



Crunching numbers behind the scenes

5



Iraqi forces in fierce battles with IS in Ramadi

7



In final year, Obama seeks to stave off lame-duck tag

14



Stoke leave Van Gaal on Man United brink

20



150 FILLS
NO: 16738
40 PAGES

ASHOUR: EXPATS GAIN MOST FROM SUBSIDIES

MP CLAIMS 'MEDICAL VISITORS', CONSULTANTS A DRAIN ON BUDGET



Min 09°
Max 18°
High Tide 14:05
Low Tide 07:35 & 19:22

STORMS KILL 15 IN SOUTHERN US

CHICAGO: Millions of residents in the southern United States struggled yesterday to recover from the deadly storms and floods that struck the region over the past days. At least 15 people have been killed in the states of Mississippi, Tennessee and Arkansas since Thursday, officials said. With more severe weather expected across the central United States, forecasters are warning of airport delays and flooded roads as travelers return home after the Christmas holiday.

Feeding on unseasonably warm air, storms left a trail of destruction in rural communities from Alabama to Illinois. More than a dozen tornadoes were reported Friday in six southern states. In Alabama, where Governor Robert Bentley had declared a state of emergency to deal with the heavy flooding, tornadoes uprooted trees and tore off rooftops, with one touching down in Birmingham, the state's most populous city. "The damage was ... confined to approximately one square mile," Birmingham Fire Department Chief Charles Gordon told CNN. "We have three houses that collapsed." No one died, but Gordon said victims were rescued from the debris.

Mississippi Governor Phil Bryant and Georgia Governor Nathan Deal also declared states of emergency in counties affected by the weather. Forecasters at the National Weather Service warned that the central United States "will continue to have widespread showers and thunderstorms this weekend." This weather system "has a history of producing heavy rain and flooding/flash flooding over much of the southeastern US, and the threat for excessive rainfall will persist."

Continued on Page 13



MOULTON, Alabama: Emergency officials transport a resident by boat because water over Byler Road prevented them from reaching him on Friday, before loading him into an ambulance. — AP

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Saleh Ashour claimed that according to reports made by the parliamentary finance and budget committees on the total cost of subsidies and how they are spent, the majority of subsidies benefit expats. "Millions of dinars are spent on medicine and the majority who benefits from this is expat residents, in addition to visitors who come for medical treatment, mainly surgeries," he said, noting that the same applies to electricity subsidies.

Kuwait began selling diesel and kerosene at market prices at the start of 2015, cut spending by 17 percent and is in the process of raising petrol prices and charges on electricity and water. Ashour also pointed out that hundreds of millions of dinars are spent on foreigners hired as advisors and consultants at various ministries and government establishments, in addition to fortunes spent on holding conferences, training courses and official assignments abroad.

Faced with heavy losses from low oil prices, Gulf states have embarked on belt-tightening measures to cut spending and boost non-crude revenues, but analysts warn much more needs to be done. After more than a decade of abundant surpluses thanks to high oil prices, the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states are projected to post a combined record budgetary shortfall of \$180 billion in 2015 and the drought is expected to continue for years. Some countries have already cut subsidies, while others are considering measures to reduce their spending.



Saleh Ashour



AJACCIO, France: Demonstrators, most of them angry against Muslim residents, march behind the Corsican flag on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica yesterday. —AP

VANDALS RANSACK MUSLIM PRAYER HALL ON CORSICA

AJACCIO, France: Demonstrators ransacked a Muslim prayer hall and attempted to burn copies of the Holy Quran on the French island of Corsica Friday, police said, following a night of violence that left two firefighters injured. Tensions had mounted in Ajaccio on Christmas Day after two firefighters and a police officer were wounded overnight in Jardins de l'Empereur, a low-income neighborhood of the city when they were "ambushed" by "several hooded youths", authorities said.

On Friday afternoon around 150 people had gathered in front of police headquarters in the island's capital in a show of support for the police and firefighters, officials said in a statement. But some in that crowd broke away to join as many as 600 who headed for the housing estate where the violence took place the night before. They shouted slogans in Corsican meaning "Arabs get out!" or "This is our home!" an AFP correspondent reported.

Nearby was a Muslim prayer room and a small group smashed the glass door and entered the place of worship, ransacking it and partially burning books including copies of the Holy Quran, said regional official Francois Lalanne. "Fifty prayer books were thrown out on the street," Lalanne said, adding that some of the

pages were burnt. Police remained on the housing estate overnight on Friday, with a security presence around five Muslim places of worship in Ajaccio, Lalanne told AFP. They would receive reinforcements in the coming days, he added. Dozens of angry Corsicans staged a fresh protest yesterday. Despite a heavy police presence, one demonstrator managed to smash three glass entrance doors in Jardins de l'Empereur as protesters shouted "This is our home!"

French Prime Minister Manuel Valls wrote on Twitter that the break-in was "an unacceptable desecration", while also condemning the "intolerable attack" on the wounded firefighters. Anouar Kbibeche, president of the French Council of the Muslim Faith (CFCM), said he had learnt of the mosque attack and the burning of "several copies of the Quran" with "distress". French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said the attack on the Muslim prayer hall showed signs of "racism and xenophobia". He also condemned the assault on law enforcement and safety officers in Corsica, saying he hoped "the authors of the violence would be identified and arrested as soon as possible."

Continued on Page 13

MODI'S SURPRISE PAK VISIT HAILED

SYRIA EVACUATION PLAN PUT ON HOLD

DAMASCUS: A plan to evacuate thousands of jihadist fighters and civilians from three besieged districts of Syria's capital was on hold yesterday, a day after an air strike killed a rebel leader. Zahran Allouch, 44, was the commander of the Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam), the predominant opposition faction in the Eastern Ghouta rebel bastion east of Damascus. A senior member of Jaish al-Islam said planes had targeted a "secret meeting" of commanders, and confirmed that Allouch was among those killed.

His death, in a raid claimed by President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, was seen as dealing a heavy blow to the nearly five-year uprising and also complicating a fragile peace process. It also halted the planned evacuation of some 4,000 people, half of them jihadists, from the southern districts of Damascus. A government official has said the plan would see the evacuees transferred yesterday out of Qadam, Hajar al-Aswad and the besieged Palestinian camp of Yarmuk and into northern Syria. Those moved are expected to include members of the Islamic State (IS) group and Al-Qaeda-affiliated Al-Nusra Front.

But a security source close to the negotiations told AFP the plan was now on hold. "Jaish al-Islam was supposed to provide safe passage through areas east of Damascus for the buses heading to Raqqa," IS's Syria bastion, the source said by telephone.

Continued on Page 13

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi broke with diplomatic protocol to pay a surprise visit to Pakistani leader Nawaz Sharif, betting his personal brand on his ability to reset troubled relations, Indian media and analysts said yesterday. Spurning official talks in the capital Islamabad, India's leader chose instead to make an intimate trip to Sharif's ancestral residence near Lahore Friday, where he was celebrating his birthday and the wedding of his granddaughter. A source present in the meeting said the leaders of the nuclear-armed archrival nations "chatted like old friends" as they ate veg-

etarian food, with the Indian premier telling Sharif, "Your sincerity is beyond doubt".

India and Pakistan have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947 and a lasting peace deal has so far proved elusive, with deadly violence still flaring in disputed Kashmir. Modi's stunning decision to drop in for talks with Pakistan's leader - something ex-premier Manmohan Singh failed to achieve in ten years of power - was roundly welcomed in India, where it was seen as a calculated personal gamble.

Continued on Page 13



LAHORE: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right) shakes hands with his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif on Friday. — AFP



An Emirati falconer moves a lure to attract a falcon yesterday in the Liwa Oasis, southwest of Abu Dhabi. Falcons were traditionally used for hunting, however hunting is now prohibited in Abu Dhabi. — AFP

In Brief

CP PATRONIZES WAQF MEETING

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronizes the 22nd Waqf Meeting, organized by Awqaf General Secretariat, under the theme 'Al-Awqaf Administration .. Integration and Pioneering.' His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Nawaf has designated Minister of Justice, Minister of Al-Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqub Al-Sanea, to represent him at the inaugural ceremony, scheduled today at 10 am at Al-Jumeirah hotel. — KUNA



SUPPORTING SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH 'VITAL'

CAIRO: Beefing up support for scientific research is vital for education development in Arab countries, Kuwait's Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa said on the sideline of the 15th conference of Arab ministers of higher education and scientific research. Financing higher education and scientific research is of Kuwait's main interest, he said, pointing out Kuwait's move to establish centers for evaluation and measurement of progress, as well as a training center for students of higher education. — KUNA



UNION SUPPORTS ARAB CAUSES

ABU DHABI: The newly-elected secretary general of the Arab Writers Union (AWU) Habib Al-Sayegh reaffirmed the Union's commitment to supporting the major Arab questions, notably the central Palestinian cause. The Arab nation is undergoing a challenging stage which requires concerted efforts by all institutions of the Arab countries, including contributions of the intelligentsia, he said Friday on the sidelines of the 26th AWU General Conference. Sayegh, of the United Arab Emirates made the remarks after being unanimously elected as new secretary general of the AWU. —KUNA



Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: Kuwaitis enjoy a day-out at a camp in the Salmi desert. Camping season in Kuwait extends from the beginning of November until the end of March each year. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



DODOMA: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem is pictured with Tanzanian Minister of Defense and National Force Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi. — KUNA

KUWAITI DIPLOMAT, TANZANIAN MINISTER DISCUSS COOPERATION

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem met yesterday with the Minister of Defense and National Force Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, discussing with him means to bolster ties. Ambassador Najem said in a press release that the meeting reflected strong desires to boost relations within the defense and security domains. Ambassador Najem conveyed greetings of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense in Kuwait Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah to the Tanzanian Minister and the people of the African country. Meanwhile, the Tanzanian minister affirmed that his country was eager to develop relations with Kuwait to achieve the interest of the people of both countries.— KUNA

KUWAIT TO TAKE PART IN NANOTECH FORUM IN OMAN

KUWAIT: Kuwait will take part in the Second Gulf Forum on Nanotechnology Awareness due to begin in Sultanate of Oman tomorrow, the International Movement for Leisure Activities in Science and Technology (MILSET) declared on Friday.

President of MILSET Regional Office for Asia Adnan Almeer said in a statement yesterday that Kuwait would be represented with a delegation from the Ministry of Education and Kuwait University. The two-day forum, sponsored by Omani Minister of Education Dr Madiha Bin Ahmad Al-Shibaniya, is co-organized by MILSET and Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science. The forum, involving nanotechnology experts from Oman, regional and foreign countries, is aimed at examining latest innovations in the sector and other nations' experience in including this science in teaching curricula. It will be accompanied by diverse activities, workshops and seminars on means of applying this modern technology. —KUNA

NUKS USA RECOGNIZES ZAIN'S SUPPORT

KUWAIT: The National Union of Kuwaiti Students in the United States (NUKS USA) recently recognized Zain's exceptional support as a Platinum sponsor of the Union's 32nd annual conference that was recently held in San Diego during November under the patronage and attendance of the Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Badr Al-Essa.

A NUKS USA delegation visited the company's main headquarters in Shuwaikh where they met Zain Group Chairman Assad Ahmad Al-Banwan and Zain Kuwait Chief Executive Officer Eaman Al-Roudhan and expressed their gratitude to Zain's continuous support to the annual conference, implementing the important role of the private sector's contribution to supporting the Kuwaiti youth locally and abroad.

Reciprocally the Chairman and Kuwait CEO expressed their admiration of the tremendous efforts exerted by the union's members, resulting in a greatly successful event that witnessed vast participation from students studying in the US.

Zain's annual participation in NUKS USA reinforces the company's commitment to the youth of Kuwait and its desire to see them reach their full potential. This is the main intention behind the company's support to NUKS USA for the past 12 years.

As in previous years, Zain took the opportunity to recognize and honor the top 10 Kuwaiti students studying in the US during the conference, with the aim of shedding light on accomplishments of

leading students. The company also sponsored a sports symposium in which prominent Kuwaiti sports figures discussed issues relevant to the domestic sporting scene. Additionally, Zain organized several sporting activities held in conjunction with the event, where the company honored the winning team of the first place title of "Zain Football Tournament", which the company sponsored for the third consecutive year. The tournament was a way to engage with the youth and share a family-like atmosphere

with the students, with immense participation of 20 teams. The company also organized and for the first time a football tournament dedicated to female students, where the company also awarded the winning team for achieving the first place title.

Zain's participation in NUKS USA reinforces the company's commitment to the youth of Kuwait and its desire to see them reach their full potential. The event brought together distinguished national figures

from across Kuwait who have had a significant impact on the country's political, economic, cultural and sporting life, and is a rare blend of intellectual and social content for the attendees.

The company sees its annual participation in the conference as part of its responsibility as a leading national company to help provide bright and enthusiastic young Kuwaitis who are looking to enter the job market with suitable development opportunities.



OFFICIAL LAUDS KUWAIT'S SUPPORT OF EGYPTIAN TOURISM

SHARM EL-SHEIKH: "We would like to thank Kuwait for encouraging tourism in Egypt," said Sami Mahmoud, head of the Egyptian Authority for Tourism Promotion. Upon the conclusion of a Kuwaiti media delegation's visit to Sharm El-Sheikh,

Mahmoud said in statements yesterday that Kuwait had played a pivotal role in promoting tourism in his country, noting that the current Kuwaiti campaign (Egypt Is Safe) was a much needed step to bring back tourists to Egypt. During the visit, the Kuwaiti media

delegation visited numerous locations in Sharm El-Sheikh to highlight the region's touristic attractions, said the Egyptian official who called on Arab tourists to continue to promote and encourage tourism in Egypt. — KUNA



SHARM EL-SHEIKH: Head of the Egyptian Authority for Tourism Promotion Sami Mahmoud is pictured with the visiting Kuwaiti delegation. — KUNA

Crime

Report

LAWMAKER'S SON CHARGED WITH OFFENDING OFFICER IN DUTY

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A customs officer working at Salmi land border exit filed a case of insulting a public officer on duty against a lawmaker's son, said security sources. Case papers indicate that the lawmaker's son was driving his father's vehicle out of Kuwait without having a power of attorney from his father, and when the officer told him he could not do so, he told him that he was the son of an MP. When the officer said that laws do not know MPs, the son insulted the officer, and was eventually banned from leaving. Security sources said that the MP tried to talk the officer out of filing a case but he refused.

Paramedics injured

An ambulance rolled over several times while dispatched to Benaider ambulance center, resulting in various injuries for the crew, who were rushed to hospital for treatment.

Gun caught with passenger

A 42-year-old citizen was arrested with a gun and five bullets during an inspection at Kuwait International Airport before boarding a flight to Saudi Arabia.

Body found

An Egyptian man was found dead in his bed in Sabah Al-Ahmed, said security sources, noting that forensic doctors removed the body pending further investigations.

Landmine kills shepherd

A shepherd was killed when he stepped on a landmine in Mnia Abdullah desert, said security sources. An investigation was opened in the case.



A beedoon man arrested in Saad Al-Abdullah with possession of drugs, guns and cash.

Drug possession

Following a wild chase, a beedoon man was arrested in Saad Al-Abdullah with 500 illicit pills. The sources added that on searching the suspect's house, a further 6,000 pills, two guns and cash were found. The suspect confessed to owning the drugs for trade purposes and that he had been using the guns for 'self-defense'.

Liquor possession

An illegal resident was recently arrested with a number of whiskey bottles ready for sale in Mubarak Al-Kabeer, said security sources, noting that the suspect led police to a Salmiya apartment he had been using to store more bottles.



Environment police officers talk to people during an inspection campaign at the vegetables and fruits market in Sulaibiya.

Inspection campaigns

Environment police agents inspected the vegetables and fruits market in Sulaibiya to ensure the market waste was properly handled and that the market had enough hygienic specifications. Meanwhile, an inspection campaign at Kabd camps areas resulted in finding three unlicensed camps, four ready-mix trucks dumping extra concrete in addition to used tires and industrial waste dumped in desert areas. In another case, a citizen, who had been wanted for a 40-month prison sentence in a drugs related case, was arrested at a checkpoint in Sabah Al-Salem.

LAW STRIPS MINISTRY OF AUTHORITY TO BLOCK WEBSITES

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Member of the parliament's educational affairs committee MP Khalil Abdullah said that the new e-media law authorized the judiciary, and not the information ministry, to block certain websites. Abdullah added that penalties for working without a license were also reduced from a fine ranging between KD 3,000 and KD 10,000 to only KD 500, adding that even fines would be paid through court orders.

Priorities' committee

The parliament's priorities committee is due to convene today morning to discuss the laws approved by the parliament

without issuing executive charts so far. The meeting will be attended by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Social Affairs and Labor Minister Hind Al-Subaih, Housing Minister Yasser Abul, Communications and Municipality Minister Essa Al-Kandaro, Public Works Minister Ali Al-Omar and Education Minister Bader Al-Essa.

KAC law

Presided by MP Faisal Al-Shaye, the parliament's financial and economic affairs committee is due to discuss a proposal made to amend law number 6/2008 pertaining turning Kuwait Airways (KAC) into a shareholding company in its meet-

ing today morning. The proposal also includes demands to stop transferring KAC employees until the amendments are made.

Club's privatization

Chairman of the parliament's youth and sports committee MP Abdullah Maayouf said that the committee's report on a parliamentary proposal made pertaining privatizing sports clubs would be finished within three months.

Anti-corruption law

MP Shaye demanded that the government must respond to parliamentary demands on filling the gaps in the new anti-corruption law in order to prevent

the recurrence of crimes like the 'multimillions bank deposits' scandal. On the same issue, MP Kamel Al-Awadhi said that lawmakers' attitudes were clear and that the new law would be a top priority for the parliament. He also called to subject the Anti-Corruption Authority directly to the parliament just like the Audit Bureau.

MP Khalil Al-Saleh called for solving the problems of the dissolved anti-corruption authority employees in a way that would not jeopardize their posts or incentives. "Those employees' financial and vocational rights must be protected," he stressed, calling for transferring them to a government body and keep paying their salaries pending reappointing once the authority is revived.

'MANPOWER' STAFF HURT IN CEILING COLLAPSE 'HEAVY RAIN' EXPECTED WEDNESDAY

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources at the Manpower Public Authority said that the ceiling of the archive's room at the labor inspection department collapsed on some porters looking up some files, injuring many of them. The sources added that many of the authority's buildings are worn out and stop functioning whenever it rains due to bad wiring and being infested with rats.

Automation

Meanwhile, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor and Minister of State for Development and Planning Hind Al-Subaih said that ever since she came to office, she has a vision to automate all ministry facilities, especially the manpower authority, which had been financially and administratively separated from the ministry. Speaking at a special ceremony held to honor 25 manpower authority employees who had taken part in workshop on developing vocational performance jointly held with EQUATE, Subaih approved the workshop, which aims at cutting red tape.

Subaih added that the law should equally apply to all without any exceptions and urged the workshop trainees to act

accordingly and work on improving the services provided to the public. She also criticized a number of employees who had left their offices to have breakfast at a labor department while people waited to be served. "How can a public servant do this and how can you enjoy breakfast knowing that you are upsetting people and wasting their time?" she asked.

EQUATE CEO Mohammed Hussein stressed that achieving goals was directly linked to improving employees' efficiency through constant development of human resources, which is the cornerstone of sustainable development. Hussein added that efficiency development is achievable through some criterions and methodology using Six Sigma and LEAN, which develop performance and cut down cost, time and effort.

Rain

Kuwait Meteorology Center predicted heavy rain that might be accompanied by thunderstorms on Wednesday, after Kuwait saw rainy weather last Wednesday and Thursday.

Penalties

Kuwait Medical Association (KMA) Secretary General Dr Mohammed Al-



Damage seen at the site where the collapse was reported.

Qenae said three Ministry of Health committees formed to study insurance against medical errors, vocational description and amending medicine practice law had concluded their work and submitted recom-

mendations to Minister Ali Al-Obaidi. Qenae added that the medicine law amendments include increasing doctors' penalties to reach three years in prison and KD 5,000 in fines.



KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Environment Police Department carried out an antismoking campaign at the Avenues Mall recently, in compliance with the environment protection law number 42/2014, which bans smoking in public places under article 56.

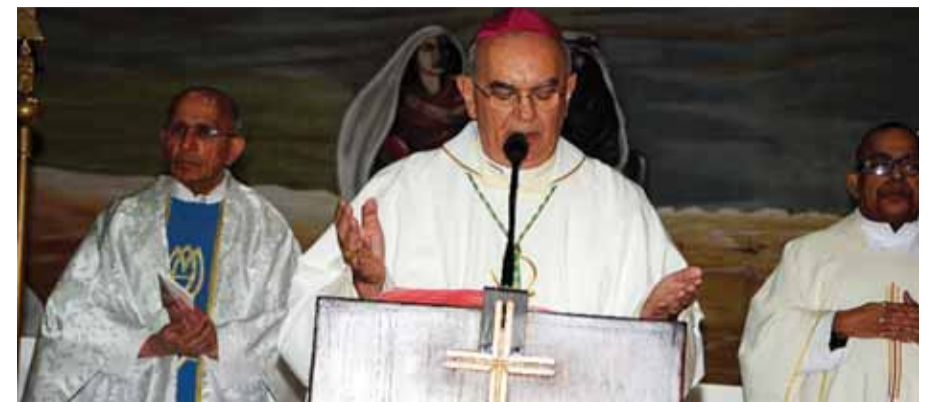


KUWAIT: The fourth batch of relief aid materials for the Yemeni people was delivered by members of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), an official said yesterday. KRCS' Deputy Chairman of the Board Anwar Al-Hasawi told KUNA that the relief aid materials were distributed in several Yemeni governorates. This current batch of relief aid is within KRCS' continuous efforts to aid the Yemeni people who are living under harsh conditions due to the ongoing conflict in their country, said Hasawi. The relief aid consisted of food materials, necessities, as well as Kitchen and cooking utensils and tools. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFS) launched a security campaign Friday night at the Mutla'a camps to raise safety awareness. It was carried out in cooperation with EQUATE and the Kuwait National Guard.

CATHOLIC CHURCH CELEBRATES CHRISTMAS



KUWAIT: Thousands of Christians congregated at the Holy Family Cathedral Church in Kuwait City on Friday for a Church service marking the Christmas day celebration. In his message to faithful, Bishop Camillo Ballin urged Christians to follow the footsteps of Christ and be good to all. On 25th December every year, Christians all over the world celebrate the birth of Jesus (PBUH) . — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

CORRECTION



KUWAIT: In a story titled 'Bano Professional Mix a Horeca Silver Sponsor' published on Thursday, December 10, 2015, the company's general manager Tawfiq Essam Al-Hashwi was mistakenly referred to as 'Essam Al-Hashwi' in the caption under the picture that was published with the story.



OOREDOO KUWAIT ORGANIZES 'EXECUTIVE PRESENCE' WORKSHOP FOR ITS LEADERS

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of Ooredoo international group, concluded this year's development agenda for its Leaders with the 'Executive Presence' workshop. The workshop was held at the company's headquarter in Kuwait City, and was attended by a number of Ooredoo Kuwait directors and executive staff members.

The main focus of the two day workshop, led by the reputable Canadian based organization, was to develop skills and abilities that communicate the executive presence required to achieve upward mobility. Additionally, the workshop aim to empower Leaders with the credibility to secure business

goals, in addition to encouraging confidence and elevating the global stature of the organization as a progressive innovator.

The Executive Presence development program was an outcome need of the extensive assessments and the Talent Reviews that were conducted earlier this year.

Commenting on this, Saleh Al-Houti, Ooredoo Kuwait Chief Human Resources Officer said: "We are very pleased to collaborate with the renowned organization such as Corporate Class Inc. to conduct a two day workshop, which is the first of its kind in the GCC. Throughout the year, we have worked with

renowned institutes to develop our employees and empower them with knowledge and training experience. This stems from our deep-rooted belief in the importance of investing in our employees."

Ooredoo Kuwait has always been keen on providing its employees with the needed workshops and development programs to continuously help improving their skills and talents to achieve excellence in their performance. In 2015 Ooredoo Kuwait had conducted 51 development programs in addition to an 'On job training' for Front Liners. These development programs covered various topics for different departments including technical and soft

courses, attended by Ooredoo employees and franchises representatives.

In addition to the training courses and workshops, Ooredoo Kuwait offered 2 opportunities for funded bachelor degrees for its national's employees this year and 3 seats for master's degree.

These assessments, talent reviews, workshops and development programs are part of Ooredoo's strategic plan to invest in its human capital and develop the talents and capacities of its employees in order to attain the high standard level they wish to achieve and further contribute to the success of the company.



ANTIQUES DISPLAYED AT DISCOVERY MALL

KUWAIT: A number of amateurs have displayed their antiques at the 10th Kuwait and Gulf auction for antiques that was held at the Discovery Mall. The displayed items included antiques, carpets, glassware, old coins, magazines, newspapers and historical documents. — KUNA



MINISTER REITERATES RESPECT OF ALL FAITHS WITHIN FRAMEWORK OF LAW

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Friday reiterated the State's respect of all religions, and keenness on providing a climate of religious tolerance and freedom within the framework of law and public morals.

"Kuwait is the country of coexistence and toleration," Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid stressed during a tour of churches and other Christian places of worship to inspect security and traffic measures for New Year celebrations.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid underscored eagerness on the protection, security and safety of all people in Kuwait who respect laws, regulations and customs and traditions "that bind citizens and expats in single fiber," the ministry's Security Information Department said in a statement. It added that the minister urged protection of security and peacefulness for the Christian sects in the country.

Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khalid was briefed by the security field and traffic commanders on the preventive plans for control, quick response and abilities to move and other measures adopted during such occasions.

He was also informed of commitment by leaders of churches and Christian sects to the preventive instructions and guidelines and precautionary measures previously announced and reiterated by the ministry and security bodies.

Meanwhile, leaders of churches and Christian sects as well as many expats have highly appreciated the State of Kuwait and the sincere efforts "around the clock" by the Interior Minister and security bodies during all occasions, which allows followers of all faiths to practice their rituals in an atmosphere of freedom and tolerance. — KUNA

Figuring it out: Official talks statistical bureau's role, future

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Many public departments and institutions do important work, but are not well known. For instance, census and other official statistics are very important for public and private institutions and even individuals. The Central Statistical Bureau is one of the institutions in charge of producing important official data. It used to be part of the Ministry of Planning, but in 2007 became an independent body.

Kuwait Times spoke to Mona Khalaf Al-Daas, Assistant Undersecretary for Statistical Affairs at the bureau, who spoke about the role of this institution and the projects it is working on. Law no. 27/1963 on statistics and census gave it the legal framework to practice this activity, especially the responsibility for collecting data. "This applies to both field surveys and administrative records. According to this law, the Central Statistical Bureau is the only reference for statistics in Kuwait. So any statistical figures can only be published through our department," Daas said.

Statistical report

According to the law, the bureau is also responsible for the statistics departments at various ministries and public institutions. "We are in charge of discussing and reviewing any statistical report issued by these institutions, in addition to training the staff," she added.

There is also an international dimension to their work. "Statistical activities started internationally in 1947 with the founding of the Statistics Committee at the United Nations, as it felt the importance of having an international committee. This committee develops the methodologies and frameworks that are necessary to produce any statistical data. Kuwait is a member of this committee, and we attend their meetings annually. This organizes our local activities, as we have to respect the international timing, rating and methodologies used," Daas noted.

Daas graduated from the Social Studies Faculty of the Kuwait University in 1994 with a bachelor's degree. Before being appointed as undersecretary in 2010, she was the head of development studies in 2003, observer of monitoring regional and international changes in 2006, head of the future expectations department and the secretariat general of the Supreme Planning Council between 2007 and 2010.

Issuing Data

The bureau issues 41 specialized periodicals annually. "Some of these periodicals are based on field surveys, such as the inflation rate, which we publish and provide to the Central Bank and some local banks, and we are the only body authorized to issue it, along with data on foreign trade. Manpower surveys and Kuwaiti and expat unemployment rates, which reached 5 percent in 2014 among Kuwaiti citizens, are also provided by us. The latest published inflation rate in Kuwait was recorded at 3.2 percent in October 2015 compared to October 2014," explained Daas.

