Renault time to decide their Formula One future and complete the takeover of a team that employs some 480 people at their factory in central England.

Renault, an engine supplier to former world champions Red Bull this season, are returning to Formula One as a full constructor by buying back the team they previously owned. The team was sold by Renault to Luxembourg-based Genii Capital, who renamed it Lotus, after a Singapore Grand Prix race-fixing scandal that rocked the sport in 2009. As Benetton and then Renault, the team had won world titles with Michael Schumacher and Fernando Alonso. This season Genii injected only enough cash into Lotus to keep the team on the grid, while leaving a string of creditors waiting to be paid.

Bailiffs impounded the cars after the Belgian Grand Prix in August and the team were denied access to the paddock hospitality in Japan due to unpaid bills.

Genii Capital chairman and current Lotus principal Gerard Lopez told Reuters at the season-ending race in Abu Dhabi last month that he would retain a shareholding in the team. The team have Venezuelan Pastor Maldonado and Britain's Jolyon Palmer as drivers signed for 2016. —Reuters

TOYOTA HEAD RESIGNS FROM TOKYO OLYMPIC COMMITTEE

TOKYO: The head of Toyota Motor Corp. stepped down yesterday as vice president of the organizing committee for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics as organizers acknowledged the cost of hosting the games will be far higher than originally thought.

The committee said that Akio Toyoda is expected to be replaced by the president of Panasonic, Kazuhiro Tsuga. Organizers said Toyoda may have been concerned about serving on both committees, as the Olympic body is seeking support from the business community. Toyota Motor is a major sponsor of the Olympics.

"Mr. Toyoda might have tried to sort out his roles," Tokyo organizing committee CEO Toshiro Muto told reporters. Toyoda said in a statement that he decided to reorganize his roles to intensify his efforts to encourage business support for the 2020 Games. He said he is "looking forward to forging even closer ties between the organizing committee and Japan's business community."

Also yesterday, Muto said the cost of the games will be much higher than the original estimate of just over 300 billion yen (\$2.5 billion), though he did not give a specific figure, saying officials are still sorting out and compiling cost estimates. Muto denied recent media reports that the latest overall cost estimate has soared to 1.8 trillion yen (\$15 billion), saying comparing numbers without specific breakdowns is "inappropriate."

Japan's national broadcaster NHK said the increase mainly came from previously unanticipated costs, including 300 billion yen (\$2.48 billion) to set up temporary venues, 270 billion yen (\$2.23 billion) for renting some venues, 200 billion yen (\$1.65 billion) for security, and 180 billion yen (\$1.49 billion) for transportation and infrastructure.

Muto said the initial estimate Japan provided to the International Olympic Committee was "bare minimum" and that costs for anti-terrorism measures, additional events, transportation, land lease and other necessities would have to be added.

"There is no doubt that a new cost estimate would swell because of the need for previously unanticipated spending such as counterterrorism measures," he said.

Tokyo Olympics organizing committee chairman and former prime minister Yoshiro Mori has said the total cost could be as much as 2 trillion yen (\$16.5 billion). Muto said the organizing committee plans to submit its latest cost estimate to the IOC by next summer.

Toyoda's sudden resignation and the confirmation of rising costs are the latest in a series of setbacks for the Olympic preparations. Japan had to scrap its original plans for the main stadium because of soaring costs, and then faced a plagiarism scandal over the logo for the games.

A new stadium design will be announced Tuesday from two proposals after Japan canceled the original plan by British-Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid. —AP



TOKYO: In this March 13, 2015 file photo, Toyota President and CEO Akio Toyoda, left, smiles with International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach as they pose with a signed document during a press conference in Tokyo as the Japanese auto giant Toyota Motor Corp. signed on as a worldwide Olympic sponsor in a landmark deal reportedly worth nearly \$1 billion, becoming the first car company to join the IOC's top-tier marketing program. Toyoda has stepped down as vice president of the organizing committee for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The committee announced the resignation of Toyoda yesterday. —AP

AUSTRALIA'S KHAWAJA SAYS HAMSTRING INJURY WOES OVER

MELBOURNE: Usman Khawaja said yesterday he was confident his recurring hamstring problems were behind him as the batsman works towards a recall to the Australia team for the second Test against the West Indies.

Khawaja returned from a spell on the sidelines in Sunday's Big Bash League Twenty20 match, scoring an explosive 109 off 70 balls for the Sydney Thunder in their one-run win over the Melbourne

Stars. "I'm very happy I got through the game. I feel really good today," Khawaja told reporters.

"Just normal general soreness, the hammies feel really good." The 29-year-old is expected to return to Australia's Test side against the West Indies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Saturday, at the expense of either Joe Burns or Shaun Marsh.

Pakistan-born Khawaja has been out

for a month since injuring his hamstring during Australia's second Test against New Zealand in Perth. He has spent most of his time out at Cricket Australia's training base in Brisbane, focusing on the troublesome tendons and muscles. "My hamstrings are definitely stronger than they have been in the last three years. The last testing I had to do on Friday was a hamstring strength test," he said. "My hamstrings came up stronger

than they've been in the last three years. "I did a lot of hard work over the last four weeks, the trainers up at the training base pushed me pretty hard. That's what I needed to do." Test coach Darren Lehmann said last month that Khawaja must "get fit and strong and faster first and make sure we don't have another injury." "I pushed myself pretty hard," Khawaja admitted. "I couldn't go there and try to nurse it or not go 100 percent

because I know that's not what Boof (Lehmann) wants."

Khawaja has been sidelined since scoring 174 and 121 in the first two Tests against New Zealand last month. During his absence, replacement Marsh made a strong case for his retention with his highest Test score of 182 during the first Test against the Windies in Hobart. That could leave Burns as the possible fall guy. — AFP

SCOREBOARD

PIETERMARITZBURG, South Africa: Close of play scores on the second day of a three-day first-class match between South Africa A and the touring England team at City Oval yesterday.

South Africa A, first innings, 136

England XI, first innings (overnight 64-0)

A. Cook c Paterson b Maharaj	126
A. Hales b Paterson	56
N. Compton lbw b Maharaj	29
J. Root c Ramela b Maharaj	117
J. Taylor b Maharaj	15
B. Stokes c Maharaj b De Lange	66
J. Bairstow not out	2
Extras (lb2, w1)	3
Total (6 wks dec, 97.5 overs)	414
Fall of wickets: 1-112 (Hales), 2-178 (Compton), 3-241 (Cook), 4-291 (Taylor), 5-395 (Stokes), 6-414 (Root)	
Bowling: Morris 25-3-93-0, De Lange 21-4-99-1, Paterson 20-3-78-1 (1w), Maharaj 26.5-3-129-4,	

Cook 5-0-13-0

Did not bat: M. Ali, S. Broad, S. Finn, M. Footitt

South Africa A, second innings

S. Cook lbw b Broad	1
R. Hendricks lbw b Ali	19
R. Rossouw not out	13
M. de Lange not out	0
Extras (lb1, w1)	2
Total (2 wks, 11 overs)	35
Fall of wicket: 1-10 (Cook), 2-34 (Hendricks)	
Bowling: Broad 3-1-10-1, Footitt 3-1-13-0, Stokes 1-0-5-0 (1w), Finn 1-0-5-0, Ali 2-2-0-1, Root 1-0-1-0	

Match situation: South Africa A trail by 243 runs with eight wickets remaining in the second innings.

COOK, ROOT CENTURIES PUT ENGLAND IN CHARGE

PIETERMARITZBURG: Alastair Cook and Joe Root hit centuries yesterday as the touring England team played themselves into a dominant position on the second day of a three-day match against South Africa A.

Skipper Cook hit 126 and Root made 117 in an England total of 414 for six declared-a first innings lead of 278 runs. South Africa A lost both opening batsmen as they limped to the close on 35 for two, still needing 243 to make England bat again.

With James Taylor and Ben Stokes having hit centuries against an Invitation XI in Potchefstroom, four of England's likely Test top six have hit centuries in the first two matches of the tour.

Alex Hales, the only specialist batsman to miss out in Potchefstroom, hit 56 in an opening stand of 112 with Cook as England

continued to show impressive form ahead of the first Test against South Africa, which starts in Durban on Saturday.

Cook made his runs off 194 balls with 16 fours and two sixes, while Root needed just 125 deliveries in an innings which included the same number of boundaries as his captain. Root and Stokes hammered 101 in a 91-ball fifth-wicket stand, with Stokes racing to 66 off 47 balls before he was caught on the boundary.

With South Africa having been trounced 3-0 in a recent Test series in India, the players next in line generally failed to impress. Left-arm spinner Keshav Maharaj was the only bowler to shine, taking four for 129, while opening batsman Stephen Cook, who carried his bat for an unbeaten 53 in an otherwise dismal first innings for the South Africans, was out for one in the second. — AFP



HAMILTON: New Zealand players pose with the trophy after they defeated Sri Lanka by 5 wickets on the fourth day of the second international cricket test in Hamilton, New Zealand, yesterday. — AP

WILLIAMSON TON STEERS NZ TO FIVE-WICKET WIN OVER S LANKA

HAMILTON: Kane Williamson scored his fifth century in eight tests in 2015 to guide New Zealand to a five-wicket victory over Sri Lanka before lunch on the fourth day of the second test at Seddon Park in Hamilton yesterday.

The victory gave Brendon McCullum's side a 2-0 series sweep over the tourists after they won the first test in Dunedin by 122 runs.

"It was definitely hard fought and I thought the improvement of the Sri Lankan side was pretty evident throughout the test series," McCullum said in a TV interview.

"Credit to Angelo and Sri Lanka for putting us under immense pressure (in Hamilton) and thankfully we were able to withstand it through an innings of sheer quality."

Williamson finished 108 not out, taking his run tally in 2015 to 1,172 — the most by a New Zealander in a calendar year — at an average of 90.15.

The hosts reached their victory target of 189 with five wickets down, wicketkeeper BJ Watling finishing unbeaten on 13 alongside Williamson and scoring the winning run with a sweep for a single off Milinda Siriwardana.

Sri Lanka fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera took 4-68 to go with his first innings haul of 5-47. New Zealand held a slight advantage when they resumed on Monday on 142-5 but both sides had the chance to win the match with Williamson always the player most likely to determine the outcome.

The 25-year-old, whose right knee was heavily strapped during his innings on Sunday, resumed on 78 not out with Watling yet to score having faced the final two balls on day three.

Williamson, however, dominated the strike to dash Sri Lanka's hopes of victory and brought up his 13th test century when he pulled Chameera behind square for his fifth boundary of the day to move to 102.

The shot moved him to 1,166 runs, surpassing the 1,164 his captain McCullum scored in 2014, as well as reducing the target to 20.

Neither side truly got to grips with the wicket throughout the match as short-pitched bowling produced steeping bounce that resulted in numerous mistimed pull or hook shots to fielders in the outfield.

The hosts capitalised on a spectacular collapse by Sri Lanka on Sunday, when they took all 10 wickets for 62 runs either side of lunch to set up their modest victory target.

"I thought we had a chance," Sri Lanka captain Angelo Mathews said. "We had them under pressure in the first couple of days but they came back strong (and) in the second innings we made a mockery out of our batting."

"We have the talent and the skill is there, it's just a matter of time. "The more they play the more they learn and the more faith we have in them." — Reuters



HAMILTON: New Zealand's Kane Williamson bats on his way to a century against Sri Lanka on the fourth day of the second international cricket test in Hamilton, New Zealand, yesterday. — AP

SCOREBOARD

HAMILTON, New Zealand: Scoreboard yesterday at the end of the match on the fourth day of the second cricket test between New Zealand and Sri Lanka at Seddon Park.

Sri Lanka, 1st Innings	292	2-40-3 (1nb).
New Zealand, 1st Innings	237	New Zealand, 2nd Innings (Overnight: 142-5)
Sri Lanka, 2nd Innings	133	Tom Latham c Pradeep b Chameera
Dimuth Karunaratne c Southee b Bracewell	27	Martin Guptill c Karunaratne b Chameera
Kusal Mendis c Santner b Southee	46	Kane Williamson not out
Udara Jayasundera c Watling b Bracewell	0	Ross Taylor c sub (Vandersary) b Chameera
Dinesh Chandimal c Guptill b Wagner	4	Brendon McCullum c Mathews b Chameera
Angelo Mathews c Watling b Southee	2	Mitchell Santner c Chandimal b Lakmal
Milinda Siriwardana c Boult b Wagner	26	B.J. Watling not out
Kithuruwa Vithanage c Bracewell b Wagner	9	Extras (1lb,5nb)
Rangana Herath b Southee	0	TOTAL (for five wickets)
Dushmantha Chameera run out	2	189
Suranga Lakmal not out	1	Overs: 54.3. Batting time: 260 minutes.
Nuwan Pradeep c Watling b Southee	0	Fall of wickets: 1-4, 2-11, 3-78, 4-130, 5-142.
Extras (4b,2lb,7w,3nb)	16	Did not bat: Doug Bracewell, Tim Southee, Neil Wagner, Trent Boult.
TOTAL (all out)	133	Bowling: Dushmantha Chameera 17-1-68-4 (2nb), Suranga Lakmal 12-4-20-1, Ragana Herath 11-0-48-0, Nuwan Pradeep 12-1-43-0 (3nb), Angelo Mathews 1-0-4-0, Milinda Siriwardana 1.3-0-5-0.
Overs: 36.3. Batting time: 189 minutes.		Result: New Zealand won by five wickets
Fall of wickets: 1-71, 2-72, 3-77, 4-87, 5-110, 6-123, 7-123, 8-131, 9-133, 10-133.		
Bowling: Trent Boult 7-1-30-0 (1w), Tim Southee 12.3-2-26-4 (1nb), Doug Bracewell 8-1-31-2 (6w,1nb), Neil Wagner 9-		



LAHORE: Former Pakistani cricketers Ijaz Ahmed(L), Mohammad Akram (2L), Rameez Raja (3L), former Australian batsman Dean Jones (C), and former Pakistani cricketers Mushtaq Ahmed (3R) Moin Khan (2R) and Wasim Akram pose for a photograph during the drafting of players for the Pakistan Super League (PSL) in Lahore yesterday. — AFP

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Kuwait Times BUSINESS

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Supply glut and a stronger dollar keep pressure on oil

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30 finalists converge on Dubai for 'Infiniti Speed Pitching'

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The Mercedes-Benz S-Class icons

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INTERSECT BY LEXUS OPENS IN DUBAI

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BAKU: People walk outside a money exchange office in Baku yesterday. Azerbaijan's Central Bank said yesterday's move to let the manat fluctuate was made to "preserve hard currency reserves ... and ensure the national economy's competitiveness on the international arena." Following the move, the manat fell by 32 percent. One manat, which was worth around \$0.95 Friday, was now trading at \$0.65. —AP

EUROPEAN BANKS POISED FOR JOB CUTS IN 2016

RETAIL, INVESTMENT BANKING LIKELY TO BE HIT HARDEST AS PROFITS DIVE

LONDON: Regulation, anaemic economic growth and technology changes will force banks across Europe to find more savings in 2016, with jobs likely to be the biggest casualty, according to investors and analysts.

Ten of the region's biggest banks have announced staff cuts of 130,000 since June, according to data compiled by Reuters more than the total number of job losses announced by those banks in 2013 and 2014. But investors believe the industry will need to slim down further and faster to boost profits.

"The perpetrators of 2008 still need to pay a penance and must shrink balance sheets in so doing," said Jamie Clark, co-manager on the Liontrust Macro Thematic team, referring to the banking crisis that triggered a deep global recession from which several of the world's largest economies are still recovering. "We read job cuts as only one sign of the secular, rather than cyclical trend to permanently smaller banks."

Tens of thousands of staff were axed during

and after the 2007/09 financial crisis but the fresh wave of cuts in Europe shows how the region's banks are trailing their US counterparts in bringing in structural overhauls. In 2014 and 2013 a combined 78,000 job cuts were announced at eighteen of Europe's largest banks, which represented 4.1 percent of staff, was far less than cuts of 7.3 percent in headcount across six major US banks.

An IMF study last year of 300 large global banks showed that only about 30 percent of euro zone lenders had a structure that was able to make a reasonable rate of return over time, compared with 80 percent of those in the US.

"US banks have mainly done what's needed to be done and are on an upward curve" said Chris Wheeler, bank analyst at Atlantic Equities. "Then you have the 'Road to Damascus' banks. They've finally realized that the market won't bail them out and they have to make some fundamental changes - Deutsche Bank, Credit Suisse, Barclays. It's going to be a year of major change that, in most cases, won't be completed

for a number of years."

Dutch lender Rabobank became the latest to wield the axe, announcing this month that it would cut 9,000 jobs, joining Deutsche Bank, UniCredit, Credit Suisse, HSBC and Standard Chartered in announcing workforce cuts in the second half of 2015.

Banking jobs 'bear market'

While some cuts will come from selling off businesses, new technology is also contributing as banks close branches and shift to systems requiring less manpower.

"We're in a long term bear market for banking jobs as we're finally seeing technology and automation taking out jobs in retail banking," Xavier VanHove, partner at fund manager THS Partners told Reuters.

A lagging European economy is also adding to banks' woes. While the US Federal Reserve has begun raising interest rates its counterpart in Europe is contemplating further monetary easing, which could eat into banks' interest

margins. Many European banks are soul searching in particular about what the future shape of their investment banks will be, with their trading divisions under the spotlight as greater capital requirements and technological automation squeeze margins.

European banks who make quick cuts to their headcount and business lines could pull their returns closer to their US peers by 2017, Morgan Stanley analysts estimate, narrowing a gap of between 3 to 4 percent percentage points. "European return on leverage exposure is roughly half that of US firms. Pruning underperforming units, intense cost-cutting and revitalizing high return-on-equity (RoE) area will be key," the analysts said in a recent note. A new CEO at Barclays is expected to axe more jobs, and has already started cutting in the investment bank, mostly in Asia, sources have said.

"The crux of cuts in investment banking fall in FICC (fixed income, commodities and currencies), where things are really difficult...It's more structural than short term," said Stephane

Rambosson, managing director at executive search firm, DHR International.

"It's like in the 80s. There were a million miners who converted into different jobs. I am sure in this industry, they will do that as well." BNP Paribas, France's biggest listed lender may make significant middle and back office job cuts in 2016 as part of a plan to cut costs by 20 percent in its investment bank that includes using "big data" technology to identify customer needs, Reuters reported in October.

