

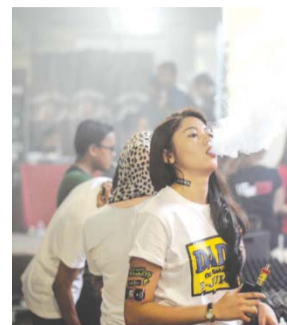
Recap of major local events in 2015 - Part II



Indonesia's women hail female-only motorbike taxis



'Un-Islamic' vaping catches fire in Malaysia amid backlash



Ronaldo double as Real sink Sociedad



KUWAIT SET TO FOLLOW AS OMAN HIKES FUEL PRICES

MP SLAMS GOVT'S 'AGITATED' PUSH TO CUT SUBSIDIES



Min 08°
Max 19°
High Tide 02:35 & 16:29
Low Tide 09:52 & 22:07



150 FILLS
NO: 16742
40 PAGES

SECOND DAY OF ARDIYA RAIDS



KUWAIT: Hundreds of people were arrested in a police crackdown in Industrial Ardiya yesterday, a day after 545 expatriates were arrested in an unscheduled campaign in the same area. — KUNA (See Page 3)

By B Izzak and Agencies

KUWAIT: As Oman yesterday became the latest Gulf state to announce the lifting of subsidies on fuel and other services after Saudi Arabia, UAE and Bahrain, the government inched closer to hiking the price of petrol and some other services and now it appears the decision is only a matter of time. The ministry of finance yesterday began what looks like an organized campaign, posting messages on its Twitter account to explain that the goal of any financial measure is to ensure the durability and sustainability of "honorable living" standards for the people.

The ministry said that the planned measures would have positive results in the medium and long term and categorically denied that it will meet the budget deficit through measures that will hurt the people. "The government plans to re-direct subsidies to ensure that they reach people who need it," the ministry said in a tweet.

The ministry did not illustrate the steps it plans to undertake but ministry undersecretary Khalifa Hamada said in press statements that the ministry will probably submit today recommendations for increases in fuel prices and other services to the Cabinet's economic committee. After approving them, they will be sent to the Cabinet for approval. It was not immediately known when the Cabinet will study the recommendations.

In the past few days, Saudi Arabia and Oman joined UAE in hiking fuel prices, while Bahrain raised prices of diesel and kerosene and said it is studying a similar measure for petrol. The actions come as

oil prices continued their retreat and have shed more than 60 percent since mid-2014. All GCC states have already announced or projected budget deficits this year.

Kuwaiti lawmakers have however warned the government they will not approve any increases in the cost of public services or fuel or any other measure that may overburden citizens long accustomed to heavily-subsidized services. MP Abdullah Al-Turaiji called on the government yesterday to stop what he called its "agitated" push for hiking the prices of fuel and services and not to forget that the victims of such measures will be simple citizens.

SEE PAGE 3

Turaiji said that the government has been talking about options to tackle the budget deficit without knowing that in all the scenarios, people will be hurt. He said that although a majority of MPs have opposed any steps to raise prices, the government is pushing hard to impose such measures in contradiction with statements by ministers that the planned measures will not affect low income people.

Turaiji called for the government to slow the process of taking decisions to tackle low oil revenues in order to consult the National Assembly either through a special session or through the Assembly bureau to find the best way to deal with the drop in revenues. He said that MPs are aware of international reports predicting that oil prices will continue its decline, but they differ with the government that any measures must not include any harm to citizens, especially low income people.

Continued on Page 13

END OF ERA FOR LAVISH HANDOUTS

DUBAI: An austere state budget released by Saudi Arabia this week is likely to mark the end of an era for the Gulf's lavish cradle-to-grave welfare systems, encouraging governments around the region to roll back costly handouts to their populations. Struggling to narrow a huge budget deficit created by low oil prices, Riyadh on Monday announced government spending cuts, reforms to energy subsidies and a drive to raise revenues from taxes and privatization next year.

Gulf governments have tightened their belts in the past during periods of slumping oil prices. But the Saudi budget went further than usual by including steps that will directly hit the purchasing power of citizens - in particular, raising domestic gasoline, kerosene, water and electricity prices. It was the biggest step a rich Gulf Arab oil exporting state has taken so far to change an arrangement in which governments heavily subsidize fuel, water, food and other essentials for their populations in exchange for social peace.

Because of Saudi Arabia's role as the political leader of the Gulf Arab states and the biggest Arab economy, other Gulf governments are now expected to follow suit as they impose their own austerity programs in response to the prospect of years of shrunken oil and gas revenues. "The initiatives announced in the Saudi budget will be game-changers in the Gulf," said Kristian Coates Ulrichsen, a political scientist at Rice University's Baker Institute in the United States. "If the reforms can be implemented without a significant backlash, that would boost the political courage of governments that hitherto have been hesitant to introduce such sensitive changes."

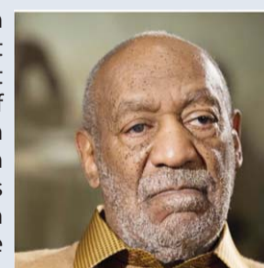
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BILL COSBY CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT

NEW YORK: US comic Bill Cosby has been charged with sexual assault in Pennsylvania over an incident that took place in 2004, a prosecutor said yesterday - the first criminal charges filed against the actor after dozens of women claimed abuse. "Mr Cosby is charged with aggravated indecent assault. This is a felony," Kevin Steele, assistant district attorney for the state's Montgomery County, told reporters in Norristown, in the suburbs of Philadelphia. Cosby, 78, was to be arraigned later yesterday. If found guilty, the veteran television star could face up to 10 years in prison and a \$25,000 fine.

More than 50 women have already publicly claimed abuse by the pioneering African-American comedian, who attained his greatest fame for his role as the lovable family doctor and paterfamilias in the hit 1980s sitcom "The Cosby Show". But his attorneys have repeatedly denied any wrongdoing by Cosby, who has gone from megastar to pariah in the face of the allegations, which span four decades. Earlier this month, he filed a defamation suit against seven of his accusers.

Continued on Page 13



Bill Cosby



Andrea Constand



The USS Harry S Truman navigates the Gulf of Oman in this Dec 25, 2015 photo. — AP

IRAN CONDUCTS ROCKET TEST NEAR US WARSHIPS

DUBAI: Iranian naval vessels conducted rocket tests last week near US warships and commercial traffic passing through the Strait of Hormuz, the American military said yesterday, causing new tension between the two nations after a landmark nuclear deal. The vital strait, a narrow waterway between Iran and Oman that is the route for nearly a third of all oil traded by sea, is crucial for ships taking part in the war against the Islamic State group in Iraq and Syria. In the past, Iran has threatened to block the strait, which lies at the entrance of the Arabian Gulf, in retaliation for international sanctions imposed over its nuclear program, but no longer issues such warnings.

While the United States has complained previously about other Iranian war games and maneuvers there, Saturday's incident comes after a series of weapons tests and other moves by the Islamic Republic following the nuclear deal. Iranian media and officials did not immediately discuss the tests yesterday. Cmdr Kyle Raines, a US Central Command spokesman, said in a statement that Iranian Revolutionary Guard naval vessels fired "several unguided rockets" about 1,370 m from the USS Harry

S Truman aircraft carrier, the USS Bulkeley destroyer and a French frigate, the FS Provence. Raines said commercial sea traffic also was nearby.

Raines said the Iranian vessels announced over maritime radio that they'd carry out a live fire exercise only 23 minutes beforehand. Iran's "actions were highly provocative," Raines said. "Firing weapons so close to passing coalition ships and commercial traffic within an internationally recognized maritime traffic lane is unsafe, unprofessional and inconsistent with international maritime law." NBC News first reported news of the rocket tests.

US Navy's 5th Fleet is based in nearby Bahrain, on the southern coast of the Gulf. The test comes after Iran and world powers led by the US agreed to a landmark nuclear deal to limit the Islamic Republic's enrichment of uranium in exchange for lifting economic sanctions. While heralded by moderates in Iran, hardliners have criticized the deal. In the time since, Iran has conducted missile tests criticized by the US, as well as aired footage on state television of an underground missile base. — AP

US STILL SPYING ON NETANYAHU

WASHINGTON: The United States continues to spy on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's communications despite promising to curtail the hacking of its allies, The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday. Contacted by AFP, the White House did not deny the report, which cites several serving and former US officials, but stressed the importance of its ongoing close ties with Israel. Netanyahu's office in Jerusalem as well as the spokesman of the Israeli foreign ministry declined to comment on the report.

Two years ago, after rogue intelligence contractor Edward Snowden revealed the vast extent of the National Security Agency's online surveillance, President Barack Obama promised to limit spying on US allies. Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel had been embarrassed by the revelation that her cellphone had been monitored and other allies expressed private concerns about the breadth of NSA monitoring.

Continued on Page 13



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman embraces Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas after receiving an honorary necklace from him during a meeting in the Saudi capital yesterday. — AFP

CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES TOP STATE OFFICIALS

KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Deputy Amir Sheikh Nawaf also received Dr Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, and head of the Public Authority for Sports Sheikh Ahmad Al-Mansour Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Deputy Amir also received Minister of Commerce and Industry Dr Yousef Mohammad Abdullah Al-Ali and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Yaser Hassan Abul. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem. —KUNA



His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Dr Sheikh Mohammad Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



Alghanim Industries team with the students in Al-Hamra Tower

ALGHANIM INDUSTRIES WELCOMES HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS DURING VISIT TO GCC COMPANIES, INSTITUTIONS

KUWAIT: Alghanim Industries, one of the largest private companies in the region, hosted a group of Harvard Business School (HBS) students, as part of the visit to multiple companies and institutions in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region to get to know the business and investment environment in the GCC region. During the visit, which was organized by two Kuwaiti students in HBS, Faisal Salem Al-Sabah and Abdulaziz Mohammed Al-

Bahar, the students attended a presentation about Alghanim Industries, where Head of the Corporate Communications Department, Abdullateef Abdulazeez Al-Sharikh presented the company's history and its early stages of development. He went on to talk about the company's portfolio of investments in the automotive, industrial, engineering, food and beverage, furniture, financial services, logistics, tourism and travel, as well as

office automation, and talent development sectors. Director of Marketing at X-cite, who holds an MBA from HBS, Faisal Abdulaziz Al-Meshal, spoke about the business model at X-cite, which includes many different products and brands under one roof. He also spoke about Alghanim Industries' first private label, WANSAs, and the success it has enjoyed.

The students, accompanied by a team from the company, visited the new head office in Al-Hamra Tower, which the management and employees will move to within the next few weeks. During the visit, the Facilities team, represented by Director of Facilities, Khaled Hallak, explained the newly introduced open office concept while touring the space, located on the highest four office floors of Al-Hamra Tower.

Sharikh, commenting on the students' visit to the company, said: "We were excited to welcome HBS students in our company for two reasons. The first is our solid commitment to education. It gives us a deep sense of pride when students visit our company, one of the largest conglomerates in the region, as part of their education and we welcome these opportunities. The second is our fundamental belief in talent, which no doubt describes HBS students. We were delighted to host them, introduce them to our company, and answer all their questions about our various businesses and our new office space." This is not the first time that HBS students visit Alghanim Industries, as the company hosts student groups from top tier universities, from around the world, on a regular basis.



Abdullateef Al-Sharikh makes a presentation to the students.

KFAED CELEBRATES 54 YEARS OF SUCCESS

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED) celebrates its 54th establishment anniversary today, with long years filled with success in helping Arab and developing Countries to achieve progress. The fund had provided 899 loans with a total of \$18.7 billion since its establishment in 1961. The loans were given to 105 countries including 16 Arab states, 41 African and 48 in several parts of Asia, the Pacific, Europe, the Caribbean and Latin America.

KFAED succeeded in developing its government-granted financial resources of KD 970 million to reach KD 5506 million between 1962 and 1987, the fund's Director General Abdulwahab Al-Bader said yesterday. The fund only focused on loaning Arab states during its early years and later on, it expanded its work to cover other Developing Countries, said Al-Bader. Until 2001, KFAED was specialized in economic sectors, however, it started to cover other fields including health and education as time progressed, he added.

Bader meanwhile noted that KFAED provides easy loans and grants to finance different development projects, while also contributing to regional and international development organizations. The official underscored the importance of the humanitarian and economic initiatives launched by His

In the same context, he mentioned His Highness' initiative at the Fourth World Islamic Economic Forum (WIEF) to provide \$100 million to support agricultural projects in Less Developed Countries. Moreover, His Highness directed KFAED to provide easy loans of \$1 billion to African countries in a period of five years, an initiative announced at the Third Afro-Arab Summit held in Kuwait in 2013, Bader said.



Abdulwahab Al-Bader

Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to tackle financial difficulties facing Arab and Developing Countries. —KUNA

During the Arab Economic, Social and Development Summit in 2009, Kuwait announced providing a capital of \$1 billion to support small and medium sized enterprises that use local resources, said Al-Bader, adding that His Highness ordered allocating \$500 million to fund the initiative. Bader said that His Highness has launched many other initiatives including one to fund projects in eastern Sudan with \$500 million as well as the three donors conferences for Syria hosted by Kuwait. KFAED continued aiding other countries even during the Iraqi Invasion to Kuwait in 1990, as the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah ordered the fund to run its activities at its office in the UK. —KUNA

COMMITTEE CELEBRATING KUWAIT AS ISLAMIC CULTURE CAPITAL APPROVED

KUWAIT: The cabinet has approved the formation of a supreme national committee to celebrate Kuwait as Capital of Islamic Culture of 2016, under the chairmanship of Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said yesterday.

Sheikh Salman said that the members of supreme committee will comprise of himself, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs and Acting Minister of Water and Electricity, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor, Minister of State for Planning and Development and Minister of Justice and Awqaf and Islamic Affairs. The chairmanship of the premier to this committee stresses his support culture and its significant role in the development of people and their nations. —KUNA



Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah stresses his support culture and its significant role in the development of people and their nations. —KUNA

COMMERCE MINISTRY TO OFFER E-SERVICES

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry's services to the public are set to witness a "huge development" as of 2016 with the implementation of modern technology, minister Yousef Al-Ali revealed on Tuesday. Speaking to reporters after a ministry function, he said that the ministry has already started offering some of these services through the internet, cutting short the need to visit the ministry in person.

The ministry is "determined to offer these services through smartphone applications as well," he underlined. On the scale of smartphone apps, the ministry has

so far created a downloadable app which makes it easy for the public to make formal complaints about businesses in the country to the Consumer Protection Department.

Other ministry departments will similarly witness "huge improvements to the ministry's services in the not too distant future," he added. Meanwhile, he said that the ministry has launched a new logo which depicts the traditional dhow boat, known locally as a 'Boom,' and symbolizes the nation's "past and its commercial development through the ages." —KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Commerce and Industry Yousef Al-Ali (right) honors an official at a ceremony to launch the ministry's new logo. —KUNA

KUWAITI ATHLETE TO CLIMB ASPIRE TOWER

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti amateur athlete Ali Al-Eidan, who is famous for climbing the stairs of various towers for good purposes and encouraging sports activities, will climb the Aspire Tower in Qatar carrying a photo of the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on Friday, Jan 1, 2016. "I will do this activity on the occasion of the National Day of Qatar. Ooredoo will sponsor the event. The Aspire Tower is located in the capital Doha and is 300 meters high, consisting of 52 floors," Eidan told Kuwait Times.

Eidan has previously climbed many towers, including the Hamra Tower on Oct 25, 2014 on the occasion of the UN naming His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as 'Humanitarian Leader'. He then climbed the Petronas Towers in Malaysia, which are 451 meters high and include 90 floors on April 25, 2015 under the patronage of Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. He also used to climb the Kuwait Towers annually since 2004 till it was closed for renovation, in addition to climbing the Liberation Tower and others. "Besides the press, I would like to thank Yousef Al-Shalal, First Director at Ooredoo, and Abdullah Al-Khattaf. Furthermore, I would also like to thank Executive Director at Qatar Airways Mohammed Al-Thani," said Eidan.



Ali Al-Eidan shows a t-shirt carrying the picture of Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive with their headlights turned on during heavy rains yesterday afternoon in Shuwaikh. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

HEAVY RAINS HIT KUWAIT

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Thunderstorms hit Kuwait yesterday as heavy clouds in some areas such as Abdali forced drivers to use headlights while driving in the afternoon. Meteorological stations recorded 10 millimeters of rain in northern and western areas including Abdali, Salmi, Abraq and Matraha. The Kuwait Meteorological Department had earlier warned of chances of heavy rain yesterday due to the Sudanese low pressure. Meanwhile, the department said yesterday that today's weather is expected to be mostly sunny that turns cloudy at night with a chance of formation of fog.

Diesel price

Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) announced reducing prices of diesel and kerosene to 100 fils per liter, as per a cabinet decision released earlier this year. In a circulation sent to its gas stations

around Kuwait, KNPC gave instructions to close at 11:30 tonight in preparation to adjust the prices.

Expat workers released

Expatriates who spent at least 30 years working at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor will officially be unemployed by the end of today's working hours, when a decision to terminate their contracts becomes effective. Meanwhile, a decision to refer 68 Kuwaiti employees with at least 30 years of duty to retirement becomes effective on April 30, 2016.

Case adjourned

The Misdemeanor Court adjourned a case filed by His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah against former MP Faisal Al-Mislem to February 3, 2016. The Public Prosecution had earlier referred the case, in which the former premier is accused of offending the former premier on Twitter, to the court.

MP SLAMS LABOR UNIONS' BILL

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Saleh Ashour criticized the government over a new bill to organize labor unions' work in Kuwait. The lawmaker



MP Saleh Ashour

charged that article 12 of the new law, which states that the regulations are compulsory, is considered a blatant intervention in unionist work and a shift in the government's role which providing guidance according to the constitution. "Article 177 of Kuwait's constitution states that apply-

ing its articles must not contradict with Kuwait's agreements with other states and international agreements," Ashour said in a statement, adding that Kuwait has joined the International Labor Organization even before it joined the United Nations.

School fees

MP Abdulhameed Dashti urged Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Bader Al-Essa to reconsider private schools' tuitions, especially American schools, where the ministry's private education department have approved fees ranging between KD 1,653 and KD 7,000 annually. The lawmaker argued that the standards based on which the new estimations were put together "were not based on realistic studies."

Hawally fight

The Criminal Court adjourned a case in which an Egyptian man was killed during a fight in Hawally to January 12, 2016. Two Kuwaiti men are charged with murder in the case and could face capital punishment. The incident took place last October at the Rihab Mall in Hawally, where one of the suspects reportedly ran over the victim several times with his car following a fight that started at a video games' shop inside the building.

437 ARRESTED IN SECOND ARDIYA CRACKDOWN

KUWAIT: Hundreds of people were arrested in a police crackdown in Industrial Ardiya Tuesday night, hours after 545 expatriates were arrested in an unscheduled campaign in the same area.

During the second campaign in less than 24 hours in the area, 437 people were arrested for violating residency and labor regulations, as well as being wanted by authorities over different criminal offenses, the Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Media Department said in a state-

ment yesterday.

The majority of the violators carry article 20 visas issued for domestic helpers, and who have left their original employers to work illegally for others. The ministry said that the original employers also face legal action for failure to report their workers missing.

Last week, 3,338 people residency law violators and people wanted for various offenses were arrested during a crackdown in Jleeb Al-Shuyukh.



KUWAIT: Officers are seen during a crackdown against violating labor forces in Ardiya.

FUEL PRICES' LIBERALIZATION REMEDY FOR BUDGET DEFICIT

KD 16 BILLION SUBSIDIES FOR NEXT THREE YEARS

KUWAIT: Local scene has been abuzz with much talk about forecast liberalization of prices of diverse types of fuel, particularly the benzene, amid predictions rates of the latter type may range between 100-115 fils per liter in the foreseeable future.

