

Deputy Amir receives Dr Saleh Al-Ujairi



S Korea, Japan strike deal on 'comfort women'



Cameron visits flood-hit British city of York



Messi, Barca win big at Globe Soccer Awards



SAUDIS RAISE FUEL, UTILITY PRICES AMID \$98BN DEFICIT

KINGDOM VOWS REFORMS AFTER RECORD BUDGET SHORTFALL



Min 05°
Max 20°
High Tide 01:10 & 15:20
Low Tide 08:48 & 20:42



BAHRAIN CABINET OKS NEW DIESEL, KEROSENE PRICES

UAE CUTS FUEL PRICES

DUBAI: Bahrain's cabinet has approved a new pricing system for diesel and kerosene that is set to begin in January, state news agency BNA reported yesterday. The new pricing system is expected to result in a "gradual increase" in the cost of both fuels to domestic customers in the coming years, as Bahrain adjusts its prices to reflect expected rises in other Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

"Bahrain continues to preserve its competitiveness with the GCC even after the adjustment of prices in diesel and kerosene and will observe the gradual increase in diesel fuel and kerosene over the coming years," said the statement, attributed to the kingdom's energy minister, Abdul Hussein bin Ali Mirza. The pricing system comes after a detailed study with the relevant authorities and parliamentary committees in the kingdom "tasked with looking at subsidies and growing government revenues," said the statement. The decision will benefit Bahrain's national economy and, at the same time, preserve the interest of citizens, the statement added.

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A Saudi man walks past a pump at a petrol station yesterday in the Red Sea city of Jeddah. (Inset) Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz heads the Council of Ministers meeting in the capital Riyadh. — AFP

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia announced a record budget deficit and cuts to fuel and utility subsidies yesterday as the oil powerhouse suffers from the drastic fall in crude prices. Petrol prices in the kingdom were to rise by more than 50 percent on some products from today, authorities said, after the world's largest crude exporter said it had posted a deficit of \$98 billion in 2015. Riyadh also projected a shortfall of \$87 billion in next year's budget, the first since King Salman took over the country in January.

The finance ministry said in a statement that revenues in 2015 were estimated at 608 billion riyals (\$162 billion), the lowest since 2009 when oil prices dived as a result of the global financial crisis. Income for 2015 was 15 percent lower than projections and 42 percent less than in 2014, after oil prices fell by more than 60 percent since mid-2014 to below \$40 a barrel. The dive is largely due to Saudi Arabia's own policies and those of other OPEC nations, who are refusing to cut oil production as they seek to drive less-competitive players, including US shale producers, out of the market.

Spending this year came in at \$260 billion, the ministry said, almost equal to 2013 expenditures and down 6.6 percent from 2014. The 2015 deficit is the highest in the history of Saudi Arabia, which relies on oil for 90 percent of public revenues, but was not as big as some expected. The International Monetary Fund had projected the 2015 deficit to be around \$130 billion and other reports also put it above \$100 billion. The 2016 budget projects revenues at \$137 billion, the lowest since 2009, and spending at \$224 billion, slightly below 2015 projections of \$229 billion. Saudi Arabia normally overspends its budget projections by around 20 percent.

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SYRIA TOWNS SEE RARE EVACUATIONS

DEADLY BLASTS HIT HOMS

OUTRAGE AFTER EGYPT TROOPS KILL GAZA MAN

TURKEY CAUTIONS ISRAEL

GAZA: Palestinians in Gaza and on social media have expressed outrage over the death of a naked man who was shot as he crossed from the Gaza Strip into Egypt. Video has spread online purporting to show the man walking in the Mediterranean surf and crossing the posts and fencing marking the border between the Palestinian enclave and Egypt. Egyptian guards open fire, while someone who appears to be part of the Gazan security forces appears to wave and signal to those shooting to stop because the man is mentally unstable.

The video, taken on Thursday, later shows the man's body on the shore. The Egyptian army has so far not commented on the incident. Officials from Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules the Gaza Strip, say he suffered from mental illness, though the father of the Gazan man has been quoted as saying he did not. The hashtag "Why did they kill him?" has since spread on social media and several dozen Gazans demonstrated on Sunday to demand Egypt return the man's body to his family.

Gaza has been under an Israeli blockade since 2006, while its sole crossing with Egypt has been largely closed since the summer of 2013, when

Continued on Page 13

BEIRUT: A rare UN-backed deal between Syria's warring sides saw hundreds of fighters and civilians evacuate three towns yesterday, as bomb blasts in the regime-held city of Homs killed at least 19 people. President Bashar al-Assad's regime has agreed to several ceasefires with rebel groups in the past but yesterday's evacuation plan was one of the most elaborate in the nearly five-year war. The United Nations has been pushing for such local deals as global powers

pursue wider efforts to resolve a conflict that left more than 250,000 dead and forced millions from their homes.

More than 450 fighters and civilians, including the wounded, began leaving three flashpoint areas in Syria as part of a six-month truce reached in September. At least 120 people, including rebels and some civilians, crossed from the last rebel bastion on the Syrian border into Lebanese territory yesterday, an AFP

Continued on Page 13



RAMADI: Members of Iraq's elite counter-terrorism service place the national flag yesterday on the roof of a building of the government complex after they recaptured this city. — AFP

IRAQI FLAG RAISED ABOVE RAMADI GOVT COMPLEX

RAMADI: Iraq declared the city of Ramadi liberated from the Islamic State group yesterday and raised the national flag over its government complex after clinching a landmark victory against the jihadists. Fighters brandishing rifles danced in the Anbar provincial capital as top commanders paraded through the streets after recapturing the city they lost to IS in May. Pockets of jihadists may remain but the army said it no longer faced any resistance and that its main task was to defuse the countless bombs and traps IS left behind.

"Ramadi has been liberated and the

armed forces of the counter-terrorism service have raised the Iraqi flag above the government complex," Brigadier General Yahya Rasool announced on state television. The former government headquarters in Ramadi was the epicentre of the fighting but Iraqi forces did not rush in when IS pulled out because the entire area was rigged. "Daesh has planted more than 300 explosive devices on the roads and in the buildings of the government complex," said Brigadier General Majid al-Fatlawi of the army's 8th division.

Continued on Page 13



MASNAA, Lebanon: Syrians and Lebanese wave and flash victory signs as a convoy carrying wounded Syrian opposition fighters leaves this Lebanese border crossing point yesterday. — AP



ROWLETT, Texas: Pam Russell (left) rescues her cat Larue from her damaged home on Delta Drive on Sunday, a day after a tornado hit the area. — AP

WILD US WEATHER KILLS 43

CHICAGO: Floods and tornadoes killed at least 43 people in the southern and midwestern United States during the Christmas holiday, with forecasters warning yesterday that blizzards and freezing rain would add to the misery. Hundreds of people in Texas were struggling to rebuild homes damaged or destroyed by rare but extremely powerful December twisters as residents of Alabama and Florida were warned they could be next. Millions of people trying to get home after Christmas were stranded by the bad weather, which grounded flights and buried major highways and roadways in snow, ice and floodwaters.

Officials pleaded with people to be wary of flash flooding after several cars were swept off roadways and to be wary of slick conditions following freezing rain. Over 1,100 US flights were canceled and another 1,650 were delayed yesterday morning, according to tracking service FlightAware. Airports were already overwhelmed by frustrated travelers after some 1,640 flights were scrapped and more than 6,400 delayed Sunday as the storm system essentially shut down airports in Texas.

Hardest hit yesterday was the major hub of Chicago,

where freezing rain and gusting winds grounded over 450 flights, according to FlightAware. The National Weather Service said more than 20 states - from Texas to as far north and east as Maine - were under a weather watch or warning. Over a foot 30 cm of snow was expected in some areas and flash flooding and freezing rain in others. The powerful storm system fueled by unseasonably warm air that began in the deep south Wednesday had already dumped as much as 104 cm of snow in parts of New Mexico and 10 inches of rain in parts of Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas the weather service said.

The governors of New Mexico, Texas and Missouri declared states of emergency for all or parts of their states Sunday to better handle storm damage. Alabama, Mississippi and Georgia also took similar measures. At least 11 people were killed over the weekend as tornadoes struck the heavily populated Dallas area in Texas. The rare December twisters flattened homes, knocked cars off highways and flipped big-rig trucks like toys. The NWS said that at least nine twisters touched down in the region late Saturday.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Dr Saleh Mohammad Al-Ujairi. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Deputy Head of the National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets President of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES DR SALEH AL-UJAIRI, OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Dr Saleh Mohammad Al-Ujairi. His Highness Also received Deputy Head of the National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah,

President of the National Security Apparatus Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah and Sheikh Salem Abdulaziz Al-Saud Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, Speaker of National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem received in his office members of offices of the National Union of

Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) in the US and the United Kingdom.

Amir concedes with Obama

In other news, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

sent a cable of condolences yesterday to US President Barack Obama over victims of tornadoes, thunderstorm and floods that engulfed the country.

In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed his hope that the US could over-

come effects of these natural disasters, wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad, Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to Obama. — KUNA

KUWAIT KEEN ON SAFEGUARDING FREEDOMS: KWA SECRETARY GENERAL

ABU DHABI: The State of Kuwait devotes special concern for safeguarding freedoms namely liberties of expression and rights of literary creators and intellectuals, affirmed the Secretary General of Kuwait Writers Association (KWA).

Adopting such an approach, Kuwait has revamped its legislations to ensure such liberties since early last century, Talal Al-Rumaidhi, said late on Sunday while taking part in the 26th conference of the Arab Writers (AWH). As a result of enacting the freedoms' laws, Kuwait has occupied a pioneering and distinguished status on the regional cultural and literary map.

Provisions of the Kuwait Constitution explicitly stipulates ensuring the freedom of expressing and safeguarding individuals' liberties that constitute basis for literary and cultural creativity, said Rumaidhi, who took part in a seminar held as part of the broad convention, tackling "the crisis of concepts about human freedoms and liberties." Rumaidhi, who spoke during the seminar about phased development of these legislations, added that the "atmosphere of freedoms prevailing in the State of Kuwait since years ago has led to creation of a growing and creative cultural status, impact of which has reached various Arab states and portrayed a civilized image about the Kuwaiti creator and author."

Boosting concepts such as "responsible freedoms" in Kuwait, along with legislative means that regulate the public and private freedoms constitute some of the most eminent factors that back up the "cultural and innovative life," he said, also noting that these regulations are in harmony with the Kuwaiti people's religious and social beliefs and values.

Cultural activities in Kuwait have not been restricted to Kuwaiti innovators; as there have been a large number of Arab intellectual figures who have taken part in the process, benefiting from the freedoms in the literary sector, Rumaidhi said.

Arab libraries are rich in Kuwaiti literary and cultural books and publications, he mentioned as a tangible proof of the significant development of the sector. The seminar ended with poetry reciting by the Kuwaiti poet Mohammad Al-Bghaili, who addressed patriotic issues, Arab unity and various humanitarian and social topics.

The conference, inaugurated by UAE's Minister of Culture, Youth and Community Development Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al-Nahyan, features some cultural seminars, scientific lectures and sessions of poetry. About 16 representatives from Arab countries, a delegation of Secretariat of AWU and a delegation from Uganda are participating in the event. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah meets Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi. — KUNA

KUWAITI AUTHORITIES CARE MUCH FOR YEMENIS: MINISTER

KUWAIT: The Yemeni community in Kuwait enjoys all possible care and support from State authorities, affirmed the Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister yesterday.

The authorities are keen on resolving difficulties that may face the Yemenis in Kuwait within framework of the deep-rooted relations that bond the two countries, said Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, as cited in a statement released by the Ministry of Interior's

Security Information Department.

Minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Khaled made the statement during a meeting with the visiting Yemeni Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Dr Abdulmalik Al-Mekhlafi, and officials accompanying him. The official statement added that the two sides discussed security issues of common concern and means of solidifying bilateral ties between Kuwait and Yemen. The Kuwaiti-Yemeni talks dealt with regional issues, it

said, adding that the two parties affirmed necessity of coordination, namely in the security domain, with aim of training and sharpening skills of Yemeni personnel, "as a priority at present for Yemen to restore security for the people." The meeting was attended by Interior Undersecretary Lieutenant General Suleiman Al-Fahad, Assistant Foreign Minister for Arab Homeland Aziz Al-Daihani and State of Kuwait's Ambassador to Yemen Fahad Al-Mai'. — KUNA



AMMAN: AFESD Director General and Chairman of the Board of Directors Abdlatif Al-Hamad, and Jordan's Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad Fakhoury sign the agreements. — KUNA

AFESD, JORDAN SIGN \$70.6 MILLION AGREEMENTS

AMMAN: The Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development (AFESD) and Jordan signed yesterday two loan agreements and one grant for \$70.6 million to fund development projects in Jordan. The agreements were signed by Director General and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Arab Fund Abdlatif Yousef Al-Hamad, and by Jordan's Minister of Planning and International Cooperation Imad Fakhoury.

Hamad said that Jordan has been struggling with economic challenges due to the Syrian refugees and many other reform programs; however, it has been exerting all efforts to face these obstacles by setting up various social and economic projects.

Fakhoury, meanwhile, explained that the \$1 million grant will be allocated to purchase

a weather radar and all of its applications for meteorological department. One of the loans, worth \$19.6 million, will go to developing the infrastructure in Petra in order to activate its tourism sector. The second, worth \$50 million, will fund medium to small businesses as a solution to combat unemployment.

Fakhoury expressed his appreciation to AFESD's unwavering support to Jordan's efforts to improve its economy. From 1975 to 2015, the AFESD funded and built 46 primary development projects in Jordan that amounted to \$1.9 billion. Grants given during the same period reached \$46 million. In addition, the AFESD funded a number of medium to small enterprises through concessional loans that amounted to \$80 million. — KUNA

AMBASSADOR LAUDS BAHRAIN'S INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT

MANAMA: Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah lauded Bahrain's development and attractive investment atmosphere. Bahrain's flexible economic policies and legislations contribute to encouraging successful investments in the country, Sheikh Azzam said in a press statement yesterday following the opening of the "Chinese Dragon City", which the country's biggest private and urban development project.

He pointed out Kuwaiti investors could also benefit from available venture opportunities in Bahrain. The \$100 million "Chinese Dragon City" is a major retail project in the western part of Diyar Al Muharraq. The Dragon City offers unique wholesale and retail opportunities to local consumers, trade customers and tourists. — KUNA



MANAMA: Dean of Diplomatic Corps and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah (right) attends the opening of the Chinese Dragon City. — KUNA

ALGERIAN SPEAKER MEETS KUWAIT'S AMBASSADOR

ALGIERS: Algerian National Assembly Speaker Abdulqader bin Saleh held talks with Kuwait's Ambassador in Algiers Mohammad Al-Shabo yesterday on a host of issues of mutual interest as well as means of promoting bilateral parliamentary cooperation.

Shabo, who conveyed greetings of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad

Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Parliament speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanim to bin Saleh, said they have discussed the positions of Kuwait and Algeria regarding Arab issues. Speaking to KUNA, Shabo underlined importance of parliamentary cooperation between the two countries. He said Kuwait and Algeria shared a strong desire to develop bilateral relations and cooperation in many domains. — KUNA



ALGIERS: Algerian National Assembly speaker Abdulqader bin Saleh meets Kuwait's Ambassador in Algiers Mohammad Al-Shabo. — KUNA

IRANIAN AMBASSADOR GREETS ON PROPHET'S BIRTHDAY, CHRISTMAS



Iranian Ambassador Dr Ali Reza Enayati

In a statement issued by the Iranian Embassy in Kuwait on the occasion of commemorating the birth of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), Iranian Ambassador Dr Ali Reza Enayati said this occasion coincides with the birth anniversary of Jesus Christ (PBUH) and thus both Muslims and Christians are simultaneously celebrating two blessed holy occasions.

Enayati added that both religions' followers can share the joy in streets, houses, mosques and churches this year as both heavenly religions highly cherish values revealed by Almighty Allah to protect mankind from ignorance and dismay. "This synchronization shows that we, nowadays, need more consolidation, cooperation and fraternal unity to confront the challenges facing human, Islamic and religious values as well as spread the culture of tolerance and interfaith and intercultural dialogue," said Enayati.

'KUWAIT TV WOOS MORE VIEWERS'

KUWAIT: The number of Kuwait Television watchers climbed by 43 percent in October 2015, as compared to the same period of last year, a senior information official said yesterday. Yousef Mustafa, the Assistant Undersecretary for Television Affairs, attributed the significant rise of spectators to revamping the national visual service in terms of content, technology, employed in shadow of soaring number of users of electronic telecommunication devices.

Programs that have lured largest number of watchers are 'Layali Al-Kuwait,' 'Shai Al-Duha,' 'Al-Mubader,' 'Mawaheb,' religious programs and news casts. Employment of renowned personalities to present these programs was also a factor for attracting greater audience.

TV remains the most effective and credible means as compared to other media outlets, he said, noting that the national TV succeeded in increasing number of watch-



Yousef Mustafa

ers despite mounting figures of people hooked to electronic social media devices. Kuwait Television is planning to present serious programs of content based on science and studies during the fasting month Ramadan. — KUNA

In Brief

GCC PARLIAMENT EXPERIENCE

KUWAIT: Secretary-General of the National Assembly Alam Al-Kandari underscored yesterday the need for training programs and exchange of experience between representatives of GCC legislative councils. This came during Al-Kandari's meeting with GCC parliament members participating in a training program on comprehensive skills for making draft laws, held by the National Assembly's Training Department. The training program was based on a joint training plan for the GCC parliaments and the 29th meeting of the joint development and training committee, he said. —KUNA



ARAB CULTURAL TIES

CAIRO: Kuwait National Library's General Manager Kamel Al-Abduljaleel stressed the importance of developing and spreading Arab culture through boosting ties between Arab states in the field. The official's statement came during a ceremony held in Cairo late Sunday to celebrate 125 years of establishing Egypt's Dar Al-Ma'arif. During the event, Dar Al-Ma'arif honored Kuwait for its role in spreading Arab culture. — KUNA



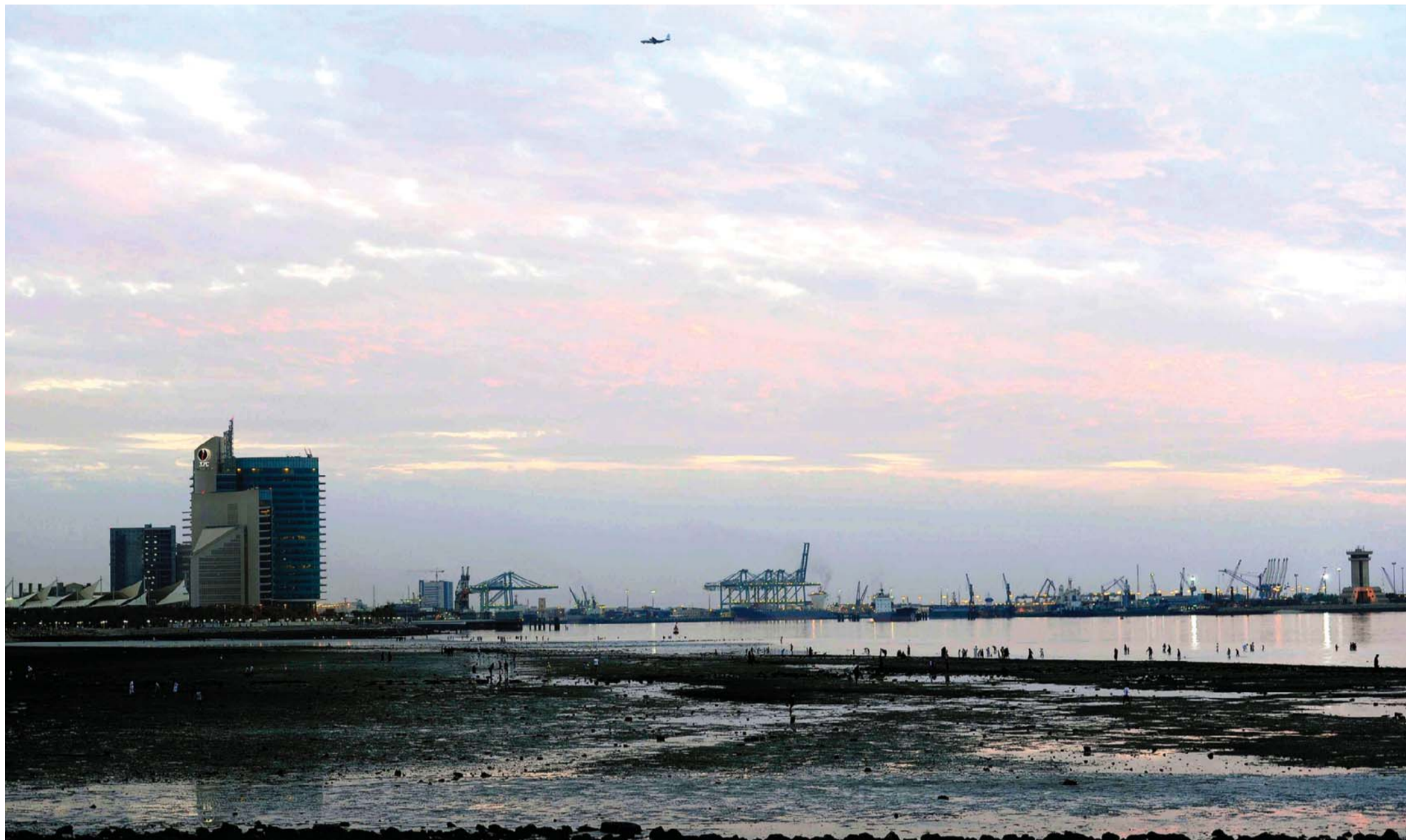
KUWAIT SUPPORTS TANZANIA

KUWAIT: Tanzanian Mufti Abu Bakr Zubair ben Ali yesterday praised the charitable and humanitarian role of Kuwait in helping people in need in Muslim countries. After his meeting with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Tanzania Jassem Al-Najem, Bin Ali thanked His Highness the Kuwaiti Amir, people and government for the continuous support to Tanzania. Kuwait is carrying out a large number of projects in Tanzania, such as mosques, wells, orphanages, schools and other projects. — KUNA



Feature

Photo



KUWAIT: Shuwaikh Port is seen from the shore at Kuwait City. — KUNA

In my view

PEACE IN SYRIA

By Labeed Abdal

local@kuwaittimes.net

The UN recently approved a resolution on an international roadmap for a political transition in Syria to end the conflict and call for launching Syrian peace talks by the beginning of January, which reflects international powers' conflict of power as well as protecting their followers and 'arms' on the ground in a way that would spare some parties, here and there, some embarrassment.