The rates and data are published on the official website of the Central Statistical Bureau and are immediately sent to Kuwait News Agency, as it is the main source of news in Kuwait. "At the same time of sending the inflation rate to KUNA, we send it to the Central Bank as they depend on these figures in their financial operations. All this data serves decision makers, and even individuals,

who can register their personal expenses to get statistics," she pointed out.

"We also conduct the household income and expenditure survey, which shows the priorities of families. These figures have great economic value in planning policies. For instance, if we compare this rate with the rate from 1986, we notice that the structure of family spending has changed. Food was the priority in 1986, while today housing is in first place and constitutes the biggest part of spending," Daas said.

Census

The bureau is obliged to hold a population census every 10 years. "Some countries used to do it every five years, including Kuwait in the past. In Kuwait, we had a census in 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985 and then in 1995 due to the invasion. But the cost of holding a census is very high, so we are now doing it every 10 years, according to the law. The last census was done in 2011 and the next one will take place in 2020, according to the harmonized GCC population census. Even the UN has set 2020 as the international census year," stressed Daas.

- Bureau responsible for statistics departments at various ministries
- Bureau issues 41 specialized periodicals annually
- Bureau holds population census every 10 years
- Bureau working on 'total economic statistics' project

Bureau for Census in each GCC country should collect all the data in a database including the civil ID number," said Daas.

But this is huge work. "Convincing all institutions and ministries to participate in this unified system of census needs great efforts. We have prepared an initial report on this issue and found that 13 institutions keep administrative records. What organizes this process is the UN requirement for public census. We cooperate with the institutions in charge and get the available data, while helping them by providing what they are missing," she added.

The Statistics Center of the GCC was established in 2014, and its headquarters is in Muscat in Oman. Kuwait as well as the other GCC countries finance it and it has a good budget. "The main goal of this center is to build abilities. So we invite all the institutions that are working with us to attend this meeting. If we have visiting experts, we also invite staff from these institutions to attend our workshops to gain experiences and build skills. We hold workshops and train local staff to be ready for the upcoming census," she stated.

Future Projects

One of the most important projects is the total economic statistics. "We set the basis of this project in cooperation with the National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises that will be financing it. This project will provide data and statistics of all businesses and economic activities of companies and will start in 2016," highlighted Daas.

The other important planned projects include the record statistics project, and the quarterly national accounts that include commitments of various countries, which used to be published annually, but should now be published quarterly. "It provides important data including GDP growth, which is important for economists," she said.

Improving commercial records according to the international classification of economic activities is another project executed by the bureau. "The database of these activities at the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is classified locally. We started in this project in 2012 and we have finished about 60 percent of it now," concluded Daas.



Mona Khalaf Al-Daas

The GCC also decided to follow the record census method instead of the field census. "In the past, we used to go personally to collect data from people in the field, which won't be done now. Some countries still use the field census method such as Jordan this year, but using computers instead of papers. Morocco in 2014 also used the field census method as well as Brazil and China. Even the United States uses it, but it's a little different as they also deploy call centers and mail, as they have discipline there. Scandinavian countries and Singapore use the record census method," she stated.

"The GCC countries are not very big and do not have people living on mountains or valleys, so we do not need a field census. For instance, the Public Authority for Civil Information has a register, the Ministry of Justice has records of marriages and divorces, while the Ministry of Interior has records of expats and those who enter and leave the country. The GCC decided that the Central



NBK's team with the Students

NBK SPONSORS LOYAC'S TRIP TO SRI LANKA

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsors a camping trip for the secondary students to Sri Lanka organized by Loyac. This sponsorship comes in line with NBK's commitment to its Corporate Social Responsibility as well as the vital role it plays in supporting students, youths and self-building initiatives in Kuwait.

This sponsorship goes with NBK's support to Loyac's activities and events for a whole year including the trip. More than 15 students are participating in this one-week trip which is designed to build the leadership skills in their personality.

NBK always strives to empower Kuwaiti youth to realize

their potentials, providing career and training opportunities. Also, NBK develops the professional skills of young Kuwaitis as part of its strategy to develop national human resources.

NBK continues to promote a range of philanthropic missions and social welfare programs as part of its corporate social responsibility to assert its leadership in supporting Kuwait's social development, standing as a model in serving all aspects of the community.

LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.

Holidays Offers

Dubai
Starting from
KD 103*
2 Nights R/O

Kochi
Starting from
KD 154*
5 Nights B/B

Bangkok
Starting from
KD 225*
5 Nights B/B

and many more destinations are available . .

For Reservations: 1 80 60 60

Head Office: 22901695 • 22901528
22411913 • 22901539
Farwaniya: 24717667

KNPC: 23887655
KOC: 23867268

Please send your queries on:
holidays@kuwaitairways.com

*Packages are inclusive of:
• Accommodations per person sharing in double room & Return Economy Class Ticket.

*Notes:
All rates are including all taxes.
Rates & Availability may change without prior notice.

OFFER PERIOD: until 15 JAN 16
TRAVEL PERIOD: from 5 Jan 2016 to 31 May 2016

FIRST CLASS HOTELS

KUWAIT AIRWAYS HOLIDAYS

Crime

Report

TRANSGENDER ARRESTED FOR CROSS-DRESSING

KUWAIT: A young transgender man was sent to vice detectives after being caught in revealing women's clothes in Salmiya. Hawally police thought the driver of a car they stopped was a woman, but the civil ID showed it was a 19-year-old man. He was arrested and charged with cross-dressing.

Suicide

A 26-year-old Lebanese man committed suicide by jumping from the 17th floor of a Mahboula building. Ahmadi police, paramedics and criminal evidence went to the area and they found the man had succumbed to his injuries. The body was recovered by the coroner, and detectives are questioning the family to find out what happened.

Contrabands

Hawally police arrested a man with unlicensed aphrodisiacs and illegal drugs. He was sent to criminal detectives for further action. The arrest was made when the man was seen walking suspiciously in Jabriya with a bag in his hand, who seemed confused when stopped. Policemen searched him and found the illicit material.

Construction material theft

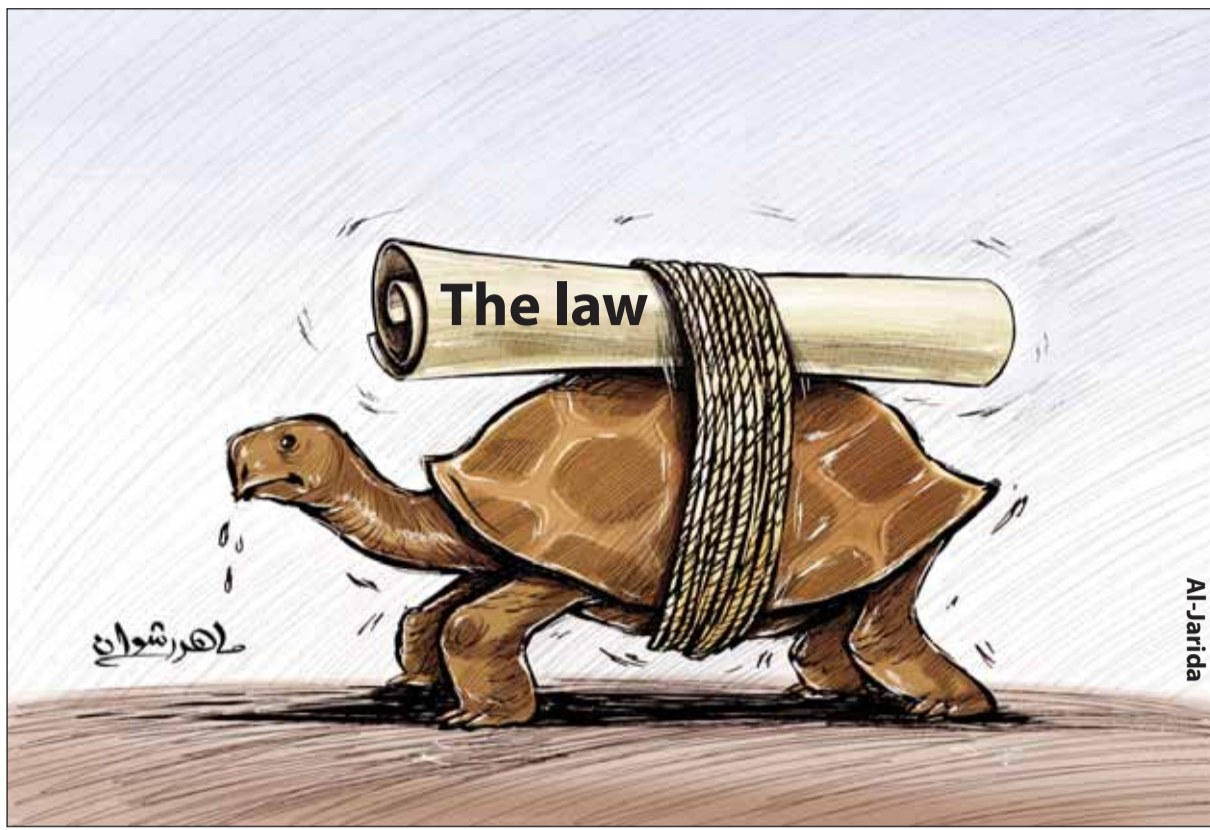
A thief stole construction material that was in front of a house under construction in Jaber Al-Ahmad, according to a complaint by the house owner at Sulaibkhat police station. The owner said the cost of the stolen material is estimated at KD 2,400. Detectives took over the case.

Child negligence

Policemen accused a woman in Fintas of negligence in caring for a minor following her son's fall from the stairs of the building she lives in. The woman rushed him to hospital for treatment for a head wound.

Search for hacker

An Egyptian man told Nugra police that he received a text message from his bank about a transfer of KD 1,100 from his account. He called the bank and suspended the account, then filed a complaint against a hacker. Police referred the case to the electronic crimes department. —Al-Rai



Al-Anbaa

JABER STADIUM... A JOY!

By Dr Nermin Al-Houti

Our words today will not be about the merits of the Jaber Stadium project and we will not get into the how, why and where about this structure - rather we will focus on the joy of the stadium's opening.

I was honored by attending the opening of Jaber Stadium, which was under the patronage of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, may Allah protect him, and what I found that day is a message for anyone who attempts to compromise the national unity that Kuwait's people and those who live in it have, hand-in-hand, and is a cohesive shield for the "pride of the Gulf". This is what we saw and felt during the celebration, which was a festival in which all Kuwaitis and expatriates participated to make Kuwait pulsate with joy and make its people happy, as our father the Amir said "let us be happy", and that sentence was interpreted completely during that celebration.

Our words today are of thanks to everyone who participated, be they government or private, headed by the interior ministry, and what the officers,

headed by Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled, did in facilitating and organizing entry and exit and helping fans to their proper seats. Thanks here is not limited to the interior ministry, rather to all our uniformed men and their unity with the crowd with their smiles and welcome for all people who came to share in Kuwait's joy.

We, after the security and stability, thank all officials at PAYS for their efforts that was felt by all those who attended the celebration, be it the organization in the stands, taking care of the fans at all levels and making those present feel warm and welcome. These things were the main reasons of having the joy come out of the heart, and made everyone feel safe and enjoy what they came to see.

A last word: The opening of Jaber Stadium is a clear message that Kuwait is one indivisible home, that was crowned by the lyrics of the opening operetta "Here...here...the glory is here." This is Kuwait, and it is still the glory and pride of the Gulf.

—Translated by Kuwait Times

ABK RECEIVES AWARD FOR 'ABK EMIRATES VISA SIGNATURE AND INFINITE CARDS'

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced that it has been awarded the 'Best New Product 2015' Award by Visa International, for its premium co-branded credit cards with Emirates Airline; the ABK Emirates Visa Signature card and the ABK Emirates Visa Infinite card.

The award was presented to Stewart Lockie, General Manager Retail Banking at ABK by Ihab Ayoub, General Manager - Middle East and North Africa, at the Bank's Head Office on 8 December, 2015. Also present from Visa was Ahmed Gaber, General Manager - KSA, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman and Amit Vij, Kuwait Country Manager and from ABK Garry Ceaplen, AGM, Retail Banking.

The ABK Emirates Visa Signature ('Signature') and ABK Emirates Visa Infinite ('Infinite') cards have been specifically designed to offer the Bank's premium customers an unrivaled variety of benefits, services and exclusive offers.

As 'Signature' and 'Infinite' cardholders, customers are automatically enrolled in the award-winning frequent flyer program of Emirates Airline; Emirates Skywards, which grants cardholders 'Skyward Miles' that can be used for reward tickets, upgrades, or other rewards offers by the program. In addition to earning Skywards Miles on local and international spends, new Signature and Infinite



Cardholders are rewarded with up to 10,000 bonus Miles.

Customers also receive complimentary airport lounge access at over 550 airports worldwide through the LoungeKey program.

As 'Infinite' cardholders, customers receive additional exclusive benefits that

include the Hilton Honors Gold, the Visa Fine Dining Discounts and rewards program, the Harrods exclusive Black Card membership, access to the ABK Advantage Program, full multi-trip travel insurance up to 1,000,000 and so much more.

ABK continuously seeks partnerships

that bring additional value to its customers, along with exclusive services that differentiate it from its competitors.

For more information on Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit www.eahli.com or contact an ABK representative via 'Ahli Chat' or by contacting a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.

50,000 TO SPEND NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS ABROAD

KUWAIT: Operations Manager at Kuwait International Airport Saleh Al-Fedaghi said that a special high-season plan had been put into practice since Thursday to meet the growing numbers of passengers expected to leave and spend the New Year holidays abroad. Accordingly, Fedaghi urged all passengers to make sure their passports are valid, respect the allowed luggage and weight rules, not carry any banned items and check in in due time prior to their flight. The airport's deputy director for aviation safety Emad Al-Jloui said that up to 50,000 passengers were expected to spend the holidays abroad using various airlines. He also stressed that emergency teams were ready for the rush. —Al-Anbaa

UP TO 2,000 DAYS LEAVE BALANCE FOR POLICE FORCE

KUWAIT: Director of Mol's police force affairs department Brig Faisal Al-Foudery announced amending article 83 of the police law pertaining leaves in a way that entitles force members to maintain an open leave balance even if that balance reaches 1,000 or 2,000 days throughout their service. Foudery explained that a police officer can use those days to go on leave, replace, or encash them effective since May. "A police agent can benefit from 90 days of his/her balance a year provided work circumstances allow it," he added, noting that an agent could also encash 60 days of the balance but stressed that taking leaves and encashing leaves could not be done in the same year. —Al-Rai

MOI TRANSACTION BAN ON 12,000 CITIZENS BY 2016 FOR NOT RENEWING WEAPONS LICENSES

KUWAIT: High-ranking security sources said that Mol Undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd gave the ministry's IT department the green light to impose a ban on around 12,000 citizens' transactions with the ministry for not renewing their weapons' licenses. The sources explained that the ban would include renewing passports, driving licenses, registrations, bringing in domestic labor, renewing labor residencies and others.

The sources explained that the new instructions would take effect by the beginning of 2016, especially when a report made by the weapons detectives director Maj Gen Farraj Al-Zobi showed that 12,000 arms licenses had

been issued to citizens who neither renewed them nor handed over their weapons. According to Zobi's report, the owners of 10,000 shotguns, 10,000 guns and 1,000 machineguns had not renewed the licenses nor handed over their weapons to the weapons police, especially those who had machineguns that were only licensed in the 1990s for certain reasons that no longer existed and thus those weapons were no longer needed.

Responding to a question if the ministry had to resort to bans and blocks which would delay citizens' transactions, the sources stressed that the weapons issue was related to national security and stability and that

decisive measures had to be taken against those who had not made use of the grace period granted to hand over weapons or renew licenses without accountability.

Finally, the sources explained that once any of the concerned citizens renews or hands over weapons, the ban would be automatically lifted. The sources added that Mol had consulted PACI to remove the names of those who passed away from the list. "However, their families will be contacted and asked to hand over the license of the weapons. They will sign an affidavit if they know nothing about the weapons," said the sources. —Al-Anbaa

'REPENTANT' EXTREMISTS BANNED FROM TRAVELLING TO PROTECT THEM

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said that the ministries of interior and awqaf were coordinating to ban 'repentant' extremists from travelling lest they might rejoin terrorist groups. The sources explained that a list was made with the names of some extremists' who had been subjected to rehab programs and showed repentance to prevent them from travelling, as well as to assess how far they benefited from the rehab programs they had been

subjected to. In addition, the sources explained that the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs intends to make use of these people by including them in a document prepared to fight terrorism as well as have them examined by sociologists and psychiatrists to help them rehabilitate and fit in the society after familiarizing them with the concept of moderation and protect them from any extreme ideas under the name of jihad. —Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa

JEREMY BENTHAM AND WORLD DESTRUCTION

By Mohammed Al-Khaldi

In the 1970s, there was a dangerous design fault in a model of one of the famous American automobile brands, where the fuel tank at the bottom rear of the vehicles used to explode on impact from behind during accidents, leading to considerable deaths and serious injuries. Guess what the manufacturing company did?!

The company used the classical American mentality that fully adopts the philosophy of the famous British philosopher Jeremy Bentham, the founder of modern utilitarianism, who died in 1832. It denies the existence of values and argues that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number is the measure of right and wrong", which means that 'right' is what is beneficial and wrong is what causes pain and loss.

Accordingly, the company analyzed its possible gains and losses, which is the basis of Bentham's utilitarianism philosophy, and found that redesigning the fuel tanks to prevent the problem would cost \$11 per vehicle, and by calculating the number of faulty vehicles - there were 12 million of them - would make the total cost \$132 million. They also found that if they ignored the fault and compensated each of the 180 fatalities with \$200,000 and each of the 180 injured with \$67,000 and paid \$700 to fix 2,000 faulty vehicles, the total cost would only be \$49 million. Thus, the company decided to ignore the fault and opted for the least cost.

This utilitarianism is a real disgusting fact of people with the least and faintest conscience, yet it forms the basis of American and European policies and they boast about graduating the best utilitarian minds in the world that are able to assess gains and losses. The same principle applies to the Phillip Morris tobacco company that deals with the entire world with the same utilitarian mentality of calculating gains and losses and prices the life of individuals by dollars they would make.

The very same pragmatics is used in politics and greedy economies. Thus, what is going on in Syria is no wonder and nobody pays attention to killing thousands and displacing millions there despite the presence of the UN and international courts and agreements, simply because decision-makers have assessed the gains and losses and believe that things are better and more profitable this way.

Notably, those doing such assessments and calculations are known as 'experts' and are paid handsomely for 'pricing' peoples' lives and thus saving millions for tycoons and businessmen and achieving diplomatic gains for politicians. This is how things are going on in this ugly world because of Bentham's utilitarianism that turned the world into a dead, heartless one!

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

BAATH = IS

By Sam Al-Nisf

In a testimony before the UN's Security Council, Yazidi princess Nadia Murad stressed that the killings, mass rape, torture and mass graves by IS in northern Iraq were definite proof that IS leaders are the very same Saddam's leaders and intelligence agents after they changed their military uniforms and wore turbans and black masks.

The Baath party was created and its leaders were left to hoist flags of and call for nationalism and Arab unity so that they could be later on used to describe regional peoples as non-believers. Doing this, Baath, Gaddafi and Saleh managed to make peoples of Iraq, Libya and Yemen, who used to be overwhelmed by Arabism, detest this Arabism and nobody dares nowadays in those

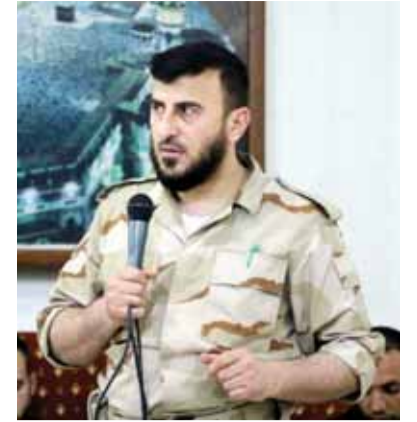
The current terrorism that is forcing the entire world to hate us is not different from that practiced in the 1970s

countries to mention Arab unity. This was no coincidence - it was carefully and meticulously planned and put into practice.

Similarly, Baath, Gaddafi and Saleh's men were allowed to pledge alliance with Muslim militias, use Muslim slogans, destroy countries, kill peoples, trigger civil wars and commit atrocities in the name of Islam while they cannot be farther from it, so that things would end up the same way they did with Arab nationalism.

The current terrorism that is forcing the entire world to hate us is not different from that practiced in the 1970s and the following years when terrorists hijacked planes, blew up airports and embassies and killed innocent people. Suspicions about those committing such devastating terrorism are the very same because they are using the same methods and have only changed the flags and slogans they are using!

—Translated by Kuwait Times



Syria rebel group names successor to slain leader

POWERFUL QUAKE JOLTS AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN

IRAQI FORCES IN FIERCE BATTLES IN RAMADI
 TROOPS CLOSE IN ON ISLAMIC STATE REDOUBT

BAGHDAD: Iraqi forces yesterday clashed with diehard jihadists from the Islamic State group defending the former government complex in the heart of the city of Ramadi. After a major push on Tuesday that broke IS defences around the city centre, government forces have been slowed by snipers, booby traps, roadside bombs and suicide attackers. While initial hopes of a quick victory have faded, Iraq's elite counter-terrorism service (CTS) and the army have advanced steadily through the devastated capital of Anbar province.

They reached a key intersection in the Hoz neighborhood home to the government complex, whose recapture would go a long way towards ensuring a full recapture of Ramadi. "CTS has cleared Hoz neighborhood in central Ramadi completely and arrived near the government complex," the force's spokesman Sabah Al-Numan

told AFP. Iraq's war media cell, which speaks on behalf of the interior and defence ministries as well as the paramilitary groups fighting against IS, said the jihadists' use of improvised explosive devices had forced a shift in strategy.

"The plan was to enter Hoz from Dhubbat but because of the mines, CTS changed tack and came in from the river bank," a statement said. The latest fighting around the government complex left at least two members of the Iraqi security forces dead and nine wounded, according to Ahmed al-Dulaimi, a police captain. At least three were killed on Friday, according to several senior officers and local officials. The figures they provide for IS casualties are high, with at least 23 killed on Friday alone.

The number of IS fighters hunkered down in central Ramadi was estimated at the start of the operation five

days ago at no more than 400. "You have the 8th Iraqi army and CTS... and they're all pushing forward," said Colonel Steve Warren, the spokesman for the US-led coalition which has been supporting Iraqi forces in Ramadi with daily air strikes. "CTS have made more progress, they're several hundred metres closer to the government complex," Warren said.

The advance by the government forces has also been hampered by the possible presence of dozens of families trapped in the combat zone and used by IS as human shields. Government forces held off months of IS assaults in Ramadi until May 2015, when the jihadists blitzed their opponents with massive suicide car bombs and seized full control of the city. That defeat was Baghdad's worst in the war against IS, and a victory now would provide a welcome boost to the much-criticized federal forces. —AFP



RAMADI: A member of Iraq's counter-terrorism forces monitors his surroundings in a street in Ramadi's Dhubbat neighborhood, adjacent to Hoz neighborhood, on Friday. —AFP

RECORD 12,000 CANDIDATES FOR IRAN ELECTIONS

TEHRAN: More than 12,000 candidates have signed up for Iranian parliamentary elections due in February, the most since the Islamic revolution in 1979, official media said yesterday. The number of people who registered to stand before a Friday deadline was up nearly 100 percent compared with the previous legislative polls in 2012, the interior ministry said. At the close of registration, the number of candidates stood at "12,123, of whom 1,434 were women," state news agency IRNA quoted the interior ministry as saying.

Women accounted for 11 percent of the hopefuls for the 290 seats available in the February 26 vote, up from eight percent last time. The proportion of candidates below the age of 50 increased from 67 percent to 73 percent. The youngest candidate to apply was 30 years old, and the oldest 75. However, the final number of candidates is expected to be lower after the Guardians Council vets applications, with a final list published on Feb 9.

Voting will be held on the same day as the election for the Assembly of Experts, which monitors the work of supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 76, and would be responsible for picking a replacement if he dies. A total of 801 candidates applied to run for the 88-seat assembly, although this number is also likely to decrease after they have been screened by the Guardians Council. President Hassan Rouhani, who took office in 2013 on the platform of more social and political freedom, has largely dedicated the first half of his four-year term to nuclear negotiations that culminated in a July deal with major powers.

The agreement will see punishing economic sanctions rolled back in exchange for Iran curtailing its nuclear program. Rouhani, who faces a re-election battle in 2017, plans to devote the rest of his term to economic and social reforms. To achieve that, he is hoping for the support of a majority of lawmakers in the next parliament. Rouhani has faced vocal opposition from conservatives in the current parliament, including on the nuclear deal. —AFP

REPS, ADMIN SPAR ON IRAN TRAVEL RULES

WASHINGTON: Top GOP lawmakers accused the Obama administration Wednesday of ignoring congressional intent and the spirit of the law in offering reassurances to Iran about new visa rules. "There is no ambiguity," said House Majority Leader Kevin McCarthy of California. "The administration should follow the law as written and agreed to." At issue is a new law tightening visa-free travel to the US, enacted as part of a sprawling spending bill passed overwhelmingly by Congress last week and signed by President Barack Obama.

The legislation, a response to the Paris terror attacks, deals with the "visa waiver" program that allows the citizens of 38 countries to travel to the US without obtaining a visa. It makes a series of changes, including requiring a visa for anyone who's visited Iraq, Syria, Iran or Sudan in the previous five years, as well as dual nationals with citizenship in any of those countries. This could make travel back and forth to the US more difficult for Iranian-Americans or for Europeans with business dealings in Iran.

Iranian leaders complained in recent days that the new requirements contradict elements of the landmark nuclear deal reached earlier this year with Iran, the US and five world powers, under which Iran must curb its nuclear program in exchange for relief from international sanctions. The agreement also committed the signing nations to refrain from policies adversely affecting normalization of trade and economic relations with Iran. —AP

ZAIN

FREE

eeZee INTERNET ON WEEKENDS

Subscribe to one of our new monthly eeZee Internet plans starting at KD 5 and enjoy eeZee Internet with FREE unlimited Internet on Fridays and Saturdays*.

To view all plans, send NET to 999

Monthly	KD 5	Monthly	KD 8	Monthly	KD 20
	5 GB 4G LTE Internet		30 GB 4G LTE Internet		1 TB 4G LTE Internet
	FREE Unlimited Internet On weekends		FREE Unlimited Internet On weekends		FREE Unlimited Internet On weekends
To subscribe Send M2 to 999		To subscribe Send M1 to 999		To subscribe Send M10 to 999	

*Limited-time offer

kw.zain.com/eeZee A Wonderful World

HOME OF MOVIES



NOW YOU SEE ME

TOMORROW
MONDAY PREMIERE
11 PM KWT

mbc.net

HOMES EVACUATED, CARS SUBMERGED AS FLOODING HITS UK

LONDON: Homes were evacuated, cars were submerged and boats were brought in to help bring people to safety yesterday as parts of England, Scotland and Wales faced severe flooding caused by repeated heavy rains. The Boxing Day holiday saw a battle against the elements, particularly in northwestern England. More than 30 "severe" flood warnings were issued - each one meaning people faced possible loss of life if they didn't exercise extreme caution.

In the county of Lancashire, some 220 miles (350 kilometers) northwest of London, emergency workers backed by the military buttressed defenses with extra sandbags and heavy trucks brought in rescue equipment able to drive through waters too high to safely traverse on foot. Hundreds of people were evacuated from their homes after water breached flood barriers and poured into the streets.

Beleaguered residents in some towns were told to abandon their homes for higher ground while others were told to move their valuables and listen to advice from emergency services about possible evacuation. Abbi Blackburn, stranded, said she had no sandbags to protect her home and had already lost major appliances to flooding in the basement. She said it was too dangerous to leave either



CALDERDALE: A car drives through flood waters at Mytholmroyd in Calderdale, West Yorkshire, England yesterday. Parts of northwest England already hit hard by flooding in recent weeks were under severe flood warnings yesterday because of forecasts for more heavy rain, with some areas being evacuated. — AP

on foot or in a vehicle. "It's getting quite bad and it's still walloping down with rain," she said. Lancashire police tried to persuade the curious to stay away from

the danger zones: "A severe flood warning means danger to life. It doesn't mean 'come and have a look,'" the department tweeted.



