



Minister visits coastguards at Sabah Al-Ahmad naval base



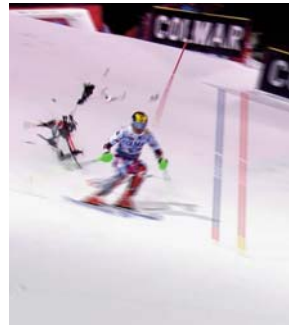
Saudis commute Sri Lankan maid's stoning death sentence



The Real Fouz: How to have gorgeous hair



Hirscher jokes of drone Xmas present



150 FILLS
NO: 16737
40 PAGES

SAUDI ARABIA TO DIVERSIFY INCOME, RAISE EFFICIENCY

KING SALMAN BLAMES ASSAD FOR IS RISE IN SYRIA



Min 09°
Max 14°
High Tide 11:50 & 22:59
Low Tide 05:16 & 16:59

PM, SPEAKER LEAD FADHL FUNERAL

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem led the funeral of late MP Nabil Al-Fadhli, who died on Tuesday. MPs, ministers and a large number of people took part in the funeral at Sulaibkhat cemetery, where Fadhli's body was laid to rest.

Sheikh Jaber paid warm tributes to Fadhli, saying he was one of the best politicians to provide good advice to the government. Ghanem said Fadhli was an honest and dedicated worker serving the interests of the country. Many MPs, ministers and dignitaries also mourned the sudden death of Fadhli.

Fadhli, 66, died on his seat on Tuesday minutes after calling on his colleagues to entirely focus on serious parliamentary work during sessions. During his brief political career, Fadhli was a strong critic of Islamist groups and at one point called for declaring some of them as terrorist groups. He repeatedly blasted opposition groups, especially the Popular Action Movement and the Muslim Brotherhood.

In another development, the appeals court yesterday suspended the implementation of a one-year jail term against former Shiite MP and lawyer Khaled Al-Shatti until the court reviews the case. The lower court this week handed Shatti the jail term after convicting him of undermining a religious sect - Sunnis - in comments on Twitter. A lawyer by profession, Shatti was elected to the Dec 2012 Assembly, which was scrapped a few months later by the constitutional court. He failed in a bid for re-election.

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem (right) and other mourners carry the bier during the burial of MP Nabil Al-Fadhli yesterday. (Inset) HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah are seen at the funeral. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh (See Page 2)

RIYADH: Saudi King Salman yesterday said he has ordered economic reforms to diversify sources of income and reduce high dependence on oil following a sharp drop in crude prices. "Our vision for economic reform is to increase the efficiency of public spending, utilize economic resources and boost returns from state investment," he said in an address to the Shura Council. "I have directed the Council of Economic and Development Affairs to devise the necessary plans, policies and programs to achieve that," he told the consultative body, without elaborating.

Oil income accounts for more than 90 percent of public revenues in Saudi Arabia. The world's largest oil exporter, Saudi Arabia is facing an unprecedented budget crunch as the price of oil has dropped by more than 60 percent since mid-2014. The king said Saudi Arabia carried out a large number of mega infrastructure projects and boosted its fiscal reserves in the past several years when oil prices were high.

The size of the fiscal buffers has enabled the kingdom to overcome the consequences from the sharp decline in oil revenues, said the king, adding that development projects have not been affected by the drop. Saudi Arabia is projected to post a record budget deficit of around \$130 billion for this year, the International Monetary Fund says. The IMF has advised Riyadh to implement reforms, including expanding non-oil revenues, warning that failure to do so would deplete its foreign reserves.



King Salman

Continued on Page 13



LONDON: This photo taken on Dec 22, 2015 shows The Dorchester hotel in central London, owned by the Sultan of Brunei, decked out with Christmas decorations, in contrast to Brunei where Christmas celebrations are banned. — AFP

BRUNEI'S SULTAN BANS CHRISTMAS

BANDAR SERI BEGAWAN: Christmas is just around the corner, but there are no tinsel-laden trees or Santa hats in the oil-rich sultanate of Brunei, where celebrations have been banned under a shift towards hardline Islamic law. The all-powerful Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, one of the world's richest men, announced last year he would push ahead with the introduction of sharia law, eventually including tough penalties such as death by stoning or severed limbs.

Religious leaders in the oil-rich sultanate warned this month that a ban on Christmas would be strictly enforced, for fear that Muslims could be led astray. "Using religious symbols like crosses, lighting candles, putting up Christmas trees, singing religious songs, sending Christmas greetings... are against Islamic faith," imams said in sermons published in the local press. Punishment for violating the ban is a five-year jail sentence, and the government warned last year that Muslims would be committing an offence if they so much as wore "hats or clothes that resemble Santa Claus".

Continued on Page 13

SCORES ARRESTED IN JLEEB RAID

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A major security campaign was launched on the instructions of Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Sabah and in the presence of Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd to arrest suspects and wanted persons as well as law violators in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.

The area was divided into five security zones. Field assistant undersecretaries participated in the campaign along with the traffic department, emergency police, helicopters, criminal detectives, state security, Kuwait Municipality, medical emergencies and the fire department, in addition to

concerned ministries. The interior ministry's PR and security information department said security authorities sealed off the area at 3:00 am with 1,700 policemen and 150 police patrol cars to raid places that sold liquor and drugs, international call centers and brothels, and arrest suspected criminals and thieves.

The campaign resulted in the arrest of 1,248 persons without IDs, 305 iqama violators, 135 debtors, 63 wanted people, 123 prostitutes, 299 absconders, 16 drug dealers, 480 with expired residencies, 23 with criminal and misdemeanor cases, 472 for deportation and 163 labor law violators. Five liquor factories were busted and 38 stores without licenses were shut down.



KUWAIT: Police officers round up people during a massive raid in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh yesterday. — KUNA

Continued on Page 13

GREETINGS TO OUR READERS

On the occasion of the anniversary of the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the festive Christmas season, Kuwait Times wishes its readers a blessed holiday and Merry Christmas!

Kuwait Times offices will be closed on Thursday, Dec 24 and Friday, Dec 25, 2015. Hence, Kuwait Times will not be published on Friday, Dec 25 and Saturday, Dec 26. Our next issue will hit the newsstands on Sunday, Dec 27, 2015.





KUWAIT: The funeral prayer is performed during the funeral of MP Nabil Al-Fadhli yesterday. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah makes a statement to reporters.



Information Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah addresses the press.

AMIR CABLES FAMILY OF DECEASED LAWMAKER

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday addressed a cable of condolences to the family of MP Nabil Nouri Al-Fadhli, expressing his deepest sorrow and condolences over death

of late MP. Fadhli passed away during a National Assembly session on Tuesday. His Highness the Amir applauded efforts exerted by the late Fadhli for services of the homeland, praying to Allah Almighty to

bestow upon his soul peace and mercy, and to grant his family and relatives patience and fortitude. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and His Highness the Prime

minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the bereaved family. In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz over

the death of his son, who was killed in a traffic accident on Tuesday. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister also sent similar cables to President Mohamed.—KUNA



The body of Nabil Al-Fadhli is being carried to his final resting place.



Nabil Al-Fadhli is laid to rest.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah offer their condolences to the deceased family.



Kuwaiti businessman Jawad BuKhamseen (left) and Head of Protocol and Chamberlain at the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah (center) among people in attendance.



MPs attend the funeral of their colleague.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub. — KUNA

SPEAKER RECEIVES PALESTINIAN ENVOY

KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received Palestinian Ambassador to Kuwait Rami Tahboub yesterday. On Tuesday, Ghanem lauded the Greek parliament's recognition of Palestine as a state. In a press release, Ghanem said that the Greek parliament's decision was in line with a popular movement amongst European nations to bring upon peace in the Middle East.

He took the chance to remind Israel that the world is carrying on this policy to recognize the right of Palestinians for an independent state with Jerusalem as its

capital. The Greek parliament's decision came at a time when Palestinians are continuously suffering from the unjust Israeli policies which will destroy any chances for peace in the region, said Ghanem, who is also the President of the Arab Parliament.

In other news, Ghanem sent a cable of congratulations to the newly appointed president of Kuwait's Court of Cassation Counselor Yousef Jassim Al-Mutaw'a, on the occasion of assuming his new post, wishing him success in his new duties and serving his country. — KUNA

IRAQI FM CALLS FOR INTENSIFYING EFFORTS TO COMBAT TERRORISM

KUWAIT: Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari stressed on Tuesday the need to intensify international efforts to combat terrorism in the region, mainly so-called Islamic State (IS). Jaafari said during a news conference late Tuesday airstrikes launched by the international coalition against IS support the Iraqi armed forces fighting terrorism on the ground, expressing his hope that the coalition would double its efforts to defeat IS.

Asked about attempts of Iraq to retake Ramadi city today from IS, he noted that combating terrorism is not a traditional war, adding the Iraqi forces are making progress against IS. As for the Iraqi-Kuwaiti relations, he said the two countries have deep-rooted ties, noting that about 49 agreements and memos were discussed by the Iraqi and Kuwaiti committees. He reiterated that exchanging visits between Iraqis and Kuwaitis were never suspended.

He added that terrorism is widely spreading in many countries across the globe, urging countries that have not affected by the phenomenon to be vigilant and ready to deal with its attacks. The Iraqi official, meanwhile, stressed the necessity of fighting terrorism globally, warning against what is called the culture of terrorism, which kills people, and calling for setting up the culture of tolerance as an attempt to face the culture of terrorism. Kuwait and all world's countries are victims of terrorism, he said, calling for exerting further efforts to face the phenomenon which, he said, is like a third World War.

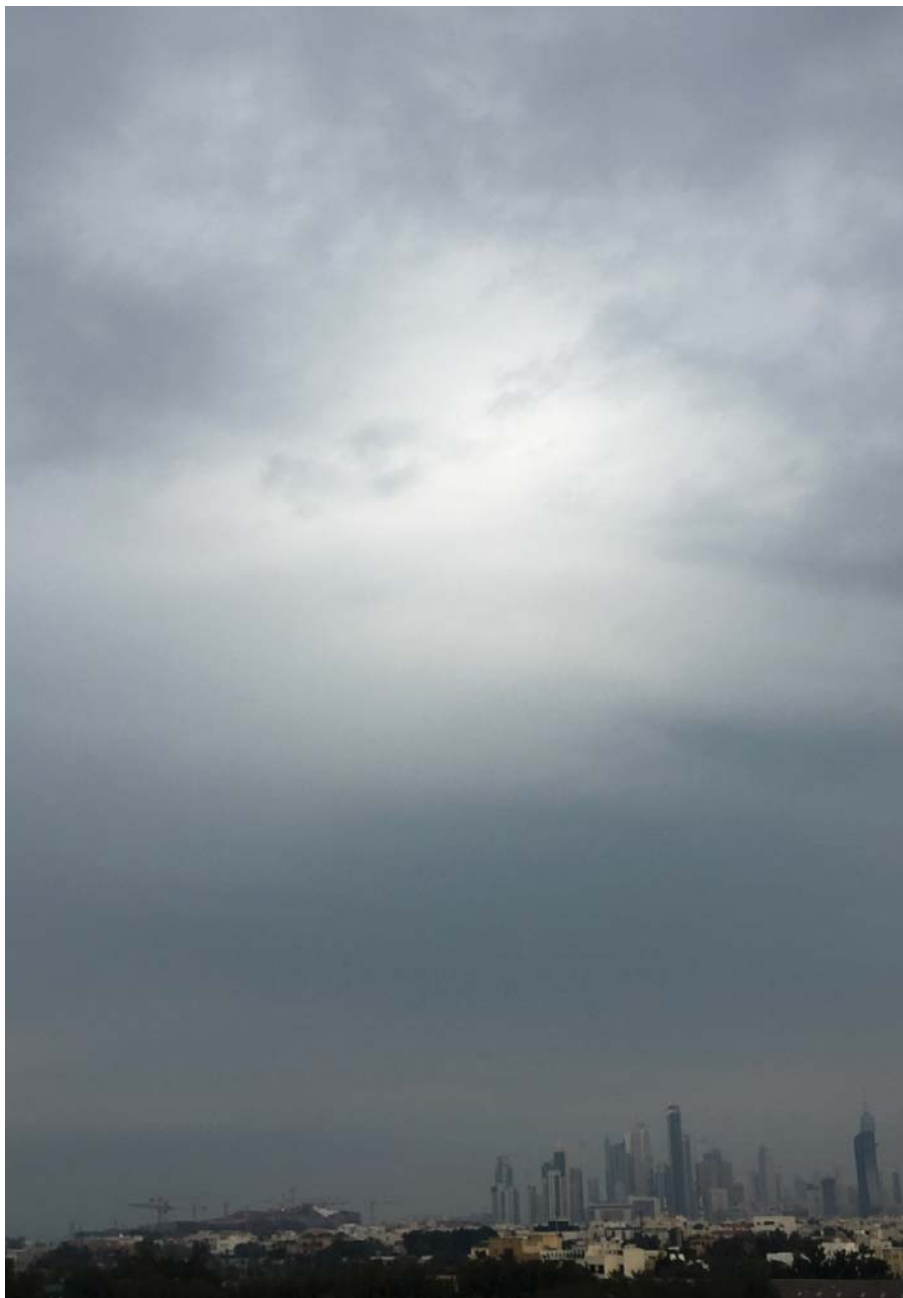
On the Turkish presence in the Iraqi territories, he said some military forces of Turkey advanced into the Iraqi territories, but the Iraqi forces dealt with them and asked the Turkish side to immediately withdraw. On the Syrian crisis, he said that his country

supports the call for solving the crisis politically, adding "we previously warned against the military solution." He noted that Iraq

backed the "fair needs" of Tunisians, Egyptians, Libyans and Yemenis. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Sabah bids farewell to Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Jaafari at Kuwait International Airport. Jaafari concluded his visit to Kuwait yesterday.— KUNA



KUWAIT: A picture showing clouds above Kuwait City yesterday. — KUNA

SPORTS AUTHORITY WELCOMES IOC CHIEF'S STATEMENT ON KUWAIT

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Sports (PAS) yesterday welcomed President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) Thomas Bach's statement which rebuffed attempts to link the recent Kuwaiti court ruling against President of the Association of the National Olympic Committees (ANOC) Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad Al-Sabah and Kuwaiti sports and laws.

Bach's remarks, during celebrations of the 120th Anniversary of the Hungarian Olympic Committee (HOC) in Budapest, have quashed attempts by IOC members, colleagues Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad, and heads of international sports federations, to "mix papers up" following a recent court ruling against him, said PAS Deputy Director General Dr Hamoud Fulaiteh.

This happened after it was obviously confirmed that the ruling against Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad, also a member of the FIFA Executive Committee was not at all related to sports or their laws in Kuwait, as the President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) claimed, Fulaiteh added in a press statement.

Court ruling

Many of them supported Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad's claims, the latest was the President of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) Olegario Vazquez Rana who deliberately linked the court ruling to the Kuwaiti sports laws and ISSF elections, the PAS senior official said.

Those world's sports figures, regrettably, backed Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad, also President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA), regardless of facts and realities, and have sought to affect Kuwait and punish the Kuwaiti sports, unduly

and with no respect of Kuwait's sovereignty, the statement reiterated.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad tried to give the impression that the ruling only sought to take revenge on him for his stances of Kuwaiti sports "which is categorically untrue." His case is basically offending the (Kuwaiti) judicial authority. It is a pity that supporters of Sheikh Ahmad

Chairman of the Olympic Council of Asia and the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee as ANOC Vice-Chairman Patrick J Hickey did during his meeting with the Kuwaiti negotiating team in Lausanne, Switzerland, last October, he regretted.

Lack of patience

Fulaiteh stated that Bach's statement shows that his colleagues lacked required patience and impartiality before they made their statements against Kuwait as they have done when they suspended Kuwaiti sports before taking enough time for studying the case or even making sure that there is a real need for amending the sports laws. He argued that the systematic attacks from the IOC and FIFA, where the Chairman of the Olympic Committee of Asia holds top posts, indicate that the measures taken against Kuwait sports are only meant to pressure Kuwaiti institutions for personal goals, away from the Olympic systems, and to put the Kuwaiti sports movement under the mercy of OCA chairman under the threat of suspension.

He underlined that PAS is open to dialogue and cooperation to achieve the interests of the Kuwait sports. The authority's calls for dialogue were resonated in its letters to the IOC, dated October 20 and 26 and December 6, he said.

In his statement, Bach stressed the prison sentence against Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad was a separate issue from the sports law. "This is justice in Kuwait, it's nothing to do with the sports law or sport," Bach told a news conference recently. He reiterated that the IOC would respect the law of Kuwait, a sovereign state. — KUNA



Dr Hamoud Fulaiteh

Al-Fahad give wrong information and raise issues that are not at all related to sports. Unfortunately, this comes from international bodies and IOC member who are supposed to stick to impartiality and to seek facts before approaching a country's sovereignty, only to support one who used to threaten sports in his home country with suspension, for flimsy arguments, Fulaiteh said.

Worse still, some even threatened the Kuwaiti government to comply with the decisions of the



KUWAIT: The Qurain Fire Center conducted a mock exercise at Gate Mall in Aqaila. The exercise mimicked the scenario of a fire in a restaurant. Firemen carried out an evacuation then dealt with the fire. — Hanan Al-Saadoun



KUWAIT: Doha Port customs officers confiscated a large quantity of medications subsidized by the government, and arrested an expatriate who attempted to smuggle the tablets outside the country. The suspect was sent to concerned authorities. For further action.

'TORRENTIAL RAIN' FORECASTED TODAY

KUWAIT: The cloudy and rainy weather that Kuwait witnessed yesterday is expected to continue for the next 24 hours as a result of the prevailing Sudanese low pressure, said Sami Al-Othman, the acting director of the meteorology station. The clouds and rain chances are forecast to recede as of tomorrow, with predictions the weather will clear up on Saturday, Othman said.

The weather today is expected to turn cloudier, coupled with torrential rain. It will be moderately cold during the day hours, with maximum temperature at 13-15 C

degrees. Tomorrow, the heat is expected to be maximum in the range of 16-18 C degrees and 6-8 C minimum. On Saturday, the weather is expected to be sunny, with light to moderate northwesterly winds. Maximum heat forecast at 17-19 C degrees, minimum at 5-8 C degrees.

Yesterday's weather was partially cloudy with rain chances, accompanied by northwesterly winds and northerly light winds, the speed of which ranged between 12-40 km/h. Highest temperature recorded was 17 C degrees, while the lowest temperature was 8 C degrees. —KUNA

MANPOWER AUTHORITY ACCUSED OF INTERFERING IN UNIONS' AFFAIRS

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Labor syndicates of the State Audit Bureau, Kuwait Municipality and the Ministry of Electricity and Water yesterday accused the Manpower Public Authority of interfering in unions' internal affairs. They further warned that such interference would lead to a 'catastrophe' because it violates the constitution as well as international laws and agreements signed by Kuwait. The three syndicates also announced their intention to take part in a sit-in next week outside the manpower authority's headquarters.

Co-op dissolved

Minister of Social Affairs and labor and Minister of State for Planning and Development Hind Al-Subaih issued a decision dissolving Abdullah Al-Mubarak

Co-operative Society's board of directors and appointing a temporary manager. The decision, issued upon a report made by a special committee formed to review the co-op's account books, appointed Fayez Abdullah Essa as interim manager for one year, during which he will call the general assembly to convene and elect a new board of directors.

Children's hospital

The Ministry of Public Works yesterday signed an agreement to conduct studies and design a new children's hospital at a total cost of KD 4.166 million. In this regard, the Ministry of Health announced that the 792-bed hospital would be allocated for children and teenagers up to the age of 18, and it would be the first-of-its-kind in Kuwait, built over an area of 120,939 square meters.



COURT ANNULS JAIL SENTENCE OVER RECEIVING LABOR ALLOWANCE

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Court of Appeals yesterday annulled a first instance court's verdict sentencing a citizen to 10 years in jail for unlawfully receiving the national labor support allowance. The court abstained from punishing the citizen and only fined him KD 200. It also made him sign an affidavit pledging to show good conduct for two years. Notably, the public prosecution had charged 146 male and female citizens of unlawfully getting a total of KD 200,000 from the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) in the form of national labor support allowances paid through a private sector company that they supposedly worked for. The suspects were sentenced to jail times varying between five and 10 years, returning the money they received

and a KD 1,000 fine each to suspend the verdicts.

Tobacco taxes

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states intend to double tobacco taxes to 200 percent instead of 100 percent by the beginning of 2017, said UAE's minister of state for financial affairs Obaid Hameed Al-Tajer.

Cafe cabins

Municipal Council member Mane Al-Ajmi yesterday filed a proposal to discuss cafes at the council's meeting on Monday. Ajmi stressed that some serious action should be taken, especially after discovering a 'vice den' inside a Jahra cafe. He proposed banning cabins or gazebos inside cafes. He also pointed out that serving shisha indoors violates the smoking ban law.



MINISTER VISITS COASTGUARD DEPT AT SABAH AL-AHMAD NAVAL BASE

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said that Kuwait's political leadership is keen on following up with the efforts of security men and providing them with all technical and human needs. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled made those statements yesterday following a visit to the Coastguard General Department at Sabah Al-Ahmad Naval Base.

A statement released by the ministry's Security Information Department said Sheikh Mohammad conveyed congratulations of the higher political leadership to 17 newly graduated officers during the visit. The minister

insisted on the necessity of compliance and exerting all efforts for the sake of the country, the statement said. The minister said the security establishment needs the efforts of new officers as their addition is vital for technical specialties. "Their role is major and (they) should bear their responsibilities at the service of citizens and expatriates," the statement reads.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled expressed satisfaction towards the readiness of sea borders' security sector and the Coastguard and their quick response to any emergency.

Meanwhile, Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman

Al-Fahad thanked Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled for his visit, confirming it will be a motive for exerting more work and sincerity in order to keep the security of the country and safety of its people.

Acting Director General of the Coastguard Directorate Colonel Saleh Al-Foudry gave details of the most important achievements of the directorate, adding that there are projects under study to support the Coastguard department and secure Kuwait's territorial waters. Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled then toured the exhibition of sea security equipment, specialized training center, diving gear and training tools of the Coast Guard.

KUWAITIS MUST CARRY THEIR PASSPORTS WHEN TRAVELING TO SWEDEN: EMBASSY

KUWAIT: Kuwait Embassy in Stockholm called on all Kuwaiti travelers to carry their passports with them when planning to visit Sweden coming from Schengen countries, due to Swedish government's recent decision of imposing strict watch on border ports.

The decision includes those with Schengen visas, who were exempted from

showing their identity documents while traveling among Schengen countries, the embassy said in a statement. The decision, which also includes visitors coming from land, sea, and air ports, will be in effect as of January 4th, 2016, the embassy said, calling all Kuwaiti citizens to follow the directions of Swedish local authorities and commit to them. — KUNA



NATIONAL GUARD CONCLUDES 'KNIGHTS RESISTANCE 3'

KUWAIT: The Kuwait National Guard's (KNG) Reinforcement Brigade recently carried out the 'Knights Resistance 3' drill at the Adaire' field. The drill was attended by KNG's Deputy Chief Lieutenant General Hashim Al-Refae and Kuwait Army's Land Forces Commander Major General Sheikh Khaled Saleh Al-Sabah.



GCC MILITARY TRAINING VITAL: AMBASSADOR

MANAMA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah yesterday said that it is very important for Kuwaitis to participate in military training courses with their GCC counterparts. Joint training courses allow participants to share experience and create unity among GCC armies, said Sheikh Azzam, also Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, while attending graduation of Kuwaitis of the 11th batch of army officers cadets of Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) at Isa Royal Military College.

He also noted that the current unstable situation in the region underlines the need for GCC states to have a qualified army at the highest levels of readiness to defend the Gulf states against any danger. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Military Attaché to Bahrain Major General Brigadier Ali Al-Asaker praised the high level of military education and training at Isa college. The college is creating qualified officers on both military and academic levels, he added. The ceremony was attended by Deputy Speaker of Kuwait National Assembly Mubarak Al-Khurainij, Bahraini Field Marshal Sheikh Khalifa bin Ahmad Al-Khalifa and Bahraini Defense Affairs Minister Lieutenant-General Youssef bin Ahmed Al-Jalahma. Moreover, the event was attended by chairman of Kuwait's Ali Al-Sabah Military College Major General Brigadier Mohammad Ahmad Al-Khoder, who thanked the Bahrain Defense Force (BDF) for accepting the Kuwaiti students in their training courses.— KUNA



MANAMA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah is pictured with Kuwaiti army officers. — KUNA

GULF BANK MARKS 'INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR TOLERANCE' ANNIVERSARY

SPONSORS 'AGAINST VIOLENCE... WITH TOLERANCE' FORUM

KUWAIT: To mark the International Day for Tolerance, Gulf Bank sponsored Kuwait University's second annual 'Against Violence... With Tolerance' forum. The forum was organized by Kuwait University's College of Social Sciences, in cooperation with Women's Research and Studies Center and Ministry of Interior and was held under the patronage of the Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior Lieutenant General Sulaiman Al-Fahad and attending the event was Sheikh Faisal Al Nawaf Al-Sabah, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of the Interior.

The 'Against Violence...With Tolerance' forum was held at Kuwait University's College of Social Sciences and was supported by a number of local governmental organizations such as 'Protecting Child' National Higher Committee and the Ministry of Health. Additionally, related organizations and centers from the United Arab Emirates participated in the forum this year.

This theme of this year's forum was 'Protecting Youth from Crime and Deprivation.' As such there were several sessions related to the theme, they were: anger management for youth; protecting society from violence and crime; developing a culture of social responsibility for youth; and electronic crimes. The call to practice tolerance was written into the identity of the United Nations 70 years ago. While people are undoubtedly more connected and more diverse, intolerance is growing in many places. The need and importance of tolerance cannot be understated, it must be taught, nurtured, and defended. Gulf Bank's support for the International Day of Tolerance is part of its corporate social responsibility program of supporting important events and causes. To learn more about Gulf Bank's corporate social responsibility program, please visit its website at www.e-gulfbank.com or its social media channels on Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook.



Hadeel Al-Fadhli, Senior Manager at Gulf Bank, receiving the bank's token of the appreciation



ABK HOSTS LONG SERVICE RECOGNITION AWARDS

KUWAIT: The Corporate Banking Division of Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently honored employees who had completed between 5 and 15 years of service with

the Bank. Commenting on the long-standing commitment and value of their contribution to the development of the Bank, EMAD ROUSHDY Executive General

Manager Corporate Banking Division took the opportunity to thank all staff receiving awards for their loyalty and dedication to ABK. Each department in

the Bank hosts regular Long Service Awards for members of staff who have been with the bank for 5 years and longer.

In my view

A GOOD NEIGHBOR

By Abdellatif Sharaa



local@kuwaittimes.net

I have known Dr Nermin Al-Houti for quite some time through her columns and lectures, but never seen her in person until about two years ago when I was invited to Sharjah, the United Arab Emirates to attend a festival when the city was the Capital of Arab Culture at the time. When I met her in person, I was really impressed with her presentation about education in the region and in Kuwait. Our relation continued since then, and we are exchanging views and I seek some advice and information from her, and she never let me down.

I learned from Dr Houti that her uncle had died recently, and I came across a column by Dr Humoud Al-Hattab in a local Arabic daily that spoke about him. I decided to go ahead to write about the man through this column.

'The good man Abdullah Ibrahim Al-Houti was a respected personality in Shamiya, who died a few days earlier. We knew him as a righteous neighbor who loved good deeds, was humble with people, generous to the poor and needy and a worshiper who did not miss a prayer at the mosque.

He was our neighbor for fifty years in Shamiya, with a small street separating our houses. Our house and theirs was in block 9 on Wahran Street. Al-Houti, Al-Muqahwi and ourselves were the first to live in Shamiya when it was a semi-desert with only signs of home borders. Next to Al-Houti's house, was Al-Zanki on the same street along with the Al-Jinahi house, and they were the first to live in this neighborhood, followed by the Al-Saad family, while there is another home of (uncle) Abdullah on the same street across from the female teachers' institute.

Abdelwahab Al-Houti is the eldest son of (uncle) Abdullah, and he is a very close friend and a schoolmate during various stages. We sat on one desk in the third secondary class, the first desk on the left side of the classroom, and we had lots of memories in this class, and whoever wants to enjoy them can ask Abu Omar about it.

Uncle Abu Abdelwahab, may Allah bestow His mercy on him, was a truly self-made businessman, as he depended on himself, after Allah, in his trade and supervised it himself, and moreover, he used to clear goods at the customs by himself without relying on agents, so he was seen to be active and vibrant, going to ports to process his transactions, and also supervised the sale of his goods personally.

Our relation with our Al-Houti neighbors was like a family, and contacts and visits linked the two families. I personally had close friendships with the children of 'uncle', and there was no effect of any age difference between me and all the children of (uncle) Abu Abdelwahab, as his children, may Allah bless them, are known to be warm in dealing with others and characterized by their ability to understand and communicate, and that is what (uncle) Abu Abdelwahab instilled in them in good attributes. They are religious and keen on implementing the teachings of Islam in their daily life. Abdelwahab, the eldest son, was an official at the Awqaf Ministry, and (uncle) Abu Abdelwahab is the father-in-law of Dr Nasser Al-Sane.

Shamiya residents know 'uncle' Abu Abdelwahab with all his traits. He was loyal to this area, and did not leave it since the '50s of the last century, and their beautiful home, which is a piece of art, still stands witness to the taste of 'uncle' Abu Abdelwahab, as he built it according to the beautiful architecture of that era and it got more beautiful with the good manners of its people.

Uncle Abu-Abdelwahab Al-Houti frequented the Al-Saqer mosque since it was opened, and used to go there on foot, and did not miss a prayer. The diwan of (uncle) Abu-Abdelwahab is a cultural one, where everybody meets on Tuesday every week, and mostly you see Shamiya residents go to the diwan as a landmark of Shamiya.

Al-Saqer mosque lost 'uncle' Abu Abdelwahab, and Shamiya lost him with his death. "Truly, to Allah we belong and truly, to Him we shall return." "There is no might nor power except in Allah!"

In my view

A ROLE MODEL

By Labeed Abdal



local@kuwaittimes.net

Chancellor Angela Merkel's call to "significantly reduce" the number of refugees entering Germany and her rejection to closing Germany's borders for humane reasons at the same time is in fact a role model to be followed in taking historical attitudes and advocating human rights by lending a hand to those who had been forced out of their homelands, leaving their houses with or without their families and dependents.

The European consolidation in dealing with the refugee problem was more like a self-test of how to manage crises and coordinate with neighboring countries at times of displacement similar to those during previous world wars.

Opening or closing the borders had been very critical for some European countries and some of them acted religiously in a most humane situation, forgetting that the countries the refugees come from like Syria had always accommodated both Muslims and Christians. The same applies to the passage-country Turkey, that was asked to accommodate a large number of refugees as well, as part of sharing the responsibility amongst neighboring countries. Merkel said that 'isolation was not the answer for Europe', especially since refugees would have to be integrated in labor markets and provide them with jobs according to local labor market rules and capacity. Her description of the situation as a 'historic challenge' to EU and that she was sure that Europe would pass the test despite the long negotiations amongst the G-20 countries concerning responsibilities and funding, was significant to Europe's past, present and future. This complicated situation calls on the international community to be up to its responsibilities and support countries that have already received millions of refugees, putting extra loads on their respective infrastructure and services. With the approach of Christmas, we should all stop devastating conflicts, as ordered in all heavenly religions through messengers the Almighty had chosen to spread peace, love and justice on Earth.



PROPERTY TO WITNESS DECLINE IN 2016: EXPERTS

KUWAIT: Property experts predict the year 2016 will witness decline of prices of investment and residential units but believe those for commercial purposes will firm. Recent interest rise on the Kuwaiti dinar and ongoing decline of oil prices are among main factors that will push property rates down.

Tariq Al-Ateeqi, former director-general of Property Clearance Company, said residential units' prices declined 20 percent, early this year, compared to the previous year, adding that distribution of plots by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare in new residential areas, namely South Al-Metlaa, West Andullah Al-Mubarak and Northwest Al-Sulaibikhat, primarily affected the prices.

Moreover, the recent government distribution of housing plots led to easing off pressure on private housing sec-

tor because the government showed seriousness in tackling this file with efforts to resolve it quickly. "All these factors result in slashing the prices in the medium and long terms," he said.

Rented housing

The plots' distribution will lead to results that will be seen in the rented housing sector (investment houses), which flourished in recent years. Kuwaiti families that occupied these houses will move to the distributed ones distributed by the authority, thus easing off some of the pressure on private housing sector. Therefore, prices in this sector will fall in the next three years, particularly in areas such as Al-Gurain, Al-Messila, Al-Fnaitees and Abu Ftaira. Forecast decline of the housing properties will affect the

investment sector (the apartment buildings), where prices will also move down, in addition to decline of costs of buildings promoted for sale.

As to commercial sector, namely shopping malls and stores, the rates will remain steady in shadow of current circumstances, namely noticeable hike of rents that pushed the price per square meter from KD 5.5 to KD 8.5. This sector may be affected with the purchase power of the consumers, who in turn get affected with changing economic conditions. In case oil prices dropped further and fears of yet another bout of global economic crises grow, the commercial sector will take the brunt of effects, although its current performance "is good with no negative pressures."

Meanwhile, Secretary General of the Real-Estate Union Qais Al-Ghanim foresees further downward movement in the sector in second half of 2016 because the market will absorb the forecast economic developments at the local and international levels. Elaborating on these changes, he mentioned the oil prices' decline to unprecedented levels since 2007 and forecasts that they will drop further to USD 25 per barrel. "This is a very negative eventuality that will

negatively affect various property sectors," he says.

Interest rate

Recent decision by the Central Bank of Kuwait to raise the interest rate leads to slashing rates of the housing units, namely the leased ones. Moreover, government plans to levy fees on some utilities and services will lead to slowdown in some of the sectors, namely construction and contracting, where products' prices will increase, thus demand on new property units and plots will shrink, Al-Ghanim said.

Ali Al-Bloushi, of Al-Jamal realty company, said prices in the investment sector will fall because supply is higher than the demand. The year 2015 witnessed decline by 10 percent of the investment plots in areas such as Hawally, Al-Salmiyah, however other regions namely Al-Farwaniyah, Khaitan and Al-Mahboula witnessed deeper falls. Prices' decline is a new opportunity for investors, who had dropped out of the market due to soaring prices, to benefit from significant forecast proceeds, namely in the apartment buildings' sector. — KUNA

FONTERRA JOINS HORECA SPONSORS

KUWAIT: Leaders Group Company announced that more hospitality, catering and hotel equipment companies have so far joined the lineup to take part in Horeca Kuwait 2016. In this regard, Fonterra Kuwait's Chief Customer Sales Manager Mohammad El-Hajjar announced his company's intention to participate in sponsoring the exhibition, adding that this shows the company's keenness on participating in specialized exhibitions in order to meet with experts and eventually develop its services for consumers' best interest.



Mohammad El-Hajjar

Hajjar explained that as a leading dairy products' company that has a worldwide web in food services, Fonterra always provides its clients with immediate innovative solutions in Kuwait, the Middle East and worldwide. "Fonterra's sales, technical and marketing teams all work on providing customers with all the support they need to develop their businesses," he underlined.

Further, Hajjar stressed that Fonterra is committed to fully observe international specifications, while at the same time

focuses on saving time and costs, as well as on innovating and technologically supporting its various products while placing customers' satisfaction as a top priority. "Fonterra has a special team of technical advisors, bakers, chefs and various food experts who all contribute in developing its products," he reiterated.

In addition, Hajjar said that Fonterra has a wide range of foodservices products including butter, cheese including processed cheese, spread cheese, Mozzarella cheese, heat-treated creams and full cream powder milk. "Our company has a world web in over 70 countries," he concluded.

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

X-cite Gift Cards

For All Your Occasions

Available in all showrooms in 10-25-50-100 KD

<p>BEKO 136996 BKK 2113M LAL Coffee Maker</p> <p>Monthly 233 Cash back 37 + 4 1 chance to enter the draw</p> <p>Power 750W Digital Operation No of Pots 1 Turkish Coffee Maker</p>	<p>PHILIPS 135020 HD9238/01 Air Fryer</p> <p>Monthly 461.9 Cash back 69 + 8 2 chances to enter the draw</p> <p>Digital Operation Cool Touch Exterior Plastic Body Timer 60 Min Removable Inner</p>
<p>KIPOR 136513 IG2000 Portable Generator</p> <p>Monthly 7119 Cash back 129 + 10 4 chances to enter the draw</p> <p>Petrol Generator Fuel Tank Capacity 3.7 Liters Maximum AC Output 2 Recoil Starting System Continuous Operating Time 3</p>	<p>PHILIPS 123239 HP6581/00 Dry Epilator</p> <p>Monthly 236.9 Cash back 39 + 3 1 chance to enter the draw</p> <p>Ceramic Smart Light Shaver Head Wet & Dry Eyebrow Tweezer</p>
<p>PHILIPS 136857 BT1000/15 Beard Trimmer</p> <p>Monthly 3.9 Cash back 4 + 1 1 chance to enter the draw</p> <p>Battery Operated No of Length Settings 4 Cutting Length 1.5-7mm Beard Trimmer Stainless Steel Blades</p>	<p>OTO BODYCARE 502044 TREADMILL + FITBIT Runner Treadmill</p> <p>Monthly 15255 Cash back 318 + 75 10 chances to enter the draw</p> <p>Home Theater System Auto Sleep Tracking Android & iPhone compatible Bluetooth 4.0, Micro-USB Fitness Tracker</p>

Pay your installments online through easycredit.xcite.com

1803535 | @XciteAlghanim | XcitebyAlghanim

www.xcite.com

SALE

تنزيلات

50%

لغاية Up to

18 500 50

ALNASSER

النصر

18 500 50

alnasserME

SINCE 1984

With Your Trust We Grow بنقلكم بنظور

Crime

Report

MAN SWINDLED OUT OF KD 82,000

KUWAIT: A citizen accused an Iraqi national of swindling him out of KD 82,000. A security source said the citizen told them his business manager did not hand over rents to the complex where a café he owns is located, valued at KD 12,740. He also took the monthly income estimated at KD 70,000. Meanwhile, a telephone store owner told Nugra police that an unidentified person stole a smartphone after pretending he wanted to buy it. The owner gave police the suspect's license plate number, only to find out it was stolen.

Cab driver held for theft

Hawally detectives arrested a Filipino for robbing his compatriot working in a beauty salon. The victim told Salmiya police that she got into a taxi after work, but the driver stopped in a dark area, threatened her and took KD 560 that was with her. The suspect confessed to committing the crime. He said the woman was in the backseat, and when she opened her purse to get her phone, he noticed a large amount of money in it, and that was when the idea to steal it came to his mind. He was sent to the public prosecution. In another incident, two thieves robbed a Filipina of KD 315 and a smartphone before escaping. The victim lodged a complaint at Abu Halifa police station, saying that she was beaten and robbed. Detectives took over the case to find and arrest the culprits.

Domestic violence

An Iranian woman was beaten by her husband, a citizen, so she lodged a complaint against him at Fahd Al-Ahmad police station. The woman told police that after domestic differences, he insulted and beat her, causing the injuries mentioned in the medical report.

Man stabbed in fight

A Syrian national was stabbed in the thigh during a fight with two compatriots in Jeeb Al-Shuyukh. The man, in his twenties, told local police that after he met the two persons, an argument took place, so they attacked and stabbed him with a sharp object. He submitted a medical report stating his injuries. Detectives are working on the case. In a separate incident, policemen broke up a fight between a Kuwaiti and Egyptian family, and they were charged with exchanging blows at Maidan Hawally police station. Investigations are underway to find out the reasons behind the fight.

Neighbors' row

A citizen in his forties accused his neighbor of damaging his car, adding when he asked her the reason for doing so, she said "why did you park in my spot?" The citizen lodged a complaint at Fahd Al-Ahmad police station. A security source said officers called the woman but she did not answer the phone, so detectives were asked to arrest her for questioning. —Al-Anbaa and Al-Rai

SEVEN NEW DESTINATIONS FOR TREATMENT ABROAD

KUWAIT: Despite the controversy within the parliamentary legislation committee over cancelling treatment abroad, well-informed health sources said that the Ministry of Health was currently considering dispatching patients for physiotherapy and orthopedic treatment to Greece and Hungary. The sources added that three hospitals had been also accredited in Poland to receive around 300 patients to be gradually sent for treatment, after a medical team had been sent to review the concerned hospitals' experiences. The sources also noted that the Ministry of Health also approved sending patients for physiotherapy in Bosnia, Slovenia, Czech Republic and Slovakia. —Al-Anbaa

MOSQUE'S REPAIR CONTRACT READY

KUWAIT: Public Works Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Maintenance Engineering Sector Mohammad bin Nikhi said the contract for repairing Al-Sadeq Mosque is ready. He said the lowest bid was for around KD 777,000, adding that work will start as soon as the contract is signed, and it will take six months to restore the mosque to its previous condition before the terrorist act. He said the delay was to give competing contractors the opportunity to study the mosque's situation and present the best proposals. —Al-Qabas

100 NATIONAL LABORERS ADJUST STATUS

KUWAIT: An official source at the Manpower Public Authority (MPA) said the National Labor Development Department receives around 100 transactions for citizens who are adjusting their status after stopping payments of national labor support because of not producing a work permit. He said the decision came after a decision by the Cabinet. The source said MPA is committed to implementing the ministerial decision, which gave a three-month grace period to correct the status. He said the decision is clear and there is no retroactive effect for the beneficiaries, and payments will be from the date of the work permit. —Al-Qabas

MINISTRY TO REINTRODUCE COMPANIES' LAW

KUWAIT: The Constitutional Court's decision a few days ago annulling the anti-corruption law because it was unconstitutional caused chaos in most ministries and government establishments that were issued similar "urgent decrees." On that regard, the commerce ministry has reportedly sought to pass the companies' law no. 25/2012 during the same time the annulled anti-corruption law was approved. Sources said that the commerce



Al-Anbaa



Al-Anbaa

THEATRE IN OLD KUWAIT

By Dr Saleh Al-Ojairi

It is a known fact that overlooking the sea, Kuwait is a fully sea-dependent nation. Kuwaitis used to dive for pearls in summer and sail to India and East Africa for trade in winter. Unlike during pearling expeditions, sailors had enough time to pass by acting some scenes during their voyages.

The first school play was performed at the Ahmadiya School in 1924 during its opening ceremony. Another comedy play was performed in 1938 under the title of 'The American Doktor (Doctor)'. In the same year, the first serious play in Kuwait's theatre history was performed under the title of 'Omar's Islam', in which Palestinian teachers and the students exerted considerable efforts to make the performance a wonderful and highly appreciated one.

Women were not allowed to act in the past and so some men, such as the late Mohammed Al-Nashmi, Abdul Razzaq Al-Nafisi, Ali Al-Rasheed, Saeed Shamma and Abdul Aziz Al-Namash had to play female roles. Later, in the 1960s, pioneering female actresses appeared, including Aysha Ibrahim, Mariam Al-Ghadban, Mariam Al-Saleh, Hayat Al-Fahd and Suad Abdullah.

Thanks to the late Egyptian veteran actor and director Zaki Tolaimat, plays performed in classical

Arabic started to flourish in Kuwait. However, the late artist Khaled Al-Musallam played a great role that is unfortunately forgotten in enhancing theatrical activities in Kuwait. He used to gather teachers during the summer vacation and perform plays that highly appealed to audiences, who used to yearn to watch a play because theatre used to be the only means of entertainment during the absence of any clubs or recreational facilities. Audiences often watched the same play over and over every night, because there was always something new, as actors usually improvised their lines and did not memorize the written scripts by heart.

Sheikhs and VIPs also used to attend the performances and watch the plays as eagerly and passionately as the common man at that time. Nowadays, theatre has made gigantic leaps forward and very outstanding performances are presented by highly efficient and talented actors and actresses, through establishing various theatrical groups over the past seven decades. I hope these outstanding artists would go on enlightening, amusing and entertaining the people of Kuwait as well as contribute to building this generous country's future.

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

DISCLAIMER

By Saleh Al-Shayji

Not being perfect, as human beings, does not mean we should stop seeking and demanding perfection. Unfortunately, some, or even most of us, randomly mix various concepts regardless of truths. Those 'some' I am talking about have been confusing the 'state' and the 'nation' and cannot even tell the difference between them both.

Whenever we write criticizing some government decision or a bad real life situation resulting from a bad government decision, lots of the victims of this 'confusion' immediately question our patriotism and consider that we have relinquished it. As it is difficult to have people give up certain ideologies or false assumptions, and because I strongly believe in this fact, I stopped arguing with any of those I believe to be victimized by such false ideas. I bear with their opinions, and maybe ridicule or insults, without uttering a single word, because I am sure I would never manage to undo the effect of their false ideas, separation from real life and incapability to cut loose with the narrow and shallow perception they have leashed themselves and their minds to.

Loving my nation and patriotism does not mean dancing in the 'government's nightclub' or walking over its circus tightropes. It does not mean applauding everything it does or to be infatuated by the voice of its official spokesperson while reading us the decisions it made and will make. As citizens, we are more keen on our nation than the government. We are the government's partners in a nation more owned by us than by them.

Patriotism is an emotional attachment to a nation and homeland, not to governments. The fact that governments are replaceable while nations are everlasting and fixed proves this. A nation is our ancestors' legacy as well as the inheritance we are going to leave to our children and grandchildren. Whenever we seek perfection of our nation, we must not necessarily achieve it, yet clinging to hopes of achieving such perfection is still far much better than being attached to nation-damaging bad real-life situations. Being against certain unfair and unconstitutional laws or decisions that fail to achieve national unity and jeopardize people's liberties does not mean I am not patriotic. On the contrary, I would be disloyal to my nation if I accept such situations and applaud them. Though I am sure I have satisfactorily refuted such allegations and provided advice to people with deaf ears, I do this out of disclaiming their allegations!

—Translated by Kuwait Times



KIB ORGANIZES COURSE ON ISLAMIC BANKING

KUWAIT: As the Kuwait International Bank (KIB) always strives to provide new recruits with training courses to develop their skills, it organized a training course on the "Fundamentals of Islamic Banking Services and Products" for two consecutive days. The training course aimed at featuring the key principles of Islamic banking and identifying the terms and conditions of opening

accounts, deposits, and services, in addition to highlighting KIB's main investments, and financial products and solutions.

The Sharia Supervisor at KIB, Dr Hisham Ahmad Abdul Hai said that this course was an added-value for the staff to develop their know-how on Sharia-compliant solutions and products; moreover, the 20

trainees showed great interest and were actively participating in the training course. Dr Abdul Hai added that KIB is always keen on organizing this workshop for its new employees, followed by a series of inclusive training courses that are held periodically depending on the requirements of each department.

He concluded by saying that KIB

believes in the significance of providing its staff with such training courses to advance their capabilities and proficiency, in order to be updated with the latest trends and products in the Islamic banking industry. As a result, the demand on the sharia-compliant services regionally and globally has been highly increasing, due to its trustworthiness and flexibility.

PANEL RECOMMENDS MARKET FUEL PRICES, NO COMPANIONS ON OVERSEAS TREATMENT

KUWAIT: The government committee entrusted with studying ways to reduce the cost of subsidies recently recommended lifting fuel subsidies and selling it at market prices from February.

The committee also recommend-

ed cutting down the treatment abroad expenses by limiting the state-paid cost for the patient alone without any companions.

The committee, comprising of elements from relevant ministries, approved all the recommendations

made by international advisor Ernest & Young concerning reducing subsidies paid for 12 goods and public services. According to the study, putting these recommendations into practice would make petrol prices jump from 60-65 fils to 100 fils per liter, which is equivalent to current international gasoline prices, that are already the lowest in 11 years.

The recommendations also included gradually lifting subsidies paid for agricultural activities, a recommendation to which many of the committee members showed some reservations on grounds that agriculture was a productive sector that does not even get much subsidies anyway.

Speaking about electricity subsidies, the committee also had reservations about lifting subsidies and setting different prices according to consumption rates. Committee members agreed that this would need a special legislation. The committee also decided reducing diesel and kerosene prices to 100 fils per liter by the beginning of January. —Al-Rai





Malaysia's Islamic airline takes off with a prayer

DEMOCRATS GRAPPLE WITH TRUMP AS PRIMARY DRAWS CLOSER



ANBAR PROVINCE: Iraqi pro-government forces stand next to armored vehicles as they take position in Al-Aramil area, south of the Anbar province's capital Ramadi, during military operations on December 22, 2015. —AFP

FORCES IN FINAL PUSH TO RETAKE RAMADI

CITY CAPTURE WILL FURTHER SHRINK JIHADISTS 'CALIPHATE'

BAGHDAD: Iraqi forces closed in on the Islamic State group's last redoubts in central Ramadi yesterday to retake the city they lost in May and further shrink the jihadists' "caliphate". A day after punching deep into the city centre, forces led by the elite counter-terrorism service (CTS) inched towards the governmental compound in Ramadi, the capital of Iraq's vast Anbar province.

"The anti-terrorism troops are now poised to break into the Hoz area where the governmental compound is located," a brigadier general in the force said. The recapture of the compound would mark another key step towards reasserting full control over Ramadi, whose liberation a CTS spokesman said Tuesday would be achieved in three days.

Devastated city

Government forces, which have been supported by daily air strikes from the US-led coalition, had to move carefully through the devastated city, whose deserted streets were littered with rubble and shrapnel. Retreating IS fighters usually booby-trap their abandoned positions, plant roadside bombs and move in tunnels which can also be trapped with huge explosive charges.

Iraqi forces clearing residential neighborhoods in Ramadi were finding huge amounts of ammunition and explosives, including rockets made from gas canisters. Officials estimated before the latest push into Ramadi that no more than 300 IS fighters remained holed up in the centre.

"The fall of Ramadi is inevitable, the

end is coming but... it's going to be a tough fight," the US-led coalition's spokesman, Colonel Steve Warren, told reporters on Tuesday. He said thousands of civilians were still believed to be inside Ramadi, some of them used as human shields by IS, also known as ISIS or by the Arabic acronym Daesh. Several officials said groups of IS fighters were trying to slip through gaps in the Iraqi forces' net around the city.

"Dozens of Daesh members have withdrawn from the city centre towards Sufiya and Sichariyah," east of Ramadi along the Euphrates Valley, said Ibrahim Al-Fahdawi, who heads the security committee in Khaldiya district. The recapture of Ramadi would further isolate IS-held Fallujah—which lies half way on the road to Baghdad—and undermine the viability of the group's self-proclaimed "caliphate".

'Battle of attrition'

Iraq's defense minister, Khaled Al-Obeidi, said last week that successive operations by the Iraqi security forces and its allies had shrunk the territory held by IS in Iraq from roughly 40 percent of the country last year to 17 percent.

Tuesday's big push into central Ramadi was only the latest step in a months-long operation, which saw Iraqi forces gradually close in after cutting off supply lines into Anbar and retaking neighborhoods, key roads and bridges one after the other. "This has been a grinding battle of attrition. I think ISIS in Ramadi is exhausted. The city has been isolated for a while," said David Witty, a retired US army Special Forces colonel and former advisor to CTS.

The slow pace of the Ramadi operation had triggered calls from some critics for a greater role for the Shiite-dominated Hashed Al-Shaabi paramilitary forces or even US troops on the ground. But Baghdad largely stuck to its strategy, resorting to newly trained local forces from Anbar to move in and hold the ground re-conquered by federal forces.

The loss of Ramadi in mid-May had been Baghdad's worst defeat in the war against IS and its recapture would provide a welcome morale boost to the country's much-criticized military. "It could be symbolic in strengthening more local resistance in Anbar against ISIS, sup-

ported by Iraqi federal forces," Witty said.

The jihadist group, which swept through swathes of Iraq in early June

2014, still controls much of Anbar, which is Iraq's largest province and has borders with Syria, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. Government forces,

allied Shiite militia and Kurdish peshmerga forces are also battling IS on other fronts. The jihadist group still controls Mosul, Iraq's second city. —

VISIT

The Largest International Expo for the Signage, Graphics and Imaging Industries in the MENA region.

**ONE EXPO
ONE MILLION
OPPORTUNITIES!**

RETAIL
DIGITAL
SCREEN
TEXTILE
FABRICATING & FINISHING
PRINT

SGI Dubai 2016
Sign & Graphic Imaging Middle East

10, 11, 12 JANUARY 2016
HALLS 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 - DUBAI WORLD TRADE CENTRE,
UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Pre-register online for your FREE fast-track VISITOR PASS
@ www.signmiddleeast.com

Organized by: INTERNATIONAL EXPO ORGANIZATIONS L.L.C. P.O. Box 50006, Dubai, UAE | Tel: +971 4 343 5777 | Fax: +971 4 343 6115 | E-Mail: sgidubai@jedubai.com
A member of Falak Holding

LENOVO P70

- 5.0" HD IPS Touchscreen
- 1.7 GHz -64bit True8core™
- 2GB RAM
- 16GB ROM, up to 32GB microSD
- 13MP Autofocus Camera
- 5MP Front Camera
- Android v4.4 KitKat
- Big 4000mAh Battery

KWD 70 10 Cash Back

LENOVO A7000

- 5.5" HD IPS display
- 1.5 GHz Octa-core Cortex-A53
- 2GB RAM
- 8GB ROM, up to 32GB microSD
- 8MP autofocus, LED flash Rear Camera
- 5MP Front Camera
- Android OS version Lollipop 5.0

KWD 56.9 8 Cash Back

LENOVO A6000

- 5.0" HD IPS Touchscreen
- 1.2GHz -64bit Quad Core Processor
- 1GB RAM
- 8GB ROM, up to 32GB microSD
- 8MP Rear Camera with LED flash
- 2MP Front Camera
- Android v4.4 KitKat

KWD 43 7 Cash Back

Shop Online
Lulu Webstore

EASY PAYMENT THROUGH DEBIT AND CREDIT CARDS

Lulu HYPERMARKET

SALMIYA • DAJEEJ • AL QURAIN • AL RAI • FAHAHEEL

GAZANS CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS WITH HEAVY HEARTS

GAZA CITY: It is a bitter Christmas for Elias Manna, who will celebrate alone for the first time because his five sons have left the Gaza Strip, the Palestinian territory hit by three wars since 2008. "At first, they left to study there," Manna, 62, said as he stood before the large wooden cross in front of a church for Latin rite Catholics in Gaza City, explaining that his sons moved to Europe. "But they never returned because there is no work that would allow them to stay here with us."

The dwindling number of Gaza Christians, a small portion of the mainly Muslim population, face the same hardships as everyone else in the war-torn enclave, but some say there are added pressures as well. They speak of worries about growing extremism in Gaza, where Salafist jihadists have posed a limited yet significant challenge to Islamist movement Hamas, which rules the territory.