That may seem small compared to cuts in coming years. Former Barclays CEO Antony Jenkins has said banks could cut up to half their jobs in the next decade due to the impact of technological and regulatory change, with the people overseeing banks' systems likely to replace investment bankers as their most influential decision makers. "The next CEO for banks is the chief information officer or the chief technology officer. They're the new king or queen," said Bill Michael, global head of banking at KPMG. —Reuters

RECORD US WARMTH BRINGS OUT NATURAL GAS, HEATING OIL BEARS

LONDON: El Nino has helped produce an unusually mild autumn and start to winter across the United States, sharply cutting the demand for heating and worsening the glut in supplies of natural gas and heating oil. Warm weather and surging energy production have pushed heating oil prices down to the lowest level since 2004 and natural gas prices to the lowest since 1999.

El Nino's lingering effects and continued oversupply could keep prices for both fuels under pressure for some time, with the weather impacts persisting well into 2016.

According to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), heating demand has been 23 percent lower than normal so far during the current heating season, which began in July. Between September and November, every state in the continental United States experienced above average temperatures. And temperatures were "much warmer" than normal in 41 states across the Rockies, Great Plains, Midwest, Northeast and Southeast. In many cases, average temperatures have been close to the highest recorded since 1895. The run of exceptionally mild weather has continued into the start of winter. Last week, heating demand was 30 percent below normal for the time of year.

WOPENING OVERSUPPLY

Unseasonal warmth has sharply cut the amount of natural gas, distillate fuel oil and

electricity required to heat homes, offices, schools and factories. Consumption of distillate is down from 4 million barrels per day in October to 3.6 million barrels per day in late November and early December, according to the US Energy Information Administration.

Most distillate is consumed by trucks, trains and in construction vehicles as transport diesel rather than as heating oil and distillate consumption typically declines slightly towards the end of the year. Nevertheless, the drop in consumption has been especially pronounced this November and December, sending consumption to the lowest level for the time of year in more than a decade.

Relative warmth has also cut gas consumption in buildings that burn gas directly in their heating systems, as well as in the power plants that supply homes, offices and other buildings that have electric heaters. Poor demand for both fuels has combined with surging supply to leave the country carrying unusually high stockpiles.

Refineries are running at record rates to meet strong demand for gasoline, leaving the market with a large oversupply of unwanted distillates. And gas production is still increasing as drilling firms sink a new generation of super wells into the highly productive Marcellus and Utica formations beneath the northeast United States. Distillate stocks hit 152 million barrels in the week ending Dec 11, which was 21 million barrels higher than the

10-year average, and 30 million barrels higher than at the same point in 2014.

The amount of gas in working storage is almost 18 percent higher than normal, at a seasonal record, and falling more slowly than usual at this time of year.

EFFECTS SET TO LINGER

Every El Nino is different, and the impact on weather is complicated and still not fully understood, according to NOAA. But the warmer than normal weather could continue for some time. The current El Nino is one of the three strongest since 1950 (the others in the top three occurred in 1997/98 and 1982/83) and will likely last well into 2016.

The biggest impact on the United States is probably still to come ("December El Nino update: phenomenal cosmic powers" NOAA, Dec. 10).

"While the warmer-than-average ocean waters are likely reaching their peak about now, they will remain a huge source of warmth for the next several months to drive the main impacts on temperature and rain/snow over North America, which typically follow the peak. The main impacts season is December-March," according to NOAA.

"Most models indicate that a strong El Nino will continue through the northern hemisphere winter 2015/16" followed by a return to more normal conditions by late spring or early summer. —Reuters

DUBAI JUMPS, SAUDI FLAT AHEAD OF BUDGET

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Middle Eastern stock markets were mixed yesterday as Dubai bounced back from the previous day's losses while Saudi Arabia's index was almost unchanged as investors awaited the release of the kingdom's state budget, expected in the coming days.

The Saudi index fluctuated narrowly before ending down 0.01 percent at 6,930 points. Trading volume was modest as many investors were unwilling to trade without knowing the size of spending cuts expected in the budget. However, petrochemical producer Saudi Basic Industries fell 1.7 percent to 84.75 riyals, heading towards its December low of 83.25 riyals.

"Current market sentiment is fragile and people are not willing to rotate into sectors that are heavily dependent on government spending or those that are export-oriented," said Mohammad al-Shammasi, head of asset management at Riyadh-based Derayah Financial.

Saudi Arabia will announce its 2016 budget next Monday, the Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television channel, which is close to the ruling family of the world's top oil exporter, reported yesterday citing unnamed sources.

The 2016 budget is being closely watched both inside Saudi Arabia and by world oil markets because it will shed light on how the kingdom plans to approach expected low crude prices next year, with widespread expectations of big spending cuts.

Dubai's index rebounded 2.5 percent to 3,101 points, gathering momentum on higher volumes in the final hour of trade as bargain buyers bought on dips. The benchmark is now

250 points above the year's low.

Gainers outnumbered losers 19 to 7 with all blue chips rising after Sunday's profit taking sell-off. Emaar Properties and builder Drake & Scull recouped all of Sunday's losses, rising 3.2 and 8.5 percent respectively. Both stocks are up over 8 percent from a week ago.

Abu Dhabi heavyweights Etisalat and National Bank of Abu Dhabi jumped 2.9 and 2.5 percent. Abu Dhabi's benchmark climbed 0.9 percent in its fourth session of gains; trading volume was the second heaviest so far in December. On Sunday, it was the heaviest.

Qatar resumed trade after the market was closed for a national holiday on Sunday and the Doha benchmark slipped 0.1 percent. Losers outnumbered gainers 11 to 3, with Gulf International Services - a stock that was removed from MSCI's emerging market index in November - leading declines; it retreated 3.3 percent.

EGYPT

Egypt's index rose 0.8 percent, its sixth straight gain, with Commercial International Bank and Orascom Telecom carrying the market higher for a second day. CIB, the bourse's largest bank by market value, rose 2.6 percent. The lender is up 4.6 percent since Thursday's close after agreeing to sell investment banking subsidiary CI Capital to Orascom Telecom for 1 billion Egyptian pounds (\$128 million).

Orascom Telecom, the most heavily traded stock, surged 6.7 percent; it is up 8.5 percent since Thursday's close. —Reuters

News

in brief

Kuwait Q3 trade surplus shrinks 66%

KUWAIT: Kuwait's foreign trade surplus shrank 66 percent from a year earlier to KD1.84 billion (\$6.1 billion) in the third quarter of 2015 as low oil prices slashed export revenues, data from the Central Statistical Bureau showed yesterday.

US dollar steady against dinar trading at KD 0.303

KUWAIT: Exchange of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar remained unchanged trading at KD 0.303, while the euro went up to reach KD 0.330 compared to Sunday's rates, said a statement by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) yesterday. Exchange rate of the sterling pound also went up to KD 0.453, the Swiss to KD 0.306 and the Japanese yen was firm, trading at KD 0.002. The dollar kept going down for the second consecutive day amid anticipations of limited losses, due to the decisions of increasing the US interest rate. Meanwhile, the euro went up compared to the dollar, continuing its gains for the second day, as the reformation operations and profit gains are still going, while investors are awaiting economic data about the European economy later today regarding the consumer's trust during this month.

Egypt's 5-yr, 10-yr treasury bonds steady at auction

CAIRO: Yields on five-year and 10-year treasury bonds were steady at an auction yesterday, data from the central bank showed. The average yield on Egypt's five-year bond rose marginally to 13.174 percent from 13.172 percent in the previous auction, on Dec 7, while yields on the 10-year bond dropped marginally to 15.365 percent from 15.373 percent on Dec 7.

Iraq's CB devalues dinar by 1.37% vs US dollar

BAGHDAD: Iraq's central bank increased the sale price of the US dollar to banks and currency exchange companies by 16 dinars, or 1.37 percent, to 1,182 dinars, according to a statement.

FALLING OIL PRICES FORCE AZERBAIJAN TO STOP PROPPING UP CURRENCY

BAKU: Energy-rich Azerbaijan, whose economy has been hit hard by falling oil prices, withdrew support for its embattled currency yesterday and the manat plunged by nearly a third against the greenback. "The central bank took the decision to switch to a floating exchange rate for the national currency as of December 21," the regulator said in a statement.

The central bank said the decision was taken because "falling oil prices and the continuing devaluation of partner countries' currencies has begun to negatively affect the Azerbaijani economy."

The manat was trading at 1.55 against the dollar yesterday, down 32.3 percent from Friday.

The country's central bank has spent more than half of its foreign currency reserves to support the currency, which has been in free fall since the beginning of the year. Following yesterday's move, the bank's currency reserves increased by 3.1 billion manats (\$2.9 billion; 2.7 billion euros).

Azerbaijan's decision came after the energy-rich Central Asian nation of Kazakhstan abandoned its currency band for a free-floating exchange earlier this year. Analysts said the move would not affect the Russian ruble but would negatively impact the majority of regional currencies.

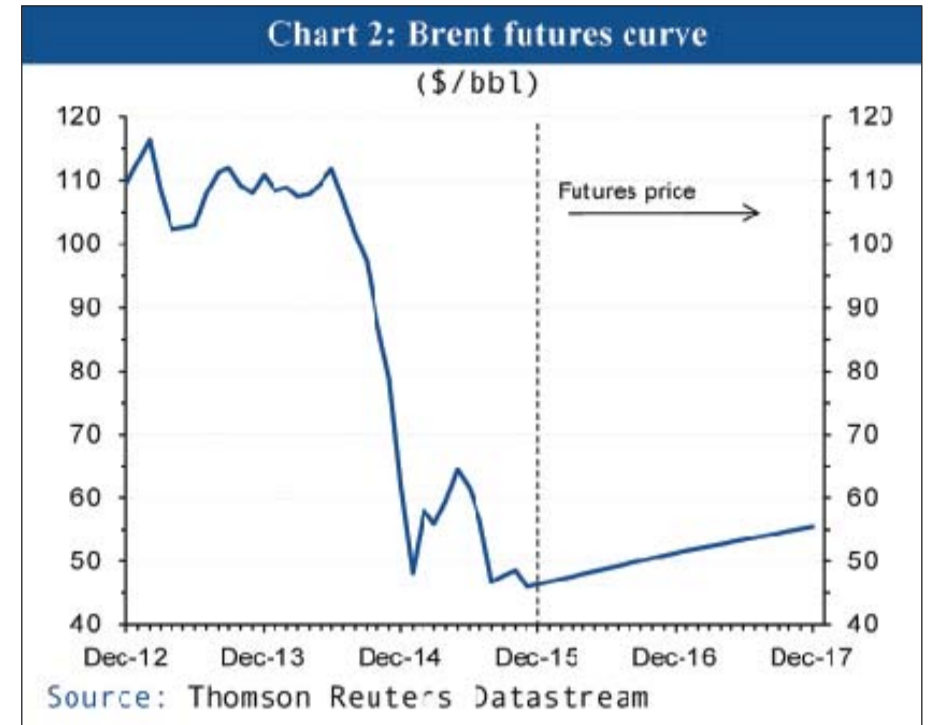
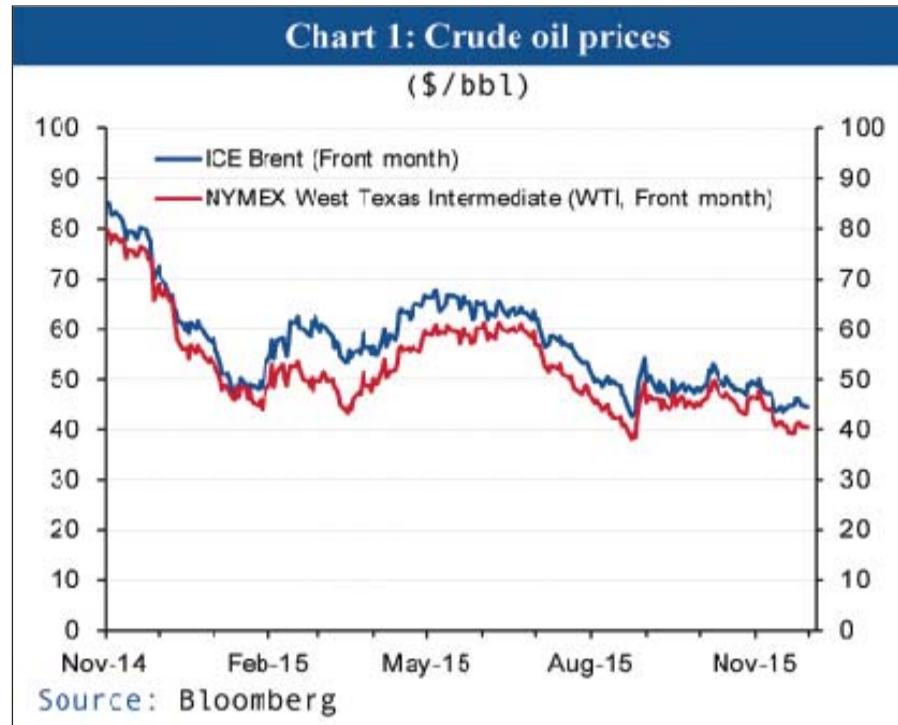
"The move can be considered to be neutral for Russia: the weak ruble, in addition to low oil prices, was itself the trigger for Azerbaijan's currency move," said Oleg Kouzmin, an economist with Renaissance Capital.

He described the prospects for Kazakhstan's tenge as "slightly negative," adding that the Georgian liri-which has lost nearly 45 percent of its value against the dollar since November 2014 — is expected to be most affected. Energy exports constitute up to three quarters of Azerbaijan's state revenues, making the Caucasus country's economy highly dependent on global oil prices. The Caspian nation in February abandoned its dollar peg and switched to a dollar-and-euro basket and also devalued the manat by more than 33 percent.

Oil prices extended losses yesterday, with Brent at one point sinking 2.1 percent to \$36.09 a barrel-its weakest since July 2004. — AFP

SUPPLY GLUT AND A STRONGER DOLLAR KEEP PRESSURE ON OIL

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT



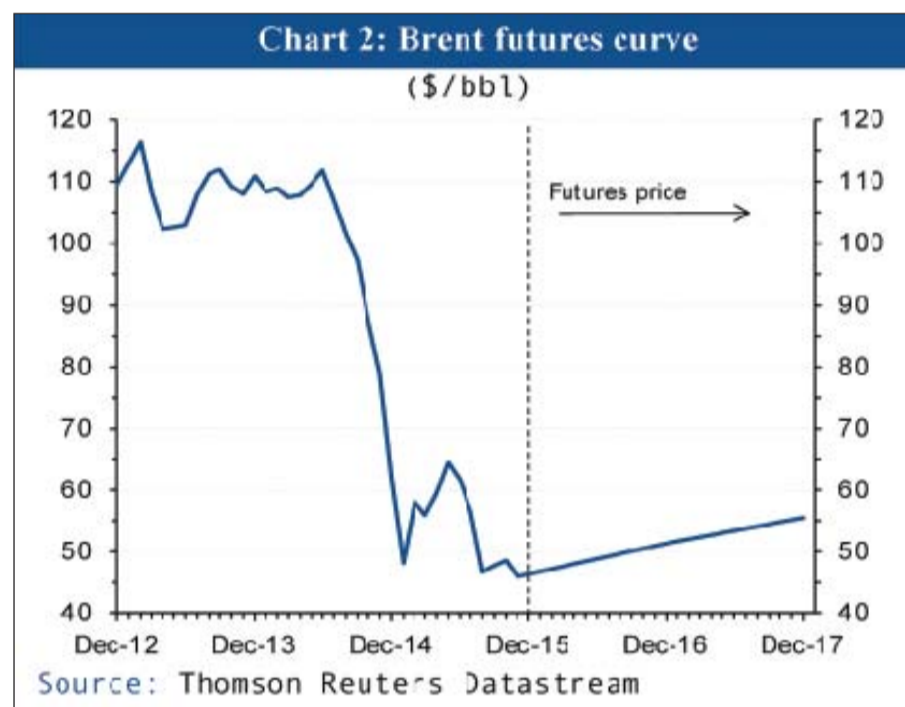
KUWAIT: November saw oil prices remained depressed below the \$50 per barrel (bbl) level for the fourth month in a row as the crude supply glut showed no sign of easing. A strengthening US dollar, which rallied to an 8-month high during the month, and a 5 percent decline in Chinese equities added further downward pressure to oil prices. ICE Brent crude, the international benchmark, closed November at \$44.5/bbl, while NYMEX West Texas Intermediate (WTI), settled at \$41.7/bbl. Both crudes fell by around \$5.0, or 10.0 percent, from the start of the month.

This is the longest stretch that Brent has traded below \$50/bbl since the financial crisis, and comes amid, what the International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates to be, the largest crude surplus in 17 years. Neither the downing of a Russian jet by Turkey nor comments by Saudi officials that the kingdom might move to stabilize prices at December's OPEC meeting managed to chip away at the predominant bearish sentiment. The latter was given extra impetus by continued, counter-seasonal crude stock builds. According to the IEA, commercial crude and petroleum product stocks have swelled to near-record levels of 3.0 billion barrels, which is significantly above historical averages.

OPEC quota

With oil prices firmly range-bound near 6-year lows, markets turned their attention to OPEC and what it might do at its 4 December meeting. The meeting took on added significance in view of Iran's potential return to the oil markets in 2016 and Indonesia's re-admittance to the group after a 7-year absence. Despite speculation that OPEC's de facto leader, Saudi Arabia, might be more amenable this time around to the idea of stabilizing the market, most observers were forecasting policy to remain unchanged; indeed, hedge funds' bets against higher oil prices, for example, reached a year-high in the final week of November, with the volume of short positions increasing to an amount equivalent to 3.5 days of global oil demand.

In the end though, and despite much deliberation at the event, members opted to roll over the group's current 30 mb/d target and to wait until the first half of 2016 before taking any action. By that



time, the thinking went, the situation would become clearer; there would be less uncertainty, for example, over the volume of additional Iranian crude coming to the market once international sanctions are lifted. Indeed Iran and Iraq's refusal to accept any limits on production effectively put an end to any possibility of OPEC formalizing production caps or reining in output. Although, at one point, earlier in the meeting, it did seem as if the group might raise its official production target by 1.5 million barrels to 31.5 mb/d to more closely match actual output. By the end of trading on Friday after the OPEC meeting, Brent and WTI crude prices had declined by 1.9 percent and 2.7 percent, respectively.

Since OPEC's decision last November to maintain the official production ceiling, the group's actual output has surged by more than 1 mb/d; OPEC members, led by Saudi Arabia, opted to allow the market to determine prices in the hope that lower oil prices would force higher-cost producers from outside OPEC, such as the US and Canada, to pare back their own production. OPEC output in October, according to the group's most recent secondary source data, came in at 31.3 mb/d. This was a decline of 260,000 b/d, or 3.2 percent, on the previous month, but nevertheless represented the sixth consecutive

month that the group's production had topped 31 mb/d.