WEST YORKSHIRE: A man wades through flood waters at Hebden Bridge in West Yorkshire, England yesterday. — AP

Its fire department reported one fire station had been evacuated due to floods but that its boat crews and "swift water rescue" crews were helping others to safety. Authorities issued some 335 flood alerts in all. The government's emergency response team convened by telephone to

coordinate rescue plans. Floods Minister Rory Stewart said rainfall in the affected areas is unprecedented. Resources are thin. Officials said 85 percent of Britain's flood defense barriers have already been deployed to the Cumbria area, in the far northwestern corner of England. — AP



BANGUI: A man passes over a metal gate to receive his voter registration card in the PK5 Muslim district in Bangui during a voter card distribution ahead the country's presidential elections. — AFP

SECURITY TIGHT FOR VOLATILE CAR'S LANDMARK ELECTIONS

FIGHTING FORCES 10% OF THE POPULATION TO FLEE

BANGUI: Central African Republic holds a key election amid tight security, hoping to turn a page on the worst sectarian violence seen in the notoriously restive nation. The much delayed legislative and presidential elections follow a Dec 13 referendum that delivered a resounding 93 percent vote in favor of a new constitution - signaling just how many Central Africans yearn for a return to normalcy.

The new constitution, installing the country's sixth republic since its 1960 independence from France, limits the president's tenure to two terms and reins in armed militias which proliferate in large parts of the country. After more than two years of fighting that forced 10 percent of the population to flee their homeland, the vote will show whether the mineral-rich but dirt poor nation can slam the door on bloodshed to begin an era of peace.

Despite the presence of 11,000 UN and French peacekeepers, large chunks of the country remain out of bounds, either under the control of rebel chieftains or bandits. There are 30 candidates vying for the presidency, including the son of former self-proclaimed emperor Jean-Bedel Bokassa, whose extravagant

1970s coronation was modelled on Napoleon's. The frontrunners include Anicet Georges Dologuele, a former premier widely known as "Mr Clean" for his efforts to wipe out graft and theft.

Dologuele's main electoral planks are his pacific past and his record as prime minister. "At age 58, I have never held a weapon," he said recently on the campaign trail. "I am still happy to recall that between 1996 until now, the only time there was no military or political crises in the country was during my time in office," he also said. The other leading contenders are another former premier, Martin Ziguèle, and Abdoul Karim Meckassoua, who held several ministerial positions under ousted veteran ruler Francois Bozize.

'No to Hatred'

Central Africa has been rocked by violence since a mainly Muslim rebellion in 2013 overthrew Bozize, triggering revenge killings by Christian militia that spilled over into civilian communities. The second round of the polls is scheduled for Jan 16. There are about 1,800 candidates in the running for parliamentary seats. Almost two million Central Africans have

registered to vote in a population of 4.8 million.

Pope Francis, who visited the Central African Republic in November, had made an impassioned appeal for peace, saying: "Christians and Muslims are brothers and sisters." "Together, we must say no to hatred, to revenge and to violence, particularly that violence which is perpetrated in the name of a religion or of God himself," the pope said.

The international community, which has been pouring aid into the country for over two years, was keen for the referendum and elections to take place. The UN mission in Central Africa said it wanted the ballot to "pass off without incident ... and for every Central African to be able to vote in total security."

The unrest in the country - which has seen six republics, an empire and several transitional governments - has wreaked havoc on the economy. Almost 70 percent of people live in poverty, and in 2014 the World Bank estimated per capita income at \$320 (295 euros), making it one of the poorest countries in the world. It nonetheless possesses substantial resources, including uranium, diamonds, gold and timber. — AFP

CAR WRACKED BY DECADES OF STRIFE, MISMANAGEMENT

BANGUI, Central African Republic: Volatile Central African Republic, which votes for a new president and parliament Wednesday, is rich in natural resources but mired in biting poverty largely due to chronic unrest. These are the major issues facing the country:

Instability

The most recent unrest came after longtime president Francois Bozize, a Christian, was overthrown in March 2013 by Muslim rebels from the Seleka coalition, who were in turn ousted a year later by a military intervention led by France, the country's former colonial ruler. The events sparked the bloodiest sectarian violence in the country's history as Christian militias sought revenge against their mainly Muslim foes. Central Africa's troubles started back in Dec 1965, five years after independence, when president David Dacko was ousted by Jean-Bedel Bokassa.

Bokassa took charge in Jan 1966 and crowned himself emperor in 1977 in a wildly extravagant ceremony that made waves across the world. His reign was marked by bloodshed, notably the 1979 massacre of school children who refused to buy school uniforms from a firm owned by one of his wives. The French drove Bokassa out on Sept 20, 1979, while he was on a visit to Libya. Dacko was reinstated but two years later forced to hand power over to senior military officers.

A multi-party system was unveiled in 1991, but then three mutinies in 1996-97 were followed by a failed coup in 2001. Bozize, a former military chief, rebelled and took over in 2003. Several more rebellions followed, starting in September 2005, and France intervened with help from Chadian soldiers in Nov 2006 to recapture towns in the north that had fallen to rebel forces. Bozize was re-elected in 2011 though the vote was marred by fraud, and in March 2013, Seleka rebels seized the capital Bangui and Michel

Djotodia proclaimed himself president.

Christians who comprise about 80 percent of the population organized vigilante units dubbed "anti-balaka", in reference to the machetes used by the rebels. The Christian militias then began to target Muslims, plunging the country into a crisis that ended when French troops backed by a UN mandate stepped in once again on Dec 5, 2013. Parliament then elected Bangui mayor Catherine Samba-Panza as interim president. In mid-December this year, a constitutional referendum on limiting the president's tenure was approved by a large majority, clearing the way for the upcoming parliamentary and presidential polls.

Poverty

The chronic crises have greatly harmed key sectors, and economic activity now comprises mainly subsistence agriculture, particularly cotton, coffee and tobacco. Almost 70 percent of the country's 4.8 million inhabitants live in poverty, and in 2014 the World Bank estimated per capita income at \$320 (295 euros), making it one of the world's poorest countries. It nonetheless possesses substantial resources, including uranium, diamonds, gold and timber. Administrations have been paralyzed by the unrest, and the customs, tax and public treasury services are unable to collect funds needed to pay salaries and pensions. Gross domestic product (GDP) plunged by 36 percent amid the unrest in 2013, but managed to expand by a slight 1.0 percent last year.

Insecurity

The country's armed forces are estimated to number about 8,000 and are backed up by 900 French troops and an 11,000-strong UN force dubbed MINUSCA. They have stabilized the situation, but do not control the entire country, which covers almost 623,000 sq km - a little less than Afghanistan or Chile. — AFP

WHAT IS BOXING DAY AND HOW DID IT GET ITS NAME?

LONDON: In Britain and other countries like Australia and Canada, the day after Christmas is a secular national holiday known as Boxing Day. Here's a brief look at some theories about how the holiday got its name and how people celebrate it:

No need for boxing gloves

While no one seems to know for sure how it came to be called Boxing Day, it definitely has nothing to do with the sport of boxing. Perhaps the most widely held understanding of its origins comes from the tradition of wealthier members of society giving servants and tradesmen a so-called "Christmas Box" containing money and gifts on the day after Christmas. It was seen as a reward for a year's worth of service.

Other believe it comes from the post-Christmas custom of churches placing boxes outside their doors to collect money for distribution to less-fortunate members of society in need of Christmas cheer. Some trace it to Britain's proud naval tradition and the days when a sealed box of money was kept on board for lengthy voyages and then given to a priest for distribution to the poor if the voyage was successful. There are other explanations, but it's clear the designation has nothing to do with the modern habit of using the holiday for shopping at "big box" stores selling televisions, computers and the like.

Sharing the wealth

No one knows for sure when Boxing Day

started, but some believe it was centuries ago, when servants would be given the day after Christmas off as a day of rest after feverish preparations for their masters' celebrations. Others trace it back even earlier, to the Roman practice of collecting money in boxes - they say Roman invaders brought this practice to Britain, where it was taken up by the clergy to collect money in boxes for the disadvantaged. The tradition gained popularity during the Victorian era and has flourished to this day. The British Empire may now be a thing of the past, but Boxing Day is still celebrated in some other parts of the Commonwealth, including Canada, Australia and Kenya. In Canada, some say Boxing Day is losing out to the US import of Black Friday, the day after US Thanksgiving in November, but a representative from Best Buy in Canada says Dec 26 remains its biggest shopping day of the year.

What Do People Actually Do?

Boxing Day has evolved into a day of relaxation and indulgence - and shopping. It is filled with sporting events (including a marathon soccer schedule tailor-made for TV viewing from a comfortable couch) and it is often a day when people open their homes to family and friends who drop by for turkey and perhaps half-consumed bottles of wine left over from Christmas dinner. In Britain it used to be a day for fox hunting in the frost-tinged countryside, but that practice has been mostly banned for more than a decade now. — AP

IMMIGRANT DEATH SPARKS RIOT IN SPAIN BEACH CITY

MADRID: African migrants rioted in a southern Spanish beach city on Friday, setting fire to garbage bins and cars, after a man from Guinea-Bissau was

stabbed to death, local officials said. Manolo Garcia, a city councillor in Roquetas del Mar in the province of Almeria, said the killing of the 41-year-old man in the



ROQUETAS DE MAR: Members of the Spanish Civil Guard patrol a street yesterday where a man from Guinea-Bissau was found dead, in Roquetas de Mar, near Almeria. — AFP

city led to protests which descended into violence in the working class neighborhood of Cortijos de Marin. "Garbage bins are being burned, cars have been burned, windows have been shattered," he told radio news station Cadena Ser.

Local online newspaper Ideal published a photo of a garbage container engulfed in flames in the middle of a street near a pharmacy as well as a video of man pushing a garbage container onto a burning car. Police found the body of the man from Guinea-Bissau on a street in Roquetas del Mar in the early hours of Friday. Police suspect the man was stabbed following a dispute over a traffic accident, local media reported.

About 30-40 people had taken part in the unrest but police have since brought the situation under control, the assistant deputy of the national government in Almeria, Andres Garcia Lopez, told Cadena Ser. "At this moment the situation is back to normal," he said. Police would remain at the scene throughout the night and for the next few days to prevent any renewal of unrest, he added. No one was injured in the riot and no arrests were made, Lopez said.

The province of Almeria is home to a sea of plastic greenhouses that employ many migrants as vegetable and fruit labourers. It also relies on tourism but the jobless rate in the province stand at 31 percent, much higher than the already high national rate of 21 percent. In 2008 African migrants in Roquetas del Mar set fire to cars and houses, and attacked police and fire-fighters with stones, after a 28-year-old Senegalese man was stabbed to death. — AFP



SYDNEY: Brazilian acrobat Jackson Carmelo Topazio does a trick on Bondi Beach while celebrating Christmas Day in Sydney, Australia on Friday, Dec 25, 2015. — AP



ALLAHABAD: Indian workers adjust electricity cables set up temporarily on the banks of the river Ganga in preparation for the annual Hindu religious fair of Magh Mela yesterday. — AFP

INDIA CLOSING IN ON DEAL TO BUILD 6 NUKE REACTORS

REACTOR SITES IN PM MODI'S HOME STATE

NEW DELHI: India expects to seal a contract with Westinghouse Electric Co LLC to build six nuclear reactors in the first half of next year, a senior government official said, in a sign its \$150 billion dollar nuclear power program is getting off the ground. The proposed power plant in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's home state of Gujarat will accelerate India's plans to build roughly 60 reactors, which would make it the world's second-biggest nuclear energy market after China.

India wants to dramatically increase its nuclear capacity to 63,000 megawatts (MW) by 2032, from 5,780 MW, as part of a broader push to move away from fossil fuels, cut greenhouse gas emissions and avoid the dangerous effects of climate change. The United States signed a pact with India in 2008, opening the way for nuclear commerce that had previously been stymied due to New Delhi's nuclear weapons programme and shunning of the global Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

But hopes that reactor makers would get billions of dollars of new business evaporated after India adopted a law in 2010 giving the state-run operator Nuclear Power Corp of India Ltd (NPCIL) the right to seek damages from suppliers in the event of an accident. Indian officials have been trying to assuage suppliers' concerns, including by setting up an insurance pool with a liability cap of 15 billion Indian rupees (\$226.16 million).

A final hurdle - ratification of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage (CSC) - is expected within weeks, the Indian government official said. The CSC requires signatories to shift liability to the operator and offers access to relief funds. In a statement, Westinghouse said it expected India would move towards a framework that satisfies the CSC and channels accident liability exclusively to the operator. The statement made no reference to ongoing negotiations.

Shares of Westinghouse's parent, Toshiba Corp, jumped as much as 3.3 percent on Thursday after the news, before slipping back. A Toshiba spokesman declined to comment on the report, but noted that Westinghouse has been confident of winning orders from India. A deal with Westinghouse could also put pressure on General Electric Co, whose nuclear energy venture with Hitachi was offered a site six years ago to build reactors.

GE has still not decided whether it would move ahead with the plan, the official said, adding that India was keen for a decision from the company soon. GE Hitachi Nuclear Energy said it had strong interest in India, and that the CSC would be "a sustainable solution to concerns about India's existing

domestic nuclear liability law". India's plans for ramping up nuclear capacity have in the past fallen far short of targets and industry officials say that the aim to lift the share of nuclear power to a quarter of its energy mix, from barely 3 percent now, is very ambitious.

No More Technical Hurdles

Later this week, India is expected to offer Russia a site in its southern state of Andhra Pradesh to build six reactors, on top of the six it is already expected to build in neighbouring Tamil Nadu, Indian and Russian officials have said. Separately, India expects Japan, which supplies components used in most reactors, to ratify an agreement sometime in the second quarter of 2016 to support its nuclear program, another senior Indian government source said. "There are no more technical hurdles in the development of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes," the source said.

French nuclear company Areva, which uses Japanese components, also has a deal to build six

reactors in India, although restructuring within that company was likely to delay construction until 2017, the first official said. French utility EDF agreed earlier this year to buy a majority stake in Areva's reactor business. Areva has been in price negotiations with NPCIL for several months now, officials at the Indian operator told Reuters in November. Areva did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Westinghouse Deal

Negotiators from Westinghouse and Indian operator NPCIL have held several rounds of talks on the nuclear plant in Mithi Virdi, the government official said. NPCIL declined to comment on the negotiations. Federal minister for Atomic Energy Jitendra Singh told parliament this month that talks were going on with French and US firms to arrive at project proposals. He offered no details. But the government source said Westinghouse and NPCIL were negotiating all six reactors in one go, instead of an earlier plan to strike deals for two at a time. — Reuters

COUPLE SEEKING TO UNDO DIVORCE GET TURNED DOWN

CONCORD: Should those irreconcilable differences suddenly become reconcilable, don't go looking to get un-divorced in New Hampshire. The state's Supreme Court this month upheld a lower court ruling refusing to vacate a New Castle couple's 2014 divorce after 24 years of marriage. Terrie Harmon and her ex-husband, Thomas McCarron, argued on appeal that their divorce decree was erroneous because they mended fences and are a couple once more. But the justices, in a unanimous ruling issued Dec 2, said the law specifically allows them to grant divorces - not undo them.

Courts in some states - including Illinois, Nebraska, Mississippi, Arkansas, Maryland and Kentucky - will vacate divorces within a certain time frame or under certain circumstances, at the parties' request. Others - including New York and South Dakota - maintain they, like New Hampshire, have no statutory authority to undo a divorce. Attorney Joshua Gordon, appointed to defend the lower court's ruling, said allowing the couple's divorce to be undone could jeopardize the finality of all divorces. "Divorce is a uniquely fraught area of litigation," Gordon argued. "For divorced couples, it is often important to have the solace of knowing that their former spouse is indeed former."

Harmon and McCarron did not return calls seek-

ing the answer to the question: Why not just remarry? They were married in 1989 and filed for divorce in January 2014; the divorce decree was finalized in July that same year. In March, they filed a joint motion to vacate the decree. New Hampshire law does allow for divorces to be set aside for reasons of fraud, accident, mistake or misfortune. Gordon said that none of those circumstances happened in the Harmon-McCarron divorce and that any adverse financial consequences the couple claimed were "self-imposed."

He said it's his understanding they had several reasons for trying to vacate the decree. "I think it was partly sentimental, and partly that they had some business interests that a divorce and remarriage would be more complicated than undoing the divorce," Gordon said. Harmon, a lawyer, argued in court papers that a couple shouldn't have to show the decree was legally flawed if they reconcile. She said that test is "designed to balance the interests of adverse parties," not those who want to get back together. Attorney Kysa Crusco, head of the family law section of the New Hampshire Bar Association, said Harmon's argument was "creative" but the law and prior New Hampshire rulings are clear. "People just have to be cautious in making sure divorce is what they really want," she said. — AP

XMAS LETDOWN: WOMAN IS NOT ACTIVIST'S LOST GRANDDAUGHTER

BUENOS AIRES: In a Christmas gift gone awry, a woman thought to be the lost granddaughter of an activist who searches for babies stolen during Argentina's 1976-1983 military dictatorship turned out to be someone else. Two genetic tests showed that the 39-year-old woman in question is not the granddaughter of Maria "Chicha" Mariani, the government said Friday. Mariani, 92 and nearly blind, is one of the best known Argentine rights activists, and the Christmas Eve news that she had finally found her granddaughter was the feel-good story of the season. President Mauricio Macri even congratulated her on Twitter.

She is one of the founders of the Grandmothers of the Plaza del Mayo, a human rights group seeking to find children stolen or illegally adopted during Argentina's so-called "Dirty War." Babies born in captivity to political prisoners or orphaned by assassinations were given to families sympathetic to the regime or even taken in by their parents' killers. Mariani's granddaughter, Clara Anahi Mariani, was abducted as a three-month-old infant when regime agents killed her mother.

On Christmas Eve a statement from the Anahi Foundation, which Mariani created in

1989 after stepping down as president of the Grandmothers group, said DNA testing had confirmed "with 99.9 percent" certainty that the woman identified as Clara Anahi was Mariani's granddaughter. That DNA test was carried out privately by the woman, who has not been named. However two DNA tests-one in early 2015 and the other made public Friday show no relationship between the two women, said Pablo Parenti, head of the government office that searches for children kidnapped during the dictatorship.

The second test was carried out by the National Genetic Data Bank (BNDG), the institution that provides official results for such cases. "Both reports are conclusive in showing that there is no relationship between the genetic profile of this young woman and the Chicha Mariani family group, nor with the other families that are still looking for abducted children," read the statement. Mariani urged "caution" in a separate statement, saying that the results of the second test needed to be confirmed. Mariani will hold a press conference on Saturday to explain what happened, her biographer Juan Martin Ramos Padilla said in a statement. — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: The woman supposed to be Clara Anahi Teruggi (right), the 120th granddaughter who was snatched from her mother and identified by Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo (Grandmothers of Plaza de Mayo), hugs Maria (Chicha) Mariani on Dec 24, 2015. — AFP

POWERFUL QUAKE JOLTS AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN

KABUL: A 6.3-magnitude earthquake centred in the Hindu Kush jolted Afghanistan and Pakistan, damaging homes and leaving dozens of people injured just two months after a killer quake rattled the same mountainous region. The tremor late Friday hit at a depth of 203.5 km, the US Geological Survey said, sending people fleeing shaking buildings into a bitterly cold night and prompting fears of aftershocks.

The epicentre of the quake, which was felt as far away as New Delhi, was in the remote Afghan province of Badakhshan, close to the Pakistani and Tajik borders. A pregnant woman was killed when a boulder fell on her house in Peshawar and up to 50 others were left injured in the north-western Pakistani city, officials said. Initial information suggested at least 45 houses were damaged in Badakhshan where communication with

remote, mountainous villages is typically slow, and 12 people were injured in the Afghan province of Nangarhar. USGS had initially reported the quake's magnitude at 6.2.

In October, a 7.5-magnitude quake in the same region ripped across Pakistan and Afghanistan, killing nearly 400 people and flattening buildings in rugged terrain. For many in Pakistan, October's quake brought back traumatic memories of a 7.6-magnitude quake that struck in October 2005, killing more than 75,000 people and displacing some 3.5 million. Afghanistan is frequently hit by earthquakes, especially in the Hindu Kush mountain range, which lies near the junction of the Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. In Nepal a quake in April and a strong aftershock in May killed more than 8,900 people. — AFP



SURKHOAD, Afghanistan: An Afghan villager removes bricks after his home was damaged from an earthquake in this district of Jalalabad east of Kabul yesterday. — AP

'ARMED' CHINESE SHIP SAILS NEAR DISPUTED ISLES: JAPAN

TOKYO: A Chinese coast guard ship which appeared to be armed with several cannons yesterday entered what Tokyo regards as its territorial waters near disputed islands, the Japan Coast Guard said. Japan and China routinely butt heads over ownership of the uninhabited East China Sea islets, as Chinese ships - mostly coastguard vessels - and aircraft have sometimes approached them to back up Beijing's claims and test Japan's response.

It was however the first time an apparently armed Chinese coastguard vessel had "entered the territorial waters near the Senkaku Islands", the Japan Coast Guard said. Japan administers the uninhabited islands under that name but China also claims them and calls them the Diaoyus. On Tuesday Japan said it had spotted the armed Chinese coastguard ship for the first time in the contiguous waters near the islands.

"The ship is seen carrying four pieces

of equipment, two at the front and another set of two at the rear, which each seem to have something similar to a cannon," a coastguard spokeswoman had said at the time. The same ship entered what Tokyo considers its territorial waters, with two other Chinese coastguard vessels without such equipment, at around 9:30 am (0030 GMT) Saturday and stayed for about an hour, the Japan Coast Guard said in statements.

In November, Japan said it spotted a Chinese naval intelligence ship operating near the disputed islands for the first time. Relations between Japan and China hit a low after Tokyo in September 2012 moved to increase its formal control by nationalizing some of the islands. But the countries - Asia's two biggest economies - have taken steps over the past year to improve ties.

They issued carefully worded statements on the dispute ahead of a sum-

mit in November last year in Beijing between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. The two sides acknowledged they had different views on tensions emanating from the issue but agreed on the need to keep them under control. Distrust, however, remains high as China is wary of moves by Abe to raise Japan's military profile while Tokyo frets about Beijing's increasing regional and global assertiveness. — AFP



VICTORIA: A Skycrane helicopter drops a load of water as it works to hold back a wildfire from the hamlet of Claredon in Victoria, Australia. — AP

MORE THAN 100 HOMES LOST IN AUSTRALIA XMAS BUSHFIRES

OFFICIALS WARN OF MORE BLAZES

MELBOURNE: More than 100 homes burned down in a leading Australian tourist area in bushfires on Christmas Day and the situation remained dangerous yesterday, as officials predicted more blazes to come later in the hot southern summer. While around 500 firefighters and 13 firefighting aircraft battled the flames along parts of Victoria state's picturesque Great Ocean Road, teams moved in to assess damage from fires that had lit up the night sky along the coast on Christmas.

A spokesman for the state's emergency services said 98 homes had been confirmed burned in the community of Wye River and another 18 in nearby Separation Creek, for a total of 116 in the two townships, located about 120 km southwest of Melbourne. Top emergency officials warned that dry conditions posed a threat of more fires for the Great Ocean Road area and

the rest of Victoria. "This fire doesn't go away," Craig Lapsley, the state's emergency services commissioner, told a news conference. "We will be back into hot, windy weather in January without a doubt. Everything's available to burn."

The Great Ocean Road is one of Australia's biggest tourist draws with its spectacular scenery and unusual offshore rock formations. It remained mostly closed to traffic on Saturday during what is typically one of its busiest times of the year. Although an evacuation alert was lifted for the popular tourist town of Lorne and rain overnight had helped the firefighting operation, officials said the situation remained potentially dangerous with many hotspots. Images from the scene showed hillsides charred to the ground all the way down to the coast.

State Premier Daniel Andrews surveyed the area from the air and commended emergency

services, noting that there had so far been no loss of life, but he warned that the number of homes destroyed could rise. Meetings were held yesterday for hundreds of victims urgently moved out of affected towns on Friday, many spending Christmas night in hurriedly organised shelters. Andrews said financial grants had already been issued to help those who had lost their homes.

The fires started with a lightning strike on Dec. 19 and, fanned by winds, have burned more than 2,000 hectares. Walking tracks in the nearby Great Otway National Park have been closed to the public as some of the fires are within the park itself. The disaster is the latest of a string of bushfires to hit Victoria and other states in recent weeks. In 2009, Victoria witnessed Australia's worst ever bushfire disaster, since dubbed "Black Saturday". — Reuters

JOURNALIST ACCUSED OF 'CHAMPIONING' TERRORISM CHINA EXPELS FRENCH JOURNALIST

BEIJING: China confirmed the imminent expulsion of a French journalist in the first such case since 2012, accusing her of "flagrantly championing" terrorist acts in a statement on its foreign ministry's website yesterday. Ursula Gauthier, a Beijing-based correspondent for French news magazine L'Obs, must issue a public apology for an article she wrote last month or China's foreign ministry will not renew her press credentials, officials told Gauthier on Christmas Day.

Her essay "flagrantly championed acts of terrorism and acts of cruelly killing innocents, triggering the Chinese people's outrage," said the foreign ministry statement. Citing her failure to make a "serious apology to the Chinese people," the statement said: "It is not suitable for her to continue working in China." "China will never support the freedom to champion terrorism," it added.

But the Chinese people expressed confusion over their own purported indignation, as most had not read or even heard of Gauthier's article, which has no Chinese-language version and remains inaccessible on the mainland's censored internet in its original French. "Triggered the Chinese people's outrage? Don't presume to represent me - I don't even know what happened!" wrote one user on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform. "You should put out the original article for everyone to see - otherwise how can everyone be angry?" asked another.

Entitled "After the attacks (on Paris), Chinese solidarity is not without ulterior motives", Gauthier's article spoke of China's anti-terrorism policies in the country's western region of Xinjiang, homeland of the Muslim

Uighur ethnic minority - many of whom complain of discrimination and controls on their culture and religion. Xinjiang is often hit by deadly unrest and China blames the violence on Islamist separatists, but rights groups point to Beijing's own actions as a driver.

If Gauthier's press card is not renewed, she cannot apply for a new visa, forcing her to leave China. "They confirmed that if I did not make a public apology on all the points that had 'hurt the Chinese people...' my press card would not be renewed and I would have to leave on December 31," Gauthier told AFP Friday. Gauthier would be the first foreign correspondent to be expelled since the 2012 expulsion of Melissa Chan, correspondent for the English-language service of Al Jazeera.

The move has been met with widespread criticism from the French government, press watchdog Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and Gauthier's employer. "France will remain committed to the defence of freedom of expression and information throughout the world," wrote French minister of culture and communication Fleur Pellerin Friday on Twitter in response to the news. Gauthier's article in L'Obs triggered condemnation from Beijing and a virulent campaign in the state-run Global Times and China Daily, as well as thousands of often violent and abusive comments from Chinese Internet users. Her photo was also published online.

While the domestic media in China is subject to strict control and many topics are taboo, the foreign media is free to publish on any topic. However, foreign journalists frequently complain of harassment by the authorities while conducting routine reporting. — AFP



BEIJING: French journalist Ursula Gauthier, a reporter for the French news magazine L'Obs, holds a statement from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs as she sits at her desk in her apartment in Beijing yesterday. — AP

TOKYO TO PROPOSE NEW FUND FOR FORMER 'COMFORT WOMEN'

TOKYO: Japan plans to propose a fresh fund to support former comfort women as foreign ministers from Tokyo and Seoul meet next week to settle a bitter row over a Japanese wartime brothel system, reports said yesterday. The one-day meeting between Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and his South Korean counterpart, Yun Byung-se, will be held in Seoul on Monday, officials have said. The ministers are to discuss "matters of mutual concern" such as the issue of women systematically forced to have sex with Japanese soldiers during World War II.

The Japanese government is considering creating a new fund of about 100 million yen (\$830,000) to help former comfort women, the Mainichi daily reported, while other media said the sum would be larger than that. Tokyo also plans to propose that the two countries sign a statement confirming that the issue of comfort women is settled completely, the Mainichi and other Japanese newspapers reported. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is aiming for a resolution of the lingering issue that has overshadowed diplomatic relations between the two East Asian US allies.

Japan issued a landmark 1993 statement that expressed "sincere apologies and remorse" to the women "who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women". But it has long maintained that the dispute was settled in a 1965 normalisation agreement with South Korea, which saw Tokyo make a total payment of \$800 million in grants or loans to its former colony.