The sector's stakeholders now view as a necessity liberalization of the fuel prices, considering the oil prices slump, where the barrel of crude has shed more than 70 percent of its value since June 2014, and oil income, upon which Kuwait depends as a main financial resource, declined by 95 percent.

The government allots annually some KD 6 billion worth of subsidies, including KD 4 billion in support of the petroleum products, thus liberalizing the energy prices and lifting the subsidies will avert hefty deficit. Such an approach has been recommended by the international consultancy, Ernest and Young, which has prepared a study on slashing the State support for the Ministry of Finance.

Considering the fact that the international fuel prices, particularly those of the bi-products, have been falling since 2014 causing drop of support for the sector; now is high time to free the prices; for citizens won't suffer much from the wide prices' margin.

In the United States, which does not subsidize the fuels, the benzene gallon rate dropped \$2 (some KD 0.606), cheaper than a gallon of milk (priced at more than \$3 or KD 0.910), according to Wall Street Journal.

By contrast in Kuwait, the need to take such a step currently appears very much necessary and adequate; where the Kuwaiti crude price is less than that of the US by \$9.08, according to official statements publicized on December 23 — where the Kuwaiti crude price stood at \$28.42 pb, compared to the American, \$37.50.

Good opportunity

According to projections, the benzene cost in Kuwait will be, after liberalization, less than by 24 percent from that of the American. It is forecast to stand at some 115 fils per liter. In other words, now is the good and sound opportunity to take such a move; for in the future it may not exist.

According to official statements, State expenditures stand at KD 19.17 billion; income KD 12.2 billion, including KD 10.7 billion worth of oil proceeds (with the price set at \$45 per barrel), at a daily output of 2.7 billion barrels.

According to the Ministry of Finance, actual deficit had amounted to KD two billion till December, forecasting that it will range in the fiscal year end between five to six billion dinars. By some tentative calculations, the energy prices liberalization and securing the subsidy, KD four billion, may put the budget in a par status after slashing spending.

Undoubtedly, the State deficit, especially if it persists, will affect in the future Kuwait's rating which stood at AA by Fitch in 2015 — along with forecast stability. The State yields dropped by 45 percent in 2015 first half, due to falling oil prices,

while expenditure fell by 20 percent. The good rating may be undermined as a result of other factors; such as declining prices of the crude, and this in turn warrants urgent economic reforms to help diversify the income resources.

According to KUNA oil report, the national crude refineries currently refine some 920,000 barrels per day. Kuwait produces various types of derivatives such as naphtha, diesel and asphalt, in addition to gas bi-products.

Lowest prices

Kuwait currently is the third among Arab

estimated at 5416 million liters per annum, including 3748.4 million liters (four types of benzene), some 76.2 million liters (kerosene) and 1592 million (oil gas).

Sales of fuel for the Ministry of Electricity amounted to 8094 million liters, sales of gas oil some 1765 million liters, heavy fuel oil 6329 million liters, bitumen 167,000 tons per year—therefore the overall sales of fuel to the local market and the ministry reached some 13510 million liters. Per capita share of the government subsidy in Kuwait amounted to \$3,430 per annum, according to the IMF (2015).



countries in terms of the lowest benzene prices, after Libya and Saudi Arabia, according to OPEC. The Octane-91 is sold at 60 fils per liter, Octane-95 at 65 fils and Ultra-98 at 90 fils. After Saudi Arabia hiked the fuel prices, days ago, Kuwait became the first at the Gulf level and fourth internationally with respect of the cheapest fuel prices, after Venezuela, Libya and Algeria.

As to oil products' consumption in Kuwait, according to an OPEC report, the country ranked sixth among Arab countries, posting 267,008 bpd, some 4.7 percent of the whole Arab consumption, standing at 5,723 bpd.

The consumption in Kuwait is high considering the population volume — 4.1 million souls—according to the International Monetary Fund, some 1.2 percent of the whole Arab nation estimated at 348 million in 2015. Petroleum consumption per capita in Kuwait is estimated at 24.4 barrels per year, four times higher than the average yearly consumption in Arab countries, estimated at six barrels.

Fuel sales in the Kuwaiti domestic market is

Meanwhile, Undersecretary of Kuwait's Finance Ministry Khalifa Hamada said that the expected financial subsidy by the State for citizens is projected at KD 16 billion during the next three years, in case the subsidy system remained unchanged.

Khalifa added in an interview with Al-Qabas Arabic-language daily published yesterday that the continuation of the subsidy system will contribute to increasing the expenditure which will lead to an imminent budget deficit. He said that the government plan to rationalize subsidization will contribute to saving KD 2.6 billion in three years, which shows the importance of the plan in a time when the budget is witnessing a large deficit because of falling oil prices.

He pointed out that the rationalization process will ensure the sustainability of development in Kuwait and give the State the ability to continue to provide essential services to its citizens, such as education, health, security, justice and other services that are indispensable. —KUNA

KD 1.33 BILLION TO BUILD, EXPAND HOSPITALS: MINISTRY

MEDICAL EXPERTS TO VISIT KUWAIT

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Health

(MoH) set KD 1.33 billion for a total of seven projects for expansion and establishment of hospitals in the country's governorates. The Ministry is following up on a strategy to cope with the structural plan of the country till 2010, allocating a total of 4,342 beds to all existing and new hospitals, Head of the health projects department at the Ministry Hisham Abulhasan said yesterday.

The MoH allocated a land of 81,000 square meters to establish Sabah Al-Ahmad Hospital in Sabah Al-Ahmad city, with a 7,000-bed capacity. New Al-Sabah Hospital in Al-Sabah medical area is among the new hospitals to be built at a cost of KD 178.9 million, with 771 beds capacity, he said.

Al-Amiri Hospital will witness increasing capacity to 446 beds, buying medical equipment, building outpatient clinics at KD 98 million, he added. By finishing the new Al-Amiri Hospital, the old Al-Amiri hospital will witness renewing its operations wards, and increasing them to nine.

Meanwhile, Al-Farwaniya Hospital expansion cost reached KD 265 million, in addition to increasing the bed capacity to 938. Al-Adan Hospital expansion cost stood at KD 231.9 million, with beds reaching 938. Expansion of the Communicable Disease Hospital cost KD 53.9 million with beds reaching 255.

Al-Razi Hospital expansion project was handed to the Ministry last October, at the cost of KD 33 million,

with an increase in the number of beds to 240. Jaber Al-Ahmad Hospital is now handed to the Ministry of Public Works, while Al-Jahra Hospital is handed to the Amiri Diwan, as the hospitals expansion projects are scheduled to end in one year and a half.

Medical experts

Meanwhile, the MoH announced yesterday that it is set to welcome an international influx of doctors who will visit the country in January. The teams of specialists, representing eleven different Arab and European nations, come from some of the world's most prestigious medical institutions in Brazil, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, the United States, France and other countries.

In a press statement, Head of the Public Relations Department at the MoH Faisal Al-Dousari said that the visit serves as a platform for which to exchange ideas and discuss the latest research in the medical world. The doctors are comprised of pediatricians, dermatologists, neurologists, optometrists and plastic surgeons, the statement added.

Consulting with experts from an array of medical fields can only enhance the quality of medication in the country, Dousari said. The latest protocols and strategies will be examined, he added. Officials of the MoH routinely organize such initiatives in an effort to infuse some international expertise into the country's healthcare system. —KUNA

MOI PROMOTES CYBERCRIME LAW

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior (MoI) is set to launch a wide-scale media campaign on January 12th to promote the cybercrime law, a senior security official said yesterday. The MoI's media campaign is mainly intended to make the largest number of society categories familiar with the contents of the law, General Director of the MoI's Public Relations and Security Media Department Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash said in a press statement. Under the law, anyone who gets illegal access to computers, information systems or



Brigadier Adel Al-Hashash

networks shall be jailed for up to six months and fined KD 500-2,000, or be punished by one of these penalties only, he elaborated.

If this illegal access results in cancelling, deleting, destroying, changing or republishing data or information, then the penalty shall be to two years in prison and KD 2,000-5,000 in fine or by one of both penalties only, he added. In case this is related to personal data or information, the violator will be punished by up to three years in prison and fined KD 3,000-10,000, or by one of both penalties only, he pointed out. If anyone forges, damages or destroys an electronic system or website, he or she shall face a three-year imprisonment and KD-3,000-10,000 fine, or by one of these penalties only, the security official added.

And if anyone creates a website for a terrorist organization or a terrorist for posting information on how to make bombs or explosives, he or she shall be punished by up to 10 years in jail and fined between KD 20,000 and 50,000, or by one of both penalties only, Hashash noted. —KUNA



MUNICIPALITY SEIZES 650 KG EXPIRED TRUFFLE

KUWAIT: Kuwait Municipality launched inspection campaigns yesterday to ensure validity of foodstuff, with field inspection teams seizing 650 kilograms of expired truffles. The food and markets control department carried out a field tour that targeted the seasonal truffle market, resulting in the seizure and confiscation of 650 kilograms of rotten truffles, that were also destroyed, Director of Al-Asimah Municipality Saud Al-Enezi said in statement. The Municipality always examines quality of food in the local market, ensuring that they fit for human consumption. It also addressing irregularities and violations and take legal action against wrongdoers during such field campaigns, he said. —KUNA

Major local events in 2015

Part II



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah waves to the crowd at the official opening of the Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium. — KUNA

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

Defense and security:

March 19: Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Khaled Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision on the establishment of Environment Police Department.
 April 13: Kuwait Ministry of Interior's Undersecretary Suleiman Al-Fahd and his accompanying delegation participated in the opening of the Interpol world complex and Exhibition of Innovation in Singapore.
 May 10: A force from the Kuwaiti Army participated in 'Al-Saqer Al-Jareh 4' exercise Qatar.
 October 3: Ministry of Interior signed a contract with (Airbus) to purchase four helicopters.
 October 6: Kuwait Navy force carried out an exercise with the US Coast Guard.
 November 3: Air Force carried out live-fire Shooting exercise.

Interior affairs and security:

January 15: Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) controlled a limited fire that broke out in a unit of heavy oil of the Shuaiba refinery.
 April 23: Minister of Interior issued a ministerial decision amending some traffic provisions.
 June 15: Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Yaqoub Al-Sanae confirmed the installation of more than 130 surveillance cameras in the mosques to secure the worshippers.
 June 26: Twenty five people died and 202 wounded in a terrorist bomb attack targeted Al-Imam Al-Sadeq mosque at Al-Sawaber area in the center of the capital, Kuwait City.
 June 26: Security authorities investigated a number of suspects in the terrorist bomb attack in Al-Imam Al-Sadeq mosque.
 June 27: Minister of Interior Mohammad Al-Khalid Al-Sabah headed a security meeting after an explosion Al-Imam Al-Sadeq mosque.
 June 27: Ministry of Interior arrested the owner of the vehicle which carried the terrorist of Al-Imam Al-Sadeq mosque.
 June 28: Ministry of Interior confirmed that the suicide bomber who blew himself up in the Al-Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque is a Saudi citizen named Fahd Al-Qabbae born in 1992.
 June 30: Ministry of Interior arrested five persons accused of possession of illegal weapons, in implementation of the law to collect

weapons.

July 7: Saudi Ministry of Interior declared arresting 3 suspects on their relation with the terrorist attack on Al-Imam Al-Sadeq mosque.
 July 30: Ministry of Interior arrested an Islamic State (IS) cell in Kuwait.
 August 10: National Campaign to collect weapons, ammunition and explosives received 7408 weapon and 20.5 tons of ammunitions.
 August 13: Ministry of Interior arrested 3 terrorist cell members and confiscated a huge amount of weapons, ammunitions and explosives hidden in a house and live ammunition in a farm at Al-Abdaly.
 September 15: Criminal Chamber of the Court sentences seven suspects in the bombing of Al-Imam Al-Sadeq mosque to death, in addition to imprisonment of 8 and patent of 14.
 October 30: Ministry of Interior prevented vehicles parking in front of mosques, Husainiyas (Shiite mosques), and places of worship for long periods.
 November 6: Ministry of Interior arrested 4 expatriates for making offensive statements toward Kuwait.
 November 13: KNPC put down a limited fire in Al-Shuaiba refinery.
 November 19: Ministry of Interior arrested an extremist network funding IS.

Social Affairs, Public Facilities:

March 5: Up to 600 personalities representatives of institutions took part first "the Woman Enabling Summit," hosted by Kuwait.
 May 14: Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor renovated nine public parks.
 August 2: The Minister of Social Affairs proclaimed two public welfare societies, "Al-Manaber Al-Quraniya" (Quranic forums) and "Al-Qawafel Al-Khairiah Lel-eghatha Al-Insaniah (Charitable Convoys for Humanitarian Relief).
 August 19: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor launched service for booking wedding halls via smart phones.
 August 20: The Public Authority of Agriculture Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) issued permits to local companies to import sheep.
 August 22: PAAAFR's teams found a perished whale in north of Garo island.
 September 22: The Ministry of Social Affairs signed a deal for establishing a blood bank in Al-Addan health zone.
 November 19: The agricultural authority distributed 500 plots for raising sheep for sake of



The effects of a terrorist attack against the Imam Al-Sadeq Mosque on Friday, June 26, 2015.



An activity held during the fourth International Arabian Horses Festival.

boosting food security.
 November 21: The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor opened the first public cafe on Failaka Island since liberation.

Municipality:

February 2: The Municipal Council approved

forming a special panel for investigating permits of the communication towers for telecom companies.
 March 3: The Municipal Council approved allocating a plot of land for building a town south of Sabah Al-Ahmad city.
 March 16: The Municipal Council approved

allocating Al-Markaziah area, located between Sabah Al-Ahmad and Al-Khairan towns for building a new town.

March 17: The Municipality launched Al-Mubarkiah market project.
 October 19: The Municipal Council opened the 3rd session and decided to name the first ring road after Sabah I.
 November 2: The Municipal Council agreed to specialize 17,000 square meters of His Highness the Amir farm for Al-Jahraa Hospital.
 November 17: The Municipality began automated booking of land plots for the spring camps.

Health Services:

January 11: Mubarak Al-Kabeer Hospital opened an electronic pharmacy.
 January 16: Kuwait took part the first time in the meeting of the World Health Organization's Executive Council.
 January 26: The neurological unit at Ibn Sina Hospital conducted a critical surgery in the brain for a number of patients suffering from diseases such as Parkinson's.
 March 1: The Ministry of Health secured new drugs for treating hepatitis.
 March 4: The central laboratory got "100" rating by the World Health Organization.
 March 18: A Kuwaiti medical team discovered a genetic pattern that causes cysts in the kidneys.
 March 24: Kuwait became the first country in the Middle East to promote a new medicine for multiple sclerosis.
 April 14: The chest hospital conducted a surgery in heart of a child, the fourth of its kind worldwide.
 May 6: A medical team cleansed pancreatic cysts using gastroscopy.
 May 20: The Ministry of Health employed a new technology in Al-Sabah health zone to treat stomach acidity.
 June 13: Cardiologist conducted heart operation without wires for the first time in the Middle East.
 August 16: Ministry of Public Works completed 80 percent of the construction works of the Jaber Hospital.
 September 19: Kuwait hosted a Cuban medical team specialized in diabetics' feet illness (diabetic neuropathy).
 October 6: Minister of Health Saad Al-Obaidi got the WHO Middle East Award.
 October 6: The WHO regional office selected Minister of Health as chairman of the 62nd session of the regional committee.
 October 18: A Kuwaiti team arrived in Hatay, Turkey, to treat Syrian refugees.
 November 24: The Ministry of Health trained 1,500 citizens on first aid in emergencies.

Education and Teaching:

January 19: Minister of Education Bader Al-Essa signed a cooperation accord with Microsoft on overhauling the educational sector.
 March 29: The Ministry of Education and the World Bank signed a cooperation accord for overhauling the sector.
 June 16: The Kuwait University faculty of engineering won the ISO certificate.
 July 21: The Ministry of Education began updating the teaching curricula in cooperation with the World Bank.
 August 10: Kuwait recorded 10 advance positions in the international arithmetic contest in Thailand.
 October 1: The Ministry of education distributed tablets loaded with curricula to schools.

Scientific Research:

March 26: KISR signed a contract for Al-Shagaya initiative for renewable energy for establishing the first solar-powered station by harnessing winds with a capacity of 10 MW.
 July 28: KISR designed a new nano-battery for medical usage.
 November 30: Kuwait Petroleum Corporation and KISR signed contracts for using wind and solar energy at the KPC headquarters.
 November 30: The team of the engineer Manar Al-Hashash won the European award for the youth.



Kuwaiti army officers participated in a military exercise in Qatar.



Final stages of construction at the Jaber Hospital.



Huge amounts of weaponry and ammunition found with the 'Abdali cell' members, who were also charged with espionage for Iran and Hezbollah.

Foreign Policy:

January 22: Albania exempted Kuwaiti citizens from entry-visa.
 January 27: Kuwait and France signed an agreement on developing lingual cooperation.
 February 5: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah visited the Spanish capital Madrid to celebrate 50 years of bilateral relations between the two countries.
 February 7: Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled participated in the GCC foreign ministers meeting with the presence of US Secretary of State.
 February 14: Kuwait chaired the Arab-African Coordination Committee's meeting at the Arab League.
 March 1: South Korea exempted Kuwaiti citizens carrying diplomatic passports from entry-visa.
 March 9: First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah headed the Kuwaiti delegation to the 143rd session of the Arab League Council, to discuss the implementation of the resolutions of the 25th Arab Summit chaired by Kuwait.
 March 11: Kuwait opened its embassy in Dar Es Salaam, Kenya.
 April 2: Kuwait donated 25,000 pounds sterling to build a memorial statue in the British city of Sheffield to honor 47 UK soldiers killed during the war to liberate Kuwait from the Iraqi Invasion in 1991.
 April 14: Kuwait donated \$15 million for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to support Palestine.
 May 29: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud announced Kuwait's donation of \$1.5 million for the UN's youth program.
 June 12: Kuwait elected as board member (executive authority) of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).
 June 19: Montenegro allowed Kuwaitis to enter without visa permit.
 June 25: Kuwait delivered donation of one million Canadian Dollars to build an Islamic center in Toronto.
 July 6: Serbia allowed the entry of Kuwaitis without visa permit.
 August 16: Kuwaiti Ambassador to Switzerland Bader Al-Tunaib signed an agreement to allow Kuwaitis with diplomatic passports to enter the country without visa.
 October 19: Indian Ambassador provided Kuwaiti citizens with a five-year entry permit including facilitations.
 October 28: Kuwait agreed to postpone receiving compensations from Iraq until 2017.
 November 10: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Russian President Vladimir Putin signed agreements to allow Kuwaitis with diplomatic passports to enter Russia without visa permits.
 November 23: Kuwait and Nicaragua signed agreements with the presence of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The agreements included allowing Kuwaitis with diplomatic passports to enter without visa as well as economic and agricultural cooperation.
 November 26: Kuwait and the UK signed agreements on criminal extradition and judicial cooperation.

Sports:

January 10: Kuwaiti Paralympian fencer Tareq Al-Qalaf won gold at an international fencing tournament held in the US.
 February 4: The fourth International Arabian Horses Festival began with the participation of 565 horses from 14 countries.
 March 2: Kuwaiti Brazilian Jiu Jitsu practitioner Mohammad Ali won Bronze at the Munich international Jiu Jitsu tournament.
 August 9: Kuwaiti rider Ali Al-Kharafi won the gold medal at an equestrian tournament held in the US.
 August 10: Abdullah Al-Fahdel and Rashed Al-Dawas won gold medals at a Jet Ski tournament held in the US.
 August 22: The Qatari football federation agreed to host



Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Sabah inspects weapons busted with 26 people in Abdali.

