



Recap of major local events in 2015 - Part I

4



Prosthetic limbs put Pakistani terror survivors together again

12



WHO announces Ebola milestone as Guinea outbreak ends

28



Snell comes on strong as Bulls topple Raptors

20



MPs FLATLY AGAINST ANY FUEL, UTILITY PRICE HIKE

DISCRIMINATION ALLEGED AT PROSECUTION • GITMO KUWAITI TO BE FREED



Min 05°
Max 20°
High Tide 01:50 & 15:55
Low Tide 09:22 & 21:23

545 ARRESTED IN ARDIYA CRACKDOWN

KUWAIT: More than 500 people were arrested in a police crackdown in Industrial Ardiya yesterday, the second in a week following a similar campaign in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh in which thousands of residency violators were arrested. The Interior Ministry announced that 545 expatriates were arrested for violating residency and labor laws during a campaign in the 'handicraft zone' in the area yesterday, while 66 vehicles were impounded.

Up to 502 personnel, including 102 officers and 400 policemen, along with 35 patrol vehicles, participated in the campaign, which came as per instructions of Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and his undersecretary Lt Gen Suleiman Al-Fahd, the ministry's Public Relations and Security Media Department said in a statement.

Last week, 3,338 people residency law violators and people wanted for various offenses were arrested during a crackdown in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh that lasted for several hours and saw the participation of 1,700 officers. The campaigns in the two areas which are heavily populated by expatriates come as part of efforts to 'cleanse' the areas of corruption, crime and violators, the ministry explained. "The security campaigns are preventive security measures during which the law is enforced on the ground," it added. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Policemen round up suspected residency violators during a raid in Industrial Ardiya yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers' opposition to reported government plans to increase fuel prices amongst other spending cuts has gained momentum, with more MPs joining the fray. The reports said that an international consultancy group has advised the government to lift subsidies on petrol prices in addition to electricity and water, besides other measures to cut spending. The increase of petrol prices is expected to be enforced soon, perhaps within weeks, according to reports, but it could take longer to increase the prices of electricity and water.

An unprecedented move by neighboring Saudi Arabia to apply massive cuts to subsidies could have increased MPs' fears that the Kuwaiti government could adopt similar measures. MP Faisal Al-Kandari warned that any government measures to reduce spending and the budget deficit must be directed to companies and not citizens, who should continue to enjoy the oil windfall.

He insisted that the government can reduce spending through measures that do not negatively impact the income of the people and recalled that most of the financial benefits Kuwaiti citizens are enjoying came through laws and cannot be changed without amending those laws through the National Assembly, which totally rejects the principle of cutting subsidies. Kandari said that MPs will not remain silent toward government plans to tax people while leaving companies.

Continued on Page 13

KUWAIT TO SEND TROOPS TO FIGHT HOUTHIS REBELS

KUWAIT: Kuwait has decided to send troops to Saudi Arabia to resist cross-border attacks by the Yemeni Houthi movement, Kuwaiti daily Al-Qabas reported yesterday citing an informed source. Though a nominal member of a Saudi-led coalition that has bombed the Iran-allied Houthis for nine months, Kuwait has held off sending ground troops to the conflict in which scores of soldiers from neighbors the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia have been killed.

"Kuwait decided on the participation of its ground forces, represented by an artillery battalion, in operations to strike at positions of Houthi aggression against the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia," the paper said. The Kuwaiti foreign ministry did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Kuwait's participation in the Yemen war has so far been limited to the air force.

Mostly Gulf Arab forces intervened in a civil war in Yemen on March 26 after the Houthis forced its government into exile and appeared poised to seize the whole country. The conflict that followed saw Gulf and pro-government ground forces claw back some strategic territory, but has left almost 6,000 people dead and plunged the already impoverished country into a humanitarian crisis. Saudi Arabia and its allies view the Houthis as a proxy for Iranian power in the Arab world - something the Islamic Republic and the Houthis deny. — Agencies

QATAR FATHER EMIR'S SURGERY SUCCESSFUL

AMIR SENDS CONGRATULATIONS

DOHA/KUWAIT: Qatar's former emir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani has undergone an emergency operation in Switzerland after breaking a leg while on holiday, the government said yesterday. The former ruler, known as the "Father Emir" in Qatar, was flown to Zurich on Saturday for treatment following the weekend incident, according to an official statement. "Following a successful operation, his Highness the Father Emir is currently in Zurich recovering and undergoing physiotherapy treatment," it said.

The royal family was thought to be holidaying at a Moroccan resort in the Atlas Mountains. The injury was confirmed by one of his sons, Sheikh Joaan bin Hamad. "For anyone who's asking about the Father Emir, he's good and well, praise God," he wrote on Twitter. "He broke his leg and had surgery and now is in the physical therapy phase... thanks for asking."

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday congratulated, in a cable, Sheikh Hamad on the successful operation he underwent, wishing him a speedy recovery. Sheikh Sabah also sent a cable to Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani to con-



Sheikh Hamad

gratulate him on successful surgery of Sheikh Hamad. HH the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

A statement yesterday from the Schulthess Clinic in Zurich said the former emir had undergone surgery on his left

Continued on Page 13



KUWAIT: Labor union members stage a protest outside the Manpower Public Authority yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

LABOR UNIONS STAGE SIT-IN TO PROTEST 'INTERFERENCE'

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Several Kuwaiti labor unionists organized a sit-in in front of Manpower Public Authority in protest against its alleged interference in the internal affairs of labor unions. President of the Arab Union of Municipalities and Tourism Workers and President of Kuwait Municipality Workers' Union Mohammad Al-Arada said the sit-in was in protest of the interference by the

social affairs and labor minister and the authority in the union's internal affairs through the issuance of the labor union activity organizing rules. Arada claimed this is a flagrant violation of international treaties and the state's constitution, without regard to the state's reputation.

He said labor organizations have protection from any interference and limits by the authorities on their activities and rules.

Continued on Page 13

LOSSES DEAL BLOW TO IS

BAGHDAD: The Islamic State group's self-proclaimed "caliphate" is far from dead but back-to-back losses in Syria and Iraq have turned a series of setbacks for the jihadists into a losing streak. IS's seizure of Ramadi in Iraq in May along with Palmyra in Syria sent the alarming signal that it could still expand a year after seizing swathes of the two countries. It has since retreated however, and recently losses have come in quick succession: Baiji, Sinjar and now Ramadi - all in Iraq - as well as a key dam on the Euphrates in Syria.

"Controlling and governing population centres and key infrastructure is important to the group's claim to statehood, and these losses chip away at the credibility of that claim," Firas Abi Ali, Middle East analyst at research firm IHS. The capture of the Tishreen dam from IS by a Kurdish-led alliance will strip the jihadists of a source of revenue and put pressure on other areas such as Minbij, northeast of Aleppo. The victory in Ramadi, which was sealed on Monday when Iraqi forces raised the national flag above the flashpoint government complex, was less strategic than symbolic, analysts said.

Continued on Page 13



RIYADH: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (right) meets Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in the Saudi capital yesterday. — AFP

ERDOGAN MEETS KING SALMAN

'COOPERATION COUNCIL' MULLED

RIYADH: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday accused Syria's president of "mercilessly" killing hundreds of thousands of people and criticized Russia for backing him. Erdogan was speaking to reporters before departing for Saudi Arabia, where he met King Salman for talks focused on the Syrian civil war and energy cooperation. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are strong backers of the rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad, who is supported by Russia and Iran.

Erdogan said his government and Saudi Arabia are working "in solidarity and consultation" to find a political solution for Syria, as both countries push for an agreement that would remove Assad from power. The state-run Saudi Press Agency said Erdogan's talks with Salman were attended by other senior Saudi royals and officials, including the kingdom's crown prince, the deputy crown prince, and the ministers of finance, foreign affairs and information. Erdogan's delegation to Saudi Arabia includes the country's ministers of economy, energy and foreign affairs.

The two sides were expected to discuss energy cooperation as Ankara works to diversify its supplies following a rift with Moscow over the downing of a Russian

plane. The Saudi Press Agency confirmed the two leaders discussed the conflicts in Syria and Iraq, as well as developments in war-torn Libya and Yemen, where Saudi forces are battling Shiite rebels.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Al-Jubeir said Saudi Arabia and Turkey agreed on the need to set up a "strategic cooperation council" to strengthen military, economic and investment cooperation between the two countries. "The meeting produced a desire to set up a high-level strategic cooperation council between the two countries," Jubeir told a joint news conference with his Turkish counterpart after talks in Riyadh between King Salman and Erdogan. He said the council will deal with security, military, economic, trade, energy and investment between the two countries.

In comments apparently directed at Russia's military intervention in Syria, Erdogan said: "You cannot go anywhere by supporting a regime that has mercilessly killed 400,000 innocent people with conventional and chemical weapons." Russia began airstrikes in Syria on Sept 30, saying it wanted to support the Syrian government and defeat Islamic State militants and other extremists.

Continued on Page 13

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Kuwait's Ambassador to Egypt Salem Al-Zamanan, as well as Ahmad Yaqoub Baqer and Tariq Sami Al-Essa.

In other news, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held a breakfast banquet at the Foreign Ministry headquarters in honor of Assistant Foreign Ministers and visiting Kuwaiti Ambassadors.

During the banquet, Kuwait's diplomatic achievements and means of enhancing

bilateral relations with all brotherly and friendly countries were tackled as well as the latest political and security developments in the world and the region. The banquet was attended by acting Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Ambassador Jamal Abdullah Al-Ghanim and several senior ministry officials.

Meanwhile, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem received in his office Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The Speaker also received Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Kuwait National Committee for Drug Prevention (Ghiras) Dr Khalid Al-Shallal and board members. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Sheikh Ahmad Al-Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. —KUNA photos



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Kuwaiti Ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah

AMIR SENDS CONDOLENCES TO SAUDI KING

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday expressed his condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz over the death of Prince Saud bin Mohammad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud. In his cable to the King, His Highness the Amir prayed to God to bestow mercy on the deceased and patience and fortitude to the Saudi Royal family.

His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to King Salman. —KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah is seen during breakfast banquet in honor of Assistant Foreign Ministers and visiting Kuwaiti Ambassadors.



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Kuwait National Committee for Drug Prevention (Ghiras) Dr Khalid Al-Shallal and board members.

INFO MINISTER DISCUSSES PARTNERSHIP WITH ENGINEERS SOCIETY'S BOARD

KUWAIT: Means to reactivate the strategic partnership between the Ministry of Information and the State Ministry for Youth on one hand and the Kuwait Society of Engineers on the other were the focus of a meeting held yesterday.

During the meeting, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah congratulated the society chairman and board of directors on winning their colleagues' confidence, and posts, the Ministry of Information said in a statement.

The major aim of this strategic partnership is

to convey the development message of both, namely serving the Kuwaiti society and introducing the latest in the world of engineering, the statement added.

Sheikh Salman also lauded the role and efforts of young engineers in the implementation of the national development plans and grand projects. He stressed how engineering has always been a base of building civilizations.

Sheikh Salman urged the society board of directors to work harder for "the development and progress of our dear Kuwait" under the wise leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh

Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

For his part, society chairman Saud Saad Al-Muhilbi reiterated insistence of Kuwaiti engineers on serving their country, developing the necessary engineering solutions and applications based on the latest innovations to overcome problems of development, and reinforce Kuwait's cultural and humanitarian role. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Information and Youth Affairs Minister Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah meets chairman and board of directors of the Kuwait Society of Engineers. —KUNA

STUDENTS REFLECT KUWAIT'S BRIGHT IMAGE: MINISTER

CAIRO: Kuwait's Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa hailed the role of Kuwaiti students abroad in reflecting the bright image of their homeland besides bolstering bilateral ties with other nations. He made his remarks Monday night on the opening of the newly-renovated headquarters of the Kuwait Students Union (KSU) - Egypt's branch. Kuwaiti students are fully aware of the role they play in reflecting the bright image of their country besides pursuing their educational attainment, the Minister said. They also contribute to the enhancement of relations between Kuwait and the countries they are studying in, including Egypt, the minister affirmed. Essa congratulated the students on the opening of the new headquarters after its renewal to better meet the needs of the students in organizing social and academic events and activities.

Meanwhile, MP Abdullaah Al-Tamimi congratulated the students on the opening of their headquarters, applauding the efforts exerted by Minister Essa, Head of Kuwait's Cultural Office in Cairo Dr Fraih Al-Enezi, and members of KSU's administrative body in supporting Kuwaiti students in Cairo. Enezi and the Dean of Kuwait University Dr Hussein Al-Ansari expressed their happiness for the renewal of KSU's headquarters in Egypt, wishing all students success and progress in their studies.

Earlier, Dr Essa inaugurated the renovated Cairo-premises of the National Union of Kuwait Students. On this occasion, Essa congratulated Kuwaiti students in Egypt and the Kuwaiti Cultural Office in Cairo. The minister urged Kuwaiti students to better represent

their country during their stay in Egypt.

Enezi meanwhile thanked Minister Essa for supporting the NUKS premises renovation. He pointed out that the building was set up 30 years ago to care for Kuwait students. The Cultural Office would mark

the 70th anniversary next March, he said. Chairperson of the NUKS-Egypt Ghanem Rajab thanked the minister for ordering the refurbishing of that important building. He also shed lights on the significant role played by NUKS since its inception. —KUNA



CAIRO: Kuwait's Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa reopens the headquarters of the Kuwait Students Union (KSU) - Egypt's branch. —KUNA

MINISTRY INKS KD29 MILLION CONTRACTS FOR FACILITY, PLANT

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Ali Al-Omair has signed a contract for setting up, maintaining and furnishing an experts building, and another for operating and maintaining Mishref pumping station, at a total value of KD 29.3 million.

The first contract includes building, maintaining and furnishing an expert department facility at Al-Reqai area, covering 10,000 meters and costing KD 22.8 million, the Ministry of Public Works said in a press statement yesterday. The second contract worth a total KD 6.5 million provides for running, operating and maintaining Mishref pumping station, as well as providing maintenance to its equipment, the ministry added. —KUNA



Minister Ali Al-Omair

KUWAIT ELECTED HEAD OF ARAB ANTI-CORRUPTION BODY

CAIRO: Minister of Justice Yaqoub Al-Sane announced Monday that the First Conference of the Signatories of Arab Anti-Corruption Convention has elected Kuwait to chair the conference bureau. In a statement to KUNA following the conclusion of the conference, Sane, also Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs, stated that the bureau would be responsible for the conference-related activities till the second round in December 2017.

Sane added that Kuwait was also chosen to steer a special committee of experts to study the optimal application of the convention articles. This choice embodies Arab countries' confidence in Kuwait's leading role in fighting corruption, the minister told KUNA.

He dedicated Kuwait's winning of the post to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Minister Sane underlined the importance of data exchange among Arab countries.



Minister Yaqoub Al-Sane

tries for the effective application of the convention and eradication of the graft. He pointed out that an Arab working group was formed to work out proposals for ensuring better governance and restoration of stolen public money. He described corruption as one of the main impediments to sustainable development in Arab countries. —KUNA

'CO-OPS UNION EASES BURDEN ON CONSUMERS'

KUWAIT: Chairman of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies Saad Al-Shabou stressed yesterday the union's keenness to ease the burdens on consumers through discounts and offers to curb rising prices.

The Union welcomed the companies which have local products they want to market them through the Union, Shabou said in a statement during the opening of Abdullah Al-Salem and Mansouriyah co-op goods festival.

He praised the preparations made

by the co-op to highlight its products and how well they are displayed and marketed.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chairman of the co-op's Board of Directors Nizar Al-Awaad said the 15-day festival will be on all co-op products, where the co-op will provide more than 200 items, with a 25 to 35 percent discount. He also stressed the co-op's keenness to offer marketing services that meet the needs of the shareholders through discount and offers. —KUNA

KUWAITI OIL BARREL TO DROP TO \$27 IN FEB: ANALYST



Mohammad Al-Shatti

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti oil analyst has forecasted the price of Kuwaiti oil barrel would drop to \$27 per barrel next February, affected by the pumping of Iranian oil into the markets and the decision to lift the ban on exports of US crude oil.

International oil experts all agreed that such factors, mainly pumping about 500,000 Iranian oil barrels daily will lead to a drop in GCC's oil prices, analyst Mohammad Al-Shatti said yesterday. Brent crude oil's price is expected to drop to \$32 pb, as the amount of offered oil in markets will prominently increase, Shatti added.

Meanwhile, the analyst noted that the situation is tense in the oil sector with pro-

ducers competing to keep stable prices and avoid losses. The expected rise of oil offer indicates that prices will reach their lowest point in the first half of 2016. Oil demand that meets the amount of demand is the main challenge facing producers in 2016, said Shatti, adding that expectations for the rate of demand is between 1.2 and 1.8 million barrel per day.

The analyst further said that the severe drop in prices will encourage more international consumption of oil, thus, increasing the rate of demand. Oil demand is also associated with the performance of China's economy, the country's economic reforms and industries' conditions.

During 2015, OPEC's production rate was recorded at 31.1 million barrel per day, while in November of the same year it reached 31.7 million barrels per day, said Shatti. These rates were recorded without the expected production of Iran, Iraq and Libya that will pose a challenge to prices and demands in 2016, he explained. As for the impact of the US oil market on supply and demand in 2016, the analyst said that the approval to sell US shale oil will have several effects. Selling shale oil will increase the profits of US refineries through importing US light crude and exporting medium and heavy crude oil, he noted. —KUNA

In my view

A VISIT TO THE SHELTER

By Talal Al-Ghannam

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Good morning dear brothers and sisters and I wish all of you a happy holiday to come. In this article, I would like to talk about my experience during my recent visit to the shelter of the Philippines Embassy here in Kuwait on December 25th. I was invited by some of the volunteers in charge of caring for those workers in the shelter before they are deported in a matter of few days. I also have had the honor to meet His Excellency the Ambassador Renato Pedro Villa and the Consul who both were so kind. We spoke about the labor issue where the Ambassador and the Consul and Attorney praised the level of cooperation extended by the Kuwaiti authorities in this respect.

It was my first time being in a shelter, and having been there means two things: Either the domestic helper does not want to work for the sponsor as stated in the contract or the sponsor is bad and mistreats the worker, a matter that prompted the worker to seek the embassy for help. The house which is used as a shelter for Filipino workers was crammed with housekeepers awaiting deportation. I was not totally aware of the nature of the problem for them to be deported but the question arises: Why Kuwait needs to establish a shelter in the first place? Would it not be better that the sponsor treats his or her workers fairly, politely, respectfully and according to Islamic teachings rather than mistreatment, oppression, selfishness, arrogance and so on? In the 1980s, the housekeepers used to come from India, they would stay for more than 25 years in a single house, and they would bring their relatives to work as well. I had never heard of a single case of maltreatment of a housekeeper or a shelter being erected for those helpless people. They were treated as if they were part of the family. The sponsor would give an OK for the housekeeper to discipline the kids if they had behaved wrongly because she was part of the family and had big concern for the family in addition to the humane treatment she is receiving from the sponsors.

It is misfortune to see Kuwait's guests being deported from the country for whatever reason. I understand that criminal cases and those behind them should be prosecuted and pursued till justice prevails, but I am talking about those helpless workers who have left behind their crying babies who need adequate parental attention, as well as old and sick parents who are awaiting medicine and special care.

I am sure that those helpless workers must have sold their belongings or even borrowed money from relatives in order to come here and fulfill their dreams and go back home happy, but yet ended up in more miseries and unfortunate situations. Many of them had stayed in Kuwait maybe for one month, and some others for less than a year. They are now thinking how would they pay back what they had abandoned and sold, or how to repay the loans they had taken and how they would make their kids happy; with a toy or with the bitter truth? Would they tell them that they were deported from the wealthy countries and how they had suffered at the hands of some employers? What would they tell their parents, 'we could not be able to buy you the needed medicine because we had been deported?' It is really a bad image for Kuwait abroad. I am for sure certain that those who are deported would go back to their country and narrate their suffering and misery to their loved ones, relatives, and maybe the media about how hard it was being in this country with 'God fearing' sponsors.

I would lastly want to affirm that Islam is not to blame; the sponsor who tends to be a Muslim only in the birth certificate is to blame. Islam teaches harmony, respect, kindness, loyalty, sympathy and many other noble characters. It does not call for the inhumane treatment of a worker. Prophet Mohammad peace and blessing be upon him narrated that a worker must be paid before his or her sweat dries out.

There has to be a solution to this problem instead of erecting shelters for the deportees. Sociologists and the authorities must sit together and discuss how the issue can be resolved socially, while the bad sponsors must be prosecuted and severely punished.

Until the next article Insha Allah.

90,000 PEOPLE EXPECTED TO SPEND NEW YEAR ABROAD

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Informed sources at Kuwait International Airport said it is expected that nearly 90,000 citizens and expatriates will leave the country during the New Year holiday. They said the number of passengers has been increasing due to the fact that the New Year holidays coincides with the end of the first school semester for intermediate and secondary stages.

Courts' roundup

The judge yesterday released Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem Al-Sabah on a KD 2,000 bail. Sheikh Abdullah was detained for insulting His Highness the Amir and the ruling family. Meanwhile, the misdemeanors court sentenced Musab Al-Failakawi to three months in jail on charges of making insults and misusing a phone. In another case, three airport employees were declared innocent over charges of bringing alcohol into the country.

EMBASSY URGES CITIZENS IN US TO BE CAREFUL OF HARSH WEATHER

WASHINGTON: Kuwait Embassy in Washington urged citizens in the US southern states to be careful as their areas were subjected to floods and harsh weather conditions, expected to last until next week. In a statement on Monday, the embassy called on citizens to abide by instructions of local authorities regarding the weather conditions.

The embassy, the Health and Cultural Offices were in constant contact with the Kuwaiti patients and their companions and National Union of Kuwait Students-US Branch (NUKS), wishing safety for all, it said. It said the embassy, health or cultural offices could be reached on the following phone numbers: Embassy: +12022620758, Health Office: +12023202415, Cultural Office: +12023642104.

Up to 43 people were killed as a result of flash floods and harsh weather conditions in mid-southern states. National Weather Service (NWS) said tornado (EF-4), second most powerful grade with winds up to 320 km/h, hit a number of states and caused hundreds of houses to be leveled. Heavy snowfall and hazardous conditions are reported in the New Mexico, Oklahoma and parts of Texas forcing as many as 200 flights to be canceled Sunday in Dallas airport. —KUNA

ARAB SCHOOL EDUCATION NEEDS OVERHAUL: ALECSO

TUNIS: The Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO) yesterday called for laying out a strategy for educational reforms in the Arab world. The focal point of the educational process should be to constantly update it to keep abreast with changes in education worldwide, said ALECSO director Dr Abdullah Muhareb in a speech at a forum organized by the organization he heads. The forum addresses ways of implementing reforms in the educational systems in the Arab world.

He said reforms must include streamlining if not totally overhauling curricula and methods of teaching in Arab schools with the objective of instigating and achieving sustainable development. He stressed the notion that with improved educational teaching in Arab schools, extremism and terrorism would be challenged head-on. He asked that the entire approach to education be well spent-on and indoctrinated toward creating a generation that shuns extremism and terrorism. —KUNA

MINISTER ESSA UNDER FIRE OVER UNESCO SECRETARY-GENERAL POST

ARMY CAPTAIN ARRESTED WITH DRUGS

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Mohammad Tana Al-Enezi threatened to grill Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa if he bows to pressure to cancel the appointment of Dr Ahmad Al-Enezi as Secretary-General of the Permanent Delegation of the State of Kuwait to UNESCO, while MP Saleh Ashour threatened to grill the minister if the secretary general was not replaced. Enezi, Secretary General of the National Kuwait Committee for Education Culture and Science, reportedly submitted his resignation to Education Ministry Undersecretary Dr Haitham Al-Athani due to pressure by Ashour. In a statement yesterday, Enezi thanked Essa for his trust in him and decided not to complete his term.



Education Minister Dr Bader Al-Essa



MP Mohammad Tana Al-Enezi

also arrested a 22-year-old citizen in Faiha with drugs and paraphernalia on him, and he was sent to the Drugs Control General Department.

Security campaigns

A campaign resulted in the arrest of a Nepalese man who was in the country illegally. An Indian man was also arrested in Khaldiya for being wanted on theft charges. A Pakistani national was caught in Faiha for being wanted on a KD 3,311 debt, a Palestinian for a KD 1,728 debt and a Sri Lankan wanted over a KD 755 debt. They were sent to concerned authorities.



MP Saleh Ashour

Officer arrested

Ahmedi police arrested a Kuwaiti army captain with drugs and an unlicensed firearm. A security source said a patrol suspected the man, and when searched, 320 illicit tablets (Captagon) and a shabu bag along with drugs paraphernalia were found. He was sent to concerned authorities.

Drug dealer sentenced

The criminal court sentenced a Bangladeshi man to death for trading in drugs. Meanwhile, another Bangladeshi was sentenced to life in prison for selling drugs. Capital police



Weapons and ammo confiscated during a campaign in Wafra yesterday.

WEAPONS' DETECTIVES SEARCH WAFRA FARMS

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Weapons detectives obtained a warrant from the public prosecution to search block 3 of Wafra farms, based on article one of law 6/2015. The campaign began yesterday with the help of general security, traffic and emergency patrols.



A package containing marijuana discovered by airport customs officers yesterday.

Suleiman Al-Fahd said an Asian man who works as a household driver attempted to hide four kilograms of



The scene after a fire was extinguished at a camp near Saad Abdullah.

marijuana in his luggage. He was arrested upon arrival to Kuwait and sent to concerned authorities.

Smuggling foiled

Airport customs supervisor



KUWAIT: Kuwait National Guard (KNG) hosted lectures for foreign security officers as part of its ongoing 'Aware' comprehensive awareness program.



Major local events in 2015



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir arrives at the scene of the Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque shortly following a terrorist attack which left 26 worshippers dead and 227 others wounded. — KUNA photos

Part I



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah offers condolences at the Grand Mosque to the families of the victims of the Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque blast.

KUWAIT: The following is part one of a list of major local events that happened in 2015, courtesy of Kuwait News Agency (KUNA):

His Highness the Amir:

January 9: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah patronized the opening of the Fifth Heritage Festival.
February 10: His Highness the Amir patronized the 18th honoring ceremony for Kuwait's Grand Quran contest.
February 24: His Highness the Amir, along with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, opened the Botanical Garden at Bayan Palace.
March 3: His Highness the Amir patronized the opening ceremony for the biofuel project of Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) at Mina Abdullah refinery.
March 3: His Highness the Amir opened Al-Saheed Park in Sharq area.
March 9: His Highness the Amir, Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, patronized the graduation ceremony of officers at the Ali Al-Sabah Military College.
March 13: His Highness the Amir headed Kuwait's delegation to Egypt's conference for economic development which was held in Sharm El-Sheikh.
March 25: Amiri decree issued accepting the resignation of Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce and Industry Abdulmohsen Al-Mudej.
March 31: His Highness the Amir pledged \$500 million to help support the Syrian refugees.
March 31: His Highness the Amir opened the third donors' conference to address the humanitarian situation of the Syria refugees with the participation of delegations from 78 countries in addition to representatives of over 40 international organizations.
June 24: His Highness the Amir visited the Kuwait military officers' club during Ramadan, delivering a speech focusing on measures to preserve security and peace in the country.
June 26: His Highness the Amir arrived at the location of the Imam Al-Sadeq attack which took place in Al-Suwaber area during Friday prayers.
June 27: His Highness the Amir expressed his condolences towards the victims of the Imam Al-Sadeq attack.
June 28: His Highness the Amir received Iraqi figures Muqtada Al-Sadr and MP Ibrahim Mohammad Bahr Al-Ollum who are visiting the country.
June 30: His Highness the Amir thanked citizens for their solidarity on the aftermath of the Imam Al-Sadeq attack.
July 1: His Highness the Amir received at Seif Palace family members of the victims of the Imam Al-Sadeq attack.
July 9: His Highness delivered his annual Ramadan speech, thanking the people of Kuwait for their gesture of solidarity on the aftermath of the Imam Al-Sadeq attack.
July 11: His Highness the Amir met the Saudi Monarch King Salman bin Abdulaziz, express-

ing his condolences over the death of Prince Saud bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, Minister of State, member of the Saudi cabinet, and special advisor to the Saudi King on foreign policy.

July 14: His Highness the Amir congratulated the (5+1) group on reaching an initial agreement on the Iranian nuclear file.
July 22: His Highness the Amir received members of the Kuwaiti popular delegation visiting the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani and Al-Azhar Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Thayyeb. The two religious figures expressed condolences over the Imam Al-Sadeq attack back in June 26th.
August 6: His Highness the Amir attended the opening of the new Suez canal.
September 11: His Highness the Amir expressed condolences over the victims of a crane accident in the Grand Mosque in Makkah, Saudi Arabia.
October 28: His Highness the Amir inaugurated the fourth session of the 14th legislative term for the National Assembly.
November 10: His Highness the Amir held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, resulting in the signing of six accords within the political, military, and economic sectors.
November 11: His Highness the Amir received Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde.

His Highness the Crown Prince:

February 20: Kuwait marked the 9th anniversary of His Highness the Crown Prince post-assumption.
March 17: His Highness the Crown Prince patronized Kuwait University graduation ceremony of the 44th academic batch.
June 23: His Highness the Crown Prince received head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq (ISCI) Ammar Al-Hakim.

June 30: His Highness the Crown Prince received former President of Al-Azhar University Professor Ahmad Omar Hashim.
November 11: His Highness the Crown Prince received Director General of International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde.
November 15: His Highness the Crown Prince patronized College of Engineering and Petroleum 40th anniversary ceremony.

His Highness the Prime Minister:

January 14: The cabinet has approved 'Humanitarian Leader' as a theme for the national Days celebrations.
August 29: His Highness the Prime Minister preside over the Supreme Committee for celebrating Kuwait as the capital of Islamic culture for 2016.
October 11: His Highness the Prime Minister opened 2nd Kuwait Oil and Gas Show and Conference.
October 12: His Highness the Premier opened new Al-Razi Hospital.
October 13: Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Al-Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah launched "New Kuwait" application aimed at educating the public about government projects.
October 19: The cabinet decided that Kuwait would not host the 23rd Gulf Cup of Nations scheduled for December 2015.
November 2: Cabinet has decided to terminate the agreement between Kuwait and the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA).
November 9: The cabinet entrusted the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) with considering a suggestion on privatizing sports clubs.

National Assembly:

January 14: The National Assembly restored the Child rights draft law to the women affairs



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah offers his condolences to King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud during the funeral of Prince Saud bin Faisal bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

parliamentary Committee.
January 27: The National Assembly voted into a law the unlicensed firearms and ammunition collection bill in its second reading.
February 5: The parliamentary budgets and final accounts committee discussed the final accounts of Environment Public Authority and Anti-corruption Authority.
February 11: The National Assembly approved five-year development plan.
June 3: The National Assembly approved a draft law on fighting cybercrimes.
June 16: The National Assembly approved a draft law organizing the use of Closed-Circuit TV monitoring (CCTV).
June 16: The National Assembly approved linking the budget of eight bodies for fiscal year 2015/2016.
June 24: The National Assembly approved a law on the establishment of a national bureau for human rights.
June 24: The National Assembly approved on two drafts law proposal for domestic helpers.
July 1: The National Assembly approved draft law concerning DNA print and sent it for the cabinet to approve the project's budget.
November 4: MPs called for immediate investigations into the reasons behind the regionally and international ban on Kuwaiti sports activities.
November 9: Parliamentary committee recommended one vote law for sports club elections.
November 17: National Assembly agreed on legislations connected with amending the disability law and the halt of Kuwait's regional and international sports activities.

Media and culture:

January 5: Ministry of Information opened the

21st Al-Qurain Cultural Festival by honoring a group of cultural figures.
January 12: Kuwait celebrated the 100 anniversary of opening the first Post Office.
February 1: Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah inaugurated the activities of "Al-Mubarakiyah Festival" which supported the Kuwaiti youth activities, held under the auspices of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, on the occasion of national celebrations.
February 1: Fine Arts Museum opened the pavilion of Archeological Al-Sabah in Houston city in Texas State in United States.
February 3: The 9th formative arts creativity festival held by Kuwait Formative Arts Society started its activities by distributing the prize of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for formative creativity.
March 21: Minister of Information, Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah issued a decision organizing the display of audiovisual works of art production facilities.
April 23: Kuwait announced joining The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage in coordination with United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).
April 28: The Martyr's Office issued postal cards in membrane of Kuwait's martyrs.
June 14: Visitors Kuwait's pavilion in Expo Milan 2015 exceeded 300,000 after six weeks from the opening of the event.
November 28: Kuwait approved on Bern Convention at the International Organization for Intellectual Property (IPIP).



Falconry at the Fifth Heritage Festival in Kuwait



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen during a summit held between leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the USA at Camp David.

Electricity and Water:

February 10: Kuwait ranked third internationally in the consumption of fresh water per person.
February 14: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) started the second stage its study on the consumption of electricity and water by families.
April 30: The GCC Interconnection Authority (GCCIA) kicked off in April.
May 4: Ministry of Electricity and Water signed an agreement with Japan to expand the networks in the country.
May 26: Minister of Public Works, Minister Electricity engineer Ahmad Al-Jassar opened project 26 of adding 535 megawatts for the electric network in Al-Zour southern power plant and water distillation.
August 19: Ministry of Electricity signed a contract of project of maintenance of major power plant and supplies three major power plants at with cost of KD 10.89 million.

Transportation:

January 7: Kuwait Ports Authority boosted cooperation with Chinese Jinzhou Port as part of enhancing coordination with major international ports.
March 23: Ministry of Communications signed with Kuwait Institution for Scientific Research (KISR) the advisory agreement of studying the evaluation the environmental revenue of the project of designing the fairway between Ras Al-Ard and Faika Island.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen in a group picture with world leaders attending the Egypt Economic Development Conference in Sharm El-Sheikh.

April 7: Minister of State for Municipal Affairs, Minister of Communications Essa Al-Kandari signed contracts of designing, fixing, operating and maintenance the second stage of fiber optic network.
 June 1: Minister of Public Works, Minister of Electricity and Water engineer Ahmad Al-Jassar signed two contacts at the cost of KD 42.5 million to establish roads bridges, and building of Expropriation of Public Welfare Department.
 June 23: Kuwait Airways received the first batch of Airbus A330 aircrafts.
 June 29: Ministry of Public Works implemented 58 percent of the development of Jamal Abdul Nasser road project, considered one

enormous projects of developing the infrastructure at the international level.
 July 2: Kuwait Airways received the ninth aircraft from Airbus according to the leasing contract.
 July 6: Kuwait Ports Authority halted marine in Shuwaikh and Shuaiba Ports due to bad weather conditions.
 August 20: Kuwait Airways operated 17 flights for the Hajj season at the total of 3,000 seats.
 August 31: Ministry of public works implemented 80 percent of Al-Jahra road, and is almost done with the constructions of major bridges.
 November 5: Ministry of Public Works signed

the contract of establishment and maintenance of roads and bridges between Abdullallah Port and Al-Wafra, valued by KD 1 million.
 November 29: Kuwait Airways received the last aircraft of Airbus leasing contract, called "Al-Jahra".

Environment:
 February 8: Kuwait Environment Protection Society monitored 93 new types of birds in the country.
 February 14: Kuwait Dive Team (KDT) and with the Environmental Voluntary Foundation (EVF) took part in the London International Dive Show.
 August 29: Kuwait Dive Team signed a cooperation protocol with OCEANA- Protecting the World's Oceans.
 September 17: Kuwait signed cooperation agreement with The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in field of observing marine environment.
 October 11: Kuwait Dive Team won international energy prize of Protection and rehabilitation of the marine environment.
 October 21: EPA chose Kuwait as a member of the Office of Science and Technology (OST), representing the Asian group and the Pacific Ocean in The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.
 October 24: Kuwait Dive Team announced the recovery oyster deaths site in Al-Khairan.

Economy:
 January 12: Kuwait Credit Bank signed a joint cooperation protocol for electronic link with Kuwait International Bank aiming to reinforce partnership between the Public and Private sectors.
 January 19: Kuwait Credit Bank launched the electronic loan service.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Russian President Vladimir Putin are seen during the Amir's visit to the Russian city of Sochi.

February 17: The National Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises launched its first program to fund small and medium enterprises in cooperation with banks.
 February 18: Ministry of Finance ran the first phase of e-mail management system after activating the electronic signature and ratification service within the framework of switching to electronic ministry project and the trend towards the application of the concepts of smart government.
 March 16: Kuwait Credit Bank performed the first request for housing loan payments electronically.
 March 16: Kuwait cooperated with international monetary fund to discuss a mechanism for application of the corporate tax.
 April 28: Kuwaitis investment in Turkey

reached \$5 billion.
 June 4: Ministry of commerce and industry formed field teams to monitor and follow up prices.
 June 24: Kuwait occupied the first place in the Middle East and seventh globally in foreign investment.
 August 24: Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects signed a consultancy contract for the rail project in Kuwait.
 October 19: (Huawei) launched its Kuwaiti company (Huawei Technologies - Kuwait) in an act to promote direct invest.
 November 11: Kuwait hosts the World Conference of Islamic finance under the auspices of His Highness the Amir.
 November 29: Kuwait Capital Market Authority issued bonds and instruments for the first time in Kuwait.



The Botanical Garden at Bayan Palace.



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Al-Anbaa

DEVELOPMENT AND DEMOCRACY

By Dr Mutlaq Al-Qarawi

When a former lawmaker was asked on a TV interview about the impact of democracy on the course of the development process in Kuwait, he said that it had a very negative as many of the laws that were the main reasons for delaying development were democratically set and gave an example of the co-education ban law.

Well, here we have to stop and refute this answer based on two main factors. The first is that this particular lawmaker, who is also a member of the judiciary, turned a blind eye to corruption, shortcomings, negligence and the negative contradicting results achieved by the government in terms of achieving development. The honorable lawmaker also forgot the many other laws imposed on us as a result of democratic practices, which unfortunately had catastrophic consequences. He also ignored the parliament's weakness in holding those who were delinquent in accelerating the development process legally accountable or even passing strict and effective laws, especially over the two past terms.

The lawmaker also expressed absolute anger against Islamist parliamentarians, in particular when mentioning Islamists' role in achieving development in Malaysia and Turkey - he attributed it to Chinese efforts in Malaysia and secular Ataturk's policies in Turkey. The second argument is that he mentioned the co-education ban law, saying that it had very negative impacts without even proving it.

We know that the co-education ban is in sync with great religious as well as traditional national values. Thanks be to Almighty Allah, this law has protected our country and children and helped them gain more knowledge and education without distracting them with petty useless things.

Boosting development requires dedication, hard work towards achieving public interests, holding those with bad performance accountable, encouraging creative people, overcoming obstacles and learning from others' experiences instead of just sitting bragging about our past. Today must be dedicated to hard work in order to reap the fruits of such work and be proud in the future.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Al-Anbaa

LOST HOPE

By Salah Al-Sayer

The current impossible situations in Syria is absolutely heartbreaking and saddening, especially when such an ancient country became like a ball of thorns passed around by bare feet on a muddy wasteland haunted by owls and crows; a country open to all sorts of demons exchanging fires and burning everything, with its hospitable people thrown around by various mighty waves only to be rejected by any shore they get washed up to.

Syria is nowadays haunted by many lost hopes, such as those who thought the problem was in a bunch of

Everybody was disappointed in Syria and all dreams vanished into thin air

bad people and wished to get rid of them, and were disappointed; those who had wished to establish a religious state are also disappointed; those who wished to have a law-governed state were disappointed and foreigners who had wished to expand at the expense of the Syrian people are disappointed too. Everybody was disappointed in Syria and all dreams vanished into thin air. Nothing is achieved in Syria but doomsday-like scenes.

Knowing that fighting parties eventually sit together to negotiate and agree, why do not brothers on bad terms together do so (except those racist fanatic ones) after recognizing each other and admitting defeat and miscalculating their odds? Why don't they admit that everybody's hopes were lost and ought to be forgotten and that a deep strong state is becoming essential in the Arab world to protect its countries from total destruction?

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Al-Anbaa

MERCY, CHICKENPOX YEARS

Al-Anbaa

By Dr Saleh Al-Ujairi

Kuwaitis have always 'dated' years, giving them certain names according to major incidents. Thus, they have historically known the year 1918 as the year of 'mercy' due to the great number of people who died in that year, namely children who were killed when a flu epidemic spread in Kuwait. The term 'mercy' (Rahma in Arabic) comes from Islamic traditions of praying to Almighty Allah to bestow his mercy on the souls of dead people, that was done often that year.

Years after that, another major incident shifted dating to the year 1931, that is historically known as the 'chickenpox' year, when the disease dangerously spread, claiming many lives including those

of children. Children who survived chickenpox suffered from chickenpox 'scars' that were locally known as 'kharsh', which are the marks left on the face of a person who survives chickenpox. Therefore, most people were hit by this 'kharsh' in the 1930s, 1940s and probably the 1950s. Young people do not know this term nowadays because they have never experienced or witnessed chickenpox.

Young people do not know this term nowadays because they have never experienced or witnessed chickenpox.

Many people died in that year, but thanks be to Almighty Allah, because people are very healthy nowadays with clear faces and complexions, and may Almighty Allah have mercy on those who lived through that ancient beautiful past!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

Crime

Report

Officer arrested for mugging expats

KUWAIT: A citizen working for the Ministry of Interior was arrested in Farwaniya for robbing several expats in Jleeb Al-Shuyukh, said security sources, noting that many of the victims identified the robber in a lineup. Case papers indicate that an Asian man reported that he had been robbed by a man in police uniform driving an SUV in Jleeb. A few minutes later, another expat showed up at the police station filing a similar complaint, giving the same description of the suspect. Both complainers said that the robber stole their mobile phones and money. After arresting the suspect within 24 hours, he was pinpointed by the two victims in a police lineup.

'Pregnant' maid arrested

A citizen handed in his African housemaid to Sulaibikhat police station after finding out that she was pregnant, said security sources, noting that the man had taken the maid to Sabah Hospital with some health complaints that turned out to be pregnancy-related.

MP insulted

A parliamentarian filed a case at Naeem police station in Jahra, accusing seven bloggers of insulting him on their Twitter accounts, said security sources, noting that the lawmaker provided copies of the slanderous tweets.

Break-in and theft

Three Asian men filed a case at Khaitan police station accusing five unidentified people of barging into their house, assaulting them and stealing their possessions. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Hostage freed

Three Asian men were arrested in Abu Halifa for kidnapping another Asian and calling his wife, demanding a KD 7,000 ransom, and threatening they would kill him otherwise, said security sources. Detectives managed to locate the suspects within four hours and freed the hostage, the sources added.

Physical assault

A bedoon and a GCC national exchanged accusations at Khaitan police station where the former claimed that the GCC national's son assaulted his nephew and presented a medical report stating nine stitches in the head. The latter, on the other hand, accused the bedoon of assaulting his son and wounding him as well. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

False alarm

Upon receiving a report on a suspicious 'green box' on the stairs of a Sharq building, capital police and a special bomb squad rushed to the scene. They found that the box was empty with no explosives were inside it.

Driver saved

Kuwait Fire Services Directorate (KFSD) rescue forces pulled out a vehicle and saved its driver after the car was partly submerged by seawater near Mangaf shore, said security sources, noting that it was not clear how the vehicle got into the water. — Al-Rai and Al-Anbaa

HOU JOINS HORECA AS GOLDEN SPONSOR

KUWAIT: The Hotels Owners Union's (HOU) Chairman Of Board Of Directors Ghazi Fahad Al-Nafisi hailed the continuous success achieved by the Horeca Kuwait exhibition, highlighting its contribution to boosting the hospitality, catering and hotel equipment business which he said supports Kuwait's plans to achieve comprehensive touristic development, build new residential cities and launch new urban communities.



Ghazi Al-Nafisi

Nafisi also expressed appreciation for the fact that Horeca Kuwait 2016 is set to be launched under auspices of Minister of Information and State Minister of Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, and under direct supervision from the tourism sector in the Information Ministry. "This is a great step in the course of developing the touristic sector and its role in providing more job opportunities for ambitious young people, while at the same time diversifying national income sources," he underlined.

Accordingly, Nafisi announced HOU's participation in Horeca 2016 as a golden sponsor, citing the exhibition's significance for that decision. In addition, Nafisi said that the importance of the hospitality sector lies in the number of many mega projects planned in the country, including the new airport, hospitals and new cities. He also pointed out that the

hotel room capacity in Kuwait had increased to more than 10,000 over the past three years, while restaurants exceeded 5,000; things that call for cooperation and joint efforts. Nafisi also called for establishing a special authority for tourism as soon as possible to act as an umbrella for developing tourism in Kuwait.

Horeca 2016 is organized by Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company. It takes place in the period of January 18-19, 2016 at Badriya Ballroom, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa.



KUWAIT: Ghadeer Al-Awadhi, NBK Assistant General Manager, Consumer Banking Group and Kay Schleeef, Business Development Manager at Abdul Rahman Al-Bisher and Zaid Al Kazemi Company, presenting the prize to one of the winners.

THREE NBK CUSTOMERS WON A BRAND NEW MERCEDES CLA UPON SALARY TRANSFER IN ITS 'TRANSFER YOUR SALARY' CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) announced three winners with a brand new Mercedes CLA, in its campaign 'Transfer your Salary and Win instant, weekly and monthly prizes' to reward its new and existing customers who transfer their Salary to the bank.

Hadi Obaid Al-Ajmi, Mohamed Jafar Mirza, and Asmaa Mohammad Gharib won a new Mercedes CLA. The winners received their prizes at Al-Bisher and Zaid showroom, the exclusive Mercedes-Benz dealer in Kuwait.

The campaign offers all existing and new customers who have their salaries transferred to NBK to enter a monthly draw on 6 brand new Mercedes CLA's. NBK has announced five winners until now. The last winner will be announced on January.

In this campaign, new customers who transfer their salary to NBK will get also a cash prize from KD 100 up to KD 5000 instantly, and enter a weekly draw to win KD 500.

This campaign offers customers a variety of features and exclusive benefits. NBK customers will benefit from a free credit card for the first

year and exclusive discounts and cash back when using their credit cards, including complimentary airport lounge access, concierge service and many exclusive global offers, as well as NBK Rewards program, the largest loyalty program in Kuwait that guarantees rewards at many of the best international and local brands in Kuwait.

In addition, customers will enjoy easy salary transfer, instant card issuance, quick auto loan approval within 30 minutes and the best banking services through NBK's largest branch network in Kuwait including NBK's branch at Kuwait's International Airport which is available 24/7 and the most advanced Mobile Banking and Online banking services that are available around the clock to ensure that customers are able to carry out their transactions easily at any time and wherever they are.

NBK pioneered many firsts in both the local and regional markets by offering innovative products and value added services. For more information please contact NBK Call Center 1 801 801 or log onto www.nbk.com.



Gardeners are seen working near a street in Kuwait City in this file photo. The picture is used for illustrative purposes only.

SIX CITIES TO HOUSE 220,000 LABORERS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality's Acting Director General Ahmad Al-Manfouhi announced the completion of a report that includes the locations where new labor cities are planned to be built in Kuwait. The report, which will be sent to the cabinet soon, specifies six locations to build residential areas for laborers in Subbiya, Mutlaa, south of Jahra, south of Sabah Al-Ahmad City and south of Khairan City. The projects have a total capacity of 220,000 laborers, Manfouhi added

The cities will have residential compounds with high environmental and service standards, in addition to health and commercial services, sports facilities, restaurants and cafes, Manfouhi said.

Furthermore, the official said that the lack of suitable residential units led to the creation of unorganized residential compounds, which in made residential areas "unsuitable for families due to the spread of negative phenomena that are hard to control." — Al-Anbaa

NEW BILL RESTRICTS REFERRAL TO PSYCHIATRIC DISEASE HOSPITAL

KUWAIT: In a major step towards improving psychiatric treatment, the cabinet recently passed a bill on psychiatric healthcare for psychiatric patients, which will be referred to the parliament for review and approval within a few days.

According to the new law, no one is to be admitted to public or private psychiatric hospitals or clinics without diagnosis and recommendation from a psychiatrist made upon developing severe psychiatric disorder symptoms. The law also conditions consulting the public prosecution on such cases within 48 hours of admission.

The law only made two exceptions where a non-psychiatrist can admit a patient against his will, and conditioned

an application should be made by a relative, investigator, social worker, psychoanalyst, consul at the expat patient's embassy, specialist or on a court order.

The law also mandates specialized psychiatric centers to keep records of information about all psychiatric patients. Upon a clearly detailed diagnosis, the law also entitles the psychiatrist in charge to prevent the patient's discharge for a maximum of 72 hours if (a) discharge would likely jeopardize his safety, mental, physical or psychological health or that of others and (b) if the patient is incapable of taking care of him/herself due to the disease's severity. The law also entitles psychiatrists to administer emergency medications in both cases. — Al-Anbaa





Storms threaten rare winter tornadoes; flights cancelled

THAI KING'S FAVORITE DOG DIES, AFTER 'INSULT' ARREST



RAMADI: Smoke rises as Iraqi security forces attack the government complex in central Ramadi, 70 miles west of Baghdad, Iraq. Iraqi military forces on Monday retook a strategic government complex in the city of Ramadi from Islamic State militants who have occupied the city since May. — AP

IS 'FATWA' OUTLINES WHO CAN HAVE SEX WITH SLAVES

ISLAMIC STATE ESTABLISHES 'WAR SPOILS' DEPARTMENT TO MANAGE SLAVERY

WASHINGTON: Islamic State theologians have issued an extremely detailed ruling on when "owners" of women enslaved by the extremist group can have sex with them, in an apparent bid to curb what they called violations in the treatment of captured females. The ruling or fatwa has the force of law and appears to go beyond the Islamic State's previous known utterances on the subject, a leading Islamic State scholar said. It sheds new light on how the group is trying to reinterpret centuries-old teachings to justify the sexual slavery of women in the swaths of Syria and Iraq it controls. To read the fatwa click here: http://graphics.thomson-reuters.com/doc/slaves_fatwa.pdf

The fatwa was among a huge trove of documents captured by US Special Operations Forces during a raid targeting a top Islamic State official in Syria in May. Reuters has reviewed some of the documents, which have not been previously published. Among the religious rulings are bans on a father and son having sex with the same female slave; and the owner of a mother and daughter having sex with both. Joint owners of a female captive are similarly enjoined from intercourse because she is viewed as "part of a joint ownership."

The United Nations and human rights groups have accused the Islamic State of the systematic abduction and rape of thousands of women and girls as young as 12, especially members of

the Yazidi minority in northern Iraq. Many have been given to fighters as a reward or sold as sex slaves. Far from trying to conceal the practice, Islamic State has boasted about it and established a department of "war spoils" to manage slavery. Reuters reported on the existence of the department on Monday.

In an April report, Human Rights Watch interviewed 20 female escapees who recounted how Islamic State fighters separated young women and girls from men and boys and older women. They were moved "in an organized and methodical fashion to various places in Iraq and Syria." They were then sold or given as gifts and repeatedly raped or subjected to sexual violence.

Dos and don'ts

Fatwa No 64, dated Jan 29, 2015, and issued by Islamic State's Committee of Research and Fatwas, appears to codify sexual relations between IS fighters and their female captives for the first time, going further than a pamphlet issued by the group in 2014 on how to treat slaves. The fatwa starts with a question: "Some of the brothers have committed violations in the matter of the treatment of the female slaves. These violations are not permitted by Sharia law because these rules have not been dealt with in ages. Are there any warnings pertaining to this matter?"

It then lists 15 injunctions, which in some

instances go into explicit detail. For example: "If the owner of a female captive, who has a daughter suitable for intercourse, has sexual relations with the latter, he is not permitted to have intercourse with her mother and she is permanently off limits to him. Should he have intercourse with her mother then he is not permitted to have intercourse with her daughter and she is to be off limits to him."

Islamic State's sexual exploitation of female captives has been well documented, but a leading IS expert at Princeton University, Cole Bunzel, who has reviewed many of the group's writings, said the fatwa went beyond what has previously been published by the militants on how to treat female slaves. "It reveals the actual concerns of IS slave owners," he said in an email. Still, he cautioned that not "everything dealt with in the fatwa is indicative of a relevant violation. It doesn't mean father and son were necessarily sharing a girl. They're at least being 'warned' not to. But I bet some of these violations were being committed."