"If young people leave for the United States and Europe, it is because they don't see any opportunities here," said Saad, 50. "Life is suffocating and extremism is growing." He added that the thought of moving to certain Arab countries in the Middle East frightened him due to the "crimes of the Islamic State," the jihadist group that has targeted Christians in Syria, Iraq and Libya. The Palestinian territories are located in the Holy Land at the heart of the Christian faith and include Bethlehem, where tradition says Jesus was born. But the number of Christians living in the Palestinian territories has fallen to 52,000, or 1.37 percent of the Palestinian population. Most of them live in the occupied West Bank, while less than six percent are in Gaza.



GAZA CITY: A Palestinian Muslim woman poses for a photo holding a chocolate bearing an image of Santa Claus at a shop. — AFP

More than double that number—around 7,000 — lived in the Strip only about a decade ago.

'That is our right'
Life has become increasingly difficult in the strip

squeezed between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean. It is under an Israeli blockade, and thousands of homes were destroyed in the 2014 war with the Jewish state. Reconstruction has been slow due to the blockade as well as a lack of donor money

and coordination between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, based in the West Bank and dominated by bitter rival Fatah. Around two-thirds of young people are unemployed, and a recent survey showed that half of Gazans want to leave the territory—though the blockade and strict border controls by Israel and Egypt keep many from doing so. The head of Roman Catholics in the Holy Land spoke of such suffering at a mass at the Holy Family Church in Gaza during a rare visit to the strip to celebrate Christmas.

"We have seen violence, exile, hunger and pain," said Fouad Twal, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem and a Jordanian. "We place our hope in the year to come, that it brings more justice, equality, unity and mercy." He also talked of "those who suffer, those who are displaced, those whose homes have been destroyed, who have lost their property."

Gaza Christian George Antoun said it is difficult to celebrate in such circumstances. "We celebrate the birth of Christ, but at the same time we are suffering from what is happening in Palestine," he said. "We pray that the king of peace, our lord Jesus, brings us peace, that Palestine will be liberated and we will be able to live like everyone else because that is our right."

But the complications facing Gazans include visits to Bethlehem. While it is located less than 100 kilometers away, it may as well be in another hemisphere for many Gazans blocked by Israeli restrictions on visiting the West Bank. This year, Israel says it has granted 800 passes to Gazan Christians to travel to Jerusalem and the West Bank. — AFP

WAITING TO LEAVE TRIPOLI'S 'CEMETERY OF THE UNKNOWN'

TRIPOLI: On the outskirts of Libya's capital, Imad wipes the dirt from the tombstone of his brother, one of hundreds of migrants whose journey ended in the "cemetery of the unknown". No name is marked on the grave, but at least it has a date, and with the help of the Libyan Red Crescent, 29-year-old Tunisian Imad ben Salem is now certain this is the burial place of his younger brother, Qabil, 25.

But an error by a doctor and red tape have prevented him from repatriating the body for the family to grieve back home. Hundreds of migrants whose dreams of a new life in Europe were sunk in the Mediterranean are buried in Bir el-Osta Milad cemetery, awaiting repatriation if their identities are confirmed.

"My brother died with 127 others on the third day of the Feast of the Sacrifice," the holiday marking the end of the annual Muslim hajj pilgrimage to Mecca, in September, Imad said. "I was supposed to stay three days in Libya, a week at most," said the young Tunisian, who for more than a month has abandoned his job as a taxi driver on which eight members of his family are dependent.

"When I arrived, there was no paperwork and I came up against obstacles at every turn," he said, angrily. "I call on the Libyan and Tunisian authorities, on the Red Crescent and the Red Cross: all I want is to take my brother's body back to Tunisia!"

Scattered under trees and between bushes, tombs are marked with the dates on which the bodies of hapless migrants were recovered from the water or washed up on Libya's shores. Some of them date back to 2012. If documents are found on the bodies, their names and nationalities are also marked on the tombstones.

300 graves ready

The Red Crescent has no precise figure, but says that several hundred men, women and children are buried in what locals have dubbed "the cemetery of the unknown". "This experience will always be engraved in our memory. It's impossible to forget the corpses... We fear that one day we will be faced by someone we know," said Abdelhamid el-Swei, who is in charge of transporting bodies to the cemetery for the Red Crescent. In one corner of the cemetery, 300 graves have been dug ready for more migrants who perish at sea and are given funerals in keeping with Muslim rites. Gravedigger Abderrazaq Abdelkarim recalls that they needed two days to prepare graves when a boat carrying 120 people sank a month ago.

The Red Crescent follows a set procedure: first, a frontline team is alerted, another is tasked with verifying the information and a third is sent to recover the bodies. The remains are then handed to forensic doctors, registered with a case number and then buried in Bir el-Osta Milad. "Not long ago we were working seven days straight," said Hussam Nasr, a Red Crescent volunteer for the past 12 years.

He recalled one instance when they had to use ropes to haul five bodies from the water and 20 meters up a cliff side. In the case of Imad's brother, the body was identified by the Red Crescent because of his tattoos. But "the forensic doctor... failed to mention the tattoos in his report and the authorities refuse to carry out a DNA test although it's perfectly clear that this is my brother. I know he's here," Imad said. "He was the youngest among us. I won't abandon him here. I will not leave without him." — AFP



DIYARBAKIR: A protester kicks a tear gas canister during a demonstration in Diyarbakir on December 22, 2015 to denounce security operations against Kurdish rebels. — AFP

TRAPPED IN WAR ZONE, TURKS STRUGGLE IN CURFEW TOWNS

OPERATION MARKS A NEW ESCALATION IN VIOLENCE

ANKARA: His neighborhood battered by shelling and food running out, Bahattin Yagarcik hunkers down in a basement along with several other families to take cover from the standoff between the Turkish military and Kurdish rebels in southeastern Turkey.

Yagarcik's hometown of Cizre and the nearby town of Silopi in Sirnak province in the Kurdish majority southeast have been under curfew since early last week as the army wages an all-out offensive against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in the town's streets.

"Tanks were deployed on the hills overlooking the city and my three-storey apartment building was set on fire last Wednesday by intensive shelling. It is completely unusable now," Yagarcik told an AFP correspondent in Ankara by telephone from Cizre. "We-four families, 26 people including two babies-found sanctuary in a two-room basement. It is freezing. Hardly any electricity. We barely use phones as batteries are running out, as well as the food we live on," he added. "We are in a basement. No heating. We are desperate. Babies are crying. I counted 24 shells that landed within only one minute in my neighborhood."

The vast operation marks a new escalation in violence between members of the Turkish security forces and Kurdish militants after a fragile ceasefire with the PKK collapsed in July. The campaign reportedly involves some 10,000 troops led by six generals and is one of the biggest-ever launched by Turkey in urban centers inside its territory.

The Turkish government says the operation is needed to root out militants who were effectively taking over the towns by building barricades and digging trenches. The local authorities insist the curfews are required to protect ordinary citizens. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has vowed: "Never doubt that the terrorist organization will be buried in the trenches it has dug."

The army has accused the rebels of using schools in the region as hideouts, blaming them for the damage the buildings have suffered in the campaign. The PKK's insurgency against the Turkish state dates back to 1984, initially pushing for full independence and then for autonomy and greater rights.

'Under siege'

But Kurdish activists and politicians have accused the army of acting with impunity, pounding large parts of the towns to rubble and killing civilians. Human Rights Watch in a report on Tuesday urged Turkey to "immediately stop the abusive and disproportionate use of force" in the security operations, which have been in progress since the collapse of the ceasefire in July. Pictures posted on social media from resi-

dents inside Silopi and Cizre have shown substantial damage to buildings, with the towns constantly shaken by the thunderous noise of shelling. The military says that over 100 PKK rebels have been killed in Cizre alone but it is not possible to independently verify the toll or confirm their identities.

Residents in both towns cower in cramped basements, waiting desperately for the moment when the operation will end. "My neighborhood in Silopi is almost under siege," 26-year-old Sehmus Baran told AFP on the phone from inside Silopi.

"The windows of our flat were all broken. The flat is freezing. We took shelter under the stairs of the building," he said. "We had no running

water for three days. Electricity is on and off." Baran said he was a university graduate and had to study for exams to become a civil servant. "But I cannot study. No electricity," he said, begging for information about "whether the United Nations is doing anything".

Murat Oktar, a local municipal official in Nur neighborhood in Cizre, said he had to flee the town to a village on its outskirts last week. "There's been constant shelling. Everyone is in a panic. The state is using so much power that it is as if an enemy state is bombing," he said. "Shops are closed. Locals are in a state of emergency, storing wheat and cheese. There are people who were wounded. They call for ambulances but no answer. There's no security for people." — AFP



TRIPOLI: A Libyan man walks next to graves dug at the Bir el-Osta Milad cemetery for unidentified migrants, dubbed by locals as the "cemetery of the unknown", on the outskirts of the Libyan capital. — AFP

70% OF SYRIA REFUGEES LIVE IN 'EXTREME POVERTY': UN

BEIRUT: More than two-thirds of Syrian refugees in Lebanon live in extreme poverty, according to a United Nations study published yesterday, up nearly 50 percent from last year. Based on an assessment of more than 4,000 refugee households, the report found that an estimated 70 percent of them are living below the Lebanese extreme poverty line of \$3.84 (3.52 Euros) per day.

"This is a striking increase from 49 percent in 2014," said Mireille Girard, head of the UN refugee agency's Lebanon office. The inter-agency study was conducted by the World Food Program, the refugee agency and the UN's children's fund. Refugees are facing a dire situation as their savings dry up, work opportunities are increasingly rare and humanitarian aid packages grow smaller.

According to the study, the refugees are borrowing to cover even their most basic needs, including rent, food, and healthcare, putting nearly 90 percent of them in debt. Household spending dropped to \$493 per month from \$762 in 2014, reflecting reduced quality of food consumed and a heightened reliance on debt and humanitarian aid.

To cope, families are pulling their children from school so that they can work. Only five percent of 15-17 year olds attended school this year. Instead, many work in agricultural fields for as little as \$4 a day. "The Syria crisis is a tragedy for children on an unimaginable scale and continues to significantly impact their protection, well-being and development across the entire region," said Tanya Chapuisat, head of the UN children's agency in Lebanon.

"Children's exposure to violence, poverty and displacement are having enormous consequences, in the immediate and long-term," she added.

UN agencies, partner organizations and Lebanon's government are requesting \$2.48 billion for the coming year to support refugees and host communities.

The UN's findings "represent an urgent call to action, demanding that no time is spared in addressing the increasing needs and vulnerabilities of Syrian refugees here in Lebanon," said Gawaher Atif of the World Food Program. More than four million refugees have fled Syria for the relative safety of the neighboring countries, according to the UN. Millions more have been internally displaced. — AFP

ISTANBUL AIRPORT BLAST KILLS 1, DAMAGES PLANES

ISTANBUL: A female cleaner was killed and another wounded early yesterday after an explosion near a plane at Istanbul's second international airport, with Turkey on high alert for possible attacks. The authorities said it was too early to confirm if the airport had been targeted in an attack, but the transport minister said there had been no security lapses.

Five planes suffered slight damage as a result of fragments from the explosion, the minister said. Airport cleaner Zehra Yamac, 30, died of head wounds hours after the blast just after 2:00 am (midnight GMT) on the tarmac at Sabiha Gokcen airport on the Asian side of Turkey's largest city, the state-run Anatolia news agency reported. Turkey's private carrier Pegasus Airlines said in a statement the explosion occurred next to one of its planes while the two cleaners were nearby.

"There were no passengers either on the plane or on the stairway. Sabiha Gokcen airport is continuing its normal operations," Pegasus said. The wounded victim, also a cleaner, was hurt in the leg. Yamac was hospitalized but died of her wounds despite the efforts of medical staff, Anatolia said. Police stepped up security at airport entrances after the blast, searching vehicles while a police helicopter circled overhead, Anatolia said. Security was also stepped up at Istanbul's largest airport, Ataturk, on the European side of the city, with police checking vehicles entering the complex, Turkish television said.

Transport Minister Binali Yildirim said five

planes were damaged and were now being repaired in the airport's hanger. But he declined to give details on the possible cause. "At this moment it's too early to give a verdict but I want to emphasize there is no weakness concerning security," Yildirim told Anatolia.

Neither President Recep Tayyip Erdogan nor Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu referred to the incident in speeches on Wednesday. The airport said on its official Twitter account that "flights from our terminals are continuing according to schedule." Sabiha Gokcen airport, named after Turkey's first female fighter pilot, is the second international airport in Istanbul after much larger Ataturk airport.

Sabiha Gokcen hosts flights both to domestic and numerous international destinations often with budget airlines but also national flag carrier Turkish Airlines.

In 2015, up to November, it hosted over 17 million domestic passengers and almost nine million international passengers, according to company figures. It is now fully owned by Malaysian Airports Holding which completed the acquisition of the remaining shares in the airport this year. "We are working very closely with the Turkish government and our counterparts to facilitate the investigation, and we await their official report on it," Dato' Azmi Murad, the executive director of Sabiha Gokcen said in a statement. "The Turkish government has heightened security within the vicinity of the airport, which includes helicopter surveillance," he added. — AFP

SLAIN MUSLIM STUDENTS' FAMILIES FIGHTING GRIEF TO HONOR LEGACY

RALEIGH: Shortly before they were gunned down, a young Muslim couple was eating out with relatives when the conversation turned to anti-Islamic attitudes in the United States. It was January 2015, months before the massacres in Chattanooga, Paris and San Bernardino, California. Deah Barakat and Yusor Abu-Salha had just gotten married and started living together in an apartment near the University of North Carolina.

When Barakat's mother worried aloud that the family could be harmed because of their religion, "we were all laughing it off, like: 'Nothing bad is going to happen. This is America,'" said Deah's brother, Farris. "Watch it happen," Farris Barakat recalled his sister-in-law saying. "You guys won't be laughing."

About 10 days later, the couple was killed in their apartment along with Yusor's younger sister, Razan. A white neighbor, who described himself as an atheist and expressed disdain for religion, has been charged with capital murder. The families believe the three were targeted because of their faith; the sisters' father says federal prosecutors recently told him they are still considering charging the defendant, Craig Hicks, with a hate crime.

The deaths of the three young Muslims lie at the intersection of themes that have gripped the American psyche in recent months: Gun violence, attitudes toward Islam and the justice system's handling of racially charged slayings. Yet as the anniversary of the killings draw near, the victims' families are channeling their grief elsewhere, into deeply personal philanthropic projects meant to honor them.

'We're not scary'

"Deah, Yusor and Razan were very good representatives of Muslim-Americans," said Farris Barakat. "We're not scary. We're not 'the other.' And I think people should see that." The families see the charitable projects as a continuation of volunteer work the three victims were passionate about. It's work that's needed all the more, the grieving relatives say, since terror attacks in the US and Europe have ratcheted up anti-Muslim rhetoric, including calls to turn away Syrian refugees.

"There's this concept in Islam called a continuous charity," Farris Barakat said. "The idea is that your good deeds don't

have to end when you die." In August, Farris Barakat and his father, Namee, traveled to Turkey to complete a project that 23-year-old Deah Barakat had launched before his death: a dental clinic for Syrian refugees. Fifteen dentists and 40 or so other volunteers treated about 800 refugees, most of them children.

"These kids are in so much need, and it's not by choice," said Namee Barakat, a native of Syria who came to the US in the 1980s. "I cannot believe anyone would refuse these refugees' entry to the US. Reshaping negative attitudes about Muslims is a key goal of Farris Barakat's charity, The Light House Project. He is renovating a house his brother owned in Raleigh to serve as a community center, host after-school programs and provide office space for charities including United Muslim Relief, which tackles poverty and related conditions in developing countries.

Scholarships have been created to honor the victims at North Carolina State University, and at the UNC School of Dentistry, which held a day of service in their honor. Deah Barakat was a student at UNC's dental school; Yusor Abu-Salha, 21, had been accepted to study there. Razan Abu-Salha was a 19-year-old student at NC State who had stopped by her sister and brother-in-law's apartment for dinner the night all three were killed.

Razan Abu-Salha volunteered alongside her sister and brother-in-law at dentistry clinics in rural North Carolina, her father has said. Yusor Abu-Salha met her husband while the two helped run the Muslim Student Association at NC State, and she had planned to travel with him to Turkey for the free dental clinic. She discussed growing up as a Muslim in the US in an interview recorded in 2014 as part of the StoryCorps oral history project and broadcast by North Carolina Public Radio.

"Although in some ways I do stand out, such as the hijab I wear on my head, the head covering, there's still so many ways I feel so embedded in the fabric that is our culture. ... There are so many people from so many different places, of different backgrounds and religions. But here we're all one - one culture," she said. Hicks, the defendant, had been brazen in Facebook rants about his disdain for Islam, Judaism and Christianity. His attorneys didn't return messages seeking comment. —AP

DEMOCRATS GRAPPLE WITH TRUMP EFFECT AS PRIMARY DRAWS CLOSER

CLINTON PLANS TO INTENSIFY CAMPAIGN SCHEDULE

WASHINGTON: Months of intense focus on the Republican race - and front-runner Donald Trump - have reverberated through the Democratic field, prompting front-runner Hillary Clinton to turn her attention to her would-be GOP challengers and leaving her chief rival, Vermont Sen Bernie Sanders, gasping for airtime.

Now, after spending weeks largely out of the spotlight, Clinton plans to intensify her campaign schedule from an almost incumbent-style effort to a more aggressive, first-timer approach. With just six weeks left before the first round of primary voting, Clinton plans a series of multi-day swings through Iowa starting in January, interspersing trips there with stops in New Hampshire and other early primary states. Her campaign will also unveil what Clinton has called her "not-so-secret weapon," sending her husband, former President Bill Clinton, out to hit the stump after months of behind-the-scenes activity, wooing donors in private events.

Escalating battle

And in a sign of the escalating battle between the two party front-runners, her campaign was forced to engage with Trump on Tuesday after he called Clinton's bathroom break during the recent debate "disgusting" and said she was "schlonged" in the 2008 race for the Democratic nomination, using a vulgar Yiddish term to describe her loss to now-President Barack Obama. On Twitter Tuesday, Trump denied the word was vulgar and said it simply means "beaten badly."

In an interview Tuesday with The Des Moines Register, Clinton said: "I don't know that he has any boundaries at all. His bigotry, his bluster, his bullying have become his campaign." Though Clinton leads Sanders in national polls by more than 20 points, the numbers are much tighter in Iowa and New Hampshire, where Sanders has an edge. The Sanders campaign believes victories in those two states would undercut Clinton's strength and send him into the next contests - in Southern and Western states where he's polling lower - with a boost of momentum.

"You will take that momentum coming out of the states, people will

come to you in very large numbers, in very short order, and you will build that into victory," Sanders campaign adviser Tad Devine told reporters in New Hampshire on Saturday. "That has been our plan from day one." But Sanders struggled to find his footing as the race has shifted away from his core economic message to one of national security after attacks by extremist elements in Paris and San Bernardino, California. Clinton aides say they are taking nothing for grant-

hasn't generated the excitement of the Republican field. "I want him to talk every single day," Democratic National Committee chairwoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz said of Trump. "It's going to help propel our nominee to the White House."

For Clinton, going after Trump creates an opportunity to reenter a political conversation that has largely moved away from the Democratic side and strike back at her GOP opponents, who are getting plenty of air-

bigoted rhetoric and proposal to ban Muslims from entering the US, Clinton has also begun telling voters that "it's OK to be afraid." The lack of attention on the Democratic race has given Clinton a break from the intense scrutiny of the summer, when much of the political conversation was focused on her use of a private email server as secretary of state and the foreign financial ties of the Clinton Foundation, the non-profit started by her husband.



GRAND RAPIDS: Republican presidential candidate businessman Donald Trump acknowledges the crowd before addressing supporters at a campaign rally. —AP

ed in the upcoming contests. "We are totally focused on this primary right now," said campaign manager Robby Mook. In recent weeks, however, Clinton has spent far more time attacking Trump and her would-be Republican rivals than Sanders, demonstrating a growing confidence in her primary standing and increased focus on the general election.

Political conversation

Democratic leaders believe that reminding their voters of whom they may be up against in November helps motivate their party in a primary that

time to lob attacks not only at each other but Clinton. "He's the leading Republican candidate but he's not really all that different from the other Republican candidates," said Clinton campaign chairman John Podesta. "He heats things up more and that's not only outrageous but it's dangerous."

But even as Clinton and her party publicly slam Trump, they're quietly grappling with the question of how to target the GOP front-runner without discounting the feeling of insecurity he's tapped into in the electorate. Between attacks on what she calls his

Her campaign has been able to use the lull to build up its operation, organize key states, promote celebrity endorsements and roll out foreign policy initiatives and positions on infrastructure, manufacturing and taxes. She's done a number of interviews on late night and afternoon talk shows designed to show her softer side, including a well-received cameo on "Saturday Night Live." "We're the sideshow," said Paul Maslin, a Democratic pollster unaffiliated with either campaign. "This is the opportunity to start to lay the groundwork for a general election message." —AP

DECLARATION BY RAUL CASTRO ON THE ANNIVERSARY OF THE ANNOUNCEMENTS OF RELATIONS BETWEEN CUBA AND US

One year has gone by since the simultaneous announcements made on December 17, 2014, by the presidents of Cuba and the United States to re-establish diplomatic relations between both countries and work to improve our relations.

One year ago, on a day like yesterday, as part of the agreements reached to find a solution to issues of interest for both countries, we were able to announce, to the great joy of all of our people, the return to our homeland of Gerardo, Ramon and Antonio, with which we made true the promise made by Fidel who had asserted that our Five Heroes would return.

On that same date, in accordance with our reiterated disposition to hold a respectful dialogue with the Government of the United States, on the basis of sovereign equality, to discuss a wide variety of issues in a reciprocal way, without any detriment to our people's national independence and self-determination, we agreed to take mutual steps to improve the bilateral atmosphere and move on towards the normalization of relations between the two countries.

It could be said that, since then, we have achieved some results, particularly in the political, diplomatic and cooperation spheres:

1. Diplomatic relations were re-established and the embassies in both countries were re-opened. These actions were preceded by the rectification of the unjust designation of Cuba as a State sponsor of terrorism.
2. High level meetings and visits have taken place.
3. The already existing cooperation in areas of mutual interest, such as aviation safety and security as well as the combat against drug-trafficking, illegal migration, alien smuggling and migration fraud has been expanded. The regular and respectful meetings between the military commands of Cuba and the United States in the perimeter of the US Naval Base in Guant-namo have continued.
4. New possibilities for bilateral cooperation have opened up in areas of mutual benefit, such as environmental protection, law enforcement, maritime and port security and health.
5. New dialogues have been initiated on bilateral and multilateral topics of interest, such as climate change, mutual compensations, traffic in persons and human rights, this latter being the one on which we have profound differences and about which we are having an exchange on the basis of respect and reciprocity.
6. We have signed agreements on environmental protection and the re-establishment of direct postal services.

All of this has been achieved through a professional and respectful dialogue based on equality and reciprocity. Quite on the contrary, this year we have not made any progress in the solution of those issues which are essential for Cuba to be able to have normal relations with the United States.

Although President Obama has repeatedly stated his opposition to the economic, commercial and financial blockade and has urged Congress to lift it, this policy remains in force. The persecution of Cuba's legitimate financial transactions as well as the extra-territorial impact of the blockade, which causes dam-

ages and hardships to our people and is the main obstacle to the development of the Cuban economy, have been tightened.

The steps taken so far by President Obama, although positive, have proved to be limited in scope, which has prevented their implementation. By using his executive prerogatives, the President could expand the scope of the steps that have already been taken and take new steps that would substantially modify the implementation of the blockade.

Despite Cuba's repeated claim for the return of the territory illegally occupied by the Guant-namo Naval Base, the Government of the United States has stated that it has no intention to change the status of that enclave. The US Government is still implementing programs that are harmful to Cuba's sovereignty, such as the projects aimed at bringing about changes in our political, economic and social order and the illegal radio and television broadcasts, for which they continue to allocate millions of dollars in funds.

A preferential migration policy continues to be applied to Cuban citizens, which is evidenced by the enforcement of the wet foot/dry foot policy, the Medical Professional Parole Program and the Cuban Adjustment Act, which encourage an illegal, unsafe, disorderly and irregular migration, foment human smuggling and other related crimes and create problems to other countries.

The Government of Cuba will continue to reiterate that, in order to normalize relations, it is imperative for the US Government to derogate all these policies that date from the past, which affect the Cuban people and nation and are not in tune with the present bilateral context and the will expressed by both countries to re-establish diplomatic relations and develop respectful and cooperative relations between both peoples and governments.

No one should expect that, in order to normalize relations with the United States, Cuba will renounce the principles and ideals for which several generations of Cubans have struggled throughout more than half a century. The right of every State to choose the economic, political and social system it wishes, without any interference whatsoever, should be respected.

The Government of Cuba is fully willing to continue advancing in the construction of a kind of relation with the United States that is different from the one that has existed throughout its prior history, that is based on mutual respect for sovereignty and independence, that is beneficial to both countries and peoples and that is nurtured by the historical, cultural and family links that have existed between Cubans and Americans.

Cuba, in fully exercising its sovereignty and with the majority support of its people, will continue to be engaged in the process of transformations to update its economic and social model, in the interest of moving forward in the development of the country, improving the wellbeing of the people and consolidating the achievements attained by the Socialist Revolution.

Thank you.

With the compliments of the Embassy of the Republic of Cuba in Kuwait



THE ULTIMATE TRAVEL COMPANION

تخطيط الأسعار

KILLER PRICES

ONLY 3 DAYS
Thursday, Friday & Saturday
24th, 25th & 26th Dec 2015

الكمية محدودة
Till Stocks Last

KD 19.950
Size: 28" + 24" + 18.5"

3 Piece Set

متوفر فقط في الفروع التالية:
الري - اوناد مول (العقيلة) - العديسي (حولي) - جمعية حولي - ناصر مول (الجهراء)
البرج الاخضر (الفحيحيل) - الدائري الرابع - بجانب المشاتل - مجمع الفال (السمية)

OFFER ONLY AVAILABLE IN LIMITED STORES:
AL RAI - AWTAJ MALL (EGAILA) - ADSANI COMPLEX (HAWALLY) - HAWALLY CO-OP
NASSER MALL (JAHRA) - GREEN TOWER (FAHAHEEL)
AL RAI - 4TH RING ROAD (NEXT TO MASHATEL AREA) - ANFAL MALL (SALMIYA)

18 500 50
alnasserME

النصر
ALNASSER
SINCE 1984
With Your Trust We Grow
بثقتكم لنطور



BURUNDI REBELS ANNOUNCE FORCE TO OUST PRESIDENT

NAIROBI: Burundi's rebels came together yesterday for the first time as a force aimed at ousting President Pierre Nkurunziza, after months of bloodshed in the troubled central African country. The formation of the insurgents comes amid mounting regional pressure on the government to accept African Union peacekeepers it calls an "invasion force". The 54-member AU said last week it would send a 5,000-strong force to halt violence that has sparked fears Burundi is sliding back towards civil war, and has pledged to send troops despite the government's fierce opposition. Pushing for Burundi's acceptance of the AU force will be a key part of talks in Uganda on December 28, regional diplomats said.

The rebels have formed a force "to protect the population" and uphold the Arusha Agreement that

paved the way to the end of the 1993-2006 civil war but which they say Nkurunziza has violated by his third term in power.

The rebels have called themselves the Republican Forces of Burundi, or "Forebu" from its name in French, Les Forces Republicaines du Burundi, said Edward Nshimirimana, a former army colonel turned rebel. "Our goal is to drive out Nkurunziza by force to restore the Arusha accord and democracy," Nshimirimana told AFP by telephone. Nkurunziza, an ex-rebel and born-again Christian who believes he has divine backing to rule, won a third term in office in July.

Rwanda denies backing rebels

A coup attempt in May was crushed after two days, with many of the soldiers and police who took

part fleeing. Hundreds of people have been killed in months of street protests in Burundi, which have devolved into frequent armed attacks with gunfire disrupting the nights and dead bodies appearing on city streets almost every day. While there have been near daily gun battles in the capital, attacks are now taking place in other parts of the country too, but until now the rebel force had no name.

The formation of Forebu is significant, as Bujumbura's government has dismissed talk of rebellion, instead rather blaming attacks on "armed criminals" or insurgents.

Burundi plunged into civil war on ethnic lines between majority Hutus and minority Tutsis in 1993, at a cost of an estimated 300,000 lives by the end of the conflict in 2006. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni will host the latest talks next

week, Uganda's Defense Minister Crispus Kiyonga said. But those talks will also involve the key opposition coalition, Cnared.

Burundi's government has so far refused to hold talks with Cnared, branding it a "terrorist organization" and accusing it of being behind attacks on security forces. Rwandan President Paul Kagame warned that the violence in the neighboring nation had the "potential to spill over" to his country. But he said he would not send troops to join the African Union force being sent to Burundi.

Kagame also dismissed allegations leveled by Burundian officials and aid groups that Rwanda is recruiting and arming refugees as rebel fighters. "I haven't even seen the tiniest evidence of that so it becomes a lot of politicking," Kagame said, calling the accusations "childish". — AFP



DUNKERQUE, France: Children of Kurdish migrants gather outside a tent at the Grande Synthe migrant camp. — AFP

FATHER OF DROWNED TODDLER ASKS WORLD TO OPEN ITS DOORS

LONDON: The father of toddler Aylan Kurdi, whose lifeless body on a Turkish beach became a symbol of the refugee crisis, has made a Christmas appeal to the world to open its doors to Syrians fleeing conflict. The message, to be broadcast by Britain's Channel 4 on Christmas Day, comes after the UN refugee agency said that more than one million migrants and refugees reached Europe this year.

They included over 970,000 who made the dangerous journey across the Mediterranean. Three-year-old Aylan died in September after his family, sheltering in Turkey from the war in Syria, decided to make a desperate bid to reach Greece in a flimsy inflatable boat. Shocking images of the toddler washed up and face down on the shore helped spur European nations to seek an effective response to the growing migrant crisis.

"My message is I'd like the whole world to open its doors to Syrians. If a person shuts a door in someone's face, this is very difficult," Abdullah Kurdi says in the video message. "When a door is opened they no longer feel humiliated," he adds, according to a transcript released by Channel 4.

Aylan's mother Rihana and brother Ghalib, 4, died in the same accident and were buried in the Syrian town of Kobane in September, days after the tragedy. Abdullah Kurdi had been trying to escape along with his family and up to three other Syrians from the flashpoint town, which was last year the site of a months-long battle between Kurdish militias and jihadists.

"At this time of year I would like to ask

you all to think about the pain of fathers, mothers and children who are seeking peace and security," says Kurdi who now lives in Erbil in Iraq. "We ask just for a little bit of sympathy from you."

Thousands perished

The UNHCR said that of the million who reached Europe in 2015, about half were Syrians fleeing the country's brutal civil war. "The number of people displaced by war and conflict is the highest seen in Western and Central Europe since the 1990s," it said, referring to conflicts in the former Yugoslavia.

In a sign that the crisis shows no sign of abating, at least 10 migrants including five children died yesterday when their boat sank near the Greek Aegean island of Farmakonissi, the national ANA news agency said. Another 13 people were rescued and two more are feared missing, the agency said. And on Tuesday, the Italian coastguard said that nearly 800 people had been pulled to safety in the Mediterranean as they attempted the crossing, and one body recovered.

Greece was by far the leading landing spot for migrants to Europe this year, with 821,008 arrivals including 816,752 by sea, the International Organization for Migration said this week. A total of 3,692 migrants died or disappeared crossing the Mediterranean this year, it added. EU leaders have set an end-of-June deadline to agree on a new border and coastguard force to slow the influx of migrants across the 28-nation bloc's porous external frontier. — AFP

SPAIN PM TO MEET SOCIALIST LEADER TO DISCUSS NEW GOVT

FOUR MAIN GROUPINGS WITH SIGNIFICANT CLOUT

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy held talks yesterday with the Socialist leader on forming a new government following inconclusive elections, just days after calling him a "miserable wretch". It will be their first meeting since Sunday's general election which saw Rajoy's conservative Popular Party (PP) win 123 seats but lose its absolute majority in the 350-seat parliament.

The opposition Socialists (PSOE) won 90 seats, followed by the far-left Podemos with 49 seats and the centre-right Ciudadanos with 40. The outcome means parliament will be made up of four main groupings with significant clout, putting an end to Spain's traditional two-party system of the PP and the Socialists and raising the prospect of weeks of political uncertainty in the Euro-zone's fourth largest economy.

Rajoy needs both the Socialists and Ciudadanos to abstain in a parliamentary vote on a new government in order to govern in a minority. Ciudadanos has already said it will abstain. The meeting will serve to "see if the PSOE is ready to reach agreements and a consensus on certain issues" or if it chooses "intransigence", the spokesman for the PP in the lower house of parliament, Rafael Hernando, said in a radio interview.

He denied a front page report in top-selling daily newspaper El Pais, which is close to the Socialists, which said Rajoy was ready to offer the Socialists the presidency of the assembly. "That is not on the table," he said when asked about the report. Talks between Rajoy and Sanchez will likely be tense after a highly acrimonious election campaign.

During the only TV debate between the two leaders last week, Sanchez accused Rajoy of not being a "decent person". The normally calm Rajoy responded with his own insult, calling Sanchez a "miserable wretch". Just before their talks Ciudadanos leader Albert Rivera called for negotiations to form a pact with the PP and the PSOE to enable a stable government.

He said the Socialists should be "responsible" and allow the PP to govern in a minority to avoid early elections and he warned it would be a mistake for the party to try to form a government



MADRID: Spanish caretaker Prime Minister and Popular Party (PP) leader Mariano Rajoy (left) shakes hands with the leader of Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE) Pedro Sanchez at La Moncloa palace. — AFP

with Podemos and smaller nationalist parties.

Fresh elections

Podemos is the only national party to back an independence referendum in the wealthy north-eastern region of Catalonia and it ran in a coalition with nationalist platforms in Catalonia, Valencia on the Mediterranean coast and the northwestern region of Galicia.

"Podemos has excluded itself from the defense of the unity of Spain," Rivera said. Podemos's number two Inigo Errejón defended the party's support for a referendum in Catalonia, saying in a TV interview that it is "a proposal for Catalonia to remain in Spain". After holding talks with the leaders of each party that has won seats in parliament, King Felipe VI, the head of state, will nominate a prime minister-most likely Rajoy. The nominated leader must then win a vote of confidence in parliament in

order to take office or else fresh elections will be held. The Socialists could be accused of destabilizing Spain if they are blamed for causing new elections, while joining forces with Podemos carries the risk that they will be swallowed up by the fast-growing party. Allowing the PP to stay in power by abstaining could alienate left-wing supporters angered by austerity measures introduced by the PP.

"I think the PSOE will end up allowing the PP to govern to avoid fresh elections which would see the PP boost its score as it would recoup votes lost to Ciudadanos and to those who abstained," said political analyst Nacho Martín Blanco. Forming a government with the PP is highly unlikely as it could see the Socialists suffer the same fate as its Greek counterpart Pasok, which saw its support plunge after it joined a coalition led by the conservative New Democracy in 2012. — AFP

HOMELESS 'MICHELIN GUIDE' HITS THE STREETS OF ROME

ROME: It's a guidebook with nothing about the eternal city's ancient monuments or famed restaurants and it can't be found in any bookstore. Its target audience is those who can't buy even a used paperback - the homeless. The 250-page pocket book, called "Rome - where to eat, sleep and have a wash," has been dubbed the "Michelin guide for the destitute". The new edition was presented on Tuesday to draw attention to the homeless during the Christmas season. The Sant' Egidio Community, a Catholic charity that distributes the guide, estimates that there are about 8,000 homeless people in Rome. Many are foreigners but a growing number are Italians.

About 2,500 sleep outdoors and thousands of others in precarious shelters such as abandoned buildings. Marco Impagliazzo, head of the worldwide group of non-clerics, said a growing number were Italian men in their mid-30s who were separated or divorced and had none of the family safety nets that traditionally protected Italians in the past. Italy's economy is emerging only slowly from a three-year recession and unemployment remains close to record highs, with virtually no jobs growth this year among those under the age of 35.

The guide includes addresses of medical services, 40 sidewalk soup kitchens, 40 indoor eateries, 45 places to sleep and 17 places to wash, get

a shave or a haircut. The number of places to wash has increased in recent years in Rome after the homeless themselves told charity workers that was what they were lacking most. Pope Francis ordered showers for the homeless to be opened just off St. Peter's Square this year. The guide, now in its 26th edition, includes a pull-out waterproof map with simple drawings - such as a sandwich for food points - and public transport routes to get to them. Sant' Egidio, which has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for its conflict resolution work and AIDS programs in Africa, plans to distribute 13,000 copies directly to the homeless and to volunteers who help them. — Reuters



LYON: In this June 28, 2015 file photo, the suspect in the beheading of a businessman, Yassine Salhi, a towel over his head to mask his face, is led by police officers as they leave his home in Saint-Priest. — AP

FRENCHMAN WHO DECAPITATED BOSS COMMITS SUICIDE IN JAIL

PARIS: A Frenchman who killed his boss and pinned his severed head to a fence at an industrial gas factory has committed suicide in his jail cell, prison authorities said yesterday. Yassin Salhi, 35, hanged himself from the bars of his cell using electrical cable on Tuesday night, according to authorities at Fleury-Merogis prison, in the southern suburbs of Paris.

The deliveryman carried out the grisly attack on employer Herve Cornara in Isere, southeastern France in June, displaying his boss's head outside the plant surrounded by Islamic flags. After sending pictures of the scene to a friend who had left to join the jihad in Syria, he tried to blow up the facility by driving his van into gas canisters, but was arrested and remanded in custody. Salhi had been placed in solitary confinement but was not considered a suicide risk.

Prison authorities had previously said he hanged himself using bed sheets. He had always disavowed any religious motive for his crime, saying it was a personal dispute with his boss, but prosecutors were pressing charges of Islamic-related terrorism. The married father-of-

three was born in the eastern French town of Pontarlier, near the border with Switzerland, to a father of Algerian origin and a mother with a Moroccan background. Salhi caught the attention of intelligence authorities in 2005 and 2006 because he was socializing with a group of people associated with radical Islam, a source close to the case told AFP in June. Intelligence services investigated him for a few years thereafter, but did not renew their inquiry in 2008.

He popped up again on the intelligence services' radar in 2013 because he was associating with people suspected of links to radical Islam. At the time he wore a beard and a traditional North African robe called a djellaba. France is on high alert after a state of emergency was declared in the wake of last month's Paris attacks, when a group of Islamic extremists killed 130 people. A jihadist plot was foiled last week in the French region of Orleans, southwest of Paris, Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said Tuesday, as the government prepared constitutional changes to enshrine emergency police powers. — AFP

CZECH PM'S TWITTER HACKED WITH ANTI-IMMIGRANT POSTS

PRAGUE: Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka's Twitter account fell prey yesterday to hackers who swamped it with violently anti-immigrant messages. "Refugees are an invasion army! The few women among them are nothing but the mothers of future terrorists. Guillotine all who help them!" said one of about a dozen messages posted both in English and Czech.

Sobotka's spokesman Martin Ayrey told AFP the government was taking steps to stop the attacks on the account. "We don't know who might be behind the attack but looking at the messages it's obvious that it's some neo-Nazis," he added. "If my Twitter account is attacked by neo-Nazis, I take it as evidence that I'm doing my job well. I wish a happy Christmas to all people of good will who reject spreading hatred, prefer humanity and support democracy," Sobotka himself said on Facebook.

The Czech Republic has rejected the EU's system of quotas for distributing refugees across the bloc to try to tackle the massive influx of people fleeing conflict, persecution and poverty in the Middle East and Africa. Sobotka has however shown a friendly face towards migrants, unlike rival President Milos Zeman, who said that jihadists used the migrant wave as a way to slip into the EU. One of the messages on the prime minister's Twitter account called for a "white revolution". "Democratic elites are devastating Europe. There is no other option but to raise arms, build a guillotine and take the law into our hands," said another. Few asylum seekers have chosen to stay in the Czech Republic so far, with a majority heading to wealthier Germany and other western EU states. — AFP

RUSSIA ISSUES WARRANT FOR FOE KHODORKOVSKY

MOSCOW: Russia said yesterday it had issued an international arrest warrant for top opposition leader Mikhail Khodorkovsky, as Moscow ramped up the pressure on a leading critic of President Vladimir Putin.

The announcement from the Investigative Committee, a top law enforcement body which reports directly to Putin, came nearly two years to the day since the Kremlin strongman stunned Russia by announcing that his political enemy, who had spent a decade in prison, would be pardoned and set free.

Khodorkovsky's supporters say the new move is aimed at silencing Putin's exiled foe. Investigators earlier this month charged the former oil tycoon in absentia with organizing the 1998 murder of a mayor in Siberia. Khodorkovsky, 52, was also charged with the attempted murders of two other people. Investigative Committee spokesman Vladimir Markin said in a statement that an international arrest warrant had been issued for the Kremlin critic, who lives abroad and spends much of his time in London.

"They've gone mad," Khodorkovsky shot back in a statement released by his opposition group Open Russia. He said an order to have him arrested in absentia compared favorably to a new law that would allow Russian police to fire at women and chil-

dren. "And what's most important it will be safe for the public," he said.

His spokeswoman Kulle Pispänen dismissed the announcement as political pressure and said it would not affect the former head of bankrupt oil giant Yukos. "Mikhail Borisovich will by no means limit his movements because of the hysterical actions of the Kremlin ghouls," Pispänen told AFP, referring to the former business magnate by his first name and patronymic. Khodorkovsky's lawyer Vadim Klyuvant said it was up to foreign countries to decide whether to comply with the warrant.

Speaking on Echo of Moscow radio, he called the arrest warrant announcement "another bout of fraudulent activities". Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov insisted that there was no contradiction between the president's move to pardon the ex-tycoon and the arrest warrant.

On Tuesday, investigators raided the apartments of employees of Khodorkovsky's Moscow-based Open Russia group, set up to help nurture civil society in the country, as well as its offices. The searches appeared tied to a 2003 case which led to the criminal prosecution of one of Russia's most powerful oligarchs and the dismemberment of his Yukos oil company which have become defining events in Putin's presidency. — AFP

AFGHAN FORCES BATTLE TO HALT TALEBAN IN HELMAND

LASHKAR GAH: Afghan forces yesterday battled Taliban fighters who overran the district of Sangin in the southern province of Helmand this week after reinforcements and NATO military advisers were rushed in to try to stop another district falling into insurgent hands.

Acting Defense Minister Masoom Stanekzai said fighting was going on in Sangin where government forces had been surrounded by insurgents who controlled most of the district including roads needed for reinforcements and supplies. "The military is in position and the operation is ongoing," Stanekzai told a news

conference in Kabul, adding that reinforcements had arrived in the province to relieve troops in Sangin.

Provincial police chief Abdul Rahman Sarjang said the situation had improved since the beginning of the week but heavy fighting was continuing. Although much attention has been focused on Sangin, fierce fighting has been underway across much of Helmand, a traditional stronghold of the Taliban and a major centre for opium that US and British troops fought for years to control.

"There is fighting here every day and whenever people come to the bazaar for

shopping they get killed," said shopkeeper Musa Khan, in Marjah district, near the provincial capital Lashkar Gah. The crisis in Helmand has piled pressure on the government of President Ashraf Ghani, following the fall of the northern city of Kunduz in September, which Taliban fighters seized and held for several days. Government forces have complained bitterly about being left without adequate supplies and reinforcements as well as with none of the air power that backed up NATO forces when they fought in the region.

Military advisers from Britain have

joined other NATO advisers in Helmand to help Afghan forces who have struggled to contain the insurgency since foreign troops withdrew from combat operations last year. NATO officials say the troops sent to Helmand are not taking a direct part in combat and they have not confirmed reports that special forces were among the advisers. The Taliban said the reinforcements showed the government's desperation.

"The Kabul administration cannot protect themselves without foreigners and the nation does not accept that," Qari Yousuf Ahmadi, a spokesman for Taliban,

said in a statement. On Sunday, the province's deputy governor issued a highly unusual public plea via Facebook, warning that Helmand would fall unless immediate action were taken and urging Ghani, who visited Azerbaijan on Tuesday, to come to the province to see for himself.

But it is not the only province where the Taliban have made gains. Yesterday, a spokesman said insurgents had captured the district of Gullistan in Farah, a remote western province that, like Helmand, is a major centre of opium cultivation. However, district governor Asif Nang rejected the claim as "baseless". —Reuters



ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani vendor sells Christmas placards on the outskirts of Islamabad. —AFP

PAKISTAN MINORITIES LIVE IN FEAR AFTER BLASPHEMY MOB KILLINGS

KOT RADHA KISHAN: Four-year-old Aliya's life collapsed last year when her illiterate Christian parents were falsely accused of tossing out pages of the Quran in their rubbish, and then lynched and burnt on a brick kiln by an angry mob.

The mob killing of Shama Bibi and Shahzad Masih triggered outrage in Pakistan, where desecration of Islam's holy book is legally punishable by death and even unproven allegations of blasphemy often lead to bloody killings at the hands of vigilantes.

After the ordeal on November 4, 2014, Aliya, which is not her real name, left the dusty brick factory where even as a toddler she had worked with her family as bonded laborers. Five other Christian families also fled.

Now she comes home from school every day, wearing her backpack and new shoes, to the lower-class area of Lahore where she lives with her maternal grandfather, elder brother and sister. The children play cricket on the roof terrace of the tiny, two-room concrete house, with a view of a dusty track lined with small rivers of sewage. But their hearts are not in their new lives, built far away from the factory—even as Christmas approaches. "The children often cry for their parents," sighs their grandfather, who AFP is not naming, saying that even a year on the family does not feel safe.

Unfounded allegations

Their sense of insecurity persists even though authorities have taken unusually strong measures to protect people like Shama and Shahzad, who were eventually found to be falsely accused. The police have traditionally been reluctant to clamp down on those who take part in mob violence for fear of enraging Islamists in this conservative Muslim country of 200 million.

But with the country's top leadership seemingly more determined to tackle religious extremism in the wake of a Taliban school massacre last year that left more than 150 dead, matters could be slowly changing. Pakistani courts appear to have shifted to a more moderate stance on blasphemy recently, warning against false accusations and bailing one accused after she had languished in jail for three years.

In the Christian couple's case, more than 100 people are still in jail—including the factory owner, who has been accused of locking them up when they tried to flee as the blasphemy allegations gathered steam because he thought they would default on their debt to him. Five other factory executives are also imprisoned, as well as two Muslim clerics accused of spreading the

rumor and encouraging the mob to attack the couple. Pakistan inherited its blasphemy law from former colonial power Britain, which devised the code to ensure communal harmony in the then undivided India.

New sections were introduced in the 1980s under military ruler General Zia-ul-Haq, which elevated Islam above all other religions and introduced the death penalty as part of his broader Islamisation agenda. Critics say the law, often misused by people carrying out personal vendettas, is feeding violence particularly against minorities.

"Such legislation can cause hatred, prejudice, and within that prejudice, may cause violence," says human rights activist Hina Jilani. Though Pakistan has never executed a blasphemy convict, more than 50 people accused of the crime have been killed before their trials were completed and 17 are currently languishing on the charge on death row.

'Fear always present'

What happened to the couple, though it sent shock and anger through the country, is far from unique. At least seven other people were murdered by vigilantes last year after being accused of supporting or committing blasphemy, though none this year. In the case of the Christian couple it emerged after the brutal killing the allegations were unfounded, as often happens.

Shahzad's father, a faith healer who used pages with inscriptions in many languages for his work, had died shortly before the incident. The family was burning documents that belonged to him. In the red mud fields where the couple worked for 20 years under the towering chimney of the brick kiln, they are remembered by the ragged, poverty-stricken wretches who labored alongside them as "good people".

"They were workers like us, our brothers. What happened to them is unfair and we are sad," said Rasheed Muhammad, one of their Muslim colleagues. Shahzad's elder brother Iqbal, who also worked at the factory, said he still fears for his life, and police have to escort him to his court appearances. "They could take us too," he said.

Riaz Anjum, the family's Christian lawyer, says he is "100 percent sure that they will get justice", and the killers will be held to account, despite the slow pace of the legal process. But real change, he said, would only come when the law is amended—a cause which Pakistan's government has not pushed for since 2011, when two political leaders who spoke out against the legislation were killed. Until such time, he sighs, "blasphemy remains a sword over our heads." —AFP

RIGHTS GROUPS RAP INDIA ON HARSHER TERMS FOR MINORS

NEW DELHI: Rights groups yesterday denounced India's new legislation allowing tougher punishments for juveniles, which was sparked by a public outcry over the release of a young man involved in a deadly gang-rape. Lawmakers Tuesday passed a bill allowing minors aged 16-18 to be sentenced to at least seven years if convicted of "heinous crimes" including rape, murder and acid attacks. However, they will not face life imprisonment or the death penalty.

The move came days after the release after three years of the youngest convict in the fatal gang-rape of a medical student on board a bus in December 2012. The release triggered widespread calls led by the victims' parents for amendments to an existing law which critics said was too weak. Amnesty termed the legislative changes "regressive and disappointing".

"Children do sometimes commit crimes as violent as those committed by adults," said Aakar Patel, executive director of Amnesty

International India, in a statement. "But the solution is not to change the law. It is to better enforce it." Under the existing law, those below 18 can be sentenced to a maximum of three years in a reform home.

Save the Children accused lawmakers of passing the new bill "in haste under public pressure and without due diligence". "Justice cannot be confused with revenge especially after the (2012) rape case. Making ad-hoc amendments using a trial and error method will only make the situation worse," said Bidisha Pillai, a campaign director for the groups' India branch.

The amended bill, which will become law after the president ratifies it, proposes a two-stage process that will first categorize crimes committed by juveniles as petty, serious or heinous. A minor accused of "heinous" crimes would then be examined by a board of psychologists and social behavior experts, who will assess whether the defendant should be tried as a child or an adult. —AFP

MALAYSIA'S ISLAMIC AIRLINE TAKES OFF WITH A PRAYER

ISLAMIC CONDITIONS ADOPTED TO AVOID RETRIBUTION

KUALA LUMPUR: The short domestic flight from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia's biggest city, begins with a recital of Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) supplication before his travel. The passengers - most of them Muslims - cup their hands, as a crew member murmurs a short prayer over the loudspeaker just before takeoff.

Malaysia's Rayani Air took to the skies over the weekend with a clear bailiwick. It is the country's first Islamic airline, offering flights that adhere to Islamic rules, including prayers, no serving of alcohol or meals with pork, and a strict dress code for Muslim female flight attendants.

The idea for Rayani Air grew out of much-publicized complaints by conservative Muslims who believed that two major air disasters for the national Malaysia Airlines - Flight 370 that went missing in March 2014 and Flight 17 downed a few months later over Ukraine - were caused by Allah's wrath. Their solution: Airlines must adopt strict Islamic customs to avoid divine retribution.

The reaction to the disasters, and the creation of the airline that operated its inaugural flight on Sunday, is an example of rising hard-line Islamic values in Malaysia, where Muslims account for about 60 percent of the country's 30 million people.

"We are answering the call of many Malaysians who wanted an Islamic airline," Rayani's managing director, Jaafar Zamhari, told The Associated Press. "We are not talking about being a holy airline or flying to holy destinations. We just want to provide an alternative to travelers, but we are open to all races and religions."

No boundaries

Ironically, the people who answered the call of conservative Islam and started Rayani Air are Hindus, perhaps an indication that a business opportunity knows no religious boundary. The founders of the airline, which currently flies to three domestic destinations using two Boeing 737s, are Ravi Alagendran

and his wife, Karthiyani Govindan. They used parts of their first names for the airline's name. Alagendran or his wife couldn't be immediately reached for comments, but in remarks to local media, he had said that "anyone wishing to travel in a

modest and alcohol-free environment will feel right at home." On a 55-minute flight Tuesday (delayed by two hours) from Kuala Lumpur to the northeastern city of Kota Baru, more than 100 passengers were greeted by Muslim female flight attendants wearing black headscarves, long pants and lime-green jackets. A prayer was

recited before takeoff and passengers were served halal food, where animals are slaughtered according to Islamic procedures. At least one passenger said she chose the airline because of its Islamic credentials. "It's quite important to have this kind of airline to represent Malaysia and its image as an Islamic country," Rayani Air is the fourth Islamic airline in the world after Royal Brunei Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines and Iran Air.



KELANTAN: In this Dec 22, 2015, photo, a Rayani Air flight crew checks the luggage compartment before departure at the Sultan Ismail Petra Airport. —AFP

recited before takeoff and passengers were served halal food, where animals are slaughtered according to Islamic procedures. At least one passenger said she chose the airline because of its Islamic credentials. "It's quite impor-

tant for me because first of all, I am a Muslim, and second, Malaysia is an Islamic country," said Che Masnita Atikah, a 23-year-old student. "It's quite important to have this kind of airline to represent Malaysia and its image as an Islamic country."

Rayani Air is the fourth Islamic airline in the world after Royal Brunei Airlines, Saudi Arabian Airlines and Iran Air.

tant for me because first of all, I am a Muslim, and second, Malaysia is an Islamic country," said Che Masnita Atikah, a 23-year-old student. "It's quite important to have this kind of airline to represent Malaysia and its image as an Islamic country."

FACEBOOK INDIA ROW OVER INTERNET ACCESS FOR POOR

NEW DELHI: Facebook went on the offensive yesterday in an escalating row with Indian authorities over a controversial initiative which the social network says is aimed at widening online access in the developing world.

The social media giant took out billboards and full-page newspaper adverts and sent SMSs to defend its Free Basics service, which offers people without the Internet free access to a handful of websites through mobile phones. Free Basics is "at risk of being banned" in India, Facebook said in the adverts, adding that the service aims to help a billion unconnected Indians—mostly living in poor rural areas—to get online.

It follows fierce criticism from net neutrality activists who say it violates the principle that the whole Internet should be available to all, unrestricted by any one company. Earlier this month the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India ordered Reliance Communications, the sole mobile operator for the service, to suspend it temporarily without giving a reason, documents seen by AFP show.

"This campaign gives people the opportunity to support digital equality in India," Facebook said in a statement on its Save Free Basics campaign. "We are committed to Free Basics and to working with Reliance and the relevant authorities to help people in India get connected." Some 3.2 million people have petitioned India's telecoms regulator not to ban Free Basics, formerly named Internet.org, which launched nationwide last month after being trialed in several states, Facebook said.

The Silicon Valley giant has asked supporters to leave a missed call at a designated number that automatically sends a message to the regulator in support of the service. Several prominent Indian entrepreneurs and members of the tech community have also spoken out against Free Basics, arguing that even for poor citizens, no Internet is better than a hand-picked and corporate-controlled web offering.