Activating a ceasefire in Syria and having representatives of the Syrian government and opposition commence negotiations and debates to limit the numbers of those killed and injured, reach peace and stability and limit human and financial losses that could have been used in building rather than destruction is mostly welcomed.

Syria still suffers from human losses. A wounded Arab sisterly country, where many religions and sects have co-existed for decades, still suffers. The Security Council's confirmation that "The only sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, with a view to full implementation of the Geneva Communiqué of June 30, 2012 as endorsed by resolution 2118 (2013), including through the establishment of an inclusive transitional governing body with full executive powers, which shall be formed on the basis of mutual consent while ensuring continuity of governmental institutions," is sort of putting things in black and white, especially since talking about human rights cannot be achieved except through public democratic choices.

On the other hand, holding the Arab strategic conference in Dubai where the WAM news agency announced that the Arab Spring had cost \$833.7 billion, including reconstruction, GDP and tourism losses, the cost of refugees, stock market and investment losses, call for much consideration. The report highlights the detrimental outcomes of the Arab Spring on economic and social development in the region, which calls for admitting that those Arab states had been plagued with regimes that lost their way without thinking about their peoples and opened all doors to foreign greed and violations.

KUWAIT REPRESENTED IN UAE CHILDREN'S THEATER FESTIVAL

SHARJAH: Kuwaiti Interior Designer Heba Al-Sane has expressed pride for representing Kuwait in the 11th UAE Children's Theater Festival's contest jury. In a statement to KUNA, Sana, also an interior designer at Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL), stated that she was chosen as jury member and prize designer at the seven-day event. This choice reflects Kuwait's eminence in cultural and art domains, she said.

Sane said she was responsible for evaluating the interior designs, lights, and costumes used in the participating performances. She pointed out that the NCCAL is keen on participating in cultural festivals abroad, especially in those organized in the United Arab Emirates. The festival concluded Sunday in a huge prize-giving ceremony. Iraqi Director Abdullah Abdulqader was named the personality of this year's edition. — KUNA



SHARJAH: Kuwaiti Interior Designer Heba Al-Sane represents Kuwait in the 11th UAE Children's Theater Festival's contest jury. — KUNA

KUWAITIS RECEIVE SUDAN'S SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MEDALS

KHARTOUM: Sudan's presidential medal for social responsibility was granted to Chief of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain for Poetic Creativity Foundation Abdulrahman Al-Babtain and Chairman of the Board of Takaful Society for Prisoners Care Musa'ad Mandani. These medals were given out during the opening of the Second Regional Forum of International Ambassadors for Social Responsibility held in Khartoum.

During the session, Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir was given the best president award for 2015 in social respon-

sibility while head of Islamic Dawa Organization Field Marshal Abd Al-Rahman Siwar Al-Dhahab was chosen as 2015 social responsibility figure. Madina and Khartoum cities were picked as 2016 social responsibility cities.

Babtain told KUNA after the award ceremony that efforts done by International Ambassadors for Social Responsibility are appreciated and very much needed to help the underprivileged. It creates a sense of social solidarity.

He expressed his appreciation for receiving the medal and dedicated it to the Kuwaiti leadership and the Kuwaiti people,

pointing out that this medal will only demand "bigger social responsibility and more humanitarian actions."

Mandani, meanwhile, said that the idea of forum saw the light four years ago but was actually put into action last year. It aims at raising awareness of the various sectors of the community about social responsibility, cast light on humanitarian projects, honoring the international ambassadors for social responsibility and assist companies and corporations to adjust their works and activities to be in line with the standards of sustainable development. — KUNA



KHARTOUM: Chief of Abdulaziz Saud Al-Babtain for Poetic Creativity Foundation Abdulrahman Al-Babtain and Chairman of the Board of Takaful Society for Prisoners Care Musa'ad Mandani receive Sudan's presidential medals for social responsibility. — KUNA

DISABLED ACTORS PRESENT THEIR ISSUES THROUGH PLAYS

MUSCAT: Kuwait is taking part in the Fourth GCC Theater Festival for Persons with Disabilities, held in Oman for seven days. The festival aims to encourage disabled actors to show their theatrical talents, while also develop their abilities through training courses, assistant Undersecretary of Human Resources and Financial Affairs Department at the Kuwait Public Authority for the Disabled Hussein Al-Duwaihes said yesterday.

The festival, inaugurated yesterday, includes six plays performed by each GCC state, said Duwaihes, adding that the event is an opportunity for people with disability to present topics of concern to themselves including the difficulties they face in their lives and the society's point of view on them. The official also noted that Kuwait is exerting great efforts to support this category of society through developing different bodies to provide them with the best services. — KUNA



KUWAIT: (From left) Dr Aisha John, Head of Quality Department at Taiba Hospital, Rashid Al-Fadhlah, Deputy CEO and Dr Ihab Hanna, Consultant Histopathology and Head of the Medical Laboratories and Pathology Department attend the press conference. (Right) Taiba Hospital officials and staff in a group photo.—Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

TAIBA HOSPITAL ACQUIRES COLLEGE OF AMERICAN PATHOLOGISTS ACCREDITATION

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Taiba Hospital recently acquired the College of American Pathologists (CAP) accreditation for providing services according to international quality criteria for medical laboratories. To mark this occasion, the hospital held a press conference and award ceremony for all the staff who participated in achieving this prestigious accreditation at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel on Sunday.

Rashid Al-Fadhlah, Deputy CEO of Taiba Hospital, said that the CAP accreditation is a quantum leap for the services provided by the hospital to its patients. "This accreditation was achieved through following international norms consisting of 12 systems and applying the 'patients safety' policy and procedures," he noted during the press conference. "Achieving this accreditation by Taiba Hospital reflects the policy of Elaj medical services company in keeping pace with international standards of quality and accuracy, which is positively reflected on servicing our clients."

Most prestigious

Dr Aisha John, Head of Quality Department, stated the

CAP accreditation is one of the most prestigious international quality certificates. "We started preparing and working to achieve this accreditation for one and a half years. The laboratory doctors spent great efforts in cooperation with the quality department staff to make this achievement possible," she said.

"The American accreditation delegation visited the medical laboratory and pathology department on inspection tours to evaluate the quality of services and review the safety systems. They also reviewed the efficiency of the available tools and machines in addition to inspections over following international systems over patients' safety. These tours were concluded with a complete report submitted by the delegation to the hospital's administration to give the final result, which resulted in achieving the CAP accreditation," added John.

Patient safety

Dr Ihab Hanna, Consultant Histopathology and Head of the Medical Laboratories and Pathology Department, highlighted that patient safety is the hospital's priority. "This fact was behind our hard work to achieve the CAP accreditation, which will positively affect our work and

the laboratory results. All this will increase the quality and safety of the medical and treatment services provided to the patients," he pointed out.

The submitting committee expressed their gladness with the professional level and modern equipment in the laboratory department. "The committee also praised the efficient and professional staff who are ready to deal with all laboratory tests. Achieving this accreditation by the hospital make the responsibility of the laboratory staff even greater to preserve the quality standard reached by the hospital, which qualified it to acquire this accreditation. This commitment will be positively reflected on the quality, accuracy and short period of the laboratory tests," Hanna added.

Taiba Hospital has also achieved other accreditations including the Joint Commission International accreditation (JCI) for implementing safe and effective healthcare of highest quality and value, which was the first of its kind in Kuwait, received in 2010. Also Taiba Hospital is the first and only private hospital in Kuwait that acquired the 'Baby Friendly Hospital' accreditation given by the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health and accredited by the World Health Organization and UNICEF.



(From left) Rashid Al-Fadhlah, Dr Aisha John and Dr Ihab Hanna cut the ceremony's cake.

KUWAIT HOSTS DENTISTRY CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health is set to organize the 4th Kuwait Dental Administration Conference between February 13-15, 2016, a senior health official said yesterday. The Health Ministry's Assistant Undersecretary for Dental Affairs Dr Yousuf Al-Duwairi said that the conference will be held under

the patronage of Minister of Health Ali Al-Obaidi. The dental event will attract a galaxy of 32 dental specialists and lecturers from all over the world, he added. The conference will include a special program for technicians and administrators in the dental field, and workshops, the official pointed out. —KUNA



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Japan closes door to refugees

CAMERON VISITS FLOOD HIT HISTORIC CITY OF YORK



SEOUL: South Korean bereaved family members of victims of World War II stage a rally demanding full compensation and apology from Japanese government in front of Foreign Ministry. — AP

KOREA, JAPAN REACH DEAL ON 'COMFORT WOMEN'
 REPRESENTS SHIFT FOR CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT

SEOUL: An apology from Japan's prime minister and a pledge of more than \$8 million sealed a breakthrough deal yesterday on a decades-long impasse with South Korea over Korean women forced into Japanese military-run brothels during World War II.

The accord, which aims to resolve the emotional core of South Korea's grievances with its former colonial overlord, could begin to reverse decades of animosity and mistrust between the two thriving democracies, trade partners and staunch US allies. It represents a shift for Tokyo's conservative government and a new willingness to compromise from previously wary Seoul.

A joint statement from both countries' foreign ministers said Prime Minister Shinzo Abe "expresses anew his most sincere apologies and remorse to all the women who underwent immeasurable and painful experiences and suffered incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women," their euphemistic name.

'Final and irreversible'

It wasn't immediately clear if Abe would be issuing a separate written statement or if it would be directly delivered to the 46 surviving former Korean sex slaves, now in their 80s and 90s. The language mirrored past expressions of remorse by other prime ministers, although it was seen by some in Seoul as an improvement on previous comments by the hawkish Abe government, which has been accused of whitewashing past wartime atrocities.

Another deciding factor was that the 1 billion yen (\$8.3 million) came from the government, not private sources, something Tokyo has been reluctant to provide in the past. South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se said Seoul considers the agreement "final and irreversible," as long as Japan faithfully follows through with its promises.

Later yesterday, Abe called Park and reiterated his apology. He said Tokyo would implement the deal and called the issue settled irreversibly. Park said she hopes the two countries will build up mutual trust and open a new era in bilateral ties based on yesterday's agreement, it said.

After phoning Park, Abe told reporters that the agreement was based on his commitment to stop younger generations from being obliged to apologize. "Japan and South Korea are now entering into a new era," said Abe, adding that he did not want to "pass on the burden on our children, grandchildren and their offspring to keep apologizing.... We should not drag this problem into the next generation."

Despite the soaring official rhetoric, the initial reaction of former sex slaves was mixed. One woman said she would follow the government's lead, while another vowed to ignore the accord because Tokyo didn't consider the money a formal compensation. "Isn't it natural to make a legal compensation if they commit a crime?" said Lee Yong-su, 88, according to South Korea's Yonhap news agency.

Some in Seoul saw the deal, while not perfect, as an important step forward. "If we brushed aside this deal, the comfort women issue would remain unresolved forever," said Lee Won Deog, director of Institute of Japanese Studies at Seoul's Kookmin University. "Elderly women would die one by one; South Korea and Japan would engage in history wars and find it harder to improve ties."

Many South Koreans feel lingering bitterness over Japan's brutal colonial occupation of the Korean Peninsula from 1910-1945. But South Korean officials have also faced calls to improve ties with Japan, the world's No 3 economy and a regional powerhouse, not least from US officials eager for a strong united front against a rising China and North Korea's pursuit of nuclear-armed missiles that could target the American mainland.

Japan appeared emboldened to make the overture to Seoul after the first formal leaders' meeting between the neighbors in 3 1/2 years, in November, and after South Korean courts recently acquitted a Japanese reporter charged with defaming South Korea's president and refused to review a complaint by a South Korean

seeking individual compensation for Japan's forceful mobilization of workers during colonial days.

Seoul, meanwhile, will refrain from criticizing Japan over the issue, and will talk with "relevant organizations" - a reference to civic groups representing the former sex slaves - to try to resolve Japan's grievance with a statue of a girl representing victims of Japanese sexual slavery that sits in front of the Japanese Embassy in downtown Seoul. Yun said South Korea recognizes Japan's worries about security over the statue, where anti-Tokyo protests take place weekly.

There has long been resistance in South Korea to past

Japanese apologies because many here wanted Japan to acknowledge that it has a legal responsibility for the women. Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida later emphasized in a closed-door briefing with Japanese reporters that Tokyo doesn't consider the 1 billion yen as compensation, but "a project to relieve emotional scars and provide healing for the victims." It will include medical services, health checks and other support for the women, he said. All compensation was settled by a 1965 treaty that restored diplomatic ties and was accompanied by more than \$800 million in economic aid and loans from Tokyo to Seoul, he said. — AP

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CHICAGO: LaTarsha Jones, center, the daughter of Bettie Jones, is comforted by family and friends during a news conference in front of the house where Bettie Jones was killed Saturday in the West Garfield Park neighborhood. — AP

POLICE SHOOTING OF GRANDMA, TEEN DRAWS FURTHER CRITICISM

CHICAGO: The fatal shootings of a woman who worked with anti-violence community groups and a young man visiting his father for the holidays has raised further questions about the Chicago police department, already under intense scrutiny after the killing of black teenager. Grieving relatives and friends of the two victims, 55-year-old Bettie Jones and 19-year-old Quintonio LeGrier, gathered Sunday to remember them and criticize city officials who they said had once again failed residents.

Both Jones and LeGrier were black, and their deaths come amid a federal civil rights investigation into the Chicago Police Department, launched after the release of police dashcam video showing a white officer a black 17-year-old 16 times in 2014. A series of such shootings across the country has given rise to the Black Lives Matter protest movement.

The latest shooting happened early Saturday morning at a small two-story home, where Jones lived in a ground-floor apartment and LeGrier's father in an upstairs unit. Police, who were responding to an emergency call made by LeGrier's father after an argument with his son, have released few details beyond a brief statement.

It said that officers "were confronted by a combative subject resulting in the discharging of the officer's weapon" and added that Jones "was accidentally struck." Police did not disclose the race of the officer or officers, saying only that those involved will be placed on administrative duties. "I used to watch the news daily and I would grieve for other mothers, other family members, and now today I'm grieving myself," LeGrier's mother, Janet Cooksey said at a news conference outside the residence earlier Sunday.

Others who spoke said police should have used stun guns or other nonlethal methods if they felt they needed to subdue LeGrier. "Why do (police) have to shoot first and ask questions later?" Jacqueline Walker, a friend of Jones, asked. "It's ridiculous." Autopsy findings released Sunday by the Cook County medical examiner's office say Jones died from a gunshot to the chest and LeGrier from multiple gunshot wounds.

Police spokesman Anthony Guglielmi on Sunday said only that the shootings are being investigated by the city's Independent Police Review Authority, the main police oversight agency. LeGrier's cousin, Albert Person, said LeGrier's father had invited his son to a holiday gathering at another home on Christmas. Person said the son's refusal to go caused friction, but he downplayed the severity of the argument. "What family doesn't fight on the holidays?" he said. — AP

PM CAMERON VISITS FLOOD HIT HISTORIC CITY OF YORK

ENGLAND BATTLES TO GET BACK ON ITS FEET

RED SQUARE CLOSED FOR NEW YEAR'S EVE

MOSCOW: Moscow's Red Square, traditionally a place where people gather to ring in the New Year, will be closed to revelers on December 31, city authorities said yesterday, amid mounting security concerns. This year, police will turn back everyone showing up at the square for the countdown to midnight sounded by the chimes on the Kremlin's tower clock, Moscow security chief Alexei Mayorov was quoted as saying on city hall's website.

The official reason given for the unprecedented closure of the square, one of Russia's top tourist attractions, was the filming of a live concert for state-run Channel One television that only a select audience will be allowed to attend. Mayorov said the police would tell anyone else that wants to join in "that Red Square is closed for an event and that there are a lot of other places around where people can have a wonderful time."

Speaking to Kommersant radio former lawmaker Alexander Klyukin said the surprise move was "the same as closing off Times Square in New York." Moscow has introduced a raft of tighter security measures since the terror attacks in Paris in November. The attacks added to the nervousness caused by the downing of a Russian passenger plane over Egypt's Sinai in late October, killing 224 people in what Moscow says was an act of terror.

"It's not a secret that Moscow is a desired target for an attack by international terrorists," Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said earlier this month. Metal detectors manned by security guards have been installed at the entrances to shopping centers and parking lot attendants have been given permission to check the trunks of suspicious vehicles. In other measures, Russia's main television tower Ostankino was sealed off with barbed wire this month, additional CCTV cameras have been installed in pedestrian areas of Moscow and police now patrol metro stations with sniffer dogs. — AFP



YORK: Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron greets soldiers working on flood relief in York city centre after the river Ouse burst its banks. — AP

YORK: British Prime Minister David Cameron visited the flood-hit historic city of York yesterday as cities, towns and villages across northern England battled to get back on their feet following devastating storms. Cameron met soldiers and volunteers helping with the aftermath of the flooding as he faced increasing pressure to take more action to prevent further chaos in future.

Around 500 properties were flooded in York, one of Britain's top tourist destinations, on Sunday as two rivers burst their banks. Some residential streets became so inundated that cars were covered up to their roofs. Soldiers helped pile sandbags up to protect properties and businesses while emergency services paddled around the streets in dinghies trying to find stranded residents.

Flooding has also hit the northern cities of Leeds and Manchester in recent days, as well as a string of towns and villages in the region. "Let's have a look and see whether more needs to be done," Cameron told Sky News when asked about his government's response. "After any one of these events, it's right to sit down, look at what you've spent, what you've built, what you're planning to spend, what you're planning to build and work out is it in the right places, are we doing it in the right way, do we need to do more?"

The Environment Agency had 10 severe flood warnings in place yesterday, signaling a "danger to life", chiefly at points along major rivers in Yorkshire. There were also over 150 flood

warnings or alerts in place in England and Wales, meaning flooding was either expected or possible. Cameron sent in 200 more troops to help 300 already on the ground in northern England with tackling the effects of flooding Sunday. Another 1,000 are on standby in case the situation gets worse.

More rain is forecast later in the week, raising the prospect of further floods at a time when many people are still at home following Christmas celebrations. The Met Office weather forecasting service has issued warnings of rain on Wednesday in northwest and northeast England plus Wales, Northern Ireland and parts of Scotland.

'Changing climate'

As the clear-up got under way, Cameron's government was under pressure yesterday over the quality of Britain's flood defenses. The country has been hit by a series of serious floods including in Cumbria, northern England, earlier this month and in late 2013 and early 2014 in southwest and southeast England.

The Independent newspaper's front page headline read: "The drowning of the north of England" while the Sun ran with "Blunder water". The Guardian said that "empty rhetoric and even the army cannot substitute for coherent policy on flood prevention". "Climate change and inadequate preparation... ensure that the floods will become a painfully regular future of British life," it said in an editorial. — AFP

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KABUL: Afghan firefighters wash a road at the site of a suicide car bomb near the international airport. — AFP

TALEBAN BOMBER TARGETS NATO CONVOY NEAR TO KABUL AIRPORT

SECURITY SITUATION WORSENS IN AFGHANISTAN

KABUL: A Taliban bomber detonated an explosives-packed vehicle near Kabul airport yesterday, killing one civilian in an attack targeting a NATO convoy the day after Pakistan's army chief visited the city to try to revive peace talks. At least 33 others, many of them children, were wounded in the assault, which occurred as the security situation worsens in Afghanistan with the Taliban ramping up their nationwide offensive.

The explosion, which left wreckage of mangled and smoldering vehicles, comes despite a renewed international push to jumpstart stalled negotiations with the insurgents. "The bombing left one person dead and 33 others wounded," an Afghan health ministry spokesman told AFP. "Among the wounded were 18 children and four women."

Officials said the target of the powerful blast, which blew out windows of a local bakery, appeared to be a NATO convoy that passed through the area. In a brief statement, the international military coalition ruled out any NATO fatalities. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid

said they were behind the attack on a foreign convoy, claiming that "several invading forces were killed and wounded".

The Taliban are known to exaggerate battlefield claims. The attack comes a day after Pakistan's powerful army chief General Raheel Sharif visited Kabul to try to prepare the ground for fresh peace talks with the Taliban. "Both sides agreed that the first round of dialogue between Afghanistan, Pakistan, US and China will be held in January to lay out a comprehensive roadmap for peace," the Afghan presidential palace said in a statement.

Historic backers

Asim Bajwa, a Pakistani military spokesman, said on Twitter that the talks would be held in the first week of January but did not disclose the venue. There was no immediate reaction from the Taliban to the announcement of the four-party talks. Pakistan-the Taliban's historic backers-hosted a milestone first round of talks in July but the negotiations stalled when the insurgents belatedly confirmed the death of longtime

leader Mullah Omar.

Afghanistan sees the support of Pakistan as vital to bring the Taliban to the negotiating table. But despite the growing bonhomie with Islamabad, analysts caution that any substantive talks are still a long way off. Afghan forces are currently battling to push out Taliban insurgents who seized large swathes of the key opium-rich district of Sangin in the southern province of Helmand.

Observers say the intensifying insurgency highlights a push by the insurgents to make more military gains in a bid to achieve greater concessions during talks. The offensive has prompted the first British deployment to the volatile province in 14 months.

The deployment, in addition to a recent arrival of US Special Forces in the region, comes a year after NATO forces formally ended their combat operations in the country. The British and US intervention has fuelled the perception that foreign powers are increasingly being drawn back into the conflict as Afghan forces struggle to rein in the Taliban. — AFP

PAKISTAN WALLS OFF GLACIAL LAKE TO STOP FLASH FLOODS

BAGROT VALLEY: Nestled at the foot of five snow-capped mountain peaks in Pakistan's northern Gilgit-Baltistan province, the villages of the Bagrot valley face fearsome flooding risks. As glaciers retreat, they leave behind lakes supported by ice dams or accumulations of rock and soil. Inherently unstable, these dams often burst, sending huge volumes of water rushing into the villages below them.

But a project to build protective structures around vulnerable villages has found a way to lessen the risks and the damage. "Outbursts can trigger a release of millions of cubic metres of water and debris in a few hours," said Khalil Ahmed, national manager of the Pakistan GLOF (Glacial Lake Outburst Flood) project. But walls can help divert the water, he said.

The four-year, \$7.6 million project, which focuses on Bagrot valley in Gilgit-Baltistan and Bindo Gol valley in the northwestern Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, has since 2011 built flood diversion walls around more than 10 vulnerable villages. Some of the barriers are made up of concrete steps, while others use stone-filled wire-mesh cages to divert floodwater, debris and ice away from buildings and land and instead direct it into the rivers flowing through the valleys.

Diverting the water

With funding and logistical support from the U.N.'s Adaptation Fund, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the Pakistan government, the project is already producing promising results, experts say.