'The fatwa'

The fatwa also instructs owners of female slaves to "show compassion towards her, be kind to her, not humiliate her, and not assign her work she is unable to perform." An owner should also not sell her to an individual whom he knows will mistreat her. Professor

Abdel Fattah Alawari, dean of Islamic Theology at Al-Azhar University, a 1,000-year-old Egyptian center for Islamic learning, said Islamic State "has nothing to do with Islam" and was deliberately misreading centuries-old verses and sayings that were originally designed to end, rather than encourage, slavery.

"Islam preaches freedom to slaves, not slavery. Slavery was the status quo when Islam came around," he said. "Judaism, Christianity, Greek, Roman,

and Persian civilizations all practiced it and took the females of their enemies as sex slaves. So Islam found this abhorrent practice and worked to gradually remove it." In September 2014 more than 120 Islamic scholars from around the world issued an open letter to IS leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi refuting the group's religious arguments to justify many of its actions. The scholars noted that the "reintroduction of slavery is forbidden in Islam." — Reuters

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5	Carpenter	2	5 years
6	Rigger	2	5 years
7	Forklift driver	2	5 years

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SAUDI EXECUTES FILIPINO

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia yesterday executed a Filipino man convicted of murder, bringing to 153 the number of people put to death this year in the ultra-conservative kingdom. Joselito Lyda San was found guilty of killing Sudanese national Saleh Imam Ibrahim with a hammer following a dispute, the interior ministry said in a statement published by the official SPA news agency. He was executed in Riyadh on Tuesday, it said. According to AFP tallies, Saudi has executed 153 locals and foreigners this year, against 87 for all of 2014.

Amnesty International says the number of executions in Saudi Arabia this year is the highest for two decades, since 192 people were put to death in 1995. The toll has rarely exceeded 90 annually in recent years, it said. Saudi executions are usually carried out by beheading with a sword. Rights experts have raised concerns about the fairness of trials in the kingdom, where the interior ministry says the death penalty is a deterrent to crime. Amnesty says Saudi Arabia had the world's third-highest number of executions last year, after China and Iran. Under the kingdom's strict Islamic legal code, murder, drug trafficking, armed robbery, rape and apostasy are all punishable by death. —AFP

PAKISTAN HANGS FOUR

PESHAWAR: Pakistan yesterday hanged four men sentenced to death by military courts for assisting in suicide bombings and attacks on soldiers, officials said. The executions were carried out at a prison in the northwestern garrison town of Kohat and the bodies were handed over to relatives, a prison official said. A senior security official confirmed the hangings and identified those executed as Noor Saeed, Murad Khan, Inayat Ullah and Israr Uddin.

"These prisoners were given death sentence by military courts on the charges of facilitating suicide bombings, causing damage to educational institutions, providing explosive materials to suicide bombers, providing vehicles to terrorists and murder of armed forces personnel," the official said. No details of specific incidents were released. The four were sentenced in April. Local and inter-

national rights groups have criticized the military courts established in January, saying they fail to meet the standards necessary for a fair trial and lack transparency.

On December 2, Pakistan hanged four men linked to the Taliban's massacre of more than 130 schoolchildren at an army-run school in the northwestern city of Peshawar in December 2014. The attack prompted a nationwide crackdown on extremism, with the establishment of military courts for a two-year period and the resumption of capital punishment after a six-year moratorium. Rights groups have also criticized the resumption of executions, accusing Pakistan of hanging an estimated 300 people in less than a year—the majority of whom had not been convicted of extremism. No official figures are available. — AFP

DISPLACED BY WAR, SYRIANS SEEK SAFETY IN CARS

DAMASCUS: Since his house on the outskirts of Damascus was destroyed two years ago, Abu Ziad's dented, decades-old pickup truck has been not only his sole source of income but also his home. Abu Ziad is one of more than 11 million Syrians, or half the population, who have been forced from their homes by the conflict that has been raging across the country since 2011. On a cold winter's day in the capital's Marja Square, the 62-year-old leans back against his soot-streaked white Suzuki, parked next to a wooden crate filled with the packs of cigarettes that are his livelihood.

"My truck is my wife. I talk to her during the day and I seek refuge with her at night, but she is now very old and cannot move around," he said. "I've owned this truck since 1978; we grew up together and we grew old together." Abu Ziad moved to Damascus when his home in Sabeneh, south of Damascus, was destroyed in early 2012. His wife died shortly afterwards, and one of his sons was killed in a mortar attack.

Abu Zia pulls his leather jacket and grey scarf tighter against the cold. "I cannot return

to my home because it has become a battlefield. I cannot rent a home because the prices are so high and I cannot afford transportation to my children's homes to sleep there," he says. Abu Ziad's children rent tiny apartments in the Damascus suburbs of Jaramana and Kisweh. "When work is good and I have a little extra cash, I rent a room inside a modest hotel that I share with three other people so I can rest a while, or I visit my children and relatives," he adds.

'Wiped off the map'

But mostly, Abu Ziad sleeps in the truck, from which he used to deliver refrigerators. When he could no longer afford to repair the truck's frequent breakdowns, he decided to park in the city centre and sleep in it at night. During the winter, he burns cardboard boxes in the truck bed to keep warm. In the summertime, he parks in a shaded area to escape the blistering heat. According to economic analyst Ammar Yussef, more than 2.3 million homes have been rendered uninhabitable across the country, displacing nearly seven million people by the end of 2015. "Most of

the areas where you will find damaged homes are the Damascus suburbs, where some areas have been wiped off the map," says Yussef, who is preparing a study on the destruction of Syria's infrastructure.

The next most-damaged area, Yussef says, is the central city of Homs, where more than 800,000 buildings, including schools and places of worship, have been destroyed. Repairing the buildings and infrastructure that have been destroyed so far across Syria could cost more than \$250 billion, he estimates. Mass displacement has created a tenfold increase in rental prices, Yussef says, with the number of people in each home skyrocketing from five in 2011 to 20 people this year.

'This is wreckage'

"The essential measure for the purchasing or renting land is how safe the area is," Yussef says. The search for safety has led many to seek refuge in buildings still under construction, often with no roof, doors or windows. Umm Walid, 52, lives with her five children and their families in an unfinished building in the Daf al-Sakhr neighborhood of Jaramana.



DAMASCUS: Syrian Umm Walid, 52, feeds her grandchildren in a room of an unfinished building where she lives with her five children and their families in the Daf Al-Sakhr neighborhood of Jaramana on the outskirts of Damascus. — AFP

A teapot brews slowly on the ground, which is covered in large, multicolored carpets, and the concrete walls are bare. Large squares of tarp over the windows barely keep the cold air out of the room. "Every one of my children

had his own apartment. But today, we all live in a single apartment so that we can pay for rent after the events forced us to flee," Umm Walid said as her grandchildren giggle and play nearby. — AFP

ISRAEL'S TOP COURT SENDS EX-PM OLMERT TO 18 MONTHS IN PRISON

THE FIRST ISRAELI LEADER TO BE IMPRISONED

JERUSALEM: Israel's Supreme Court yesterday reduced former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's prison sentence for a sweeping bribery scandal from six years to 18 months, handing him a moral victory even as he prepares to become the first former Israeli head of government to be imprisoned. In its ruling, the court overturned the main bribery charge against Olmert but upheld a lesser charge. The 70-year-old ex-premier was ordered to begin serving his sentence on Feb 15.

Olmert was convicted in March 2014 and sentenced to six years in a wide-ranging case that accused him of accepting bribes to promote a controversial real-estate project in Jerusalem. The charges pertained to a period when he was mayor of Jerusalem and the country's trade minister, years before he became prime minister in 2006. Olmert has denied any wrongdoing and was allowed to stay out of prison until the verdict on his appeal was delivered.

After yesterday's decision, Olmert said he was "satisfied" about his partial exoneration. Clearly relieved, Olmert said it was still a "hard day" but that he accepted the Supreme Court's ruling. "A stone has been lifted from my heart," he said. "I said in the past, I was never offered and I never took a bribe. And I say that again today." The ruling marks a dramatic climax of the lengthy legal saga of a man who only years earlier led the country and hoped to bring about a historic peace agreement with the Palestinians. Olmert was forced to resign in early 2009 amid the corruption allegations. His departure cleared the way for the election of hard-liner Benjamin Netanyahu, and subsequent Mideast peace efforts have failed.

Olmert was a longtime fixture in Israel's hard-line right wing when he began taking a more moderate line toward the Palestinians as deputy prime minister a decade ago. He played a leading role in Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005. He became prime minister in January 2006 after then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon suffered a debilitating stroke. He subsequently



JERUSALEM: Former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is seen in the court room as he waits for the judges at the Supreme Court in Jerusalem yesterday. — AFP

led their newly formed Kadima Party to victory in parliamentary elections on a platform of pushing further peace moves with the Palestinians.

A gifted orator, Olmert crossed a series of taboos while in office - warning that Israel could become like apartheid South Africa if it continued its occupation of the Palestinians and expressing readiness to relinquish control of parts of the holy city of Jerusalem as part of a peace deal. He led his government to the Annapolis peace conference in November 2007 - launching more than a year of ambitious, but unsuccessful peace talks with the Palestinians. Olmert enjoyed a warm relationship with then President George W Bush. Olmert has said he made unprecedented concessions to the Palestinians during those talks including a near-total withdrawal from the West Bank and an offer to share control of Jerusalem - and was

close to reaching an agreement at the time of his resignation. The Palestinians have said his assessment was overly optimistic.

In a recent documentary, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Olmert had made a serious offer, but pressured him to sign the deal without allowing him to look at a map for the border Olmert proposed. Abbas said that at the time, he also expressed doubts over Olmert's ability to carry out a deal because of his legal problems and impending resignation. Despite his ambitious agenda, Olmert's term was clouded by the kidnapping of an Israeli soldier who was captured by Gaza militants in a cross-border raid and an inconclusive war against Hezbollah guerrillas in Lebanon. Both occurred shortly after he took office. Olmert also launched a military invasion of the Gaza Strip in late 2008 that drew heavy international criticism.

But it was corruption allegations, which had dogged him throughout his career, which ultimately proved his undoing. He was forced to announce his resignation in late 2008 and left office early the following year. Yesterday's ruling focused on the "Holyland" real-estate project - a sprawling high-rise apartment complex built on a Jerusalem hilltop that local residents love to hate because of its imposing appearance. Local zoning laws were changed to make way for the project. In their 948-page ruling, five Supreme Court judges reversed Olmert's previous conviction for accepting a 500,000 shekel (\$130,000) bribe to help promote the project.

It marked a stark departure from the harsh 2014 Tel Aviv District Court ruling, where Judge David Rozen accused Olmert of undermining the public's trust and called him a "traitor". The money was earmarked for Olmert's cash-strapped younger brother, Yossi, but four of the five justices ruled it could not be proved beyond a reasonable doubt that Olmert was involved or aware of the transaction. However, the top court did maintain a lesser conviction against Olmert of taking a 60,000 shekel (\$15,000) bribe. Barring any unforeseen intervention, Olmert is to report to prison on Feb 15. The ruling also all but ended any hopes that Olmert, who was once seen as the most formidable opponent to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, might return to politics.

Tuesday's conviction included a ruling of "moral turpitude," meaning that Olmert would be barred from politics for an additional seven years after serving his time. In a separate case, Olmert was sentenced earlier this year to eight months in prison for unlawfully accepting money from a US supporter. He is also appealing that sentence. If the appeal is rejected, that prison time could be added to Tuesday's verdict. Aside from the embarrassment of having a former prime minister charged and put on trial for bribery, the case was seen in Israel as a barometer of the country's fiercely independent legal system and a point of pride in proving that no one is above the law. — AP

IRAQ ARMY 'NEEDS KURDS' HELP TO RETAKE MOSUL

BAGHDAD: The Iraqi army will need Kurdish fighters' help to retake Mosul, the largest city under the control of Islamic State, Iraqi Finance Minister Hoshiyar Zebari said, with the planned offensive expected to be very challenging. Mosul, 400 km north of Baghdad, has been designated by the government as the next target for Iraq's armed forces after they retook the western city of Ramadi. "Mosul needs good planning, preparations, commitment from all the key players," Zebari, a Kurd, said in an interview on Monday in Baghdad.

"Peshmerga is a major force; you cannot do Mosul without Peshmerga," he told Reuters, referring to the armed forces of Iraqi Kurdistan, an autonomous northern region close to Mosul. The mostly Sunni city had a population of two million before it fell to the militants in June 2014 in the first stage of their sweeping advance through northern and western Iraq. The battle of Mosul would be "very, very challenging," Zebari said. "It will not be an easy operation, for some time they have been strengthening themselves, but it's doable."

Given the extent of the area that needs to be secured around Mosul during the attack, the army may also need to draw, in support roles, on local Sunni forces and possibly the Shiite Popular Mobilisation, he said. The Mobilization, known in Arabic as Hashid Shaabi, is a loosely knit coalition of Iran-backed Shiite militias set up to fight Islamic State. It was barred from the week-long battle to retake Ramadi to avoid tension with the Sunni population. The retaking of Ramadi by Iraq's army marked the first major success of the US-trained force that initially fled in the face of Islamic State's advance 18 months ago.

Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi said on Monday that Islamic State would be defeated in 2016 with the army planning to move on Mosul. "We are coming to liberate Mosul and it will be the fatal and final blow to Daesh," he said in speech praising the army's "victory" in Ramadi. Retaking Mosul would effectively mark the end of the caliphate proclaimed by Islamic State in adjacent Sunni areas of Iraq and Syria, according to Zebari. "It's there where Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi declared his caliphate," he said, referring to the group's leader. "It is literally their capital." The Iraqi Kurdish president, Massoud Barzani, discussed plans for the liberation of Mosul with Lieutenant General Tom Beckett, Britain's senior defense adviser, in September, according to Kurdish TV Rudaw. — Reuters



DIYARBAKIR: People run away from tear gas and water cannon as they protest against curfews yesterday in Diyarbakir. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday accused the leader of the main Kurdish party Selahattin Demirtas of "treason" over his call for autonomy for the country's Kurdish minority. — AFP

ERDOGAN ACCUSES KURDISH CHIEF'S PARTY OF 'TREASON'

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday accused the leader of the main Kurdish party Selahattin Demirtas of "treason" over his call for autonomy for the country's Kurdish minority. In a speech at the weekend Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) co-chairman Demirtas said that Turkey's largest ethnic minority had to decide whether to live in autonomy or "under one man's tyranny". On Monday, prosecutors opened a criminal investigation against him for crimes against the constitutional order over the remarks. "What the co-leader has done is clearly provocation, treason," Erdogan told reporters yesterday at Istanbul airport before leaving for Saudi Arabia. "This is the time when the masks have been taken off and the real faces exposed," he said. "How dare you talk about establishing a state in the southeast and in the east within Turkey's existing unitary structure," he said, addressing Demirtas.

"You cannot take such a step. Neither the national will, nor our security forces, armed forces, police, village guards allow such a thing." The charismatic 42-year-old has emerged as Erdogan's key rival over the last year, with many commentators saying he is the only politician to rival the Turkish strongman's rhetorical skills. Under party rules Demirtas shares the leadership of the HDP with a woman, Figen Yuksekdag.

'Puppet' politicians

The Turkish government labels the HDP a political front for the militant Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which is designated as a terrorist organization by Ankara and its Western allies. Erdogan accused HDP politicians of being "puppets of the terrorist organization." "The will of the people is stronger than arms," the president said. "They have no faith in the parliament." Referring to the criminal investigation

against Demirtas, Erdogan said: "I believe that the treachery network dealing a blow to our country's unity will learn a lesson it deserves from our people and from the law." Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu had cancelled a scheduled meeting with Demirtas planned this week to discuss constitutional reforms, chastising the party for banking on "conflict and tensions".

Tensions are running high in Turkey's predominantly Kurdish southeast, which has been rocked by curfews imposed on several towns where the security forces have been battling PKK militants. A five-year-old boy, named as Huseyin Selcuk, was shot dead this week while playing in the garden at his home in the flashpoint town of Cizre, local media reported. "According to preliminary investigation, Huseyin Selcuk lost his life after a bullet fired from a Kalashnikov rifle hit the back of his neck," Hurriyet newspaper reported. — AFP

News

in brief

60 tons of uranium transported to Iran

STOCKHOLM: Norway says it has helped verify a shipment of 60 tons of raw uranium to Iran as part of an international deal on Tehran's nuclear program. The Foreign Ministry said yesterday that experts from the Norwegian Radiation Protection Authority "verified and controlled the transportation" of the uranium from Kazakhstan to Iran on Dec 27. Iran is receiving raw uranium in exchange for sending most of its low-enriched uranium to Russia under the July 14 nuclear agreement. The deal aims to reduce Iran's ability to make nuclear weapons - something Tehran says it has no interest in doing. Norwegian Foreign Minister Boer Brende said Norway was supporting the deal by helping "ensure Iran's excess enriched uranium is replaced by natural uranium, so that the commitments in the agreement can be met."

Indian police arrest ex-air force officer for spy links

NEW DELHI: Delhi police said yesterday they have arrested a former Indian Air Force officer on charges of passing secrets to Pakistan's spy service. Police said the man, who is accused of giving details of air force exercises to Pakistan's powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), had fallen victim to a "honey trap". "Ranjith KK has accepted to have passed Air Force-related information pertaining to a recent Air Force exercise, movements of aircraft and deployment of various units in Air Force," said Ravindra Yadav, Delhi police joint commissioner of crime, in a statement. The arrest comes days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid a surprise visit to his Pakistani counterpart Nawaz Sharif to try to ease troubled relations. The nuclear-armed rivals frequently accuse each other of spying on military activities. The two have fought three wars since gaining independence from Britain in 1947 and a lasting peace deal has so far proved elusive, with deadly violence still flaring in the disputed territory of Kashmir.

Turkish authorities nab, IS suspects, including Briton

ISTANBUL: Turkish authorities have arrested three suspected members of the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group in Istanbul, including two Pakistanis and a Briton, state media said yesterday. The state-run Anatolia news agency said the Pakistani suspects had been detained last week in a raid on their homes in Istanbul's central Mecidiyekoy district. Police then expanded the operation based on intelligence the suspects provided and detained the British suspect, identified as Hasan H., at a bus stop in the conservative Fatih district, it added. All have now been remanded in custody by a court. Anatolia said that Hasan H was believed to be linked to Aine Lesley Davis, a close associate of the notorious British IS militant known as "Jihadi John" who Washington believes was likely killed in a recent drone strike in Syria. Davis, a London-born British Muslim who turned to Islamist militancy, was among IS suspects detained in November in Istanbul the same day as the Paris attacks, for allegedly planning to stage a parallel attack in Turkey's largest city. There has been no further information on Davis' case since his detention.

Two arrested over rape at India IT giant Infosys

MUMBAI: Indian police said yesterday they had arrested two contract workers accused of raping a woman at the premises of technology giant Infosys, in the latest incident of sexual violence to rock the country. The men, aged in their twenties, filmed the alleged assault, which occurred on Sunday at one of the IT firm's offices in the western city of Pune in Maharashtra state, officers said. "The woman works as a cashier at the canteen and had gone to the wash-room in the evening when one of the men assaulted her while the other filmed it," Suresh Bhonsle, a senior inspector for Pune police said. "They have been arrested and produced before the court," he said, adding that the men also worked in the canteen, as a cleaner and a waiter. Infosys, India's second largest IT services exporter, said in a statement emailed to AFP that it was investigating the "alleged incident at our Pune campus involving our partners' contractual staff". "We have stringent security measures in place on all our campuses and have a zero tolerance policy against sexual harassment which extends to our contractual staff as well."

Thieves return French police armbands, keep luxury loot

PARIS: A French prosecutor says choosy thieves returned a delivery of police armbands they say they inadvertently stole while targeting luxury goods. Vienne prosecutor Matthew Bourrette told the Dauphine Libere newspaper that five masked thieves robbed a delivery center in Saint-Quentin-Fallavier on Dec 22, making off with a shipment of Louis Vuitton products - as well as six packages destined for the national police. The paper reported for Tuesday's editions that the packages containing police armbands were left outside the police station overnight on Dec. 24 with a taped note: "An unexpected windfall, luxury clothing targeted without weapons or violence. Happy holidays to all." The thieves - and the Louis Vuitton merchandise - remain missing, the newspaper reported.

NO CHARGES IN CLEVELAND POLICE SHOOTING OF BLACK BOY 'PERFECT STORM OF HUMAN ERROR, MISTAKES'

CHICAGO: A grand jury in the US state of Ohio declined to bring criminal charges against Cleveland police officers involved in the fatal shooting last year of a 12-year-old boy, a prosecutor said Monday. The November 2014 death of Tamir Rice—a black child who had been carrying a replica gun in a playground when he was shot dead—and the fatal shootings of other African Americans by police have triggered protests across the country.

Surveillance video showed Rice was fatally shot within seconds of the patrol car arriving on the scene as he began to pull the toy gun out of his waistband. The boy died hours later in hospital. Cuyahoga County prosecutor Tim McGinty described a "perfect storm of human error, mistakes and communications by all involved that day" and said evidence considered by the grand jury "did not indicate criminal conduct by police." "It would be irresponsible and unreasonable if the law required a police officer to wait and see if the gun was real," McGinty told reporters.

The Rice shooting came just days before a grand jury opted not to indict a white police officer who fatally shot unarmed black teenager Michael Brown in the St. Louis, Missouri, suburb of Ferguson in August 2014. The two incidents are frequently cited in the ongoing national debate about how race plays into police actions in the

United States. In the latest incident to raise hackles, police in Chicago responding to a domestic dispute on Sunday shot dead a young black man who was allegedly holding a baseball bat as he came down the stairs and also killed his neighbor, a mother of five who had answered the door.

Saddened, not surprised

Rice's family said they were "saddened and disappointed" by the grand jury's decision "but not surprised." They accused McGinty of "abusing and manipulating the grand jury process to orchestrate a vote against indictment" and urged federal prosecutors to "step in to conduct a real investigation." Ohio Governor John Kasich urged residents not to "give in to anger and frustration and let it divide us." "Tamir Rice's death was a heartbreaking tragedy and I understand how this decision will leave many people asking themselves if justice was served," he said in a statement.

"We have made progress to improve the way communities and police work together in our state, and we're beginning to see a path to positive change so everyone shares in the safety and success they deserve." A judge had recommended in June that there was probable cause to charge the officers, but independent reports ordered



Tamir Rice

by McGinty's office and released in October found that officer Timothy Loehmann was justified in shooting Rice.

Loehmann and his partner Frank Garmback believed they were responding to an "active shooter" in a crime-ridden park that has memorials to two police officers who had been shot dead nearby in the line of duty, McGinty said Monday. A police dispatcher had failed to tell them

that the person who called to complain about Rice brandishing a gun had said he believed it was a toy. The officers were "frightened" and did not realize that Rice—who was tall for his age—was just a boy with a toy, McGinty said.

Pattern of excessive force

In December 2014, a federal probe launched by the Justice Department—well before the Rice shooting—found that Cleveland police had engaged in a pattern of using excessive force. Cleveland—a city of 390,000 that is more than 50 percent African-American—pledged in May to overhaul its police force and aspire to "bias-free" law enforcement, under an agreement with the Justice Department.

McGinty insisted that "steps have been taken" to ensure that this "tragic event" does not happen again, including outfitting all Cleveland police officers with body cameras in order to help "improve public confidence and improve performance." Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson acknowledged it had been a "long, troubling, trying year" for the city, and especially for Rice's family, and pledged that a police administrative review of the incident would move forward. Later Monday, dozens of people protested in New York City, trying to block streets to express outrage at the Ohio grand jury decision in Rice's case. — AFP

RUBIO VISITS IOWA; QUESTIONS GROW ON EARLY-STATE EFFORTS

DES MOINES: With a nationally focused campaign that leans on strong debate performances and television advertising, Marco Rubio isn't going all out in any one of the early voting states. That's raised eyebrows among Republicans in states such as Iowa, where people are used to being lavished with attention in a presidential campaign. As 2015 wanes, the Florida senator is back in Iowa on Tuesday for a multi-day swing, hoping to shore up support and finish in the top tier of candidates in the Feb 1 caucuses. But he is continuing to spread his time and money across the early states, showing no indication he will choose just one to make his mark. That's unlike Texas Sen Ted Cruz, who has set his sights on Iowa, and former Florida Gov Jeb Bush, who is pushing hard in New Hampshire.

While supporters say Rubio just needs to stay in the top cluster in the first few states, some see the approach as risky. "The caucuses are about organize, organize, organize and get hot at the end," said Iowa Republican strategist Doug Gross, who has not endorsed a candidate. But as for Rubio and his people, "I think they've intentionally tried to run a different campaign." In another early voting state, South Carolina, former Republican Party chair Karen Floyd described Rubio's approach as "curious," saying his organization there has not been as visible as several of his rivals. Rubio spokesman Alex Conant said the campaign has no plans to "give up on states we can win." But it is risky to be seen as having to win a particular state a month before the voting, he said. "We see four states where Marco can succeed," Conant said, referring to the four earliest ones — Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada. In Iowa, recent polls have found Cruz and Donald Trump battling for first, with Rubio usually a distant third. He's seen as competing most directly with others considered part of the GOP establishment — Bush, New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and Ohio Gov. John Kasich. Most agree he doesn't actually need to win the caucuses, but must emerge as the leader of that group.

"As 2016 starts, Iowa feels it's Cruz's to lose," said Matt Strawn, a former Iowa Republican Party chairman. "A lot of Senator Rubio's success will be determined by whether he can blunt the

momentum or not allow any of his New Hampshire competitors to build momentum." A good organization is important in Iowa because caucuses take more effort than a primary, requiring voters to show up at a fixed time on a winter night. The Republican caucuses drew about 120,000 voters in 2008 and 2012 — roughly 20 percent of registered Republicans. Cruz has perhaps the strongest traditional organization in Iowa, with backing from churches, an active volunteer network and some key endorsements.

Rival Ben Carson has been wooing churches and Bush and Rand Paul have had staff in the state for months. The biggest wild card remains Trump, who has been drawing massive crowds, but must translate that into caucus voters. Rubio has less paid staff than some competitors and his state director hails from Arkansas. He draws large, enthusiastic crowds and has done at least 49 public events in the state this year — more than Bush or Christie, but significantly fewer than Cruz, who has done at least 80. Iowa Rep Bobby Kaufmann, who is backing Rubio, said the pace will pick up in the next month with "a more traditional Iowa campaign."

Iowans have been exposed to more commercials promoting Rubio than they have almost any other candidate. Rubio's campaign and two outside groups helping him, including one that keeps its donors secret, together aired about 4,000 ads on broadcast TV in 2015, according to advertising tracker Kantar Media's CMAG. That's second only to Right to Rise, a super political action committee backing Bush, which had about 5,600 ads up this year. Bush's own campaign didn't do any Iowa broadcast advertising, CMAG shows. Cruz broadcast only about 800 commercials in the state, and groups helping him have put just a few more on Iowa TV. Trump hasn't had any local commercials. There's much more to come. Information from CMAG shows some \$18 million in commercials already on deck for January. Rubio's campaign, so far, plans to spend the most in the state, with the Bush super PAC close behind. But because the ad rates are so much higher for outside groups than for the candidates themselves, Rubio will probably get much more airtime for his money. — AP



TEXAS: A destroyed apartment complex is seen in the aftermath of a tornado in Garland, Texas. The southern US state of Texas reeled from rare December tornados, as days of storms battering a vast region stretching from the southwestern US to Canada claimed at least 43 lives. — AFP

STORMS THREATEN RARE WINTER TORNADOES; FLIGHTS CANCELLED CHICAGO-AREA AIRPORTS WORST HIT

CHICAGO: Snow, sleet and hail snarled transportation across swaths of the United States on Monday during one of the busiest travel weeks, after dozens died in US storms that were part of a wild worldwide weather system seen over the Christmas holiday period. More than 40 people were killed by tornadoes and floods in the United States during the holiday season, where rare winter tornado warnings were issued in Alabama on Monday. Alabama, Mississippi and the Florida panhandle were expected to bear the brunt of the day's strongest storms, AccuWeather senior meteorologist Michael Leseny said. About 2,900 flights had been canceled at US airports by 11 pm EST on Monday, according to FlightAware.com, while another 4,800 delays were reported.

Chicago-area airports were worst hit with hundreds of flights canceled as the city was swept by sleet and hail and United Airlines granted exemptions from fees for some travelers impacted by the storms. More than a foot (30 cm) of snow was forecast for southwestern Wisconsin and southeastern Minnesota, and snow was also falling in Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri. A flash flood warning was in effect in eastern Missouri and Southern Illinois, the National Weather Service said. Thirteen people died in flash floods in those two states during the weekend, including four international soldiers training at a military base in Missouri, the Army said.

The storms came as other countries struggled with extreme weather and stressed holiday infrastructure. In Britain, hundreds of troops were deployed and a

government agency said a "complete rethink" of flood defenses was needed after swaths of northern England were inundated by rivers that burst their banks. Severe weather also hit parts of Australia, where more than 100 homes were lost in Christmas Day brushfires. Then on Sunday a freight train carrying sulphuric acid derailed in the Outback, and a Queensland Rail spokeswoman told local media that floods had stopped crews reaching the scene.

Lives and homes lost

The bad weather caused two candidates for the Republican presidential nomination, New Jersey Governor Chris Christie and US Senator Marco Rubio, to cancel campaign events in Iowa. In Arkansas, a 31-year-old man drowned in a flood-swollen creek about 65 miles northwest of Little Rock, authorities said on Monday. Six tornadoes were reported on Sunday — three in Arkansas, one in Texas, and two in Mississippi.

US President Barack Obama, on vacation in Hawaii, called Texas Governor Gregg Abbott on Monday to receive an update and to offer his administration's continued support after weekend tornadoes that killed at least 11 people in the Dallas area and damaged about 1,600 structures and homes. One twister in the city of Garland, Texas, had winds of up to 200 miles per hour and killed eight people, including a 30-year-old woman and her year-old son. "We are very blessed that we didn't have more injuries and more fatalities," Garland's Mayor Douglas Athas told CNN.

'Ripped our world apart'

In the Dallas suburbs of Garland and Rowlett, which were devastated by tornadoes on Saturday, many residents turned to social media to tell stories of survival and to ask for help finding lost pets. Briana Landrum posted a photo of her living room couch surrounded by wreckage where her house once stood in Rowlett. Her two cats are missing, she wrote, and the freezing rain has made searching for her "sweet babies" difficult. "The roof fell on us one second and the next, it was gone," she wrote. "The tornado ripped our world apart." Ten deaths and 58 injuries were reported in Mississippi, and hundreds of homes were damaged, authorities said. One man recounted how a tornado swept his adult son through treetops before dropping him hundreds of feet away.

In flooded southern Missouri, dozens of adults and children forced from their homes took refuge at Red Cross shelters. Four international soldiers receiving training at the Fort Leonard Wood military base drowned when their vehicle was swept into flood waters on Sunday, the Army said in a statement. Their identities and home countries have not yet been released. Red Cross spokeswoman Julie Stolting said there was no telling when displaced people might be able to return home. "But we're feeding them, we're sheltering them, we're providing health services," she said. In Oklahoma, Governor Mary Fallin extended a state of emergency for all 77 counties on Monday after freezing rain, ice and sleet left nearly 200,000 homes without power. — Reuters



NEW HAMPSHIRE: Republican Presidential candidate Marco Rubio speaks at a pancake breakfast at the Franklin VFW in Franklin, New Hampshire. — AFP

CENTRAL AMERICA COUNTRIES AGREE 'A BREAKTHROUGH' ON STRANDED CUBANS

GUATEMALA CITY: Central American countries on Monday agreed a breakthrough in the case of thousands of US-bound Cuban migrants stranded in Costa Rica, after weeks of often acrimonious regional diplomacy. In a meeting in Guatemala City, representatives from several of the countries said they would fly some of the Cubans to El Salvador, where they would be put on buses to cross Guatemala and enter Mexico. Separate statements by the Guatemalan and Costa Rican governments said the exercise would be a "pilot plan" to be carried out in "the first week of January." They did not say how many of the up to 8,000 Cubans currently stuck in Costa Rica would be flown out, stressing that talks on the logistics still needed to be held. A Costa Rican foreign ministry official said the migrants would be paying for the transport themselves.

Problem solved?

The announcement suggested a bitter row among Central American nations over the Cubans could be on its way to being resolved. The issue blew up into what several of the nations termed a "humanitarian crisis" when Nicaragua in mid-November closed its border to the Cubans, who had been given Costa Rican transit visas. Costa Rica's efforts to have countries north of Nicaragua admit the Cubans had been in vain up to Monday.

San Jose's mounting frustration with its neighbors exploded of December 18 when it suspended its politi-

cal participation in the Central American Integration System (SICA), a regional body meant to promote cooperation between member states. It also said it would accept no more Cubans itself and threatened any more arrivals with deportation back to their home country. Pope Francis on Sunday pleaded with Central American nations to end the Cubans' "humanitarian drama." A week earlier, he had called on Costa Rica and Nicaragua to improve ties frayed by years of border disputes.

Surge in Cuban migrants

Monday's meeting in Guatemala City brought together foreign ministry officials from Costa Rica, Guatemala, Panama, El Salvador, Honduras and Mexico, as well as representatives from the International Organization for Migration—but not Nicaragua. Costa Rican Foreign Minister Manuel Gonzalez hailed its "positive results" and thanked the other countries for their "goodwill." He said Costa Rica was hoping to put the agreement into action as soon as possible but admitted that the end-of-year vacation period "prevents us advancing more rapidly."

The number of Cubans trying to get to the United States jumped this year, following the December 2014 announcement by Washington and Havana that they were thawing relations frozen since the Cold War. Many Cubans fear that the rapprochement will put an end to America's longstanding policy of taking them in if they make it over a land border. With the US Coast Guard

sending back any Cubans intercepted in the waters of the Florida Straits, Cubans increasingly have sought to make the overland journey through Central America and Mexico. Thousands flew to Ecuador, a South American ally of Cuba's that allowed them easy entry until the beginning of this month, when it abruptly reinstated a visa policy.

Panama affected too

Costa Rica found itself lumped with the brunt of the problem of the migrants after it busted a human smuggling network in November that had been clandestinely taking the Cubans north. Once that brought the migratory flow out into the open, Costa Rica initially mulled sending the Cubans back to its southern neighbor Panama, but relented and gave out transit visas. But Nicaragua refused to admit the Cubans, forcing Costa Rica to put them up on its side of the border in 37 temporary shelters as their numbers swelled daily by a couple of hundred.

Panama, too, is struggling with stranded Cubans. It has 750 of the migrants blocked on its northern border with Costa Rica, which has stopped handing out transit visas. Panama's government said Friday it was closing the temporary shelters they were using in the border town of Paso Canoas and relocating them to small hotels. The Panamanian Red Cross warned last week that, if the Cubans did not soon receive Costa Rican visas, the situation could "spin out of control." — AFP

US 'AFFLUENZA' TEEN ARRESTED IN MEXICO

WASHINGTON: Authorities in Mexico have detained a wealthy Texas teenager sought in the United States after he apparently violated the terms of his probation for killing four people in a drink-driving accident, a newspaper said late Monday. Ethan Couch, 18, once described as suffering from 'affluenza', and his mother Tonya were arrested in the Pacific resort city of Puerto Vallarta, the Fort Worth Star-Telegram reported.

It quoted Sam Jordan, a spokeswoman for the Tarrant County district attorney's office. Ethan Couch crashed his pickup into a group of pedestrians and another vehicle in 2013, leaving four dead and several seriously injured. He had a blood-alcohol level nearly three times the legal limit. Couch, the son of millionaire parents, made headlines during his trial when a psychologist testifying on his behalf claimed he suffered from "affluenza". The term, coined from affluence and influenza, implied that financial privilege made him unable to understand the consequences of his actions. The hunt began a few weeks ago after Couch missed a mandatory meeting with his probation officer. The FBI and US Marshals Service joined the search after authorities put Couch on the country's most wanted list. Prosecutors had sought 20 years in prison for Couch, but judges handed him a surprise sentence of mental-health treatment and a decade of probation. The leniency shocked many Americans, especially because the teen expressed no remorse



Ethan Couch

and did not spend a single night behind bars. The controversy was reignited this month after the emergence of a video showing Couch at a party taking part in a drinking game, which violated the terms of his probation. Police showed up at his home to find it empty with no forwarding address. The teenager's flight, apparently with his mother, prompted outrage across the country. — AFP

GERMANY GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO BICYCLE HIGHWAYS

BERLIN: It's every cyclist's dream: no red lights, no trucks, just a clear, smooth lane to zoom down with the wind in your face. Welcome to Germany's first bicycle

Autobahn. Fans hail the smooth new velo routes as the answer to urban traffic jams and air pollution, and a way to safely get nine-to-fivers outdoors. As a glimpse of a

greener urban transport future, Germany has just opened the first five-kilometer stretch of a bicycle highway that is set to span over 100 kilometers.

It will connect 10 western cities including Duisburg, Bochum and Hamm and four universities, running largely along disused railroad tracks in the crumbling Ruhr industrial region. Almost two million people live within two kilometers of the route and will be able to use sections for their daily commutes, said Martin Toennes of regional development group RVR. Aided by booming demand for electric bikes, which take the sting out of uphill sections, the new track should take 50,000 cars off the roads every day, an RVR study predicts.

The idea, pioneered in the Netherlands and Denmark, is gaining traction elsewhere in Germany too. The banking centre of Frankfurt is planning a 30-kilometre path south to Darmstadt, the Bavarian capital of Munich is plotting a 15-kilometre route into its northern suburbs, and Nuremberg has launched a feasibility study into a track linking it with four cities. In the capital Berlin, the city administration in early December gave the green light to a feasibility study

on connecting the city centre with the leafy southwestern suburb of Zehlendorf.

Rapid track

The new velo routes are a luxury upgrade from the ageing single-lane bike paths common in many German cities, where tree roots below can create irregular speed bumps and a mellow cycling lane can suddenly end or, more alarmingly, merge into a bus lane. The new type of bike routes are around four meters (13 feet) wide, have overtaking lanes and usually cross roads via overpasses and underpasses. The paths are lit and cleared of snow in winter. Like most infrastructure projects, the bicycle Autobahn is facing headwinds, however, especially when it comes to financing. In Germany, the situation is complicated because while the federal government generally builds and maintains motor-, rail- and waterways, cycling infrastructure is the responsibility of local authorities.

For the Ruhr region's initial five-kilometer rapid track, the cost was shared, with the European Union funding half, North Rhine-Westphalia state coughing

up 30 percent, and the RVR investing 20 percent. Toennes said talks are ongoing to rustle up 180 million euros (\$196 million) for the entire 100-kilometre route, with the state government, run by centre-left Social Democrats and the Greens party, planning legislation to take the burden off municipalities. "Without (state) support, the project would have no chance," said Toennes, pointing to the financial difficulties many local governments would have in paying for maintenance, lighting and snow clearance.

In Berlin, a heavily indebted city-state, the conservative CDU party has proposed a private financing model based in part on advertising along the route. "The bike highways are new in Germany," said Birgit Kastrop, in charge of the Munich project. "We must find a new concept for funding them." The German Bicycle Club ADFC argues that, since about 10 percent of trips in the country are now done by bicycle, cycling infrastructure should get at least 10 percent of federal transport funding. "Building highways in cities is a life-threatening recipe from the 1960s," said its manager Burkhard Stork. "No one wants more cars in cities." —AFP



YORK: A man on a bicycle turns back from a flooded residential street next to the River Foss after it burst its banks in York, northern England. —AFP

DOUBLE LIFE OF RUSSIAN 'SPY' BEHEADED BY ISLAMIC STATE

KHASIEV CAUGHT UP IN THE MURKY WORLD

MAYKOP: In the video, a man in an orange jump suit kneels beside a lake in Syria and confesses in Russian to spying on Islamic State militants. Another Russian speaker, this one in camouflage fatigues, then uses a hunting knife to hack off the kneeling man's head. When Islamic State posted this footage online on Dec 2, it brought the distant Syria conflict home to ordinary Russians. Here, in high-definition video, appeared to be one young Russian killing another for reasons few people could understand. It also opened up another mystery. The prisoner and alleged spy in the video said his name was Magomed Khasiev, that he was from Russia's mainly Muslim region of Chechnya, and that he worked for Russian intelligence.

Pro-Kremlin Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov quickly denied Khasiev was a spy. But interviews with more than a dozen people who knew Khasiev in Russia suggest the 23-year-old man had connections to both Muslim groups and Russian security and seemed to live a double life. An ethnic Russian born to a non-Muslim family in Russia's industrial heartland, Khasiev spent his teenage years among Chechens who knew him as a devout Muslim and a fluent Chechen speaker. Some of his Chechen friends went off to fight for Islamist militants in the Middle East, and encouraged him to join them.

In his other life he associated with non-Muslims, had a friend in the police, and had a licence from the Interior Ministry to work as a security guard, according to a former teacher, a friend, and staff of several security companies. For some purposes, including his work, Khasiev used the name he was given at birth: Yevgeny Yudin. If his testimony on the video is to be believed, Khasiev ended up

caught in the murky world between official Russian involvement in the conflict in Syria and the jihad that several thousand citizens of Russia and other former Soviet republics have joined. Neither Russia's Federal Security Service - the intelligence agency Khasiev claimed he was working for - or Russia's Interior Ministry responded to requests for comment on the case.

Orphanage

According to his file at an orphanage in Chechnya, Khasiev was raised for the first decade of his life by his mother, an ethnic Russian. When he was 10, she handed him to the orphanage for reasons the file does not make clear. Soon after, the documents show, his mother died of tuberculosis. In the orphanage, Khasiev, or Yudin at that time, learnt Chechen, gave himself the Muslim first name Magomed and converted to Islam. The former head of the orphanage, Ruslan Yusupov, remembers Khasiev playing with his own children and grandchildren. "He was soft as a kitten. He loved attention and care so much."

After three years, Khasiev was adopted by a Chechen family and took the last name of his adoptive mother Markha Khasieva. But she returned him to the orphanage a year later because of tensions between her and other relatives. Khasieva told Reuters she had nevertheless stayed in touch with the boy and cared for him. In 2008, Russia's then Interior Minister, Rashid Nurgaliev, visited the orphanage to talk to potential new recruits for the Suvorov academy, an elite military school. According to orphanage staff, Khasiev, then 16, was keen to enrol but was rejected as too old. His best friend at the orphanage, Minkail Temiev, did qualify.

True chechen?

Khasiev was sent to a college in Maykop, capital of the predominantly Muslim Russian region of Adygeya, some 500 km from the Chechen capital Grozny. There, according to friends and family, Khasiev moved in two sets of social circles. In one, he maintained his Chechen identity and stayed in touch with his adoptive family and old friends, including Temiev. According to orphanage staff, Temiev in fact followed Khasiev to Maykop.

At college, Khasiev was registered by his Russian name. But he told teachers he wanted to be called Magomed. "At first, he corrected his teachers," his supervisor Tatiana Maystrevskaia recalled. "I told him: Once you change your documents, I will call you Magomed. He didn't object to that." Acquaintances outside college, many of them Chechens, always knew him as Magomed. "He wasn't any different from us, he spoke pure Chechen. Many people didn't even know he was Russian," said one of Khasiev's Chechen friends.

Khasiev eventually changed his name officially to Magomed Khasiev by applying for a new passport, according to Viktor Zyzin, a close friend and an ethnic Russian. But despite his insistence on using a Muslim name, Khasiev did not appear to be a Chechen nationalist or radical, Zyzin said. A 2011 posting on Khasiev's account on Vkontakte, the Russian version of Facebook, shows him posing next to a poster of Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov. The Chechen leader helped the Kremlin defeat a Muslim insurgency in the North Caucasus and is considered by Muslim militants to be an infidel. And Khasiev had plenty of non-Muslim friends, including Zyzin and an ethnic Armenian called Grant.

In the video of his beheading,

Khasiev describes Grant as an old acquaintance and the conduit to Russian special services through which he passed the intelligence he collected on Islamic State militants. A Chechen friend of Khasiev told Reuters Grant served in the police. Two other people who knew Khasiev, including Zyzin, said they had met Grant but did not know where he worked. Reuters has not been able to establish Grant's family name or other details about him. Officers in the regional police department of Adygeya and the city police of Maykop said nobody of that name worked for them. The Interior Ministry in Moscow did not reply to a request for comment.

Radical friend?

At the end of 2013, Khasiev was hired by Sheriff M, a security company in Maykop. According to Anzor Takhumov, head of a local security guard school, Khasiev had applied for an Interior Ministry licence to work as a guard a few years earlier using the name Yudin. That was also the name he used to get his job. Just a few months after he began working, Zyzin said, Khasiev sold an apartment he had bought under a Russian government scheme designed to help orphans.

It is not clear how he ended up in Islamic State territory in Syria, but members of Khasiev's adoptive family in Chechnya suspect his old friend Temiev may have played a role. They believe Temiev had become radicalised. Markha Khasieva said her adoptive son had told her that Temiev had tried to recruit him to join Islamist fighters, but that Khasiev had rejected the offer. She remembers Temiev showing up at a funeral wearing a long beard, a style often associated with followers of hard-line Islam. Family members joked that he looked like Karl Marx. —Reuters



BRUSSELS: A police officer stands outside a police station yesterday in Brussels. After several searches in Brussels, Vlaams-Brabant and Liege the past two days, two suspects were arrested. —AFP

BELGIUM ARRESTS 2 OVER NEW YEAR'S TERROR PLOT

BRUSSELS: Belgian police have arrested two people suspected of plotting attacks in Brussels during New Year celebrations, just weeks after the jihadist bombings and shootings in Paris which were allegedly planned in Belgium. The federal prosecutor's office in Brussels, the home of the European Union and NATO, said yesterday that police seized military-style training uniforms, computer hardware and Islamic State propaganda material in raids in various parts of the country.

But investigators said the police action on Sunday and Monday was not linked to the wave of deadly attacks in Paris in November which were claimed by the Islamic State group and which France says were prepared in Belgium. One of the two was arrested on suspicion of planning attacks as well as "playing a lead role in the activities of a terrorist group and recruiting for terrorist acts," the prosecutor's office said in a statement. The second faced charges of planning and "participating in the activities of a terrorist group," it said.

'Emblematic sites'

"The investigation cast a light on serious threats of attacks believed to be aimed at several emblematic sites in Brussels and carried out during the end-of-year celebrations." In light of the "serious" threats, Belgium's OCAM national crisis centre late Monday raised its alert level for police and soldiers in Brussels, "which could be symbolic targets," a spokesman said. In the last year, the Belgian authorities have deployed troops in addition to police reinforcements outside many locations in Brussels, including European Union buildings and foreign diplomatic missions, as fears of jihadist attacks have grown.

The two new suspects were arrested during raids in the Brussels area, in the

Flemish Brabant area to the north of the capital and near Liege in the eastern part of Belgium's southern French-speaking region of Wallonia. The raids, which were ordered by an investigating magistrate in Brussels who specializes in terrorism cases, turned up neither weapons nor explosives. A total of six people were detained, including the two suspected of plotting attacks, but the four others were later released, the prosecutor's office said.

Probe ongoing

It said investigators were examining seized computer hardware, uniforms and Islamic State propaganda material but declined to release any details about the suspects as the investigation was ongoing. Prime Minister Charles Michel was following developments closely but did not have any immediate plans to make a statement, his office said. The Belgian authorities are still looking for suspects linked to the November 13 attacks on a Paris concert hall, restaurants, bars and the national stadium which left 130 people dead and hundreds more wounded.

The top fugitive is Brussels-born Salah Abdeslam, 26, who is suspected of having played a key role in the Paris carnage and understood to have returned to the Belgian capital the day after the bloodshed. An international arrest warrant is out on Abdeslam, who lived in the troubled Brussels district of Molenbeek, which analysts say has served as a haven for jihadists. Nine men have been detained including four accused of helping Abdeslam get away in the hours after the attacks. Since the end of November, Brussels has remained at alert level three, one notch below the maximum alert of a serious and imminent terrorist threat.

CENTRAL AFRICA VOTES IN PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

BANGUI: The Central African Republic votes today in presidential polls, in which all leading candidates have vowed to reunite a nation torn and terrified by unprecedented sectarian strife. Postponed several times due to violence and logistical problems, the first round of the polls was again delayed by three days from Sunday, partly because of reports of clashes in regions where armed gangs still hold sway.

The vote, which also includes legislative polls, follows a referendum on constitutional change that was backed by a resounding 93 percent of voters, widely seen as showing how much people long for peace and a return to normal life. Three men are tipped as front-runners in a race with 30 candidates. All are experienced politicians who held high-profile posts in previous governments and one comes from the small Muslim minority population.

The violence in the mineral-rich but dirt poor country followed the ouster in March 2013 of president Francois Bozize by a mainly Islamic rebel alliance, the Seleka, which installed Michel Djotodia, the first Muslim head of state of a mostly Christian country. Djotodia quit in January 2014 after disbanding the Seleka, but attacks on Christians by rogue Muslim forces led to brutal reprisals against Muslim districts by "anti-balaka" ("anti-machete") militias from Christian communities.

Thousands were slaughtered in a spiral of atrocities that drove about one in 10 of the population of 4.8 million to flee the country. Christians and Muslims alike came forward massively to ensure their names were on the electoral roll and to collect their voters' cards, often saying they never again wanted to hear gunfire or other manifestations of violence. Top electoral officials also urged a three-day delay because voting materials were not reaching isolated areas and some voters' cards had yet to be printed and handed out, while polling station staff needed last-minute training.



BANGUI: Supporters of Central African presidential candidate Faustin Archange Touadera hold a placard with Touadera's campaign poster - reading "1st tour" during a presidential campaign rally in Bangui on the last day of campaigning ahead of Central African Republic presidential and legislative elections due today. —AFP

Cash and T-shirts

While 30 candidates vie to become president, at least 1,800 people want a place in the 105-seat National Assembly, but by the weekend, the National Elections Authority (ANE) had not cleared a valid final roster for the parliament poll. Two of the three men far ahead of the crowd in the presidential race were prime ministers under the late president Ange-Felix Patasse: Anicet Georges Dologuele and Martin Ziguele, who are both Christian. The third, Abdoul Karim Meckassoua, is a Muslim with a serious chance in the race and a good business reputation. He served Bozize from 2003-13 in successive posts, including as foreign minister. Up to the end of

campaigning late Monday, candidates were handing out cash and T-shirts in Bangui and in remote provinces for those who could afford to use aircraft instead of ruinous roads.

The three previous presidents are barred from standing again. Catherine Samba Panza has overseen a political transition while the country has licked deep sores and benefitted from a blood transfusion by donor nations, France in the lead. Bozize and Djotodia are both in exile and both face UN and US sanctions stemming from violence. The latter stepped down under strong foreign pressure after failing to rein in forces that led to fears of genocide along religious fault-lines. —AFP

JAPAN'S FIRST LADY VISITS WAR SHRINE

TOKYO: Japanese first lady Akie Abe said she has again visited the controversial Yasukuni war shrine in Tokyo, posting photos of the site on the same day Japan and South Korea struck a landmark agreement on wartime sex slaves. "My final visit of the year," Abe, wife of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, wrote Monday on her Facebook page, also noting that this year marks the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II. The shrine honors millions of Japan's war dead, including several senior military and political figures convicted of war crimes after World War II, and visits by high-profile figures anger wartime adversaries China and South Korea.

Abe, known as a fan of South Korean culture, did not reveal exactly when she visited the shrine. Her Facebook post was accompanied by two photos of shrine buildings. The top-selling Yomiuri Shimbun cited a shrine official as saying it could not confirm whether she had entered the main shrine.

According to Abe's Facebook page, she also visited the shrine in May and August of this year. Her husband, who visited the shrine in December of 2013 - which set off a firestorm of criticism in China and South Korea and earned a rare rebuke from top ally the United States-made a ritual offering in October, though he did not go himself.