Iraq recorded the largest decline in production in October, of 200,000 b/d, to 4.0 mb/d. Bad weather in the northern Gulf, from where the country exports the bulk of its oil, was the primary reason for the decline. Iraqi output had actually climbed to an all-time high of 4.2 mb/d in September. Saudi Arabia and Kuwait also witnessed declines in production compared to September-70,000 b/d and 40,000 b/d, respectively. Kuwait's fall in output to 2.7 mb/d came as a result of scheduled maintenance. The country has been working hard to compensate for the loss of oil from fields the country shares with Saudi Arabia in the divided Neutral Zone. UAE and Qatari production, meanwhile, continued at a steady level, of 2.8 mb/d and 0.7 mb/d, respectively.

Libya, with its increase of 50,000 b/d to 430,000 b/d, witnessed the largest rise in output among OPEC exporters in October. The gain may be temporary, however, as persistent violence and insecurity forced shut the eastern port of Zuetina in early November.

Non-OPEC supply recovers

According to the IEA, non-OPEC supply outside of the US posted healthy gains in October in spite of lower oil prices and

capex spending cuts. Chief among non-OPEC producers recording sizeable gains was Russia, the second largest non-OPEC oil producer. The country continued to pump at record levels of almost 10.8 mb/d-1.3 percent more than a year ago- even while the country feels the financial strain of lower oil prices and sanctions. Others including China, Vietnam, Oman and the North Sea producers have also been able to boost output.

Nevertheless, US production, which has been the largest source of non-OPEC supply growth in recent years thanks to the shale oil revolution, has clearly declined over the last 6 months. According to weekly estimates provided by the US Energy Information Administration (EIA), production fell from a 44-year high of 9.6 mb/d last June to 9.2 mb/d as of 27 November, a drop of 400,000 b/d, or 4.0 percent. (Chart 6.) This has come amid cutbacks in capital spending by oil majors and reductions in drilling activity that have seen US oil rig counts plummet by more than 65 percent since reaching a high last October.

The IEA forecasts US shale production to decline by nearly 0.6 mb/d in 2016, which is a fall of more than 10 percent. Shale production accounted for at least 57.0 percent of total US crude production in August. The agency expects total non-OPEC supply growth to therefore reflect this in 2016 and fall by 0.6 mb/d. This would also reverse the increase in supply, of 1.3 mb/d, that is expected to occur in 2015. (Chart 7.) World demand growth expected to ease towards long-term trend in 2016 after surging to a 5-year high in 2015.

On the demand side, the IEA expects the temporary boost to crude demand provided by low oil prices and better-than-expected macroeconomic fundamentals in 2015 to prove transitory and global oil demand growth to ease back to its long-term trend rate in 2016. Thus, after reaching a 5-year high of 1.8 mb/d in 2015, the agency is forecasting that demand growth will decelerate to 1.2 mb/d in 2016. With crude supply growth expected to tighten to a greater extent than demand growth in 2016, the 'call on OPEC crude' is projected to increase to 31.3 mb/d next year, according to the IEA. This is a rise of 0.2 mb/d from the agency's last projection, bringing the call closer to OPEC's current output of 31.4 and portending somewhat tighter market conditions than in recent months.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Table listing exchange rates for Asian countries including Japanese Yen, Indian Rupees, Pakistani Rupees, Sri Lankan Rupees, Nepali Rupees, Singapore Dollar, Hongkong Dollar, Bangladesh Taka, Philippine Peso, and Thai Baht.

GCC COUNTRIES

Table listing exchange rates for GCC countries including Saudi Riyal, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, and UAE Dirham.

ARAB COUNTRIES

Table listing exchange rates for Arab countries including Egyptian Pound - Cash, Egyptian Pound - Transfer, Yemen Riyal/for 1000, Tunisian Dinar, Jordanian Dinar, Lebanese Lira/for 1000, Syrian Lira, and Morocco Dirham.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

Table listing exchange rates for European & American countries including US Dollar Transfer, Euro, Sterling Pound, Canadian dollar, Turkish lira, Swiss Franc, Australian Dollar, and US Dollar Buying.

GOLD

Table showing gold prices for 20 Gram, 10 Gram, and 5 Gram.

UAЕ EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES

Table listing teletransfer rates per 1000 for various currencies including Australian Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Swiss Franc, Euro, US Dollar, Sterling Pound, Japanese Yen, Bangladesh Taka, Indian Rupee, Sri Lankan Rupee, Nepali Rupee, Pakistani Rupee, UAE Dirhams, Bahraini Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Jordanian Dinar, Omani Riyal, Qatari Riyal, and Saudi Riyal.

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer

Table listing selling rates for various currencies including US Dollar, Canadian Dollar, Sterling Pound, Euro, Swiss Frank, Bahraini Dinar, UAE Dirhams, and Qatari Riyals.

Table listing exchange rates for various currencies including Saudi Riyals, Jordanian Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Sri Lankan Rupees, Indian Rupees, Pakistani Rupees, Bangladesh Taka, Philippines Peso, Cyprus pound, Japanese Yen, Syrian Pound, Nepalese Rupees, Malaysian Ringgit, Chinese Yuan Renminbi, Thai Bhat, and Turkish Lira.

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

Table listing sell cash and sell draft rates for various countries including British Pound, Czech Korune, Danish Krone, Euro, Norwegian Krone, Romanian Leu, Slovakia, Swedish Krona, Swiss Franc, and Turkish Lira.

Table listing exchange rates for various currencies including US Dollars, Bangladesh Taka, Chinese Yuan, Hong Kong Dollar, Indian Rupee, Indonesian Rupiah, Japanese Yen, Kenyan Shilling, Korean Won, Malaysian Ringgit, Nepalese Rupee, Pakistani Rupee, Philippine Peso, Sierra Leone, Singapore Dollar, South African Rand, Sri Lankan Rupee, Taiwan, and Thai Baht.

Table listing exchange rates for various currencies including Bahraini Dinar, Egyptian Pound, Iranian Riyal, Iraqi Dinar, Jordanian Dinar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Lebanese Pound, Moroccan Dirhams, Nigerian Naira, Omani Riyal, Qatari Riyal, Saudi Riyal, Syrian Pound, Tunisian Dinar, Turkish Lira, UAE Dirhams, and Yemeni Riyal.

30 FINALISTS CONVERGE ON DUBAI FOR 'INFINITI SPEED PITCHING'

GRAND PRIZE OF \$40,000 OF SEED FUNDING FOR THEIR BUSINESS

DUBAI: Infiniti, one of the region's fastest growing premium automotive brands, announced the conclusion of the regional final of 'Infiniti

Speed Pitching' at the Dubai Autodrome. "With over 100 applicants submitting their business ideas in an attempt to be shortlisted,

the feedback has been nothing short of excellent," said Juergen Schmitz, Managing Director, Infiniti Middle East. "Phase one of the competition saw entrepreneurs around the region submit business ideas spanning a range of sectors, products and services."

Held on the 9th of December at the Dubai Autodrome, the 30 finalists were evaluated by a jury of their peers that included senior industry leaders from varied sectors in the region. Each candidate was given the opportunity to pitch their idea to a total of 3 judges (individually) in the rear cabin of the Infiniti Q70 as it was chauffeured around the track for a period of seven minutes.

As points were tallied through each of the sessions, 6 finalists were then further chosen to elaborate on their ideas and present them to the entire panel of judges and more importantly answer the question of 'Why their idea should be chosen as one of the 3 finalists to be sent to Hong Kong?'

Whilst all ideas presented during the day were great - the stand out proposals were delivered by Stefano Fallaha from Lebanon, Zaina Al-bader from Kuwait and Thea Myhrvold from the UAE.

These three finalists will now travel to the "Infiniti Lab" in Hong Kong for a three-day mentorship program. This phase will be a part of Infiniti's broader partnership with Nest. The three shortlisted finalists will undergo an intensive mentoring and coaching program with Infiniti, Nest and international industry leaders. The workshop will culminate with a final day of pitching their business idea to a panel of judges that will include senior Nest & Infiniti executives with one winner being awarded \$40,000 of seed level funding.

To be eligible for the program, participants had to be able to present a thorough intelligent and innovative commercial proposition. The start-up idea could have covered any product- or service-related industry, participants had to be based in the GCC (Jordan and Lebanon included), and the business and related activities had to have had a clear focus on the region.



3 Speed Pitching regional winners.

TAKAUD, MIRABAUD SIGN PARTNERSHIP TO EXPAND WEALTH MANAGEMENT SERVICES

KUWAIT: TAKAUD, the specialist savings, investments and pensions provider for the MENA region and MIRABAUD (Middle East) Ltd Associated with Mirabaud & Cie SA founded in 1819, one of the oldest and most distinguished Swiss private banks, today announce the signing of a business partnership that will see both partners join forces to provide TAKAUD's affluent clients in the GCC markets with a richer and appealing wealth management offering.

The partnership enhances TAKAUD's investment platform with the addition of Mirabaud fund range, including some of the top performing flag-ship funds. Furthermore, the two institutions will work closely to develop new investment solutions in the area of wealth management and corporate retirement services to better serve TAKAUD's clients throughout the region.

Following the signing of the partnership agreement, TAKAUD has received a delegation from Mirabaud for a workshop to introduce the Mirabaud's approach to wealth management and advisory offering the investment solutions universe with the attendance of seasoned fund managers, and discussed areas where a differentiated added value can be offered to TAKAUD's clients in

various segments. Mirabaud is an international banking and financial group that provides a clientele of private, institutional and corporate investors with its primary vocation: Wealth Management taking a global, independent and customized view, Asset Management



Luc Metivier

as well as Montreal, Hong Kong and Dubai covering three continents.

TAKAUD, one of more than 60 diversified businesses owned by the KIPCO Group including leading investment and retail banks, asset management companies, insurance companies and other



Olivier Honsberger

services with an active investment approach driven by strong convictions, along with the Brokerage and Corporate Finance arm acting as financial intermediary and independent adviser for corporations. Established in Geneva in 1819, the Group has offices in Switzerland (Geneva, Zurich and Basel), and Europe (London, Luxembourg, Paris, Madrid, Barcelona, Valencia and Seville),

media and manufacturing entities, is focused on providing clients with a best-in-class offering, which fuses industry leading financial planning practices from developed markets with regional cultural knowledge and investment expertise.

TAKAUD's innovative advisory platform builds on TAKAUD's respected regional market presence as a leading savings and

pensions advisor, positioning TAKAUD as the 'provider of choice' of wealth management for executives, businessmen, SME owners, and affluent clients who are currently underserved by traditional banking services.

Luc Metivier, TAKAUD's Chief Executive Officer commented: "Mirabaud is a first class international private bank with a long history. The newly signed partnership with their fully owned subsidiary in Dubai Mirabaud (Middle East) Ltd signifies TAKAUD's great momentum and potential as the regional 'go-to advisor' for savings, pensions and wealth management solutions".

Olivier Honsberger, Mirabaud's Dubai Chief Executive Officer, said "The Middle East's wealth management industry is entering a period of rapid development, as people increasingly seek better investment solutions and personalized banking services. To meet the demand of TAKAUD's regional clients for diversified wealth management solutions, we will be placing the entire range of Mirabaud funds on TAKAUD's platform supported by our investment philosophy, thus significantly expanding the universe of investment options available to their clientele, in terms of asset classes, currencies, sectors and geographies".

REID SAW CHANCE TO TICK OFF WISH LIST IN US BUDGET OIL DEAL

WASHINGTON: Locked in budget talks in the twilight of his Senate career, Harry Reid saw an unexpected opening to bargain for his legislative wish list. It had become apparent to Senate Democratic Majority Leader Reid that lifting the longstanding ban on US oil exports was the Republicans' top priority as the two sides tried to find common ground. And while Reid knew scrapping the ban had little support among his own colleagues, he also saw trading it as a chance for Democrats to score some victories.

The Republicans saw freeing crude exports as "something they wanted to do for the oil industry ... for me it was a way of trying to do some other things," Reid told Reuters last week in his office in the Capitol. Reid, 76, was elected to the Senate in 1987 and will not seek re-election in November. "I thought, well, maybe this is an opportunity to do something good about things I've never been able to accomplish."

Both Republicans and Democrats claimed victories in the \$1.8 trillion budget passed by Congress and signed by President Barack Obama on Friday. For Reid, that ranged from tax breaks for families to billions of dollars in new spending for medical research.

But in agreeing to vote for a deal that killed the oil export ban, the Democrats extracted unprecedented five-year extensions to renewable energy tax credits that expired last year for wind, and were due to expire in 2016 for solar. The extensions provide Democrats and Obama ammunition in their strategy to reduce carbon emissions and temper climate change. Investors in renewables said they needed certainty about subsidies if the sector was to secure a greater share of the energy market.

At the start of weeks of secretive budget talks among congressional leaders, Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell told

Reid that lifting the 40-year-old ban, a relic Congress passed after the Arab oil embargo led to panics over fuel supplies, was the prize he wanted most.

McConnell wanted to lift the ban in an earlier transportation bill but couldn't get enough Democratic support. And Obama opposed freeing exports without winning a major concession that would offset criticism that sending US crude abroad conflicted with its agenda to fight climate change.

But McConnell found a receptive, if unlikely, ally in Reid. The Nevada native was sympathetic to plight of drillers dealing with a glut of domestic crude choking the oil boom, and to the concerns of fellow Senate Democrats, Heidi Heitkamp, from North Dakota and Joe Manchin from West Virginia, who badly wanted the ban lifted. That's where Reid's experience with renewable power entered the equation. Nevada has the country's third-highest capacity of installed solar power per capita, and Reid sponsors an annual clean energy summit in Las Vegas. Last August, he toured a Tesla battery plant that gets power from the Nevada sun.

Reid and House Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi explained to Republicans McConnell and House Speaker Paul Ryan what they would have to win for oil exports.

Ryan's willingness to negotiate was a major element in the unusually cooperative tone that characterized this year's budget talks, Reid said.

A tumult in global oil markets helped the political case for lifting the ban. The domestic shale oil boom helped lead to a collapse in global crude prices. Resulting low prices for gasoline evaporated a major worry many Democrats had about exports: that they could be blamed by voters one day if fuel prices at the pump spiked upward, for whatever reason. —Reuters

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CUBAN ECONOMY GROWS 4% IN YEAR OF DETENTE WITH US

HAVANA: Cuban gross domestic product grew 4 percent in 2015, official media reported yesterday Monday, as internal reforms overshadowed negative trends such as falling commodity prices.

The report did not refer to warming relations with the United States, instead mentioning that growth came despite continued sanctions.

Growth was in line with projections made a year ago, and Economy and Planning Minister Marino Murillo attributed it to improved planning and contracting with "all productive sectors growing compared with last year."

Murillo was speaking at a closed session of the Council of Ministers and the report focused on internal economic performance in the productive sectors, not services and external finances.

Despite market-oriented reforms begun five years ago, the Cuban economy grew an anemic 1

percent last year and, on average, 2.3 percent each year from 2011 through 2014.

The government says it needs up to 7 percent growth to attain significant development. The report cited a fall in the prices of imports such as fuel and food, which helped growth, but did not allude to similar steep declines in the prices of key exports such as refined oil products, nickel and sugar.

The United States maintains a trade embargo on Cuba despite President Barack Obama's policy change toward normalizing relations a year ago.

The report did not mention sectors that have most benefited from better US relations, such as tourism and related services and remittances.

The report also failed to mention Cuba's most important foreign currency earner, the export of professional services to oil-producing

nations, such as ally Venezuela. Those services accounted for more than \$8 billion in revenue out of \$18 billion last year.

Cuba receives more than 100,000 barrels of oil per day as part of an exchange for Cuban doctors and other professionals. Under terms of the deal, Venezuela is protected from falling oil prices, which in turn punish Cuba. Venezuela's economy is among the worst performing in the world as the value of its oil exports has fallen as much as 60 percent over the last 18 months.

On Dec 6, an opposition coalition critical of Cuba swamped the ruling socialist party in parliamentary elections. But four days later, Moody's upgraded its outlook on Cuba to positive from stable, while leaving its credit with a junk rating of Caa2, saying Cuba's dependence on Venezuela had lessened since 2014 and that reforms and rapprochement with the United States were positive. —Reuters

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EUROPEAN SHARES ADVANCE, SPANISH STOCKS PUMMELED

LONDON: European shares gained ground yesterday, buoyed by carmaker Volkswagen and telecoms equipment manufacturer Ericsson...

Neither Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's conservatives nor left-wing parties won a clear mandate to govern in Sunday's poll...

Spain's top-share IBEX 35 index fell 2.1 percent, while Spanish 10-year government bond yields hit one-month highs after the election.

Spanish companies Banco Santander, Banco Bilbao Vizcaya Argentaria, Iberdrola and Telefonica were the top fallers on the European blue-chip STOXX50 index...

Britain's FTSE 100 rose 0.8 percent, with media group ITV lifted by a report that Comcast was planning an 11 billion pound (\$16 billion) bid for ITV.

"Having been prepared for negativity after Spain, other indexes have shrugged it off. Volumes are low and the holiday exodus is beginning, so we're seeing reasonable moves on low volumes today," said Mark Priest...

Swedish telecom equipment maker Ericsson soared 6.7 percent, after settling a dispute with Apple over patent licensing...

positioning the stock for its biggest daily gain since July 2014.

Volkswagen also rose 2.7 percent. The company said it plans to limit the time staff can remain in certain roles in order to improve oversight at the company...

The FTSEurofirst and Euro STOXX 50 are both up by around 4 percent since the start of 2015, with economic stimulus measures from the European Central Bank helping to support stocks in spite of political uncertainty in countries such as Spain and Greece.

Asia markets

In Tokyo scandal-hit conglomerate Toshiba lost almost 10 percent following a weekend report in the leading Nikkei business daily that it would likely record a fiscal year net loss of about \$4 billion.

In a statement after the markets closed yesterday, Toshiba said it would post a record 550 billion yen (\$4.5 billion) annual loss. The 140-

year-old company was this year hit by revelations that executives systematically pressured underlings to inflate profits in a years-long scheme to hide poor results.

Japan's Nikkei stock index ended 0.4 percent lower but pared most of its early losses after falling 1.8 percent at one point, with a pick-up in the dollar against the yen providing some respite for exporters.

Most other regional markets ended in positive territory after falling into the red in the morning. Sydney closed up 0.1 percent, Hong Kong gained 0.2 percent and Seoul ended 0.3 percent higher.

Shanghai closed 1.8 percent higher on fresh hopes Chinese authorities would unveil new measures to reform the economy, particularly the cumbersome state-owned enterprises.