When a glacial lake burst in April 2014 and another in July 2015, both triggering flash floods in the Bagrot valley, the walls saved village properties and maize and vegetable crops from being washed away, said Shahadat Noor, a potato farmer in Bagrot. "The structures veered the floodwater flow off the settlements and croplands, sending it gushing safely through the valley," he told Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Local people say the project has also helped mountain communities regain confidence in their ability to withstand such floods. "We do know we cannot control glacial melt and erratic or intense rains," said Mazhar Hussain, a community development specialist who runs the Dubani Development Organization, which works on the Pakistan GLOF Project. "But we can, at least, minimize the risk of GLOF, (flash) floods, landslides or land erosion by adapting to the impacts of global warming on the valley's glaciers," he said.

As well as bolstering Bagrot's defenses against glacial flooding, said Hussain, the project has designated nine safe havens from flooding: high, open and flat areas, equipped with toilets and access to drinking water, that villagers can use as temporary shelters when floods hit.

Over the last three years, construction on such defenses has begun in 15 different Bagrot mountain villages identified by the communities as vulnerable to glacial lake outburst floods or flash flooding, Hussain added. Sajid Ali, a young farmer in the Bagrot valley, said his village used to fear flash floods that threatened to sweep away homes, farm plots and centuries-old irrigation channels. "But such is the case no more," he said, standing in the shadow of the Hinarchi glacier.

Adapting to the inevitable

According to the Pakistan Meteorological Department, in 2010 there were about 2,400 glacier lakes in Pakistan's north. Now there are over 3,000, according to the department, and the number is expected to keep growing as temperatures continue to rise, summers grow longer and warmer, and winters get shorter.

Ghulam Rasul, the meteorological department's director-general and former senior climatologist, said more than seven glacial lake outbursts have been recorded in the last two years in the country's north. The department currently has 52 glacial lakes in the north flagged as likely to burst at any time, he said. And the problem isn't limited to Pakistan. Nepal, Bhutan and India are also critically vulnerable to glacial lake outburst floods and flash floods, climatologists say.

In June 2013, devastating flooding in the northern Indian state of Uttarakhand killed more than 5,000 people, and the Sunkoshi landslide tragedy in Nepal in August 2014 left at least 150 dead. Climatologists at Pakistan's Global Change Impact Studies Centre (GCISC) and the Pakistan Meteorological Department warn that as the number of glacial lakes continues to grow, outbursts will be hard to avoid. The focus should be on finding ways to protect communities from the inevitable, they say.

Replicating the measures in the Bagrot valley could "help stave off loss of life and livelihoods in the mountain communities and downstream areas," said Munir Sheikh, former head of climatology and environment at the impact studies centre in Islamabad. — Reuters

MYANMAR ACTIVIST JAILED FOR SATIRICAL ARMY FACEBOOK POST

YANGON: A Myanmar court sentenced a female activist to six months in jail yesterday for a Facebook post satirizing the powerful military, the latest crackdown against free speech in the former junta-ruled country. Freedoms have flourished since the junta ceded full control to a partly civilian government in 2011, culminating in landmark elections last month.

But there have been growing concerns over renewed breaches of civil liberties. Criticism of the still powerful military remains fraught with risk. Chaw Sandi Tun, 25, was arrested in October after a post on her Facebook page made fun of the army. "My daughter was sentenced to six months' imprisonment at Ma U Bin township court this morning under Section 66(d) of the telecons law. We will appeal as we are not satisfied," her mother Ei San told AFP.

She was referring to a broadly worded law which bans the defamation or "disturbing" of people through any telecommunications network. The maximum penalty she faced was three years in jail. Her lawyer confirmed the sentence but said his client denied making the post. "She said her Facebook account had been hacked several times and that she didn't post that post," Robert San Aung said.

The post compared the color of a new uniform for army officers with that of a "longyi" (traditional skirt) worn by National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi, whose party swept last month's polls and will form a government next year. "If you love mother that much, why don't

you wrap mother's longyi on your head?" the post said.

The United States embassy has previously called for the release of Chaw Sandi Tun and Patrick Khum Jaa Lee, another activist who has been arrested over Facebook posts critical of the military. Myanmar has come a long way since the decades of brutal rule under a junta which tolerated little dissent, jailed critics, ran vast informant networks and kept the nation closed off as its economy collapsed.

The quasi-civilian government which replaced outright junta rule in 2011 was widely praised for a series of political and economic reforms, with most international sanctions dropped. In recent years social media has also exploded, a new phenomenon in a country where owning a mobile phone just five years ago cost thousands of dollars. But in recent months the military and its incumbent army-backed government have been accused by rights groups of returning to junta-era tactics. There was widespread criticism of a violent police crackdown on student protesters earlier this year.

In February a freelance photojournalist was arrested for uploading a satirical post on Facebook mocking the military. And in October 2014 another freelance journalist was shot dead by the army in a case raised by US President Barack Obama during his official visit to Myanmar. Two soldiers were later acquitted of the murder in a country where the powerful military remains shielded from civilian oversight. — AFP

TWO DEAD IN BANGLADESH MILITANT HIDEOUT BLAST

DHAKA: Two suspected followers of a banned Bangladeshi Islamist outfit were killed yesterday in an explosion outside the capital Dhaka as security forces raided a third extremist hideout in four days. The Rapid Action Battalion launched the raid on an abandoned house at Gazipur, 40 kilometers north of Dhaka, just after midnight, said a spokesman for the elite police unit.

Suspected members of Jamayetul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) hurled bombs towards the raiding party before an explosion in the building. Two bodies were later recovered. "We opened fire at them after a law enforcer was injured as the JMB militants hurled an IED (improvised explosive device) at our officers when we surrounded the house," said RAB spokesman Major Rumman Mahmud.

"After we shot several rounds of bullets we heard an explosion inside the den. Later we found two bodies lying on the floor," he said. Unexploded IEDs, grenades, a pistol, bullets and JMB propaganda leaflets were found at the premises. It was the third raid on a suspected militant hideout in four days as security forces intensify a hunt for extremists following a series of deadly attacks on foreigners as well as an attack at a mosque at a naval base.

The raid came hours after three alleged JMB militants were arrested in the port city of Chittagong. Police found a modern assault rifle, a huge cache of bullets, bombmaking equipment and army uniforms during the operation. "The worst part of our concern is they have local military fatigues, which makes it harder for the police to monitor their movement," Chittagong Metropolitan Police Commissioner Abdul Jalil Mandal said.

Last Thursday police raided a multi-storey building in Dhaka's Mirpur suburb and arrested seven suspected JMB men after a 15-hour operation. Police said they recovered hand grenades and suicide bombers' vests. The high-profile raids and arrests have raised fears Islamist militants have regrouped a decade after they carried out a series of bombings.

The nationwide blasts coincided with the launch of a campaign to introduce Sharia law in the Muslim-majority but officially secular nation. In recent months a string of attacks and murders of foreigners, secular bloggers, publishers, Sufi leaders, Shiites and Ahmadi Muslims were claimed by the Islamic State group. — AFP



CHANDIGARH: Indian rescuers search for victims in the rubble of a collapsed building. — AFP

SIX DEAD AFTER LIQUOR SHOP COLLAPSES IN INDIA

CHANDIGARH: A two-storey liquor store collapsed yesterday killing six laborers in northern India, police said, the latest deadly accident to highlight shoddy construction standards in the country. The building in Chandigarh city crumbled as construction workers in an adjoining plot were digging a basement, triggering the wall of the liquor store to cave in. "Six people are confirmed dead and 11 have been injured. They have been taken to hospital for treatment," Chandigarh's senior superintendent of police, Sukhchain Singh Gill, said. He added that no one else was feared trapped after rescuers helped by residents plucked out survivors using shovels and bare hands to shift mangled heaps of steel and concrete.

The accident is the latest in a long line of deadly building collapses in India, some of which have highlighted shoddy construction standards. In July, seven people died when a three-storey building collapsed in heavy rains in Mumbai just a year after an 11-storey apartment tower in Tamil Nadu came crashing down killing 61 people, mostly laborers.

A massive influx of people to cities in search of jobs and a shortage of cheap housing have fuelled the construction of illegal buildings across the country, often with sub-standard material. Millions also live in dilapidated old buildings, many of which caved in during heavy rains. — AFP



MEGHALAYA: In this photograph taken on November 8, 2015, an Indian Khasi tribal villager walks along a lane in the village of Mawlynnong in the north-eastern state of Meghalaya. Mawlynnong village is the cleanest village in Asia. — AFP

Focus

BALMY WINTER
HITS FRENCH SKI
WORKERS IN WALLET

By Benoit Pavan

The spring-like temperatures that have disappointed many skiers hoping to find a blanket of fresh powder in the French Alps is having a far more painful impact on resort workers: Unemployment. Seasonal workers set to run ski lifts and clean hotel rooms across France's assortment of world-famous slopes have seen jobs delayed or cancelled as employers wait to see if snow will fall. "There are a lot of people in my position," said Julien, a ski patrolman, who had just learned his job offer in Aussois in the French Alps had been deferred by 12 weeks. The 23-year-old, who is also a nurse, said the uncertainty was "tough to handle".

Temperatures have hit record highs around Europe in recent weeks, reducing usually sparkling snow-dusted mountains from France to Russia to muddy tracks or requiring that they be covered in manmade powder. It has been an unusually hot year so far. According to experts at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in the United States, the period worldwide from January to November 2015 was the hottest recorded since 1880.

At Aussois, a resort perched at an altitude of 1,500 m, the dearth of snow has meant that six seasonal workers who were promised jobs have yet to start drawing a wage. Julien said he had pre-paid for a month's lodging in the mountains that he could not use because his starting date was postponed. The union representing workers at the resort has asked local authorities to pressure management to create part-time positions in order to get more people to work. But like abundant snow, a helping hand from management at the small-scale resort has yet to materialize.

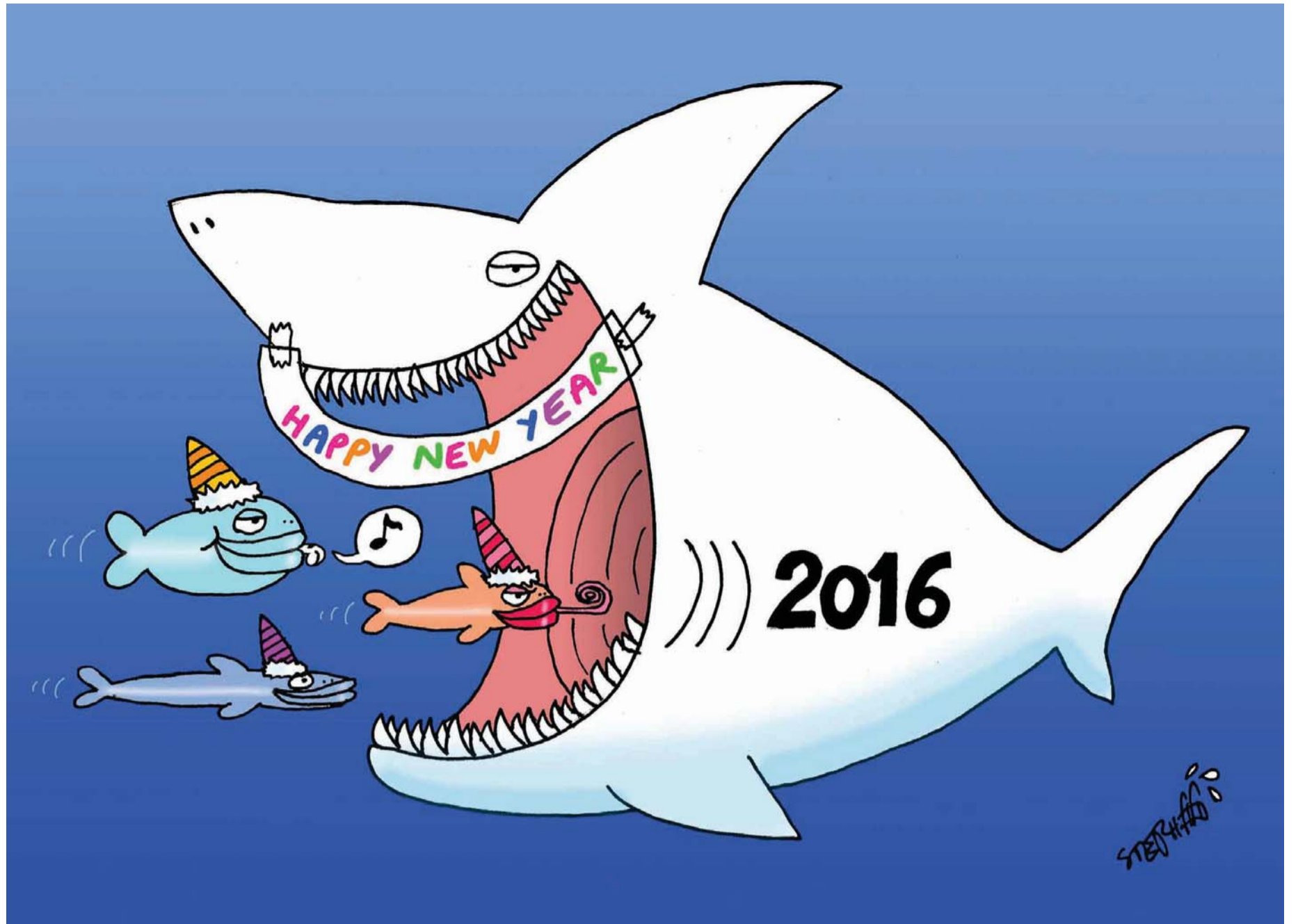
'Don't Exaggerate the Situation'

"We all offered to do fewer hours so that the others would be hired, but management refused," said Francois Xuereb, 32, a seasonal worker and union delegate at Aussois. The situation is better at bigger resorts like Menuieres or Meribel a little further north, where unions reported that everyone who had been promised a job had got one. At L'Alpe d'Huez, another resort popular with both French and foreign snow aficionados, around 300 seasonal workers are already on the job, after some "minor" adjustments to their duties, said Christophe Monier, general manager of the company that operates the property.

In Dec 2014, unseasonably warm temperatures already prevented the ski season from getting into full swing in Austria and Switzerland, home to some of Europe's most popular slopes. Then a massive storm dumped heavy snow just days after Christmas, stranding some 15,000 people overnight in the French Alps while skiers revelled in the fresh powder blanketing the slopes.

Some workers on the French slopes are holding out hope that Mother Nature will come through again in the end. "We shouldn't exaggerate the situation," said Carole Pierre, a seasonal worker at Valmorel, where staff have accepted a 30 percent cut in working time and pay in order to keep their jobs. "If in three weeks the snow still hasn't arrived and the mild weather prevents us making artificial snow, we'll go to half-time work," she said. "In the long run, the situation will favor high-altitude resorts," she said, referring to spots with cooler climates. —AFP

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MAJOR CHALLENGES STILL LOOM FOR CAR

By Crispin Dembassa-Kette and Joe Bavier

As General Bala Keita, the military head of Central African Republic's UN peacekeeping mission, fended off militia attacks on a polling station in a besieged Muslim enclave in the capital Bangui earlier this month, he was surprisingly optimistic. It certainly wasn't an auspicious start to a constitutional referendum meant to pave the way for pivotal general elections. But amid the machinegun fire and incoming rocket-propelled grenades, the battle-tested Senegalese officer saw hope. "What's extraordinary is that people are here. And we're trying to provide security," he shouted down a crackling phone line during the Dec 13 referendum. "The population is saying 'We need to vote.'"

Less than three weeks later, Central African Republic's beleaguered people are preparing to head to the polls again on Wednesday for presidential and legislative elections to restore democratic rule under the newly approved constitution. They hope this second round of voting will bring them a step closer to ending years of violence. But while doubts still loom over the authorities' capacity to hold polls in a country carved up by warlords, a more important test will come after, when a new president seeks to rebuild and reunite a nation that now exists in little more than name.

Since mainly Muslim Seleka rebels seized power in the majority Christian country in early 2013, deposing then-President Francois Bozize, the former French colony has slid ever deeper into chaos. Abuses by Seleka - "Alliance" in the country's most widely spoken language, Sango - fuelled the rise of Christian militias who launched reprisals against Muslim civilians in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Thousands have died and nearly one in five of the 5 million Central Africans has fled the violence. The unrest also repeatedly delayed the polls.

After the referendum exposed shortcomings in the training of election workers and ballot papers arrived late, the latest delay saw the election postponed by three days. While the delay may help smooth over some of the logistical issues, security remains a major concern. "They're going forward with these elections, and in many areas it's a war zone," said Lewis Mudge, a researcher with Human Rights Watch who has worked extensively on Central African Republic.

Too Many Guns

Despite initial agreements, there has been almost no progress towards disarming thousands fighters loyal to rebel and militia leaders ahead of the vote. During the referendum, gunmen attacked voters in Bangui and the polls were also disrupted in Bossangoa, a Bozize stronghold, as well as in some areas in the northeast under the control of Seleka factions. The United Nations has promised a heavy security presence on election day. But even if the polls go ahead without violence, critics argue the thorny issue of disarmament has simply been dumped in the lap of the future president.

"The winner will probably be able to rule Bangui and rule in parts of the west and the southwest of the country, but in the east and the northeast, I have no idea," said one senior UN official, on condition of anonymity. Having withdrawn from the capital after their leader Michel Djotodia stepped down from the presidency under international pressure in 2014, the various factions of the former Seleka coalition have entrenched themselves in the northeast.

Some, including the movement's former number two Nouredine Adam, have flirted with formal secession. Convincing them to hand back territory won't be easy, particularly if the new president is deemed a threat to Muslims. Dealing with the Christian militia - known as "anti-balaka" (anti-machete) groups - who control the south and southwest, could be even more complicated. "There are not two or three separate anti-balaka leaderships but a galaxy of local chiefs without either a political or stable allegiance and the only thing they have in common is a taste for banditry," the International Crisis Group said in a September report.

Without a functioning army of his own, the new president will be heavily dependent upon the UN mission, MINUSCA, and a small contingent of French troops to bolster security. However, MINUSCA has yet to show that it is prepared to use the threat of force to push disarmament. And Paris will likely seek to resume a troop withdrawal next year after the pull-out was suspended during a spike in violence that began in September. Without a stick, the new leadership may be forced to fall back on an old carrot and offer militia chiefs government or army posts, perpetuating a decades-long cycle of rewarding insurrection that critics say helped spawn the current crisis. "Our history has seen too many blunders and wrong turns. We must

avoid falling into the same old traps," said Richard Ouanga, a law professor at the University of Bangui.

Moving Beyond Religion

If and when the guns are silenced, any long-term strategy for maintaining stability must include a revival of the economy. "You can make all the reconciliation speeches you want ... but as long as you haven't fed your people, the conditions of this crisis will still be there," said former Prime Minister Anicet-Georges Dologuele, a leading contender for the presidency.

Other top candidates include former Foreign Minister Karim Meckassoua, Former Prime Minister Martin Ziguete and Bilal Desire Nzanga-Kolingba, the son of a former president. Central African Republic's economy was in trouble long before the crisis that began with the 2013 Seleka takeover. With investors balking at the risky prospect of ploughing money into the chronically unstable nation, potentially lucrative uranium deposits went undeveloped.

The cotton sector, once a pillar of the economy, crumbled as roads needed to bring production to market fell into disrepair. As state authority receded, diamond and gold mines fell under the control of militia bosses. Turning all that around will take time, and it will also require the participation of all Central Africans, particularly Muslims who, despite constituting a minority, have traditionally played an outsized role in trade and transportation.

Unfortunately, they make up a large part of Central African Republic's roughly 900,000 displaced, having either fled abroad or moved to the northeast after coming under attack from anti-balaka or their Christian neighbours. "Muslims are discriminated against ... They are not seen as sons of this country. That's the real problem. Most of our Christian compatriots think all Muslims are foreign," said Ali Ousman, head of the Coordination of Muslim Organisations. Creating conditions for their return when many of their homes have been either destroyed or are now occupied by Christians, will likely prove one of the new government's most difficult challenges.

Bangui's Archbishop Dieudonne Nzapalinga, however, is confident reconciliation is possible. It has to be, he says, because without it Central African Republic as a nation will fail. "I cannot build this country by excluding my brother from another religion or political party. We must instead include our brothers ... The moment has come to move beyond our religions." —Reuters

MERKEL CENTER STAGE IN EU'S YEAR OF CRISES

By Frank Zeller

In a year of crises for Europe, from the Ukraine war to Greece's debt turmoil to the historic refugee influx, Germany's Angela Merkel emerged as the continent's de facto leader, drawing more praise and fire than ever. Whether spearheading EU diplomacy with Moscow, bargaining with Athens over tough bail-out terms or responding to the world's biggest refugee wave since World War II-Merkel was in the middle, again and again.

At a time of growing uncertainty and division in Europe, the pragmatic quantum chemist whom Germans call "Mutti", or mummy, preached fiscal rectitude and humanitarian principles, often drawing a mixed response. Her unusually bold move to throw open Germany's doors to Syrian refugees has particularly battered her long-stellar poll ratings at home, and left the leader of Europe's top economy isolated on key issues in the 28-member EU.

"2015 has been an incredible year, hard to comprehend really," said the 61-year-old chancellor, who is not usually given to hyperbole, at a congress of her centre-right party this month. "I've never experienced such a rapid sequence of highly significant events." That was quite a statement for the Protestant pastor's daughter, who grew up behind the Iron Curtain and lived through the fall of the Berlin Wall a quarter-century ago.

'We Can Do This'

The rise of Germany's influence during Merkel's decade in power has often unset-

tled European neighbours. When an unyielding Merkel told debt-hit eurozone members to slash public spending, she was caricatured as an austerity dominatrix in Nazi garb who deployed accountants rather than tanks. Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi, more politely, stressed that while he had esteem for Merkel, "Europe has to serve all 28 countries, not just one."

Merkel won over some of her harshest critics with her decision in September to open the doors to a record wave of refugees who were heading in, many on foot, from Budapest. The country that once sent rail carriage-loads of people into concentration camps was now cheering as trains arrived packed with refugees from war-torn Syria, in moving TV footage seen around the world. "We can do this," has been Merkel's mantra ever since, as she has sought to instill courage in a country scrambling to welcome the one million newcomers who arrived this year.

Merkel was hailed as "Mama Merkel" by refugees who flocked to take selfies with her, and pictured as a Mother Teresa figure on the cover of Spiegel magazine. In rare unanimity, media organisations including Agence France-Presse, Time magazine and the Financial Times declared the long-time "Queen of Europe" the world's most influential person of 2015.

New York Times columnist Roger Cohen wrote that "she has become a towering European figure, certainly the equal of such postwar German giants as Konrad Adenauer, Helmut Schmidt and Helmut Kohl - perhaps

even surpassing them". Even Greece's left-wing former finance minister Yanis Varoufakis, long the arch-nemesis of Berlin, told news weekly Stern that "maybe, if I was German, I would vote for Merkel".