"Oh my fellow Indians, either choose this & do a jihad for independent Internet later or pick #NetNeutrality today," tweeted Vijay Shekhar Sharma, the founder of PAYTM, an e-commerce site. India is a key territory for Facebook with 130 million users, making it the social network's biggest market outside the United States. "It goes about a modern twist to what essentially used to be the white man's burden—that India's poor need Facebook's FreeBasics to free them," Amod Malviya, the former chief technology officer for Indian shopping website Flipkart, wrote in a blog post. —AFP



BEIJING: A man wearing a face mask stands in front of a mall. — AFP

CHINESE CITY'S PURPLE HAZE BLOWS THE COUNTRY'S MIND

BEIJING: Nanjing's purple haze has put a spell on Chinese social media as much of the country suffers its latest bout of choking smog. Buildings in the city loomed large against a violet sky in pictures that circulated on Weibo, a Chinese version of Twitter, and were even tweeted by the official Xinhua news agency.

The tint seemed to be the result of a particularly colorful sunset refracted by the cloud of pollution that settled over the city earlier this week, experts said in online comments. Counts of PM2.5 — harmful microscopic particles that penetrate deep into the lungs—peaked at 370 micrograms per cubic meter yesterday, according to official data from Jiangsu province.

The World Health Organization's recommended maximum exposure is 25 over a 24-hour period. The purple pictures left many seeing red. Chinese anger at pollution has grown to new levels following a December that has seen some of the worst smog in years.

Beijing declared its first maximum red pollution alert this month, after a thick haze rolled into the capital, blocking the sun and effectively turning day into night. Nanjing's purple haze, reminiscent of the Jimi Hendrix classic song, had social media users worried at the implications of the psychedelic sunset.

"This is comparable to the London smog during the industrial revolution," said one commentator on Sina Weibo, referring to toxic clouds that covered the UK capital in the early 1950s. "We have to ask why this is happening! Why?!!!" "When I think about how future children might live under 'gray' skies, unable to even see the stars, my mood also becomes gray," said another user. Others, however, considered the city's colorful smog to be a gas. "Let's go to Nanjing and inhale that haze," said one user in a comment that probably would have been appreciated by the drug-loving Hendrix. "It's really high quality," he added. —AFP

CHINA'S NEW COUNTER TERRORISM BILL INSPIRED BY US LEGISLATION

BEIJING: China studied US legislation to draft its controversial counterterrorism law, it said yesterday, amid concerns in Washington that the bill's provisions may tighten media controls and threaten the intellectual property of foreign tech firms.

The country's first anti-terror law comes as Beijing wages a controversial campaign to stamp out ethnic violence linked to the western Xinjiang region and works to tighten controls over political dissent online and on the ground.

The homeland of the mostly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority has been plagued by unrest in recent years, provoking China to launch a police crackdown on

separatist "terrorists" it says are behind the violence.

In an attempt to control online communications that the government says have contributed to the violence, drafts of the law have included provisions that could require tech firms to install "backdoors" in products or turn over encryption keys to Beijing, potentially threatening both freedom of expression and intellectual property.

The US has expressed repeated concerns about the bill, with US President Barack Obama saying he directly raised the issue with President Xi Jinping during his September trip to Washington. But the law, foreign ministry spokesman

Hong Lei told reporters yesterday, reflects lessons Beijing learned from watching US legislators hammer out their own legislation, bills which include provisions slammed by rights groups for violating privacy and shirking due process of law.

'Double standard'

"While formulating our counter terrorism law, we learned from the legislatures of other countries, including the US," he said, adding that some of the bill's provisions were similar to American telecommunications legislation. Washington's criticism, Hong said, showed a "double standard" on terror-

ism, a frequent complaint from China about international reactions to violence by Uighurs, which some analysts say is an inevitable expression of anger towards repressive policies by Beijing.

Addressing concerns about the legislation, Hong said it "will not have any restriction on the lawful activities of enterprises. It will not leave backdoors, and it will not impede freedom of expression online or the intellectual property rights of enterprises".

The bill's latest version will forbid individuals from reporting on "details of terrorist activities that might lead to imitation", the official Xinhua news service said Monday, adding it was "specifically

revised to restrict the distribution of terrorism-related information" on social media. The third draft since the bill's introduction, it also redefines "terrorism" to include activities with political and ideological motives, the report said.

The current draft is "quite mature", it said, adding that the standing committee of the rubberstamp National People's Congress recommended it be put forward for approval. The comments come a day after Chinese courts handed down a three-year suspended prison sentence to civil rights lawyer Pu Zhiqiang for posts on his social media account that "incited ethnic hatred". —AFP

SURVIVORS FOUND AS CHINA PLEDGES LANDSLIDE PROBE

PROBE INTO NATION'S LATEST INDUSTRIAL DISASTER

BEIJING: Rescuers scurrying through the debris of a huge three-day-old landslide discovered a young man alive in the mud yesterday, as China's cabinet announced a probe into the nation's latest industrial disaster.

Tian Zeming survived for almost 72 hours on seeds and

newspaper in the southern Chinese boom town.

The 19-year-old had used a rock to tap on debris to try to attract the attention of those looking for signs of life among the sea of mud. Images from the scene showed dozens of firefighters and police thronging around

the debris early yesterday died several hours later, firefighters said. An additional body was recovered Wednesday afternoon, the China Youth Daily reported, bringing the confirmed death toll to three.

The number of deaths was expected to rise sharply after the

Investigation begins

Anger was growing over the lax standards and poor enforcement seen to be behind the disaster. "The lack of safety supervision and passive attitude in taking precautions has caused the whole nation to shake with anger and shocked the world!" user Xizidan wrote in a post that was taken down by authorities, but was found on the censorship tracking website Weibo.com.

The mudslide was caused by the improper storage of waste from construction sites, according to the official newspaper of the Ministry of Land and Resources. Soil was illegally piled 100 meters (330 feet) high at an old quarry site and turned to mud during rain Sunday morning, according to the state-run Global Times. The State Council, China's cabinet, has set up a team to investigate the disaster, state broadcaster CCTV said yesterday. The team will be headed by the minister of land resources.

Documents on the website of Guangming New District, where the landslide occurred, show that authorities were aware of problems with the storage and had urged action as early as July. In an announcement dated July 10, officials said work at the site was not being carried out according to approved plans and ordered the Hongao Construction Waste Dump to "speed up" work to bring its operations into line. The government issued a second warning in September, noting that the dump's permit to receive waste had expired and authorities had made it clear that dumping should cease. The city had "pointed out problems at the site and requested steps to correct them", the statement said. —AFP



SHENZHEN, Guangdong: Rescuers search for survivors at the site where a giant flow of mud and construction waste engulfed buildings in Shenzhen, Guangdong province yesterday. —AFP

fruit that had been buried alongside him when a tide of earth and rubble from a huge waste dump crushed more than 30 buildings, rescuers were quoted as saying. "He has a very strong will to survive," the emergency team's leader told the government-run Shenzhen Special Zone Daily

a stretcher, apparently bearing the teenager to a waiting ambulance.

He was confirmed to be one of the 76 listed as officially missing after the disaster, the Guangdong province fire department said in its official microblog. A second man who was also found alive in

so-called "golden period" the 72-hour window when survival chances are highest-closed. The landslide is the latest in a series of fatal accidents in the world's most populous country, and comes just months after a massive chemical blast in the industrial city of Tianjin killed almost 200 people.

JUNTA: 99 PERCENT OF PEOPLE ARE SATISFIED WITH OUR RULE

BANGKOK: It's the kind of poll result you'd see in a North Korean election or Saddam Hussein's Iraq: Thailand's military-ruled government says 99 percent of the country's people are happy with its performance since it took power in a coup last year. The junta has relentlessly pursued critics, jailing them for attempting to stage protests, lighting candles or even hitting the "like" button on Facebook, yet says the poll released Tuesday shows an astonishing majority of Thais are satisfied with its performance.

The survey conducted by the government-run National Statistical Organization found that 98.9 percent of respondents were satisfied and confident in the government's performance, said government spokesman Sansern Kaewkamnerd. He did not disclose the format or margin of error of the survey, but said 2,700 people nationwide were polled from Nov 27 to Dec 4. However, the number of respondents and dates they were polled varied depending on the government source. Deputy government spokesman Werachon Sukondhapatipak said over 7,000 people were polled earlier in December.

The statistics office that conducted the poll said 3,900 people were surveyed from Nov. 2 to

10 - and that 98.6 percent of them expressed satisfaction with the government. There was no immediate explanation for the confusion over the sample size and results. The Southeast Asian country has been deeply divided along political lines for a decade, and there is little sign those wounds have healed significantly since army Gen. Prayuth Chan-ocha took power from an elected government in May 2014 following months of protests.

Claims of popularity

Despite the government's claims of popularity, Prayuth acknowledged that the divide remains in a speech Tuesday summing up his administration's accomplishments in 2015. "It's hard to give a speech, to create understanding, hard to send messages to people nationwide because we have differences," he said. "In the past, we haven't understood one another and it led to disputes. Now we have to think about how to move this country forward."

The junta has been criticized for taking Thailand, once a beacon of democracy and freedom in Southeast Asia, backward. According to Human Rights Watch, the junta's rule has sent

"Thailand's human rights situation into free fall." The junta has limited freedom of expression and assembly and curbed dissent by detaining hundreds of academics, politicians, journalists and others viewed as critics. They are sent to military bases for what it calls "attitude adjustment" and only released after signing a contract not to voice dissent.

Meanwhile, the junta has launched a campaign to boost its popularity and "return happiness" to Thailand. As a New Year's gift to the people, the junta chief wrote a song that was released Tuesday called, "Because You Are Thailand."

It was Prayuth's second such morale-boosting effort since seizing power. Shortly after the coup, he penned the lyrics to a tune called, "Returning Happiness to the People," which is often played on state-controlled radio and TV stations. In his speech yesterday, Prayuth indicated that the junta was sticking to its latest plan to hold elections in mid-2017. "We have one year and six months, if we start counting from January 2016 until (July) 2017," Prayuth said, adding later, "I don't want to hold on to power." —AP



SEOUL: South Korean bereaved family members of victims of World War II hold a press conference in front of the Constitutional Court. —AP

S KOREAN COURT REFUSES TO REVIEW JAPAN WWII TREATY

SEOUL: A South Korean court yesterday refused to review a complaint over a 1965 treaty between Japan and South Korea that Tokyo uses to deny compensation for South Korean victims of World War II-era slavery, a boost to recent efforts by the neighbors to improve bad ties.

Seoul's Constitutional Court said the accord was never meant to serve as a standard for providing individual compensation. The court's decision came in response to a complaint filed by a woman who said the treaty blocks her right to seek more compensation because of her late father's wartime slavery. Japan colonized the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

The 1965 treaty, which was accompanied by more than \$800 million in economic aid and loans from Tokyo to Seoul, came as South Korea worked to rebuild an economy devastated by the 1950-53 Korean War. The treaty declared all compensation issues between the countries over property, rights and interests as "completely and finally" settled.

Binding power

Relations between the countries, both democracies and strong US allies, have been bad since the 2012 inauguration of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, whose nationalistic stance on Japan's wartime past has worried and angered Seoul. Although

the South Korean court has no binding power over international agreements, Seoul could have been obligated to seek a new deal with Tokyo had the court ruled the treaty unconstitutional, analysts said. The decision, however, won't likely stop lawsuits by South Koreans seeking compensation from Japan's government and businesses.

Differences on Japan's responsibility over Koreans enslaved before and during World War II, including Korean women forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers at front-line military brothels, have been a major source of friction between Seoul and Tokyo. During a November summit in Seoul, South Korean President Park Geun-hye and Abe agreed to try to resolve the sex slaves matter.

The Japanese government has never directly compensated South Korean victims of wartime slavery but set up a fund in 1995 to make payments to former military sex slaves from private donations. Japanese leaders have previously apologized over the former sex slaves, but many South Koreans see the statements and past efforts at private compensation as insufficient.

Critics say Japan didn't admit to involvement in the military-run brothels until after the 1965 treaty. South Korean officials have also argued that the treaty covered only economic and property claims between the countries, not war crimes or human rights issues. —AP



FREE NORTH KOREAN ASSOCIATION IN THE EU

The President of the Free North Korean Association in the EU, Man-Sok Chang, along with other campaigners, was lobbying MEPs and staff members of the European Parliament earlier this week, to draw attention to the exploitation of overseas workers, and violations of human rights.

North Korea sends workers abroad, including to the EU, the Middle East, Russia, and Africa for fixed terms of three and a half years. During this period they are not

permitted to return home, and keep only a pittance of the money that the state is paid for their labor.

Following the adoption by the UN General Assembly condemning North Korea's Human Rights record, the Association is calling on the international community, and the EU in particular, to apply pressure on the NK government to allow the UN into the country to continue an open investigation into the situation. - Courtesy of North Korean Embassy

POE IN DANGER OF PHILIPPINES PRESIDENTIAL FIGHT KNOCKOUT

MANILA: A leading contender for the Philippine presidency, Senator Grace Poe, could be barred from standing next year after the election commission ruled yesterday she was not a "natural born" Filipino. The neophyte politician, who topped the senatorial election in 2013, was a founding with unknown parents who was adopted and raised by Philippine movie stars.

She went to study in the United States in the late 1980s and lived there until April 2005, although she briefly returned to the Philippines to help her father in the 2004 presidential election

campaign. "Seven members of the commission believed that Senator Poe is not a natural born citizen," Commission on Elections chairman Andres Bautista said, adding she has five days to get the Supreme Court to stop the commission enforcing Wednesday's ruling.

Under the constitution, a Philippine president must be a "natural born citizen" meaning a Filipino at birth, be able to read and write, be at least 40 years old and a resident of the country for 10 years before the vote. Bautista said the commission also found Poe, 47, failed to comply with the 10-year residency

requirement. Poe, who for a time became a naturalized US citizen, returned to the Philippines when her movie star father Fernando Poe Jr died seven months after being defeated in the May 2004 presidential election. She vowed Wednesday to fight on. "I am a Filipino and qualified to offer myself as president of our country."

The (commission) cannot change that much less deprive our people of their right to choose our next leader," she said in a statement. She vowed to appeal to the Supreme Court, urging the magistrates to be "objective and fair in their

discernment of my case." "Until the high tribunal's final ruling is out, I remain a candidate for president of the Filipino people," said Poe, who has also maintained she has renounced her US citizenship and fulfilled the residency requirement.

Bautista said Poe's name "is in the ballot as we speak", but would not say if it would be culled if the Supreme Court fails to issue an immediate injunction. He said the commission has until January 20 to prepare the final list of candidates to be included in the May 9, 2016 ballot. Poe was the clear front-run-

ner when she announced her candidacy in September.

However, she lost her outright lead amid legal challenges to her candidacy. A Social Weather Stations poll of 1,200 registered voters nationwide, also released yesterday, found Poe level-pegging with Vice President Jejomar Binay at 26 percent. President Benigno Aquino's preferred successor, former interior secretary Manuel Roxas, was in third place at 22 percent, just ahead of Rodrigo Duterte, a southern Philippines mayor with a hardline stance against crime. —AFP



A campaigner for the Hong Kong Vegetarian Society lies on a mock plate as a meat dish on a pavement in Hong Kong yesterday. The campaigners staged the event to urge consumers to leave meat off the menu on the occasion of the festive season. — AFP

SAUDIS COMMUTE MAID'S STONING DEATH SENTENCE

COLOMBO: A Saudi Arabian court has commuted the death-by-stoning sentence passed on a Sri Lankan maid convicted of adultery, the government in Colombo said yesterday. "We have succeeded in getting the death sentence overturned. Our concern was to make sure that the original sentence was not carried out," Harsha de Silva, the deputy foreign minister, told reporters in Sri Lanka's capital. "The government of Sri Lanka wishes to acknowledge and appreciate the good offices of the Saudi authorities," De Silva said. "The sympathy, understanding and the concern expressed, and assistance extended, by many other parties is also noted and deeply appreciated."

De Silva said the woman would now serve a "short jail sentence" but details on the exact time that she would have to remain behind bars were not yet clear. The 45-year-old married mother of two, who has not been named, was convicted of adultery in August after her arrest in April last year. She was sentenced to death by stoning, while an unmarried Sri Lankan man convicted alongside her was sentenced to 100 lashes. De Silva said the Sri Lankan government had not appealed on behalf of the man. It was not clear if his punishment had been carried out.

Sri Lankan lawmakers urged the government earlier this month to ban sending housemaids to Saudi Arabia if the

death by stoning sentence was carried out. De Silva said the government did not want to restrict anyone seeking employment abroad. Lawmakers from both the government and the opposition had united earlier this month in urging Colombo to secure clemency for the woman and a pardon for the man. Neither is said to have had legal representation when their case was first taken up and the Sri Lankan authorities were alerted to the case only after the sentence was announced.

Foreign employment minister Thalatha Athukorala said many Sri Lankans employed in Gulf states got into trouble as they were unaware of local laws as well as cultural and religious practices. "We try to educate them before they take up foreign employment. We even show them pictures of (executions) punishment," she said adding that about 40 percent of Sri Lankans seeking foreign employment did not register with the authorities.

In 2013 Sri Lanka recalled its envoy to Riyadh to protest against the beheading of a Sri Lankan maid convicted of murdering a child in her care in 2005 when she herself was 17 years old. Sri Lanka maintained she did not receive a fair trial and appeals for clemency were rejected. Under the conservative kingdom's strict Islamic sharia legal code, murder, armed robbery, rape, adultery, drug trafficking and apostasy are all punishable by death. — AFP

BRUNEI'S SULTAN BANS CHRISTMAS

Continued from Page 1

Although Christians are free to celebrate, they have been told not to do so "excessively and openly", in a directive that has had a chilling effect on the Southeast Asian nation, which sits on a corner of Borneo island. Businesses have been warned to take decorations down and authorities have stepped up spot checks across the capital. Hotels popular among Western tourists that once boasted dazzling lights and giant Christmas trees are now barren of festive decor.

"This will be the saddest Christmas ever for me," a Malaysian expatriate resident told AFP, requesting not to be named for fear of reprisals from authorities. "The best part of Christmas day is waking up and having that feeling that it is Christmas, but there's just none of that here and you just feel deprived. All this is just because of what the sultan wants. In 2013, I saw many Muslims together with Christians having a good time at their house parties. Everything was normal and good," he said.

Most people are too scared to speak up about the ban, and while some privately gripe about the rule they know there is little to be done. "I will be working on Christmas after church. We just have to cope," a Filipino waitress - one of Brunei's many guest workers - told AFP. Some people dared to post pictures on social media depicting Christmas cheer using the hashtag #MyFreedom, part of a global campaign to highlight oppression against Christians. At least one church in the capital sported decorations that were visible from the street, a rare glimpse of holiday cheer in the otherwise decoration-free city.

"The ban is ridiculous. It projects this image that Islam does not respect the rights of other religions to celebrate their faith," said a Muslim mother in the capital, also too scared to provide her name. "Islam teaches us to respect one another and I believe it starts with respecting other religions even if what is being banned are ornamental displays." Others were more tempered, and urged the prohibition to be respected. "It is an Islamic country and so with respect to the law, churches need to keep decorations indoors," said a Christian Bruneian, unfazed by the strict rules. "The meaning of Christmas for us isn't all about Christmas decorations."

However, the prohibition does not extend to the business interests of the sultan, whose estimated \$20 billion fortune includes the historic Beverly Hills Hotel - part of his Dorchester Collection with branches in London, Paris, Milan and Rome. It is Christmas as usual this year in the upscale Le Richemond hotel in Geneva where guests are greeted by lavish displays in the hotel lobby, include bowls overflowing with pine branches, ornaments and candles aplenty.

The Le Maurice hotel in Paris advertises a Christmas eve seven-course gourmet menu for 650 euros - before drinks - while the Beverly Hills Hotel is decked out for the holidays too. Before unveiling the hardline law, the sultan had warned of pernicious foreign influences such as the Internet and indicated he intended to place more emphasis on Islam in the conservative Muslim country. Strict rules against homosexuality in the sharia law, punishable with death by stoning, sparked a backlash among A-listers including Jay Leno, Ellen DeGeneres and business tycoon Richard Branson, who called for the hotels to be boycotted. — AFP

SAUDI ARABIA TO DIVERSIFY INCOME, RAISE...

Continued from Page 1

The kingdom, which has been pumping around 10.4 million barrels a day, has withdrawn funds from its foreign reserves and also issued bonds to finance the budget deficit. At the end of October, its reserves fell to \$644 billion from \$732 billion at the end of last year. The finance ministry has issued bonds worth \$20 billion for the domestic market. In 2014, Saudi Arabia posted a budget deficit of \$17.5 billion, only its second since 2002.

In his speech, King Salman also accused Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad yesterday of having aided the rise of the Islamic State group and called for a political settlement with moderate forces to end the war there. The solution would be to form "a transitional government made up of moderate opposition forces, ensuring the unity of Syrians and the departure of foreign forces and terrorist organizations," the king told the Shura Council.

These organizations "could not have found fertile

ground in Syria, had it not been for the Syrian regime's policies, which have exterminated hundreds of thousands... and displaced millions" of people, said the monarch. More than 250,000 people have been killed in Syria since the conflict broke out in March 2011. The kingdom, a key-backer of Syrian opposition groups, has repeatedly insisted on Assad's departure.

Earlier this month, Riyadh hosted a meeting of various Syrian armed and political opposition groups who agreed to negotiate with the regime but set Assad's departure as a condition for any eventual political transition process. The kingdom "calls for a political solution to end Syria's crisis," said King Salman, who made only a brief appearance at the council. He read only part of the speech, the entire text of which was later published on the official SPA news agency.

In November, foreign ministers from countries that back and oppose Assad's regime agreed on a roadmap to end the conflict. This would see a transitional government set up within six months, after regime-opposition talks, and elections within 18 months. — Agencies

PM, SPEAKER LEAD FADHL FUNERAL

Continued from Page 1

MP Ahmad Al-Azemi meanwhile strongly rejected proposals to cut government subsidies to the agricultural sector and to stop financing people who accompany patients sent by the state abroad for treatment. The lawmaker said that the government should find other means to cut spending and boost non-oil revenues in the face of a sharp fall in oil prices. The new proposals also included calls for the government to

completely lift subsidies on petrol within the next few months.

MP Abdullah Al-Turajji also lashed out at the government's plans to lift subsidies on fuel and electricity without stopping squandering of public funds like the latest government decision to allocate KD 600 million for the Kuwait Airways budget. The lawmaker insisted that there should be no increase in prices of services and commodities before the government finds ways to curb squandering of public funds.

BRITISH MUSLIM FAMILY BARRED FROM US...

Continued from Page 1

"We should do more than shrug our shoulders at secretive American security policies that leave our constituents in such limbo." She complained that officials who kept the family from boarding provided no information and said she had hit "a brick wall" seeking information about the

case. Talha Ahmad, a spokesman with the Muslim Council of Britain, told Sky News the denial of boarding privileges is "very, very worrying" because it is part of a pattern. "It seems like it's not a unique or isolated incident," he said, asserting that Muslims are often singled out. The US embassy in London and Britain's Home Office did not immediately respond to requests for comment. — Agencies

Kuwait Times Premier Brands

To see your ad here, call: +965 248 35 616 / 617

E MAIL: info@kuwaittimes.net ads@kuwaittimes.net Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

Winter Offers

<p>White-Westinghouse WKFK07GGAW3 Vented Dryer خشابنة</p> <p>7 سنوات ضمان</p> <p>79 KD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • سعة 7 كجم • تحكم كهربائي • 2 مستويات لدرجة الحرارة • 2 مستويات للتجفيف الأوتوماتيكي • تحكم أوتوماتيكي في الرطوبة 	<p>White-Westinghouse MFF3025RW 76X60cm</p> <p>16 سنوات ضمان</p> <p>189 KD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • سخان • سعة 76 X 60 سم • فرن ب 4 مخارج • اللون الأبيض 	<p>White-Westinghouse MLTU16GGAWB Washer غسالة</p> <p>16 سنوات ضمان</p> <p>219 KD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • سعة 16 كجم • 3 برامج • تحكم إلكتروني • ماء بارد أو حار • دورة بالذاتقة ٦٨٠ 	<p>White-Westinghouse MLF125BZKS Washer غسالة</p> <p>12 سنوات ضمان</p> <p>299 KD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • تمسح من الأمام • دورة بالذاتقة 110٠ • 7 برامج • باب زجاجي
--	---	---	--

best يوسفي AL-YOUSIFI

Credit: Start from 5KD • Up to 48 month • Instant approval

1809 809

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

Kuwait Times

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYANEditor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYANEDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
COMMERCIAL : 24835618P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL : info@kuwaittimes.net
Website : www.kuwaittimes.net

Focus

JAPAN PM FACES
MAKE-OR-BREAK
TEST 3 YRS LATER

By Hiroshi Hiyama

It was an irresistible promise: Elect me, I'll bring back Japan's once-soaring economy and restore its battered national pride. Three years later, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is facing the enormity of his grand ambitions, and the clock is ticking. Abe, 60, swept to power in Dec 2012 with a novel recipe for success, energizing a one-time global powerhouse that languished in a decades-long slump, overshadowed by regional rival China. The take-charge politician trotted around the globe, inking deals for Japanese firms and selling his eponymous "Abenomics" policy blitz. "I am back and so is Japan," the two-time nationalist leader declared to an American audience.

Abe's call to action - including big government spending and massive central bank monetary easing - had some early successes, as the yen weakened sharply from record highs against the dollar. The drop was good news for exporters as corporate profits soared and the benchmark Nikkei 225 stock index doubled to the 20,000 level. A fledgling economic recovery appeared to be taking hold.

But as he marks three years in office on Saturday, the scale of Abe's self-appointed task may be coming back to haunt him. Growth has stumbled, the war on years of deflation is not yet won, and a promised overhaul of the highly regulated economy is far from complete. "Compared to the magnitude of Abenomics' stimulus, the economy's performance has been feeble," said Ryutaro Kono, economist at BNP Paribas.

Abe's initial burst of enthusiasm - after a forgettable one-year first term that ended in 2007 - has not been matched by results, some say. "The first half of (Abe's) tenure showed progress," said Satoshi Osanai, economist at Daiwa Institute of Research. "The second half has not been so bright."

'No Better Alternative'

Abe took power after a rough few years for Japan as it went through a half dozen leaders and saw China overtake it as the world's number-two economy and assume an increasingly assertive role in Asia. It also suffered the shock of the March 2011 triple earthquake, tsunami and nuclear disasters, which dealt another blow to the economy. Facing summer elections, Abe's popularity is hovering around 50 percent, relatively strong considering the deep unpopularity of some of his policies. His bid to bolster Japan's defence posture by diverting from the traditional interpretation of the pacifist constitution - which could see Japanese troops go into battle for the first time since World War II - angered neighbors China and the Koreans and was bitterly opposed at home and sparked rare street protests.

An unpopular push to switch on nuclear reactors shuttered after the 2011 disaster has also done little to boost his appeal. "(Abe's) great advantage is that voters think there is no better alternative," said Robert Dujarric, director of contemporary Asian studies at Temple University's Tokyo campus. A key reason, observers say, is that a weak and fragmented opposition has been unable to mount a serious challenge. As a result, Abe is tipped to tighten his grip on power in next year's upper house elections.

'Painful Reforms'

Meanwhile, Japan's jobs-for-life culture, a cornerstone of its post-war economic boom, has given way to more part-time and unstable contract work. The country also has one of the world's biggest national debts, a problem aggravated by a demographic decline that will see a shrinking labour force made to cover the soaring social security costs of the fast-ageing nation. The International Monetary Fund has trimmed its growth projections while credit agencies have cut their ratings, amid growing doubts that Abe's economic plan will work.

Even Abe's key constituency - Japan Inc - is not playing ball. The premier is struggling to get firms whose bottom line benefited from his policies to share the spoils with employees. Wage hikes, he says, are key to winning the war on deflation, which held back growth for years as consumers delayed spending in the hopes of getting goods cheaper down the road. That hurt firms' expansion and hiring plans. Abe recently pledged to re-focus his efforts on fixing the world's number-three economy and beef up social programs, as he tries to lure more women and the elderly into a shrinking workforce.

But his legacy hangs on whether he can get tough on overhauling Japan's rigid labour market and tame the spiralling costs of the national pension system, observers said. Japan has no time to lose as a brief growth jolt from Tokyo's hosting of the 2020 Olympics could give way to another long-term economic slide, warned Hideo Kumano, chief economist at Dai-ichi Life Research Institute. "After the (summer) election it would be a great opportunity to carry out painful reforms... (they) need to happen now." — AFP

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



SAVERS IN DARK OVER SAHARA'S SCHEMES

By Sumeet Chatterjee

In 2004, Kshitij Kumar Pandey took 10,000 rupees (\$150) out of his pension and put it into a savings plan run by India's embattled Sahara conglomerate. The Sahara agent told him his money would triple in 10 years. Sahara India Pariwar (family) had become one of India's most successful companies over the past three decades with this kind of financial alchemy, turning tiny deposits into dreams for small farmers, rickshaw pullers and food vendors with little financial knowledge.

Pandey, a 78-year old resident of the east Indian city of Patna, said the Sahara agent promised him his money would grow to roughly 30,000 rupees when the time deposit matured in October of last year. His investment documents contained a sample illustration showing how a 10,000 rupees deposit would increase to 25,940 rupees over 10 years, or about 10 percent a year. But when Pandey went to the Sahara branch to redeem his deposit, the office told him he could have 15,000 rupees immediately - if he agreed to transfer the remaining 15,000 rupees he was owed to Humara India Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, Pandey said. He has so far not accepted that offer. Humara is a new Sahara fund-raising vehicle with operational ties to the conglomerate, according to investor documents reviewed by Reuters and interviews with Sahara agents in different parts of India. "The agent sold me a dream then, and now he has vanished," said Pandey, who said he has gone to the Sahara branch office in Patna, the state capital of Bihar, four times over the past few months. "Every time they send me back with one assurance or another," said Pandey. "We are completely helpless. We don't know who to approach and how to get my money back."

Sahara and its founder Subrata Roy have been under scrutiny for years over its financial products, including for possible money laundering. Over the past four decades, Roy has built an empire from his small deposit schemes that includes overseas hotels such as New York's Plaza and London's Grosvenor House, television stations, a sprawling community resort outside Mumbai, and a stake in a Formula One racing team.

Over the years, Roy has had his picture taken with the likes of Barack Obama and Bill Clinton, David Cameron and the Dalai Lama. But he has spent the last 21 months in New Delhi's Tihar Jail for not complying with a Supreme Court order to return 360 billion rupees (\$5.4 billion) to investors who put money in a 2008-11 Sahara time deposit plan.

Pushing for Transfers

The Supreme Court said the 2008-11 plan violated market disclosure regulations on raising capital, including failure to file a prospectus - a legal document that provides details about a financial product for investors - with the markets regulator. Selling time deposit plans through loosely regulated credit cooperatives is not illegal in India. Like Sahara's now banned 2008-11 scheme, the new deposit plans are sold

through the group's vast network of agents across the country. They collect deposits from investors for a fixed period of time and promise to return the money at interest rates higher than what banks offer.

In addition to hunting for new customers, Sahara agents and branch officials are also trying to get Pandey and other investors in older Sahara savings plans to switch into the new credit cooperative schemes, according to Reuters interviews with these investors. Sajan Poovayya, who has litigated corporate and commercial cases before India's Supreme Court and is a founder of Bangalore-based law firm Poovayya & Co, says Sahara could be violating the law if it is forcing investors to convert their maturing deposits into a credit cooperative plan.

"The minute you actually breach your obligation to pay me, and rather than paying me force me to get into a cooperative movement, that I think erodes the very ethos of the cooperative movement on one side and clearly, of course, flouts the law because there is a contractual violation in you not returning the money," Sahara did not respond to repeated Reuters requests for comment.

No Maturity Date

Most of the nearly two dozen investors in the old Sahara plans that Reuters spoke to stopped short of accusing the conglomerate of forcing them to convert their plans. But they said Sahara officials refused to allow them to redeem their matured deposits until they agreed to do so. Reuters reviewed savings certificates provided by investors that showed the transfers. The agents never make the requests in writing; it's all verbal, the investors say. In at least one case, the investor claimed her money had been transferred from her old Sahara plan to a new credit cooperative society despite her opposition.

Most of the savings certificates that investors showed to Reuters make no mention of either the maturity date or the interest to be paid on maturity. Such omissions violate Indian laws requiring companies that run savings deposit plans to clearly mention all the terms, said Ramanand Mundkur, managing partner of Mundkur Law Partners. A few certificates that Reuters reviewed did state that investors could expect an interest rate of 10-15 percent for a one-year deposit. That compares to 7-8.5 percent offered by commercial banks.

Vimal Kumar Sinha, the head of Sahara's Patna operations, said some recent Sahara payments to customers were delayed because of the difficulties the company faced as a result of the Supreme Court case. He declined to comment on individual cases, such as Pandey's. But, he said, some Sahara agents were probably coaxing investors to convert their savings into another financial plan without the company's knowledge.

Weak Oversight

Credit cooperatives are widely used by India's rural poor as an alternative bank. Nearly two-fifths of India's 1.27 billion people lack a bank account - most of them live in rural areas. Sahara turned to credit cooperatives mainly because of their

relatively weak oversight, said current and former senior Sahara employees, who said they were briefed on the these financial plans by Sahara's senior management. Those that operate across state lines are registered not with the central bank but with the credit cooperatives division at the Ministry of Agriculture. The first of the Sahara credit cooperatives, Sahara Credit Cooperative Society Ltd, was set up in 2010, around the time when India's markets regulator started investigating the Sahara bond scheme the Supreme Court would later declare illegal. Sahara has started three more credit cooperatives since January 2014: Humara India Credit Cooperative Society, Stars Multipurpose Cooperative Society and Saharain E-Multipurpose Society.

The credit cooperatives division said it had asked for an explanation from Sahara Credit Cooperative Society after receiving complaints of non-payment from investors. The division said in a letter sent in reply to a Reuters request for information under India's Right to Information Act, that it had not received a response from Sahara Credit Cooperative Society. Pressuring investors, such as Pandey, to transfer their deposits from older Sahara financial plans to a credit cooperative is against regulations, a senior official at the credit cooperatives division said when told of the cases Reuters had discovered.

Operational Links

The official at the cooperatives division was not aware that Sahara was operating credit cooperatives, such as Humara India, the cooperative Pandey and others were asked to switch into. He said the division does not have the resources or punitive provisions to closely monitor more than 1,400 multi-state credit cooperative societies across the country. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI), the country's central bank, said it was scrutinizing the rapid growth of credit cooperatives, introduced in 1984 as a self-help tool in rural areas where banks are scarce.

"We are looking into it, particularly multi-state credit cooperatives," RBI deputy governor S S Mundra told Reuters. The RBI, he added, should oversee all deposit-taking institutions, including the credit cooperatives. He declined to comment specifically about Sahara's credit cooperatives. While most credit cooperatives are owned by their members, Sahara's credit cooperatives have operational links to the conglomerate, according to investment documents from Sahara's customers and data at the ministry of corporate affairs.

Sahara's credit cooperatives - Humara India Credit Cooperative, Star Multipurpose and Saharain - are active in most Indian states, according to documents obtained from the cooperative division through the Right to Information Act. Investment certificates from those three cooperatives shown to Reuters either display a hologram with the Sahara logo - featuring India's flag and the traditional hand-loom symbol with the Sahara name written in small letters - or show the Sahara name in the background. Humara India and Saharain did not respond to requests for comment on their links with Sahara. —Reuters

US UPGRADED UZBEKISTAN DESPITE RIGHTS ABUSES

By Matt Spetalnick, Peter Eisler and Jason Szep

The news reached Dmitry Tihonov in Uzbekistan's rural heartland as the labor activist quietly recorded the arrival of thousands of teachers, nurses, laborers, students and other conscripts sent to the fields to pick cotton. A fire had destroyed Tihonov's home office. When he returned to search the debris on Oct 29, his reports for international monitors documenting the annual mobilization had vanished.

Human rights groups say Tihonov is a victim of Uzbekistan's efforts to conceal a massive, state-orchestrated forced labor system that underpins its position as the world's fifth-largest cotton exporter. They cite regular arrests, intimidation and harassment of activists. The activist from Angren, a town about 100 km east of the capital Tashkent, says he's under constant surveillance by local authorities to remind people "it's better to keep away from me" - an allegation that Reuters could not independently confirm.

Persecution of activists is among many abuses cited by witnesses and human rights groups that fueled discord in the Obama administration this year over how much criticism Central Asia's most populous nation deserved in the US State Department's annual report on modern slavery. In a previously undisclosed memo, analysts in the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons called forced labor "endemic" during the cotton harvest and said Uzbekistan had "failed to make significant and sustained efforts" to improve its record. The early 2015 memo, reviewed by Reuters, recommended keeping Uzbekistan in the lowest tier of the report's rankings, raising the specter of economic sanctions on a country whose cotton is used in yarn and fabric that play a significant role in the global supply chain. But senior US diplomats rejected the recommendation, downplaying concerns about human rights in a strategically important country. The landlocked nation of deserts, mountains and steppes was a transit point for US troops and supplies during the war in neighboring Afghanistan. Washington now wants its help preventing the spread of Islamic militants, stabilizing Afghanistan and offsetting Russian influence in the region.

When the State Department issued its 2015 Trafficking in

Persons (TIP) Report in July, Uzbekistan was elevated from the bottom tier of violators. Uzbekistan doesn't meet "minimum standards" to end trafficking, the report said, but it is "making significant efforts" - a caveat absent from the analysts' assessment. Uzbekistan's government makes an estimated \$1 billion a year from cotton sales, and the harvest mobilizations of roughly a million people that date to Soviet times are characterized as a patriotic duty. Uzbek officials did not answer repeated requests for comment but generally argue that citizens pick cotton voluntarily.

A Reuters examination - based on interviews with local officials, activists and workers in the fields - found that while the country has made progress ending child labor in the harvest, it has intensified recruitment of adults and older teenagers using the same coercive approach.

The State Department's decision to rebuff its experts' recommendation and upgrade Uzbekistan's rating in the trafficking report reinforces a Reuters article in August that said senior diplomats inflated assessments of 14 strategically important countries in the annual review, including the central Asian country. The yearly review is meant to independently grade countries on trafficking and forced labor.

Despite Uzbekistan's progress barring children from the fields, "I don't see any evidence that this very fundamental form of coercive labor has changed," says former US ambassador-at-large Mark Lagon, who headed the State Department's anti-trafficking office from 2007-2009. Uzbekistan still has a "miserable human rights profile". Asked for comment, a State Department official defended Uzbekistan's upgrade, saying the department stands by "the integrity of the process" for determining country rankings.

"Are they still mobilizing workers? Yes," said a senior official who accompanied Secretary of State John Kerry on a Nov 1 visit to Uzbekistan. But "if you don't show recognition of improved behavior (on child labor), you risk them deciding it's not worth the effort and then doing nothing."

Strategic Importance

US policymakers have struggled for two decades to balance concern about Uzbekistan's human rights record with the need to

maintain relations with hardline President Islam Karimov. "It's a natural geopolitical alliance but it's complicated because of his human rights record," says John Herbst, US ambassador to Uzbekistan from 2000-2003. "His authoritarian regime is not very consistent with our principles."

Speaking to reporters before his November meeting with Karimov in the ancient Silk Road city of Samarkand, Kerry spoke of "shared interests", especially combating Islamist extremism, but his references to human rights were oblique. He noted a need to address "the human dimension" of Uzbek governance. Reuters was unable to determine whether they discussed forced labor in their private meeting.

Uzbekistan took initial steps to bar children from picking cotton in 2012 and the effort expanded in 2013, when the State Department downgraded the country in the trafficking report to the "Tier 3" - the lowest rank shared by North Korea and a few other countries. In last year's report, Uzbekistan remained at Tier 3, and its prohibitions on child labor grew more stringent.

But the dearth of child workers led to increased conscription of adults and older teens, according to a dozen witnesses of the harvest interviewed by Reuters. Still facing the same government-imposed harvesting quotas, local authorities expanded mobilizations of public employees, such as teachers, nurses and bureaucrats, as well as private sector workers, the witnesses said. While young, school-age children were not forcibly mobilized on a mass scale, many 17-year olds were coerced along with some younger children in the later weeks of the harvest to meet quotas, they added.

A dozen workers interviewed by Reuters in September all requested anonymity, saying they feared retribution. Among them, a plumber, 46, said he was bused 250 km to pick cotton for 15 days. When he returned, another group of employees went out. Food and lodging were provided in dilapidated barracks. "There was no way of refusing," he said. A pensioner, 64, said each household in her town was directed to send a volunteer to pick cotton. She feared those that didn't would be "on the black list" and lose public benefits. Because her son runs a small shop that supports the family, she went to the fields herself. —Reuters

WEST HAM'S PAYET TO RETURN IN NEW YEAR

LONDON: France international Dimitri Payet is set to make his return from an ankle injury in the new year, West Ham manager Slaven Bilic said yesterday. The former Marseille attacking midfielder was expected to be out until February after sustaining the injury in last month's 1-1 draw with Everton. But Bilic says the 28-year-old's recovery is going ahead of schedule and he could be involved as early as the league match against Liverpool on January 2. "It is good news with Dimitri as he is ahead of schedule, so he should train with us after the Villa game or the Southampton game," Bilic said. "He is training with the fitness coaches and he might be involved in the Liverpool game which is a big boost. "At the beginning we thought he would be back in February but he is way ahead of schedule and it is not that bad. His ankle is very good-it is stable-so it is great news if it goes like this." West Ham have drawn their last four matches and have not won since beating Chelsea 2-1 in October, drawing five and losing two of their seven matches since. They travel to Aston Villa on Saturday before hosting Southampton two days later.—AFP



US INVESTORS REPORTEDLY IN TALKS TO BUY EVERTON

LONDON: A consortium led by two US technology investors is negotiating to buy Everton Football Club for an estimated £200 million (272 million euros, \$297 million), The Times newspaper reported yesterday. The report said the group had signed a preliminary agreement with owner and chairman Bill Kenwright and was checking the club's accounts with the aim of completing a takeover within the next six weeks. The agreement means the investors have been given time for exclusive talks on the deal. The consortium is led by John J. Moores and Charles Noell, co-founders of venture capital firm JMI Equity.

The 71-year-old Moores, who is also the founder of business software firm BMC, bought the San Diego Padres baseball team in 1994 and sold it in 2012. Contacted by AFP, an Everton spokesman declined to comment. The report comes after fellow English Premier League side Crystal Palace last week said US investors Josh Harris and David Blitzer had bought a 36-percent stake.—AFP

ROBIN SODERLING FINALLY RETIRES

STOCKHOLM: Sweden's Robin Soderling finally announced his retirement yesterday, more than four years since his last match. "I have realised that I will not be fit enough to play tennis at the level I demand of myself," said Soderling, 31, to the Swedish news agency TT. Soderling fell ill with glandular fever in the summer of 2011, but he did not realise the seriousness of his sickness and continued to train, although he struggled physically. He described his condition as "overtraining syndrome" and said in a press release that "with this disease it has been impossible for me to train 100 percent". Soderling reached the final of the French Open in both 2009 and 2010, before rising to a career-high fourth in the world rankings in late 2010. His greatest moment was perhaps inflicting on clay court king Rafael Nadal his first ever defeat at the French Open in 2009. In fact, until the Spaniard lost to world number one Novak Djokovic in the Roland Garros quarter-finals earlier this year, that remained his only defeat on the Parisian clay in 71 matches.—AFP



ECCLESTONE SAYS GERMAN GP COULD MAKE COMEBACK

FRANKFURT: Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone said Germany could return to the grand prix schedule if an agreement was reached with track owners, according to an interview in a German magazine.

"I am sitting here with my pen and am prepared to sign a contract if they send me one," Auto Motor und Sport magazine on Wednesday quoted Ecclestone as saying. Formula One's governing body, the International Automobile Federation, this year dropped the German grand prix from its Formula One calendar for the first time since 1960. The Nuerburgring had been due to host the July 19 race under an alternation agreement but a change of ownership and financial difficulties left Hockenheim as the only option. However, with low attendances at that circuit last year, organisers were unwilling to risk a further loss with so little time to sell tickets and get ready, though they still had a contract to host the race in 2016.

"I had hoped that the new owners of the Nuerburgring would be able to agree a contract with me, but that

does not appear to be the case," Ecclestone told Auto Motor und Sport. He also cast doubt on whether Hockenheim could continue to shoulder the financial strain of the grand prix. "We really have an extremely favourable contract with Hockenheim. That won't be the case in the future anymore. They have to accept what other European countries pay too," he said. Asked whether next year's US Grand Prix in Austin would go ahead, Ecclestone said: "Forecasts are difficult." The Oct. 23 race in Texas, the only round in the United States and important for teams and sponsors, is on the 2016 calendar with an asterisk against it as subject to agreement with the commercial rights holder.

"They knew exactly what it would cost when they signed the contract with us. They knew that they would have to build a race track, and what it costs to put on a grand prix," Ecclestone said. Ecclestone has said this year that he wanted to add more American venues, but he told the magazine that 2016 would be too soon for a race in California.—Reuters



Formula One supremo Bernie Ecclestone (left) with an official.



MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO: In this image taken from video a camera drone crashes into the snow narrowly missing Austria's Marcel Hirscher during an alpine ski, men's World Cup slalom, in Madonna Di Campiglio, Italy, Tuesday.—AP

HIRSCHER JOKES OF DRONE XMAS PRESENT

MADONNA DI CAMPIGLIO: Marcel Hirscher joked that he'd had an early Christmas present after narrowly avoiding a potentially disastrous collision with a drone at the World Cup slalom at Madonna di Campiglio in Italy.

The Austrian was hurtling down the mountain on his second run on Tuesday when the drone, which was being used to film television pictures of the course from above, came crashing down to the ground just inches away from the 26-year-old.

"That's my Christmas present! I'm not hurt and I was lucky," joked Hirscher. Television footage shows the drone smashing to pieces as it hits the ground just behind Hirscher, with a propeller bouncing up into the air.

However, Hirscher took a more serious tone with journalists when adding: "It's unbelievable, it's incredible, shameful." Hirscher revealed he had no idea at the time what had happened, believing an official charged with flattening out the piste after a competitor's run had hit the ground.

"I just heard a noise, I thought a groomer had fallen over," said Hirscher. The drone was being operated by an expert employed by the host broadcaster Infront Sports and Media. Both they and the International Ski Federation (FIS) apologised for the incident and vowed to ensure no such repeat occurred.

"While FIS and its partners aim to use new technology to enhance the fan experience, an accident such as the drone crash cannot happen again," said an FIS statement. "FIS and the host broadcaster will work together with all the involved parties to see what occurred during the crash and ensure that this will not happen again."

ABSOLUTE PREMIERE

Prior to the event, organisers had been championing what they described as "unprecedented live TV images" from the first ever alpine skiing event to use a drone to film the race.

"The recipe of successful events is to be able to build over history, and experience, while always trying to pursue innovation, to be one step ahead of your time," boasted a press release on Saturday.

"Supported by its over-60-year history the 3Tre (the Madonna di Campiglio World Cup race) is the perfect place where something revolutionary may happen and amaze millions of TV viewers around the world."

It added: "A drone will fly over the slope to air live images during the event, an absolute premiere in Audi FIS Ski World Cup."

However, the crash has convinced some athletes that drones have no place flying over a skiing race. "That drone almost crushing @MarcelHirscher WHAT!!!!" said American skier Steve Nyman on Twitter.

"Drones=good idea. Flying over

people=bad idea." While countries like Austria, Switzerland and France do not allow drones to be flown over crowds of people, that is not the case in Italy.

A France Televisions spokesman told AFP that while they do not film sporting events with drones, they do use them to show the spectacular landscape around the country during the three-week long Tour de France bicycle race. It's not the first time a major sporting event has been disrupted by a wayward drone.

In October 2014, a European Championship qualifying match in Belgrade between Serbia and Albania was halted when violence broke out on and off the field after a drone flew over the pitch.

The drone was carrying a flag bearing a map of 'Greater Albania', which included Serbia, in a clear provocation between two Balkan nations with fragile ties, particularly

since Kosovo, a former province of Serbia populated by mostly ethnic Albanians, declared independence in 2008 — a move not recognised by Belgrade.

At September's US Open tennis tournament, eventual women's champion Flavia Pennetta's second round match against Monica Niculescu was disrupted by a drone flying over the court and crashing in the stands.

Italian Pennetta admitted to being terrified by the incident at the time, believing it to be a bomb. "I was a little bit scared, I have to say," Pennetta said. "I mean, with all the things that happen now in the world, I'm imagining, 'OK, it's a bomb'."

"That was my first reaction. I think it's normal to think something like that." A teacher from New York City was later arrested and faced a charge of reckless endangerment.—AFP

VIVA LAUNCHES CR7 LIVE SERVICE WITH CHANCE TO WIN TRIP TO MADRID

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launches CR7 Live service that offer VIVA's customers the chance to enter a draw and win three trips to Madrid with 7 days in a five-star hotel, and eighteen devices Samsung Note 5.

This exclusive and special service allow Ronaldo's fans to get updates about latest news and information concerning Cristiano Ronaldo, and view statistics that make him the best player in the world, in addition to download and watch official videos and photos for him. To subscribe to CR7 Live, send R to

51507 for 100 Fils per day or just visit the URL <http://kw.cr7liveat.com> and click on the subscribe button and insert the PIN code that you receive through your inbox. You can also answer questions about Cristiano Ronaldo for KD 1/SMS to collect even more points with each answer and enjoy more chances to enter the draw. To find out more about VIVA's new prepaid packages, or any of its other competitive promotions, products and packages, visit one of the 70 VIVA branches, or the VIVA website at www.viva.com.kw, or call VIVA's 24 hour call center on 102.

Watch Ronaldo play in Madrid
Send "R" to 51507 for a chance to win a ticket to Madrid or a smartphone device

SKI FEDERATION BANS DRONES

VIENNA: The international ski federation is banning camera drones from its World Cup races after one of the flying objects crashed and nearly hit Austrian skier Marcel Hirscher during a slalom in Italy.

FIS will prohibit drones "as long as I am responsible ... because they are a bad thing for safety," men's race director Markus Waldner told The Associated Press on Wednesday, a day after the night's race in Madonna di Campiglio.

"It was huge luck that Marcel was not hurt," Waldner said. "I am very angry." The drone carrying a TV camera came down and shattered on the icy slope just behind Hirscher, a few seconds after the Olympic silver medalist started his second run.

"I didn't know what it was, but I felt something," said Hirscher, who was unhurt and continued his run, finishing second behind Norwegian winner Henrik Kristoffersen. "I thought it was a course worker behind me, or a gate."

Course workers slip through the gates shortly after each skier to smoothen the snow surface for the next competitor. "I am very relieved that nothing happened," Hirscher said. "You don't want to think about what could have happened when 10 kilograms (22 pounds) are coming down 20 meters (65 feet). That would have been a very serious, bad injury. There are a lot of cool things nowadays. But you have to guarantee the safety - and that was just insane."

According to Waldner, FIS had agreed on the use of the drone at Tuesday's slalom but the pilot wasn't allowed to fly the camera directly over the race course.

"He did not follow our instructions," the race director said. "He had to fly outside of the race track and follow the racer from a 15-meter (50-foot) distance. Then there would have been a margin and nothing could have happened."

Drones have been used many times before at ski races. The ski federation said the new technology was aimed at enhancing the experience for TV viewers as it provides moving pictures from an overhead angle which regular cameras can't shoot.

FIS said legal restrictions in Italy for the use of drones at events are not as tight as in many other countries, such as Austria and Switzerland, where flying over a crowd has been banned.

The company responsible for the camera drone, sports marketing agency Infront, said it was still examining the crash. "We are extremely relieved that apparently none was hurt," Infront said in a statement. "At the same time, this incident is being taken very seriously and the circumstances leading to it are currently being examined. An update will be provided as soon as secured information is available."

The Switzerland-based agency has been the long-term TV rights holder of the FIS Alpine skiing World Cup.—AP

2015 SPORTS MOMENTS IN PICTURES



BERLIN: In this Sunday, July 9, 2006 file photo Fabio Cannavaro lifts the soccer World Cup trophy after Italy defeated France in the final in the Olympic Stadium in Berlin, Germany. The World Cup was in full swing when the US Federal Reserve last raised interest rates before its decision Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2015, to lift its main interest rate from record lows of near zero percent. — AP



FOXBOROUGH: New England Patriots quarterback Tom Brady responds to a reporter's question during a media availability at the NFL football team's facility Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2015, in Foxborough, Mass. — AP



CHICAGO: In this Dec. 13, 2015 file photo, Washington Redskins quarterback Kirk Cousins (8) throws during the second half of an NFL football game against the Chicago Bears in Chicago. Publicly, anyway, the Washington Redskins have not made clear whether they envision Kirk Cousins as their quarterback of the future. A look at his statistics, though, shows that Cousins is compiling numbers that make him look good when compared to Redskins QBs of the past. — AP



ROME: Spezia players celebrate after scoring the decisive goal during the Italian Cup soccer match between Roma and Spezia, at Rome's Olympic stadium, Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2015. Spezia won 4-2 in penalty shootout to advance to the quarterfinals. — AP



FOSHAN: Akira Yanase of Japan, left, prepares to shoot during a match against Iran in the Men's Water Polo AASF Asian Championship in Foshan in south China's Guangdong province, Wednesday, Dec 16, 2015. — AP



CINCINNATI: In this Sept. 12, 2015, file photo, Cincinnati Reds' Todd Frazier hits a single in the sixth inning of a baseball game against the St. Louis Cardinals, in Cincinnati. All-Star third baseman Todd Frazier has been dealt from the Reds to the Chicago White Sox as part of a three-team, seven-player trade that also includes the Los Angeles Dodgers. — AP



EAST RUTHERFORD: In this Feb. 2, 2014, file photo, fans arrive outside MetLife Stadium before the NFL Super Bowl XLVIII football game between the Seattle Seahawks and the Denver Broncos in East Rutherford, N.J. MetLife Stadium at the Meadowlands in East Rutherford, New Jersey, will be the site of the 2016 Centennial Copa America final June 26. The Confederation of North, Central America and Caribbean Association Football made the announcement Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2015. — AP

FOR NFL RECEIVERS, MORE TO GAME THAN JUST CATCHING THE BALL

ATLANTA: When Julio Jones takes off from the line of scrimmage, it creates plenty of headaches for those guys who have to cover him.

That's not their only concern. The Atlanta Falcons receiver is also willing to dole out a crushing block when he's not the intended target. At 6-foot-3 and 220 pounds, he's certainly big enough to do some damage.

"We're very active in the blocking game because we love our running backs. You don't want someone to have a free hit on your brother," Jones said. "Also, if you can spring someone for a big play, a big run, it's going to open you up in the passing game. So it's a win-win."