The announcement of the first lady's latest visit comes as Japan and South Korea reached an agreement on the emotional and divisive issue of wartime sex slaves-known euphemistically as "comfort women"-that has long soured relations. Japan said on Monday it was offering one billion yen (\$8.3 million) to help victims and an apology from the prime minister. Shinzo Abe told reporters on Monday after speaking by phone with South Korean President Park Geun-Hye that the agreement heralds a "new era" in relations between the two countries. —AFP

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PROSTHETIC LIMBS PUT PAKISTANI TERROR SURVIVORS TOGETHER AGAIN

PESHAWAR: Pakistani teen Ali Shah was on his way to school when he lost half of his right hand and his left leg after stepping on an IED—the Taliban's weapon of choice in its decade long insurgency. Now the 13-year-old, along with hundreds of others maimed by such bombs

every year, is learning to use a prosthetic in a society where the disabled have traditionally been shunned and forced to stay at home. Nearly a year on, he is set to receive a new leg at the Pakistan Institute of Prosthetic and Orthotic Sciences in Peshawar (PIPOS) where

thousands have been treated, a lifeline for many in the country with some of the highest IED death rates in the world.

Ali remembers the day he lost his limbs vividly. "I thought something happened to my heart when the blast occurred, I lost my senses, someone took me to the doctor and there I returned to my senses," he said, speaking at the Doctors Without Borders hospital where he is being treated. It's not clear who was behind the blast that tore into Ali at the school gate as he was coming back from lunch. "I had been walking along with some classmates but I was walking faster and left them behind," he said.

He was rushed by his father to a field hospital, then taken on an arduous 12-hour journey to Peshawar by car, van and bus, bleeding all the way—where medics saved his life. But the road to recovery, which has taken months to allow his wounds to heal enough for him to be fitted with the prosthetic, has only just begun. "There is stigma around disability and a fear of becoming a burden on one's family, especially for young men who are supposed to take responsibility to provide for their family," said Shaista Aziz, a spokeswoman for Doctors Without Borders, which runs several trauma centres in Pakistan's northwest.

While the use of landmines planted by armies has fallen globally since the

1990s, the number of civilians hit by improvised explosive devices has skyrocketed, according to Action on Armed Violence. The British charity recorded a 70 per cent global rise in civilians killed or maimed in such attacks between 2011 and 2013. In Pakistan—which has the highest number of IED-related casualties along with Iraq and Afghanistan—Taliban and other Islamist groups have used improvised devices and firearms to kill more than 27,000 civilians and security forces since 2004, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal monitoring group.

'I want to be normal'

Headquartered in Peshawar where it was founded in 1981 to deal with the wounded during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, PIPOS clinics treat around 10,000 patients a year—many of whom are victims of suicide blasts, IEDs and landmines. The majority of the patients are given free treatment, paid for by the International Committee of the Red Cross, while the centre also boasts a prosthetics college. According to the institute's director Zia-ur-Rehman, the new limbs help many defy the stigma of disability.

"After having this artificial limb, these braces from here and our satellite centre, they feel like they can perform their normal daily activities," he said. "They feel a

kind of confidence and they can go to their workplace, they can go to their school with these artificial limbs." For Muhammed Nabi, a tailor from Kohat in his mid-twenties who lost his left leg when he trod on an IED, the artificial limb has proven a lifeline. "It was a very sad incident in my life. But then I realized I couldn't spend the rest of my life in this sadness," he said, as he practiced walking with his new leg in the centre's rehabilitation hall. "With this artificial limb I will—inshallah—be able to be normal in my life and in my job."

Beyond the physical loss, many patients who lose limbs undergo severe psychological trauma that can lead to irregular behavior, according to patient liaison officer Zahida Parveen. Sometimes even a new limb is not enough to overcome the long-term mental struggle. "They feel dependent on others. For example after receiving appliances (prosthetics) some patients did not try to participate in normal life activities to support themselves," Parveen said. Ali Shah is set to return to the same school where he stepped on the bomb, committed to pursuing his education. "I want to complete my education and I want to serve my village people after that. I want to be a teacher so I can educate the youngsters," he said. —AFP



PESHAWAR: Pakistani improvised explosive device (IED) victims sit at the Pakistan Institute of Prosthetic and Orthotic Sciences (PIPOS) in Peshawar. —AFP

110 JOURNALISTS KILLED IN 2015, MOST IN 'PEACEFUL' COUNTRIES

INDIA 'DEADLIEST' ASIAN COUNTRY

PARIS: A total of 110 journalists were killed around the world in 2015, Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said yesterday, noting that while many died in war zones the majority were killed in supposedly peaceful countries. Sixty-seven journalists were killed in the line of duty this year, the watchdog group said in its annual roundup, listing war-torn Iraq and Syria as most danger-

"largely attributable to deliberate violence against journalists" and demonstrates the failure of initiatives to protect media personnel, the report said, calling for the United Nations to take action. In particular, the report shed light on the growing role of "non-state groups"—often jihadists such as the Islamic State group—in perpetrating atrocities against journalists.

need a response that matches the violence against journalists". A special representative of the United Nations secretary-general for the safety of journalists must be appointed without delay.

The 67 deaths bring to 787 the total number of journalists who were murdered, knowingly targeted or killed in the course of their work since 2005, the Paris-based organization said. In 2014, there were 66

employees have been living under close protection ever since. Some of them still have to keep changing their place of residence."

In Syria, the northern town of Aleppo was described as "a minefield" for professional and citizen-journalists alike. "Caught between the various parties to the conflict since 2011, journalists are liable to end up as collateral victims, being taken hostage by a non-state group (such as Islamic State, the Al Nusra Front or the Free Syrian Army) or being arrested by the Assad regime," RSF said. Those murdered in Syria included Japanese freelance reporter Kenji Goto, whose execution by the Islamic State group was unveiled in a macabre video in January.

India singled out

The RSF report also singled out India, where nine journalists had been murdered since the start of 2015, some of them for reporting on organized crime and its links with politicians and others for covering illegal mining. India saw five journalists killed in the course of their work and four for uncertain reasons, which is why it ranked below France where the cause of death was known. "Their deaths confirm India's position as Asia's deadliest country for media personnel, ahead of both Pakistan and Afghanistan," RSF said, urging the Indian government to establish "a national plan for protecting journalists".

In Bangladesh, four secularist bloggers were killed in acts claimed by local jihadists. "The passivity of the Bangladeshi authorities in the face of this bloodbath has fostered a climate of impunity that is extremely dangerous for citizen journalists," RSF said. The report also placed the spotlight on 54 journalists who were held hostage at the end of 2015, 26 of them in Syria, and 153 journalists who were in prison, 23 of them in China and 22 in Egypt. —AFP



ISTANBUL: Turkish journalists gather to protest against the jailing of opposition Cumhuriyet newspaper's editor-in-chief Can Dundar and Ankara representative Erdem Gul, in Istanbul. The journalists accused the government of silencing critics and attempting to cover-up a scandal after Dundar and Gul were jailed on terror and espionage charges for their reports on alleged Turkish arms smuggling to Syria. —AP

ous places for journalists with 11 and 10 fatalities respectively, followed by France, where eight journalists were killed in a jihadist assault on a satirical magazine.

A further 43 journalists around the world died in circumstances that were unclear and 27 non-professional "citizen-journalists" and seven other media workers were also killed, RSF said. The high toll is

In 2014, it said, two-thirds of the journalists killed were in war zones. But in 2015, it was the exact opposite, with "two-thirds killed in countries 'at peace'." "Non-state groups perpetrate targeted atrocities while too many governments do not comply with their obligations under international law," RSF Secretary General Christophe Deloire said. "The 110 journalists killed this year

such fatalities. France was the scene of an unprecedented attack on the press in January, when gunmen opened fire at the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo, killing 12 people, including eight journalists. "It was an unprecedented tragedy," RSF said. "A western country had never suffered a massacre of this kind in the past. "Charlie Hebdo's journalists and



BANGKOK: File photo shows Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej holding the leash of his dog while sitting in a wheelchair at a hospital in Bangkok. The favorite dog of Thailand's ailing monarch has died, days after a man was arrested under the kingdom's strict royal defamation laws for allegedly making a satirical online remark about the beloved canine. —AFP

THAI KING'S FAVORITE DOG DIES, AFTER 'INSULT' ARREST

BANGKOK: The favorite dog of Thailand's ailing monarch has died, days after a man was arrested under the kingdom's strict royal defamation laws for allegedly making a satirical online remark about the beloved canine. The dog, called Tongdaeng (Copper), became both a household name and a publishing sensation in Thailand after King Bhumibol Adulyadej adopted her as a stray puppy and penned a heartfelt book about her attributes in 2002. She was praised for her loyalty and obedience, with the book widely interpreted at the time as a parable about how Thais should live and remember their place within the kingdom's rigid society.

Her death was announced in a statement from the veterinary faculty of Kasetsart University late Monday. "While Khun Tongdaeng was sleeping and relaxing, she died peacefully on 26 December 2015 at 11:10pm at Klai Kangwon Palace," the statement read. It said she had been ill for the last few years and was just over 17 years old when she passed away. "Khun" is an honorific in Thailand, roughly translating to "ma'am", and was frequently used by officials and local media when referring to Tongdaeng.

Her death was splashed across Thai newspapers Tuesday, with local media reporting that the king had been informed. The dog regularly featured in palace photographs while the book about her outsold bestsellers such as Harry Potter in Thailand. A privately funded animated film based around Tongdaeng and her attributes is currently showing at Thai cinemas. In his book, Bhumibol described Tongdaeng as a

"respectful dog, with proper manners" who was "humble and knows protocol." "She would always sit lower than the king," the book added.

Criticism banned

King Bhumibol, 88, has spent much of the last two years in hospital and is rarely seen in public. But the world's longest-serving monarch remains widely revered in Thailand where his economic and social teachings are extensively promoted. The monarchy is also shielded from any debate and criticism by one of the world's harshest royal defamation laws. Anyone convicted of insulting the king, queen, heir or regent, can face up to 15 years in jail on each count. Analysts say uncertainty as the king's reign enters its twilight years is a major factor in the political chaos that has beset Thailand for the much of the last decade, as competing elites jostle for influence.

Lesser majeste prosecutions have soared since the army, which styles itself as the champion of the monarchy, grabbed power in a coup last year. The boundaries for what counts as a royal insult have also expanded dramatically. Earlier this month Thanakorn Siripaiboon, 27, was arrested for allegedly making a "satirical" Facebook post about the king and his dog, according to his lawyers. As is often the case in lese majeste cases, the authorities did not give details on what the post said. Thanakorn also faces lese majeste, sedition and computer crimes charges for clicking "like" on a doctored photo of the king and sharing it, plus an infographic on a growing corruption scandal engulfing the military. —AFP

23 KILLED AS TALEBAN SUICIDE BOMBER TARGETS GOVT OFFICE

PESHAWAR: At least 23 people were killed and dozens wounded when a Taliban suicide bomber on a motorbike crashed into the main gate of a government office in the northwest Pakistan town of Mardan, officials said. The blast highlights the Pakistani Taliban's continued ability to carry out attacks despite a major military offensive against its headquarters that analysts say has reduced the group's capacity. "It was a suicide bomber riding on a motorbike," Faisal Shahzad, district police chief said, placing the number of dead at 23 and wounded at 63.

The explosion ripped through the front entrance of a regional branch of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), which is responsible for issuing ID cards. Television footage showed the collapsed front wall of the building and twisted metal debris strewn on the road. Eyewitness Nasir Khan, a 29-year-old laborer who received a shrapnel injury to his right leg, said: "I was standing in the queue waiting for my turn as I had gone to renew my identity card when I heard someone shouting Allahu Akbar (God is greatest) and then I fell to the ground.

"The air was filled with smoke and dust and I could not see anything." "When the dust settled and I stood up, it looked as though someone had butchered the people in the line, there was only blood and human flesh in the row where people were previously standing," Ehsanullah Ehsan, spokesman for the hardline Jamaat-ul-Ahrar faction of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (Pakistani Taliban) claimed responsibility for the attack in an email sent to AFP. "This office was attacked because it is an important institution of the infidel state of Pakistan," he said, vowing to carry out further attacks.



PESHAWAR: Pakistani paramedics transport a bomb blast victim to a hospital in Peshawar yesterday. —AFP

Crackdown on militancy

Pakistan has been battling an Islamist insurgency since 2004 after the US-led invasion of Afghanistan caused militants to flee across the border where they began to foment unrest. More than 27,000 civilians and security personnel have died in attacks since that time, according to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, a monitoring site. But overall levels of extremist-linked violence have dropped dramatically this year, with 2015 on course for the fewest deaths since 2007 - the year the

Pakistani Taliban umbrella group was formed.

Analysts have credited the fall to military operations against the Taliban in the tribal areas of North Waziristan and Khyber where they are headquartered as well as the country's largest city of Karachi. Authorities have also taken steps to shut down militants' sources of funding and arrested thousands for inciting hatred. The crackdown came in the aftermath of a Taliban school massacre in December 2014, in which more than 150 people, mainly schoolchildren were killed. —Agencies



The sun sets as a paraglider prepares to land at the ski stadium on Monday prior to the ski jumping event in Oberstdorf, southern Germany, which is the first station of the Four-Hills Ski Jumping tournament. — AFP

LABOR UNIONS STAGE SIT-IN TO PROTEST...

Continued from Page 1

He said the union movement's demand is for the administrative decision, which he considered a "black rule" in the history of the authority and the ministry, be withdrawn, because unions and labor organizations are not considered departments of the manpower authority and members are not employees of the authority or the ministry to warrant such a decision. Arada said labor unions will act at all regional and international levels to defend "our gains and the working class," adding that such interference was banned by all international treaties. President of the Government Workers' Union Bader Al-Azmi said the sit-in aims at striking out this malicious decision. He said the decision was issued by sectors "we do not belong

to, and we reject it", hoping HH the prime minister intervenes in this matter and cancels the decision.

Head of the Audit Bureau Workers' Union Mamdouh Al-Enezi said they were against such interference by the authority in the work of labor unions, and had appealed to the Cabinet and the social affairs minister "to stop such oppressive decisions, but we did not get any response". "We took the first procedural steps by staging the sit-in, then we will go to Arab and international organizations," he warned.

Acting Director General of the manpower authority Ahmad Al-Mousa said the authority has never interfered and will not interfere in labor union work, adding that it did not do so out of its belief in complying with international standards. Mousa gave the press statement on the sidelines of the sit-in yesterday.

ERDOGAN MEETS KING SALMAN

Continued from Page 1

But many of the strikes have hit Western-backed rebel groups in areas where IS is not present, and Syrian activists say the Russian strikes have killed civilians.

Though Kurdish fighters are among the strongest forces on the ground in Syria battling the IS group, Erdogan told reporters before arriving in Saudi Arabia that countries backing the Kurds are "adding fuel to fire". Turkey considers the Kurdish forces in Syria terrorists because of their links to an outlawed Kurdish rebel group in Turkey. When Saudi Arabia hosted a meeting of major Syrian opposition groups this month, the main Kurdish militia known as the YPG and the largest

Kurdish group, the Democratic Union Party or PYD, were not invited. This is Erdogan's third visit to Saudi Arabia this year. He flew to Riyadh in January to attend the late King Abdullah's funeral and again in March for bilateral talks with King Salman. The two leaders also met at the G-20 summit held in Turkey last month. Saudi-Turkish ties were strained under Abdullah, who saw Turkey's support of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood group as a destabilizing threat to the region. Ties between the two countries have since improved under the new monarch Salman, who has worked closely with Sunni countries to stymie the reach of Saudi Arabia's top regional foe, Shiite Iran. Turkey is a member of the 34-nation Islamic military alliance that Saudi Arabia announced this month. — Agencies

MPs FLATLY AGAINST ANY FUEL, UTILITY PRICE...

Continued from Page 1

Deputy speaker Mubarak Al-Khrajinej called on the government to tackle the deficit and high spending away from the peoples' pockets, adding that any measures must not affect low income people or the subsidies provided to essential services and commodities. Khrajinej said the government should search for financial solutions to deal with the budget deficit but without lifting subsidies, raising charges or cutting financial benefits. He stressed that the majority of the Assembly will not accept any measures of this type. MP Mohammad Al-Huwaila said that the recommendations to the government negatively and directly impact families, adding that he will not accept those measures.

In another development, a number of Shiite MPs claimed yesterday that recent appointments by the public prosecution were marred with discrimination, and called for an investigation. MP Abdulhameed Dashti demanded that Justice Minister Yaqoub Al-Sane send him the official list of people

who have been accepted to work as prosecutors and their evaluations. He asked the minister if some applicants were rejected although they obtained higher marks than some of those accepted, and demanded to know the reasons.

MP Khalil Al-Saleh said that some of the applicants have been discriminated against and demanded the list of those accepted and their grades and the list of those rejected with their grades. The two lawmakers said a number of those accepted are either sons or close relatives of some judges and demanded action.

Meanwhile, MP Ahmad Al-Azemi yesterday congratulated HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and the government in addition to the family of Fayeze Al-Kandari, the last Kuwaiti Guantanamo inmate, after US authorities decided to free him next month. A Kuwaiti delegation is scheduled to travel to Guantanamo Bay on Jan 5 to receive Kandari, who has been at the prison for the past 14 years, and return to Kuwait on Jan 9. Azemi said the release came after concerted efforts by the Amir and the Kuwaiti government.

QATAR FATHER EMIR'S SURGERY SUCCESSFUL

Continued from Page 1

hip on Dec 26, in a procedure led by head physician Michael Leunig. The clinic said the operation went smoothly and "without complication". The sheikh was recovering well and no further information would be given, it added. It was reported on Monday that as many as nine planes belonging to Qatar's royal family had landed in Switzerland over the weekend. Swiss civil aviation authorities confirmed that a number of planes from the Qatari royal fleet had made unscheduled landings at the Zurich-Kloten airport. According to Zurich's Tages Anzeiger newspaper, the first Qatari plane, an Airbus, landed from Marrakesh shortly after midnight

on Dec 26. A second flight landed at Zurich-Kloten at 5:00 am (0400 GMT) the same day, with a third plane coming 15 minutes later, both having originated in Doha, the paper reported. According to Tages Anzeiger, six more planes linked to the Qatari royal family and government landed in Zurich through the weekend.

Sheikh Hamad ruled Qatar from 1995 to 2013, overseeing its transformation into one of the richest countries in the world. He stepped down in June 2013 when he announced in a televised address he was handing power to his son Sheikh Tamim. The official Qatar News Agency reported that the emir had received a phone call on Sunday from Morocco's King Mohammed VI and discussed "issues of common concern". — Agencies

LOSSES DEAL BLOW TO IS

Continued from Page 1

Patrick Martin, Iraq analyst at the Institute for the Study of War, said the Ramadi win was the reversal of an earlier loss and would fall short of seriously crippling IS in the area. "ISIS (IS) remains capable of launching attacks across Iraq without Ramadi, which is more significant for the Iraqi security forces and the Iraqi government than it ever was for ISIS," he said. A senior officer in the counter-terrorism service that spearheaded the fighting in Ramadi told AFP that IS had driven many of its vehicles and weapons out of the city before the battle began.

Winning battles and gaining territory, regardless of their tactical significance, is important for morale, said Patrick Skinner of the US-based Soufan Group intelligence consultancy. "Losing matters. And while the cyber battle is relatively important, the actual physical battle is paramount in the short term," he said.

'Less Triumphant'

Skinner argued that even IS supreme Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi's latest audio message, last week, sounded "less triumphant" than usual. That view was shared by Abi Ali, who saw Baghdadi's threatening of Jews and Israel as a "great indicator of the trouble Islamic State is in". "The popularity of anti-Israel rhetoric in the region makes dictators believe that the theme is a guaranteed crowd-pleaser, and so they turn to it to distract from other problems they face," he said.

The US-led coalition announced yesterday that its air strikes had killed 10 "leadership figures" in IS in December alone, including two militants linked to the November Paris attacks. Beyond the mere scorekeeping

of wins and losses, analysts also focused on the significance of the new combinations of forces that are waging the anti-IS war. In Sinjar, rival Kurdish factions got together, with aerial support from the US-led coalition, to retake the city. In northern Syria, Kurdish forces leading an alliance with Sunni Arab fighters have scored gains.

And in Ramadi, federal forces entered the city centre and retook it without the involvement of the Tehran-backed Shiite militias that had played a key part in earlier successes. "In Iraq, the restored capability of the Iraqi forces is very important and is likely to be a model for future offensives," said Abi Ali. According to Skinner, the "methodical taking of Ramadi, with US air cover limiting the movement and fortifications of ISIS in the urban areas, proved to be very effective. It will likely be replicated again in Fallujah."

Iraqi Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi vowed Monday that all remaining IS-held areas in the country would be retaken by the end of 2016, including second city Mosul. In Syria, Abi Ali said it would become more difficult for Kurdish forces to gain ground as they advance towards the IS bastion of Raqa and move farther away from Kurdish land. "Greater involvement by Sunni Arabs is needed before the forces fighting Islamic State develop the capability to take, hold and police predominantly Sunni Arab territories from the group," he said.

As the heart of the caliphate Baghdadi proclaimed 18 months ago shrinks, Abi Ali predicted IS would likely see oil-rich Libya as a "plan B" and expand there in the coming year. "Moreover, the ideologies of jihadism and of political Islam are alive and well. It is far too soon to write off Islamic State and organizations similar to it," he said. —AFP

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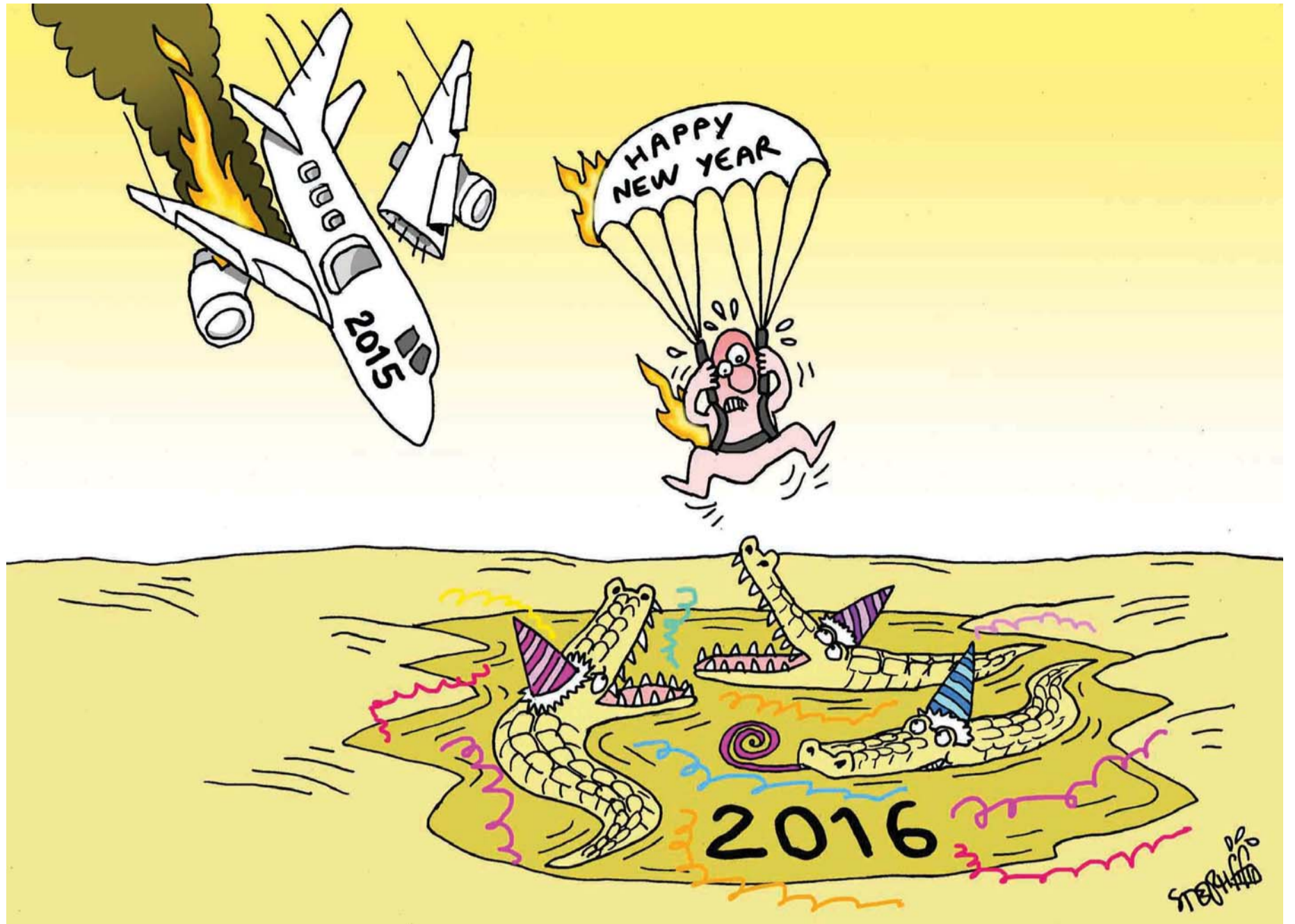
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HOPES OF PEOPLE FORCED OUT OF THEIR HOMES

By Sebastien Malo

The year 2015 saw a record number of people fleeing their homes, with more than 60 million people uprooted by wars, conflict and persecution in countries ranging from Syria to South Sudan and Afghanistan, according to the United Nations. Worldwide that means one person in every 122 has been forced to flee their home, displaced within their own country or forced to move to another country. Here are some of their stories and their hopes for 2016:

Sandy Khabbazah, 26, a Syrian now living in Oakland, New Jersey, United States

"I am from Aleppo City. Our house is on the line between ISIS (Islamic State) and the Syrian government. If the Syrian army wants to attack ISIS, they put tanks near our house. When ISIS wants to attack the Syrian government, they come to our neighborhood. My family is stuck there. It's like a nightmare, but it's true. One time ISIS went next door and put snipers there. When I was going to school, a sniper shot at me three times. I was lucky he missed me.

My mom came a couple of times to America and she loved America so she named me Sandy. It is an American name because she wanted me to come back here. And here I am. Her dream came true. I came here as a student. I came because I'm an ambitious woman. I want opportunity to build my future. My dream was to work with NASA. But I'm struggling financially because education here is so, so expensive.

I'm a civil engineer, and I'm working a job for people who graduated from high school. With that money, I trained to become a concrete inspector certificate. One day I went to a church. The pastor and I we started talking, and he told me: "I will help you." Until now, the church keeps sponsoring me and they offered me a place to stay. My hope is in 2016 to be reunited with my family here in America and to be a good American. I love America."

Mustafa Asefi, 28, an Afghan living in Vancouver, Canada
"I'm from Afghanistan, from Kabul, and I was working for an international company. In 2014 in December, I got a

warning letter from the Taliban. They warn people who are working with international companies. They assume these people are their enemy, are helping the enemy of the Taliban, or the foreigners. These are normal strategies that the Taliban and other militias use in Afghanistan. They just send you a letter which is called 'shabnama'; it's like a warning letter. And along with that they call you and send you text messages. They continue these threats and you have to obey them. Otherwise they will take action.

Because I was working for an international company, I was lucky enough that we got a US visa and from the United States, we eventually came to Canada. We applied for protection. When they accepted me as a refugee, it was like someone issued me a new birth certificate. For me, it was a very tough year because I never expected I would have to flee everything, leave everything behind. I was working as a professional engineer, and I wanted to work with my country, with my people. But my life was in danger and I had no choice. My hope is to start my normal life as it was in my home country. I want to have a job, I want to work, as I was working in my home country, because now this is my country and this is my people."

Hassane Chetim, 36, a Nigerian living in Bosso, Niger

"The first day Boko Haram entered my village, Gogone, was Oct 1, 2014, and now for a second time on Nov 25, 2015. That's what caused all the villagers in my town to flee. Last year I moved here to settle in the town of Bosso. I have a family of six boys and six women, and everyone works. Everyone contributes their stone to the building. It forced us to leave the land on which our ancestors have lived for many years. We never thought that some of our villages that have existed for more than a hundred years would be deserted in an instant.

We grew peppers and so we had something with which to survive. I'm a teacher, but since 2012 I haven't taught. People are afraid that Boko Haram will catch their children at school, so they don't send them. During the last attack there were 19 dead and nine people were wounded. One of my nieces has died, and a nephew of mine was wounded. There is a constant fear that doesn't let our conscience rest. I hope that this war ends and that the people return home and retrieve their freedom to

work the fields and fish in the lake. If I live, I thought about writing a novel about the fact that we are the youth of the crisis. Because it is youth that is being lost. It hurts me."

Luoy Liay, 29, living in Juba, South Sudan

"It was on Dec 15, 2013 that my displacement started. It happened after the presidential guard clashed among themselves, which later led to massive killing - ethnic killing of civilians who are part of the Nuer tribe. Political differences in the leading party, too, was at play. We ran, we ran for our lives. I was a college student pursuing a bachelor's degree in development studies. Conditions are totally unacceptable in the protected site in which I live. A lot of violence, stress, and too much thinking about losing hope for the future. We worry about goods, education, health care, basic things.

The conditions are not normal here. In here, you sleep in open shelter, regardless of your sex. Many people lose hope for their future. That pushes some to commit crimes. It is so difficult for someone who was studying to stop for three years. 2016 may be different in some ways, but the truth is the trauma remains. It will be hard to recover smoothly without getting better education and health care systems."

Ragheda, 30, a Syrian living in Mafraq, Jordan

"My life in Syria was good. Not very rich, but easy. My husband was in construction but was injured and cannot move. I am the head of my household. Why did I have to leave in 2012? It was, simply, the war. Air strikes next to the house. My daughter suffers from post-traumatic stress. She frequently has night terrors. She is 10 years old. I live in a very good neighborhood in Mafraq (northern Jordan) where my Jordanian neighbors are very kind. But I would like to be in a place where I don't need anyone to help me. I receive cash assistance from UNHCR, but it is barely enough to cover the rent.

The services in Jordan aren't enough to cover all my needs. I am currently four months behind in rent. I hope that in 2016 I can catch up on my payments and be able to pay rent on time. I would also like to find psychological help for my daughter." —Reuters

SF HOUSING SHORTAGE THREATENS BLACKS

By Janie Har

Tired of paying nearly \$4,000 a month for a one-bedroom in San Francisco's popular South of Market district, two newlyweds last year bought a townhouse in a budding development along the city's rough-edged southeastern bay-front. Friends warned Eytejumade and Jinglin Sogbesan that the historically black Bayview-Hunters Point was a dangerous place. But Eytejumade Sogbesan, 39, a Nigeria native and former investment banker, ignored them. A \$500,000 two-bedroom with parking seemed a bargain in a city where modest homes fetch \$1 million.

As San Francisco rides a massive building boom reminiscent of post-World War II, fueled largely by growth in tech-based jobs, developers are finally wading into a part of the city long plagued by too much poverty and not enough fresh produce markets. But as modern dwellings crop up, there are fears that the city's dwindling population of African Americans will not be able to afford the neighborhood that writer James Baldwin once called "the San Francisco America pretends does not exist."

"I love this place. This is really home," said Dwight Brown, a jobs activist standing outside his office on Third Street, a rundown commercial strip. "But the writing on the wall was they're taking it away from us. You're not going to be able to live in San Francisco, unless you stand and fight for it."

As San Francisco's population climbed to an estimated 860,000 this year, the number of African Americans has plummeted from 100,000 in 1970 to fewer than half that today. Blacks, who comprised a third of Bayview-Hunters Point residents in 2010, are being priced out or have sold their property, trading rising equity in their homes for quieter lives in the suburbs. City leaders say

the new development should help preserve the city's black community. As evidence, they point to plans for new senior and public housing, as well as recent legislation requiring that 40 percent of new affordable units go to residents.

"People heard so many different promises for years and now, they literally see the manifestation of years of advocacy and work and disappointment. This is for you," said San Francisco Supervisor Malia Cohen, whose great-aunts once lived in a city housing project. Bayview-Hunters Point is one of the last major frontiers for San Francisco development, encompassing more than a square mile of undeveloped land in a cramped city of 49 square miles. It is sunnier than many areas, with spectacular views of the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge and downtown.



In this Nov 9, 2015 photo, Thomas Bailey offers barbecue to passersby while vending on a street corner in the Bayview-Hunters Point district in San Francisco. —AP

Rich History

The neighborhood is perhaps best known as home of Candlestick Park, where the Giants and 49ers played for decades before moving to new venues. But the area has a rich history. Once called Butchertown for the slaughterhouses of yesteryear, Bayview-Hunters Point has long served as a place of pioneers, including Italians and Maltese - and after World War II, thousands of blacks who left the South for jobs at the naval shipyard.

There was a thriving blue-collar middle class. But when the shipyard closed in 1974, work dried up and gangs came to rule, especially in its public housing projects. Neighborhood tensions with police remain high, especially after five officers on Dec 2 fatally shot a 26-year-old knife-wielding suspect who was black. Still, daily life for many defies

Bayview-Hunters Point's reputation as a dangerous place.

On a recent afternoon, formerly homeless Thomas Bailey sold gumbo and ribs from a makeshift stand outside the vintage 1888 Bayview Opera House. At a nearby senior center, old-timers from places such as Mississippi and Texas chatted away. Blocks away, tight friends goofed around on a hoverboard and bicycle. "We got good people here, hard-working people," said Allen Jordan, co-owner of Sam Jordan's Bar and Grill, named after his father, who was San Francisco's first black candidate for mayor. "A lot of people have a fear of coming here, without ever being here."

In 2008, voters approved a measure allowing the development going on today. Lennar Urban plans to construct 12,000 housing units on the sites of the former shipyard and now-demolished Candlestick Park, nearly doubling the population of 35,000. There are plans for a luxury shopping center at the old park and for rebuilding the dreary 1963 Alice Griffith housing project, marred by broken windows and boarded up units. "We need a change," said resident Robin Robinson. "If people are living a little bit better, maybe they'll feel a little better."

Eytejumade Sogbesan, the newcomer, said buying a home in one of the most expensive cities in the country is good for his family, which includes an infant daughter. Plus, he said, "I will be part of a community that will be evolving into something much different." Terrance Everette, a father of one, escaped a tumultuous life in Bayview-Hunters Point to find stable work and housing in a suburb. Yet the power company subcontractor, 41, longs to return, to be part of the evolving community where techies and other professionals are snapping up homes. "It's a dream to stay where you're from. It's a culture shock to send you elsewhere," he said. "I'd rather be home." —AP

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'MONSTER' INOUE DEFENDS WBO TITLE

TOKYO: "Monster" Naoyu Inoue of Japan yesterday successfully defended his World Boxing Organization junior bantamweight title, flooring Philippine challenger Warlito Parrenas with a quick knockout. The bout marked a return to the ring for Inoue (9-0, 8 knockouts), who missed most of this year after injuring his right hand in beating Omar Narvaez of Argentina a year ago for the title. The boxing wonderboy released fast and heavy punches, which put 32-year-old Parrenas (24-7-1, 21 knockouts) on the canvas quickly in the second round. Inoue then followed up with killer left-hand blows that had the Philippine fighter on his knees. Inoue grabbed the WBO crown last year, dethroning Narvaez who had defended the title for 12 years with a second-round knockout. The unbeaten 22-year-old previously captured the World Boxing Council light flyweight title in April last year and defended it six months later in September. Yesterday's bout was part of a double-header that also featured Japanese challenger Akira Yaegashi (23-5, 12 knockouts) grabbing the International Boxing Federation world light flyweight title by beating Mexican Javier Mendoza (24-3-1, 19 knockouts). Judges awarded the bout to Yaegashi by scores of 117-111, 119-109 and 120-107. — AFP

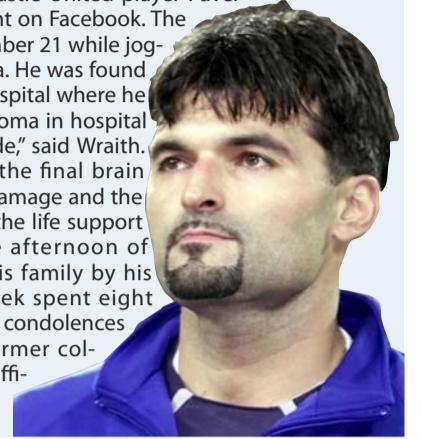


BARCELONA FIRES 'INSULTING' PLAYER

BARCELONA: Diehard Real Madrid fan Sergi Guardiola's decision to write offensive tweets aimed at Barcelona came back to haunt him Monday when he was hired and fired by the Spanish giants on the same day. The 24-year-old striker penned a deal with Barca's B team but was sacked just a few hours later when angry fans of the Catalan club made officials aware of Guardiola's Twitter tirade from 2013, www.lequipe.fr reported. His tweets had included "Allez Madrid" and "F... Catalans". "FC Barcelona has decided to terminate the contract signed with Sergi Guardiola, after finding that he had published offensive tweets about the club and Catalonia," said a Barcelona statement. Meanwhile, coach Luis Enrique yesterday refused to rule out the possibility of strengthening his side in the January transfer window, with the club's ban on signing new players set to expire. Barca were barred from registering new players for two consecutive transfer windows in 2015 after breaking FIFA rules on the signing of foreign players under the age of 16. However, from January 4 Barca will finally be able to hand debuts to off-season recruits Arda Turan and Alexis Vidal, with further transfer activity potentially on the cards. — Agencies

EX-NEWCASTLE 'KEEPER DIES AFTER HEART ATTACK

PRAGUE: Former Czech international goalkeeper Pavel Srnec of Newcastle United fame died yesterday following a heart attack he had suffered while out jogging last week, his agent said. "It is with deep sadness that I have to announce the passing of former Newcastle United player Pavel Srnec," Steve Wraith said in a statement on Facebook. The 47-year-old Srnec collapsed on December 21 while jogging in the eastern Czech city of Ostrava. He was found after 20 minutes and taken to a local hospital where he died. "Pavel... had been in an induced coma in hospital with his close family around his bedside," said Wraith. "Despite the best medical attention the final brain scans on Monday showed irreversible damage and the decision had to be taken to switch off the life support machine." "Pav passed away on the afternoon of Tuesday 29th December 2015 with his family by his side." Newcastle United, where Srnec spent eight years, said on Twitter that "our deepest condolences go to Pavel's family, many friends, former colleagues and supporters at this very difficult time." — AFP



LIENZ: Sweden's Frida Hansdotter, center, winner of an alpine ski, women's World Cup slalom, celebrates on the podium with second placed Switzerland's Wendy Holdener, left, and third placed Petra Vlhova, of Slovakia, in Lienz, Austria, yesterday. — AP

HANSDOTTER EDGES HOLDENER TO WIN WOMEN'S WORLD CUP SLALOM

LIENZ: Frida Hansdotter held on to her first-run lead to win a women's World Cup slalom yesterday, making her the main candidate to take over the discipline title from the injured Mikaela Shiffrin.

The Swede's third career win helped extend her lead in the discipline standings to 100 points over Petra Vlhova of Slovakia. She is the only skier to reach the podium in all four slaloms this season. Hansdotter finished in a

combined time of 1 minute, 47.02 seconds on the Schlossberg course to edge Wendy Holdener of Switzerland by 0.07. Vlhova, who won the previous slalom in Are, Sweden, two weeks ago, posted the fastest second-run time and finished 0.43 behind in third.

Michaela Kirchgasser of Austria, who was 0.39 back in third after the opening leg, failed to finish her final run. "It was a really nice race today," Hansdotter said. "I had a solid first run

but I felt I had more to give."

Carrying a slim 0.11-second lead into her second run, Hansdotter avoided mistakes and lost just four-hundredths of her advantage, denying Holdener a first World Cup slalom victory for a Swiss female skier in 13 years.

"It was amazing," said Hansdotter, who raised both arms in celebration after crossing the finish. "I knew it was close. In the upper part I had the feeling it was good but on the steep

part I struggled a bit."

Although it was only her third win and first of the season, the slalom specialist is one of the most consistent performers on the circuit with 19 podium finishes. She came runner-up in 14 slalom races, a women's World Cup record she shares with Swedish great Pernilla Wiberg. Seven times Hansdotter came second to Shiffrin, who also beat the Swede to retain her world title last February. The Olympic champion

from the United States, who won the World Cup slalom title the past three years and also took the first two races this season, is out for an indefinite time after hurting her right knee in a warmup crash for the Dec. 12 giant slalom in Are. The women's World Cup continues with another slalom in Santa Caterina, Italy, next Tuesday. That race has been moved from Zagreb because of a lack of snow in the Croatian resort. — AP

KSF ISSUES STATEMENT ON ISSF INTERFERENCE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Shooting Federation (KSF) Board of Directors reviewed the statement issued by the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) on December 15, in which it defends Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad in a case that is in Kuwait courts and is not related to sports in any way, which is a strange and unprecedented step, and from the domain of the ISSF activities, as Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad is not a member of ISSF, and has no designation at the ISSF, except personal relations, and joint interests with the President of ISSF, Mexican, Olagario Vasquez Rana, especially that Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahad inherited his post as president of ANOC from his brother Mario Rana.

The irresponsible statement by ISSF, and its flagrant interference in the internal affairs of a sovereign country, in a way that oversteps the sports role of ISSF and its statutes, which is a crime in the international and German laws where ISSF is located and where the statement was issued.

Kuwait Shooting Federation, while categorically denying the incorrect accusations mentioned in ISSF statement, emphasizes that the statement only represents ISSF President Rana and Secretary General Schriber, and does not represent ISSF members, as well as the International Shooting Community, which has good relations with KSF.

Kuwait Shooting Federation will take the necessary legal action to hold those involved in this suspicious statement accountable. We at KSF confirm that we adhere to the sports ethics, and remain distant from any actions and practices that have nothing to do with sports and far from fair play.

Those accusations by ISSF are part of a continued campaign against KSF for more than one year, which caused the cancellation of the qualifying quota places to Rio de Janeiro 2016 Olympics, during the Asian championship that was held in Kuwait in November, and the suspension of KSF, in a manner that contradicts the constitution of the ISSF.

May Allah protect Kuwait from all evil under the wise leadership of HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince and HH the Prime Minister.

INNERHOFER BATTLES GATE IN WILD DOWNHILL

SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA: Adrien Theaux won a wild World Cup downhill by a large margin yesterday while Christof Innerhofer grabbed most of the attention by finishing fourth after skiing halfway down the course with a gate attached to him.

Theaux won in 1 minute, 47.29 seconds on the dark and steep Deborah Compagnoni course for a 1.04-second advantage over Hannes Reichelt of Austria. It was the Frenchman's third career win. David Poisson of France came third, 1.15 behind - the first podium result in the 33-year-old's World Cup career. Innerhofer missed the podium by just 0.07. About a minute into his run, the Italian got his left arm wrapped around a gate and the bright fluorescent orange panel and long pole caught onto his equipment.

After about 30 seconds, Innerhofer rid himself of the pole but he carried the panel to the finish at speeds above 120 kph (75 mph) - earning the Italian loud cheers from the home crowd. "Bode Miller's no longer around so there needs to be another crazy guy," Innerhofer said. "It was really at the limit and very dangerous. I couldn't see and I was carrying the pole and the panel. ... It felt like a parachute behind me."

Aksel Lund Svindal finished seventh, ending his run of three straight downhill wins. "This is not my style of downhill," Svindal said. "This is Innerhofer's style." Still, the Norwegian reclaimed the overall World Cup lead from Marcel Hirscher, who doesn't race downhill. Svindal moved 15 points ahead of his Austrian rival in the overall and maintained his lead in the downhill standings.

International Ski Federation technical operations manager Mike Kertesz explained that the gates contain one fixed pole and one that is designed to release in case of contact.

"Probably what happened is the gate panel came off the fixed pole but the outside of the two poles isn't fixed so it came with it," Kertesz said. "It's made to release and not wreck the athlete." Either way, there was no stopping Innerhofer.

"What he did today was unbelievable - going 145 kph with his goggles covering his eyes," Svindal said. "I wouldn't have finished fourth - there's no way. That was ridiculous." Ten of the 56 starters didn't make it to the finish, including several racers who lost a ski on the challenging course. Of the first six racers, only three completed their runs.

RELAXED

Defending champion Travis Ganong of the United States finished 17th. "It's really difficult and you had to have the legs," Theaux said. "I just tried to ski relaxed. If you push too much

you go off line and break your legs. I like this kind of course where it's difficult and there are a lot of turns. The difficult part is you don't see anything." Poisson took the bronze medal in downhill at the 2013 world championships but had never had success on the regular World Cup circuit.

"This is a big result for me," he said. "It was a long time." Poisson was among those voicing criticism when the annual race in Bormio was moved up the road to Santa Caterina starting last year.

"I have to apologize," he said. "This is a great course, and just as challenging as Bormio and even Kitzbuhel when it's rough there. You have to ski it with a lot of heart and dedication." Those attributes are certainly not lacking in Innerhofer, who has battled back problems throughout his career but

took a medal of each color at the 2011 worlds and silver in downhill and bronze in super-combined at last year's Sochi Olympics.

"I feel like I'm starting a second career now," Innerhofer said. "I don't fear anything and nothing can stop me, as you saw today." The 31-year-old Innerhofer announced he hopes to continue skiing through the 2022 Olympics in Beijing - when he'll be 37. "Skiing is my passion," the outgoing Italian said. "Why think about quitting?" Nursing a big bruise on his arm and a slight cut on his nose from his escapades, Innerhofer didn't want to speculate over whether he would have won if he hadn't gotten the gate attached to him. "I had a big lead near the end of both training sessions," he said. "So make up your own mind." — AP



SANTA CATERINA VALFURVA: France's Adrien Theaux celebrates on the podium after winning a men's World Cup downhill in Santa Caterina Valfurva, Italy, yesterday. — AP

STEYN WILL NOT BOWL FOR REST OF TEST

DURBAN: South African fast bowler Dale Steyn will not bowl again in the opening test against England at Kingsmead after his shoulder spasm failed to clear up overnight, officials said yesterday.

The decision is a further blow to the home side, who have their backs to the wall as they seek to avoid defeat in the first of the four-test series. Steyn bowled just under four overs in England's second innings on

Monday and although a scan on his right shoulder revealed no tear, he was ruled out after experiencing discomfort before the start of the fourth day's play. Steyn had twice left the field at Kingsmead in mid-over in obvious pain on Monday as England built a potentially match-winning lead.

"Dale experienced some discomfort in his right shoulder after the first day's play and it was probably because of the long

layoff he's had, coupled with the fact there was a great bowling load on him on the first day," explained team manager Mohammed Moosaajee.

"We took him for a precautionary scan, which was inconclusive. There were no tears to any muscles, tendons or ligaments." The world's top-ranked test bowler, only just back after a groin injury which kept him out of three tests in India last month, clasped

his shoulder on his follow-through after two balls of his fourth over in England's second innings and was sent off the field by his captain Hashim Amla for treatment. He came back out 50 minutes later and was brought on to bowl again but managed just three balls before departing the arena, throwing an object to the ground in obvious frustration as he walked to the dressing-room.

After his scan during the afternoon session, he returned to field until the close of play, limiting his time off the pitch in case he was passed fit to bowl on Tuesday, which did not happen.

The absence of Steyn, who took four wickets in the first innings, was keenly felt as England built up a 261-run lead over South Africa overnight and took a firm grip on the test match. — Reuters

FINN STRIKES AS ENGLAND PUSH FOR WIN IN FIRST TEST

DURBAN: Steven Finn took three crucial wickets, including two in successive overs, as England pushed for victory on the fourth day of the first Test against South Africa at Kingsmead yesterday.

Set to make 416 to win, South Africa were 136 for four at the close of play, facing a long struggle to bat out the final day to earn a draw and prevent England from going ahead in the four-match series.

England hopes soared when the tall Finn had South African captain Hashim Amla caught behind for 12 before removing the limpet-like Dean Elgar for 40. Elgar, who carried his bat for 118 not out in the first innings, was caught at second slip by Joe Root. He had been on the field for the entire match up to that point. AB de Villiers and Faf du Plessis batted through 103 minutes and 23.5 overs to raise hopes that South Africa might pull off another rearguard action to save the game as they have done against Australia, India and Sri Lanka in recent seasons.

But, in what proved to be the last over of the day, Finn struck again, having Du Plessis caught by England captain Alastair Cook at first slip off a ball that kicked viciously to glance off the shoulder of the bat. Finn finished the day with three for 27. Du Plessis nine off 66 balls.

De Villiers, who made 37 not out off 83 balls, escaped with his score on 33 when he went down the pitch to off-spinner Moeen Ali and wicketkeeper Jonny Bairstow failed to catch a sharply-turning ball to make a stump-

ing. Elgar and Stiaan van Zyl put on 53 for South Africa's first wicket before Ben Stokes bowled Van Zyl for 33.

The left-handed Van Zyl played some handsome strokes before he fell in similar fashion to his first innings duck against Stuart Broad, misjudging a ball bowled from around the wicket which hit his off stump. England were bowled out for 326 in their second innings just under an hour after lunch.

Bairstow hit an aggressive 79 off 76 balls to provide impetus to the England innings as they sought to score quickly to give themselves time to bowl out South Africa.

Bairstow hit nine fours and three sixes before he was last man out, caught at long-off, after he provided a rare example of a batsman scoring freely on a dry, slow pitch.

With fast bowler Dale Steyn missing because of a shoulder strain, off-spinner Dane Piedt bowled 18 overs unchanged from the start of play. He finished with five for 153 in 36 overs, his first five-wicket haul in Tests. South Africa struck two blows early in the day, dismissing Joe Root for 73 and Stokes for five.

But Bairstow followed up a first innings of 41 with another fluent performance, with James Taylor (41), Moeen Ali (16) and Chris Woakes (23) all providing support. Steyn, who only bowled 3.5 overs on Monday, including a second spell of just three balls, again felt discomfort in his right shoulder and it was decided he should not take the field. The injury puts him in doubt for the second Test starting in Cape Town on Saturday. — AFP



MELBOURNE: Australia's Usman Khawaja, left, avoids a shot from West Indies' Marlon Samuels, right, during their cricket test match in Melbourne, Australia, yesterday. — AP

LYON, MARSH BOWL AUSSIES TO BIG SERIES WIN OVER WINDIES

MELBOURNE: Nathan Lyon and Mitchell Marsh bowled Australia to a 177-run victory over the West Indies in the second Test yesterday, to win the series and retain the Frank Worrell Trophy.

The Australians, who won the first Test in Hobart by an innings and 212 runs, dismissed the visitors for 282 in the final overs of the fourth day after declaring their second innings on their overnight 179 for three with a 459-run lead.

The embattled Caribbean tourists resisted the Australian push with a spirited 100-run sixth-wicket stand between skipper Jason Holder and former captain Denesh Ramdin. But they quickly lost their remaining four wickets to crash to defeat 1.3 overs before the scheduled close.

Holder was out for 68 off 86 balls, while Ramdin chipped in with 59 off 90 balls in his best Test score for two years. Lyon, Australia's all-time leading off-spin wicket-taker with 182, was named man of the match with seven match wickets, while all-rounder Marsh finished with four for 61 in the second innings.

"Lyono did what he's done so well for us this summer, got wickets for us at crucial times. He's bowled beautifully," said Australia skipper Steve Smith.

Smith said of Marsh: "I think when he's in a good rhythm he's as good as any of the bowlers around the country at the moment, and he hit that rhythm today." Ramdin and Holder held the Australians at bay for 21 overs until Ramdin was caught behind by Peter Nevill off Marsh. It was the first century partnership of the series for the embattled Windies.

"I'm obviously proud of the way the guys showed some fight in this game," Holder said. "I'm still disappointed we didn't put up a better fight but still credit to the way the guys played, especially Darren Bravo in the first innings and Denesh Ramdin in the second innings. I thought the bowlers tried (too)."