'Historic Challenge'

Many Germans, however, now have doubts, fearing that Merkel, their trusted guarantor of stability, is plunging the coun-

try into chaos. Polls point to growing fears about the influx of mostly Muslims, a rightwing populist party has been gathering steam and there has been a spike in racist hate crimes. "Germany is definitely split," said Oskar Niedermayer of Berlin's Free University. "In general, Merkel and her work are still very highly regarded, but on the refugee crisis a majority think she is pursuing the wrong policy."

Merkel's plan to avoid a million more arrivals next year is based in large part on convincing other EU members to accept more refugees. Yet the response so far has ranged from deafening silence to howls of protest. Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban rejected Germany's "moral imperialism" and sealed national borders with razor wire, while Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka charged that Merkel had "encouraged illegal migration" to Europe. Even European Council president Donald Tusk labelled Merkel's migrants policy "dangerous".

At the party congress, Merkel conceded that the refugee influx - "a rendezvous with globalisation" - presented an "enormous" task and would change the country forever. "It is a historic challenge for Europe, and I say we want Europe to meet this challenge," she said, to thundering applause. "And I am convinced it will." Niedermayer said that Merkel, in her best speech so far, had "bought herself a few months, but not more" while voters and her own party base would likely grow more impatient. "That's why 2016 will be the true acid test." —AFP



Sports

**Guptill smashes
NZ to big win
over S Lanka**



**Super-sub Son
sinks 10-man
Watford 2-1**



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COMANCHE WINS SYDNEY TO HOBART RACE Page 15



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's Wayne Rooney (right) takes on Chelsea's John Terry during an English Premier League match at Old Trafford Stadium yesterday. — AP

CHELSEA DRAW GIVES VAN GAAL RESPITE



MANCHESTER: Manchester United bought beleaguered manager Louis van Gaal some much-needed respite with an improved display in yesterday's 0-0 draw at home to under-performing Premier League champions Chelsea. Van Gaal has admitted that he is contemplating leaving Old Trafford after a wretched slump in form, but although his team have now gone eight games without victory in all competitions, they avoided

sinking to five straight defeats for the first time since Dec 1936. In a performance that will give United's board reason to hope the Dutchman may yet steer the club out of their dip, the home side played with greater enterprise than of late and hit the woodwork through Juan Mata and Anthony Martial. But Chelsea had their moments, too, and might have given Guus Hiddink the first win of his second spell as interim manager had David de Gea not saved smartly from John Terry, Pedro Rodriguez and Cesar Azpilicueta or Nemanja Matic not blazed over when clean through in the second half. The result left Chelsea, unbeaten against United in nine encounters, three points above the relegation zone, while their opponents are five points off the top four in sixth place. Meanwhile, the spectre of Jose

Mourinho, sacked by Chelsea 11 days ago, continues to haunt Van Gaal, whose future remains uncertain. His face and 'Special One' nickname adorned scarves sold outside Old Trafford by opportunistic stallholders, while his name was chanted by the away fans inside the ground. **Matic Mocked** Rested for the 2-0 defeat at Stoke City, Wayne Rooney was one of four players brought in by Van Gaal - Matteo Darmian, Bastian Schweinsteiger and Morgan Schneiderlin the others - and the captain set the tone for the hosts in the first half with his confident probing and crisp passing. Playing up front, with Martial exiled to the left, the England captain set up two early chances for Mata and Schneiderlin, the Spaniard slamming a shot against the bar,

the Frenchman drilling wide. In between, United goalkeeper De Gea produced a brilliant one-handed save after Terry met Willian's right-wing corner with a bullet header, but for most of the first half it was one-way traffic. Martial was a menace with his relentless desire to get the ball down and run, driving a shot against the left-hand post after skinning Branislav Ivanovic and drawing a booking for John Mikel Obi - preferred to Cesc Fabregas by Hiddink - with a burst from halfway. Shortly before the half-hour, Rooney picked up a loose ball and took aim from 30 yards with a shot that was arrowing into the top-left corner until the flying Thibaut Courtois pushed it behind. United's level dropped as half-time approached and they survived a scare early in the second half when De Gea produced a fine double-save

to thwart first Pedro, teed up by the impressive Eden Hazard, and then Azpilicueta. The home side were soon back on the attack and it took a tremendous reflex stop from Courtois to prevent Ander Herrera tucking away Martial's drilled left-wing cross. But United's fans' hearts leapt into their mouths again moments later when from Pedro's pass, Matic suddenly found himself bearing down on De Gea, only for the Serbian midfielder to hoist his shot into the crowd, unleashing a burst of mocking laughter around the ground. The final chance fell to Rooney, picked out at the back post by substitute Cameron Borthwick-Jackson, but from inside the six-yard area the United number 10 volleyed well over. Frustrated, Rooney planted his studs into Oscar's calf shortly after and was lucky to escape with a booking. — AFP

INSPIRED OZIL FIRES ARSENAL TO TOP SPOT



LONDON: Arsenal's title challenge is back on track following a 2-0 victory over Bournemouth yesterday which sent them to the top of the Premier League and saw goalkeeper Petr Cech set a new clean-sheet record. Goals from Gabriel and Mesut Ozil, who was again Arsenal's key performer, were enough for the Gunners to settle a few nerves following a shock 4-0 defeat at Southampton two days earlier. The victory also marked an important landmark for Cech who kept his 170th clean sheet in the Premier League - most of them in Chelsea colors - to overtake the previous mark set by David James. With former leaders Leicester due to play fourth-placed Manchester City 24 hours after this fixture, the result leaves Arsenal one point clear at the top of the table - and goes some way to answering criticism that Arsene Wenger's side were starting to buckle under the pressure of trying to win the title for the first time since 2004. If you took only history into account then this fixture would be one of the most uneven the Premier League has ever seen - mighty Arsenal, 13-time

champions, 12-time FA Cup winners and perennial Champions League participants against a club that was playing in the fourth tier of English football only 12 years ago. But there's a lot more to English football than that and there was not a huge chasm between the teams as Arsenal ground out a crucial three points. Bournemouth, renowned for their attractive style of play, went into the game having not lost since early November, including morale-boosting victories over Chelsea and Manchester United. Arsenal by contrast had seen their own six-match unbeaten run brutally ended by Southampton in defeat at St Mary's, a result which almost instantly deflated the euphoria which had been building in north London. **Mercurial** Perhaps that is why the atmosphere at the Emirates was so muted at the start of a match that Wenger's side simply could not afford to lose. Gabriel's header from an Ozil corner after 27 minutes, however, soon settled those nerves. Set-pieces have been Bournemouth's Achilles heel all season and the Brazilian defender was totally unmarked as he stooped to head home at the far post. Gabriel, in fact, was one of four players brought into the Arsenal side by Wenger following that miserable evening on the south coast, with Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, Calum Chambers and Kieran Gibbs also selected in a rare shake-up - and Lauren Koscielny surprisingly left on the bench. Gabriel justified that faith as he hit the post with another header from another Ozil corner minutes lat-



LONDON: Arsenal's German midfielder Mesut Ozil controls the ball in front of Bournemouth's South African-born English midfielder Andrew Surman during an English Premier League match at the Emirates Stadium yesterday. — AFP er, the ball bouncing back off the upright onto Per Mertesacker and dropping wide. Gabriel was also outstanding in defence and the game was effectively over when the mercurial Ozil played a delightful one-two with Olivier Giroud before accepting the Frenchman's back-heeled pass and sliding the ball home in the 63rd minute. Arsenal, who missed a string of chances to add to their lead, now face struggling Newcastle at home next weekend before potentially more difficult fixtures against Liverpool, Stoke and Chelsea. — AFP

CARROLL SCORES WINNER AGAINST SOUTHAMPTON



LONDON: England striker Andy Carroll marked his return from injury with a close-range header that gave West Ham a 2-1 win against Southampton in the Premier League yesterday. The Hammers turned the game around at Upton Park after trailing 1-0, with halftime substitutes Carroll and midfielder Manuel Lanzini key to an unlikely victory after a dreadful first half. West Ham's Carl Jenkinson scored an own goal in the 13th minute after Dusan Tadic latched on to a low cross from Shane Long and the ball hit the defender's leg. The visitors seized the initiative from there on, dominating possession and going close through Long before failing to convert a flurry of chances before the interval. Jose Fonte drew a dramatic save from Adrian, Sadio Mane shot wide and Tadic - after some neat footwork - fired at the 'keeper as Southampton pushed for a second.

After seeing his side outplayed for much of the first period, Slaven Bilic rang the changes at the break, throwing on Carroll and Manuel Lanzini for Zarate and Alex Song - and almost immediately got the response he was after. Just two minutes after the re-start, James Collins' header was cleared off the line from an early corner before Carroll blew a golden opportunity, blasting over off the bar from five yards out with the goal at his mercy. Carroll and Oriol Romeu then sent tame efforts goalwards at either end before West Ham pulled level in bizarre circumstances. Michail Antonio then scored an unusual equalizer in the 69th for West Ham after a clearance hit him on the head, with the ball looping over Southampton goalkeeper Maarten Stekelenburg. Carroll headed the winner 10 minutes later. Antonio - involved in all of West Ham's best moves - headed Valencia's cross against the underside of the bar and Carroll was quickest to react, pouncing on the loose ball to score his second of the season. West Ham had to hold off a determined onslaught from Southampton in the closing stages but, aside from Virgil van Dijk's off-target shot, the hosts were largely untroubled and saw out the final minutes to sign off 2015 with a victory. — Agencies

SURVIVAL OF FITTEST FOR SHIPPING FIRMS IN 2016



TOKYO: Department store employees place products into "lucky bags" for their annual New Year's sale in Tokyo yesterday. Some 150,000 lucky bags containing items worth four times their price tag will go on sale on January 1 to celebrate New Year's Day. — AFP

MIDDLE EAST MISSES OUT ON M&A BOOM

SELLERS RELUCTANT TO CUT PRICES AFTER BUOYANT PERIOD

DUBAI: A global boom in mergers and acquisitions has largely bypassed the Middle East where regional deals are stalling as sellers refuse to budge on valuations despite a slumping oil price. While a flurry of big deals pushed global M&A volume in 2015 to a record \$4.6 trillion, transactions between parties in the Middle East totalled just \$12.68 billion in the year to Dec 7, according to Thomson Reuters data.

That would make it the slowest year in value terms since 2011, while the actual number of deals is on course to be the lowest since 2007. The decline follows a buoyant period when surging economic growth-driven by government largesse and a young and increasingly affluent population-propelled the region's private equity market and pushed up valuations, especially in consumer-focused, healthcare and education businesses.

The valuations being sought by sellers, their expectations inflated by that frenzy, have yet to come back down to earth, despite a regional growth outlook clouded by oil falling to an 11-year-low.

"I don't think expectations of sellers have modulated at all in response to oil prices," said Richard Dallas, managing director of Abu Dhabi-based Gulf Capital, noting that "just like in any real estate market, the first phase of an adjustment is a period of illiquidity."

One industry participant contrasted the gap in valuations between private sellers and public markets, with most Gulf stock exchanges tumbling around 15 percent this year.

One reason potential sellers have been reluctant to compromise is because many businesses are owned by families who often have sentimental attachments to their assets.

In other cases, sellers promised high valuations a year ago by advisers pitching for roles are now unwilling to yield to changed economic conditions. "It's the wrong discussion to try and optimize pricing up front and then either end up with

the wrong partner or with no transaction," said Mustafa Abdel-Wadood, partner of emerging market-focused firm Abraaj Group. The result is that deals take longer to close, as buyers and sellers haggle for longer to reach a mutually agreeable price, or transactions simply fall through.

DEALS DRY UP

The sale of Dunia Finance is one such example, with sources indicating that initial interest shown in the consumer finance firm in August had petered out as the sellers' price expectations deterred potential buyers. Nobody was immediately available to comment on the state of the sale process from Dunia, or current Abu Dhabi-based owners Mubadala and Waha Capital. Singapore's Temasek Holding, whose unit is the third stakeholder in Dunia, declined to comment.

Similarly, KKR and Dubai-based Fajr Capital's joint bid for a 25 percent stake in Azadea Group ran into difficulties because of a disagreement over valuations between the buyers and the family group which owns the Middle Eastern retailer.

While the Middle East has started to benefit from engagement by international private equity firms, who target larger deals, such transactions remain rare. Most deals are below the \$200 million level and between local parties.

It is not all doom and gloom, with population growth continuing to make defensive sectors like food and beverages and healthcare attractive. Another potential bright spot is that the uncertain economic environment has prompted more companies to begin talks with advisers about raising cash through asset sales. "We are getting a lot of enquiries from family groups as many are having to look at tough strategic decisions and are looking at ... possible M&A transactions, divestments," said Raymond Hurley, financial services deals specialist at professional services firm PwC. — Reuters



JEDDAH: Saudi groom Hisham Saleh Edris drives his decorated car as he arrives alone at the men's section of the wedding hall in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. The kingdom has announced yesterday a projected budget deficit in 2016 of \$87 billion (327 billion riyals), as lower oil prices cut into the government's main source of revenue. — AP

SAUDI ELECTRICITY SURGES BEFORE BUDGET ON PRICE REFORM HOPES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock market was generally little changed early yesterday as traders cautiously awaited the release of the kingdom's 2016 state budget, while Egypt recouped some of previous session's losses. The Saudi index rose in the opening minutes but then came well off its highs and after 80 minutes of trade, was up just 0.2 percent.

However, Saudi Electricity Co (STC) and National Gas and Industrialization Co surged 9.9 and 6.8 percent respectively. The budget may include rises in electricity and natural gas feedstock prices, which could boost the bottom lines of Saudi Electricity while squeezing petrochemical firms.

"Before such a big announcement, speculative activities take the driver's seat," said Nateer Al-Mahdi, a portfolio manager at Saudi's Riyad Capital, adding that STC could be sold if electricity price rises were confirmed.

In an unprecedented move, a senior official of state oil giant Saudi Aramco and the ministers of Economy and Planning, Finance, and Water and Electricity will appear at a news conference on the budget.

"The reforms may target the industrial sector before they impact the consumer," said Santhosh Balakrishnan, head of equity research at Riyad Capital. "But what the markets are really looking for is indications as to which sectors will be mostly impacted as a result of those reforms."

In Egypt, Cairo's benchmark rose 0.5 percent in thin trade with second-tier stocks making solid gains. Arabia

Investments and GB Auto were top performers, gaining 6.4 and 1.4 percent respectively.

Dubai's stock market slipped yesterday as regional investors diverted their attention to Saudi Arabia's 2016 state budget announcement, due in the afternoon, while Qatar and Abu Dhabi were steady in lethargic trade. Late on Sunday, Dubai announced plans to raise state spending by 12 percent in 2016 compared to its 2015 budget plan as it invests in infrastructure to sustain economic growth, while continuing to balance its budget. This failed to boost Dubai's stock index, which fell 0.9 percent as only one-third of listed stocks traded. Emaar Properties and Arabtec retreated 2.4 percent and 0.7 percent respectively.

The Saudi budget, which may include spending cuts that have implications for economies throughout the region, is expected to be announced around 1200 GMT. Abu Dhabi's bourse oscillated narrowly around Sunday's close in early trade with only six active stocks among the 61 listed. Blue chips Etisalat and Union National Bank were the only two gainers, rising 2.0 and 0.3 percent.

In Qatar, the index rose 0.3 percent in thin trade as international portfolio managers were largely absent because of the year-end holiday season. Gainers out-numbered losers seven to four with the industrial sector's Aamal Co and Qatar Islamic Bank advancing 2.4 and 1.1 percent. — Reuters

LISTING FAMILY BUSINESSES TO GIVE ADDED VALUE TO KSE

KUWAIT: Analysts have agreed that the recent call by Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of Kuwait's Capital Market Authority (CMA) Nayef Al-Hajraf for family businesses to list at the Kuwait Stock Exchange (KSE) is a significant step that is likely to give added value to the market. In separate interviews with KUNA, they cited the financial solvency and accumulated expertise of family businesses, saying this will help realize the vision of turning Kuwait into a regional financial hub, enhancing the flow of national and foreign investments.

Listing of family businesses on the KSE will be a remarkable step, advisor to the Board of Directors of Arzaq Capital Co. Salah Al-Sultan told KUNA yesterday. Yet, he believed that the present stage is "unfavorable", citing the frequent declines in market performance since the global financial mayhem, and its implications. The pace of market performance since the year started has been impacted by pressing factors, which prompts family businesses to wait until some temporarily risks vanish, he said.

These risks are mainly political developments in the region, the falls of oil prices and the lack of major market makers at KSE, he noted.

Al-Sultan stressed the fact listing family businesses in

the region's second strongest market will no doubt consolidate it, and give impetus to efforts seeking to develop Kuwait into a financial hub in the region. Analyst Adnan Al-Duleimi referred to favorable positive factors for family businesses to be listed at KSE, topped with their good investment reputation. These also include the CMA Law that regulates businesses and helps them maintain their status, he added, noting that the state had offered these companies financial, legislative and logistic support, as well as saving many of them from bankruptcy.

Meanwhile, Al-Duleimi told KUNA that the activation of the CMA Law pushed some companies that had withdrawn from the market to think seriously of making a comeback.

No doubt listing family businesses on the KSE will have several benefits for the market and the companies, chairman of the Kuwaiti Traders Association Mohammad Al-Tarrah.

The step will boost the financial solvency of the businesses so that they can expand their activities for the good of shareholders, Al-Tarrah told KUNA. The listing of the Mezzan Holding Co. on KSE earlier this year has been successful, which prompts the "cloning" of similar family businesses. — KUNA

SURVIVAL OF FITTEST FOR SHIPPING FIRMS IN 2016

DOWNTURN IN DRY FREIGHT MARKET STARTED IN 2008

LONDON: Shipping companies that transport commodities such as coal, iron ore and grain face a painful year ahead, with only the strongest expected to weather a deepening crisis caused by tepid demand and a surplus of vessels for hire.

The predicament facing firms that ship commodities in large unpackaged amounts - known as dry bulk - is partly the result of slower coal and iron ore demand from leading global importer China in the second half of 2015. The Baltic Exchange's main sea freight index - which tracks rates for ships carrying dry bulk commodities - plunged to an all-time low this month.

In stark contrast, however, tankers that transport oil have in recent months enjoyed their best earnings in years. As crude prices have plummeted, bargain-buying has driven up demand, while owners have moved more aggressively to scrap vessels to head off the kind of surplus seen in the dry bulk market.

Symeon Parios, chief administrative officer of Athens-run and New York-listed shipping firm Euroseas, said the outlook for the dry bulk market was "very challenging".

"Demand fundamentals are so weak. The Chinese economy, which is the main driver of dry bulk, is way below expectations," he added. "Only companies with very strong balance sheets will get through this storm." The dry bulk shipping downturn began in 2008, after the onset of the financial crisis, and has worsened significantly this year as the Chinese economy has slowed. The Baltic Exchange's main BDI index - which gauges the cost of shipping such commodities, also including cement and fertiliser - is more than 95 percent down from a record high hit in 2008.

The index is often regarded as a forward-looking economic indicator. With about 90 percent of the world's traded goods by volume transported by sea, global investors look to the BDI for any signs of changes in sentiment for industrial demand.

"The state of the dry bulk market especially indicates that economies worldwide are likely to stay weak, much to the disappointment of central banks ... FX traders, miners, steel makers, trading houses, and commodity economies," said Basil Karatzas, head of New York consultancy and brokerage Karatzas Marine Advisors & Co.

Ratings agency Fitch downgraded the shipping sector to negative, from stable, this month due to slowing global trade and an economic slowdown in emerging markets, adding that dry bulk would remain under pressure.

COMMODITY PRESSURE

Slowing demand and concerns over the health of the Chinese and global economies have pushed the 19-commodity Thomson Reuters/Core Commodity CRB Index, which tracks the prices of 19 commodities including oil and grains, to its lowest level since 2002.

"There is no doubt that the overall macro situation is one that does not engender a lot of confidence for increased trade flows in 2016 and beyond," said Khalid Hashim, managing director of Precious Shipping, one of Thailand's largest dry cargo ship owners.



go ship owners.

Worsening conditions have already claimed casualties. In September, Japanese bulk carrier Daiichi Chuo Kisen Kaisha filed for protection from creditors, and private equity backed Global Maritime Investment Cyprus Ltd filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection in the United States.

Smaller dry bulk ship owners are expected to struggle in coming months. "There are clearly big problems for almost all dry bulk owners, certainly those who cannot subsidize dry bulk through ownership in tankers. Debt can only be serviced through reserves of capital and not from cash-flow," said Tony Foster, chief executive of British shipping asset manager Marine Capital.

"Public companies will issue discounted shares. Small private companies without obvious external

support will be at the most risk." Ship owners are also contending with more vessel orders, which are expected to increase oversupply further.

While the dry bulk market has been in a downturn since 2008, there have been brief rebound periods of relatively good earnings in that time that emboldened ship owners to order more vessels, which normally take up to three years to deliver.

"Too many factors are against ship owners at present, and January sees a disproportionate delivery of vessels from the shipyards," said Karatzas.

Analysis from Axia Capital Markets showed the

environmental pledges. But the country has been looking to boost strategic reserves of crude, taking advantage of multi-year lows in prices, which has helped the oil tanker market rally. Earlier this month China said it more than doubled the size of its strategic crude oil reserves between November 2014 and the middle of this year, a rate exceeding analysts' estimates.

Oil tanker players have been more conservative since 2008 in ordering ships as they experienced rock-bottom rates that saw earnings falling below zero as recently as last year, meaning owners

clocked up losses every day. The scrapping of tankers, which picked up in 2011, has also shrunk the fleet.

Average earnings for supertankers hauling 2 million barrels of oil on the benchmark Middle East Gulf to Japan route have surged to over \$110,000 a day. In contrast, average earnings for capesize ships, among the largest vessels used to haul coal and iron ore, have slumped to under \$5,000 a day in recent weeks - below the basic operating cost level a ship needs to break even, which is around \$8,000.

DIVERGING FORTUNES

"The (tanker) market is on fire," said Deutsche Bank analyst Amit Mehrotra, but added: "Owners of dry bulk ships are likely to spend the holiday break quietly reflecting on how they will further endure the worst market many have seen in their lifetimes." - Reuters

By contrast, demand for oil tankers and the rates they command have surged to their highest levels since 2008 in the past three months. Dry bulk shipping markets have been hit hard by a slide in demand for coal by China, which is also trying to ease its dependence on the polluting fuel and meet

cumulative loss of revenues for 13 shipping companies publicly listed in New York reached over \$3.36 billion in the first nine months of 2015. "Given the current oversupply of vessels in the marketplace that has built up over the past five years, we expect rates to remain at depressed levels for at least two more years as the market struggles to find a new equilibrium," said Robert Perri of Axia Capital Markets.