While receivers have always had to double as blockers to some degree, today's generation is taking it to a whole new level. Star receivers such as Jones and Arizona's Larry Fitzgerald are integral parts of the run game, even though they obviously make the big bucks for what they can do when the ball's in the air.

"They're bigger faster, stronger and

smarter," said Falcons safety William Moore. "I know if you ever play a guy like Julio, you've got to go block him before he blocks you."

Fitzgerald is having another huge receiving year for the playoff-bound Cardinals. But he can do so much more. In an early season blowout of Detroit, Fitzgerald had four knockdown blocks and "sealed the edge for two long runs," according to coach Bruce Arians. Cardinals quarterback Carson Palmer calls his 6-foot-3, 225-pound teammate "the best blocking wide receiver in the league."

Blocking became a bigger focus for Fitzgerald after Arians was hired and shifted him from wideout to the slot. Fitzgerald wasn't thrilled with the move, but he's got no complaints now - especially after landing a new two-year, \$22 million contract, all of it guaranteed.

Besides, given all the horrible teams he's played on in the desert, the 32-year-old Fitzgerald was willing to do whatever it takes to help the Cardinals win. "There are so many years ... I was out of contention already," he said. "We were

scheduling vacations, seeing what I'm going to do after the season. Now nobody has that kind of mindset around here anymore. We're focused on winning this division, executing assignments on every single play."

CATCHING SKILLS

Even though he's still the main man of the offense, Fitzgerald doesn't care who gets the glory. "No matter who scored the touchdown, you see Larry jumping on somebody in the end zone," said Harold Goodwin, Arizona's offensive coordinator. "He knows that he can block and spring a running back, we're making plays and having success as an offense. That's what brings him joy."

In Minnesota, the receivers know running back Adrian Peterson is going to be the centerpiece of the offense, so they've got to pitch in with something other than their catching skills.

"They're not always getting all the catches that they want to get, but they understand we're pretty good running the football and they're a part of it as well," coach Mike Zimmer said. "Those

guys go in there and they've got to block safeties all the time and corners. That's who we are and they have to take part ownership in it as well."

Falcons offensive coordinator Kyle Shanahan said a receiver's size doesn't really matter. Blocking if all about attitude. "It doesn't have to do with whether you're big or small," Shanahan said. "It has to do with the 'want to.' Usually, if guys are willing and their technique is good, they can be an effective blocker."

Jones showed off his desire to be more than a pass catcher on a play that didn't even count earlier in the season. After an interception, he ran nearly the length of the field to tackle Tampa Bay's Kwon Alexander, even though the Buccaneers had clearly jumped offside before the snap.

SELF-PRESERVATION

The Falcons kept the ball on the penalty, but Jones won even more respect from his teammates. He's certainly got the respect of his opponents - whether he's receiving or blocking. "They just keep their heads on a swivel,"

Jones said. "They're looking for you. So it's kind of getting them out of position. They're looking for you instead of coming down into the box to defend the run."

It's a matter of self-preservation, said Moore, who recently went down with a season-ending injury. "As a strong safety and being down in the trenches a lot, I face a lot of receivers that are physical," he said. "That's one thing I look for when I'm watching film. If the receivers are physical in the run game and the blocks, I know how to approach it during the week so it won't be a blind side (hit)."

Obviously, some receivers are more willing to block than others. Frankly, top players such as Jones and Fitzgerald could get away with giving it the matorador treatment. It's not like they're going to get dumped because they can't block.

For others, it's a necessity for staying in the league. "Some guys don't like to get in there and get messy," Shanahan said. "Usually those guys, if they're not extremely talented and making up for it in other places, it's tough for those guys to last." —AP

FURY'S POTENTIAL RIVALS TO FIGHT IT OUT ON SAME CARD

NEW YORK: Four fighters seeking a potential showdown for an undisputed heavyweight boxing crown against Britain's Tyson Fury will meet on the same New York card on January 16, promoters revealed Tuesday.

Undeclared challengers Charles Martin and Vyacheslav Glazkov will fight for the vacant International Boxing Federation world title on the same Brooklyn card where unbeaten American Deontay Wilder defends his World Boxing Council crown against Poland's Artur Szpilka.

US southpaw Martin, 22-0 with one draw and 20 knockouts, puts his 16-fight win streak on the line against Ukraine's Glazkov, 21-0 with one draw and 13 knockouts.

The fight was added to Wilder — 35-0 with 34 knockouts-making his third title defense against Szpilka, who is 20-1 with 15 knockouts. Fury won the World Boxing Association title last month by taking a unanimous decision over

Wladimir Klitschko, the long-time champion from Ukraine who is set for a rematch. Fury also won three other crowns, including the IBF title he quickly vacated.

That set up the heavyweight title double-header, the first such bouts in Brooklyn for 115 years, and those winners could meet to unify the crowns and be ready for the Fury-Klitschko winner late next year to decide an undisputed king. "I want to become a world champion so I can go down in history as a top heavyweight," Martin said.

"Glazkov is a great fighter. He's undefeated, so I know it's going to be a tough fight, but I'm coming in to be victorious."

It's the first world title bout for both fighters. It will be Martin's fifth fight within a year and a week and Glazkov's third fight in 10 months. "I am looking forward to getting back in the ring and finally getting my opportunity to fight for a world title," said Glazkov. — AFP



Ryan Fitzpatrick

PANTHERS HAVE NFL-BEST 10 PLAYERS SELECTED FOR PRO BOWL

NEW YORK: The undefeated Carolina Panthers led the NFL with 10 players selected for the Pro Bowl on Tuesday. The Panthers are two wins away from a perfect regular season. Quarterback Cam Newton was picked for the third time, and five of his teammates were first-time selections, including cornerback Josh Norman and linebacker Thomas Davis.

"It's truly an honor to be selected to the Pro Bowl," Davis said. "All the hard work and dedication I've put into the game has paid off. I'm extremely excited and I couldn't be more thankful to the fans who took their time to vote me in, as well as my fellow players and coaches."

"To have 10 guys selected says a lot about our team. It says a lot about our fans and how highly they thought of us this season, and I think it says a lot about the way our season has gone. I'm excited and thankful to be part of the 10."

Joining them will be center Ryan Kalil, who was picked for the fifth time, and linebacker Luke Kuechly, who earned his third selection.

Seattle, Arizona and New England each had seven players selected, and Cincinnati had five players picked.

Leading the way for the Seahawks was quarterback Russell Wilson, who was the only member of the offense picked. The

rest of the selections were defensive end Michael Bennett, safety Kam Chancellor, special teamer Tyler Lockett, cornerback Richard Sherman, safety Earl Thomas and linebacker Bobby Wagner.

Patriots star Tom Brady was selected for the 11th time, most of any player this year. Among the other Patriots honored were tight end Rob Gronkowski and cornerback Malcolm Butler, whose last-minute interception clinched New England's Super Bowl win over Seattle.

Raiders safety Charles Woodson, who announced on Monday that he will retire after the season, was selected for the ninth time.

Also selected was Giants receiver Odell Beckham Jr., who has 91 catches for 1,396 yards and 13 touchdowns, tied for the league lead. Beckham was given a one-game suspension on Monday for his conduct on Sunday against Carolina, when he drew three personal foul penalties.

Twenty-five players selected were first-timers, including three rookies: the Rams' Todd Gurley, Lockett and the Chiefs' Marcus Peters. Hall of Famers Jerry Rice and Michael Irvin will serve as alumni team captains for their Pro Bowl teams. The draft will be on Jan. 27. The Pro Bowl will be held on Jan. 31 in Aloha Stadium in Honolulu, Hawaii. — AP

FLORHAM PARK: Ryan Fitzpatrick has played in huge games before, so pressure is no big deal to the Jets quarterback. New York against New England this Sunday?

Try Harvard-Yale, 2004. "You know, 10-0 season on the line," Fitzpatrick said with a big smile Tuesday. "A lot of alumni at that game. It'll really set you up for your future if you win that one." He was joking, of course. But, for the record, the Crimson routed the Bulldogs 35-3 in "The Game" that day to finish undefeated.

"We won," Fitzpatrick said. "I think I did all right." Fitzpatrick was 15 of 24 for 124 yards and a touchdown, and ran for 67 yards and a score on 11 carries. He led an offense that rolled up 326 yards, including 202 on the ground.

Still, it's not exactly the type of experience an 11-year NFL veteran can draw from - even if it was a pretty big stage for a kid.

"When I was in college, you're getting 10,000 fans, maybe, and then you get to the Harvard vs. Yale game," Fitzpatrick said. "At Harvard, you get 30,000-plus and at Yale you get 50- or 60,000-plus. It was always a huge deal for us, the four games, but I've played in enough now with more people that it's kind of a distant memory."

And, there might be just a little more at stake this weekend at MetLife Stadium when the Jets (9-5) take on the Patriots (12-2) with their sights set on staying on track in the AFC playoff hunt. "I don't know if I really want to place the significance of where it is in my career, but this is a huge one for me and I'm excited," Fitzpatrick said. "This is why everybody in here plays the game. Playing football games like this in December and have a shot at playing longer. We're pretty excited about this one."

Because of tiebreakers, the Jets are on the outside of the playoff picture while Kansas City and Pittsburgh, also 9-5, are currently in. A loss to its AFC East rival wouldn't knock New York out of the race, but it sure would make things a lot more difficult than they already are. As it is, the Jets could finish the season on a six-game winning streak but become the third 11-5 team to not make the postseason.

"We've probably been in playoff mode the last four weeks," coach Todd Bowles said. So, for the Jets, they insist their approach won't change from what it has been. "I think maybe it's even more important this week to stay the same because there probably will be some other guys that really try to ramp it up," Fitzpatrick said. "It's another football game." It all starts with Fitzpatrick, who has a career-high 26 touchdown passes and is three short of tying Vinny Testaverde's franchise record for a season.

CONTINUE TO IMPROVE

But Fitzpatrick is also a dismal 1-7 against the Patriots, who have beaten the Jets in nine of the

A BIG GAME FOR JETS' FITZPATRICK?

last 10 meetings. That includes a 30-23 victory for New England in October, when New York held a fourth-quarter lead before the Jets blew it against Tom Brady and Co.

"I don't know if I'd put it in those terms," Fitzpatrick said, "but we've got to do a better job when it's a got-to-have-it play, of making it. Versus the Giants, we kind of did that and last week versus Dallas, we did that. So hopefully, we'll continue to improve in that area as a team."

Wide receiver Brandon Marshall didn't hesitate when asked if this weekend's game was the biggest he has played in.

"Yes, absolutely ... because it's the next one," Marshall said. "And, obviously, it's the next one and we understand the implications attached to it. So, yeah, the next couple will be the biggest games of my career."

Neither Fitzpatrick nor Marshall has ever made the playoffs during their NFL careers, so that is also riding on the final two weeks of the regular season.

"They've got a good thing going over there," Fitzpatrick said of the Patriots. "We just have to do our best to make sure that we're playing our game and we're making the plays." — AP

RUSSIAN SPORTS MINISTER DENIES DOPING COVER-UPS

MOSCOW: Russia's sports minister says accusations that the government is covering up doping of athletes are unfounded. Russia's track and field federation was suspended in November after a World Anti-Doping Agency panel accused the country of operating a widespread, state-sponsored doping program and covering up positive tests.

Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko says "to

blame such a country as Russia that we, on an absolute government level, are covering something up is impossible." He says individual athletes should take responsibility for staying clean.

Mutko says the government "cannot sleep together with each of the athletes." He adds: "How can I control them? What can I do to them? It's silly, don't you understand?" — AP



MOSCOW: Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko speaks during a news conference in Moscow, Russia, yesterday. Mutko said doping has been yet another try to paint Russia as a villain, and dismissed any claims that the government was involved in doping cover-ups. Instead, he suggested that athletes should take personal responsibility for the breach of sports regulations. — AP



SUNRISE: Florida Panthers forward Jaromir Jagr is assisted on the ice after being injured by a stick to the face during the first period of an NHL hockey game against the Ottawa Senators, Tuesday, in Sunrise, Fla. — AP

SIMMONS HOPES CRITICISM FIRES UP WAYWARD WEST INDIES

MELBOURNE: West Indies coach Phil Simmons hopes the criticism that has rained down on his team during their tour of Australia can spark the players into a better showing at the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne.

The team were castigated for their three-day defeat in the first test in Hobart, with local pundits questioning their unity and commitment to the three-match series.

Australia opening batsman David Warner remarked on Wednesday that his team felt their bowlers were just "going

through the motions" on the opening day's play, when the hosts piled on 438 for the loss of three wickets.

Simmons said he felt Warner's criticism was "fair", looking from outside. "Of course, (the criticism) is going to hurt. If it doesn't hurt, well then something's wrong," the 52-year-old told reporters at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on Wednesday.

"But I know that all the criticism that we've received since before coming here has hurt and all I can hope is that it pushes them as much as it pushes me to

push them to do the work-it pushes them to do well on the field."

The body language of the West Indies players has come under fierce scrutiny, and captain Jason Holder was moved to deny allegations in Hobart that his bowlers had tried to avoid doing the heavy lifting by bowling into the wind at Bellerive Oval.

Batsman Marlon Samuels, who scored nine and three in Hobart, was singled out for his lacklustre fielding, while Jerome Taylor missed a catching chance during the tour match in Geelong at the

weekend because he was not facing the play.

Simmons said both Samuels and Taylor had been talked to and that he and bowling consultant Curtly Ambrose had drilled the importance of body language into the team.

"Oh boy, we have to. We keep doing that every day," he said. "Your body language always tells something to the other team. It's something that especially Mr. Ambrose keeps trying to preach to them that it's part of the game and you need to show the other team that you're

in this so it's something we keep talking about."

Australian selector Mark Waugh last week questioned the commitment of senior West Indies players and their support for 24-year-old Holder. Simmons said Holder had the respect of the players but the coach's comments suggested the young captain had his hands full trying to enforce discipline.

"He speaks his mind to players when they don't do what he expects them to do which is what I expect of a captain," Simmons added. — Reuters

AUSSIES AIM FOR SERIES WIN OVER STRUGGLING WINDIES

SYDNEY: Australia have their eyes on regaining the top Test ranking as they set about retaining the Frank Worrell Trophy against the dispirited West Indies in Saturday's second Test in Melbourne.

The Australians lie third on the ICC Test ladder, behind South Africa and India. If South Africa lose their four-Test series with England which begins on Boxing Day then Australia will grab top spot if they can sweep the West Indies series 3-0.

That looks on the cards after the Windies were thrashed by an innings and 212 runs inside three days in the first Test in Hobart. They last won a Test in Australia almost 18 years ago. Jason Holder's West Indies have been pilloried as one of the worst touring teams to head Down Under in recent times and have struggled to be competitive in all their four games, even against modest opposition.

"We know we've got a big Test series here, then against New Zealand, to achieve the number one status," Australia vice-captain David Warner said.

"Things have to play into our hands as well with South Africa's series against England. We've got a big job at hand, our goal is to be number one in all three formats."

The dashing opener insisted complacency would not be an issue for Australia, despite the West Indies being forced to follow on in Hobart. "It did look like they did go through the motions when we were batting on that (first) day, when we batted big," Warner said.

"But it's a new game. We're all fired up and ready to go." The home side could make two changes with Usman Khawaja expected to return from missing the last two Tests with hamstring trouble, while newcomer Scott Boland may get his chance as a replacement for injured paceman Nathan Coulter-Nile.

Khawaja has been sidelined since scoring 174 and 121 in the first two Tests against New Zealand last month and proved his fitness with an explosive 109 off 70 balls in the Big Bash League

Twenty20 series last weekend.

'Pumped up' Windies

The return of Pakistan-born Khawaja is expected to be at the expense of either Joe Burns or Shaun Marsh, who hit his highest Test score of 182 as Khawaja's replacement in Hobart.

Darren Bravo, one of the Caribbean tourists' few shining lights during the first Test, insists his side will be much better prepared for the Melbourne Cricket Ground showpiece on Boxing Day.

Bravo top scored with 108 in the West Indies' first innings, while opener Kraigg Brathwaite contributed 94 after Australia skipper Steve Smith enforced the follow-on.

"When you're not scoring runs it's always difficult to pick yourself up," Bravo said. "But I believe the guys have that sort of resilience in them. "We've scored international hundreds already, we've proven we are definitely capable of playing at this level. The guys are really up for it. We're really pumped up ... we're much better prepared and we're looking forward to it."

The West Indies are considering recalling leg spinner Devendra Bishoo after he claimed two wickets against a Victoria XI last weekend. "He bowled better," coach Phil Simmons said. "There was a lot more drive in his deliveries and everything like that."

Teams:

Australia (from) - David Warner, Joe Burns, Usman Khawaja, Steve Smith (capt), Adam Voges, Shaun Marsh, Mitch Marsh, Peter Nevill, Peter Siddle, Josh Hazlewood, James Pattinson, Nathan Lyon, Scott Boland.

West Indies (from) - Kraigg Brathwaite, Rajendra Chandrika, Darren Bravo, Marlon Samuels, Jermaine Blackwood, Denesh Ramdin, Jason Holder (capt), Kemar Roach, Carlos Brathwaite, Jerome Taylor, Devendra Bishoo, Jomel Warrican. Umpires: Marais Erasmus (RSA), Chris Gaffaney (NZL) TV umpire: Ian Gould (ENG) Match referee: Chris Broad (ENG). — AFP



TORONTO: Toronto Raptors guard DeMar DeRozan (10) drives past Dallas Mavericks forward Dirk Nowitzki (41) as Mavericks Zaza Pachouli, left, and Raptors center Bismack Biyombo look during the first half of an NBA basketball game in Toronto. — AP

DEROZAN HELPS RAPTORS EDGE MAVERICKS 103-99

TORONTO: DeMar DeRozan scored 28 points and Bismack Biyombo had a career-high 20 rebounds, leading the Toronto Raptors to a 103-99 victory over the Dallas Mavericks on Tuesday night. Kyle Lowry added 17 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for Toronto, which swept the two-game season series against Dallas. Terrence Ross scored 16 points, and Luis Scola finished with 15 points and nine rebounds. The Raptors appeared to be on their way to a comfortable victory with five minutes to go in the fourth. But the Mavericks battled back. Jeremy Evans scored with 11.6 seconds remaining to trim Toronto's lead to 101-99, but missed a foul shot that would have got Dallas within one. Ross then closed it out with a couple of free throws. Dirk Nowitzki led the way for Dallas with 20 points and seven rebounds.

PISTONS 93, HEAT 92

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope's jumper with 55.5 seconds left put Detroit ahead to stay, and the Pistons rallied from 18 points down for the road win. Reggie Jackson led the Pistons with 18 points, while Stanley Johnson and Caldwell-Pope each had 14. The Pistons were 15 for 29 from 3-point range, outscoring Miami 45-12 in that department. Chris Bosh scored 20 points for Miami, which missed a pair of go-ahead shots in the final three seconds. Dwyane Wade missed a 14-footer, and after Andre Drummond missed a pair of free throws at the other end and the Heat got the ball back with 1.1 seconds left, Bosh missed a jumper as time expired. Wade finished with 19 points, and Hassan Whiteside had 16 points and 16 rebounds for Miami.

GRIZZLIES 104, 76ERS 90

Marc Gasol scored 19 points for Memphis, and Mike Conley had 18 points and six assists. The Grizzlies had five players score in double figures. Courtney Lee had 15 points, reserve Zach Randolph added 14 points and eight rebounds, and Matt Barnes finished with 12 points and 10 boards. Jahlil Okafor scored 18 points and Hollis Thompson contributed 16 for Philadelphia, which dropped to 1-29 while losing its 11th straight game. Now the 76ers head out for a six-game trip, and they have lost 22 in a row on the road. Philadelphia had 28 turnovers and shot 65.6 percent (21 for 32) from the free-throw line.

LAKERS 111, NUGGETS 107

Kobe Bryant tied a season high with 31 points after missing a game with a sore right shoulder, and Los Angeles rallied from a 21-point, first-half deficit to beat short-handed Denver. Bryant also had five assists and played stellar defense to help bottle up the hot-shooting Will Barton, who had 23 points in the first half only to finish with 25. The 37-year-old Bryant announced last month he would retire after the season. He received plenty of cheers during his penultimate game in the Mile High City, including chants of "Kobe, Kobe" in the waning seconds. Up 103-100 with 1:23 remaining, Bryant hit two free throws and then a jumper to seal the Lakers' fifth win of the season. — AP

NBA Results/Standings

Memphis 104, Philadelphia 90; Detroit 93, Miami 92; Toronto 103, Dallas 99; LA Lakers 111, Denver 107.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division					
W	L	PCT	GB						
Toronto	18	12	.600	-	Oklahoma City	19	9	.679	-
Boston	15	13	.536	2	Utah	12	14	.462	6
NY Knicks	14	15	.483	3.5	Denver	11	17	.393	8
Brooklyn	8	20	.286	9	Minnesota	11	17	.393	8
Philadelphia	1	29	.033	17	Portland	11	19	.367	9
Central Division				Pacific Division					
Cleveland	18	7	.720	-	Golden State	26	1	.963	-
Indiana	16	11	.593	3	LA Clippers	16	13	.552	11
Detroit	17	12	.586	3	Phoenix	12	18	.400	15.5
Chicago	15	11	.577	3.5	Sacramento	11	17	.393	15.5
Milwaukee	11	18	.379	9	LA Lakers	5	23	.179	21.5
Southeast Division				Southwest Division					
Atlanta	18	12	.600	-	San Antonio	24	5	.828	-
Miami	16	11	.593	0.5	Dallas	15	13	.536	8.5
Orlando	16	12	.571	1	Memphis	16	14	.533	8.5
Charlotte	15	12	.556	1.5	Houston	15	14	.517	9
Washington	12	14	.462	4	New Orleans	8	19	.296	15



DHAKA: In this photograph taken on April 6, 2014, India's Yuvraj Singh plays a shot during the ICC World Twenty20 cricket tournament final match between India and Sri Lanka in the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka. India's national selectors on December 19, 2015, recalled fading stars Yuvraj Singh and Ashish Nehra for Twenty20 internationals against Australia, keeping one eye on the upcoming World T20. — AFP

DAY/NIGHT TEST LIGHTS A PATH AS PAKISTAN GO HOME

LONDON: Cricket staged its first day/night Test in 2015 after years of speculation that such matches might help arrest declining attendances for the sport's longest format. November witnessed the landmark fixture when Australia beat New Zealand in front of an impressive aggregate crowd of 123,736 who flocked to the Adelaide Oval for the three days the match lasted.

Another event significant in that it simply took place, was that Pakistan played major internationals on their own soil for the first time in six years, beating Zimbabwe in both Twenty20 and one-day series. Pakistan had been a 'no go' area for rival nations since gunmen opened fire on Sri Lanka's team bus in Lahore in 2009.

Meanwhile Pakistan left-arm quick Mohammad Amir returned to competitive cricket after serving a jail sentence and a five-year ban for his role in the spot-fixing scandal that took place during Pakistan's 2010 tour of England. The highlight of Australia's year came when they beat fellow co-hosts New Zealand by seven wickets in the 50-over World Cup final in Melbourne. Their record-extending fifth title owed much to Mitchell Starc, the left-arm fast bowler taking 22 wickets at 10.18.

But it was a different story when Australia were beaten in the Ashes—the first time they had lost four successive away series against England since 1896 despite the hosts effectively ending Kevin Pietersen's international career. Stuart Broad set up England's series-clinching win with a remarkable eight for 15 return as Australia were skittled out for 60 on the first morning of the fourth Test at his Trent Bridge home ground.

After the defeat, Australia captain Michael Clarke announced his international retirement.

He was one of several Australians to retire in 2015, with Ryan Harris, Chris Rogers, Brad Haddin, Mitchell Johnson and Shane Watson (Tests) also bowing out.

South Africa lost their first away Test series in nine years when they went down 3-0 to India as touring teams everywhere again struggled. India did however triumph in Sri Lanka, where conditions are similar to their own, by coming from behind to win a three-match series 2-1 as they enjoyed their first success on the island in 22 years. Sri Lanka said goodbye to the retiring duo of Kumar Sangakkara and Mahela Jayawardene, two outstanding batsmen.

One consolation for South Africa was the form of AB de Villiers, who scored the fastest fifty, hundred and 150 — off just 64 balls against the West Indies at the World Cup-in one-day international history. Bangladesh, so long the makeweights of world cricket, knocked England out of the World Cup and enjoyed several home ODI series wins.

IPL SCANDAL

Corruption continued to haunt cricket in 2015, with the Chennai Super Kings and Rajasthan Royals suspended from the lucrative Twenty20 Indian Premier League because of betting-related activities involving team officials Gurusath Meiyappan and Raj Kundra in 2013.

The fall-out extended to the top of the world game, with Meiyappan's father-in-law Narayanawami Srinivasan, whose India Cements company own CSK, having his term as ICC chairman cut short last month when the Indian board withdrew support for their former president. — AFP

THE GLITZY LIVES OF SOUTH AMERICAN FEDERATION BOSSES

SAO PAULO: When Brazilian Football Confederation president Marco Polo Del Nero was pictured aboard his yacht being kissed by a young model, he could never have imagined the photo would become part of a corruption investigation into South American football.

A year later, that kiss has vanished from the Instagram page of Katherine Fontenele, the 24-year-old model whose nude photo had recently graced the cover of Brazilian men's magazine Sexy.

But the Internet never forgets, and the snapshot has come back to haunt the 74-year-old football honcho, who was one of 16 people indicted by US authorities this month in the spiralling corruption scandal shaking FIFA.

That love birds' outing on his 16-meter (52-foot) yacht returned from the past when a Brazilian Senate commission carrying out its own investigation into dirty dealings in the national sport announced it was requesting access to the bank and telephone records of Del

Nero's ex-girlfriends. Lawmakers suspect the yacht, My Way—which Del Nero was fond of using for champagne-soaked outings with girlfriends a third of his age—was purchased with bribes from sports marketing company Klefer, which is now in the cross-hairs of both the US and Brazilian investigations.

"Everybody saw the luxurious lives they lived," Brazilian sports journalist Juca Kfourri said of the men who run the so-called "beautiful game" here.

"They flew around in private planes, jets, helicopters. They had mansions in the best neighborhoods in Rio de Janeiro... Nobody ever doubted where that money was coming from."

FIFTH AVENUE PRISON

Del Nero's wealth has allegedly expanded immensely since 2012, the year his ally Jose Maria Marin took over as CBF president.

Brazilian newspaper Folha de Sao Paulo recently reported his real estate

holdings have expanded by 175 percent since the arrival of Marin—who was himself indicted by US authorities in May, paving the way for Del Nero to succeed him.

Del Nero has so far escaped arrest—unlike the 83-year-old Marin, who was nabbed in a Zurich luxury hotel.

Marin, who was extradited to New York and released on \$15 million (13.7 million euros) bail, is currently under house arrest at his apartment in the swank Trump Tower on Fifth Avenue. He has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

Del Nero for his part was forced to resign from FIFA's executive committee and take leave from the CBF.

"The presidents of the CBF never hid their lifestyles. They believed the impunity they enjoyed for so many years would last forever. It's disgraceful for the Brazilian authorities that the FBI had to come and investigate," said Kfourri.

The master of turning power to

wealth in the footballing world is Ricardo Teixeira, the CBF's president for 23 years and another of the 16 Latin American football officials indicted this month.

"If you had to define 'craftiness,' in the good sense of the word, you'd point to Ricardo Teixeira," his ex-father-in-law, long-time FIFA president Joao Havelange, once said of him.

Teixeira, who moved to a \$7.5-million mansion in Miami after standing down as CBF president in 2012, is now back in Brazil, which does not extradite its citizens.

TARNISHED GLORY

But the excesses weren't limited to Brazil. Of the 10 South American football federation presidents in office in 2013, just one has not been implicated in corruption by the FBI: Uruguay's Sebastian Bauza.

The last three presidents of South American federation CONMEBOL have all been arrested in the probe,

along with the presidents or former presidents of the Venezuelan, Bolivian, Peruvian and Ecuadoran federations.

Those targeted include Chilean federation ex-president Sergio Jadue, who is collaborating with US investigators after leaving the country under police escort.

He left behind a new \$700,000 mansion and a meteoric rise that took him from the front office of a humble local club to the vice presidency of CONMEBOL.

Also cooperating with the Americans is Luis Bedoya, the "tsar" of Colombian football, a former clothing salesman who bought a dozen luxury properties during the nine years he led the Colombian Football Federation, according to a report by a local news magazine. South Americans are meanwhile left hoping their next generation of football leadership will restore the tarnished glory of a continent that has won nine World Cups and whose stars continue to light up the best leagues in the world. —AFP



LUGUE: Conmebol Secretary Hugo Figueredo, right, holds a ballot with the name of Argentina's Boca Juniors, as Uruguay's Diego Forlan stands by during the Copa Libertadores draw ceremony in Luque, Paraguay, Tuesday. — AP

HIDDINK TELLS PLAYERS 'LOOK IN THE MIRROR'

LONDON: New Chelsea interim manager Guus Hiddink has asked his underperforming players to "look in the mirror" and claims their future at the club is at risk if they don't up their game. The Dutchman has replaced Jose Mourinho but confirmed at a press conference yesterday it is only likely to be a short-term role. He arrives with Chelsea struggling in 15th spot in the Premier League with supporters unhappy with players for their perceived failure to work for their predecessor.

Diego Costa, Cesc Fabregas and Eden Hazard bore the brunt of supporter criticism but Hiddink's message to them was a clear one. "I spoke fully to the squad and, of course, we talked a bit about the past, why I'm here, the reasons why we are down," he said. "But on the other hand I told them things happen in football and I want everyone to look in the mirror, not just for two seconds, but longer. "And see what anyone can contribute from now on to raise us up. That was what I was emphasising. Not to look back to much. "We cannot ignore what has happened in the recent past, but I asked them and told them to look in the mirror and be hypocritical and give the best for the team. They have to look forward."

He added: "There must be a great desire to play. If you don't have that desire, please knock on my door and we'll talk. We'll talk briefly."

GLAD TO BE BACK

Hiddink is reprising the role he took in 2009, a season where he helped Chelsea win the FA Cup.

"I shouldn't be here, halfway into the season," the 69-year-old said as he gets ready for his first game in charge at home to Watford on Boxing Day. "That means things are not going as well as foreseen at the beginning of the season. But anyhow I'm glad to be back. It's a few years ago that I was here in a similar situation and I tried to help out when I was asked to do so. "I worked at that time with a lot of love for the club and to work with the players is great."

"First we said let's go to mid-May. But then



COBHAM: Chelsea's Dutch interim manager Guus Hiddink hosts a press conference at the club's training ground in Cobham, south west London, yesterday, ahead of their forthcoming English Premier League fixture against Watford on December 26. — AFP

we'll see. I will see what will happen. We have only spoken about until the end of the season. "No manager can guarantee three points every week, but we have to show to ourselves, the club, the players, the fans inside Chelsea and abroad, that the team have big desire to wash away the last half year and go up to the next coming games."

Hiddink has refused to rule out a return to the club for former player Didier Drogba who was in the stands alongside him for the 3-1 win over Sunderland last week.

"I worked with him five or six years ago, and I was delighted to have such a professional in the squad," he said.

"He is a legend already in this club, but also outside this club in the world. So it's nice for guys with these big hearts to connect them somehow with the club. But he is playing for Montreal, under contract. "All the big clubs, and the smaller ones, have these specific guys, figures, who can go into whatever they like - coach, ambassador, manager - but they must be given the opportunity to do so. They give the Chelsea brand a big image, worldwide."

"The official process I don't know, but I spoke openly from the bottom of the heart that such impact players can be huge for the club. How it goes on now, it's others who have to deal with that. Not me." — AFP

VAN GAAL SPECULATION DISRESPECTFUL: WENGER

LONDON: Speculation about Louis Van Gaal being replaced by Jose Mourinho as Manchester United manager is disrespectful, Arsenal boss Arsene Wenger said yesterday.

United's home defeat by Norwich City last weekend, after which the Dutchman said he was "worried" about his position, was their third defeat in a row and they are without a win in six matches in all competitions.

Mourinho's sacking by Chelsea last week has increased speculation that Van Gaal could be replaced by the Portuguese three-times Premier League title winner. "I do not want to get into a world of speculation, I personally have huge respect for Louis van Gaal," Wenger said at a news conference on Wednesday.

"What is going on there at the moment is disrespectful. This guy has worked for 30 years in football and delivered an unbelievable quality of work."

"Of course he deserves more time." Wenger, whose team are second in the Premier League ahead of the busy Christmas programme, two points behind Leicester City, said Pep Guardiola's decision to announce that he will leave Bayern Munich at the end of the season added to the rumours.

Although he would welcome the Spaniard in England, should Guardiola end up in the Premier League. "He is a top quali-

ty manager, not so much for what he has won already because Bayern won before he was there and (his former club) Barcelona are winning now, but because of his positive attitude towards the game and that he wants his teams to play in a positive manner, that I respect," he said.

"Personally I don't like that a manager comes out so early on their plans because it's not good for their own teams and increases speculations about the managers who are going through a difficult patch."

With Mourinho axed, Van Gaal under pressure and Manchester City's Manuel Pellegrini also coming under pressure, Wenger appeared serene yesterday, with his side bang in form and many predicting Arsenal will win the league.

Arsenal have won the most points in the top flight in the calendar year and beat Man City 2-1 on Monday. "We lost our first game at home against West Ham and we were not absolutely sure that at Christmas we would be two points behind the leaders," Wenger said.

"But if you look back at 2015 we have been consistent, we've had a positive year and stabilised our defensive record and improved our record against the strong teams in the Premier League."

"So it looks like we are on the right train going the right way." Arsenal are at Southampton on Saturday and host Bournemouth two days later. — Reuters

RED STAR ACCEPT LIVERPOOL OFFER FOR MARKO GRUJIC

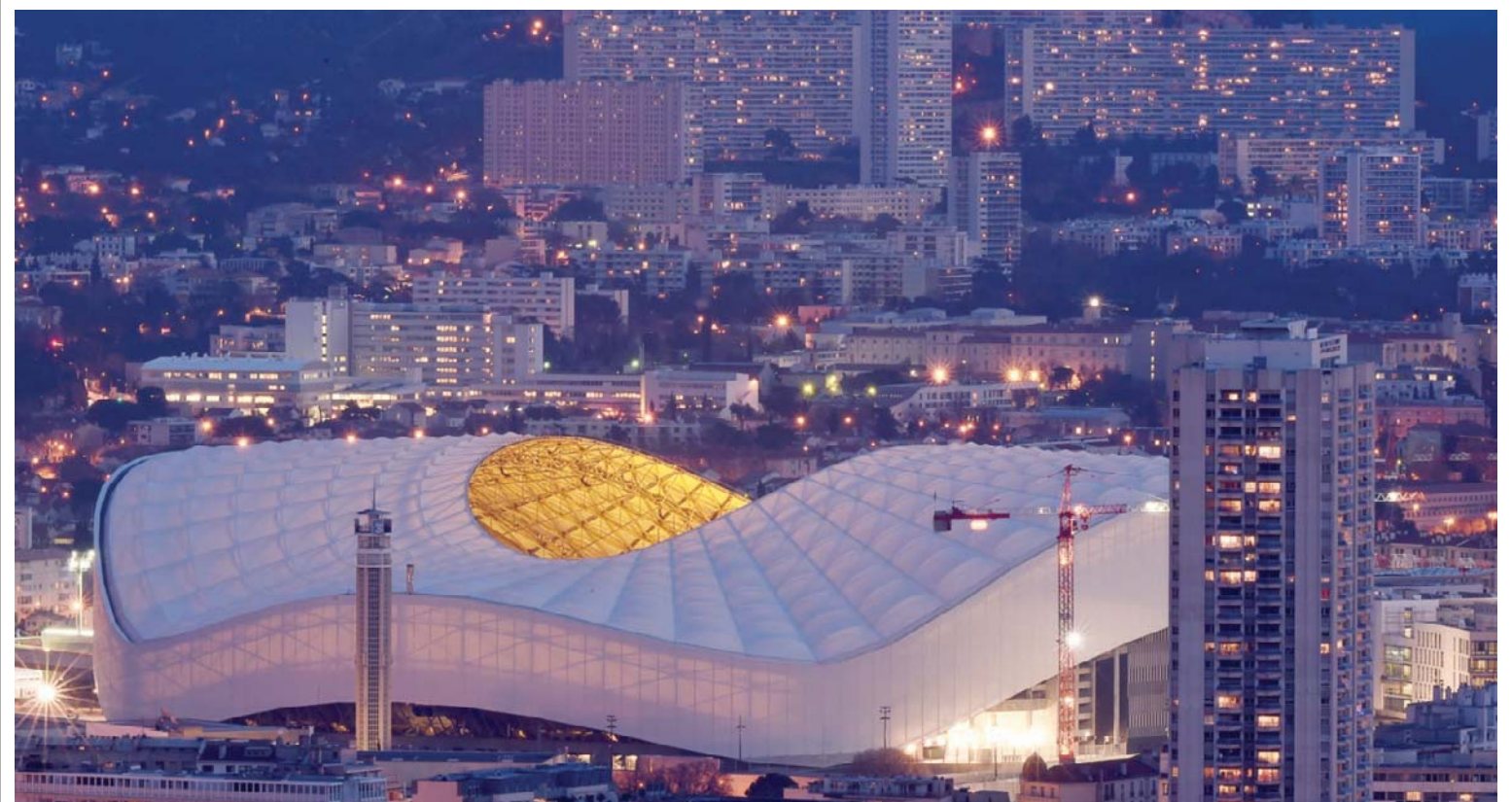
BELGRADE: Cash-strapped former European Cup winners Red Star Belgrade say they have accepted a bid of 5.14 million pounds (\$7.64 million) from Liverpool for talented 19-year-old midfielder Marko Grujic.

"The club's board considered all three official bids for Grujic, including those from Anderlecht and VfB Stuttgart, and unanimously accepted Liverpool's offer as it stipulates an immediate payment of the transfer fee," a club statement said. Grujic, who won the Under-20 World Cup with Serbia in New Zealand in June, would be loaned back to Red Star for the remainder of this season before joining Liverpool in July. Red Star, who won Europe's premier club competition in 1991, are 25 points clear at the top of the Serbian first division which headed into its December-February winter break last week. However, the debt-ridden club have barely stayed afloat over the past few years as they owe more than 40 million euros (\$43.59 million) to creditors as well as former players and coaches.

Last year, soccer governing body UEFA banned Red Star from entering the Champions League qualifying rounds because of unpaid bills.

Grujic, who can be deployed across the midfield, impressed in the opening half of the season. According to Serbian media, his family were opposed to him leaving at such a young age and his father Goran implored Red Star to keep him. Red Star said they had had no choice.

"We sincerely wanted Marko Grujic to carry on playing for Red Star in the next 10 years but the club's financial situation dictated a different decision," the statement said. "In an effort to honour his father's wish, we accepted to pay Liverpool one million euros for Grujic to stay at Red Star on loan for six months. "The transfer will help Red Star get back on its feet and the long-term benefit will be having the resources to bring up more players like Grujic from our youth academy." Liverpool, who are ninth in the Premier League, have not confirmed the deal. — Reuters



MARSEILLE: Picture taken on December 16, 2015 in Marseille, southern France, shows the Velodrome football stadium. Marseille is one of the ten host cities for the Euro 2016 soccer finals that will be played from June 10, 2016 to July 10. — AFP

Sports

Russian sports minister denies doping cover-ups



DeRozan helps Raptors edge Mavericks 103-99



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2015

HIDDINK TELLS PLAYERS 'LOOK IN THE MIRROR' Page 19



DALLAS: Ales Hemsy #83 of the Dallas Stars skates the puck against Trevor van Riemsdyk #57 of the Chicago Blackhawks in the third period at American Airlines Center on Tuesday in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

ALLEN STOPS 32 SHOTS, BLUES SHUT OUT BRUINS

BOSTON: Jake Allen stopped 32 shots for his fifth shutout, Vladimir Tarasenko and Robby Fabbri scored third-period goals and the St. Louis Blues cooled off the Boston Bruins with a 2-0 victory Tuesday night. It was only the second regulation loss in 16 games for Boston (11-2-3). St. Louis posted its fifth win in seven games. The Bruins had won six of their last eight at home. Boston goalie Tuukka Rask made 27 saves, but lost in regulation for the first time in 11 starts after going 8-0-2.

STARS 4, BLACKHAWKS 0

Patrick Sharp had a goal and an assist in his first regular-season game against his former team, leading Dallas to a victory against Chicago. Sharp scored 11 seconds into the third period to give the Stars a 2-0 lead in what had been a game with few chances between the highest-scoring teams in the Western Conference. Jason Spezza and Colton Scsevour also scored for Dallas. Antti Niemi stopped 20 shots for his third shutout this season. It was the first of five meetings between the NHL-leading Stars and the defending Stanley Cup champions.

SHARKS 5, KINGS 3

Joe Pavelski scored the tying and go-ahead goals 92 seconds apart in the third period, and defenseman Brent Burns had two goals and an assist to help San Jose beat Los Angeles. Joe Thornton added a goal and two assists, and Martin Jones made 33 saves against his former team as the second-place Sharks reduced the Kings' lead in the Pacific Division to eight points. San Jose leads the NHL with 13 road wins (13-6-2). Tyler Toffoli had two goals for the Kings, both set up by Tanner Pearson, and Trevor Lewis also scored. Jonathan Quick stopped 17 shots.

WILD 2, CANADIENS 1

Jason Pominville and Charlie Coyle scored to help Minnesota hand Montreal its fifth straight loss. Daniel Carr spoiled Darcy Kuemper's shutout bid by scoring with 7:14 remaining. Kuemper and the Wild clamped

down from there, dropping the Canadiens to 1-9 in their last 10 games. Kuemper made 24 saves, giving regular goalie Devan Dubnyk a rest after the Wild lost 6-3 to Dallas the night before. Mike Condon stopped 20 shots for the Canadiens, outscored 19-5 during their losing streak. They have 15 goals in the last 10 games.

RANGERS 3, DUCKS 2, OT

Mats Zuccarello scored a power-play goal at 2:37 of overtime and the slumping New York Rangers beat Anaheim for their fourth win in 15 games. Derrick Brassard had two goals and an assist as the Rangers snapped a three-game losing streak. Henrik Lundqvist made 17 saves. Corey Perry and Rickard Rakell scored for the Ducks, who lost their second in as many nights and for the fourth time in five games. John Gibson stopped 19 shots.

CANUCKS 2, LIGHTNING 1

Daniel Sedin scored the go-ahead goal in the third period, Jacob Markstrom made 26 saves and the road-weary Vancouver Canucks downed Tampa Bay. Sven Baertschi also scored for the Canucks, who finished their road trip 2-3-1. Vancouver, which had one power play, allowed just one goal on 10 short-handed opportunities. The Lightning got a goal from Jonathan Marchessault. Canucks captain Henrik Sedin contributed an assist after missing two games with a lower-body injury.

DEVILS 4, RED WINGS 3

Kyle Palmieri had a goal and an assist, Cory Schneider made 25 saves and New Jersey defeated Detroit. Jordan Tootoo, David Schlemko and Sergey Kalinin also scored for the Devils. They had goals on three straight shots midway

through the first period, ending Jimmy Howard's night, and the Red Wings never caught up. Dylan Larkin, Mike Green and Riley Sheahan scored for Detroit.

PANTHERS 2, SENATORS 1

Aleksander Barkov scored the winning goal in a shootout to lift the streaking Florida Panthers over Ottawa. Brandon Pirri also scored a shootout goal for Florida. Roberto Luongo stopped both Ottawa attempts to give the Panthers their fifth straight win. Florida has won 11 of its past 14. Corban Knight scored in regulation for the Panthers, and Luongo made 15 saves. Jaromir Jagr had an assist. Mark Stone scored for Ottawa, and Craig Anderson stopped 39 shots. The Senators have lost five of their past seven, and five straight on the road.

COYOTES 3, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Shane Doan scored twice in a 14-second span of the first period and assisted on the go-ahead goal, leading Arizona over Toronto. Connor Murphy's shot zipped through traffic and into the net with 13:54 to play, giving the Coyotes the lead. Arizona improved to 10-1-1 in its last 12 games against Toronto dating to the 2005-06 season. Louis Domingue stopped Michael Grabner's penalty shot and finished with 37 saves. Brad Richardson had two assists and Arizona ended the Maple Leafs' streak of six games with at least one point. James van Riemsdyk and Nazem Kadri scored for Toronto.

FLAMES 4, JETS 1

Johnny Gaudreau had his second hat trick of the season and Calgary beat Winnipeg, tying a franchise record with its 10th straight victory at home. With the Flames nursing a 2-1 lead, Gaudreau scored a key goal at 15:41 of the third period. He completed his hat trick with an empty-netter less than 3 minutes later. The streaking Gaudreau has 20 points (13 goals, seven assists) during the 10-game winning streak at the Saddledome. Joe Colborne also scored for the Flames, who have won eight of 10 overall. Tyler Myers scored for Winnipeg, which has lost five in a row on the road. — AP

NHL results/standings

St. Louis 2, Boston 0; NY Rangers 3, Anaheim 2 (OT); New Jersey 4, Detroit 3; Vancouver 2, Tampa Bay 1; Florida 2, Ottawa 1 (SO); Minnesota 2, Montreal 1; Dallas 4, Chicago 0; Calgary 4, Winnipeg 1; Arizona 3, Toronto 2; San Jose 5, Los Angeles 3.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference							
Central Division						Atlantic Division							
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS							
Dallas	26	7	2	124	88	54	Montreal	20	13	3	105	89	43
St. Louis	21	11	4	92	85	46	Boston	19	10	4	104	85	42
Chicago	20	12	4	96	87	44	Florida	19	12	4	95	81	42
Minnesota	18	9	6	91	80	42	Detroit	17	10	7	89	89	41
Nashville	17	11	6	90	86	40	Ottawa	17	12	6	105	104	40
Colorado	17	17	1	99	97	35	Tampa Bay	17	15	3	87	82	37
Winnipeg	15	17	2	92	104	32	Buffalo	14	16	4	79	89	32
							Toronto	12	14	7	86	93	31
Pacific Division						Metropolitan Division							
Los Angeles	20	11	2	84	76	42	Washington	25	6	2	105	71	52
San Jose	17	15	2	93	94	36	NY Rangers	20	12	4	104	93	44
Vancouver	13	14	9	91	103	35	NY Islanders	19	11	5	96	82	43
Arizona	16	15	2	90	104	34	New Jersey	17	13	5	83	87	39
Calgary	16	16	2	91	113	34	Philadelphia	15	12	7	74	92	37
Edmonton	15	18	2	91	106	32	Pittsburgh	16	14	3	76	84	35
Anaheim	12	15	6	62	85	30	Carolina	13	16	5	80	101	31
							Columbus	13	20	3	88	112	29

FIFA SETS DATE TO END 'EXCO' NAME, CURB DECISION POWERS

GENEVA: The tainted 'executive committee' name of FIFA's ruling panel will end on April 26. FIFA published the agenda yesterday for its special election congress on Feb. 26 which confirms the proposed rebrand to a 'FIFA council' with less decision-making power.

Changes to FIFA statutes, including reforms agreed by the executive committee this month, take effect 60 days after they are formally voted through by the congress of 209 member federations.

The so-called ExCo has become symbolic of FIFA's reputation for corruption. After Sepp Blatter and Michel Platini were banned for eight years on Monday, 14 of the 24-man ExCo from 2010 are now sanctioned or under investigation by FIFA's ethics committee, or indicted by the U.S. Department of Justice.

The new council of up to 37 members will cede

day-to-day decisions to the FIFA administration, and must consult with a newly created panel of mostly non-football people. A proposed new FIFA governance committee will 'deal with, and advise and assist the council on all FIFA governance matters,' a proposed draft to modernize the FIFA statutes stated.

Members of that governance panel will be elected at the annual FIFA Congress at Mexico City on May 12-13, FIFA said. The revised statutes document gives detail to policy proposals agreed by the ExCo on Dec. 2-3. The proposals relied on ideas submitted by FIFA audit panel chairman Domenico Scala and shaped by a reform group chaired by former IOC director Francois Carrard. They include imposing term limits of 12 years on future presidents, who will have a more ceremonial role, and council members. Their pay and bonuses should also be published.

Detail in the draft includes making the promotion of women's football and increasing women's roles in football governance an official FIFA objective.

FIFA's 209 members would also be required "to prohibit all forms of discrimination" in their own legal statutes.

A new section, Article 23, is dedicated to "confederation statutes," and makes minimum demands of the continental bodies that outgoing president Blatter has blamed for many of FIFA's problems. FIFA also is preparing to relax its rules which prohibit government interference in how football is run by national federations.

Currently, FIFA statutes say members shall manage their business independently and "are not influenced by any third parties." The new draft suggests "without undue influence" by others, such as governments. — AP

FLASHBACK



In this Sunday, March 29, 2015 file photo, Australia captain Michael Clarke holds the Cricket World Cup Trophy aloft after his team defeated co-host New Zealand in the final in Melbourne, Australia. Clarke scored 74 vital runs to help Australia win the trophy for the fifth time, three more than any other team. — AP



Mercedes-Benz meets demand for Hybrid and Plug-In Hybrid models



NUUK: People look at tuna fish caught in the waters off Greenland being loaded at the harbor in Nuuk, Greenland. — AFP

IN GREENLAND, HOPES FOR CLIMATE CHANGE BOOST ECONOMY

GREENLANDERS HOPE TO CASH IN ON RISING TEMPERATURES

NUUK: As the world struggles to limit climate change, some people in Greenland hope to cash in on rising temperatures with new species to fish, innovative exports and advances in farming. While the North Atlantic Island remains highly dependent on shrimp as its main export-it is known locally as "the pink gold"-warming waters are attracting new types of fish. "It's very nice to be able to offer freshly caught tuna and mackerel even if we are right here in Greenland," said Bjorn Johansen, a chef at Hotel Hans Egede, the largest hotel in capital Nuuk, which has a population of 22,000.

In summer, fishermen in east Greenland are now catching mackerel and Atlantic bluefin tuna that have swum far from their spawning grounds in the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Mexico. For Johansen they are a break from the monotony of Greenland's traditional staples. For Nuuk's home rule government, which is seeking more sources of income as the economy has to support an ageing population, they are an export opportunity.

Falling commodity prices have put a damper on hopes that the territory's mineral riches-buried beneath the ice-could spark an imminent mining boom. Instead fisheries continue to dominate the economy, accounting for about 90 percent of exports, and mackerel and Atlantic bluefin tuna have ready markets. That is welcome news for the local government, as the subsidy from former colonial master Denmark that currently accounts for about half of the annual budget is now fixed and its value slowly erodes along with inflation.

From Nuuk to Nairobi

"If summer temperatures continue to increase during this century ... it is likely that bluefin tuna could become a regular summer visitor in east Greenland waters," said Brian Mackenzie, a marine ecology professor at the Technical University of Denmark. Satellite images show the Arctic territory's vast ice sheet, which holds between six and seven percent of the world's fresh water and covers four-fifths of

its land, shrinking by nearly 50 cubic miles per year. The ice sheet, a potentially massive contributor to a rise in sea levels, lost mass twice as fast between 2003 and 2010 as during the entire 20th century, researchers said last week in the journal *Nature*. For many Greenlanders, climate change is already posing challenges and changing the traditional lifestyle: some hunters and fishermen have had to put down their huskies as thinner winter sea ice makes the use of dog sleds for ice fishing too dangerous. Tourism, one of the industries the government wants to grow to diversify the economy, is also facing obstacles in the thawing Arctic.

During some parts of the year the ice floes in the Ilulissat icefjord, Greenland's largest tourism attraction, have been so massive that cruise ships have had problems getting tourists ashore. They have also made it harder for local fishermen to navigate into open waters. But with the melting ice sheet comes rock that has been naturally crushed by the ice. This "rock flour" contains nutrients that can be used in

countries with poor farmland. "It is completely ready for shipping. A man and a shovel and then just off with the nutrient-rich dirt," said Minik Rosing, a geology professor who heads the think tank Greenland Perspective.

Potato protection

The substance is a nuisance for Greenlanders when it clogs up the fjords and "may as well do good elsewhere in the world", he added. The idea is to export the rock flour to places with barren and arid land such as Africa and South America. The nutrients in the crushed rocks from Greenland can make the farmland arable again, Rosing said. As the minerals are absorbed by the plants through the soil, more vegetation pulls carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere.

One ton can be shipped up to 12,000 kilometers before having a negative impact on the climate, meaning the rock flour can be transported from Nuuk to Nairobi. "We can therefore easily move it to South America or Africa with-

out a negative impact," said Rosing. Another export idea rooted in microbiology has come from south Greenland's potato crops, which have grown more plentiful as summers have become warmer. While the cost of farming in the island is high compared to other places, higher temperatures could see it being done on a larger scale in the future.

The warming climate is not the only thing working in farmers' favor: researchers have found that the soil is also providing them with a unique advantage. While potato growers around the world face the threat of disease-causing microbes such as blight wiping out entire harvests, south Greenland's soil contains microorganisms that inhibit the growth of harmful fungi. These "have a major biotechnological potential if the molecules can be successfully synthesized into chemical compounds or if the organisms can be used as an organic alternative to pesticides", said microbiologist Peter Stougaard, an associate professor at the University of Copenhagen. — AFP

FACEBOOK TO ENABLE VIEWING OF APPLE'S ANIMATED PHOTOS

NEW YORK: The latest iPhones come with the ability to turn still images into video - just like magic - but sharing options had been limited to other Apple apps. That's changing as Facebook, one of the leading forums for photo sharing, adds Apple's Live Photos feature to Facebook's iPhone and iPad app. Facebook will start offering it Monday to a limited number of users initially, with a broader rollout planned in the coming weeks. Facebook's support follows a similar move by Yahoo's Tumblr service.

With Live Photos on the iPhone 6s and 6s Plus, every still shot is accompanied by a three-second video, with sound. For instance, you can snap a shot of your kid blowing out birthday candles - and get video showing the flame going out as everyone sings "Happy Birthday."

The phone automatically records video in the background when the camera app is open. The recording is immediately discarded if you do nothing. When you snap a shot, the phone saves a second and a half of video leading to that shot and continues recording until you get three seconds in all. Why not just take video? You might not know ahead of time when you'll encounter a scene lending itself to video. With Live Photos, you always get the video option - unless you turn the feature off.