In its editorial yesterday, Japan's conservative Sankei daily called on the government to maintain that the dispute was settled in the 1965 agreement and assure that South Korea stop "rehashing" the issue as a diplomatic card. Seoul is demanding a fresh formal apology and compensation for the Korean women. The fate of the comfort women is a hugely emotional issue in South Korea and a source of much of the distrust that has marred relations between Seoul and Tokyo for decades. — AFP

FRESH LANDSLIDE HITS MYANMAR JADE MINE

YANGON: Rescuers were searching through mud and rubble yesterday after a new landslide buried workers - possibly dozens - in a remote jade mining region in northern Myanmar, the second such incident in just over a month. The landslide took place on Friday afternoon in Hpakant, Kachin State, the war-torn area that is the epicentre of Myanmar's secretive billion dollar jade industry. "The rescue process has now started and we are searching for dead bodies but we can't tell the numbers yet," Nilar Myint, an official from Hpakant Administrative Office said.

An AFP photographer on the scene said mechanical diggers had been brought in to sift through a huge pile of debris that had slid down a steep hillside. Locals report as many as 50 people might have been buried by the wall of mud and stones. But a second official involved in the rescue operation downplayed that number. "According to what officials from nearby villages have told us, just three or four people are missing at the moment," Myo Thet Aung, also from the Hpakant Administrative Office, told AFP.

By mid-afternoon yesterday, officials said

they still had not found any bodies. The same area was hit by a massive landslide last month that killed more than 100 people. Locals say dozens more have died throughout the year in smaller accidents. The region is remote, with little phone coverage and poor roads making it difficult to obtain precise and swift data after such incidents. Those killed in landslides are mainly itinerant workers who scratch a living picking through the piles of waste left by large-scale industrial mining firms in the hope of stumbling across a previously missed hunk of

jade that will deliver them from poverty.

Demand from China

Myanmar is the source of virtually all of the world's finest jadeite, a near-transparent green stone that is enormously prized in neighbouring China, where it is known as the "stone of heaven". The Hpakant landscape has been turned into a moonscape of environmental destruction as firms use ever-larger diggers to claw the precious stone from the ground. But while mining firms - many linked to the junta-era military elite - are thought to be raking in huge sums, local people complain they are shut off from the bounty.

In an October report, advocacy group Global Witness estimated that the value of Myanmar jade produced in 2014 alone was \$31 billion and said the trade might be the "biggest natural resource heist in modern history". Much of the best jade is thought to be smuggled directly to China. With little help from authorities, Hpakant community groups have pooled limited resources to help workers injured in the accidents which have become commonplace as the diggers creep closer to villages.

Heroin and methamphetamine are also easily and cheaply available on Hpakant's dusty streets, a side effect of Myanmar's massive narcotics trade. Locals have launched desperate campaigns to try to persuade Myanmar's quasi-civilian government, which replaced outright military rule in 2015, to force mining firms to curtail their rapidly expanding operations.

But their pleas have so far fallen on deaf ears. Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy swept landmark Nov 8 elections and will form a new government early next year. But it has not yet outlined any firm plans for the jade trade beyond pledges for a more equitable allocation of profits from the country's natural resources. Analysts say reform will be difficult given the entrenched military interests in the trade and the remoteness of many of the mines, some of which are in the hands of ethnic rebel fighters. — AFP



HPAKANT: Rescue workers are pictured at the site of a landslide yesterday in Hpakant, Kachin State, the war-torn area that is the epicenter of Myanmar's secretive billion dollar jade industry. — AFP



Jockeys compete in a camel race during the Mazayin Dhafra Camel Festival in the desert near the city of Madinat Zayed, 150 km west of Abu Dhabi, on Friday. The festival, which attracts participants from around the Gulf region, includes a camel beauty contest, a display of UAE handicrafts and other activities aimed at promoting the country's folklore. — AFP

SYRIA EVACUATION PLAN PUT ON HOLD

Continued from Page 1

"About 1,200 people were supposed to leave today (Saturday), but the death of Zahran Allouh means we are back to square one," he said. He said buses standing by to transfer the evacuees had left empty and "the plan was on hold until Jaish al-Islam reorganizes itself".

Another source close to the negotiations said there was a delay in implementing the deal but that it was "still in place". Syrian Observatory for Human Rights chief Rami Abdel Rahman said the deal was "frozen, but not cancelled, because of logistical issues linked essentially to the difficulty of providing safe passage". The deal came after two months of intense talks between government and district leaders, according to the Britain-based monitor.

Syria's conflict erupted in 2011 with anti-government protests but has spiralled into a multi-sided civil war across the country. Allouh was a leading figure in the rebel movement in Damascus province, and had been holding a senior-level meeting in Eastern Ghouta when he was killed. A Syrian security source told AFP "dozens" of rebels died in two rounds of air strikes by Syria's air force with newly provided Russian missiles. At least 12 Jaish al-Islam members and seven from the Islamist Ahrar al-Sham group were killed.

Hours afterwards, leading members of Jaish al-Islam elected Abu Hammam Al-Buwaydani as a replacement,

according to the Observatory. Buwaydani is a 40-year-old businessman and fighter from Douma in Eastern Ghouta who hails from a family with strong ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, the monitor said. Backed by Saudi Arabia, the group recently took part in a landmark opposition meeting in Riyadh aimed at forming a united front for eventual talks with Assad's regime. It has remained firmly opposed to both Assad and IS.

Analyst Karim Bitar said Allouh's death is "a severe blow to the Riyadh negotiations process". "Given Allouh's authoritarian temper and strong rule, it will take time for Jaish al-Islam to recover from this blow and for the alternative leadership to emerge," he said. Aron Lund, editor of the Carnegie Endowment's Syria in Crisis website, said: "In a way, Zahran Allouh has been the rare successful centralizer in the Syrian rebel movement." But with him gone, that cohesion could "unravel", Lund added.

Elsewhere, a coalition of Kurdish and Arab groups said it seized the key Tishreen Dam from IS on the Euphrates River, as well as seven villages on the river's eastern bank, in the northern province of Aleppo. Syrian Democratic spokesman Talal Sello told AFP dozens of IS fighters had been killed. The SDF can now cross into IS-controlled territory along the river's western bank, bringing it less than 30 km from Manbij, an IS stronghold. The Observatory's Abdel Rahman said the SDF had crossed the dam, and "battles are now on the western bank of the river". — AFP

VANDALS RANSACK MUSLIM PRAYER HALL...

Continued from Page 1

Local authorities including Christophe Mirmand, the prefect or top official of Corsica, also vowed to arrest those responsible for the outbreak of violence over two days on the Mediterranean island. The Christmas violence came amid heightened security measures for the season in France after the Nov 13 attacks by jihadists in Paris that killed 130 people. Dalil Boubakeur, the rector of the Grand Mosque of Paris, said he was "dismayed and sad-

dened" by the events on Corsica in an appearance on France's BFMTV, calling for "calm and cool heads".

Around 120,000 French police, members of armed units and soldiers were mobilised on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day. Corsica is a department of France which held regional elections earlier this month, which had seen the far-right anti-immigrant Front National make unprecedented gains in the first round of the vote. On Corsica the nationalists won the regional election there taking power for the first time. — AFP

MODI'S SURPRISE PAK VISIT HAILED

Continued from Page 1

"Modi has made clear he is willing to risk political capital to make peace," the Indian Express newspaper said, warning that any future terrorist attacks traced to Pakistan would invite "savagery criticism".

The visit, announced by Modi on Twitter, gave the appearance of being spontaneous, with Sharif's foreign affairs adviser not able to reach Lahore in time. However, a senior Pakistan official told AFP that security had been planned days in advance. While Indian media suggested Modi was the driving force behind the visit, a Pakistan official said it was Islamabad's idea to arrange a meeting ahead of formal diplomatic talks set for January. "The goal behind this meeting was to humanise the other side by arranging a visit involving close family members," said the official, adding that some of Sharif's cabinet had opposed the visit.

Television polls suggested most Indians welcomed the development while newspapers praised Modi's decision to avoid weighty expectations by staging an informal "stopover" on the way back from Kabul. "Traditional build-up to an Indian PM's visit to Pakistan would have seen different interest groups bringing all kinds of pressure to bear," The Times of India said. Yet members of the opposition Congress party denounced the "unpredictable" act, calling it un-statesmanlike, with some complaining such an important meeting should not have been announced on Twitter. Others questioned whether the newfound friendship would translate into concrete progress on peace, thwarted by issues such as India's fear of Pakistan-

sanctioned terror attacks and violence-plagued Kashmir.

In his 18 months in power Modi has shown huge confidence in his political skills, announcing economic policies himself and fronting a key state election campaign in Bihar - unsuccessfully - instead of fielding a candidate. "Modi loves to spring surprises - he's disruptive, he's setting aside old taboos," Neelam Deo, a director at Gateway House think-tank in Mumbai told AFP. "He's personalized diplomacy to an extent we haven't seen in India since (India's first prime minister) Jawaharlal Nehru in the 1950s," she said, adding the visit was likely part of a broader strategy.

In Pakistan, the population has largely backed efforts to bring peace between the two countries. But in Pakistani-administered Kashmir, where cross-border shelling has claimed dozens of lives since 2014, the mood was sceptical. Aziz Ahmed, a refugee from Indian-controlled Kashmir called the meeting a "mere photo session". "Such meetings have been taking place in the past, but have proven useless after some time," he said in Muzaffarabad, capital of the Pakistan-controlled territory.

There were signs Pakistan's powerful army was not happy about the visit, with criticism on pro-army Twitter accounts believed to be run by the military. Modi and Sharif have had a stop-start diplomatic relationship since the Indian premier's surprise decision to invite Sharif to his inauguration in May 2014. A brief meeting on Nov 30 between the two leaders on the sidelines of the UN climate summit in Paris, followed by talks between their national security advisers in Bangkok, appeared to have broken the ice. — AFP

STORMS KILL 15 IN SOUTHERN US

Continued from Page 1

The NWS warned that "flash flooding will be possible" yesterday in the area.

In Mississippi, eight people were confirmed dead and another 60 injured, the state emergency management agency said on Twitter. Among them was a seven-year-old boy killed when a storm picked up and tossed the car he was travelling in, fire chief Kenny Holbrook told reporters in the town of Holly Springs. Six fatalities were confirmed in Tennessee, including three people found

dead Thursday in a car submerged in a creek, according to the fire department in Columbia, Tennessee. Another person was killed in Arkansas.

The East Coast meanwhile was enjoying unseasonably warm weather, with temperatures in New York peaking at 72 degrees Fahrenheit (22 Celsius) Thursday, the warmest Christmas Eve since records began in 1871. The temperature reached a record-setting 66 degrees (19 Celsius) the following day. In the US capital, the temperature on Friday reached 69 degrees (20.6 Celsius), a 30-year record, local media reported. — AFP



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

Panasonic BUSINESS Winter Offers

<p>Panasonic PT-LX22 Projector</p>  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: red;">140</p> <p>• 2200 ANSI Lumens • XGA • Contrast 500:1</p>	<p>Panasonic KX-MB2128MLW</p>  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: red;">49</p> <p>• ADF (Auto Doc Feeder) • Print + Copy Speed upto 26ppm • Fax (Basic options) • Printing / Scanning resolution 600dpi/19200 dpi • Computer Interface USB 2.0</p>	<p>Panasonic KX-MB1520 Laser Printer</p>  <p style="font-size: 2em; font-weight: bold; color: red;">39</p> <p>• Print speed 19 PPM • Resolution 600x600dpi</p>
--	--	--



best
AL-YOUSIFI

• 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) • Fahaeel (Opp. General Parking) • Jahra (Opp. Main Co-op.) • Airport (Departure Hall)

1809 809

FIGUEREDO BRIBES PAID 'FOR DECADES'

MONTEVIDEO: Former FIFA vice-president Eugenio Figueredo received millions of dollars in bribes throughout his career at the top of South American football, prosecutors claimed Friday. Figueredo, 83, was extradited from Switzerland and spent Christmas in jail pending a trial which could see him imprisoned for up to 15 years. Late Friday, he was admitted to a Montevideo hospital with chest pain, but was expected to return to his cell in a matter of hours, said the prosecutor in his case, Juan Gomez. Gomez said evidence given by Figueredo showed clearly that the official was corrupted from the moment he joined the executive committee of CONMEBOL, the South American federation. "From the time he became a member of the executive committee, he received huge sums of money from plans hatched by various members of CONMEBOL with the objective of maintaining a twisted form of corruption," said Gomez in his initial report. As CONMEBOL president, the Uruguayan looked to distribute the money via "a network of corruption that hit South American football with impunity and persisted for decades." —AFP



KOOYONG TO HOST DAVIS CUP CLASH WITH US

SYDNEY: Australia's first-round Davis Cup World Group clash with the United States in March will be played on grass at Kooyong in Melbourne in a tie marking Lleyton Hewitt's debut as captain. The former home of the Australian Open Grand Slam will host its first Davis Cup showdown in 10 years from March 4-6 on a portable grass court, organisers said. "To play Davis Cup in Melbourne, the home of tennis in Australia, at a club like Kooyong with so much tennis history is a privilege," said Hewitt. "The tie against the United States is going to be tough," he added. "It will be my first tie as captain and I'll be looking to help the boys build on the momentum and progress of 2015." The United States and Australia are the two most successful nations in Davis Cup history. The Americans have won a record 32 times while Australia is second overall with 28 wins. Australia's most recent tie against their arch-rivals was in 1999 where Hewitt made his Davis Cup debut. Alongside Pat Rafter, he led his country to a 4-1 World Group quarter-finals victory over the United States, whose team included current captain Jim Courier. — AFP

BRYANT LEADS VOTING FOR ALL-STAR GAME

LOS ANGELES: Kobe Bryant, in his swan song season for the Los Angeles Lakers, is the early leader in voting for the 2016 NBA All-Star game, the NBA announced on Friday. Despite his mediocre form this season, Bryant has logged 719,235 votes, more than 200,000 ahead of Golden State Warriors guard Stephen Curry (510,202). LeBron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers leads the Eastern Conference with 357,937 votes, followed by Miami Heat guard Dwyane Wade (300,595). The 65th NBA All-Star game will be played in Toronto on Feb. 14. Voting runs until Jan. 19. Fans will select three frontcourt players and two guards from each conference. Bryant, 37, is listed as a frontcourt player. Bryant, who announced last month that the 2015-16 campaign will be his final season, is the all-time highest NBA All-Star scorer with 280 points. His 17 All-Star selections is second behind the 19 appearances by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, the legendary Lakers center. —Reuters



SYDNEY: Ragamuffin 100 sails away from Wild Oats XI during the start of the Sydney Hobart yacht race in Sydney, yesterday. The 628-nautical-mile race started in Sydney Harbour and is expected to end two to three days later in Hobart, the capital of the island state of Tasmania. — AP

WILD OATS XI OUT OF SYDNEY TO HOBART AS SQUALL HITS

SYDNEY: Eight-time line honours winner Wild Oats XI pulled out of the Sydney to Hobart yesterday while American super-yacht Comanche was attempting repairs after fierce winds hit off Australia's east coast, officials said.

A 108-strong fleet set sail from Sydney Harbour earlier Saturday, but by late evening 10 boats had retired, including one with a broken mast, the organising Cruising Yacht Club of Australia said.

"Wild Oats XI has retired from the race after reporting a torn mainsail," the club confirmed in a statement. It said the Mark Richards skippered crew was returning to Sydney but no further details were available.

Early reports indicated the sail "tore in half when the yacht was hit by a 40 knot squall," the Wild Oats XI twitter feed stated. Organisers said the crew of the Comanche, which had been leading the race after bolting out of Sydney Harbour, "will try to effect repairs to a

rudder and continue racing". The front half of the fleet in the gruelling 628 nautical mile (1,163 kilometre) race was enduring the brunt of the punishing weather as they sailed into "southerly buster" gale force winds, the CYCA added. The navigator on one of the leading yachts, Ichi Ban's Will Oxley, had reported gusts of up to 43 knots while another boat, CEX Dolce, was returning to Sydney with a broken mast, it said. Officials had warned of thunderstorms and gales late yesterday as the fleet travelled down the east coast of Australia. Storms are not unknown to the race, with six people dying, five boats sinking and 55 sailors rescued on a fatal night in 1998 when a deep depression exploded over the fleet in the treacherous Bass Strait.

'WET AND WINDY'

It was an eventful beginning to the race, with three yachts retiring early after collisions

just after the start, and another a short time later. Among them was Ark323, one of two Chinese entries and one of 27 foreign boats in the race which draws spectators on land and in boats in Sydney on Boxing Day.

"Ark323, one of two Chinese entries, retired following a collision 300 metres after the start. All on board were safe," race organisers said in a statement. Australian boat Cougar II retired at about the same time with damage to her starboard quarter while the British entry Lupa of London also pulled out with a damaged bow after a collision.

Another boat, M3, withdrew after shattering its forestay, her crew deciding that the harsh weather forecast ruled out a possible repair and rejoining of the race.

Line honours contender supermaxi Perpetual Loyal and St Jude were later retirements, both understood to have sustained rudder damage from the rough weather in the

evening, while Koa withdrew with steering damage. Last year's line honours winner Wild Oats XI had initially led in the moments after the starter's horn blew, but was overtaken by Perpetual Loyal before Comanche took the lead after unfurling her big spinnaker. Wild Oats holds the race record of one day, 18 hours, 23 minutes and 12 seconds set in 2012 and her retirement and Comanche's rudder damage open up the race for line honours.

Rambler was in the lead late Saturday, ahead of Comanche, Ragamuffin 100 and Maserati.

A brief update from Ragamuffin reported conditions as "wet and windy" as the leaders tracked down the New South Wales coast.

The winds are expected to ease today, and will be light off the coast of Tasmania as the boats head to Hobart's Constitution Dock, with the first boats not expected to cross the finish line until tomorrow. —AFP

WORLD CHAMPION LOVCHEV BACKED DESPITE DOPING BAN

MOSCOW: Russian sports minister Vitali Mutko on Friday threw his support behind world champion weightlifter Aleksey Lovchev who has been banned for suspected doping in the latest controversy to hit the country's sports authorities.

Lovchev, 26, who won gold in the +105kg category at the world championships in Houston last month, tested positive for the banned growth hormone Ipamorelin.

He claims he had permission to use a medicine to ease pain from a knee injury he was suffering at the time of the tournament where he broke the clean-and-jerk and total world records.

"We are going to give him all the support necessary since he has not been officially found guilty of doping and no decision has been taken," Mutko told a news conference.

On Thursday, the International Weightlifting Federation (IWF) said that traces of Ipamorelin had been found in Lovchev's 'A' sample.

As this constituted a "violation of anti-doping regulations", he was provisionally suspended, the IWF said in a statement.

Mutko said that Lovchev suffered ruptured knee ligaments a month before the world championships and had authorisation to use a medicine to treat the injury.

Lovchev said he was innocent, telling Russian television station Match he was in a state of "absolute shock".

Friday's revelations came hot on the heels of Russian track and field competitors being banned after their athletics federation was accused of state-sponsored doping. The Russian anti-doping authority and Moscow's anti-doping laboratory were also suspended. — AFP

BRONCOS NEW CHAPLAIN OFFERS SPIRITUAL, FINANCIAL HELP

ENGLEWOOD: When Gary Kubiak was hired to coach the Denver Broncos, he wanted a full-time chaplain.

Kubiak went looking for someone players could really relate to, someone who had played the game and "had some stories to tell."

That led him to Luther Elliss, once the highest-paid defensive tackle in the NFL before losing it all and going bankrupt, then rebuilding his life and answering his second calling as a minister.

Elliss, who played nine seasons in Detroit and one in Denver after a standout career at the University of Utah, serves as both a cautionary tale and a sounding board at 13655 Broncos Parkway, where he delivers practical financial advice and spiritual guidance.

Elliss shepherds players on their faith journey and also warns them not to follow his path to financial ruin.

"He's been to the mountaintop and he's been humbled," linebacker Brandon Marshall said. "It's really nice to have a guy like that. I went to him when I had questions. He's very knowledgeable, he's wise, he's like a gentle giant." Cornerback Chris Harris Jr., said Elliss brings "cred" into the job because he played the game: "When you have a guy who's done it, it makes it easier to approach him."

Elliss, who has a family of 14, seven adopted, speaks from experience and the heart when he tells his tale of recovery from being broke and broken five years ago.

He didn't blow his \$12 million in earnings as a pro football player on the high life of drugs

and drink; he just made bad business decisions.

Elliss, who also serves as a transition coach for the NFL and speaks at the league's rookie symposiums, brings firsthand knowledge into the job of convincing players they'll one day lose their Midas touch.

"Everything they touch turns to gold. And usually they're pretty creative, hard workers, so they've been able to overcome things, any obstacle that comes to mind," Elliss said. "And even for myself, we had guys come over and talk to us about finances and gave us the statistics, it was like over 60 percent of the guys end up broke, divorced, homeless, without a job after you leave the game within three years. And I'm like, 'No, that's not me.'"

SUPERMAN SYNDROME

Elliss calls it the Superman Syndrome, which serves athletes well, but not in life away from the game.

"I thought I could transition into business and do the exact same thing that I was doing on the football field. What I didn't realize is business is a different animal," Elliss said. He lost his businesses, a call center and a manufacturing company for the auto industry, even though he had promised not to go over budget and to listen to his accountants and attorneys.

"It ultimately came down to my decision and my decision was I'm unstoppable, we can make this work," Elliss said. "And ... it was just good money chasing bad money and before you knew it we were in trouble and you're trad-

ing second mortgages and doing just all sorts of silly things that you really shouldn't have been doing.

"But being that I'm not used to losing, I figured, hey, I just needed a little bit more, a little bit more time," said Elliss, who still rues hurting employees and business partners. "I just hope people understand I never meant to do anyone harm. But it was my own foolishness and pride that took me off the cliff."

Elliss relied on family, friends and his faith to



DENVER: Denver Broncos head coach Gary Kubiak looks at his play chart during the first half of an NFL football game against the New England Patriots, Nov 29, 2015, in Denver. — AP



WIMBLEDON: In this Friday July 10, 2015 file photo, Novak Djokovic of Serbia in action against France's Richard Gasquet at Wimbledon. — AP

DJOKOVIC, FEDERER IN RACE TO BE FIRST \$100M MAN

PARIS: Novak Djokovic and Roger Federer are poised to become the first \$100 million men in tennis in 2016, in a gripping sub-plot to the new Grand Slam season.

No player in the history of the sport has broken through the \$100 million on-court earnings barrier but world number one Djokovic and Federer, the number three, should reach the landmark next year.

Djokovic, 28, has just over \$94 million in prize money while Federer, six years the Serb's senior, has banked \$97.3 million. With \$3.85 million on offer for the winner of January's

Australian Open, the season's first major, the veteran Swiss would be the first man to the magical number even if the odds are heavily stacked against a player who won the last of his 17 Grand Slam titles in 2012.

The staggering rewards for the modern player, all boosted by lucrative off-court earnings through sponsorship and endorsements, are a far cry from the heavyweights of the sport who starred in earlier eras. Rod Laver, the last man to complete the calendar Grand Slam—something that eluded Djokovic courtesy of a French Open final loss in 2015 — ended his playing

career with \$1.5 million, still a huge sum by the standards of the late 1960s.

John McEnroe earned \$12.5 million while Federer's hero, Pete Sampras banked \$43 million before he retired in 2002. Djokovic earned a season record \$21.5 million in 2015, a year which saw him win three of the four majors-taking his total to 10 in total. "My season was the best of my career with many highlights. It inspires me even more to keep on going, and I hope to continue to play at this level in 2016," said Djokovic.

Despite his dominance of the sport,

Djokovic still has some catching up to do when it comes to matching Federer's overall personal fortune. According to Forbes' rich list, Federer was the fifth highest-earning sportsman in 2015 thanks to \$58 million in endorsements. Djokovic was 13th, his on-court wealth boosted by \$31 million worth of commercial riches.

But the Serb knows time—and the form which saw him win 82 matches and suffer just six losses last season—is on his side.

"I think I have a good chance. I'm 28 and I still don't feel like the end is anytime soon, that definitely excites me and motivates me to keep

going." The staggering wealth in the men's game dwarfs the women's tour. Serena Williams's on-court earnings stood at just over \$74 million after a 2015 season which saw the American also claim three of the four Grand Slam titles. Rival Maria Sharapova, the world's richest sportswoman due to her lucrative off-court portfolio, has earned less than half than Williams — \$36.4 million.

Back in the men's game, 14-time major winner Rafael Nadal has banked \$75 million on court while current world number two Andy Murray has earned \$42.5 million. — AFP

SERENA WILLIAMS WINS AP FEMALE ATHLETE OF YEAR FOR FOURTH TIME

NEW YORK: Serena Williams spent a good portion of 2015 deflecting questions about whether she could complete the Grand Slam. After coming oh-so-close, she can acknowledge how much she cared about the rare feat.

"I wanted it. But ... winning one (major title) is not easy. And then, (when) you have a 'bounty' on your head, it's even harder," she said with a laugh. "If you know anything about me, I hate to lose."

I've always said I hate losing more than I like winning, so that drives me to be the best that I can be."

Williams' will was on display time and again, along with her best-in-the-game serve and other skills, fashioning comeback after comeback to nearly become the first tennis player in more than a quarter-century to win all four Grand Slam tournaments in a season. In a vote by US editors and news directors, Williams was chosen as The Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year for the fourth time.

Results were announced Friday.

Williams collected 50 first-place votes and 352 points. Carli Lloyd, whose hat trick in the final lifted the US women's soccer team to the World Cup title, was the runner-up, with 14 first-place votes and 243 points. UFC star Ronda Rousey finished third, one spot ahead of the woman she stunningly lost to last month, Holly Holm. UConn basketball player Breanna Stewart was fifth.

The AP Male Athlete of the Year will be announced later. Williams, who also won AP awards in 2002, 2009 and 2013, joined Chris Evert as a four-time honoree. The only woman with more AP selections is Babe Didrikson, with six — one for athletics in 1932, and five for golf from 1945-54.

"It's not even winning the Grand Slam titles as much as the way she got herself out of the deep holes that she dug, just repeatedly. It's not like she had two or three narrow escapes," Evert said about Williams. "It really was the year of the comeback. It

was just unbelievable."

Williams won the Australian Open on hard courts in January, the French Open on red clay in June, and Wimbledon on grass in July, before losing in the US Open semifinals in September in one of the biggest upsets in the sport's history.

SERENA SLAM

Williams went 53-3 with a WTA tour-leading five titles and was ranked No. 1 every week. She raised her Grand Slam singles trophy count to 21; only two women have won more.

It did not come easily this year for Williams, who grew up in Compton, California, and turned 34 in September.

At the French Open, already dealing with a painful right elbow, Williams caught the flu. Four times in Paris, she lost the first set before rallying to win.

"My elbow was killing me. It's about fighting and just never giving up. You hear that and it sounds cliché," Williams said, "but it's really just about, 'OK, I'm going to at least try and see what happens.'"

At Wimbledon, she was two points from defeat in the third round but wound up completing a self-styled "Serena Slam" of four major championships in a row, a run that began in 2014. She also became the oldest woman to win a major title in the Open era, which began in 1968.

"I retired at 34, and I know that at 32, 33 and 34, I was struggling mentally to get psyched up for matches and to feel motivated," Evert said. "What impresses me even more than the physical prowess of Serena is the fact that she can still conjure up that hunger and that passion for these matches. ... Sometimes, (the motivation is) just not there. And the times when it wasn't there for her, she still created magic."

Only at the US Open, with the historic achievement of a calendar-year Grand Slam in the offing, did Williams stumble, losing a three-setter to 43rd-ranked Roberta Vinci of Italy. — AP



OAKLAND: Andrew Bogut #12 of the Golden State Warriors goes up to block the shot of Timofey Mozgov #20 of the Cleveland Cavaliers during their NBA basketball game at ORACLE Arena on Friday in Oakland, California. — AFP

WARRIORS THUMP CAVALIERS IN NBA FINALS REMATCH

OAKLAND: Draymond Green had 22 points and 15 rebounds and the Golden State Warriors got defensive in their NBA Finals rematch against Cleveland, beating the Cavaliers 89-83 on Friday. Stephen Curry added 19 points and Klay Thompson had 18 for the Warriors, who improved to 28-1 by winning their 32nd straight regular-season home game. Instead of doing it with 3-pointers, defending champion Golden State maintained its edge over Cleveland by limiting the Cavaliers to 32 percent shooting. LeBron James scored 25 points to lead the Cavaliers. They had their six-game winning streak snapped. The Cavaliers were short-handed when they lost the final to the Warriors in six games, missing power forward Kevin Love the entire series with a shoulder injury and losing point guard Kyrie Irving to a knee injury late in the first game. Having both those players healthy for the rematch did little to help Cleveland. Love scored just 10 points on 5-for-16 shooting, and Irving missed 11 of 15 shots in a 13-point game.