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GULF NAVIGATION HOLDING NAMES JAIN AS NEW CEO



Parag Jain

DUBAI: Gulf Navigation Holding PJSC, the Dubai-based shipping company, has confirmed the appointment of Parag Jain as the company's new Chief Executive Officer (CEO). The confirmation is a welcome move as Jain has been serving in the capacity of acting CEO since May of this year. With over 20 years of experience in the marine and maritime industry, Parag's dynamic leadership and proficiency in the business is expected to help steer the company's journey towards more growth and development.

The newly appointed CEO first joined Gulf Navigation Holding in January 2010, originally serving as the company's General Manager for the Agencies and Marine Products Division. Co-workers and industry professionals have described Jain as a dynamic and a visionary leader that believes in leading from the front with a hands-on approach towards achieving operational efficiency and effective management, which results in financial strength for the company.

CHINA TELECOM SHARES FALL AMID PROBE INTO BOSS

HONG KONG: Shares in China Telecom dropped as much as three percent yesterday after news its head was under investigation, the latest high-profile target in a corruption crackdown. The firm, one of China's big-three telcos, saw its shares trade as low as HK\$3.62 (\$0.47) on Hong Kong's bourse compared to the previous closing of HK\$3.73. At Monday's close the drop had narrowed to 1.34 percent, with the shares ending at HK\$3.68. The probe into Chang Xiaobing for "severe disciplinary violations" was announced by the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection, the watchdog of the ruling Communist Party.

The term is normally a euphemism for graft. Chang had been "taken away," according to an article in the respected business magazine *Caijing*, adding that he disappeared just days before a meeting of the state-owned company planned for December 28.

Chang's phone was switched off and he had not responded to multiple calls, it added. "Since last year, when the authorities were probing oil companies, we knew they would be doing this for other sectors. Now it's telecoms," financial analyst Jackson Wong from the brokerage firm Simsen Financial Group told AFP.

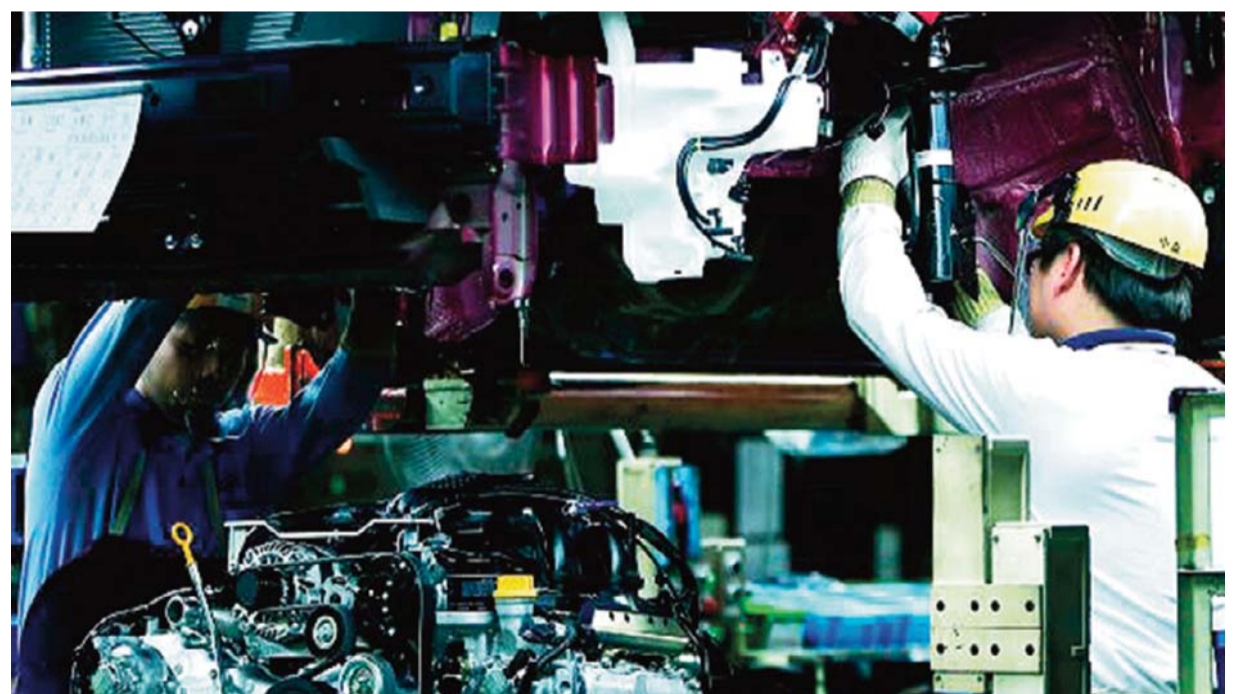
Wong said investors were moving cautiously pending further details of the probe. Authorities have been pursuing a hard-hitting campaign against allegedly crooked officials since President Xi Jinping took office in 2013, a crusade that some experts have called a political purge. After a stock market rout this summer, the nation's financial sector was under the spotlight with several high-level executives reportedly being hauled in. Billionaire Guo Guangchang, dubbed China's Warren Buffett, disappeared from public view earlier this month amid reports he had been detained by police in Shanghai. He briefly resurfaced afterwards but his conglomerate flagship Fosun confirmed the 48-year-old was "assisting in certain investigations" by Chinese authorities. - AFP

GERMAN STOCK EXCHANGE BOOKS HIGHEST NUMBER OF IPOs SINCE 2007

FRANKFURT: The Frankfurt stock exchange said yesterday that 24 companies went public in 2015, the highest number of initial public offerings (IPOs) since 2007. In terms of the size of capital raised from the new listings, this year was also the best in eight years, with the total issue volume amounting to seven billion euros (\$7.7 billion), Deutsche Boerse said in a statement.

By comparison, 19 companies went public in 2014 with a total volume of four billion euros. The single biggest IPO was Covestro, the polymers division of chemicals and pharmaceuticals giant Bayer, which raised 1.5 billion euros when it went public in October.

In July, the real estate financier Deutsche Pfandbriefbank raised 1.16 billion euros via its IPO and Scout24, a digital marketplace specializing in the automotive and real estate sectors, was the third-biggest listing in Frankfurt this year with a volume of 1.02 billion euros. Among the other stock market debutants this year were car parts maker Schaeffler and container shipping giant Hapag Lloyd. In 2016, the most eagerly awaited IPOs will include divisions of the two energy giants E.ON and RWE. - AFP



TOKYO: Japan's factory output declined 1.0 percent, data showed yesterday.

JAPAN FACTORY OUTPUT SLUMPS IN NOV AS RECOVERY STUMBLES

TOKYO: Japan's factory output declined in November, official data showed yesterday, falling back after two months of gains as the economy struggles to mount a recovery. The disappointing data-industrial production fell 1.0 percent from a month earlier-comes after separate figures last week showed persistently weak inflation and household spending.

The numbers underscore Tokyo's challenge in conquering years of deflation and tepid growth with the prime minister's "Abenomics" policy blitz. Monday's decline in factory output was worse than market expectations for a 0.4 percent contraction. Output is taking "one step forward and one step back," the ministry of economy, trade and industry said in a statement. The government forecast stronger figures this month and in January.

"But we should not be so optimistic," said Yusuke Shimoda, an economist at Japan Research Institute. "One big concern is a slowdown in the Chinese economy, which is pressuring Japanese companies." On Friday, Japan said that core inflation, excluding volatile fresh food prices, ticked up 0.1 percent in November. It was the first gain in five months but remains way below the Bank of Japan's 2.0 percent target, as officials struggle to convince cautious firms to usher in big wage hikes to stir spending. In November, household spending fell 2.9 percent from a year ago, the third monthly decline.

Japan's economy saw a slight uptick in the July-September quarter, rising 0.3 percent and reversing an earlier forecast of a contraction that had risked putting the country into recession for the second time in as many years. But a lacklustre global economy, marked by the slowdown in China and weakness in emerging markets, is also posing challenges to the recovery.

Tokyo has approved an extra spending budget to stimulate the economy. A falling price spiral in Japan for years put consumers off buying in the hope of getting goods cheaper down the road, denting firms' expansion and hiring plans. That has weighed on growth in the wider economy.

This month, Japan's central bank announced an unexpected tweak to its 80 trillion yen (\$665 billion) annual asset-buying scheme in a bid to power a recovery in the economy.

The central bank's stimulus, launched more than two years ago, is a cornerstone of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's attempt to kickstart the long-lumbering economy. BoJ chief Haruhiko Kuroda said he was keeping a close eye on how much cash firms hand out in winter bonuses, and in spring wage negotiations. Policymakers hope that putting more cash in shoppers' wallets will spur spending and move Japan closer to the bank's inflation target. - AFP

GOLD DRIFTS LOWER, HEADS FOR 6TH STRAIGHT QUARTERLY LOSS

LONDON: Gold edged lower yesterday in line with a retreat in oil prices, giving up some of last week's gains, but moves were muted in thin liquidity in a holiday-shortened week.

The metal rose nearly 1 percent during Christmas week, but remains on track to fall for a sixth successive quarter, its biggest run of quarterly losses since the mid-1970s. It is down 9 percent so far this year.

Prices hit their lowest since early 2010 earlier this month in anticipation of the first US interest rate hike in nearly a decade. Though gold recovered lost ground in the wake of the announcement as dealers holding short positions covered, it remains under pressure.

Spot gold was down 0.3 percent at \$1,071.94 an ounce at 1250 GMT, while US gold futures for February delivery were down \$4.40 an ounce at \$1,071.50. "Gold is drifting lower after failing to extend the pre-Christmas rally," Saxo Bank's head of

commodity research Ole Hansen said. "Although the near-term direction of the dollar is pointing higher, the lack of dollar strength this December has supported gold primarily through the covering of short positions."

"The first quarter is undoubtedly going to be challenging but in the near-term a break above trendline resistance at \$1,078 could signal some additional short-covering towards \$1,102," he said.

Oil prices fell more than 2 percent after the long Christmas weekend, with international crude and product markets still well supplied. Gold is positively correlated to oil as the metal is seen as a hedge against petroleum-led inflation. Weakness in oil pressured shares in Europe and Asia in trade thinned by holidays in a number of financial centres. The dollar was little changed, with the key London currency market among those still closed. - Reuters



BEIJING: A group of Chinese workers wait for a shuttle bus outside a construction site in Beijing yesterday. - AFP

KIDS' ASTHMA RATES QUIET DOWN AFTER EARLIER INCREASE

CHICAGO: Asthma rates in US children have quieted down after a decades-long increase, a government study found, and researchers are trying to pinpoint reasons that would explain the trend. A possible plateau in childhood obesity rates and declines in air pollution are among factors that may have helped lower cases in kids, the 2001-13 study suggests. Overall, average asthma rates among kids aged 17 and younger increased slightly, then leveled off and declined by the study's end, when 8.3 percent of kids were affected.

Rates varied among some regions, races and ages. The study was published online yesterday in the journal Pediatrics.

Nuanced trends

Childhood asthma rates doubled from 1980 to 1995, partly because of more awareness and diagnosis. The new study shows slower increases after that, rising to 9.3 by 2010. Declines in the most recent years were in children younger than 5, Mexican kids, those in the Midwest and those from families that weren't poor.

Rates plateaued among whites and those living in the Northeast and West, but increased in those aged 10 to 17, kids from poor families and those living in the South.

Rates increased but then plateaued among blacks. The study is based on annual in-person government health surveys in which parents of more than 150,000 kids were asked if their children had been diagnosed with asthma. Data not included in the study show 2014 rates climbed slightly to 8.6 percent but it's not

clear if that change was real, said lead author Dr Lara Akinbami, a medical officer at the government's National Center for Health Statistics.

Competing forces

Asthma's causes are uncertain but authorities believe several factors play a role or trigger attacks, including air pollution, obesity, tobacco smoke, premature birth and respiratory infections in infancy. Competing changes in some of these factors complicate efforts to understand

asthma trends, Akinbami said.

For example, while US air quality has generally improved from decades ago, children whose schools are built near congested expressways may not be benefiting. And while US smoking rates have fallen, a warming climate may prolong growing seasons and kids' exposure to pollen. Akinbami called the study overall good news since rates are down or mostly stable. "We're cautious because we never know that the next year is going to show," she said. —AP

DAMAGE FROM SINKING LAND COSTING CALIFORNIA BILLIONS

DOS PALOS: A canal that delivers vital water supplies from Northern California to Southern California is sinking in places. So are stretches of a riverbed undergoing historic restoration. On farms, well casings pop up like mushrooms as the ground around them drops.

Four years of drought and heavy reliance on pumping of groundwater have made the land sink faster than ever up and down the Central Valley, requiring repairs to infrastructure that experts say are costing billions of dollars. This slow-motion land subsidence — more than one foot a year in some places — is not expected to stop anytime soon, experts say, nor will

Over-pumping

Land subsidence is largely the result of pumping water from the ground. As aquifers are depleted, the ground sags. The most severe examples today are in San Joaquin Valley, where the US Geological Survey in 1975 said half of the land is prone to sinking. USGS researchers later called it one of the "single largest alterations of the land surface attributed to humankind."

A sparse mountain snowpack in California's driest four-year span on record has forced farmers in the Central Valley, the nation's most productive agricultural region, to rely on groundwater to irrigate their crops. Drought has spawned a well-

spots, irrigation districts raise the sides of sagging canals so they can increase the water level and maintain a gravitational flow.

As a result, at least one bridge now sits below the waterline. Chris White, general manager of the Central California Irrigation District in Los Banos, said replacing it is expected to cost \$2.5 million. Rebuilding another canal recently cost \$4.5 million.

Putting a grand total on damage from subsidence in California is tricky because irrigation districts don't often single out repairs required by subsidence from general upkeep, said Borchers, who estimates long-term costs as being

California Aqueduct, a massive canal that delivers water 400 miles to Southern California, also sank by nearly 13 inches, the NASA research shows.

This has cost the state of California "tens of millions of dollars" in repairs to the aqueduct in the last 40 years, and officials expect to spend that much in the future, said Ted Thomas, a spokesman for the state's Department of Water Resources. California became the last state in the West to regulate groundwater when Gov. Jerry Brown last year signed legislation ending a Gold Rush-era policy that generally let property owners take as much as they wanted. But local agencies have until 2040 to put groundwater management plans into effect.

Farmers and irrigation districts are not the only ones taking note of sinking land. Spokesman Greg Snapper said Pacific Gas & Electric Co. has not sustained any broken natural gas pipelines from sinking land in the Central Valley, but it monitors the lines and this year started using NASA's satellite research as part of that effort.

A 60-mile stretch of California's High Speed Rail track, designed to whisk passengers through the Central Valley in excess of 200 mph, will be built on a bed of rocks. This design is more forgiving and easier to maintain and repair if the land sinks than other stretches built on highway-like slabs, said Frank Vacca, the rail authority's chief program manager.

Sinking land has stopped work on part of a historic project to return water flows to an irrigation-depleted section of the San Joaquin River. Before construction of a passageway for fish can begin, officials need to assess how fast the land will sink in the future, said Alicia Forsythe of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.

With a wet El Niño winter forecast, geologists also worry that subsidence in a flood control channel elsewhere on the river may cause water to pool, prompting flooding rather than flow toward the sea. "We haven't had to use it for a while," said Michelle Sneed, a USGS subsidence researcher. "We'll see how that's going to perform this year, if it's called upon." —AP



DOS PALOS: In this Dec 22, 2015 photo, Chris White, general manager of the Central California Irrigation District, speaks during an interview with The Associated Press as he stands on a bridge over the Outside Canal that needs to be replaced because of sinking land. —AP

the expensive repairs.

"It's shocking how a huge area is affected, but how little you can tell with your eye," said James Borchers, a hydro-geologist, who studies subsidence and says careful monitoring is necessary to detect and address sinking before it can do major damage to costly infrastructure such as bridges and pipelines.

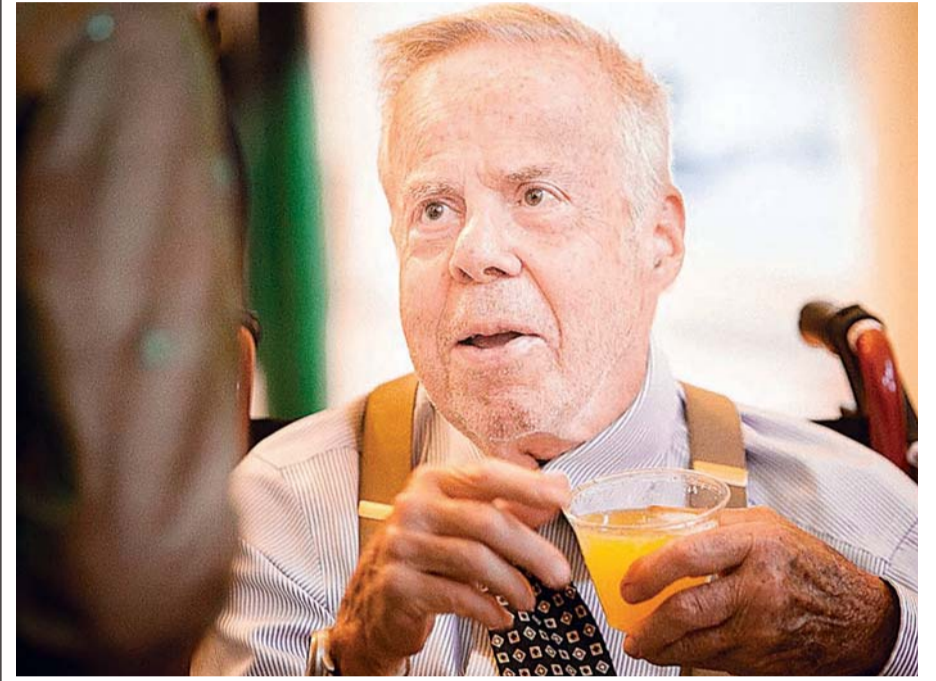
drilling boom with some tapping ancient aquifers 3,000 feet down.

In wet years, groundwater provides about 40 percent of water used in California, but in times of drought, groundwater can amount to 65 percent of the state's water supply. Decades of over-pumping have destroyed thousands of well casings and buckled canal linings. To keep water flowing through low

"probably in the billions."

Decade long problem

Subsidence has been a problem for decades, and it's accelerating. Last year near Corcoran, the land sank 13 inches in eight months, researchers at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory found by comparing images collected over time from satellites and airplanes. Parts of the



SEATTLE: This undated photo provided the Spitzer family shows Dr Robert Spitzer, a psychiatrist who played a leading role in establishing agreed-upon standards to describe mental disorders and eliminating homosexuality's designation as a pathology. —AP

SPITZER, 'MOST INFLUENTIAL PSYCHIATRIST,' DIES AT 83

SEATTLE: Dr Robert Spitzer — a psychiatrist who played a leading role in establishing agreed-upon standards to describe mental disorders and eliminating homosexuality's designation as a pathology — died Friday in Seattle. He was 83. Spitzer died of heart problems, said his wife, Columbia University Professor Emerita Janet Williams.

Dr Spitzer's work on several editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, or the DSM defined all of the major disorders "so all in the profession could agree on what they were seeing," said Williams, who worked with him on DSM-III, which was published in 1980 and became a best-selling book.

"That was a major breakthrough in the profession," she said. Spitzer came up with agreed-upon definitions of mental disorders by convening meetings of experts in each diagnostic category and taking notes on their observations, the New York Times reported. "Rather than just appealing to authority, the authority of Freud, the appeal was: Are there studies? What evidence is there?" Spitzer told the New Yorker magazine in 2005. "The people I appointed had all made a commitment to be guided by data."

Dr Allen Frances, a professor emeritus of psychiatry at Duke University and editor of a later edition of the manual, told the Times that Spitzer "was by far the most influential psychiatrist of his time." Gay-rights activists credit Dr Spitzer with

removing homosexuality from the list of mental disorders in the DSM in 1973. He decided to push for the change after he met with gay activists and determined that homosexuality could not be a disorder if gay people were comfortable with their sexuality.

At the time of the psychiatric profession's debate over homosexuality, Dr Spitzer told the Washington Post: "A medical disorder either had to be associated with subjective distress — pain — or general impairment in social function." Dr Jack Drescher, a gay psychoanalyst in New York, told the Times that Spitzer's successful push to remove homosexuality from the list of disorders was a major advance for gay rights. "The fact that gay marriage is allowed today is in part owed to Bob Spitzer," he said.

In 2012, Dr Spitzer publicly apologized for a 2001 study that found so-called reparative therapy on gay people can turn them straight if they really want to do so. He told the Times in 2012 that he concluded the study was flawed because it simply asked people who had gone through reparative therapy if they had changed their sexual orientation. "As I read these commentaries (about the study), I knew this was a problem, a big problem, and one I couldn't answer," Dr Spitzer told the Times. "How do you know someone has really changed?" Dr Spitzer and his wife moved to Seattle from New Jersey this year. —AP

ASTRONAUT TIM PEAKE DIALS WRONG NUMBER FROM SPACE

LONDON: Anyone can dial a wrong number, but it's not often done from outer space. British astronaut Tim Peake tweeted an apology on Christmas Day from the International Space Station after calling a wrong number. He wrote "I'd like to apologize to the lady I just called by mistake saying 'Hello, is this planet Earth?' - not a prank call - just a wrong number!"

The 43-year-old former army helicopter pilot did not say who he was calling. Millions of Britons have been following his mission closely since he became Britain's first publicly funded

astronaut and the first Briton to visit the space station. The nation seemed to come to a halt during liftoff Dec 15 as many stopped what they were doing and nervously watched live coverage of him leaving the earth for outer space.

An astronomer told Britons they might have a chance to view the space station as it transits above the earth on Christmas Day. Robin Scagell of the Society for Popular Astronomy said the station would be flying relatively low when it passes over London and would be "the brightest star in the sky, moving rapidly from

west to east."

Peake plans to conduct experiments on how the human body reacts in space and — in a British twist on space exploration — try out a new team-making process geared toward zero gravity. He is sharing the space station with five other astronauts from Russia and the United States. Peake's crewmates are NASA's Scott Kelly and Tim Kopra and Russians Mikhail Kornienko, Yuri Malenchenko and Sergey Volkov. Kelly and Kornienko are on the first joint US-Russian one-year mission at the space station. —AP



KAZAKHSTAN: In this Tuesday, Dec 15, 2015 file photo, British astronaut Tim Peake, member of the main crew of the expedition to the International Space Station (ISS), gestures prior to the launch of Soyuz TMA-19M space ship at the Russian leased Baikonur cosmodrome. —AP

IRAN REPORTS 112 SWINE FLU DEATHS SINCE NOVEMBER

TEHRAN: A swine flu outbreak in Iran has killed 112 people since mid-November and the country's first medical worker has died of the virus, media said yesterday. "About 1,190 people have been diagnosed with the (H1N1) virus and hospitalized" and "the death toll has reached 112," state news agency IRNA quoted a health ministry official as saying.