Asian qualification matches for the Kuwaiti national team.
 September 8: Kuwait beat Laos by 2-0 goals the football qualifications for the Asian and World Cup tournaments.
 October 1: The Kuwaiti team won the gold medal at the 100 butterfly stroke at the Asian tournament in Bangkok.
 October 7: Justice Minister issued decision to look into the conflicts within the local sports scene.
 October 20: Majority of Kuwait sports clubs contested FIFA's decision to suspend Kuwaiti football regional and international activities.
 October 27: Kuwait's sports authority contested the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) decision to suspend Kuwait's regional and international sports activities.
 December 18: The Jaber Al-Ahmad International Stadium was officially inaugurated under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Housing:

February 1: Public Authority for Housing Welfare started distributing of government housing in the Sabah Al-Ahmad area.
 February 2: Public Authority for Housing Welfare began distributing government housing at the west Abdullah Al-Mubarak area.
 March 2: Public Authority for Housing Welfare distributed government housing in Wafra area.
 April 1: Ministerial decree issued to tackle problem caused by bachelor housing in family residential areas.
 November 12: Ministry of Awqaf announced a housing project for minimum wage citizens.
 November 26: Public Authority for Housing Welfare distributed draw cards for the 17th batch of housing units in south Mutla area.

Humanitarian aid:

January 9: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) headed to Jordan and Lebanon to distribute relief aid to Syrian refugees living under harsh winter conditions.
 January 30: KRCS distributed relief aid to South Sudanese refugees in Khartoum.
 February 23: Kuwait donated \$500,000 to support international efforts in combating Malaria.
 April 18: KRCS launched campaign in support of Yemeni people.

April 26: Kuwait launched national campaign to aid the Yemeni people on orders from His Highness the Amir.
 April 28: KRCS provided relief aid and assistance to Nepal after earthquake hit country.
 June 10: Kuwait donated \$300,000 for needy in Iraq and Yemen.
 July 2: Five thousands Syrian refugee families benefit from Kuwait's relief aid program in Jordan.
 July 14: KRCS launched project to save children around the world.
 September 22: Kuwait donated \$15 million to support UNRWA's efforts to educate one million Palestinian students.
 November 5: KRCS sent 10 tons of relief aid to Myanmar.
 November 12: Kuwait sent \$5 million worth of medical aid to Yemen.

Major obituaries:

April 11: Renowned actor Ahmad Al-Saleh passed away at age 77.
 May 21: Former Speaker of the National Assembly Jassem Mohammad Al-Kharafi passed away at age 75.
 June 26: Abdulaziz Yousef Al-Adsani, former State Audit Bureau chief, passed away at age 84.
 August 24: Former MP Falah Al-Hajraf passed away at age 93.
 November 11: Former chief of staff Sheikh Salah Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah passed away at age 84.
 November 16: Former MP Nasser Abdulaziz Sarkoh passed away.
 November 16: Former MP Yousef Al-Mukhled passed away.
 December 22: MP Nabeel Al-Fadhil passed away during a regular session for the National Assembly.



Kuwait's flag covers the seat of MP Nabil Al-Fadhil, who passed away during a National Assembly session on December 22, 2015.

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HITLER AND ARAB TYRANTS' ESCAPE

By Sami Al-Nisf

Despite an embargo on Germany after World War I and limiting its armament opportunities through the Treaty of Versailles in a way that seemed strange to Churchill, as he explained in his autobiography, Hitler managed to establish the Third Reich and claimed that it would last for a thousand years. However, according to the memoirs written by one of his commanders, Rommel (Aka: Desert Fox), Hitler had deprived them (his troops) of military supplies and fuel, and at the same time, urged them to win the war against allied troops who outnumbered those of Rommel's 2 to 1. They had twice as much of everything including troops, equipment, tanks, cannons and planes. Once he opened a southern front in Africa, Hitler opened others in northwestern Europe by attacking France, Britain, Holland and the rest of the Scandinavian countries after allowing the allied troops to get out of the Dunkirk shores safely. At the same time, Hitler opened an eastern front towards Asian and attacked Russia.

In his book 'Mein Kampf' (My Struggle), Hitler stressed that it was wrong to fight the British and impossible to defeat them due to their strong will because Germany had no intention to take over British colonies. In the same book, Hitler talked about the mistake of fighting the Soviets due to the area, population and the weather. However, and against his commanders' recommendations, Hitler did not attack Russia in spring through to summer and attacked in the middle of summer and was caught by the severely cold winter. He also took his troops to the Stalingrad in freezing north instead of heading south to the warm Caucasus and oil, which he severely lacked. He even made things worse by waging an unnecessary war against US after Japan attacked it and did not ask Japan to attack Russia in return, which enabled Stalin, after securing his eastern front, to move two million soldiers by train from the Japanese borders to the German one and eventually win the war. A series of documentaries recently shown on the History Channel talked about the efforts exerted by a group of Western researchers to review the recently declassified FBI top secret documents that show that US security and diplomats had not believed the theory about Hitler's suicide because it lacked proof. They argued that, contrarily, there was plenty of evidence and witnesses proving he had escaped to Argentina via Spain with the help of his Fascist ally, General Franco, and was received by his Argentinean ally General Peron and German businessmen.

The channel's team interviewed elderly witnesses who had served Hitler during his stay in Eden Hotel, owned by his German friends in the province of Cordoba, before he left to charming Bariloche in Argentina until he died in the beginning of the 1960s. According to documents and witnesses, the Russians and the West agreed that it would be better to declare believing the suicide theory before their own people so as not to be accused of not being able to achieve full victory. Even DNA tests conducted on the remains of Hitler's skull kept in Russia showed that it belonged to a non-Aryan little girl who was most probably from North Africa! What applies to Hitler in this story also applies to other tyrants in our area, be them Saddam, Gaddafi, Ararat or leaders of terrorist groups like bin Laden, Abu Nidal and Abul Abbas, who all died skeptically without any witnesses to their end or even knowing where their bodies are buried. After conquering Tikrit recently, Kurds found that Saddam's grave was empty, which raises thousands of questions about his execution video that shows masked men without knowing whether they were his friends or enemies!

— Translated by Kuwait Times



النسب

Al-Anbaa

LIFTING SUBSIDIES AND MAGICIAN'S HAT

By Tareq Buresli

Whenever oil prices drop, the government immediately considers cutting expenses through citizens' pockets as if it knows no other way to make up for the possible deficit except through citizens' pockets. The government had never thought of diversifying income sources during years of affluence as various cabinets should have done over the past 20 years through developing the tourism or the industrial sectors, or even by attracting foreign capital to invest locally.

Instead, successive cabinets opted for day-to-day strategies over the past 20 years of growing affluence and wealth without thinking about the future. And now, when oil prices dropped to extreme deficit-causing levels, the government has finally started thinking of ways to overcome the deficit problem, and instead of activating plans to diversify income sources and encouraging them, the government opted for the easier solution by lifting subsidies on

various goods and services, according to government reports published last week.

And here, it is noteworthy to mention that these very same reports had been in the government's drawers since the 1980s and occasionally brought out whenever oil prices fluctuate or drop. The government has been using them as the rabbit in a magician's hat that is only brought out once the magician finishes performing his magic trick in a 'now you see it' manner!

Instead of overburdening citizens to solve deficit problems, the government ought to act more courageously and go back to the 'rabbit' and diversify sources of income. Instead of austerity plans, the government should have maintained and protected citizens' gains, be them grants, subsidies or rent allowances, and deal with the malfunction that led to the deficit in the first place.

— Translated by Kuwait Times

These very same reports had been in the government's drawers since the 1980s and occasionally brought out whenever oil prices fluctuate or drop.

Crime

Report

Driver arrested with drugs

KUWAIT: Major General Fahd Al-Shuwaye sent a bedoon man to the Drugs Control General Department after he was arrested while obstructing traffic on Taawon road. Officers found him in an abnormal condition with possession of hashish and drugs paraphernalia.

Generator theft

A citizen accused a person of stealing a power generator in a complaint he filed at Jahra police station. Investigations are ongoing.

Two hurt in fight

A bloody fight took place in Jahra between a citizen and a bedoon. A security source said the Jahra hospital investigator sent two medical reports to Taima police station, one about a bedoon who was beaten and had bruises and a swollen forehead who was admitted to ICU, while the second was about a 17-year-old citizen who had a wound in his scalp that required three stitches. The source said a fight took place between the two in Oyoun, while the citizen denied stabbing or beating the bedoon and named another person. Investigations are underway.

Policemen assaulted

Officers in a police patrol in Adailiya noticed a wedding motorcade, in which several cars were blocking the road. When police attempted to stop the vehicles, a group of people attacked a policeman, tore the shirt of the officer and threw his personal firearm to the ground. Some people gathered to free the assaulters, but the officer fired warning rounds in the air and controlled the situation. In another case, seven citizens including juveniles were sent to the public prosecution and juvenile prosecution for recklessness and assaulting an officer and a policeman from the supervision and inspection department. — Al-Anbaa

CBK PROVIDES SERVICES DURING NEW YEAR HOLIDAYS

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced that it would continue serving its clients during the New Year holidays at both of its branches at Kuwait International Airport, located in the arrival and departures lounges, in addition to services provided through its 24/7 call center's highly qualified team. CBK announced that services would also be available in its ATMs around Kuwait, as well as online through www.cbk-online.com or the CBK smartphone application.



NGOS SHARE INSIGHTS, SHOWCASE PROJECTS DURING STAND CONFERENCE IN ISTANBUL

KUWAIT REPRESENTED IN INTERNATIONAL NGO CONFERENCE

KUWAIT: A group of local NGOs recently represented Kuwait at an international conference, aimed at bringing together non-profit initiatives and organizations from around the world to share insights and experience, provide support on best practices and build networks. The Support for Training, Advocacy, and Network Development (STAND) conference took place in Istanbul, Turkey over a period of four days, and included the participation of five Kuwaiti NGOs: Fawzia Sultan Rehabilitation Institute (FSRI), en.v, Birth Kuwait, Project 189 and Abolish 153.

During the conference, Kuwait's thriving civil society movement was evident. With many of the workshops and discussions being led by the Kuwaiti NGOs, the Kuwaiti organizations showcased their own projects and efforts, and discussed the challenges of carrying out non-profit projects in Kuwait.

Through the training and support provided by STAND - a regional initiative



aimed at building the capacity of the local civil society through training, funding, and networking opportunities - FSRI spearheaded one of the landmark projects showcased at the conference: the Kuwait Children's Resource Center (KCRC). The KCRC online portal, developed in collaboration with Birth Kuwait and 6abee-

bat, as part of a grant funded by the US-Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI), is a platform offering bilingual resources to parents, professionals and the community at large to provide the best care and support for children and families in Kuwait.

"We have been very fortunate to have the opportunity to work with a number of local NGOs who share the same vision as ours through the STAND program. As a result of these collaborations, KCRC was developed and now stands as an important hub of information and resources for parents and professionals," said Dr Elham Al-Hamdan, President and Medical Director of FSRI. "With the shift in thinking becoming more community centric, we are seeing a growing and strengthening civil society in Kuwait and an increase in number of collaborative projects addressing important issues facing our society. We are really proud to be part of this, and we look forward to further partnerships with local, regional and international NGOs."

EXPAT TEACHERS TO BE CUT BY 25%

KUWAIT: The Education Ministry plans to reduce the number of expatriate teachers of both genders in certain specialties by up to 25 percent, starting from the next school year. General Education Undersecretary at the Education Ministry Fatima Al-Kandari said the ministry is keen and serious over the replacement process, especially

for expats, who will be reduced by 20 to 25 percent in specialties that already have qualified citizens, Gulf nationals or bedoons employed. Kandari, who spoke after chairing the weekly meeting of education zones, said the reduction percentage will be from the total number of expats working in some specialties, not all. — Al-Qabas

SAUDI ARABIA'S STEP OPENS DOOR FOR GCC SUBSIDY CUTS: OFFICIAL SUPER, ULTRA GAS AT INTERNATIONAL PRICES

KUWAIT: Finance Ministry Undersecretary Khalifa Hamada said Saudi Arabia's decision to reduce spending and rationalize subsidies of products and services will open the door for adopting the plan of subsidy rationalization in Kuwait. He said the issue will be looked at as a general direction in all Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries to face the negative effects of falling oil prices.

Hamada said the size of subsidies expected to be given from the state to citizens will reach nearly KD 16 billion during the next three years if the subsidy system remains the same.

He said the continuation of the current subsidy policy will contribute to the growth of the expenses chapter in the general budget, and this will lead to the increase of actual deficit significantly. Finance Hamada said the government plans to liberalize prices of super gasoline (95 octane) and ultra during January, and these will be sold at international prices, in the first decision of reducing government subsidies for commodities and services. On that regard, Hamada said discussions are still ongoing with regards to the price of premium gasoline (91 octane), which will be liberalized in

three stages, as one of the suggestions is to partially liberalize the price in the first stage and having the state present a fixed 50 fils per liter subsidy to limit the effects of reducing subsidies on limited-income people.

New budget

Meanwhile, official government sources said the government plans to reveal a reformist budget that depends on two things - to reduce current spending by nearly KD 5 billion to reach nearly KD 10 billion in the 2016/2017 budget, and expanding spending on development projects in the budgets of ministries, government establishments and independent authorities, which is estimated at KD 6 billion in 2015/2016 budget, though only projects worth nearly KD 2 billion were executed, which represents actual spending on projects so far as per finance ministry statements. Sources say actual spending is expected to rise by 150 percent on projects to reach KD 5 billion in the new budget. The sources said that the 2016 budget will have five changes:

- ♦ Reduction of allowances to subsidize commodities and services presented by the state from KD 3.7 billion

to nearly KD 2 billion.

- ♦ Reduction of the general treasury's contribution to social security.
- ♦ Change in calculation and payment of retired citizens' rewards policy.
- ♦ Reduce expenses of the health sector and treatment abroad.
- ♦ Reduce foreign aid.

State salaries

In other news, the State Audit Bureau noticed continued an increase of payments for salaries and rewards during the 2012/2013 and 2014/2015 fiscal years in a way that contradicts decisions of the cabinet related to dealing with squandering through spending. The bureau said in a report it sent to the National Assembly that increasing spending on salaries in ministries and government establishments including rewards does not agree with the financial directions of the state, which stresses on rationalization. The report said the amounts spent on salaries jumped from KD 7.827 billion in 2012/2013 to KD 8.735 billion in the previous fiscal year, while spending on rewards rose from nearly KD 215 million to KD 359 million in the same years. — Al-Qabas, Al-Rai, Al-Anbaa

YALI AND ALAYYAN JOINS HORECA 2016

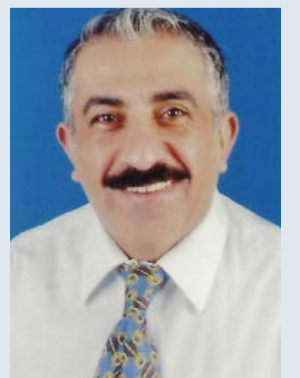
KUWAIT: Yali and Alayyan Trading Company announced its participation in Horeca Kuwait 2016 exhibition which is organized by Leaders Group Company for Consulting and Development in collaboration with the Hospitality Services Company.

In this regard, Anwar Jawad Yali, Yali and Alayyan's CEO said that Horeca 2016 has proven itself as a great platform to develop the hospitality, food industries and hotel sector, adding that the event has been attracting an unprecedented number of participating companies. "The exhibition is a golden opportunity for Yali and Alayyan to get closer to its clients," he added.

Yali added that Yali and Alayyan Trading Company was established in 1967 as a subsidiary of Yali Holding Company and specialized in transport and storage. "In 1976, the company expanded its activities and became a certified agent in Kuwait for Thermo King (world leader in Transport Refrigeration and Air Conditioning technologies)," added Yali. He pointed out that ever since, Yali and Alayyan had been providing its clients with transport refrigeration solutions, importing and selling transport refrigeration equipment, after sale services, support and maintenance by technical teams certified by Thermo King. He also noted that the company owns a workshop specialized in thermal isolation

using the best technologies and materials.

Further, Yali said that Yali Fresh Fruits Company was established in 1979 as another subsidiary for Yali Holding Company, and that it had become one of Kuwait's leading companies in importing and transporting high quality vegetables and fruits. "The Fresh Fruits company owns a fleet of the best trucks fully equipped with the latest technologies in the business, primarily, Thermo King equipment," Yali added, noting that the company was awarded highest official accolades such as ISO 22000/9000 and HACCP. Horeca Kuwait 2016 takes place in the period of January 18-19, 2016 at Badriya Ballroom, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa. The event will be held under auspices of the Minister of Information, State Minister of Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah.



Anwar Jawad Yali



S Korea's 'comfort women' protest against agreement

BRITAIN'S FLOODS: CAUSES, COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES



EAST GREENBUSH: A vehicle is pulled from the median on Interstate 90. — AP

US NORTHEAST HIT BY DEADLY WINTER STORM
 SNOW, SLEET AND FREEZING RAIN GREASING ROADS

PORTLAND: Winter weather that spun off a series of deadly storms in the Midwest brought the season's first big punch to the Northeast on Tuesday, with snow, sleet and freezing rain greasing roads, sending drivers spinning and keeping people indoors amid sub-freezing temperatures. Parts of northern New England had already about 6 inches of snow by early evening, and isolated areas could get 10 inches or more by the time it ends late in the day, according to the National Weather Service.

The weather made for a sloppy mess in parts of metro Boston, where memories linger of last winter's record-breaking snowfall. But as Fernando Gonterman waited for a train from Harvard Square to his job at Massachusetts General Hospital, he was unfazed. "Weather is weather. Just deal with it, right?" he said.

In snow-loving Vermont, Chassidy Byrd, the assistant manager at a gas station and convenience store in Plainfield, said the storm returned the state to a sense of normal. Without any snow, "it didn't feel like Vermont," she said. Mike Kistner of the National Weather Service in Gray, Maine, said the storm that chilled the Northeast is linked to the same system that produced deadly tornadoes in the Midwest beginning Saturday, then brought heavy snow, ice, rain, flooding and blustery winds as it moved toward the Great Lakes. That storm system killed dozens, including many who drowned in floodwaters and others caught up in tornadoes.

Kistner said the northeastern spur of the system was tracking toward Cape Cod, Massachusetts, before it blows out to sea late Tuesday.

Forecasters said snowfall totals would range from an inch or less in parts of southern New England before turning over to rain and sleet, while northern regions

would see more. In central and northern New York, 4 to 8 inches of snow was anticipated and police were investigating whether slick roads caused a crash overnight that killed a state corrections officer driving home from work.

Making up

The snow went a long way toward making up for a warm, snowless December in the Northeast where several spots are flirting with record warmth for the month. The temperature topped 60 degrees on Christmas Day in Maine, and normally, Portland would have seen more than a foot of snow by Tuesday, Kistner said.

There were no major traffic problems, but some vehicles got stuck in the mounting snow around rush hour. Traffic was mostly light because schools were closed for Christmas vacation and many businesses were closed.

Portland resident Aaron Lovely said he ported through the worst of the snow for about 20 minutes to get to his job at a downtown record store, which was mostly empty late Tuesday morning. He said the trek through the snow "wasn't the worst," and the winter's lack of weather so far was perhaps more unnerving. "It was kind of weird that there wasn't snow until now," Lovely said.

"It's about time," Eric Janelle, of Weare, New Hampshire, was happy for the businesses that rely on the snow, but memories of last year's relentless onslaught tempered his enthusiasm. "It's good that it's finally snowing here at the end of December, but on the other hand, it was so bad last year that it's nice to have a little bit of a break," he said. A minute later, as he hopped over a pile of slush on Concord's Main Street, he shouted over his shoulder: "I sure didn't miss this!" — AP

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HAMAS BANS GAZA NEW YEAR PARTIES

GAZA CITY: Islamist group Hamas has banned public New Year's Eve parties in the Gaza Strip because they offend the territory's "values and religious traditions", police said yesterday. "The interior ministry and police department did not give permits to any restaurants, hotels or halls for end-of-year parties" after several venues requested permission, police spokesman Ayman Al-Batinji said.