But Stewart Richardson, chief investment officer at RMG Wealth Management in London, warned: "The problems that have been affecting both markets and the global economy for months remain in place. "Commodity prices remain low, corporate debt remains too high and emerging markets continue to struggle. Furthermore, although Federal Reserve Chair Janet Yellen continues to characterize the US economy as strong, it does appear to be slowing down." —Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Monday 21 December 2015

Summary table with columns: Index, Change, Closing, Last Closing, High, Low. Includes Price index, Weighted index, KSX 15.

Summary table with columns: Volume, Value (KWD), Number of Trades. Includes Volume: 108,568,035; Value: 10,288,546; Trades: 2,732.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes MARIN, IKARUS, IPG, NAPESCO, ENERGYH, GPI, ARAR, Oil & Gas, KFQUC, DPCC, ALKOUT, ALQURAIN, Basic Materials.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes SOKOUK, KRE, URC, NRE, SRE, TAM, AREEC, MASGALJI, ARABREC, ERESO, MADANEC, INJAZZAT, INVESTORS, IRC, ALTIJARIA, SANAM, AAYANRE, AQAR, ALAQARIA, MAZAYA, ANOC, THEMAR, TLJARA, TAAMEER, ARKAN, ARGAN, ABYAN, MUNSHAAT, FIRSTDUBAI, KBT, REAM, MENA, ALMUDON, MARAKEZ, REMAL, MASHAER, Real Estate.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KCEM, REFRI, CABLE, SHIP, PCEM, PAPER, MRC, ACICO, GMMC, HCC, KPAC, KBMM, NICBM, EQUIPMENT, NCCI, GYPSUM, SALDOOKH, AGLTY, EDU, CLEANING, CITYGROUP, KGL, KGPC, HUMANSOFT, NAFAS, SAFWAN, GFC, MAYADEEN, CGC, MITCC, UPAC, ALAFCO, MUBARRAD, LOGISTICS, SCEM, GCEM, QCEM, FCEM, RKWC, SPEC, Industrials.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SGC, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOLA, ALMAL, GIH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, ISKAN, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAR, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINIV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, STRATEGIA, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMINTAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPCC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KGH, NSH, PAPO, CATT, DANAH, POULT, FOOD, Consumer Goods, MHC, ATC, YIACO, Health Care.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SGC, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOLA, ALMAL, GIH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, ISKAN, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAR, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINIV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, STRATEGIA, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMINTAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPCC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KCIN, KHOT, SULTAN, CABLETV, EFAS, IFHR, OULAFUEL, MUNTAZAHAT, JAZERA, SOOR, FUTUREKID, ALNAWADI, ALRAI, ZIMAH, UFIG, KOUJIFOOD, Mezzan, Consumer Services.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SGC, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOLA, ALMAL, GIH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, ISKAN, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAR, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINIV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, STRATEGIA, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMINTAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPCC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes ZAIN, ODOREDO, HITSTELEG, VIVA, Telecommunications, NBK, GDK, CBK, ABK, ALMUTAHED, KIB, BURJ, KFIN, DOUBYAN, AUB, ITHMR, WARABANK, Banks.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SGC, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOLA, ALMAL, GIH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, ISKAN, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAR, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINIV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, STRATEGIA, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMINTAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPCC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KINS, GINS, AINS, WINS, KUWAITRE, FTI, WETHAQ, BKIKWT, Insurance.

Table of Trades with columns: Security, High, Low, Volume, Value (KD), Trades, Last, Change. Includes KINV, FACIL, IFA, NINV, KPROJ, COAST, SECH, SGC, ARZAN, MARKAZ, KMEFIC, ALAMAN, ALOLA, ALMAL, GIH, AAYAN, BAYANINV, OSOUL, KFIC, KAMCO, NIH, ISKAN, MADAR, ALDEERA, ALSALAM, EKTTITAR, ALMADINA, NOOR, TAMINIV, EXCH, TAIBA, KSHC, STRATEGIA, ASIYA, GNAHC, AMWAL, ALMINTAZ, MANAZEL, NIND, BIHC, SENERGY, AGHC, KPCC, TAHSSILAT, JEERANH, EKHOLDING, GFH, INOVEST, Financial Services.

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Entrance.



Show Kitchen.

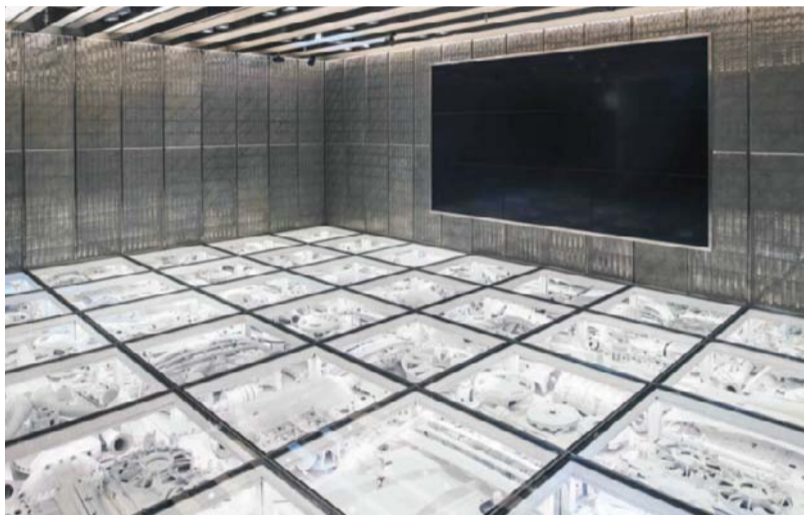
INTERSECT BY LEXUS OPENS IN DUBAI

LUXURY BRAND EXPERIENCE SPACE

Lexus International opened the first Intersect by Lexus luxury brand experience space outside of Japan in Dubai, UAE, with an opening ceremony yesterday to mark the occasion.

Intersect by Lexus is a unique luxury space for the Middle East region where visitors can experience Lexus without get-

ting behind a steering wheel. Neither a dealership, nor a traditional retail space, guests can engage with Lexus while "connecting with the city, and intersecting with other people and cars". The first Intersect by Lexus opened in Tokyo's Minami-Aoyama district in August 2013. Intersect by Lexus is located at the



Garage and Exhibition Space.

heart of the Dubai International Financial Center (DIFC), and offers a relaxing yet stimulating space for people who are seeking diverse luxury lifestyles enriched by design, art, fashion, culture, film, music and technology. Takayuki Yoshitsugu, Chief Representative, Middle East and North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said, "We are very pleased to inaugurate Intersect by Lexus where people from across the region have the opportunity to be part of a distinctive experience. Intersect by Lexus is a comfortable and inspiring space for every individual and they can treat it as their own unique place. At Lexus, we share a tremendous passion for luxury, quality craftsmanship and innovative design. This manifests itself in every corner of Intersect by Lexus to give visitors a sense of the lifestyle associated with a Lexus. Yoshitsugu added: "We sincerely appreciate the support of our customers who have put their faith in Lexus over the years and we look forward to welcoming them to Intersect by Lexus."

Both Intersect by Lexus experience spaces have been designed by Masamichi Katayama, the world-

renowned designer and founder of interior design firm Wonderwall. They are designed to embody the Lexus brand, and provide a brand experience with surprise and inspiration unique to Lexus. INTERSECT BY LEXUS is composed of two floors. The lower floor features a garage and exhibition space for Lexus concept vehicles and art installations, while the upper floor provides a lounge, a restaurant, a library lounge, and a shop for CRAFTED FOR LEXUS (www.crafted-for-lexus.com) lifestyle items.

"This project is not just about creating a restaurant, but rather an environment," explains Katayama, "As an incubation platform generating new innovative ideas and concepts, it has been designed to capture the feeling of a lounge, allowing people with shared values to come together and interact in a relaxed yet inspiring atmosphere."

These spaces will host workshops, exhibitions, and events, acting as the launching point for diverse brand activities. Intersect by Lexus will be further expanded into the global scene, with a space in New York currently being planned.



Library Lounge and Eatery.

UK HELP FOR STEEL MILLS NOT ENOUGH: REPORT

LONDON: Government action to address domestic and European Union policies that cripple Britain's steel sector are still not enough to secure the industry's future, a parliamentary committee report said yesterday.

Nearly 4,000 jobs were lost in the British steel industry in October alone-equivalent to about a fifth of the workforce - as Tata Steel buckled under pressure from decade-low steel prices, while SSI UK and Caparo Industries shut up shop. The crisis prompted EU ministers to hold talks at Britain's request, while the UK government pledged action on some of the industry's concerns on high energy costs, green taxes, business rates and cheap imports, notably

from China. "Increased (government) activity has not yet translated into measurable impact. Nor will current measures be enough to provide certainty for the future," said the report from parliament's Business, Innovation and Skills committee. "Government must now work with industry to establish what a sustainable future for UK steel looks like, and then commit to taking the necessary measures to help deliver it." After months of lobbying, Britain received EU approval last week to compensate energy-intensive industries such as steel for the cost of green taxes like the renewables obligation, Britain's main incentive mechanism for large-scale renewable projects. —Reuters

ETIHAD AIRWAYS EXPANDS CODESHARE AGREEMENT WITH RUSSIA'S S7 AIRLINES

KUWAIT: Etihad Airways, the national airline of the United Arab Emirates, is expanding its codeshare partnership with S7 Airlines to cover eight additional destinations from the Russian carrier's Moscow hub.

Effective 16th January 2016, Etihad Airways will place its EY code on S7 Airlines' domestic services between Moscow and Chelyabinsk, Krasnoyarsk, Novosibirsk, Novy Urengoy, Omsk, Perm, Rostov-on-Don and Sochi. Under this revised agreement, S7 Airlines applies its code on routes via Moscow to Abu Dhabi and selected connecting destinations on Etihad Airways' network including Singapore, Bangkok, Phuket and Sydney. The Abu Dhabi-based carrier, which operates daily flights to Moscow, already has codeshare arrangements in place with S7 Airlines covering the Russian cities of Kazan, Krasnodar, Saint Petersburg, Samara, Ufa and Yekaterinburg. Both airlines have been offering joint codeshare flights since 2010.

James Hogan, Etihad Airways' President and

Chief Executive Officer, said: "This enhanced codeshare arrangement with S7 Airlines is in line with our strategy to strengthen existing partnerships and develop new ones. "Etihad Airways has enjoyed a strong working relationship with S7 Airlines and through this enhanced partnership we are demonstrating our commitment to the Russian inbound and outbound market, and providing guests with greater choice and travel convenience."

Igor Veretennikov, S7 Group Deputy CEO and Head of Strategy Department, said: "By extending our codeshare agreement with Etihad Airways, we open up more travel opportunities for S7 Airlines' passengers, adding destinations such as Singapore to our route network. We look forward to welcoming Etihad Airways' customers on eight more S7 Airlines' routes within Russia." Etihad Airways' daily Moscow flights are operated with a 174-seat Airbus A321 in a two-class configuration of 16 In Business and 158 in Economy.

THE BEST DECEMBER OFFER FROM CHEVROLET ALGHANIM

HIGHEST TRADE-IN VALUE PLUS UP TO KD 1000 UPON PURCHASING SILVERADO OR TAHOE

KUWAIT: Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait, has always been keen on providing its customers with the best offers to own and enjoy the Chevrolet car of their dreams. The newest December promotion presents this perfect opportunity. Now, customers can get up to KD 1,000 in cash with the highest trade-in value upon buying a brand new Chevrolet Silverado or Tahoe.

Chevrolet Alghanim's December offer has been created to fulfill the dreams of youth who wish to own the larger-than-life Silverado, the powerful drive that can take on any terrain. The limited-time offer also provides all SUV fans that chance to own an exceptional one with the Chevrolet Tahoe, a strong, sturdy and secure SUV that offers the driver as well as passengers a spacious interior that merges innovative design with excellent on-road performance that fits every individual and family's need.

Youths and families alike will also enjoy Chevrolet's signature driving experience owing to the cars' state-of-the-art technology and latest safety standards, ultimately embracing an incredible design and daring creativity at an unsurpassable value. Chevrolet MyLink gives drivers the best of both worlds when it comes to infotainment. It provides easy, intuitive operation of basic functions, yet it is also highly customizable and capable of linking to devices such as smartphones, USB devices and MP3 players, giving users more ways of staying connected, like accessing their favorite music files, photo albums and videos via Bluetooth or USB/AUX.

With its award-winning exterior and interior

designs, plus a host of advanced safety features and remarkable towing capacity and performance, the Silverado is proudly considered Kuwait's best-selling pick-up truck, guaranteed to get drivers through the most demanding jobs ever while being environmentally-friendly.

Everything from Silverado's interior and exterior styling to ergonomics and performance has been re-engineered. The new Silverado is stronger, smarter and more capable than ever. Equipped with three EcoTec3 engines, V-6 4.3L with the most torque and highest towing rating of any standard V-6, V8 5.3L and an all-new 6.2L V-8, the Silverado proudly features the segment's most powerful engine. The increased torque and efficiency of the new EcoTec3 engine family resulted in an unprecedented level of power to take on any high terrains and obstacles.

The new Silverado is also designed to bring new levels of confidence for adventurers and campers alike, thanks to its perfect blend of exterior elegance and exterior ruggedness, making it the best pick-up truck to own. Developed entirely around functionality, the interior cabin meets the needs of the driver and passengers by featuring the smartest technologies and redesigned front seats and forward-opening doors that are built for all-day comfort.

The cabs also feature inlaid doors that fit snugly into recesses in the body sides for reduced turbulence and wind rush. Even the smallest details of the body, such as the roof and tailgate spoiler, were tuned in a wind tunnel to smooth airflow over the truck for reduced noise and improved aerodynamic efficiency. Available

in three trim levels that include LS, LT and LTZ, the all-new Tahoe has been completely redesigned. Featuring premium materials that contribute to the functional, sophisticated design as well as available 8-inch diagonal color touch-screen with 3D navigation, in addition to up to six USB ports to connect smartphones, Blue Ray DVD rear entertainment system and fold-flat third-row seat that provides incredible spaciousness for the whole family. In addition to keyless access, the Tahoe also features a host of available driver assistance technologies, such as Standard Front and Rear Park Assist helps when maneuvering Tahoe in tight parking situations and Side Blind Zone Alert with Lane Change Alert use radar sensors in the rear quarter panels to detect fast approaching vehicles.

Chevrolet Care

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 24/7 roadside assistance. Customers who want to purchase a new vehicle or upgrade their existing vehicle can now take advantage of this amazing offer. Visit our showrooms in Safat Alghanim Al-Rai, Sharq, Fahaheel, Al-Ahmedi, and Shuwaikh and get the offer today!

OOREDOO, EUREKA AND EDAM PARTNERS IN NOJOOM LOYALTY PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, yesterday announced that its award-winning Nojoom Loyalty Program will offer customers the exclusive opportunity to redeem their points for shopping vouchers from Eureka Electronics & EDAM Group's Restaurants & Entertainment Centers in eMall, one of the largest electronic retailers, Restaurants & Entertainment Centers in Kuwait and the region. Nojoom, Kuwait's biggest telecom rewards program, allows customers to earn points as they use Ooredoo services in exchange for a variety of rewards from the program's many partners.

eMall, is a first of its kind shopping experience in the Kuwaiti market designed for the "smart shopper". The eMall is a department store containing a variety of popular international brands in consumer products, restaurants, cafes, entertainment centers, health clubs and fashion. Eureka Electronics serves the customers through several branches across Kuwait.

Nojoom members who have accumulated points during their use of Ooredoo services will be able to redeem their points with Eureka Electronics & EDAM Group's Restaurants & Entertainment Centers (eClub & eJoy), one of Nojoom's leading partners by contacting the call center 121 or visiting the



web portal at www.ooredoo.com.kw.

Commenting on the partnership and its benefits to members, Mijbil Alayoub, Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait said: "We are excited to bring our customers the many exciting benefits resulting from our partnership with Eureka Electronics, one of the Kuwait and the Middle East's leading electronics retailers & EDAM Group's Restaurants & Entertainment Centers (eClub & eJoy) one of the kind in Kuwait. Through this joint effort under our Nojoom program members will be rewarded with eMall's many benefits including best market value on brands, conven-

ience collection of products under one roof and family-friendly establishment in an easily accessible location. We look forward to bringing our customers the best rewards with our program partners."

The CEO of Eureka, Eng Ahmad Al-Qenaie has said: "Our partnership with Ooredoo stems from our strong belief that the smart shopping option inevitable in light of the evolution of the market and the breadth of choices volumes and Eureka took it upon themselves to be at the ambition level of smart shopper and its aspirations where the customer in Kuwait one of the smartest customers in the region and afford him the first

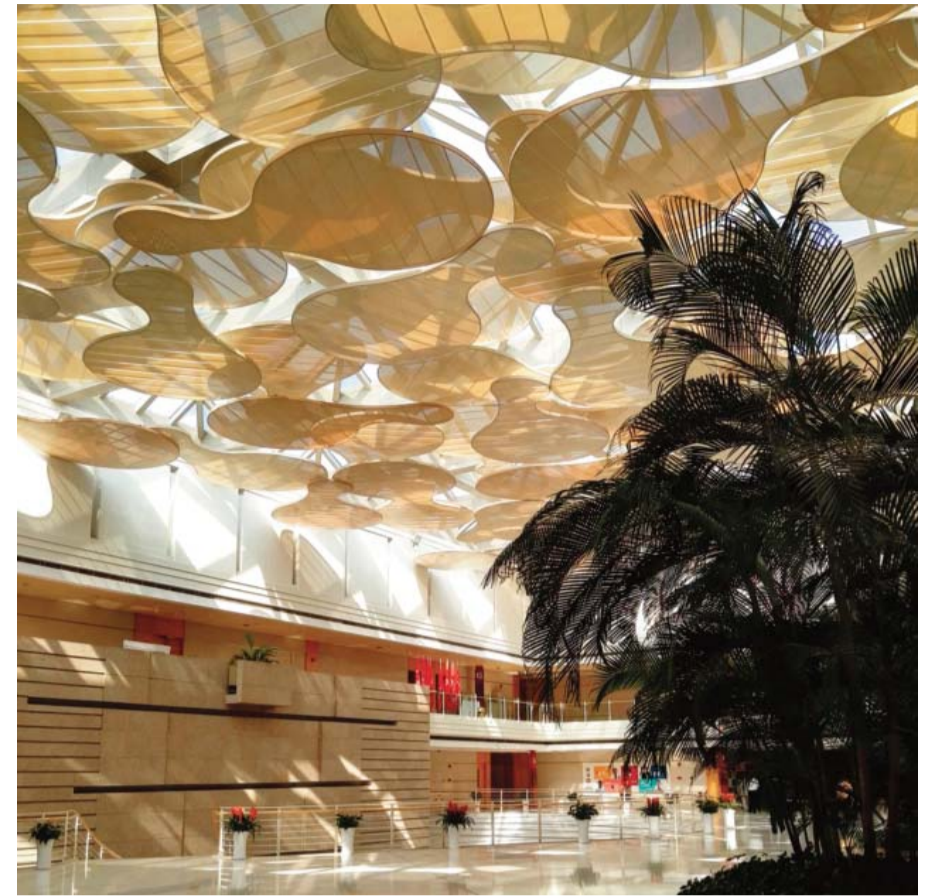
choice is always worth."