A BETTER EFFORT IN THIS GAME

Skipper Holder's resistance ended in the final overs of the day as he drove Marsh straight to Josh Hazlewood at mid-off. The wickets then quickly tumbled. Kemar Roach went for 11 and Jerome Taylor was last man out for a duck after skying Marsh to a sprawling James Pattinson at

SCOREBOARD

MELBOURNE: Scores after the fourth and final day of the second Test between Australia and the West Indies at the Melbourne Cricket Ground yesterday:

Australia 1st innings 551-3 declared (U. Khawaja 144, S. Smith 134 not out, J. Burns 128, A. Voges 106 not out)	West Indies 1st innings 271 (D. Bravo 81, C. Brathwaite 59; N. Lyon 4-66, J. Pattinson 4-72).	R. Chandrika lbw b Pattinson 37 D. Bravo c Nevill b Siddle 21 M. Samuels c Nevill b Marsh 19 J. Blackwood lbw b Lyon 20 D. Ramdin c Nevill b Marsh 59 J. Holder c Hazlewood b Marsh 68 C. Brathwaite b Lyon 2 K. Roach c Warner b Pattinson 11 J. Taylor c Pattinson b Marsh 0 J. Warrican not out 4 Extras (lb7, w1, nb2) 10 Total (all out; 88.3 overs) 282
Australia 2nd innings J. Burns c K. Brathwaite b Holder 5 D. Warner c Holding b C. Brathwaite 17 U. Khawaja c Ramdin b Holder 56 S. Smith not out 70 M. Marsh not out 18 Extras (lb6, w2, nb5) 13 Total (3 wickets declared; 32 overs) 179 Fall of wickets: 1-7 (Burns), 2-46 (Warner), 3-123 (Khawaja) Bowling: Taylor 3-0-25-0, Holder 11-1-49-2 (1nb), C. Brathwaite 6-1-30-1 (1w), Roach 4-0-22-0 (1w), Warrican 8-0-47-0	West Indies 2nd innings K. Brathwaite c Smith b Lyon 31	Fall of wickets: 1-35 (K. Brathwaite), 2-83 (Bravo), 3-91 (Chandrika), 4-118 (Samuels), 5-150 (Blackwood), 6-250 (Ramdin), 7-253 (C. Brathwaite), 8-274 (Holder), 9-278 (Roach), 10-282 (Taylor) Bowling: Hazlewood 20-6-40-0 (1nb, 1w), Pattinson 17-4-49-2, Lyon 23-7-85-3, Siddle 9-2-35-1, Marsh 17.3-2-61-4 (1nb), Smith 2-1-5-0. Result: Australia win by 177 runs

SCOREBOARD

DURBAN, South Africa: Scores at close of play on the fourth day of the first Test between South Africa and England at Kingsmead yesterday:

England, first innings 303	(Woakes, 9-315 (Broad)
South Africa, first innings 214	Bowling: Steyn 3.5-0-10-0, Morkel 20.3-5-38-1, Abbott 21.4-3-62-1, Piedt 36.4-153-5, Elgar 9-0-32-0, Van Zyl 10.1-3-20-3, Duminy 1-0-5-0
England, second innings (overnight 172-3)	South Africa, second innings
A. Cook lbw b Piedt 7	D. Elgar c Root b Finn 40
A. Hales c Abbott b Piedt 26	S. van Zyl b Stokes 33
N. Compton c De Villiers b Morkel 49	D. Steyn not out 0
J. Root c Van Zyl b Abbott 73	F. du Plessis c Cook b Finn 9
J. Taylor st De Villiers b Piedt 42	D. Steyn not out 0
B. Stokes c Elgar b Piedt 5	Extras (lb2, lb3) 5
J. Bairstow c Duminy b Van Zyl 79	Total (4 wks, 47 overs) 136
M. Ali lbw b Piedt 16	Fall of wickets: 1-53 (Van Zyl), 2-85 (Amla), 3-88 (Elgar), 4-136 (Du Plessis)
C. Woakes c Duminy b Van Zyl 23	Bowling: Broad 11-4-25-0, Woakes 6-2-17-0, Finn 8-3-27-3, Stokes 7-1-26-1, Ali 15-3-36-0
S. Broad c De Villiers b Van Zyl 0	Match situation: South Africa need 280 runs to win with six wickets remaining.
S. Finn not out 0	
Extras (lb3, lb3) 6	
Total (102.1 overs) 326	
Fall of wickets: 1-13 (Cook), 2-48 (Hales), 3-119 (Compton), 4-192 (Root), 5-197 (Stokes), 6-224 (Taylor), 7-272 (Ali), 8-315	



DURBAN: South Africa's batsman AB de Villiers (R) plays a shot during the fourth day of the first Test match between England and South Africa at Kingsmead stadium yesterday in Durban. — AFP

COURT CLEARS AMIR'S PATH TO RETURN TO PAKISTAN TEAM

LAHORE: A Pakistani court yesterday rejected a petition against the inclusion of convicted spot-fixer Mohammad Amir in the national cricket team, clearing the last hurdle to his predicted comeback after a five-year ban.

Amir, 23, was one of three Pakistan players banned for arranging deliberate no-balls as part of a betting scam during a Test match in England 2010. The two other were the then-Test captain Salman Butt and bowler Mohammad Asif. All three were also sentenced to six months in prison in Britain. The prospect of the trio returning to national colours after serving their bans has polarised opinions, with one lawyer petitioning the Lahore High Court to issue a stay order against a recall for Amir. Justice Shahid Bilal Hasan rejected the petition, according to the Pakistan Cricket Board's legal adviser Taffazul Rizvi. "I pleaded the case on behalf of the PCB and our opinion is that Amir completed his ban and as per country's constitution he has every right to play cricket," Rizvi told AFP. "The judge on hearing the arguments rejected the petition filed by a lawyer, Munsif Awan," he added.

Pakistan's selectors included Amir in a fitness camp staged to select the squad for next month's tour of New Zealand. Because of his extraordinary wicket-taking form Amir is tipped to be in the squad.

The squad for the three one-dayers and three Twenty20 internationals is likely to be announced in the next couple of days. Amir, who was 18 at the time of his conviction, pleaded guilty to spot-fixing in 2011, while Butt and Asif maintained their innocence until all their appeals were exhausted.

Legendary Pakistan pacemen Imran Khan and Wasim Akram have also backed Amir's return to international cricket. "We also informed the court that Amir will play under the microscopic eyes of the ICC (International Cricket Council) and the PCB," said Rizvi. — AFP



LAHORE: Pakistani cricketers warm-up during a practice session in Lahore yesterday. Pakistan's cricket chief yesterday, said he had refused to accept one-day captain Azhar Ali's resignation over the widely-tipped selection of convicted spot-fixer Mohammad Amir, saying the team could not afford a crisis at this time. — AFP

KANE SAYS HE'S INNOCENT AMID SEX CRIME INVESTIGATION

BUFFALO: Sabres forward Evander Kane was calm and brief in saying he looks forward to having his name cleared in connection with a sex crime allegation.

"I just want to say I've done nothing wrong," Kane said Monday morning following Buffalo's pre-game skate before hosting the Washington Capitals. "I respect the legal process. And unfortunately at this time, there's not much more I can talk about."

Kane spoke for about 30 seconds in front of a large gathering of reporters in a corner of the Sabres locker room. He did not take any questions in his first comments since The Buffalo News reported that Buffalo police were investigating a claim made against the player. The alleged incident occurred early

Sunday at a downtown hotel, where Kane is living, after he and the Sabres returned to Buffalo following a 6-3 win at Boston. Police issued a statement that was limited to saying that no report or charges had been filed.

The investigation is in its preliminary stages, according to a person with direct knowledge of the details who spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity because officials are not publicly commenting about the case. The person said police searched Kane's room at the hotel and towed his vehicle, describing that as standard practice in such cases.

Kane rejoined his teammates after being given a personal day off on Sunday, when coach Dan Bylsma said the Sabres were made

aware of the allegation. Bylsma said Kane would be in the lineup against Capitals. Without going into detail, Bylsma said Kane addressed the team before practice and added the player appeared happy to be on the ice with his teammates. Bylsma otherwise declined comment by referring to a statement the team released on Sunday. "We take the allegation made today against Evander Kane very seriously," the Sabres said. "We are gathering facts and have been in touch with the NHL and Evander's representatives."

LACK OF EVIDENCE

Kane, who is from North Vancouver, British Columbia, is the second NHL player to be investigated for a sex offense by police in

the Buffalo area this year. In November, prosecutors cited a lack of credible evidence after reviewing an allegation against Chicago Blackhawks star Patrick Kane, who was accused of assaulting a woman at his off-season home outside Buffalo in August.

Sabres captain Brian Gionta said the allegation against Kane shouldn't be a distraction. "It's one of our teammates obviously, but the bottom line is, when we're in this room we have to worry about hockey," Gionta said. "Lots of things happen, and that's for him to deal with. Part of being a professional is trying to separate things."

Gionta referred to the team statement when asked how the team will support Kane. "It's a serious accusation, but at the same

time, that's what it is at this point in time," Gionta said. "And until things change, he's our teammate and that's about it."

The 24-year-old Kane is in his first full season in Buffalo after he was acquired in a multi-player trade with the Winnipeg Jets in February. He did not play for the Sabres last year because he was recovering from season-ending shoulder surgery.

This year, the hard-hitting forward has eight goals and five assists in 25 games. Kane is in his seventh NHL season after being selected fourth overall by the then-Atlanta Thrashers in the 2009 draft. He has scored 19 or more goals three times, and enjoyed a career-best season in 2011-12, when he had 30 goals, 27 assists for 57 points in 74 games. — AP

CALM LEAVES SYDNEY-HOBART HANDICAP HONOURS WIDE OPEN

SYDNEY: A battle was under way yesterday in becalmed waters for the overall winner of the Sydney to Hobart race after American supermaxi Comanche took line honours in Australia's gruelling classic.

After some of the roughest conditions for years turned almost breezeless, local boat Ragamuffin 100 arrived second in the Tasmanian capital during the morning, just seconds ahead of another US contender Rambler.

Italian challenger Maserati, skippered by Giovanni Soldini, was expected to cross the finish line in fourth around midday with Australian entries Chinese Whisper and Ichi Ban further out.

The breathless arrival meant Rambler lost any hope of lifting the Tattersall Cup as handicap winner for the vessel that performs best according to size. The gales and high seas over the first night and day put 32 yachts out of the race, leaving the smaller boats changing places for the handicap lead in windless conditions on the Bass Strait. The wind was expected to pick up off Tasmania later Tuesday, pushing the mid-sized yachts home by evening. The 88-foot Rambler had been the only big boat in the overall top 10 before being becalmed and pipped at the post by 100-foot Ragamuffin, skippered by 88-year-old Australian Syd Fischer. Archambault 13 Teasing Machine from France was Tuesday morning in the handicap lead, a position she had held for at least 12 hours, race organisers said.

French 35-footer Courier du Leon has also been in the overall lead group and the JPK 1080 yacht will be hoping to make it two majors in a row after victory in the Fastnet Race.

Comanche was first across the finish line Monday night in the 71st edition of the 628-nautical-mile Sydney-Hobart in

two days, eight hours, 58 minutes and 30 seconds.

DAMAGED HULLS

A savage southerly battered the 108-strong fleet after leaving Sydney Harbour on Saturday on the journey south down Australia's east coast. Punishing winds shredded sails, damaged rudders and hulls, and broke one yacht's mast.

Comanche hit an unidentified submerged object which broke one of her twin rudders and a daggerboard, but after initially considering retirement the crew made repairs and continued on.

Two other strong contenders for line honours-eight-time fastest finisher Wild Oats XI and supermaxi Perpetual Loyall-were forced to withdraw with a ripped mainsail and rudder damage respectively. Comanche co-owner Kristy Clark, the first female owner to take Sydney-Hobart line honours, said there were many emotions at sea, including "pure terror at one stage". It's one of the best things I've ever done," she added in Hobart late Monday, where she was met by co-owner husband, Netscape founder Jim Clark. Comanche, the first American entry to take line honours since 1998, was runner-up to Wild Oats XI in her first Sydney-Hobart last year. She had been hot favourite for 2015 after setting a new 24-hour monohull record of 618.01 nautical miles in July. Her biggest competition for line honours had come from Rambler which also hit an object in the water on Saturday, sustaining similar damage. Ragamuffin 100 on Monday was revealed to be the latest of the supermaxis to be damaged, with the port daggerboard sheared off in the blue water event organised by the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia. The race record, set by Wild Oats XI in 2012, is one day, 18 hours, 23 minutes and 12 seconds. — AFP



BUFFALO: Buffalo Sabres goaltender Linus Ullmark, of Sweden, gets beat for a goal by Washington Capitals Alex Ovechkin during the second period of an NHL hockey game, Monday in Buffalo, NY. — AP

CAPITALS BEAT SABRES FOR 8TH STRAIGHT WIN

BUFFALO: Braden Holtby made 31 saves and Alex Ovechkin scored to lead the Washington Capitals over the Buffalo Sabres 2-0 on Monday night for their eight straight win. Ovechkin scored 19 seconds into the second period and Jay Beagle scored about 12 minutes later to help the Eastern Conference-leading Capitals improve to 27-6-2, the best start in franchise history. Washington has earned a point in 15 of its last 16 games and trails the Dallas Stars by one point for the NHL lead. Holtby got his 22nd career shutout and second this season. He leads the NHL with 23 victories and is 15-0-1 in his last 17 games. Linus Ullmark made 24 saves for the Sabres. Sabres forward Evander Kane played for the first time since The Buffalo News reported that Buffalo police were investigating a sex crime allegation against him.

AVALANCHE 6, SHARKS 3

Nathan MacKinnon scored twice on power plays and added an empty-net goal, Carl Soderberg and Blake Comeau also scored on power plays and Colorado ended a 13-game losing streak in San Jose. Matt Duchene also scored, and the Avalanche won their fourth straight on the road to improve to 6-1-1 over their last eight games. Patrick Marleau, Melker Karlsson and Tomas Hertl scored for the Sharks. San Jose owns the worst home record in the league at 4-10 and has lost four straight at home and seven of eight. Colorado's Calvin Pickard stopped 35 shots for his first decision of the season and his first win in over a year. Martin Jones saved 20 of 25 for the Sharks.

CANADIENS 4, LIGHTNING 3, SO

Max Pacioretty won it in the third round of a shootout and Montreal beat Tampa Bay to end a six-game losing streak. Brian Flynn also scored in the shootout for Montreal. Valtteri Filppula had a shootout score for Tampa Bay. The Canadiens got goals from Tomas Plekanec, Alex Galchenyuk and Dale Weise. Nikita Kucherov, Jason Garrison and Ryan Callahan scored for the Lightning, who are 2-1-1 on a six-game homestand. Tampa Bay centers Tyler Johnson and Brian Boyle both returned after being out with upper-body injuries. Mike Condon made 36 saves through

NHL results/standings										
Washington 2, Buffalo 0; Montreal 4, Tampa Bay 3 (SO); Nashville 5, NY Rangers 3; Minnesota 3, Detroit 1; Los Angeles 5, Vancouver 0; Colorado 6, San Jose 3.										
Western Conference										
Central Division										
	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS				
Dallas	27	7	3	129	91	57	Florida	20	12	4
St. Louis	22	12	4	95	90	48	Detroit	18	11	7
Minnesota	19	10	6	95	84	44	Boston	19	12	4
Chicago	20	13	4	97	89	44	Ottawa	18	12	6
Nashville	18	12	6	97	92	42	Tampa Bay	18	15	4
Colorado	18	17	2	106	102	38	Buffalo	15	17	4
Winnipeg	16	17	2	93	104	34	Toronto	13	14	7
Pacific Division										
Los Angeles	22	11	2	93	79	46	Metropolitan Division			
Arizona	17	15	3	95	109	37	Washington	27	6	2
Vancouver	14	15	9	93	109	37	NY Rangers	20	13	4
San Jose	17	16	2	96	100	36	NY Islanders	19	12	5
Calgary	17	16	2	96	116	36	New Jersey	17	14	5
Edmonton	15	19	3	95	113	33	Pittsburgh	17	15	3
Anaheim	13	15	6	66	87	32	Philadelphia	15	13	7
Eastern Conference										
Atlantic Division										
Montreal	21	14	3	110	95	45	Carolina	15	16	5
							Columbus	13	22	3

overtime for Montreal, while Tampa Bay's Ben Bishop stopped 31 shots.

KINGS 5, CANUCKS 0

Tyler Toffoli scored three goals, Jonathan Quick got the 40th shutout of his NHL career and Los Angeles beat Vancouver. The Kings won their second straight and snapped Vancouver's two-game win streak.

The Canucks have yet to win three games in a row this season. Quick made 27 saves in his second shutout this season and was rarely tested. The Kings outshot the Canucks 38-27, leading 1-0 after one period and 3-0 after two. Toffoli finished his hat trick on a power play with 7:04 left. Derek Forbort got his first NHL goal and Brayden McNabb also scored. Anze Kopitar had four assists. Vancouver was shut out for the fourth time in its past 11 games.

WILD 3, RED WINGS 1

Mikko Koivu scored twice, Devan Dubnyk

made 28 saves in a surprise appearance and Minnesota beat Detroit. Dubnyk suffered a cut on his arm in practice Sunday and had to have stitches. He was expected to sit, but Darcy Kuemper was announced out with an upper-body injury about an hour before the game. Charlie Coyle scored for the third time in four games for Minnesota. Koivu scored a power-play goal in the third and added an empty-net tally for Minnesota, which had lost three of four. Pavel Datsyuk scored his fourth goal of the season for Detroit. Petr Mrazek made 32 saves for the Red Wings.

PREDATORS 5, RANGERS 3

James Neal scored twice, Mike Ribeiro had three assists and Nashville held off New York. Filip Forsberg, Craig Smith and Ryan Ellis also scored for the Predators. Roman Josi added two assists, Pekka Rinne had 26 saves and Nashville won for the third time in four games. Jesper Fast, Rick Nash and J.T. Miller had goals but New York lost its fourth in five games. — AP



KADIKOY: This file photo taken on June 12, 2009 shows Halil Ibrahim Dincdag, 33 posing in Kadikoy, a quarter of Istanbul. A Turkish court yesterday ordered the Turkish Football Federation (TFF) to pay thousands of dollars in compensation after it revoked the refereeing licence of a local referee on the grounds that he was gay. — AFP



OOREDOO CONCLUDES PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN ACADEMY SESSIONS

KUWAIT: Ooredoo has successfully concluded its intensive football camp, in collaboration with Paris Saint-Germain Academy for youngsters. The Academy hosted 200 young football lovers between the ages of 6 to 16 for three days. All registered participants received diplomas on the successful completion of their training.

This dedicated intensive camp, which was held for the first time in Kuwait, was a great chance for the participants to develop various skills including tactical and defensive playing, stamina training and the basic rules of football. Ooredoo Kuwait Corporate Communication Director Mijbil Alalyoub said: "We are glad that young participants enjoyed

the intensive camp. The feedback received from them and their parents was very encouraging. We were overwhelmed with the number of applicants, and hope to accommodate more students in the future. We look forward to providing more training for football fans and potential players." It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo Group and Paris Saint-Germain's

agreement focuses on the development of youth and community support, with the launch of coaching programs across Ooredoo's footprint in the Middle East, North Africa, and Southeast Asia. Those programs are designed to create life opportunities for young people. Ooredoo and Paris Saint-Germain bring qualified coaches and Paris Saint-Germain training

programs to a number of key markets, with a focus on encouraging aspiring young footballers to pursue their sporting dreams. Ooredoo aims to continue supporting young people's ambitions and aspirations and further developing their skills in different areas as a part of the company's corporate social responsibility.

ASIAN PLAYERS SHINE, BUT TOUR OUTLOOK UNCERTAIN

HONG KONG: While the stars of Asian golf shone brightly in 2015, the Asian Tour heads into an uncertain new year with players unhappy with a proposed European Tour merger. On the fairways and greens all was well, as Asian players matched their international rivals and made an impression at events across the globe.

India's Anirban Lahiri wrapped up the Asian Order of Merit with two wins in co-sanctioned Asian-European Tour events—the Malaysian and Indian Opens—and a slew of top-10 finishes around the world, including an admirable fifth place at the US PGA Championship at Whistling Straits.

South Korea's An Byeong-Hun took Rookie of the Year honours on the European Tour and carried off the biggest prize of his career with a stunning six-shot triumph at the PGA Championship at Wentworth to pocket a cool \$1 million. Evergreen Thai Thongchai Jaidee showed he was still young at heart with a game to match, winning the European Open in September, recording eight top-10s and reaching a career-high world ranking of 28, at the tender age of 45.

His fellow countryman Kiradech Aphibarnrat won three times globally with nine other top-10s, while Wu Ashun became the first Chinese player to win a European Tour event on home soil when he lifted the China Open trophy in Shanghai.

Thongchai then capped his stellar year by making his Presidents Cup debut against the United States in Incheon, South Korea, the first time the prestigious team matchplay event had been staged in Asia.

The event proved a roaring success with huge crowds and a nail-biting denouement. The US won on the final green of the final singles match, when home favourite Bae Sang-

Moon agonisingly fluffed a crucial chip to the 18th green to hand Bill Haas the winning point in a 15.5-14.5 victory.

It was a sad end for Bae, who now has his pro golf career put on hold while he serves at least 18 months compulsory national service in the South Korean military.

MERGER AND SPLITS

Off the course, meanwhile, major developments were brewing in Asia that will rumble on into 2016. In August, the European and Asian Tours announced in a vaguely worded statement a "joint vision" for the future.

It soon emerged that the proposal was for a fully-fledged merger of the two organisations to form a mega-tour stretching from Ireland to the shores of the Pacific in the Far East.

While the increased presence, sponsorship and prize money opportunities such a tour could harness were broadly welcomed by the European players, their Asian counterparts were less convinced.

The players held a long meeting at the Macau Open in October and it became clear there were deep divisions in the ranks over the merger.

Players who ply their trade on both tours seemed in favour, but some members of the Asian Tour were scared their opportunities to make a living could be eroded by an influx of higher-ranked players from Europe.

Asian Tour CEO Mike Kerr came under fire at the meeting and European Tour CEO Keith Pelley flew in to meet the players. At the beginning of December, the Asian Tour confirmed Kerr had stepped down as CEO, without giving any reasons for his resignation, while the body's board also had a shake-up in personnel. —AFP



DENVER: Denver Broncos kicker Brandon McManus (8) kicks a field goal as punter Britton Colquitt (4) holds against the Cincinnati Bengals during the first half of an NFL football game, Monday, in Denver. — AP

WARE LIFTS BRONCOS PAST BENGALS 20-17 IN OT

DENVER: DeMarcus Ware put the clamps on the loose football and punched Denver's ticket to the playoffs. "The ball was on the ground and I was feeling like, 'There's no way somebody's going to take this ball from me,'" Ware said after his fumble recovery in overtime sealed Denver's 20-17 victory over Cincinnati on Monday night. Russell Bodine's catchable shotgun snap eluded AJ McCarron, who was making his second start in place of Andy Dalton. He raced to recover it, but Ware swept past right tackle Andrew Smith and secured Denver's fifth consecutive trip to the postseason.

"It was my fault. I told the team that," McCarron said. "I looked up to see the coverage and the snap caught me by surprise."

McCarron also hurt his left wrist on the play and wrapped it afterward. He said he wasn't sure how bad it's hurt, but "I'll get it checked out tomorrow and we'll see." This was just the big play Ware's been looking for ever since missing a month with a bad back. "Felt great to finish the game that way," Ware said. "We thought we were going to finish it with the field goal but at the end of the game, it's all about that win."

Ware's recovery followed a 37-yard field goal by Brandon McManus, whose shanked 45-yarder at the end of regulation made necessary the extra drama. "I'm 24 years old and I don't think I've ever kicked the ball like that in my life: grade school, elementary school, or anything like that," McManus said. "I just wrapped my toe around it and I knew I had to bounce back." He did, helping the Broncos (11-4) overcome a 14-0 first-half deficit and denying the Bengals (11-4) their first road win on a Monday night since 1990.

'IT'S NOT HOW YOU START, IT'S HOW YOU FINISH'

"There's an old saying: It's not how you start, it's how you finish," Broncos quarterback Brock Osweiler said. "And this team finished great tonight." The Bengals blew a chance to earn a bye in the playoffs and move ahead of the New England Patriots in the race for the AFC's top seed.

"We knew what we have in front of us, an opportunity to get the bye," said Carlos Dunlap, who collected all three sacks of Osweiler. "It is what it is now. Now we're going to move on."

Denver, which was in danger of becoming the first team since the 1970 merger to miss the playoffs after starting 10-2, snapped a two-game skid with its third overtime win of the season.

Now, the Broncos can earn the top seed in the AFC with a win over San Diego and a loss by New England at Miami next weekend.

"We've won in a lot of ways this year," Broncos

safety T.J. Ward said. "Overtime, game-winning field goals, blocked field goals, strips, fumble recoveries. When you get down to the playoffs you're going to need all those types of wins."

McManus has missed a kick in five consecutive games, and this one wasn't even close. It sailed wide left - missing the protective netting - to the astonishment of 74,511 fans even though the flags atop the goal posts revealed a complete lack of wind. The relieved Bengals called tails but the coin landed heads. Unlike Patriots coach Bill Belichick a day earlier, Broncos coach Gary Kubiak chose to receive, and Denver drove 60 yards in 13 plays. Osweiler, making his sixth straight start in place of Peyton Manning, played with a sore left shoulder and banged his left elbow in the frenetic final minutes but stayed in.

"Coming into the game, I was a little bit banged up. Coming out of the game I'm a little bit banged up. But that's football," said Osweiler, who will get the start against the Chargers next week, too.

FIELD GOAL

McCarron drove the Bengals on two long first-half drives, covering 80 and 90 yards and eating up a total of 16:24 to put Cincinnati ahead 14-0. He

threw a 5-yard TD pass to A.J. Green and Mohamed Sanu scooted in from 6 yards out on a direct snap.

After that, he found it tough to sustain drives against Denver's defense, which is ranked No. 1 against both the run and the pass and held McCarron to 200 yards passing and the Bengals to 3.3 yards a carry.

The Broncos pulled to 14-3 at halftime on McManus' short field goal, and the Broncos came out in hurry-up mode and were a different team in the second half - a reversal of last week at Pittsburgh, where they jumped out to a 17-point lead but were outscored 24-0 after the break. Osweiler connected with Sanders on a short TD throw for Denver's first third-quarter points since Nov. 8 at Indianapolis, and C.J. Anderson gave the Broncos their first lead when he broke free for a 39-yard touchdown run with 11:17 remaining.

After Mike Nugent's 52-yard field goal tied it with 6:45 remaining, the Broncos twice drove to the Bengals 26 only to come away empty, once on Anderson's fumble and then on McManus' miss.

"We told him if you get another chance take advantage of it and he did," Demaryius Thomas said. "That's what won the game." That, and Ware's huge play moments later. — AP



CINCINNATI: In this Monday, Sept. 7, 2015 file photo, Cincinnati Reds relief pitcher Aroldis Chapman prepares to throw in the ninth inning of a baseball game against the Pittsburgh Pirates in Cincinnati. The New York Yankees bolstered an already dominant bullpen Monday acquiring hard-throwing All-Star closer Aroldis Chapman from the Cincinnati Reds for four minor leaguers. — AP

YANKEES ACQUIRE CUBA'S CHAPMAN FROM REDS

NEW YORK: Hard-throwing closer Aroldis Chapman was acquired by the New York Yankees from the Cincinnati Reds in a five-player Major League Baseball trade on Monday.

The Yankees will send four minor leaguers-right-handers Caleb Cotham and Rookie Davis and infielders Eric Jagielo and Tony Renda to Cincinnati. Cuba's Chapman had a 1.63 ERA in 65 appearances last season, when he led the majors with 15.74 strikeouts per nine innings. The deal comes three weeks after a proposed trade to send Chapman to the Los Angeles Dodgers broke down after reports that police investigated an accusation of domestic violence involving the pitcher in October. "I can tell you that obviously we completed this transaction today and to the best of our abilities, we have researched as much as we can," general manager Brian Cashman said.

"We certainly don't have the full extent of the MLB investigative arm but we've done as much due diligence on the subject at hand as we possibly can and we have

completed the transaction based on a lot of that due diligence." According to reports, more than a dozen police officers converged on Chapman's home in Florida on October 30.

The Florida police released a report that stated there was insufficient evidence to charge Chapman because of inconsistent stories, the absence of physical injuries and non-co-operating witnesses. "Yes, certainly there's some serious issues here that are in play," Cashman said. "I acknowledged it as an area of concern and it's certainly reflective of some of the acquisition price and there's risk and there's a process going to play out." A National League all-star in each of the last four seasons, the 27-year-old Chapman went 4-4 with 33 saves and a 1.63 ERA over 66 1/3 innings in 65 relief appearances with the Reds in 2015.

Chapman threw the 62 fastest pitches in Major League Baseball in 2015, with a high of 165 kmph (103 mph) on June 29. Chapman is eligible for free agency after next year's World Series. — AFP

NFL Result/standings

American Football Conference											
East Division					West Division						
W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	W	L	T	PCT		
z-New England	12	3	0	.800	455	295	z-Cincinnati	11	4	0	
NY Jets	10	5	0	.667	370	292	Pittsburgh	9	6	0	
Buffalo	7	8	0	.467	357	342	Baltimore	5	10	0	
Miami	5	10	0	.333	290	379	Cleveland	3	12	0	
North Division					South Division						
z-Cincinnati	11	4	0	.733	395	263	Houston	8	7	0	
Pittsburgh	9	6	0	.600	395	307	Indianapolis	7	8	0	
Baltimore	5	10	0	.333	312	377	Jacksonville	5	10	0	
Cleveland	3	12	0	.200	266	404	Tennessee	3	12	0	
West Division					National Football Conference						
x-Denver	11	4	0	.733	328	276	East Division				
x-Kansas City	10	5	0	.667	382	270	y-Washington	8	7	0	
Oakland	7	8	0	.467	342	376					
San Diego	4	11	0	.267	300	371					

National Football Conference										
East Division					West Division					
W	L	T	PCT	PF	PA	W	L	T	PCT	
Philadelphia	6	9	0	.400	342	400	z-Arizona	13	2	0
NY Giants	6	9	0	.400	390	407	x-Seattle	9	6	0
Dallas	4	11	0	.267	252	340	St. Louis	7	8	0
North Division					South Division					
x-Green Bay	10	5	0	.667	355	303	z-Carolina	14	1	0
x-Minnesota	10	5	0	.667	345	289	Atlanta	8	7	0
Detroit	6	9	0	.400	334	380	Tampa Bay	6	9	0
Chicago	6	9	0	.400	315	373	New Orleans	6	9	0
West Division					East Division					
z-Carolina	14	1	0	.933	462	298	z-Arizona	13	2	0
Atlanta	8	7	0	.533	322	325	x-Seattle	9	6	0
Tampa Bay	6	9	0	.400	332	379	St. Louis	7	8	0
New Orleans	6	9	0	.400	388	459	San Francisco	4	11	0
West Division					East Division					
z-Arizona	13	2	0	.867	483	277	x-clinched playoff berth			
x-Seattle	9	6	0	.600	387	271	y-division winner			
St. Louis	7	8	0	.467	264	311	z-denotes first-round bye			
San Francisco	4	11	0	.267	219					

KLOPP WARNS LIVERPOOL NOT TO UNDERESTIMATE

SUNDERLAND: Jurgen Klopp insists Liverpool won't take Premier League strugglers Sunderland lightly after ending high-flying Leicester's long unbeaten run.

Klopp's side became the first side to stop Leicester scoring in the league this season as Claudio Ranieri's team were beaten 1-0 at Anfield on Saturday-their first defeat since September.

That was Liverpool's first win in five games and they go to Sunderland on Wednesday on the back of successive away defeats in the Premier League. Reds boss Klopp therefore insists his side has no right to take anything for granted, despite Sunderland's position in the relegation zone and their chastening 4-1 defeat at Manchester City in their last game. "There's no doubt about the quality

of the players, the character. What we have to create is a stable level of performance," Klopp said. "We have to go to Sunderland and be concentrated from the first second, like we were against Leicester.

"We want to win at Sunderland. That's the only reason why we travel there. "We have no doubt as to the mentality of the team. Nobody in the team thinks it's only Sunderland."

"We want to develop and get more points in these very important moments in the league." Klopp expects a strong Sunderland reaction to their defeat at City as the Weariders scrap for survival and will prepare his players for a physical battle. "I think second balls will be a big thing to think about for Sunderland. They will go back to their roots. We know what is

waiting for us." Liverpool will not rush back striker Daniel Sturridge, who has returned to training following his latest four-match injury absence with a hamstring strain, and are awaiting the results of a scan on a hamstring injury Divock Origi sustained against Leicester. Winger Jordan Ibe could return following illness, but defender Martin Skrtel and midfielder James Milner, who is due to return to training yesterday, are still missing.

SHATTERED

Meanwhile, Sunderland boss Sam Allardyce admits he is taking a risk by turning to veteran defender Wes Brown against Liverpool.

Former England international Brown is set for only his second appearance since

May, with his most recent coming in last month's 6-2 defeat at Everton. The 36-year-old is on standby to replace former Manchester United team-mate John O'Shea, who is struggling with a calf problem picked up in the City defeat that left the Black Cats second-bottom.

With Younes Kaboul facing up to two months out with a torn hamstring, Allardyce is short on options for the Liverpool clash. He is ready to shift his formation to protect Brown, and said: "I could have covered any injury, apart from one to John O'Shea.

"We have Wes but he hasn't played much football at all this season so that would be a bit of a concern. But that will be the case if John doesn't make it. "We'd have to play a different way and play a

certain system to use Wes' experience and also give him a little bit of protection. "We know that he's getting a little bit older and he's not quite as quick as he used to be."

Following an upturn in results after Allardyce took charge in October, Sunderland have lost their last four games to leave them five points adrift of safety ahead of the latest round of fixtures going into their final game of 2015.

"We had some positive results when I arrived and I thought that would lift the confidence," Allardyce said. "But all of a sudden, that confidence is shattered again. I see a lot of fear back in the team and I have to use my experience to dispel that. "I need to put the players in a good frame of mind so that they go out and fight their way out of this." — AFP

POCHETTINO CAUTIOUS ABOUT TOTTENHAM TITLE TALK

WATFORD: Mauricio Pochettino urged his Tottenham stars to keep their feet on the ground as they head into 2016 firmly in the Premier League title race.

Pochettino's side move into the new year primed to not just battle for a Champions League place but also vie for the domestic crown.

Not since 1961 have Tottenham won the league but their gritty 2-1 win over 10-man Watford on Monday was another clear indication this could yet be their year in this topsy-turvy Premier League.

They lie in third place but, while Pochettino knows silverware is for the taking, the Tottenham manager refuses to get distracted by talk of a title charge.

"I think that the numbers reflect that it (title push) is possible but the only important thing for us is to try to keep inside our thoughts, try to win every game and keep working hard," Pochettino said.

"We are very young and you need to show your strengths in all the league. We have the youngest squad in the Premier League. But to speak about the title, it's more important to keep working hard and showing our maturity.

"The most important thing is that we have smart players who are always looking to improve. We must be proud of our players. We have the youngest squad in the Premier League.

"It's very important to keep our feet on the ground. This is the key in football. We have to keep working hard and behave in the same way that we started in the league six months ago. "But we have to continue showing this maturity. We showed how to fight and we got a reaction so we must be proud of our players."

Tottenham continued their march to the top thanks to substitute South Korea forward Son Heung-min's 89th minute winner. The visitors had led via Erik Lamela before Watford striker Odion Ighalo struck in the first-half for his sixth goal in as many games.

Watford saw Nathan Ake red-carded for a high challenge on Lamela before Son won it right at the end.

Hornets manager Quique Sanchez Flores said: "I'm proud of my players as they fight a lot and have a big soul and amazing spirit. They play for the fans against a very tough team. "The feeling for us is sad as we are close to a point but proud of my players. They tried to solve every situation.

"I support Nathan as he's a fair player who plays in a good way. These kind of players need love. "He went for the ball and it's football. He doesn't need to apologise. We move on and it's been a fantastic start for us. "Nobody would have expected us to be in this position heading into the new year. — AFP



ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Sunderland v Liverpool	22:45
beIN SPORTS	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Real Madrid v Real Sociedad	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Levante v Malaga	18:00
beIN SPORTS	
Sevilla v RCD Espanyol	20:15
beIN SPORTS	
Rayo Vallecano v Atletico	20:15
beIN SPORTS	
SD Eibar v Sporting Gijon	20:30
beIN SPORTS	
FC Barcelona v Real Betis	22:30
beIN SPORTS	
Celta v Athletic de Bilbao	22:30
beIN SPORTS	
Getafe v Deportivo La Coruna	22:30
beIN SPORTS	
Las Palmas v Granada	23:00
beIN SPORTS	

LOUIS VAN GAAL VOWS TO FIGHT THROUGH MAN UTD UNCERTAINTY

MANCHESTER: Louis van Gaal has vowed to fight on as Manchester United manager, but admits that the matter may yet be taken out of his hands by the club's board.

The Dutchman, 64, has faced three weeks of speculation after a run of games that has seen United slip to sixth place in the Premier League table and limp out of the Champions League in the group phase.

Despite an improved display, they could only draw 0-0 with misfiring champions Chelsea at Old Trafford on Monday-their sixth goalless stalemate at home of the season-but Van Gaal said that behind the scenes, everyone at the club was pulling in the same direction.

the cards with regard to his future.

He also said that he had walked out of a press conference prior to the Stoke game in protest at "lies" in the media. "That's the reason I walk away in the press conference," he said. "Not with a 'stormy' head or 'angry' head. No, I walk with a quietness because I want to make my point."

United appeared to have rediscovered an element of vim in the early stages against Chelsea, with Juan Mata and Anthony Martial hitting the woodwork.

HIDDINK 'WORRIED'

Ander Herrera and Wayne Rooney also went close, while Willian might have conceded a penalty for handball, but Chelsea had chances of their own, David de Gea thwarting John Terry, Pedro Rodriguez and Cesar Azpilicueta, and Nemanja Matic blazing over when clean through.

For all his talk of fighting on, Van Gaal acknowledged that he will be powerless to do anything if United's owners the Glazer family and executive vice-chairman Ed Woodward decide to remove their backing.

"I have said that Manchester United has a lot of confidence in (their) manager and I have not received that in every club," he said. "But of course I know that there are circumstances that a board has to decide to sack the manager. I'm looking always from my point of view and that can be not the right view.

"In this crazy football world that can happen every day, also with me. When it happens to Jose Mourinho, then it can happen with me."

Chelsea manager Guus Hiddink remains without a win after two games of his second stint in interim charge, the 3-1 win over Sunderland having occurred before he took up his functions, but he has seen signs of progress.

"No win, but we have to look and consider the situation where Chelsea was or is and now we are three games (in) and what is important is the boys experienced a very bad half year and they have to lift it up," he said. "Starting with Sunderland and Watford (against whom Chelsea drew 2-2) and now, the team knows what to do."

Chelsea are only three points above the relegation zone, but Hiddink, who revealed that Cesc Fabregas had missed the match with a high temperature, said that they were moving in the right direction.

"Of course I'm worried," he said. "But I would have been more worried (if) there was a lack of confidence or a lack of ambition or lethargy. That's what I don't see at the moment in this team." — AFP



Louis Van Gaal

"The environment (around the club) is making the crisis," he said. "Inside the club the players are willing to fight for every metre, the manager is willing to fight, the members of staff are willing to fight and the board is very confident in the staff and their manager."

Speaking after Saturday's 2-0 defeat at Stoke City, which was United's fourth in a row, a subdued Van Gaal had suggested that he could elect to leave the club rather than wait for the axe to fall.

But he was defiant after the draw with Chelsea, proclaiming "I shall not resign" in a television interview, and explaining that he had raised the issue of resignation merely to demonstrate that the club did not hold all



DOHA: Inter Milan's Italian head coach Roberto Mancini (2nd L) and his striker Stevan Jovetic from Montenegro (L) attend a press conference with Paris Saint-Germain's French head coach Laurent Blanc (2nd R) and his Italian midfielder Marco Verratti (R) in the Qatari capital Doha yesterday, one day ahead of their friendly football match. — AFP

HISTORY-MAKERS REAL SEEK END-OF-YEAR BOOST

MADRID: Real Madrid host Real Sociedad yesterday intent on producing another tub-thumping performance to follow up their historic 10 goals and shore up under-fire Rafael Benitez's position as coach.

Real became the first side to reach double figures in a La Liga match in 55 years in their 10-2 dissection of Rayo Vallecano prior to the short Spanish winter break. But not even that was enough to deter fans at the Santiago Bernabeu from booing Benitez, whose position remains precarious if reports are to be believed. Real closed the gap on league leaders Barcelona and Atletico Madrid to two points, with German midfielder Toni Kroos summing up the end-of-year mood in the Madrid dressing room.

"We all want to do better, for each other and for our fans," he told the club's official website. "We've failed to be at our best at certain points of the season. "We work our socks off on a daily

basis and the pay off for that hard work will end up being reflected in the results.

"I'm positive that we'll find that consistency that is not only demanded of us by our fans, but that we too yearn for." The World Cup winner begged Real's supporters to keep the faith. "It's too early to be making evaluations. We are Real Madrid and being successful is part of our DNA."

France international defender Raphael Varane, out for the past month with a hamstring injury, could start after returning to full training. However, the club on Monday lost their appeal against being kicked out of the Copa del Rey for fielding an ineligible player, with Spain's Administrative Tribunal for Sport (TAD) insisting the decision was final. Barca, who have a game in hand, welcome Real Betis to the Camp Nou with the players planning to show off the five trophies collected in 2015 in La Liga, the Copa del Rey, Champions League, Super Cup and last

weekend's Club World Cup in Japan.

On Sunday Barca and club superstar Lionel Messi triumphed at the Globe Soccer Awards in Dubai, taking home the prizes for best team and best player. Messi had travelled from Argentina to attend the ceremony. "It's very nice to receive these awards, but I always say that the team makes it possible," said Messi. "It's been an extraordinary year." Atletico, second on goal difference, are on the road at Rayo where they will seek to return to winning ways after missing the chance to go top when succumbing 1-0 to Malaga before Christmas, with captain Gabi sent-off. Fourth-placed Celta Vigo could end the year in third if Real come unstuck against Sociedad and they see off Athletic Bilbao. Elsewhere, newly-appointed Valencia coach Gary Neville faces a momentous four days, with Thursday's derby at Villarreal followed Sunday by Real's visit to Valencia's Mestalla stadium. — AFP

WENGER HAILS OZIL AS BERGKAMP'S EQUAL

LONDON: Arsene Wenger hailed Mesut Ozil as the best player in the Premier League and an equal of Arsenal legend Dennis Bergkamp following another influential display in a 2-0 win over Bournemouth.

German midfielder Ozil made one goal and scored another at the Emirates Stadium on Monday to help Arsenal back to the top of the table, leaving pundits running out of superlatives to describe his performance.

Ozil's statistics are astonishing even by his own high standards. So far this season he has made 16 assists and score five goals in the Premier League-closing in fast on the all-time record of 20 assists set by another Arsenal great Thierry Henry.

Against Bournemouth he set another mark, too, creating nine goalscoring opportunities for teammates-the highest figure registered in the league this season. No wonder Gunners boss Wenger was happy to suggest his midfielder has been peerless in the league this season. When asked if Ozil is now the best player in the Premier League, he said simply: "Look at the number of the assists and they speak for him." The Frenchman also acknowledged comparison with Dutch forward Bergkamp, who was such an inspiration in Wenger's early days in north London. "Bergkamp was more of a goalscorer than him. But now Ozil becomes a goalscorer too. They could be comparable," he said. All this from a player who last season was labelled as a luxury by some onlookers, singled out by Henry as a someone who needed to "step up his game" and accused of drifting out of matches by German legend Lothar Matthaus. Throughout it all, however, Wenger remained staunchly loyal to a player he signed from Real Madrid, insisting that Ozil would eventually become a Footballer of the Year in England.

FOCAL POINT

"Ozil was the focal point of our team," Wenger said after goals from the German and defender Gilberto, from an Ozil corner, clinched a crucial victory against Bournemouth that sent Arsenal one point clear at the top of the Premier League.

"I don't know if it was his best performance, I have seen a few good games from him this season. "What is important is that he convinces everyone he's not only a fantasy player, but he's a player who is ready to work for the team very hard. "He's added scoring goals to his assists as well. Overall he's a complete player." Ozil's transformation into Arsenal's talisman has been fascinating to watch, but what has impressed most this season is his level of consistency-and at the age of 27 Wenger does not yet believe he has reached his peak. "What's important is that he becomes as good as he can be-and he's on the way. Is there a lot left? I don't know but at the minute what he's doing is absolutely fantastic,"

Wenger said. "In a career you have to be better every game. Some people manage to have that focus, that consistency-and some cannot. "He shows that he is always consistently going upwards."

Ozil is not the only player at Arsenal setting records. Goalkeeper Petr Cech reached a new Premier League mark of 170 clean sheets in his career by keeping out Bournemouth, drawing praise from his manager ahead of a home game against Newcastle on Saturday.

"I think he can be very proud of that," said Wenger. "It's a remarkable achievement. People don't realise how much commitment, how much focus is behind that." — AFP



LONDON: Arsenal's German midfielder Mesut Ozil controls the ball in front of Bournemouth's South African-born English midfielder Andrew Surman (R) during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Bournemouth at the Emirates Stadium in London on Monday. — AFP

Sports

Hansdotter edges
Holdener to win
women's WC slalom



Lyon, Marsh bowl
Aussies to series
win over Windies



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 2015

HISTORY-MAKERS REAL SEEK END-OF-YEAR BOOST Page 19



PHOENIX: J R Smith #5 of the Cleveland Cavaliers attempts to save an out of bounds ball past P.J. Tucker #17 of the Phoenix Suns during the first half of the NBA game at Talking Stick Resort Arena on December 28, 2015 in Phoenix, Arizona.— AFP

IRVING'S LATE SHOOTING LEADS CAVS PAST SUNS

PHOENIX: Kyrie Irving sank a 3-pointer as the shot clock expired with 21.9 seconds to play and the Cleveland Cavaliers held on to hand the Phoenix Suns their fifth loss in a row, 101-97 on Monday night. Brandon Knight's 3-pointer cut Cleveland's lead to 96-95 with 1:27 to go and, after LeBron James missed a jumper, Knight hit another 3 but it was waved off because of an offensive foul against the Suns' Tyson Chandler. The Cavs almost turned it over on their next possession but got the ball to Irving, who made a jumper from beyond the top of the key. In his fourth game since returning from knee surgery, Irving also hit a 12-foot floater to put Cleveland ahead 96-92 with 1:44 to go. Irving scored 22 points, J.R. Smith had 17 and Kevin Love added 16 for the Cavs, who ended a two-game skid. James had 14 points, only two on 0-for-3 shooting in the fourth quarter. T.J. Warren scored 23 for the Suns, who earlier in the day announced they had fired assistant coaches Mike Longabardi and Jerry Sichting. Nate Bjorkgren was promoted to take Longabardi's job as defensive coordinator. Assistant coach Earl Watson was promoted to a bench coach position.

WARRIORS 122, KINGS 103

Stephen Curry overcame a slow start to score 23 points as part of his sixth career triple-double and Golden State beat Sacramento for its 29th victory in 30 games this season. Curry added a career-high 14 rebounds and 10 assists. Klay Thompson scored 29 and Draymond Green had 25 points for the Warriors, who have won 33 straight regular-season home games. Omri Casspi scored a career-high 36 points, tying Mike Bibby's team record with nine 3-pointers for Sacramento. But the Kings still lost their 11th straight against their Northern California rivals. The Kings were excited to have a healthy DeMarcus Cousins for the first time in three meetings with the Warriors this season. But the All-Star big man played less than 13 fouled minutes.

SPURS 101, TIMBERWOLVES 95

Kawhi Leonard had 17 points and 11 rebounds, Boban Marjanovic also scored 17 and San Antonio remained undefeated at home by holding off Minnesota. San Antonio joined the 1978 Portland Trail Blazers and 1986 Houston Rockets as the only Western Conference teams to open a season 18-0 at home. The Spurs had six players in double figures and overcame coach Gregg Popovich's early ejection. Popovich was thrown out with 1:13 remaining in the first half on two successive technical fouls following a non-call on LaMarcus Aldridge. With veteran star Tim Duncan sitting out due to a sore right knee, the Spurs (27-6) needed another big man to step up and Marjanovic did. He sparked two key runs for San Antonio, going 7 for 7 from the field and 3 of 4 on free throws in 15 minutes. Andrew Wiggins led Minnesota with 18 points.

HORNETS 108, LAKERS 98

Kemba Walker scored 18 of his 38 points in the fourth

quarter, and Charlotte defeated Los Angeles in Kobe Bryant's final game in Charlotte against the team that drafted him - and promptly traded him - nearly 20 years ago. Cody Zeller had 16 points and eight rebounds, and Nicolas Batum added 15 points and 11 assists for the Hornets. Bryant, who received a taped message from Hornets owner Michael Jordan before the game, finished with 20 points on 5-of-20 shooting. He had only three points in the second half, making just one of 10 shots. Jordan didn't attend Bryant's final regular-season game in Charlotte, but congratulated him on an "unbelievable career" during a message that was played on the arena's scoreboard before tip-off.

BULLS 104, RAPTORS 97

Tony Snell and Pau Gasol each had 22 points, Derrick Rose added 20 and Chicago pulled away late to beat Toronto. Snell, back in the rotation because of an injury to Doug McDermott, had 19 points in the final 17 1/2 minutes to spark the Bulls. Aaron Brooks scored 17 points and rookie Bobby Portis added 12 as the Chicago reserves outscored their counterparts 51-27. Kyle Lowry had 28 points and DeMar DeRozan added 19 for Toronto. Jonas Valanciunas had nine points in 20 minutes off the bench after missing 17 games with a broken left hand.

PACERS 93, HAWKS 87

Monta Ellis scored 26 points and Indiana snapped Atlanta's six-game winning streak. Ellis had 15 points in the first half, and Ian Mahinmi finished with 13 points and nine rebounds. With the Pacers leading by three, Ellis pulled up for a 3-point attempt with 16 seconds to play. The ball bounced off the rim, but Mahinmi was waiting for a tip-in that all but sealed it for Indiana. Paul Millsap led the Hawks with 24 points. They had possession down three with less than 30 seconds remaining, but George Hill stole the ball from Jeff Teague.

MAGIC 104, PELICANS 89

Nik Vucevic scored 28 points and matched his career high with seven assists, leading Orlando over New Orleans. Evan Fournier had 20 points, Tobias Harris added 14 and Andrew Nicholson scored 13 for the Magic, who used a pair of surges early in the third and fourth quarters to pull away. Anthony Davis led the Pelicans with 20 points and eight rebounds. Tyreke Evans finished with 16 points and eight assists.

CLIPPERS 108, WIZARDS 91

Chris Paul scored 23 points, reserve Jamal Crawford added 21 and Los Angeles again overcame Blake Griffin's absence in beating Washington. DeAndre Jordan had 15 points and 13 rebounds for the Clippers, who got 54 points from substitutes in their third straight win - second since Griffin was ruled out for at least two weeks with a quadriceps strain. Even the 6-foot Paul helped make up for the loss of Griffin inside with a rare two-dunk perform-

ance. The Clippers never trailed and led by at least 10 throughout the last three quarters. John Wall had 23 points and 11 assists, and Marcin Gortat added 12 points and 16 rebounds as the Wizards' four-game winning streak was snapped. Otto Porter added 21 points off the bench for Washington.

NETS 111, HEAT 105

Wayne Ellington tied a career best with seven 3-pointers and scored 26 points, Brook Lopez added 26 points and 12 rebounds, and Brooklyn rallied from 16 points down in the third quarter to beat Miami. Jarrett Jack scored 18 for the Nets, who had lost seven consecutive games to the Heat going back to the 2014 playoffs. Shane Larkin had seven assists in the third quarter alone to spark Brooklyn's comeback, its biggest of the season. Chris Bosh was a career-best 5 for 5 from 3-point range and finished with 24 points and 12 rebounds for Miami, which also got 24 points from Dwyane Wade. Hassan Whiteside had 18 points and 11 rebounds for the Heat, who have alternated wins and losses in their last eight home games. Ellington's other game with seven 3s also came against Miami, when he was with Memphis in 2012.

MAVERICKS 103, BUCKS 93

Wesley Matthews scored 22 points, including two clutch 3-pointers in the fourth quarter, and Dallas held off Milwaukee. The Mavericks never trailed and led by as many as 13 in the second half, but needed consecutive 3s by Matthews to fend off a Bucks comeback. He snapped an 89-all tie with a 3-pointer from the right wing with 4:25 to play, then followed Giannis Antetokounmpo's runner at the other end with another 3 with 3:50 remaining. The Bucks didn't score again until Antetokounmpo's layup with 1:11 to play made it 97-93. Devin Harris sealed the game with a layup with 11 seconds left. Zaza Pachulia added 17 points and eight rebounds for Dallas against his former team. Jerryd Bayless returned to the Bucks' lineup after missing 11 games with a left ankle sprain and led Milwaukee with 19 points and seven assists.