But sharing had been limited to certain Apple apps - such as the texting app Messages, but not Mail. With tools Apple is making available to third parties, sharing can now be done through Facebook and Tumblr, too. Your friend merely needs to tap and hold the photo to watch the image animate. The iPhone 6s models are required for creating Live Photos, but viewing can also be done on older iPhones and iPads with the latest operating system. On Android and Web browsers, you get only the still images. Besides Facebook and Tumblr, Getty Images is also offering a selection of Live Photos through its app. It's a curated selection, though, rather than a mechanism for sharing photos with friends. — AP

MALAYSIAN BAUXITE RUSH BRINGS WEALTH, WORRIES

BUKIT GOH: Malaysian farmer Surin Beris's palm plantation has been razed and bulldozers are tearing into its red soil, releasing potentially hazardous dust into the environment-yet he couldn't be happier. Surin, 67, is reaping a windfall from a modern-day gold rush in Malaysia's sleepy rural state of Pahang for the high-grade bauxite that lies in its red soil. Demand for bauxite, which is used in aluminum production, is soaring-fueled by heavy demand from China.

The boom is a "gift from Allah", said Surin, a Muslim in a bright white skullcap who previously made about 2,000 ringgit (\$470) per month cultivating the plum-sized fruit that is squeezed to make palm oil. "I made a million ringgit in less than six months. I thank the Almighty for being so generous," he said. Bauxite mining took off in Malaysia shortly after Indonesia, a top producer, banned mineral ore exports in January 2014 to encourage domestic metals processing, leaving major consumers like China in a supply crunch. Malaysia has helped fill the gap. Previously an insignificant producer, there has been a sharp rise in mining, most of it illegal like Surin's. Malaysia's bauxite output more than quadrupled year-on-year in 2014, to nearly 963,000 metric tons, according to government figures, and is expected to rise.

Pillaging the land

But critics warn the mining is being done amateurishly and with little or no government attention to potential environmental harm. Bauxite mining can release carcinogenic heavy metals such as strontium, cesium and other harmful substances, as well as low



BUKIT GOH: A worker wearing a face mask looks on at a bauxite storage site in Bukit Goh situated in Malaysia's rural state of Pahang. — AFP

levels of radiation. Since it generally lies just below the surface, extraction involves stripping off topsoil, leaving exposed pits. In Pahang, where the landscape is dominated by tropical forests and agriculture, red dust swirls around the pits and along the roads on which bauxite-laden trucks rumble toward the port of Kuantan on the South China Sea, where the ore is shipped to China.

Critics fear heavy metals could enter the water supply or food chain, affecting communities for years. Environmentalists say local rivers and the shores along Kuantan are frequently stained red from mining run-off, and

residents complain of a rise in respiratory problems and skin rashes. "My four-year-old granddaughter is in pain because she cannot breathe properly. We inhale dust everyday," complained Manap Muda, a village head near Kuantan who said authorities were turning a blind eye.

Fuziah Salleh, a Kuantan opposition parliament member, said legal loopholes allow small landowners to mine without approval and that many were "raping the land for profit". "The people are greedy and are making massive money at the expense of public health," she said. The government has begun

to admit a problem. Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, the natural resources and environment minister, gave AFP a government report stating that "high concentrations" of hazardous substances were found in water samples taken in August from the Pengorak river, near bauxite mining areas and Kuantan. "Our findings showed that there was aluminum, arsenic, mercury, and manganese. The mining activity worsened the water quality," he said in an interview. The river has been rendered unfit for drinking, irrigation, swimming or fish, the report said.

Let the good times roll

Malaysia's six-decade-old ruling coalition is routinely accused of paying inadequate attention to the environmental and social side effects of the harvesting of the country's rich resources.

Timber exploitation, for example, is a key source of political funding that helps sustain the coalition but which environmentalists say has contributed to the decimation of once-majestic rainforests.

Mohamad Soffi Abdul Razak, chair of the Pahang state government's environment committee, dismissed the health and environment fears, saying authorities intend to let the good times roll. "The bauxite rush is creating jobs. Pahang is blessed by God," he said. Wan Junaidi, however, said he would press for more sustainable mining and measures to prevent the release of dangerous elements. Few expect the bauxite rush to be slowed, however. "I have complained, but corruption is keeping illegal mining alive," said Manap Muda, the village head. — AFP

WORLD BANK APPROVES \$500 MILLION LOAN TO PHILIPPINES

MANILA: The World Bank approved a \$500 million loan yesterday to help the Philippines deal with natural disasters. It can access the new credit line following "a state of calamity" declared by the president, the World Bank said in a statement. On average, more than 1,000 lives are lost every year in the Philippines, with typhoons accounting for the majority of deaths and damage.

The country is also highly exposed to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. "Financial shocks caused by natural disasters undermine economic

growth and poverty reduction," said Philippine finance secretary Cesar Purisima. "This is the environmental equivalent of the middle income trap. Governments need to be agile in mobilizing resources if we are to break free from disaster-traps that knock back the poorest and most vulnerable," he added.

Super Typhoon Haiyan struck the Philippines in November 2013, one of the strongest ever storms to hit land, leaving more than 7,350 people dead or missing. Total damage and losses

reached 571.1 billion pesos (\$12.9 billion), cutting economic growth by about 0.9 percent in 2013, and another 0.3 percent in 2014, pushing about 2.3 million people below the poverty line as a result, the bank said. Typhoons Koppu and Melor, the two latest extreme weather events that hit the Philippines this year, claimed nearly 100 lives combined according to official counts. It is the second time the World Bank has given the country money to help deal with such catastrophes.—AFP

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Dow Jones	17,251.62	17,417.27	165.65	▲ 0.96	-2.28
NASDAQ	4,968.90	5,001.10	32.20	▲ 0.65	5.60
SBP 500	2,021.15	2,038.97	17.82	▲ 0.88	-1.00
Financial Times	6,083.10	6,170.14	87.04	▲ 1.43	-6.03
DAX	10,488.75	10,649.52	160.77	▲ 1.53	8.61
CAC 40	4,567.60	4,637.74	70.14	▲ 1.54	8.54
Swiss	8,515.82	8,620.15	104.33	▲ 1.23	-4.04
Nikkei 225	18,916.02	18,886.70	-29.32	▼ -0.16	8.23
Topix	1,531.28	1,533.60	2.32	▲ 0.15	8.96
Hang Seng	21,830.02	22,040.59	210.57	▲ 0.96	-6.63
Straits Times	2,852.97	2,863.65	10.68	▲ 0.37	-14.90

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait	5,624.68	5,619.98	-4.70	▼ -0.08	-16.20
Saudi Arabia	7,046.97	7,072.62	25.65	▲ 0.36	-15.44
Dubai	3,147.08	3,137.32	-9.76	▼ -0.31	-16.61
Abu Dhabi	4,209.15	4,241.73	32.58	▲ 0.77	-7.06
Bahrain	1,189.78	1,189.53	-0.25	▼ -0.02	-16.60
Qatar	10,174.80	10,217.19	42.39	▲ 0.42	-17.18
Oman	5,418.01	5,419.32	1.31	▲ 0.02	-14.59
Lebanon	1,161.07	1,159.56	-1.51	▼ -0.13	-1.93
Jordan	2,083.84	2,088.34	4.50	▲ 0.22	-3.77
Egypt	6,762.26	6,769.08	6.82	▲ 0.10	-24.25
Morocco	8,863.38	8,845.50	-17.88	▼ -0.20	-7.87
Tunisia	4,969.15	4,955.68	-13.47	▼ -0.27	-2.37

Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.2484	3.2776	3.0007	2.2031	3.2445	396.46	4.5359
Saudi Riyal	0.08164		0.2676	0.2450	0.1799	0.2649	32.37	0.3703
US Dollar	0.30510	3.7370		0.9155	0.6722	0.9899	120.96	1.3839
Euro	0.33326	4.0819	1.0923		0.7343	1.0813	132.15	1.5129
Sterling Pound	0.45390	5.5595	1.4877	1.3618		1.4726	179.98	2.0594
Swiss Franc	0.30821	3.7751	1.0102	0.9248	0.6791		122.27	1.3980
Japanese Yen	0.00252	0.0309	0.0083	0.0076	0.0056	0.0082		0.0114
Australian Dollar	0.22047	2.7004	0.7226	0.6610	0.4856	0.7153	87.41	

Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dollar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30510	3.7370	0.3745	3.6275	0.3832	3.6571	7.7201
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2776		12.2484	1.2275	11.8895	1.2558	11.9866	25.3035
Saudi Riyal	0.2676	0.08164		0.1002	0.9707	0.1025	0.9786	2.0659
Bahraini Dinar	2.6702	0.81469	9.9786		9.6862	1.0231	9.7653	20.6144
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08411	1.0302	0.1032		0.1056	1.0082	2.1282
Omani Riyal	2.6099	0.79629	9.7534	0.9774	9.4676		9.5448	20.1490
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08343	1.0218	0.1024	0.9919	0.1048		2.1110
Egyptian Pound	0.1295	0.03952	0.4841	0.0485	0.4699	0.0496	0.4737	

Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.00	1.25	1.44	1.63	1.94
US Dollar	0.39	0.41	0.59	0.81	1.13
Euro	-0.26	-0.20	-0.12	-0.03	0.05
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.50	0.58	0.74	1.05
Swiss Franc	-0.82	-0.80	-0.77	-0.70	-0.61
Australian Dollar	2.07	2.15	2.09	2.06	2.01
Canadian Dollar	0.00	0.86	0.86	0.95	1.00

Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year
United States	0.97	1.71	2.25	2.97
Europe	-0.35	-0.06	0.61	1.40
United Kingdom	0.60	1.28	1.90	2.62

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %
Kuwait Oil	28.84	28.32	-0.52	▼ -1.80	-77.29
Brent	35.62	35.73	0.11	▲ 0.31	-55.73
West Texas	36.17	36.07	-0.10	▼ -0.28	-47.77
Gold	1071.96	1071.85	-0.11	▼ -0.01	-10.45
Silver	14.26	14.24	-0.02	▼ -0.11	-10.21



HYUNDAI MOTOR'S GENESIS AND TUCSON MODELS EARN RENOWNED SAFETY AWARD

KUWAIT: Hyundai Motor's Genesis and Tucson have been recognized by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety's (IIHS) 2016 Top Safety Pick+ awards. This prestigious awards body helps consumers select vehicles that offer the highest level of crash protection by conducting extensive testing and awarding those which are worthy.

Jim (James) Kim, Vice President and Head of Operations at Hyundai Motor Company Africa and Middle East said: "Our company's emphasis on safety is once again highlighted as two very different models, one an SUV and one a luxury sedan, are internationally recognized for their advanced safety technologies. The features which I think have helped us secure these awards are elements such as the autonomous emergency braking feature, lane departure warning with lane keep assist and the emergency brake assist offering."

Adrian Lund, IIHS president commented on the rationale behind the Hyundai recognition: "The Genesis is equipped with Electronic Stability Control (ESC), nine airbags and energy-absorbing front airbags, while the Tucson has AEB, helping these vehicles earn our top rating. Both earned a required good rating in the small overlap front crash evaluation and a superior or advanced-rated front crash prevention system with automatic braking capabilities, a key criteria to qualify for a Top Safety Pick+ award."

Hyundai Motor's Genesis is equipped with many advanced safety technology options, including ESC, Lane Departure Warning System, Tire Pressure Monitoring System, Brake Assist and Electronic Brake Distribution, Lane Change Assist and a rear-view camera. In addition, the vehicle includes Sensory Surround Safety Technologies that help driver alertness and focus on total occupant safety, and even the safety of other drivers nearby.

Multiple advanced safety technology options are also available on Hyundai Motor's Tucson, including AEB with pedestrian detection, Lane Departure Warning System, Blind Spot Detection, Rear Cross-Traffic Alert, Lane Change Assist, Backup Warning Sensors and a standard rearview camera. In addition, advanced high-strength steel represents more than 50 percent of the vehicle's structure, for enhanced crash safety. The vehicle also features a standard Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) that alerts drivers if one or more tires are under-inflated, and includes the tire's location.

IIHS rates vehicles in a small overlap front crash, moderate overlap front crash, side and roof strength, and head restraint tests, as well as a standard or optional front crash prevention system. Winners of the Top Safety Pick+ award must earn good ratings for occupant protection in all five of the evaluations. For the first time, a good rating in the small overlap front crash test is required to earn the award.



NBK ANNOUNCES FOUR AL JAWHARA WINNERS

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced the four lucky winners in Al Jawhara weekly draws during the month of December. The draws were conducted under the supervision of Ministry of Commerce Representatives. Ammar Thabet Al Muhanna, Abdulmohsen Al Taleb, Abdulaziz Al Dlemei and Sayeed Thahaer Al Shameriy each won KD 5,000. The winners expressed their gratitude and thanked NBK for its great services and promotions. The upcoming winner of Al Jawhara KWD 250,000 last quarterly draw in 2015 will be announced live on Marina FM on Tuesday, 29th of December, 2015.

NBK has re-launched Al Jawhara account recently by doubling customers' chances to win in the weekly, monthly and quarterly draws when they do not withdraw or transfer from their accounts. NBK customers have chances

to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly. Each KD 50 in a customer's account entitles them to one entry in the draw, thus more money in an account means more chances in each draw. The new feature introduced to Al Jawhara Account enables customers to double their chances when maintaining their balance without withdrawing or transferring from Al Jawhara account.

Al Jawhara is the most popular prize-giving account in Kuwait. Al Jawhara account entitles account holders to enter the weekly, monthly and quarterly Al Jawhara draws. All prizes are automatically credited to the winners' accounts the day after the draw. Al Jawhara accounts are available for both Kuwaitis and expats and can be opened at any of NBK's branches around Kuwait, or through NBK website for existing customers.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.516
Indian Rupees	4.602
Pakistani Rupees	2.903
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.123
Nepali Rupees	2.881
Singapore Dollar	217.428
Hongkong Dollar	39.270
Bangladesh Taka	3.869
Philippine Peso	6.437
Thai Baht	8.452
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.217
Qatari Riyal	83.661
Omani Riyal	791.060
Bahraini Dinar	808.820
UAE Dirham	82.920
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	37.770
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.942
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.421
Tunisian Dinar	150.693
Jordanian Dinar	428.823
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.029
Syrian Lira	2.170
Morocco Dirham	31.221
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.400
Euro	333.840
Sterling Pound	452.947
Canadian dollar	219.545
Turkish lira	103.855
Swiss Franc	309.350
Australian Dollar	221.907
US Dollar Buying	303.200

GOLD

20 Gram	220.060
10 Gram	112.730
5 Gram	57.050

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES	TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000
Australian Dollar	211.78
Canadian Dollar	222.01
Swiss Franc	311.03
Euro	335.60
US Dollar	304.60
Sterling Pound	465.02
Japanese Yen	2.55
Bangladesh Taka	3.866
Indian Rupee	4.597
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.124
Nepali Rupee	2.872
Pakistani Rupee	2.904
UAE Dirhams	0.08289
Bahraini Dinar	0.8095
Egyptian Pound	0.03881
Jordanian Dinar	0.4332
Omani Riyal	0.7910
Qatari Riyal	0.08398
Saudi Riyal	0.08119

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.750
Canadian Dollar	220.635
Sterling Pound	455.500
Euro	332.480
Swiss Frank	303.225
Bahrain Dinar	806.235
UAE Dirhams	83.215
Qatari Riyals	84.430

Saudi Riyals	81.945
Jordanian Dinar	429.300
Egyptian Pound	38.808
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.126
Indian Rupees	4.589
Pakistani Rupees	2.909
Bangladesh Taka	3.862
Philippines Peso	6.420
Cyprus pound	580.455
Japanese Yen	3.510
Syrian Pound	2.610
Nepalese Rupees	3.860
Malaysian Ringgit	71.805
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.375
Thai Bhat	9.405
Turkish Lira	104.170

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.444600	0.453600
Czech Korune	0.004334	0.016334
Danish Krone	0.040609	0.045609
Euro	0.327187	0.335187
Norwegian Krone	0.030902	0.036102
Romanian Leu	0.087320	0.087320
Slovakia	0.009099	0.019099
Swedish Krona	0.032056	0.037056
Swiss Franc	0.300830	0.311030
Turkish Lira	0.098924	0.109224
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.211757	0.223257
New Zealand Dollar	0.200911	0.210411
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.213144	0.221644
US Dollars	0.300300	0.304800
US Dollars Mint	0.300800	0.304800

Asia

Bangladesh Taka	0.003448	0.004048
Chinese Yuan	0.045440	0.048940
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037174	0.039924
Indian Rupee	0.004301	0.004691
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002432	0.002612
Kenyan Shilling	0.003164	0.003164
Sierra Leone	0.000250	0.000265
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066958	0.072958
Nepalese Rupee	0.002886	0.003056
Pakistan Rupee	0.002701	0.002981
Philippine Peso	0.006405	0.006685
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.213542	0.219542
South African Rand	0.014062	0.022562
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001766	0.002346
Taiwan	0.009145	0.009325
Thai Baht	0.008126	0.008676
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.800536	0.808536
Egyptian Pound	0.034557	0.037683
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000201	0.000261
Jordanian Dinar	0.425343	0.432843
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000153	0.000253
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022124	0.046124
Nigerian Naira	0.001259	0.001894
Omani Riyal	0.784229	0.789909
Qatar Riyal	0.082900	0.084113
Saudi Riyal	0.080287	0.081237
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.147078	0.155078
Turkish Lira	0.098924	0.109224
UAE Dirhams	0.081896	0.083045
Yemeni Riyal	0.001376	0.001456

A YEAR ON, GERMANY TOTS UP PROS AND CONS OF MINIMUM WAGE

FRANKFURT: One year has passed since Germany introduced a national minimum wage, with no evidence so far of the catastrophic economic consequences predicted by its opponents. Nevertheless, a huge influx of refugees, most of whom will initially depend on menial and low-paid work, has reignited debate about the need for, and effectiveness of, a legal basic wage. Germany is taking in about one million asylum seekers this year, which some observers predict will drive up unemployment as many will not immediately be able to find, or qualify for, work in Europe's biggest economy. The influx has come during a year in which legislation came into effect from January 1 obliging employers to pay their workers at least 8.50 euros (\$9.30) per hour.

There were plenty of critics of the move, primarily small- and medium-sized businesses who argued it would push up labor costs and prices, and even force them to lay off workers. In order to give time to different industries to adapt, it was agreed to stagger the introduction of minimum wage across some sectors over two years. Now some opponents suggest an exemption be made for refugees to make it easier for them to find jobs. "There could be a specific rule for refugees stating that

the minimum wage rule doesn't apply to them for a period of, say, 18 or 24 months," said Michael Huether of the IW economic think tank. So far, the government has ruled out making wide-scale exceptions.

Record-low unemployment

Chancellor Angela Merkel and her conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) had long opposed a national minimum wage, favoring instead separate pay deals by industrial sector and region. But her coalition partners, the centre-left Social Democrats (SPD), were adamant they would only enter into a power-sharing deal if she agreed to the fixed basic wage to help Germany's growing army of working poor. A year after its introduction, there are many who say the minimum wage has not actually had much effect. "I'm still struggling to make ends meet," said Juergen Herbst, who works as a receptionist at a small family-run hotel outside Frankfurt.

Herbst, who is in his 50s, said his pay has risen by 149 euros per month. But his child support payments increased as well, he argued. He said he had to call in the unions to force his employer to pay him the legal minimum wage. It was a matter of "dignity", Herbst argued, and said that



BERLIN: Refugee children walk through a shelter for asylum seekers in Berlin. — AFP

hotel owners had still kept him on. The government argued that more than three million people would be better off with the minimum wage. But some economists doubted its impact, as it would give only a small boost to purchasing power at a time of already robust consumer demand.

At the same time, the doomsday predictions of others have not been fulfilled

the Ifo institute, for example, had warned it could destroy as many as 900,000 jobs and undermine German competitiveness. In isolated cases, companies may have been forced to close. In October, for example, a 200-year-old firm called Steinbach—which makes figurines for traditional Christmas nativity models—shut down, saying it could not finance the sud-

den 27-percent increase in wage costs. But "on the whole, employers have not had to lay off people as a result of the reform," said Klaus Brenke, economist at the DIW think tank. In fact, Germany's jobless rate has kept falling, to 6.3 percent in November, the lowest level since unification in 1990.

'That's enough'

The German economy is currently in a fairly good shape and on course for a record trade surplus this year. "Salaries are already above the minimum wage in the export sectors, primarily the manufacturing industry, so they haven't been affected," said Joachim Moeller, director of the IAB institute for employment research. It was mostly people with few or no qualifications who benefitted. From January 1, 2017, the minimum wage will finally be in force across all sectors, with only very few exceptions. And not everyone sees a case to start exempting refugees. "There is already an exception in place for people in on-the-job training. That's enough," said IAB's Moeller. "In the same way that the introduction of a minimum wage hasn't destroyed jobs, making exemptions won't create any either," said DIW economist Brenke. — AFP

NISSAN GROUP OF EUROPE



Supports



World Food Programme

NISSAN EUROPE, WFP JOIN FORCES TO BOOST SUSTAINABILITY IN HUMANITARIAN MOBILITY

DUBAI: Nissan Europe yesterday announced a year-long humanitarian collaboration with the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) focused on improving road safety and environmental sustainability within the organization. The program will touch WFP's employees in terms of road safety and significantly enhance WFP's supply chain foot printing and sustainable procurement initiatives, contributing towards the United Nations (UN) "Greening the Blue" program to measure, reduce and offset carbon emission of UN agencies.

With 88 percent of WFP's 14,600 staff based in the field across 82 countries, safety is a critical part of the organization's day-to-day operations in ensuring the efficient delivery of food assistance to the people who need it most. Often visiting some of the hardest-to-reach communities in the world, threatened by natural disasters and conflict, road incidents are unfortunately commonplace due to hazardous road conditions.

Through this collaboration, Nissan Europe will be working closely with WFP to create a strong culture of road safety by providing remote training to help WFP's team of drivers and fleet of 3,200 vehicles - thus enhancing humanitarian access to deep-field communities. Nissan will also leverage its environmental leadership to support WFP in effectively measuring its carbon footprint across its air, land and sea operations as well as through its supply chain.

This pilot with Nissan, representing an annual investment of AED180,000, marks an important step toward more efficient, greener and safer means of moving humanitarian supplies and people, supporting WFP's vision of zero hunger and Nissan's Blue Citizenship visions of a future with zero emissions and zero fatalities. "WFP is delighted to work with Nissan Europe to explore new and innovative ways to green our operations and improve the safety of our fleets," said Jay Aldous, Director, Private Sector Partnerships at the UN World Food Programme. "As the logistics leader for the humanitarian community, WFP is committed to improving every facet of our operations so we can more effectively reach the people who need our assistance the most, wherever they are."

Thierry Pieton, Senior Vice President, Administration & Finance Nissan Europe commented: "Following Nissan's donation of 10 Million Yen (US\$80,000) to support WFP's relief efforts in Nepal, today is a proud moment for Nissan as we cement our relationship with the UN World Food Programme. Improving road safety is critical to accessing vulnerable people in hard-to-reach areas, and Nissan is committed to using its expertise and resources to help WFP reach its zero hunger ambition."

REFUGEE INFLUX GIVES EXTRA PUSH TO GERMAN CONSTRUCTION BOOM

ECONOMISTS SEE RISK OF PROPERTY BUBBLE FORMING

NEUKIRCH: Near Germany's southern border, a small family-run construction company is being flooded with orders for its pre-fabricated homes. They are destined to house some of the one million asylum seekers flooding into the country this year. The family factory in Neukirch, a small town close to Austria and Switzerland, cannot keep up so company chief Joerg Bauer is expanding near the shores of Lake Constance. "We are about to introduce a double-shift at our plant in Neukirch, open a bigger factory building in nearby Lindau and increase our staff from 40 currently to 60," he said.

Demand for entry-level homes for the refugees, many of whom have been sleeping in gymnasiums, local halls and tents, is adding to a cocktail of factors fuelling a revival of the German construction industry. The sector is also being buoyed by population growth in major cities plus an increasing interest in real estate. Record-low borrowing costs and rising real wages are encouraging many Germans to overcome their traditional aversion to buying their own flats and houses, with some also regarding property as an attractive investment.

This demand, coupled with a 13-billion euro (\$14 billion) push by the government in 2016 to modernize roads and bridges, is expected to boost construction sales by 2.5 percent to 235 billion euros next year, the highest level since 2000, according to the industry's BvB association. The revival adds impetus to a recovery in the domestic economy, which is compensating for sluggish foreign trade as exporters struggle with a slowdown in emerging markets. Construction accounts for 4 percent of German gross domestic product (GDP) and, with 2.5 million people working in more than 300,000 companies, it is a major employer.

"More and more Germans are putting their money into property," said Hans-Werner Sinn, head of the Ifo economic institute. Ifo's construction sector index rose in November to

its highest level since German reunification in 1990. The index, which measures sentiment in the sector, dipped slightly this month but remains high as the European Central Bank's low interest rates turn more Germans away from regular saving funds and towards property investments. This increased private sector demand is helping the property market further up the scale from the entry level homes built by companies such as Bauer Holzsysteme in Neukirch.

For instance, shares in real estate group Patrizia Immobilien, which is building 4,000 new flats in cities including Munich, Hamburg and Berlin, have jumped around 120 percent this year. Still, the construction industry has a way to go to match the boom it enjoyed when much had to be rebuilt in the former communist east Germany following reunification. Turnover in core construction business has increased in the last few years but in 2014 remained about 15 percent below levels of the mid-1990s.

Bubble risk

Housing remains in short supply due to a lack of construction in 2001-2009, when the public sector scaled back tax incentives for residential investors and abolished a home subsidy for owner-occupiers, who also faced much higher borrowing costs then. From January to September this year, building approvals were granted for about 223,000 flats, the main dwellings in German cities, statistics office data shows.

This marked a 5 percent rise compared with the first nine months of 2014. For the full year, the figure is expected to be nearly 300,000 flats, but that is still insufficient to cope with the urban growth. "This is a strong development, but it's still far below the levels we saw in the 1990s after reunification, with more than 600,000 flats," said Tobias Just, a real estate expert at the University of Regensburg. To avoid housing shortages - especially in big cities such as Berlin, Hamburg

and Munich where populations are growing fastest - more than 400,000 flats now need to be built every year, industry experts estimate.

With demand outstripping supply, some economists say the market could overheat. "We don't have a bubble in Germany yet," said Commerzbank chief economist Joerg Kraemer. "But there is a real risk that this might develop into a bubble in a couple of years." Trying to head off an urban housing crisis, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble and Construction Minister Barbara Hendricks are planning hefty tax incentives for investors who build new apartments in certain city areas in the next three years.

Government stimulus

In the public sector, investment in housing for the asylum seekers and the infrastructure overhaul are supporting demand. Stock in Hochtief, which focuses mainly on public projects such as motorway modernization, has risen about 50 percent this year. A Hochtief spokesman said the higher state spending on infrastructure and refugee housing was positive for the whole sector, adding: "A company like Hochtief can benefit from stronger growth in residential construction." The public sector is doubling its funds for social housing to more than 4 billion euros up to 2019 to cope with the asylum seekers, many of them refugees fleeing war in the Middle East.

The small- and medium-sized firms that dominate Germany's residential building sector are scrambling to meet this demand. At Bauer Holzsysteme, orders have been placed for more than 100 pre-fabricated buildings in 2016, up from 20 delivered this year. Max Boegl, which is also making modular buildings for refugees, is experiencing the same upswing. "We're noting sharply increased demand since October and we expect this trend to continue next year," Max Boegl spokesman Juergen Kotzbauer said. — Reuters



TOKYO: Pedestrians pass before a share prices board in Tokyo. Tokyo stocks dropped on a stronger yen, with Toshiba slumping on a weekend report that the scandal-hit conglomerate will likely post a massive fiscal year loss. — AFP

TOSHIBA TO CUT JOBS AMID RECORD LOSSES

TOKYO: Toshiba plans to cut 7,800 jobs, mostly in its consumer-electronics business, as it reorganizes in the face of projected record losses for the current fiscal year. The Japanese conglomerate has been struggling with the aftermath of a major accounting scandal, compounded by troubles in nuclear energy and losses in the business that makes personal computers, TVs and consumer appliances.

The job cuts announced Monday will affect about 30 percent of the consumer-electronics business and represent about 3 percent of Toshiba's overall employees. Toshiba Corp said it is also selling its TV manufacturing plant in Indonesia and will sell or seek outside investors for a division that makes electronics for health care. Despite its well-known brand, Toshiba has struggled to differentiate its products in consumer electronics. Its television business faces stiff competition from low-cost Chinese manufacturers and high-end Korean brands, while demand for personal computers has been falling worldwide.

Toshiba is also wrestling with costs from decommissioning the Fukushima Dai-ichi

nuclear power plant, which went into meltdown after the March 2011 tsunami. Toshiba said it had not yet fully calculated the impact of the nuclear disaster on its books. Analysts say the company has been looking to sell or restructure several businesses to generate more money for its mainstay memory-chip business. That's one of the company's strongest divisions but requires ongoing investment to keep pace with technological changes. The chip business faces "intense global competition and increasing price pressures," according to a recent report from Moody's.

Toshiba is the world's second-largest maker of "flash" memory chips, behind Samsung, but its sales declined slightly last year, according to research firm IHS. The company projected a loss of 550 billion yen (\$4.5 billion) for the fiscal year through March 2016. That means Toshiba is sinking into its second straight year of loss, after racking up a loss of nearly 38 billion yen (\$312 million) for the previous fiscal year. Japanese media reports said the latest loss forecast would be a record for Toshiba, surpassing the massive losses during the Lehman financial crisis. — AP

UK GROWTH SLOWDOWN TAKES RATE-HIKE PRESSURE OFF BOE

LONDON: Britain's economy grew less strongly than previously thought in much of 2015, according to official data that may give the Bank of England pause for thought as it ponders when to raise interest rates. Britain's economy expanded by 0.4 percent in the third quarter, down from a previous estimate of 0.5 percent and below the forecasts of 35 economists polled by Reuters, who had all expected no change in the figure. Growth in the second quarter was revised down more sharply.

Weaker growth in the huge services sector, especially in financial services, was behind the new, lower assessment of growth for the July-September period, the Office for National Statistics said yesterday. The BoE has previously said it expects growth in the third quarter will eventually come in at 0.6 percent. "There will be even less near-term pressure to raise interest rates," Philip Shaw, an economist with Investec, said.

Most economists have previously said they expect no move by the BoE until around May of next year. Financial markets expect no rate hike until late 2016 or early 2017. In annual terms, overall economic growth in the third quarter was revised down to 2.1 percent from a previous reading of 2.3 percent. Economists taking part in a Reuters poll had expected no

change to the previous ONS estimates. Sterling briefly fell after the data and government bond prices edged up. Britain has grown more quickly than most other developed economies over the past two years, helping Prime Minister David Cameron and finance minister George Osborne to lead their Conservative Party to an election victory in May.

Risks ahead

A spokesman for the finance ministry said yesterday's data showed Britain was still ahead of most of its peers in terms of growth but also highlighted the risks still facing the economy. "That's why we should continue working through our plan to build an economy that delivers security for working people," the spokesman said, referring to Osborne's program of further spending cuts to fix Britain's weak public finances. Britain's recovery since 2013 has been driven in large part by spending by consumers. Yesterday's data showed household spending rose more quickly than previously thought in the third quarter, helped by the biggest annual increase in disposable income since 2010 as inflation tumbled to zero and wages rose. Still, the savings ratio fell to its joint lowest level since 1963. — Reuters



INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITY

In the OIL & GAS - FIRE & SAFETY

- Corporate or Individuals - Corporate preferably in the same field. Individuals with high net worth, sophisticated investor in private equity.
- For more info log on to Oil Review Magazine issue 8 www.oilreviewmiddleeast.com/magazine/current-issue Pages 81 & 54, 51, 2.

Interested parties may please contact us at: tankco@ivacis.com

GLOBAL STOCKS EXTEND RALLY FOR THIRD DAY

DOLLAR SLIGHTLY HIGHER AGAINST MAJOR RIVALS

LONDON: Global stocks extended a rally into a third day yesterday as oil edged up from 11-year lows and the dollar eked out minor gains in trade gradually winding down for the holidays. European shares rose on the last full trading day before the Christmas break, following Asian bourses higher. The pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 index rose 1.5 percent, led by miners which rallied on higher copper prices. London-listed miners Glencore and Anglo American both rose more than 4 percent. "We think commodities are due for a bounce, and that should help mining stocks," HED Capital managing director, Richard Edwards, said.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.6 percent to the highest in almost two weeks. Tokyo markets were closed for the Emperor's Birthday holiday. In China, the blue-chip CSI 300 index broke a four-day winning streak and closed down 0.3 percent while the Shanghai Composite index ended down 0.4 percent. China's state news agency Xinhua said slashing the country's excess steel capacity would be a top priority for the government over the next five years. MSCI's all-country world stocks index was up 0.36 percent, though it is down 4.5 percent for the year.

Equity investors were encouraged after gains of 1 per-

cent in the Dow Jones industrial average lifted Wall Street for a second day on Tuesday. Data on Tuesday showed US economic growth in the third quarter was revised down slightly to a 2.0 percent annual pace but this still beat forecasts. Oil prices struggled to lift off lows plumbed earlier in the week. Brent crude, the global benchmark, stood at \$36.50 a barrel, up 39 cents, having touched an 11-year low of \$35.98 late on Tuesday. The dollar strengthened versus the euro and held broadly steady against a basket of major currencies. The euro fell 0.3 percent to \$1.0922 while the Japanese yen was barely changed at 120.97 per dollar.

The euro has performed well this year at times of risk

aversion, as investors have unwound carry trades in which the euro is borrowed then sold for higher-yielding currencies. "When you are in an environment where rate expectations are stable, the euro is mostly driven by risk sentiment," said Credit Agricole currency strategist Manuel Oliveri in London. "So we could imagine that the euro goes to \$1.10 or so into the end of the year." Yields on low-risk government bonds were little changed. German 10-year Bunds, the euro zone benchmark, yielded 0.61 percent, up 1 basis point on the day. Ten-year US Treasuries yielded 2.239 percent, unchanged from Tuesday's close in New York. Gold traded at \$1,071.60 an ounce. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report										
Wednesday 23 December 2015										
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low					
Price Index	-4.70	5,619.98	5,624.68	5,627.41	5,602.72					
Weighted Index	0.57	380.98	380.41	380.98	379.13					
KSX 15	2.36	902.52	900.16	903.00	896.53					
Trades										
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change	Security	High	Low
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	114	0.0	0.0	SOKOUK	47.5	45.0
IKARUS	92	90	27,393	2,485	3	90	-2.0	KRE	57	56
IPG	250	250	5,122	1,281	1	250	0.0	URC	92	92
NAPESCO	680	640	7,900	5,151	5	650	-20.0	NRE	92	89
ENERGYH	41.5	41.5	500	21	1	41.5	1.0	SRE	0.0	0.0
GPI	54	52	1,444,912	78,271	53	54	-2.0	TAM	0.0	0.0
ABAR	122	122	300	37	1	122	-10.0	AREEC	0.0	0.0
Oil & Gas		1,486,127	85,245	64	808.60	6.57		MASSALEH	0.0	0.0
KFOUC	230	228	27,000	6,190	3	230	10.0	ARABREC	30.0	29.0
BPOC	520	510	44,370	22,829	6	510	-10.0	ERESCO	65	63
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	0.0	MABANEE	940	930
ALQURAIN	188	184	128,313	23,826	18	188	-2.0	INJAZZAT	84	79
Basic Materials		199,683	52,845	27	982.78	9.38		INVESTORS	25.0	24.5
KCEM	385	385	228,620	88,019	3	385	5.0	IRC	29.0	27.5
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320	0.0	ALTJARIA	81	79
CABLE	375	360	17,990	6,482	10	375	0.0	SANAM	0.0	0.0
SHIP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	148	0.0	AAYANRE	79	79
PCEM	1,080	1,040	118,651	127,451	9	1,040	-46.0	AQAR	0.0	0.0
PAPER	395	395	26,671	10,140	2	395	-20.0	ALQAARIA	0.0	0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	79	0.0	MAZAYA	104	102
ACICO	285	275	37,715	10,530	12	285	5.0	ADNC	27.5	26.5
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	490	0.0	THEMAR	90	90
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	0.0	TUJARA	0.0	0.0
KPAK	360	360	10	4	1	360	-10.0	TAAMEER	0.0	0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	0.0	ARKAN	114	112
NICBM	230	230	50,000	11,500	2	230	-10.0	ARGAN	182	182
EQUIPMENT	60	57	800,100	46,141	25	58	-1.0	AYAAR	28.5	28.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	0.0	MUNSHAAT	90	86
GYSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	0.0	FIRSTDUBAI	47.0	45.0
SALBOOKH	83	81	86,916	7,087	13	81	-1.0	KBT	44.5	42.0
AGLTY	490	490	247,066	119,824	18	485	0.0	REAM	0.0	0.0
EDU	210	210	2,000,000	420,000	3	210	0.0	MENA	0.0	0.0
CLEANING	39.0	39.0	5,000	195	1	39.0	0.0	ALMUDON	35.0	34.0
CITYGROUP	380	380	1	0	1	380	0.0	MARAKEZ	21.5	21.0
KGL	43.5	43.0	268,080	11,548	11	43.0	-1.0	REMAL	35.0	34.0
KCPK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	218	0.0	MASHAER	0.0	0.0
HUMANSOFT	980	980	5,000	4,900	1	980	0.0	Real Estate	27,818,885	1,500,970
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	204	0.0	KINV	100	100
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	325	0.0	FACIL	176	174
GFC	34.5	31.0	104,000	3,329	10	34.5	2.0	IFA	29.5	28.5
MAYADEEN	21.5	21.0	926,132	19,449	12	21.5	0.0	NINV	92	88
CGC	780	780	19,000	14,820	5	780	0.0	KPROJ	580	570
MTCC	69	69	2,100	145	2	69	-1.0	COAST	32.5	31.5
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	700	0.0	SECH	39.0	37.5
ALAFKO	212	208	16,933	3,550	4	212	0.0	SGC	0.0	0.0
MUBARRAD	78	77	183,532	14,133	8	78	1.0	ARZAN	36.5	36.0
LOGISTICS	57	56	713,000	39,929	21	57	0.0	MARKAZ	0.0	0.0
SCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	82	0.0	KMEFIC	27.5	26.5
GCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	78	0.0	ALAMAN	58	57
QCEM	75	75	117	9	1	75	-5.0	ALOLA	55	54
FCEM	74	72	51,260	3,726	3	73	-1.0	LMAL	0.0	0.0
RKWC	104	99	183,800	18,415	13	104	4.0	GIH	26.5	25.5
SPEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	88	0.0	AAYAN	48.0	47.5
Industrials		6,090,694	981,325	191	1048.02	-6.40		BAYANINV	33.5	32.5
KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	0.0	OSOUL	0.0	0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	62	0.0	KFC	37.5	33.5
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	112	0.0	KAMCO	0.0	0.0
CATTL	130	124	36,340	4,547	5	130	2.0	NIH	60	60
DANAH	84	84	10,000	840	3	84	3.0	ISKAN	30.5	30.0
POULT	176	176	10,000	1,760	2	176	0.0	MADAR	0.0	0.0
FOOD	1,980	1,920	54,713	108,049	6	1,980	-20.0	ALDEERA	31.5	30.5
Consumer Goods		111,053	115,196	16	1078.31	4.97		ALSALAM	35.0	34.0
MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	190	0.0	EKTTITAB	31.0	30.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	0.0	ALMADINA	34.5	34.0
YIACO	166	158	101,700	16,073	4	158	-10.0	NOOR	48.0	47.5
Health Care		101,700	16,073	4	955.38	-10.35		TAMINV	420	405
KCIN	880	880	2,789	2,454	1	880	0.0	EXCH	0.0	0.0
KHOT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196	0.0	TABIA	0.0	0.0
SULTAN	72	66	40,198	2,700	7	67	0.0	KSHC	25.5	24.5
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	25.0	0.0	STRATEGIA	0.0	0.0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	330	0.0	ASIYA	37.5	36.0
IFAHR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	178	0.0	GNAC	28.0	27.0
OULAFUEL	110	110	7,048	775	14	110	0.0	AMWAL	0.0	0.0
MUNTAZAHAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	96	0.0	ALMINTAZ	78	77
JAZEERA	910	900	214,277	194,913	16	910	0.0	MANAZEL	23.5	22.5
SOUR	110	108	10,923	1,198	18	110	0.0	NIND	128	126
FTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	0.0	BIHC	30.0	29.0
ALNAWADI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89	0.0	SENERGY	13.0	12.5
ALRAI	158	146	4,226	657	8	154	-2.0	AGHC	80	80
ZIMAH	128	120	1,961,813	243,577	116	128	4.0	KPPC	53	52
UFIF	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	150	0.0	TAHSSILAT	0.0	0.0
KOUTFOOD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	740	0.0	JEERANH	60	60
Mezzan	1,160	1,140	190,000	220,200	13	1,160	-20.0	EKHOLDING	0.0	0.0
Consumer Services		2,431,274	686,473	193	1022.78	-1.60		GFH	38.5	35.0
ZAIN	350	345	248,476	85,746	13	345	0.0	INOVEST	0.0	0.0
OOREDOO	1,050	1,040	10,027	10,569	8	1,060	2.0	Financial Services	37,748,051	1,555,886
HITSTELEC	30.0	28.5	2,294,700	66,625	42	29.0	0.0	Investment Instruments	0	0
VIVA	1,000	990	580,181	577,981	129	1,000	0.0	ASC	0.0	0.0
Telecommunications		3,133,384	740,921	192	598.02	-3.01		OSOS	0.0	0.0
NBK	810	800	2,504,162	2,010,964	29	800	0.0	FUTURE	0.0	0.0
GBK	260	260	75,091	19,524	4	260	0.0	HAYATCOMM	47.0	44.5
CBK	500	500	79,966	39,983	4	500	0.0	Technology	700	31
ABK	370	355	146,112	53,108	8	370	5.0	BAREEQ	104	104
ALMUTAHEO	520	520	37,344	19,419	3	520	0.0	AFAO	0.0	0.0
KIB	220	218	150,874	33,121	11	220	0.0	ALSHAMEL	0.0	0.0
BURG	380	375	110,621	41,833	11	380	-5.0	SAFRE	0.0	0.0
KFIN	560	550	686,085	378,378	36	560	10.0	AJWAN	26.0	25.5
BOUBYAN	440	435	355,190	154,516	21	435	0.0	MASAKEN	0.0	0.0
AUB	208	206	1,022,000	210,572	18	208	-2.0	DALQAN	0.0	0.0
ITHMR	43.5	41.5	4,576,782	194,882	124	42.5	-1.0	ALEID	0.0	0.0
WARBANK	196	194	339,545	65,880	73	194	0.0	MIDAN	0.0	0.0
Banks		10,083,772	3,222,179	342	900.91	1.13		FLEX		

NEW BOSS IN DASH FOR SIMPLICITY AT BLOATED ROLLS-ROYCE

FILTON: Twelve months and 80 signatures: That is what it recently took Rolls-Royce to approve a small change requested by a supplier, symptomatic of a business that had become as complex as the engines it makes to power the world's biggest jets. New chief executive Warren East says the number of sign-offs should be closer to 15, and it's an example of the complexity he says has jeopardized the financial health of Britain's engineering flagship, a rival to General Electric in making the engines of the world's largest passenger planes. "Virtually every process I look at is over-complicated," East told Reuters in an interview. He has met 70 investors in the last six weeks, seeking support after oil and gas customers cut orders for marine engines and some aero engines were retired earlier-than-expected, exposing poor financial discipline and operational problems. The share price has nearly halved since May, leading to takeover talk and reports of UK government concern that a key military contractor could fall into foreign hands. At Rolls-Royce's factory in Filton, near Bristol, fitters make and maintain engines to power Tornado and Typhoon fighters in buildings that look more like Internet-era warehouses than the oily workshops of the past. East says the problem is the layers of

bureaucracy above the shopfloor.

Simplicity and pace

East, who became chief executive in July, announced a restructuring last month, under the mantra of "simplicity and pace," aiming to save 150-200 million pounds annually by 2017. A first step was scrapping a layer of top management. "It is going to take four to five years," he said, but hopes to get 80 percent of it done in 18 months to two years. It is not the first time the engineering powerhouse has taken aim at its own complexity. In the 1990s, the Derwent Project sought radical cuts in lead times and costs.

But East, who built British chip designer ARM into a world-beating supplier to the likes of Apple and was a non-executive director at Rolls before he replaced John Rishton, is making a new effort to tackle management layers and red tape. The 54-year old, who likes to hold candid town-hall meetings, says things could get worse before they get better. He does not rule out another profit warning. Analysts are expecting pretax profit to plunge next year to about 725 million pounds, around the level last posted in 2006, after a decade of growth ended in 2014.

Rolls-Royce's fortunes have been entwined

with Britain's national interest since it built its first aero-engine for the Royal Air Force in World War One, and it was nationalized in the 1970s after a new turbo-fan engine almost destroyed the company. It was privatized in 1987, although the government kept a "golden share" that can be used to block a takeover. Recent press reports said the British government was considering nationalizing Rolls-Royce's nuclear submarine unit or merging some of its businesses into BAE Systems, Britain's other defense heavyweight, if the company's difficulties worsened. "Of course it's possible that there's all sorts of people dreaming up lots of strategies for Rolls-Royce," East said. "(But) I can tell you that I've had no hint whatsoever of any reality behind the stories."

Margins

Rolls has historically struggled to match the 20 percent level of margins made by its larger US rival GE, which benefits from its exposure to the high-volume narrow-body aircraft market. Before recent woes, Rolls was targeting margins of around 15 percent. Rolls-Royce is on course to take a 50 percent share of the 250-seat plus twin aisle wide-body aircraft market by 2020, up from 30 percent now. It has been locked out of

narrow-body jets, which carry up to 200 passengers, since 2011 when it decided to sell out of a multinational alliance making those engines to fellow member Pratt & Whitney.

Its former US partner has independently notched up thousands of engine sales for the revamped Airbus A320neo, prompting debate over whether Rolls made a blunder. East is not excluding taking Rolls-Royce back into that market, but says it is not a priority. "I don't rule out narrow-body in the long term but we have got to get through to make the business model work in the first place with one (wide-body) space," he said. East also said he was open to possible new developments including a "middle of the market" 240-seater being studied by Boeing and a possible engine upgrade of the slow-selling Airbus A380 superjumbo.

Limited room for maneuver

The arrival of US activist investor ValueAct on the shareholder register in July ramped up expectations of change. But East, who met the US hedge fund earlier in December, denies reports ValueAct wants to force Rolls-Royce to divest its marine unit. "My thoughts and their thoughts are pretty

much completely aligned," he said. But the share price drop to about 570 pence from a year-high of 1,046 pence in May has raised the prospect of suitors. Jefferies analyst Sandy Morris believes any suitor would have to offer at least 10 pounds per share for the company. "There is a tacit acceptance that the business is worth vastly more in 2020 and that by 2025 is worth vastly more again," he said, referring to the growth promised by the new engines on order.

But Rolls-Royce has issued four profit warnings in just over a year and placed the dividend under review and the consensus forecast is now for it to be cut. "We are supportive of the path that Warren East has set out for the company, though he has limited room for manoeuvre," Ben Ritchie, senior investment manager on the UK and European equities team at Aberdeen Asset Management, and the company's second biggest shareholder said. On the shop floor at Filton, where the engines for Concorde were once made, pride in the company is undiminished. Wearing a Rolls-Royce embroidered shirt, Paul Abrahams, value-stream manager said: "You feel the hurt when we have problems and share the success when things go well." —Reuters



RIO DE JANEIRO: Chocolate bars are displayed at Aquim shop in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The chocolate is produced by Brazilian cacao company Mendosa, settled in Salvador, Bahia state, which was among the 50 best chocolate makers in the world in the last Paris Chocolate Show. —AFP

EMERGING MARKET STOCKS SAW SIXTH RISE IN 7 DAYS

LONDON: Emerging market stocks saw their sixth rise in seven days yesterday as investors looked for some last minute bargains in an area that has lost almost 17 percent this year. With trading volumes minimal ahead of festive holidays it was impossible to say how long the mini-revival would last, though there was a general sense among EM followers that 2016 is unlikely to be as difficult as 2015 has been.

MSCI's closely-followed 23-country index topped the 800 point level as it rose 0.8 percent, but the day's big focus was on Brazil, one of the heavyweights that has been hardest hit during this year's turmoil. Its central bank is due to publish a new inflation report later, which is likely to signal whether it will have to hike interest rates next month in an already beleaguered economy. The real was hovering just off a record low hit in September. It has lost over 30 percent since the start of the year as a recession has been exacerbated by a series of scandals that has engulfed President Dilma Rousseff.

"We expect the central bank to increase expected inflation for 2016 and 2017 and that is probably going to have immediate implications for its January meeting," said Cristian Maggio, head of emerging markets strategy at TD Securities. "If the real gets any weaker between now and the meeting, it would definitely increase the chances of a hike," he added, saying it could be between 50 and 75 basis points. Elsewhere, Turkey's

lira steadied at 2.9268 having taken a 1 percent tumble on Tuesday after the country's central bank opted not to raise interest rates despite inflation running at over 8 percent.

President Tayyip Erdogan has repeatedly called for lower interest rates to boost economic growth, fuelling fears of political interference in central bank policy. Istanbul stocks rose 1.3 percent to take their gains over the last seven sessions to over 7 percent. A small tick-up in oil prices from 11-year lows and a softer dollar were helping some of the big commodity producers. A rise in its government bond yields pushed South Africa's rand lower though Russia's rouble rose 0.7 percent as traders shrugged off the United States adding another 34 Russian individuals and firms to its sanctions list.

Overnight in Asia, the majority of the regional stock markets had climbed and currencies were mostly flat to firmer. China's central bank, which has a history of making changes around this time of year, said it would extend the yuan's trading hours on the Shanghai-based foreign exchange market from Jan 4. The move will allow trading in the Chinese forex market to overlap with European trading hours and is Beijing's latest effort to internationalize its increasingly influential currency. The bank also set the official yuan rate higher for a third straight day, that traders said suggested it wanted to keep the currency stable for now. —Reuters

ALL-NIGHTERS AND XBOXES IN RECORD YEAR FOR M&A

LONDON: When bankers talk about paper, they usually mean stocks and bonds. But in a record year for M&A, for the people who print the documents for the bids and offers and prospectuses for corporate deals, paper means paper-and-lots of it. Deal volumes this year are up by more than 40 percent on the previous year to a record \$4.6 trillion, according to preliminary Thomson Reuters data. This translates into hundreds of thousands of pages of documents that have to be sent out to shareholders. For Shell's proposed purchase of BG, currently worth \$53 billion and one of this year's mega-deals, printers mailed out 10,500 copies of a 72-page "intention to make an offer" document, plus half a million copies of one regulatory letter, among other announcements, to BG's shareholders.

The firms that handle this specialized work have had a frantic year of typesetting and proof-reading under strict security, before printing and posting the documents to shareholders across the world under deadlines that can be as tight as just a couple of days.

A handful of companies such as Sterling, Merrill Corporation and Black and Callow dominate the business, which not only needs big printing machines and typesetting programs but often specialist translators too. As privately held companies they do not publish their earnings. But one US-based financial printer told Reuters that revenues this year from deals alone had risen twofold. "In this environment it becomes all hands on deck. You just do what

you have to do," the person said, adding that their firm's biggest deal of the year ran to 40,000 copies.

And it is a round-the-clock business. Junior corporate lawyers said that during a proofing process they can spend days camped out in printers' offices—where there are often bedrooms, showers and even pool tables and Xboxes provided to pass the time. "The documents are getting bigger and more complex to draft. In this market, clients are seeing only a small window to do the deal, so the pressure on us is greater to do more in less time," said Tim Black, joint managing director of Black and Callow financial printers, formed after a management buyout from data room company Imprima last year.

But environmental awareness and technology are changing this niche industry, pushing these companies to look for other sources of revenue beyond producing stacks of documents. Printers can earn tens of thousands of pounds per deal, and the longer the document and the larger the number of recipients, the bigger the paycheck. The total bill for typesetting, specialist translation, printing and postage can run into the millions.

Black's company printed some of the documents for the Shell/BG initial offer this year and also did the Lloyds and HBOS merger prospectus back in 2008. That approximately 300-page document was delivered to one in 10 UK households. —Reuters

MERCEDES-BENZ MEETS DEMAND FOR HYBRID AND PLUG-IN HYBRID MODELS

DUBAI: As the importance of fuel efficiency and environmental awareness in the Middle East grows, the long-time leadership by Mercedes-Benz in developing alternative drive systems is meeting the growing demand for Hybrid and Plug-In Hybrid models. Consistently at the forefront of technological advancements, Mercedes-Benz has been doing research into mixed and alternative drive systems for more than 118 years, and applying new innovations and refinements to every new generation of model launched.

"With a number of countries in the GCC holding top spots globally for the biggest ecological footprints in the world, public awareness of the importance of environmental protection is growing. So too, is the pressure to adopt alternative sources of energy to power vehicles. At Mercedes-Benz, we like to sum up our approach to sustainability in two words: acting responsibly. Alternative drive systems are the future of the automotive industry, for both fuel efficiency and environmental factors," said Dirk Fetzer, Director of Sales & Marketing at Daimler Middle East & Levant.

"In addition to reduced fuel consumption and engines powered by environmentally friendly fuels, Mercedes-Benz hybrid and plug-in hybrid models continue to deliver the same exceptional performance thanks to improved acceleration and quiet running." Mercedes-Benz has made a strong statement in the Middle East region with their Hybrid model - S 400 h and Plug-In Hybrid models - S 500 e and GLE 500 e.

Efficient Luxury Saloon

With the new S 400 h, the world's first series production car to feature a hybrid drive system with a lithium-ion battery, Mercedes-Benz is emphatically underlining its claim to leadership with respect to design, comfort, innovation and environmental compatibility. The combination of a further improved V6 petrol engine and a compact hybrid module makes this model the world's most efficient luxury saloon with a petrol engine. Its fuel consumption of 6.3-6.8 liters per 100 kilometers (NEDC combined) corresponds to a remarkable 21-percent reduction over its predecessor. The combined output is 245 kW/299 hp, with a combined maximum torque of 620 newton meters. The S 400 h accelerates to 100 km/h in 6.8 seconds and has a top speed of around 250 km/h - environmentally compatible drive systems and outstanding performance are not necessarily a contradiction in terms. The S-Class hybrid offers all the advantages of this drive concept: a comfortable ECO start/stop function automatically switches the engine off when the S-Class comes to a stop - for example at traffic lights.