And for his part, said the General Manger of EDAM Group, Ashraf Halla: "We cannot offer Ooredoo clients less than the best in terms that befitting Ooredoo's customers." "And he also noted that the participation of the Safe Family Entertainment Center "eJoy" at (eMall) in the "Nojoom" program is an indication of the trust level of Ooredoo and excellent value provided by "eJoy" to its customers,



Mijbil Alayoub

we in turn appreciate Ooredoo trust and we will work constantly to maintain it." The Nojoom Loyalty Program, part of Ooredoo Kuwait, has previously won Best Loyalty Program in the MEA Award in 2012 by Customer 360 for its customer satisfaction quality.



A look at the rise of the brand in 2015



Expansion and Opening of New Markets Bringing Huawei Consumer Business Group Closer to Global Consumers

For the first half of 2015, the proportion of public sales channels (including online) grew **56%**.

Huawei will build 32,171 retail stores (premium experience stores, experience stores, dedicated divisions and shops) globally by the end of 2015. The total number of stores meanwhile will increase 100 percent year-on-year.

- Western Europe: 3,936 retail stores
- Southeast Asia: 4,853 retail stores
- Northeast Europe: 1,540 retail stores
- North Africa: 2,062 retail stores

Research and Development (R&D) Enjoys Global Resources

Allocating **10%** of sales income into R&D, and in 2014 alone, **USD 1.2 billion** was invested into R&D

16 R&D centers globally

70% are R&D staff

EU ID, Innovation...	US RF, OS, Chipset	CHINA Platform	JAPAN Electro-component, MD	INDIA Software
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2012 Laboratory to Build Future Competitiveness

- Cloud Service
- Aesthetics
- Nanotechnology
- Future Network
- New Energy
- Big Data
- Unmanned Auto
- AI
- AR/VR
- Algorithm

Our Global Sales Network Covers Over 170 Countries and Regions

- Huawei HQ
- Accounting sharing centers
- Bidding centers
- Supply centers
- R&D centers
- Training centers
- Technical support centers

Huawei Technologies Co. Ltd, is the largest telecommunications equipment manufacturer in the world, having overtaken Ericsson in 2012. The company is ranked 228th in the Fortune Global 500 list and netted a sales revenue of 28 billion USD in the first half of 2015. The Huawei Consumer Business Group has had a steady growth in both sales revenue and smartphone shipment. Sales revenue rose from 4.5 billion in 2010 to a targeted 20 billion in 2015 while smartphone shipments for 2015 is expected to exceed 100 million units. A tremendous improvement over the 3 million units sold in 2010.

Huawei was listed on Interbrands 100 Most Valuable Global Brands list again in 2015, moving up to rank 88 rising above both the Heineken and MTV brand. 2015 was the year of many firsts, including making the prestigious BrandZ list. Huawei ranked 70 on the list because the brand invested in its global technology offering, demonstrated with two-third of its revenue coming from markets outside of China. Achieving a rank on the BrandZ list recognizes Huawei's real strengths. Huawei's brand momentum also took a major step forward in 2015. The brand moved way beyond competitors HTC, Lenovo and Sony in terms of brand development while keeping a steady growth in utilization rate. These goals are in line with Huawei's key objective which is becoming the world's most respected brand. Research and development are important pillars of

the Huawei brand and enjoys resources derived from a global level. 10% of sales in 2014 (USD 1.2 billion) were allocated to R&D. Today Huawei is proud of its 16 R&D centers located around the world including in China, Japan, India, US and EU all of which are assigned individual tasks to ensure the smooth running of operations.

Huawei also covers a global sales network located in over 170 countries and regions around the world. To get to the actual numbers - there are 3,936 retail stores in Western Europe, 4,853 in Southeast Asia, 1,540 in Northeast Europe and 2,062 in North Africa. For the first half of 2015, the proportion of public sales channels (including online) grew 56%. Further, Huawei is expected to build 32,171 retail stores (premium experience stores, experience stores, dedicated divisions and shops) globally by the end of 2015. The total number of stores meanwhile will increase 100 percent year-on-year. Huawei's new flagship products were a major success for all their customers in 2015. The new P8 had its global launch in London on April 15th while The Mate S and Huawei Watch were both launched in Berlin on September 2nd. Both launches were lauded by both our customers and technology pundits from around the world.

Huawei's Consumer Business Group market share is No.2, No.3 and No.4 in Iran, Saudi Arabia and UAE respectively. When the entire region is taken into consideration, Huawei sits at No.3 behind Samsung and Apple. Huawei was also awarded at the Diamond Awards for Smartphones at DISTREE Middle East for its achievements and growth in the region.

Huawei performance in Kuwait is looking extremely bright. It has made breakthroughs not only for affordable devices but also in mid- and high-end devices. In 2012, Huawei shipped 53,000 units in Kuwait. This number rose tremendously in 2014 where Huawei shipped over 659,000 units. This is a clear indication of Huawei's amazing potential in the smartphone market not only in Kuwait and the Middle East but also around the world.



Our Design Center and The Aesthetic Research Center Embrace the Latest Fashion Trends

London Design Center and Paris Aesthetic Center have more than a dozen renowned designers from the luxury, fashion, automobile, 3D and digital industry.



A YEAR AFTER WORK STARTS, LITTLE SIGN OF NICARAGUA CANAL

RIVAS: A year ago, to much fanfare, a Chinese consortium planning on building a canal across Nicaragua to rival the century-old one in neighboring Panama started initial work with a target completion date of 2020. Today, however, there is no further sign of progress beyond the dirt paths the Hong Kong Nicaragua Development Group carved out near the mouth of the Brito River, meant to be the Pacific Ocean gateway to the \$50-billion canal. HKND has admitted work had been delayed, with excavation pushed off to the end of next year.

It blamed the lateness of an environmental study which was approved by authorities only in November. In the town of Rivas, located near the opening of the Brito River, unease and anxiety has taken hold. Although the government has promised its 200,000 inhabitants the canal would bring them lasting prosper-

ity, rural folk on the outskirts fear only they will be uprooted to make way for the massive project. "If the canal comes, where will we settle?" asked Ruth Campos, a resident in her 60s in the town of Las Lajas.

Residents uprooted

She is one of 27,000 Nicaraguans who are to be relocated because of the construction of the canal which aims to accept passage of 3,500 cargo ships a year, according to HKND. The consortium was in 2013 given a concession to build and run the Nicaragua canal for 50 years, renewable for another half century. The design for the manmade waterway calls for a canal 278 kilometers long, 280 meters (919 feet) wide, and 30 meters (98 feet) deep. Its goal is to capture five percent of global maritime traffic, especially superfreighters going between America

and Asia whose size prevents them using the Panama canal.

"They can kill me, but I'm not leaving," warned a 95-year-old resident, Cristina Lopez, whose town of La Virgen is to be bulldozed to make way for the canal according to HKND's maps. "This is where I was born, and it's where I will die," she said. A neighbor, Esperanza, 70, said: "Here there will be some deaths because nobody wants to leave their home. How can these people come to force us from our land?"

Environmental fears

The locals, and environmental groups, fear the massive project will destroy Lake Nicaragua, a vast inland body of fresh water that is Central America's biggest, and a key throughpoint for the canal. HKND plans to build a logistics center for the canal in Rivas. In September, work

was meant to have been completed on a first stage that would see five million tons of earth excavated. But the delay attributed to the environmental impact study has pushed that back. The work "may be delayed, may change some plans," Eden Pastora, a member of the government's Great Inter-oceanic Canal Commission said. "But the project will go on," he said.

Many doubts

HKND, still in what it calls the "conception phase" of the project, is to start building a port early next year on Nicaragua's Caribbean coast, in Punta Gorda, to bring in the heavy machinery needed for the next stage. The Australian head of the project for the HKND, Bill Wild, said late last month that work was "behind schedule" by nearly a year. He said late approval of the environmental impact study was to blame. That study,

carried out for HKND by a British firm, Environmental Resources Management, concluded that the canal would have "significant" consequences, especially for Lake Nicaragua. Parts of the canal are also to be built on earthquake-prone terrain, it noted.

But it stated that, if executed correctly, the canal would have a "positive" impact for the country. A hydrology expert, Salvador Montenegro, highlighted the problem of opening up Lake Nicaragua, whose shallow waters lie above an ancient tectonic zone of seismic and volcanic activity. An Asian affairs analyst, Alberto Aleman, said HKND has left open "many questions about the environmental aspects" of the project. "Apparently not enough capital, not enough investment has been raised, and they have not been able to come up with a study able to dispel all the doubts," he said. — AFP

CLINTON AVOIDS CAMPAIGN DIET PITFALLS WITH HOT PEPPERS, YOGA

WASHINGTON: Gone are the Bojangles fried chicken and biscuits. When supporters offer Tex-Mex, she takes a salad. And forget about cake (most of the time). As Hillary Clinton knows from previous presidential campaigns, politicking means picking your food carefully. When her staff laid out a spread of pulled pork and beans from Whole Hog Cafe after a stop in Little Rock, the Democratic front-runner ate a single tomato slice. Though she forgoes a Fitbit to count her steps, Clinton sends her campaign team to scout out secluded tracks for brisk walks and hotel rooms with space for yoga. And she swears by the weight-loss power of hot peppers, keeping red pepper flakes on hand when on the road.

Since launching her 2016 bid in April, Clinton has embarked on a diet and fitness regimen, hoping to stave off the pounds that afflict most every White House hopeful amid the near-sleepless nights and temptation of nonstop snacking during a campaign. Among supporters, her significant weight-loss - along with a style makeover - are subjects of constant chatter. "She must be doing something right that I couldn't figure out how to do politically and gastronomically," said former Vermont Gov. Howard Dean, a Clinton backer who said he added 35 pounds, ballooning up to 195, during his eight-month campaign for president in 2004. "I don't know how people stay trim on the campaign trail."

'I'm not skinny'

All candidates have their tricks for staying fit while hustling for votes. President Barack Obama has often complained about the fried food that is a staple of campaign stops and is a regular at the gym, even when traveling. Kentucky Sen Rand Paul avoids fries. Republican Jeb Bush is a devotee of the Paleo diet, claiming to have lost 40 pounds by cutting carbs and dairy. "I'm not skinny," he said this fall. "I'm perfectly sized." But no

politician's looks have been scrutinized as long or as intensely as Clinton's, whose appearance has been a topic of conversation for decades.

"It's a daily challenge," she said earlier this year to a participant in a Facebook chat, who asked how she manages to get camera-ready each morning. "I do the best I can - and as you may have noticed, some days are better than others!" Unlike her self-described "vegan-ish" husband and gluten-free daughter, aides say Clinton doesn't follow a specific diet plan. Instead, they say, she goes by the general rule of "if it looks bad for you, it's probably bad for you." Her one secret: Raw hot peppers. At a farm stand in Davenport, Iowa, this fall, Clinton detailed scientific research on the health effects of spicy food, telling a cashier that she finds eating raw jalapenos "so refreshing."

"During 2008, there was not a day or a minute that went by that we didn't have a full plate of raw jalapenos," said Jamie Smith, a 2008 campaign aide, who once received a pep talk from Clinton about her inability to handle their heat. "She ate them like potato chips." Former and current staffers describe her food tastes as surprisingly normal, saying she snacks on cheddar Goldfish crackers.

While she would occasionally indulge when she campaigned for fellow Democrats during the 2014 elections, snacking on fried chicken and Mexican food, Clinton has now adopted more discipline.

Dining with supporters in Washington earlier this month at Etto, an Italian restaurant known for its wood-fired pizzas, Clinton opted for a cauliflower salad. At the Iowa State Fair, an annual calorie-rich stop for candidates, she picked up a pork chop on a stick, but ate only three bites in public. (Aides say she later ate the whole chop - not because it was a political obligation, but because she said it was "delicious.") — AP



BEIJING: A woman wears a mask as she rides her bicycle along a street near Tiananmen Square on the third day of a "red alert" for pollution in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

BEIJING SMOG PERSISTS THOUSANDS OF PLANTS CUT PRODUCTION

BEIJING: Beijing has ordered 2,100 factories to suspend or reduce production as part of its "red alert" measures to deal with smog, the government said yesterday, as the city remained shrouded under toxic haze for the third consecutive day. The Chinese capital imposed the highest tier of a four-color smog warning system for four days starting Saturday, the second time the red alert was applied since Beijing established the pollution precaution scheme in 2013. As part of the "emergency response plan", 2,100 factories in the city and on its outskirts have been ordered to either stop or scale back production in an effort to cut emissions, an official from the Beijing Municipal Commission of Economy and Information Technology, who declined to be named said.

The government was sending inspectors to

the plants on a daily basis, she said. "[The factories] all strictly carried out the measures" as required, she added. Counts of PM2.5 - harmful microscopic particles that penetrate deep into the lungs - were 172 micrograms per cubic meter earlier, according to the US embassy, which issues independent readings. The reading is nearly seven times the World Health Organisation's recommended maximum exposure of 25 over a 24-hour period.

PM2.5 is expected to peak at above 300 micrograms per cubic meter today, the state-run Beijing Daily reported, citing environment authorities. During the red alert, Beijing pulls half the city's cars off the roads, except for buses, taxis, electric cars and vehicles for special purposes such as ambulances, while the public transport system including subways increases

capacity, the report said. Schools and kindergartens in Beijing were advised to close yesterday and today under the red alert and teaching materials were uploaded online for the students, the paper said.

It added that 33 cities in other provinces including Hebei, which surrounds Beijing, Henan in central China and Shandong in the east also imposed similar steps to contain the smog. All the measures reduced the PM2.5 concentration by up to 30 percent compared with a simulation of the situation where no action is taken, said the city's environment authorities, according to the report. Beijing issued its first-ever red alert on December 7, declaring emergency pollution measures following scathing public criticism of the city's weak response to choking smog that settled on the city earlier in the month. — AFP



HOPKINTON: Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton gets fresh tomatoes at Dimond Hill Farm between campaign stops in Hopkinton, NH. — AP

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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

استشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM

Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St. 1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B - Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368



(Left to right) Loay Ahmed, Marketing Manager; Khalil About, Brand Manager at Al-Mulla International; Bassam Saleh; Ali Deeb; Imad Malaeb, General Manager of Acura; and Aliaa Jamal



Khalil About, Brand Manager at Al Mulla International announcing the winners



Imad Malaeb, General Manager of Acura presenting the prize to the 1st place winner, Bassam Saleh



Imad Malaeb, General Manager of Acura presenting the prize to the 3rd place winner, Aliaa Jamal



Imad Malaeb, General Manager of Acura presenting the prize to the 2nd place winner Ali Deeb

AUK STUDENTS WIN 'ACURA' PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

The American University of Kuwait (AUK) co-organized a photography competition for its students in partnership the Al-Mulla International Auto Trading Company. The competition, called Acura, required participating students to take photographs of the Acura car - the world's first Japanese luxury car since 1986 - and share the photos on the social networking platform Instagram for a chance to win KD 1500, KD 1000, or KD 500 in prize money. The competition was open to all AUK stu-

dents and ran for one month, during which participants were required to take creative photos of the Acura car and posted them on their personal Instagram accounts.

The winners of the competition were selected based on the creativity of the photographs they posted and the number of organic "Likes" they accumulated on Instagram. Thirty students participated in the competition and the winners were announced during a ceremony held at the AUK campus. The event was

attended by Loay Ahmed, Marketing Manager, and Khalil About, Brand Manager at Al-Mulla International, who presented the winners with the prizes. Bassam Saleh, Ali Deeb, and Aliaa Jamal, won the first, second and third prizes respectively.

Dr Hanan Muzaffar, AUK Dean of Student Affairs, extended congratulations to the winners saying "Bassem, Ali, Aliaa, and everyone else who participated in the photography competition, you make us all proud to belong

to AUK. Creativity and dedication are indeed traits that our students excel at, so there was no doubt that the top three winners would be members of our Wolfpack. Great job! Continue to make us shine."

"We at ACURA are always keen to encourage the young generation of Kuwait to get more creative and to excel in all areas, as part of our social responsibilities," said Imad Malaeb, General Manager of Acura, "This won't be the last event, as we still have so many more

events to come in 2016."

The American University of Kuwait (AUK) is an independent, private, equal opportunity, and co-educational liberal arts institution of higher education. The educational, cultural and administrative structure, methods and standards of AUK are based on the American model of higher learning. The language of instruction is English. More information on the American University of Kuwait can be found at www.auk.edu.

OGILVY PUBLIC RELATIONS CREATES NEW BOARD TO DRIVE INNOVATION AND GROWTH SAADA HAMMAD TO REPRESENT MEMAC OGILVY PR MENA

Memac Ogilvy, the leading advertising and public relations agency in the MENA region, announced the appointment of its Regional Director, MENA Saada Hammad as a member of Ogilvy PR's worldwide Board. The recent formation of the board has been created with two main objectives to advise the CEO and executive committee and to lead in the development of strategies, which are critical to growth, including talent, innovation, and digital. The Board will report to Christopher Graves, Global Chair of Ogilvy PR.

Commenting on the announcements, Stuart Smith, Global CEO of Ogilvy PR said: "The Board brings together people from a wide variety of backgrounds, demographics and responsibilities. Leveraging a diverse range of skills and talent will generate real value for our people, our clients and our business. Christopher is one of our industry's best disruptive thinkers. Under his leadership, the Board will have a tangible and positive impact on our strategy."