JAZZ 95, 76ERS 91

Gordon Hayward scored 24 points, including a 3-pointer that put Utah ahead for good against Philadelphia. The Jazz ended a two-game skid despite missing Derrick Favors and high-scoring reserve Alec Burks. The 76ers (2-31) were trying to win consecutive games for the first time this season after Saturday's victory at Phoenix. The Jazz led by 19 midway through the third quarter, but the 76ers went on a 29-10 run to close the quarter. Nerlens Noel caught an alley-oop from Ish Smith to put the 76ers up 91-89 with 38.3 seconds remaining. Hayward answered with a 3 with 33.5 seconds left to go up 92-91. Smith scored a season-high 22 points in his second game with the 76ers after being traded from the Pelicans. Noel had 18 points and blocked five shots. — AP

FALLEN FIFA EX-VP 'TOOK \$50,000 A MONTH IN BRIBES'

MONTEVIDEO: Fallen FIFA vice president Eugenio Figueredo received \$50,000 a month in "improper payments" from sports marketing companies, authorities in his native Uruguay alleged yesterday in an indictment.

The 83-year-old ex-football boss, one of seven top FIFA officials arrested at a Zurich luxury hotel in May, received "hefty sums" each month to ensure two firms retained their exclusive rights to various South American tournaments, said the indictment published by a Uruguayan court.

Figueredo, who was extradited from Switzerland to Uruguay last week, faces charges of fraud and money laundering, and is currently in jail pending trial.

Detailing their case against him, prosecutors said records showed Figueredo received not only a monthly salary of \$40,000 as president of South American football confederation CONMEBOL, but also \$50,000 a month in bribes, which he invested in Uruguayan real estate.

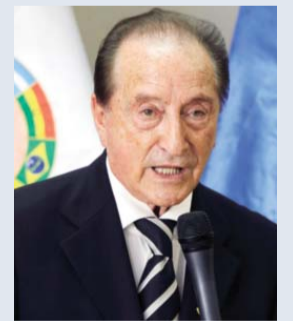
The indictment said the sources of the illicit cash included Argentine firms Full Play and Torneos y Competencias, both of which are in the cross-hairs of the US investigation that unleashed the corruption scandal roiling world football.

Figueredo used "ploys and deceit to the detriment of Uruguayan clubs and professional footballers," said the indictment.

"These ploys aimed to maintain the status quo that had reigned for years at CONMEBOL and which resulted in avoiding new offers and/or companies for the sale of television rights to the different tournaments," Figueredo faces two to 15 years in prison if convicted.

The head of the Uruguayan Football Association from 1997 to 2006, Figueredo became CONMEBOL president in 2013. CONMEBOL's last three presidents have all been arrested in the scandal, plunging the South American confederation into crisis.

In all, 25 current or former top football officials have been indicted in the US investigation, leaving FIFA's reputation in tatters. The world football governing body banned disgraced president Sepp Blatter last week for eight years over ethics violations. — AFP



Eugenio Figueredo



BMW ConnectedDrive: A whole new meaning to sheer driving pleasure

EXPLORING THE MYSTERIES OF PRODUCTIVITY



RIYADH: A picture provided by the Saudi Press Agency (SPA) on Monday shows Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz (6thL) heading the Council of Ministers meeting in the capital Riyadh. — AFP

SAUDI BRACING FOR A LONG PERIOD OF CHEAP OIL

OPEC HEAVYWEIGHT SHOWS NO SIGNS OF WAVERING IN LONG-TERM OIL STRATEGY

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's planned cuts in spending and energy subsidies signal that the world's largest crude exporter is bracing for a prolonged period of low oil prices.

The OPEC heavyweight shows no signs of wavering in the long-term oil strategy it has orchestrated since last year. Instead, it appears willing to continue tolerating cheap crude to defend market share and wait for the market to balance without cutting supplies, oil sources and analysts say.

In one of the strongest signals that the kingdom will stay the course despite the impact on its finances, Saudi Aramco's chairman Khalid Al-Falih said it could outlast others.

"We see the market balancing sometime in 2016, we see demand ultimately exceeding supply and soaking up a lot of the excess inventory and prices in due course will respond regardless of when and by how much," Falih told a news conference late on Monday detailing next year's budget.

"Saudi Arabia more than anyone else has the capacity to wait out the market until this balancing takes place," he said. Analysts said the plans announced on Monday to shrink a record state budget deficit with spending cuts, reforms to energy subsidies and a drive to raise revenues from taxes and privatization showed Riyadh was expecting lower revenues.

"We don't see any changes to Saudi Arabia's oil policy - in the context of oil production," said Amrita Sen, chief oil analyst at consultancy Energy Aspects.

"The budget changes suggest they are expecting oil prices to stay low for some time and the reforms are a small step towards addressing that."

BELT-TIGHTENING

The 2016 budget and reforms announcements marked the biggest shake-up to economic policy in the kingdom for over a decade and aimed to cut the government deficit to 326

billion riyals, down from 367 billion riyals or 15 percent of gross domestic product in 2015.

Next year's budget projects spending of 840 billion riyals, down from 975 billion riyals spent in 2015. The government also said it was hiking prices for fuels, water and electricity as well as gas feedstock used by industry, as part of politically sensitive subsidy reforms.

"Saudi Arabia can either spend its way out of the current scenario or start belt-tightening. In the past the country has spent lavishly on health, education and infrastructure in difficult times knowing that oil prices will be supportive," said Asim Bakhtiar, head of research and investment advisory, Saudi Fransi Capital.

"If oil has entered a down cycle then belt-tightening will prevail," Falih, who is also the health minister, became chairman of Aramco, the world's biggest state energy firm, earlier this year after more than 30 years in the company. As one of one of a handful of Saudi figures whose views are closely watched by traders

and analysts for any insight into the kingdom's oil thinking, Falih has long been considered a possible successor to Saudi Oil Minister Ali Al-Naimi.

His appearance at the news conference with two other ministers, during which he shared his views on oil prices and market assessment, was seen as a possible signal he could be named oil minister when Naimi, 80, eventually retires.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) rolled over its year-long strategy of pumping at will in its Dec. 4 meeting, raising the stakes in its survival-of-the-fittest market strategy.

Riyadh was the driving force behind OPEC's shift in policy last year, rejecting calls to reduce output to support oil prices that are trading this month at their lowest since 2004. It chose instead to defend market share against higher-cost rivals.

Falih said the policy had borne fruit. "Over the last year we have seen the down cycle in the

oil markets have a significant impact on both supply and demand. Supply has plateaued in North America and started declining by significant amounts and we expect that to continue or perhaps accelerate in 2016," he said.

Brent was trading at around \$36.85 a barrel yesterday, a sharp drop from a high of \$115 a barrel in June 2014 before OPEC's policy shift. The Finance Ministry did not disclose the average oil price assumed in its 2016 budget calculations but economists estimated it was about \$40 a barrel and saw crude production remaining high at above 10 million barrels per day next year.

"We do not see Saudi Arabia... cutting production in order to support upward movement in prices. So far, Saudi policy of gaining market share has worked, with lower prices undercutting both OPEC and non-OPEC competitors in key markets," wrote analysts at Jadwa Investment, a leading Saudi financial firm, in a note yesterday. — Reuters

SAUDI SHARES FALL BUT ENDS OFF LOWS

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Saudi Arabia's stock index fell but closed well off its lows yesterday after the 2016 state budget introduced spending cuts, rises in fuel, natural gas feedstock and electricity prices, and tax hikes. Other markets in the region were mixed. Analysts welcomed the budget as showing the government's willingness to adopt difficult reforms to address a huge deficit caused by low oil prices. As such, it could help to sustain confidence in the rial's peg to the US dollar. The Kuwait index dropped 0.8 percent to 5,584 points.

"It is a step in the right direction, as these steps will not bring the budget into balance again but do help to improve the fiscal sustainability of the country and its ability to withstand low oil prices now and in the future," said Jaap Meijer, managing director for equity research at Arqaam Capital in Dubai.

Many of the austerity measures had been expected and were partly factored into stock prices before the announcement, analysts said. In addition, they said, the 2015 deficit of 367 billion riyals (\$97.9 billion) was lower than the 400 billion to 450 billion riyals which many investors had feared, and the planned cut in 2016 spending was smaller.

Nevertheless, some Saudi stocks were sold indiscriminately yesterday as retail investors reacted badly to the biggest shake-up to economic policy for over a decade. The main index ended down 0.9 percent at 6,931 points, off a low of 6,756 points.

Petrochemical producers, which generally account for about a third of the market's capitalization, were particularly hard hit as their margins will be hurt by more costly feedstock. Saudi Basic Industries, the biggest petrochemical producer, tumbled 4.0 percent and Saudi Kayan lost 2.1 percent. Methane was raised to \$1.25 per million British thermal units and ethane to \$1.75, from 75 US cents for both. "Saudi petchem producers have lost the

cost advantage, and they cannot pass on this cost in their prices to end-users because that is determined by market forces of demand and supply," said Iyad Ghulam, analyst at NCB Capital. He added, however, that the companies could absorb some of the costs because they have large operating margins, so they would not necessarily post losses in 2016.

Construction and cement firms are likely to be hurt by spending cuts in the budget. Abdullah Abdul Mohsin Al-Khodari Sons slid 0.9 percent, and Saudi Cement Co fell 2.2 percent after saying it would take a charge of 66.2 million riyals this quarter as it wrote off two kilns that would remain idled indefinitely - a sign of a gloomy demand outlook.

Santhosh Balakrishnan at Riyad Capital noted cement firms were heavy users of natural gas. "With a 67 percent hike in feedstock prices, this will have a significant squeeze on margins, because the cement producers will not be able to pass on the higher cost to the consumer since there is still a huge surplus of cement, close to 22 million tons."

Utility Saudi Electricity Co, which had jumped 9.9 percent on Monday in anticipation of the electricity price hike, dropped 5.7 percent. It said the price increase would have little effect on its bottom line because it would be offset by higher fuel costs.

However, rising stocks outnumbered losers 88 to 64 as many second- or third-tier stocks such as insurers climbed. Many banks also gained as they were seen as not directly vulnerable to the austerity steps; Alinma Bank rose 4.8 percent. Elsewhere in the Gulf, Dubai fell in early trade but ended 0.5 percent higher. GFH Financial, a speculative favorite that was the market's most heavily traded stock, jumped 7.5 percent. Abu Dhabi gained 1.0 percent on the back of banks. National Bank of Fujairah, which rarely trades, jumped 14.9 percent in its heaviest volume this year. — Reuters

IN RUSSIA, RECESSION TAKES A BITE OUT OF THE HOLIDAY FEAST

MOSCOW: For most Russians, it's not New Year's without a Salad Olivier, a dish meant to augur prosperity. This year, soaring food costs mean the tradition can also be a painful reminder of how rapidly many Russians' wealth is fading amid recession and Western sanctions.

The mix of chicken, potatoes, peas, carrots and mayonnaise - which was introduced by a Belgian chef in the 19th century, and shed richer ingredients like grouse and crayfish amid food shortages under the Soviets - will cost 35 percent more to prepare this year. The stiff rise, reported by the federal statistics office, comes amid the deepest economic downturn in President Vladimir Putin's 15 years in office.

The economy has been in decline for a couple years due to sanctions and a slump in the price of Russia's valuable oil exports. But this New Year's Eve will arguably be the first in more than a decade when Russians are feeling the pain of recession at the table. "Before, you could buy jewelry or expensive perfume for the New Year," says 65-year old Nikolai Skomorokhov, who retired this month. "This time, it's about the bare minimum. We're mostly spending on the celebration."

Skomorokhov, who is visiting his daughter and grandchildren in Moscow for the holidays from his hometown of Valdai in the north-west, says the usual items he would buy for the holiday became 30 to 40 percent more expensive over the year, causing him cut down on spending.

The national currency, the ruble, has fallen about 20 percent against the dollar this year, on top of a 40 percent slide in 2014, pushing up the price for imported goods. A Russian ban on Western food imports, imposed in retaliation for US and European economic sanctions, has further hurt supply, pushing up prices.

Official consumer price inflation was around 12 percent this year, but New Year's shopping shows a much higher rate. The rise in the cost of a Salad Olivier, which is sometimes used informally as a benchmark for the cost of living since it contains several staple ingredients, is indicative of a rise in food costs. Groceries for a typical holiday dinner for two including vegetables, sausage, cheese, pickles and chicken would cost 5,790 rubles (\$80) this year, 28



MOSCOW: Customers line up to stock up for the New Year in GUM Department Store in Red Square in Moscow yesterday. This year, soaring food costs mean the tradition can also be a painful reminder of how rapidly many Russians' wealth is fading amid recession and Western sanctions. — AP

percent higher than a year ago. "This year, Russians are celebrating without much joy because the year has been tough," says Marina Krasilnikova, a researcher at the polling agency Levada. "People are growing less confident in the economic situation of the country."

Retail sales were down 13 percent in November compared with a year earlier, the sharpest decline since 2000, the economic development ministry said in a report this week. In recent years, as Russia's oil-fueled economy was stagnating, retail sales were supporting the economy. Not anymore.

"Unlike during the 2008-2009 crisis, the food consumption has fallen as dramatically as the consumption of durable goods in 2015," the ministry's report said, adding that Russians are cutting down on food as the prices rise.

Worries about the economy featured prominently in Putin's annual news conference earlier this month, when journalists from state-owned media, not known for asking tough questions, grilled the president about falling incomes and living standards. Yet the majority of Russians tend not to blame Putin, whose popularity remains buoyed by the annexation of Crimea in 2014, but his government.

81-year old Iraida Robkova says the 2000s were probably the most secure and happy years of her life before the economy went downhill last year. "We were free to speak what we wanted, to buy what we wanted, travel wherever we wanted and the prices were not that high," Robkova, who lives in Moscow, spends at least 2,500 rubles (\$35) a month on medicine - while the state-sponsored allocation is just 800 rubles (\$11) - and says she would not be able to afford a New Year's dinner if it wasn't for her daughter and son-in-law, who also help her pay for groceries and utilities.

Robkova blames the economic problems on Putin's state ministers. "Putin did a great thing: he got us Crimea back," she says. "But things are difficult for him. His team is weak." Economists are warning that lower incomes and higher prices are pushing millions back below the poverty line. About 39 percent of Russians now say they are either short of money to buy food or cannot afford new clothes, compared to 22 percent just a year ago, according to a recent poll by VTsIOM. Some 1,600 people were surveyed by phone in mid-December in the poll, which had a margin of error of 3.5 percentage points. — AP

EGYPTIAN POUND STAYS STEADY AT FOREX SALE

CAIRO: Egypt's central bank kept the pound steady at 7.7301 pounds to the dollar at its official foreign currency auction yesterday, five days after it raised benchmark interest rates by 50 basis points. The rate was steady on the black market as well.

Egypt, which depends on imported food and energy, is facing a dollar shortage and mounting

pressure to devalue the pound. The central bank surprised markets when it strengthened the pound on Nov. 11 by 20 piasters against the dollar.

Yesterday, it sold 39.1 million dollars at a cut-off price of 7.7301 pounds to the dollar, unchanged from Sunday. The official rate is still far from the black market, which was around

8.58 pounds to the dollar yesterday, unchanged from Sunday.

The country has been starved of foreign currency since a popular uprising in 2011 ousted autocrat Hosni Mubarak and drove tourists and foreign investors away. Egypt's reserves have tumbled from \$36 billion in 2011 to \$16.4 billion, and the country has been rationing dollars

through weekly dollar auctions to banks, keeping the pound artificially strong.

In February, the central bank imposed capital controls, limiting dollar-denominated deposits to \$50,000 a month in an attempt to fight the black market. The move caused problems for importers, who could no longer source their foreign currency needs. —Reuters

SAUDI CENTRAL BANK'S NET FOREIGN ASSETS DROP 1.9%

GOVT LIQUIDATES ASSETS TO COVER BUDGET GAP

DUBAI: Net foreign assets at Saudi Arabia's central bank fell 1.9 percent in November from the previous month to 2.356 trillion riyals (\$628 billion) as the government liquidated assets to cover a huge budget deficit caused by low oil prices. Assets dropped 14.2 percent from a year earlier to their lowest level since October 2012, central bank data showed on Monday. They reached a record high of \$737 billion in August last year before starting to shrink.

The central bank acts as Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund and has borne the brunt of financing the deficit, which totalled 367 billion riyals this year, according to a Finance Ministry statement on Monday.

The assets, some of which are managed by global fund firms, are mainly securities such as US Treasury bonds and deposits with banks abroad. Equities are believed to account for only a small fraction of securities holdings, perhaps 20 percent. The bulk of assets are believed to be denominated in US dollars. The November data showed Saudi Arabia slowing its sales of foreign securities; the central bank's holdings of these dropped 0.5 percent from the previous month to \$425 billion. It drew down its deposits with banks abroad by 5.4 percent to \$143 billion.

Saudi Arabia is better equipped to wait out currently low oil prices than other producers, Saudi Aramco Chairman Khalid Al-Falih said on Monday, adding that he expected a more stable market "sometime in 2016." "Saudi Arabia more than anyone else has the capacity to wait out the market until this balancing takes place," he told a news conference. The comment by the head of the state oil company



JEDDAH: A Saudi employee fills the tank of his car with petrol at a station yesterday in the Red Sea city of Jeddah. Net foreign assets at Saudi Arabia's central bank fell 1.9 percent in November from the previous month to 2.356 trillion riyals (\$628 billion) as the government liquidated assets to cover a huge budget deficit caused by low oil prices. — AFP

was in line with Saudi Arabia's no-cut oil policy on output despite a sharp fall in global oil prices since mid-2014.

"Our production policy has been clear, we will meet customers' demand and will not leave our customers short of energy," he said. Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, led a shift in OPEC policy last year by rejecting

calls to reduce production to support prices, choosing instead to defend market share. Brent crude futures this month have hit their lowest levels since 2004.

Meanwhile, Saudi Electricity Co expected the effects of fuel and electricity price hikes announced in the 2016 government budget to roughly balance out, with little overall impact

on its bottom line, the company said in a bourse statement yesterday.

The firm said it would see "significant effects" on income from the energy subsidy reforms introduced on Monday, but that the rise in costs associated with higher fuel prices would offset increased revenues from electricity sales. — Reuters

News

in brief

US dollar steady against dinar trading at KD 0.303

KUWAIT: Exchange rate of the US dollar against the Kuwaiti dinar remained unchanged trading at KD 0.303 yesterday, as well as the euro which stood at KD 0.332 compared to Monday's rates, said a statement by the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK). Exchange rate of the sterling pound also remained unchanged at KD 0.452, while the Swiss franc dropped to KD 0.306 and the Japanese yen was firm, trading at KD 0.002.

Bahrain's Batelco names Hinnawi as group CEO

DUBAI: Bahrain Telecommunications Co (Batelco) has named acting group Chief Executive Ihab Hinnawi as its permanent Group CEO, it said in a statement to the bourse yesterday. Hinnawi has been the acting CEO since February this year, after Alan Whelan suddenly stepped down. Prior to these moves, Hinnawi had been chief executive of Jordan's Umniah, an operator which is 96 percent owned by Batelco, since 2009. He will be directing operations across the Group's 14 geographies.

Saudi Cement to write off unused kilns for 66m riyals

DUBAI: Saudi Cement Co will take an impairment charge of 66.2 million riyals (\$17.6 million) in the fourth quarter of 2015 as it writes off the value of two kilns that will remain out of operation indefinitely, it said yesterday. Due to a rising trend for clinker inventory along with a ban on exports, the kilns are likely to remain non-operational "for the foreseeable future", Saudi Cement said in a bourse statement. They were idled because of high inventory and the absence of growth in Saudi demand, the company had said in September 2014. At that time, it began recording depreciation charges for the kilns, but will now record their remaining value as a loss on its balance sheet.

Saudi Samba Financial trims H2 dividend

DUBAI: Samba Financial Group, Saudi Arabia's third-largest bank by assets, has proposed a dividend of 0.45 riyals (12 cents) per share for the second half of 2015, it said in a bourse statement yesterday. The proposed figure is lower than the 0.7 riyals per share which the bank said it would pay for the corresponding period of 2014.

NCB wins nod to form derivatives unit

DUBAI: National Commercial Bank, Saudi Arabia's largest lender, has received regulatory approval to set up a subsidiary to engage in derivatives trading and repo activities, the lender said yesterday. The Cayman Islands-based unit, The Saudi National Commercial Bank Markets Limited, will be 100 percent owned by NCB and have a paid-up capital of \$50,000, a bourse statement said. NCB said there would be no financial impact on NCB's current financial statements due to the establishment of the company.

ZIMBABWE GOVT WORKERS VOW TO STRIKE OVER LATE PAY

HARARE: Government workers in Zimbabwe vowed yesterday to go on strike in January after their salaries and annual bonuses were not paid in the latest sign of the country's economic woes.

The state-controlled Herald newspaper quoted workers' representatives as saying their members had not received their wages and would not work after January 1. "We do not have transport money to go to work, which simply means that we will be home starving without even food," Zimbabwe Nurses Association general secretary Enock Dongo said.

Tens of thousands of government workers began their Christmas holidays without pay after the government failed to process salaries that were due in mid-December. For the first time since independence in 1980, the government has also not paid civil servants their annual bonuses. Finance minister Patrick Chinamasa issued a statement apologising for "all the inconveniences caused" and pledging that the salaries would be paid after a delay.

Zimbabwe's economy has been on a downturn for more than a decade since veteran President Robert Mugabe oversaw the often violent eviction of white farmers under controversial land reforms. The economy shrank by about 40 percent between 2000 and 2009, and government wages now suck up about 80 percent of government revenue. — AFP



BEIJING: Chinese workers prepare to take a shuttle bus outside a construction site in Beijing. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.527
Indian Rupees	4.609
Pakistani Rupees	2.902
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.120
Nepali Rupees	2.877
Singapore Dollar	217.090
Hongkong Dollar	39.245
Bangladesh Taka	3.869
Philippine Peso	6.447
Thai Baht	8.214

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.150
Qatari Riyal	83.592
Omani Riyal	790.410
Bahraini Dinar	808.160
UAE Dirham	82.852

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	37.950
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	38.910
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.420
Tunisian Dinar	151.720
Jordanian Dinar	428.470
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.028
Syrian Lira	2.169
Morocco Dirham	31.195

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.150
Euro	335.330
Sterling Pound	455.310
Canadian dollar	220.560
Turkish lira	104.980
Swiss Franc	310.040
Australian Dollar	222.640
US Dollar Buying	302.950

GOLD	
20 Gram	219.670
10 Gram	112.530
5 Gram	56.950

UAE EXCHANGE CENTRE WLL

CURRENCIES

Australian Dollar	212.64
Canadian Dollar	223.90
Swiss Franc	312.54
Euro	337.05
US Dollar	304.35
Sterling Pound	465.98
Japanese Yen	2.57
Bangladesh Taka	3.870
Indian Rupee	4.602
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.122
Nepali Rupee	2.873
Pakistani Rupee	2.901
UAE Dirhams	0.08282
Bahraini Dinar	0.8088
Egyptian Pound	0.03877
Jordanian Dinar	0.4329
Omani Riyal	0.7903
Qatari Riyal	0.08391
Saudi Riyal	0.08112

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.400
Canadian Dollar	222.240
Sterling Pound	455.735
Euro	334.985
Swiss Frank	301.790
Bahrain Dinar	805.305
UAE Dirhams	83.120
Qatari Riyals	84.335

Saudi Riyals	81.850
Jordanian Dinar	428.810
Egyptian Pound	38.763
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.123
Indian Rupees	4.594
Pakistani Rupees	2.901
Bangladesh Taka	3.867
Philippines Peso	6.440
Cyprus pound	579.790
Japanese Yen	3.510
Romanian Leu	0.087248
Syrian Pound	2.380
Nepalese Rupees	3.865
Malaysian Ringgit	71.725
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.470
Thai Bhat	9.415
Turkish Lira	104.405

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.446836	0.455838
Czech Korune	0.004339	0.016339
Danish Krone	0.040641	0.045641
Euro	0.328067	0.336067
Norwegian Krone	0.031045	0.036245
Romanian Leu	0.087248	0.087248
Slovakia	0.009088	0.019088
Swedish Krona	0.032203	0.037203
Swiss Franc	0.301603	0.311803
Turkish Lira	0.099748	0.110048
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.212639	0.224139
New Zealand Dollar	0.201590	0.211090
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.214208	0.222708
US Dollars	0.300050	0.304550

US Dollars Mint	0.300550	0.304550
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Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003460	0.004060
Chinese Yuan	0.045401	0.048901
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037142	0.039892
Indian Rupee	0.004267	0.004657
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002446	0.002626
Kenyan Shilling	0.003161	0.003161
Korean Won	0.000252	0.000267
Malaysian Ringgit	0.066900	0.072900
Nepalese Rupee	0.002883	0.003053
Pakistan Rupee	0.002668	0.002948
Philippine Peso	0.006400	0.006680
Sierra Leone	0.000067	0.000073
Singapore Dollar	0.213194	0.219194
South African Rand	0.014042	0.022542
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001765	0.002345
Taiwan	0.009194	0.009374
Thai Baht	0.008119	0.008669

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.799874	0.807874
Egyptian Pound	0.034527	0.037653
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000200	0.000260
Jordanian Dinar	0.424989	0.432483
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.022096	0.046096
Nigerian Naira	0.001257	0.001892
Omani Riyal	0.783579	0.789259
Qatar Riyal	0.082831	0.084044
Saudi Riyal	0.080220	0.081170
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.147679	0.155679
Turkish Lira	0.098748	0.110048
UAE Dirhams	0.081826	0.082977
Yemeni Riyal	0.001375	0.001455

Blackstone report

EXPLORING THE MYSTERIES OF PRODUCTIVITY

By Byron Wien

The attacks in Paris on November 14 could have a significant effect on the world economy going forward. Geopolitical factors played a role in the Federal Reserve's initial decision not to raise short-term interest rates in September. There is also the concern that both businesses and consumers will reduce their spending until they become more confident about future world stability. Finally, with ISIS striking targets beyond the Middle East, a major coordinated military effort might have been organized to subdue its forces in the Middle East.

The attacks by Al-Qaeda on the World Trade Center in New York and other sites in 2001 were not followed by a series of incidents although there was widespread fear of further strikes at the time; the resultant escalation of security precautions proved effective. The US equity market declined sharply in reaction to those assaults, but a month later, with world economies recovering from a recession, the indexes had recovered their lost ground. Nonetheless, the market rallied on the Monday after the Paris attacks, even though the economies of the major developed countries have been showing weakness recently.

Prior to the Paris carnage there was some good news in the US. We finally got a strong jobs number for October with a 271,000 increase in non-farm payrolls. Construction was the standout among sectors adding workers. The Federal Reserve raised short-term interest rates this month. And average hourly earnings increased 2.5 percent on a year-over-year basis, with many observers commenting that wages were "accelerating." Fed Vice Chair Stanley Fischer has argued that if productivity is not growing, "there is not a lot of force in the economy for real wages to rise." So perhaps wages won't "accelerate." Before we get too carried away with the idea that the long period of wage stagnation is over and consumers will have more spending money available to keep the economy growing in 2016, I think it would be useful to look at the complex factors at work in this economic cycle.

Goldman Sachs has identified three factors influencing their "wage tracker." The first is labor market slack, which has depressed growth .6 percent, according to their estimates. The second is weak productivity growth, which has diminished wage growth by an estimated .3 percent. The third is low inflation, which has dampened wage growth by an additional .2 percent. Adjusting for these factors added together would produce wage growth of 3.2 percent, 1.1 percent above the current level, using their data. Recent business cycles have shown wage growth of 3.5 percent to 4 percent, so what is holding wages back?

The slow growth of the economy is clearly one factor. The Goldman estimate that the economy is growing about one percentage point below potential seems right to me and accounts for about half of the shortfall in wage gains. In the 1950s it was not uncommon to have productivity growth in excess of 4 percent. In the 1960s 3 percent was a frequent reading, but after the period 2000 to 2005 where productivity growth was 3 percent to 4 percent, recent data has shown 1 percent. The recovery cycles of previous periods have been characterized by forces that increased productivity. According to Strategas Research, "the me decade" and credit cards spurred growth in the 1980s and the computer in the 1990s. The problem with the current period is that housing, whose excesses were the principal cause of the recession in 2008-9 and which is playing an important role in the current recovery, does not improve productivity. It only improves the quality of life.

Looking ahead, I examined opposing views of productivity. One bearish view is espoused by Frank Veneroso, an economist whose work I have followed for twenty years. Veneroso starts with the statement that productivity growth in this cycle has been abysmal, averaging only .5 percent over the last five years. He sees no reason in history or theory for it to change in what he views as a mature economic expansion. In eight of the ten cycles since 1950 there has been a surge in labor productivity in the early part of an

expansion and decay in the latter part. One of the exceptions was the 1990s, when capital equipment investment in technology caused a late cycle increase in productivity. This is not happening now. Many observers explain the current low productivity data by saying the economy is facing "headwinds." These include: (a) a lack of business confidence in future demand; (b) a decline in entrepreneurship except in certain technology-related areas; and (c) a lack of willingness by financial institu-



tions to provide loans to start-ups. These conditions are unlikely to change soon.

Extreme point

According to Veneroso, valuations in the technology sector may be reaching an extreme point, particularly for promising companies that are not yet public. Businesses have been using leverage to increase earnings per share and borrowing has been expanding at almost twice Gross Domestic Product growth, thereby putting business debt at an all-time high. Mergers and acquisitions, share buybacks and leveraged loans are approaching the 2007 peak. This data suggests that the headwinds are not impeding entrepreneurial activity and innovation so there is no reason to expect a significant gain in productivity.

Joel Mokyr, a Northwestern professor, is on the other side: "product innovation has been particularly pronounced during the last 20 years and if that is the case, productivity statistics systematically under-measure the rate of technological progress." Mokyr makes a distinction between product innovation and process innovation. If you can produce the same goods with less labor and less capital, productivity improves. That's process innovation. Product innovation is harder to measure. That can improve your life without showing up in the productivity statistics. Antibiotics and anesthesia are examples. So is an automobile that will last longer and require fewer repairs. He sees a significant opportunity in 3D printing. Unlike some who believe low productivity is caused by "headwinds," he believes the wind is behind us.

If the low productivity numbers are real and not a result of measurement error, they are significant. If productivity does not improve, the implications for the future economic outlook are worrisome. The productivity report for the third quarter showed that employee output per hour increased at a 1.6 percent annual rate, well above the estimates of most economists. Productivity only increased .4 percent in the third quarter of 2014, but from 2000 to 2013 productivity improved 2.1 percent annually and that includes the recession of 2008-9. The major contributor to the favorable third quarter productivity number was a decrease in the number of hours worked which dropped by the most in six years as a result of an 18 percent decline in the number of people working for themselves and not picked up in the surveys. There has been a lot of interest in the importance of the "gig economy" where people get paid for performing tasks but do not have a formal job. Many younger people like the freedom and independence of this work and are willing to give up the structure and benefits of traditional employment to engage in work that conforms to their desired lifestyle. It is hard to assess the long-term impact this phenomenon will have on the productivity data.

The equity market is very much aware of the benefits of producing profits with relatively few employees. Some of the best performing stocks have a very high enterprise value to employee ratio. According to Strategas Research, examples include Facebook with an enterprise value (EV) of \$285 billion and 9,200 employees, for a ratio of 31, Visa with an EV value of \$185 billion and 9,500 employees and a ratio of 20 and Netflix with an EV of \$46 billion, 2,450 employees and a ratio of 19. We have transitioned to a knowledge-based economy where the computer plays an important role from a manufacturing economy where labor was key to output. There are two important implications of that change. The first is that an entrepreneur can create a very valuable company in a relatively short period of time; the second is that some of the most exciting companies get the job done with relatively few workers. In some cases they do so while displacing the work done by competitors who employ many more people. Compare the companies above with more worker-intensive examples like Gap with an EV value of \$11 billion and 141,000 employees for a ratio of .08.

In terms of productivity, assessing the impact of technology is hard. There is no question that the cell phone and the computer have made us more productive. Many of us can work effectively away from the office in any location and some of the new, innovative companies like Uber and Airbnb have productivity characteristics that are probably not accurately reflected in the reported statistics. What we do know is that thousands of jobs in manufacturing and services have been eliminated by technology. This has resulted in favorable productivity figures over the last fifty years and sent profit margins to an all-time high, allowed the stock market to recover and increased the perception of inequality. Both corporate profitability and the standard of living are tied to productivity. If productivity is being properly measured and is, in fact slowing, it will have a profound impact on the future outlook for the economy and the financial markets.

JOB MARKET LIFTS CONSUMER CONFIDENCE IN DECEMBER

US HOME PRICES HIGHER IN OCTOBER

WASHINGTON: An improving job market lifted consumer confidence in December, a business group says. The Conference Board says that its consumer confidence index rose to 96.5 this month from November's revised 92.6.

Americans were more optimistic about current conditions and about the future. "As 2015 draws to a close, consumers' assessment of the current state of the economy remains positive, particularly their assessment of the job market," said Lynn Franco, the group's director of economic indicators. Hiring has been healthy in 2015. Employers are adding an average of 210,000 jobs a month through November. Unemployment has stayed at a seven-year low 5 percent for two straight months.

US home prices climbed in October at a slightly faster pace as the supply of properties on the market remained tight, according to a closely watched private report released yesterday. The S&P/Case-Shiller price index for 20 major cities rose 5.5 percent from a year ago in October following a 5.4 percent rise in September. Month-over-month, the index rose 0.8 percent.

Twelve of the cities reported an acceleration in year-over-year gains. Leading the pack were San Francisco; Denver, Colorado; and

Portland, Oregon, with all three posting 10.9 percent increases. "Generally good economic conditions continue to support gains in home prices," said David Blitzer, head of the Index Committee at S&P Dow Jones Indices, in a statement.

"Among the positive factors are consumers' expectations of low inflation and further economic growth as well as recent increases

in residential construction including single-family housing starts."

Blitzer noted that inventories of existing homes, the majority of the US housing market, have averaged near a five-month supply, a "fairly tight" supply.

Blitzer said that the Federal Reserve's decision two weeks ago to begin raising interest rates was not expected to push up historically low mortgage rates quickly. He

noted that the Fed's latest projections suggest that the fed funds rate will be around 2.6 percent in September 2017 compared to the current rate of about 0.5 percent. "These data suggest that potential home buyers need not fear runaway mortgage interest rates," Blitzer said. The average 30-year mortgage rate was 3.94 percent in November, compared with 4.0 percent a year ago. — AFP



MOSCOW: A woman walks at an exchange office sign showing the currency exchange rates of the Russian ruble, US dollar, and euro in Moscow yesterday. The Russian ruble continued its decline yesterday dropping by 0.6 percent to 72.6 rubles to the dollar. — AP

RUBLE SINKS TO NEW 2015 LOW OVER OIL PRICE PLUNGE

MOSCOW: Russia's battered ruble yesterday continued its slide on the back of low oil prices, reaching a new 2015 low against the dollar and dropping to below 80 against the euro.

The Russian currency stood on Tuesday at 72.85 against the dollar, down from 72.46 on Monday. The ruble meanwhile stood at 80.02 against the euro, dropping below 80 for the first time since late August. The slide in oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's role in

the Ukraine crisis have pummeled the oil-dependent Russian economy in recent months.

At his annual press conference earlier this month President Vladimir Putin assured the country could weather the headwinds, despite volatility in oil prices. The ruble lost around half of its value in 2014 but recovered slightly as energy prices stabilized this year, allowing officials to claim the worst of the crisis had passed. — AFP

GERMAN STATES BUDGET 17BN EUROS FOR REFUGEES IN 2016

BERLIN: Germany's federal states plan to spend about 17 billion euros in 2016 for the country's record refugee influx, said a newspaper survey yesterday of their finance ministries.

The funds will go towards housing, food, education and otherwise care for the asylum seekers from Syria and other trouble spots across the Middle East and Africa who have flocked to Europe's biggest economy. Die Welt daily said that the country's 16 federal states had budgeted in a total of 16.5 billion euros (\$18 billion) for next year, after about one million refugees and irregular migrants arrived in 2015.

Spending may rise further since the budgets were based on earlier and lower estimates of 800,000 arrivals this year, it said. The most populous state, North Rhine-Westphalia, planned outlays of around four billion euros, Bavaria of 3.3 billion euros, and Baden-Wuerttemberg of 2.2 billion euros, Die Welt reported.

In many cases only about one quarter of this would be matched by the federal government, which has pledged to pay the states 670 euros per refugee per month next year, said the report.

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaueble in November said he had budgeted 8 billion euros in additional federal spending for refugees for 2016. The same month, the German Council of Economic Experts in its annual report to the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel predicted total additional public outlays of up to 14.3 billion euros on refugees next year. — AFP

OIL UP ON FORECASTS FOR COLDER WEATHER

LONDON: Oil prices rose by \$1 a barrel yesterday in thin trade amid prospects of colder weather in coming weeks but the outlook for 2016 remained bearish due to slowing global demand and abundant supplies from OPEC members.

Brent and US WTI crude prices gained more than 2 percent to trade above \$37 per barrel as of 1415 GMT after falling 3 percent on Monday. Brent traded less than two dollars above an 11-year low of \$35.98 hit last week. Both crude benchmarks are down by more than two-thirds since mid-2014 on US shale oil output and OPEC member Saudi Arabia's decision to pump near record volumes to safeguard market share.

On Monday, Saudi Arabia announced plans to shrink its record \$98 billion state budget deficit with spending cuts, reforms to energy subsidies and a drive to raise revenue from taxes and privatization.

"The budget likely signals no near-term changes to energy or foreign exchange policies," Bank of America Merrill Lynch analysts said in a note. ING Bank analyst Hamza Khan noted

Tuesday's oil price rise came in low trading volumes and after a possible drawdown in US stocks.

Severe weather in parts of the US south and midwest has disrupted shipments.

"But fundamentals remain very bearish," Khan said. Saudi Arabia and Iraq have added output in 2015 and the world's production has at times exceeded demand by more than 2 million barrels per day.

Jaap Meijer, managing director and head of research at Arqaam Capital in Dubai, said the Saudi budget showed Riyadh was taking steps to weather a prolonged lull in oil prices.

"We do not expect Saudi to cut production in 2016 and expect them to continue with their current policy of defending market share," Meijer said. The global oil glut is expected to worsen in 2016 as Iran has pledged to ramp up exports once Western sanctions on it are lifted.

"Iran is gearing up to flood the market with 500,000 bpd within weeks of sanctions being lifted, while the ceasefire in Libya may also add extra barrels," said Ole Hansen, the head of commod-

ity strategy at Saxo Bank.

Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies the UAE and Kuwait have said they are counting on global demand growth to help rebalance the market over the course of 2016.

But there are increasing signs that demand might slow much sharper than expected after a spike in 2015. "The demand situation does not support a return to a higher price environment," said derivatives exchange operator CME Group.

Oil analysts JBC Energy said that oil product demand growth in Europe turned negative in October for the first time in 10 months and that diesel and gasoline demand growth in China was also slowing.

In the short-term, colder weather entering Europe and North America following an unusually warm start to winter may provide a mid-term boost to prices. Yesterday, British wholesale gas prices snapped a months-long bearish spell with week-ahead prices jumping 13 percent on forecasts for colder temperatures. US natural gas prices settled up 10 percent on Monday. — Reuters

UK GAS PRICES JUMP FOR NEXT WEEK ON WEATHER FORECAST

LONDON: British gas prices for working days next week jumped more than eight percent on Tuesday as forecasters predicted colder temperatures that should rekindle demand for the heating fuel.

By contrast spot gas contracts had not yet shown signs of having traded, although conditions looked bearish, with the country struggling to cope with an oversupply of gas supplies.

Gas for working days next week rose 2.55 pence per therm, or 8.31 percent, to 33.25 p/therm by 0811 GMT, driven by colder weather forecasts for the period.

"[The forecast provides] a very different picture to what we were seeing before Christmas," a trader at a top European utility said, referring to consistently mild outlooks weighing on demand and prices.

Local distribution zone consumption forecasts for

next week are seen up by 30-40 million cubic metres/day (mcm) of gas, compared with before Christmas, according to analysts at Thomson Reuters Point Carbon.

On the spot market, no contracts had yet traded, although Britain's transmission network was oversupplied by 16.2 mcm, with demand pegged at 225.2 mcm/day, according to National Grid data.

Flows through Norway's main export route to Britain through the Langeled pipeline were at 60 mcm, compared with 35 mcm/day during the Christmas break.

In the Netherlands, the day-ahead gas price at the TTF hub was 0.28 euros higher at 14.70 euros per megawatt hour yesterday. In Europe's carbon market, the benchmark EU Allowance (EUA) were unchanged at 8.38 euros a ton. — Reuters

GULF BANK LAUNCHES 'KNOW MORE ABOUT LOANS' INFO CAMPAIGN

KUWAIT: In September, Gulf Bank began an awareness campaign to provide its valued customers important information about loans.

This "Know More About Loans" information campaign provides up-to-date information about the types of loans available under Kuwait rules and regulations, as well as the loan application process. It also answers frequently asked questions.

This comprehensive information is available under the loans sections of Gulf Bank's website, www.gulfbank.com/loans where relevant information is compiled in loan tables. For additional information or for questions, customers should visit any of Gulf Bank's 56 branches or call the customer care center at 1 805 805. Posts about loans are also available on Gulf Bank's social media channels on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter.

The information campaign sheds light on the following: various types of loans available, including borrowing limits for each category of loan; required documents and identification needed to apply for a loan; the proof of purchase requirement; the loan application process; the terms of loan repayment; clarification of loan interest rates; and other details.

To find out more about Gulf Bank's initiatives and programs, visit the Bank's bilingual website at www.e-gulfbank.com.



STABILIZING OIL LIFTS EURO SHARES, ASIA UP

LONDON: European stocks rose and eurozone bond yields edged up yesterday as oil prices stabilized above 11-year lows on the back of prospects for lower temperatures on both sides of the Atlantic.

The fall in oil prices has been a major driver of financial markets this year, hammering energy companies, lowering inflation expectations and reinforcing bets on loose monetary policy in Europe and a slow tightening in the United States. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) futures were up 21 cents at \$37.02 per barrel, following a more than 3 percent fall on Monday. Brent, the international benchmark, was at \$36.82 per barrel, up 20 cents but still

less than a dollar away from an 11-year low hit earlier in December.

This lifted shares in Europe, where the pan-European FTSEurofirst 300 index rose 0.9 percent while the eurozone's blue-chip Euro STOXX 50 index advanced 1.3 percent.

"Brent crude is slightly higher, and if it can drag itself across the \$37 per barrel mark it is struggling with, then European stock markets may be able to hold on to some gains," said Spreadex analyst Connor Campbell.

Britain's blue-chip FTSE 100 index, opening for the first time since the Christmas break, rose 0.4 percent. It underperformed its European peers due to a fall in major mining

stocks, which account for around 5 percent of the FTSE's market capitalization.

Their poor performance came as London copper dipped for a second day and aluminum shed 1 percent on concerns about demand from top consumer China. Deutsche Bank rose 1.6 percent following its move to sell its 20 percent stake in China's Hua Xia Bank to insurer PICC Property and Casualty Co for up to 25.7 billion yuan (\$4 billion).

German 10-year Bund yields, the benchmark for eurozone borrowing costs, rose 2 basis points to 0.58 percent and most other bond yields in the single currency region were up 1-3 basis points.

Spanish bond yields nudged down as differences between political parties made an anti-austerity leftist coalition look increasingly unlikely.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was up 0.1 percent. But it remained on track to mark a loss of around 12 percent for 2015, a year that saw it log a more than seven-year high in April. China's blue-chip CSI300 index added 0.9 percent, while the Shanghai Composite Index closed up a similar amount, as the central bank vowed to maintain reasonable credit growth and keep the yuan stable.

climbed in late afternoon trading, while Tokyo and Sydney cast off early losses to end higher, partly lifted by bargain buying. Shanghai finished up 0.85 percent and Shenzhen added 0.95 percent. Hong Kong's Hang Seng index ended 0.36 percent higher.

In Tokyo, the Nikkei 225 added 0.58 percent on bargain-hunting after ending flat at the lunch break.

Seoul tacked on 0.11 percent, while Taiwan closed 0.77 percent lower. Singapore closed up 0.45 percent. Australia's benchmark S&P/ASX200 shrugged off early losses as investors bought banks and consumer stocks, offsetting falls in major miners, to end up 1.15 percent. In Wellington, the NZX-50 index rose 1.07 percent. Earlier in the day, sentiment drooped in the wake of disappointing industrial profit data that pointed to weakness in China's economy.

Asia stocks jump

Asian stock markets broadly rose yesterday in see-saw trading despite fears about the state of China's economy, a key driver of global growth. Another slump in oil prices also curbed investors' enthusiasm in low-volume trading as markets wind down in the last week of the year.

Analysts warned that sliding crude prices, which had enjoyed a brief push upward last week, would drag on Asia-Pacific markets. "Whenever the weakness in oil regains market attention, it weighs on sentiment," Toshihiko Matsuno, chief strategist at SMBC Friend Securities in Tokyo, told Bloomberg News.

"Movement in Chinese shares will continue to have an effect on other markets." However, mainland Chinese shares

The looming end to a six-month Chinese share sale ban aggravated worries about a sell-off on mainland bourses. Dealers were also spooked by reports that Saudi Arabia would cut fuel and utility subsidies in response to a record budget deficit to cope with plunging oil prices.

"The pre-Christmas general recovery in global risk sentiment is showing some signs of fragility as we approach the year-end," Australia National Bank credit analyst Simon Fletcher said in a commentary. — Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Tuesday 29 December 2015

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▼ -44.60	5,583.81	5,628.41	5,636.43	5,560.62
Weighted Index	▼ -1.03	379.34	380.37	381.32	378.71
KSX 15	▼ -2.18	895.60	897.78	901.47	894.93

Volume	120,696,205
Value (KWD)	9,210,376
Number of Trades	2,784

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
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MARIN	106	104	1100	115	3	106	▼ -8.0
IKARUS	90	90	6,179	556	2	90	▼ -1.0
IPG	275	265	78,500	21,397	6	275	▲ 15.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	650	▲ 15.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	43.0	▲ 0.0
GPI	53	51	759,369	39,484	30	52	▲ 0.0
ABAR	122	122	200	24	1	122	▼ -10.0
Oil & Gas			845,348	61,576	42	807.15	▼ -9.19

KFOUC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	▲ 0.0
BPCC	500	500	1,020	510	2	500	▲ 0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610	▲ 0.0
ALQURAIN	188	188	27,435	5,109	8	188	▼ -2.0
Basic Materials			28,455	5,619	10	959.96	▼ -3.79

KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380	▲ 0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320	▲ 0.0
CABLE	370	365	355	130	2	370	▼ -5.0
SHIP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	148	▲ 0.0
PCEM	1,120	1,080	490	530	2	1,080	▲ 0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	390	▲ 0.0
MRC	74	74	10	1	1	74	▼ -10.0
ACICO	295	295	90	27	1	295	▲ 15.0
GGMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	490	▲ 0.0
HCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132	▲ 0.0
KPAK	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	360	▲ 0.0
KBMMC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250	▲ 0.0
NICBM	226	226	249,416	56,368	2	226	▼ -2.0
EQUIPMENT	59	58	294,969	17,172	10	59	▼ -1.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99	▲ 0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102	▲ 0.0
SALBOOKH	83	81	63,100	5,171	13	83	▲ 1.0
AGLTY	485	480	69,205	33,357	9	485	▲ 0.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210	▲ 0.0
CLEANING	40.0	39.5	95,000	3,765	3	40.0	▲ 0.0
CITYGROUP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	405	▲ 0.0
KGL	42.5	42.0	229,349	9,747	7	42.5	▼ -0.5
KPCP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	218	▲ 0.0
HUMANSOFT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	980	▲ 0.0
NAFAIS	184	184	10	2	1	184	▼ -20.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300	▲ 0.0
GFC	33.5	31.5	4,373	140	7	31.5	▼ -0.5
MAYADEEN	21.5	21.0	390,500	8,296	10	21.5	▲ 0.0
CGC	780	780	33	26	1	780	▲ 0.0
MTCC	69	67	172,100	11,660	11	69	▲ 0.0
UPAC	650	650	60	39	1	650	▼ -50.0
ALAFCO	210	208	10,000	2,081	3	210	▲ 0.0
MUBARRAD	76	76	100,000	7,600	4	76	▲ 0.0
LOGISTICS	57	55	410,110	22,866	17	56	▼ -1.0
SCEM	83	82	165,000	13,535	4	83	▼ -1.0
GCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	78	▲ 0.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75	▲ 0.0
FCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	74	▲ 0.0
RKWC	100	100	50,000	5,000	2	100	▲ 0.0
SPEC	89	89	200	18	1	89	▲ 0.0
Industrials			2,304,370	197,529	112	1038.47	▼ -10.67

KSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	220	▲ 0.0
NSH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	62	▲ 0.0
PAPCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	112	▲ 0.0
CATTL	126	126	5,000	630	1	126	▼ -2.0
DANAH	82	80	171,050	13,749	19	82	▲ 0.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	186	▲ 0.0
FOOD	1,960	1,960	69,723	136,657	7	1,960	▲ 0.0
Consumer Goods			245,773	161,036	27	1080.52	▼ -1.47

MHC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	180	▲ 0.0
ATC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	920	▲ 0.0
YIACO	148	130	550	81	2	130	▼ -10.0
Health Care			550	81	2	896.75	▼ -10.35

KCIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	880	▲ 0.0
KHOT	200	200	2,118	424	1	200	▲ 0.0
SULTAN	68	66	93,285	6,177	5	66	▲ 0.0
CABLETV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	25.0	▲ 0.0
EYAS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	330	▲ 0.0
IFAHF	200	190	210,700	41,843	13	200	▲ 6.0
OUJAFUEL	112	110	27,840	3,074	15	112	▲ 0.0
MUNTAZAHAT	96	94	64,310	6,062	33	96	▲ 0.0
JAZEERA	910	890	4,866	4,423	3	910	▲ 0.0
SOOR	112	110	62,355	6,949	10	110	▲ 0.0
FUTUREKID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	110	▲ 0.0
ALNAWADI	84	79	1,065	89	2	84	▲ 0.0
ALRAI	154	148	6,300	956	14	148	▲ 4.0
ZIMAH	130	120	2,614,200	329,630	131	122	▼ -4.0
UFIF	140	140	10	1	1	140	▼ -10.0
KOUTFOOD	640	640	5,000	3,200	1	640	▼ -10.0
Mezzan	1,160	1,140	1,920	2,227	3	1,160	▲ 0.0
Consumer Services			3,093,769	405,056	232	1002.84	▼ -15.37

ZAIN	355	350	1,059,934	375,130	39	350	▲ 5.0
OOREDOO	1,060	1,060	5,105	5,411	3	1,060	▲ 0.0
HITSTELE	29.0	28.0	1,032,322	29,217	15	28.5	▼ -1.0
VIVA	1,000	990	198,883	196,944	117	990	▲ 0.0
Telecommunications			2,296,244	606,703	174	594.97	▼ -9.92

NBK	810	800	2,222,077	1,777,707	40	800	▲ 0.0
GBK	260	260	6,076	1,580	1	260	▲ 0.0
CBK	500	500	70,004	35,002	3	500	▲ 0.0
ABK	370	370	100,000	37,000	3	370	▲ 0.0
ALMUTAHED	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	540	▲ 0.0
KIB	220	218	63,964	13,954	5	220	▲ 0.0
BURG	375	370	684,218	256,566	31	375	▲ 0.0
KFIN	550	540	213,874	117,366	27	540	▼ -10.0
BOUBYAN	440	435	1,206,437	530,766	29	440	▲ 5.0
AUB	206	204	860,000	176,320	15	204	▼ -2.0
ITHMR	45.0	43.0	3,380,700	148,714	69	44.5	▲ 1.0
WARBANK	198	196	411,117	80,845	93	198	▲ 0.0
Banks			9,218,467	3,175,819	316	903.07	▼ -0.27

KINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	305	▲ 0.0
GINS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	750	▲ 0.0
AINS	485	485	15,000	7,275	2	485	▲ 25.0
WINS	104	104	51,010	5,305	4	104	▲ 0.0
KUWAITRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	200	▲ 0.0
FTI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	56	▲ 0.0
WETHAQ	41.0	41.0	350	14	1	41.0	▲ 1.0
BKIKWT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	355	▲ 0.0
Insurance			66,360	12,594	7	1107.17	▲ 12.29

SOKOUK	49.5	48.0	244,068	118,001	41	48.0	▼ -1.0
KRE	57	56	701,790	39,800	4	56	▲ 0.0
URC	96	94	1,129	108			



BMW CONNECTED DRIVE

A WHOLE NEW MEANING TO SHEER DRIVING PLEASURE

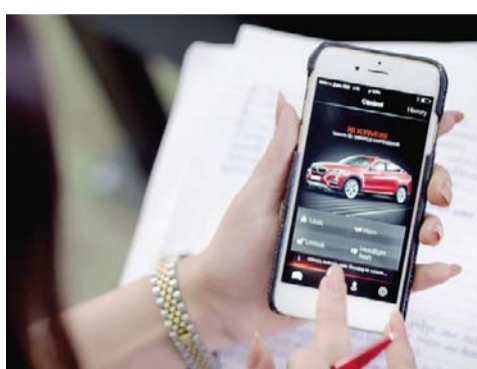
KUWAIT: BMW group continues to present customers with unmatched, market-leading benefits and privileges of owning a new BMW vehicle equipped with the pioneering and cutting-edge technology - BMW ConnectedDrive.