"Vaccines and laboratory equipment for diagnosis are available around the clock across the country," Mohammad Mehdi Gouya, the head of the ministry's communicable diseases department, said. The outbreak was "under control" and its "first and more serious wave" of expansion was expected to diminish "in the coming days," he added. Swine flu deaths have mostly been in southeastern Iran, while many other provinces across the country have reported isolated fatalities. A nurse died Sunday after contracting the flu from patients at a hospital in the northeastern town of Neyshabour, the Mehr news agency reported yesterday. Authorities earlier this month warned swine flu could spread to Tehran and provinces in the north and west. A major H1N1 outbreak sparked a World Health Organization pandemic alert in June 2009, after the virus emerged from Mexico and the United States. —AFP



LINCOLN: One of two male red pandas eats bamboo given as a Christmas gift at Lincoln Children's Zoo. —AP

US ZOOKEEPERS GIVE TREAT FILLED PRESENTS TO ANIMALS

LINCOLN, Nebraska: Even the animals shared in the holiday spirit at the Lincoln Children's Zoo in Nebraska. On Thursday, keepers gave their animals treat-filled presents, continuing the zoo's longtime tradition. "The keepers have a great time with it, and it's something fun," zoo director John Chapo told the Lincoln Journal Star, adding that the treats also provide nutrients.

Zookeeper Meg Meyer's first stop was the macaws, where Elliot and Sergeant Pepper ripped the red Christmas wrapping off their boxes and discovered nuts, graham crackers and ice cream cones. They cawed loudly from inside their heated room. Carson and Tenzing, two of the zoo's red pandas, found bamboo, bananas and apples in their present. Ranney, the snow

leopard, savored meatballs. A naked mole-rat feasted on baby pears.

"It's something different than what they eat every day, but it's still nutritious for them," said Ryan Gross, the zoo's director of strategic communications. "Just like we get special food around the holidays, so do they." And Ranney received an extra gift: a Christmas Eve snowstorm. "I don't think she's had snow since she got here," Gross said. "She's very happy right now." The eight full-time zookeepers work 365 days a year, Chapo said, including in bad weather and on holidays. "They still come in and take care of our animals on Christmas," he said. "They have Christmas spirit, and they want to share toys with the animals — (the toys) are tasty tidbits." —AP

DRUG SHOWS PROMISE FOR ENDANGERED FOX

TORRANCE: The Catalina Island fox, one of the world's most endangered species, suffered from frequent tumors for the past decade until scientists discovered a relatively simple solution: treating ear mites.

Research by veterinarians at the University of California, Davis and the Catalina Island Conservancy shows treating ear mites with an anti-parasitic drug helps block cancer, according to the Daily Breeze of Torrance. Ear infections that can lead to cancer were reduced from 98 percent to 10 percent among foxes that received the drug during a six-month trial.

Efforts to save the foxes, one of the six subspecies of the island gray fox native to the Channel Islands, began in the late 1990s when residents noticed the population declined — a result of canine distemper brought by visitors. The disease killed roughly 90 percent of the island fox population.

As of 1999, roughly 100 foxes remained, said Winston Vickers, associate veterinarian at University of California, Davis, and lead author of the study. As a result, all fox pop-

ulations on the island were listed as endangered under the federal Endangered Species Act.

Scientists noticed the prevalence of ear mites and the incidence of cancer. A pilot study spearheaded by the conservancy began with 100 foxes to determine whether the drug ivermectin would be effective, administered through a syringe into the animal's ear canal.

"It's an oily based treatment that coats the inside of the ear and kills the mites," said Calvin Duncan, wildlife biologist for the Catalina Island Conservancy and co-author of studies. Initial lumps that indicate early stages of most tumors are no longer being seen, Vickers said.

In 2014, the fox population was surveyed at 1,717, and Duncan said this year's data should indicate similar numbers. The numbers have rebounded so much that the Catalina Island fox may no longer be listed as an endangered species. The designation, which prohibits hunting of the animals and other restrictions, is under review by the US Fish and Wildlife Service. —AP



In this Nov 23, 2003, file photo, a Santa Catalina Island fox pup dashes into the wilderness after being released on Santa Catalina Island off the coast of Southern California. —AP

IOWA CITY STUDENTS STRIVE FOR SUCCESS

IOWA CITY: Inside the Church of the Nazarene in Iowa City, students are spending time after school working to become better in school. Sitting side by side at a table, a teacher helps an 11-year-old with math homework. Another student works on a math program on a computer, while another sorts through books from her bag.

The 10 students — in third through sixth grade — wear navy blue hooded sweatshirts that say "Got Education?" as well as "Strive for Success," the name of the program that's helping them do better at school. Founded in 2012, Strive for Success is a faith-based, after-school program designed to improve students' math and reading skills. The program was founded by Caleb Thomas, who was a counselor for seven years at Grant Wood Elementary in Iowa City.

"I started the program," he says, "based on the needs of students not having positive things to do after school, as well as some of the kids falling behind in their academics, recognizing that it would be wonderful to provide a safe environment for kids to come and get caught up on their academics and reading and math."

Multiple activities

The program, he says, helps students who are one to two grade levels behind in reading and math become proficient in those subjects. It employs licensed teachers and practicum students at the University of Iowa as trained volunteer tutors. Students start by signing in, having a snack

and creating a daily progress report that "allows them to figure out what they have to do for the day," Thomas says. Besides working on homework, they take time for sports and other activities.

TaSean Henderson, an 11-year-old sixth grader at Horn Elementary, is working his way through math folders that gradually increase in difficulty and that are part of the Teacher Accelerated Instruction program. The work, he says, helped him earn a 96 percent on a recent math test. Math is now his favorite subject. The program, he says, helps in other areas: "When you come in, you gotta be respectful."

Eleven-year-old Joshua Thomas, also a sixth grader at Horn, says he joined to improve his math and reading skills. "If I wasn't in this program, I wouldn't have the best grades," he says. Strive for Success staffers stay in touch with the students' teachers and keep them aware of areas where a child might be struggling, Thomas says.

"The school district has changed its (math) curriculum, which I really enjoy because it provides a lot of story problems," Thomas says. "However, because the kids are behind in their reading, it takes them a longer time to get their math done. It can take some of these students up to an hour just to get some of their math homework done." Students pay \$25 a month as an education investment fee to be in the program, Thomas says. Sponsors also assist with costs. "Hopefully, through word of mouth," Thomas says, "the community will begin to learn more about this program."



BARROW: In this Oct 7, 2014 file photo, men haul sections of whale skin and blubber, known as muktuk, as a bowhead whale is butchered in a field. —AP photos

ALASKA'S INUIT LINK STEADY FOOD SUPPLY TO ENVIRONMENT HEALTH

ANCHORAGE: Alaska Inuit hunter John Goodwin for decades has hunted oogruk, the bearded seal, a marine mammal prized for its meat, oil and hide. The largest of Alaska's ice seals uses sea ice to rest and birth pups, and after the long winter, when ice breaks into floes, there's a window of opportunity for Goodwin to leave his home in Kotzebue and motor his boat between ice panels, north seals and butcher them before they migrate through the Bering Strait.

A hunting season that used to last weeks, however, has shrunk. Ice that formerly froze 5-feet (1.5-meters) thick or more is a fraction of that. Ice disappears quickly, and so do the seals. "As soon as the sun comes out, it starts melting, or we have a heavy rain," Goodwin said. "Basically, it's the rain that deteriorates the ice real quick. We don't have enough time to hunt."

Protect their culture

The environment is changing and the Inuit, who consider themselves a part of it, want measures taken to protect their culture. A report issued this month by the Inuit Circumpolar Council-Alaska, which advocates for Inuit coast villages from southwest to north Alaska, calls for policies that protect Inuit traditional food and the Arctic environment that produces it. "When we say food security, it has to do with the health of all of it," said Carolina Behe, the organization's indigenous knowledge and science adviser.

More than 90 percent of the food purchased with cash in Alaska comes in from elsewhere and a reliable food supply in more urban communities like Anchorage means affordable prices and uninterrupted service on groceries shipped north by barge or jet. For the Inuit, who have survived for thousands of years in one of the harshest climates on Earth, food is the connection between the past and today's culture, according to the report.

Food is survival and identity. Over millennia, the capturing of caribou or seals, the gathering of salmonberries, how they were processed, stored and shared was incorporated into art, storytelling, dance, drumming, education and language.

"Our traditional foods are much more than calories or nutrients; they are a lifeline throughout our culture and reflect the health of the entire Arctic ecosystem," the report's authors said. As changes arose, Inuit leaders began talking at public forums about food. Their concept of secure food differed from the concept held by people in academia and government, who spoke of nutritional value and purchasing power.

Hunting disruption

At a meeting four years ago, Behe recalled, someone asked whether the Inuit were looking forward to increased shipping because it would create more opportunity to move in food. "Our people were saying the exact opposite: We're really concerned about these ships because they're going to disrupt our hunting, the noise is disrupting the animals, the pollu-

ocean and wildlife management. State officials set hunting seasons. Federal officials oversee harvesting of marine mammals and industrial ocean fisheries. International agreements are considered in salmon and migratory bird decisions. Sources within the United States and internationally contribute to warming and pollutants affecting the Arctic.

Researchers want a better understanding on how



BARROW: Inuit hunter Karlin Itchoak coils the rope of subsistence net after pulling in a beluga whale as the sun sets.

tants, and that's a threat to food security," Behe said.

The report, assembled through visits to 15 Inuit villages and with 146 listed authors, urges Arctic policy decisions through the lens of food. Inuit leaders want the baseline data collected on the Arctic ecosystem using both science and indigenous knowledge, Behe said. A scientist researching salmon might look first at population dynamics. An elder might taste the water, look at streamside vegetation, check fish scales and gauge the texture of the meat, Behe said.

The report notes the fragmented nature of land,

rapid change in the Arctic is affecting natural systems and people. That's also increasingly important for the Arctic Council, the eight-country forum that promotes cooperation and interaction between Arctic countries, said Fran Ulmer, chair of the US Arctic Research Commission. People who are causing change in the Arctic from greenhouse gases or pollution, Behe said, must take responsibility for actions affecting the Inuit. "The people causing the pollution have to have more responsibility and have to be expected to change their behavior, as opposed to expecting Inuit to change theirs," she said. —AP

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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
فهد علي المخيزيم

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



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



The Armenian Prelacy in Kuwait and the Neighboring Countries hosted a Christmas reception which was attended by ambassadors and other dignitaries. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



THE SULTAN CENTER, DASMAN DIABETES INSTITUTE ORGANIZE PUBLIC SCREENINGS

Out of a deep commitment to the health of its customers and the community, The Sultan Center (TSC) and Dasman Diabetics Institute coordinated a Glucose Screening and Blood Pressure check at TSC Sharq on December 22, 2015 at TSC Sharq.

Led by its effective programs and awareness campaigns, The Dasman Institute aims to prevent, control and mitigate the impact of diabetes in Kuwait. Through this event, TSC and the Dasman institute jointly aimed to

educate customers on diabetes through public health promotion, while also encouraging individuals to undergo regular preventative health screenings in order to detect the onset of diabetes.

Lisa Al-Ghareeb, Marketing Manager at TSC, quoted: "As part of TSC Because We Care program and our ongoing support to the community, TSC wanted to provide the public with a venue to undergo check-ups in order to help identify their risk for developing diabetes, hence, to ensure

that they lead healthy lives.

Through this initiative and with consistent check-ups, individuals are strongly advised to adopt healthy lifestyle practices while stressing the importance of early detection of diabetes.

Diabetes is a condition that can have an impact on the entire family; whether you or a family member has diabetes the Dasman Institute can assist with the necessary resources and support in order for your family to adjust to life with Diabetes.



An end of first term - end of Year 2015 event took place recently at Kuwait National English School. A seasonal tea party for staff held by Madame Chantal Al Gharabally, School Director. The year and the term were ended happily before Winter break at Kuwait National English School.



Residence Inn Kuwait



Blentz Restaurant

RESIDENCE INN LAUNCHES WEEKEND OFFER FOR GCC NATIONALS, RESIDENTS



Lobby lounge

Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City offers its guests from GCC the perfect weekend escape with up to 30 percent discount on room rates. The special package also includes complimentary breakfast and free airport transfers. Whether it is a short trip to enjoy the shopping delights in the heart of Kuwait City or a weekend break from the stress of everyday living, Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City provides the perfect solution.

Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City extends the feeling of a comfortable home away from home and offers guests inviting and functional public spaces to relax and enjoy their stays. Other hotel facilities and services include a fitness center, business center, stylishly-appointed studios with fully-equipped kitchens and free house-keeping services.

Perfectly located in the Sharq business district, Residence Inn by Marriott Kuwait City has a lobby that offers a communal environment including a self-service lounge, and a warm casual restaurant- The Blentz. A "grab and go" kiosk/market offering snacks, basic food items, newspapers, magazines and various sundries is located adjacent to the front desk. Three fully-equipped meeting rooms are available with state-of-the-art technology and a professional event management team to handle all details. Overlooking the beautiful blue waters of the Arabian Gulf, the sun-drenched meeting rooms are an ideal location for any corporate events and meetings. Residence Inn featuring its fitness facilities will allow travelers to continue with their regular routine of a healthy and balanced lifestyle.



Larger studio sea view



The Jordanian Community in Kuwait launched its first non-profit website to provide career opportunities for Jordanians in Kuwait and outside. The announcement came during a ceremony held recently and attended by officials from the Jordanian Embassy in Kuwait led by Deputy Ambassador Shakir Al-Amoush, as well as Secretary General of the Council of the Jordanian Community in Kuwait Engineer Ghassan Theyab. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

SHOP BAHRAIN LAUNCHED IN A GLITZERY EVENT

'Shop Bahrain', the largest nationwide festival, kicked off on Thursday, December 24th at Seef Mall with a live performance by popular Arabic singer, Asma Lmnawar, with scores of people attending the launch event from Bahrain and across the region.

Shop Bahrain will mirror the Kingdom's position as a welcoming, accessible, family destination with an incredibly diverse range of retail experiences from luxury malls to traditional souks to luxury boutiques coupled with unbeatable bargains and promotions. The 30-day festival will run until the 23rd of January 2016.

Commenting on the launch event, Shop Bahrain Project Director, Nawaf Al Koheji said: "For the next thirty days, we welcome residents and visitors to enjoy the promotions and activities organized as a part of Shop Bahrain."

Shop Bahrain's calendar of activities boasts the return of Al Riwaq's 'The Nest', showcasing local and regional talent and entrepreneurs under one roof during the weekend event. The event aims to promote the latest creations from clothes, jewelry, ceramics, furniture and much more. On the sidelines of the event, a number of workshop for children, film screenings and music acts are held. The event will be held on the weekends until the 9th of January 2016.

In addition, the 'Taste Tour' is held daily in the center of it all - Adliya, until 9th of January allowing the public to

sample the best dishes from 13 restaurants in Block 338. Participants who complete the 'Taste Tour' will be able to take part in a raffle draw for a Gulf Air business class ticket to any destination.

Shop Bahrain also features the largest outdoor ice skating rink held outside Al Aali Shopping Complex, the 'VIVA Shop & Skate' is open throughout the week and also features a market during the weekends, creating a unique experience for the public.

Next on the calendar of events is 'The Family Fair', an exciting carnival held during the New Year's Eve Weekend at Prince Khalifa bin Salman Park in Hidd featuring a concert by Bahraini singer, Hind, along with fireworks, games and food stalls.

A number of in-mall activities will also be held across participating shopping malls including children cinema, art workshops, reverse bungee jumps, rock climbing and much more.

Mega raffle draw and instant scratch and win cards will also offer visitors and residents the opportunity to win big and amazing prizes with more than 20,000 prizes such as airline tickets and cars.

Shoppers and visitors can find out the latest information about Shop Bahrain through the festival's website www.shopbahrain.com or by following any of its social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube @shopbahrain.



CLASSIFIEDS



KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (24/12/2015 TO 30/12/2015)

SHARQIA-1
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 11:45 AM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 1:45 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 4:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 6:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 12:05 AM

SHARQIA-2
 POINT BREAK 12:45 PM
 POINT BREAK 3:00 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 5:15 PM
 POINT BREAK 8:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 10:15 PM
 POINT BREAK 12:30 AM

SHARQIA-3
 KHANET EL YEK 1:00 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 3:00 PM
 THE GOOD DINOSAUR 4:45 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 7:00 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 9:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 10:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-1
 DILWALE - Hindi 11:45 AM
 NARCOPOLIS 2:45 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 4:45 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 7:45 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 10:45 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 12:45 AM

MUHALAB-2
 KHANET EL YEK 12:15 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 2:15 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 4:15 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 7:15 PM
 SOUKHYAM - Telugu 4:15 PM
 SOUKHYAM - Telugu 7:15 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 10:15 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 12:15 AM

MUHALAB-3
 POINT BREAK 12:30 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 3:00 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 5:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 7:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 9:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 12:05 AM

FANAR-1
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 12:00 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 2:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 4:00 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 6:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 8:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 10:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 12:05 AM

FANAR-2
 NARCOPOLIS 11:30 AM
 STOMPING GROUND 1:30 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 3:15 PM

 STOMPING GROUND 5:15 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 7:00 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 9:00 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 10:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 12:45 AM

FANAR-3
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 PM
 DARK MOUNTAIN 3:00 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 4:45 PM
 DARK MOUNTAIN 7:30 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:30 PM
 MAMA MANCHU ALLUDU KANCHU - Telugu 3:30 PM
 MAMA MANCHU ALLUDU KANCHU - Telugu 6:30 PM
 SOUKHYAM - Telugu 9:30 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:30 AM

FANAR-4
 POINT BREAK -3D 12:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 2:30 PM
 THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:00 PM
 POINT BREAK -3D 7:15 PM
 POINT BREAK 9:45 PM
 POINT BREAK 12:15 AM

FANAR-5
 DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM
 DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 5:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 8:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 PM

MARINA-1
 DILWALE - Hindi 12:45 PM
 ROOM 1:30 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 3:45 PM
 ROOM 6:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 8:30 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 10:30 PM
 ROOM 12:30 AM

MARINA-2
 POINT BREAK 12:15 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 2:45 PM
 POINT BREAK 5:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 8:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 10:15 PM
 POINT BREAK 12:45 AM

MARINA-3
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 1:15 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE -3D 3:15 PM
 THE GOOD DINOSAUR 5:15 PM
 THE PEANUTS MOVIE 7:30 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 9:30 PM
 STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS 12:15 AM

AVENUES-1
 NARCOPOLIS 1:15 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 3:30 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 5:45 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 8:00 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 10:15 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 12:30 AM

AVENUES-2
 STOMPING GROUND 12:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 2:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 4:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 6:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 8:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 10:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 12:45 AM

AVENUES-3
 DILWALE - Hindi 11:30 AM
 DILWALE - Hindi 2:30 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 5:45 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 9:00 PM
 DILWALE - Hindi 12:05 AM

360°-1
 POINT BREAK -3D 1:15 PM
 POINT BREAK -3D 3:45 PM
 POINT BREAK -3D 6:15 PM
 POINT BREAK 8:45 PM
 POINT BREAK 11:15 PM

360°-2
 KHANET EL YEK 12:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 2:15 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 4:30 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 6:45 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 9:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 11:15 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 1:15 AM

360°-3
 STOMPING GROUND 11:45 AM
 STOMPING GROUND 1:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 3:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 5:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 7:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 9:45 PM
 STOMPING GROUND 11:45 PM

AL-KOUT.1
 POINT BREAK 11:30 AM
 POINT BREAK 2:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 4:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 7:00 PM
 POINT BREAK 9:30 PM
 POINT BREAK 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.2
 KHANET EL YEK 12:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 2:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 4:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 6:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 8:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 10:00 PM
 KHANET EL YEK 12:05 AM

AL-KOUT.3
 STOMPING GROUND 11:45 AM
 NARCOPOLIS 1:30 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 3:30 PM
 NARCOPOLIS 5:15 PM

THE GOLD CAMP FOR RENT

For companies and families
 Programs: competitions for kids and games.
 Programs: competitions for grownups.
 Playgrounds: football, volleyball, Horses & camel
Fenced camp + security.