Plug-in Hybrid Technology

For the first time in its SUV history, Mercedes-Benz offers a plug-in hybrid model, the GLE 500 e 4MATIC drive combines the power and refinement of a V6 engine, with the fuel consumption of a three-liter car

and the versatility of a premium SUV. The drive system comprise a BlueDIRECT V6 direct-injection petrol engine with 245 kW (333 hp) and a hybrid module with 85 kW (116 hp) of electric power. The system peak torque is a massive 820 Newton meters. Thanks to the boost function, the innovative system drive also

sets a new benchmark in the SUV market segment by offering the best on-road and off-road handling, outstanding spaciousness and high levels of safety.

S 500 e: Ultramodern hybrid

The new Mercedes-Benz S 500 e

The high-voltage battery of the S 500 e can be charged via maximum external charging capacity electricity using a 3.6 kW on-board charger. The unit is permanently installed in the vehicle and charges single-phase up to 16 A. The connection for the charging cable is located under a flap in the rear bumper



offers all-electric driving at speeds up to 130 km/h and optimizes energy recovery.

With plug-in hybrid technology and a system output of 330 kW (442 hp), the GLE 500 e 4MATIC guarantees brilliant performance with CO2 emissions of just 78 g/km (3.5 l/100 km). The compact hybrid module is fully integrated into a seven-speed 7G-TRONIC PLUS automatic transmission. Reducing fuel consumption and CO2 emissions by 17 percent compared with predecessor model

blends an ultramodern hybrid drive configuration with the unique innovations and the luxurious equipment of the S-Class. The Mercedes-Benz S 500 e offers a system output of 330 kW and 820 Nm torque, sprints from 0 to 100 km/h in just 5.2 seconds and can drive up to 33 km purely electrically. The certified consumption is 2.8 liters/100 km, which corresponds to 65 g CO2/km emissions. Key elements of this impressive output are the V6 biturbo and the intelligent hybrid drive.

underneath the tail light on the right-hand side. An automatic lock ensures that the cable cannot be separated from the vehicle by unauthorized persons. The new S-Class can be charged in two hours via fast charging power socket such as wall-box or at a public charging station where available. Alternatively, charging via house connection is also possible, of course. Depending on the connection a charge time e.g. of two hours and 45 minutes can be attained.

CHINA SOUTHERN AIRLINES TO BUY 10 AIRBUS PLANES \$2.27BN

BEIJING: China Southern Airlines announced yesterday it would buy 10 aircraft worth a total \$2.27 billion from European aerospace giant Airbus, as a Chinese boom in air travel defies slowing economic growth. The carrier, one of China's "big three" with the largest fleet by size, will take delivery of the A330-300 medium-to extended-range jets between 2017 and 2019, it said in a statement to the Shanghai stock exchange.

It was the company's second major purchase this month following a \$10 billion order for 110 planes from Boeing. China, the world's second largest economy, is Asia's biggest aircraft buyer as a growing middle class takes to the skies in ever-

increasing numbers. Earlier this month China's budget carrier Spring Airlines announced plans to buy 60 aircraft from Airbus worth \$6.3 billion at list prices. State-owned China Aviation Supplies Holding Group signed a deal with Airbus at the end of October, pledging the purchase of 100 A320 aircraft worth \$9.7 billion at list prices. Yesterday's announcement comes at a tumultuous time at China Southern. Its chairman Si Xianmin was put under investigation by authorities last month for "severe violations of discipline," a phrase which typically refers to corruption. His company recorded a 48.4 percent year-on-year fall in net profit to 1.17 billion yuan (\$186 million) in the third quarter,

according to an earnings report.

The latest order comes despite slowing economic growth which aviation industry officials fear could hurt air travel. China logged its worst economic performance since the global financial crisis in the third quarter, with gross domestic product rising just 6.9 percent year-on-year. But Boeing estimates the country will add 6,330 new aircraft worth \$950 billion to its commercial fleet by 2034. Airbus passed its 2015 orders target by October on the back of strong demand from China and Singapore. At the time, the company said that it had 6,741 jets on its order book, equivalent to ten years of production. —AFP



DRAKE & SCULL CONSOLIDATES PREMIER POSITION IN UAE'S ENGINEERING SECTOR

DUBAI: Drake & Scull Engineering (DSE), the subsidiary of Drake & Scull International PJSC (DSI), a regional market leader in the integrated design, engineering and construction disciplines of General Contracting, Mechanical, Electrical and Plumbing (MEP), Water and Power, Rail, Oil and Gas, and Water and Wastewater Treatment, has announced that it has secured a AED 121 million EPC (Engineering, Procurement & Construction) contract to design and install a chilled water distribution network for a prominent mixed use development in Dubai. The AED 121 million project win has helped DSI achieve AED 2.65 Billion in Total Project Awards across MENA and Asia, year to date.

Under the terms of the agreement, DSE will design and build an underground chilled water pipe network in the mixed use development which will feature pre-insulated pipes varying in sizes ranging from 100 mm to 1,200 mm for an approximate total length of 32 km. In addition, DSE will also deliver all related civil works with a scheduled completion slated for 2018.

Ahmad Al Naser, Managing Director of Drake & Scull Engineering, said: "DSE has achieved substantial progress in the regional engineering sector and boasts of a strong portfolio of major district cooling installations in prominent metropolises across the

region. Our expertise in delivering such complex projects has been demonstrated by our pioneering work on district cooling plants in the Dubai Festival City, Jumeirah Beach Residences, and Meydan Nad Al Sheba in Dubai.

The installation of the underground chilled water pipe network in the mixed use development will prove to be a challenging project that will provide us with an opportunity to demonstrate our well-honed EPC skills. Some of the major district cooling projects we are currently delivering in the region include the district cooling plants in Dohaland and Lusail City in Qatar and Saraya Aqaba in Jordan. We are confident that our sound technical fundamentals combined with our experienced team of skilled professionals give us a competitive advantage as we aim to secure substantial project wins associated with the upcoming Dubai Expo 2020."

DSE was formed through a strategic merger of Drake & Scull's traditional MEP and Water & Power (WP) businesses under one specialist entity. Some of the key engineering projects being undertaken by DSE in the UAE include the Louvre Museum, the Fairmont Hotel & Service Apartments, the Jewel of the Creek, the Habtoor City, and the Mall of the Emirates expansion.

FIVE STARS FOR ALL-NEW INFINITI Q30 IN EURO NCAP ASSESSMENT



DUBAI: The all-new Infiniti Q30 has received the maximum five-star rating by independent vehicle safety organization, Euro NCAP. The Euro NCAP scoring system considers various aspects of vehicle safety, such as occupant protection, child protection, pedestrian protection and safety assist which is the availability and effectiveness of safety systems and driver aids. As well as achieving the maximum five stars, the Infiniti Q30 gained top scores in each of these four testing categories.

Roland Krueger, President, Infiniti Motor Company, commented: "The Q30 offers a comprehensive technology package that enhances the car's driving experience while providing maximum safety to all occupants. The five-star rating from Euro NCAP is testament to Infiniti's advanced safety approach". Occupant protection scored highly in the rigorous test program with an 84 per cent rating for adult safety. As well as a driver knee airbag, the Q30 has driver-, passenger-, front hip-thorax side and front-to-rear curtain airbags.

Designed and engineered to offer the best possible levels of protection for children, an automated system in the front passenger seat will turn off the front passenger airbag when someone fits a rear-

ward facing child seat. For Pedestrian Protection, the Q30 scored 91 per cent, a score which is determined from tests to the most important vehicle front-end structures, such as the bonnet and windshield, the bonnet leading edge and the bumper. The Q30 is equipped with a sensor that detects a pedestrian's legs contact with the bumper and causes the hood to pop up to give more clearance between the hood surface and the hard parts of the engine to protect pedestrians.

An 81 per cent score in the Safety Assist category was due to the latest safety technologies fitted to the Q30 as part of Infiniti's acclaimed Safety Shield system. They include Forward Collision Warning, Lane Departure Warning and Speed Limit Alert. A detailed report of Euro NCAP's findings can be found on the organization's website

<http://www.euroncap.com/en/results/infiniti/q30/22031>. Prior to the Q30, Infiniti received a five-star rating from Euro NCAP for the Q50 Sports Sedan. When it was launched in Europe in 2013, that vehicle was also praised by Thatcham, the UK Motor Insurance Repair Research Centre, for having one of the most advanced standard fit collision avoidance systems that the Centre had ever tested.



OPEC MARKET SHARE TO SHRINK BY 2020

RIVALS KEEP PUMPING DESPITE OIL COLLAPSE

LONDON: Global demand for OPEC's crude will be lower in 2020 than next year as supply from rivals proves more resilient than expected, potentially fuelling a debate on the merits of its strategy to let prices fall to hurt other producers. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, which a year ago refused to cut supply to retain market share against higher-cost rivals, in its 2015 World Oil Outlook raised its global supply forecasts for tight oil, which includes shale, despite a collapse in prices.

Demand for OPEC crude will reach 30.70 million barrels per day (bpd) in 2020, OPEC said, lower than 30.90 million bpd next year. The expected demand from OPEC in 2020 is about 1 million bpd less than it is currently producing. Oil has more than halved its price in 18 months and sank to an 11-year low of \$36.04 a barrel this week. The drop has helped to boost oil's medium-term use, although OPEC said the demand stimulus of low crude prices will fade over time. "The impact of the recent oil price decline on demand is most visible in the short term," OPEC Secretary-General Abdullah Al-Badri wrote in the foreword to the report. "It then drops away over the medium term."

OPEC is increasingly divided over the merits of the 2014 shift to a market-share strategy, which was led by Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies, and at a Dec. 4 meeting failed to agree a production ceiling for the first time in decades.

Nonetheless, the report shows that the medium-term outlook - from OPEC's point of view as the supplier of a third of the world's oil - has improved. In the 2014 edition, demand for OPEC crude was expected to fall to 29.0 million bpd by 2020. OPEC said it stopped modeling work on the report in mid-year, since when it has updated its forecast of 2016 non-OPEC supply to a decline. OPEC figures in the report do not include Indonesia, which rejoined in December. The main figures in the report showing OPEC medium-term market share under pressure are unchanged from those in a confidential OPEC report Reuters obtained in November.

Resilient shale

OPEC initially downplayed the impact of shale oil, although its annual outlook in 2012 acknowledged for the first time that the effect could be "significant". Years of high prices - supported by OPEC's former policy of cutting supply - helped make non-conventional oil such as shale viable. In a change of tack from previous reports, OPEC now says many projects work at lower prices too. "The most prolific zones within some plays can break even at levels below the prices observed in 2015, and are thus likely to see continued production growth," the report said. Global tight oil output will reach 5.19 million bpd by 2020, peak at 5.61 million bpd in 2030 and ease to 5.18 million bpd in 2040, the

report said, as Argentina and Russia join North America as producers.

Last year's estimates were 4.50 million bpd by 2020 and 4 million bpd by 2040.

Under another, upside supply scenario, tight oil production could spread to Mexico and China and bring supply to almost 8 million bpd by 2040, OPEC said. As recently as 2013, OPEC assumed tight oil would have no impact outside North America. The report supports the view that OPEC's market share will rise in the long run as rival supply growth fades. OPEC crude demand is expected to reach 40.70 million bpd in 2040, amounting to 37 percent of world supply, up from 33 percent in 2015.

OPEC nudged up its medium-term world oil demand forecast, expecting oil use to reach 97.40 million bpd by 2020, 500,000 bpd more than in last year's report. But factors including slower economic growth, the limited share of the crude cost in pump prices and the falling value of some domestic currencies against the dollar will limit the demand response to lower crude prices, OPEC said. By 2040, OPEC expects demand to reach 109.80 million bpd, 1.3 million bpd lower than a year ago, reduced by energy efficiency and climate-change mitigation efforts. Only a gentle recovery in oil prices is seen. OPEC's basket of crude oils is assumed in the report at \$55 in 2015 and to rise by \$5 a year to reach \$80 by 2020. — Reuters



FORD NAMED ONE OF LINKEDIN'S 2015 'TOP 50 MOST INDEMAND EMPLOYERS'

DUBAI: Ford Motor Company has been recognized as one of the world's most attractive employers for 2015, according to LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network on the internet. In the "Top 50 Most InDemand Employers in Middle East and North Africa" list released, Ford ranks 43rd, and is the only global automotive OEM to appear on the business-oriented social networking service's list. According to LinkedIn, the InDemand list represents the most sought-after companies based

on billions of interactions between LinkedIn's 395 million-plus members and employers' company pages, as well as employee profiles, and job postings.

"At Ford our greatest resource is our employees, and this honor is a testament to their hard work and dedication. We work hard at Ford to create an exciting and high-performing work environment that provides challenging and rewarding careers," said Jim Benitende, President of Ford Middle East and Africa. "We are incredibly

pleased to be honored as the top automotive company on the 'Top 50 Most InDemand Employers in the Middle East and North Africa', and this will help motivate us to continue to engage our employees in new and interesting ways in 2016."

Rather than relying on questionnaires, the InDemand employer rankings measure the actual behavior of professionals on LinkedIn - including reach, engagement, and job activity - as they explore their career journey.

MOST MENA RESPONDENTS FEEL POSITIVE ABOUT 2016

BAYT.COM MENA SURVEY

DUBAI: Professionals in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) are looking forward to the New Year, according to the Bayt.com/Holidays in the MENA Workplace Poll. The vast majority of respondents (79.6%) will be making career New Year's resolutions. In fact, 30.4% of them have already resolved to work harder next year. Feelings about 2016 are very positive: 38.7% describe their feelings as "very positive" and 33.2% as "excited", compared to only 19% describing their feelings as "anxious" and 9.2% as "neutral". 57.1% say that the new calendar year affects their levels of excitement towards work, while only 31% are "not affected at all".

An impressive 93% of professionals believe in "reinventing oneself, career and/or life" and 83.1% say they would like their career and life to be "very different" next year. More than half of MENA companies (52.4%) hold events to celebrate public holidays at least once a year, according to employed poll respondents, with 23.6% of companies hosting several events throughout the year. When asked about their working environment during holiday seasons, the majority of poll respondents (66.3%) felt that the office environment is "more fun" during the holidays, with a third believing it is "a lot more fun". A third of respondents also felt that the office environment "does not change" during the holidays.

More than half of employed MENA respondents feel that their productivity is not affected by the weather (57.5%); however, 42.5% are affected with 24.7% stating that they "work best in spring/summer", while 17.8% say that they "work best in fall/winter". The holiday season also affects productivity for 38.2% of employed respondents, but with only 20.8% saying that it is "affected to a large extent". A third denies that productivity is affected at all. In fact, more than a third of poll respondents (34.1%) "almost always" work on a public holiday, while 44.7% "work occasionally". Only 21.2% said that they do not work during public holidays at all. When it comes to favorite holiday activities for employees around the MENA region, travel tops the

list for 30.1% of those surveyed. 22.2% claim to travel during "almost every holiday", while 30.3% travel once or twice a year. Almost a third admit that they "rarely" travel for the holidays, while 18% claim to "never travel" at all. Other favorite holiday activities are "spending time with family" (21.3%), "going out with friends" (15.2%); and "partaking in outdoor activities" (10.9%).

In terms of New Year's resolutions, the majority of poll respondents (30.4%) have resolved to work harder in the New Year. 17.8% have decided to change their job or career, while 17.2% would prefer to travel more. Other resolutions included taking a course (8.1%), getting organized (6%) and joining a gym or losing weight (5.4%). The majority of respondents also claim to have stuck to last year's resolutions (79.8%); however, almost half of these (48.9%) admit to "only sticking to their resolutions to some extent". "The fact that employees are resolving to improve their working habits and work harder in the New Year is a boon for workplaces throughout the MENA region," said Suhail Masri, VP of Sales, Bayt.com. "At Bayt.com, it is our mission to provide professionals with the tools and knowledge to discover the regional trends and use these to make better decisions when it comes to hiring and retaining top talent. We encourage professionals in the Middle East keen on reinventing themselves and their careers in 2016 to use the holiday season to learn new skills that would empower them to do so."

They can join career discussions already taking place on Bayt.com Specialties, where millions of professionals are engaging in career conversations. They can also take courses and tests designed with their upward mobility in mind. Bayt.com wishes everyone a blessed holiday season and a happy New Year! Data for the Bayt.com "Holidays in the MENA Workplace" poll was collected online from 20 November-18 December 2015, with 7,708 respondents from the UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Algeria, Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, Iraq, Libya, and Yemen.

SOUTHERN AFRICA NATIONS FACING FOOD SHORTAGES

JOHANNESBURG: Southern Africa faces food shortages as drought, exacerbated by the El Nino weather pattern, delays planting and stunts crops across the region, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has said in an alert. "The presence of a strong El Nino episode in 2015/16 raises serious concerns regarding the impact on food insecurity," the FAO said in the alert, issued late on Tuesday. Regional harvests last season were also badly affected by drought conditions, raising the spectre of back-to-back production declines of key cereal crops such as maize.

"In 2015 maize production, accounting for nearly 80 percent of the total cereal output, declined by 27 percent on account of adverse weather," the FAO said. "The steep contraction has resulted in a tight supply situation in the 2015/16 marketing year (generally May/April) and raised import requirements for most countries." Small-scale farmers in countries such as Malawi and Zambia are especially vulnerable as their plots are almost entirely dependent on the rain.

Maize prices in South Africa, the continent's top producer of the staple crop, are near record highs in the face of rolling heat waves and poor rains over key growing areas. The December maize contract, which expired yesterday, closed at 4,160 rand a ton, almost double its closing levels last year, according to Thomson Reuters' data. It scaled a record high of 4,250 rand a ton on Monday. The South African Weather Service said last week that temperatures would remain higher than normal and rainfall levels would be below average into the autumn season in May because of the El Nino, a warming of ocean surface temperatures in the eastern and central Pacific that occurs every few years. — Reuters

TURKMENISTAN EYES WESTERN MARKETS WITH \$2.5 B GAS LINK

BELEK: Turkmenistan hailed yesterday the completion of a \$2.5 billion gas pipeline connecting its abundant eastern gas fields to the Caspian Sea while potentially expanding Europe's energy security options. The approximately 800-kilometre long East-West pipeline could connect the isolated state possessing the world's fourth largest gas reserves with markets in the West via an ambitious link that would traverse the Caspian. "With the completion of the East-West pipeline, cooperation with our European partners acquires a new quality," said Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov at the opening ceremony at the Belek compressor station, some 500 km northwest of the capital, Ashgabat.

The East-West pipeline may prove an important component of a bigger link planned by the European Union, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Georgia that would funnel natural gas along the floor of the Caspian before connecting with pipelines threading into Europe. The Trans-Caspian pipeline is expected to cost around \$5 billion and could carry as much as 30 billion cubic meters of natural gas annually in the direction of the EU. The pipeline would provide Europe with an opportunity to lessen its dependence on Russia-sourced gas. — AFP

VOICE OF CHANGE OR LIFESTYLE BIBLES: BLOGS FLOURISH IN 2015

PARIS: Thought to be on the wane a decade ago, blogs in 2015 are alive and well as a powerful voice driving change in politics, human rights and lifestyle choices across the globe. In some parts of the world, they are the only vehicle to raise taboo topics, often with dire or even deadly consequences for the authors. In mainly Muslim Bangladesh, hardline Islamist militants hacked to death four atheist bloggers and a publisher in the past year for writing what they consider heretical material.

Blogging has become a massive phenomenon in the impoverished country in recent years, with bloggers, some of whom attract tens of thousands of followers, dealing with issues considered no-go zones for the mainstream media. "Bloggers are the biggest challenge for the evil forces in the country. For telling the blunt truth without hesitation, the bloggers are becoming the targets of these bad people," said top blogger Arif Jebtik, who himself has been threatened by Islamist militants for his writings.

"It is easier for the bloggers to reach a general crowd with sensitive issues such as politics, religion and human rights over the Internet, since the national media sometimes has censorship and tend to avoid focus on these topics," said Imran H Sarker, head of Bangladesh Online Activists' Network (BOAN). Bloggers-with their ability to reach vast audiences

uncensored-have been a thorn in the side of authoritarian regimes elsewhere around the globe, with Saudi Arabia's Raif Badawi among the most famous examples. The outspoken advocate of free speech was arrested in 2012 on charges of "insulting Islam" through his writing, and has since been convicted to 10 years in prison and 1,000 lashes, sparking international outrage. He received the first 50 lashes in January and subsequent beatings have been continuously postponed. Blogging in the kingdom "is not very popular... because we can get into a lot of trouble," says Eman Al-Nafjan, who has written the "Saudiwoman's Weblog" since 2008 (<http://saudiwoman.me/>).

In Ethiopia, six bloggers from the Zone 9 (<http://zone9ethio.blogspot.com>) website were arrested in April 2014 and charged with terrorism. Two were released in July and four were acquitted of the charges in October. Around the world, the blogosphere remained vibrant in 2015, with some 76 million sites on Wordpress and 360 million on Tumblr.

Shift to lifestyle in West

In the West, lifestyle blogs on everything from fashion to food to travel have continued to grow in popularity in 2015, even as political blogs have been ceding ground to social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Take the case of Sarah Dawalibi, a passionate traveller

who in 2009 decided to start a blog to keep her friends and family in France up to speed on her adventures around the world. Six years later 'Le Blog de Sarah' (<http://www.leblogdesarah.com>) has become a veritable reference bible in the country, with some 30,000 people reading it each month.

"People have more confidence in a blog than in a travel magazine," says Dawalibi. "Lots of readers ask bloggers for advice."

They have a feeling that they know you, since when you blog, you reveal quite a bit about yourself." Blogs-short for web logs-appeared in 1999 with the Blogger site, which for the first time allowed people to create a website without knowing programming codes. By the mid-2000s, blogs became the centre of debate on the web, before the emergence of Facebook and Twitter in 2004 and 2006, respectively.

"With the surge in subscribers to Facebook and Twitter, the prominence of blogs begins to decline as the number of users on these social media platforms increase," says Antoinette Pole, a professor at Montclair State University in New Jersey and a specialist in political blogs. "Currently, much more discussion and debate occurs through Facebook or Twitter. While blogs still exist, their popularity indeed appears to have waned over the last 3-4 years. That said, their utility is in their ability to provide greater depth, almost akin to a web-

site. And, still some genres of blogs remain popular."

Most of the traditional media, including AFP, have also waded into the blogosphere, giving their reporters and writers a chance to write more personal takes on their work and postings. "I started blogging in 2002 on a lark, inspired by some other sites I was reading and to spare my friends, who didn't always share my interests, from having to listen to me talk endlessly about books and politics," says Maud Newton, who in 2002 launched one of the first literary blogs (<http://maudnewton.com>). "I was astonished when, within a year or two, it began to be mentioned and cited in publications like New York Magazine, the New York Times Book Review, the Evening Standard, The New Yorker, and so on."

"Over the years, my blog led to my writing for many newspapers, magazines, websites, and hybrids of these. Eventually I became a columnist for the New York Times Magazine."

Standing out in the blog crowd - since anyone and everyone can create their own blog, thousands are created every day - depends on the genre.

"If you are a food, fashion, or travel blogger then the images on your blog are critical," says Pole. "This is a major draw for blogs of this ilk." "In contrast, if you're discussing sports or politics or even literature, images probably are not as important, so the writing becomes paramount." — AFP



SPACE: This NASA image shows Expedition 46 Flight Engineer Tim Kopra on a December 21, 2015 spacewalk, in which Kopra and Expedition 46 Commander Scott Kelly successfully moved the International Space Station's mobile transporter rail car ahead of the docking of a Russian cargo supply spacecraft. — AFP

NASA SUSPENDS LAUNCH OF INSIGHT MISSION TO MARS

CHICAGO: NASA has suspended the March 2016 launch of its InSight mission to Mars because of problems with a key scientific component, the US space agency said Tuesday. The next launch window will not occur until around May 2018 and NASA said it does not yet know if it will be able to continue with the mission given budget constraints.

The InSight lander was set to delve deep beneath the Red Planet's surface in order to discover how the solar system's rocky planets formed. "Learning about the interior structure of Mars has been a high priority objective for planetary scientists since the Viking era," said John Grunsfeld, associate administrator for NASA's Science Mission Directorate in Washington.

"We push the boundaries of space technology with our missions to enable science, but space exploration is unforgiving, and the bottom line is that we're not ready to launch in the 2016 window," he said in a statement.

The problematic instrument is a seismometer provided by France's Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales (CNES), designed to measure ground movements as small as the diameter of an atom. "It's a hard blow," CNES president Jean-Yves Le Gall said.

"This is one of the risks of the job. The good news is that our system was able to discover the problem when it was still here on Earth." NASA said the decision to delay follows unsuccessful attempts to repair a leak affecting the device, which requires a vacuum seal around its three main sensors to withstand the harsh

conditions of the Martian environment.

A leak discovered earlier this year, that prevented it from retaining vacuum conditions, was successfully repaired, and the mission team "was hopeful the most recent fix also would be successful."

However, the instrument once again failed to hold a vacuum during testing on Monday in extreme cold temperature. "It's the first time ever that such a sensitive instrument has been built," said Marc Pircher, Director of CNES's Toulouse Space Centre. "We were very close to succeeding, but an anomaly has occurred, which requires further investigation. Our teams will find a solution to fix it, but it won't be solved in time for a launch in 2016." The relative positions of the planets are most favorable for launching missions from Earth to Mars for only a few weeks every 26 months, according to NASA's statement.

"For InSight, that 2016 launch window existed from March 4 to March 30," the space agency said. "A decision on a path forward will be made in the coming months, but one thing is clear: NASA remains fully committed to the scientific discovery and exploration of Mars," added Grunsfeld.

While the InSight launch is important, Grunsfeld said the suspension "doesn't affect the sequence of any other missions." Plans to send a manned mission to Mars in the 2030s remain "on track," NASA said. NASA is currently working on three Mars missions with the European Space Agency and plans to send another rover to Mars in 2020. — AFP

DRONE HELPS ICEBREAKER NAVIGATE TREACHEROUS THE ANTARCTIC WATERS

SYDNEY: Australia's flagship icebreaker has for the first time used drone technology to navigate treacherous Antarctic waters, overcoming significant technical hurdles, officials said yesterday. The Aurora Australis is on an annual resupply voyage to Australia's Casey research station with images of sea-ice conditions from the quadcopter drone helping navigation decisions.

The Australian Antarctic Division said the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) was proving to be a valuable addition to the current suite

of sea-ice navigation tools, which include satellite imagery and radar. But it has not been plain sailing in the sub-zero conditions. "The electronics do not like snow, the batteries do not like the cold, and the drone's compass did not like the ship's thousands of tons of steel," Australian UAV director James Rennie said. "Because the compass couldn't calibrate on the ship and its need to work alongside the unit's GPS, there was potential for the UAV to behave unpredictably." — AFP



YANGON: Thet San (background) stands past model airplanes hung inside a drone accessories shop in Yangon. In a ramshackle workshop tucked behind a bustling Yangon market, Kyi Tha fixes a drone's plastic propeller and gives it a vigorous spin, testing a home-made product for eager Myanmar flying enthusiasts who refuse to let poverty clip the wings of their hi-tech dreams. — AFP

GOOGLE DEVELOPING NEW MESSAGING APP

YOUTUBE RAMPS 360-DEGREE VIDEO WITH 'SPOTLIGHT STORIES'

CALIFORNIA: Google, part of Alphabet Inc, is building a new mobile messaging application to better compete with rival services such as those offered by Facebook Inc, The Wall Street Journal reported. The new service would tap into Google's artificial intelligence know-how, integrating chatbots, or software programs that answer questions, inside a messaging app, the Journal reported on Tuesday, citing people familiar with the matter.

(<http://on.wsj.com/1NBajmA>) The new app will enable users to text friends or a chatbot, which will search the web and other sources for information to answer a question. It is unclear when the service will be launched, or what it will be named, the report said. Google declined to comment. Popular messaging apps include Facebook's WhatsApp and Messenger services, and Tencent Holdings Ltd's WeChat, while Google has a service called Hangouts.

360-degree video

Meanwhile, YouTube has added interactive, 360-degree animation video to its line-up, with help from the makers of "Wallace and Gromit." Dubbed "Spotlight Stories," the new feature will be viewable on the YouTube app of an array of Android-powered smartphones. Showcasing the technology was a Santa-themed short film from Academy Award-winning studio Aardman Animations, entitled "Special Delivery."

The animated short centers on a building custodian trying to find a "mysterious stranger" who remains just out of sight but leaves behind a trail of gifts.

Designed by Google as a new form of storytelling, the immersive films allow users to drill



Virginia Tech Center for Technology Development Program Administration Specialist Greg Brown seen behind the wheel of a driverless car during a test ride showing the alert system handing over automation to the driver while traveling street in Blacksburg, Va. — AP

down into sub-stories within their plot by moving their phone towards what they want to see. "The sensors on your phone allow the story to be interactive, so when you move your phone to various scenes, you unlock mini-stories within the story," technical project lead Rachid El

Guerrab said in a blog post. "Special Delivery" features 10 subplots and three potential endings. Google Spotlight Stories will be expanded next year to more Android devices as well as a YouTube application for mobile devices powered by Apple software, El Guerrab said. — Agencies

BAHAMIAN CHARGED WITH HACKING CELEBS' EMAILS, STEALING SCRIPTS

NEW YORK: A Bahamian man hacked into celebrities' email accounts to steal unreleased movie and TV scripts and private sex tapes and sought to peddle some of the scripts, boasting to an undercover agent that he had dossiers on at least 130 accounts of stars and bigshots in entertainment, sports and media, federal prosecutors said. Alonzo Knowles was being held without bail after a court appearance Tuesday on criminal copyright infringement and identity theft charges as prosecutors described a scheme that also involved proffering an actor's passport, Social Security numbers for three professional athletes, unreleased tracks from a singer-songwriter's upcoming album and an explicit video grabbed from a radio host's email account.

Though none of the victims were identified, prosecutor Kristy Greenberg told a judge that several agents had spoken to were "quite traumatized" by the theft of their personal information. "This case has all of the elements of the kind of blockbuster script the defendant, Alonzo Knowles, is alleged to have stolen," Manhattan US Attorney Preet Bharara said in a statement. "Unfortunately, these circumstances are all too real." The case comes at a time when security is a sensitive subject in Hollywood. Hackers calling themselves Guardians of Peace broke into Sony Pictures Entertainment computers last year and released thousands of emails, documents, Social Security numbers and other personal information in an attempt to derail the release of the North Korean-focused comedy "The Interview."

The US government blamed North Korea for the attack. Subsequently, former Sony Pictures co-chair Amy Pascal left her position after the hack revealed embarrassing emails that included racially insensitive remarks about President Barack Obama's purported taste in movies, and Sony Pictures agreed to pay current and former employees up to \$8 million to reimburse them for identity-theft losses and other costs.

Also last year, hackers broke into female celebrities' personal Apple accounts, stole nude photos and posted them on the web. Jennifer Lawrence and Mary Elizabeth Winstead have said they were victims of the hack attack. The investigation into the 23-year-old Knowles

began only this month, after "a popular radio host" received an unsolicited offer from someone selling scripts for the next season of a popular TV drama, according to court papers. The radio host contacted the show's executive producer, who called Department of Homeland Security investigators.

Authorities followed that offer to Knowles, of Freeport, Bahamas, who called himself "Jeff Moxey" and claimed to have "exclusive content" worth hundreds of thousands of dollars, Homeland Security Special Agent Michael McDonald said in a complaint. Within days, Knowles - via video call - was showing an undercover agent scripts for an unreleased comedy movie, a new TV show, and other materials, some marked as having been distributed to actors, the complaint said. Knowles said he'd gotten into celebrities'

accounts by sending either a computer virus or a false warning that the person's account had been hacked, and then using the information he got back to change the accounts' email settings so he could maintain ongoing access, it said.

"The possibilities are definitely unlimited," Knowles told the undercover agent in a recorded conversation, according to the complaint. On Dec 12, Knowles sent the undercover agent a sexually explicit image and a video from the email account of a second radio host that the host had received from another victim described as a "television host and columnist," the complaint said. It says he claimed, "This is just an example of things I can get." At a meeting in New York on Monday, the day he was arrested, he offered to sell the undercover agent about 15 TV and movie scripts for \$80,000, it said. — AP

THE DANGERS OF KEEPING OUTDATED JAVA SOFTWARE

SAN FRANCISCO: PC users will see more warnings about the dangers of keeping outdated software on their machines, under a legal settlement negotiated by tech giant Oracle and regulators at the Federal Trade Commission. The FTC says Oracle Corp deceived consumers for several years by promising that updating their Java software would keep them safe from malware and hacking attacks. Until last year, the FTC says, the update tool provided by Oracle did not remove some older versions of Java, which meant PCs were still vulnerable.

Many consumers aren't aware they use Java, which comes pre-installed on many PCs and helps with the operation of many web-based functions, including online calculators, games, chatrooms and even viewing 3D images. The FTC estimates Java can be found on more than 850 million PCs. Oracle was aware since 2010 that older versions of Java had security flaws that left their users vulnerable to malicious attacks, according to the FTC. But earlier update procedures installed a new version of the program without removing the older ones. Oracle later changed its Java update tool to make it remove the most recent

version, the FTC says. But until August 2014, the tool still left some older versions untouched.

The FTC says Oracle revised its Java update tool again last year, to help users remove all earlier versions. Even so, some PC users may still have older versions on their machines. In a statement announcing the settlement, the FTC said Oracle's internal documents show that it knew that its earlier procedures left some PCs vulnerable to hacking, despite its assurances to PC users. An Oracle spokeswoman declined comment Monday.

Without admitting any wrongdoing, Oracle settled an FTC complaint by promising that current and future Java updates will automatically search for all older versions of the software. If an older version is found, the update tool will notify PC users of the security risk and provide a way for removing it. Oracle also promised to publicize the danger of leaving older versions of Java on PCs, by posting notices on social media and sending bulletins to leading distributors of security software. PC users can remove old versions of Java by updating to the current version, Java 8, or by using the tool at java.com/uninstall. — AP

ANTI-MARIJUANA ADS PROVOKES LAUGHTER

SYDNEY: An anti-marijuana campaign in Australia featuring a human-sized lumbering stoned sloth acting foolishly has backfired and become the brunt of jokes on social media. Launched this week using the slogan "You're worse on weed", it attempts to warn teenagers of the dangers of sustained cannabis use by depicting those who smoke it as grumbling, oversized "stoner sloths".

But it has been widely mocked as "ridiculously funny" with thousands of comments on its Facebook page, which has attracted more than 16,000 likes. "Smoke weed, become one of the most adorable animals in the world. Where do I get some weed?" wrote Andrew Watton-Davies while Scott Hobson noted that: "I literally can't tell if it's satire or legit."

Even Premier Mike Baird, whose New South Wales state government is behind the campaign, has poked fun at it. "Just saw

the #StonerSloth ads. Not sure where NSW Gov's ad guys found Chewbaccas siblings, but those videos are ... Quite something," he tweeted, referring to the "Star Wars" character. The National Cannabis Prevention and Information Centre said the ad did not reflect its views on how campaigns stressing the dangers of cannabis should be handled.

In a statement, it said any campaign should "be aware that teenagers are intelligent and have access to a lot of information, so campaign approaches should respect them and give them credit by avoiding hyperbole". The NSW Greens called it "juvenile" but the state government insisted it was designed to reach young people before cannabis use became a serious problem. "The campaign is designed to appeal to, and be 'shareable' among, teenagers who are some of the most vulnerable to cannabis use," it said. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Leon Perkins, 3, leans forward to take a bite of snow as he plays with his brother Conner, left, 2, and his father Erin at Snoqualmie Pass. The Seattle family headed to the mountains Tuesday to enjoy the new snow that fell overnight. — AP

STRANGE WEATHER PATTERNS ACROSS US LINKED TO EL NINO

COUNTY BASKING IN ABOVE-AVERAGE TEMPERATURES

SEATTLE: Astrid Rau just baked 16 kinds of Christmas cookies, including a batch in the shape of snowflakes. But she's nevertheless having trouble getting in the holiday spirit, thanks to forecasts that have the temperature in her hometown of Perkasie, Pennsylvania, hitting 72 degrees on Thursday. "I associate cold with Christmas," the 55-year-old says. "And if it's warm it just doesn't feel quite right to me."

A weather pattern partly linked with El Nino has turned winter upside-down across the US during a week of heavy holiday travel, bringing spring-like warmth to the Northeast, a risk of tornadoes in the South and so much snow across the West that even skiing slopes have been overwhelmed. In a reversal of a typical Christmas, forecasters expect New York to be in the mid-60s on the holiday - several degrees higher than Los Angeles.

The mild conditions have helped golf courses in New England do brisk business, but the pattern comes at a steep cost for ski resorts that have closed and for backcountry skiers who confront avalanche risks. And like Rau, many Americans complain that it just doesn't feel like the holidays without a chill in the air. "It's been a great snow season so far from the Rockies to the higher elevations in the Cascades and the northern Sierras, and it's been the total opposite on the East Coast," said Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service.

Record warmth

Big parts of the county are basking in above-average temperatures, especially east of the Mississippi and across the Northern Plains. Record warmth was expected on Christmas Eve along the East Coast, Oravec said. He laid the credit - or blame - with a strong El Nino pattern, the warming of surface waters in the Pacific Ocean near the equator. That's helped drive warm air west to east across the Lower 48 and

kept colder air from the Arctic at bay, he said.

In the Pacific Northwest and California, the effects of El Nino haven't really hit yet. They're typically seen in January through March, and the heavy rains and snows in the region are probably not linked to the phenomenon, said Washington State Climatologist Nick Bond.

The winter in the Pacific Northwest is still predicted to be drier than normal, so the series of storms that dumped feet of snow in the Cascades this month and piled the snowpack back above normal, were helpful, he said. Come summer, farmers and salmon alike will rely on that melting snow. In Washington, authorities have closed the state's main east-west route, Interstate 90, over the Cascade Mountains repeatedly this week due to heavy snows and avalanche danger. Officials closed a sledding hill near Snoqualmie Pass on Tuesday because the storm kept the state Transportation Department from plowing the parking lot. On Sunday, a heavy storm closed Oregon's Mount Ashland Ski Area when it knocked out power.

California is in its driest four-year span on record, and experts anticipate a possible fifth year of drought. Weather forecasters say a strong El Nino weather system could drench the state, but one good, wet winter won't be enough to rehydrate the parched land. A fresh round of chilly rain was expected to hit San Francisco late this week. The same system was expected to drop some 4 feet of snow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. While ski resorts celebrated a deluge that threatened to drop almost 2 feet of snow in parts of Colorado's mountains, forecasters warned of serious avalanche risks. An avalanche near the Montana-Wyoming state line on Sunday buried three snowmobilers, killing a 33-year-old North Dakota man. Another avalanche partially buried a ski patrol employee at the Snowbasin resort, about 45 miles north of Salt Lake City, and two snowboarders were caught in a backcountry

slide southwest of Breckenridge Ski Area on Saturday. They escaped serious injury.

"We're giving our generally weak snowpack a very large and rapid load, and it's unlikely to be able to hold up," said Brian Lazar, deputy director of the Colorado Avalanche Information Center. Warnings and advisories were posted for much of Colorado's high country, with an emphasis on the risk of large, dangerous slides in steep terrain.

Striking weather

Meanwhile, the National Weather Service said the most recent storm had raised the level of Lake Tahoe by about 2 inches since midnight Monday. Officials calculated that that's nearly 6.4 billion gallons of water. Elsewhere, severe thunderstorms and possible tornadoes were forecast in northern Alabama, northern Mississippi, Arkansas and western Tennessee. Tornadoes are not unheard-of in the region in late December, but the extreme weather, driven by warm temperatures and large amounts of moisture in the atmosphere, was nonetheless striking, said Jeff Masters, director of meteorology at Weather Underground.

In addition to El Nino, a weather pattern called the North Atlantic Oscillation is also helping keep cold air bottled up in the Arctic. Combine that with warm temperatures around the planet from man-made global warming, he said, and you have a recipe for intense weather: "There are a couple of natural patterns at work, and then there's this human-caused component too." With such balmy temperatures in the Northeast, Pine Oaks Golf Club in Easton, Massachusetts, is probably having its busiest December since it was built more than 50 years ago - a bonus for a club that doesn't count on much winter revenue. "We've got 65 degrees coming up on Christmas Eve," said Scott Ibbitsen, a golf specialist at the course. "It'll be our busiest December day ever." — AP



SEATTLE: In this Dec 15, 2015, file photo, a Chipotle Mexican Grill employee prepares food. After an E. coli outbreak that sickened more than 50 people, Chipotle is changing its cooking methods to prevent the nightmare situation from happening again. — AP

CHIPOTLE TWEAKS COOKING AFTER RECENT E COLI SCARE

NEW YORK: After an E coli outbreak that sickened more than 50 people, Chipotle is tweaking its cooking methods. Onions will be dipped in boiling water to kill germs before they're chopped. Raw chicken will be marinated in re-sealable plastic bags, rather than in bowls. Cilantro will be added to freshly cooked rice so the heat gets rid of microbes in the garnish.

"When you're given a project like this, you look at the universe of hazards," said Mansour Samadpour, CEO of IEH Laboratories, which was hired by Chipotle to tighten its procedures. The changes mark a dramatic turn in fortunes for Chipotle, which has surged in popularity by touting its "Food With Integrity" slogan. As it expanded to more than 1,900 locations, the company also sought to draw a distinction between itself and other fast-food chains that executives said use "chemical additives" and "cheap artificial ingredients."

Now, Chipotle Mexican Grill Inc may be suffering from traits that helped define it. In its annual report in February, the company noted it may be at a higher risk for food borne illnesses because of its use of "fresh produce and meats rather than frozen," and its traditional cooking methods, rather than "automation." The warning started coming to life this summer when the chain was tied to food borne illnesses in California and Minnesota, although those cases didn't get as much attention.

Then, at the end of October, E coli cases were reported in Oregon and Washington, prompting the company to shut down 43 restaurants in those states. YouGov Brand Index said customer perceptions about Chipotle sank to their lowest level since it began tracking the company in 2007. That was before additional cases popped up in seven more states.

Sickened dozens

In November, sales crashed 16 percent. Then, an unrelated norovirus outbreak sickened dozens of students at Boston College. And this week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported five more cases of E coli in later November linked to Chipotle, which it said might not be part of the larger outbreak. The CDC hasn't identi-

fied what triggered the E. coli cases, and Chipotle executives say they may never be able to identify what made people sick.

In the meantime, the company can't afford to wait and figure out what went wrong. Chipotle spokesman Chris Arnold said many of changes will be implemented in coming weeks, but that the company doesn't expect the taste of its food to suffer. Among the tweaks the company is making:

Cheese will now arrive in restaurants shredded. Ingredients like onions will be macerated with lemon or lime juice to kill germs. 60 samples of every 2,000 pounds of steak will be tested before it's sent to stores. A similar testing program will be implemented for chicken in coming weeks. Pork and barbacoa beef are already delivered cooked in sealed bags.

Tomatoes, cilantro and other ingredients will be chopped in centralized locations, rather than in stores, so they can be tested. Chipotle has said in the past that tomatoes taste better when freshly diced in restaurants. After the outbreak, Chipotle co-CEO Steve Eells changed tunes: "If I'm eating a burrito that had tomatoes that were chopped in a central kitchen in the salsa or one that was chopped in house, I probably couldn't tell the difference," he said in an interview on CNBC last week.

Not all chopping will be moved to centralized locations. Onions, for instance, would oxidize and smell bad if they were chopped days in advance, Samadpour said. So they will remain chopped on in restaurants, along with lemons, limes and jalapenos. All will now be blanched to kill germs. Still, the road for Chipotle to recover its image may be long.

The industry got a wake-up call in 1993, when an E. coli outbreak linked to Jack in the Box sickened hundreds and left four dead. But the scare didn't extinguish the problem. After being tied to an E coli outbreak in late 2006, Taco Bell's sales fell for multiple quarters. Barclays analyst Jeffrey Bernstein has noted Chipotle's recovery may take longer than other chains that have been hurt by food borne illnesses, because social media has increased people's awareness of such incidents. — AP

TOP LAWYER REJECTS CLAIMS AGAINST NEW TOBACCO LAW

LUXEMBOURG: A senior lawyer for the EU's top court yesterday rejected claims, including by US tobacco giant Philip Morris, that the bloc's new law on plain packaging and banning flavors was illegal. Philip Morris International, maker of iconic brands such as Marlboro, said it would challenge the rules on the grounds they distorted the EU's single market and undercut consumer choice.

The company, along with British American Tobacco, especially criticized the plain packaging requirement which eliminates manufacturers' branding and product claims in favor of dominant health warnings. Advocate General Juliane Kokott said the EU legislation had been properly adopted in 2014 and aimed to ensure standard practice across the 28-nation bloc so as to combat the health risks associated with smoking.

Kokott said the legislation meant all tobacco manufacturers were on a level playing field and they could not claim discrimination. The

European Union's standardization of the labeling and packaging of tobacco products was "proportionate," Kokott said in a statement issued by the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg. "They make a particular contribution to increasing the visibility of health warnings and maximizing their efficacy," she said, citing the special need to make smoking unattractive to younger people.

As for a ban on menthol cigarettes, contested by Poland, Kokott said there was "a serious risk that flavored cigarettes will facilitate initiation of tobacco consumption for non-smokers and make it more difficult for habitual smokers to escape nicotine addiction."

"The necessity of an EU-wide prohibition on all characterizing flavors, including menthol, cannot seriously be called into question, particularly in view of the precautionary principle and the standards of the WHO," Kokott said the EU was similarly correct in introducing restrictions on e-cigarettes. —AFP

CLINTON ANNOUNCES \$2 BN EFFORT TO CURE ALZHEIMER'S

WASHINGTON: US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton announced Tuesday a \$2 billion annual effort to cure Alzheimer's disease by 2025, calling for doubling federal spending to combat the illness. The Democratic front-runner plans to introduce her proposal in Iowa during her last presidential campaign swing before the holidays. The funding is coupled with proposals to aid the 15 million Americans caring for those afflicted by the illness. The proposal marks the first time a presidential candidate has made combating Alzheimer's a campaign issue, according to advocates, and is part of a larger effort by Clinton to increasing funding for health research.

"We owe it to the millions of families who stay up at night worrying about their loved ones afflicted by this terrible disease and facing the hard reality of the long goodbye to make research investments that will prevent, effectively treat and make a cure possible by 2025," Clinton said. "The best scientific minds tell us we have a real chance to make groundbreaking progress on curing this disease and relieving the pain so many families feel every day." Five million Americans have been diagnosed with Alzheimer's, a number that's expected to increase to 15 million by 2050. The disease is the sixth leading cause of death in the United States and disproportionately impacts minorities and women. Two out of three Alzheimer's patients are women.

Clinton's plan would guarantee consistent funding so researchers can work toward advancing treatment, not only for Alzheimer's but other neurodegenerative illness including Parkinson's disease and Lewy body dementia. Clinton will pay for her plan by closing tax loopholes, though her campaign did not specify which ones.

"Our single bottle-neck has been funding. We are budget-constrained not a knowledge-constrained field," said Alzheimer's expert Rudolph Tanzi, who discovered many of the genes leading to Alzheimer's and oversees a research center at Massachusetts General Hospital. "Hopefully with \$2b a year we can finally do the work we need to do." Last year, the US government spent \$586 million on the disease. The 2016 budget signed by President Barack Obama last week will increase federal funding to \$936 million annually. Total costs may exceed \$1 trillion by 2050, according to estimates. — AP



Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton

HEALTH ISSUES PERSIST FOR EBOLA SURVIVORS

PARIS: The lucky ones who survive Ebola may suffer potentially blinding vision problems, hearing loss and joint pain for months afterwards, medical experts reported yesterday. Many endured the debilitating after-effects without access to treatment in West African countries stretched beyond their limits by the worst Ebola outbreak in history.

Of 277 survivors examined at a clinic in Sierra Leone, about four months after they were discharged, nearly 80 percent reported joint pain, said the experts. Sixty percent experienced vision problems, 18 percent suffered eye inflammation that could make them blind, and a quarter reported hearing difficulties.

"The numbers were higher than we initially expected," study lead author Sharmistha Mishra of the University of Toronto told AFP by email.

There had been reports of Ebola after-effects before this outbreak, which started in December 2013. But the new study, published in The Lancet Infectious Diseases, claimed to be the largest and most detailed yet into the nature of post-Ebola complications, and how widespread they were.

Survivors of the outbreak in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea "are experiencing significant long-term effects with potential for long-term disability including visual loss," said Mishra. The West African outbreak has killed over 11,300 of more than 28,600 people infected. In the affected countries, not even primary care is readily accessible, the study authors said. Specialist treatment are also rare, Sierra Leone had two ophthalmologists at the time of the outbreak. —AFP



Daniel and Dr Graham Davies

PIONEERING TRANSPLANT SAVES BABY DANIEL'S LIFE

Is there a greater fear than your child undergoing continual suffering? And is there no greater gift than someone saving them? Stela Pirvu probably ponders over these questions as she recounts the time she brought her son Daniel to Professor Graham Davies and his team from Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH), for a pioneering thymus transplant. Daniel Pirvu was diagnosed in early life with complete DiGeorge Syndrome a condition with many complications including immunodeficiency, defects of the heart, thymus and parathyroid glands as well as abnormalities of the palate.

Daniel presented with a range of conditions that led doctors to conclude he had Complete DiGeorge Syndrome with a complete absence of the thymus gland. This essentially meant he had an extremely poor immune system and was vulnerable to many dangerous infections. In fact at one point, Daniel was so ill that his internal organs began to fail and doctors were reserved about his chances of survival. "The life expectancy of children with Complete DiGeorge Syndrome is typically less than two years," Stela, his mother,

explains "When he was first diagnosed I just couldn't help but cry. The fear of the unknown was at times unbearable." All doctors would offer was an unrelated bone marrow transplant - a procedure never before performed for a primary immunodeficiency in Romania.

At this point, Stela had described her son's chances of survival as "extremely low to zero". A doctor suggested a thymus transplant to Stela but unfortunately such a transplant was only available at two hospitals in the world, GOSH in London and Duke University in North Carolina, USA. These seemed inaccessible to Daniel. Luckily Daniel was able to come to GOSH when he was 16 months old after his mother conducted extensive research into thymus transplants, and found Dr Louise Markert from Duke University who put her in touch with Professor Davies.

Professor Davies was conducting research into thymus transplants for children with DiGeorge Syndrome at GOSH at the time, and immediately identified the urgency of a transplant for Daniel. "The thymus gland is a 'school' for the immune system" he explains, "through the thymus gland the immune system devel-

ops and is 'taught' how to recognise and attack invading germs but not the body's own cells." The procedure for the transplant was a long process which involved cultivating slivers of the thymus in a laboratory for a number of weeks and then placing them into Daniel's thigh muscles. "The recovery of the immune system after a thymus transplant is slow," Professor Davies continues, "it can take months for it to start working."

Daniel's recovery from the transplant was particularly slow due to complications from a BCG (tuberculosis) inoculation he had been given as a baby. However, his immune system has begun to show signs of improvement and Prof Davies is optimistic about the transplant's long term success. Although Daniel still suffers from the additional complications linked to DiGeorge Syndrome, he has remained stable and free of significant infections since his return home last year.

"He is a very active, cheeky and happy little boy. Full of curiosity and life he loves listening to music, interacting with nature and numbers, and loves hugs and cuddles," Stela lovingly says. Now 3 years old, Daniel's future

looks bright and his family remains to be hopeful and positive about his future.

Stela praises the work of Professor Davies and his team. "I honestly have no words to describe Dr Graham Davies and express his interest. Of course he is very dedicated to his work and highly professional...but even above that he has an extremely kind and generous heart. To us he is the Doctor that saved Daniel's life, and I cannot think of a way to describe how thankful we are that we had the chance to meet him."

Professor Davies asserts that "Children needing thymus transplants are rare. It is a complex procedure that requires highly specialised laboratory facilities. We were fortunate at GOSH, as when we were setting up the programme we had gene and cell therapy programmes which use the same facilities. Without these and the supporting team at GOSH we would not have been able to conduct this research." Prof Davies plans to continue to provide these transplants in the future and hopes to expand it to include those who do not suffer from DiGeorge Syndrome, yet lack thymus function for other reasons.

Davies is a consultant paediatric immunologist at Great Ormond Street Hospital and an honorary Professor in Paediatric Immunology at University College London, Institute of Child Health.

Great Ormond Street Hospital in London is recognised as one of the few truly world-class hospitals for children. GOSH is a world-leading research centre, conducting research into areas including rare diseases, cancer, genetics and immunology. In partnership with University College London (UCL) Institute of Child Health (ICH) GOSH is one of the top five research institutions for children in the world. GOSH is the only academic Biomedical Research Centre in the UK to be dedicated to children's health and between 2010-2014, GOSH/ICH research papers had the highest citation impact of any of the top children's hospitals in the world, as reported by Thomson Reuters. GOSH also places great emphasis on the support and care provided for children by nurturing an open and supportive atmosphere, ensuring that parents and patients are well informed and closely involved in the treatment process.

MORE YOUNG ADULTS SIGNING UP FOR OBAMA HEALTH LAW

WASHINGTON: Midway through sign-up season, more young adults are getting coverage through President Barack Obama's health care law. The number of new customers is also trending higher, officials said Tuesday in an upbeat report.

Outside analysts who reviewed the administration's update said it reflects encouraging progress, but that may not dispel questions about the long-term future of the health insurance markets created under Obama's 2010 overhaul. Premiums have been going up and getting new sign-ups remains a challenge.

Administration statistics also showed some continuing problems verifying the citizenship and income of applicants for subsidized coverage. Consumer advocates say those issues generally stem from the complexity of the law, and that many people who run into verification problems simply drop out. Some become uninsured again.

Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia M Burwell said more than 8.2 million people signed up or renewed coverage for 2016 from Nov. 1 through Dec. 19. Open enrollment ends on Jan. 31. People who remain uninsured after that risk rising fines. "We're off to a strong start," Burwell said Tuesday, noting that the numbers reflect only the 38 states using the HealthCare.gov website and call center. Major states running their own programs, including California and New York, were not counted in Tuesday's report, and their totals will be factored in later.

About 2.4 million people who've signed up are new to HealthCare.gov, said Burwell, ahead of last year's levels. And 2.1 million are under age 35, a coveted demographic because young adults tend

to be healthy and their participation helps keep premiums in check. The number of younger adults signed up is close to double what it was at this point last year. Obama's health care law offers subsidized private health insurance to people who don't have access to job-based coverage. This year nearly 85 percent of customers nationwide are receiving assistance that averages \$271 a month.

Between the insurance markets and the law's Medicaid expansion for low-income people, the health care law has helped bring down the nation's uninsured rate to 9 percent, a historic low. That translates to more than 16 million people gaining coverage since the law passed five years ago.

Tuesday's update amounted to a half-time report on the 2016 enrollment season. Independent analysts said the administration should be able to meet or exceed its ultimate goal, which is having 10 million people signed up and paying premiums at the end of 2016. As of Sept. 30, the insurance markets had about 9.3 million people enrolled and paying their premiums.