He said New Year's Eve celebrations were "incompatible with our customs, traditions, values and the teachings of our religion". Parties had also been curtailed in "solidarity with the families of the martyrs of the Jerusalem intifada," Batinji said, referring to violence that has swept the city and parts of the West Bank in recent months.

Since October 1, 136 Palestinians and 20 Israelis have died in a wave of attacks and clashes across Israel and the Palestinian territories-including some in Gaza. The majority of the Palestinians were killed while carrying out attacks,

leading some to dub the unrest a third Palestinian "intifada", or uprising.

In previous years restaurants, hotels and cafes in Gaza were allowed to host closed events to celebrate New Year's Eve. The New Year under the Islamic calendar began this year in October, but the new year under the Gregorian calendar is widely celebrated across the Arab world. Islamists Hamas tightly restrict public parties and celebrations in Gaza.

A source close to the police said security forces would close down "any unlicensed party".

Gaza, a tiny enclave of 362 square kilometers squeezed between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean Sea, is home to some 1.8 million Palestinians-one of the highest population densities in the world. It has been under an Israeli blockade since 2006 when Hamas took control of the region in a violent struggle after the ruling Fatah movement refused to cede power following elections Hamas won. — AFP

IRAQ MAY LOSE GENERATION DUE TO LACK OF SCHOOLS, HOSPITALS

LONDON: Preventing violence from depriving millions of children in Iraq of education and decent healthcare is a key humanitarian priority for the country in 2016, a senior UN official said yesterday. More than 2 million children in Iraq are out of school, up to 3 million more have had their education disrupted by the war, and nearly one in five schools have been damaged, destroyed or used for other

purposes, the UN children's fund UNICEF says.

Of the schools that are still in use, classes are often overcrowded and lessons taught in shifts. "We're at risk of losing a generation through the lack of education, health and protection," Peter Hawkins, UNICEF's Representative in Iraq, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation during a brief trip to Britain. "Schools, clinics,

water facilities etc are deteriorating further and further which makes the life of children very difficult. (We're) seeing increasing signs of stunting. Nutrition is becoming a problem," he said.

Nearly 14,000 teachers have fled northern Iraq where large swathes of land are held by Islamic State (IS) militants, who swept across the Syrian border in mid-2014, declaring a "caliphate" to rule

over all Muslims. Hawkins said gaining greater access to Iraqis living in areas held by Islamic State was another top concern for 2016.

UNICEF, along with the Iraqi health ministry, vaccinated up to 600,000 children against measles and polio in IS-controlled areas in 2015 but progress on humanitarian access remained "very, very slow", he added. Iraqi Prime Minister

Haider Al-Abadi declared on Monday that his forces would defeat Islamic State in the coming year, after their recapture of Ramadi, capital of western Anbar province, which fell to the Islamist group in May. Hawkins said many families had fled the contested city and were living in camps in the capital Baghdad. Many children had been uprooted several times, he added. — Reuters



DIYARBAKIR: Children collect bullet shells off the streets of Sur district yesterday in the main Kurdish city, after a curfew was lifted. — AFP

TURKISH TOWN CITIZENS INSPECT DAMAGE AFTER 19-DAY CURFEW

CONTROVERSY IGNITED OVER HUMANITARIAN COST

DARGECIT: Walking gingerly through streets littered with the rubble of damaged buildings and dead animals, residents of a mainly Kurdish town in southeastern Turkey started to return to their homes after a 19-day curfew was lifted. Authorities imposed the curfew in Dargecit in the province of Mardin on December 11 to back up a large-scale military operation against suspected Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) rebels in the southeast.

The curfew was implemented at a similar time to lockdowns in the towns of Silopi and Cizre in Sirnak province as well as the Sur district of the city of Diyarbakir which

remain in place and have ignited controversy over the humanitarian cost of the measures. Bodies of dead donkeys and other farm animals left a bloody trail on the streets of Dargecit and residents immediately set about removing the corpses, an AFP photographer at the scene said.

It was not immediately clear how they had been killed. Other residents carefully walked through the muddy streets of the town, inspecting the burned out wrecks of cars or homes that had been partly destroyed. Special police forces maintained a heavy presence while hundreds of people also attended the funeral in Dargecit of one man

killed in the fighting. The authorities have said that two tonnes of explosives and numerous weapons were seized during the curfew operation.

'Fear and terror'

According to official media, at least 22 "terrorists" were killed. The army says more than 200 PKK militants have been killed in the current campaign in the southeast which the government says is aimed at flushing out the Kurdish rebels from urban centers. But the opposition pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) argues that the main victims have been ordinary people.

It says 360 civilians, including 61 children and 73 women have been

killed since the violence erupted this summer, shattering a truce after just two and a half years. "Contrary to the claims of ensuring peace and security, the authorities create fear and terror among the people, recklessly kill civilians and destroy cultural heritage," the party said in a statement yesterday. Meanwhile, the authorities partially lifted the curfew in the Sur district of Diyarbakir, revealing streets where shop fronts were hidden from view by sandbag barricades erected during the fighting. Spent bullets also littered the streets, which were eagerly gathered up by local children, the photographer said. — AFP

ISRAEL CRACKS DOWN ON ISLAMIC STATE RECRUITS

JERUSALEM: Ayoob Kara, a deputy Israeli cabinet minister, used to double as an unofficial intermediary with the few of his fellow Arab citizens who have left to join Islamic State insurgents in Syria or Iraq. Negotiating discreetly through relatives and go-betweens, he would offer them reduced jail terms if they returned to Israel, cooperated with security services and helped deter other would-be Islamic State recruits by publicly disavowing the group.

A half-dozen volunteers took the deal, Kara says. But with the number of Islamic State sympathizers in Israel growing from its initial trickle, and some accused of trying to set up armed cells within the country's 18-percent Muslim minority, the deputy minister no longer sounds so accommodating.

"I used to work hard to dissuade people from joining ISIS, but now I say that there's no point," he told Reuters in an interview, using an acronym for the insurgents. "If, by this point, when the dangers are abundantly clear to everyone, they still want to go, then they are beyond saving and it's a one-way ticket for them. It's literally a dead end."

Hardening policies

Kara, a confidant of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was expressing a hardening of government policy against Islamic State, which, though preoccupied with battling Syrian and Iraqi regime forces, has recently inveighed against Israel. "Jews, soon you shall hear from us in Palestine, which will become your grave," promised a Dec. 26 voice recording on social media attributed to Islamic State chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi.

In October, two video clips surfaced in which Islamic State gunmen threatened to strike Israel. They spoke in near-fluent, Arabic-accented Hebrew, suggesting they were among the several dozen Israeli Arabs who the Shin Bet domestic intelligence service estimates have joined the group abroad.

Israel sees a major cross-border attack on it by Islamic State as unlikely. But it is less sanguine about support for the group inside Israel, which is already beset by Palestinian street violence that has surged in the last three months, stoked in part by strife over a contested Jerusalem mosque complex.

"It (Islamic State influence) is beginning to spread here as well," Intelligence Ministry director-general Ram Ben-Barak told Israel's Army Radio on Sunday. "The ISIS scenario we worry about is ISIS cells arising in Israel to carry out terrorist attacks." Among Israel's Muslim minority, pro-Palestinian sympathies are common but

political violence rare.

Para-glider, ex-army defector

Still, a series of spectacular incidents involving Israelis and Islamic State has unsettled the Shin Bet. One Arab citizen who had volunteered to serve in Israel's army later defected to the insurgents' ranks in Syria, it emerged this month - a blow for a military that regards itself as a sectarian melting pot in the Jewish-majority country.

Separately, an Israeli Arab used a paraglider to fly into Syria in what the Shin Bet said was a bid to join Islamic State, and three others were arrested on suspicion of trying to set up an armed cell to carry out attacks in Israel on orders from two Israeli Arabs who are already with Islamic State in Iraq.

The paraglider incident prompted Netanyahu to order the revocation of Islamic State volunteers' Israeli citizenship. Such a move, if it passes higher court review, would effectively shut the door on their return, a step that also has been a controversial topic of debate in European nations whose citizens have been fighting for Islamic State.

It marks a policy shift for Israel, which last year repatriated Marhan Khaldi, an Arab citizen wounded while fighting for Islamic State in Iraq and who made his way back to Turkey, where Israeli diplomats replaced the passport he had discarded en route to the war zone. Israel jailed Khaldi for 42 months, a sentence comparable to previous cases of citizens who joined Islamic State abroad.

Prosecutors had sought an 8- to 12-year prison term for Khaldi and appealed to the Supreme Court to harshen his punishment, saying in a statement that due the risk posed by Islamic State "the time is ripe to get tough on such offences". The Supreme Court's ruling on the appeal could take months. Khaldi's lawyer, Hussein Abu Hussein, said Israeli judges lacked court precedents on which to base sweeping new sentences due to the fact that the country outlawed Islamic State only in September 2014 - a delay he attributed to the Netanyahu government's reluctance to take sides in Syria's civil war.

Israeli legislation introduced in December 2014 that would raise the maximum jail sentence for joining foreign groups like Islamic State to five years is still under parliamentary review. "It has taken time for the monstrousness of ISIS to dawn, so while Israel is seeking greater penalties for joining it, this had been taking time too," said Abu Hussein, who also heads the Israeli Arab civil rights group Adalah. — Reuters

TURKEY DETAINS IS SUSPECTS OVER NEW YEAR ATTACK PLOT

ANKARA: Turkish police yesterday detained two Islamic State suspects accused of plotting a suicide bomb attack on New Year's Eve celebrations in the capital Ankara. The arrests come with European countries on high alert for possible attacks over the New Year, with Belgium detaining two suspected Islamists and Moscow closing off its iconic Red Square.

Turkish officials said the pair, whose nationality was not disclosed, were planning to strike an area in the centre of the city that is expected to be packed with revelers on the night of December 31. "They are suspected of being affiliated with the Islamic State and were planning an attack on the New Year in Ankara," a Turkish official said, asking not to be named.

Turkey has been on high security alert since October 10 when two suicide bombers ripped through a crowd of peace activists in Ankara, killing 103 people in the worst attack in modern Turkey's history. According to the private NTV television, counter-terrorism police arrested the pair in the Mamak district, on the outskirts of the capital, which is home to more than five million people.

The two were planning to stage an attack in Ankara's main Kizilay square, the Anatolia news agency reported, citing the prosecutor's office. The two men, identified as MC and AY, had already carried out surveillance on potential targets, according to the Ankara governor's office. They had planned to strike two separate spots in Kizilay-one outside a big shopping mall and the second in a street packed with pubs. Police also confiscated one suicide bomb vest, one bomb mechanism with ball bearings and one rucksack with bomb-making materials, the governor's office said.

'Turkey on frontline'

The October attack in Ankara was blamed on IS jihadists, like two other deadly strikes in the country's Kurdish-dominated southeast earlier in the summer. In June, four people were killed in an attack on a rally of the main pro-Kurdish party in Diyarbakir while in July, 33 people were killed in a suicide bombing against activists in the town of Suruc on the Syrian border.

Turkish authorities have over the past few months cracked down on the Islamic State group's so-called " sleeper cells" throughout the country. "Turkey is a target of terror because it is on the frontline in the fight against IS," the Turkish official said. Earlier this month, police arrested an alleged member of the IS group suspected of planning a suicide attack on the US consulate in Istanbul.

The Syrian national was detained at the bus station in the southern city of Kahramanmaraş and then taken into custody. Long criticized by its allies for taking too soft a line against jihadists, Turkey is taking firmer action against the IS group on the border with Syria after being shaken by attacks on its soil and the Paris assaults in November.

Turkey has vehemently rejected accusations of failing to properly police the 911-kilometre border, saying its sheer length makes it impossible to block off entirely. Ankara has called for better intelligence sharing from its allies-a complaint also brought up by its Western partners.

Europe on alert

In Turkey's biggest city Istanbul, some 15,000 police will be deployed to ensure security over the New Year, including 5,000 in the area around the central Taksim Square, the city's deputy police security chief Zafer Baybaba said. European capitals have also beefed up security after the coordinated attacks in Paris which left 130 people dead and hundreds more wounded on November 13.

Belgian police arrested two people suspected of plotting attacks in Brussels during New Year festivities, the federal prosecutor's office said this week. Police seized military-style training uniforms, computer hardware and Islamic State propaganda material in raids around the capital Brussels and in the Liege region.

Austrian police said Saturday they had stepped up security in Vienna and other cities after receiving a warning of possible attacks during the holiday season. And Moscow's Red Square, traditionally a place where people gather to ring in the New Year, will be closed to revelers on December 31 amid mounting security concerns. — AFP



TEHRAN: An Iranian couple look at a heavily polluted skyline. — AFP

NEW RESTRICTIONS IN TEHRAN AFTER 18TH DAY OF BAD AIR

TEHRAN: More than two weeks of heavy pollution led Iranian officials to ban all outdoor sport and impose new traffic restrictions yesterday as persistent cold weather exacerbated Tehran's air quality problems. In the worst concerted period of pollution for three years, primary schools and nurseries were closed and new car exclusion zones imposed in the capital.

Tehran's air quality index averaged 159 yesterday, up two from the previous day, and more than three times the World Health Organization's advised maximum of between zero and 50. At such levels people are advised not to leave home unless absolutely necessary. One area in north-eastern Tehran peaked at 238 on the pollution index and President Hassan Rouhani addressed the issue at a meeting of his cabinet as concern rises about health risks.

"The problem has been around for years and cannot be entirely tackled in a short time," he was quoted by the official IRNA as saying. IRNA report-

ed that yesterday was the 18th straight day of dangerously bad air while newspapers quoted officials casting blame on each other for the problem and failure to tackle it.

"Our preference was to close all schools but the education ministry insisted on keeping high schools open because of final term exams," said Mohammad Heydarzadeh, secretary of Tehran's emergency air pollution committee. The cold weather is causing climate inversion-where emissions from car exhausts hang in the air rather than rising into the atmosphere above.

A decade-long central restriction zone based on car number plates was in place across the city yesterday, traffic police announced. Vehicles with plates ending in an odd number can't go out on Saturday, Monday and Wednesday, while cars with even numbered plates are banned on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

Sand and cement factories around the capital have been banned from operating until Friday,

the end of the Iranian week, and all outdoor sport including professional football league matches has been called off. Exhaust fumes from the five million cars and almost as many motorcycles on Tehran's roads account for 80 percent of its pollution, officials say.

Two permanent zones of traffic restrictions introduced in 1979 and 2005 have failed to rectify the sprawling city's poor air quality. While Tehran is the epicenter of the problem, primary schools in other major cities including Isfahan, Qom, Arak and Tabriz were also forced to close. Weather forecasters predicted that air quality would improve after expected rainfall yesterday evening.

Last December, almost 400 people were hospitalized with heart and respiratory problems caused by heavy pollution in Tehran, with nearly 1,500 others requiring treatment. In 2012, pollution contributed to the premature deaths of 4,500 people in Tehran and about 80,000 in the country, the health ministry said. — AFP

REPUBLICANS COME UP SHORT IN SEARCH FOR DIVERSE VOTES

NEW YORK/WASHINGTON: Ten months before the United States elects a new president, the Republican Party has yet to resolve a problem that its leaders said contributed to Mitt Romney's 2012 loss to Barack Obama: A lack of support among Hispanic and younger voters.

The percentage of Republicans among those likely to vote in the Nov. 8, 2016, election lags Democrats by 9 percentage points, compared with a 6-point deficit in the year leading up to Obama's 2012 victory, according to an analysis of Reuters/Ipsos polling data from 2012 and 2015. While the American electorate has become more diverse the last three years, the party's support among Hispanic likely voters and younger likely voters has shrunk significantly. Polling data on likely voters who identify as members of a particular political party are considered valuable indicators of election outcomes. In 2012, 93 percent of voters who identified as members of a particular party cast a ballot for that party's presidential candidate, a Reuters/Ipsos Election Day poll found. The numbers suggest the Republican field, led by billionaire businessman Donald Trump, faces strong headwinds against the Democrats, led by former secretary of state Hillary Clinton.

"Good candidates running good campaigns can overcome partisan disadvantages," Republican pollster and strategist Neil Newhouse said. "The party faced these same challenges in 2012 and is still facing those challenges, and it is potentially more significant."

An analysis of the Reuters/Ipsos polling data found:

In 2012, Democrats made up 44.7 percent of party-affiliated likely voters, compared to 39.1 percent Republicans, a difference of about 6 percentage points, according to the analysis of 87,778 likely presidential voters polled leading up to the 2012 presidential election. The results have a credibility interval of plus or minus 0.3 percentage points.

Three years later, that lead had grown to nine points, 45.9 percent to 36.9 percent, according to the analysis of 93,181 likely presidential voters polled in 2015. The results in 2015 have the same credibility interval as 2012.

Among Hispanics who are likely presidential voters, the percentage affiliated with the Republican Party has slipped nearly five points, from 30.6 percent in 2012 to 26 percent in 2015. Meanwhile, Hispanic Democrats grew by six percentage points to 59.6 percent. Among whites under 40, the shift is even more dramatic. In 2012, they were more likely to identify with the Republican Party by about 5 percentage points. In 2015, the advantage flipped: Young whites are now more likely to identify with the Democratic Party by about 8 percentage points. Meanwhile, black likely voters remain overwhelmingly Democratic, at about 80 percent.

Bread and butter voters

For both parties, the election will partly hinge, as

always, on getting out the votes, Newhouse said. But for a Republican to win, the gap in party membership means their voters need to show up at a much higher rate than Democratic voters.

In November 2014, Republican voters did just that with dramatic congressional victories that allowed the GOP to take control of the US Senate and solidify its control of the US House of Representatives. Those gains, during a low-turnout midterm election, were fueled by turnout among older white voters.

Ari Fleischer was co-author of "Growth and Opportunity Project," the Republican postmortem of Romney's 2012 loss which concluded that the party had to connect with minorities, especially Asians and Hispanics, and the young. "If our Party is not welcoming and inclusive, young people and increasingly other voters will continue to tune us out," the authors wrote.

A former press secretary to President George W. Bush, Fleischer said Republicans' "bread and butter" support comes from a powerful and growing block of voters: whites over 55. The numbers bear that out. Aging baby boomers likely to vote in a presidential election remain strongly Republican, up slightly to 47.7 percent of voters polled in 2015. The share of that group who identify as Democrats slipped nearly two points to 35.4 percent in 2015.

Diverse field

An irony is that the Republican presidential field is younger and more diverse than the Democratic contenders. It includes Hispanics Ted Cruz and Marco Rubio, both in their mid-40s; two business people - Trump and a woman, Carly Fiorina; and a retired neurosurgeon, Ben Carson, who is black.

All three Democratic candidates are white and long-time politicians, though Clinton, the front-runner, is a woman. Republican Senator Dean Heller of Nevada said the rhetoric coming from some of his party's candidates is dampening any hope their message will resonate beyond the party's base.

Heller, who has endorsed former Florida Governor Jeb Bush for the Republican nomination, noted Bush's brother George W. Bush got about 40 percent of the Hispanic vote in 2004 while Romney got just 28 percent in 2012. "So it is possible for a Republican candidate to do well with the Hispanic community," Heller said. "And we have to do better or we're not going to win this presidential race." Carlos Firpi is a 31-year-old Hispanic voter and a Republican. Earlier this year, he considered himself a Trump supporter. No longer. "Now I don't know who to support," said the computer technician from Carlisle, Pennsylvania. "Unfortunately, all I seem to hear anymore from anyone in the Republican Party is extremism." — Reuters



GRAND RAPIDS: Republican presidential candidate, businessman Donald Trump addresses supporters at a campaign rally. — AP

TRUMP SAYS CRITICISM OF BILL CLINTON IS FAIR

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump is reviving memories of Bill Clinton's affair with a White House intern and his turbulent interactions with black voters during South Carolina's 2008 primary as the ex-president prepares to campaign for his wife in New Hampshire.