The BMW ConnectedDrive technology has two components: the Driving Assistant Services and Apps that offer car owners a range of categories that include travel, office and entertainment, including a Concierge Service and Remote App.

The Concierge Service as part of the Services and Apps on the BMW ConnectedDrive platform presents a convenient way of establishing a connection with BMW's Call Centre agents at the touch of a button. These agents will then be on hand serving as "personal assistants" to every owner of a BMW car that is equipped with BMW ConnectedDrive technology.

Whether one is looking for a particular restaurant, the nearest cash dispenser, a mall, Cinema - a BMW Call Centre agent is always ready to be of service and send the relevant address details on request straight to the car's navigation system.

Furthermore, BMW ConnectedDrive car owners can also have remote access to their



vehicle via the BMW Call Centre or the My BMW Remote App. With it, car owners can use the Concierge Services independently on their mobile phone at home or abroad, around the clock, seven days per week and without incurring any additional costs.

Other uses of My BMW Remote App include being able to lock or unlock one's BMW by smartphone from wherever if the owner happens to be unsure whether he or she locked the car after getting out. Or, instead of using the My BMW Remote App, drivers can call the BMW Call Centre wherein, after callers have identified themselves as the

owner, the Call Centre agent activates the Remote Services and unlocks or locks the vehicle.

Another feature of the My BMW Remote App is that within the 'Climate' menu, a BMW car owner can turn on the auxiliary heater or auxiliary ventilation. The App also allows drivers to sound the horn and flash the lights in order to find the vehicle in a large car park. And, with the assistance of a Vehicle Finder, it shows the car's current position on a map on a smartphone.

As an added convenience for those who may often change their mobile phones to a



new one, the My BMW Remote App can be downloaded on the App Store or on Google Play. However, before one can avail of any Remote Services, it must be activated in the BMW ConnectedDrive customer portal (incl. security

question for use via the Call Centre). To know more about BMW Cars and Connected Drive features, please visit Ali Alghanim & Sons Automotive Company's showroom.

AMID CUBA OPENING, HAVANA QUINCEANERA BIZ BOOMS

HAVANA: Up a winding flight of stairs at a beachside Havana home, Camila Lopez Rivas lies on the tile floor, smiling mischievously into a video camera circling overhead. Tossed around her are layers of a blue and aqua taffeta dress, the first of nine outfits the 14-year-old will pose in, from colonial ball gowns to a neon green bikini.

Camila lives in Miami, the daughter of a truck driver who left Cuba when she was a baby. She doesn't remember the island, but wanted to return for the photographs and videos that Latin American girls typically take for their 15th birthdays. "I left very young," Camila said between a halt in the taping. "But I'm from here." Such voyages back to Cuba are becoming increasingly common for girls who find that marking the milestone on the island is both appealing and economical. Cuban reforms permitting small-scale, private businesses and

the re-establishment of US-Cuban diplomatic relations have encouraged new photo and event planning businesses for events such as girls' 15th birthdays.

The complicated networks connecting Cubans in Miami and Havana feed the growth: Camila learned about Marbella Studio, the business she hired, from another girl in Florida who had her photos taken there. Marbella Studios in Guanabo, a 30-minute drive from Havana, is located in an Art Deco-style home and employs 12 photographers, stylists and videographers. There are more than 500 outfits to choose from in three dressing rooms and a calendar full of appointments with clients. Owner Sarah Medina Vigor said about 60 percent of the 500 or so girls her studio photographs each year travel here from other countries, with July and December being the peak months.

Celebrations known as "quincean-



PENAS BLANCAS: A Cuban woman migrant uses her cell phone while other Cubans sleep, outside of the border control building in Penas Blancas, Costa Rica, on the border with Nicaragua which closed its borders to Cuban migrants. — AP

eras," marking a girl's 15th birthday and recognizing her transition to womanhood, date back centuries in Latin America. Some vestiges of the older celebrations remain, with Latin American girls performing traditional waltzes. But in Cuba, photographs are the main focus.

Signs for new photo businesses that document 15th birthdays line the doorways of decrepit Havana buildings and advertisements abound on websites such as Revolicom.com, an underground Cuban Craigslist. Many studios are run by former state sector professionals who purchased cameras with the help of U.S. relatives and have found taking pictures far more profitable than the average monthly government salary of \$20.

Alberto Gonzalez, owner of Aladino photo studio, said he saw an equal number of clients from Cuba and abroad

over the summer. "This year, more came than any other," he said of the visitors. But the daughters of workers in Cuba's emerging private sector are also helping fuel business. With the economic reforms, many families on the island now have extra cash to spend for quinceanera celebrations.

They include 14-year-old Dachely Silva, who sat at Aladino one afternoon before a gold-rimmed mirror as a makeup artist layered mascara onto her eyelashes. Her mother, Mayelin Alfonso, recalled posing in just one dress for her own 15th birthday. Now, her husband has a business driving tourists around in a restored classic American car. Without the business, "we would not be able to afford this," Alfonso said. Quinceanera packages at most studios start around \$150 and include professional hair and makeup artists, scenic Havana backdrops and multiple wardrobe changes - a bargain compared to similar services in the US that typically start at about \$1,000.

In the past, quinceanera photos typically featured girls in poufy dresses and crowns. But at many Havana studios, there are now punk-rock style sneakers and miniskirts among the rows of high heels and gowns. The girls also pose in bikinis, feathered boas and little else for photos that would raise eyebrows back in some parts of the US.

Very emotional

Some girls hold their quinceanera parties in Cuba as well. On one late evening, dozens of teens stood outside a new party hall in a restored colonial building where a woman who lives in the U.S. was throwing her sister a 15th birthday party. A guest, 14-year-old Maria Fernandez of Havana, said it was "very emotional" to see friends come back to the island for their 15th birthday celebrations. "They have friends and an entire life here," she said. — AP



HAVANA: Estefania Hernandez Perera, 14, who lives in Cuba, is photographed by FotoEcos, a studio that specializes in quinceaneras, along the Malecon in Havana, Cuba. Hernandez is the third in her family to hire FotoEcos for their quinceanera portraits. — AP

GOLD GAINS ON FLAT DOLLAR, SET FOR 3RD YEAR OF LOSSES

LONDON: Gold edged up yesterday in response to a flat dollar and slightly firmer oil prices, but the metal is heading for its third consecutive year of losses on prospects of rising US interest rates.

Gold is likely to end 2015 down nearly 10 percent, mostly due to expectations that higher US interest rates will hit demand for the non-interest-paying metal. Spot gold rose 0.2 percent to \$1,070.50 an ounce by 1245 GMT, after losing 0.6 percent in the previous session. Volumes were thin in the last trading week of the year.

"Over the short-term, the precious metal will likely trend sideways, as funds look to close out the year and contemplate heading into next year with a fresh slate," INTL FCStone analyst Edward Meir said. The dollar was 0.1 percent up against a basket of leading currencies, ahead of US house price and consumer confidence data. The US currency will continue to be the main driver for gold and its performance going forward, analysts said. Aided by an improving US economy, the Federal

Reserve raised rates for the first time in nearly a decade this month and hinted at gradual increases in 2016.

"Gold's downturn is likely to continue throughout 2016... there are going to be more US rate hikes than the market is anticipating the next year," ABN Amro analyst Georgette Boele said. The metal dropped on Monday, when crude oil fell more than 3 percent.

"Gold is seen as an inflation hedge and lower oil prices give investors fewer reasons to buy gold," ABN Amro's Boele said. Global benchmark Brent crude steadied above 11-year lows but gains could be undermined by the impact of near record output.

Assets of SPDR Gold Trust, the top gold-backed exchange-traded fund, fell 0.18 percent to 643.56 tons on Monday, close to a seven-year low. Speculators' short positions in COMEX gold contracts are near an all-time high, though data on Monday showed they had reduced the record bearish stance in the week to Dec. 22. — AP

BOSNIAN REGION ADOPTS LABOR LAW REFORM SOUGHT BY EU, IMF

BANJA LUKA, Bosnia: Facing down trade unions and opposition lawmakers, Bosnia's autonomous Serb Republic yesterday adopted a new labor law sought by the International Monetary Fund in return for fresh funds for the cash-strapped country.

The new law introduces more flexible labor practices and underpins a raft of legislative changes to secure badly-needed funds from the IMF and the European Union, which has launched a new effort to encourage economic and political reform in Bosnia in exchange for closer ties with the bloc.

As lawmakers debated the bill, riot police stood guard outside the parliament of Bosnia's Serb Republic, one of two autonomous regions that make up Bosnia under a peace deal that ended a 1992-95 war in the former Yugoslav republic. Trade unionists said the law would make it easier for firms to fire workers in a country already mired in high unemployment. They argued it would take away some of the benefits they enjoyed under previous legisla-

tion and give broader powers to employers.

A protest banner read: "We do not want to be 21st century slaves."

Serb Republic Prime Minister Zeljka Cvijanovic said failure to adopt the law would close the door on foreign investment and international funds. "We are all determined to develop a real economy. I feel sorry for the workers but we cannot give up this law," she said.

Bosnia's other half, the Bosniak-Croat Federation, adopted new labor legislation in July. Passage of the bills by both regions was the main condition set by the IMF to continue talks on a new loan deal for Bosnia, after the previous arrangement expired in June. Trade unions president Ranka Misic was ejected from parliament by security guards for obstructing the debate, prompting a walkout by opposition lawmakers. "We will decide what to do next. The time ahead will be turbulent and painful," said Misic. The bill, however, passed by 49 ruling coalition votes in the 83-seat chamber. — Reuters

BARCLAYS COMPASS: DEVELOPED MARKETS TO LEAD GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES IN Q1 2016

KUWAIT: Barclays has announced the findings of its latest "Compass" report, which includes the Bank's tactical recommendations to portfolio asset allocations. Published by Barclays' Wealth and Investment Management division, the research focuses on providing investment advice and recommendations to investors around the world, including the MENA region.

The Q1 2016 Compass report, which examines major asset classes globally, retained an overweight allocation on global equities compared to fixed income. Within the equities asset class, the report favored developed markets, with a focus on Europe in particular, where corporate profits have the highest potential to rebound. However, the report also highlighted the fact that border closures in Europe could weigh on corporates' profits.

While the report reduced its allocation to fixed income instruments in general, it favored developed government bonds over investment grade, high yield and emerging markets bonds, citing risks to the sub sector, particularly in the US market where energy-related defaults are expected to rise, due to depressed oil prices.

As for emerging markets equities, while the Q1 2016 Compass report remained tactically underweight on the asset class in the short term, it maintained a constructive long-term view for emerging markets due to their demographics. However, the Tactical Allocation Committee, which consists of senior investment strategists and portfolio managers at Barclays, still sees selective opportunities in emerging markets, most notably in the MSCI China index.

As for investing in commodities, the report also maintained an underweight allocation for this asset class, citing the impending approach of US interest rate hikes, which



Vic Malik

continues to cast its shadows on commodities prices. The Q1 2016 Compass report highlighted that key commodities, such as oil and copper, are close to bottoming out, while gold remains vulnerable to the impending interest rates hike.

Commenting on Q1 2016 Compass report, Vic Malik, Head of Global Investments and Solutions for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) at Barclays Wealth and Investment Management, said: "While the new year tends to be a popular time to make changes, we believe that current economic climate will remain unchanged during Q1 2016, which supports our view that portfolios should continue to focus more on equities and away from the overpriced bond market.

Investors will continue to have concerns next year over a number of issues, including effects of the slowdown of the Chinese economy, corporate debt in emerging markets given a stronger US dollar and the trajectory of the US interest rate if inflation nears the FED target.



KIRBY BUILDING SYSTEMS AND KIMMCO PARTICIPATE IN BIG5 EXHIBITION IN DUBAI

KUWAIT: Alghanim industries, one of the largest privately owned companies in the region, had two companies represent it in the Big5 Exhibition, held from 23 to 26 November 2015 at the Dubai World Trade Center, and considered to be the region's largest building and construction exhibition, bringing together suppliers and buyers since 1979. Kirby Building Systems, the global leader in the design and manufacturing of pre-engineered steel buildings and structures, and KIMMCO, the major provider of insulation products in the Middle East, Africa, the Far East and Asia both had major presence at the exhibition.

Kirby Building Systems has been manufacturing steel buildings and supplying construction material in the Middle East and North Africa region for over 40 years, and as the construction market in the Middle East continues to grow, the exhibition allowed Kirby to reaffirm its prowess as one of the leading construction companies in the region.

The Kirby team was provided with opportunities to speak to consultants, builders, contractors, project managers, engineers and government officials and was able to demonstrate Kirby's capabilities to design and deliver steel structures and buildings, as well as showcasing many of its other products. The company's booth was located in Hall 8 of the exhibition and attracted over 250 visitors. Kirby used the 6m x 6m assigned space to set up a unique booth that displayed the company's quality structures and designs.

Various Kirby products like I-beams, open web joist and metal tubes were shown as part of the booth's display. The inside of the stand had a large video wall that highlighted different Kirby projects from around the world. There was also an architectural scale model of a building with all the Kirby products incorporated in it. The display of the model created a lot of curiosity among the visitors who were interested to know more about Kirby products and their usage in various applications.

The Mezzanine area of the booth displayed Kirby Engineering Excellence and Sales & Distribution networks, as well as providing an exclusive area for meetings with prospective clients.

James Minato, Senior General Manager of Kirby Kuwait said: "The Exhibition was quite successful and as usual gave Kirby the opportunity to showcase its global capabilities and revisit with its customer base. In addition to its traditional product, Kirby's stand this year focused on marketing its commercial capabilities, with a stand consisting of a two-story steel building with Glazing all around, in line with its strategy to further penetrate the commercial sector."

New products

The exhibition also served as the perfect platform for KIMMCO to launch two new products, the 'KIMMCO Climaver' and 'KIMMCO EcoBuild'. Climaver is a lightweight pre-insulated ductwork system which enables designers to meet the stringent thermal, acoustic and fire-performance requirements of the HVAC (heating, ventilating and air-conditioning) market.

Mark Westermayer, Director of Marketing at KIMMCO said: "According to a recently published report, 20 per cent of the air that moves through the metal duct systems is lost due to leaks and poorly sealed connections. Climaver is the solution! It provides energy-efficiency in order to keep the operational costs as low as possible and helps to meet a variety of challenges faced while designing and executing a project due to its on-site fabrication and installation".

A presentation on the features of the product was conducted by Mark Westermayer, along with a live demonstration of the product by Benju Thomas, Marketing Supervisor at KIMMCO. Various benefits of the product were showcased, including fire performance as well as thermal & acoustic comfort.

The EcoBuild product launch generated great interest among visitors to the booth, which featured a live falcon as a symbol of the EcoBuild product. Visitors took photos with the falcon in front of the EcoBuild backdrop. "The EcoBuild range is 100% natural, high performing and provides high value and quality. With a focus on building applications, EcoBuild is providing excellent thermal, acoustic, fire performance and, on top of this, it is improving the quality of the environment in which we live and work. EcoBuild meets the most stringent European requirements, statutory or voluntary, on emissions of formaldehyde and VOCs (volatile organic compounds) in indoor air and additionally reduces energy consumption and hence, CO2 emissions" Mark Westermayer said.

In an effort to raise awareness about the role of insulation within the building industry, Manhal Jaweesh, Sr. Manager of the Technical Department at KIMMCO, conducted a seminar entitled "Mineral Wool Insulation, a Comfort Value Proposition in Building Industry" at the sustainability theater on 25 November 2015. During his presentation, Manhal explained the criteria to choose the best insulation for building, insulation and environment insulation in green building, indoor air quality, and air leakage in HVAC systems.

The exhibition gave KIMMCO the opportunity to meet existing and potential customers, and to reiterate its commitment to providing the best insulation solutions and HVAC systems in the GCC and the wider region.



17 SALES CONSULTANTS AT MERCEDES-BENZ KUWAIT COMPLETE DAIMLER GLOBAL CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

KUWAIT: Highlighting the global standards of excellence followed by Daimler around the world, Abdul Rahman Albisher & Zaid Alkazemi Company, the authorised General Distributor of Mercedes-Benz in Kuwait, announced the recent certification of 17 sales consultants from new passenger cars, AMG, fleet sales and approved used cars in a two-year certified training program conducted by the Daimler Regional Training Centre.

During the certification ceremony held in Albisher & Alkazemi Co's Mercedes-Benz Showroom in Kuwait earlier this month, the newly qualified Sales consultants were congratulated and awarded certificates to confirm their successful completion of the comprehensive "Daimler C-Sales" training program that included modules on sales techniques and product knowledge of all Mercedes-Benz products. During this program, the Sales consultants follow a development plan, which includes the

application of theoretical knowledge in the daily business and customer dealings and a number of e-learning modules and tests.

The training concludes with a formal assessment run by third-party Assessors from UK. Every Sales Consultant who successfully passes the assessment receives the title of "Certified Sales Consultant".

Congratulating the staff at the ceremony, Michael Ruehle, CEO of Abdul Rahman Albisher & Zaid Alkazemi Company, said: "This is a long-term program run over a two-year period, and completing it successfully demonstrates the achievement of the sales consultants on receiving this internationally recognized qualification of Mercedes-Benz Certified Sales Consultant. It also demonstrates the importance of training, commitment & ambition to learn and succeed, and understanding of our global premium brand."

"Mercedes-Benz offers the best or nothing in

every aspect of its services and we are confident our customers will deal with the best qualified Sales consultants in the automotive industry."

The "Certified Sales Consultants" are: Shehata

- Ali Nour El Din
- Mohammed Kamal Abu Zayed
- Nabil Syed Rabik
- Sameer Al-Mushasha
- Hong Cuong Nguyen
- Sadik Shaikh
- Hassan Moghaddam
- Mahmoud Mustafa
- Yehiya El Tawil
- Al Hassan Al Hakim
- Mohamad Jamal Eddine
- Mohamad Achour
- Hasan Abushok
- Ahmad Zalatimo
- Sadique Kassim Sayyad Mohammed
- Munir Marshlian
- Ali El Fakih



The all-new Mercedes-AMG GLE 63 Coupé.

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The best or nothing.



ME EMPLOYERS SEEK TO ADVANCE WORKERS' ICT SKILLS, SAYS SURVEY

DUBAI: A new survey conducted by ICDL Arabia, the governing body and certification authority for the ICDL certificate program in Egypt, GCC States and Iraq, has revealed a growing demand for the improvement and enhancement of information and communication technology (ICT) skills for employees in the public and private sectors. The result further demonstrates a new trend where employers are not only looking to hire ICT-proficient candidates but also willing to provide them with additional necessary training to upgrade or enhance their skills. The survey covered 500 governments and companies across the region, including company owners and department and HR heads from various public and private sector organizations in the Middle East.

Survey findings indicate that employers in the region are looking for skilled employees who can improve upon their performance in response to changes in technology and market trends. Nearly 85 per cent of respondents said that all roles, including administrative, customer service, operations, sales and business development, marketing, and management require ICT skill sets such as teamwork, project management, report creation, and secured use of data and social media tools. While skills such as Digital Marketing followed by Word Processing and Online Collaboration are in high demand among employers, the majority of employees are proficient in Presentation, Word Processing, and Social.

Most employers in the Middle East are open to the idea of investigating in appropriate training and learning programs for their employees to enhance their proficiency as per the requirement of the organization and the market. Most of the respondents also indicated that they see the need for training their employees in fields such as Project Planning, Presentation,

Spreadsheets, Word Processing, and IT Security because of their importance in the day-today tasks.

The survey results also points out that soft skills such as Teamwork, Communication, and Planning, followed by Flexibility and Analysis are considered essential for any role in the work-

place. The businesses' move to adopt the latest technologies in the workplace. Along with this comes the necessity of human capital to be proficient in the adoption and use of these new technologies, hence the growing demand for advanced ICT skills. ICT skills need to be updated in accordance with the evolution of technology



place. Lastly, employers believe that these soft skills that are difficult to acquire without a good back level of proficiency in ICT.

Jamil Ezzo, Director General, ICDL Arabia, said: "The Middle East region continues to enjoy robust growth across various industry verticals and a large component of this progress is fuelled

as they are crucial for successful performance of professional commitments. The survey reinforces the ICDL's commitment to offer the latest training programs and courses to develop human resource capacities to meet the ever-evolving ICT requirements of the regional job market."



QALAA HOLDINGS EXITS MISR GLASS AND UNITED GLASS CO

CAIRO: Qalaa Holdings, an African leader in energy and infrastructure, announced yesterday that its subsidiary MENA Glass Ltd. has signed agreements for the sale of the entirety of its stake in Misr Glass Manufacturing Company (MGM), a leading producer and exporter of glass containers across the Middle East and North Africa, to Middle East Glass Manufacturing Company, and the entirety of its stake in United Glass Company (UGC) to MGM Holding, at a combined equity value for 100% of both MGM and UGC of c. EGP 828 million. The agreeing parties expect to finalize the closing in 1Q2016 as soon as the purchasers complete their funding

of the transactions. Qalaa Holdings currently has an effective ownership of 15.2 percent in MGM and UGC. "As our fifth disposal announcement this quarter, the transaction underscores both our commitment to divesting non-core operations and our ability to conclude deals at the right valuations," said Qalaa Co-Founder and Managing Director Hisham El-Khazindar. "It has been a pleasure to work with the team at MGM to help it capture new opportunities. We now look forward to watching it grow under the stewardship of Middle East Glass as we ourselves focus on our core investments." The exit is helping accelerate

the delivery of Qalaa's FY15 strategy, with its key elements being deleveraging at the holding and platform company levels; acquisition of additional stakes in key platform companies; selective investments within existing platform companies; and share buybacks so long as the company's shares trade at a significant discount to their fair market value. Qalaa maintains the stance that further divestments to support its strategic goals will be executed as need be and is already in advanced stages of negotiations for several divestments, including Dina Farms and ASEC Cement's operations in Algeria (Zahana Cement Co.

and Djelfa Cement Co.). Qalaa has recently announced exiting its investments in confectioner Rashidi El-Mizan, cheese manufacturer El-Misrieen, and cement companies ASEC Minya and ASEC Ready Mix. As part of its transformation into a holding company, Qalaa has since 2014 divested non-core assets including Sudanese Egyptian Bank, float glass manufacturer Sphinx Glass, two metallurgy subsidiaries of United Foundries Co, and investment bank Pharos Holding. Pharos Holding acted as financial advisers, and Zaki Hashem Law Office acted as legal counsel, to the sellers on the transaction.

FITBIT LIKELY A HOT SELLER FOR CHRISTMAS

NEW YORK: It was a very merry Christmas for fitness-tracking device maker Fitbit. The company's app store Christmas Day, a sign that many people couldn't wait to set up their Fitbit trackers after unwrapping them. It also suggests that Fitbit trackers were a hot seller during the holidays, despite increasing competition from Apple's smartwatch and other wearable devices. Investors were pleased, sending shares of the San Francisco company higher Monday.

The Fitbit app topped Apple's app store in the US on Christmas Day and the day after, according to App Annie, which tracks app downloads and rankings. That's far better than last year when the Fitbit app ranked at No. 18 on Christmas Day and No. 15 the day after, according to research from Raymond James & Associates. In a note to clients, Raymond James analyst Tavis McCourt called the numbers "impressive." Fitbit declined to comment Monday. Apple did not respond to a request for comment.

While app downloads don't necessarily mean a tracker was sold, McCourt said it's a "good measure of relative sales success". Retailers confirmed Monday that Fitbit trackers were in high demand during the holiday shopping season. Macy's Inc said the Fitbit's products sold "very well" at the department store. Discount retailer Target Corp said the trackers were one of its top-selling electronics during the holiday season. And Amazon.com Inc said the Fitbit Charge was one of its most popular items for customers that used its same-day delivery service in Chicago, Dallas, New York and other major cities.

App downloads could also lead to future sales. Users who track their health information on the app are more likely to buy another Fitbit device when they want to upgrade, said Ross Rubin, the senior director of industry analysis at App Annie.

Amanda Hetherington opened a Fitbit Flex on Christmas Eve, a gift from her son, and plans to buy more. Hetherington, who says she is working on getting back into

shape, downloaded the app on Christmas Day. Besides steps, she also plans to track what she eats and how much water she drinks with the app. She's already making changes: This weekend she parked further away from a restaurant to get in more steps. "I love it so much," said Hetherington, who lives near Columbia, South Carolina, "I'll probably get one for my husband for Valentine's Day."

Fitbit sells several different devices that track user's steps, calories or sleep patterns. They cost as little as \$60 for a tracker that clips to clothing to about \$250 for a watch. The company has already sold more than 13 million devices so far this year before the holiday shopping season, surpassing the 10.9 million total devices it sold last year. But like a new gym membership, there is still the question of how long people will remain dedicated to their fitness trackers once the novelty wears off. Research firm Endeavour Partners estimated earlier this year that about a third of trackers get abandoned after six months. — AP



NEW YORK: In this June 18, 2015 file photo, Fitbit CEO James Park shows off one of his devices as he poses for photos outside the New York Stock Exchange, before his company's IPO. — AP



JINAN, China: Students wearing face masks walk across the street in a line in east China's Shandong province amidst heavy air pollution on Dec 24, 2015. — AFP

TECH GIANTS SPOT OPPORTUNITY IN FORECASTING CHINA'S SMOG

MICROSOFT, IBM VIE FOR BUSINESS

BEIJING: Air pollution in China could be big business. Two of the world's largest technology firms, IBM and Microsoft, are vying to tap the nascent, fast-growing market for forecasting air quality in the world's top carbon emitters. Bouts of acrid smog enveloping Beijing prompted authorities in the Chinese capital to declare two unprecedented "red alerts" this month - a warning to the city's 22 million inhabitants that heavy pollution is expected for more than three days.

Such alerts rely on advances in pollution forecasting, increasingly important for Communist Party leaders as they seek improvements in monitoring and managing the country's notorious smog in response to growing public awareness. Official interest has also been boosted by China's preparations to host the Winter Olympics - Beijing's smog is worse in the colder months - in 2022. "There is increasing attention to the air quality forecast service," said Yu Zheng, a researcher at Microsoft. "More and more people care about this information technology."

A rudimentary forecast was pioneered by Dustin Grzesik, a US geo-

chemist and former Beijing resident who created Banshirme.com, a free website and smartphone app, in 2013 to predict clean air days using publicly available weather data on wind patterns. "If you can predict the weather, it only takes a few more variables to predict air quality," said Robert Rohde of Berkeley Earth, a US-based non-profit that maps China's real-time air pollution. "Most of the time pollutant emissions don't vary very rapidly."

Now, advances in "cognitive computing" - machines programmed to improve modelling on their own - allow more sophisticated forecasting software to provide predictions for the air quality index up to 10 days in advance using data on weather, traffic and land use, as well as real-time pollution levels from government monitoring stations and even social media posts. Forecasts can help governments plan when to close schools and airports, restrict vehicles or postpone sporting events, and also decide which polluting factories to shut down temporarily.

Business of Smog
Both Microsoft and IBM secured

their first government clients last year after developing their respective pollution forecasting technologies at their China-based research labs. Chinese authorities only began releasing real-time levels of PM2.5 - airborne particulate matter under 2.5 microns in diameter that can penetrate deep into the lungs - in 2012, after denouncing the US embassy for publishing its own real-time monitoring data on Twitter. IBM's first client was the city of Beijing's environmental protection bureau, which bases its colour-coded pollution alerts on the technology.

The company launched a "Joint Environmental Innovation Centre" - staffed by government and IBM scientists - with the bureau earlier in December, allowing officials to better model pollution reduction scenarios during the worst episodes. Still the municipal government only makes public a 24-hour forecast on its website, meaning residents aren't able to see for themselves when a "red alert" may be due. The environmental bureau's monitoring centre did not respond to a request for comment.

IBM has also signed a deal with

Zhangjiakou, which will jointly host the 2022 Winter Olympics alongside Beijing, to do forward planning and scenario modelling ahead of the games. For its part, Microsoft has signed up China's environment ministry, and the environmental protection bureaus in Fujian province and Chengdu, the capital of the southwestern province of Sichuan. Outside China, IBM has also signed deals for air quality modelling with Delhi, one of the world's most polluted cities, and Johannesburg.

"We should be able to use the same base system and do air quality forecasting in different parts of the world," said Brad Gammons, the business leader behind the IBM initiative, which the company calls "Green Horizons." "With the machine-based learning we can do it very quickly." The two tech rivals aren't just competing over government clients. Business clients - in particular renewable power generation companies - are another target, along with consumers. Already more than 30 solar farms in China are using IBM's forecasting technology, which can also help predict the availability of sunlight. — Reuters

SAMSUNG PAY PLANS TO ENABLE US ONLINE SHOPPING IN 2016

CHICAGO: Samsung Electronics Co plans to expand its fledgling mobile payment service in the United States next year, allowing users to shop online and with more smartphones that support the electronic wallet. Lower-priced Samsung phones will likely start offering the mobile wallet "within the next year," Thomas Ko, global co-general manager of Samsung Pay, said in an interview. The service debuted in South Korea on just a handful of high-end Samsung phones, including the Galaxy Note 5, the Galaxy S6 Edge, Galaxy S6, and S6 Edge Plus.

Wider "handset availability of Samsung Pay as well as online payment support is coming soon," he said late last week. He did not comment on which other countries Samsung Pay would expand to. Samsung Pay has already scored a lead over its major rivals Apple and Android, by launching its US service on Sept 28 with technology that is widely used at most stores. Apple Pay and Alphabet Inc's Android Pay require retailers to install new equipment.

By accepting payments online, Samsung Pay will compete with established rival PayPal Holdings Inc, as well as newcomers such as Visa Inc's Visa Checkout. Mobile wallets have struggled to find favor in the United States, which

has also been slower than Europe and Asia to adopt technologies such as credit cards embedded with microchips. Samsung Pay is already the most widely accepted mobile wallet in the United States because it is compatible with new and older credit card terminals and do not require any special arrangements with retailers, Ko said. For instance, shoppers at Wal-Mart Stores Inc or Target Corp can pay by just waving their smartphones with the app.

By contrast, Apple Pay, launched in September 2014, requires retailers to install new equipment that supports near-field communication (NFC) compatible with its service, which has hindered wider acceptance, consultants said. "For Samsung, moving online could be a smart move," James Wester, research director, global payments, at IDC Financial Insights, said. "It will help them build customer habit and they can benefit from that when US consumers transact in stores."

While Samsung Pay is the most widely accepted mobile wallet, customer adoption remains a hurdle because many shoppers find it is not worth the trouble to use the service when swiping a credit card is just as easy, he noted. Samsung Pay had an average of eight transactions per US user within the first four weeks of its launch, the company said in October. — Reuters

ADOBE UPDATES FLASH AMID EXPLOIT FEARS

WASHINGTON: US software maker Adobe on Monday released security updates for its Flash video player amid ongoing concerns about security holes that could let hackers in. Adobe said it was aware of a report of "limited, targeted attacks" against unprotected versions of the software. "These updates address critical vulnerabilities that could potentially allow an attacker to take control of the affected system," the company said in a statement. "Adobe recommends users update their product installations to the latest version."

But some websites and services have been abandoning Adobe for security reasons. Facebook this month said it was switching software for its embedded videos while adding that "we are contin-

uing to work together with Adobe to deliver a reliable and secure Flash experience for games on our platform." Apple notably dropped the use of Flash in its iPhones several years ago, and earlier this year Amazon said it had stopped accepting advertising in Flash format.

Google also blocked Flash ads from its Web browsers this year by converting the content to a different format known as HTML5. The moves come amid concerns that hackers could insert malicious software into video ads, a technique known as "malvertising". Security blogger Brian Krebs said that Internet users should at least update their Flash programs or "better yet, get rid of Flash altogether, or at least disable it until and unless you need it." — AFP

DATABASE OF 191 MILLION US VOTERS EXPOSED ON INTERNET

AUSTIN: An independent computer security researcher uncovered a database of information on 191 million voters that is exposed on the open Internet due to an incorrectly configured database, he said on Monday. The database includes names, addresses, birth dates, party affiliations, phone numbers and emails of voters in all 50 US states and Washington, researcher Chris Vickery said in a phone interview. Vickery, a tech support specialist from Austin, Texas, said he found the information while looking for information exposed on the Web in a bid to raise awareness of data leaks.

Vickery said he could not tell whether others had accessed the voter database, which took about a day to download. While voter data is typically considered public information, it would be time-consuming and expensive to gather a database of all American voters. A trove of all US voter data could be valuable to criminals looking for lists of large numbers of targets for a variety of fraud schemes. "The alarming part is that the information is so concentrated," Vickery said.

Vickery said he has not been able to identify who controls the database, but that he is working with US federal authorities to find the owner so they can remove it from public view. He declined to identify the agencies. A representative with the Federal Bureau of Investigation declined to comment. A representative with the US Federal Elections Commission, which regulates campaign financing, said the agency does not have jurisdiction over protecting voter records.

Regulations on protecting voter data vary from state to state, with many states imposing no restrictions. California, for example, requires that voter data be used for political purposes only and not be available to persons outside of the United States. Privacy advocates said Vickery's findings were troubling. "Privacy regulations are required so a person's political information can be kept private and safe," said Jeff Chester, executive director of the Washington-based Center for Digital Democracy.

The leak was first reported by CSO Online and Databreaches.net, computer and privacy news sites that Vickery said helped him attempt to locate the database's owner. CSO Online said the exposed information may have originally come from campaign software provider NationBuilder because the leak included data codes similar to those used by that firm. In a statement, NationBuilder Chief Executive Officer Jim Gilliam said the database was not created by the Los Angeles-based company, but that some of its information may have come from data it freely supplies to political campaigns. "From what we've seen, the voter information included is already publicly available from each state government, so no new or private information was released in this database," Gilliam said. — Reuters

COLOMBIAN REBELS TRADE JUNGLE FOR YOUTUBE

HAVANA: Until recently, Milena Reyes spent her days sloggling around the jungle, dressed in combat fatigues and carrying an assault rifle. The Colombian guerrilla fighter never imagined she would end up in front of a TV camera wearing make-up and high heels to present the first-ever news program by the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) on YouTube. Reyes, 26, says she did not even know what her mission was when she and a small group of comrades were flown into Cuba, where the FARC and the Colombian government have been holding talks to end a five-decade armed conflict.

FARC commanders only told the youthful band of guerrillas once they arrived in Havana that they would be creating and producing the "Insurgent News," the Marxist rebel group's attempt to get its message out and revamp its image. Reyes, who says she could not even watch television when she was in the jungle, said it was intimidating to suddenly become a TV presenter. "When you're in the mountains, you worry about staying alive. You get chills from the tension. Here the chills are different - I get nervous about people seeing me on TV," she told AFP.

She has had to learn to wear heels, do her on-screen make-up in a matter of minutes and deal with the comments people make about her online. Reyes, who only opened a Twitter account eight months ago, is now the head of social media for the news bulletin, a 15-minute

weekly program that blends traditional FARC propaganda - revolutionary rhetoric and people power songs - with segments on sports, culture and the Internet. Some 50 editions have aired since the program debuted in October 2014.

Behind Enemy Lines

Viviana Hernandez, a 49-year-old rebel who reviews books and movies for the news bulletin, said it was tricky transitioning from the jungle to cyberspace. "It's been hard. We were trained for something else entirely. We shudder every time they point a camera at us," she said. The FARC has been at war with the Colombian government since 1964, a conflict that has killed more than 220,000 people. Human rights groups say atrocities have been committed on both sides.

But the FARC alleges its version of events gets only biased coverage in the "oligarchic" media. To counter the weight of the mainstream press, the guerrillas' approach used to be to release statements dattelined in "the mountains of Colombia" via clandestine short-range radio transmitters or European websites. But the rebel group is now seeking to transform itself into a political party in anticipation of an eventual peace deal.

As part of that push, the fiercely "anti-imperialist" guerrillas have turned to firm-capitalist, American platforms like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to tell their side of the story and improve their public relations. "These are situations we could never have imagined a few years



HAVANA: A member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) delegation prepares her camera at Convention Palace during peace talks with the Colombian government on Dec 10, 2015. — AFP

ago, but there's a new reality now," said FARC commander Carlos Lozada, a member of the rebel negotiating team.

Media analyst Omar Rincon, the director of the journalism program at the University of Los Andes in Colombia, praised the FARC's media savvy in using

technology to convey its message in its own "esthetic-narrative code". But he said the group needs to learn the news media are "not a recruiting tool". "The FARC will continue losing the media war as long as it doesn't understand that you win with your message," he said. — AFP

EBOLA: PROFILE OF A PROLIFIC KILLER

PARIS: A factfile on Ebola ahead of Guinea's expected announcement yesterday that it is now officially Ebola-free:

Toll

The worst outbreak of Ebola started in December 2013 in southern Guinea before spreading to two neighboring west African countries. It has killed more than 11,300 people, out of 29,000 registered cases, according to World Health Organization (WHO) estimates. The real figure may be higher. More than 99 percent of the victims were based in three neighboring West African countries-Guinea (more than 2,500 dead), Sierra Leone (more than 3,900) and Liberia (more than 4,800).

Where does it come from?

Ebola was first identified in central Africa. The tropical virus was named after a river in the Democratic Republic of Congo then known as Zaire-where it came to light in 1976. Five species have been identified to date (Zaire, Sudan, Bundibugyo, Reston and Tai Forest), the first being the most virulent with death rates that have reached 90 percent among humans.

How is it transmitted?

The virus' natural reservoir animal is probably the bat, which does not contract the disease itself. Chimpanzees, gorillas, monkeys, forest antelope and porcupines

are also suspected of having transmitted Ebola to humans. Only one certified contact with an animal has been recorded in the current outbreak. It has since been passed among humans. Ebola is transmitted by contact with the blood, body fluids, secretions or organs of an infected or recently deceased person, but not by air.

Those infected do not become contagious until the symptoms appear. They then become more and more contagious until just after their death, which poses great risks during funerals.

What are the symptoms?

Following an incubation period of between two and 21 days, Ebola develops

into a high fever, weakness, intense muscle and joint pain, headaches and sore throats. That is often followed by vomiting and diarrhea, skin eruptions, kidney and liver failure, and internal and external bleeding.

How to avoid infection

In the absence of a confirmed vaccine or cure, it is recommended that preventive measures be taken to stop the spread of Ebola-notably through hand-washing and using gel or alcohol-based disinfectants. A distance of several meters (yards) should also be kept from infected people or bodies, and healthcare providers must wear disposable protective clothing that includes masks and gloves.

Possible treatments

Several tests have been carried out with experimental drugs and vaccines during the epidemic in west Africa. Among these are Avigan (favipiravir) an antiviral treatment being developed by the Japanese company Toyama Chemical. The best known is ZMapp, a cocktail of three monoclonal (single cell) antibodies developed through a Canadian/US partnership. The WHO said in July that the world "is on the verge of an effective Ebola vaccine" after Canadian drug VSV-EZBOV was found in clinical trials in Guinea to provide 100-percent protection from the disease. The drug may therefore become the first licensed vaccine against the disease. —AFP



CONAKRY: This file photo taken on March 8, 2015 shows members of the Guinean Red Cross carrying the body of a person who died from the Ebola virus at the Donka hospital in Conakry. — AFP photos

WHO ANNOUNCES EBOLA MILESTONE AS GUINEA OUTBREAK ENDS

'EVEN IF OPEN TRANSMISSION STOPPED, THE DISEASE NOT TOTALLY DEFEATED'

CONAKRY: The UN's health agency yesterday declared Guinea's Ebola outbreak over two years after it emerged, spreading death across west Africa and pushing the region's worst-hit communities to the brink of collapse. One of the poorest nations in the world, the former French colony was the host for "patient zero"-an infant who became the first victim-and health authorities went on to record some 2,500 deaths. "Today the World Health Organization (WHO) declares the end of Ebola virus transmission in the Republic of Guinea," the UN agency said in a statement in Geneva. The fever spread stealthily and terrifyingly from December 2013, striking two neighboring countries, Sierra Leone and Liberia, with sporadic cases also in Mali, Nigeria and Senegal.

As world health watchdogs struggled to respond, the death toll mounted at a dizzying rate, igniting fears in Europe and elsewhere of a virus that transgressed borders and national controls. Around 11,300 people died out of almost 29,000 recorded cases, according to a WHO tally that many experts

believe greatly understates the real impact of the outbreak. It was the deadliest epidemic of Ebola since the disease was first identified in 1976. The last known case in Guinea was a three-month-old named Nubia, who was born with the disease but whose recovery was confirmed on November 16. That triggered the countdown to the announcement, as a period of 42 days-twice the virus's maximum incubation period-is required to declare a country free of transmission.

'Au revoir, Ebola'

"It's the best year-end present that God could give to Guinea, and the best news that Guineans could hope for," said Alama Kambou Dore, an Ebola survivor. "From 2013 to 2015, Guineans suffered, they lived and survived, they endured, they were stigmatized, rejected, even humiliated because of this disease, which leapt out of nowhere." The WHO declared Sierra Leone's epidemic over on November 7, triggering wild celebrations in the capital Freetown. On December 3, Liberia released its last two known Ebola cases from hospital,



CONAKRY: This file photo taken on November 28, 2015 shows medical workers presenting Nubia (center), the last known patient to contract Ebola in Guinea, during her release from a Doctors Without Borders treatment center in Conakry.

starting the six-week countdown.

President Alpha Conde is expected at an official celebration in Conakry on Wednesday, flanked by representatives from donor countries and dozens of organizations, from Doctors without Borders to the Red Cross, that were frontline responders in the crisis. Guests will pay tribute to the 115 health workers who died fighting Ebola and eight members of an Ebola awareness team killed by hostile locals in Guinea's forested southeast. A range of top African musicians, including Youssou N'Dour and Mory Kante, will take to the stage for a "memorial" concert-entitled "Bye-bye, au revoir Ebola" in the francophone country. Amid the jubilation and hope for a return to normality, experts have sounded a note of caution, as the virus has been shown to persist in the sperm and other body fluids of survivors significantly longer than previously thought.

Shattered economies

Liberia was declared free of human-

to-human transmission in May and again in September, but both times the fever resurfaced in small clusters. "We have to be very careful because, even if open transmission has been stopped, the disease has not been totally defeated," said Alpha Seny Soumah, a Guinean health technician and Ebola survivor. Guineans battling Ebola have been faced with huge obstacles, not least the country's grinding poverty and a crumbling medical infrastructure.

Frontline workers have also had to combat the rumor mill, entrenched denial, fear of Ebola stigma and resistance to confinement measures deemed authoritarian or unreasonable. They also had to persuade people to abandon funeral traditions whereby mourners touch the body of their loved one-a potent pathway to infection. The epidemic devastated the economies of the worst-hit countries, as crops rotted in the fields, mines were abandoned and goods could not get to market. — AFP

HUNDREDS HOSPITALIZED IN MASS VIETNAM FOOD POISONING

HANOI: Hundreds of workers at a Hong Kong-owned garment factory in Vietnam which makes lingerie for labels like Victoria's Secret and Wacoal have been hospitalized with food-poisoning, state media reported yesterday. More than two-thirds of the 650 victims, mostly female workers at Regina Miracle International Vietnam Co Ltd, were rushed on Monday to hospitals and clinics in Hai Phong City, 100 kilometres (60 miles) from Hanoi, Thanh Nien newspaper said. Most of them suffered from dizziness, stomach pain and headaches after eating a lunch of rice, fish, meat, vegetables and yoghurt in the factory canteen.

"By todaynoon, 223 workers remained in hospital, but with minor symptoms (of food poisoning)," Pham Thu Xanh, director of Hai Phong's health care department said in an interview with state-run Vietnam Television. The Thanh Nien report said authorities were investigating what had made the work-

ers sick while the food company has been temporarily suspended from operations until the results are known. Officials in Hai Phong and at the factory's Vietnam and Hong Kong offices could not be reached for comment.

On its website Regina Miracle says it employs between 15,000 to 20,000 workers "manufacturing a variety of lingerie, shoes and sporty apparel of well-known fashion brands such as Victoria's Secret, Wacoal, Under Armor". Food poisoning outbreaks, especially in factory canteens, have become increasingly common in Vietnam which has seen record foreign investment in recent years and impressive factory growth. The communist nation recorded a GDP growth rate of 6.68 percent this year according to official figures, the highest rate in five years, with strong exports, foreign investment and buoyant domestic consumption. Foreign investment surged 17.4 percent compared to last year with a record-high of \$14.5 billion. — AFP

IRELAND SAW PRE-HISTORIC MIGRATION FROM MIDEAST, EASTERN EUROPE

WASHINGTON: Ireland underwent a massive prehistoric wave of immigration from the Middle East and eastern Europe, which could explain how modern farming arrived in the region, researchers said in a study released on Monday. The major finding, traceable via in genome sequencing, may end a long-running debate among scientists, some of whom thought local populations abruptly switched from being hunter-gatherers to using organized farming techniques simply as part of local adaptation. In fact, the changes came with this massive influx of people from the Middle East and eastern Europe, according to the study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Science (PNAS).

The Middle East was where modern farming was developed about 10,000 years ago. And while Ireland is often thought of for its wailing-pipes Celtic connection, its history is a bloody quilt of many invasions and influxes-Celts, Vikings, Normans-all before becoming the first outpost of the British empire. Researchers believe that Ireland's underlying Near Eastern genetic code might have some connection with Celtic language introduction or evolution.

Dan Bradley, lead researcher and a genetics professor at Trinity College, Dublin and his team sequenced the genome of an early farm woman who lived near modern-day Belfast about 5,200 years ago, as well as three Bronze Age contemporaries from about 4,000 years

ago. "We estimate that our Neolithic individual (the more than 5,000 years ago early farmer) has about 60 percent Middle Eastern origins. This is a rough estimate but we are certainly comfortable stating that she has majority Middle Eastern ancestry," said Bradley.

It is not clear however that this population influx also introduced ancestral Celtic languages of Ireland, Scotland and Wales-but the research suggests that that is a strong possibility. "Our discovery of a major migration to Ireland in the Bronze Age does at least identify this horizon as a candidate for such an introduction," he said. Meanwhile, the three Bronze age men whose genes were sequenced from remains found on Rathlin island off Northern Ireland had 30 percent genetic makeup "from the peoples originating above the Black Sea"-in other words modern day Russia and Ukraine.

"However, in this respect they do not differ very much from some central European Bronze Age samples and as such the amount of introgressing ancestry from mainland Europe could have been much greater than this." The affinity between the three Bronze Age men and modern Irish, Scots and Welsh is quite strong, suggesting there were significant Celtic genetic traits 4,000 years ago, said Lara Cassidy, another author and genetics professor at Trinity College. Their Y chromosomes often have a mutation common among Celtic-descended people C282Y, a disorder that causes iron overload in different tissues. — AFP

TENS OF MILLIONS OF CALIFORNIA TREES THREATENED BY DROUGHT

WASHINGTON: As many as 58 million large trees in California are threatened by record drought afflicting the state since 2011, says a study published Monday. Even if the weather phenomenon called El Nino produces more precipitation, California's forests could suffer irreversible change, the report said. Besides the lack of water, high temperatures and a destructive insect called the bark beetle also raise the risk of forest mortality, said the study published in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences.

"California relies on its forests for water provisioning and carbon storage, as well as timber products, tourism, and recreation, so they are tremendously important ecologically, economically, and culturally," wrote

Greg Asner, an ecology expert with the Carnegie Institution. He added: "The drought put the forests in tremendous peril, a situation that may cause long-term changes in ecosystems that could impact animal habitats and biodiversity." In this study California's forests were observed with laser-guided imaging equipment.

The researchers found that some 10.6 million hectares (41,000 square miles) of forest with up to 888 million large trees, including the famed sequoias, have endured major water shortages from 2011 to 2015. Of these, up to 58 million trees have suffered a water deficit classified as extremely threatening to long-term forest health. — AFP



MONROVIA, Guinea: This file photo taken on February 23, 2015 shows a man walking past an ebola campaign banner with the new slogan "Ebola Must GO" in Monrovia.

AS HYDROPOWER DRIES UP, TANZANIA MOVES TOWARD FOSSIL FUELS

DAR ES SALAAM: As drought continues to cripple its hydropower plants, Tanzania is struggling to produce enough electricity - and is moving toward using more fossil fuels to make up the shortfall. Hydropower plants normally produce about 35 percent of Tanzania's electricity needs, with gas and oil plants making up most of the difference. But as demand grows and water shortages hit hydropower production, Tanesco - the state-run power utility firm - is investing in more fossil fuel plants to maintain its electricity supply.

In October the east African nation was forced to shut down its main hydropower facility for nearly a month because the water level was too low to run the turbines, officials said. In December, the country's hydropower plants, which can produce as much as 561 megawatts of power, generated only 110 megawatts, according to Tanesco. "The main challenge we have been facing is overreliance on hydropower as the major source of electricity, which is hard to maintain due to unpredictable weather," said Felchismi Mramba, Tanesco's manag-

ing director, in an interview.

Solar, wind untapped

While Tanzania has significant untapped renewable energy potential from sources such as geothermal, solar and wind, the government has mostly failed to tap this potential as an alternative to hydropower, said Agnes Mwakaje a climate change expert at the Institute of Resources Assessment, at the University of Dar es Salaam. However, Sospeter Muhongo, Tanzania's minister for energy and minerals, said the government is keen to invest in alternative power production, including using wind and solar, to meet the hydropower shortfall and give hydropower dams time to refill.

Mtera and Kidatu hydropower dams on the Great Ruaha River at one point shut down for three weeks because water levels fell below the minimum required, officials said. "The water level in most of our hydropower dams is not sufficient to generate electricity, yet there's nothing we can do other than waiting for the rains to come," Mramba,

told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The hydropower shortfalls have led Tanesco to suffer losses of about 500 million Tanzanian shillings (\$230,000) daily, Mramba said.

In an effort to find a more reliable mix of energy sources, Tanesco is now building more gas-fired power plants, and looking at other renewable energy sources to supply the national grid. "We are hoping to reduce hydropower dependence to 15 percent once our gas-fired plants become fully operational," Mramba said. According to Tanesco, gas power plants could provide 60 percent of the country's electricity needs.

Tanzania's government last year launched an electricity supply "roadmap" that aims to boost generating capacity from about 1,590 megawatts today to 10,800 megawatts in a decade, largely by building more gas and coal power plants.

Analysts say diversifying power sources is crucial to avoiding shortages like that caused by the current drought.

"Tanesco must use an energy mix in the order of

priority to include natural gas, coal, hydro and renewables if it has to make electricity generation sustainable," said Haji Semboja, an economics professor at the University of Dar es Salaam. "Natural gas can keep electricity flowing when the sun doesn't shine and the wind fails to blow. You can switch it on and off pretty quickly," he said. Tanzania might also consider importing electricity from large-scale hydropower projects in Ethiopia, Muhongo said.

Dirty but cheap

Although Tanzania has for many years depended on hydropower, the country's electricity generation has moved increasingly toward gas over the last decade after off-shore gas deposits were discovered near Mtwara, on the southeast coast. Today, oil and gas facilities account for 63 percent of the country's power generating capacity, compared to 36 percent for hydropower, the government said. Tanzania has more than 58 trillion cubic feet of gas, equivalent to 9.2 billion barrel of oil, according to

the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. The country also has 1.9 billion tons of coal that could also be used to generate electricity, the ministry said.