Saada Hammad has been leading the Memac Ogilvy PR team since 2010, building a commendable infrastructure that has been regarded among the best. During her tenure, business has tripled in volume and the agency has been prolific in the international awards scene, regularly being recognized for outstanding work. Before joining Memac Ogilvy PR, Saada was the Communications Director for General Motors in the Middle

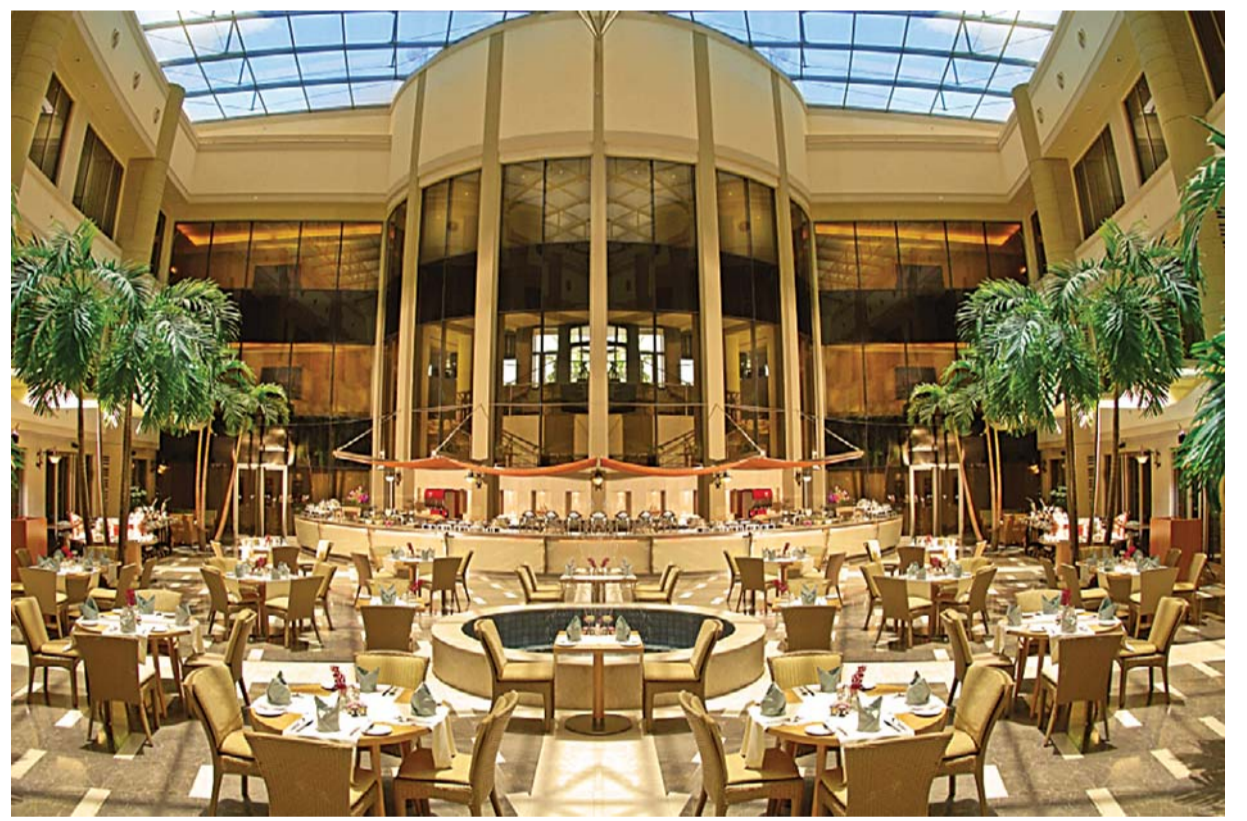
East where she had established and managed an integrated in-house PR department, a first for the region. Saada has been a major player in the communications industry for over twenty years. Born and raised in Lebanon, and educated in Italy, she spent most of her career in Dubai.

"The decision made by the Chairman of Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide Christopher Graves to appoint our own Regional Director Saada Hammad a member in the board brought enormous pride and joy to us. This appointment represents a great opportunity for Memac Ogilvy PR and the industry as it will contribute in re-defining the role of public relations in our region," commented Edmond Moutran, CEO and Chairman of Memac Ogilvy MENA. "I am confident this remarkably PR board will spark fresh collisions of ideas from all over, and new ways to navigate content, social, digital and behavioral sciences to earn influence on behalf of our clients," added Moutran.

"It is a great honor for me to represent the Memac Ogilvy group on Ogilvy PR's worldwide board. I believe this is the ideal platform to share the region's experience with the world and to tap into the worldwide network. This position will allow for us to create more value to our existing clients in the region, offering them innovative integrated solutions of international standards," said Saada Hammad, Memac Ogilvy Regional Director of Public Relations for the Middle East and North Africa.



Saada Hammad



CELEBRATE A MEMORABLE NEW YEAR AT MARINA HOTEL KUWAIT

Marina Hotel announced its offerings for the festive season. It has planned a remarkable program with a variety of packages that guarantees its guests a non-forgettable new year's celebration.

At Marina Hotel Kuwait each distinctive restaurant, unique in its culinary mastery, will enchant guests with specially-designed menus amid an atmosphere of good cheer and company. To celebrate the New Year's

Eve there is no place better than the Six Palms restaurant and the Atlantis restaurant to host an evening to remember with a magnificent International buffet dinner all in true Marina style at only KD 28 NET per guest. Marina Hotel invites its guests to indulge in the year end getaway with family and loved ones with a fascinating New Year room package of one night stay inclusive of buffet breakfast and buffet dinner at the Six

Palms restaurant or Atlantis restaurant for two persons starting from KD 170 NET. What better way than to start the first day of the year with your loved ones through a delectable selection of special treats and surprises for the entire family at a delightful international lunch buffet at the Atlantis restaurant. Delight yourself in a lavish experience and visit Marina Hotel Kuwait for the fun and festivities.

MCDONALD'S 'TASTES OF THE WORLD' CONCLUDES WORLDWIDE TOUR IN PORTUGAL

McDonald's Kuwait concludes its extremely popular 'Tastes of the World' campaign,

which took customers on a delicious journey of flavors from around the world. After the exotically mouth-

watering 'The Italian' and 'The Spanish', the final leg of this worldwide tour will be in Portugal with 'The Portuguese', which is available now at all McDonald's restaurants in Kuwait until stocks last.

"The Portuguese" burger has a deliciously juicy Halal chicken patty engulfed by two slices of cooling Emmental cheese, lettuce, mayo and tomato slices drenched in peri peri, the world-famous spicy Portuguese sauce, all in a warm bakery style roll.

"This year, Tastes of the World proved to be as popular as ever. It offered our customers the chance to take a worldwide tour and experience delicious exotic new flavors; with 'The Italian', 'The Spanish' and now 'The Portuguese'," said Sherif Coutry, Marketing Director at McDonald's Kuwait.

He also added: "This campaign continues to be one of our most popular offerings at McDonald's, and I personally can't wait to see what we have in store for next year."





CiK President Ishtiaq Malik



Ambassador of Canada Martine Moreau



US Ambassador Douglas Silliman



Ambassadors of Canada and US present a plaque to CiK President



Welcoming the guests



CiK audience



CiK reception



CiK guests



Gifts presented to children



Ambassadors with the guests

CANADIANS IN KUWAIT (CIK) HOLDS SEASONS GREETING

Canadians In Kuwait (CiK) a social networking organization for Canadian expat community based in Kuwait celebrated the current season for its members and guests with a grand event with pomp and color at Crowne Plaza Hotel - Farwaniya.

Ishtiaq Malik - CiK President welcomed Martine Moreau - Ambassador of Canada and Douglas Silliman - US Ambassador, the dignitaries, members and guests on behalf of CiK.

Ambassador of Canada - Martine Moreau addressed the audience by greeting Canadian community in Kuwait with season's greetings and appreciated CiK for holding this event.

US Ambassador - Douglas Silliman wished seasons greeting to all in his speech and enthralled the audience with a Canadian poem. All applauded the Ambassador gesture and enjoyed the poem.

CiK President in his address said that CiK

shares Canadian culture with other expats communities in Kuwait, utilizing the talent and efforts of its members. CiK's top agenda is to promote Canada's national traditions and events in Kuwait. The Past one year was very active, CiK had conducted several successful events for its members to enjoy their time in Kuwait. The membership to CiK has grown substantially. CiK website is proven to be very informative with weekly news updates and is beneficial to its members.

Martine Moreau handed over plaque of appreciation to CiK Executive Board Members: Keith Edwards - Secretary, Reza Mehrabi - Managing Finance, Christophe Holdrinet, Mohammad Al-Shemmari, George Apostolou, Moly Hinh, Tracey Mackenzie and volunteer Angelina Lantaca

Ambassador of Canada - Martine Moreau and the US Ambassador - Douglas Silliman

together presented a plaque of appreciation to the CiK President - Ishtiaq Malik for his services to Canadian community.

Special thanks were extended to CiK sponsors for their generous support to make the event successful: Qatar Airways - Fadi Hijazin (Platinum Main Sponsor), KGL - Taufic Jawhara, Ahmad and Ghazal International - Dr Mohammed Ameen, Marafie - Shaheed Islam, Al-Ahlea Circle Company - Saad Al-Mutawa, Honda AlGhanim Motors, Tim Hortons, Almuthana Nursery, Eclipse Salon and SPA, Kuwait Times - Adnan Saad, KARZ Supermarket - Moussa Hamad, Royal Digital Computer Center, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Movenpick Hotel Al-Bida'a, Radisson Blu Hotel and Safir Hotel - Fintas. CiK President also thanked Scott Beverly and Lorie Beverly for supporting this CiK event. Canadian Community in Kuwait enjoyed the gathering with their families and friends.

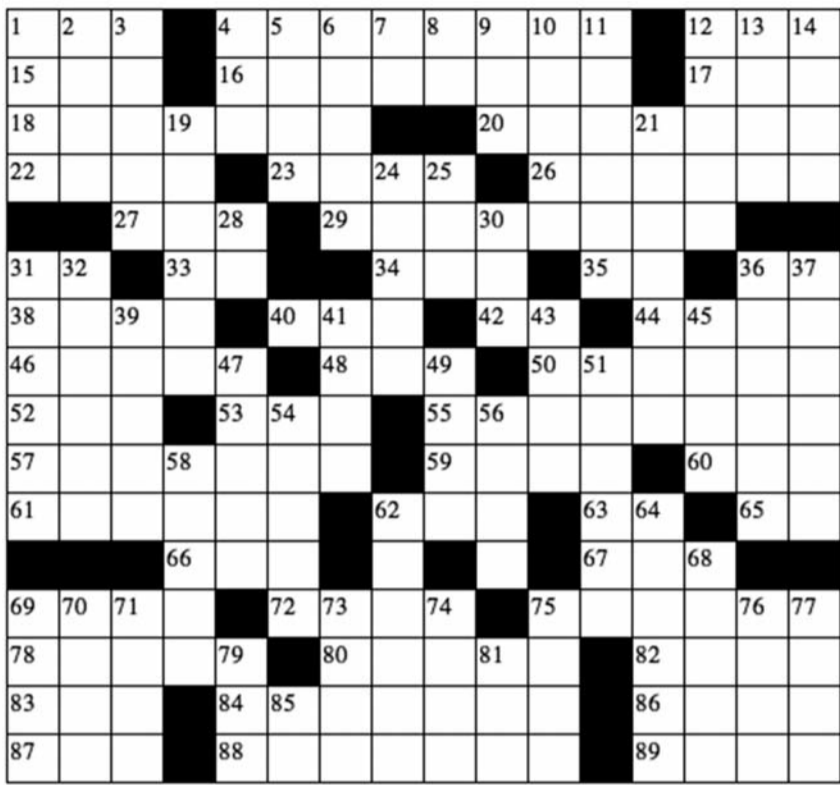


CiK audience



A course on self-defense training for police officers, which took place at the Kuwait Olympic Committee Health Club Lion Team Academy, was recently concluded. The course is considered the longest in the history of self-defense trainers in Kuwait. The conclusion ceremony took place in the presence of the president of the sport's international federation and VIP protection coach, who himself is world self-defense champion.

CROSSWORD 1117



ACROSS

- 1. The compass point that is one point west of due north.
4. A substance (as a coenzyme) that must join with another to produce a given result.
12. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
15. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
16. A tall piece of furniture that provides storage space for clothes.
17. A rapid escape (as by criminals).
18. The range of colour characteristic of a particular artist or painting or school of art.
20. Neckwear consisting of a long narrow piece of material worn (mostly by men) under a collar and tied in knot at the front.
22. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
23. The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
26. A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
27. 3 to 30 gigahertz.
29. The capital of the Democratic Republic of the Congo on the Congo river opposite Brazzaville.
31. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
33. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
34. Tag the base runner to get him out.
35. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
38. Informal or slang terms for mentally irregular.
40. The sixth day of the week.
42. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
44. (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
46. An explanation or definition of an obscure word in a text.
48. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
50. A spirit believed by Muslims to inhabit the earth and influence mankind by appearing in the form of humans or animals.
52. An association of countries in the western hemisphere.
53. A protocol developed for the internet to get data from one network device to another.
55. Small genus of shrubs and subshrubs of western United States having flowers that change color as they mature.
57. A ship with a reinforced bow to break up ice and keep channels open for navigation.
59. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
60. Annual grass of Europe and North Africa.
61. Leave a camp.
63. A Russian river.
65. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
66. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
67. An early form of modern jazz (originating around 1940).
69. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
72. A sandal attached to the foot by a thong over the toes.
78. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
80. An Italian woman of rank.
82. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
83. Step on it.
84. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
86. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
87. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
88. Small hardy range horse of the western plains descended from horses brought by the Spanish.
89. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.

DOWN

- 1. Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
2. Divulge information or secrets.
3. One of the four countries that make up the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.
4. A United States unit of weight equivalent to 100 pounds.
5. Profane or obscene expression usually of surprise or anger.
6. A person or animal that is markedly unusual or deformed.
7. A public promotion of some product or service.
8. A hard brittle blue-white multivalent metallic element.
9. A United States unit of weight equivalent to 2000 pounds.
10. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
11. Of or involving the rectum.
12. (used of opinions and actions) Far beyond the norm.
13. Type genus of the Majidae.
14. A stock exchange in New York.
19. People of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture.
21. An area in southwestern Asia whose sovereignty is disputed between Pakistan and India.
24. (Sumerian and Babylonian) A solar deity.
25. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
28. The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
30. The compass point that is one point east of due south.
32. The comfort you feel when consoled in times of disappointment.
36. Wildly disordered.
37. A member of the Uniat Church.
39. Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
41. Deeply moved.
43. An edge tool used to cut and shape wood.
45. (prefix) Within.
47. A minute epidermal pore in a leaf or stem.
49. 100 chon equal 1 won.
51. German mathematician (1804-1851).
54. Marine bivalve common in Philippine coastal waters characterized by a large thin flat translucent shell.
56. A domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church.
58. A coffee cake flavored with orange rind and raisins and almonds.
62. Skillful (or showing skill) in adapting means to ends.
64. Ruffed grouse.
68. Type genus of the Percidae.
70. Scottish philosopher of common sense who opposed the ideas of David Hume (1710-1796).
71. In bed.
73. The probability of a specified outcome.
74. A ruler of the Inca Empire (or a member of his family).
75. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
76. A flat-bottomed volcanic crater that was formed by an explosion.
77. A French abbot.
79. (music) The pace of music measured by the number of beats occurring in 60 seconds.
81. (British) Your grandmother.
85. A bivalent and trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may soon find a physical move or some other type of change pending. There may be an opportunity for you to be in on the research that it takes to find new land for development. Consider the water systems and how your company will take care to maintain the nearby water system.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If for any reason you have been procrastinating or having a conversation with an authority figure concerning anything, now would be an ideal time to communicate honestly. The ethers of the universe are working with you in whatever changes you desire.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may be feeling very good about yourself just now and appreciating your own work in progress. You may see value in or feel love for an older person or someone in authority.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Taking the novel approach, trying out new ideas and advancing in breakthrough thinking could be what you are all about just now. You just simply feel like being different, trying out something new.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Expect some challenges coming to your attention today. You are able to combine feelings with cognitive thinking to solve problems and you work a problem as one would work a crossword puzzle.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may take on the job of orienting a newcomer to your work area. Your humor may be overshadowed only by your rather eccentric behavior just now.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Sometimes we all take turns at being too oblivious as to what or how we really feel about some person, place or thing. This may not be the most appropriate time for you to make vocational or career decisions or to give practical advice to those around you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You should find yourself in top condition when it comes to any kind of mental activity. You are full of wit and sharp ideas. This could be a time when you find some real discoveries in the idea department.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have your own philosophy and may see the world through multi-colored glasses. As a young person, you seemed to be empathetic of others and their emotional suffering.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Openings at work and changes in status give you new options. Follow rules as you work in areas that are new to you. Work ethics are very important and should you choose to take time off work you will probably do so by calling the time away, a vacation.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

When some kind of recognition or extra support comes along for you, you can see that your efforts are worthwhile. You may have the feeling that you are very much in-touch with those around you today.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Watch out, as an independent streak seems to be surfacing at this time. Others will admire your unique and rather unusual way of perceiving things. Your sense of humor simply shines just now.

WORD SEARCH

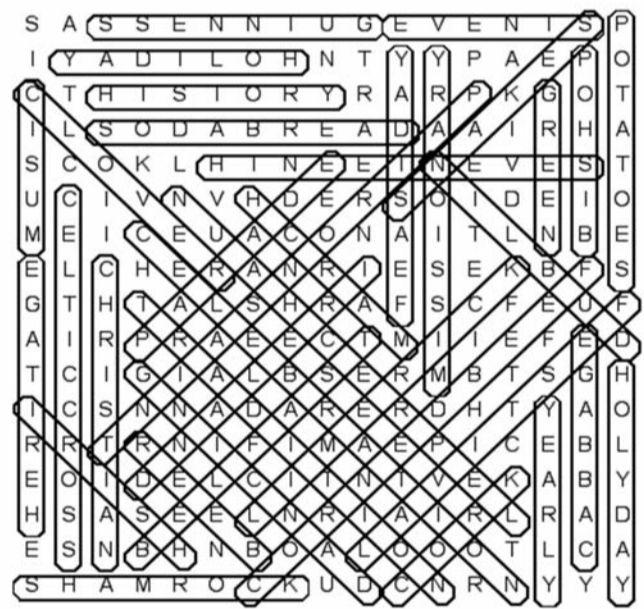
Songs From the Year 2002

Find and circle all of the songs from 2002 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 21 letters spell an additional song title from 2002.

Word search grid with 15 rows and 25 columns. Includes lists of 2002 songs like 'Aerobic', 'Heaven', 'Nothin' Oh Boy', etc.

Yesterday Solution

St. Patrick's Day



- BEER, BELFAST, BISHOP, CABBAGE, CELEBRATION, CELTIC CROSS, CHRISTIAN, CLOVER, CORK, CORNED BEEF, DANCING, DUBLIN, EVENTS, FEAST DAY, FESTIVAL, GREEN, GUINNESS, HERITAGE, HISTORY, HOLIDAY, HOLY DAY, IRELAND, IRISH, LEPRECHAUN, LIMERICK, MARCH, MISSIONARY, MUSIC, PARADE, PATRON SAINT, POTATOES, SEVENTEENTH, SHAMROCK, SNAKES, SODA BREAD, TRADITION, YEARLY

The hidden message is: SAINT PATRICK LIVED IN THE FIFTH CENTURY

Yesterday's Solution

Solved crossword puzzle grid showing words like 'TRYSAP', 'PLAINT', 'PHENOL', 'DECORUM', etc.