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FOR SALE

Chevy Caprice, 1994 model, white, must test. KD 700.
 Tel: 99058260. (C 5104)
28-12-2015

CHANGE OF NAME

I Irfan Mohammed S/o Noor Jaman, Dist Banswara (Rajasthan) holder of Indian Passport No. F9295894, I am going to change my name Irfan Khan, in future known by my new name Irfan Khan. (C 5103) 27-12-2015

SITUATION VACANT

Professional cook for house, good experience all kinds of food, especially Arabic food, good salary, part time. Call: 23901053, 60064934. (C 5102) 21-12-2015

A single American-Lebanese male living in Salmiya needs a lady worker to help in cooking and cleaning. She must understand and speak English and her timing and salary are negotiable. Call 6641-7504. (C 5100) 19-12-2015

I Dheemu Sudeep holder of Indian Passport No. F6768269 resident of Pulapathur (V & P) Rajampet (M), YSR Kadapa Dist, A.P., India. Now I have changed my name as Bheemu Sudeep Kumar Reddy instead of Dheemu Sudeep in future all transaction will be made in Bheemu Sudeep Kumar Reddy only. (C 5101) 21-12-2015

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR CIVIL INFORMATION

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

PRAYER TIMINGS

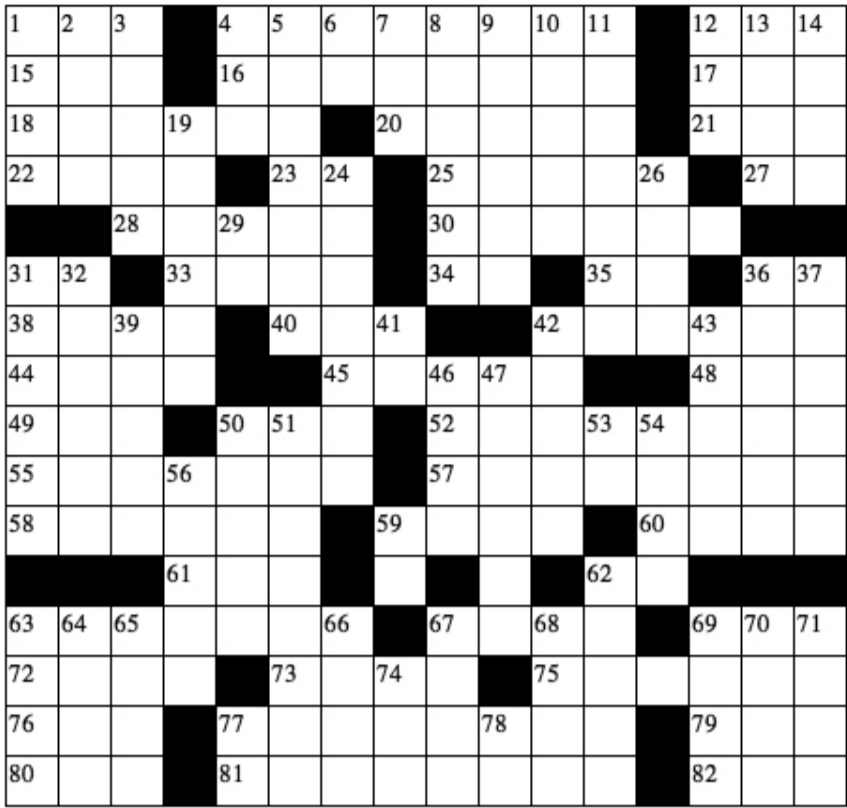
Fajr: 05:17
Shorook: 06:41
Duhr: 11:50
Asr: 14:40
Maghrib: 16:58
Isha: 18:21

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw) In case you are not travelling, your proper cancellation of bookings will help other passengers to use seats

Arrival Flights on Tuesday 29/12/2015				Departure Flights on Tuesday 29/12/2015			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
BBC	143	Dhaka	00:05	KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	KAC	672	Dubai	14:45
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:50
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	OMA	645	Muscat	15:30
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	NIA	251	Alexandria	15:30
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	KAC	562	Amman	15:40
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	JAD	301	Amman	15:55
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	QTR	1072	Doha	16:10
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	FDB	051	Dubai	16:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	RJA	640	Amman	16:55
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	KAC	542	Cairo	16:55
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20	KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	17:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	MSR	614	Cairo	17:50
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25	JZR	325	Al Najaf	17:50
THY	6376	Istanbul	05:05	JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	KAC	502	Beirut	18:00
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	FDB	063	Dubai	18:05
BAW	157	London	06:40	UAL	982	IAD	18:15
KAC	416	Jakarta/Kuala Lumpur	07:15	JZR	177	Dubai	18:20
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	KAC	680	Muscat	18:25
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	KAC	786	Jeddah	18:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	QTR	1080	Doha	18:55
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	KAC	742	Dammam	19:05
OMA	641	Muscat	08:00	KAC	614	Bahrain	19:10
KAC	354	BLR	08:15	KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
THY	6676	Istanbul	08:30	KAC	166	Paris/Rome	19:30
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	KAC	618	Doha	19:35
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	KAC	104	London	19:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50	KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	FDB	061	Dubai	20:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55
IRC	6507	Shiraz	10:30	JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
IRA	675	Lar	10:40	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	ALK	229	Colombo	21:25
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15	UAE	859	Dubai	21:40
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	QTR	1082	Doha	22:00
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	JZR	125	Bahrain	22:00
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	KLM	415	Amsterdam	22:05
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	AIC	987	Chennai/Hyderabad	22:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	FDB	059	Dubai	22:30
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50	PIA	239	Sialkot	22:35
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	JZR	239	Amman	23:05
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10	JZR	185	Dubai	23:15
KAC	514	Tehran	14:10	UAL	981	Bahrain	23:25
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20	FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30	THY	764	Istanbul	23:50
FBA	831	Al Najaf	14:40	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:55
				MSC	403	Asyut	23:55

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1122



ACROSS

- A doctor's degree in education.
- The wife or widow of a czar.
- The compass point that is one point south of due east.
- (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
- A chain of mountains between France and Spain.
- Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
- Having short sharp turns or angles n.
- Volatile liquid distilled from turpentine oleoresin.
- A master's degree in business.
- Tropical starchy tuberous root.
- A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Orion and Columba.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- Be in accord.
- A compound that exists in forms having different arrangements of atoms but the same molecular weight.
- A radioactive transuranic element produced by bombarding plutonium with neutrons.
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- Resembling or similar.
- A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
- A person regarded as arrogant and annoying.
- United States writer noted for his stories about life during the California gold rush (1836-1902).
- The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
- An ester of adenosine that is converted to ATP for energy storage.
- Pause or hold back in uncertainty or unwillingness.
- Having the hair or wool cut or clipped off as if with shears or clippers.
- Called forth from a latent or potential state by stimulation.
- A geographical area and former kingdom in northeastern India in the Himalaya Mountains between Nepal and Bhutan.
- Suggestive of the supernatural.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- Bark rich in tannin.
- A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
- A sock with a separation for the big toe.
- Harmony of people's opinions or actions or characters.
- The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
- The cry made by sheep.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A great raja.
- One of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.

DOWN

- The feeling of distress and disbelief that you have when something bad happens accidentally.
- A town in north central Oklahoma.
- (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
- An accountant certified by the state.
- Type genus of the family Zygnemataceae.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- Of flax, hemp, or jute, so as to promote loosening of the fibers from the woody tissue.
- Used to manufacture fructose and in assessing kidney function.
- Indian nun and missionary (born in Albania) dedicated to helping the poor in India (1910-1997).
- United States comedian.
- Accepted as real or true without proof.
- Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
- The capital of Croatia.
- On a beach.
- Joint consisting of a line formed by joining two pieces.
- An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
- The Indic language of the Sindhi people.
- A bowl-shaped opening at the top of a volcano.
- Act of correcting an error or a fault or an evil.
- 100 kopecks equal 1 ruble.
- A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
- (Norse mythology) The chief race of gods living at Asgard.
- Feeling or showing extreme anger.
- Fertility goddess in ancient Greek mythology.
- A member of the people in southeastern India (Andhra Pradesh) who speak the Telugu language.
- Any plant of the genus Erica.
- Proboscis worms.
- Being nine more than ninety.
- Bound or secured closely.
- Jordan's port.
- A unit of magnetomotive force equal to 0.7958 ampere-turns.
- Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
- An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
- Type genus of the Nepidae.
- The 11th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- The basic unit of money in Ethiopia.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- A desert in central Asia.
- A steep rugged rock or cliff.
- (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
- A long thin fluffy scarf of feathers or fur.
- A unit of luminous flux equal to the amount of light given out through a solid angle of 1 steradian by a point source of 1 candela intensity radiating uniformly in all directions.
- A state in midwestern United States.

Yesterday's Solution

P	O	A	S	E	L	F	S	A	M	E	N	A	P
E	S	R	E	L	A	M	I	T	I	C	A	R	A
C	H	A	L	K	M	A	T	T	O	R	N	E	Y
S	A	B	A	H	A	N	L	I	L	E	A	S	E
			K	E	B	A	B	C	H	O	C	K	
S	H	A	S	T	A	T	A	E	G	U	T	B	
H	E	T	H	N	E	O	L	I	S	P	E	R	
A	G	M	A	D	D	R	A	C	A	E	N	A	
M	A	R	I	C	O	P	A	F	N	A	R	C	
E	R	A	A	N	A	S	E	N	T	R	E	E	
D	I	R	A	C	B	H	A	G	A	L	C	D	
			E	R	I	C	A	D	A	C	H	A	
M	A	F	I	A	M	A	T	H	B	A	A	L	
I	B	I	S	U	S	A	G	E	B	A	B	K	A
M	E	E	T	F	O	L	I	A	G	E	O	H	M
E	D	D	A	A	S	S	O	U	A	N	R	A	P

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You won't have much of an opportunity to rest today if you left too many tasks undone yesterday. Nothing is to be gained by worrying about the outcome; instead, just get busy with your chores right off the bat. But even if you don't have any pressing obligations to fulfill now, you might still be too serious-minded to completely chill out. Thankfully, there will be plenty of time to play later on when you're in the mood. The math is simple; the sooner you get started with what's on your plate, the more likely you are to finish.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Although you're distracted by the pursuit of pleasure now, you might need to wait until a later date to actually obtain your object of desire. In the meantime, it's prudent to direct your attention to more mundane tasks. You're better off setting a measurable goal early in the day and then diligently tracking your progress. Even if you would be happier doing something else today, you can still derive sweet satisfaction from your list of accomplishments. Save the fun and games for when you can play without guilt.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Of course, you know that you should be grateful for the many blessings in your life, but you can't avoid feeling annoyed if you're blocked from chasing your dreams today. Your natural tendency is to sow your ideas like Johnny Appleseed; however, it's more useful now to keep them to yourself until you are certain you have found fertile ground. Even after testing the soil and waiting for the right temperature, take your time to share your thoughts and carefully nurture them until they reach fruition.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You could be overly protective of those you love as you attempt to balance your concerns with their needs. You might not even notice that you have overstepped your role in your haste to do the right thing. Although you want to initiate action for someone else's benefit, consider that your interference may not be in their interest. Sometimes a temporary setback or emotional hurt is the best teacher even if it is hard to witness. Taking responsibility for your actions inspires others to do the same.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Your life may already be in a state of flux now that a significant cycle is reaching a turning point. You know you need to narrow your focus, but you're receiving mixed signals from the cosmos. Instead of closing down your mind in fear of making the wrong choice, visualize all the things that make your heart happy. You don't have to do anything at all about your fantasies today if you commit to executing your new strategy tomorrow. Your dreams are the roots of your future.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Your creative juices are flowing and your drive for self-expression is strong, but you might not be confident enough to fully trust your impulses today. Instead of taking an unnecessary risk, play things more conservatively for now. After all, you're not interested in an easy come, easy go solution. Demonstrate your wisdom by building on your previous accomplishments while still progressing on your long-term goals.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Although you're quite adept at balancing work and play, relaxing can be challenging today until you complete your unfinished business. Free-floating anxiety may throw you off schedule now, especially if you believe that you are running out of time. Fortunately, an impending deadline is more flexible than you think; instead of wasting your energy on panic and despair, just breathe deeply and continue doing the very best job you can. A moment or two of meditation is the fastest trick to regaining your center.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

People may be making too many demands on your time these days. They might not think twice before asking you for what they want, even if their neediness poses a major inconvenience. It's hard to tell if your associates are aware of the impact of their behavior, so you can't really accuse them of being selfish. However, your loyalty runs deep enough that if a friend requests your help now, you will be there in an instant. Follow your instincts today, but remember that setting healthy boundaries won't detract from supporting those you love.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You're so concerned now about what others think of you today that you tiptoe around deciding what is appropriate in your current social sphere. However, you're not any less confident of your judgment just because it differs from the crowd. But you really want to be a team player and will sacrifice some of your personal needs now for the good of the family, group, or community. Honorable intentions bring positive results.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You might be feeling a bit ornery today, especially if an acquaintance is pushing your buttons. You're short on patience, especially when it comes to situations that aren't your immediate concern. You're not willing to waste your time on trivial matters just because someone else does. But don't be too quick to judge others; politely playing within the rules of social etiquette now will serve you well. Kindness is key.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

You're likely to jump to conclusions now, unless you consciously slow down your mental process. But there's a special trick to making this proactive strategy work; you don't have to change the speed of your thinking. Instead, just increase the amount of time between a thought and the moment you respond. You'll be surprised with the difference you can make if you slowly count to ten before saying a word. A moment of patience in the height of emotion saves many moments of regret.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Someone you admire may stubbornly stand in the way of your satisfaction today, and you might not even have a clue as to their motives. Your first impulse is to ignore the whole situation or just laugh it off to reduce the pressure. But instead of making light of a potential problem, find the courage to initiate a conversation in a nonthreatening manner. Nearly all complicated dynamics are easier to resolve once you commit to handling it together. Just remember that it takes two willing participants to tango.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Hawaii

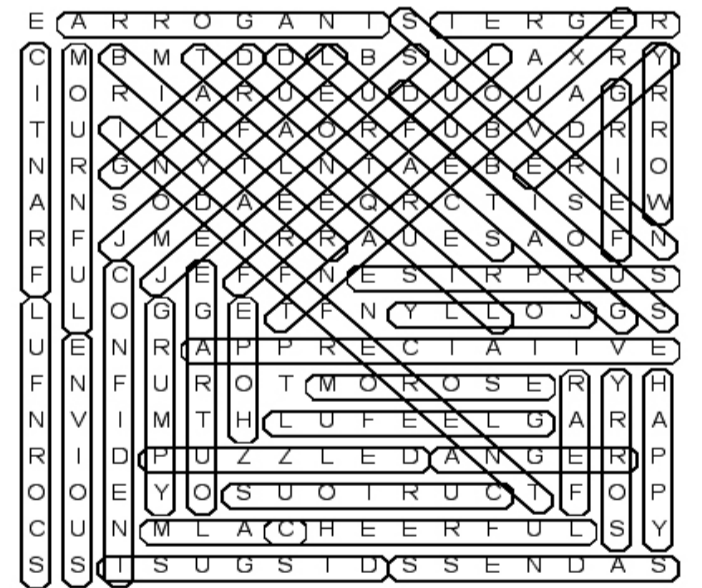
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 48 letters spell a secret message.

M	T	H	S	E	E	W	A	L	O	O	H	A	K	R	E	S	A	U	T
U	R	R	E	O	N	M	A	M	N	G	T	L	Y	T	S	L	K	R	
H	T	A	P	H	O	O	A	A	L	N	I	P	O	U	R	U	A	E	O
A	T	P	W	A	L	N	N	I	O	E	E	N	U	E	R	N	L	P	
O	O	N	I	O	C	T	A	L	I	A	H	A	N	S	S	R	F	A	E
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C	K	Y	L	O	E	A	P	D	C	B	V	L	H	A	I	K	E	I	S
R	S	N	N	U	R	P	A	P	A	O	I	T	W	D	K	O	E	S	T
A	S	S	I	B	L	C	I	E	L	K	C	T	K	I	A	N	E	L	R
G	S	E	O	I	A	O	M	H	I	E	V	E	C	V	Y	A	F	A	O
U	A	R	R	M	H	I	N	K	C	A	S	A	I	A	C	F	N	S	
S	R	I	N	S	A	I	O	C	R	T	H	B	N	K	O	O	D	E	
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L	T	S	A	O	C	I	L	A	P	A	N	L	U	A	U	T	P	A	H
E	A	C	A	N	O	E	I	N	G	B	S	E	H	C	A	E	B	E	I
H	U	L	A	N	T	N	O	R	T	H	S	H	O	R	E	I	U	A	M

- ALOHA ARCHIPELAGO BEACHES CANOEING COFFEE GRASS SKIRT HAWAIIAN HONOLULU HULA HUMPBACK WHALES ISLANDS
- KAHO'OLAWE KAUAI KAYAKING KONA COAST LANAI LUAI MACADAMIA NUTS MANTA RAYS MAUI MOLOKAI NAPALI COAST
- NIIHAU NORTH SHORE OAHU PACIFIC OCEAN PEARL HARBOR PINEAPPLES RESORTS SAND SCUBA DIVING SNORKELING STATE
- SUGARCANE SURFING TOURISTS TROPICAL VACATION UKELELE WAIKIKI WALMEA BAY WARM WHALE WATCHING

Yesterday's Solution

Moods & Emotions 3



- ANGER APPRECIATIVE ARROGANT BITTER CALM CHEERFUL CONFIDENT CURIOUS DISGUST DUBIOUS
- EDGY ENVIOUS EXUBERANT FEAR FRANTIC FRETFUL GLAD GLEEFUL GRATEFUL GRIEF
- GRUMPY HAPPY HOPE INDIFFERENT JEALOUS JOLLY JOYFUL MOROSE MOURNFUL NERVOUS
- OUTRAGE PUZZLED REGRET SADNESS SCARED SCORNFUL SORRY SURPRISE TRANQUIL WORRY

The hidden word is: EMBARRASSMENT

Daily SuDoku

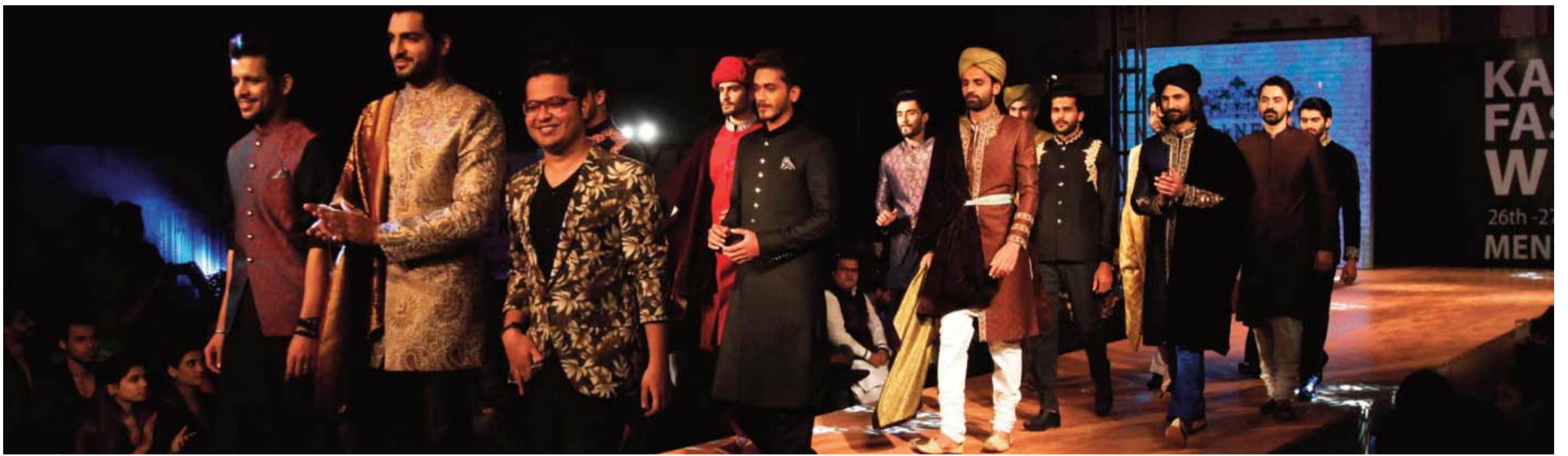
		4	1	3		7
3				2	9	
	5		6			
6	3			2	5	
1		2	7	4	9	5
			3	1		7
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				1		5
	6	5				1
2		9		7	3	

easy

Yesterday's Solution

8	3	7	6	1	5	2	4	9
2	1	5	3	9	4	7	8	6
9	4	6	2	7	8	1	5	3
5	9	8	7	3	6	4	1	2
7	2	3	1	4	9	8	6	5
4	6	1	8	5	2	9	3	7
3	8	9	4	6	7	5	2	1
6	7	2	5	8	1	3	9	4
1	5	4	9	2	3	6	7	8

hard

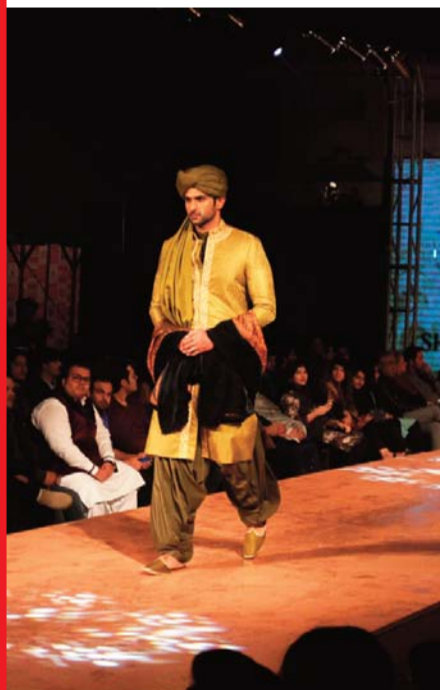


Models present creations of Pakistani designer FHS by HUB at the Karachi Fashion Week men's in Karachi. — AP/AFP photos

KARACHI MEN'S FASHION WEEK



Models present creations of Pakistani designer Umar Saeed.



Models present creations of Pakistani designer Deepak and Fahad.



Models present creations of Pakistani designer Emraan Rajput.



Pakistani actor and TV host Faisal Qureshi presents creations of designer Emraan Rajput.

'Come Together' on top as Beatles start streaming

The Beatles are reaching a new audience through streaming and listeners have an early verdict—"Come Together" is their favorite song from the Fab Four. The best-selling band in history on Thursday ended a long boycott and made its catalog available through streaming, the fast-growing sector of on-demand online music. Spotify, the largest streaming service, said that fans in the first three days had streamed Beatles songs 70 million times— which means that on average every user of the site listened to one Beatles song around the Christmas holiday. "Come Together" was well ahead as the most popular song, with more than 2.3 million streams as of early Monday on Spotify. While the company did not offer analysis, the bluesy rock song from 1969 was the opener on "Abbey Road," The Beatles' best-selling album, so it may have benefited from listeners who immediately hit play on the album. "Here Comes the Sun," also off "Abbey Road," was also among the most listened although it was out-paced by two other Beatles tunes with themes of hope—"Let It Be" and "Hey Jude."

Spotify said that 65 percent of its Beatles listeners were under age 34 — too young to have direct memories of the band that broke up in 1970. "We're helping introduce a new generation of fans to the most important band in his-

tory," Spotify founder and CEO Daniel Ek wrote in a blog posting. Spotify has been beset by criticism by artists, notably Taylor Swift, who argue that the streaming service does not pay back enough to artists. The company has disputed the charges and tried to portray streaming as a rare source of growth in a largely stagnant music industry. Ek, 32, described The Beatles' arrival on Spotify as a "personal triumph" in light of the Swedish entrepreneur's own childhood. "My grandmother was into jazz and my grandfather was an opera singer. The one thing in my youth that everyone in my family—my mom, uncle, aunt and grandparents—could all agree on musically was The Beatles," he wrote. Unlike a growing number of artists who have forged exclusive deals, The Beatles are streaming on all major services including Apple Music, Deezer, Google Play Music, Rhapsody and Tidal. — AFP

Beatles dolls are displayed, during an auction preview in Beverly Hills, California, in this September 9, 2015, file photo. — AFP



This file photo taken on February 13, 1964 shows Fritz Bauer (center), German general prosecutor, giving a press conference on the death of so-called Euthanasie Professor, German psychiatrist and Nazi Werner Heyde. — AFP photos

German cinema rediscovers Nazi hunter Fritz Bauer

With two new films, German cinema has rediscovered the country's fiercest Nazi hunter, former prosecutor Fritz Bauer, honoring a man who fought against post-war amnesia about the Holocaust. A Jewish atheist and Social Democrat who spent time in a Nazi concentration camp before going into war-time exile, Bauer became "the most hated lawyer in Germany" after World War II, one of his biographers, Ronen Steinke, told AFP. Honoring him on the big screen with the stories of his two biggest battles places him "finally back where he belongs: in the collective consciousness," said Munich daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung.

"Labyrinth of Lies" by Giulio Ricciarelli-



This file photo taken on November 6, 2015 shows Fritz Bauer, German general prosecutor, who was in charge of the so-called Frankfurt Auschwitz trials starting on December 20, 1963 and ending in August 1965.