Ministry officials say that Tanzania, facing power shortages, should consider increasing its use of coal to produce electricity, even though burning coal is a major driver of climate change. "It is the dirtiest but cheapest source of energy. Many countries are still producing their electricity almost entirely from coal. So why not Tanzania?" asked Hosea Mbise, commissioner for petroleum and energy at the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

But the government is also planning to use some solar, wind and geothermal power in its energy mix. A \$132 million, 50-megawatt wind facility is being built, Mbise said, and the country hopes to win funding from the African Development Bank to develop geothermal plants. About 36 percent of Tanzanians have access to electricity, and only 7 percent of those are in rural areas, according to the ministry. It said demand for electricity is growing between 10 and 15 percent a year. — Reuters

CHINESE CARER KILLED EIGHT ELDERLY PATIENTS BY POISON

BEIJING: A Chinese carer has confessed in court to killing her elderly patient in order to receive her salary early, and claims to have killed seven more, reports said yesterday. The deaths highlight weaknesses in the elderly care system in the country, whose vast population is ageing rapidly. He Tiandi, 45, went on trial last week in the southern city of Guangzhou for the murder of a

woman in her 70s. According to local media reports, the victim's daughter-in-law had promised He a full month's wage in the event of her patient's death regardless of how many days she had worked.

After only four days of looking after the patient, He allegedly fed her broth spiked with sleeping pills and toxic chemicals, injected the potion into her

belly and buttocks and finally garrotted her with a nylon rope, the Guangzhou Daily said. "I didn't want someone else to get the money," she told the court, the paper reported. During a police interrogation, He confessed to murdering another seven patients and attempting to kill two more by poisoning, the article said, adding that prosecutors did not press charges over these cases due

to a lack of evidence. There are deep demographic challenges in China, where holes in the social safety net have left many of the country's aged, and their children, desperate for assistance.

China now has more than 212 million people over 60, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. "An increasing number of them will need the care of others in the near future," the

China Daily said in an editorial about the murder case yesterday. While children "can put safety measures in place against those with bad or evil intentions... it should be possible for such care providers to be registered and vetted", it added. The worries were reflected on social media. "This is hard to bear," said one commentator. "The living environment of the elderly is bleak." — AFP

TASTE TEST: NEXT GENERATION OF FAKE MEATS, VEGAN MAYO

'NUMBER ONE, NEVER USE THE WORD 'VEGAN''

NEW YORK: Patrick Brown is on an improbable mission: Make a burger Americans love, minus the meat. Veggie patties have been around for decades, but Brown and others want to make foods without animal products that look, cook and taste like the real thing - and can finally appeal to the masses. "We are not making a veggie burger. We're creating meat without using animals," said Brown, a former Stanford scientist who has been scanning plants in search of compounds that can help recreate meat. Brown's company, Impossible Foods, is part of a wave of startups aiming to wean Americans off foods like burgers and eggs, and their efforts are attracting tens of millions of dollars from investors. The goal is to lessen the dependence on livestock for food, which they say isn't as healthy, affordable or environmentally friendly as plant-based alternatives. The challenge is that most Americans happily eat meat and eggs. That means that, without a breakthrough, those seeking to upend factory farming risk becoming footnotes in the history of startups. To understand the difficulty of their task, consider the transformation raw chicken undergoes when cooked. It starts as a slimy, unappetizing blob, then turns into a tender piece of meat.



SAN FRANCISCO: Hampton Creek Foods pastry chef Ben Roche pours Just Scramble into a pan.

meat might weird people out and says it's a "desirable evolution." "It's like moving from the horse-drawn carriage to the automobile, or the landline to the iPhone," he said. But Beyond Meat isn't quite there yet; The Huffington Post described the strips as having an "unpleasant" taste that inhabits a "strange territory between meat and vegetable."

At Impossible Foods, the patty is made by extracting proteins from foods like spinach and beans, then combining them with other ingredients. The company, which has about 100 employees, expects the product to be available in the latter half of next year, initially through a food-service



SAN FRANCISCO: Hampton Creek Foods pastry chef Ben Roche pouring syrup over french toast made with Just Scramble.

operator. Few have tasted it, but the vision continues to gain traction. In October, Impossible Foods said it raised \$108 million in funding, on top of its previous \$74 million. Among its investors are Bill Gates, Google Ventures and Horizons Ventures.

Culturing meat, just like yogurt

Another startup isn't totally ditching the cow. With \$15.5 million in funding, Modern Meadow in New York City takes cells from a cow through a biopsy and cultures them to grow into meat. At a conference in February, company founder Andras Forgacs likened the process to culturing yogurt or brewing beer. "This is an extension of that," he said. Modern Meadow doesn't have a product on the market yet either. The company says it doesn't necessarily want to replicate steaks and burgers, and gave a hint of the type of foods it might make by presenting "steak chips" for attendees at a small conference last year.

Only about 200 people have tried the chips, which Forgacs describes as "crispy, crunchy beef jerky." Citing the demand for more openness about how food is made, he sees a day when people tour meat plants, as they do with breweries. "There could be your friendly neighborhood meat brewery," Forgacs said.

Banning the word 'vegan'

In San Francisco, Hampton Creek's mission is to replace the eggs in products without anyone noticing. In trying to appeal to the mainstream, co-founder and CEO Josh Tetrick has a simple rule. "Number one, never use the word 'vegan,'" he said. To avoid perceptions its eggless spread Just Mayo won't taste good, Hampton Creek even removed the V-word from the label. Tetrick says what makes the product different is that it tastes better and costs less - not that it's made with a protein from a

Canadian yellow pea instead of eggs. "The egg-free thing is almost irrelevant," he said.

Swapping out a single ingredient in a product may make it easier for people to swallow change. It may also make change simpler to achieve; Just Mayo's consistency and taste are similar to mayonnaise. The product, which is available at retailers including Target and Wal-Mart, is gaining enough traction that the American Egg Board, which is responsible for slogans like the "Incredible, Edible Egg," sees it as a "major threat," according to emails made public through a records request. So far, Hampton Creek has attracted \$120 million in funding. It continues to screen plants for compounds that can help replace eggs in recipes and plans to eventually introduce a scrambled-egg product.

On the cusp of something big?

For those looking to lessen the reliance on ani-



SAN FRANCISCO: This Feb 4, 2015 photo shows chocolate chip cookies made by Hampton Creek Foods Just Cookie Dough at their office. — AP photos

mals for food, there are encouraging signs all around. Last year, Pinnacle Foods, the maker of Hungry-Man dinners, paid \$154 million to acquire Gardein, which makes frozen veggie patties, nuggets and crumbles. Pinnacle CEO Robert Gargort said he thinks meat alternatives are in the "early stages of a macro trend," similar to the way soy and almond milk changed the dairy category.

But for now, vegetarian products remain a niche market. And even if people cut back on meat and eggs for health, environmental or animal welfare reasons, they might not want literal replacements. Morningstar, a longtime maker of vegetarian products owned by Kellogg, says people are becoming more accepting of vegetables as main ingredients. As such, it wants to evolve from a maker of meat substitutes to a brand known for its "veggie cuisine," such as bowls with brown rice and black beans.

Yves Potvin, Gardein's founder, also thinks veggie alternatives don't have to replicate meat, so long as they taste good. It's why Gardein's products are shaped to be reminiscent of meat, but don't try to mimic their exact flavor and texture. "What people like is the experience," Potvin said. "They like the memory." — AP



SAN FRANCISCO: Hampton Creek Foods bottles of Just Mayo flavors.



SAN FRANCISCO: Scrambled eggs made by Hampton Creek Foods Just Scramble.

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times
248 33 199

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AIP HONORS MERITORIOUS STUDENTS

Association of Indian Professionals (AIP), Kuwait organized a grand function on December 26, 2015, at the Indian Community School (Senior), Salmiya in order to felicitate the meritorious Indian students of class XII. Awardees were selected based on the CBSE examination results declared for the academic year 2014 - 2015, from all Indian schools in Kuwait which are affiliated to the CBSE system of education of India. Gold/silver medals and certificate of merit were presented to the students who scored highest and second highest aggregates in science and commerce streams. Silver medals with certificates were presented to the students who scored 100 percent marks in any subject. Bronze medals and certificates were dispersed to those awardees who scored an aggregate of 90 percent or above. Indian Ambassador Sunil Jain was the chief guest while Abhay Chaturvedi on behalf of Kuldeep Singh Lamba (a prominent businessman), S K Wadhawan (Managing Partner and CEO of Samara Group), Ajay Goel (COO

and Ashok Angural (regional director of TCIL) were the guests of honor.

'Meet Your Seniors'

The event was organized as two sessions; First session was 'Meet Your Seniors' program which was followed by the second session of 'AIP Meritorious Awards distribution 2015'. 'Meet Your Seniors' program was conducted by Sajeev K Peter, AIP Executive Committee member and Business Editor with Kuwait Times. Seventeen senior students who are currently pursuing their higher education either in Kuwait, the US, Canada, the UK, the UAE and in India were present to share their academic, social and cultural experiences of their current career span in their respective institutions. The program provided an excellent opportunity for junior students and their parents to interact with the senior students and rendered very useful information about careers and institution options.

AIP General Secretary Umesh Sharma welcomed the guests and audience. He highlight-

ed that the AIP Awards have now become a symbol of excellence. Sharma extended his appreciation and thanked all principals of Indian schools in Kuwait who provided official information which facilitated the final selection of meritorious awardees. A colorful souvenir which included awardees' photographs and depicting AIP's vision and mission was released by the chief guest. The cover page was dedicated to the multifarious personality Bharat Ratna, Dr Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam who achieved the highest office of the President of India but remained a humble and down to earth person. He was a scientist and was known as a missile man but he preferred to be a teacher always.

Promoting students

The ambassador, while sharing some of his past memorable studentship experiences, appreciated the efforts of AIP for promoting Indian students through motivation, exposure and career guidance programs. He specifically

mentioned that although, meritorious students in Kuwait are usually separately honored on different community and on school level basis, AIP award function is the one and only event where meritorious Indian students from all Indian schools in Kuwait are jointly honored at a single occasion. Jain congratulated the awardees and advised all students to pursue their career of their own choice. His gracious presence from the beginning to the end of the award distribution ceremony reflected his interest and sincerity towards the academic wellbeing of Indian students in Kuwait.

Fahaheel Al-Watanieh Indian Private School-FAIPS (DPS) was adjudged as the winner of 'AIP Best Academic Performance Award' for class XII of year 2014-15, and India Community School (Senior), Salmiya as the runners up. Best performing schools were selected on the weighted average method. Rolling trophies and mementos were presented to these schools by the Ambassador.

Sunil Jain, Abhay Chaturvedi, S K

Wadhawan, Ajay Goel, Ashok Angural, Umesh Sharma, Umesh Shahani, Dr Kamlesh Kumari, Jagdish Joshi, Sajeev K Peter and A R Subbaraman distributed medals, certificates, rolling trophies and mementos. Anamika Anil Kumar, Aditya Narayan Rajesh, Vrischika V. Nair, Harsh Manish Varia, Vritika Naik, Elroy Castellino, Namrita Shankar, Febin Manu Varghese, Deepti, Ravi Kumar, Jennifer Henry, Serrao and Jessica Henry Serrao compered the awards distribution ceremony in an excellent manner. Vote of thanks was proposed by Dr Kamlesh Kumari.

Toyo Tires of Al-Mailem Tires (Toyo Tires) was the main sponsor whereas Samara Auto Supplies Ltd was the co-sponsor of this program. Other sponsors were City Centre; Mughal Mahal; Telecommunication Consultants India Limited (TCIL); BEC Exchange; GFS General trading and Contracting Co; Aman Exchange; Gulf Facilities General Trading and Contracting Co; Lulu Exchange and Asia Electromechanical Co Ltd.



KNES' EARLY YEARS CHILDREN CELEBRATE THE WINTER HOLIDAY

The youngest children from Kuwait National English School (KNES) held their annual Winter Holiday Concerts recently. The children sang and danced about the beauty of winter and the world around them. They sang about recognizing all the good in their world and learning to appreciate it. Kuwait National English School believes children should see and cherish friendships, family and their community. It is through this caring environment that they will develop a lifelong commitment to improving our world for themselves and their children.



Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah officially inaugurates the Kuwait Carnival. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

AHMADI GOVERNOR INAUGURATES 'KUWAIT CARNIVAL'

By Faten Omar

Ahmadi Governor Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah inaugurated the 'Kuwait Carnival' on Monday at the Marah Land entertainment park in Sabahiya. "National celebrations and festivals are important to keep generations aware of the country's

history and the sacrifices made by our martyrs and forefathers," he said. The carnival, consisting of an array of activities, will take place until March 19.

Sheikh Fawaz noted that the carnival coincides with the 10th anniversary of the rule of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as

Crown Prince, in addition to the celebration of 55 years of independence and 25 years since the liberation of Kuwait. He praised the opportunities available at the carnival for young men and women to participate in small and volunteer projects, which encourages and supports them.

Head of the Carnival's Higher Committee Hussein Al-

Shaheen said the carnival will witness a variety of activities for families and children, including aerobatics shows. He added that the carnival has opened its doors to small and medium enterprises to participate and organize exhibitions in the park, pointing out that the main objective of the exhibition is to support these projects in different specialties and market their products and services.



Holiday Dinner
From The Sultan Center



RING IN THE NEW YEAR WITH TSC'S HOLIDAY DINNER

With New Year's just around the corner, let TSC help make it a day to remember by letting us take care of cooking your New Year's Dinner. With the help of our deli, customers can spend more time focusing on family and friends and letting TSC take care of preparing a delicious turkey dinner complete with all the trimmings.

According to Makram Malaeb, Group International and Non-Food Commercial Director at TSC, "Since many customers are travelling or working, TSC offers its customers the chance to enjoy a delicious holiday dinner specially prepared using the finest ingredients by a name they trust. Orders can be placed 24 hours in advance and collected from TSC Salmiya, Hawally, Shaab or Al-Kout."

TSC offers a range of party platters that can be customized from classic combinations of premium deli meat to specialty cheese assortments that can suit everyone's tastes. Be sure to stock up on your favorite party snacks, beverages and decorations to ring in the New Years with style. Visit TSC today for all your holiday shopping.



Discovery CHANNEL HD

00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Lair Of The Mega Shark
02:00 Dual Survival
02:50 River Monsters
03:40 Auction Hunters
04:05 Property Wars
04:30 Storage Wars Canada
05:00 Carfellas
05:30 How It's Made
06:00 Ice Cold Gold
06:50 Junkyard Empire
07:40 Fast N' Loud
08:30 Auction Hunters
08:55 Property Wars
09:20 Storage Wars Canada
09:45 Carfellas
10:10 How It's Made
10:35 Auction Hunters
11:00 Manhunt With Joel Lambert
15:10 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
16:00 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
16:50 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
17:40 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
18:30 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
19:20 Fire In The Hole
20:10 Property Wars
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 Mythbusters
21:50 The Carbonaro Effect
22:15 The Carbonaro Effect
22:40 You Have Been Warned
23:30 Junkyard Empire

DISCOVERY SCIENCE

00:35 Storm Chasers
02:08 Food Factory
02:55 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
03:42 NASA's Unexplained Files
04:29 Secrets Of Interrogation
05:16 Food Factory
05:39 Food Factory
06:03 Curiosity: How Evil Are You?
06:50 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
07:37 Strangest Weather On Earth
08:00 Strangest Weather On Earth
08:23 Sci-Fi Science
08:45 Sci-Fi Science
09:08 NASA's Unexplained Files
09:53 How Do They Do It?
10:38 Redesign My Brain
15:10 NASA's Unexplained Files
15:57 How Do They Do It?
16:44 Super Volcano
17:31 Bermuda Triangle Exposed
18:18 Long March Into Space
19:05 NASA's Unexplained Files
19:50 Strip The Cosmos
20:40 Stephen Hawking's Grand Design
21:25 Stephen Hawking's Universe
22:15 NASA's Unexplained Files
23:00 Strip The Cosmos
23:45 Gadget Show - World Tour

Disney

00:00 Gravity Falls
00:25 Mako Mermaids
00:45 The Hive
00:50 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:15 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
01:40 Wolfblood
02:05 Wolfblood
02:30 Violetta
03:15 The Hive
03:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
03:45 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
04:10 Wolfblood
04:35 Wolfblood
05:00 Violetta
05:45 The Hive
05:50 Mouk
06:00 Lofirock
06:25 Hank Zipzer
06:50 Girl Meets World
07:15 H2O: Just Add Water
07:40 H2O: Just Add Water
08:05 Austin & Ally
08:30 Austin & Ally
08:55 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
09:20 Sabrina: Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
09:45 Jessie
10:15 Lemonade Mouth
12:00 Dog With A Blog
12:25 Austin & Ally
12:50 Jessie
13:15 First Class Chefs
13:40 Jessie
14:05 Dog With A Blog
14:30 The Next Step
14:55 Austin & Ally
15:20 Best Friends Whenever
15:45 Girl Meets World
16:10 Violetta
17:00 The Next Step
17:25 Mako Mermaids
17:50 Girl Meets World
18:15 Dog With A Blog
18:40 Gravity Falls

19:05 H2O: Just Add Water
19:30 Violetta
20:20 The Next Step
20:45 Dog With A Blog
21:10 Austin & Ally
21:35 Jessie
22:00 First Class Chefs
22:25 Jessie
22:50 Dog With A Blog
23:10 The Next Step
23:35 Austin & Ally

Disney JUNIOR

00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:20 Calimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopedoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopedoo
02:30 Art Attack
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
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03:30 Loopedoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:20 Calimero
04:35 Zou
04:45 Loopedoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopedoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopedoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Calimero
08:15 Zou
08:25 Loopedoo
08:40 Henry Hugglemonster
08:55 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
09:20 Sofia The First
09:45 Miles From Tomorrow
10:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:35 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
11:55 Miles From Tomorrow
12:20 Henry Hugglemonster
12:30 Henry Hugglemonster
12:45 Limon And Oil
12:55 Loopedoo
13:10 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Sofia The First
14:25 Sofia The First
14:50 Miles From Tomorrow
15:15 Jake And The Neverland Pirates
16:05 Pixie Hollow Games
16:35 Miles From Tomorrow
17:00 Sofia The First
17:25 Aladdin
17:50 Adventures Of The Gummi Bears
18:15 Chip n Dale Rescue Rangers
18:40 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:05 Miles From Tomorrow
19:30 Sofia The First
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

itv CHOICE

00:10 Come Date With Me Australia
01:05 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
02:00 Emmerdale
02:25 Coronation Street
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 Midsomer Murders
05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
06:10 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
07:05 Coronation Street
07:30 Coronation Street
07:55 Coach Trip
08:25 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
09:20 Peter Andre's 60 Minute Makeover
10:10 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
11:05 Coach Trip
11:35 Four Weddings UK
12:30 Come Date With Me Australia
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Paddock To Plate
15:35 The Jonathan Ross Show
16:30 The Syndicate
17:25 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
18:20 Come Date With Me Australia
18:45 Come Date With Me Australia
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 The Jonathan Ross Show
20:30 The Syndicate
21:25 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Four Weddings UK

NAT GEO WILD HD

00:20 World's Deadliest
01:10 Man V. Monster
02:00 Built For The Kill
02:50 World's Deadliest Animals
03:45 Animal Fight Club
04:40 Africa's Deadliest
05:35 Built For The Kill
06:30 World's Deadliest Animals
07:25 Animal Fight Club
08:20 Croc Labyrinth
09:15 Built For The Kill
10:10 World's Deadliest Animals
11:05 72 Dangerous Animals Australia
12:00 Salmon Wars
12:55 Africa's Deadliest
13:50 World's Deadliest Animals
14:45 Animal Fight Club
15:40 Crococalypse
16:35 Built For The Kill
17:30 World's Deadliest GPU
18:25 72 Dangerous Animals Australia
19:20 Animal Fight Club
20:10 Crococalypse
21:00 Built For The Kill
21:50 World's Deadliest GPU
22:40 72 Dangerous Animals Australia
23:30 Salmon Wars

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

00:10 The Border
01:00 Air Crash Investigation
02:00 Wicked Tuna: North vs. South
02:55 Cosmos: A Spacetime Odyssey
03:50 The Border
04:45 Last War Heroes
05:40 Nat Geo Amazing!
06:35 Innovation Nation
07:00 Innovation Nation
07:30 The Great Food Revolution
08:25 Expedition Wild
09:20 Last War Heroes
10:15 Do Or Die
10:40 Do Or Die
11:10 Man V. Viral
12:05 Car SOS
13:00 Expedition Wild
14:00 The Great Food Revolution
15:00 Innovation Nation
15:30 Innovation Nation
16:00 Do Or Die
16:30 Do Or Die
17:00 Man V. Viral
18:00 Car SOS
19:00 Air Crash Investigation
20:00 Do Or Die
20:25 Do Or Die
20:50 Man V. Viral
21:40 Car SOS
22:30 Air Crash Investigation
23:20 Nat Geo Amazing!

people HD

00:10 The Wine Quest: Spain
00:35 Eat Street
01:00 Chefs Run Wild
01:25 Tales From The Bush Larder
01:50 World's Best Chefs
02:15 American Food Battle
02:40 Eat Street
03:05 Great Escapes
03:30 The Great Food Revolution
04:20 David Rocco's Dolce India
04:45 David Rocco's Dolce India
05:10 Home Strange Home
06:00 American Food Battle
06:25 International Open House
06:50 Chefs Run Wild

food network

00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
02:00 Man Finds Food
03:00 Man Fire Food
04:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
05:00 Guy's Grocery Games
06:00 Chopped
07:00 Man Fire Food

07:30 Man Fire Food
08:00 Chopped
09:00 Guy's Grocery Games
10:00 The Kitchen
11:00 Barefoot Contessa
11:30 Barefoot Contessa
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
14:30 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 Man Fire Food
15:30 Man Fire Food
16:00 Chopped
17:00 The Kitchen
18:00 Siba's Table
18:30 Grandma's Secret Cookbook Special
19:00 Chopped
20:00 Guy's Grocery Games
21:00 Chopped
22:00 Chopped South Africa
23:00 Iron Chef America

itv CHOICE

00:10 Come Date With Me Australia
01:05 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
02:00 Emmerdale
02:25 Coronation Street
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 Midsomer Murders
05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
06:10 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
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21:25 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
22:20 Coronation Street
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Four Weddings UK

OSN FIRST HD COMEDY

01:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
13:00 Suburgatory
16:00 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:30 The Nightly Show With Larry Wilmore
22:00 The League
22:30 The League
23:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers

OSN FIRST HD ACTION

00:00 Hammer Of The Gods
02:00 The Guest
04:00 A Stranger In Paradise
06:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
08:00 Age Of Dinosaurs
10:00 The Prince
12:00 A Stranger In Paradise
14:00 Christmas Twister
16:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
18:00 Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief
20:00 The Prince
22:00 Android Cop

OSN FIRST HD ACTION

00:00 The Guest-18
02:00 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
04:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra-Age Of Dinosaurs-PG15
06:00 The Prince-PG15
08:00 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
10:00 Christmas Twister-PG15
12:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
14:00 Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief-PG15
18:00 The Prince-PG15

OSN FIRST HD MORE

00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Devious Maids

07:15 Tales From The Bush Larder
07:40 World's Best Chefs
08:05 American Food Battle
08:30 Eat Street
08:55 Great Escapes
09:20 The Great Food Revolution
10:10 David Rocco's Dolce India
10:35 David Rocco's Dolce India
11:00 Home Strange Home
11:50 American Food Battle
12:15 International Open House
12:40 Chefs Run Wild
13:05 Tales From The Bush Larder
13:35 World's Best Chefs
14:00 The Wine Quest: Spain
14:30 Eat Street
14:55 Eat Street
15:25 Tripping Out With Alle & Georgia
15:50 Tripping Out With Alle & Georgia
16:20 David Rocco's Dolce India
16:45 David Rocco's Dolce India
17:15 Home Strange Home
18:10 The Wine Quest: Spain
18:35 International Open House
19:05 Eat Street
19:30 Tripping Out With Alle & Georgia
20:00 Tripping Out With Alle & Georgia
20:25 David Rocco's Dolce India
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23:20 Tales From The Bush Larder
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00:00 The Guest-18
02:00 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
04:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra-Age Of Dinosaurs-PG15
06:00 The Prince-PG15
08:00 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
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12:00 G.I. Joe: The Rise Of Cobra
14:00 Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief-PG15
18:00 The Prince-PG15



G.I. JOE: THE RISE OF COBRA ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

00:00 No Way Jose
02:00 You Again
04:00 How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days
06:00 Life With Mikey
08:00 Problem Child
10:00 How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days
12:00 You Again
14:00 Muppets Most Wanted
16:00 Problem Child
18:00 Baggage Claim
20:00 That Awkward Moment
22:00 Revenge For Jolly!

OSN MOVIES HD ACTION

00:00 Hammer Of The Gods
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12:00 You Again
14:00 Muppets Most Wanted
16:00 Problem Child
18:00 Baggage Claim
20:00 That Awkward Moment
22:00 Revenge For Jolly!

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

01:00 United Passions-PG15
03:00 A Thousand Times Good Night-PG15
05:00 Escobar: Paradise Lost
07:00 One Chance-PG15
09:00 The Fold-PG15
11:00 United Passions-PG15
13:00 Penthouse North-PG15
14:45 Miss Julie-PG15
17:00 The Fold-PG15
18:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
21:00 Serena-PG15
23:00 Afternoon Delight-18

OSN MOVIES HD DRAMA

01:00 United Passions-PG15
03:00 A Thousand Times Good Night-PG15
05:00 Escobar: Paradise Lost
07:00 One Chance-PG15
09:00 The Fold-PG15
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17:00 The Fold-PG15
18:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
21:00 Serena-PG15
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OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

00:00 Life Of Crime-PG15
02:00 Dragonheart 3: The Sorcerer's Curse-PG15
06:00 10 Years-PG15
08:00 HairBrained-PG15
10:00 Robot & Frank-PG15
12:00 Closed Circuit-PG15
14:00 40 Days And Nights-PG15
16:00 HairBrained-PG15
17:45 Need For Speed-PG15
20:00 Let's Be Cops-PG15
22:00 End Of Watch-18

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17:45 Need For Speed-PG15
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22:00 End Of Watch-18



AGE OF DINOSAURS ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

OSN MOVIES HD COMEDY

00:00 No Way Jose
02:00 You Again
04:00 How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days
06:00 Life With Mikey
08:00 Problem Child
10:00 How To Lose A Guy In 10 Days
12:00 You Again
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02:00 A Stranger In Paradise-PG15
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14:00 40 Days And Nights-PG15
16:00 HairBrained-PG15
17:45 Need For Speed-PG15
20:00 Let's Be Cops-PG15
22:00 End Of Watch-18

OSN MOVIES HD FESTIVAL

00:30 Bessie
02:30 Where Angels Fear To Tread
04:45 Calvary
06:30 Julie And Julia
09:00 Mr. Pip
11:00 Where Angels Fear To Tread
13:00 Wattress
15:00 Against The Ropes
17:00 Mr. Pip
19:00 Collaborator
21:00 The Double
23:00 Tusk

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

01:30 No Good Deed-PG15
03:00 Selma-PG15
05:15 Planes: Fire And Rescue-PG
07:00 The Single Moms Club-PG15
09:00 Big Eyes-PG15
10:45 The Hobbit: The Battle Of The Five Armies-PG
13:15 Tinker Bell And The Legend Of The NeverBeast-FAM
14:45 The Fault In Our Stars-PG15
17:00 Big Eyes-PG15
19:00 The Other Woman-PG15
21:00 The Boy Next Door-18
23:00 Transformers: Age Of Extinction-PG15

OSN MOVIES HD KIDS

01:00 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
02:45 Snow Queen
04:30 Memory Loss
06:00 Egon And Donci
08:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase
09:45 Blue Elephant 2
11:30 Cher Ami
13:00 Snow Queen
14:30 Jelly T

OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

00:00 Life Of Crime-PG15
02:00 Dragonheart 3: The Sorcerer's Curse-PG15
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OSN MOVIES HD PREMIERE

00:00 Life Of Crime-PG15
02:00 Dragonheart 3: The Sorcerer's Curse-PG15
06

CLASSIFIEDS



Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 30/12/2015				Departure Flights on Wednesday 30/12/2015			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05
SYR	343	Damascus/KAC	00:10	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	MSC	404	Asyut	00:55
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	UAL	981	IAD	01:10
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	SYR	344	Damascus	01:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	KAC	283	Dhaka	02:10
CLX	784	Luxembourg	01:45	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	203	Lahore	03:05
KKK	6507	Istanbul	02:50	CLX	784	GKD	03:15
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	KKK	6508	Istanbul	03:50
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
CEB	7694	Manila	03:15	FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
AGY	680	Alexandria	04:30	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
SAW	701	Damascus	05:15	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:40	THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	CEB	7695	Manila	05:20
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	AGY	685	Sohag	05:30
BAW	157	London	06:40	JZR	560	Sohag	06:10
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	SAW	702	Damascus	06:15
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	RJA	645	Amman	07:05
OMA	641	Muscat	07:55	THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
KAC	344	Chennai	08:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30	FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	KAC	511	Mashhad	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	BAW	156	London	08:45
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50	OMA	642	Muscat	08:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	JZR	534	Cairo	09:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:20	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:25
QTR	1070	Doha	09:25	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	117	New York	09:55
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:50	KAC	561	Amman	10:00
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	JZR	482	Istanbul	10:00
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:15	KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
AGY	684	Sohag	11:35	KAC	175	Frankfurt/Geneva	10:30
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	501	Beirut	10:30
KAC	204	Lahore	12:20	JZR	356	Mashhad	10:30
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
IRM	1188	Mashhad	12:25	KAC	153	Istanbul	10:40
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	IRA	664	Shiraz	11:40
IRC	6511	ABD	13:00	IAW	158	Al Najaf	11:50
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	AXB	890	Mangalore	12:15
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:15	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
IZG	4167	Mashhad	13:30	KAC	103	London	12:25
IYE	826	Sanaa/Mukalla	13:30	UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50	AGY	681	Asyut	12:35
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
IRC	526	Mashhad	13:55	KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
MSR	575	Sharm el-Sheikh	13:55	FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	JZR	786	Riyadh	13:10
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10	KAC	545	Alexandria	13:25
IRM	1186	Tehran	14:15	MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30	IRM	1189	Mashhad	13:40
KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45	JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
KAC	672	Dubai	14:45	IRC	6522	Lamerd	13:55
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
KAC	512	Mashhad	14:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KNE	462	Madinah	14:55	CLX	792	Hanoi	14:30
GFA	221	Bahrain	15:00	IYE	827	Mukalla/Sanaa	14:30
KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05	IZG	4168	Mashhad	14:30
MRJ	4815	Mashhad	15:15	KNE	481	Taif	14:50
OMA	645	Muscat	15:30	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	14:55
KAC	562	Amman	15:40	IRC	527	Mashhad	14:55
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
JZR	535	Cairo	15:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10	IRM	791	Madinah	15:10
JZR	787	Riyadh	16:25	IRI	1187	Tehran	15:30
FDB	051	Dubai	16:30	SVA	503	Madinah/Jeddah	15:45
JZR	357	Mashhad	16:30	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:45
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40	KAC	617	Doha	15:45
RJA	640	Amman	16:55	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
KAC	542	Cairo	16:55	KNE	463	Madinah	16:00
SYR	341	Damascus	17:00	KNE	473	Jeddah	16:05
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	JZR	554	Alexandria	16:10
IRC	6521	Lamerd	17:20	MRJ	4814	Mashhad	16:15
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:25
MSR	614	Cairo	17:50	OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:45
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	502	Beirut	18:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
FDB	063	Dubai	18:05	JZR	238	Amman	17:30
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20	FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
KAC	786	Jeddah	18:30	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
JZR	483	Istanbul	18:40	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
QTR	1080	Doha	18:55	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25	SYR	342	Damascus	18:00
GFA	216	Paris/Rome	19:30	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	IRC	6512	ABD	18:20
KAC	618	Doha	19:35	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	154	Istanbul	19:45	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45	MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
ETD	919	Abu Dhabi	19:55	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:10
KAC	102	New York/London	19:55	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	792	Madinah	19:55	ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
KNE	480	Taif	20:10	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
FDB	061	Dubai	20:20	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	361	Colombo	20:45
KAC	546	Alexandria	20:35	QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
MSR	606	Luxor	20:45	KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50	KNE	343	Chennai	21:00
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55	KAC	461	Riyadh	21:10
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55	OMA	331	Trivandrum	21:10
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	KAC	1331	Trivandrum	21:40
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25	MSR	619	Alexandria	21:45
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40	DLH	634	Doha	21:45
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	125	Bahrain	22:00	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25	JZR	502	Luxor	22:00
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:25	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
KAC	564	Amman	22:25	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
FDB	059	Dubai	22:30	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
BBC	044	Dhaka/Dammam	22:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
JZR	239	Amman	23:05	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15	ETD	920	Dubai	22:35
JZR	555	Alexandria	23:25	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
PIA	215	KHI	23:40	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	23:00
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
THY	764	Istanbul	23:50	KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:55	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
MSC	403	Asyut	23:55	FDB	060	Dubai	23:35
				KAC	415	Kuala Lumpur/Jakarta	23:40

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

For Rent

(Only to foreigners or expats)

A 3 bedroom apartment in Sabah Al-Salem including one master bedroom, two bathrooms, reception, maid room with bathroom, fully equipped kitchen and lift.

Rent value- KD 550 (No mediators allowed)

99549533
96094533

FOR SALE

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

Lexus RX350 (2009) in excellent condition, smoke gray outside, leather beige inside, services at dealer only, five new tires, insurance and windshield. KD 4500, negotiable. Tel: 99123411. (C 5105)

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.

Tel: 96003089 / @The_Gold_Camp

FOR RENT

New Outstandingly located and super deluxe Three bedroom apartment in Adailiya including a master bedroom, two other bedrooms, maid's room, reception, Kitchen and three bathrooms.

For inq.: 99003713

URGENTLY REQUIRED

A leading Investment company is seeking to hire an

ACCOUNTANT

Who has the ability to record accounting entries accurately, help in the preparation of reports and financial analysis. for Foreign & Local Investments Department & Real Estate Investments Department

Qualification & Requirements:

Age from 25 to 30 years old.

Transferable Visa (18)

Bachelor Degree in Accounting.

Minimum 5 years of experience in Investment Accounting & Financial analysis.

Proficiency in both Arabic and English language (written and oral communication skills).

High computer knowledge (Microsoft Word, Excel, Access and Accounting Software).

Interested candidates are requested to send their detailed Curriculum Vitae (CV) to alnour1999@yahoo.com

JOB OPPURTUNITIES

A local company is in need of the following personnel for a KOC project:

1) **Mechanical Engineer** with minimum 8 years experience in piping and pipeline projects in Oil/ Gas Industry in Kuwait.

2) **Site Secretary (male)** with a minimum of 2 years experience in a construction firm.

Applicants must be fluent in English and hold both a valid drivers license and a transferable residency and capable of starting immediately.

Email cover letter and resume to

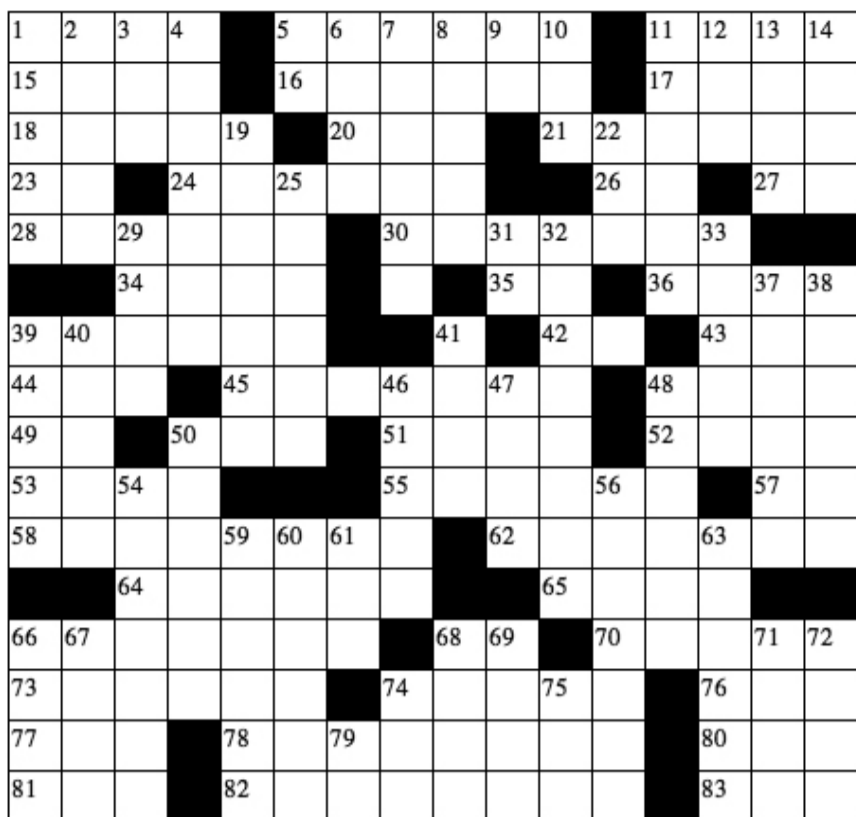
info@26febco-kw.com



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

SHARQIA-1	
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CROSSWORD 1123



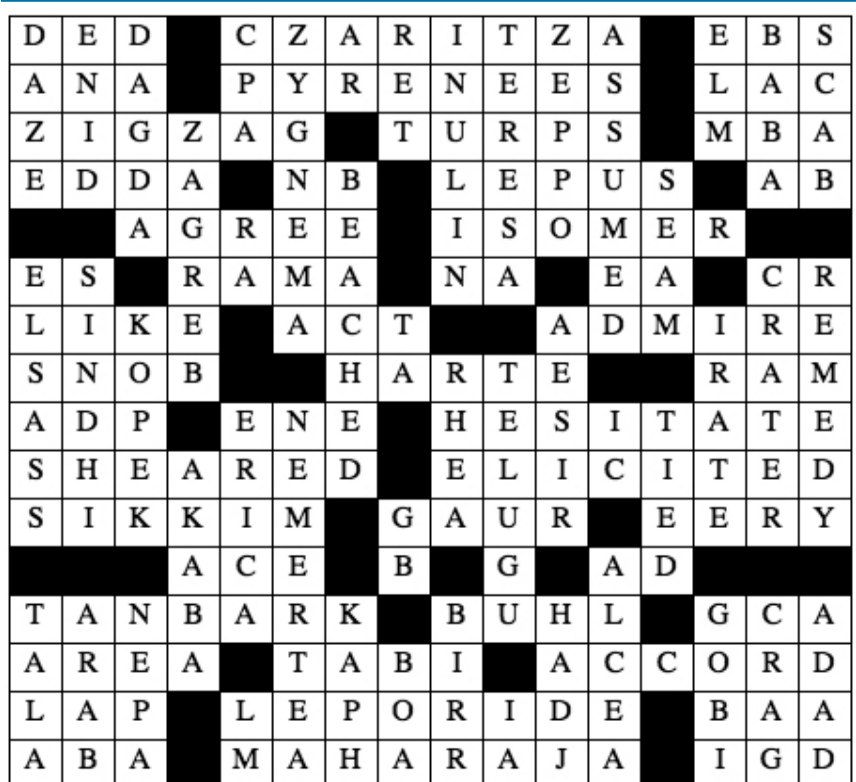
ACROSS

- (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
- A region of northeastern France famous for its wines.
- The taste experience when a savoury condiment is taken into the mouth.
- An Iranian language spoken in Afghanistan.
- Any alcoholic beverage of inferior quality.
- A spread made chiefly from vegetable oils and used as a substitute for butter.
- English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
- A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- The largest city in Kazakhstan and the capital until 1998.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- In societies practicing shamanism.
- The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
- A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
- (Assyrian) God of storms and wind.
- Any of a group of hard crystalline minerals that consist of aluminum silicates of potassium or sodium or calcium or barium.
- Herb of the Pacific islands grown throughout the tropics for its edible root and in temperate areas as an ornamental for its large glossy leaves.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- The basic unit of money in Papua New Guinea.
- (Arthurian legend) The battlefield where King Arthur was mortally wounded.
- A unit of information equal to one million (1,048,576) bytes.
- An argument opposed to a proposal.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- Type genus of the family Zygnemataceae.
- A state in New England.
- A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
- Beyond what is natural.
- United States writer noted for his droll epigrams (1902-1971).
- A bottle with a stopper.
- A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
- Someone who attacks.
- A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
- Be inherent in something.
- In bed.
- Capital and largest city of Bulgaria located in western Bulgaria.
- Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
- A person who is rejected (from society or home).
- United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
- (informal) Of the highest quality.
- United States architect known for his steel framed skyscrapers and for coining the phrase 'form follows function' (1856-1924).
- A strong emotion.
- A doctor's degree in theology.
- A great raja.
- A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.

DOWN

- A machine or person that adds.
- Long-tailed arboreal mustelid of Central and South America.
- Canadian hockey player (born 1948).
- Filled with vapor.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- A rich soil consisting of a mixture of sand and clay and decaying organic materials.
- Use explosives on.
- A yellow pungent volatile oil (trade name Agene) formerly used for bleaching and aging flour.
- A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.
- The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
- A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
- Remaining after all deductions.
- Spanish painter best known for his portraits (1746-1828).
- Basal part of a plant ovule opposite the micropyle.
- The upper side of the thighs of a seated person.
- A fictitious name used when the person performs a particular social role.
- Designer drug designed to have the effects of amphetamines (it floods the brain with serotonin) but to avoid the drug laws.
- 16 ounces.
- A mountain peak in south central Sri Lanka (7,360 feet high).
- A toxic protein extracted from castor beans.
- A military officer appointed from enlist-ed personnel.
- Raised for its long silky hair which is the true mohair.
- A Buddhist who has attained nirvana.
- Flightless New Zealand rail of the ivish disposition having short wings each with a spur used in fighting.
- The iridescent internal layer of a mollusk shell.
- God of death.
- The French-speaking capital of the province of Quebec.
- Malevolent aspect of Devi.
- Emotionally affected.
- Genus of South and Central American heathlike evergreen shrubs.
- An intersection or crossing of two tracks in the form of the letter X.
- A member of a South American Indian people in Peru who were formerly the ruling class of the Inca empire.
- A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
- (of tempo) Leisurely n.
- (used of count nouns) Every one considered individually.
- An independent ruler or chieftain (especially in Africa or Arabia).
- (Polynesian) An alcoholic drink made from the aromatic roots of the kava shrub.
- Disturb in mind or make uneasy or cause to be worried or alarmed.
- Evergreen trees and shrubs having oily one-seeded fruits.
- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You are mentally very sharp, with great ideas and clear thoughts. This is an excellent time to make decisions and take care of any mental work. If you teach, this is a good time to plan an outstanding winter or spring program of study. Things are working with rather than against you so do not hold back. There are some old traditions that you may have in your past that you will want to reinstate now. This is a high-energy day and much is accomplished. Your sense of value is sharp and you may decide that now is a good time to pick out a gift for someone with an end of the year birthday. A little shopping in preparation for a day off tomorrow may be tempting, particularly if you think a few friends might drop by. Tonight is a good time to enjoy life!



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Fate sends opportunity your way-careful, you could pass this up if you are not paying attention. New information can change your outlook and your life and this information just may be the fun morsel of fate coming your way. Your inner direction is good. The workplace brings about round table discussions and you are included. Take a notepad with you so you can review the discussions at a later time. On a personal slant, this would be a good time to watch the budget. You can make a significant difference on the positive side if you choose to answer no, when it comes to joining a big party bash that would cost a lot of money. If what you spend would not take away from a vacation, or some other need, then go for it. A visitor to your home has a gift.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Travel in your professional life may be on hold for a bit but this may be a blessing. This day however, may have opportunities for travel. A stay at a lakeside cabin, motel, hotel, etc., may be planned or a call ahead may find an opening just for you and a loved one this next weekend. Whatever the case, today is not such a busy day... You have done your work and now all you need to do is ring up the sales or be available to help a client or customer. Take a step back and jot down a few goals on next year's calendar. Consider checking off these goals as time goes by... You will really be pleased with yourself by this time next year. Maybe a bright sticker! Play with the reward and have fun with your own little secret reminder of your good works.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Business writing is expected to be correct and references noted. Today you may be working on correcting other people's writing or correcting your own writing. Research and the study of how some test or customer experience relates to productivity are important and may head one of your projects. This afternoon you may gladly accept a job or an assignment that could take you off the beaten path. Do not go too far though-you will want to be home in time for the big social that you and your family or friends usually enjoy at this time of the year. Social life is going to increase in the next few days. Get plenty of rest and drink lots of water. If you have decided to move your residence, you could make that jumpstart as soon as you consider a business offer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You could be thinking about past loves and fun places from time to time today. Pay attention to your chores or work during the day but the afternoon is great for visits and relaxed interaction with co-workers or friends. Ask about recipe favorites and request that each person bring three recipes that are family traditions enjoyed during the winter season or holiday times. Whether you are a cook or your specialty is some other thing, some of these old family favorites would be wonderful to have in an album for all to enjoy and perhaps make additions to, from time to time. After the holiday, you will want to have a party for your co-worker friends and start the year out with good work connections and new friends, thus creating a positive aura.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Any form of legal controversy is best avoided now. It would be far better to settle out of court than to fight to the bitter end. A change of residence is something that has been on your mind lately. You may find this move a possibility during this upcoming weekend. Educational plans need changing, as you may now realize the education you have now does not suit you as well as you would like. Anything connected with publishing, advertising or broadcasting requires reexamination. A change of plans or perspective gives you the upper hand. This is a good time for you-a time you are free to make any sort of change that you might want to try out for yourself. This holiday season also becomes one of the most memorable ones in your life.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

This is a time when you could be contemplating some changes and examining your foundation, responsibilities and basic security. You can get rid of all that is unsound, leaving only that which has been properly determined or solid. Get down to the basics. Meaning, if you are working it would be good to clean out your desk, make a full effort to get rid of the trash and file away folders that are just sitting around. If you are in retail, look around and pick up, put up and create a good presentation. You may find that you are more organized than before, able to reach new levels of self-discipline. Voices fill the air this evening as you and a group of your friends enjoy some fun interactions. Careful with your diet, there is a lot of food to savor. Take little bites.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Missing information is likely when someone is in an extreme hurry-make sure it is not you that is in a hurry! Today seems to be that type of day where everybody works toward getting things completed. Be sure that you get all of the facts and be sure that you understand a situation before you become involved. This may not be the most opportune day for making plans. It could be hard for you to figure out the right move. Go with the flow and enjoy the day for the day's sake. You will find new opportunities to be surrounded by busy, happy people: shopping, grocery store, errands, etc. You enjoy performing simple acts of altruism. Make a donation to an organization to which you feel a kinship. If you are adopted, perhaps an adoption group, etc.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Seeing that your business is taken care of may be a major theme where your emotional orientation is concerned at this time. You crave organization and practicality and you want to your work to flow smoothly. You do everything you can at this time to make plans for this next workweek. You may arrange your time so that there is room for either additional work or you show how you are ready for an employee upgrade. This afternoon may have you in a quandary when one person puts a damper on what you say or think, or in some way manages to restrict your ability to communicate. Hold your tongue; the energy will pass and because you did not persist, new information will bring understanding. This evening is relaxing and fun.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

In youth, discipline, economy and practicality are stressed. However, you are certainly disciplined now and the people in your workplace put a great deal of trust in your professional expertise. Think about speaking to middle school students regarding social behavior. If you find yourself working today, you will be happy to know that someone new and quick to learn will be coming under your tutelage. The hard work in becoming educated brings more remuneration your way as you realize you have a better understanding of human nature than most. You might want to think along the lines of comedy material and entertaining instead of speaking because you could teach through entertaining. Celebrate tonight.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Your career may be quite different next year. It is time to enjoy what you have learned and put it into action. All that education, training or experience is paying off. You are helping others and superiors will soon be reassessing and deciding the best place for you to be working next. You may even have your own office. There always seems to be something new or a new experience just around the corner. Keep moving and making new goals; you are the fortunate one. If you are considering some type of management or investigative work, you are the one that will discover problems and find the answer that could put a problem right in no time, a true benefit. It would be good to count your blessings today. Laughter comes from young people this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Ideas and communications are about topics of interest and concern just now. Getting the facts and making sure that people get your message straight is an important part of your job. This is a time when new information becomes known. You could move into a better paying position within the company for which you work. Keep aware-you are in a learning phase now, and that means adapting to changing circumstances. If possible, you may want to postpone travel plans until the office or workplace gets back to some semblance of a smooth running organization. Then the powers that be will be most pleased to consider your needs. If you see that this is a good time to travel... Pack lightly and carry small bills and plenty of change.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

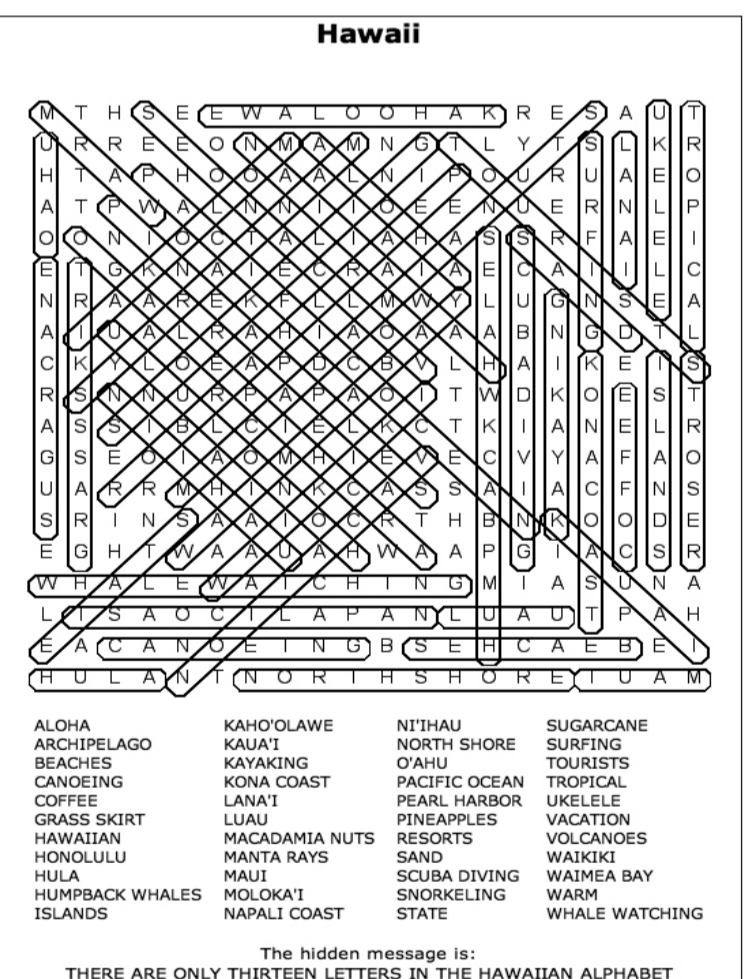
Treasure Island

Find and circle all of the words and names from the book Treasure Island. The remaining 46 letters spell a secret message.