Daily SuDoku

9x9 Sudoku puzzle grid with some numbers pre-filled.

Yesterday's Solution

Solved 9x9 Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 1-9 in each cell.

Jenner wants make up line

Kylie Jenner wants her own make up line. The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star - whose lip kit sold out in thirty seconds - is keen on expanding the range and making it a huge success. She told Interview magazine: "If I could do whatever I wanted, I would have a successful make up line, and I would want to hopefully start more businesses, and just be, like, a businesswoman."

The news might come as a surprise to some as the 18-year-old beauty recently revealed she "hates" wearing make up. She shared: "I honestly hate wearing make up. Lately, I've just been so over it. I feel like I'm way too young to wear such heavy makeup all the time. 'It's just bad for your skin, but I'm always doing photo shoots or red carpets and events, so I just obviously want to look good.'" Meanwhile,

as well as make up, Kylie admits to having an "addiction" to changing her hair color time and time again. She shared: "I first dyed my hair when I was 16. I dyed it blue and I never even asked my mom. After that, I've just had this addiction to changing my hair. 'It makes me feel like a new person. I love feeling different and I love leaving the house knowing that nobody has ever seen me this way.'"



Osbourne has fractured her foot

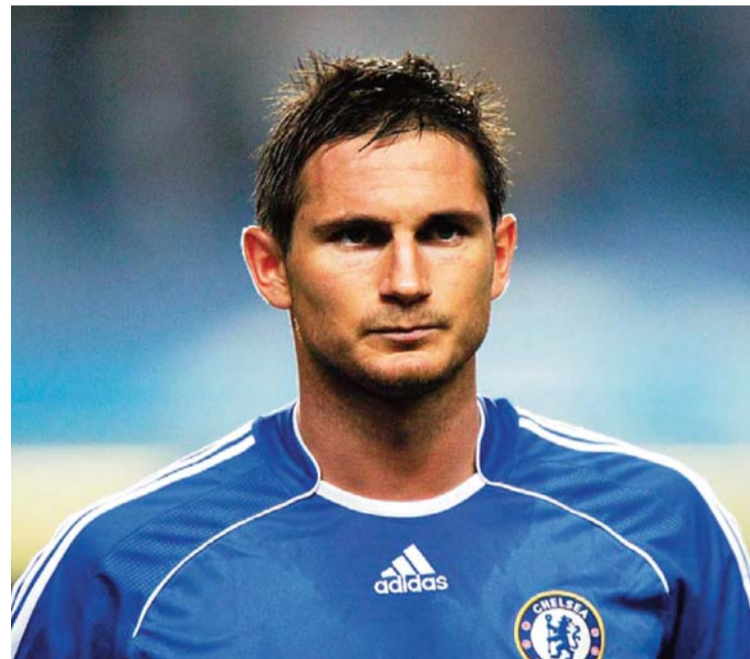
The former 'Fashion Police' star has been left in pain for the festive season after somehow damaging her right foot. Sharing a picture of the bruised and swollen body part on Instagram, she wrote: "All I want for Christmas is not to have a broken foot." The 31-year-old star later shared another image of herself looking sheepish in a wheelchair, with her foot strapped up, being pushed by medical staff, and she revealed in the Instagram post the extent of her injuries. She wrote: "I have a fracture, chipped bone and torn tendon!!!! Thank you to the amazing Doctors and nurses for taking such good care of me.(sic)" It is unclear how Kelly sustained the injury as just a few hours before sharing the picture of her foot, she had been showing off her Christmas wrapping and dish washing skills on the photo-sharing website. Kelly hasn't had the easiest few weeks, as last month she feared for her life while travelling back to Los Angeles from Australia with pal Melinda Varga. The star posted on Instagram "Never been so scared in our lives! @melindavargainoz & I just experienced the worst turbulence EVER! we held hands so tight our hands swelled up & I think my wrist is sprained! I genuinely thought this would be my last day on earth. Thank god we were together & we have landed safely! All I want is my mum right now." And earlier that week, Kelly was forced to travel to filming for 'Australia's Got Talent' by rickshaw after losing her car. She posted: "Look how I showed up to work today because I could not find my car! The fresh air was amazing @gottalentau (sic)"

Lovato's vacation with her boys

Demi Lovato is vacationing with both her boyfriend and her ex-boyfriend. The 'Skyscraper' singer and actor Wilmer Valderrama were thrilled to run into Joe Jonas and his brother Nick Jonas while holidaying in St Barts and have been having fun together. Alongside a picture of the three guys, Demi, 23, wrote: "This picture makes me so happy. I love my boys." And Wilmer, 35, also shared a picture of himself and his pals sitting on some steps. He captioned the image: "SharingTheMoment with woes in St Barts or St Barths...Tomato...TomAto (sic)" However, the couple - who have had an on-off relationship since 2010 - have also found lots of time to be alone together. In a selfie in front of a plane with his girlfriend, Wilmer wrote: "Traveling with this lil' angel around the world truly feels like the world just moves around us (sic)" The 'Confident' hitmaker recently admitted she has never felt "more in love". She gushed: "I've never been more in love. I'm so excited to have him in my life as my best friend and my boyfriend." And she also said she is "grateful" for her boyfriend. She said: "We don't share everything with the world. But we do feel comfortable to share a lot. With Wilmer and I and our relationship, he's extremely supportive in everything that I do. He makes me feel confident and beautiful. And I'm just really, really grateful for him."



Tearful groom Frank Lampard



Frank Lampard was "very tearful" when he gave his wedding speech. The soccer player tied the knot with long-term girlfriend Christine Bleakley at St Paul's church in London's Knightsbridge yesterday and couldn't hide his emotions as he paid tribute to his new wife at the reception at nearby members-only venue The Arts Club. Guest Piers Morgan told his 'Good Morning Britain' co-host Susanna Reid: "[Frank] was very tearful in his speech. It was very moving". Meanwhile, Piers - who was accompanied to the wedding by wife Celia Walden - admitted he warned Frank that Christine was "out of his league" when he first saw the brunette beauty in 2009. He recalled: "I said a few words [at the wedding], I offered to because I was there when they met at the Pride of Britain Awards with Frank and Kevin Pietersen. "Christine came into the bar and Frank said, 'Who's that? She looks a bit of a sort', which I think is East End for 'She's attractive.' I said,

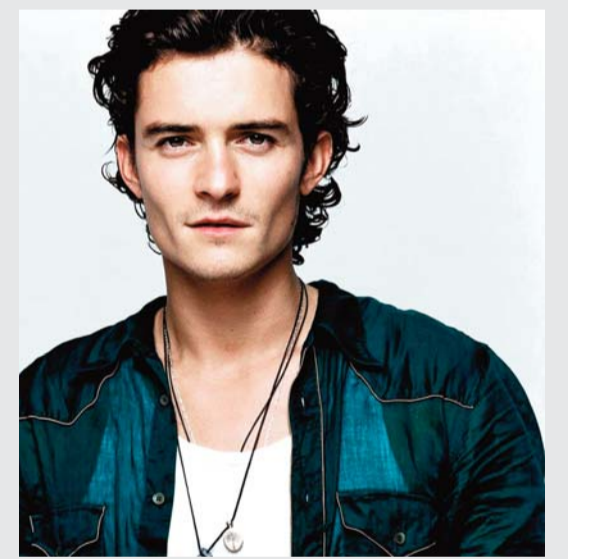
'She's way above your league mate.' "Anyway, next thing, they get together, he said in his speech, he was away playing for England and they spoke every night for four hours and just fell madly in love in one week." As well as Piers and Celia, famous guests at the wedding - which saw Christine don a stunning Suzanne Neville gown - included Phillip Schofield and his wife Stephanie Lowe, designer Kelly Hoppen, and TV presenters Anthony McPartlin and Declan Donnelly with their respective spouses, Lisa Armstrong and Ali Astall/ Former soccer player Jamie Redknapp, who is a cousin of the groom, and his wife Louise attended, along with Jamie's father Harry and Frank's ex-teammate John Terry.



Billie Faiers has had a 'few' fashion disasters

The 'Only Way Is Essex' star insists she isn't immune to fashion fails and remembers a particular ghastly outfit she wore when she first joined the ITVBe show. She said: "Oh gosh, I've had a few, I'm sure. One outfit that always sticks in my mind is a blue kaftan dress that I wore when I'd first joined 'TOWIE' and I paired it with these tan ankle boots. I look back now and think, 'What was I doing?'" Her fashion disaster didn't discourage the 25-year-old television personality - who has 17-month-old daughter Nellie with fiancé Greg Shepherd - from launching her own fashion line. Speaking about the new range to the Daily Star newspaper, she added: "I've wanted to do my own range for so long but I've been waiting for the perfect company to collaborate with. I knew I wanted to be heavily involved in the design process and

that's the great thing about In The Style, we're all on the same page with our ideas and they let me have a lot of creative control. "I think the first drop is very festive in the sense that you've got a lot of glamorous dresses in there for Christmas parties. That said, there are also more casual day dresses, playsuits and jumpers, so there's definitely something to cater for all occasions. "I'm really pleased with how it's turned out. When we released the first item from the range - my 'Prosecco' slogan jumper - it sold over 1,000 units in two hours, which was a record. So I'm now really excited to see how the full range does."



Bloom deported from India for having incorrect visa

Orlando Bloom was reportedly deported from India on Saturday after his visa was rejected. The 38-year-old actor arrived at Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport on a British Airways flight from the UK to promote tourism as a guest of the state. But he was allegedly sent straight back to London on a turnaround flight after his e-visa, which he applied for weeks in advance, was refused by government officials. A source told the Mail Today in India: "Orlando was invited [to India] for a government program. "The arrogant behavior of Immigration officials has dented India's image globally as they deliberately deported him even when they had other options to allow him to stay here." The 'Pirates of the Caribbean' star was reportedly "upset" about how immigration officers had handled the situation but was later allowed to return to the New Delhi after External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj intervened to ensure the Hollywood hunk was issued an urgent visa. According to the Daily Mirror newspaper, the insider said: "A visa was issued after Sushma Swaraj's reported intervention after which Bloom finally landed in Delhi on Sunday." Despite the mix up, Orlando hasn't let the inconvenient error ruin his trip as he was seen on Sunday posing for photographs in front of the world-famous Taj Mahal.

Aoki marries his girlfriend Cowling

Steve Aoki has married his longterm partner Tiernan Cowling. The 38-year-old EDM DJ finally tied the knot after a five year engagement with the Australian model, 24, in Maui, Hawaii on Friday at an "intimate ceremony" attended by family and close pals. A rep for the star told US Weekly: "Steve married his longtime girlfriend in a small, private and intimate ceremony in Maui in front of their families." The Grammy-nominated musician - who is one of the highest-grossing DJs of all time - is the brother of actress-and-model Devon Aoki and their father is the late Hiroaki Aoki, who founded the Benihana restaurant chain. As well as a great personal milestone for Steve, 2015 has also been a phenomenal year for the music producer professionally, having released his third studio LP, 'Neon Future II, which features collabo-

rations with Snoop Lion, Rivers Cuomo and rockers Linkin Park. However, Steve feels there is still much to be accomplished in the world of electronic music. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, he explained recently: "In America, as far as commercial radio is concerned, it's [EDM] not dominating. Maybe one or two songs will come and really dominate, like a Calvin Harris song, an Avicii song, this Major Lazer song ['Lean On'], which has been a number one song ... But it's very rare. I still feel like there's a long way for us to go. "At the end of the day pop is called pop, it's popular. So when people write that kind of music, it's always going to be the dominant kind of music in the commercial space."





Teigen's present from Legend is a 'lifetime dream'

John Legend has bought Chrissy Teigen her "lifetime dream" for Christmas. The 'Lip Sync Battle' star - who is expecting her first child with the 36-year-old singer - has vowed her dinner parties will be better than ever after her husband splashed out on a giant "cheese wheel". Alongside a picture of herself kissing John on the cheek as he held the gift, she wrote on Instagram: "John got me my lifetime dream for Christmas. "A cheese wheel to dump pasta and risotto in for years to come! My tableside serving game is bout to be liiiiiit! Heading out to relax with the fam now woohoo!" She later posted another picture of the wheel in action. She wrote: "If you haven't seen one of these wheels in action oh man, it is a thing a beauty. Hot pasta is tossed around, gently melting the cheese and plat-

ed right at your table. It makes me emotional (sic)" John recently described Chrissy, 30, as the "head chef" in their household. He said: "She's the head chef but I'm her sous chef. And I'm in charge of breakfast usually as well." And the 'All of Me' hitmaker previously praised his wife for being a "great cook". He said: "When she's working on it and I'm home I gain five pounds guaranteed. So, I'm like, sometimes I need to travel so I can lose weight!" [Her best creation] is kind of like when people do those artichoke dips but it's got buffalo chicken and cheese and all these other things in it, too. It's really, really delicious. Chrissy is obviously a great cook."

Kim Kardashian West to launch own range of emojis

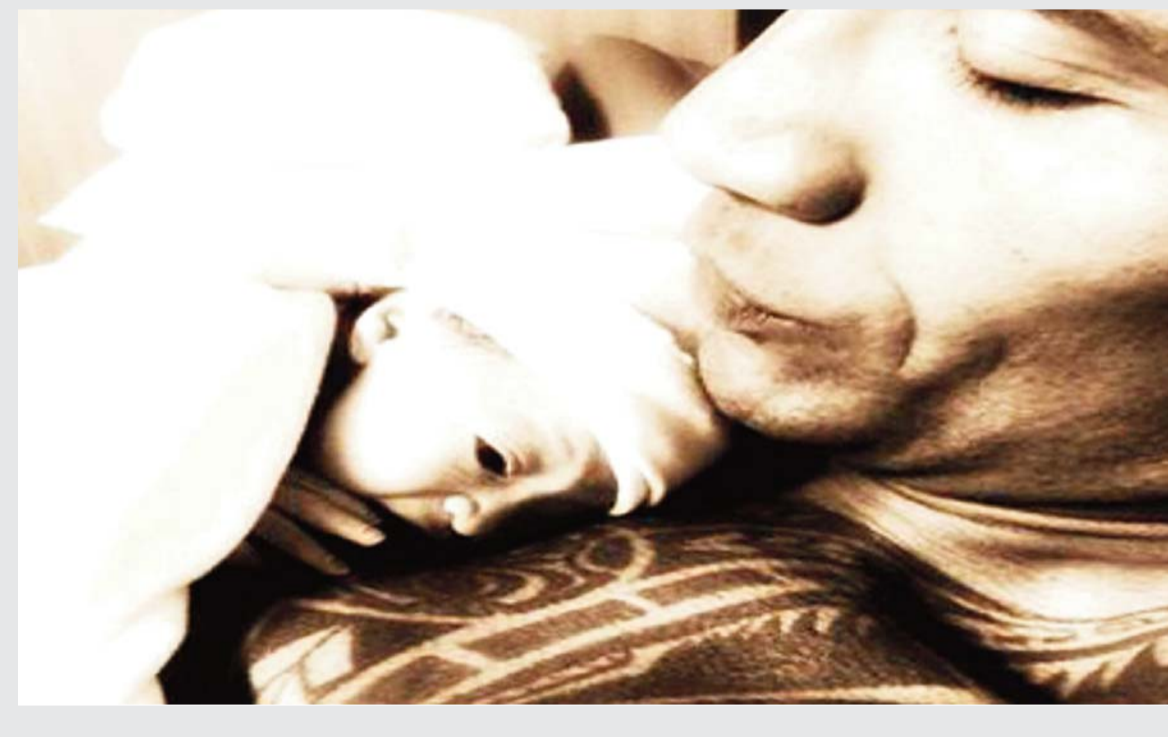
Kim Kardashian West is set to launch her own range of emojis. The 35-year-old reality TV star took to Instagram to share a preview of the new Kimoji app, an entire series of emojis featuring her, and revealed it will launch today. She did not give any other details on the app, which sees a number of famous Kim pictures turned into emojis, including her taking a selfie in a white bathing suit, Kim's cry face and even a cartoon of her with contouring make-up. Kim also has her own game, 'Kim Kardashian: Hollywood' which sees players aim to increase their fame and reputation, starting on the E-list and rising to the A-list, with the reality TV star's help. Meanwhile, Kim announced her new app after on Instagram after she celebrated reaching 55 million Instagram followers with a pouting selfie. The 'Keeping Up With The Kardashians' star shared a new picture on the image sharing site in order to mark the milestone and wrote a message of thanks to her fans. She captioned the picture: "55 MILLION!!!!!!OMGGGGG!!!!!! LOVE YOU SO MUCH!!!!!! (sic)." Kim reached 55 million followers just one day after her mother Kris Jenner got her number up to 10 million. Alongside a collage on her page, she wrote: "Thank you so much for following me ... Can't believe it's 10 MILLION of you!!!! You are amazing!!! I am appreciative and grateful and feeling humbled and blessed... "Merry Christmas everyone, don't forget to tell those you love how special they are.... God Bless You!!! (sic)"



The Rock shows off his newborn daughter

Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson has shared the first picture of his newborn daughter, Jasmine. The former professional wrestler and his long-term girlfriend Lauren Hashian welcomed their new baby last week and the proud dad took to Instagram to share a sweet snap of Jasmine lying on his chest. He wrote: "Christmas came early! Within minutes of being born she was laying on daddy's chest. And being a grateful man takes on a whole new meaning...Thank you guys so much for the awesome congratulatory wishes and love you've been sending @laurenhashianofficial and myself. We're extremely grateful." "Kinda crazy but in this cool and powerful skin to skin bonding moment with my newborn baby Jasmine, I had just one wish I asked the universe... Give me the strength to be a better man

today than I was yesterday. If I can accomplish that, then I'd have a good shot at being a great father (sic)." Dwayne is already father to 14-year-old daughter Simone but this is his first child with Lauren. The couple announced the pregnancy news in September, with Dwayne revealing last month they were expecting a girl. He posted a picture of himself cradling Lauren's baby bump, and captioned the image: "I was raised by and live with amazing and strong women, so the universe felt we needed one more... IT'S A BABY GIRL!! THANK YOU guys so much for the awesome support and love you've sent @laurenhashianofficial and myself from around the world. We're so grateful for this blessing and thrilled to share the news with y'all. (sic)"

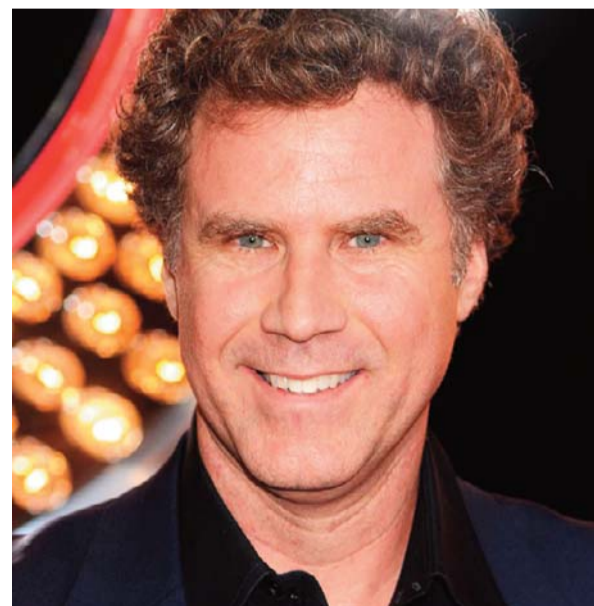


Victoria doesn't want soccer star daughter

Victoria Beckham doesn't want her daughter to play soccer. The 41-year-old fashion designer would prefer four-year-old Harper to enjoy pursuits she can also participate in, such as dance or tennis, after watching all three of her sons, Brooklyn, 16, Romeo, 12, and Cruz, 10, share their father David Beckham's passion for the sport. David said: "After having three boys that obviously do want to play football she wants to be able to have one of our children that wants to go and do stuff with her, like ballet or tap [dance]. At the moment Harper plays tennis. "I think Victoria's had 16 years of sitting on cold Sunday mornings on the sidelines, watching the boys. She'd like to sit indoors and watch Harper either play tennis or ballet or tap. But if ever Harper does want to go and play football, Victoria will support her." David recently travelled the world to play his sport across seven continents to promote the work of UNICEF in a new documentary, 'David Beckham: For the Love of the Game', and has vowed his "lucky" children will accompany him on one of his charity visits in the future. Speaking to reporters to promote the film, he said: "Every time I go on a field trip I sit down with them after and discuss every single detail. "My kids have been asking to come with me on these trips for years. At some point they will. "Obviously their priority is their schooling but they are interested in these trips. My children already understand how lucky they are to have the life they have."