Trump's latest broadsides on the Clintons - a potential preview of a nasty, personal general election - could benefit both sides as they seek to energize voters leading into the first primary contests. But they could pose a long-term risk for Trump, some observers warn.

"If Hillary thinks she can unleash her husband, with his terrible record of women abuse, while playing the women's card on me, she's wrong!" Trump said Monday on Twitter to his nearly 5.5 million followers. "Remember that Bill Clinton was brought in to help Hillary against Obama in 2008. He was terrible, failed badly, and was called a racist!" he added.

Escalating feud

The attacks are the latest in an escalating feud between Trump and Hillary Clinton, who have been spending more time focused on each other as the first nominating contests draw nearer. In a phone interview with NBC's "Today Show" on Tuesday, Trump said his comments about Bill Clinton were "fair game" after Hillary Clinton accused him of having a "penchant for sexism." Her remark was in response to Trump saying Clinton had been "schlonged" by Obama in the 2008 nominating contest.

"There was certainly a lot of abuse of women," Trump said of the former president. The thrice-married Trump also said Tuesday that his own marital indiscretions would be fair game during the campaign. "Frankly, Hillary brought up the whole thing with sexism," he told reporters aboard his private jet in Omaha, Nebraska,

ahead of a rally across the border in Iowa. "And all I did is reverse it on her because she's got a major problem. Happens to be right in her house. So, if she wants to do that, we're going to go right after the president, the ex-president. Then we'll see how it all comes out."

In taking on Bill Clinton, Trump is drawing upon two longstanding Republican critiques against the former president that have received scant attention thus far: the ex-president's affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky during the 1990s and his dust-up with black voters during the 2008 South Carolina primary.

After Obama's win, the former president noted that Jesse Jackson had won South Carolina's primary in 1984 and 1988 - victories that didn't lead to the Democratic nomination. The remarks angered many black voters and officials in the state, who viewed it as an attempt to diminish Obama, then Hillary Clinton's main rival. Republican strategist Kevin Madden, who is not affiliated with any campaign, said Trump's willingness to go after the former president so pointedly is precisely what his supporters like about him. "He's a departure from what they believe are candidates who in the past have only gone after Democrats with kid gloves," he said. Democrats and some Republicans, meanwhile, said Trump's comments could backfire in a general election against Clinton, who has appealed to women and minority voters at the heart of the coalition that twice elected Obama.

Rep James Clyburn, D-SC, said in an interview that Trump's comments on race were aimed at tamping down "black excitement and participation" in the upcoming election. "He's trying to tarnish Mrs. Clinton and in doing so is misrepresenting what was said" by the former president, said Clyburn, who has remained neutral in the Democratic primaries. — AP

PINOCHET DICTATORSHIP PACTS OF SILENCE UNRAVELS IN CHILE

'CRIMINALS CAN'T TAKE THE GUILT ANY LONGER'

SANTIAGO: One former Chilean soldier said he shot 10 people in the head and then blew up their bodies with dynamite. Another said his platoon drenched two teens with gasoline and set them on fire. Both confessions made publicly this year have shocked Chileans with details of crimes committed during the Andean nation's bloody 1973-1990 dictatorship. Human rights groups and families of victims believe they are a clear sign military pacts of silence that have hushed up many of the atrocities committed during the rule of Gen Augusto Pinochet may finally be unraveling.

"Criminals can't take the guilt any longer," said Veronica de Negri, whose 19-year-old son, Rodrigo Rojas, was burned to death at a 1986 protest against Pinochet. "They're going to continue coming out. It's a domino effect. More and more will talk." For nearly three decades, many perpetrators enjoyed impunity. But after a former soldier testified this year about Rojas' killing, in July a judge charged seven ex-soldiers with the attack, which also severely burned another teen, Carmen Quintana.

US documents published this year indicated Pinochet covered up the military's role in the slaying of Rojas, who was a US resident visiting his native Chile. The case drew worldwide condemnation and strained the regime's relationship with Washington. The latest confession came early in December and took Chileans by surprise: It happened during a radio show that usually focuses on personal anecdotes, some humorous, some serious.

Love story

Using the name "Alberto," the caller first said he wanted to share a love story. He then launched into a much darker tale. He said he was an army veteran and recounted taking several people to the desert, shooting them in the head and blowing up the bodies. "Not even their shadow was left," said the man, who expressed regret about killing at least 18 people in various incidents.

Days after the 25-minute call, the man, identified as Guillermo Reyes Rammsy, was arrested. A judge ordered him held under house arrest while the case is investigated. Attempts to reach Rammsy were not successful. "These people carry feelings of guilt," said Giorgio Agostini, a forensic psychologist. "Speaking about it, in this case publicly, gives them some sort of release."

At least 3,095 people were killed during Pinochet's dictatorship, according to government figures, and tens of thousands more were tortured or jailed for political reasons. Pinochet died in 2006 under house arrest without being tried on charges of illegal enrichment and human rights violations. Retired Gen Guillermo Garin, who was the army's second-in-command under Pinochet,



SANTIAGO: In this Sept 11, 2015, file photo, a masked woman carrying a flower gathers with others outside La Moneda presidential palace to mark the anniversary of Chile's coup. — AP

says the number of victims has been exaggerated. He also denies the existence of any pacts of silence.

"I was very close to General Pinochet," Garin told the AP. "The president was busy governing the country and was not involved in anti-subversive fights or combatting clandestine organizations." But ample evidence points to Pinochet's involvement and to his orders for cover-ups.

US documents published recently show Pinochet covered up the military's role in the burning death of Rojas. Declassified State Department cables from 1986 cited a source within Chile's national police force who said a report on the attack was presented to Pinochet, who refused to take it and rejected ordering an investigation.

Burned by firebombs

At the time, Pinochet accused Rojas and Quintana of being terrorists who were burned by firebombs they planned to use against barricades. Punishment for dictatorship-era crimes has been sparse. The government's human rights program says 1,373 former and current military members have faced trial. Of those, 344 have been convicted, and most of them were sentenced to house

arrest or some other form of non-jail punishment.

While the trials have led to some revelations about the regime's abuses, human rights groups believe there is much more to learn. Former Supreme Court President Sergio Munoz, who oversaw special judges handling hundreds of dictatorship cases, says members of the military have gone to great lengths to remain silent about the crimes.

He hit roadblocks in some investigations and often there was "deficient cooperation among institutions," Munoz told The Associated Press. "Chile would benefit a lot from say, choosing 20 former military draftees and letting them go unpunished in exchange for information," said Marta Lagos, a political analyst.

Fernando Mellado, who heads a group of former recruits who served during the dictatorship, said more ex-soldiers would be willing to provide information if they didn't fear being jailed. He said many young soldiers were "just kids" taking orders. Attempts by some former military recruits to reach an immunity-for-information deal with the Ministry of Justice have failed. "If the state frees us from responsibility, I think we'll talk without a problem because we are not the only ones responsible," Mellado said. — AP

AP-NORC POLL: RELIGIOUS RIGHTS MOST VITAL FOR US CHRISTIANS

WASHINGTON: Americans place a higher priority on preserving the religious freedom of Christians than for other faith groups, ranking Muslims as the least deserving of the protections, according to a new survey. Solid majorities said it was extremely or very important for the US to uphold religious freedom in general. However, the percentages varied dramatically when respondents were asked about specific faith traditions, according to a poll by The Associated Press and the NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

Eighty-two percent said religious liberty protections were important for Christians, compared with 61 percent who said the same for Muslims. About seven in 10 said preserving Jews' religious freedom was important, while 67 percent said

so of Mormons. People who identified with no religion were ranked about even with Muslims in needing support to live out their beliefs. Charles Haynes, director of the Religious Freedom Center of the Newseum Institute, said the findings reflect deep divisions among Americans about the very definition of religious liberty, which has taken on newly politicized meanings in a time of debate over gay marriage and the threat from Islamic extremists.

'Eye of the beholder'

"Religious freedom is now in the eye of the beholder," Haynes said. "People in different traditions, with different ideological commitments, define religious freedom differently."



VIRGINIA: In this photo taken Dec 4, 2015, people arrive for Friday prayers at Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque in Falls Church. — AP

The poll was conducted Dec 10 through Dec 13, after Islamic extremist attacks in Paris and San Bernardino, California, and during intensifying anti-Muslim rhetoric by Donald Trump and other candidates for the Republican presidential nomination. The furor has led to a spike in vandalism of mosques and harassment of US Muslims over the last month.

In the survey, 88 percent of Republicans said it was important to protect the religious liberty of Christians, while only 60 percent said so for Muslims. Democrats also ranked religious freedom for Muslims as a lower priority. Eighty-three percent of Democrats said the protections were important for Christians, while only 67 percent said so for Muslims.

A Pew Research Center survey last year found an increasing share of Americans believe Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence among its followers. Several outspoken critics have emerged who argue Islam itself is a threat to the US. "These numbers seem to be part of a growing climate of anti-Muslim sentiment in the United States," said Madhha Ahusain, an attorney for Muslim Advocates, a California-based civil rights group. "This climate of hatred has contributed to dozens of incidents of anti-Muslim violence in recent weeks."

Helen Decker, 65, a West Texas Christian who reads the Bible regularly, believes strongly that religious freedom should be provided to people of all faiths or no faith, including for her grandson whom she said is an atheist. But she said Muslims can only earn the same religious liberty protections "under certain circumstances" - that they can show that they are not a radical Muslim. "Muslims - they need to be protected just like Christians, unless they pose harm to human life," Decker said. But John Ashford of Chicago, who is retired from the U.S. military and the Postal Service, said "it's not right" to deny religious liberty protections to Muslims. He said officials have been showing too much deference to Christians for political reasons, in what he considers a threat to the separation of church and state. — AP

ASYLUM-SEEKERS FEAR SHELTER IS HAUNTED

STOCKHOLM: Thirty-five asylum-seekers have asked to be relocated from a refugee housing facility in southern Sweden because they believe it's haunted by ghosts, officials said yesterday. The asylum-seekers were spooked by flickering lights and noise in the plumbing system at the facility in Grannaforsa, a small village in Smaland province, said Magnus Petersson, a local manager at the Swedish Migration Agency.

Petersson said 35 of the 58 people living in the shelter came to the agency's office in the nearby town of Alvesta on Tuesday, demanding to be relocated. They reluctantly returned to the shelter at the end of the day after being told there were no ghosts - and no alternative housing available - Petersson said.

"I know that in their faith there is a different view on spirituality," he said. "We were responsive to them but somewhere you have to use your common sense and believe in science." Sweden has received a record 150,000 asylum-seekers this year, mostly from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan. The large influx has left the Swedish Migration Agency scrambling to find housing, including in remote villages surrounded by

thick forest and roaming wildlife.

Hamid Alojaili, a Syrian resident of the Grannaforsa facility, told local newspaper Smalandsposten "we are sure" that the building is haunted. "Doors are getting reopened by themselves," he said in English in a video clip posted on the paper's website. "And there is no one outside." Many get the feeling they are not alone even in the bathroom, he said, adding that the residents would rather stay in tents than in Grannaforsa "because it's too dangerous to be there."

Stefan Johansson, a co-owner of the facility, said it was built in the 19th century and was long used as a home for disabled people. During World War II, it housed German deserters. Johansson said there are natural explanations for all the things that frighten the asylum-seekers. "It's an old house and the doors maybe are a bit crooked," he said. "Sometimes there are cracking noises in the pipes."

The flickering lights were caused by glitches in electrical switches, he said. "We have explained all this to them. How much of it they took in I don't know," Johansson said. — AP

NIGERIAN BUILDS 'BIGGEST' STATUE OF JESUS IN AFRICA

LAGOS: A Nigerian businessman is set to unveil what he says is Africa's largest statue of Jesus (PBUH), describing it as a symbol of peace in a country wracked by Islamist insurgency. Obinna Onuoha commissioned the 8.53 meter tall "Jesus de Greatest" statue in 2013, hiring a Chinese company to carve it out of white marble.

Standing barefoot with arms outstretched, the 40 ton statue will tower over St. Aloysius Catholic Church in the mainly Christian village of Abajah in

Nigeria's southeastern state of Imo. "It's going to be the biggest statue of Jesus in the continent," said Onuoha, the 43-year-old chief executive officer of an oil and gas distribution company. "Definitely pilgrims will come."

Around 1,000 people are expected to attend the statue's unveiling on New Year's Day. Onuoha said he has contacted the police just to be sure that it is not attacked or vandalized. Nigeria, Africa's largest country with 170 million people,

is split between a more prosperous Christian south and a poor Muslim northern uneasy balance that is sometimes a source of tension.

More than 17,000 people have been killed in Islamist group Boko Haram's six-year quest to create an independent state but the violence has been mainly confined to Nigeria's Muslim-majority north. "We think religions can exist side by side," Onuoha said. "We hope that people can live in harmony." Onuoha says he

had a dream in 1997 to build a giant statue of Jesus.

When his 68-year-old mother fell seriously ill a few years ago, she made him promise that he would build a church if she survived. He built it in Abajah, some 500 kilometers southeast of Lagos, and it is here that the "Jesus de Greatest" statue is located. Reactions to the statue are mixed. "It is clearly wrong," Emmanuel Lashiolola, a Catholic and former student in a seminary school, said.

"You do not unveil Jesus Christ. I hope somebody is not trying to use the ceremony to raise money." But priest Paul Awowole said: "Liturgically, I do not think there is anything is wrong in unveiling the statue of Jesus Christ. It is to venerate and honor Jesus Christ." Onuoha is just counting down the days until the statue makes its official public debut. "The scaffolding is coming off as we speak," Onuoha said. "People driving by are already stopping to have a look." —AFP



TADCASTER: Members of the emergency services assess the damage to a bridge caused by floodwater over the River Wharfe. —AFP

BRITAIN'S FLOODS: CAUSES, COSTS AND CONSEQUENCES

CAMERON'S GOVT ACCUSED OF NEGLIGENCE

LONDON: With more floods forecast Wednesday as Storm Frank sweeps in, Britain is asking whether its defenses can deal with extreme weather events, with many accusing David Cameron's government of negligence.

What has happened?

In early December, Storm Desmond brought the country's first wave of heavy rain, with streets submerged in northwest England and 60,000 homes left without power. The town of Honister in Cumbria recorded 341.4mm of rain in 24 hours, a new British rainfall record for a 24-hour period, while nearby Thirlmere recorded 405mm in 48 hours, a national record for a two-day period.

Just as it was recovering in time for the Christmas holidays, northern England was once again battered by high winds and heavy rains. Much of the historic city of York was left under several feet of water while flooding also affected the northern cities of Leeds and Manchester. A spell of dry weather has helped the clean-up operation, but Secretary of State for Environment Rory Stewart said he was "very concerned" by the imminent arrival of "Frank".

Why so much rain?

Britain has a long history of extreme rainfall events, the last of which dates back only two years. Some have been known to cause mass deaths, such as the 1953 floods that claimed more than 300 lives. Environmental experts

suspect the frequency of recent floods is partly down to man. "Climate change has played an important part," said John Gummer, Chairman of Britain's independent Committee on Climate Change. "These things might well have happened but climate change makes them more regular and much worse," he added.

What are the costs and consequences?

The most recent floods have inundated more than 6,700 buildings, leading to the evacuation of thousands of people and forcing the government to call in army reinforcements, with 500 soldiers mobilized and 1,000 in reserve. Combined with Storm Desmond, the damage could exceed £5 billion (6.7 billion Euros, \$7.4 billion), according to preliminary estimates by auditing firm KPMG.

Have the flood defenses failed?

The British government has spent around £1.8 billion in recent years on flood defences designed to protect towns and villages. However, Cameron has admitted that they have not been a total success, saying: "It's clear that in some cases they have been overtopped and overrun." A prime example is the flood barrier at York, which became submerged by the rising water, disabling some of the electrical wiring inside. Fearing all the pumps could be damaged, the authorities decided to temporarily open the barrier, causing further flooding and leading to the River Foss bursting its banks.

What is the political fallout?

"You would have thought David Cameron had learnt the lesson from the floods of 2013/14. Apparently not," said Justin Bowden of the GMB union, blaming cuts to the Environment Agency for the failings. Natalie Bennett, leader of Britain's Green Party, accused Cameron of being "the modern equivalent of the Emperor Nero fiddling while Rome burned." Cameron is not the only public servant in the line of fire, with the Daily Mail accusing Environment Agency chief Philip Dilley of "sunbathing" in the Caribbean "while Britain suffers its worst floods in decades." Cameron defended himself as he put on his Wellington boots for a walk around York, saying the government would look at suggestions for extra defenses.

What are the solutions?

David Rooke, an Environment Agency official, has called for a "complete rethink" about the threat of flooding, with nearly one in five houses now at risk, according to The National Association of Estate Agents. Among the proposed solutions are improved warning systems, more use of waterproof construction materials and less deforestation. "Ground floors of homes can be designed either to hold out water, or can be designed to anticipate water, which puts less stress on the structure of the building," Richard Coutts, an architect, told AFP, also citing the possibility of amphibious and floating homes. —AFP

FRENCH JIHADIST EL MOUADAN WAS CLOSE TO PARIS GUNMAN

PARIS: French jihadist Charaffe El Mouadan, who the United States said Tuesday was killed in Syria, was close to at least one of the gunmen who carried out a massacre at a Paris concert hall, according to investigators.

The Pentagon said Mouadan had "direct" links to Abdelhamid Abaaoud, the Belgian jihadist who was suspected of planning the coordinated attacks on Paris on November 13 and was killed by police five days later. A French source was cautious as to whether Mouadan played any operational role in those attacks but gave details about his part in France's jihadist scene. "As things stand now, there is nothing to prove (Mouadan's) involvement" in the Paris attacks, the source said.

But, the source added, Mouadan was close to Samy Amimour—a former Paris bus driver who went to Syria to fight and returned home to wreak havoc at the Bataclan music venue, where 90 out of the 130 people killed that night lost their lives.

So close were the links that the Mouadan family home in Drancy, a grimy suburb north of Paris, was searched by police four days after the Paris attacks. The Pentagon said Mouadan had been planning attacks against the West, although a spokesman gave no further details.

He was killed in a US-led coalition air strike on December 24.

Long before he made it to Syria, Mouadan had harbored ambitions of fighting with Islamic extremists, according to investigators. He and Amimour were arrested in 2012 along with a third Drancy resident, Samir Bouabou, as they were preparing to travel together to fight in Yemen or Afghanistan, they say.

Mouadan 'the leader'

A source close to the investigation said Mouadan was clearly the leader of the trio. One of eight children, he was born in the Paris suburb of Bondy to Moroccan parents. His father was a mechanic. Charaffe El Mouadan obtained French nationality in 1992.

His path to radicalization appears to have been through the Internet, just as investigators believe was the case for Amimour and Bouabou. A friend told anti-terrorist investigators that despite growing up in a Muslim family, Mouadan "was not really into religion at the start." But later he developed an "extremist outlook," without ever attending any particular mosque. In March 2012, Mouadan, Amimour and Bouabou enrolled in a shooting club. Mouadan took out a 20,000-euro (\$21,900) loan to finance their aborted trip to Yemen.

After he was prevented from

going there, Mouadan told investigators he had abandoned his plans to wage jihad and had instead decided to travel to an Islamic country to perfect his knowledge of Arabic. In fact, he and Bouabou appear to have spent a short time in Tunisia, an investigation source said. Their plan



Charaffe Al Mouadan

to travel to Yemen foundered because of their poor grasp of Arabic and a lack of contacts.