CLIPPERS 94, LAKERS 84

Chris Paul scored 23 points and the Los Angeles Clippers beat the Los Angeles Lakers to end a three-game skid. Kobe Bryant scored 12 points for the Lakers in his NBA-record 16th and final Christmas Day game. He played 26 minutes and sat out the entire fourth quarter. J.J. Redick had 14 points, and DeAndre Jordan added nine points and 14 rebounds for the Clippers. They have won eight straight against the Lakers and 12 of the last 13 meetings. Rookie D'Angelo Russell led the Lakers with 16 points.

HEAT 94, PELICANS 88, OT

Chris Bosh had 30 points and 10 rebounds, Dwyane Wade added 19 points to move into No. 3 on the NBA's Christmas Day list and Miami survived some shaky moments to beat New Orleans. Hassan Whiteside grabbed 17 rebounds for the

Heat, an NBA-best 10-2 on the holiday. Wade's tough jumper with 1:45 left in overtime gave him 273 points on Christmas, one more than Shaquille O'Neal for No. 3, and Bosh followed that about a minute later with a three-point play. Anthony Davis led the Pelicans with 29 points and 15 rebounds. But he missed a contested jumper on New Orleans' final possession of regulation, and the Heat took control in the extra session.

ROCKETS 88, SPURS 84

James Harden had 20 points and the Houston Rockets slowed down the soaring San Antonio Spurs with an 88-84 victory Friday night. The improved Houston defense held the Spurs to a season low in points to snap their season-best seven-game winning streak. Houston used an 8-2 run to take a 78-71 lead with about 5 minutes left.

Tim Duncan made a hook shot after that, but Harden hit a 3-pointer. After Duncan's layup, Harden brought the crowd to its feet with an off-balance 3-pointer from the corner that made it 84-75. Kawhi Leonard had 20 points to lead San Antonio.

BULLS 105, THUNDER 96

Jimmy Butler scored 23 points, and Pau Gasol had 21 points and 13 rebounds in Chicago's victory over Oklahoma City. Derrick Rose added 19 points, and Taj Gibson had 13 points and 10 rebounds to help the Bulls snap a three-game losing streak. Kevin Durant had 29 points, nine rebounds and seven assists for Oklahoma City, and Russell Westbrook added 26 points, eight assists and seven rebounds. The Thunder had won three straight and nine of 10. — AP

NBA Results/Standings

Miami 94, New Orleans 88 (OT); Chicago 105, Oklahoma City 96; Golden State 89, Cleveland 83; Houston 88, San Antonio 84; LA Clippers 94, LA Lakers 84.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference								
Atlantic Division		Central Division		Northwest Division		Pacific Division						
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB					
Toronto	18	12	.600	Cleveland	19	8	.704	Golden State	28	1	.966	-
Boston	16	13	.552	Chicago	16	11	.593	LA Clippers	17	13	.567	11.5
NY Knicks	14	16	.467	Indiana	16	12	.571	Sacramento	12	17	.414	16
Brooklyn	8	21	.276	Detroit	17	13	.567	Phoenix	12	19	.387	17
Philadelphia	1	30	.032	Milwaukee	12	18	.400	LA Lakers	5	25	.167	23.5
Southeast Division				Southwest Division								
Atlanta	19	12	.613	San Antonio	25	6	.806	-				
Miami	17	11	.607	Dallas	16	13	.552	8				
Orlando	17	12	.586	Memphis	16	15	.516	9				
Charlotte	15	13	.536	Houston	16	15	.516	9				
Washington	13	14	.481	New Orleans	9	20	.310	15				



PARIS: In this June 6, 2015, file photo, Serena Williams, of the United States, holds the trophy after winning the final of the French Open tennis tournament against Lucie Safarova, of the Czech Republic, at the Roland Garros stadium, in Paris. For the fourth time, Williams has been named The Associated Press Female Athlete of the Year. — AP

NFL SEASON MARKED BY MEDIOCRITY, NOT PARITY IN 2015

NEW YORK: The NFL likes to call it parity. This season, it looks closer to mediocrity. From the porous offensive lines to the suspect quarterbacking and poor tackling, from the inconsistent officiating to the multitude of key injuries, the 2015 season has been filled with the unwatchable.

Yes, the playoff races, particularly for the AFC wild card, have been intriguing. Carolina's chase for perfection has been worthy of headlines. The performances by the league's top players - particularly the ones making substantial breakthroughs such as Cam Newton and Doug Baldwin on offense, Khalil Mack and Ziggy Ansah on defense - have been mesmerizing.

There's also the noteworthy, if maddening, race to relocate to Los Angeles involving the Rams, Raiders and Chargers. As for the rest, well, let's hope the playoffs and Super Bowl go in a different direction than we've witnessed since September.

One team not concerned with the postseason for the 16th straight time - remarkable in itself that anyone could miss the playoffs that many years in a row - is Buffalo. The Bills under Rex Ryan

epitomize how disappointing the level of play has been in so many cities. They brought in a high-profile coach and upgraded their talent level. They paid huge salaries to hold on to some key players. And they flopped.

"I mean, I could tell you the common thread is this: that when you have high expectations and you don't reach those things, that obviously you're going to have a little more questioning," Ryan says. Here's what has been most worth questioning through 15 of the 17 weeks on the schedule:

PARITY

If what the NFL wants is nearly every team in contention to win a division or grab a wild card when the calendar turns to December, it came close to that goal in 2015.

If what it wants is high-quality football from many of those teams, sorry.

It's worthwhile to praise the work of the Panthers and Patriots, Cardinals, Broncos and Bengals, who pretty much for the entire season have risen above the morass. Second-half surges by the Chiefs, Steelers and Seahawks have been impressive.

But also recall that Kansas City lost five in a row, going into a funk after blowing a game against Denver. Seattle wasted the best home-field advantage in the sport, falling twice at CenturyLink Field and basically being handed a win over Detroit by incorrect officiating. Pittsburgh was 4-4 and somehow lost to Baltimore at home.

Most disturbing, even laughable, has been the level of play and coaching throughout the NFC East and AFC South. It's still possible both wretched divisions will be won by teams without winning records, who then deservedly will be underdogs as hosts to a wild card in the playoffs.

The league can brag all it wants about how packed together so many clubs are. It's sort of like finding a slew of fast-food restaurants together along a busy roadway.

BLOCKING AND TACKLING

Shield your eyes. These basic skills appear to have gone the way of the chip shot extra point (one of the good things about this season, incidentally). One reason quarterbacking has been so spotty (see

below) is the inability of linemen, tight ends and running backs to provide protection.

No area requires bonding more than the O-line, but even some units that enjoy that continuity have underperformed. If the Broncos disappear quickly in the race to the Super Bowl, the lack of solid blocking could be the determining factor. On the other side, it might be difficult to find a dozen fundamentally strong tacklers in the entire NFL. In their, uh, defense, the rules about what's a legal hit have made some of them gunshy or confused. But the very basics of wrapping up and keeping the head out of the play have been lost.

QUARTERBACKING

Someone recently wondered why the league doesn't simply expand to get teams into Los Angeles - or the cities abandoned through relocation - and maybe even into London in the near future. One good reason: Where will NFL-quality quarterbacks come from?

And what is NFL-quality for the position today? It seems fair to say that half of the 32 teams aren't sure what they have behind center, and a bunch of

those don't like what they have. There is hope with the likes of Jameis Winston, Marcus Mariota, Derek Carr, Teddy Bridgewater and Blake Bortles as the new wave, and with Newton and Russell Wilson in the MVP conversation. But future eliteness for QBs is unpredictable - see Matt Ryan - and when the aging crop of stars leaves, it's hard to see the college game producing an ample number of replacements.

OFFICIATING

For decades, it's been fashionable for fans to blame the officials for losses, while team owners, general managers and coaches have bitten their tongues and tried to shrug off officiating problems. Not anymore.

There's a growing sentiment that game officials have lost their way, and the NFL will need to look long and hard into how it handles who is blowing the whistles; how to simplify the rule book; and how to better use the ever-improving technology.

One thing the NFL must hope as this season of mediocrity winds down is that a wrong call doesn't decide that big game Feb. 7. — AP

CUE CARD PIPS VAUTOUR IN VINTAGE KING GEORGE BATTLE

LONDON: Cue Card pipped Vautour on the line to land a vintage King George VI Chase at the fourth attempt at Kempton yesterday.

Vautour (3-1) appeared to be set for victory, leading over the last fence and up the run-in only for Cue Card (9-2), under a determined ride by Paddy Brennan, to reel him in to edge the Boxing Day showcase by a head. Don Cossack, the 15-8 favourite, held every chance when falling at the second last.

Cue Card's previous best showing in the three-mile Grade One was runner-up to Silviniaco Conti, winner of the last two runnings but who only played a bit role this time.

Leading early on, Paul Nicholls' runner lost his grip on the race down the back straight as Vautour jumped to the front, with Cue Card tracking. Don Cossack was getting ready to launch his bid for glory when crashing out of the picture two fences from home.

That left Cue Card as the only live danger to Vautour with Brennan conjuring up a final stride lunge on Colin Tizzard's rejuvenated nine-year-old to emerge triumphant after an epic battle.

"This is the best day of my life - it's truly unbelievable," said Brennan. "I won't lie and

say that there was a lot more left in the tank, but if anyone can get this horse back to win the Gold Cup, it's going to be Colin Tizzard."

Mullins found defeat hard to take. "We did everything right until the last 20 yards," the Irish trainer told Channel 4. "He probably didn't just jump the last as efficiently as he could have, but it was a very brave run and a very brave run by Cue Card - that's horse racing." Mullins didn't leave Kempton empty handed, as his Faugheen set himself up for a defence of his Champion Hurdle crown next March, justifying cramped odds of 1-4 in the Grade 1 Christmas Hurdle.

Bouncing back after surprise defeat on his seasonal return at Punchestown, Mullins' classy hurdler was too quick for The New One in second. Earlier, Lizzie Kelly became the first woman jockey to win a British Grade 1 chase on Tea For Two in the Kauto Star Novices Chase won 12 months ago by Conegree who went on to win the Cheltenham Gold Cup. "Awesome! I thought two fences out I'm going to win," said the history-making rider.

Kelly's mother and assistant trainer Jane Williams said: "I'm thrilled for her."

"It's important for girls to get into racing and we set out to try to prove girls can win Grade Ones." —AFP



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Erik Lamela, left, is beaten to a cross by Norwich's Declan Rudd, right, and Norwich's Ryan Bennett, centre, during the English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham Hotspur and Norwich City at White Hart Lane in London, yesterday. — AP

HARRY KANE IN TUNE AS TOTTENHAM DOWN NORWICH



LONDON: Harry Kane hit all the right notes as the Tottenham striker's double clinched a 3-0 win over Norwich that kept his side's top four bid on track yesterday.

Kane was inspired by some unorthodox pre-match motivation from Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino, who quoted Britney Spears and Will.I.Am's song 'Scream and Shout' in an attempt to keep his players' minds focused on their own performances.

Pochettino had been asked if Arsenal's title challenge would overshadow Tottenham's bid for a top-four finish. "I think it's like what Britney Spears and Will.I.Am sing: 'Everybody in the club, all eyes on us, all eyes on us,'" the Argentine said. That odd soundbite seemed to have the desired effect on Kane and his teammates as they brushed aside the struggling Canaries thanks to a first-half brace from the England international and Tom Carroll's late strike at White Hart Lane.

Tottenham have now lost just one of their last 17 Premier League matches, keeping them in fourth place and firmly in the hunt for a Champions League berth next season. Norwich, unable to build on their shock 2-1 win at Manchester United last weekend, are hovering just above the relegation zone on goal difference. Tottenham goalkeeper Hugo Lloris was celebrating his 29th birthday and the French international was in no mood to hand out any gifts to Norwich as he turned away Vadis Odjidja's long-range strike in the early stages. Norwich should have taken the lead when Cameron Jerome headed over from close-range.

SPECTACULAR 'RABONA' STRIKE

But that narrow escape sparked Tottenham into life and Kane fired wide after Kyle Walker's initial effort was blocked. Kane was beginning to find space behind the Norwich rearguard with some astute runs and another well-timed break onto Dele Alli's clever pass ended with Canaries goalkeeper Declan Rudd forced to race off his line to foul the striker.

It was a clear penalty and Kane stepped up to send Rudd the wrong way with the spot-kick. Pochettino's side almost doubled their lead when Toby Alderweireld's header from a corner forced Rudd to save and Alli followed up with a header of his own that the keeper tipped over.

Tottenham were rampant now and Kane struck again three minutes before half-time. Erik

Lamela launched a rapid break as he fed Alli, who picked out Kane on the right-hand side of the area. Kane took one touch and smashed it low and hard into the far corner past Rudd for his 13th club goal of the season. Rudd kept Norwich from going further behind after Tottenham carved through the visitors' defence.

When Alli's shot was saved, Lamela pounced

on the rebound, but Rudd kicked away the Argentine's low shot. Another Kane shot was repelled by Rudd, who then denied Lamela a spectacular 'rabona' strike as he wrapped his kicking leg around the back of the standing leg to try the cheeky effort. With 10 minutes remaining, Carroll lashed his first Premier League goal for Tottenham low into the far corner. —AFP



LONDON: Tottenham's Harry Kane celebrates after scoring a penalty during the English Premier League soccer match between Tottenham Hotspur and Norwich City. — AP

2 BROWNS PLAYERS ARRESTED AFTER CHRISTMAS TRAFFIC STOP

CLEVELAND: Browns linebacker Armonty Bryant will not play in today's game at Kansas City after he and safety De'Ante Saunders were arrested Christmas morning following a traffic stop.

Bryant, who has a history of legal troubles, is not traveling with the team so he can tend to the legal matter. Browns general manager Ray Farmer issued a statement on Saturday condemning the players' behavior.

"These are charges that we take very seriously," Farmer said. "The importance of responsible decision-making is something we continually stress to all members of our organization, which makes it extremely disappointing that these two individuals would put themselves in this situation by making such poor decisions." Farmer added the incident is subject to the NFL's personal conduct

policy. There were no immediate details about the arrests. The state highway patrol said no information will be available until after 10 pm. Browns coach Mike Pettine gave his players the holiday off so they could be with their families. Bryant is second on the team with 5 1/2 sacks this season, his third to the legal matter. Browns' 25-year-old was drafted in the seventh round in 2013 from East Central Oklahoma, where he had some off-field problems. He was arrested for driving under the influence less than a week after Cleveland drafted him. He was also suspended for three games in college for selling marijuana to an undercover officer.

Saunders has been on Cleveland's practice squad. The Browns (3-11) will visit the Chiefs on Sunday before ending the regular season at home against Pittsburgh on Jan. 3. —AP



ST PETERSBURG: Marshall wide receiver Deandre Reaves (19) eludes a diving tackle by Connecticut safety Obi Melifonwu (20) during the first quarter of the St. Petersburg Bowl NCAA college football game yesterday, in St. Petersburg, Florida. — AP

Sports

Pakistan resolves row over Amir

17

Benteke hands Liverpool victory over Leicester

19



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2015

DJOKOVIC, FEDERER IN RACE TO BE FIRST \$100M MAN

Page 16



STOKE-ON-TRENT: Stoke City's US defender Geoff Cameron (R) vies with Manchester United's English defender Chris Smalling during the English Premier League football match between Stoke City and Manchester United at the Britannia Stadium in Stoke-on-Trent, central England yesterday. — AFP

MAN UTD LOSES 4TH IN ROW AT STOKE

VAN GAAL WOES DEEPEN



LONDON: Louis van Gaal hinted that he could vacate the Old Trafford hot seat after watching Stoke City swat aside his timid Manchester United team 2-0 in the Premier League yesterday.

Goals from Stoke forwards Bojan Krkic and Marko Arnautovic punished United for a dreadful start at a blustery Britannia Stadium and although the visitors improved

in the second half they could not repair the damage.

Dutchman Van Gaal has now overseen a seven-match winless run in which United have been eliminated from the Champions League and fallen out of the Premier League's top four after successive defeats by Bournemouth, Norwich City and Stoke.

Having criticised the media and stormed angrily out of his pre-match news conference on Wednesday, there was an air of resignation about Van Gaal's comments after the loss-United's fourth in a row in all competitions.

"The club doesn't have to fire or sack me-sometimes I do it by myself," the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich manager told reporters.

Minutes earlier, he had been asked if he

still thought he was the man to turn around United's season and whether he had the support of United's hierarchy.

"It's more difficult because I'm also part of the four matches we have lost and so people are looking at me," Van Gaal told Sky Sports. "It's another situation, we have lost the fourth game, we will have to wait and see," he added with a lingering glare towards the reporter.

United, down to sixth in the Premier League, face struggling champions Chelsea at Old Trafford on Monday and few would be surprised if Van Gaal was no longer in charge.

Stoke manager Mark Hughes had spoken this week of his days as a marauding United striker under Alex Ferguson when the side approached every game expecting to win it

and he would have been surprised by his side's early dominance.

The 20-times English champions have traditionally been associated with swash-buckling attacking football, but apart from a brief flurry after the break when Van Gaal brought his captain Wayne Rooney off the bench, they were woefully short of belief or leadership.

Van Gaal looked powerless as he clutched his notes while sitting uneasily on the bench next to assistant Ryan Giggs.

The biggest indictment of the malaise afflicting England's biggest club was Van Gaal's belief that his expensively-assembled team "did not dare to play football in the first half."

Stoke's opener after 19 minutes summed up a truly awful first half for United.

Attempting to knock a bouncing ball back to his goalkeeper David de Gea with a diving header, Memphis Depay only succeeded in gifting the ball to Stoke right back Glen Johnson who crossed for Bojan to stab home.

It got even worse for United when Bojan's free kick was blocked and with no defender closing down Arnautovic he thundered a shot past De Gea.

England striker Rooney spiced up United's attack after the break but Marouane Fellaini wasted their best chance when he shot straight at Stoke keeper Jack Butland from close range.

At the final whistle Van Gaal gave a brief wave to United's travelling fans. The next few days will reveal whether it was his parting gesture. — Reuters

OSCAR SLIP DENIES HIDDINK OPENING CHELSEA VICTORY



LONDON: Diego Costa scored twice as Chelsea were held to a 2-2 draw by Watford at Stamford Bridge yesterday in Guus Hiddink's first game in charge as temporary manager.

Costa put his side ahead and his second goal mid-way through the second half rescued a point after a Troy Deeney penalty and an Odion Ighalo effort had put Watford ahead.

But had Oscar not skied a penalty high over the bar with 10 minutes remaining, Hiddink might have marked his return to west London with victory. Hiddink is back at the club after a previous stint in charge in 2009 as Chelsea attempt to recover from Jose Mourinho's departure. The early signs suggest that he intends to adopt a more adventurous approach than his predecessor, with Oscar, Willian and Pedro Rodriguez encouraged to get forward in support of lone striker Costa here. The proactive approach almost reaped dividends within four minutes when Pedro flashed in a cross from the right.

Costa, outjumping Allan Nyom, was first to the ball, but his header cleared the crossbar of Hornets goalkeeper Heurelho Gomes. Though much has been made of Chelsea's attacking struggles, their defensive frailties have been as

much a factor in their slide towards the relegation places.

Twice the visitors had decent chances to open the scoring. Both efforts fell to live-wire Nigerian forward Ighalo, his first an instinctive volley that flashed wide and the second a delicate header that failed to trouble Thibaut Courtois.

Hiddink had suggested that he might turn to graduates from Chelsea's impressive youth academy to give the club an injection of vim, but he kept faith with the stalwarts against Watford and they combined for the opening goal in the 32nd minute.

HAZARD IMPACT

Willian's right-wing corner was knocked on by a combination of John Terry's head and Gary Cahill's shoulder to Costa, who volleyed home from close range. It was his first goal in over a month.

But the Blues managed to shoot themselves in the foot three minutes before the break when an innocuous corner from Ben Watson was misjudged by Nemanja Matic, who allowed the ball to bounce off his arm. It was a clear penalty and visiting captain Deeney despatched the spot-kick with consummate ease.

John Mikel Obi, one of three survivors from Hiddink's previous reign-the others being Terry and Branislav Ivanovic-replaced Cesc Fabregas at half-time.

But it was the visitors who restarted the game on the front foot and deservedly took the lead 11 minutes into the second period. Ivanovic, shorn of any confidence this season, was pulled out of position following the run of Deeney.

This allowed Ighalo the freedom to race into the vacated right-back position and he left fly, his



LONDON: Chelsea's Spanish midfielder Cesc Fabregas (L) vies with Watford's Nigerian striker Odion Ighalo during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Watford at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

left-footer clipping Cahill and zipping past a slightly embarrassed Courtois.

England's festive games have a habit of producing goals and this one did not disappoint as the Blues restored parity within nine minutes. Willian bisected the Watford rearguard and Costa steamed through, taking a touch and lofting the ball over Gomes.

Eden Hazard entered the fray with 16 minutes to play and was immediately in the action when he was hauled down by Watford substitute Valon Behrami in the penalty area. — AFP

EVERTON STUN NEWCASTLE WITH LATE CLEVERLEY GOAL



NEWCASTLE: Everton midfielder Tom Cleverley headed a dramatic stoppage-time winner to seal a 1-0 victory at Newcastle that left the hosts languishing in the relegation zone yesterday.

Roberto Martinez's side looked to have squandered their dominant display with a series of missed chances until Cleverley popped up with his perfectly timed intervention to stun St James' Park.

Cleverley's first goal of the season gave Everton their first win in five league matches and shattered Newcastle's three match unbeaten run.

Newcastle are third bottom, behind Norwich on goal difference. The only Everton player who left frustrated was Romelu Lukaku, who would have entered the Goodison Park history books if he had scored for a ninth successive match.

Belgian striker Lukaku would have joined Everton legend Dixie Dean on that milestone mark he set in 1924, but he drew a disappointing blank. With torrential rain having lashed Tyneside all day, Everton made the more positive start on a slick surface.

They threatened for the first time when

Kevin Mirallas's powerful strike was kept out by Newcastle goalkeeper Rob Elliot. Martinez's men enjoyed total dominance of possession in the early stages, but Newcastle almost went in front against the run of play through Aleksandar Mitrovic, who should have done better than head tamely wide from Daryl Janmaat's cross.

As the game began to open up Everton winger Aaron Lennon drilled a low effort at Elliot, while Newcastle came close at the other end when Georginio Wijnaldum's header flew wide from Moussa Sissoko's cross.

Lukaku was well policed by the Newcastle defence in the first half. But he nearly reached the landmark three minutes after the interval when Seamus Coleman's cross flew across goal and just past the former Chelsea forward.

That close shave was followed by an even better chance for Lukaku, who turned Chancel Mbemba and saw his strike turned away by Elliot. Elliot was working overtime now and he made another good stop to deny Lennon. Penned into their own half for long periods, Mitrovic wasted a rare Newcastle chance when he headed Sissoko's cross wide from six yards.

Ramiro Funes Mori saw his header pushed away by Elliot, but Everton's pressure was finally rewarded in the most dramatic fashion.

With just seconds left in the third minute of stoppage-time, Newcastle couldn't deal with a cross and Cleverley looped a header over the stranded Elliot and into the net. — AFP

Kuwait Times BUSINESS

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 27, 2015

US manufacturing struggles
as rising income brightens
outlook

Page 23

HK apartment sells for
a record \$76.7 million

Page 23



The latest BMW 6
Series Gran Coupe

Page 26

KURDISTAN REGION TAKES SMALL STEP TOWARDS ECONOMIC REFORM

Page 23



JAMMU: Indians, wrapped in blankets, ride a horse-cart on a cold morning in Jammu, India yesterday. —AP

RUSSIAN FIRMS TONE DOWN HOLIDAY CHEER HOLIDAY EXCESSES CAN LAND BUSINESSES IN HOT WATER

MOSCOW: Forget corporate holiday bashes where glitterati are treated to fine champagne and French delicacies: Russia's economic crisis has taken the glow off the holiday season this year. Many companies are now forced to scrimp on once lavish New Year's parties or celebrate the country's most beloved holiday in the office - with simple snacks on offer and employees bringing their own drinks. On a recent afternoon servers were arranging Chianti bottles on white tablecloths for a holiday party for 500 employees of an international firm in Roll Hall, a venue just south of the Moscow city centre.

Yelena Vetrova, deputy director of the entertainment and shopping complex, said that business was mostly good although some clients waited until the last minute to book their parties, while others scaled theirs down. "For the first

time ever this year we were taking reservations in December," said Vetrova, noting that clients used to make bookings as early as May. She added that some clients had cancelled, while others toned down the festivities: The average price tag this year is 25 to 30 percent lower than last December. "People don't go away hungry but they don't eat foie gras," she said with a wry smile. "Many firms ask us whether they can bring their own alcohol, and we agree."

Modesty in Vogue

Corporate New Year's parties became a huge industry in Russia during the years of high oil prices, with some companies booking lodges in the Alps, splurging on chocolate fondue fountains and paying singers hundreds of thousands of dollars for a performance. But if it was once trendy to show off, the opposite

appears to be true amid a shrinking economy, with prices rising and real incomes falling by more than nine percent in the first 11 months of 2015.

This year, holiday excesses can land businesses in hot water. The government is looking into what many believe is a suspiciously lavish banquet laid on recently by the state corporation Rosnano, a leader in Russia's nanotechnology industry. Some 400 people attended the New Year's party, which reportedly cost more than \$30,000. "We have a huge amount of money. Simply a lot," Rosnano head Anatoly Chubais told his staff at the event held at a Moscow club, according to a leaked video that caused a scandal. "We will have a second bonus," he said, to cries of "hooray!"

Chubais, one of a handful of figures who oversaw liberal reforms in the government of

Boris Yeltsin and who managed to hold on to a top post under President Vladimir Putin, was forced to explain himself. "About the New Year's corporate party," he wrote on Twitter on Wednesday. "I confirm that all expenses were paid from the personal funds of board members." The scandal prompted Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich to order a check into whether the Rosnano employees' bonuses were justified.

Partying in the Office

For most companies in the private sector, New Year's habits are hard to break, with three-quarters planning to have a party. But 41 percent said they have cut their budgets and 21 percent plan to party in the office, according to a study by the Russian executive search website HeadHunter.ru. "The situation is not good,"

said Yegor Dobrogorsky, the head of event agency Communicator Creative Events, according to which the hard-hit construction and auto sectors appear to be scrimping the most.

Dobrogorsky added that companies can save by having employees host and participate in entertainment programmes, opting for buffet-style meals or axing the traditional celebrations altogether. Buying Russian wines instead of imported alcohol can reduce the bill by half or more, he added. Restaurateurs for whom New Year's parties have always been a gold mine are taking a hit. Igor Bukharov, president of the Russian Federation of Restaurateurs and Hoteliers, said the market for holiday catering is down by a further 20 percent after last year's decline. The parties "have always been an important source of revenue to compensate for a slow January," he said. —AFP

US JOBLESS CLAIMS NEAR 42-YEAR LOW AS LABOR MARKET TIGHTENS

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing for unemployment benefits fell more than expected last week, nearing a 42-year low as labor market conditions continued to tighten in a boost to the economy. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits dropped 5,000 to a seasonally adjusted 267,000 for the week ended Dec 19, not far from levels last seen in late 1973, the Labor Department said.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast claims dipping to 270,000 in the latest week. Claims have been below 300,000, a threshold associated with a buoyant labor market, for 42 consecutive weeks. That is the longest stretch since the early 1970s. However, some of the decline last week could be attributed to difficulties adjusting the figures during the holidays. Still, labor market strength is helping to underpin consumer spending, supporting the economy as it deals with the headwinds of a strong dollar, slowing global growth, spending cuts by energy firms and an inventory overhang.