Will Ferrell: A bank job would have been fine

Will Ferrell would have been "fine" with a "job in a bank". The 47-year-old comedian has written and starred in a string of successful movies, but revealed he almost never tried to make it in Hollywood, because there was a time when he saw a regular career that was stable as very desirable. The 'Anchorman' actor explained: "The stereotype you made fun of as a kid was 'the job in the bank'. But to me that always sounded all right. Nine to five and you know where you're going. You get a decent salary and vacations and get to carry a briefcase. I was fine with that idea." But Will came to realize that if he didn't "give it a shot" at writing comedy, it would "eat away" at him. He told the Observer magazine: "But then I also realized at a young age that I loved writing. I was doing little comedy bits. I never had the guts to realize I might be a performer. But by the time I graduated college I knew that thought would eat away at me if I didn't give it a shot."



'Harry Potter and The Cursed Child' has cast its lead actors

The stage show - a spin-off from the popular novels and movie series - will debut at the Palace Theatre in the heart of London in summer 2016 with Jamie Parker playing Harry, Noma Dumezweni as Hermione Granger and Paul Thornley taking the role of Ron Weasley, the Daily Mail reports. In the movies Harry, Hermione and Ron were played by Daniel Radcliffe, Emma Watson and Rupert Grint. Director and co-writer John Tiffany previously insisted the trio won't be involved in the play. He said: "I would be very surprised if any of the original cast were to feature because the last thing they would want to do is go back to something they did 10 years ago.

"We've been working with actors since the beginning of this year, but the characters are the stars of this - so I don't think we'll be saying a hot Hollywood actor will be playing Harry Potter." Meanwhile, producer Sonia Friedman said the casting was a collective decision involving author JK Rowling, director John, playwright Jack Thorne, producer Colin Callender and herself. She explained: "We were all involved with all the key casting decisions." Discussing the two-part play, which Rowling sees as the eighth in the franchise, she previously revealed it will follow Harry's second son Albus, 19 years after the last book.



Laura Carmichael so happy Beyonce is a 'Downton Abbey' fan

Laura Carmichael is thrilled that Beyonce watches 'Downton Abbey'. The 28-year-old actress and her co-star in the show Michelle Dockery, 34, find it "surreal" when they get compliments from "really famous people" on the red carpet at award shows, but were amazed when they found out their favorite singer is also a fan. Laura shared: "We've been on lots of red carpets together and to the Met Ball more than once, which was amazing and surreal because all these really famous people, like Mick Jagger, Bruno Mars, Marc Jacobs and P Diddy, were coming up and talking to us. "I'm a huge Beyonce fan, but the first time we went and I saw her, I was too nervous to approach her. The next time, Michelle (Dockery) literally pushed me forward and Beyonce was so sweet and pleased when I told her how much I'd enjoyed her show a few days previously in London." To which Beyonce replied: "I really like your show." And the actress still gets "giggly" when she thinks of her the superstar and her husband Jay Z tuning into the show. She told Stella magazine: "I have a feeling someone told her who were. But still, Michelle and I get giddy imagining Beyonce and Jay Z settling down on the sofa to watch 'Downton'."



Features



A portion of Building 50, the main structure at The Village at Grand Traverse Commons, a former mental hospital that has been converted into a mixed-use neighborhood in Traverse City, Mich. — AP photos

A portion of Building 50, the main structure at The Village at Grand Traverse Commons.

Entrance to a hiking and biking trail at The Village of Grand Traverse Commons.

In Michigan, neighborhood replaces stately mental hospital

In a resort community known primarily for dazzling Lake Michigan vistas and cherry orchards spread across green hillsides, a new attraction is taking shape in an unlikely setting. A state mental hospital operated for more than a century a half-mile from downtown Traverse City and its popular waterfront. It closed in 1989, and the stately but dilapidated buildings appeared destined for the wrecking ball.

Raymond Minervini and his fledgling development company rode to the rescue, hoping to transform the fading landmark into a modern, mixed-used urban neighborhood while retaining its historic character. The gamble is paying off. The 480-acre campus is now The Village at Grand Traverse Commons. It features shops, restaurants, offices and housing amid spacious lawns and a natural area with hiking and biking trails. For anyone needing a break from the beach scene and downtown traffic without fleeing to the countryside, it's the perfect getaway.

Raymond Minervini II, the founder's son and business partner, noted that the mental hospital was built at a time when experts believed attractive surroundings and fresh air were the best treatment. In a sense, he said, the mission hasn't entirely changed.

Fascinating historical

"The word 'asylum' is perceived very negatively these days," he said. "We'd like to take it back. It actually meant 'sanctuary,' a beautiful and noble intent to take care of our fellow human beings." To fully appreciate the experience, consider the two-hour guided tour. It's a bit pricey at \$25 per person and not available to kids under age 12, but you'll get fascinating historical insights and even wander through spooky underground steam tunnels. Otherwise, explore on your own.

The Village's centerpiece is the former hospital residential and administration building, still known simply as Building 50. Its inelegant moniker may be the only unspectacular thing



The Village of Grand Traverse Commons.



A street view of a section of The Village at Grand Traverse Commons.

about this five-story structure. Constructed with more than 8 million white bricks and a quarter-mile long, its architecture is Victorian-Italianate, with high ceilings, large windows and red rooftop spires. The basement level, an afterthought during the hospital era, is now the commercial hub. Labeled the "Mercato" (Italian for "marketplace,") its twisting hallways and interconnected boutiques are meant to resemble an old-world street scene. Locally owned shops offer artwork, books, clothing, antique furniture and more.

If you weren't hungry when you arrived, be sure to work up an appetite while browsing. Trattoria Stella and PepeNero are high-quality Italian restaurants serving lunch and dinner. Less expensive options include Spanglish, which features Mexican fare, and Cuppa Joe, a coffeehouse and cafe. For dessert, head

down the hall to Underground Cheesecake Company, where flavors range from white chocolate marble to blueberry ripple. Then it's time to go outdoors. The Minervinis take some obvious liberties by referring to the Village's grounds as "Traverse City's Central Park," but the comparison somehow seems apt.

Auxiliary buildings

Amble along the tree-lined front lawn, a choice location for festivals, weddings or just tossing a football. For the more adventurous, entrances to the 140-acre trail network are behind Building 50. You'll quickly feel a long way from town while walking, biking, jogging or skiing through woods and meadows. Also worth checking out is a botanic garden under development in a section of the campus where hospital resi-

dents once grew vegetables and milked cows.

Wind up your visit by relaxing in the "backyard," a miniature village square near the trailheads where some of the hospital's former auxiliary buildings are being refurbished. Test your skills on the bocce courts or savor a cup of organic coffee at Higher Grounds Trading Company. Prefer something stronger? Step next door to Left Foot Charley for a glass of wine or cider, produced on site. Another area winery, Black Star Farms, has a tasting room in the Mercato. On your way out, pick up a loaf of cinnamon raisin bread from Pleasanton Brick Oven Bakery. Now you won't have to worry about breakfast tomorrow morning. — AP



Pam Paquin stitches a fur purse on her manual sewing machine at her home in Central Massachusetts.



Pam Paquin stitches a fur purse on her manual sewing machine, as her daughter works on her homework at the kitchen table.



Pam Paquin tries on a fawn scarf and belt at her home.



Pam Paquin checks on the progress of the tanning of bear skin fur.— AP photos

'Accidental fur': Boston company turns roadkill into fashion

Pamela Paquin's source for fashion is either "tres chic" or will make you shriek. She creates neck muffs, leg warmers, hats, purses and more from roadkill, or "accidental fur," as she prefers to call it. As owner of Petite Mort Furs, a 2-year-old Boston-area company, she said she's offering the fur industry an alternative to wild fur trapping and large-scale fur farms. "All this fur is being thrown away," Paquin said. "If we can pick that up, we never have to kill another fur-bearing animal again." Keith Kaplan, head of the Fur Information Council of America, said his trade group considers all North American furs to already be ethically and environmentally responsible.

"Production of fur in North America is highly regulated with guidelines set through years and years (and millions of dollars) of scientific study," he said via email, declining to comment on Paquin's company or the general idea of using roadkill for fur. "In fact, the populations of every species used by the industry today are as abundant, or more abundant, than they were a century ago." Animal rights groups also have mixed feelings about road-



Pam Paquin harvests the pelt of a fisher cat.

popularity. That demand, she said, is part of the reason she chose to jump into the industry despite having no background in fashion or design, and after working mostly office jobs for environmental and sustainability organizations. The Fur Information Council of America said the US alone recorded \$1.5 billion in fur sales in 2014. Globally, it's part of an over \$35 billion industry.

Handmade goods

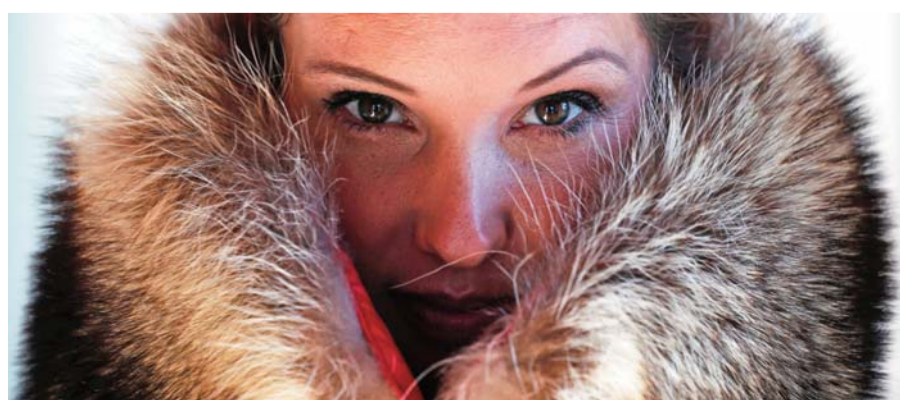
"Clearly advocacy had failed," Paquin said. "Alternatives must be found. Making use of animals that would otherwise be thrown away is sensible." Heidi Forbes, a San Francisco-area resident who purchased a fox fur neck muff from Petite Mort last summer, said she's surprised at the pushback from animal rights groups. "They're being short-sighted," she said. "We should be encouraging people to buy sustainable fur. These are animals that are already dead."

Products by Petite Mort, which means "the little death" in French and also describes the sensation of orgasm, are decidedly high-end, ranging from \$800 to \$2,000, depending on the product and

type of fur used. They can be found online and on Boston's fashionable Newbury Street, where the company rents display space in a handmade goods market. "The value that these products have is that they're handmade, local and last a lifetime," Paquin explains. "That's not just couture and high end, but that's also sustainable." Each piece comes with a personal note explaining where and when the animal was found. Paquin works with animal control specialists to gather the carcasses, but skins many of them herself. She considers the process almost sacred and doesn't care much for the "roadkill" label. "It's a turnoff," Paquin said. "It cheapens my product." — AP



Pam Paquin examines the paws of a fisher cat while harvesting its fur.



Pam Paquin harvests the pelt of a fisher cat.



A "Petite Mort" branding logo is stitched to a fur at Pam Paquin's home.



Miss Colombia 2015 Ariadna Gutierrez (left) is mistakenly named Miss Universe 2015 instead of first runner-up.



Former Miss Universe Paulina Vega, center, takes away the flowers and sash from Miss Colombia Ariadna Gutierrez, left, before giving it to Miss Philippines Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, right.



Miss Philippines 2015, Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach (center), who was mistakenly named as First Runner-up reacts with other contestants after being named the 2015 Miss Universe.

Miss Universe mistake crowns Colombia before Philippines

The Miss Universe contestant from the Philippines is this year's winner, but for one brief moment Sunday evening, it appeared as if it might be a repeat win for Colombia. Colombia contestant Ariadna Gutierrez Arevalo was already wearing the crown as this year's Miss Universe winner when host Steve Harvey returned to apologize. Harvey said it was his mistake and that he would take responsibility for not correctly reading the card, which said that contestant Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach was this year's winner and Colombia was actually the first runner-up.

He held up the card for Fox network cameras to see up close afterward. Talking with reporters afterward, Harvey and an executive for pageant owner WME-IMG called it human error. "Nobody feels worse about this than me," he said. A mystified Wurtzbach appeared stunned as she walked to the front of the stage alongside the crown-wearing Arevalo before last year's Miss Universe from Colombia removed the crown and placed it on Wurtzbach's head. Wurtzbach later said she felt conflicting emotions as the mistake happened: joy when she was told she had indeed won, concern for Colombia contestant Ariadna Gutierrez Arevalo and confusion at the whole situation.

Enjoy the moment

Wurtzbach said she tried to approach Arevalo onstage afterward but the Colombian was crying and surrounded by a crowd of women. She said she realized it was, "probably bad timing." "I did not take the crown from her," Wurtzbach told reporters after the pageant concluded, saying she wished the contestant from Colombia well and hoped the Latin American community understands that "none of this was my fault." "None of this was done on purpose. It was an honest mistake," she said, apologizing on behalf of the organization she now represents. She said Harvey told her afterward that she "should just enjoy the moment." Harvey also apologized on Twitter, but at first misspelled the home countries of both contestants before also fixing that.

"I'd like to apologize wholeheartedly to Miss Colombia & Miss Philippines for my huge mistake," he wrote. "I feel terrible." Harvey, who was hosting the contest for the first time, said he re-read the card and noticed it said "first

runner-up" next to the Colombia contestant's name before he asked producers if he had made a mistake. "I feel horrible for this young woman," he said after the pageant. An executive with pageant owner WME-IMG, Mark Shapiro, said Harvey caught the mistake and corrected it on his own, saying he wanted to make a wrong into a right. "It was humiliating for the women. It was humiliating for him," he told reporters after the pageant.

As all this was unfolding, a car drove up onto a sidewalk and struck dozens of people just outside the Planet Hollywood hotel-casino where the pageant was taking place. The Las Vegas Strip was soon jammed with ambulances and fire trucks, and authorities said 37 people were taken to a hospital to be treated for injuries and one person was killed. Even before Sunday night's oops moment, the pageant was involved in another controver-

sy when a backlash against the pageant's former owner Donald Trump led Univision to pull out of the broadcast and the businessman to sell it in September.

The competition started with women representing 80 countries between the ages of 19 and 27. For the first time, viewers at home weighed in, with their votes being tallied in addition to four in-person celebrity judges. NBCUniversal and Donald Trump co-owned the Miss Universe Organization until earlier this year. The real-estate developer offended Hispanics in June when he made anti-immigrant remarks in announcing his Republican presidential run.

Airing the pageants

That led Spanish-language network Univision to pull out of the broadcast for what would have been the first of five years airing the pageants and NBC to cut business ties with Trump. The former star of the "Celebrity Apprentice" reality show sued both companies, settling with NBC in September, which included buying the network's stake in the pageants. That same month, Trump sold the organization that includes the Miss Universe, Miss USA and Miss Teen USA pageants to entertainment company WME-IMG.

Shortly after Sunday night's confusion, Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos tweeted a message on his official account to Ariadna Gutierrez. "For us, you will continue being miss universe! We are very proud!" Philippines presidential spokesman Edwin Lacierda didn't address the controversial win but said, "in bagging this victory, Ms Wurtzbach not only serves as a tremendous source of pride for our people, but also holds up the banner of our women and of our country-as a true representative of what the Filipina can achieve." It's the third time a contestant from the Philippines has won the title. It could have been the second win in a row for Colombia. The pageant's contestant from the United States, Olivia Jordan, was named second runner-up. — AP



Miss Philippines 2015, Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach (left), and Miss Colombia 2015, Ariadna Gutierrez (right), wait for the judges' final decision.



The winner of 2015 Miss Universe, Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, poses for a press conference.



Other contestants comfort Miss Colombia Ariadna Gutierrez, top right, after she was incorrectly crowned Miss Universe at the Miss Universe pageant.



The top three finalists (from left) Miss USA 2015, Olivia Jordan, Miss Colombia 2015, Ariadna Gutierrez, and Miss Philippines 2015, Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, stand onstage.



Former Miss Universe Paulina Vega, center, reacts before taking away the flowers, crown and sash from Miss Colombia Ariadna Gutierrez, left, before giving it to Miss Philippines Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach.



Eighty contestants stand on stage during The 2015 MISS UNIVERSE Show at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino, in Las Vegas, California.



Contestants stand on stage during The 2015 MISS UNIVERSE Show at Planet Hollywood Resort & Casino.