Germany's short-listed submission for Best Foreign Language Feature at February's Oscars—describes one of Bauer's chief accomplishments, bringing to justice 22 former Auschwitz officials in the 1960s. The story focuses on a fictional young, idealistic public prosecutor who works under Bauer and fights against a conspiracy of silence and resistance in a judicial establishment still filled with ex-Nazis.

"Do you want every German to ask if their father was a murderer?" the young prosecutor is asked angrily in the movie. "Yes, that's exactly what I want," he replies firmly. "I want these lies and this silence to end." Before the 1963-65 trial in Frankfurt, "a significant proportion of Germans believed the pictures of the (concentration) camps were Allied propaganda," wrote prosecutor Erardo Cristoforo Rautenberg in news weekly Die Zeit. Bauer "wanted to break the silence on the Nazi crimes" at a time when West German society during its economic miracle years "preferred to turn the page" on the horrors of the Holocaust, said Steinke.

In enemy territory

The target of hate mail, anti-Semitic phone calls and a bomb threat, Bauer, then the chief prosecutor of central Hesse state in Frankfurt, was also the subject of a "neo-Nazi plot to assassinate him," said his biographer. "In the Frankfurt courtroom, dogs had to search for explosives every morning," Steinke said. A second movie, "The People vs. Fritz Bauer" by Lars Kraume, released at Switzerland's Locarno International Film Festival, tells the story of how Bauer helped track down fugitive top Nazi Adolf Eichmann, known as the "architect of the Holocaust", in Argentina.

The film portrays Bauer aged in his fifties—a stocky figure with a white mane, gruff manner and piercing eyes behind thick glasses—also evoking his rumored homosexuality, at a time when sex between men was still punished with prison. "As soon as I come out of my office, I enter enemy territory," Bauer once said as he faced massive obstruction by lawyers who had served during the "Third Reich", according to historian Werner Renz. In 1957, in a deliberate act of "high treason" that could have landed him in jail, Bauer passed on to Israel's Mossad secret service information that led to the spectacular kidnapping of Eichmann.

Posthumous triumph

Eichmann was abducted by Israeli agents in Buenos Aires in 1960, convicted in 1961 and hanged in Israel a year later. For Bauer, it was only a partial victory: Eichmann did not face justice in Germany. Berlin had never requested the extradition of the top Nazi, whose testimony could have implicated former Nazi collaborators in high places. The influence of Bauer—who was in 1933 interned in a concentration camp and then went into exile in Denmark and Sweden during the war—has continued to grow after his death, inside the courts and beyond.

His notion that the Nazi extermination camps were "collective enterprises of death", where every "cog in the machine" shared part of the guilt, did not triumph at the Frankfurt trial. But the principle was eventually confirmed by German courts in landmark trials of former Nazi camp guards almost 50 years later—at the 2011 trial of John Demjanjuk, and in this year's trial of Oskar Groening. Bauer—a passionate teacher who passed "his confidence and hopes" onto a younger generation, according to Renz—was found dead in his bathtub in July 1968, under still unclear circumstances.

At the time, "a younger generation was preparing to demand the democratization of society and a break with the authoritarian tradition of Germany", a development to which the deceased prosecutor "had contributed like no-one else," said Rautenberg. A few months later, in November 1968, a young activist called Beate Klarsfeld slapped Germany's then chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger in parliament and called him a Nazi, an act that came to symbolize the 'house-cleaning' by Germany's post-war generation against their parents. — AFP

Oscar winning cameraman Haskell Wexler dies at 93

Haskell Wexler, one of Hollywood's most famous and honored cinematographers and one whose innovative approach helped him win Oscars for "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" and the Woody Guthrie biopic "Bound for Glory," died Sunday. He was 93. Wexler died peacefully in his sleep, his son, Oscar-nominated sound man Jeff Wexler, told The Associated Press. A liberal activist, Wexler photographed some of the most socially relevant and influential films of the 1960s and 1970s, including the Jane Fonda-Jon Voight anti-war classic, "Coming Home," the Sidney Poitier-Rod Steiger racial drama "In the Heat of the Night" and the Oscar-winning adaptation of Ken Kesey's "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest."

He was also the rare cinematographer known enough to the general public to receive a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame. "He was a wonderful father. I owe most of who I am to his wisdom and guidance," said his son, nominated for Oscars himself for "Independence Day" and "The Last Samurai." "Even in an industry where, when you're working on a movie, there is not much else you can do, he was always there for me," Jeff Wexler said. Fonda praised Wexler on her Twitter account.

Favorite causes
"The brilliant, beloved Oscar-winning cinematographer, Haskell Wexler has died. He was my friend. He filmed 'Coming Home' and a documentary with me and Tom Hayden in North Vietnam in 1973. He was brave & gorgeous and I loved him," she wrote. When the elder Wexler wasn't working on big-budget studio fare, he traveled the world directing and photographing documentaries for favorite causes. His 1969 "Medium Cool" mixed documentary and dramatic elements, telling the story of a fictional television photographer (Robert Forster) who covers the violence between Chicago police and protesters at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. The real-life unrest was filmed on the spot for the movie, and its "cinema verite" approach was closely studied by aspiring filmmakers.

"I was under surveillance for the entire seven weeks I was in Chicago, by the police, the Army and the Secret Service," Wexler once



In this Nov 2, 2009, file photo, cinematographer Haskell Wexler arrives at a premiere in Los Angeles.

told a reporter. Throughout his career, Wexler was noted for his versatile and intuitive approach. For "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" the last film to receive an Oscar for best black and white cinematography, he used handheld cameras to capture the tension of the tirades between Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton. For "In the Heat of the Night," he put silks over the tops of sets and aimed lights at their centers. His aim was to contribute to the tension between Poitier's big-city black detective and Steiger's Southern white lawman.

American policy

As visual consultant on George Lucas' "American Graffiti," he hosed down the streets to achieve a moody, reflective style. He helped give Terence Malick's "Days of Heaven" a hazy, dreamlike atmosphere. Wexler was also noted for his clashes with directors. Francis Ford Coppola fired him during the filming of "The Conversation." Milos Forman dropped him during the filming of "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" and Wexler shared the cinematography credit with Bill Butler.

"I don't think there's a movie I've been on that I didn't think I could direct better," he said in 2005. For one of his documentaries, 2006's "Who Needs Sleep?" Wexler turned his attention to the film industry itself, decrying the long hours endured by Hollywood set workers. It was inspired by the death of a worker who fell asleep driving his car after a 19-hour stint on a movie set. —AP

Zhang Ziyi gives birth to baby girl

Chinese actress Zhang Ziyi, who gained international fame for her role in "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon," posted a photo of a baby's hand online yesterday to announce the arrival of her first child. Two adult hands hold the baby's hand and the caption reads: "December 27th, 2015, you, me, her... With the birth of this little life, we have our own family. Everything went safely and smoothly. Infinite gratitude!" Zhang's manager confirmed in a text message to The Associated Press that the 36-year-old actress had given birth following the post on the actress's Twitter-like Sina Weibo account. It is Zhang's first child, and the third for Chinese rock singer and composer Wang Feng who has two daughters from previous relationships. Zhang accepted a marriage proposal delivered by drone from Wang in February at her birthday party.

Reports said she gave birth in the United States. Zhang is one of China's biggest movie stars and catapulted to stardom in the West with the Oscar-nominated "Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon." A sequel is due out next year but she will not be in it. Her other English credits include "Rush Hour 2," "Memoirs of a Geisha" and "Horsemen." She also starred in the 2013 Hong Kong-Chinese acclaimed martial-arts epic "The Grandmaster," which led to several "Best Actress" trophies across Asia. Wang became a household name in China after appearing as a judge of the "Voice of China" singing show in 2013. — AP



Chinese actor Chen Xuedong, left, touches the tummy of actress and co-producer Zhang Ziyi during a press conference of their new movie 'Oh My God' in Beijing. — AP

'Force Awakens' becomes fastest movie to hit \$1bn

"Star Wars: The Force Awakens" has reached \$1 billion at the box office, achieving the milestone with record-setting hyper speed. The Walt Disney Co said "The Force Awakens" crossed the billion-dollar mark Sunday, accomplishing the feat in just 12 days. The previous movie to reach \$1 billion the fastest was Universal's "Jurassic World," which did it in 13 days in June. "Jurassic World" also had the benefit of record grosses in China. "The Force Awakens" doesn't open in the world's second-largest movie market until Jan 9. JJ Abrams' installment of "Star Wars" also posted the biggest Christmas Day box office in history with \$49.3 million and the best second-weekend earnings with \$153.5 million.

"The Force Awakens" has been setting records since its debut Dec 17. It brought in a galactic \$238 million in North America over its opening weekend, besting previous record-setter "Jurassic World," and set international opening-weekend records in Australia, New Zealand and throughout Europe. It scored the biggest worldwide debut with \$529 million. It also topped \$100 million in IMAX screenings in 10 days, another global record.

"You almost have to rewrite all the record books for this movie," box office analyst Paul Dergarabedian of Rentrak said. "It's absolutely mind-blowing that 'Star Wars' could get to a billion dollars in 12 days and it hasn't even opened in China, the second biggest movie market in the world." The power of "Star Wars" meant the rest of the week's releases were competing for second place. That prize went to the Paramount comedy "Daddy's Home," which opened with \$38.8 million, according to studio estimates Sunday. David O Russell's new drama starring Jennifer Lawrence, "Joy," debuted in third place with \$17.5 million. A flurry of new films also opened in the top 10

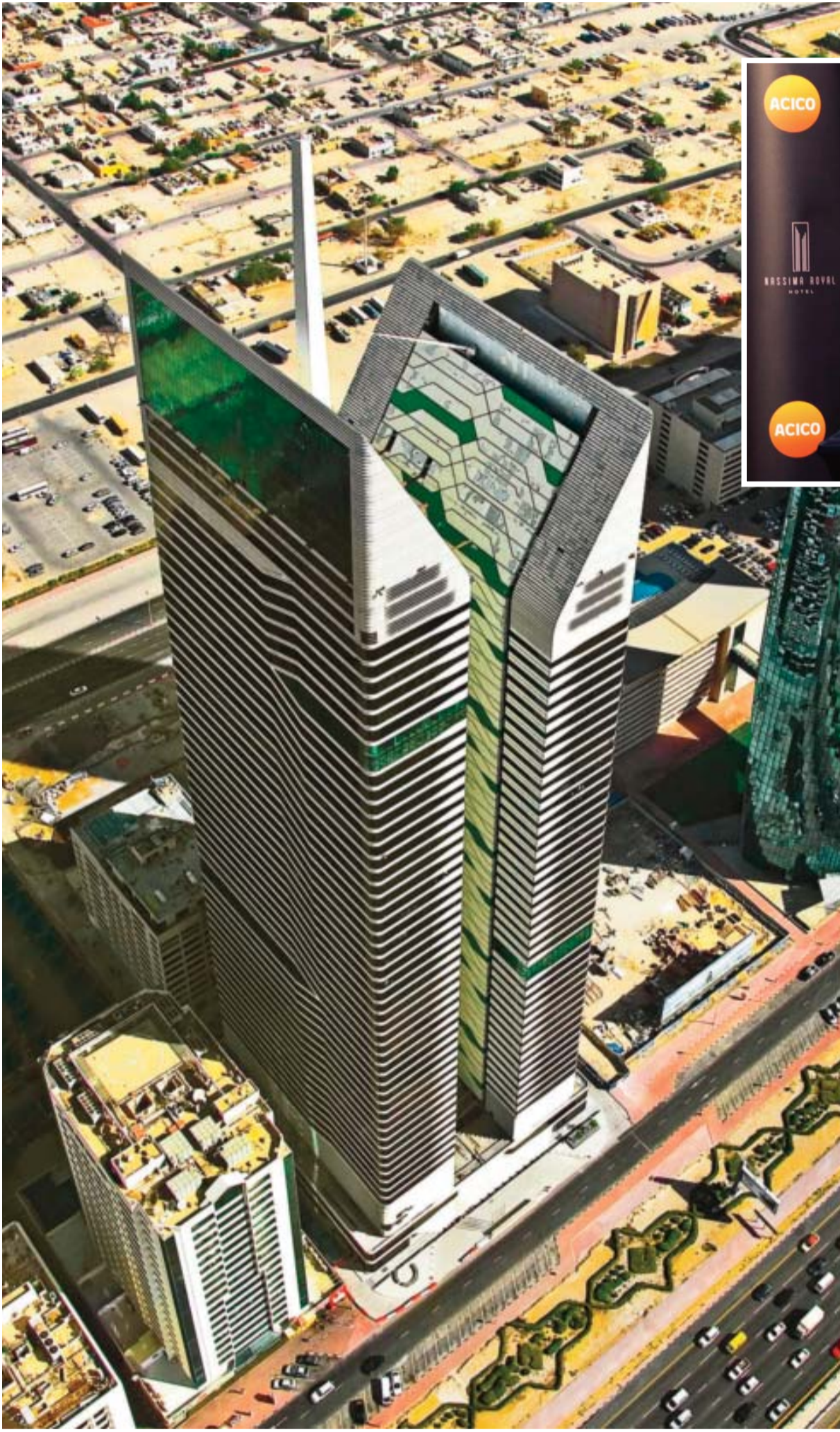
this weekend. "Concussion," the Will Smith-NFL drama, took in \$11 million, good for sixth place, followed by the financial-crisis saga "The Big Short," which collected \$10.5 million. The remake of "Point Break" opened with \$10.2 million. And Quentin Tarantino's latest film, "The Hateful Eight," debuted in 10th place with \$4.5 million. A juggernaut like "Star Wars" empowers the entire industry, Dergarabedian said. "It's great for the audiences, great for studios and theater owners in particular who can point to this and say the movie theater industry is as viable and relevant as it's ever been," he said.

- Estimated ticket sales for Friday through Sunday at US and Canadian theaters, according to Rentrak. Where available, the latest international numbers for Friday through Sunday are also included.
1. "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," \$153.5 million (\$133.3 international).
 2. "Daddy's Home," \$38.8 million (\$4.4 million).
 3. "Joy," \$17.5 million (\$2 million international).
 4. "Sisters," \$13.9 million (\$300,000 international).
 5. "Alvin and the Chipmunks: The Road Chip," \$12.7 million (\$8.1 million international).
 6. "Concussion," \$11 million.
 7. "The Big Short," \$10.5 million (\$1.4 million international).
 8. "Point Break," \$10.2 million (\$2 million).
 9. "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay-Part 2," \$5.3 million (\$6.4 million).
 10. "The Hateful Eight," \$4.5 million. — AP



From left, director JJ Abrams, producer Kathleen Kennedy, actress Daisy Ridley and actor John Boyega pose with droids character BB-8 and R2-D2 on stage during the premiere of 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens' in Shanghai, China, Sunday. — AP

ACICO-Hotels sector launches Nassima Royal



Nabil Al-Khaled and Cornelia Erhardt during press conference

In the presence of elite Kuwaiti media and journalists, ACICO's hotels sector proudly announced the launch of its new luxury brand Nassima Royal, situated in the heart of the cosmopolitan city of Dubai. The announcement came during a press conference held on Sunday Dec 20, 2015 at Nassima Royal Hotel hosted by ACICO's hotels sector and headed by its Chief Operating Officer Nabil Al-Khaled, who defined the project as "the core investment of the group in the emirate of Dubai" due to an increase in the number of tourists within the region, rising to more than 12 million in 2014 alone as stated by officials of the Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing.

ACICO is a listed company with a broad portfolio of activities and interests. Established in 1990, it provides construction services across the GCC real estate spectrum as well as manufacturing building materials. The company's real estate portfolio includes a collection of properties in Dubai and Fujairah. During the press conference, Khaled highlighted "the entry into the luxurious hospitality market came after detailed feasibility studies and an analysis about the future growth in tourist travel trends".

Alliance

He expressed pride in the alliance of Nassima Royal

Hotel and Nassima Tower Hotel Apartments, which will strengthen and extend their current brand identity to reinforce their market position. ACICO Group is keen to invest and grow within the Gulf region while aiming to diversify in various sectors and areas. It continues to search for high yielding investment opportunities in stable markets such as those already achieved in Dubai and Fujairah. Khaled stated that "this entity will soon become a milestone in the field of tourism in Dubai".

"We are pleased to announce the opening of Nassima Royal. We now look forward to taking the property to the next level and creating the excellence that is truly is 'The Heart of Luxury,'" said General Manager Cornelia Erhardt.

Nassima Royal is an iconic architectural masterpiece fitted and finished to the highest level in order to differentiate it from other hospitality destinations within the region and combines all of the essential key elements within the business and leisure industry that emphasize on the success of the project. The Nassima Royal Brand represents a unique and lifestyle experience featuring impeccable design, exceptional cuisine and a refined level of hospitality in addition to offering exceptionally high levels of service, delivered by genuine and passionate brand ambassadors.





Winning Combination

Both magnificent properties have 600 luxurious guestrooms, suites and luxury apartments which combine elegance with refined style and technology, creating the ultimate in comfort. The spacious rooms have breathtaking panoramic views of either the vibrant Sheikh Zayed Road or the Gulf, all of which are furnished with an excellent assortment of high-quality room amenities.

A winning combination of form and function, the property features the most unique meeting space in the city. An exclusive state-of-the-art modern space named Origami creates an authentic ambiance in addition to a further 18 meeting rooms. The property offers a diverse array of traditional and authentic cuisines including TRE, which offers fine-dining Italian cuisine.

In order to continue to expand, strengthen the brand and deliver an exemplary guest experience, ACICO is currently enhancing its properties facilities which will include a contemporary remodeling of the lobby space in the coming New Year. As a result of the above mentioned moves and rebranding of Nassima Royal Hotel, the property was approached by The Preferred Hotel & Resorts LVX Collection, which is responsible for representing renowned properties that feature the finest accommodations coupled with attentive, engaging and exclusive personal service, and is now proud to have Nassima Royal Hotel as part of its prestigious network.

For more information please contact
Tel : 22969899
Website: www.nassimaroyalhotel.com



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 29, 2015

ACICO launches Nassima Royal

38



A picture taken on December 27, 2015 shows a caravan of camels crossing the Liwa Oasis, southwest of the Emirati capital, Abu Dhabi, during the Dhafra Camel Festival. 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

Joy for Berlin family as cat returns for Christmas

Forget the return of Star Wars. For a family in Berlin, this Christmas saw the return of Miko—their cherished black and white cat which went missing in the German capital in 2008. "A family from Berlin-Charlottenburg (neighborhood) this year experienced a Christmas story with a particularly 'happy ending,'" announced an association for the protection of animals on Saturday.

"They learned on Christmas day that their cat Miko had been found—seven years later," said the group which runs a refuge for animals where the cat was identified. Miko had been discovered by people in Berlin's Kreuzberg neighbor-

hood—just a few kilometers from its old home turf—and taken to the refuge where workers were able to contact the owners because the cat had an identity chip.

Elena Hanke was 11 years old when she searched in vain for missing Miko. Along with her father and sister Jennifer she came to the shelter to recover the long-lost pet, the association said. After years as a runaway, Miko was "a bit too thin", but still healthy, the veterinarian at the refuge told the delighted family.—AFP



Elena Hanke poses for a photo with her cat named Miko at the animal refuge center in Berlin on December 26, 2105.—AFP



Abstract painter, sculptor Ellsworth Kelly dies at 92

Influential American abstract painter and sculptor Ellsworth Kelly died on Sunday, said an art gallery owner in New York. He was 92. Matthew Marks of the Matthew Marks Gallery said Kelly died of natural causes at his home in Spencertown, New York. Marks said he was told of the death by Kelly's partner, Jack Shear. Kelly was born in Newburgh, New York, in 1923 and served in the US military during World War Two. Afterward, he studied art in France for several years on the GI Bill and had his first solo show at the Galerie Arnaud Lefebvre in Paris in 1951.

He returned to New York several years later. "I think he bridged European and American modernism," Marks said. "He was a real American original." Kelly had retrospectives at New York's Guggenheim Museum and the San Francisco Museum

of Modern Art, among others over his decades-long career. "In his work Kelly abstracts the forms in his paintings from observations of the real world, such as shadows cast by trees or the spaces between architectural elements," according to his biography on the Guggenheim's website.

He also carried out public commissions around the world, including a memorial for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Kelly, who named Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse among his influences, told the opening of a large contemporary art wing showcasing his work at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts in 2013: "I am nourished by the past, I am questioning the present, and I am stepping into the future." — Reuters



In this undated photo provided by Helen Woodward Animal Center, a man dressed as Santa Claus pets a dog named Dozer in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif. For the fifth consecutive year, more than 1 million pets will have a forever home for Christmas, thanks to 4,000 shelters in 22 countries and an adoption program Blue Buffalo Home 4, the Holidays campaign started 17 years ago by Helen Woodward Animal Center president and CEO Mike Arms.—AP photos

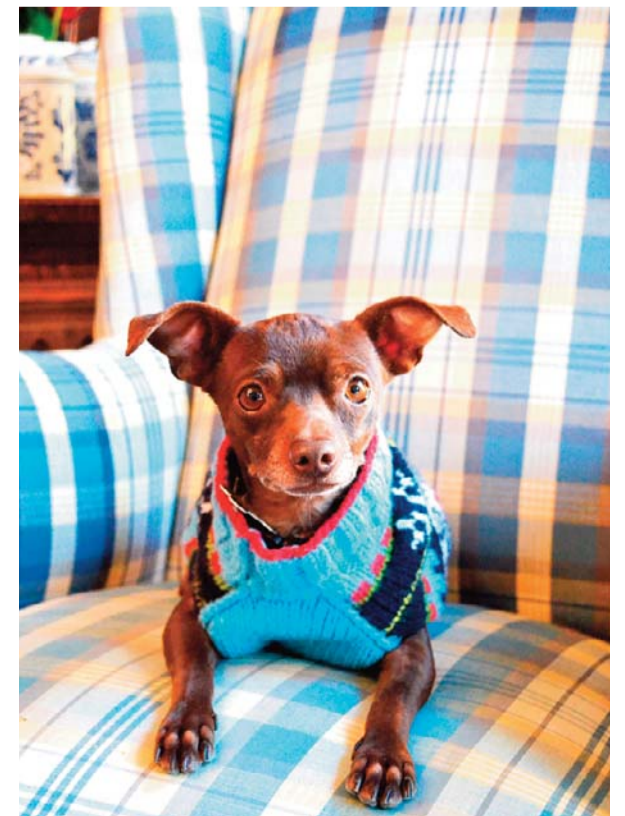
Home for the Holidays



In this photo Rocky the Bitty Bruiser, a Chihuahua orphan puppy, wearing a bow tie.



In this undated photo provided by Helen Woodward Animal Center, photos of pets, all of whom were adopted, hang from a tree in Rancho Santa Fe, Calif.



In this photo Hershey, a former orphan dog, wearing a festive sweater.