In the past, about 1 in 5 of those signed up at the start of the year has dropped out later. Some probably found jobs with health insurance benefits. Elizabeth Carpenter of the consulting firm Avalere Health said the administration seems to be on track to exceed its 2016 enrollment goal, after attrition. "The bigger question is if this sort of modest year-over-year growth is sufficient to ensure a balanced, stable risk pool over time and continue to attract insurer participation," added Carpenter. — AP

SOME CARDIAC ARREST VICTIMS IGNORE WARNING SYMPTOMS

WASHINGTON: Sudden cardiac arrest may not always be so sudden: New research suggests a lot of people may ignore potentially life-saving warning signs hours, days, even a few weeks before they collapse.

Cardiac arrest claims about 350,000 U.S. lives a year. It's not a heart attack, but worse: The heart abruptly stops beating, its electrical activity knocked out of rhythm. CPR can buy critical time, but so few patients survive that it's been hard to tell if the long-time medical belief is correct that it's a strike with little or no advance warning.

An unusual study that has closely tracked sudden cardiac arrest in Portland, Oregon, for over a decade got around that roadblock, using interviews with witnesses, family and friends after patients collapse and tracking down their medical records.

About half of middle-aged patients for whom symptom information could be found had experienced warning signs, mostly chest pain or shortness of breath, in the month before suffering a cardiac arrest, researchers reported Monday. The research offers the possibility of one day preventing some cardiac arrests if doctors could figure out how to find and treat the people most at risk.

'Much too late'

"By the time the 911 call is made, it's much too late for at least 90 percent of people," said Dr Sumeet Chugh of the Cedars-Sinai Heart Institute in Los Angeles, who led the study reported in *Annals of Internal Medicine*. "There's this window of opportunity that we really didn't know existed." Importantly, a fraction of patients considered



LOS ANGELES: This Jan 4, 2008 file photo shows Cedars-Sinai Medical Center. — AP

their symptoms bad enough to call 911 before they collapsed, and they were most likely to survive. That's a reminder to the public not to ignore possible signs of heart trouble in hopes they're just indigestion, said University of Pittsburgh emergency medicine specialist Dr. Clifton Callaway, who wasn't involved in Monday's study but praised it.

"Chest pain, shortness of breath - those are things you should come in the middle of the night to the emergency department and get checked out," said Callaway, who chairs the American Heart

Association's emergency care committee. "We strongly recommend you don't try to ride it out at home." Previous heart attacks, coronary heart disease, and certain inherited disorders that affect heartbeat all can increase the risk of sudden cardiac arrest. People known to be at high risk may receive an implanted defibrillator to shock the heart back into rhythm. But cardiac arrest is such a public health problem that the Institute of Medicine last summer urged a national campaign to teach CPR, so more bystanders know how to help. — AP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199





Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
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



Dr Amir Zeid, RISE Director, introducing the speaker



Presentation by Basel Al-Othman, Founder of KuwaitHackers.com



Live hacking experiment



RISE CENTER AT AUK HOLDS LECTURE ENTITLED, 'LIVE MOBILE HACKING'



Dr. Zeid presenting Certificate of Appreciation to the guest speaker

The Center for Research in Informatics, Sciences and Engineering (RISE) at the American University of Kuwait (AUK) held a lecture on Thursday entitled, "Live Mobile Hacking: Malware Attacks and Data Protection," delivered by Founder of KuwaitHackers.com, Basel Al-Othman. The lecture highlighted how vulnerable general mobile users are to malicious hacking attempts and introduced ways to ensure data protection against malware attacks. The event was open to member of the AUK community and the public.

RISE Director, Dr. Amir Zeid, welcomed the attendees to the interactive lecture that was aimed to provide an understanding of smartphone hacking threats and techniques. "We live in a world that is virtually wrapped into a net of rapidly evolving cutting-edge technologies. Our connectivity is greatly empowering, yet poses new points of vulnerability that we must be aware of," Dr. Zeid noted, "To

be able to navigate through the cyber threats that we may be vulnerable to, both collectively and individually, is key to what this lecture aims to achieve."

To demonstrate how easily smartphones can be hacked, and how smartphone security operates, Founder of KuwaitHackers.com, Basel Al-Othman, made the audience witness an actual hacking attempt, instigated by himself, and hacked a smartphone live. "We practically live our lives online. It is imperative that we understand the risks involved," Al-Othman said, "Credit card information, personal photos, sound files and chat messages may be in jeopardy, if one isn't cautious of potential threats." Al-Othman received his M.Sc. in Computer Science from the University of Hertfordshire, with a specialization in computer security. He is currently an Information Security doctoral candidate at De Montfort University in Leicester, UK. In addition to his work as a hacking instructor

and penetration-testing expert, Al-Othman's research interests include machine learning botnet detection and malware analysis for intrusion detection and prevention.

The AUK Center for Research in Informatics, Sciences, and Engineering (RISE) serves as AUK's primary source for research and development activities, a bridge to industry, and an important venue for community outreach. RISE adapts an integrative model by forging connections between academic disciplines, local & international innovators, academia & industry, as well as technology & society.

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.



UNDER THE CAPTION: EAT BETTER LIVE BETTER

The Eat Better Live Better event which launch the new menu that entails new breakfast items and protein sweets. LaSalade is a restaurant that caters food for various tastes and needs. The mission of our restaurant is to provide light and healthy food away from any fried products. We focus to increase awareness that eating healthy is not a punishment since you can still enjoy your favorite meals with light ingredients and with proper taste. As well the restaurant has a monthly prescription program for weight loss, body builders and fitness.



ASSE KUWAIT CHAPTER ORGANISES DEVELOPMENT CONFERENCE 2015

American Society of Safety Engineers (ASSE), Kuwait Chapter is a premier voluntary, non-profit making Health, Safety and Environmental organization, which strives to provide professional guidance, training, consultancy and resources to the industrial and social sectors in the region.

As a part of continuous efforts in its professional journey, ASSE Kuwait Chapter is organizing the 8th International HSSE & Loss Prevention Professional Development Conference (PDC) and Exhibition on 9th -10th December 2015 at Radisson Blu Hotel, under the patronage of Minister of oil, State of Kuwait.

The two day conference with the Theme "Sharing Experience to Enhance the HSSE Culture" was inaugurated by His Excellency Sheikh Talal Al Sabah, Acting Undersecretary, Minister of Oil, Kuwait.

The inaugural session was attended by Mohammad Husain, President & CEO, EQUATE, Mohammad Ghazi Al Mutairi CEO, Kuwait National Petroleum Company, Ismail Abdullah Deputy CEO, Support Services Kuwait Oil

Company and several other dignitaries from oil sector companies and other distinguished guests attended the function.

Major General Yousef Al Ansari Director, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Michael Belcher, President ASSE USA, Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait, Ashok Garlapati Global Region, Vice President ASSE USA, also participated in the inaugural ceremony.

G Sampath Reddy, President of the ASSE Kuwait Chapter in his welcome address highlighted the activities of the Chapter and welcomed everyone to this prestigious event.

Engr. Fadhel Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait Chapter in his opening address stated the importance of the conference.

Vasudevan, Director of the ASSE Kuwait Chapter's 8th International HSSE & Loss Prevention Professional Development Conference (PDC) and Exhibition, briefed the highlights of the conference, which was organized by the volunteer efforts of the Chapters members.

After the inaugural ceremony an executive panel discussion was held with the participa-

tion of Mohammad Husain President & CEO, EQUATE, Mohammad Ghazi Al Mutairi CEO, Kuwait National Petroleum Company, Ismail Abdullah Deputy CEO, Support Services Kuwait Oil Company and Mr. Michael Belcher, President ASSE USA. Fadhel Al Ali, Chairman ASSE Kuwait, Vasudevan, Director Professional Development Conference (PDC) also participated in the discussions with question and answers. Bala Siva Srikanth Deputy Director of the Professional Development Conference (PDC) moderated the discussion.

At the end of Executive Panel discussion, Riaz Mohammed Shareef, past president of ASSE Kuwait Chapter and Advisory Committee member was awarded as the chapter safety professional of the Year - 2015.

During the two day conference, symposiums on Process Safety Management, Sustainable Energy and plenary session where 68 technical papers on topic related to the Occupational Health & Industrial Hygiene, Process Safety, Personal Safety, Fire Safety, Environmental Engineering & Management, Loss Prevention, Industrial Security, Behavior

Based Safety (BBS), Ergonomics etc were presented. E-poster exhibition on various topics were presented.

An exposition by major industrial suppliers and service providers were organized during this two day conference which was a major event where the conference delegates had an opportunity to get accustomed to the latest safety and fire equipments in the market.

The advisory board for the PDC 2015 were Mr. Michael Belcher, CSP President, American Society of Safety Engineers, USA, Ismail Abdulla Ali, Deputy CEO (Corporate Services Directorate), Kuwait Oil Company, Khaled Saleh Al Asousi Dy. CEO Support Services, Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC), Major General Yousef Al Ansari Director, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate Ali Al Kshawe Manager (HSE), Kuwait National Petroleum Company. Ahmed A Abbas Manager, (HSE), Kuwait Oil Company Sati S. Al Otaibi Manager (EHS and F&S), JO - Wafra Salem Al Azmi Manager - HSE.

The conference was sponsored by Equate, KOC, KNPC and RIMSCO as platinum sponsors.

The conference was endorsed by International Association of Drilling Contractors (IADC), National Examination Board occupational Safety & Health (NEBOSH) and supported by Board of certified Safety professionals (BCSP), Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), Centre for Chemical Process Safety (CCPS).

More than 350 delegates including managers, team leaders, consultants, specialists, engineers, physicians, coordinators and inspectors & supervisors of various disciplines from oil sector and other companies attended the conference. AUM students who attended the conference and were given free registration for their participation.

The closing ceremony of the conference was held on the afternoon on 10th December. Feedback from the internal and external participant and dignitaries were taken during the closing ceremony. Bala Siva Srikanth, Deputy Director for the 8th International HSSE & Loss Prevention Professional Development Conference (PDC) and Exhibition gave the vote of thanks.



Khaled Alhassan awarding the winner Shaheen Alkhudhari with the presence of Khaled Alsanousi & Eman Alawadhi

GIG SUPPORTS KIPCO TMKEEN AWARD FOR YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

Gulf Insurance Group, a leading company in the field of rendering the insurance services in the State of Kuwait and the Middle East, announced its support for the KIPCO Tmkeen Award for Young Entrepreneurs. The award is a partnership between KIPCO - Kuwait Projects Company - and the Youth Empowerment Symposium (Tmkeen).

Ajar Online, a cloud service built for the real estate market in Kuwait and the GCC, was recently named the

winner of the award. The team includes co-founders Shaheen Alkhudhari and Talal Alyaseen, as well as Mohammad Eid Ebrahim and Ali Ahmad Taqi.

GIG's CEO, Mr. Khalid Saud Al Hassan, commented, "Cooperation with young people through the KIPCO Tmkeen Award has availed us of the opportunity to engage in dialogue with the initiators in the business sector in order to determine the best means to render insurance consultancy and services with the aim of

helping make their projects more sustainable."

Al Hassan pointed out that Gulf Insurance Group's support of this award is based on its vision of supporting Kuwaiti youth, noting that the Group has provided the winner with a range of insurance policies to cover the business's specific needs.

Al Hassan added that Gulf Insurance Group would continue to support the young talents in Kuwait and encourage them to develop projects and build promising futures.

ICSK AMMAN STUDENTS ACHIEVE SUCCESS IN INAK BADMINTON TOURNAMENT

The students of the Indian Community School Kuwait Amman branch have brought glory to the school with their spectacular achievement in the IBAK Inter-School Badminton Tournament 2015 held in Kuwait from 3rd to 5th Dec '15. Master Adhnan Jeff of Class VI C was the winner in the under-12 Singles Boys Category. Master Aidan Anesh Mathew Class V-B & Master Adhnan Jeff Class VI-C were the 2nd Runners up in the doubles under-14 Boys category.

Rajesh Nair, C, Principal expressed his delight and happiness at the excellent performance put up by the students of ICSK Amman and extended his congratulations.



Discovery Channel HD
00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Mythbusters
02:00 The Carbonaro Effect
02:50 You Have Been Warned
03:40 Auction Hunters
04:05 Property Wars
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 Americana
05:30 How It's Made
06:00 Ice Cold Gold
06:50 Kindig Customs
07:40 Fast N' Loud
08:30 Auction Hunters
08:55 Property Wars
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 Americana
10:10 How It's Made
10:35 Auction Hunters
11:00 So You Think You'd Survive?
15:10 The Pop Illusionist
19:20 Sean Conway - Running Britain
20:10 Property Wars
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
21:50 Deadly Islands
22:40 Amish Mafia
23:30 Kindig Customs

Discovery Science
00:35 Mythbusters
01:20 How It's Made
01:44 How It's Made
02:08 Strip The Cosmos
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:42 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
04:29 Mythbusters
05:16 Strip The Cosmos
06:03 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
06:50 X-Machines
07:37 How It's Made
08:00 How It's Made
08:23 Mythbusters
09:08 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
09:53 X-Machines
10:38 How It's Made
11:00 How It's Made
11:23 Food Factory
11:45 Food Factory
12:08 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
12:53 X-Machines
13:38 Mythbusters
14:23 How It's Made
14:46 How It's Made
15:10 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
15:57 Food Factory
16:20 Food Factory
16:44 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
17:31 The Ipod Revolution
18:18 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
19:05 Long March Into Space
19:50 How The Universe Works
20:40 Outrageous Acts Of Psych
23:00 How The Universe Works
23:45 Gadget Show - World Tour

Disney Channel
00:00 Violetta
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Wolfblood
04:35 Wolfblood
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lolirock
06:25 Hank Zipzer
06:50 Girl Meets World
07:15 H2O: Just Add Water
07:40 H2O: Just Add Water
08:05 Austin & Ally
08:30 Austin & Ally
08:55 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
09:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
09:45 Jessie
10:10 Jessie
10:35 Good Luck Charlie: The Road Trip Movie
11:55 The Good Dinosaur Movie Special
12:20 Hank Zipzer
12:45 I Didn't Do It
13:10 I Didn't Do It
13:35 Liv And Maddie
14:00 Liv And Maddie
14:30 H2O: Just Add Water
14:55 H2O: Just Add Water
15:20 Kim Possible

15:45 Kim Possible
16:10 Jessie
16:35 Austin & Ally
17:00 How To Build A Better Boy
18:40 Gravity Falls
19:30 H2O: Just Add Water
19:55 H2O: Just Add Water
20:20 Liv And Maddie
20:45 Good Luck Charlie
21:10 Good Luck Charlie
21:35 Wizards Of Waverly Place
22:00 Binny And The Ghost
22:25 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
22:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
23:10 Wolfblood
23:35 Wolfblood

Disney Junior
00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:20 Callimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Callimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopdidoo
02:30 Art Attack
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Callimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Callimero
04:35 Zou
04:45 Loopdidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Callimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopdidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Callimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopdidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Callimero
08:10 Zou
08:25 Loopdidoo
08:40 Henry Hugglemonster
08:55 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
09:20 Sofia The First
09:45 Miles From Tomorrow
10:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
11:55 Miles From Tomorrow
12:20 Henry Hugglemonster
12:45 Limon And Oil
12:55 Loopdidoo
13:10 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Sofia The First
14:25 Sofia The First
14:50 Miles From Tomorrow
15:15 Captain Jake And The Never Land Pirates
15:40 Captain Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:05 The Adventures Of Disney Fairies
16:35 Miles From Tomorrow
17:00 Sofia The First
17:25 Aladdin
17:50 Adventures Of The Gummi Bears
18:15 Chip N Dale Rescue Rangers
18:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
19:30 Sofia The First
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:35 Sofia The First
22:00 Miles From Tomorrow
23:20 Lilo & Stitch
23:50 Zou

ITV Choice
00:10 Come Date With Me Australia
00:35 Come Date With Me Australia
01:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
02:00 Emmerdale
02:25 Coach Trip
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 The Syndicate
04:20 Seven Days With A Friend
05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
05:40 Come Date With Me Australia
06:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
07:05 Coronation Street
07:30 The Syndicate
08:25 Seven Days With A Friend
09:20 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
10:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
11:05 Coach Trip
11:35 Four Weddings UK
12:30 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Come Date With Me Australia
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
15:35 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
16:30 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
18:10 Coronation Street
19:35 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
20:30 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Four Weddings UK

National Geographic Channel HD
00:10 Do Or Die
00:35 Do Or Die
01:00 Man V. Viral
02:00 Car SOS
02:55 Air Crash Investigation
03:50 Do Or Die
04:15 Do Or Die
04:45 24 Hours In A&E
05:40 Ufos: The Untold Stories
06:35 Mega Factories: Supercars
09:15 Giuliana & Bill
10:15 Giuliana & Bill
11:10 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
11:35 #RichKids Of Beverly Hills
12:05 El News
13:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
14:05 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
15:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
16:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai

16:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
17:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
18:00 El News
19:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 El News
23:00 The Soup
23:30 Sex With Brody

Food Network
00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
00:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Chopped
02:00 Chopped South Africa
03:00 Man Fire Food
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
04:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Holiday Baking Championship
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
07:30 Roadtrip With G. Garvin
08:00 Iron Chef America
09:00 Cooking Christmas With Matt And Lisa
09:30 Cooking Christmas With Matt And Lisa
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 The Pioneer Woman
11:30 The Pioneer Woman
12:00 Food Network All-Star
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 The Kitchen
16:00 Iron Chef America
17:30 The Pioneer Woman
18:00 Jenny And Reza's Fabulous Food Academy
18:30 Cooking Christmas With Matt And Lisa
19:00 Food Network All-Star
20:00 Holiday Baking Championship
21:00 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
22:00 Siba's Table
22:30 Siba's Table
23:00 Iron Chef America

ITV Choice
00:10 Come Date With Me Australia
00:35 Come Date With Me Australia
01:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
02:00 Emmerdale
02:25 Coach Trip
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 The Syndicate
04:20 Seven Days With A Friend
05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
05:40 Come Date With Me Australia
06:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
07:05 Coronation Street
07:30 The Syndicate
08:25 Seven Days With A Friend
09:20 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
10:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
11:05 Coach Trip
11:35 Four Weddings UK
12:30 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Come Date With Me Australia
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
15:35 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
16:30 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
18:10 Coronation Street
19:35 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
20:30 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Four Weddings UK

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 Built For The Kill
01:10 World's Deadliest Animals
02:00 Built For The Kill
02:50 World's Deadliest
03:45 Caught In The Act
04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
05:35 Built For The Kill
06:30 World's Deadliest
07:25 Caught In The Act
08:20 Dark Side Of Crows
09:15 Caught In The Act
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 Outback Wrangler
12:00 Outback Wrangler
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Africa's Deadliest
13:50 Night Stalkers
14:45 Caught In The Act
15:40 Croc Inside Out
16:35 Caught In The Act
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Outback Wrangler
18:50 Outback Wrangler
19:20 Caught In The Act
20:10 Croc Inside Out
21:00 Caught In The Act
21:50 Monster Fish
22:40 Outback Wrangler
23:05 Outback Wrangler
23:30 Fish Warrior

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 Built For The Kill
01:10 World's Deadliest Animals
02:00 Built For The Kill
02:50 World's Deadliest
03:45 Caught In The Act
04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
05:35 Built For The Kill
06:30 World's Deadliest
07:25 Caught In The Act
08:20 Dark Side Of Crows
09:15 Caught In The Act
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 Outback Wrangler
12:00 Outback Wrangler
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Africa's Deadliest
13:50 Night Stalkers
14:45 Caught In The Act
15:40 Croc Inside Out
16:35 Caught In The Act
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Outback Wrangler
18:50 Outback Wrangler
19:20 Caught In The Act
20:10 Croc Inside Out
21:00 Caught In The Act
21:50 Monster Fish
22:40 Outback Wrangler
23:05 Outback Wrangler
23:30 Fish Warrior

17:00 Innovation Nation
17:30 Innovation Nation
18:00 Breakthrough
19:00 Megastructures
20:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai
20:50 Innovation Nation
21:15 Innovation Nation
21:40 Breakthrough
22:30 Megastructures
23:20 Ufos: The Untold Stories

NAT GEO people HD
00:10 American Food Battle
00:35 Eat Street
01:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
01:50 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
02:15 American Food Battle
03:00 Man Fire Food
04:00 A Marriage Of Flavours
03:05 East Bites West With Chef Wan
03:30 East Bites West With Chef Wan
03:55 Meat v Veg
04:20 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
04:45 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
05:10 Access 360 World Heritage
06:00 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
06:25 Poh & Co.
06:50 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
07:40 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
08:05 American Food Battle
08:30 A Marriage Of Flavours
08:55 East Bites West With Chef Wan
09:20 East Bites West With Chef Wan
09:45 Meat v Veg
10:10 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
10:35 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
11:00 Access 360 World Heritage
11:50 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
12:15 Poh & Co.
12:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
13:35 World's Best Chefs
14:00 The Wine Quest: Spain
14:30 Top Tables, Top Cities
14:55 Street Food Around The World
15:25 Grandma's Boy
15:50 Grandma's Boy
16:20 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
16:45 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
17:15 Dream Cruises
18:10 The Wine Quest: Spain
18:35 Poh & Co.
19:05 Street Food Around The World
19:30 Grandma's Boy
19:55 Mummy Fall
20:20 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
20:50 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
21:15 Dream Cruises
22:05 The Wine Quest: Spain
22:30 Poh & Co.
22:55 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
23:45 World's Best Chefs

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 Built For The Kill
01:10 World's Deadliest Animals
02:00 Built For The Kill
02:50 World's Deadliest
03:45 Caught In The Act
04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
05:35 Built For The Kill
06:30 World's Deadliest
07:25 Caught In The Act
08:20 Dark Side Of Crows
09:15 Caught In The Act
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 Outback Wrangler
12:00 Outback Wrangler
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Africa's Deadliest
13:50 Night Stalkers
14:45 Caught In The Act
15:40 Croc Inside Out
16:35 Caught In The Act
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Outback Wrangler
18:50 Outback Wrangler
19:20 Caught In The Act
20:10 Croc Inside Out
21:00 Caught In The Act
21:50 Monster Fish
22:40 Outback Wrangler
23:05 Outback Wrangler
23:30 Fish Warrior

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 Built For The Kill
01:10 World's Deadliest Animals
02:00 Built For The Kill
02:50 World's Deadliest
03:45 Caught In The Act
04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
05:35 Built For The Kill
06:30 World's Deadliest
07:25 Caught In The Act
08:20 Dark Side Of Crows
09:15 Caught In The Act
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 Outback Wrangler
12:00 Outback Wrangler
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Africa's Deadliest
13:50 Night Stalkers
14:45 Caught In The Act
15:40 Croc Inside Out
16:35 Caught In The Act
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Outback Wrangler
18:50 Outback Wrangler
19:20 Caught In The Act
20:10 Croc Inside Out
21:00 Caught In The Act
21:50 Monster Fish
22:40 Outback Wrangler
23:05 Outback Wrangler
23:30 Fish Warrior

NAT GEO WILD HD
00:20 Built For The Kill
01:10 World's Deadliest Animals
02:00 Built For The Kill
02:50 World's Deadliest
03:45 Caught In The Act
04:40 Ultimate Animal Countdown
05:35 Built For The Kill
06:30 World's Deadliest
07:25 Caught In The Act
08:20 Dark Side Of Crows
09:15 Caught In The Act
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 Outback Wrangler
12:00 Outback Wrangler
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Africa's Deadliest
13:50 Night Stalkers
14:45 Caught In The Act
15:40 Croc Inside Out
16:35 Caught In The Act
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Outback Wrangler
18:50 Outback Wrangler
19:20 Caught In The Act
20:10 Croc Inside Out
21:00 Caught In The Act
21:50 Monster Fish
22:40 Outback Wrangler
23:05 Outback Wrangler
23:30 Fish Warrior



NEIGHBORS ON OSN MOVIES PREMIERE HD

15:30 Hot In Cleveland
16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Mummy Fall
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Hot In Cleveland
21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD

00:00 Better Call Saul
01:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
02:00 The Flash
03:00 American Horror Story: Hotel
04:00 The Fosters
05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
06:00 Castle
07:00 Bones
08:00 Resurrection
09:00 The Fosters
10:00 Castle
11:00 Bones
12:00 Emmerdale
12:30 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Resurrection
15:00 Castle
16:00 Emmerdale
16:30 Coronation Street
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 Resurrection
19:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
20:00 The Flash
21:00 Blindspot
22:00 Empire
23:00 Secrets And Lies

OSN FIRST HD

00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Devious Maids
04:00 The Leftovers
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Emmerdale
07:30 Coronation Street
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
09:00 The Astronaut Wives Club
10:00 Emmerdale
10:30 Coronation Street
11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
13:00 Once Upon A Time
14:00 The Astronaut Wives Club
15:00 Live Good Morning America
08:45 For Greater Glory-PG15
11:15 Stash House-PG15
13:00 Kon-Tiki-PG15
15:00 Christmas Magic-PG15
16:30 For Greater Glory-PG15
19:00 Barefoot-PG15
21:00 Kill The Messenger-PG15
23:00 The Melancholy Fantastic

OSN MOVIES HD

01:15 Se Puder... Dirija!
03:00 The English Teacher
05:00 The Magic Of Belle Isle
07:00 To The Wonder
09:00 Manny
11:00 The Magic Of Belle Isle
13:00 Siberian Education
15:00 The Nightmare Before Christmas
17:00 Manny
19:00 Lost Christmas
21:00 Black Nativity
23:00 American Hustle

OSN MOVIES HD

01:15 Endless Love-PG15
03:00 Pompeii-PG15
05:00 Christmas In Conway-PG15
07:00 Alexander And The Terrible... Very Bad Day-PG
09:00 Penguins Of Madagascar
11:00 Northpole-PG
13:00 Rio 2-FAM
14:45 Into The Woods-PG
17:00 Penguins Of Madagascar
19:00 Night At The Museum: Secret Of The Tomb-PG
21:00 Paddington-PG
23:00 Captain America: The Winter Soldier-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD

01:00 Vampire Dog
04:30 Zorafa
06:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
08:00 Worms

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

00:00 The Dogs Of War
01:45 v For Vendetta
04:00 The Core
06:15 Dying Of The Light
08:00 Superfast
10:00 Special ID
11:45 The Core
14:00 Toxin
16:00 Dying Of The Light
18:00 Getaway
20:00 Special ID
22:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga
23:45 The Power Of Vek

OSN MOVIES ACTION

02:00 The Core-PG15
04:15 Dying Of The Light-PG15
06:00 Superfast-PG15
08:00 Special ID-PG15
09:45 The Core-PG15
12:00 Toxin-PG15
14:00 Dying Of The Light-PG15
16:00 Getaway-PG15
18:00 Special ID-PG15
20:00 Northmen: A Viking Saga
21:45 The Power Of Vek-PG15
23:30 Watchmen-18

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

00:00 She Wants Me
02:00 Shanghai Calling
04:00 Christmas At Castlebury Hall
06:00 Streetdance: All Stars
08:00 Until She Came Along
10:00 Christmas At Castlebury Hall
12:00 Shanghai Calling
14:00 Big Fat Liar
16:00 Until She Came Along
18:00 Cas & Dylan
20:00 Laggies
22:00 The Babymakers

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

01:00 Breathe In-PG15
03:00 Very Good Girls-PG15
05:00 Stash House-PG15
06:45 Romeo & Juliet-PG15
08:45 For Greater Glory-PG15
11:15 Stash House-PG15
13:00 Kon-Tiki-PG15
15:00 Christmas Magic-PG15
16:30 For Greater Glory-PG15
19:00 Barefoot-PG15
21:00 Kill The Messenger-PG15
23:00 The Melancholy Fantastic

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

01:15 Se Puder... Dirija!
03:00 The English Teacher
05:00 The Magic Of Belle Isle
07:00 To The Wonder
09:00 Manny
11:00 The Magic Of Belle Isle
13:00 Siberian Education
15:00 The Nightmare Before Christmas
17:00 Manny
19:00 Lost Christmas
21:00 Black Nativity
23:00 American Hustle

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

01:00 Vampire Dog
04:30 Zorafa
06:00 Columbus In The Last Journey
08:00 Worms

11:05 Tanked
12:00 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 Yankee Jungle
14:45 Ten Deadliest Snakes
15:40 Treehouse Masters
16:35 Tanked
17:30 Shamwari: A Wild Life
17:55 Shamwari: A Wild Life
18:25 Ten Deadliest Snakes
19:20 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Lions And Giants
22:05 Treehouse Masters
23:00 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
23:55 China's Deadliest Snakes
00:50 Gator Boys
01:45 Call Of The Wildman
02:15 Call Of The Wildman
02:40 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet

BBC entertainment

03:55 My Family: Christmas 2008
04:25 My Family: Christmas 2008
05:00 Teletubbies
05:25 Show Me Show Me
05:45 Charlie And Lola
05:55 Doctors
06:20 Show Me Show Me
06:40 Charlie And Lola
06:55 Jollywobles
07:05 Doctor Who: The Day Of The Doctor
08:25 Doctors
08:55 Eastenders
09:25 David Copperfield
10:15 David Copperfield
11:00 Doctor Who: The Day Of The Doctor
12:20 Only Fools And Horses Christmas Special
13:25 David Copperfield
14:15 David Copperfield
15:00 Blackadder's Christmas Carol
15:45 Doctors
16:15 Eastenders
16:45 Doctor Who: The Day Of The Doctor
18:00 Bleak Old Shop Of Stuff: Christmas Special
18:30 Bleak Old Shop Of Stuff: Christmas Special
19:00 Doctors
19:30 Eastenders
20:00 The Turn Of The Screw
21:30 Darna O Britain: Craic Dealer
22:20 Bleak Old Shop Of Stuff: Christmas Special
22:55 Bleak Old Shop Of Stuff: Christmas Special
23:25 Sherlock
00:50 Doctors
01:20 Eastenders
01:50 The Turn Of The Screw

Cartoon Network

03:14 Grojband
03:35 Johnny Test
05:05 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:27 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:50 Regular Show
06:00 The Amazing World Of Gumball
07:00 Adventure Time
07:25 Teen Titans Go!
08:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
08:35 Ben 10 Omniverse
09:20 Nexo Knights
09:45 Nexo Knights
10:10 Regular Show
10:20 Regular Show
10:30 Johnny Test
11:20 Uncle Grandpa
11:40 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
12:05 Teen Titans Go!
12:50 Steven Universe
13:02 Steven Universe
13:15 Regular Show
14:00 Johnny Test
14:50 Adventure Time
15:10 The Amazing World Of Gumball
15:35 The Amazing World Of Gumball
16:00 Ben 10 Omniverse
16:45 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
17:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
17:30 Teen Titans Go!
18:20 Regular Show
19:05 The Amazing World Of Gumball
19:30 Johnny Test
19:40 Johnny Test
19:51 Adventure Time
20:15 Steven Universe
20:27 Steven Universe
20:40 Teen Titans Go!
21:00 Teen Titans: Trouble In Tokyo
22:15 Uncle Grandpa
22:40 Adventure Time
00:10 Regular Show
01:40 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:02 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:25 Grojband
02:51 Grojband

OSN NEWS

01:00 Live MSNBC Mtp Daily
02:00 Live MSNBC News
03:00 Live NBC Nightly News
03:30 ABC World News With David Muir
04:00 Live MSNBC All In With Chris Hayes
05:00 Live MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
06:00 Live MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
07:00 NBC Nightly News
07:30 ABC World News With David Muir
07:57 NBC Nightly News
08:18 Live MSNBC News With David Muir
08:39 Live ABC Nightline
08:56 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
10:00 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
11:00 Live ABC World News Now
11:30 Live ABC World News Now
12:00 Live NBC Early Today
12:30 Live ABC America This Morning
13:00 Live ABC America This Morning
13:30 Live ABC America This Morning
14:00 Live ABC America This Morning
14:30 MSNBC First Look
15:00 Live NBC Today Show
18:57 MSNBC Hardball W/ Chris Matthews
19:38 MSNBC The Rachel Maddow Show
20:19 MSNBC The Last Word W/ Lawrence O'Donnell
21:00 Live MSNBC Live With Thomas Roberts
23:00 Live MSNBC Live With Kate Snow

OSN NEWS

03:40 The Ghost Inside My Child
04:35 Martina Cole's Lady Killers
05:25 The Last Goodbye
06:15 My Haunted House
07:05 The First 48
10:00 Martina Cole's Lady Killers
20:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
23:00 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover
01:45 The Haunting Of...
02:45 50 Ways To Kill Your Lover

AMC

03:30 Earthbound
05:05 Brannigan
06:55 Of Mice And Men
08:45 Improptu
10:30 Rich Kids
12:05 The Tender
13:35 The Man In The Iron Mask
15:45 The Hills Run Red
17:15 Alexander The Great
19:30 True Heart
21:00 Breaking Bad
22:00 Into The Badlands
23:00 Stay Hungry
00:40 FX
02:30 Hide

Disney XD

07:00 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
07:25 Boyster
07:50 Supa Strikas
08:15 Lab Rats
08:40 Frozen In Time
09:35 Kirby Buckets
10:00 Lab Rats
10:25 Kickin' It
10:50 Mighty Med
11:15 Supa Strikas
11:40 K.C Undercover
12:05 Boyster
12:35 Kickin' It
13:00 Phineas And Ferb
13:55 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
14:20 Lab Rats: Bionic Island
14:45 Pair Of Kings
15:15 Pair Of Kings
15:40 Penn Zero: Part Time Hero
16:10 The Naughty List
17:00 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
17:25 K.C Undercover
17:55 Supa Strikas
18:20 Lab Rats
18:45 Mighty Med
19:10 Annedroids
19:40 Kickin' It
20:05 K.C Undercover
20:30 Supa Strikas
20:55 Lab Rats

ANIMAL PLANET HD

03:35 Tanked
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 Treehouse Masters
06:49 Shamwari: A Wild Life
07:12 Shamwari: A Wild Life
07:36 Call Of The Wildman
08:00 Call Of The Wildman
08:25 Ten Deadliest Snakes
09:15 Gator Boys
10:10 Treehouse Masters



A HAUNTED HOUSE ON OSN MOVIES PREMIERE HD

CLASSIFIEDS

Kuwait Times
Now you can browse
www.kuwaittimes.net
e-mail: info@kuwaittimes.net



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (24/12/2015 TO 30/12/2015)

SHARQIA-1
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 11:45 AM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 1:45 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 4:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 6:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 12:05 AM

SHARQIA-2
POINT BREAK 12:45 PM
POINT BREAK 3:00 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 5:15 PM
POINT BREAK 8:00 PM
POINT BREAK 10:15 PM
POINT BREAK 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
KHANET EL YEK 1:00 PM
STOMPING GROUND 3:00 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 4:45 PM
KHANET EL YEK 7:00 PM
STOMPING GROUND 9:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 10:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-1
DILWALE - Hindi 11:45 AM
NARCOPOLIS 2:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 4:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 7:45 PM
NARCOPOLIS 10:45 PM
NARCOPOLIS 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-2
KHANET EL YEK 12:15 PM
KHANET EL YEK 2:15 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 4:15 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 7:15 PM
SOUKHYAM - Telugu 4:15 PM
SOUKHYAM - Telugu 7:15 PM
KHANET EL YEK 10:15 PM
KHANET EL YEK 12:15 AM

MUHALAB-3
POINT BREAK 12:30 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 3:00 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 5:00 PM
POINT BREAK 7:00 PM
POINT BREAK 9:30 PM
POINT BREAK 12:05 AM

FANAR-1
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 12:00 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 2:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 4:00 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 6:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 8:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 10:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 12:05 AM

FANAR-2
NARCOPOLIS 11:30 AM
STOMPING GROUND 1:30 PM
NARCOPOLIS 3:15 PM
STOMPING GROUND 5:15 PM
NARCOPOLIS 7:00 PM
STOMPING GROUND 9:00 PM
NARCOPOLIS 10:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 12:45 AM

FANAR-3
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 3:00 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 4:45 PM
DARK MOUNTAIN 7:30 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:30 PM
SOUKHYAM - Telugu 3:30 PM
MAMA MANCHU ALLUDU KANCHU - Telugu 6:30 PM
SOUKHYAM - Telugu 9:30 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:30 AM

FANAR-4
POINT BREAK -3D 12:00 PM
POINT BREAK 2:30 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:00 PM
POINT BREAK -3D 7:15 PM
POINT BREAK 9:45 PM
POINT BREAK 12:15 AM

FANAR-5
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM
DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 PM

MARINA-1
DILWALE - Hindi 12:45 PM
ROOM 1:30 PM
KHANET EL YEK 3:45 PM
ROOM 6:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 8:30 PM
KHANET EL YEK 10:30 PM
ROOM 12:30 AM

MARINA-2
POINT BREAK 12:15 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 2:45 PM
POINT BREAK 5:30 PM
POINT BREAK 8:00 PM
POINT BREAK 10:15 PM
POINT BREAK 12:45 AM

MARINA-3
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 1:15 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE -3D 3:15 PM
THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:15 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 7:30 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:30 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 AM

AVENUES-1
NARCOPOLIS 1:15 PM
NARCOPOLIS 3:30 PM
NARCOPOLIS 5:45 PM
NARCOPOLIS 8:00 PM
NARCOPOLIS 10:15 PM
NARCOPOLIS 12:30 AM

AVENUES-2
STOMPING GROUND 12:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 2:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 4:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 6:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 8:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 10:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 12:45 AM

AVENUES-3
DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM

DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 5:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi 12:05 AM

360-1
POINT BREAK -3D 1:15 PM
POINT BREAK -3D 3:45 PM
POINT BREAK -3D 6:15 PM
POINT BREAK -3D 8:45 PM
POINT BREAK 11:15 PM

360-2
KHANET EL YEK 12:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 2:15 PM
KHANET EL YEK 4:30 PM
KHANET EL YEK 6:45 PM
KHANET EL YEK 9:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 11:15 AM

360-3
STOMPING GROUND 11:45 AM
STOMPING GROUND 1:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 3:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 5:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 7:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 9:45 PM
STOMPING GROUND 11:45 PM

AL-KOUT.1
POINT BREAK 11:30 AM
POINT BREAK 2:00 PM
POINT BREAK 4:30 PM
POINT BREAK 7:00 PM
POINT BREAK 9:30 PM
POINT BREAK 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.2
KHANET EL YEK 12:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 2:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 4:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 6:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 8:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 10:00 PM
KHANET EL YEK 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.3
STOMPING GROUND 11:45 AM
NARCOPOLIS 1:30 PM
STOMPING GROUND 3:30 PM
NARCOPOLIS 5:15 PM
STOMPING GROUND 7:15 PM
NARCOPOLIS 9:00 PM
STOMPING GROUND 11:00 PM
NARCOPOLIS 12:45 AM

AL-KOUT.4
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:00 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 2:45 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE 4:45 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 6:45 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 8:45 PM
STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 11:45 AM

BAIRAQ-1
KHANET EL YEK 11:30 AM
KHANET EL YEK 1:30 PM
POINT BREAK -3D 3:30 PM
KHANET EL YEK 6:00 PM

SITUATION VACANT

Professional cook for house, good experience all kinds of food, especially Arabic food, good salary, part time. Call: 23901053, 60064934. (C 5102) **21-12-2015**

A single American-Lebanese male living in Salmiya needs a lady worker to help in cooking and cleaning. She must understand and speak English and her timing and salary are negotiable. Call 6641-7504. (C 5100) **19-12-2015**

CHANGE OF NAME

I Dheemu Sudeep holder of Indian Passport No. F6768269 resident of Pulapathur (V & P) Rajampet (M), YSR Kadapa Dist, A.P., India. Now I have changed my name as Bheemu Sudeep Kumar Reddy instead of Dheemu Sudeep in future all transaction will be made in Bheemu Sudeep Kumar Reddy only. (C 5101) **21-12-2015**

LOST

Original document policy No. 633003315 of Muhammad Mali by the State Life Insurance Corporation Pakistan, Gulf Zone is reported to have been lost. Anyone finding the same or claiming any interest in it should communicate with State Life office Kuwait. Tel: 22452208. (C 5099) **16-12-2015**

EMERGENCY
112



Hearty Seasons Greetings to Our Patrons

Let our Confectioneries cater to your Christmas needs

Our Christmas delicacies

- Christmas Plum/Fruit Cake
- Cake (Chocolate/Vanilla)
- Black or White Forest Cake/Trifle Pudding
- Yule Log/"X" Mas Special Cakes
- Date & Walnut Cake Madeira Cake
- Marzipan Sweets
- Ladoo (Boondi/Rava/Besan)
- Soan Pappi • Balushahi
- Mysore Pak • Milk Peda • Kaju Burfi
- Assorted Indian Sweets Box • Chakuli
- Karakaddis, Kidiyos
- Mixture (Chiwda) • Kaju Masala
- Rose Cookies, Rice Ladoo
- Nevri • Assorted Cookies

Available at our Confectioneries in

City Tel.: 22411407 - Fahheel Tel.: 23910445 / 2
Salmiya I Tel.: 25736663 - Salmiya II Tel.: 25642296
Hawally Tel.: 22616195
Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh Tel.: 24318423
Contact: Tel.: 22450504 Fax.: 22421361
www.caesars-kw.com
Email: sales@caesars-kw.com

FOR RENT
In West Mishref
New perfect sized pent house apartment 3 bedroom and 3 bathroom & nanny bedroom with bathroom foreigners only or Co.
Cost 870
99777277

FOR RENT
Second floor 3 bedroom (including master one) apartment in Sabah Al-Salem with reception, two bathrooms, maid room and bath, fully equipped kitchen and lift. (foreigners and expats only)
rent value= **KD 550**
No intermediaries allowed.
Call: **99549533**

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr:	05:13	Asr:	14:36
Shorook	06:38	Maghrib:	16:54
Duhr:	11:46	Isha:	18:17

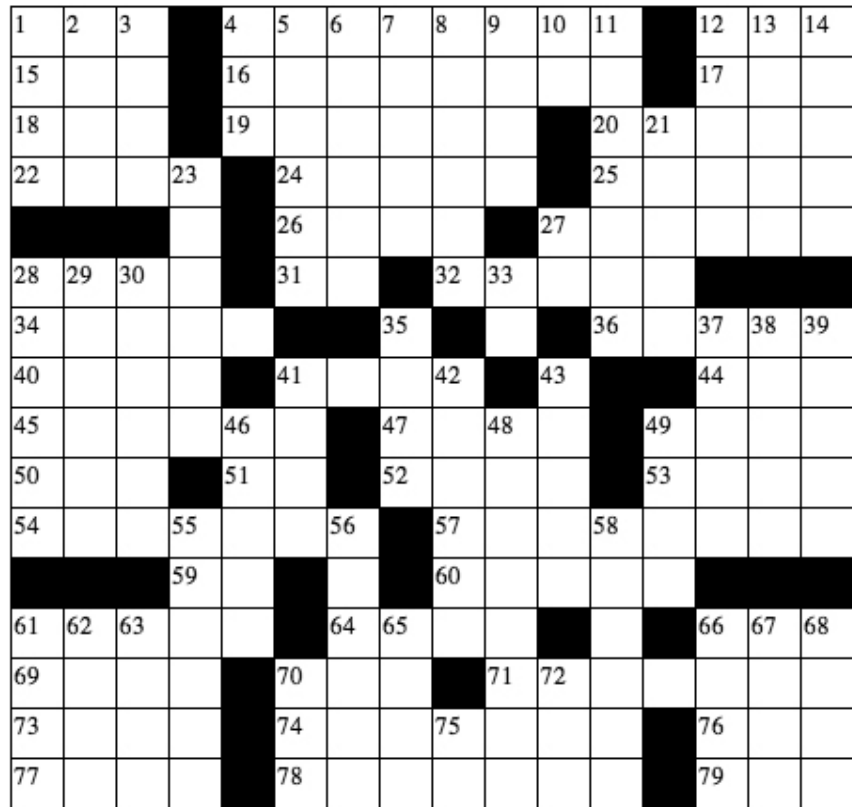
Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers to use seats

Arrival Flights on Thursday 24/12/2015				Departure Flights on Thursday 24/12/2015			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	SYR	342	Damascus	14:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	THY	767	Istanbul	14:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	KNE	481	Taif	14:50
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	JZR	124	Bahrain	15:00
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
PCT	858	Istanbul	02:00	AXB	394	Kozhikode	15:20
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	617	Doha	15:45
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	KAC	741	Dammam	15:50
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20	SVA	505	Jeddah	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	NIA	252	Alexandria	16:30
QTR	8511	Doha	06:10	OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	JAD	302	Amman	16:40
BAW	157	London	06:40	KAC	563	Amman	16:45
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	KNE	475	Jeddah	17:25
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	344	Chennai	08:30	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50	JZR	238	Amman	18:50
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	JZR	554	Alexandria	19:10
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20	ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	UAL	982	Bahrain	19:30
OMA	641	Muscat	10:05	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
IRM	1180	Mashhad	10:10	KAC	353	BLR	20:40
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10	QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	KAC	543	Cairo	20:55
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15	KAC	343	Chennai	21:00
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	MSR	619	Alexandria	21:05
AGY	682	Asyut	11:40	KNE	461	Riyadh	21:10
NIA	151	Cairo	11:55	KNE	122	Sharjah	21:15
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
KAC	204	Lahore	12:20	FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	DLH	634	Doha	21:45
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
JZR	241	Amman	12:50	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
SYR	341	Damascus	13:30	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
THY	766	Istanbul	13:45	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50	QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10	KLM	417	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30	FDB	060	Dubai	23:35
KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45	KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:35
				KAC	415	Kuala Lumpur/Jakarta	23:40

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1119



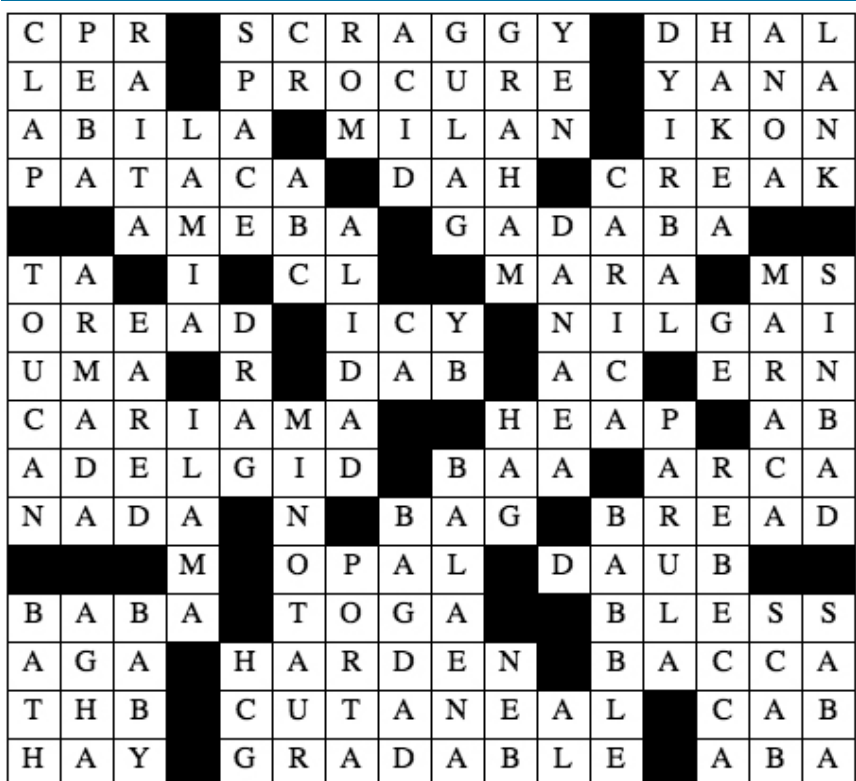
ACROSS

1. Characteristic of a mob.
4. Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
12. The executive agency that advises the President on the federal budget.
15. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
16. Lacking gonads.
17. The molecular weight of a substance expressed in grams.
18. Having leadership guidance.
19. The essential qualities or characteristics by which something is recognized.
20. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
22. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
24. A dark region of considerable extent on the surface of the moon.
25. A state of northeastern India.
26. A theocratic republic in the Middle East in western Asia.
28. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
31. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
32. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
34. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
36. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
40. Any of a group of antidepressant drugs that inhibit the action of monoamine oxidase in the brain and so allow monoamines to accumulate.
44. A spring-flowering shrub or small tree of the genus Crataegus.
45. Similar to the color of a ripe orange.
47. In bed.
50. (Irish) The sea personified.
51. The branch of computer science that deal with writing computer programs that can solve problems creatively.
52. Informal terms for a (young) woman.
53. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
54. Capable of being added or added to.
57. Providing no shelter or sustenance.
59. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
60. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
61. The state prevailing during the absence of war.
64. A river in western Thailand.
69. An Indian nursemaid who looks after children.
71. Resembling an eel in being long and thin and sinuous.
73. Wrap us in a cellophane, as of a corpse.
74. An American operation in World War I (1918).
76. The federal agency that insures residential mortgages.
77. Chief port of Yemen.
78. Give encouragement to.
79. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. English monk and scholar (672-735).
4. Cooking utensil consisting of a wide metal vessel.
5. A lizard of the family Agamidae.
6. Someone legally empowered to witness signatures and certify a document's validity and to take depositions.
7. Frogs, toads, tree toads.
8. A fancy dock for small yachts and cabin cruisers.
9. The content of cognition.
10. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
11. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
12. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
13. An atom having a valence of one.
14. A loud harsh or strident noise.
21. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
23. French painter and exponent of Fauvism (1880-1954).
27. An informal term for a father.
29. Equipped with or connected by gears or having gears engaged.
30. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
33. A ductile silvery-white ductile ferromagnetic trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
35. Wearing or provided with clothing.
37. Green algae common in freshwater lakes of limestone districts.
38. The capital of Morocco.
39. Not in a state of sleep.
41. A garment that covers the head and face.
42. A port city in southwestern Iran.
43. A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
46. The vertical triangular wall between the sloping ends of gable roof.
48. Coming into existence.
49. Offering fun and gaiety.
55. A city in western Germany near the Dutch and Belgian borders.
56. The domain ruled by an emperor or empress.
58. Trade name for an oral contraceptive containing mestranol and a progestin compound.
62. Having an eye or eyes or eyelike feature especially as specified.
63. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
65. Any tree or shrub of the genus Inga having pinnate leaves and showy usually white flowers.
66. A small high-pitched flute similar to a piccolo.
67. A Loloish language.
68. Massive plantigrade carnivorous or omnivorous mammals with long shaggy coats and strong claws.
70. The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
72. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
75. A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.

DOWN

1. A master's degree in library science.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

It might feel like you've been through the emotional ringer lately, but don't worry -- you're due for a break today. Everything is going to go much more smoothly than it has been, and you will benefit from the ambition of others. Let them do all the work while you supervise. Take advantage of this downtime by following up on a travel opportunity. Go and learn more about a culture that you've always been curious about. Fill today with exploration, and feed your curiosity.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

When you feel like you're in too much of a hurry today, slow down! It sounds simple, but lately you have been letting yourself get caught up in the momentum of your days' activities. Like a leaf in a windstorm, you're getting tossed about and starting to feel a bit powerless over your situation. This is nonsense -- if you want things to slow down, you can slow them down. The power is in your hands. It's time for you to remind yourself that you are in control of your own life.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Why not let other people take the wheel today while you just follow along behind them? Not only is it easier to just go with the flow, it can be a lot more interesting too! The universe will still give you the chance to initiate new ideas, plan new social outings or personal projects -- you don't have to be the one in charge to get a green light on new endeavors. Don't confuse power with opportunity. If you do, you'll never get a chance to relax!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Think about a person who really taught you something valuable in your life, and bring that good memory to life in the present for a while. Remembering this person, whose encouragement helped you in the past, will help you keep a positive attitude today. You need to keep hanging in there when times get rough! Honor this person by being a positive and encouraging presence in someone else's life -- lend a hand or give a hug to someone who's feeling extra stress now.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today you'll think that you are too busy for a long debate over issues, but you are wrong -- there is always time to learn more about things that are important to you! When you meet someone who challenges your opinions, don't just smile and pretend you agree. Ask them why they feel the way they feel -- their answer will surprise and intrigue you. That creaking noise is the sound of your mind slowly opening up to the possibility that you could be wrong.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

The problems you had with some feisty coworkers are gone for now, and there is a much lighter mood at work -- it's finally time to exhale. Your emotions have been caught up in a battle that wasn't yours to fight, although the people whose defense you came to really appreciate you sticking your neck out like that. Now it's time to put your focus back where it belongs: On your work. After this brief distraction, you'll find work more rewarding than ever.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Reflecting on your own life isn't selfish -- in a way, it's selfless. By understanding why you do the things you do, you are able to learn the right kind of lessons you need to become a better friend, a better partner, and a better employee. So don't feel bad about wanting to spend time alone, today. Even though other people who are getting together and having fun want you to join them, your energy is much better suited to introspection. It's a good thing.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Something big happens today that will force you to take a controversial stand, but sticking to your principles will cause your friends to admire you even more than they already do. By being so principled, you are becoming a respected member of your social group, and you have power. You can even stop a silly spat between two of your friends from growing into a fiery argument today -- you could be the voice of reason that helps everyone avoid conflict.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Mixing your business with pleasure is not always a bad move -- it just requires very delicate footwork. Are you up for it? Make sure you are, because juggling romance with your workload takes a lot more energy than you might think. Make sure you review your company's policy on the matter, too -- is this person worth losing your job? Keep in mind that you can be flirtatious and have fun without moving things into a stage of 'formal romance,' with all its complications.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

No one will be able to find fault with the points you are making today -- no matter how hard they may look for faults to find! Your mind is sharp and you know the subject you're talking about inside and out. It's time to toss out any insecurity or hesitation you may have felt yesterday: There's no room for anything but confidence and pride, today. You are a star, you are on fire, and you know it. Better yet, everyone else in the room will know it by the time you're through!