The four-week moving average of claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it strips out week-to-week volatility, rose 1,750 to 272,500 last week. Prices of longer-dated US government debt rose after the data, while the dollar pared some losses. US stock index futures were slightly higher. A Labor Department analyst said there were no special factors influencing the data and that no states had been estimated.

The claims report showed the number of people still receiving benefits after an initial week of aid declined 47,000 to 2.20 million in the week ended Dec 12. The four-week moving average of the so-called continuing claims rose 10,000 to 2.21 million. The continuing claims data covered the period during which the government surveyed households for December's unemployment rate. —Reuters

MACRI TRIES TO FIX ECONOMY INFLATION CASTS LONG SHADOW

BUENOS AIRES: Days into his presidency, Mauricio Macri faces his first big threats as he seeks to fix Argentina's ailing economy: inflation and recession. In his first policy moves since taking office on Dec 10, the free markets advocate made good on his promises to eliminate capital controls and cut hefty export taxes. But floating the peso triggered an immediate 26.5 percent devaluation and by making imported goods more expensive it will put further pressure on inflation, which already stands at well above 20 percent.

Economists expect inflation to accelerate to 35 percent in 2016, eating into Argentines purchasing power and dampening spending. They predict the economy will contract in the first months of the year, although it could then pick up again if new investment kicks in and a cheaper peso helps exporters. Argentines knew the peso was being held artificially strong and many believe the measures are needed, but even Macri's own supporters are worried. "It is going to hurt us all," said Cristina Lopez, 70, who works as a secretary to supplement a pension that she says is not enough to get by on. "I went to get medicine yesterday and it had gone up 30-40 percent already."

Lopez voted for Macri's center-right "Let's Change" alliance and blames the poor economy on 12 years of populist policies.

"They left us in a bad situation," she said of the previous government of leftist Cristina Fernandez, who imposed currency and trade controls in Latin America's No 3 economy in a bid to boost domestic consumption and foster national industries. As Macri dismantles those policies, he risks tipping the economy into recession and stirring unrest from labor unions linked to the Peronist party he has just turfed out of power.

"The contractive exchange, fiscal and monetary policies at the same time will generate a decline in economic activity in the first half of the year," said a research note from Buenos Aires brokerage Allaria Ledesma and Co. Macri believes a mix of pro-business policies and government austerity will bring inflation under control and encourage the investment that Argentina needs to grow rapidly and create jobs. But in the short-term he has a problem, and little space to maneuver. Interest rates are already high, discouraging investment. And austerity means reducing utility subsidies and restraining public sector wage hikes, both of which are unpopular.

Macri will be helped if exports start to grow quickly, and some businesses are already hopeful. "The devaluation is an opportunity rather than a problem," said Pedro Cascales, whose company Tradefin

makes machinery such as units for backup supply of gas.

He mainly sells products in Argentina but with a cheaper peso and no more industry export taxes, he is on the hunt for foreign markets. "In the last years it was tough because the peso was strong," he said, adding that he expects his revenue will jump from 30 million pesos this year to 50 million in 2016. Yet he is still wary that rampant inflation could kill those ambitions. "The big challenge will be the rate of inflation because if inflation goes up at the same rate or even more than the devaluation this advantage might only last a few months."

The devaluation pushed up the price of imported wares, including consumer goods like televisions and refrigerators but also those used lower down the production chain like auto parts. Businesses have been quick to hike prices in anticipation of increased costs and some are accused of moving too quickly, using the devaluation as an excuse to increase profits. "The government has to control the decisions by those who determine prices, the big monopolies and oligopolies as well as the supermarket chains," said the Confederation of Medium-Sized Enterprises (CAME), which represents more than 450,000 companies. "In the last few weeks, these actors increased prices in anticipation in an abusive way." —Reuters

RBI SOUNDS WARNING ON INDEBTED FIRMS

NEW DELHI: A high proportion of Indian corporations have weak balance sheets, posing a threat to the financial system of the world's fastest-growing major economy, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said. Almost one in six of the 2,711 listed companies surveyed by the RBI is rated as weak based on its level of debt and ability to service that debt, the central bank said in its Financial Stability Report.

Declining profitability together with high borrowing rates and a poor capacity to pay back loans "continue to cause concern" in the corporate sector, the half-yearly report said.

"Corporate sector vulnerabilities and the impact of their weak balance sheets on the financial system need closer monitoring, RBI governor Raghuram Rajan wrote in the forward to the report. Among the most stressed sectors are construction, power and steel-where a slowdown in China has led to a flood of cheap imports. Asia's third-largest economy expanded 7.4 percent in the second quarter of the financial year, figures released at the end of November showed, outperforming China. —AFP

KURDISTAN REGION TAKES SMALL STEP TOWARDS ECONOMIC REFORM REGIONAL GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCES SPENDING CUTS

ERBIL: The government of Iraq's Kurdistan region has unveiled spending cuts in a tentative step towards tackling an economic crisis that officials say poses a greater threat than Islamic State. The Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), which is three months in arrears and deeply in debt, has been struggling since early 2014 when the Baghdad government slashed its funding, halting a boom fuelled by Iraq's growing oil revenues. Then Islamic State overran a third of Iraq, scaring off foreign investors and driving more than one million refugees into Kurdistan.

Unveiled earlier this week, the spending cuts will include cutting allowances of

ministers and other officials by as much as 50 percent, and eliminating perks such as paying the rent and electricity bills of senior civil servants. But two Kurdish lawmakers, Farsat Sofi and Goran Azad, who presented a report on the economy to the cabinet earlier this month, said the reforms, which are due to come into force at the start of next year, needed to go much further. "Those decisions should have been made sooner and they concern reducing expenses rather than real economic and administrative reform," said lawmaker Goran Azad. "The government has only two options: either to reform or cease to function."

Both Sofi and Azad said the amount

saved through the measures would be negligible compared to the scale of the problem, and expected more changes to be introduced in the coming weeks. The lawmakers said the KRG has now racked up roughly \$18 billion in debt and is unable to meet a bloated public payroll costing 870 billion dinar (\$793 million) per month, including the salaries of its armed forces, the peshmerga. The peshmerga have emerged as a key component of the US-led coalition's strategy to "degrade and destroy" Islamic State, driving the insurgents back in northern Iraq with the help of airstrikes.

Speaking of the multiple challenges facing Kurdistan, Deputy Prime Minister

Qubad Talabani said earlier this month: "But of all of these crises, the one that poses the most significant threat to the long-term future of Kurdistan ... is the economic crisis." The autonomous region ran a budget deficit of nearly 8 trillion dinars in 2014, Talabani said, predicting a smaller but still considerable shortfall of 2-3 trillion dinars this year. Dependent on oil revenue, Kurdistan has increased independent exports to more than 600,000 barrels per day in an effort to cover the gap, but the price of crude has fallen below \$40 per barrel, on top of which the KRG sells at a discount.

Talabani also said the first priority was to "restructure" the region's salary and

pensions scheme, which currently consumes 70 percent of Kurdistan's entire budget. The second and third priorities are to reduce subsidies for petroleum products and electricity sector, he said. Lawmaker Sofi said the KRG should also root out thousands of "ghost employees"—people who are on the public payroll but do not go to work. The new measures will be a major test for the KRG as true reform will have to take on corruption, Azad said. "It won't be easy because reform harms the interests of a group of people in positions of power and influence, so they will create obstacles," Azad said. "If they don't reform, it will harm their own interests and those of the nation." — Reuters



OHIO: Jordan Peterson, of Bellefontaine, works on an Airstream travel trailer at the Airstream factory in Jackson Center, Ohio. US factory orders rebounded in October 2015 after two prior monthly declines, helped by rising demand for aircraft, computers and machinery. — AP

US MANUFACTURING STRUGGLES AS RISING INCOME BRIGHTENS OUTLOOK

PERSONAL INCOME RISES 0.3%; WAGES UP 0.5%

WASHINGTON: New orders for US manufactured capital goods fell in November and the prior month's increase was revised sharply lower as the drag on manufacturing from a strong dollar and spending cuts in the energy sector showed little sign of abating. But the outlook for the economy remains encouraging, with other data showing consumer sentiment at a five-month high in December and personal income rising for an eighth straight month in November.

That should support consumer spending and generate enough economic growth for the Federal Reserve to steadily raise interest rates next year. "The economy is not too cold, and not too hot, it is just right. The Fed can stay the course ... no need to depart from a gradual pace given what we know currently about the economy," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFG Union Bank in New York.

The Commerce Department said non-defense capital goods orders excluding aircraft, a closely watched proxy for business spending plans, dropped 0.4 percent last month. October's increase in orders for these so-called core capital goods was revised down to 0.6 percent from 1.3 percent. Manufacturing, which accounts for 12 percent of the economy, is also buckling under businesses' efforts to reduce an inventory bloat and sluggish

global demand, which has curtailed new orders growth. The dollar has gained almost 20 percent against the currencies of the United States' main trading partners over the last 18 months.

At the same time, plunging crude oil prices, which on Monday plumbed their lowest levels since 2004, have put pressure on oilfield services firms like Schlumberger and Halliburton, forcing them to slash capital spending budgets. A survey early this month showed manufacturing contracted in November for the first time in three years. Core capital goods shipments fell 0.5 percent last month after declining 1.0 percent in October. Shipments of these goods are used to calculate equipment spending in the government's gross domestic product measurement.

"Unless we see a big rebound in December or upward revisions, it appears that investment in equipment contracted in the fourth quarter," said Paul Ashworth, chief US economist at Capital Economics in Toronto. A separate report showed the University of Michigan's consumer sentiment index increased to 92.6 this month, the highest reading since July, from 91.3 in November. Low inflation, characterized by deep discounts at shopping malls, accounted for the rise in sentiment this month. The report also showed that consumers'

attitudes towards purchases of long-lasting manufactured goods such as motor vehicles and other big-ticket items hit their highest level since 2005.

Wages rising

Prospects for consumer spending next year also got a boost from another report from the Commerce Department showing income increased 0.3 percent last month after gaining 0.4 percent in October. Wages and salaries advanced 0.5 percent, adding to a 0.6 percent gain in October. US stocks rose on the mixed data, with sentiment also buoyed by a rebound in oil prices. The dollar firmed against a basket of currencies, while US Treasuries fell.

A tightening labor market, marked by an unemployment rate that is in a range some Fed officials consider consistent with full employment, is starting to lift wages. While that could generate price pressures, inflation will likely remain below the US central bank's 2 percent target because of the oil price rout. "The Fed understands that the competing factors will be with us for a while and that is why it is easy for the members to say that rates will be increased gradually," said Joel Naroff, chief economist at Naroff Economic Advisors in Holland, Pennsylvania. — Reuters

VIETNAM ECONOMY GROWS AT HIGHEST RATE IN 5 YEARS

HANOI: Vietnam's economy in 2015 grew at its fastest pace in five years, official figures showed yesterday, shaking off regional economic worries with strong exports, record foreign investment and buoyant domestic consumption. The communist nation recorded a GDP growth rate of 6.68 percent, easily surpassing the government's 6.2 percent target with a figure that looks set to be one of Southeast Asia's strongest showings for the year.

"This growth rate is very important for the Vietnamese economy in the coming years in the context of falling world oil prices and instabilities in the international financial markets," Nguyen Bich Lam, director of the General Statistics Office, told reporters in Hanoi. Many Asian economies have been rattled by troubles in China, where the world's second largest economy has suffered with its worst annual growth rates in a quarter of a century.

While regional neighbors like Thailand have suffered, Vietnam has proved resistant to the slowdown of its giant northern neighbor, partly through state intervention. The State Bank of Vietnam weakened the dong three times this year to spur exports after China depreciated the yuan, dragging exchange rates lower across Asia. Exports rose 8.1 percent in the 12 months through December while imports climbed 12 percent. Much of the growth has been fuelled by a flurry of international interest with disbursed foreign investment surging 17.4 percent compared to

last year with a record-high of \$14.5 billion.

The strong showing is a significant jump on the last two years. In 2014 Vietnam's GDP growth was just under six percent, while that of 2013 was only 5.42 percent. Senior economist Le Dang Doanh said that strong industrial growth also helped boost the economy as well as "lower oil prices in the world market which has greatly reduced the cost of imported raw materials for Vietnam". On Wednesday, Vietnam released data showing an annual inflation rate of just 0.63 percent in 2015, the lowest in 14 years. Vietnam is now party to the recently sealed Trans-Pacific Partnership, the world's largest free trade deal between 12 nations, including the US and Japan.

As the poorest of the TPP nations, the pact is something of a coup for the country's Communist rulers, who will meet in January for a major gathering of senior officials to choose new leaders and decide the country's five-year economic plan. In a report earlier this month the World Bank said the TPP deal could add "as much as eight percent to Vietnam's GDP... over the next 20 years" if it goes ahead. But many analysts still say Vietnam's economic progress is vulnerable due to high public debts, inefficient operation of huge state-owned enterprises and rampant official corruption. For decades, the country suffered from runaway inflation with triple digit increases in the 1980s and rates as high as 28.3 percent as recently as August 2008. — AFP



TOKYO: Shoppers select fish at a market in Tokyo. Japanese consumer prices rose 0.1 percent in November year-on-year, official data showed, as the government continues to battle years of deflation. — AFP

JAPAN'S LEADERS URGE HIGHER WAGES, BUT BUSINESSES GIVE MUTED SUPPORT ABE SAYS WAGE HIKES, CAPEX CRITICAL TO END DEFLATION

TOKYO: Japan's prime minister and central bank governor have applied fresh pressure on companies to do their part in putting a sustained end to deflation by boosting wages and investment. The head of Japan's biggest business lobby, however, offered only conditional support, underscoring the difficulty policymakers face in convincing risk-shy Japanese companies to divert more of their record profits to innovation and human resources.

At an annual meeting of the business lobby Keidanren, Abe voiced hope that companies raise wages next year at a faster pace than this year, saying that boosting salaries and capital expenditure was critical for Japan to exit deflation. Bank of Japan Governor Haruhiko Kuroda also waded in, telling the same meeting that companies who invest now are the ones to be rewarded when the central bank's aggressive money printing succeeds in accelerating inflation to its 2 percent target.

"Fortune favors the bold," Kuroda said, citing a famous proverb and stressing that more companies need to be spending further on new innovation and raising salaries to lure

talent in a tightening job market. Kuroda also said the BOJ remains "unwavering" in its determination to do whatever it takes to hit its 2 percent inflation target, suggesting his readiness to expand monetary stimulus if risks threaten a broad uptrend in prices. Despite assurances by Kuroda that Japan's economic prospects are bright, many companies still sit on a huge pile of cash because of uncertainties over the external outlook and a shrinking domestic market as the country's population ages rapidly.

In the meeting, Keidanren chairman Sadayuki Sakakibara praised Abe's efforts to reflate growth and his pro-business policies such as a pledge to cut Japan's corporate tax rate. But he said companies had the flexibility to decide to what degree and how employees should be compensated, signaling that smaller and less-profitable firms may opt to pay one-off bonuses rather than increase base salary. "Each company faces a different business environment," Sakakibara said. "I'd like to urge companies to take measures that best suit their needs," he said, adding that companies did not necessarily need to persist in raising regular pay. — Reuters

HK APARTMENT SELLS FOR A RECORD \$76.7 MILLION

HONG KONG: A luxury apartment in Hong Kong sold for a record HK\$594.7 million (\$76.7 million), days before Christmas, making it the most expensive flat in the city and possibly in Asia, reports said Friday. An unidentified buyer paid more than HK\$103,700 per-square-foot for the 5,732 square-foot (532 square-metre) unit at the luxury 39

Conduit Road apartment tower in the southern Chinese city's upmarket Mid-Levels residential area, The Apple Daily and The Standard reported.

The condominium, on the 46th floor with a view of the iconic Victoria Harbor and a 1,754 square-foot rooftop, had a list price of HK\$646.48 million on developer

Henderson Land Properties' website. The price beats the previous record HK\$470 million paid for a luxury unit which takes up the entire eighth floor of the Opus Hong Kong, a 12-storey residential building designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Frank Gehry, in 2012.

Henderson Land was not available for comment Friday, a public

holiday. This comes as analysts said a US interest rate hike could put an end to the housing boom in the Chinese city which maintains a decades old peg with the US dollar. Hong Kong-based brokerage CLSA warned the residential market was at a "turning point", with prices possibly dropping 17 percent by 2017, while other firms have tipped falls of up to 30 percent. Hong Kong's de facto central bank last Thursday raised its base interest rate by 25 points to 0.75 percent after the US Federal Reserve announced its first rate increase in more than nine years.

But chief analyst for Midland Realty Bugge Lau said the record-breaking purchase does not reflect the bigger picture of the overall property market in the city. "The super-rich, I don't think the small increase in the interest rates have any impact on their purchasing power," Lau said. "This is exceptional, it can't reflect the whole market," which he described overall as "sluggish". Property prices in Hong Kong, famous for its sky-high rent and super-rich tycoons, have more than doubled in six years due to record low interest rates and a flood of wealthy buyers from mainland China. Many residents complain they can no longer afford decent accommodation in the city of seven million people, and analysts say property ownership is out of reach even for the upper middle class. — AFP



HONG KONG: Tourists look at the city skyline and Victoria harbour while visiting the Peak in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP



THE NEW BMW 6 SERIES GRAN COUPE

KUWAIT: The arrival of the new BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe - continues BMW's promise to bring the latest and most innovative models to Kuwait. Conjoining up a new balance of dynamic excellence, elegance and luxury, the enhanced addition to the BMW 6 Series range blends the sports performance and aesthetics of a coupe with the extended functionality of a four-door car. Its distinctive proportions and longer wheelbase accentuate the exterior's irresistible radiance.

The interior of the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe delivers luxurious long-distance comfort for the driver and passengers in four full-size seats and offers a third seat in the rear that is suitable for shorter journeys. Detail refinements showcase both the elegance of the body design and the exclusive ambience of the interior. The 6 Series Gran Coupe is a great example of the varied and premium line up we offer our customers, in addition to offering exceptional service and low cost of ownership, we are sure the car will make an impact in the market.

The BMW TwinPower Turbo engines available for the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe stand for sportiness with efficiency. The twin turbo 3.0 litre V6 of the 640i produces 320 horsepower and 450 Nm of torque which translates



to a 0 - 100 km/h time of just 5.4 seconds. Meanwhile, under the bonnet of the BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe is a V8 petrol engine of the 650i with BMW TwinPower Turbo technology that has two turbochargers, direct injection and VALVETRONIC. This results in 450hp at 5,500 rpm, with an acceleration from 0 to 100 km at 4.6 seconds reaching top speeds of 50 km/h.

BMW ConnectedDrive in the new BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe come as standard with a hands-free facility and a SIM card embedded in the car. Enabling ConnectedDrive Services and Real Time Traffic Information for the

navigation system. The BMW Head-Up Display projects relevant driving data, information and navigation directions into the driver's direct field of view using 3D graphics to promote concentration on the road ahead. Other technologies include Stop & Go function, the Lane Departure Warning system and Pedestrian and Collision Warning system. Exclusively available at Ali Alghanim & Sons Automotive. The BMW 6 Series Gran Coupe is exclusively available at Ali Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive importer for BMW Group automobiles in Kuwait.



1804080
www.borgan.com

بنك برونتان
BURGAN BANK
driven by you

BURGAN BANK ANNOUNCES SPECIAL DISCOUNTS AT RESTAURANTS, CAFES

KUWAIT: Borgan Bank has announced its partnership with different restaurants and cafes in Kuwait. The bank's customers will avail discount when using any of Borgan Bank's cards while dining in Suits Turkish Restaurant, Khaneen Kuwaiti Restaurant, Espressamante cafe, Haagen Dazs cafe, Dilmah Tea Lounge cafe, Nino restaurant and Leila from Lebanon restaurant. This ongoing offer comes to provide customers with a superb experience when dining at fabulous restaurants

and cafes, while saving money with an exclusive discount from Borgan Bank. Borgan Bank's customer-centric approach aims at providing customers with rewarding opportunities. To find out more about Borgan Bank services as well as its latest promotions, customers are required to visit their nearest Borgan Bank branch or contact the call center on 1804080. For more information, customers can visit the bank's website on www.borgan.com.

TURKEY'S SIMSEK SEES 2016 GROWTH ABOVE 4%

RUSSIA'S IMPACT LIMITED

ANKARA: Deputy Turkish Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek said he expected faster economic growth this year than official forecasts, and an even stronger expansion next year, and he played down tensions with Moscow over Ankara's downing of a Russian jet. Simsek also told Reuters in an interview that the central bank had been "very clear" in its statement explaining its surprise decision to leave interest rates steady this week, in comments that may do little to quell investors' concerns about the bank's independence.

The "positive surprise" of third-quarter GDP growth of 4 percent pointed to full-year growth of 3.5 to 4 percent and more than 4 percent growth in 2016, said Simsek, who is responsible for the performance of the economy. In October, the government cut its growth forecasts to 3 from 4 percent in 2015 and to 4 from 5 percent in 2016. "This growth is a rather good outcome given the serious political instability due to elections, troubles in the Middle East and surrounding countries and the narrowing demand due to the collapse in commodity prices," he said late on Wednesday.

Commenting on those problems, Simsek said souring relations with Moscow after Turkey shot down a Russian warplane last month had not had a serious impact on trade and was unlikely to do so. "We do not anticipate a lasting, significant

impact on foreign trade. If there is one, it will be limited," he said. "We will be able to find alternative markets for our products." Simsek, a former finance minister, took up his new post last month after an election that handed one-party rule back to the AK Party, which oversaw an economy that has grown around 5 percent annually on average since it first came to power in 2002.

The deputy prime minister also said he expected the current account deficit, resource-poor Turkey's biggest economic weakness, to narrow to about 4.5 percent of GDP this year and then to 4 percent next year. "We think the narrowing in the current account deficit will continue next year despite developments in Russia and the region," he said.

Bank on track

Simsek said the central bank, which stunned the markets by not hiking interest rates as widely expected, was acting in line with its "road map" towards a simpler policy framework aimed at narrowing its corridor of interest rates. "The central bank has taken many steps required by this road map and said that the next step would be a process of narrowing the corridor. It linked this to market volatility," he said, avoiding further comment. Analysts have been urging an interest rate hike to rein in inflation and boost the lira

currency, but the bank has faced political pressure to keep monetary policy loose.

President Tayyip Erdogan has called for rate cuts and even equated high interest rates with treason. The lira, which weakened to 2.96 to the dollar after Tuesday's rate decision, has since recovered and stood at 2.9232 on Thursday. The main share index was up 0.1 percent and the 10-year benchmark bond yield was steady at 10.78 percent. "In the short term, naturally, inflationary pressures will continue to be strong," Simsek said. "The decline in global commodity prices will be somewhat supportive in the period ahead," he added, suggesting the inflationary pressure the central bank faces may ease.

"To lower (inflation) we have to raise productivity, securing this with structural reforms. We must strengthen monetary policy's hand by keeping fiscal policy tight," he said. He added that the 2016 budget would give the signal that fiscal discipline will be maintained and forecast faster growth next year as political uncertainty wanes and European economies recover. "The reform agenda, serious real increases in wages, domestic investment and consumption will boost demand," he said. He added that a delay in Turkey's implementation of the Basel III set of global banking regulations, expected to take place in March, was not currently on the agenda.—Reuters

AAFAQ ISLAMIC FINANCE CONFERRED TWO PRESTIGIOUS AWARDS BY IFM

DUBAI: Aafaq Islamic Finance, a leading provider of Islamic finance products and e-government services in the UAE, received two eminent awards from London-based International Finance Magazine (IFM) during the 2015 IFM Awards held recently at the Landmark Hotel, London. Mujtaba Naseem, DCEO & CFO at aafaq Islamic Finance, accepted the award for the 'Fastest Growing Finance Company - GCC 2015', while Nihad Shahin, Secretary of the Boards of Directors at aafaq Islamic Finance, was given the trophy for the 'Best Smart Service Provider - GCC 2015' during a glittering ceremony that was attended by high profile guests, industry leaders, and representatives from the world's leading banking and financial institutions.

The IFM Awards celebrates excellence and honors individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions to the international finance industry. It heralds the highest standards of innovation and performance in four different categories, including Financial, Brokerage, Leadership,

and Technology. Apart from recognizing the key performers in the industry, the IFM Awards makes a concerted effort to shine the spotlight on organizations in niche segments and those that exhibit brilliance in the unsung corners of the finance industry.

HE Dr Abduljaleel Alblouki, Deputy Chairman of aafaq Islamic Finance, said: "We thank the Awarding Committee of IFM Awards 2015 for bestowing aafaq Islamic Finance with the two prestigious awards. It is a tremendous achievement to be recognized at a global platform for making outstanding contributions to the international banking and finance industry. They demonstrate aafaq's continued commitment to embrace innovation and technology to offer smart banking solutions designed to meet its patron's requirements and expectations. We have outlined strategic policies to expand our services to a wider geographical area to reach out to a larger customer base, and these awards serve as strong motivations for us to further intensify our efforts."



FUNGUS KILLING TREE CRITICAL TO HAWAII'S NATIVE FORESTS

HONOLULU: A newly discovered fungus is killing a tree that's critical to Hawaii's water supply, endangered native birds and Hawaiian cultural traditions like hula. The disease called rapid ohia death has hit hundreds of thousands of ohia lehua trees on the Big Island. As of last year, it was found to have affected 50 percent of the ohia trees across 6,000 acres of forest, but it's believed to have spread further since then. To date, it's been found primarily in Puna but also in Kona and Kau. It hasn't been seen anywhere else in the world.

Robert Hauff, the forest health coordinator at the state Department of Land and Natural Resources, said the state is planning aerial surveys next month to learn how many acres are affected by the fungus. A world expert in similar diseases is also expected to visit the islands



PAHOA: This Dec. 17, 2015 photo provided by the Hawaii State Department of Land and Natural Resources shows ohia lehua trees hit by the rapid ohia death fungus. — AP

to advise the state on how to control the outbreak. "Worst case scenario is that it spreads statewide and it decimates all of our ohia forests. It's a pretty bleak picture," Hauff told reporters at a news conference in Honolulu.

Ohia is important to the water supply because it's so effective at soaking water into the ground and replenishing the watershed. It's critical for native birds because the animals feed on its nectar. It provides a canopy to native plants growing underneath it in the forests. The state Department of Agriculture has created rules prohibiting moving wood, flowers and other parts of the ohia tree between islands. The state is also encouraging people to clean tools used on ohia and clean shoes and clothes used near ohia.

Christy Martin, a spokeswoman for the Hawaii Coordinating Group on Alien

Pest Species, said the fungus is "sneaky" because it can infect a tree for months before showing any symptoms. "So somebody could think they're walking through a healthy forest, picking up wood and doing whatever they're doing collecting for lei and not know they're dealing with an infected tree," Martin said after the news conference.

Sam Ohu Gon III, senior scientist and cultural adviser at the Nature Conservancy of Hawaii, said ohia wood was used for weapons, hula instruments, homes and temples in ancient Hawaii. Many Hawaiian proverbs and sayings reference the tree. "It's a fundamental blow to the natural foundations of Hawaiian culture as far as I'm concerned," Gon said. "It's very important thing, therefore, for anyone who has any love at all for those elements of where we live." — AP

WOMAN WRITES BOOK ABOUT LAUGHING THROUGH CANCER

CEDAR RAPIDS: Kathy Lariviere always has found life funny. Finding a lump in her breast in 2012 was anything but. Yet over the next 15 months of diagnosis with breast cancer, surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation, she managed to keep laughing.

She wrote her struggles and her jokes down on a blog, "Laugh With Kathy." In October, Lariviere, 56, of Urbana, published a book of the same name, with the subtitle, "Finding Humor in the Journey Through Breast Cancer." She had looked on Amazon for a humorous breast cancer book but couldn't find one. On its face, it's not a humorous topic, but she said there were so many times she couldn't help but laugh. "When my doctor is talking to me seriously about nipple tattoos, my mind is going somewhere else," she said.

She used humor to get her through the awkward and absurd moments she saw all around, from the fire safety guide inside a hyperbaric chamber to the sheer number of people she had to show her bare chest to. She would stand with her hands on her hips and pretend she was Super Woman, looking over the doctor's and nurse's shoulders as they examined her. "I always decided I had the power of flight," she said.