The three men were then arrested in France but freed. Like hundreds of other Westerners, a year later they had found their way to Syria and the chaos of the civil war, with Mouadan the first to make his way there. Within

days, on September 6, 2013, Bouabou and Amimour were spotted in Turkey, the main crossing point for Western jihadists seeking to get into Syria. Also with them was Omar Ismail Mostefai.

Two years later, Mostefai would join forces with Amimour in the trio of suicide vest-wearing attackers at the Bataclan. Mouadan claimed he had gone to Syria for "humanitarian" reasons, yet he sent photographs to at least one friend showing him smiling and heavily armed, a source said. French investigators believe Mouadan, Mostefai and Amimour remained in the same area while they were in Syria. They initially thought the fourth member of their group, Bouabou, had slipped back into Europe through Greece in September hiding among refugees but they are now sure he was in Syria at the time of the attacks in Paris.

Mouadan's role in the Paris attacks is unclear. One witness at the Bataclan said one of the killers spoke about phoning "Souleymane" during the shootings.

The name "Abou Souleymane," or father of Souleymane, is a nickname that Mouadan used in Syria and on his Twitter account. But it is a common nickname and investigators believe the gunman might have been referring to another "Abou Souleymane," who is based in Belgium. —AFP

VOTERS IN CAR HOPING FOR GREATER STABILITY

BANGUI: Thousands in Central African Republic's capital voted yesterday in national elections with hope that a new president will lead to greater stability after years of violence. Voters are choosing a president from a list of 30 candidates to replace transitional leader Catherine Samba-Panza, who was put in place in January 2014. More than 1.8 million people are expected to vote at more than 500 polling stations nationwide.

Central African Republic has been rocked by unrest since March 2013 when a largely Muslim alliance of rebel groups known as Seleka overthrew President Francois Bozize. The rebel leader left power in 2014 and a horrific backlash by the Christian anti-Balaka militia against Muslim civilians followed. Thousands were killed and sectarian violence has continued, displacing nearly 1 million people.

That elections are being held at all is a major feat for the nation that has delayed them several times this year, including a delay from Dec. 27 to Dec. 30 to make sure training was finalized and voting better organized. Voters stood patiently in line, some wearing colorful clothing, some hoisting parasols to ward off the hot sun.

Still, there were a few problems, with some names of candidates for parliament reported missing from ballots. But, at least through mid-day, there were no reports of violence. Samba-Panza voted at a school in the capital, Bangui, urging others to get to the polls. "Many thought this day, this vote would not be possible for security and organizational reasons. But, you see, we all are voting in dignity and peace and I am proud," she said.

'New start'

Among the favored candidates are former Prime ministers Martin Ziguéle and Anicet Georges Dologuele, and Abdou Karim Meckassoua, a former foreign minister under former President Bozize. "I expect

these elections to be a new start of our country," said candidate Ziguéle of the Movement for the Liberation of the Central African People. "This is one day, the day of choice. Whatever the shortcomings noted here and there, Central Africans must remain in the rank and vote until the end."

People of Central African Republic are also voting for a National Assembly. Worries about the vote materialized for Christian Guenebeme, who said he was a legislative candidate but couldn't find his name on the ballots.

"I'm disappointed that neither my name nor my picture appear on the ballot for legislative candidates in two voting centers. We were right to say that the conditions were not yet ripe for organizing these elections," he said. Marcellin Daza, 42, said that people's names are missing and there is disorder, but he wants change. "We are discouraged, but we cannot give up the vote out of love for our country. It's time for things to change," Daza said.

Refugees also gathered in Cameroon's border town Garoua Boulai yesterday, where 12,000 have registered to vote, hoping for peace to return so they can go back home to Central African Republic.

"We have suffered too much and need peace to return to our homes," said 23-year-old Abdoulaye Babiya who wants to return to being a student. He and the thousands of others waiting on a dirt road in the heat of the sun proudly placed their votes in a clear plastic box with a red top, closely overseen by poll workers in bright yellow vests.

UN peacekeepers, police, armed forces and gendarmerie have been deployed. Five people died in violence in a vote on a referendum on Dec 13 that was seen as a test for these national elections. The vote comes nearly a month after Pope Francis visited Central African Republic and called for peace and reconciliation between Christians and Muslims. —AP



GAROUA BOULAI: A Central African Republic refugee casts his ballot in elections. —AP

LIFE SENTENCES GIVEN TO UK ATTACK PLOT COUPLE

LONDON: A husband and wife convicted of planning a major attack to mark the 10th anniversary of the London suicide bombings were both sentenced to life in prison yesterday.



This photo provided by Thames Valley Police shows Mohammed Rehman and his wife Sana Ahmed Khan. —AP

Mohammed Rehman, 25, who used the Twitter name "Silent Bomber" and asked users whether he should bomb a shopping centre or the London Underground train network, will serve a minimum of 27 years.

Judge Jeremy Baker ruled that his wife Sana Ahmed Khan, 24, must serve a minimum of 25 years after

being found guilty on Tuesday. Rehman was arrested in May after posting a tweet saying: "Westfield shopping centre or London underground? Any advice would be greatly appreciated." The tweet linked to an Al-Qaeda statement about the July 2005 bombings in which four suicide bombers targeted London's transport system, killing 52 people.

The couple were accused of planning their attack for around May 28. Police seized more than 10 kilograms of urea nitrate, which can be used to manufacture a large bomb, from their house. Rehman also filmed himself testing explosives in the couple's back garden. Rehman was found guilty of creating the bomb, while his wife funded the project and bought the chemicals, the Crown Prosecution Service said. Their bomb "would have caused multiple fatalities" if it had been detonated on the London Underground, it said.

"The intention to carry out some form of terrorism attack was clear," Susan Hemming, head of the CPS counter terrorism division, said following the verdict. "The pair had been very close to carrying out an attack. All they required was to purchase the chemicals to make a detonator." —AFP

US GENERAL: MORE TROOPS REQUIRED IN AFGHANISTAN

WASHINGTON: The top US and NATO military commander in Afghanistan may seek additional American troops to help local forces as they struggle to contain the Taliban insurgency, USA Today reported Tuesday. General John Campbell's interview with the newspaper comes as the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated in

the second half of 2015, with an increase in insurgent attacks and higher casualties among both Taliban and national forces.

Already, President Barack Obama has backed on a pledge to pull out all but 1,000 troops, and in October he announced that 9,800 US forces would remain in Afghanistan until the end of 2016.

Campbell told USA today he would ask the Obama administration to keep that higher number of troops in country as long as possible and suggested he might call for more US personnel. "If I don't believe that we can accomplish the train, advise and assist and the (counter-terrorism) missions, then I owe it to the senior leadership to come back and

say, 'Here's what I need: If that's more people, it's more people,'" Campbell told the newspaper. The 9,800 US troops are scheduled to be drawn down to 5,500 by January 1, 2017.

"My intent would be to keep as much as I could, for as long as I could," Campbell said. This month marks a year since the US and

NATO-led mission in Afghanistan transitioned into an Afghan operation, with allied nations assisting in training and equipping local forces to tackle Taliban and other groups. The Taliban have already dealt some stinging blows to Afghan forces, including a short-lived takeover of the northern city of Kunduz. — AFP

BURUNDI PRESIDENT WILL FIGHT AU PEACEKEEPERS

NAIROBI: Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza said yesterday he would fight proposed African Union peacekeepers if they set foot on Burundian soil, defying intense global pressure to accept the force. "Everybody should respect the borders of Burundi. If the troops are in violation of this decision, they will have attacked Burundi, and each Burundian must stand up to fight them," Nkurunziza said in a speech broadcast on state radio.

"The country will have been attacked, and we will fight them." The 54-member African Union gave Burundi a four-day deadline on December 17 to accept a 5,000-strong force to halt months of violence, pledging to send troops even though Burundi said it was opposed to an "invasion force". The small central African country descended into bloodshed in April when Nkurunziza announced his intention to run for a controversial third term in a July election that he went on to win.

"You cannot send troops to a country if the United Nations Security Council has not accepted it... the UN resolution says the international community should respect the independence of Burundi," Nkurunziza said in one of his strongest speeches yet following the unrest.

Hundreds killed

Burundi is still recovering from an ethnically-charged civil war between majority Hutus and minority Tutsis, which cost an estimated 300,000 lives between 1993 and 2006. The violence—which has seen hundreds killed and included an abortive coup, regular ambushes on security forces, street battles and even failed mortar bombings on the presidential palace—echoes attacks carried out during the civil war.

"When there are two warring forces then you can have a peacekeeping force," Nkurunziza said. "But this is not the case here, because we are facing a security problem. It is not a political issue, because this was resolved by the elections." Rebels last week said they had formed a force "to protect the population" and uphold the

Arusha Agreement that paved the way to the end of the civil war but which they say Nkurunziza has violated by his controversial third term in power.

Earlier this month UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that deploying UN peacekeepers to Burundi was an option to quell the violence. AU Commission chief Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma has written to the UN Security Council asking for "full UN support including the authorisation of a support package" for the force, the AU has said. The proposed force, the African Prevention and Protection Mission in Burundi, is known by its acronym in French, MAPROBU. No details of possible troop contributing nations have been given, or any timeline for its deployment. Burundian troops themselves are a key contingent in the AU force in Somalia, AMISOM, as well as the UN mission in Central African Republic (CAR).

Sanction threats

Nkurunziza's speech came shortly after the AU repeated threats of sanctions if violence continues as it pushed for the swift deployment of the force. Burundi's government and opposition, who met in Uganda on Monday, are due to meet again in January in the northern Tanzanian town of Arusha for talks aimed at ending months of violence.

Ugandan officials said talks would resume on January 6 but the Burundi government delegation said "no consensus" had been reached on the date. "All those whose action could jeopardize the inter-Burundian dialogue, including attacks by armed groups against governmental facilities and other targets, as well as refusal to respond to the invitation of the mediator, shall be subjected to sanctions," Dlamini-Zuma said in a statement seen yesterday. She gave no further details of possible sanctions, which have been threatened before, but called for "unreserved cooperation" with the peace process "in order to put an end to the violence." — AFP



CAPE TOWN: A file picture taken on April 9, 2015, shows students attacking the defaced statue of British mining magnate and politician, Cecil John Rhodes, as it is removed by a crane from its position at the University of Cape Town. — AFP

OXFORD STATUE STIRS GHOSTS OF BRITISH COLONIALISM PAST

STUDENT CAMPAIGN BOOSTED BY SOCIAL MEDIA

LONDON: The toxic legacy of colonialism in Africa has stirred up a heated debate in Britain involving a prestigious Oxford University college, some high-powered alumni and a student campaign boosted by social media. The focus of the debate is an unremarkable limestone statue looking down on Oxford's High Street of Cecil Rhodes, the Victorian-era tycoon who founded the De Beers diamond company and what is now Zimbabwe.

"To put someone so literally on a pedestal is to tacitly condone their legacy," said Daisy Chandley, a student and organizing member of the Rhodes Must Fall in Oxford campaign. Smudged by passing traffic on a busy thoroughfare and soiled by pigeons, the Rhodes statue is still in a stunning location surrounded by Oxford's dreaming spires in the heart of the university's college community.

An inscription underneath pays homage to Rhodes—a white supremacist like many builders of the British empire—for his donation to Oriel College. Inspired by the popular movement that forced the removal of a statue of the famous colonialist at the University of Cape Town in South Africa, campaigners have been asking the British college to do the same.

'Wider racism'

The campaigns are distinct but supporters in Oxford use the same hashtag #RhodesMustFall as the Cape Town campaign and their actions have fuelled a political debate in South Africa as

well as soul-searching in Britain ranging well beyond the statue itself.

"There have always been those who have questioned the statue as well as the wider racism within the university but the movement in South Africa brought debate over similar problems in Oxford to the forefront and triggered collective action," Chandley said. The university rejects accusations of racism but Oriel College promised to be "more diverse and inclusive of people from all backgrounds" in a response to the campaign earlier this month. It said it would take down a Rhodes plaque on the wall of another college building and agreed to a six-month "listening exercise" on whether to remove the statue. The college said Rhodes's values "stand in absolute contrast to the ethos of the scholarship program today and to the values of a modern University".

It said it would put up a sign in an antique window below the statue saying that "the College does not in any way condone or glorify his views or actions". But it also talked up the positive contribution of the Rhodes Scholarships, which have allowed 8,000 students from around the world to study at Oxford, including former US president Bill Clinton and former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott.

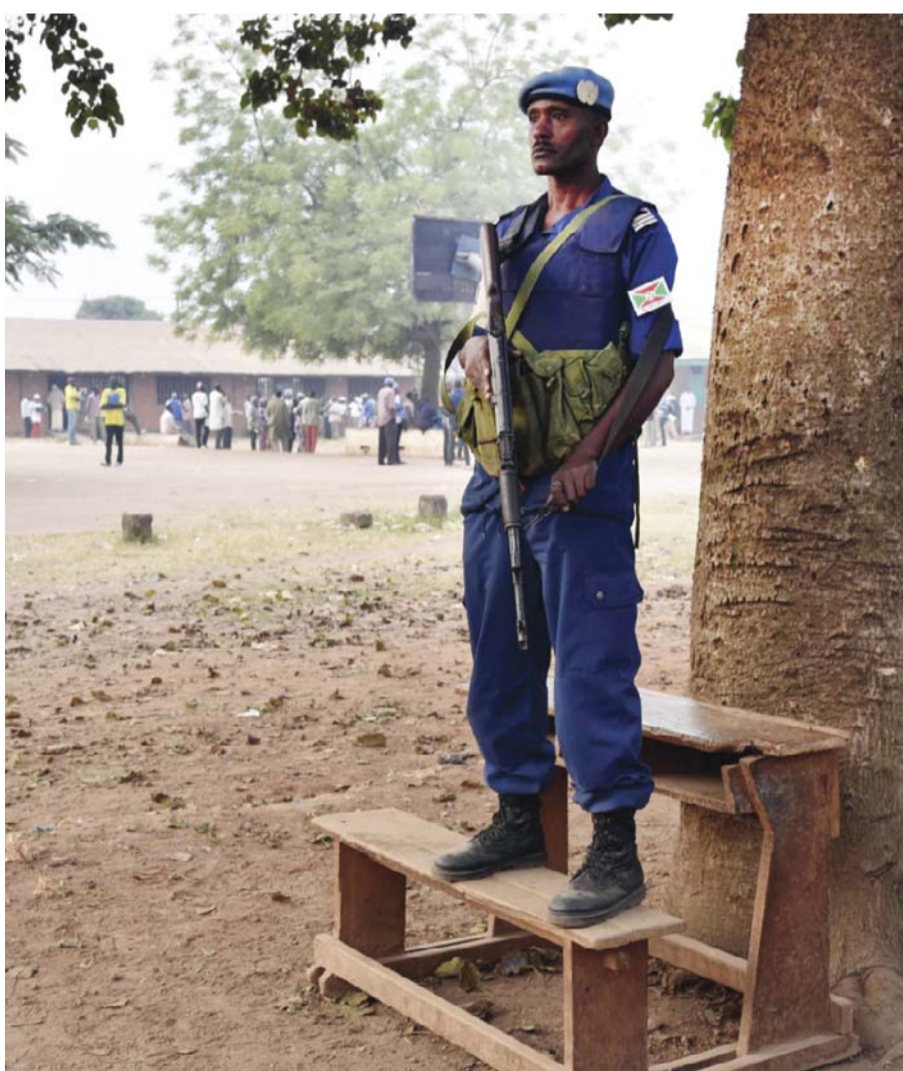
One of the organizers of the campaign, South African Ntokozi Qwabe, was himself named a Rhodes Scholar last year and has defended himself against charges of hypocrisy by saying that he is taking back some of the money that Rhodes took from Africa. "I'm no beneficiary of Rhodes.

I'm a beneficiary of the resources and labor of my people which Rhodes pillaged and slaved," he wrote on Facebook.

'A man of his times'

Academics, politicians and famous Oxford alumni have waded into the row, heatedly debating the rights and wrongs of honoring a man who was a major driver of British territorial expansion in southern Africa and a key player in the Boer Wars that left thousands dead.

One opponent of the campaign even compared it to the monument-destroying Islamic State group. In a letter to The Times newspaper, South Africa's last white president FW de Klerk, who shared a Nobel Peace Prize with anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela, dismissed the campaign as "folly". "If the political correctness of today were applied consistently, very few of Oxford's great figures would pass scrutiny," wrote de Klerk, who was key in ending racial segregation in South Africa. The Economic Freedom Fighters, a radical left-wing party in South Africa, expressed "disgust" at de Klerk's comments and called for his Nobel to be revoked. "All apartheid and colonial statues and symbols must fall, not just here in South Africa, but the world over," it said in a statement. But in an open letter to Britain's Independent daily, Abbott said Rhodes was "a man of his times". "The university should remember that its mission is not to reflect fashion but to seek truth and that means striving to understand before rushing to judge." — AFP



BANGUI: A Burundi United Nations peacekeeper keeps watch outside a polling station on December 30, 2015 as people go to the polls to take part in the country's presidential and legislative in the Muslim district in PK 5. — AFP

PAKISTAN JAILS SAUDI CONSULATE ATTACKER

KARACHI: A court in Pakistan yesterday sentenced a Shiite militant to 14 years in prison for throwing grenades at the Saudi Arabian consulate in Karachi four years ago, a prosecutor said. Zaki Qazi of the little known Lashkar-e-Mehdi group and his accomplice Tabish Hussain lobbed two grenades at the mission as they rode past on a motorcycle in May 2011, causing no casualties.

Police carried out a raid in November of that year, killing Hussain during fighting and arresting Qazi. Special public prosecutor Shamim Akhtar said: "The court has awarded 14 years' imprisonment to the accused (Qazi) and confiscation of his property."

Pakistan has since the 1980s been a battleground for proxy groups funded

by Saudi Arabia and Iran. Sectarian violence—mainly attacks by Sunni militants on Shiites, who make up roughly 20 percent of the population—has claimed thousands of lives over the past decade.

Donors in Saudi Arabia have long been accused of quietly funding terror groups sympathetic to the kingdom's hardline version of Sunni Islam. Leaked diplomatic cables by then-US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in 2009 said Saudi Arabian donors were "the most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide".

The cable cited the Taliban, Al-Qaeda and Pakistan's Sunni Muslim sectarian militants Lashkar-e-Jhangvi as examples of where funds were being channeled. — AFP

MODI UNABLE TO FIND PEOPLE FOR MAJOR CABINET REVAMP

NEW DELHI: After a drubbing in a state poll in November, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi wants to overhaul his cabinet to weed out underperformers and improve his government's image. Problem is, several sources said, he can't find the right replacements.

As New Delhi buzzes with speculation about changes in several ministries, senior members of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a close aide to Modi said some changes could come early next year but the talent pool was too shallow to engineer a major revamp.

Pressure is mounting on Modi to revive his party's fortunes. Nearly two years after he swept to power on a promise of jobs and growth, the shine is coming off — reforms to revive investment have withered and the economy is stuttering. Rural distress has grown after two successive droughts. "The challenge is to identify the right candidates who can deliver fast-paced reforms and policies in their work sphere," the prime minister's aide said.

Articulate and suave, Finance Minister Arun Jaitley has been considered for the defence portfolio, another high-profile role that is crucial to Modi's geopolitical ambitions and plans to boost Indian industry. But there was no one to take Jaitley's place in finance, the sources said. A spokesman for Modi declined to comment.

Death of talent

An official in Jaitley's office said they didn't have any knowledge of a possible reshuffle. Modi tends to keep such decisions close to his chest, and the sources said the final decision lay with the prime minister. They added that he has yet to make up his mind on the changes, and that nothing has been confirmed. Another close aide to the prime



KABUL: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi waves as he boards an airplane at the Kabul International Airport on December 25, 2015. — AFP

minister dismissed talk of a reshuffle as speculation, saying it had no basis.