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are feeling more experimental today -- you'll be drawn to avant-garde ideas and expressions that used to make you suspicious or even fearful. Suddenly they are making more sense and you are more comfortable with the idea of exploring them. Do it today -- do some research online about the wilder, wackier things you have been hearing about and find out how they could become a part of your life's journey. Your comfort zone is comfortable, but ultimately it is also restrictive. Step out of it!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Are you in the mood to hide from the world? Good, because today the universe is sending you the right amount of energy and a great opportunity to do just that. The high-maintenance people who are usually clamoring for your attention are all occupied with other things right now -- so you are free to do whatever you want, however you want. This quiet 'alone time' will enable you to get back in touch with what you really want to do about a big decision you have been putting off making.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Songs From the Year 2003

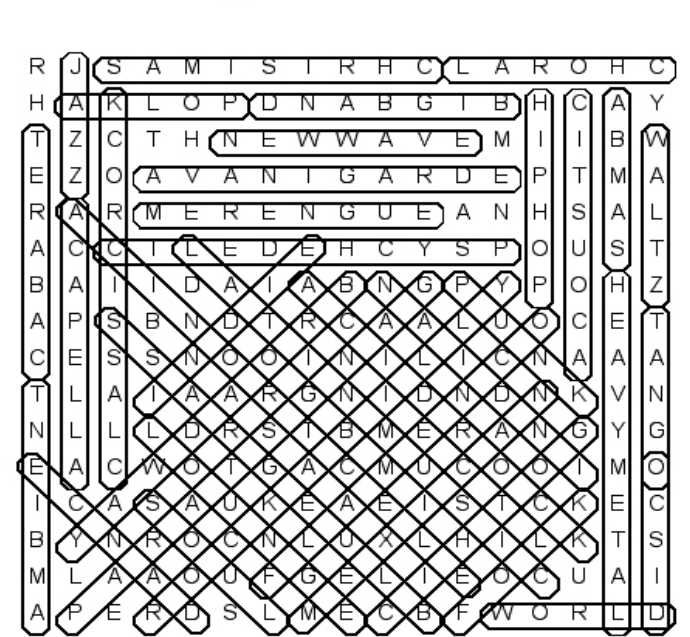
Find and circle all of the songs from 2003 that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell an additional song title from 2003.



- | | | | |
|------------|--------------|--------------|-----------|
| ALL I HAVE | GET LOW | LANDSLIDE | SO GONE |
| ANGEL | GOSSIP FOLKS | LIKE A STONE | SOMEDAY |
| BABY BOY | HEADSTRONG | LIKE GLUE | STAND UP |
| BEAUTIFUL | I CAN | MESMERIZE | STUCK |
| CLOCKS | I WANT YOU | MISS YOU | SUGA SUGA |
| COME OVER | I'M WITH YOU | PICTURE | SUNRISE |
| DRIFT AWAY | IGNITION | RAIN ON ME | SUPERMAN |
| FIGHTER | IN DA CLUB | RIGHT THUR | TROUBLE |
| FRONTIN' | INTO YOU | SAY YES | UNWELL |
| GET BUSY | INTUITION | SENORITA | |

Yesterday's Solution

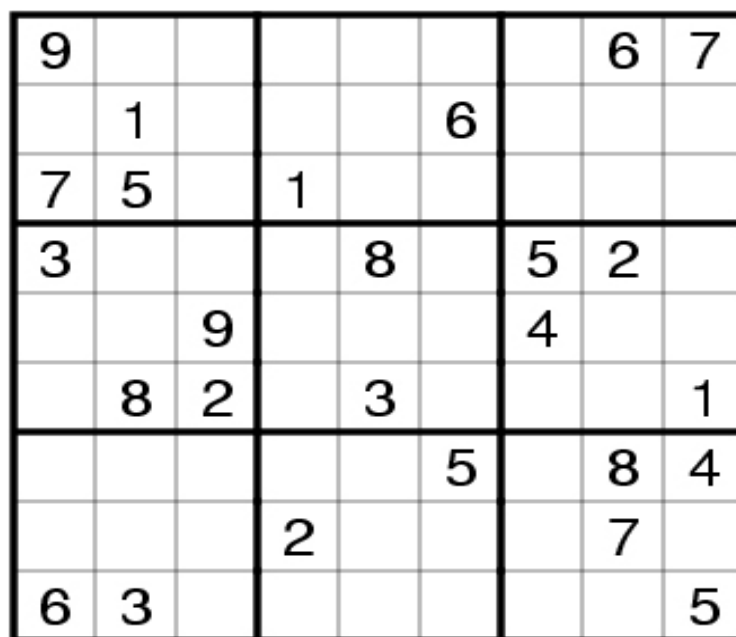
Types of Music 1



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| ACAPPELLA | CHRISTMAS | HIP HOP | PSYCHEDELIC |
| ACID ROCK | CLASSIC ROCK | INDIAN | PUNK |
| ACOUSTIC | DANCE | INDIE | ROCKABILLY |
| AMBIENT | DISCO | JAZZ | SAMBA |
| AVANT-GARDE | ELECTRONICA | LATIN MUSIC | SOUL |
| BIG BAND | FLAMENCO | LOUNGE | TANGO |
| BLUEGRASS | FOLK | MERENQUE | WALTZ |
| BROADWAY | GANGSTA RAP | MEXICAN | WORLD |
| CABARET | GOTHIC | NEW WAVE | |
| CHORAL | HEAVY METAL | POLKA | |

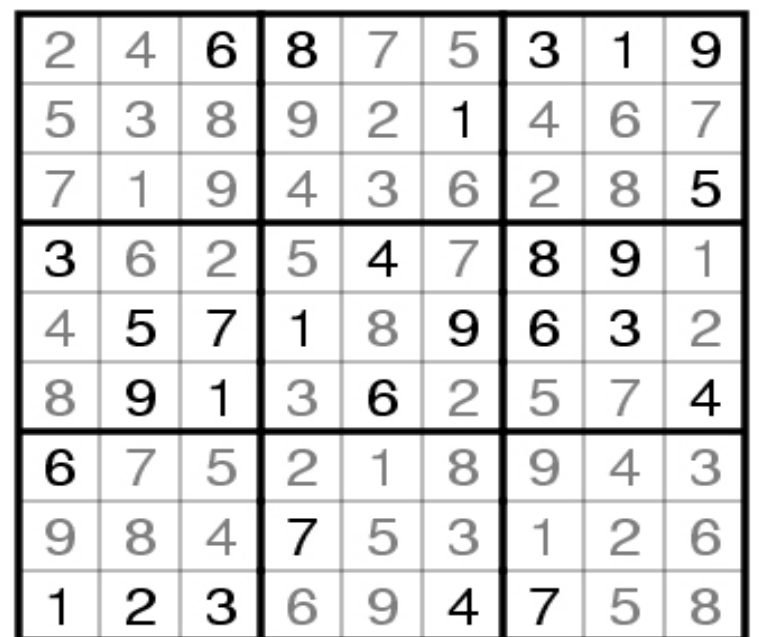
The hidden message is: RHYTHM AND BLUES

Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



medium

For labor-related inquiries and complaints:
Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Lesotho	00266
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	Nigar	00227
Cayman Islands	001345	Nigeria	00234
Central African	00236	Niue	00683
Chad	00235	Norfolk Island	00672
Chile	0056	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
China	0086	North Korea	00850
Colombia	0057	Norway	0047
Comoros	00269	Oman	00968
Congo	00242	Pakistan	0092
Cook Islands	00682	Palau	00680
Costa Rica	00506	Panama	00507
Croatia	00385	Papua New Guinea	00675
Cuba	0053	Paraguay	00595
Cyprus	00357	Peru	0051
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Philippines	0063
Czech Republic	00420	Poland	0048
Denmark	0045	Portugal	00351
Diego Garcia	00246	Puerto Rico	001787
Djibouti	00253	Qatar	00974
Dominica	001767	Romania	0040
Dominican Republic	001809	Russian Federation	007
Ecuador	00593	Rwanda	00250
Egypt	0020	Saint Helena	00290
El Salvador	00503	Saint Kitts	001869
England (UK)	0044	Saint Lucia	001758
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Pierre	00508
Eritrea	00291	Saint Vincent	001784
Estonia	00372	Samoa US	00684
Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
Falkland Islands	00500	San Marino	00378
Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
Grenada	001473	Sri Lanka	0094
Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
Lithuania	00370	Zimbabwe	00263

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 23/12/2015-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 17 °C

By Day : Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually at times variable wind changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for scattered rain that might be thundery at times
By Night : Cloudy with light to moderate freshening gradually at times variable wind changing to north easterly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h with a chance for scattered rain that might be thundery at times

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Expected Weather	cloudy + scattered rain	clouds to decrease + scattered rain	sunny	sunny
Min Temp °C	05	06	04	06
Max Temp °C	14	13	16	17
Wind Direction	north easterly to northerly	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	15 - 35	15 - 35	12 - 35	12 - 35

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Weather Watches

Heavy Rain

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	12		16	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	05		17	
ABDALY	04		19	
BUBYAN	06		19	
JAHRA	09		19	
FAILAKA ISLAND	10		18	
SALMIYAH	12		17	
AHMADI	12		18	
JAL ALIYAH	07		18	
QAROH ISLAND	17		18	
UMH AL-MARADEM	16		18	
NUWAISIB	10		20	
WAFRA	06		19	
MANAGISH	07		18	
SALMY	05		18	
MUTRIBA	05		19	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	19
Min Temp (°C)	06
Max Rel Hum (%)	91
Min Rel Hum (%)	27
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	36 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:39
Sunset	16:55

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:14
Sunrise	06:39
Zuhr	11:47
Asr	14:37
Sunset	16:55
Isha	18:17



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	Plastic Surgeons
Dr. Abidallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	Family Doctor
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	Psychiatrists
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	25736920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	Internists, Chest & Heart
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Paediatricians	Endocrinologist
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	Physiotherapists & VD
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dr. Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abidallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abidallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	Rheumatologists:
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	Internist, Chest & Heart
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC	
Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 23845955	William Schuilenberg, RPC 2290-1677 Zaina Al Zabin, M.Sc. 2290-1677
---------------------------------	---	--	------------------------	----------------------	---

Will Smith enlightened by playing 'Concussion' doctor

While the new Will Smith film "Concussion" may lead some to question their support of the NFL, the forensic pathologist who first drew attention to the dangers of repeated head trauma said he wanted his discoveries to "advance football." "Concussion" tells the true story of Dr Bennet Omalu who stumbled upon an insidious brain disorder affecting football players that began in 2002 with an autopsy on former Pittsburgh Steelers center Mike Webster.

"I had this hunger in me to use my knowledge to become a voice for the voiceless, to make a difference, just like Will Smith," Omalu said. Smith said the script enlightened him about the dangerous effects of multiple concussions. "When I met Bennet and went through the science, I was terrified as a parent," Smith said. "My son played football for four years and I had no idea this was an issue." Omalu studied the brains of NFL players who had died under dubious circumstances, including former NFL players Justin Strzelczyk, Terry Long, and Andre Waters, who are depicted in the film. Strzelczyk was involved in a head-on collision on the wrong side of the highway evading police; Waters shot himself in the head; and Terry Long died from drinking anti-freeze.

Brain disease

His study, in conjunction with the University of Pittsburgh's pathology department, led to the discovery that the former players were suffering from Chronic Traumatic Encephalopathy, or CTE, an asymptomatic brain disease. The effects of the incurable disease don't show up until later in life and manifest as psychotic episodes, dementia, and sui-

cide. CTE had been researched previously in boxers and it had been identified in soccer and rugby players, though Omalu's work first linked it to American football players and has sparked broad discussions about player safety.

After researching the role and learning more about the condition, Smith remains a football fan. Yet, he feels different about the game. "I wanted to be a part of it just to deliver information to parents and to players because if I didn't know, I felt a lot of other people didn't know," Smith said. David Morse, who plays Webster in the film, found the role a challenge. "(Mike Webster) was adored by people, the city of Pittsburgh, but what we see is a man at the end of his life with dementia," Morse said. "He's gluing his teeth in with Super Glue, tasing himself. He's just in a kind of hell at the end of his life."

Wonderful country

Webster's problems progressed after his 1997 induction into the Pro Football Hall of Fame. He went on a downward spiral, dying in 2002 at age 50. Morse admits playing Webster affected him. "I'm fascinated by the game, but I can't watch it the same way," he said. "I still watch it, but I understand way more about what's happening to these people on the field." The NFL attacked the study, and the Nigerian-born Omalu feared deportation. But he kept his resolve.

"My faith made me not afraid," Omalu said. "Americans are perfect and seek perfection in whatever they do, so I was simply being American to contribute my part to this wonderful country, to actually advance football." Morse sees that era as a dark peri-



Co-producer Giannina Facio-Scott, from left, Dr Bennet Omalu, director Peter Landesman, actor Gugu Mbatha-Raw, actor Will Smith, producer Elizabeth Cantillon and actor David Morse poses together at the photo call for 'Concussion' at The Crosby Street Hotel. — AP

od for professional football. "The NFL at that time period should not look good. They were doing the wrong thing, they were trying to crush anybody, Dr. Omalu, who wanted to talk about it," he said. "Now, they starting to do the right thing and thank good-

ness they are. "Nobody wants the game to go away, but there needs to be an awareness and an honesty with players and parents of young children playing the game," Morse said. — AP



This photo provided by Twentieth Century Fox shows, Leonardo DiCaprio in a scene from the film, 'The Revenant'. — AP

The extremes Leonardo DiCaprio went to for 'The Revenant'

Alejandro G Inarritu knew Leonardo DiCaprio would go to the ends of the earth to make the 19th century survival epic "The Revenant" exactly as the famously meticulous director wanted. For Inarritu, DiCaprio was the best person to play Hugh Glass, a real life fur trapper who survived a bear mauling and then went to find his mates who left him for dead in the unforgiving wilderness. Over the course of the nearly yearlong production, the Oscar-nominated actor and environmentalist proved his commitment over and over. He ate raw bison. He stripped naked in sub-zero temperatures. He even jumped into an icy river. But, early on, Inarritu had one very specific worry: Could DiCaprio grow a beard?

"You cannot shoot this film with a fake beard. It would look terrible," Inarritu said in a recent interview. "Not every man grows so much hair in his face. That was a bet." Thankfully for the director, DiCaprio sprouted a gnarly, unruly beard that becomes a symbol of where exactly his character is on his journey, and how deeply he's devoted. Makeup added dirt on a daily basis, and a combination of glycerin and grit gave his hair that unwashed, bloody look - the look of someone who'd survived a bear attack.

Shooting on location

It's a minor thing, and perhaps the easiest test DiCaprio had to endure to make the sprawling epic, but it's one of those details that illustrate the overall production's commitment to authenticity. "It's a really primal story of man and the natural world," said DiCaprio in a recent phone interview. "It's almost biblical." In an era of computer generated imagery and other post-production fixes, this was an unconventional shoot from the outset. Inarritu traveled with his crew to Calgary, Alberta and then to Argentina when the Canadian snow melted earlier than expected. As if shooting on location isn't hard enough, he and cinematographer Emmanuel "Chivo" Lubezki also opted to shoot only in natural light, giving the production a mere 90 minutes a day to achieve complex, highly choreographed long takes.

The duo had done this before in "Birdman," but never in the unpredictable wilderness. But DiCaprio knew very well what he was signing up for. "When you're out in the elements like this - and there are people who have much harder jobs than people making a movie - but you just appreciate the endurance of man and how we're able to adapt to circumstances," DiCaprio said. "You're signing on to find elements

that will ultimately transform the narrative and find the poetry. ... It was all basically us really putting ourselves in this environment and seeing what happens."

Instinct and reaction

Partly by nature of the story and partly for the sake of his character, DiCaprio largely isolated himself from the rest of the cast, including his friend Tom Hardy. He studied the life of Hugh Glass and the lives of fur trappers at the time. He learned and practiced the choreography for the shots, too. But when it came time for the cameras to roll, everything became very animalistic - a largely silent performance rooted in instinct and reaction. "For me it was about really thinking these thoughts and really trying to feel this man's pain," DiCaprio said. "Leo thinks like a filmmaker more than an actor," Inarritu said. "He understands the whole. He was able to be not only a machine doing exactly what we agreed in a natural way but at the same time be absolutely present to react to any improvisation. That's when I felt that this is one of the greatest actors." Little remains of DiCaprio's full mountain man transformation externally.

The blood and the sweat

Production wrapped. He shed the beard. The bumps and bruises healed. But the grit of the shoot, the trials and tribulations, the tension of getting that perfect shot, it's all left on the screen - particularly in the bear attack. "I think it will go down in history as one of the most voyeuristic action sequences ever created," DiCaprio said. "You feel the blood and the sweat. You almost smell the bear. It accomplishes what movies do at their best which is to really make you feel like the rest of the world has evaporated and you're singularly in that moment."

Inarritu wants to keep the specifics of how exactly he achieved such a harrowing sequence to himself. Revealing the process would destroy the magic of it all, he said. "I wanted for people (to) feel the cold, smell the fear," he said. "It was difficult but that's what we were supposed to do. Nobody should care. Nobody should be bothered with having a good time or not. That's not the purpose of doing a film." "Judging by the results I would not change a bit" — AP



This photo provided by Lucasfilm shows Peter Mayhew as Chewbacca and Harrison Ford as Han Solo in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens', directed by JJ Abrams. — AP

'Star Wars' trailers vs what ended up in the film

JJ Abrams never intended to guide "Star Wars" fans in the wrong direction. The writer-director says - spoiler alert! - that while trailers for "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" feature footage and dialogue that didn't ultimately end up in the final cut of the movie, the discrepancies weren't meant to throw anyone off. "It's a fairly common occurrence when you're working on a movie, and it's a year or six months out," said Abrams. "We were still editing, refining and adjusting the film. That evolution process is something that's hard to predict."

In a recent interview with The Associated Press, Abrams detailed his decisions (along with editors Mary Jo Markey and Maryann Brandon) on what footage landed in "The Force Awakens" and what was sent down the garbage chute.

Call from light

"Star Wars" fans flipped their Stormtrooper helmets when a pair of beams flared out from the side of Kylo Ren's lightsaber in the first teaser trailer. However, "The Force Awakens" doesn't actually feature the moment when the masked baddie ignites his flickering lightsaber hilt. "There might be a look or scene in a trailer that identifies as being powerful in that short form, but sometimes that doesn't jibe with what's happening in the long form," said Abrams. "There were a couple of shots that ended up not being used in the film, simply because we were doing our best to make the movie be the best version of itself, which sometimes means losing a moment here or there."

Other trailer portions cut from the film include Rey (Daisy Ridley) entering a derelict Star Destroyer on her home planet and an ominous exchange between the spunky scavenger and itty-bitty pirate Maz Kanata (Lupita Nyong'o).

IT'LL GUIDE YOU

In the second trailer, Maz Kanata is seen passing a lightsaber to another woman. But it's Finn (John Boyega)

who takes it from her yellow hand in the movie. Abrams acknowledged that after Maz Kanata's castle is leveled by the First Order, the big-eyed buccaneer originally traveled to the Resistance's base to hand off Luke Skywalker's signature weapon to his sister, Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher).

"It ended up being an unnecessary hot potato," said Abrams. "It felt like the movie was stronger if we skipped over that moment. It definitely wasn't meant to be diversionary. It was a scene in the movie I later realized I had put the entire crew through shooting, only to cut it." "Star Wars" fans shouldn't expect an extended edition of "The Force Awakens" with such moments folded back into the narrative. Unlike his predecessor, Abrams isn't interested in rereleases. "I'm not a huge fan of directors' cuts and modifications to a movie," he said. "I feel the movie that comes out is the movie that should be the intended final product."

Who talks first

Mark Hamill delivered a new rendition on dialogue uttered by Luke Skywalker in 1983's "Return Of The Jedi" in the second trailer, although the chilling monologue isn't included in "The Force Awakens." In fact, Skywalker doesn't spew a single word when on screen at the end of the movie. Abrams noted that the filmmakers never intended for the last Jedi to open his trap. "There were all sorts of different ideas pitched over the past three years," said Abrams. "When it became clear what this story was and where 'Episode VIII' and 'Episode IX' would go, the end of this movie was very much intended to be a cliffhanger. Obviously, the Luke storyline will continue in a very strong way, but it wasn't material for this movie." — AP

Austrian radio jockey punished for playing 'Last Christmas' 24 times

An Austrian radio station has punished one of its moderators after he locked himself in the studio only to play the song 'Last Christmas', a cult hit from the 1980s by British band Wham!, 24 times in a row. Only once the moderator's daughter called the studio to beg her father to stop because the song made everyone 'mad' did he finish his one-song marathon, according to a video on Youtube.

Timm Bodner, programming Chief of the station Antenne Kaernten in Austria's

province of Carinthia, told Reuters on Wednesday the 27-year-old disc jockey barricaded the studio last Friday with a wooden stick to play the prank on his listeners. 'In general, it was funny but there must be consequences,' Bodner told Reuters in a telephone conversation. 'As a consequence he will have to work tomorrow on Christmas and on New Year's eve.' — Reuters



This picture taken yesterday shows new work by Italian street artist Maupal, showing a Santa Claus dressed in military uniform, on a street in Rome. — AFP

How to have gorgeous hair!



My job requires me to be in the salon almost every other day, either for my hair or my nails or any sort of maintenance I have to take care of. Many girls who follow me think I color and style my hair on a daily basis without actually taking care of it, which is definitely not the case. Whether or not you genetically have good hair, you always need to make sure you keep it healthy, just like when you apply too much make up too often your skin starts breaking out, the same goes to your nails, if you always have nail varnish on they'll eventually become weak, and so on.

Your body is what you take with you throughout your life, what you do now is considered a package

that you keep adding on to for the future and when you're older. Working out, eating healthy, drinking water, getting enough sleep, as well as taking care of your outer appearance is something you will appreciate in the later stages of your life. Being a woman, you deal with many things, marriage and pregnancy change many things, hormonal changes also can change your skin, hair and can even be biological. Point is, whatever it is you want to maintain in terms of your appearance or skin, hair body, etc, you will have to take care of and assure it stays healthy.

The first thing you would want to invest in, is a moisturizing serum or oil replacement, you can apply this after every shower with wet hair so it can lockdown the moisture in your hair. I would suggest to Pantene Oil Replacement, which I always pack with me when I'm travelling, because that's the worst time when my hair goes crazy, when I travel.

Another thing I've been loving to use in my hair coloring is to add Olaplex. I used it once and ever since I cannot color my hair without asking my hair colorist to add it to the dye. It doesn't allow the color to damage your hair, and leaves your hair silky smooth. I swear by the product!

Hair treatments is very essential if you're girl who loves styling and coloring her hair often like myself, I've used so many treatments it's ridiculous, but now I know that I educated myself to know what's best for my hair.

Try fillers!

Try fillers! I literally have fillers in my hair as I write this article. This treatment comes in three steps, 1 the shampoo to clean your hair, 2 is the actual fillers, which comes in as a gel-like residue which you apply to your hair starting from the roots to the ends. Keep it on for 20-30 mins depending on how dry and damaged your

hair is, then use the step 3, which is a moisturizing shampoo to clean out the fillers.

Caviar, is another option for a treatment if you're feeling like you want to pamper yourself. This treatment might be more on the expensive side but it's sure worth it every once in a while. It leaves your hair with an incredible shine as well as making it very soft.

If your hair is not very damaged or dried out, try out the Botox treatment, this to me, I find is a quick fix, as the other treatments mentioned are more extensive moisturizing for your hair, which I love. Sometimes, when you're in a hurry and this fix is just the one for you or for your younger daughter/sibling. Whatever treatment you choose to go for just make sure it suits your hair type as it is always important to educate ourselves with what products we are using on ourselves.



In this Feb 9, 1964 file photo, The Beatles perform on the CBS 'Ed Sullivan Show' in New York. — AP

Beatles songs

being made available for streaming

The Beatles are set to release their back catalogue on streaming sites including Spotify, Apple Music and Tidal for the first time from Christmas Eve, the band's website said yesterday. The announcement comes after years when the Fab Four's songs were not available on the sites and five years after they were first made available for downloading on Apple's iTunes. "On December 24 at 12:01am local time-here, there and everywhere-The Beatles' music is available for streaming worldwide," an announcement on the band's website said.

"Happy Crimble (Christmas), with love from us to you." The Beatles were one of the most commercially successful and critically acclaimed groups of all time. The announcement means that fans will be able to listen to the band's songs on nine services-Spotify, Apple Music, Slacker, Tidal, Groove, Rhapsody, Deezer, Google Play and Amazon Prime. Although some musicians have expressed concern about the amount of money their music can make on streaming services, most have decided they have little choice but to use them. Taylor Swift removed her whole back catalogue from Spotify last year but did agree to stream on Apple Music when it launched in June.—AFP

'Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi' ceremony



In this April 21, 2015 file photo, Sylvester Stallone, a cast member in the upcoming film 'Creed,' arrives onstage to introduce a clip from the film at the Warner Bros presentation during CinemaCon 2015 at Caesars Palace, in Las Vegas. — AP



Lebanese Muslim Sufi men play music during a ritual ceremony to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Mohammed (PBUH), known in Arabic as 'Al-Mawlid Al-Nabawi', yesterday in the southern Lebanese city of Sidon. — AFP photos

Auction of Stallone's film memorabilia fetches \$3 million

An auction of Sylvester Stallone's black leather "Rocky" jacket and other movie memorabilia has earned more than \$3 million. Heritage Auctions President Greg Rohan says Stallone's leather jacket was the top item sold at the three-day auction, with a winning bid of \$149,000. A poncho worn by Stallone in the first "Rambo" film fetched \$60,000 in a sale that featured boxing trunks and gloves, and other items from the actor-director's storied career.

Portions of the proceeds will benefit military charities. Stallone attended the auction's first day and mingled with fans. The 69-year-old Oscar nominee announced the sale in July but said it didn't mean he was saying goodbye to the characters who made him famous. Stallone reprised his role as Rocky Balboa in the recent film "Creed." — AP

THE SECRET GARDEN - DUMOND'S WINTER 2015 COLLECTION



Dumond was inspired by secret gardens to celebrate winter. The absence of light brings a darker side to the collection while the delicacy of colors and flowers give a ladylike touch to the shoes and accessories. The most obscure side appears in the Victorian boots that appear to win their place in fashionista's hearts. With low shafts, medium heels, shoelaces and pointy toes, the shoe merges classic and modern features.

Cleated soles, in turn, accompany heavy boots with fur appliques. Perfect for the cold weather. The comfortable boyish style is one of women's passions. Oxfords and loafers got

delicate details to be an even greater feast for women's eyes. Sneakers established themselves as the choice for a cooler, more athletic look and appear with slip-on flats in versions with tall shafts, metallic elements and animal prints. They also appear with higher soles than the version that took over the streets this summer. White appears prominently and prints the athletic style to the shoes even more. The famous fringes of boho in its chic version return to the collection both in the children's and in the adult line.

Dumond's sweetest and more feminine side features crocodile prints, which will take

over winter in shoes and bags. Over-the-knee boots return to the fashion scene and add a pinch of power to the look. Traditional pointy-toe pumps never go out of fashion and are part of the brand's winter collection. Dumond chose a color palette filled with black, caramel and purple. They became even more vivid with a varnish finish - highlight of the collection. Thin-strap sandals add delicacy to the outfits. Sweet or dark - which is your side? Treat yourself to the latest collection at The Mall, The Avenues.

Nicolas Cage returns stolen Mongolian dinosaur skull

US actor Nicolas Cage has agreed to turn over a dinosaur skull he purchased for \$276,000, after it turned out to be smuggled from Mongolia, his agent confirmed Tuesday. The actor bought the Tarbosaurus bataar fossil at a New York auction in March 2007 and "received a certificate of authenticity from the auction company," said Alex Schack, who represents Cage. In 2014, however, the Department of Homeland Security contacted the actor to inform him that a years-long investigation had led them to believe it had been illegally smuggled from Mongolia.

Once authorities determined the fossil "was indeed illegally smuggled into the US and rightfully belongs to the government of Mongolia," Cage agreed to turn it over to Homeland Security, Schack said. Cage, who won an Academy Award in 1996 for his leading role in "Leaving Las

Vegas," is an avid collector and was reportedly in competition with Leonardo Di Caprio for purchase of the fossil, according to US media.

No charge has been filed against the actor or the Beverly Hills-based auction house, I.M. Chait. According to the New York District Attorney's office-which announced the fossil's return but did not include the actor's name when it made the case public-the skull first arrived in the United States in Florida in 2006. It arrived from Japan, with a customs document simply describing it as fossilized pieces of stone. Mongolia considers all fossils found in its Gobi desert, especially those from its Nemegt geological formation, to be government property and has banned their export.

Tarbosaurus bataar lived during the Cretaceous period and disappeared some 65 million years ago. Its first fossils were discovered at the Nemegt formation in 1946. More

than 30 specimens, including 15 skulls, have been discovered. New York authorities have returned several fossils to Mongolia in recent years, including a Tarbosaurus bataar dating back 70 million years. Measuring more than 2.5 yards (just less than 2.5 meters) tall and around eight meters long, that skeleton was sold at a New York auction for \$1.05 million in May 2012. But it was seized the following month after Mongolian authorities intervened. The skeleton was returned to Mongolia in May 2013 and its Florida-based importer, Eric Prokopi, was sentenced to three months in prison in June 2014. — AFP

This August 30, 2013 file photo shows US actor Nicolas Cage at the 70th Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP





Twelve-year-old South African Kyle Todd (center) dancing during his initiation ceremony to become a Sangoma or traditional healer at a traditional healer school in Pretoria, South Africa. — AFP photos



Kyle Todd (left) getting dressed for his initiation ceremony to become a Sangoma or traditional healer.



Twelve-year-old South African Kyle Todd (center) dancing during his initiation ceremony to become a Sangoma or traditional healer.

White boy blazing a trail in S African spiritual world

Bare-foot, with rattles on his ankles and wearing a colorful beaded ceremonial skirt, a white boy with short blond hair makes shamanic-like dance moves to a frantic drum beat. Kyle Todd is a spiritual healer, or "sangoma" as healers are known in his native South Africa. At 12, he is one of the youngest whites to be initiated into the practice of traditional medicine—a profession traditionally dominated by blacks. It started with premonitory dreams, which his parents initially didn't take seriously, suspecting he was simply watching too much television.

"First I had visions, I thought it was dreams or just a nightmare," he told AFP in a township near Pretoria where he received his training. In one of his most vivid dreams, he claims he foresaw the death of South Africa's anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, who passed away in December 2013 at the age of 95. "A few weeks before Mandela died, I had a vision he was gonna die and people (said) it was a dream, that I am watching TV and getting nightmares... until the dreams ... started becoming true," he told AFP.

He also says he foresaw the xenophobic attacks that rocked Johannesburg and Durban earlier this

year, leaving at least seven people dead. Small numbers of whites have in recent years joined the ranks of South Africa's 69,000 registered sangomas but rarely-if ever-are they this young. Phephile Maseko, coordinator of the national Traditional Healers Organisation, believes he is the youngest practitioner of his craft from the white minority.

'Whites don't understand'

Sangomas occupy a respected position in South African society, particularly among blacks, who view them with a mix of reverence and fear. Not only do they treat physical and psychological conditions but they also act as mediums. At home Kyle is like any other pre-teen, spending hours in front of the television and playing video games or football and marbles with friends. But on a recent weekend he swapped his Xbox controller for a beaded knobkerrie—a short wooden stick with a knob at one end—and sat on a reed mat attending to a "patient". He throws a mix of cow shells, dice, coins and animal bones onto a goat's animal skin mat to obtain a "reading" or diagnosis of Philda Demas's condition.

At the end of a 30-minute consultation, 51-year-

old Demas, a black mother of four who works with female abuse victims, is satisfied. "He was so powerful," said Demas, who likes consulting Kyle because she believes young healers are more honest about the results of readings. "They tell you everything they see," she said. Kyle said he did not choose to be a sangoma but was discovered to have healing powers a few years ago.

Even before undergoing training last year, he was already able to "accurately" read the bones, according to Solly Mathebula, his teacher, who is also a sangoma. Since he qualified, he has been in demand. "I have got people from overseas now phoning (for appointments with Kyle), I have calls from all over South Africa," said Mathebula. In his hometown of Musina, near the border with Zimbabwe, people stop him while he is cycling home from school to solicit an on-the-spot diagnosis.

"They stop me on the street and ask 'can you give me a reading; but I say 'no I can't give you a reading now,' the slender soft-spoken youth told AFP. But he is considerably less popular in the predominantly white neighborhood where he lives with his parents and younger sister and brother. He gets teased at school and has lost some friends who fear that he might cast a spell on them. "Most of (my) friends went against me and started being ex-friends," he said. "It has been difficult... being in a community that doesn't understand sangomas," his father Mike, a mine diesel mechanic, said. "They believe that sangomas are part of witchcraft."

Most of Kyle's clients are blacks who have "accepted him very well," according to Mathebula. "I treat mostly black people, (because) white people, most of them don't believe in this. So they don't come," said his protege. A bone-throwing session may be required to tell if he will go on to become a full-time sangoma. His parents want him to finish his education first and pursue a career in pharmacy or herbal science. Maybe, at that point, "he can combine the two (traditional medicine and science)," his father said. — AFP



Kyle Todd (left) getting dressed for his initiation ceremony to become a Sangoma or traditional healer.



Kyle Todd (left) preparing for his initiation ceremony.



Kyle Todd (center) performs during his initiation ceremony.



Kyle Todd (left) getting dressed for his initiation ceremony.



Kyle Todd (left) getting dressed for his initiation ceremony to become a Sangoma or traditional healer.



Kyle Todd (left) receiving instructions before his initiation ceremony.



Kyle Todd (second left) getting ready for his initiation ceremony.

Indulge your sweet tooth this fall with Rado's chocolate brown ceramic Timepieces

Rado is paying homage to its Swiss roots with an exquisite new range of timepieces in chocolate brown high-tech ceramic, a unique color and material combination that evokes the artistry and craftsmanship of Switzerland's famed MaOtres Chocolatiers. The Rado HyperChrome family, known for its embodiment of everyday elegance, has added three new watches in this glossy chocolate color just in time for the festive season. The three cocoa-colored models - the HyperChrome Automatic, HyperChrome Automatic Chronograph Tachymeter, and Limited Edition HyperChrome Automatic Diamonds - will help you set the table for your holiday feast in style. The tasty trio comes in three sizes and is crafted in a luminous earthen hue paired with chic rose gold colored accents, making these timepieces equally at home in the chalet or the city.

Cutting-edge wrist candy

Chameleon-like chocolate ceramic adapts to subtle changes in the lighting conditions, transitioning from sweet and light to velvety and dark, just like the Swiss confections that inspired it. The result: bold but versatile autumnal accents ideal for a range of outfits and skin tones - the perfect pieces to pair with a woolen blazer or cashmere sweater. A luxurious alternative to the classic tortoiseshell pattern, Rado's brown high-tech ceramic is a captivating neutral that adds understated interest to any fall or winter ensemble.

Rado's chocolate brown HyperChrome timekeepers are not only objects of desire, but also objects of everlasting beauty. Thanks to the properties of Rado's high tech ceramic, their rich brown hue will not fade over time. They also boast all the usual benefits of watches crafted from high-tech ceramic: Scratch resistant and lightweight, the innova-

tive material also adapts to the wearer's body temperature, making for a cozy wearing experience.

Sumptuous chocolate brown ceramic is the latest in Rado's notable range of high-tech ceramic colors - the inaugural black first pioneered by the watchmaker three decades ago, followed by a pristine white, an elegant grey, and a metallic plasma. Like its predecessors, it is available in both polished and matt finishes. Creating consistent colors with ceramic processes is notoriously difficult, but Rado's mastery of materials and vision of superior quality have made these concerns a thing of the past. Rado timepieces in chocolate brown high-tech ceramic - a cutting-edge confection to sink your teeth into this fall.



Features



In these photos provided by Ink Drop Design, Portland, Oregon artist mom Shondra Neumayer creates beautiful cards for her studio Ink Drop Design. — AP photos



In this photo provided by the MoMA Design Store, children's book author and artist David Carter's New Year's card is a joyful, festive explosion of abstract shapes and pop up paper construction.



In this photo provided by the MoMA Design Store, in Brooklyn-based Australian artist Sophie Blackall's Festive Dinner Table, a holiday dinner party pops out at you, and there's a family of realistic, charming characters seated around the table. It's one of the highlights of the Museum of Modern Art's holiday card collection this year.

Holiday cards with an artful edge

Christmas and seasonal greeting cards have long been an artistic niche that inspires illustrators and designers. Besides today's ubiquitous family photo cards, contemporary designs often take advantage of advances in drafting and production "holography, music embeds, digital photography and laser-cutting among them. Other designs begin life with time-honored tools like the paint pot, pencil box and scissors.

Shondra Neumayer of Portland, Oregon, combines modern vintage-style typography, folk-art style woodland silhouettes and antique-style, marquee-light imagery with rustic barn-board backgrounds in cards she sells at her Etsy shop, InkDropDesign. She began designing cards out of frustration with what she saw as a market filled with cheap and cheesy holiday cards

"Going to the mailbox should be an exciting event," she says. "Each (year) I found myself asking the question, 'Why can't Christmas cards be

cool?'" In a series of cards sold at Society 6's online store, Christina Rollo, a photographer in Binghamton, New York, makes intimate portraits of plump little chickadees and sparrows nestling among snowy boughs and berries.

The Museum of Modern Art in New York has been selling holiday cards since 1954. Chay Costello, the museum's associate director of marketing, says the card program began as a way to foster and encourage young and emerging artists by exposing their work to a larger audience. The program's early years included work by Alexander Calder, Robert Indiana and Andy Warhol. Costello says Indiana's famous "Love" illustration was originally created as a holiday card.

MoMA's card art is selected through an open submission process, and the museum receives hundreds of designs annually. Pop-up cards have become particularly popular.

"We started to see an increasing trend toward



In this photo provided by the MoMA Design Store, a magical village complete with homes, holly and dancing children grace Elsa Mora's intricately-cut 'Wintertale' card.

cards with special features," Costello says. "Instead of a card with graphic artwork on its front, many artists have begun to think three-dimensionally, with spiraling and fold-out elements and elaborately crafted pop-out construc-

tions that result in a card that's a gift in and of itself"

The designs feature paper manipulation at its best: shimmering snowflakes, shooting stars, skiing reindeer, and holiday bouquets that "bloom"

when the card is opened. There are twirling ornaments, sleds that swoosh through a forest, Santa perched precariously on a ladder decorating a tree, and a paper bucket full of holiday champagne.

New York-based Elsa Mora's lantern-shaped card with intricately cut woodland flora and fauna is a favorite in the MoMA shop, Costello says. This year, Mora's "Wintertale" card includes a village complete with homes, holly and dancing children. "Festive Dinner Table," a card by artist Sophie Blackall of Brooklyn, opens to a holiday dinner party.

Other creative cards, pop-up and not, are available at Papyrus, Galison and the Art Institute of Chicago's web shop, among other places. The crafts site Etsy.com had over 90,000 Christmas card offerings in a recent search. — AP

Big books make great gifts for the holidays

Coffee table books are always great gifts for just the right enthusiast, and they're plentiful at holiday time as quick grabs or advance buys. A few suggestions, based on interest area: "Harper's Bazaar: Models," by Derek Blasberg: Christy, Naomi, Linda, Kate, Gisele and more. In all, the magazine's editor in chief, Glenda Bailey, and editor at large, Blasberg, have selected 28 famous faces, with essays, covers and interviews. Abrams, \$65.

"Curves," photographs by Victoria Janashvili: Portraits focused on body esteem for women, all women - short, tall, big and bigger. Janashvili ends with a nude self-portrait, she writes, "see myself as a beautiful one - like all the women that I photograph." Self-published, \$51 at Curvesthebook.com.

"Creating the Illusion: A Fashionable History of Hollywood Costume Designers," by Jay Jorgensen and Donald L. Scoggins: The people behind movie fashion get their due in long

Photography, film & illustration
 "Schatz Images: 25 Years," by Howard Schatz: A stunning, two-volume box set from the award-winning photographer spanning portraits of murderers and athletes, dancers and models, pregnant moms and "interesting nobodies," as the publisher puts it. A limited-edition retrospective. Glitterati Inc., \$365. "Fellini: The Sixties," by Manoah Bowman: Focused on the director's most iconic work, including "Dolce Vita," "81/2," "Juliet of the Spirits" and "Fellini Satyricon." Includes some never-before-seen archive photos, along with stills and essays from an array of contemporary writers. A collaboration between Turner Classic Movies and Running Press, \$65.

"Nextinction," by Ralph Steadman and Ceri Levy: A follow to the cartoonist's wild collection of extinct birds. The 192 here, in Steadman's trademark trippy style, are alive but endangered, including the giant ibis, the kakapo and the spoon-billed sandpiper. Steadman and Levy have dubbed

this volume offers a 50-year history of the show in art and design. Extras at the back include sketches, schematics and full-color sets on cards tucked into an envelope. Harper Design, \$45.

"Blue's Hands," by Joseph A. Rosen: The photographer chronicles his own 30-year love affair with blues music focusing on the working hands of some of the greats. In full color close-ups, from juke joints to concert halls and luxury liners, Rosen sticks to his mission of letting the hands tell the story, with nugget bios of each artist at the back. Schiffer Publishing, \$29.99.

"Bob Dylan All the Songs," by Philippe Margotin and Jean-Michel Guesdon: This is the story behind every track. That's 492 songs. Along with exhaustive notes on players, lyrics and production, the two have included bites of backstory for true "Dylanologists." Photos of the man and his famous friends and collaborators abound. Black Dog & Leventhal, \$50.

"Dust & Grooves: Adventures in Record Collecting," by Eilon Paz: One need not be a vinyl head to appreciate this book, but one does need a healthy appreciation of music. This gem reads like "Humans of New York" of the crate-digging scene. Paz first self-published his ode to vinyl collectors, beginning in New York but spreading to collectors from Portugal to Japan to his native Israel and back again to Brooklyn. In all, he tells the stories and lovingly photographs the collections of more than 130 people, including Acid Jazz record label co-founder Gilles Peterson, among other notables. Ten Speed Press, \$50.

Travel & pop culture

"Passage to Cuba," by Cynthia Carris Alonso: The photographer has spent 20 years shooting Cuba. At a time of openness for American visitors, she captures street scenes, historic moments and beautiful landscapes, from Havana to the sparkling blue shoreline of Varadero Beach. In thoughtful but spare text, she explains the Spanish architecture of Old Havana, poses the dancers of Cuba's water ballet team and shares her shots of a rally celebrating the return of Elian Gonzalez. Skyhorse Publishing, \$45.

"John Baeder's Road Well Taken," by Jay Williams: Nobody captured "diner consciousness" quite like the realist painter Baeder. In this volume, Williams creates a full account of Baeder's life, including interviews with the artist and nearly 300 images of his collectible diner paintings, watercolors, vintage photos and memorabilia. The Vendome Press, \$45.

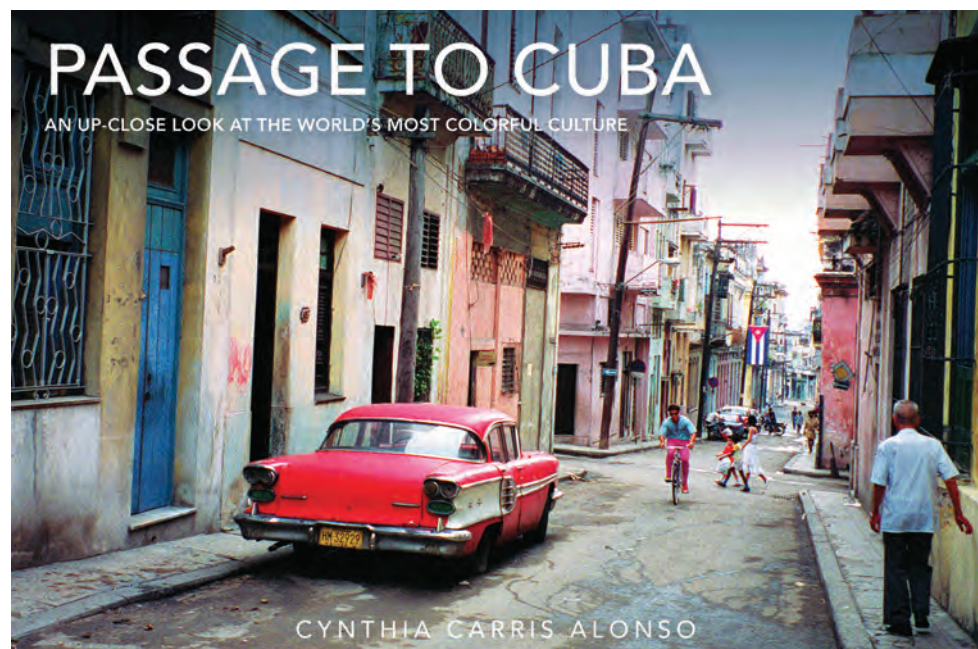
"The National Parks: An American Legacy," photographs by Ian Shive: The National Park Service marks its 100th anniversary in 2016. From a portrait of a golden-mantled ground squirrel in Glacier National Park to a serene sunset at Denali, this book includes more than 200 never-before-seen images. A bald eagle guards prey in Olympic National Park, the stark dunes

themselves the "gonzovationists." Portion of proceeds to BirdLife International. Bloomsbury, \$50.

"Back to the Future: The Ultimate Visual History," by Michael Klastorian and Randal Atamaniuk: Marking the 30th anniversary of the original movie, hundreds of images from all three in the time-travel trilogy. Concept art and storyboards are also included, along with cast and crew interviews. Harper Design, in conjunction with Universal Pictures, \$50.

Tv & music

"Dr Who: Impossible Worlds," by Stephen Nicholas and Mike Tucker: For the hard-core fan,



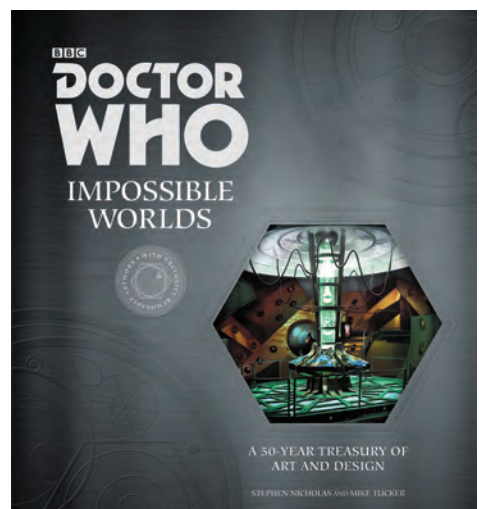
This book cover image released by Skyhorse Publishing shows "Passage to Cuba," by Cynthia Carris Alonso.

essays accompanied by production shots, illustrations and behind-the-scenes candids. From the silent era of Greta Garbo to Johnny Depp's pirate. Running Press, \$65.

"Peter Lindbergh: Images of Women II," designed by Juan Gatti, text by Werner Spies, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke: The German photographer's work spanning 2005 through 2014, black and white from the worlds of fashion, society and film. Portraits and nudes include Nicole Kidman, Tilda Swinton and Kate Winslet - and a few famous men. Schirmer/Mosel, \$99.95.



This book cover image released by WW Norton & Co shows Revolution: Mapping the Road to American Independence, 1755-1783," by Richard H Brown and Paul E Cohen.



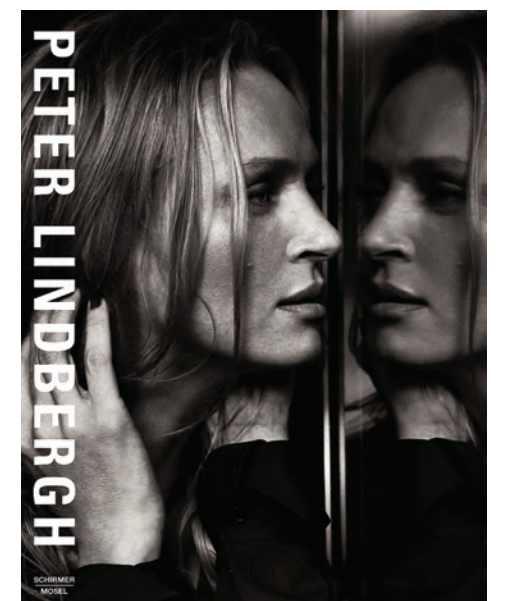
This book cover image released by Harper Design shows, "Dr Who: Impossible Worlds," by Stephen Nicholas and Mike Tucker.



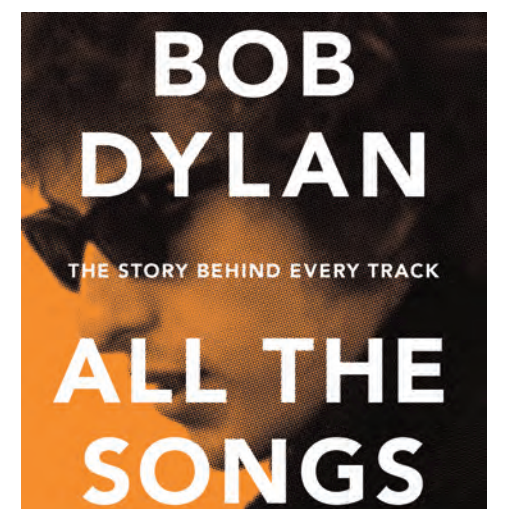
This image released by Running Press shows "Fellini: The Sixties," by Manoah Bowman.



This book cover image released by Ten Speed Press shows "Dust & Grooves: Adventures in Record Collecting," by Eilon Paz.



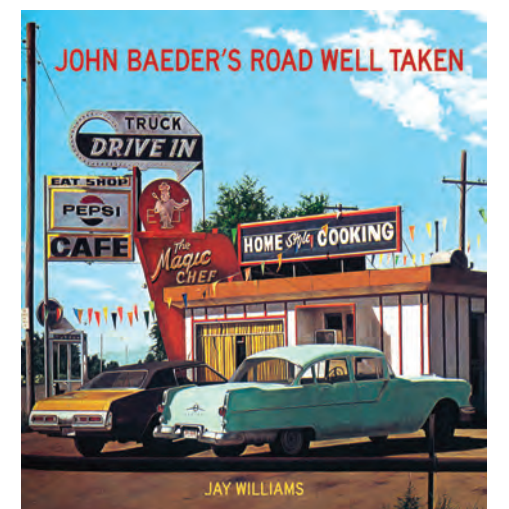
This book cover image released by Schirmer/Mosel shows "Peter Lindbergh: Images of Women II," designed by Juan Gatti, with text by Werner Spies, Wim Wenders and Peter Handke.



This book cover image released by Black Dog & Leventhal shows, "Bob Dylan All the Songs," by Philippe Margotin and Jean-Michel Guesdon.



This book cover image released by Schiffer Publishing shows "Blues Hands," by Joseph A Rosen.



This book cover image released by The Vendome Press shows "John Baeder's Road Well Taken" by Jay Williams.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2015

White boy blazing
a trail in S African
spiritual world

38



Motorcyclists dressed in Santa Claus outfits ride down the streets in downtown Tokyo during a Christmas 'toy run' by the Harley Santa Club yesterday. Some 500 motorcyclists took part in the run on December 23 - a local holiday - to campaign against child abuse ahead of Christmas. — AFP

Thinking Outside the Bow: Tassels and other gift toppers

It's the year of the tassel in gift wrapping. This holiday season, in lieu of the traditional bow, lifestyles magazines are showing tassels and pompoms adorning brightly wrapped packages and wine bottles. "We're seeing tassels on everything ... on pillows, throws, in fashion and in jewelry," says Amy Panos, deputy editor of Home Design for Better Homes and Gardens magazine. Other creative gift toppers might include washi tape, cupcake liners, fabric, wire or tree sprigs.

Panos recommends "going big" - make the tassel large, or top the gift with a giant, tissue-paper pom-pom. "The bigger the better," she says. "That's what makes something look festive and modern." Tassels may be purchased for a few dollars, but are easy to make, says Marcie McGoldrick, editorial director of crafts for Martha Stewart Living. Homemade ones "have a more considered, personal feel," she says. "They're great for hostess gifts atop a wine bottle."

Usually crafted with yarn or thread, tassels can also be made with tissue and other paper. Better Homes' December issue uses brown Kraft paper, but scrapbook or construction paper works too. Panos suggests using metallic paper or incorporating several colors in the same tassel. She says solid colors - not patterned paper - work best. "It looks really subdued and elegant," she says.

The tassels can be saved and hung as ornaments from a tree, wreath or light fixture, Panos says. For packages that need to be shipped or stacked flat, she recommends weaving ribbons of different sizes and colors in a simple pattern - crossing one over another and attaching them in the back. Or use washi tape, which comes in many colors and holiday-themed patterns. Add a fringed "belly band"



In this photo provided by HGTV, create a unique gift topper with a pencil eraser dipped in acrylic paint as seen on the snowman gift wrap. 'It adds that personalized touch,' says Kayla Kitts, special projects editor for HGTV.com.

around the midsection of a gift: Cut a strip of crepe paper long enough to fit the package (either lengthwise or widthwise), fold it lengthwise and cut slits along the edges to fringe. Reopen, flatten and attach to package and top with a coordinating color of ribbon.

More creative alternatives to bows

1. Add flattened cupcake liners to the tops and corners of packages, says McGoldrick. "They add dimension and texture and come in great colors."

2. To create a monogram, bend 8-gauge wire to form an initial, and then wrap it with yarn or thin ribbon and glue the yarn ends to the wire. Attach it to the package with matching yarn or ribbon, says Kayla Kitts, special projects editor for HGTV.com.
3. Make a gift tag from fabric glued to cardstock, and attach it to the package with ribbon, Kitts says.
4. Use the eraser end of a pencil, dipped in paint, to create a design or image on a package wrapped in Kraft paper, says Kitts. "It adds that personalized touch."
5. Wrap gifts in a square of inexpensive, holiday-themed fabric with the corners gathered and tied at the top; it's called "furoshiki," a Japanese term, and works especially well for small gifts.
6. Go outdoors and snip something green and wintry (think evergreen). Panos recommends tucking small pinecones, pine branches or holly into a package tied with ribbon. If those aren't in your vicinity, use what you have, such as seashells.

"Anything from the natural world is automatically going to look gorgeous on top of a package," Panos says, noting that the live tree standing in many homes this time of year is a perfect source. "Snip from the back," she advises. — AP

In this image courtesy of HGTV, a leather tassel adorns a bottle of juice. Often inexpensive to buy, tassels also can be made from thread, yarn, even paper for decoration on holiday gifts. — AP photos



In this photo provided by Better Homes and Gardens, paper tassels adorn a package. Make tassels with yarn, ribbon or paper as large as possible, says Amy Panos, deputy editor of Home Design for 'Better Homes and Gardens' magazine. It's almost 'the bigger the better,' says Panos. "That's what makes something look festive and modern."



In this photo provided by HGTV, create a unique gift topper by bending 8-gauge wire into the shape of a letter then wrap it with yarn or ribbon and glue to adhere. Attach the monogram with matching yarn or ribbon to the package, says Kayla Kitts, special projects editor for HGTV.com.



In this photo provided by HGTV, colorful yarn pom-poms adorn gift packages.



In this photo provided by Better Homes and Gardens, for gifts that need to be shipped or stacked flat, add a fringed 'belly band' around the midsection: Cut a strip of crepe paper long enough to fit the package (either lengthwise or widthwise), fold it lengthwise and cut slits along the edges to fringe. Attach to package and top with a coordinating color of ribbon.