Didn't come easy

Laughing didn't always come easily. "One day I was so mad I wanted to break something," she said. She spent the day painting eggs with the targets of her ire - syringes, breasts. She went outside and heaved an egg as hard as she could at a tree. "I missed, and I was so mad I started laughing," she said. That led to blowing up pumpkins, which became a ritual for she and her husband after treatment milestones. They set them up in the woods behind their house, surrounded with explosive Tannerite, and shot them with rifles. "I thought, if I can laugh at this, I can make it through this," she said.

Her treatment was long, 14 months. She saw other patients come and go. Not all survived. On the treatment floor at the Hall-Perrine Cancer Center in Cedar Rapids, she could talk with other patients about their struggles in a way that was hard in the outside world. "A friend told me he wasn't going to survive. We could talk about it calmly," she said. The blog struck a nerve for a lot of other patients, as well as their friends and family, nurses and doctors. People all over the world started sharing her posts and started writing her emails. Eventually the blog had over 5,000 followers.

"I felt like whether I survived or not, I'd given people hope," she said. She said looking for the funny moments helped her cope, but every one has to face their diagnosis in their own way. "I think every cancer patient is entitled to get through it however they need to," she said. "If you want sympathy, if you want to be surrounded by friends, if you want to hide in the house, if you want to laugh at the world, you get to do whatever you need."

She started the blog initially to keep family and friends informed about her treatment. A professional website designer, Lariviere always has enjoyed writing, and the blog also became a way to process what was happening. Not everything made it online. Some things are private, and she didn't always share the daily pain and struggles of treatment.

"I think you don't get a lot of choices when you're diagnosed with cancer. The only choice I had left was how I let friends and family see me go through it," she said. "I wanted to do it with grace and humor and compassion." — AP



WARE: In this Saturday, Dec 12, 2015 photo, Dennis Volz-Benoit (right) embraces his son Tyler as Eric Volz-Benoit (left) holds Zachary during a family outing at the Quabbin Reservoir observation tower. — AP

SPECIAL HELP FOR FAMILY OF SPECIAL-NEEDS KIDS

SPRINGFIELD: It takes a strict routine and a lot of help to raise a family of special-needs children. Few know this better than Eric and Dennis Volz-Benoit, who have five. Typical days involve feeding tubes, breathing treatments, medications and assembly-line showers, not to mention taking kids to school, making dinner and washing clothes. "It's just kind of like a well-oiled machine," said Eric Volz-Benoit. "The key for us is routine. Everything is routine."

But routine only goes so far for the Springfield couple and their children, Zachary, 8, who has epilepsy and cerebral palsy; Tyler, 7, who has brain damage and autism; Jayden, 5, who has post-traumatic stress disorder and borderline behavior problems; and biological siblings Ryan and Mandie, 7 and 6, who both have PTSD. That's where the Collaborative Consultative Care Coordinator Program - known as 4C, and where Eric Volz-Benoit works as a nurse - comes in.

The program helps parents and pediatricians manage medically complex chil-

dren. Families are paired with a team of helpers, including a nurse care coordinator and a social worker who can make home visits. A child's medical information is loaded into a central site, or "cloud," so any specialists needed to check or treat any given condition can get what they need quickly and easily. The program is a partnership between Boston Medical Center and Baystate Medical Center, funded in September 2014 by a three-year, \$6 million federal grant under the Affordable Care Act.

Zachary is the only one who qualifies for the coordinated care at 4C. He uses a wheelchair and requires a feeding tube and oxygen; early on after coming to live with the couple in 2008, he was frequently in and out of the hospital. Volz-Benoit credits Zachary with helping him "grow up a lot" and become a father to his brood of special children. "No matter how cruddy of a day I've had, all I have to do is come home and get a kiss and see that child," he said. "He balances my life. I can't imagine not having him around." — AP



WARE: Eric Volz-Benoit, a registered nurse who works with children afflicted with complex medical disabilities, attends to his adopted son Zachary (right) who is wheelchair-bound after being born with cerebral palsy, while Eric's partner Dennis, left rear, trims the Christmas tree at their family home.

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199



Dr. Fabad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم



Consultant Pediatrician
إستشاري أطفال
M.B. Bch. FRCPC. FAAP. PEM



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



LAIF CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS; HOLDS 'ALL NATIONS NIGHT'

As part of its Christmas celebration, Life Abundant International Fountain Church (LAIF) organized 'All Nations Night' at the NECK premises Kuwait City. The anointing power-packed service featured high praise from different nationalities. The guest speaker Pastor Maduako urged Christians across the globe to be good ambassadors of Christ. He lauded the efforts of Kuwait government in promoting religious tolerance and peace in the region. The event also featured an international guest artist Racheal Rena who thrilled the congregation and exalted the Almighty God with her praise and worship songs.



Happy birthday to our dear sister Racheal Rena. May God guide and protect you as to continue to be a blessing to your family. We just want to tell you that 'we love you.' Greetings from LAIF family, friends and well-wishers.



The bond between you and I will forever be my most cherished possession. Happy birthday to my dear husband. May the Almighty God continue to shower you with his blessings Amen. Greetings from wife, daughter, son, friends and well-wishers.



DR GHALIB AL-MASHOOR GETS WARM SEND OFF RECEPTION

After 13 years of service with United Arab Shipping Company (Government owned GCC Shipping Giant), Dr Ghalib Al-Mashoor was given warm send off reception by UASC staff. Dr Ghalib was appointed as a Senior Financial Analyst followed by couple of promotions such as an Assistant Investment Manager, then as an Investment Manager, who managed a portfolio of about \$182 million UASC assets from the year 2001 to 2014.

Dr Mashoor is having rich experience in the Economic and Financial instruments who attended more than 200 International economic, financial and investment seminars and visited 21 Arab, American and European countries.

Earlier, Dr Mashoor has worked about 13 years for ARAB LEAGUE's Inter-Arab Investment Guarantee Corporation, (owned by 22 Arab Governments) in the capacity of "Chief Dealer for Investments and Securities". Dr Ghalib was instrumental to bring a permanent solution and to sort out IAIGC's several financial assets in order and he has used high caliber to sort out the settlement issues during the invasion of Kuwait in the year 1990.

After the delegated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kuwait in 1991, he was assigned to take up position in Jordan, and Egypt, where he worked almost 2 years. Dr Mashoor now joined with 'Rakomesko Group' as Financial Advisor and Investment Consultant.



Greetings

Rasha Moneim celebrated her birthday recently with family and friends.



BANGLADESH VICTORY DAY OBSERVED BY AWAMI LEAGUE CENTRAL COMMITTEE



On 16th of December, 44th Bangladesh victory day, a discussion meeting was arranged by Bangladesh Awami League Central Committee Kuwait, on December 24th at Gulshan Restaurant in Kuwait city. The discussion meeting was presided by Mohamed Abdur Rouf Mowla, President of Bangladesh Awami League Central Committee, Kuwait. The special guest was Mohd Foez Kamal the senior vice president of BALK, Hazrat Ali Mollik, General secretary of Jatia Party Kuwait, Bir Muktijudda Delwar Hossain, Vice president of BALK, Morshed Alam Badal, the General Secretary of BALK, Mohammad Alimuddin, the convener of Sylhet Awami League Convener Committee, Kuwait.

The Function was conducted by Zahidul Islam, The co-organizing secretary of BALK, Speeches on the occasion of significance of

victory day were delivered by the Shechasebak League General Secretary Mohammed Shamsul Haq, Jobo League co-convenor secretary Aklakul Ambeya Basar, Mohammad Shamsul Haque the organizing secretary of BALK, Mohammed Liaqat Bishas, the vice president of BALK, Abdur Rahman the vice President of BALK, Special guests and the president of the Committee.

Poet and the editor of Magazine Mrittka Salim Reza recited heart rendering poem. The program started with recitation of verses from the Holy Quran and Du'a Mahfil Conducted by Mowlana Abdul Ahad and followed by one minutes silence in honor of the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman who was assassinated by a handful of ambitious and treacherous military officers on Aug 15, 1975 and martyrs of war of liberation in 1971.



—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



'TOP OF' HOLDS ROOFTOP MARKET

By Faten Omar

Top Of' held its third rooftop market yesterday at the Arraya Center parking lot. 'Top Of' is a pop-up rooftop space boasting excellent food, entertainment and community activities with the Kuwait City skyline as a backdrop. These outings aim to reclaim urban space and add a new dimension to life in the city. Outings either start at sunrise or sunset with packed entertainment schedules including a unique array of food vendors, live music and performances, fitness activities, local film screenings and art shows.

Top Of is also a fundraiser for proteges and there are more than 40 volunteers from ages 15 to 23 in this project, and

all profits made from the events go directly to The Proteges program to support youth mentorship and development. "Top Of is a fun market outing that includes different activities for families, children and teens. It also acts as a fundraiser for The Protégés program that is designed to positively influence Kuwait's youth," said Basma Al-Abduljaleel, Manager of the 'Top Of' project.

Abduljaleel noted 40 companies and organizations are participating in the 'Top Of' market at the Arraya parking lot's rooftop. "This is our third Top Of market, and we will hold another one on January 16 in the same location. We are trying to encourage small businesses to persevere by giving them booths at the Top Of market, and we have booths for food, art and

accessories. I invite all people to support our project and have fun and enjoy the moment. We have many activities for all ages," she added.

The event was held from 10 am to 8 pm, with bikers, Mini Cooper show, a live blues music performance and photo booth. The Proteges program is part of a social enterprise that is designed to positively influence the youth of Kuwait through an inclusive program that combines travel, lectures, group activities, challenges, games and fun. Guided by a team of mentors, The Protégés are encouraged to discover their passions and are given the necessary tools to assist them to excel in their future careers and contribute positively to society.

CELEBRATE THE FESTIVE SEASON AT SHERATON KUWAIT AND FOUR POINTS BY SHERATON KUWAIT

As we start to countdown the last days of the year 2015, Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait are thrilled to welcome all of their distinguished guests to celebrate the festive season and New Year in a family atmosphere full of fun and superb luxurious hospitality through its diverse restaurants that have been extensively preparing for a remarkable New Year's Eve dining experience and start your 2016 with the most delicious cuisines.

Indulge in any of the specialty restaurants operating in a wide range from Sheraton Kuwait to the Avenues, one of the largest and most prestigious shopping malls in Kuwait and the region. Enjoy the delicious flavors from all over the world through the international buffet served in Al-Hambra restaurant or experience the

charm of the very authentic Lebanese taste at Le Tarbouche. For those who love the Iranian cuisine they can treasure the most authentic grills and many other delicious appetizers at Shahrayar and explore the spicy and exotic Indian palate at Bukhara; where the dishes are prepared with the finest Indian spices. For those looking to just sit back, relax and enjoy a very calm New Year start, can captivate their taste buds in the most tranquil atmosphere and enjoy the marvelous English Tea and savor the most delicious snacks at the English Tea Lounge.

For a very unique and dazzling New Year Eve, you can enjoy the most bona fide delicacies of Italy at Riccardo Restaurant, the first fine dining Italian restaurant in Kuwait and a classic atmosphere hidden behind the

elegant marbled filled walls of Sheraton Kuwait.

If you are looking for a comfortable, casual and down to earth festive season, the Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait has the best choices for you. Indulge in the most laid back trip across the globe with Asseef offering the most delicious international cuisine, whereas La Mamma Pizzeria serves you the best pizza in town baked in the very special wood fired oven in addition to an assortment of mouthwatering appetizers from the countryside of Italy in a rustic Italian atmosphere.

On this joyous occasion, the Management and staff of Sheraton Kuwait and Four Points by Sheraton Kuwait would like to take this opportunity to wish you all a Happy and Prosperous New Year 2016.



The cultural committee of the Jordanian community in Kuwait hosted a 'cultural open day' at Al-Shaab Park recently, which was attended by a large number of Jordanian families. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

For labor-related inquiries and complaints: Call MSAL hotline 128

Hospitals

Table with 2 columns: Hospital Name and Phone Number. Includes Sabah Hospital, Amiri Hospital, Maternity Hospital, etc.

Clinics

Table with 2 columns: Clinic Name and Phone Number. Includes Kaizen center, Rawda, Adaliya, etc.



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

Table with 4 columns: GOVERNORATE, PHARMACY, ADDRESS, PHONE. Lists pharmacies across Governorates like Ahmadi, Jahra, Capital, etc.

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Large table listing international call rates for various countries, including Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, etc.

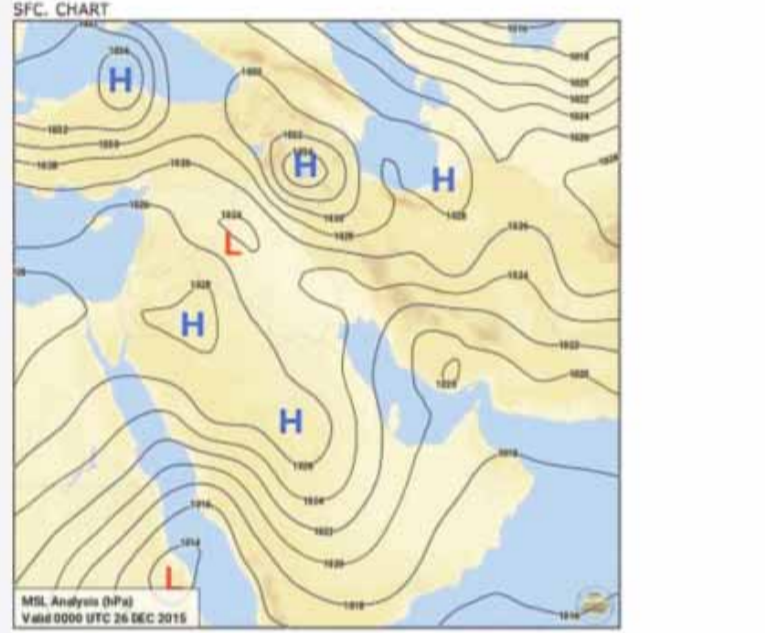
STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 26/12/2015-07:00 LT UTC +3hr Max Temperature 18 °C



Four-Day Forecast table with columns for Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday, including weather icons and temperature ranges.

Warnings & Weather Watches

Table with 3 columns: Station, MIN °C, Max °C. Lists weather data for various stations like KUWAIT CITY, ABDALY, etc.

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport table with weather metrics like Max Temp, Min Temp, Wind Speed, etc.

Prayer Times table with columns for Fajr, Sunrise, Zuhr, Asr, Sunset, Isha.

PRIVATE CLINICS



Grid of private clinics categorized by medical specialties: Ophthalmologists, Plastic Surgeons, Paediatricians, Endocrinologist, Family Doctor, Psychiatrists, Gynaecologists & Obstetricians, General Practitioners, General Surgeons, Internists, Chest & Heart, Neurologists, Dermatologists, Dentists, Physiotherapists & VD, Rheumatologists, Internist, Chest & Heart, Consultant Cardiologist, Gastrologists.

Contact information for various clinics: Psychologists, Soor Center, Kaizen center, Noor Clinic, William Schuilenberg, etc.

KANYE AND KIM OFFERED \$2.5M FOR THE FIRST PHOTOGRAPHS OF THEIR SON

The couple welcomed little Saint into the world on December 5 and since his birth, they have been inundated with offers from publications keen to show him off for the first time. According to TMZ, offers range from \$2 million to \$2.5 million and request the full family, including Saint's older sister North, two, to take part in a range of pictures, including candid group shots. However, insiders told the website the couple are "almost certain" they will reject all offers for the pictures. When North was born, Kanye, 38, showed off a selection of pictures of her

on his mother-in-law Kris Jenner's now-defunct talk show, fuelling speculation that Saint's public debut will come on Kim's sister Khloe Kardashian's new programme 'Kocktails with Khloe', which launches in the new year. The family have already been seen in public together since Saint's birth, but during the visit to take the infant to the doctor last week, Kim, 35, and her rapper husband ensured he was kept fully covered and away from view in his car seat.



Weisz 'picks out' the Christmas traditions she likes

The 45-year-old actress - who is married to Daniel Craig and has a nine-year-old son, Henry, with ex-fiancé Darren Aronofsky - doesn't fully embrace all aspects of the festive season as she grew up in a Jewish household, but she does abide by some customs typical of the Christian holiday period. She said: "I grew up Jewish so when I was a kid, it was all about Hannukkah. But these days I have a Christmas tree and do some of the other stuff. I am not a very traditional person, so I just pick out the bits that I like. I like mid-

night mass and I like Christmas carols. "I do a very good 'Hark the Herald Angels Sing.'" When it comes to receiving gifts, Rachel loves a handmade present. She said: "I think the best present is something that has been made for you. My best friend gave me a cushion in the shape of a cow, which she did herself with needlepoint and it was the most beautiful gift. As far as I know, there was no symbolic meaning to the cow shape."



Roberts spends days in the kitchen during the holidays

The 'Money Monster' actress - who has children Hazel and Phinnaeus, 10, and Henry, eight, with husband Daniel Moder - admits one of her favorite things about the Christmas period is having the chance to try out new recipes and entertain other people with culinary delights. She said: "I love to cook anyway and the great thing about the holidays is that you have this perfect excuse to spend all day in the kitchen for days and days. Not that I don't enjoy cooking every day for the five of us, but it's very exciting to

get out the cookbooks and find things that are new and delicious and cook up an abundance of food for a big group of people." The 48-year-old star may enjoy trying new recipes over Christmas, but she also has old favorites which she goes back to every year. She said: "There's a particular Brussels sprout recipe that I have down. It requires shredding them to start with, which I think is the secret to delicious and palatable Brussels sprouts. My husband really likes this and I make it every year."



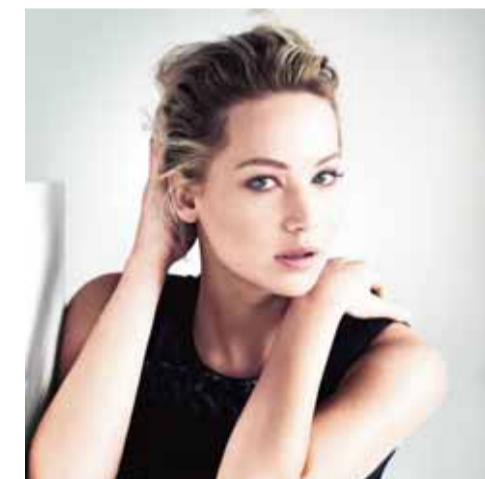
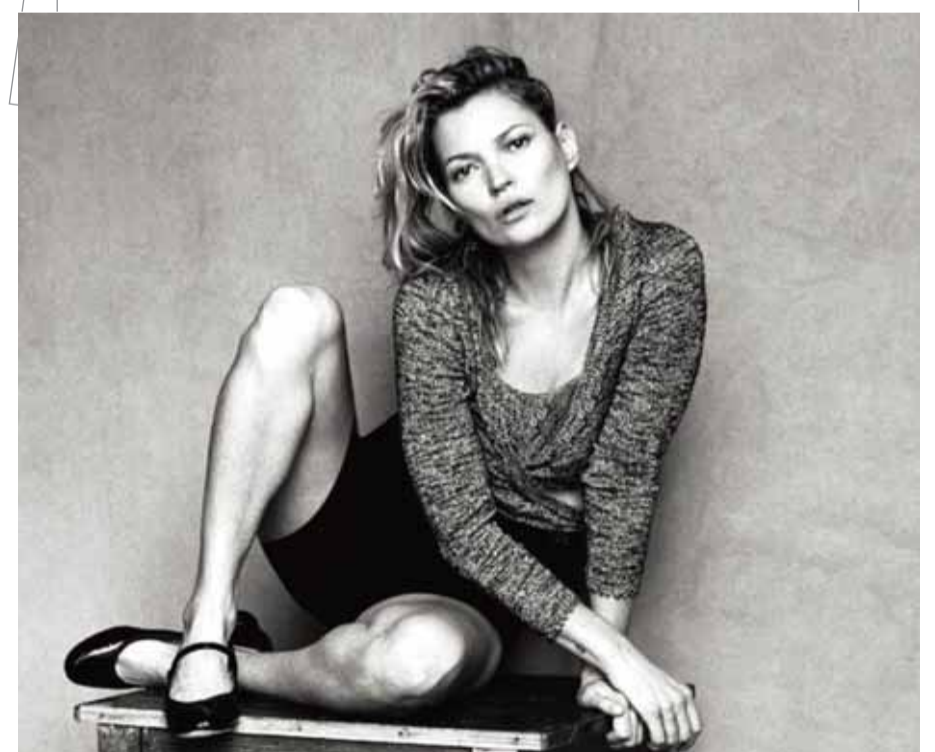
Keaton loves going on a road trip at Christmas

The 69-year-old actress - who is a single parent to adopted children Dexter, 20, and 15-year-old Duke - enjoyed a traditional holiday season when she was a child and though she had a good time, she now prefers her new family ritual of exploring California. She said: "What I love to do [at Christmas] is get into the car with the kids and our dog Emmy and drive up north to see the country. When I was a kid, we had the whole traditional Christmas thing with the tree and the dinner and the aunts and cousins and I remember loving it. But I also remember getting into the car with the family at other times and taking trips around California and I loved that too. California is the best place in the world for me and I love to get out there. Now I'm older, I'm swapping one tradition for another and we have the best time." The 'Christmas with the Coopers' star is fascinated by how different her daughter has grown up to be. She said: "Dexter is really interesting because she's so different to me. She's the managerial type and very practical. She's good to have around because she likes to get everything just right. Duke - well, he's such a guy and he likes, guess what, sports and guitars."



Moss loves to give jewels at Christmas

The 41-year-old supermodel - who has a 13-year-old daughter, Lila, with ex-boyfriend Jefferson Hack - will be handing her loved ones some sparkling gifts, and hopes to receive something similar in return. She said: "I like jewels, to give and receive." Kate - who is rumored to be dating Nikolai Von Bismarck though she's still married to Jamie Hince - is planning a traditional family Christmas with her loved ones. She said: "I'll be at home with my family and friends. [We'll eat] roast turkey and all the trimmings." Though she thinks she throws the best festive parties, the stunning star will also be hoping for some relaxing time at home over the holiday period. She said: "My guilty pleasure is watching TV in bed." The British beauty has already been thinking about some simple resolutions for 2016. Asked her New Year's resolutions, she said: "Peace and love."



Lawrence would never celebrate Christmas in LA

The 'Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 2' actress resides in the city for work but always returns to her family in Kentucky for the festive season. She said: "I always go to Kentucky for Christmas - I can't imagine spending Christmas in LA." And the 25-year-old beauty loves the fact her father still dresses as Santa Claus every year and the whole family take part in the same festive ritual. She explained: "I have a couple of nephews now and Christmas is so much more fun when there's babies around. We have a tradition over Christmas that my dad will dress up as Santa and then we all go, 'Oh my God, Santa has crashed his sleigh' and we run to the window and see my dad walk past. We did that when I was little and I used to love it and now that my oldest nephew is four, he's old enough to do it too, so that'll be fun." Jennifer is especially excited about tucking into some of her mother's festive cooking. She said: "My mom always makes this amazing dish of mashed potato - she puts hot pepper into it and a thick layer of cheese and puts it into the oven and it's so good. We have it every year with Christmas dinner."

TYGA has bought himself a \$200,000 Christmas gift

The 'Rack City' hitmaker - who recently reconciled with girlfriend Kylie Jenner - was seen leaving a Lamborghini dealership driving a top-of-the-range Lamborghini Aventador super car. The vehicles usually retail at around \$200,000 so Tyga was clearly keen to splurge ahead of the festive season. However, his new purchase may raise some eyebrows as it has been rumored the rapper has money troubles. It was recently revealed he had failed to close on the purchase of his new home three times. The 'Ayo' hitmaker has been in escrow on a \$10 million, eight-bedroom prop-

erty in the Calabasas home close to where Kylie and various members of her family live, but has reportedly come up with excuses every time the deal has been due to complete. The 26-year-old star had blamed being on the road or not getting paid for not having the cash to finalize the transaction but the news came just a few weeks after Tyga was reprimanded by a judge for not paying a settlement agreed with one of his dancers. Allison Brown sued the rapper for sexual battery as she claimed she was plied with alcohol and coerced to remove her top during a shoot on

one of his music videos and alleged a man on the set groped one of her breasts. She and Tyga - who was the target of the action because he was in charge - settled for around \$50,000 but he only paid half so earlier this month a judge ordered him to pay the outstanding \$25,000, plus \$16,000 in lawyers fees. In addition, the rapper has an outstanding tax lien of over \$19,000 and owes his landlord \$70,000 in back rent.



Price insists she's easy to buy presents for

The 37-year-old former glamour model's husband Kieran Hayler always likes to "treat" her over the festive season and finds buying her a gift is never a problem because she rarely splashes out on herself throughout the year. Katie said: "I'm really easy to buy for." Kieran added: "Everyone must think Kate always buys herself designer shoes and handbags but she never does. 'I like to treat her - in the past I've bought her Louboutins and a Louis Vuitton handbag with matching shoes, things

like that." Katie will also be relying on Kieran to go shopping for gifts for their kids Jett, two, and Bunny, 16 months, and her children from past relationships, Harvey, 13, Junior, 10, and Princess, eight. She said: "It'll be Kieran who probably sorts the kids' presents. He thinks of thoughtful presents which they'll actually use and sits down and uses them with them." And the couple is reluctant to splash out on some of the things on the kids' wish lists. Katie said: "Princess wants an iPhone but she's not getting one. I've

told her she's too young." Kieran added: "They also like those new Megaboard things, but we're not sure about those either." Katie worries about the expense of having so many children during the festive season. She said: "These days they want iPads and expensive gadgets and they don't realize the cost. And when you've got five kids, you're just like, Jesus, where do you start?"

Jenner loves ex-wife's annual Christmas Eve party

The 'I Am Cait' star - who was known as Bruce Jenner before her transition earlier this year - will be joining the rest of her family at her former spouse's festive bash and can't wait to kick off the holiday season in style. Answering fan questions on her website, she said: "It's a great time for our family, a great time for all our close friends." It just really kicks off our holiday season perfectly and it certainly is a lot of fun." The 66-year-old former Olympian thinks Kris does a "beautiful" job of organizing the "spectacular" party. She said: "Probably the biggest tradition I have along with the rest of the family, is Kris - for the last 30 years - her Christmas Eve party is over the top spectacular." She does such a beautiful job with decorating the house. We've had the same Santa Claus for 25

years." Caitlyn went on to explain she had photos of daughters Kendall, 20, and Kylie, 18, as babies with the same Santa who still visits their house. While Caitlyn is looking forward to tonight's party, Kris is said to have scaled down the bash this year and planned a more intimate affair because daughter Kim Kardashian West and husband Kanye West are planning to bring their 19-day-old son Saint along, as well as two-year-old daughter North. A source told E! News: "They just wanted it more low key, especially because Kanye and Kim are there now with the baby."



Hart sent 300 children on a \$100 shopping spree

The 36-year-old comic teamed up with basketball star Chris Paul for their second annual Holiday Takeover event at a Los Angeles branch of retailer Target and allowed the youngsters to splurge on new toys - so long as they also bought at least one gift for someone else. The children invited to take part were from several Los Angeles youth organizations, including the Brotherhood Crusade and the Boys & Girls Club. Chris tweeted a picture of himself and Kevin wearing Santa hats and posing with the children and wrote alongside the image: "Just surprised 300 kids with holiday gifts - on to the next location for 300 more! #ChrisAndKevinHolidayTakeover (sic)" And the two stars' generosity didn't end there as they dished out more goodies to youngsters with the help of toy brand Hasbro. Chris tweeted: "Thank you to @HasbroNews for helping @KevinHart4real and me give toys to over 900 kids for the holidays." The 'Get Hard' actor finds helping others is one of his favorite things about the holiday period. He posted on Instagram: "Me & @cp3 Holiday Takeover is putting smiles on Kids Faces all over Los Angeles. This is why I love the Holidays!!!! #MerryChristmas #SpreadLove #WeDoitForTheKids #GivingBack (sic)"

Tempah wanted to buy Katy B a Swegway

The 27-year-old rapper was unsure what to get his 'Louder' collaborator but thought she'd appreciate one of the self-balancing vehicles, which are also known as hoverboards. Asked what he was planning to buy Katy for Christmas, he recently told BANG Showbiz: "I don't know but I'm going to get her one. I don't know what should I get? I don't know, what would you get Katy B? Perfume?" And on the suggestion of buying her a Swegway, he agreed: "I'm going to get her Swegway. I'm going to do that." Regardless of what he chose for his pal, Katy was unlikely to be disappointed as she admitted she hadn't asked for anything special and was just looking forward to tucking into a Christmas dinner. Asked what she is hoping to be under the Christmas tree this

year, she said: "I don't want anything for Christmas. I just enjoy spending time with my family, eating cooked dinner. "All I need is Yorkshire puddings and roast potatoes." And Tinie himself said he'd just like to have all of his family together. He said: "I just want all of my siblings and my mum and dad to be under one roof, and for it to just be amazing and magical like when we were kids. "Everyone's getting older now, so everyone's just starting to get on with their own lives, so I'm looking forward to that."