The problem with the government's search for talent is that Modi's Hindu nationalist administration is loath to tap people who are associated with other ideologies, such as liberals or the left. At the same time, the right-wing intelligentsia has not developed after decades of rule by the centrist Congress party, under which liberal institutions flourished. "Compared to the Congress, we have a smaller talent pool and less exposure, but it's only a matter of time that we expand our base," BJP vice president Vinay Sahasrabudhe said. He said Modi has "embarked on the process of fine-tuning the government machinery and also send a concrete signal that inefficiency will be checked."

BJP's defeat in Bihar state polls earlier this year led to calls from within the party and the Hindu group that is its ideological parent, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), to remove ministers and party officials who failed to deliver.

Fan intolerance

Although a general election is not due until 2019, the government's fortunes will depend on upcoming provincial polls, including an election in bellwether Uttar Pradesh state in 2017. Top RSS and BJP leaders are expected to meet in New Delhi in the second week of January, where these issues are likely to be discussed. A revamp is also expected to send the message that Modi will not tolerate remarks by ministers that fan intolerance against India's non-Hindu minorities.

Junior ministers Giriraj Singh and Niranjan Jyoti could be removed after they made public remarks construed as anti-minority, the sources said. Singh's and Jyoti's offices said they have no information about Modi's reshuffle plans.

Some ministers are also looking for a change. Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj has asked to be moved to a portfolio with a more domestic focus, the sources said. Swaraj's office said they will not comment about her plans. Road transport minister Nitin Gadkari was offered additional charge of the agriculture ministry, but he declined saying he already had too big a job, the sources said.

A source in Gadkari's office declined to comment, calling it a "hypothetical question." Modi is looking to the RSS and may go further afield in southern and northeastern states to find new, lesser-known faces to bring to his government, his aide said. That would also give his cabinet a more pan-India feel, the aide said. — Reuters

THAI INQUIRY FINDS IRREGULARITIES IN CONTROVERSIAL MILITARY PARK

BANGKOK: A Thai defense ministry team looking into allegations of corruption at a military-built park said yesterday it had found financial "irregularities" in the project but had no authority to investigate any wrongdoing. Rajabhakti Park was built to honor Thailand's much-revered monarchy, but has become a lightning rod for anti-junta sentiment and a potential embarrassment to a military that seized power last year vowing to crack down on graft.

Sitting on army land in the royal resort

town of Hua Hin, the project was overseen by General Udomdej Sitabutr, a former army chief who is currently deputy defense minister. "We have noted irregularities which we will pass on to the defense minister, the prime minister and relevant agencies," said General Chaicharn Changmongkon, deputy permanent secretary for defense, who headed the inquiry. He would not elaborate on what those irregularities were, and told reporters the inquiry's "limited authority" meant it was unable to identify any

wrongdoers.

More than 63 million baht (\$1.8 million) out of the park's total budget of 866 million baht was drawn from the state, said Chaicharn, contradicting previous military assertions that no government funds had been used. The military overthrew an elected government in May 2014, and experts say its popular acceptance relies heavily upon a carefully cultivated reputation for battling corruption.

This has made the junta acutely sensitive to graft allegations at Rajabhakti Park

levelled by some Thai media and opposition groups. Police and soldiers intercepted a train on Dec 7 and disconnected a carriage carrying anti-junta activists to the park and briefly detained dozens of people. Police later vowed to charge 11 of the activists for illegal assembly. Gatherings of more than five people are banned under the junta.

The military had a week earlier stopped two leaders of the United Front for Democracy Against Dictatorship, a group aligned with politicians who have

challenged the old military-linked establishment, from visiting the park, which features giant statues of past Thai kings.

Two people were detained in December on suspicion of sharing an infographic on Facebook alleging corruption at the park. An earlier military inquiry into the project found no evidence of wrongdoing. However, Udomdej said on Nov. 10 there was "an element of truth" to allegations that an unidentified civilian had demanded bribes from foundries that cast the statues. —Reuters

S KOREA'S 'COMFORT WOMEN' PROTEST AGAINST AGREEMENT FACING UPHILL BATTLE TO SELL IT TO PUBLIC

SEOUL: Former "comfort women" and hundreds of supporters protested yesterday against South Korea's agreement with Japan on wartime sex slavery, as Seoul faces an uphill battle to sell it to the public. Some 250 protesters gathered next to a statue outside Japan's embassy which symbolizes Korean

The plight of the so-called "comfort women" is a hugely emotional issue that has for decades marred ties with Japan, which ruled the Korean peninsula harshly from 1910 to 1945.

The landmark agreement has sparked an angry reaction from some of the victims and activists,

weekly there at the statue for years, demanding Japan's formal apology and compensation. "We will continue to fight to make Japan take formal legal responsibility and apologize so that victims who have already perished will have justice," 88-year-old Lee added. The mood was somber as nine former sex

agreement!" some chanted, waving banners that read: "Say no to relocation of the statue!"

Public support

In the face of criticism, President Park Geun-Hye has launched an all-out campaign to win public support for the deal. Senior officials Tuesday visited shelters for the victims and pleaded for their support—a key step in securing broader approval. The handful of comfort women who have spoken about the agreement have mostly rejected it, but the views of the others are not known. However, a recent poll showed 66 percent of South Koreans overall oppose the relocation of the statue.

Park has called for "understanding by the public and the victims" about the deal, which was warmly welcomed by the United States. It had long urged its two key Asian allies to make up. Up to 200,000 women in Asia, many of them Koreans but also from China, the Philippines and what is now Indonesia, and others, are estimated to have been forced to provide sex to Japanese soldiers during World War II.

Japan has long maintained that its disputes with South Korea were fully settled in a 1965 agreement which saw Tokyo establish diplomatic ties and make a payment of \$800 million. But Seoul has said that treaty did not cover compensation for victims of wartime crimes and did not absolve Tokyo of responsibility.

The compromise agreement also drew a mixed reaction in Japan, with some far-right activists and newspapers criticizing Abe for offering the apology. China took a different tack, with state media slamming Japan's long-awaited mea culpa as insincere and insufficient. Beijing wields popular anger over Japan's wartime atrocities in China as a tool against its regional rival Tokyo. —AFP



SEOUL: South Korean supporters hold portraits of former "comfort women", who were forced into wartime sexual slavery for Japanese soldiers, during an anti-Japanese rally commemorating the death of nine former sex slaves this year in front of the Japanese embassy. —AFP

women forced into Japanese army brothels during World War II. They waved banners and chanted slogans, dismissing the deal as "humiliating."

Japan Monday offered an apology and a one-billion yen (\$8.3 million) payment to the 46 surviving South Korean women under an agreement which both nations described as "final and irreversible".

who took issue with Tokyo's refusal to accept formal legal responsibility for the sex slavery. Japan said the one-billion-yen payment was aimed at "restoring the women's dignity" but was not official compensation. "The fight is still on," survivor Lee Yong-Soo said at the rally, attended by one other victim and about 250 protesters.

Gatherings have been held

slaves who died this year were commemorated. It later turned angry, with protesters shouting slogans denouncing Japan and its Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Demonstrators held portraits of the former victims and waved banners condemning the deal, particularly Seoul's pledge to try to remove the statue from outside the embassy. "Cancel the humiliating



INCHEON: In this Oct. 4, 2014 file photo, Kim Yang-Gon, center, a secretary of North Korea's ruling Workers' Party, arrives at the Incheon International Airport. —AP

N KOREAN OFFICIAL IN CHARGE OF RELATIONS WITH SOUTH DIES

SEOUL: A top aide to North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un who oversaw relations with the South has died in a traffic accident, Pyongyang's state media said yesterday, a loss seen as a setback for reconciliation efforts. Kim Yang-Gon, who was a secretary of the ruling Workers' Party, "died in a traffic accident at 6:15 am Tuesday at age 73", the Korean Central News Agency said without giving further details.

It described the deceased as the leader's "most trustworthy aide" and said a state funeral would be held. Leader Kim has earned a reputation for ruthlessness after sacking previous high-ranking officials and having his uncle executed. One South Korean analyst said there was no evidence of foul play in the death but it could not be ruled out.

"Kim Yang-Gon was becoming too close to the leader, which must have incurred great jealousy among political rivals," Professor Yang Moo-Jin of Seoul's University of North Korean Studies said. While announcing the members of a state funeral committee, the North indirectly confirmed the reinstatement of two other officials.

Among the 80 names on the list were Choe Ryong-Hae, a vice marshal and Kim Jong-Un's confidante who had reportedly been sent to a farm for re-education, and another dismissed official Won Dong-Yon, a one-time deputy to Kim Yang-Gon. The reversals of fortune, along with two similar cases earlier this year, have prompted suggestions the leader may be rolling back a purge.

In August Kim Yang-Gon took part in talks to ease tensions with South Korea over a border land mine blast blamed on the North which brought the two sides to the brink of war. He served three generations of the Kim dynasty, which has ruled the North since its founding in 1948 with an iron fist and brooks no dissent.

KCNA hailed him as "the dearest and the most trustworthy comrade-in-arms" of Kim Jong-Un, who will preside over the state funeral today. His death was a "great loss" for the party and the people, it said, praising him for his "admirable loyalty and competence". South Korean Unification Minister Hong Yong-Pyo sent a message of condo-

lences to Pyongyang.

A career diplomat, Kim Yang-Gon played a leading role in arranging the 2007 summit between then-leader Kim Jong-Il and South Korean president Roh Moo-Hyun. He was the only North Korean official present at their meeting in Pyongyang. After the sudden death of Kim Jong-Il in 2011, Kim Yang-Gon was a key confidante to his young son and successor Jong-Un, advising him on cross-border and international relations.

'Negative impact on relations'

At the talks in August the two sides vowed to try to promote civilian exchanges. But subsequent talks this month ended with little progress in resolving issues such as that of families separated by the 1950-53 Korean War, and the resumption of cross-border tours to the North's scenic Mount Kumgang. Kim Yang-Gon's death was seen as a blow to efforts at dialogue and reconciliation. "This is going to deliver negative impacts on inter-Korean relations", said Professor Yang. "In light of the North's nature, I don't see anyone who can replace him in his role in daring to offer policy ideas and advice to the leader in these fields", he said.

Professor Kim Yong-Hyun of Dongguk University said Kim Yang-Gon had an image as a "moderate". "His death may cause difficulties in keeping up the momentum for dialogue" between the two Koreas, he said. Some of the North's most promising party leaders have died in traffic accidents.

Kim Yang-Gon's predecessor Kim Yong-Sun, who helped arrange the first North-South summit in 2000, perished in what was described as a traffic accident in 2003. Ri Je-Gang, a top party official, reportedly died in a car crash in 2010 at a time when he was rumored to be involved in a power struggle with Jang Song-Thaek, the brother-in-law of Kim Jong-Il.

Jang himself survived a car accident in 2006 but was executed in 2013 by his nephew and new leader Kim Jong-Un after being condemned as a "traitor" to the nation. Yonhap said the partying habits of North Korean elites were also to blame for their disproportionately high rate of fatal traffic accidents, often driving home drunk after exclusive parties. —AFP

PHILIPPINE PRIEST 'SORRY' AFTER HOVERBOARD STUNT

CHINA'S XI WARNS COMMUNIST COLLEAGUES TO WATCH FAMILY

BEIJING: China's Communist chief Xi Jinping told top officials in the ruling party to closely watch their families, state media said yesterday, after reports that his relations and those of other elite politicians amassed massive wealth.

Xi, who has overseen a much-publicized crackdown on corruption, told members of the party's 25-member Politburo to "strictly educate and supervise their children and other family members", the official Xinhua news agency said. Chinese officials are not required to disclose their wealth or that of their close relatives, in what critics say is a barrier to Xi's anti-graft campaign. Xi has relied on internal party agencies to oversee the crackdown, while more than a dozen activists have been jailed for protesting to demand officials be made to declare their assets.

Bloomberg News in a 2012 report cited records showing that Xi's family owned assets worth several hundred million dollars. China responded by blocking the company's website. The report did not allege wrongdoing by Xi, who it cited as saying in a 2004 anti-graft conference call: "Rein in your spouses, children, relatives, friends and staff." The New York Times reported that former Premier Wen Jiabao's family had controlled assets worth \$2.7 billion. China called the report a smear.

At a Politburo meeting held this week, Xi also urged adherence to the "three stricts and three earnestness", Xinhua said. The slogan-one of many numerical designations in Chinese politics—refers to being strict in morals, power and discipline, as well as honesty in decisions, business and behavior, Xinhua added. Xi has centralized power and carried out an unusually fierce campaign against allegedly corrupt officials since assuming power three years ago, although critics say it has been used for factional infighting. —AFP



QUEZON CITY: A Filipino Catholics choir hold hands as they sing during the first of nine daily dawn Masses before Christmas day at the St Peter Parish. —AP

MANILA: The Philippine Catholic Church has apologized after a priest was filmed riding a hoverboard in church while celebrating Christmas Eve Mass. In clips that have gone viral on YouTube and social media sites, a middle-aged man in a white cassock sings a Christmas song while riding a self-balancing electric scooter between packed pews.

The diocese of San Pablo said the priest rode the hoverboard inside his Miraculous Medal church in the town of Binan, about 30 kilometers south of Manila, "as a way of greeting his parishioners". "That was wrong. The Eucharist demands utmost respect and reverence... it is the Church's highest form of worship," the diocese said. Its statement was released to AFP yesterday by the Catholic

Bishops Conference of the Philippines, which named the priest as Father Albert San Jose.

"Consequently, it is not a personal celebration where one can capriciously introduce something to get the attention of the people," the statement added. "The priest said that it was a wake-up call for him; he acknowledged that his action was not right and promised that it will not happen again. "He will be out of the parish and will spend some time to reflect on this past event," it said, adding the priest also offered an apology. The Philippines is a conservative bastion of the Catholic Church in Asia, the only state outside the Vatican to ban divorce. About 80 percent of its 100 million people are members of the faith. —AFP

CHINA: STORM CAUSED SINKING OF CRUISE SHIP THAT KILLED 442

BEIJING: Chinese authorities blamed freak weather for the capsizing of a cruise ship that killed hundreds earlier this year, but also recommended that the captain be further investigated and representatives of the shipping company and local authorities be punished for management flaws, state media announced yesterday.

The disaster on the Yangtze River on the evening of June 1 killed 442 people and left just 12 survivors. The Eastern Star was carrying many elderly tourists on a 10-day cruise from Nanjing in China's east upstream to Chongqing.

The official Xinhua News Agency said the Cabinet's investigation team concluded that the Eastern Star was brought down "by strong winds and heavy rains" associated with a downburst, a strong downdraft that is "a very rare weather phenomenon."

The conclusion backs up the initial finding that the disaster was caused by strong winds, although passengers' relatives have raised questions about whether the ship should have continued its voyage despite a weather warning.

Xinhua said the investigation team found that 36 local government and Communist Party officials and seven people from the shipping company should be given administrative punishments for flaws in management, which would likely include demotions and firings.

The seven included the captain and the officer in charge at the time, who died in the disaster. The investigation found the pair responded inadequately to the emergency and had not properly ascertained the threat posed by the dire weather conditions, Xinhua said.

It recommended that the ship's captain, Zhang Shunwen, have his license revoked and his contract terminated, and that his case be sent for further investigation to determine whether he should face criminal charges.

The captain was arrested after he was rescued from the river, with investigators looking into why he chose to sail into the storm instead of dropping anchor. Investigators had also been expected to focus on alterations made to the ship. A government agency had earlier cited the ship for safety violations.

Qin Meiping, who lost her 73-year-old father and 49-year-old brother, questioned whether the modifications to the vessel had been safe. "If you blame it on the weather, why were the other two boats that were also traveling at that time safe? Why was this boat modified three times before? Were the modifications done properly?" asked Qin, who said she has had "tears in my eyes every day since" the sinking. "We are not experts, but is the report by the experts the truth?" —AP



The setting sun sets wispy clouds aglow above the skyline of the Dubai Marina in Dubai yesterday. —AP

END OF ERA FOR LAVISH HANDOUTS

Continued from Page 1

In postings on Twitter, ordinary citizens in the Gulf also saw the Saudi budget as signalling tougher times for the region. "Saudi Arabia's budget deficit is terrifying! We fear that it will be echoed around the Gulf," tweeted a Kuwaiti high school teacher who identified himself as Bu Dujan, adding that fuel price hikes in the region would raise the costs of goods.

Some countries had already launched reforms before Riyadh made its move. In August, the United Arab Emirates abandoned a system of fixed gasoline prices in favor of one linked to global oil prices; gasoline has barely risen, but the way is clear for it to do so in future when oil eventually recovers. Bahrain more than doubled prices of beef and chicken in October as it removed subsidies on them, and this week the Bahraini cabinet approved a new system for diesel and kerosene that would allow prices to rise

gradually in coming years.

Bigger changes are on the way. Governments in Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar and Oman, which face financial squeezes of varying intensity, have all said they are conducting broad reviews of their subsidy systems, though they have not yet committed to specific reforms. Because of political sensitivities, governments are likely to move cautiously; Saudi officials stressed this week that they wanted to minimize the impact on the living standards of lower-and middle-income people.

Although the Saudi price of 95 octane gasoline jumped 50 percent, it remained very low by global standards, at 0.90 riyal (\$0.24) per litre. Water and electricity price hikes were structured to impose most of the burden on big corporate users. Nevertheless, Riyadh made clear that the price hikes were only the first in a series, saying it would adjust subsidies for water, electricity and petroleum products over five years. — Reuters

KUWAIT SET TO FOLLOW AS OMAN HIKES FUEL...

Continued from Page 1

The lawmaker said that Assembly committees have reports which indicate unrestrained squandering of public funds by government institutions and bureaucrats, adding that controlling government spending must precede any other measures.

Turajji said a correct implementation of the privatization plan will provide additional revenues to help face the sharp drop in oil income.

MP Faisal Al-Kandari meanwhile sent a series of questions to Finance Minister Anas Al-Saleh about the issue. He asked about the truth in media reports about a government plan to raise the price of fuel and electricity. He also asked for the cost of subsidies and other benefits for the people in the budget.

Oman's official ONA agency reported yesterday that the government will hike fuel prices, charges for public

services and corporate taxes in the face of falling oil prices. "The council of ministers has approved a number of measures to face the consequences from the drop in oil prices and to ensure fiscal sustainability," ONA cited a cabinet statement as saying. "These measures include reducing government spending and boosting non-oil revenues through raising taxes on corporate profits, increasing charges on some public services and amending fuel prices to be in line with international levels as from mid-January," the statement said.

The cabinet also approved a 2016-2020 development plan and the 2016 budget but provided no details. Omani oil revenues have dropped by more than 60 percent as oil prices have plunged from about \$100 a barrel to below \$40 since mid-2014. It has projected a budget deficit of \$6.5 billion for 2015, but the International Monetary Fund has warned the shortfall may be much bigger.

US STILL SPYING ON NETANYAHU

Continued from Page 1

But, according to the Journal report, Obama decided there was a "compelling national security purpose" in continuing to monitor some leaders, including Netanyahu and Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The US administration decided not to remove or disable the "cyber-implants" it had secreted on foreign communications systems, as they would be hard to replace. Instead, the report says, Obama ordered that some of the hacked systems used by close allies would not be routinely monitored by the

NSA, while others would continue to be mined for intel.