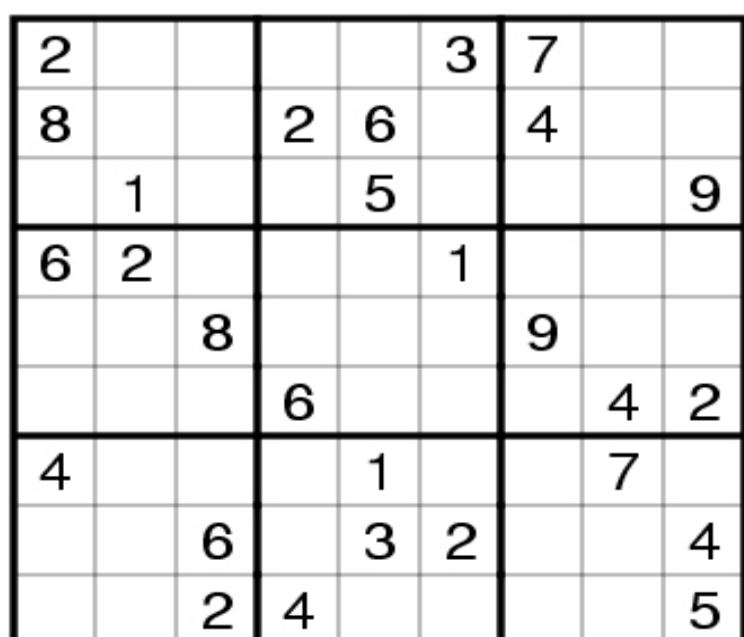
- | | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| ADMIRAL BENBOW INN | CAPE | ISLAND | QUARTERMASTER |
| APPLE BARREL | CAPTAIN FLINT | ISRAEL HANDS | SAIL |
| ASHORE | CAPTAIN SMOLLETT | JIM HAWKINS | SCHOONER |
| BEACH | CHEST | JOLLY ROGER | SEAFARING |
| BEN GUNN | COAST | LOGBOOK | SEAMEN |
| BILLY BONES | COMPASS | LONG JOHN SILVER | SHIP |
| BLACK DOG | COVE | MAROONED | SKELETON |
| BUCCANEER | CREW | MUSKET | SPY-GLASS |
| BURIED GOLD | CUTLASS | MUTINY | SQUIRE TRELAWNEY |
| CABIN BOY | DR. LIVESEY | PARROT | THE BLACK SPOT |
| CANNON BALLS | GUINEAS | PIRATES | TREASURE |
| CANNONS | HISPANIOLA | PISTOL | WALRUS |

Yesterday's Solution



The hidden message is: THERE ARE ONLY THIRTEEN LETTERS IN THE HAWAIIAN ALPHABET

Daily SuDoku



hard

Yesterday's Solution



easy

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

Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaee Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Lesotho	00266
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	Niger	00227
Cayman Islands	001345	Nigeria	00234
Central African	00236	Niue	00683
Chad	00235	Norfolk Island	00672
Chile	0056	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
China	0086	North Korea	00850
Colombia	0057	Norway	0047
Comoros	00269	Oman	00968
Congo	00242	Pakistan	0092
Cook Islands	00682	Palau	00680
Costa Rica	00506	Panama	00507
Croatia	00385	Papua New Guinea	00675
Cuba	0053	Paraguay	00595
Cyprus	00357	Peru	0051
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Philippines	0063
Czech Republic	00420	Poland	0048
Denmark	0045	Portugal	00351
Diego Garcia	00246	Puerto Rico	001787
Djibouti	00253	Qatar	00974
Dominica	001767	Romania	0040
Dominican Republic	001809	Russian Federation	007
Ecuador	00593	Rwanda	00250
Egypt	0020	Saint Helena	00290
El Salvador	00503	Saint Kitts	001869
England (UK)	0044	Saint Lucia	001758
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Pierre	00508
Eritrea	00291	Saint Vincent	001784
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Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
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Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
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Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
Lithuania	00370	Zimbabwe	00263

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



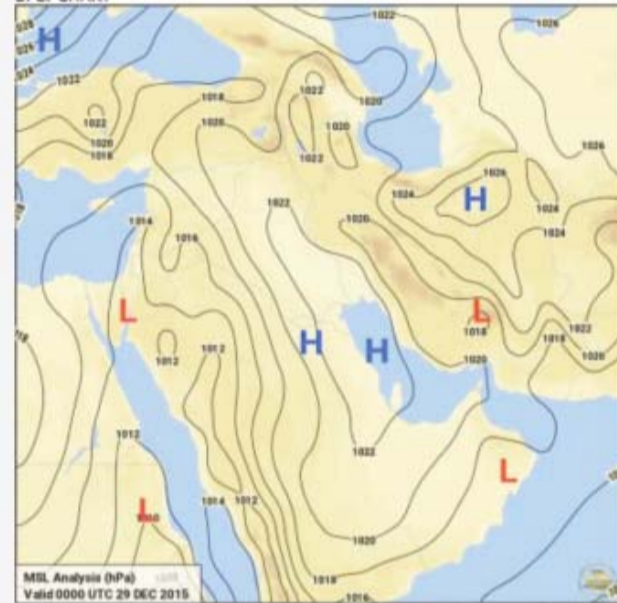
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 29/12/2015-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 21 °C

By Day : Sunny with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 22 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear later on
By Night : Partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h

SFC. CHART



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather	Cloudy + scattered thunder rain	sunny	cloudy + scattered rain	sunny
Min Temp °C	11	08	10	05
Max Temp °C	22	18	21	17
Wind Direction	south easterly changing to south westerly	north westerly to light variable	south easterly changing to north westerly later on	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	20 - 45	08 - 26	12 - 35	20 - 40

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated.

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C	EXP
KUWAIT CITY	11		19	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	06		21	
ABDALY	05		22	
BUBYAN	07		17	
JAHRA	08		21	
FAILAKA ISLAND	08		17	
SALMIYAH	13		17	
AHMADI	13		18	
JAL ALIYAH	06		17	
QAROH ISLAND	16		17	
UMM AL-MARADEM	16		18	
NUWAISIB	09		22	
WAFRA	07		22	
MANAGISH	06		23	
SALMY	06		21	
MUTRIBA	05		22	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	18
Min Temp (°C)	05
Max Rel Hum (%)	98
Min Rel Hum (%)	32
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	21 W
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:42
Sunset	16:58

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:17
Sunrise	06:42
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	14:40
Sunset	16:58
Isha	18:21



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	2455050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daory	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	2455050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	22636920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abdallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr. Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
Dr Adrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliyami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gupje	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam Bern University	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abdallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdalateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abdallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abdallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	2455050 Ext 210
Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCP, PACC	
Assistant Professor Of Medicine Head, Division of Cardiology Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital	25339667
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib MD, PH.D, FACC	2611555-2622555
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	

Psychologists /Psychotherapists	Soor Center Tel: 2290-1677 Fax: 2290 1688	info@soorcenter.com www.soorcenter.com	Kaizen center 25716707	Noor Clinic 2
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Khloe

prefers lip liners to lipstick

Khloe Kardashian prefers using lip liner to lipstick. The 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' beauty's younger step-sibling Kylie Jenner, 18, might be known for her lip fillers and lip kit range, but Khloe also takes pride in keeping her lips looking luscious and plump and revealed she uses liners. Revealing her favourite lip products on her website, she wrote: "Sometimes I even colour my lips in with liner - it just stays put better than lipsticks. I've tried them all, but my faves are Charlotte Tilbury, M.A.C. and Make Up For Ever." The 31-year-old beauty also chose two of her stepsister's liners from the Kylie Jenner Lip Kit range as her favourites, adding the Kylie Lip Kit in Dolce K and the Candy K shade to her list. The stunning blonde even joked that if makeup artists don't line her lips she won't be seen without wearing lip liner. She posted: "I'm OBSESSED with lip liners. If I'm wearing colour on my lips, I always line them first. And if a makeup artist doesn't line my lips, we're gonna have a problem, LOL (sic)!"



Anastacia

drinks water like a 'camel'

The 47-year-old singer made sure she had water at the top of her rider when she was globe-trotting around the world for her 80-day tour earlier this year because she can easily drink a countless amount of fluid in one sitting. Speaking exclusively to BANG Showbiz, she said: "My tour rider pretty much consisted of water but we're talking like 10 litre bottles that I drink because I'm an absolute camel. I love water. Off stage I can do a full litre or a litre-and-a-half in one shot. I can bong my water." The 'I'm Outta Love' hitmaker - who underwent a double mastectomy in 2013 after being diagnosed with breast cancer for the second time - also likes to make sure she's getting her five a day by requesting raw vegetables and hummus. She added: "I also have raw vegetables and hummus because I can always use that as a snack." However, the blonde beauty - who has a low immune system due to her battle with the chronic condition Crohn's Disease - won't dip into her hummus unless it's in a sealed packet so she can make sure it's fresh and in date. She explained: "I ask for the hummus in the container because that's where I get a little gummy. I'm like, 'You give me hummus in the container because I want to make sure it's not hummus that's been prepared to be on the shelf for 12 years!'"

Radcliffe

has savings of almost £60 million

Daniel Radcliffe has almost £60 million in savings. The 26-year-old actor - who shot to fame playing Harry Potter in the movie adaptations of JK Rowling's books - holds £59,393,476 in his company Gilmore Jacobs, according to reports filed to Companies House. This is £2 million more than he had the year before, according to the Daily Mirror newspaper. The new accounts date up until March 2015. Meanwhile, Daniel recently admitted he finds watching his own movies "pointless" because he is so critical of himself. He explained: "I stopped watching myself quite recently because it's never great. 'Sometimes I'll be happy, but I'll never be like, 'Oh yeah, that was awesome.' I always focus on the stuff that I would rather have done differently and it's a bit pointless after a while." And he insisted that he was determined to become a huge success after 'Harry Potter' because he wanted to prove the doubters wrong. He said: "Sometimes I think it's useful for me to believe that's what people are thinking. 'It's always been a driving factor, that people assumed we were going to disappear or become bad. That's always been a motivation. To prove those people wrong.'"



Adriana Lima's

hair secret

Adriana Lima says the secret behind her luscious locks is not "over-washing" her hair. The 34-year-old model - who has been a Victoria's Secret Angel since 2000 - credits her healthy diet and skipping shampooing for her stunning shiny hairdo. She said: "If you have dry hair, don't wash every day. And if you have very, very dry hair, wash once a week! The oils help your hair look better." "Everything that goes into your body is going to show up on the outside. You're going to see it in your skin and your hair and your nails." And one hair hack she lives by to keep it feeling "super-shiny" is flax seed oil. She told website Celebrity Health & Fitness: "If you want your hair to grow faster, you can take flax seed oil or a flax seed pill. It's great! It will make your hair super-shiny and it's going to grow fast." As for her hot body, the mum of two - who's divorced from Serbian basketball player Marko Jaric - says she lost her pregnancy weight gain by following the popular Paleo diet, which allows you to eat proteins, healthy fats, vegetables and fruits, and excludes gluten, sugar, dairy, alcohol and junk food. On her diet, Adriana - who has children Valentina, six, and Sienna, three, with her ex-husband - added: "I always like to eat healthy. I'm a mom, I have two kids, so I have to set a great example."



Kylie

advised to get restraining order

Kylie Jenner has been advised to get a restraining order against an obsessive fan. According to TMZ, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has urged the 18-year-old reality TV star to take out the injunction barring a male fan from coming within 120 yards of her home. The unnamed man was apprehended earlier this month after trying to get into the 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' star's property and placed under a 72-hour hold. He was later put under a second 72-hour hold after he escaped from a psychiatric ward and was recaptured by LA County Sheriff's deputies. If he violates a restraining order he can be held for a longer period of time. The man has turned up to Kylie's home at least 10 times and thinks he is "soulmates" with the reality star. Police told the website the intruder will be "watched more closely". Kylie - who is dating rapper Tyga, 26 - recently admitted she wished she could lead a "normal" life. She said: "All the time. I dream about [being normal]. I never wish to have somebody else's life - I was meant to have this life for a reason, and I'm going to make the best out of it. But I have normal friends. I sit at my house, and they practically live with me, and I watch them get ready to go to a high school party, hang out with their friends, go to concerts."



The Osmonds

saved by beliefs

The Osmonds think their Christian beliefs saved them from the "pitfalls" of fame. The musical family admit they were "offered everything" during their pop heyday, but don't regret maintaining their clean-cut image and staying focused on their careers. Jimmy Osmond said: "We were wondering around the rock world and the pop world and you know, we stood for our beliefs and all of these things and no one knew what to do with that and it's actually worked to our benefit. "Having a Christ-centred life has really blessed us. It's kept us away from a lot of the pitfalls that are out there. But we were offered everything as you can imagine. We don't take ourselves too serious. I don't think we're looking for anything but a desire to pursue our craft." And the group think the integrity of an artist is very important to their fans. Jimmy added in an interview with BANG Showbiz: "I love Taylor Swift. People want to know that an artist is standing for what they really are. So we've always put our belief system, that's what kept us together and the rest of this stuff is just what we do for fun."

Pitt and Jolie's son hurts leg in Thailand

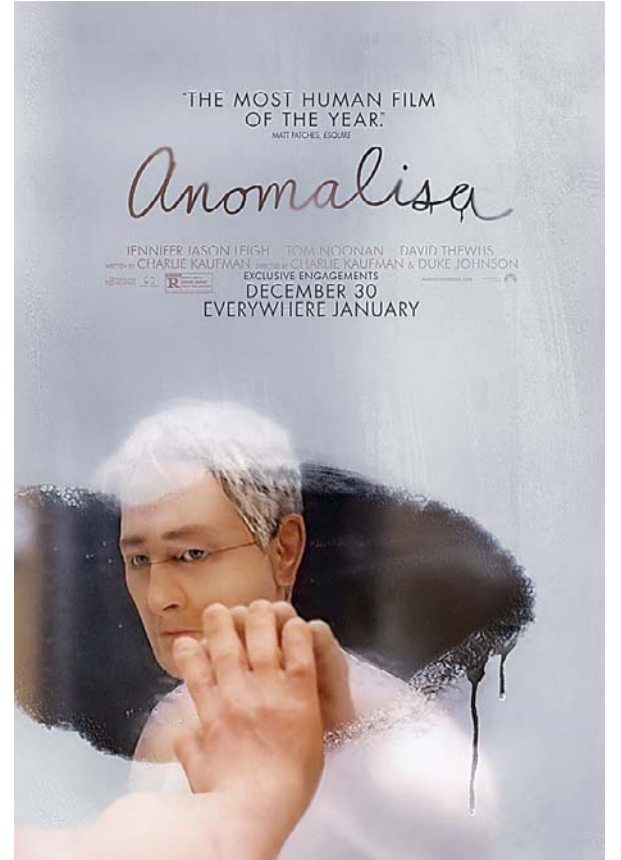


Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie's son injured his leg during a family trip to Thailand. While 12-year-old Pax Jolie-Pitt - who was adopted from an orphanage in Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam in 2007, hurt his right leg, he did not break the limb, a source told PEOPLE. The family, Brad, Angelina and their six children, Maddox, 14, Pax, Zahara, 10, Shiloh, nine, and seven-year-old twins Knox and Vivienne, spent the festive break touring around Thailand together. They have been spending a great deal of time in Asia recently, where Angelina is shooting 'First They Killed My Father: A Daughter of Cambodia', about the brutal Khmer Rouge regime. Meanwhile, it was previously revealed that Angelina has given her oldest son Maddox his first speaking role in the upcoming Netflix drama. "[Maddox] has been desperate to get into acting. This is a dream come true for him. He's read the book the film's based on and speaks the language - it's a perfect fit." The teenager, who was adopted by the filmmaker from an orphanage in western Cambodia in 2002, had a non-speaking part in 51-year-old Brad's film 'World War Z'. Angelina has not confirmed his acting role but admitted she hired her son to be an assistant on the set of the film. She explained: "As Maddox and I prepare the film we will be side by side learning about his country. This is a very important time for him to understand who he is. He is my son but he is also a son of Cambodia. This is the time for our family to understand all that that means to him and to us. My desire to tell this story in the most truthful and accurate way possible will be my tribute to the strength and dignity of all Cambodian people." —Bang Showbiz

Bailey's fitness vows

Sam Bailey has vowed to get fit in 2016. The 38-year-old singer - who has children Brooke, 10, Tommy, six, and Miley, 15, months, with husband Craig Pearson - thinks she needs to be more active and take part in more exercise. She said: "My New Year's resolution is to get fit! Like everyone! I want to do more sport!" The 'Skyscraper' singer enjoyed Christmas this year because it was her first in her new family home. She said: "This [was] the first time we've had Christmas at home with all of us together in a bigger house, we've had an extension and this is our first Christmas with the big extension. We've got a lot more room now!" But one thing that didn't change for the family was Sam's husband preparing Christmas lunch - because she can't cook. She admitted: "My husband cooks, he's amazing, he only does it because I can't!" Meanwhile, the former 'X Factor' winner also shared her top tip for fellow performers. She said: "Go for a wee before you go on stage, that's always my mentality always have a quick wee, just let it all out. I still do that now, I just let it all out!"





The best movie scenes of 2015

Whether comedy or drama, films this year featured a barrage of memorable moments: "Creed" (Warner Bros) When Apollo Creed's son Adonis (Michael B Jordan) finally gets in the ring for his first official fight with Rocky in his corner, no less-it's impossible not to cheer. It's a tense, operatic sequence that would be exhilarating even if wasn't filmed entirely in one take; an added bonus that makes it even more jaw-dropping.

"Room" (A24)

After being held captive in a room for seven years, Ma (Brie Larson) hatches an escape plan involving her 5-year-old son Jack (Jacob Tremblay) feigning death. What ensues is perhaps the most riveting sequence of the year as Jack sees the outside world for the first time from the back of a pickup truck, then has to make a run for it and rely on the kindness of a stranger.

"Suffragette" (Focus Features)

The most moving scene occurs near the end of "Suffragette" when Carrie Mulligan's Maud-almost defeated from incarceration, starvation diets and constant surveillance-goes to the factory where all these young women are treated like slaves and takes the daughter of her friend Violet Miller and marches her to safe harbor: the house of a rich compatriot (Romola Garai) who abandoned the cause and she takes the young woman in as a housemaid.

"Brooklyn" (Fox Searchlight Pictures)

One of the charms of this film is that few of its characters fall into neat categories of bad or good, nasty or nice. When Irish immigrant heroine Ellis accepts an invitation to dinner with her Italian beau's family, the other young women teach her how to eat spaghetti, which she's never had before. Ellis is hardly besties with them, but they lend a hand when she needs them.

"The Big Short" (Paramount)

Adam McKay's agitprop opus is full of jaw-dropping moments (Margot Robbie in a bubble bath explaining securities!?) but its heart is

bared near the end, as Mark Baum (Steve Carell) sits on a Manhattan rooftop, pondering whether to finally sell his securities and cash in on the financial crisis. Instead of triumph, Baum's face registers sadness, regret, resignation, even despair. He has met the enemy, and he is it.

"Anomalisa" (Paramount)

The phrase "stop-motion animation sex scene" sounds like a joke (and may even conjure up images of "Team America: World Police"), but in the context of directors Charlie Kaufman and Duke Johnson's melancholy meditation on love and loneliness, the intimate coupling between Michael (David Thewlis) and Lisa (Jennifer Jason Leigh) represents an emotional high point.

"Inside Out" (Walt Disney Pixar)

Joy and Sadness aren't just the main characters in Pixar's latest ingeniously imaginative animated wonder, they're the primary emotions the audience experiences watching the movie. And perhaps no scene represents director Pete Docter's expert grasp of both feelings better than the moment when Bing Bong, a cat-elephant-dolphin hybrid made of cotton candy (he's a little girl's almost-forgotten imaginary friend, rambling around inside her mind), makes the ultimate sacrifice.

"Amy" (A24)

The first scene of Asif Kapadia's breathtaking documentary on Amy Winehouse's tragic short life is one of its most crushing: Amy, at the tender age of 14, before the drugs and alcohol and bulimia that would kill her, sings "Happy Birthday" to her best friend in that rich, contralto voice for which she would soon become famous. It's a painful reminder of all that potential Winehouse had as both an artist and a woman, and how that enviable promise was cruelly snuffed out at the all-too-young age of 27.

"Straight Outta Compton" (Universal)

A preternaturally gifted studio maestro, a self-doubting yet charismatic amateur, a moment of inspiration, and history is made: Usually, when music biopics portray the act of creation as a sudden flash of inspiration, they're leaving out all the unglamorous trial-and-error that lead there. But

with the scene early in "Straight Outta Compton" where Dr Dre (Corey Hawkins) coerces the wholly inexperienced Eazy-E (Jason Mitchell) into the recording booth to cut the seminal track "Boyz-n-the-Hood," the "Eureka!" moment is absolutely real, and F. Gary Gray captures all of the chaos, nervousness and giddy exhilaration that came with it.

"Mad Max: Fury Road" (Warner Bros)

"Feels like hope," says Nicholas Hoult as war boy Nux in George Miller's "Mad Max: Fury Road" as the protagonists plan for the car chase that serves as the pic's climax. "Car chase" seems too small a phrase to capture the breathless battle waged by Charlize Theron, Tom Hardy and a half-teenage, half-geriatric band of kickass females in "Fury Road's" third act. That a feminist action pic is garnering such awards buzz feels like hope, indeed.

"Carol" (The Weinstein Co)

In a love story told almost entirely through a series of gazes, the wordless final scene (spoiler alert) is a doozy: Two women lock eyes in a crowded public space, much as they did when they first met. But this time it is Theron, not Carol, who initiates the approach, and what passes between them is not just recognition or tentative interest, but a sublime mutual acceptance.

"Trainwreck" (Universal)

Sports stars aren't always known for stealing scenes in romantic comedies (cameos in frat boy comedies starring the likes of Adam Sandler? Yes). But whether it was an impassioned reciting of "Gold Digger" to a devotion to "Downton Abbey," NBA superstar LeBron James proved he had the comedic chops to be the sensitive, devoted wingman to Bill Hader's sports surgeon in Amy Schumer's summer hit "Trainwreck."

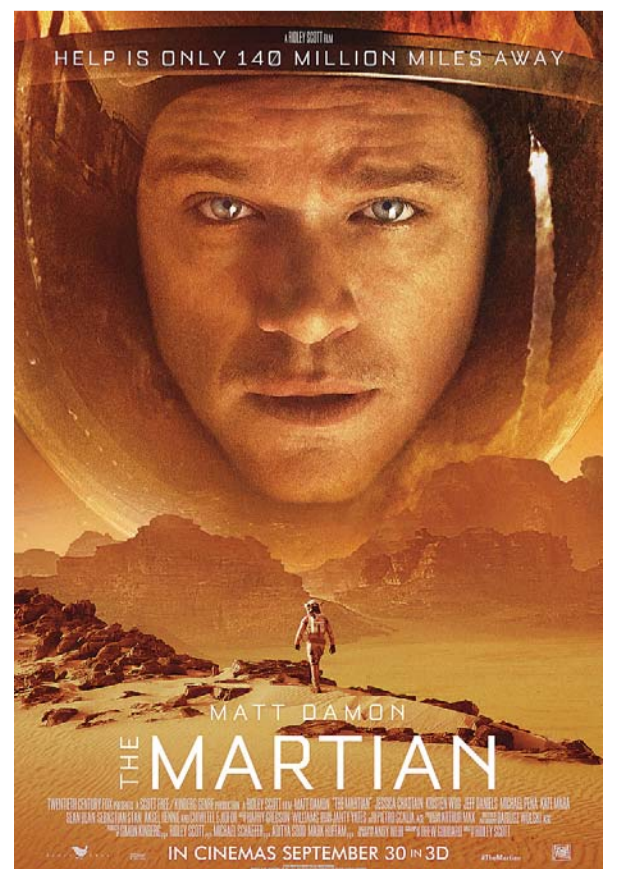
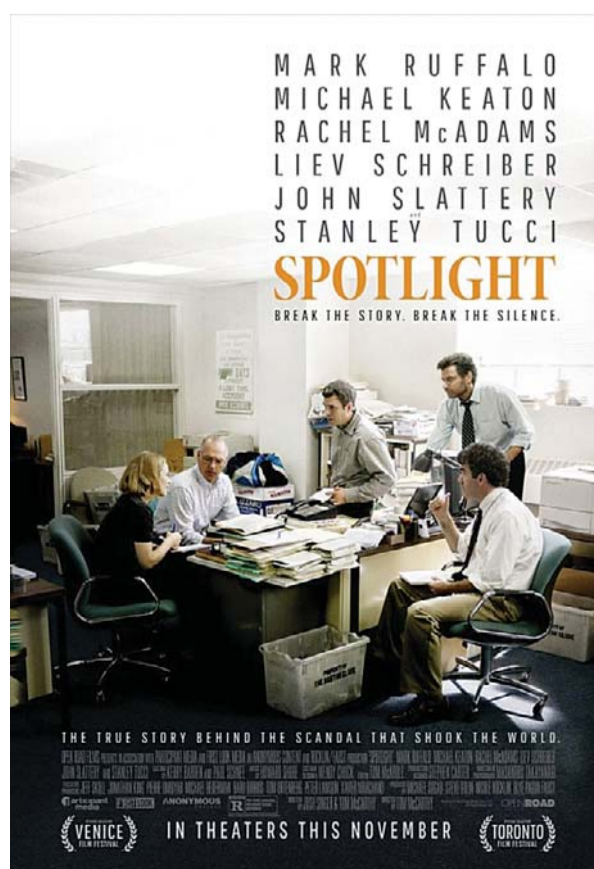
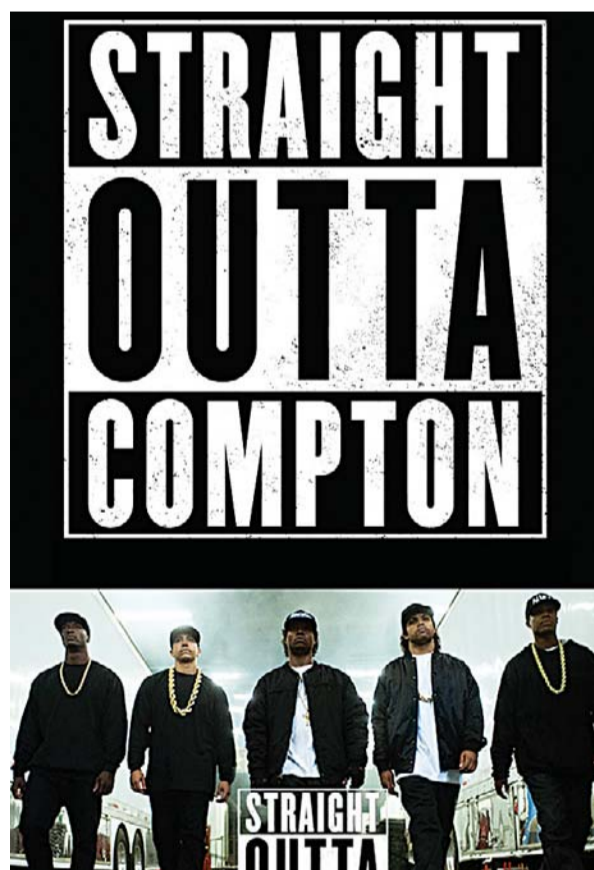
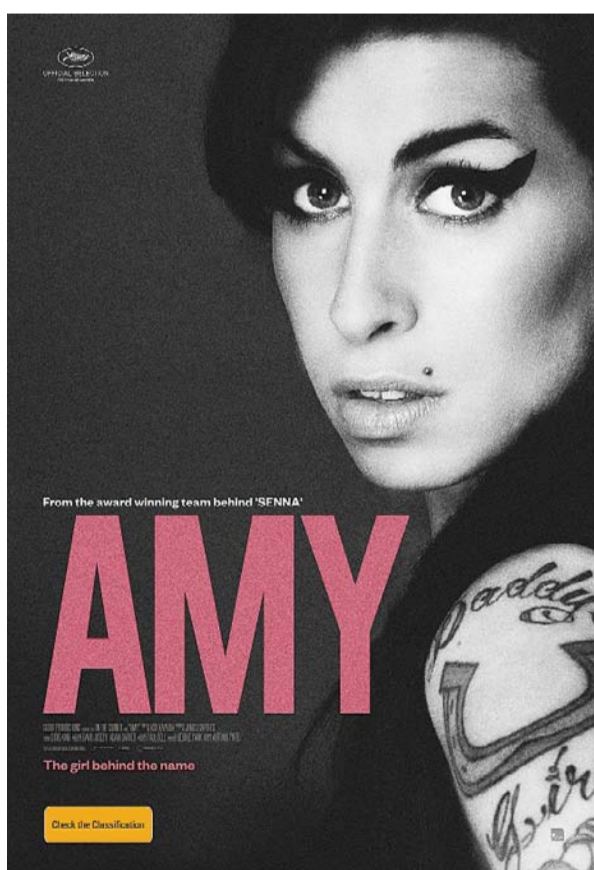
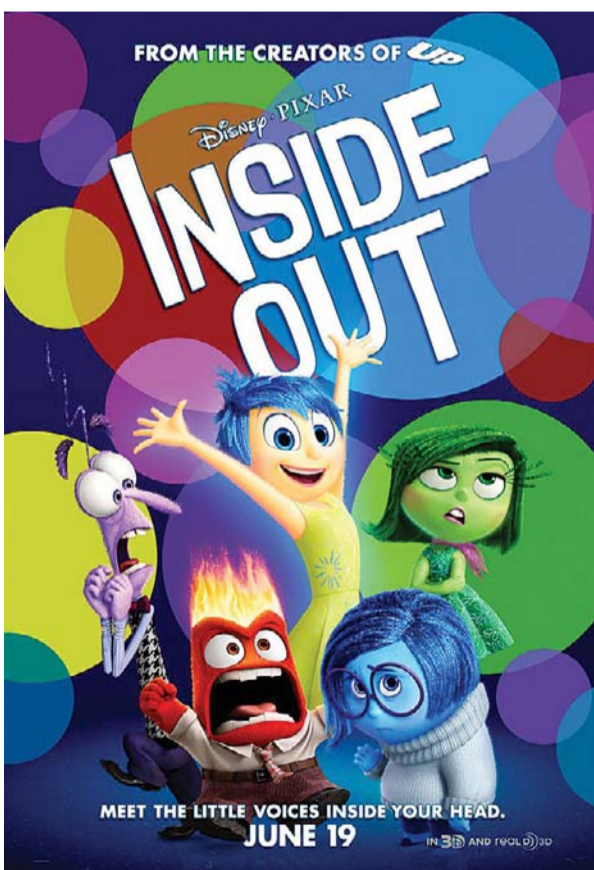
"Spotlight" (Open Road Films)

A key scene comes when the journalists in "Spotlight" are sitting in the editor's room discussing the fact that child abuse allegations had been brought to their attention five years earlier. As they go through clips Ben Bradlee Jr. (John Slattery) says what the team realizes that the metro edi-

tor at the time was Walter "Robby" Robinson (Michael Keaton). There was no conspiracy to block investigations but they did slip through the cracks.

"The Martian" (20th Century Fox)

Among many memorable scenes there is the moment when Matt Damon's Mark Watney has been told that his fellow crew members have not yet been informed that he's alive. He starts cussing and Vincent Kapoor (Chiwetel Ejorfor), the NASA officer, tells him to cut it out as his comments are going live worldwide. Without taking a breath, Watney continues cursing.—Reuters



Motorhead Frontman Lemmy dies at 70

Ian Fraser Kilmister, widely known as Motorhead vocalist and bassist Lemmy, died of cancer Monday in Los Angeles. He was 70. The band confirmed his death on its official Facebook page, saying, "There is no easy way to say this...our mighty, noble friend Lemmy passed away today after a short battle with an extremely aggressive cancer. He had learnt of the disease on December 26th, and was at home, sitting in front of his favorite video game from the Rainbow which had recently made its way down the street, with his family. We cannot begin to express our shock and sadness, there aren't words. We will say more in the coming days, but for now, please...play Motorhead loud."

A rock and roll hellraiser par excellence, the British musician was a member of Hawkwind in the early 1970s before founding Motorhead. The band's biggest hit was "Ace of Spades" in 1980. Radio personality Eddie Trunk first tweeted the news. Always cutting a distinctive figure with his giant mutton-chops, large facial moles and low-slung Rickenbacker bass, Kilmister was born Ian Fraser Kilmister in Staffordshire, England. A rock and roll lifer from the moment he saw the Beatles at Liverpool's Cavern Club as a teenager, Kilmister played in a variety of British bands during the 1960s, briefly served as a roadie for the Jimi Hendrix Experience, and played bass in space rock outfit Hawkwind from 1972 to '75 (when he was fired after being arrested for drug possession at the U.S.-Canada border). But it's as the founder and lone constant member of Motorhead that most of his legend relies.

'Phlithy Animal'

The rare group to be revered by metalheads and punks in equal measure, Motorhead's compulsion to push rock music to its fastest, loudest and most primal form left a profound influence on thrash and speed



This June 26, 2015 file photo shows Motorhead bassist Lemmy Kilmister performing on the Pyramid stage during Glastonbury Music Festival at Worthy Farm, Glastonbury, England. — AP photos

metal, though Kilmister himself always insisted that the band should be described purely as rock and roll. Famously laying out his ambitions for the group to become "the dirtiest rock and roll band in the world; if we moved in next door, your lawn would die," Kilmister sang with a guttural yet surprisingly melodic growl, and played bass in the style of a rhythm guitarist, heavy on distortion and power chords.

Abetted by drummer Phil "Phlithy Animal" Taylor and guitarist "Fast" Eddie Clarke, Kilmister and Co released Motorhead's self-titled debut to minor British chart success in 1977, though 1979 follow-ups "Overkill" and "Bomber," both released on the Bronze Records label, each climbed higher. In 1980, fourth album "Ace of Spades" reached No. 4

on the UK album chart, with its title track quickly becoming the group's signature song. It was also the first Motorhead album to be released in North America, where the band began to develop a cult following after supporting Ozzy Osbourne on tour. The group's live album "No Sleep 'til Hammersmith" topped the British charts the following year.

Clarke left the group in 1982, Taylor quit in 1984, and the group was reorganized as a quartet. Around that time, the band became embroiled in a legal scuffle with Bronze Records, eventually forming its own imprint, GWR Records, on which it released "Orgasmatron" in 1986. Undergoing various lineup changes over the years, the band toured and recorded tirelessly up until the present day, releasing 22nd studio album

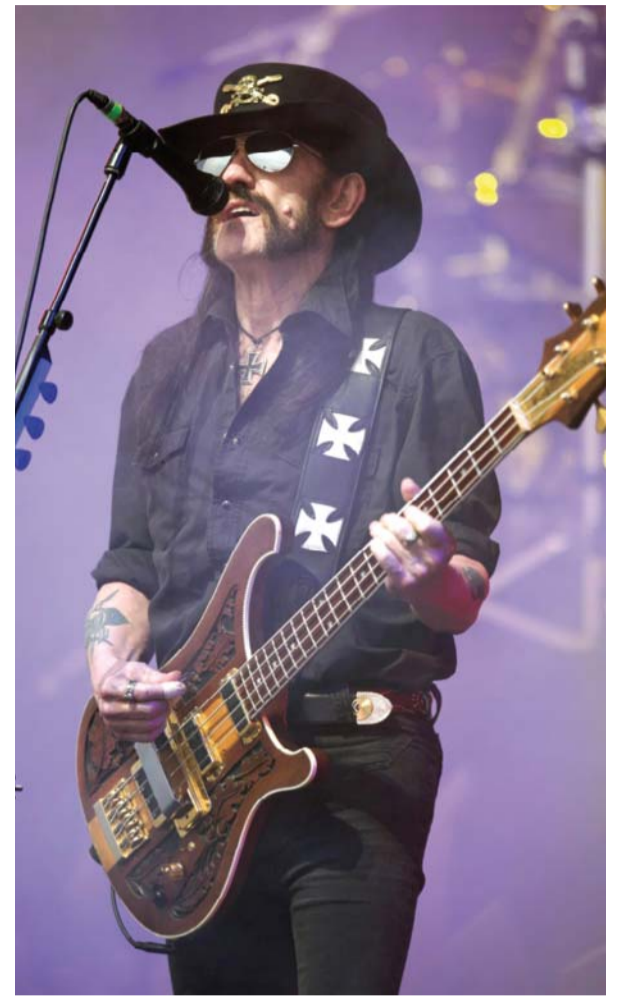
"Bad Magic" in August of 2015, and performing at the 2014 Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival.

Nazi memorabilia

Thanks to a number of multiplatinum-selling superfans most notably Metallica and the Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl—the band's catalog gradually became part of the rock canon, and Kilmister became a rock cult figurehead. An outspoken raconteur and Los Angeles resident for the last few decades of his life, Kilmister was known for his sexual profligacy (he claimed to have slept with more than 1,000 women), love of video poker, and large collection of Nazi memorabilia. (Kilmister always denied any personal or political affinities with Nazism, once quipping to Spin magazine, "It's always the bad guys who have the best uniforms.") He had said that he drank a bottle of Jack Daniel's every day for many years, though he professed to have finally slowed down recently.

He memorably appeared as himself in the 1994 Brendan Fraser-Adam Sandler comedy "Airheads," in which he claimed to have been editor of his high school newspaper, as well as filming cameos in films and TV shows such as "Eat the Rich," "The Drew Carey Show," "Hardware" and "The Decline of Western Civilization, Pt. 2." Greg Olliver and Wes Orshoski's feature-length documentary on Kilmister, "Lemmy," premiered at SXSW in 2010.

Motorhead won its first and only Grammy in 2005 for best metal performance—ironically, for a cover of Metallica's heavily Motorhead-indebted "Whiplash." Kilmister also wrote the Ramones song "R.A.M.O.N.E.S." and contributed lyrics to Ozzy Osbourne's hit 1991 power ballad "Mama, I'm Coming Home." Kilmister often wryly noted that he made more money in royalties from the latter song than he had made in the preceding 15 years with Motorhead. — Reuters



This file photo taken on June 26, 2015 shows the lead singer and bassist for British rock band Motorhead, Ian "Lemmy" Kilmister, performing on the Pyramid Stage on the first official date of the Glastonbury Festival of Music and Performing Arts on Worthy Farm near the village of Pilton in Somerset, southwest England.



This photo provided by the San Francisco City Attorney's office shows Justin Bieber graffiti on a San Francisco street on Saturday. — AP

San Francisco prosecutor has a 'purpose': Find Justin Bieber taggers

Teen idol Justin Bieber's latest album, "Purpose," may be garnering big sales, but San Francisco's city attorney is on the hunt for those responsible for what he calls a "guerilla marketing" campaign of sidewalk graffiti promoting the album. The ads, which City Attorney Dennis Herrera said seemed to have been spray-painted at several locations, contain the words "Justin Bieber," "Purpose" and "#Nov13," presumably in reference to the album's November release date.

"Our sidewalks in San Francisco are not canvases for corporate advertising," Herrera said in a letter to executives at Def Jam Recordings and Universal Music Group, Bieber's record label and distribution company. Herrera, in the letter, said he would "aggressively pursue all available penalties and costs from those

responsible." He said the vandalism "irresponsibly tells our youth that likeminded lawlessness and contempt for public property are condoned and encouraged by its beneficiaries."

Representatives for Universal Music Group and Def Jam, which is part of Universal, could not be immediately reached for comment. The Bieber campaign stencils appeared to have been done in permanent spray paint and did not wash away in recent rains, Herrera said. Similar sidewalk graffiti appeared in Manhattan's East Village neighborhood in November around the time of the album's release, a Reuters witness reported.

Graffiti art

Herrera's office said the album campaign was not the first to plague San Francisco streets and the issue has re-emerged over the past year, triggering complaints from residents. Previous vandals used chalk, he said. Herrera said his office has previously secured financial settlements for similar campaigns, which have been waged by IBM, NBC Universal, Turner Broadcasting and Zynga. He said civil penalties for each instance of graffiti could run up to \$2,500. Ian Kerr, a sales associate with advertising firm OUTFRONT Media, said advertising on a San Francisco bus shelter could cost around \$400 for a four-week period, while a highway-side billboard could cost anywhere between \$25,000 and \$50,000.

In October, Bieber posted images to his Instagram account purporting to show elaborate graffiti art in several cities of the track names on the album, including one said to have been drawn in San Francisco. The city attorney's office did not directly address that image. The album, Bieber's fourth and which has scored the best-selling debut so far in the singer's career, reached the top of the US Billboard 200 album chart, selling 520,000 albums, 602,000 songs and being streamed 100 million times in its first week. — Reuters

In this Sunday, Nov 22, 2015 file photo, Justin Bieber arrives at the American Music Awards at the Microsoft Theater in Los Angeles. — AP



Hollywood publicist and awards consultant Weissman dies at 90

Murray Weissman, a well-regarded Hollywood publicist and awards consultant, died Monday of complications from pancreatic cancer at his Los Angeles home. He was 90. He was a trailblazer in the field of awards campaigning and his clients included Frank Sinatra, the Television Academy, Miramax, Judy Garland, Danny Kaye, Red Skelton, Dick Van Dyke, the Smothers Brothers and such hit series as "The Twilight Zone," "Gunsmoke," "Route 66," "Wyatt Earp" and "Hogan's Heroes." He worked on Oscar campaigns for Best Picture winners "The Sting," "Kramer vs. Kramer," "Dances with Wolves," "The English Patient," "Shakespeare in Love," "Chicago" and "Crash."

Miramax co-founder Harvey Weinstein has called Weissman the unsung hero of Miramax and the Weinstein Company Oscar campaigns: "Murray is one of the friendliest guys in town and somebody people actually take seriously. It's been a pleasure to work with him all these years. He's indefatigable, a guy who makes the Hollywood machinery run." Weissman was born in Brooklyn and moved to Los Angeles in 1936 with his family. He graduated from Fairfax High School and from the University of Southern California's School of Journalism, then served as a Navy radio operator during World War II in 1944-45 aboard the attack transport USS Clearfield. Weissman began his career as a publicity executive with the ABC and CBS television networks. In 1966, Weissman moved to Universal Pictures where he spent 10 years as chief of the motion picture publicity department including Steven Spielberg's "Jaws," which opened in more than 400 theaters and was accompanied by a massive PR campaign that Weissman supervised.



Murray Weissman

Unflinching taste

In 1981, after stints at Lorimar Productions and Columbia Pictures (overseeing marketing on Spielberg's "Close Encounters of the Third Kind"), he formed his own marketing and PR company. Beginning in the 1990s, Weissman began focusing more on award campaigning for film and television with studios' Academy Awards and Emmy teams. In 2006, with son-in-law Rick Markovitz, Weissman formed Weissman/Markovitz Communications, which has assisted on Emmy campaigns for Amazon's "Transparent," FX's "American Horror Story," AMC's "Breaking Bad" and "Mad Men." Weissman/Markovitz is repping "The Big Short" and "Anomalisa" during the current awards season along with the Art Directors Guild, the International Cinematographers Guild and the Make-up and Hair Stylists Guild. "Mad Men" creator Matt Weiner said,

"Murray Weissman was an essential part of 'Mad Men.' His understanding of creative people, his patience, his cleverness with gatekeepers, and his unflinching taste served as an example to me and to generations of artists. Murray's belief in the show, in the network's commitment, and in me personally—expressed by clever, persistent, and always polite persuasion—enabled our success. Murray Weissman was a Zen warrior, proving how belief in yourself and your work can overcome all obstacles."

Memorial service

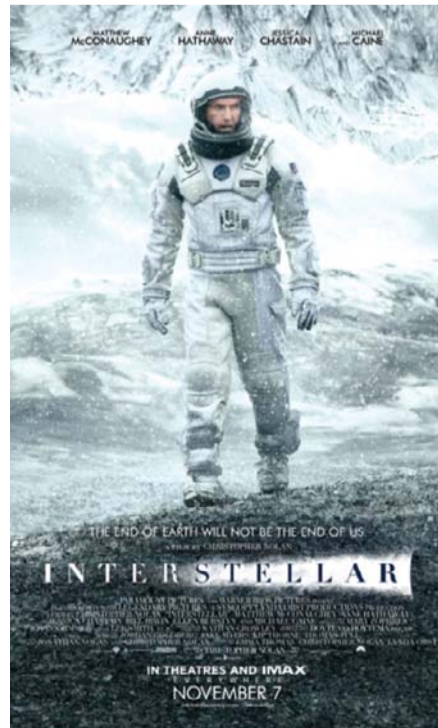
He was so popular among his peers and clients that, when his terminal diagnosis became known, Variety, the Hollywood Reporter and several others combined to throw him an early 90th birthday party on Nov 17. Weissman described the event—which included testimonials from longtime friends and colleagues—as having the opportunity to attend his own memorial service. Weissman had two children with his first wife, Graciela. After her death, he married Kay Friedman in 1995, and the two traveled extensively.

With his first wife, he also played a role in introducing his daughter, Julie to Rick Markovitz, who she later married.

Among the honors he received, Weissman was nominated for publicist of the year by the Publicists Guild of America. He is survived by his wife, children Benjamin and Julie, and three grandchildren. A memorial service will be held Saturday at 11 am at the Mulholland Tennis Club, 2555 Crest View Drive, in Los Angeles. In lieu of flowers, the family has requested that contributions be made to the Motion Picture & Television Fund. — Reuters

Top 10 pirated movies of 2015

The movies that were the most pirated in 2015 may not come as much surprise—but how much they got pirated is sure to shock. Some of the biggest blockbusters at the box office this year proved just as popular among torrent users: "Furious 7," "Avengers: Age of Ultron" and "Jurassic World" were the



top three worldwide, according to piracy tracking firm Ecxipio, which monitored activity from the beginning of the year through Dec 25.

When movies from 2014 are included in the tally, "Interstellar" was actually the

most downloaded film of 2015, owing to the fact popular movies from the previous year spend more cumulative time in circulation among pirates. The same was true last year when the 2013 movie "Wolf of Wall Street" led the pack in 2014. But "Wolf" drew just over 30 million downloads—55% less than the nearly 47 million that "Interstellar" commanded. If the four 2014 titles that made the 2015 list are factored in, "Wolf" would not have even made the top 10 list this year, as No. 10 movie, "The Secret Service," grabbed 31 million downloads.

Ecxipio didn't change how it monitored piracy this year, and the tracking period is roughly the same. While the surging numbers clearly indicates piracy continues unabated worldwide, the growth of overseas markets like Brazil are key to fueling totals as well. "Furious 7" atop the list isn't a surprise given it has been a magnet for piracy since its April release.

- #1 46,762,310 Interstellar (2014)
- #2 44,794,877 Furious 7 (2015)
- #3 41,594,159 Avengers: Age of Ultron (2015)
- #4 36,881,763 Jurassic World (2015)
- #5 36,443,244 Mad Max: Fury Road (2015)
- #6 33,953,737 American Sniper (2014)
- #7 32,126,827 Fifty Shades of Grey (2015)
- #8 31,574,872 The Hobbit: Battle Of The Five Armies (2014)
- #9 31,001,480 Terminator: Genisys (2015)
- #10 30,922,987 The Secret Service (2014)

—Reuters



Enrique Iglesias

Sri Lanka cricket stars sorry for Enrique concert chaos

An entertainments company owned by two Sri Lankan cricket legends apologized yesterday for an Enrique Iglesias concert where local women shed their underwear, sparking outrage from the country's president. Live Events, owned by Mahela Jayawardene and Kumar Sangakkara, admitted that security "failed alarmingly" and apologized for the "negative experience" during the one-hour concert in Colombo on December 20. Fans had paid prices ranging from 5,000 rupees to 50,000 rupees (\$350) for tickets to the show which was part of the Spanish star's world tour, "Love and Sex."

They did not directly refer to President Maithripala Sirisena's criticism that intoxicated local women had thrown their bras at the singer and kissed and hugged him. "I don't advocate that these uncivilized women who removed their brassieres should be beaten with toxic stingray tails, but those who organized such an event should be," the president said on Sunday. In conservative Sri Lankan society, public displays of affection, even among married couples, are frowned upon. Police are known to have arrested courting couples for kissing in public parks or seafront promenades.

Sirisena did not name the two cricket stars, but it was widely known that the concert was hosted by a company set up recently by the pair after Sangakkara retired from international cricket in August. Live Events said they were considering refunding fans who were disappointed due to delays in starting the concert and the ensuing crowd chaos. —AFP



Visitors enter and leave the Men In Black attraction at Universal Studios.



Guests stroll past the shops of Hollywood Boulevard at Universal Studios.

Universal Orlando looks back 25 years, more innovation ahead

When the Universal Orlando theme park opened in 1990, it was a way for visitors to have fun inspired by the movies they loved - without traveling to California. Director Steven Spielberg held the scissors at the ribbon-cutting. One of the first rides was themed on his movie "E.T." Even ads for the park had the tone of a movie-quality teaser, promising the "greatest Hollywood production ever." Jason Surrell, creative director at Universal Creative, saw that ad while still in college. "This is one of the reasons I moved down to Florida because at the time I knew it was becoming Hollywood east," he said.

One thing the new Florida park couldn't do was show visitors the authentic Hollywood backlots in Los Angeles where Universal has made movies for over a century. Those backlot tours remain a staple of the company's first theme park, Universal Studios Hollywood, which opened in 1964. But in the last 25 years, Universal Orlando has emerged from the shadow of its older sister park to forge its own identity celebrating the entertainment industry. It's built thrilling roller coasters, incorporated the latest interactive technology into rides and in 2010 opened one of the most successful attractions in theme park history, The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, with a second Potter area added in 2014.

It's also grown from a single theme park, the original Universal Studios Florida, to two, with the opening of Islands of Adventure in 1999. That's when the complex was renamed Universal Orlando Resort. The CityWalk dining and entertainment area was added that year as well. Today there are also four hotels, with 18 new attractions and experiences added in the last five years. Growth through 2017 includes the new Skull



Street performers entertain guests at Universal Studios.

Island: Reign of Kong attraction, themed on King Kong, along with another hotel and a new water theme park, Volcano Bay.

Both the Orlando and California parks had record attendance this past summer, thanks to the Potter attractions in Florida and the Fast & Furious-Supercharged ride in California. Comcast's NBCUniversal division, which owns the Universal theme parks, said in October that its parks division generated \$896 million in revenue for the third quarter. The Hollywood park will open its own Wizarding World of Harry Potter in 2016. One thing that's defined Universal Orlando's rides since the beginning is an emphasis on the latest technology, said Chick Russell, a Universal Creative director and executive producer who's worked on the Potter attractions and others. Even in the park's early days, the E.T. Adventure ride invited patrons to tell the host their names at the beginning of the ride, and a robotic E.T. would repeat the names later. "That was a pretty advanced thing to do 25 years ago," Surrell said.

In 1996, the Terminator 2: 3-D attraction opened, bringing 3-D effects and live-action actors to the park. More recent rides, like those inspired by "Spider-Man" and "Transformers" movies, "create the illusion of speed and the excitement you wish you could live when you see the films," Russell said. The Harry Potter attractions offer an even more immersive experience, wrapping guests into a realistically detailed fictional world the minute they step into Diagon Alley. It's a trend Universal expects to continue in its next 25 years. "It feels like we've evolved from riding the movies to living the movies," Surrell said. "It's really about putting people right square in the middle of the action." — AP



Park guests relax in the shade of rotating globe at Universal Studios.



Park guests ride the Dragon Challenge roller coaster at Universal Studios.



A Lucille Ball character waves to guests as she walks along Hollywood Boulevard at Universal Studios.



Blues Brothers characters entertain guests at Universal Studios.



A character actor greets visitors at the entrance to the Revenge of the Mummy ride at Universal Studios.



Two locals dressed up in the traditional "caretos" costume take part in a winter masquerade in the northern Portuguese parish of Parada de Grijó, some 20 km from Bragança, during the Sao Estebao festivities on December 27, 2015. — AFP

Brazilian Santas end hot Christmas season with a shave



A graduate of the Brazil's School of Santa Claus gets his beard trimmed by students in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos



A graduate of the Brazil's School of Santa Claus gets his beard trimmed by students in Rio de Janeiro.



Students of the Brazil's School of Santa Claus gather for lunch.

After more than a month sweating in the tropical heat, dozens of Brazilian Santa Clauses celebrated the end of the season Monday by shaving or trimming their thick white beards. Dressed in T-shirts and drinking beers and Cokes, the exhausted men gathered at an Italian restaurant in Rio de Janeiro to ditch their beards after a hard season of temporary work at shopping malls and hospitals. The 30-odd men were graduates of the Rio Santa Claus School, which trains aspiring Saint Nicks looking to make some extra cash as Brazil struggles through a

deep recession. Scarfing down plates of spaghetti, the Santas sang some final Christmas carols as bemused passersby looked on.

"They're getting their strength up by eating some pasta before heading back to the North Pole," joked the school's director, Limachen Cherem. The academy, which Cherem founded 22 years ago, has trained 400 Santas with free classes in singing, theater, diction, body language, gymnastics and make-up. The Santas, who can earn upwards of \$3,500 in 40 days, then give a percentage of their earnings back to the

school. There are no fake beards or pillows stuffed down the shirtfront here: Cherem's Santas look the part, bushy white beard and all-though in multi-racial Brazil, they come in all kinds of colors. "It's beautiful working with children from different races and classes. What's great about kids is that race is never an issue.

They ask me why I'm black, and I tell them it's from going down so many chimneys," laughed Aylton Lafayette Grimaldi, 68, who has been finding jobs through the Santa school for 11 years. — AFP



Students of the Brazil's School of Santa Claus gather for lunch.