Kimberly Wyatt will be doing 'lots of cooking' this Christmas

The former Pussycat Dolls singer is very excited about celebrating this year because her 12-month-old daughter Willow - who she has with husband Max Rogers - will be more aware of what's going on. She said: "It's Willow's second Christmas but she'll be more aware this year so we'll be able to celebrate it. "We are having it all at our house so I'll be cooking the meal having lots of friends and family over. Lots of cooking." The 33-year-old beauty hopes her little girl will like the special gift they've chosen her. She said: "She won't see this will she? We've got her a little car. "And we got her a doll house last year and we're having it built this year." Meanwhile, Kimberly has no idea what she'll be unwrapping from under the tree as Max has gone "off list" - and isn't feeling too confident about his choice. He exclusively told BANG Showbiz: "She hasn't asked for anything this year. I'm going off list. We'll see what happens. We'll be divorced by January." — Bangshowbiz



Eyre can't wait for her festive holiday

The 21-year-old singer and boyfriend Lewi Morgan reached their first anniversary together in October but have been too busy to celebrate, and are looking forward to finally marking the occasion by jetting off to Mexico on Boxing Day. Asked how they celebrated their anniversary, she said: "We had to wait for the Christmas period, when it's a lot calmer and when everybody has disappeared off for a week or two. "I'm going to Mexico with Lew on Boxing Day, which I'm very excited about. "I think I'm more excited to be going to Mexico than I am about Christmas." It'll be nice to go and get some winter sunshine. "We've done work in different countries before

at the same time but that's not really a holiday." 2015 saw Ella scoop Best Female Act at the MOBO Awards and the 'Gravity' singer was thrilled to triumph in such a hotly-contested category. She said: "It's amazing. I never, ever expect anything. "It's always such a pleasure to be in such a strong category. There are so many strong female artists around. "I'm proud and flattered to be a part of that. I would much rather support them than feel like I'm against them. "I'm a big fan of all the girls in the industry and I will forever be championing that."

Teigen and Legend are expecting a baby girl

The couple has taken to their Instagram pages to share a new photo of the 30-year-old model on the cover of Vogue Thailand's January 2016 cover, revealing the picture was taken on the same day they discovered the gender of their unborn tot. Alongside the picture, Chrissy wrote: "A couple minutes after this shot, John and I learned we were having our little baby girl!" And her 36-year-old husband shared the same photo and wrote: "Chrissy's Vogue Thailand cover. From the day we found out we were pregnant with our baby girl." The 'All of Me' singer admitted earlier this month he and Chrissy knew the gender of their baby. He

said: Yeah, we know [the gender]. "I hear tabloids are reporting. They don't know, but we know. And they have a 50 percent chance of being right. Maybe they're right, maybe they're wrong." But the couple is still deciding on a name for their offspring. He added "We don't have a name yet." We kind of go at it with our own process and think about the names that mean something to us. Some of them have family resonance. Some of them are for other sentimental reasons. "We'll just decide on our own taste and what means something to us."





This photo provided by Twentieth Century Fox shows, Jennifer Lawrence, from left, Robert De Niro, and Edgar Ramirez, in a scene from the film, "Joy."

Miracle Mops to movie stars: The real Joy dishes on 'Joy'

So then there was that time that Joy Mangano, "Miracle Mop" inventor and home shopping entrepreneur, was sitting at a meeting wedged between Jennifer Lawrence and Robert De Niro. And De Niro leaned over and said: "Joy, I have to talk to you. I have such a great idea for a product!"

Mangano continues the story, laughing: "And Jennifer is on the other side and she says, 'Bob, you can't ask her that. Everybody asks her that!' She won't say what the product idea was, but allows that when things eventually calm down with the movie, she and Bob will probably get around to discussing it. Late-night meetings with movie stars - oh yes, Bradley Cooper was there, too - isn't something Mangano ever envisioned, but life changed a few years back when she got a call telling her of plans for "Joy." The movie, directed by David O. Russell, tells the inspirational tale of a tenacious

ing. He knows more about me than anybody in the world - I would never need therapy!"

AP: What do you think he found unique about your story?

Mangano: I've always had this inner resiliency. I grew up in an Italian family in an era where it was, "When are you gonna get married and have children?" And throughout life, I was always taking care of everyone around me. And through the course of that, I lost ... I think we lose what we ARE. And then to find that again, and to go against all odds and have the courage to keep doing that - I wish everybody could be able to find that space within themselves. I feel like I grew wings when that happened!

AP: The movie is based on you but also some other businesswomen. Is it accurate about your life?

Mangano: I will say that I SEVERELY inspire the movie. How many women do you know who invented the Miracle Mop?

AP: In the movie, Joy goes to QVC with her mop but it doesn't sell - until she insists that she herself go on camera to pitch it.

Mangano: Yes, it was my own determination to say: "Put ME on with that mop, and the mop will sell!"

AP: So now you're making a new version of the Miracle Mop?

Mangano: Yes and I can promise you, the only thing harder than inventing is reinventing. I was possessed to keep this mop at the original price - \$19.95 - and I promise when you see it, you'll see why I say it should be \$50. I'm telling you, you're gonna sing and dance with this mop - even if you don't buy it!

AP: What do you think of Jennifer Lawrence playing you?

Mangano: What an honor, right? She has one of the wittiest minds. Within 10 minutes we were finishing each other's sentences. When we met - I don't know that I've told anybody this, but she looks at me, and my (three adult) children, and says, "I've never seen a family as close as you all are. It reminds me of my family." That's something a 25-year old doesn't always pick up on.

AP: What do you most want people to take away from the film?

Mangano: I've had so many people saying afterward, "There's something I was going to do and I never did, and now I'm gonna do it." I feel like people are going to want to climb mountains when they get out of this movie. — AP



Inventor Joy Mangano attends the world premiere of "Joy" at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York. — AP photos

Long Island mother who could barely support her family and then had one great idea - that self-wringing mop - that launched an empire. But Mangano, 59, thinks the movie - on which she serves as executive producer - has a much more universal message that applies equally to women and men: "Be courageous to do what you're passionate about and know instinctively you should be doing, because if you don't, you'll never have that achievement that you know is within you," she says. Mangano sat down last week to discuss her life and the film. The interview has been edited for clarity and length.

AP: How did you first hear about plans for "Joy"?

Mangano: The telephone rings and it's a producer (whom Mangano had met years earlier), and he says, "Hi, Joy, we're here because we're going to make a movie about your life story." And then David called, and I remember it was in the afternoon, and he said "I just want to talk for a few minutes," and when we hung up it was absolutely pitch black out. And that was the beginning of many hundreds of hours of talk-



Arab women turn trash into artistic works

Photo feature by Wassim Haidar

BEIRUT: Lebanese, Syrian and Palestinian women refugees have joined hands to make 250 artistic pieces from recycled materials retrieved from trash bins. Up to 75 talented women took part in an exhibition, organized by the local society, "Al-Abaad," displaying their works, earning some money that help these cash-strapped females, particularly the Syrians and Palestinians, cope with living difficulties. The activity serves a double purpose; enabling these limited-income, but rather skillful, ladies put some cash in their pockets and promoting recycling, an environmental issue of great significance worldwide. - KUNA



'45 Years' a devastating time bomb

How many great movies could be written across the enigmatic, profound face of Charlotte Rampling? Hundreds? Thousands? At any rate, Andrew Haigh's "45 Years" is one of them.

In it, Rampling stars as half of a childless couple - Kate and Geoff (Tom Courtenay) Mercer - preparing to celebrate their 45th anniversary. In minutes, we can already feel jealousy welling in us from snapshots of their peaceful, harmonious lives in rural England: dog walks, drinking tea and taking leisurely trips into town.

That such appearances of elderly tranquility are not what they seem is one of the notions upended by "45 Years." A letter arrives for Geoff with startling news that the frozen body of the woman he dated before meeting Kate

has been found in a Swiss glacier where she died in an accident while traveling with Geoff more than 50 years ago. "Like something in the freezer," mumbles an astonished Geoff. "She'd look like what she did in 1962," he says. "And I look like this."

The news unsettles Geoff, transporting him back to his mid-20s self, unmooring an iceberg of the past. Confessions follow, revealing a deeper history than Kate was before aware. She watches with increasing alarm as her husband begins smoking again and rummaging around the attic late at night for pictures of his old flame. Their previously rock-solid relationship is suddenly beset with fissures and tremors erupted by a history that isn't so ancient, after all.

Haigh, who is 42, has made the HBO series "Looking" and the excellent independent film "Weekend." That movie dealt with two gay men whose one-night stand is extended across a weekend, during which a remarkable intimacy accumulates as they examine their night together and contemplate their connection.

For Haigh, relationships are forged in a moment, crystallized in the circumstances of their beginnings. Kate and Geoff may be in their 70s, but their marriage is still built upon - and haunted by - whatever brought them together in their 20s. Old age has done far less to change them than most would think.

The devastating power of "45 Years," which Haigh adapted from David Constantine's short story "In Another Country," lies in the director's sensitive understanding of relationships: of the conversations that take place over pillows and the quiet contemplation of fates abandoned in marriage.

But it's Haigh's tremendous lead actors that make the movie. They're a convincing couple: Courtenay is absent-minded and untidy; Rampling is cool and controlled. As Kate sees a new rival to her husband rise from the dead, the anxieties and confusions flicker across Rampling's face. Turmoil stirs beneath her chilly stillness.

If going to see "45 Years" (and you should), choose your date wisely. After the film's haunting final shot, you're likely to be exiting the theater wondering just how well you really know the companion next to you. "45 Years," an IFC Films release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "language and brief sexuality." Running time: 95 minutes. Four stars out of four. — AP



Film review

This photo provided by Agatha A. Nitecka shows Tom Courtenay, left, as Geoff and Charlotte Rampling as Kate in Andrew Haigh's film, "45 Years". — AP

Calvin Klein round



Transparent. Ephemeral. Calvin Klein round. A luminous bracelet accented by geometric cut-out details simultaneously reveals and conceals the wrist of the wearer. This light and refined timepiece is offered in polished stainless steel, PVD yellow or PVD pink gold and either a black, silver or mirror dial. Calvin Klein round is finished with a "Calvin Klein" logo at 12 o'clock.

Tongue in cheek, Miss Universe host says 'Merry Easter'

Steve Harvey, the man who famously gave the Miss Universe crown to the wrong contestant, has now offered the world Easter greetings — on Christmas Day. "Merry Easter, y'all!" ran the caption to a picture of smiling Harvey, smoking a cigar and flashing a peace sign. The picture was posted Friday on Harvey's social media accounts.

Harvey poked fun at himself and his gaffes in his first public appearance since the high-profile fiasco. Harvey, a 58-year-old comedian and talk show host, misread his cue card in front of a global television audience at the Miss Universe pageant on December 20 and announced that Miss Colombia, Ariadna Gutierrez, had triumphed.

Moments later he apologized and announced

Miss Philippines, Pia Alonzo Wurtzbach, was the actual winner. Harvey apologized on Twitter for what he called "an honest mistake," but identified the women as "Miss Philippians and Miss Columbia." He quickly corrected the spelling mistakes and deleted the tweet.

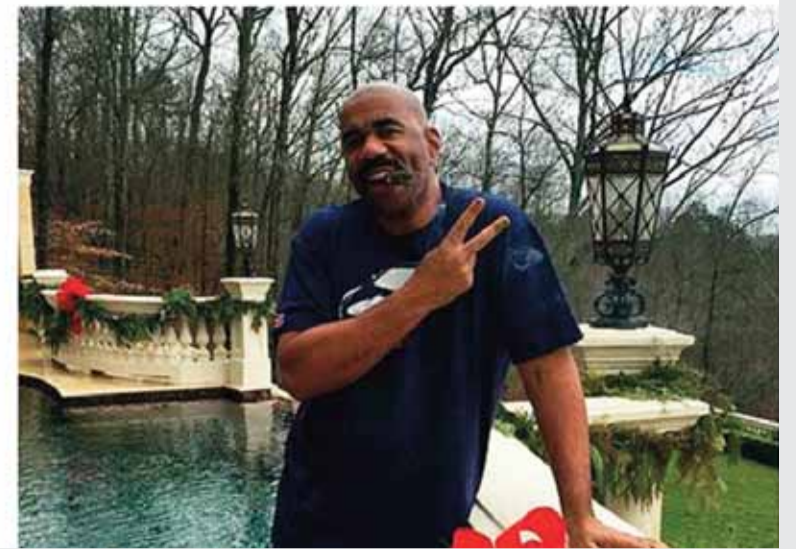
Viewers can expect to see a lot more of him: "Steve Harvey Signs Multi-Year Deal to Host Miss Universe" ran the headline on the website Comedyhype.com. Harvey posted a link to the site on his Facebook page.

The contract was signed just before the pageant aired, and the deal "is for at least three years, possibly even as many as six or seven," read the brief text, quoting an ET Online story. After the pageant mixup several people took to Twitter to

claim that the affair was a publicity stunt aimed at boosting both Harvey and the event's sagging TV ratings.

"I generally don't buy into conspiracy theories, but this is the most attention the Miss Universe pageant has gotten since, well, ever," said newspaper sportswriter Les East. "Steve Harvey's mistake was all a conspiracy created for two purposes: Make Miss Universe relevant again. Make Steve Harvey relevant again," another tweet said. The online magazine Salon dismissed the doubters as "Miss Universe truthers"—an American term for conspiracy theory devotees—that "show how paranoid we've become." — AFP

Steve Harvey @IamSteveHarvey · 20h
Merry Easter y'all! 🎄🎄🎄



In this Monday, Dec 8, 1997, file photo, actor Robert Downey Jr listens to Municipal Judge Lawrence Mira in a Malibu, California, courtroom before being sentenced to six months in jail for violating parole on a prior drug conviction. — AP

Robert Downey Jr pardoned in drug case

The governor of California pardoned Robert Downey Jr. on Thursday for a nearly 20-year-old felony drug conviction that led to the Oscar-nominated actor's imprisonment for roughly a year. Downey was among 91 people granted pardons for criminal convictions after demonstrating they had rehabilitated themselves and been out of custody for at least 10 years, Gov Jerry Brown's office announced.

The pardon does not erase records of a conviction but is a public proclamation that the person has remained out of trouble and demonstrated exemplary behavior, according to material on Brown's website. Downey, once a courthouse mainstay for a series of drug-related arrests, has become one of Hollywood's greatest success stories for career and addiction rehabilitation.

Since 2008, Downey has portrayed "Iron Man" in a series of Disney blockbuster films, including "The Avengers," based on the Marvel comic books. The 50-year-old actor is a two-time Oscar nominee for his roles in 1992's "Chaplin" and 2008's "Tropic Thunder." Downey's legal troubles began in June 1996 when he was stopped for speeding on Pacific Coast Highway and authorities found cocaine, heroin and a pistol in his vehicle.

In 1999, he was sent to prison for roughly a year after he acknowledged violating his probation. Downey obtained the pardon after

getting a judge to issue a certificate of rehabilitation, according to a proclamation released by Brown's office. It said Downey has "lived an honest and upright life, exhibited good moral character, and conducted himself as a law-abiding citizen." An email sent to Downey's agent Jim Toth and a call to his attorney Blair Berk were not immediately returned.

The Democratic governor, a former Jesuit seminarian, has made it a practice to issue pardons around Christian holidays. The state's longest-serving governor has now issued 1,087 pardons, including 683 in the past five years and 404 during his first eight years in office from 1975-1983, according to his office.

Most of those pardoned Thursday were convicted of drug and property crimes, though three were convicted of arson, one of kidnapping and one of vehicular manslaughter. Three were convicted of assaults using deadly weapons and one of carjacking with a BB gun. Many are now residents of other states. The hundreds of pardons Brown has issued in each of his four terms are typical — except for his three immediate predecessors. Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger granted 15, Democrat Gray Davis granted none, and Republican Pete Wilson granted 13. — AP

Legendary sci-fi writer George Clayton Johnson dead at 86

George Clayton Johnson, the legendary science-fiction writer who authored the first "Star Trek" television episode and several classic stories for the popular 1960s TV show "The Twilight Zone," died on Christmas Day. He was 86. Johnson, who also co-wrote the dark futuristic tale "Logan's Run," died of cancer in Los Angeles on Thursday afternoon, his son, Paul B Johnson, told The Associated Press on Friday.

"Please emphasize how much he loved his fans, and judging by the overwhelming response I've received, from hundreds of people, known and unknown, he made quite an impact on them," said his son, who has been deluged with calls, emails and social media postings in recent days.

Although not widely known outside of science-fiction circles, Johnson was revered among fans of the genre for his work, which also included collaborating with Ray Bradbury on the 1962, Oscar-nominated, animated short film "Icarus Montgolfier Wright."

A popular figure at science-fiction conventions for decades, the soft-spoken but friendly author was instantly recognizable for his long, flowing white hair and beard, as well as what might best be described as his hippie attire.

"He is not one of those guys who uses his celebrity as such," his son had recently told the AP. "He'll give the same attention to a young aspiring writer who wants to know how to get into the business as he would a famous producer he knows or someone he was friends with like Ray Bradbury." Johnson's best-known science-fiction work was likely "Logan's Run," co-written as a novel with William F. Nolan in 1967 and released as a film in 1976.

The dystopian story envisions a futuristic society in which young people live idyllic lives inside an enclosed dome but with one catch — they are executed when they turn 30. One of them, Logan, is a so-called "sandman" whose job is to track down and kill those who attempt to avoid their ritualistic executions. His superiors, curious why the others want to run away, falsify his personal records, advancing his age to 29, then send him off to find those who don't return.

The book was adapted into an Oscar-nominated film starring Michael York as Logan and Jenny Agutter as a fellow runner. It also included a brief but memorable appearance by a young Farrah Fawcett. It was followed by a short-lived TV series, and for years there has been talk of a remake. Before "Logan's Run" Johnson also created several of the best episodes of The Twilight Zone.

Star Trek and Twilight Zone

One that dealt poignantly with aging was "Kick the Can," in which a group of elderly rest-home residents turn back their biological clocks and relive their childhoods by playing that simple children's game. The story, which first aired on television in 1962, was retold in 1983's "Twilight Zone: The Movie," in a segment directed by Steven Spielberg.

In another "Twilight Zone" episode, titled "A Game of Pool," Jonathan Winters is the late Fats Brown, the greatest pocket billiards player who ever lived, and who comes back to life to challenge Jack Klugman's upstart young hustler who boasts he

could have beaten him. When Klugman's character does win he's forced to spend his eternity defending the title from other young upstarts while Winters' character goes off fishing.

"Nothing in the Dark" which starred a young Robert Redford as a kindly version of the Grim Reaper, was one of Johnson's favorite stories, according to his son. In it Redford's character has arrived to take an elderly woman, but he doesn't reveal himself until he's assured her that death is nothing to fear.

George Clayton Johnson



Johnson's most prominent mainstream work was "Ocean's 11," the 1960 film about a Las Vegas casino heist that starred Frank Sinatra and his Rat Pack buddies Sammy Davis Jr., Dean Martin and Peter Lawford. He and fellow writer Jack Golden Russell created the story, which has resulted so far in a remake and two sequels, each starring Brad Pitt and George Clooney.

In 1966, Johnson wrote "The Man Trap," the premiere episode of "Star Trek" that introduced audiences to the crew of the USS Enterprise, including now familiar characters Capt. James T. Kirk and Mr. Spock. Born July 29, 1929, in Cheyenne, Wyo., George Clayton Johnson served in the Army before studying drafting in college.

He eventually moved to Los Angeles where he worked as a draftsman for the Lockheed aviation company while moonlighting as a writer. Soon after quitting his day job to pursue writing full-time, he connected with another prominent "Twilight Zone" writer, Charles Beaumont, who introduced him to the show's creator, Rod Serling.

Over the years Johnson also had a handful of small roles in quirky films such as "The Intruder," which starred William Shatner, "The Boneyard Collection" and "Her Morbid Diaries." His last film appearance was in 2013's "Saint Bernard." In addition to his son, Johnson is survived by a daughter, Judy Olive, and his wife, Lola Johnson. — AP



Volunteer Patty Shook takes a phone call from a child asking where Santa is and when he will deliver presents to her home, inside a phone-in center during the annual NORAD Tracks Santa Operation, at the North American Aerospace Defense Command, at Peterson Air Force Base, Colorado. — AP photos



NORAD and US Northern Command (USNORTHCOM) Chief of Staff Major Gen Charles D Luckey joins other volunteers taking phone calls from children around the world asking where Santa is and when he will deliver presents to their homes, inside a phone-in center during the annual NORAD Tracks Santa Operation

US military 'tracks' St Nick storybook flight for 60th year

For the 60th consecutive year, the North American Aerospace Defense Command will continue its tradition of telling youngsters the location of Kris Kringle on his annual storybook world tour. The so-called Santa Tracker's hub is at Colorado's Peterson Air Force base, where hundreds of volunteers will be answering calls from an estimated 125,000 children around the globe looking for Santa's whereabouts.

In places like Alaska, however, remote NORAD identification technicians who monitor computer screens 24 hours a day for possible air incursions also spend Christmas Eve serving as official Santa "trackers." The technicians in Canada and the US report "sightings" of a sleigh full of toys pulled by flying reindeer, said Tech. Sgt. John Gordinier, an Alaska NORAD spokesman. "It's one of the largest military community relations events we have," Gordinier said.

How does NORAD track Santa?

A system of radar stations and satellites monitor all air traffic entering US and Canadian airspace. All aircraft have a code to identify themselves. If an aircraft doesn't have a code, Gordinier said, NORAD can scramble jets to see who it is and what they're doing. Luckily, Santa is good at keeping in touch with NORAD, Gordinier said. "When he pops up, we call him Big Red One," he said. "That's his call sign." The nose on Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer is a tipoff. It gives off an infrared signature similar to a missile launch, Gordinier said.

What is Santa's route?

On his mythical journey, Santa generally departs the North Pole, flies to the international date line over the Pacific Ocean, then begins deliveries in island nations. He then works his way west in the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Alaska is usually his last stop before heading home, Gordinier said.

How do children participate?

Starting at 10 p.m. Alaska time on Dec 23, and for 23 hours covering most of Christmas Eve, children can call a toll-free number, 877-446-6723 (877-HI-NORAD) and speak to a live phone operator about Santa's whereabouts. They can also send an email to noradtracksanta@outlook.com. NORAD has 157 telephone lines and hundreds of volunteers ready to answer calls, including first lady Michelle Obama, who takes a break from her Hawaii vacation to take forwarded calls. NORAD also created a website, www.noradsanta.org; a Facebook page, www.facebook.com/noradsanta; and a Twitter account @NoradSanta for the program. The sites include games, movies and music. "Santacams" stream videos from various locations.

How did NORAD get involved with tracking Santa?

A 1955 newspaper advertisement for Sears Roebuck and

Co. listed a phone number for "kiddies" to call Santa Claus but got it wrong. The number was for a crisis phone at Air Operations Center at Continental Air Defense Command, NORAD's predecessor, in Colorado Springs, Colorado. Air Force Col Harry Shoup took a call from a child and thought he was being pranked. When he figured out he was talking to a little boy, he pretended he was Santa. More children called. Shoup eventually instructed airmen answering the phone to offer Santa's radar location as he crossed the globe. That sparked the tradition that is heading into its 60th year. — AP



Visitors watch fireworks next to a 38 meter Christmas tree at a shopping center in Jakarta on December 25, 2015. — AFP

Dying art? A recipe to save Hong Kong's handmade dim sum

HONG KONG: For the past 60 years, Chui Hoi has risen in the early hours of the morning to prepare bite-size steamed morsels for his small but popular dim sum restaurant in Hong Kong. "Sun Hing" opens its doors at 3:00 am, seven days a week, with a loyal clientele from students to the elderly filling the 60-seat restaurant in the western district of Kennedy Town.

At 85 years old, Chui is committed to handmaking his dim sum-parcels of meat, seafood and sweet fillings served in stacks of bamboo baskets-saying that freshness is key to their success. But many in the industry fear the traditional art of making dim sum is dying as restaurants choose factory-made versions to save money and meet demand. "Fresh handmade foods are beautiful after they are steamed, but many are made in factories now," says Chui.

Younger chefs are less interested in the hard graft it takes to prepare dim sum, he adds-it is usually eaten in the morning, so cooks must get up in the night to prepare. "Young people think being in this industry means no freedom because you have to get up early and the hours are long," he said.

At Maxim's Palace in the harborfront City Hall building-a favorite with locals and tourists-chandeliers sparkle over dim sum diners in the buzzing banqueting hall. But, like Chui, Maxim's supervising chef Tang Leung-hung says there is a dearth of young talent to produce its handmade fare.

"The problem with the industry is the manpower. Young people are not willing to join us," he said. "Many of them have turned to hotels' western restaurants and sushi restaurants for jobs instead of Chinese ones," says Tang, with younger people seeing them as more fashionable and with better hours.

Teenage hopes

Dim sum-which means "touching the heart"-is a Cantonese-style cuisine from southern China, often served with pots of tea. Typical dishes vary from parcels of ground pork and shrimp "siu mai" to sweet treats including custard buns and "ma lai go" steamed sponge cake.

Once mainly part of a leisurely weekend ritual which could take hours, many dim sum joints in Hong Kong now have a quickfire approach, including takeaway kiosks inside subway stations. With demand growing and rental costs high, mass-produced buns and dumplings imported from mainland China are a way to up the volume and cut costs. But there are those who are actively seeking to prevent a culinary art from dying out.

In the kitchen of Hong Kong's famous five-star Peninsula hotel, teenagers don chefs' whites to knead dough and fill intricate parcels as part of a cooking contest. "We need to attract youngsters to join this trade. Craftsmanship is what is needed," says Frankie Tang, executive chef of the Peninsula's Spring Moon Restaurant and organizer of the contest.

Of the five finalists making dim sum from scratch, 17-year-old Wu Cheng-long won after making dishes including crunchy lotus-seed pastry and a spring roll filled with fruit. "We should make people not forget (how to make) dim sum. We should continue to develop this tradition," said Wu, who won HK\$25,000 (US\$3,200) cash and a one-year apprenticeship at the hotel.

Cultural heritage

There is also hope among the city's food experts, who say dim sum's enduring popularity at home and

increasing appeal abroad will inspire young chefs. Several of the city's local dim sum restaurants have received international accolades, including Michelin stars.

"The tradition (of eating dim sum) is still thriving... On Father's Day, for example, you don't go to a western fast food restaurant, you go to 'yum cha'," says Hong Kong food blogger KC Koo. "Yum cha"-Cantonese for "drink tea"-is the name for the meal during which dim sum are eaten, washed down by hot tea.

Koo adds that it is important to preserve the handmade tradition as it is a key facet of Cantonese culture. "I have confidence that there will be new blood as the market is there," he said. Back at "Sun Hing," the elder Chui's 48-year-old son Chui Kwok-hing is following in his father's footsteps. "I come in at 1:30 am. Sometimes I feel like I have migrated to another country as the hours are upside down," he says of the exhausting routine.

But he sees a reason for waking up in the dark. "People like to have dim sum in the morning, to be energized with some tea before going to work," he said. "I feel happy when people think the food is delicious." He adds that he wants to preserve the restaurant's hard-won reputation. "My dad is already 85-years-old but he still works here-as the young generation, we should try to be even better." — AFP



In this photograph taken on November 12, 2015 a waitress serves baskets of dim sum on a trolley in a restaurant in Hong Kong.



A service assistant (center) carrying dim sum at the Sun Hing restaurant in the Kennedy Town district.



A cook standing in the kitchen of the Sun Hing restaurant.



Bamboo steamer baskets are seen in a kitchen during a local dim sum contest.



A participant is seen in a kitchen during a local dim sum contest.