"Going dark on Bibi? Of course we wouldn't do that," one senior US official told the Journal, speaking on condition of anonymity. In Netanyahu's case, Washington was concerned that Israel was itself monitoring US negotiations with Iran and might try to derail the effort to reach a deal on Tehran's nuclear program. Last March, Israel denied reports in The Wall Street Journal that its security forces spied on the negotiations between Tehran and major powers over Iran's nuclear capacities. — AFP

BILL COSBY CHARGED WITH SEXUAL ASSAULT

Continued from Page 1

The Pennsylvania criminal charge stems from allegations made by a former employee of Temple University in Philadelphia, who says the television legend assaulted her at his home in the suburb of Cheltenham in 2004. "On the evening in question, Mr Cosby urged her to take pills that he provided to her and to drink wine - the effect of which rendered her unable to move, (or to) respond to his advances, and he committed aggravated indecent assault upon her," Steele said.

Steele said the charge - which prosecutors later clarified is a felony of the second degree - stemmed from new evidence in the case that came to light in July, prompting the reopening of the investigation. "A prosecutor's job is to follow the evidence wherever it leads and whenever it comes to light," Steele said. "Today, after examination of all the evidence, we are able to seek justice on behalf of the victim," he added, urging anyone with information about similar incidents with Cosby to come forward.

In a statement, prosecutors accused Cosby of fondling the woman and penetrating her with his fingers. Steele did not name the victim, but the facts of the

case correspond with allegations made by Andrea Constand. Constand's lawyer, Dolores Troiani, confirmed to CNN that the charge was connected to her. In 2005, an initial investigation did not result in criminal charges against Cosby in Constand's case.

In a deposition Cosby gave as part of a civil suit filed by Constand, which was settled in 2006, the actor insisted all relations with Constand were consensual, and accused her of lying about the assault. "I think Andrea is a liar and I know she's a liar because I was there. I was there," Cosby said in the deposition, cited by The New York Times. Prosecutors said the release of court documents in July and the subsequent release of the deposition had in part led to the reopening of the case. Steele said the victim had said she was willing to cooperate with prosecutors.

Statutes of limitations have prevented most of the women who have accused the comedian of sexual assault from taking legal action. In the Pennsylvania case, the statute of limitations was set to expire early next year. The accusations against Cosby have led television networks to back away from projects connected to him, and several universities have stripped him of honorary degrees. — AFP

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Kuwait Times

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7
FAX : 24835620/1
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163
ACCOUNTS : 24835619
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Focus

NO HOLIDAY CHEER
AS TURKS IN RUSSIA
DREAD NEW YEAR

By Maria Antonova

Mehmet Ali Duzcu usually holds a holiday party for his small team of colleagues in Moscow, but this year he is in no mood to celebrate. His firm, which imports textiles from Turkey, had already been hurting from Russia's economic crisis, but now sanctions Moscow has imposed against Turkey over the downing of a Russian jet last month - which go into effect on Jan 1 - have "practically been a death sentence," he said.

Duzcu, who hails from Turkey but acquired Russian citizenship during his two decades in the country, is one of thousands of Turks who are now living in fear of an uncertain future in Russia, even after spending decades in the country they consider home. "When my colleagues ask me what will happen to us next year, I have nothing to say to them, and I don't want to lie," said Duzcu, 46, whose company imports bedding, bathrobes and other household goods for large Russian chains and online stores. "I have absolutely zero holiday spirit," he told AFP.

Since Ankara shot down a Russian warplane on the Syria-Turkish border on Nov 24, Moscow regards Turkey - a trading partner and top tourist destination for Russians - as an adversary. The Russian government has come up with a wide range of measures to go into effect come 2016, including an embargo on produce and limits on employment of Turkish nationals. Since the incident, many Turks have been deported and Turkish companies raided by police, forcing some to suspend operations.

'All is Lost'

Textiles have not been specifically targeted by sanctions but Industry and Trade Minister Denis Manturov said Tuesday a ban on imports of consumer goods from Turkey was still an option. An embargo on Turkey's light industry had been drafted just in case, he added. "It will be hard to substitute Turkish textiles, but nobody can guarantee that they won't try," said Duzcu, whose business is already suffering due to delays in customs processing, which now takes three times longer than before the incident.

But what scares Turks like Duzcu the most is the political grandstanding by both Istanbul and Moscow following the incident, and a media atmosphere in which anti-Turkish sentiments are thriving. "I consider both countries mine and it's very hurtful to hear the anti-Turkish propaganda on Russian television," said Bulent Yalin, another Turkish businessman who said he avoided going outside for the first few days after the downing of the jet and the ensuing storm of angry rhetoric. "I just had the feeling that all is lost," said Yalin, who has three children with his Russian wife but only residency status in the country.

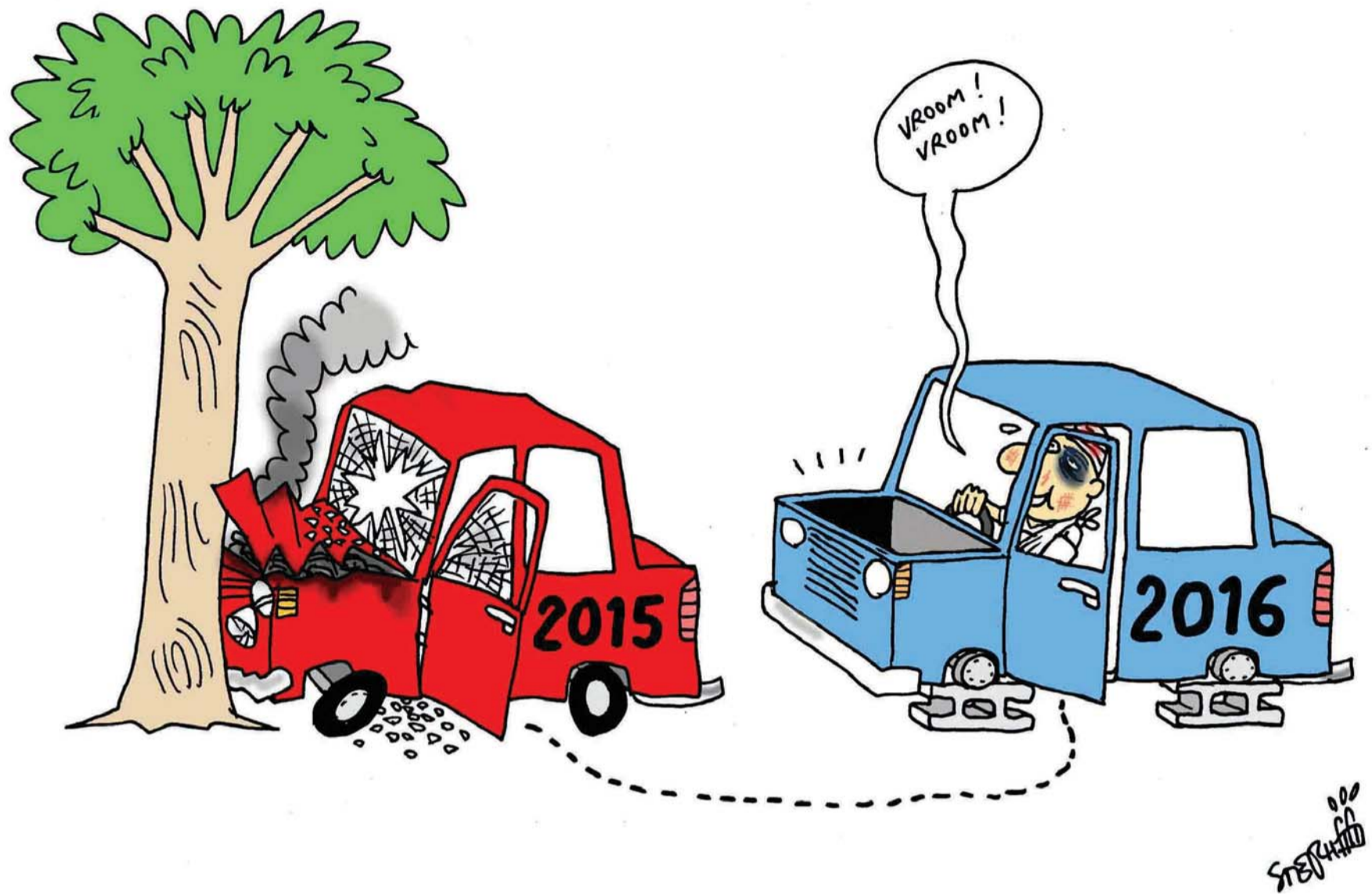
Yalin estimates that some 200,000 mixed families could be hurt by the measures, while his wife Yelena Korzhavina sent a letter to Russian President Vladimir Putin saying sanctions hurt primarily ordinary people like themselves. "All plans are crumbling before our eyes," Yalin said sitting in his flat in the outskirts of Moscow as his twin toddler daughters romped on the floor with a pile of Legos.

Russia's state media quickly caught on the message after President Putin accused Turkey of a "stab in the back" and accused his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan of trading oil with Islamic State jihadists. Since November, Turkey has become the number one enemy in Russian media, overtaking the United States, Ukraine and even the Islamic State group itself in terms of the number of negative mentions, RBK news agency reported Tuesday, quoting data from media monitor Medialogia.

In a poll conducted this month by the Public Opinion Foundation pollster, 29 percent of Russians viewed Turks more negatively than before the Nov 24 incident, with only 24 percent saying they like Turkish people. "Not many people give a lot of thought to what the media says, most will truly tie Turkey and Turkish citizens directly to terrorism," said Korzhavina, Yalin's wife. "I really don't want this hatred to continue," she said, fearing that anti-Turkish propaganda falls on an audience already disgruntled with the economic crisis that may be more than willing to find a scapegoat.

Duzcu, the textile importer, said he forbade his children from loudly speaking Turkish in public and now thinks twice before mentioning his heritage to strangers. "I'm not happy with the Turkish government, I never voted for Erdogan, and shooting down that plane was a deadly mistake," he said. "But Russia should not react so harshly, it should not provoke people with nationalist attitudes. God forbid, this will lead to a peaceful Turk or Russian being attacked and then it will be hard to forgive one another," he added. "Before it's too late, both governments should back down." —AFP

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CHINA CONTROLS DISSIDENTS THROUGH RELATIVES

By Paul Mooney and David Lague

Ekin Kurban, an ethnic Uighur from China's frontier region of Xinjiang, left his homeland for Canada back in 1999. When he returned to Xinjiang for a visit in April 2013, he had not seen his family for more than 13 years. Kurban was especially excited about seeing his 85-year-old mother.

His joy was short-lived. On the third day after his arrival, an agent of China's pervasive security police summoned him for a meeting at a police station. Over the next 10 hours, Kurban, a 55-year-old long-distance truck driver, was grilled on his activities in Canada and the United States. His interrogators urged him to send reports on fellow Uighur exiles when he went back, leaving him with a stark choice: Spy for China or never come back to see his family again. The interrogators had a particular target in mind. For 90 minutes they demanded information on Washington-based Rebiya Kadeer, the most prominent leader of the Uighur community in exile and an outspoken critic of China's treatment of the Turkic-speaking Muslim people in Xinjiang. "They asked me who was active in the leadership and who was doing what," said Kurban, as he steered his 53-foot tractor trailer on a long haul trip from California to Montreal. "They also wanted to know what Rebiya Kadeer was doing and what projects she had."

Kurban's interrogation is part of a global campaign of intelligence gathering and harassment by China against the Uighur community abroad. The effort is aimed at neutralizing the community's leaders, whom Beijing accuses of plotting independence, and sowing distrust and discord among its members. With the power to treat family members back home as hostages, Chinese security services have strong leverage over Uighurs living overseas, thousands of whom have fled what they say is persecution by the authorities in Xinjiang.

China's suppression of political dissidents and restive minorities at home is well known. Less documented are Beijing's extensive and growing efforts to stifle these same populations abroad, including Chinese-born citizens of Western democracies. This examination of China's methods of exerting control over Uighur exiles in North America, Europe and Australia is based on interviews with exiled Uighur leaders, court records of espionage trials and the findings of asylum cases.

In Germany and Sweden, Chinese spies - some Uighurs themselves - have been convicted of espionage against local Uighur communities. Relatives of exiled Uighur leaders in the United States and Canada have been jailed back in Xinjiang. One prominent Uighur leader said he has been detained or denied entry on traveling to some Western countries after China accused him of terrorism. "Some might think that once you flee China, you are free," said Kayum Masimov, president of the Uyghur Canadian Society. "But you are never free."

In response to questions from Reuters about the targeting of Uighurs, China's Foreign Ministry said Xinjiang is experiencing one of its "fastest periods" of development. "There will always be some people with ulterior motives and forces who do not wish to see a stable and harmonious Xinjiang," the ministry said. "Their plots are doomed to fail."

'100 Percent' Infiltration

Ultimately, Uighur activists say, the goal of China's global dragnet is less the collection of high quality intelligence and more an effort to intimidate the exile community. Prominent Uighurs say China's infiltration of their ranks is even more successful than its penetration of Tibetan exile groups critical of Beijing's policies in Tibet. "If the infiltration of the Tibetans is 80 percent, then the infiltration of the Uighurs is 100 percent," said Enver Tohti, a former cancer surgeon from Xinjiang who was granted refugee status in the United Kingdom in 1999. "So far here in the UK, I've had four Uighurs confess to me that they have been spying."

In Xinjiang, which borders Kazakhstan, the Chinese authorities are battling to contain unrest that has seen hundreds of people die in clashes in recent years. Beijing blames the violence on Islamist militants. Human rights groups say China has failed to produce convincing evidence that it faces a cohesive militant force. Harsh controls on the religion and culture of Uighurs are the primary reason for the violent outbreaks, they say.

China denies that repression takes place and has blamed a number of lethal attacks in recent years on militants from Xinjiang. In the southwestern city of Kunming, 31 people were killed at a train station on March 1, 2014, by knife-wielding assailants. In March this year, China executed three people for their role in the attack. The government said the culprits were separatists from Xinjiang.

Beijing has seized on the attacks as proof that it faces a significant threat of Islamist radicalism, and has labeled a group of Uighur leaders, some citizens of Western countries, as terrorists. These allegations have hindered the travel of exile leaders such as Dolkun Isa, executive chairman of the Munich-based World Uyghur Congress, the leading Uighur group which advocates democracy and human rights in Xinjiang. China named Isa, a former student activist in Xinjiang, on a list of Uighur terrorists in 2003. Germany accepted his claim of refugee status and granted him a passport in 2006. That status hasn't always helped. Isa says he has been detained or refused entry when traveling to countries including Switzerland, the United States and South Korea. He has since been allowed into Switzerland and the United States, which he said granted him a 10-year multiple entry visa in 2012. Isa says he condemns all terrorism. The Chinese Foreign Ministry said Kadeer and Isa have colluded with terrorist forces, but did not provide any evidence.

Trouble in Hungary

In the detention cases, Uighurs say some foreign governments are responding to diplomatic pressure from an increasingly wealthy and powerful China. The Munich-based vice president of the World Uyghur Congress, Umit Hamit, a German citizen, said he didn't expect trouble in Hungary, a country he had visited eight times in 10 years without any problems. On May 30, 2013, that changed: He said he was detained while leading a Uighur youth delegation to Budapest. Police cordoned off and searched the motel where his 28-member group was staying as if they were looking for a bomb, according to Hamit's account of the incident. "They didn't find anything," he said in an interview in Munich.

After contacting the German embassy, Hamit was released, but the Hungarians kept up the pressure. He said he was told by the police that he had one hour to leave the country. "I told them I don't have a car here," Hamit says. "They said, 'Okay, we'll give you two hours.'" The World Uyghur Congress later said it suspected Hungarian authorities were acting on false allegations from China that Hamit was a terrorist. The Chinese Foreign Ministry had no comment on the incident.

Economic ties between Hungary and China have blossomed in recent years. In June, Hungary became the first European country to sign a cooperation agreement with Beijing on its "Silk Road" initiative to develop trade and transport infrastructure across Asia and beyond. Last month, a consortium led by China Railway Group was awarded a 10 billion yuan (\$1.54 billion) contract for building the Hungarian section of a railway that will link Budapest with the Serbian capital Belgrade.

China's growing economic clout, and the diplomatic leverage that has brought, are enabling Beijing to impose its will far beyond its borders. Reuters reported this year how Beijing is using intimidation tactics at the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva to silence critics there. Another article documented how China is backing a Buddhist sect that operates in the West as part of its strategy to discredit the Dalai Lama.

In the case of the Uighurs, China's efforts at control now stretch thousands of miles beyond Xinjiang. In the past year, Uighurs fleeing Xinjiang have reached Turkey via Southeast Asia. Not all have made it. In July, Thailand forcibly repatriated more than 100 Uighurs to China. The move was condemned by the United States, which said the Uighurs could be harshly treated back in China. Thai Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha said it wasn't the fault of his government if the Uighurs faced problems back home.

Spying For China

Extensive spying on Uighur exiles was the focus of a 2011 court case in Munich. The Bavarian capital is home to about 650 Uighurs, one of the biggest single communities in the West, said Isa of the World Uyghur Congress, or WUC, who gave evidence at the trial. Prosecutors charged three Chinese men with

illegal "secret service activity," Munich court records show. One of the suspects, a 62-year-old Chinese man identified only as "G" in the records, was accused of "spying on the Uighur community in Germany and sending the information he gathered to the Chinese intelligence service."

According to the court records, the man "regularly reported to his intelligence service contact person - by telephone or in personal meetings - on planned Uighur demonstrations and events. He also passed on information about Uighur exiles and the WUC." The three men were given suspended sentences for spying, according to a Bavarian Interior Ministry annual report. "The Chinese intelligence service case officers operating under the cover of diplomats working at the Chinese consulate general in Munich subsequently left Germany," the report said.

Isa says security officials in China are still collecting information. "We know the Chinese government and Chinese police call Uighur people here in Munich," he said. China's Foreign Ministry didn't comment on the case. In Australia, concerns over Chinese surveillance of Uighurs have helped refugees seeking asylum. In a review of an asylum application for an unnamed Uighur man in Sept 2011, Australia's Refugee Review Tribunal concluded that the activities of Uighurs living in the country were likely being reported to Chinese authorities. As a result, it found, "the applicant may be at risk of persecution for his participation in these activities if he were to return to China." The tribunal ruled that the applicant was entitled to asylum.

The tribunal also cited the sworn evidence of Alim Seytoff, president of the Uyghur American Association. Seytoff had testified in an earlier case that "there is an extensive network of spies including some Uyghurs, who regularly monitor the activities of Uyghurs throughout the Western world and report on their activities to the PRC (People's Republic of China) authorities."

The Price of Activism

For China, the exile Uighur leadership poses a challenge to Beijing's narrative on Xinjiang. Leaders like Kadeer regularly highlight the trials and imprisonment of Uighur activists, including Ilham Tohti, an economics professor who was jailed for life on charges of separatism in September 2014. The leadership also organizes protests outside Chinese embassies in Western capitals and lobbies politicians in their adopted countries.

China's Foreign Ministry said that in the case of Ilham Tohti, "the facts of the crime are clear and there is cast iron evidence. During the trial, the rights of Ilham (Tohti) and his defending team were fully guaranteed." Foreign journalists and diplomats were barred from the courtroom during the trial. There is a price to pay for activism, especially for the highest-profile Uighur leaders. And the cost often falls on their families back in Xinjiang. Some relatives are jailed or beaten. Others are prevented from ever reuniting with their exiled children or siblings.

"They use your family ties to stop you from doing whatever you're doing and to get you to do what they want you to do," Mehmet Tohti, the founder of the Uighur organization in Canada, said in an interview in Toronto. Tohti said he has not been allowed back to Xinjiang in close to 25 years, and his parents have been blocked from leaving China to visit him. Even extended members of his family cannot obtain Chinese passports to travel abroad, he said. The Foreign Ministry didn't comment on Tohti's case.

Even minor figures in the exile community feel the pressure. When truck driver Kurban returned in 2013 to Urumqi, the regional capital of Xinjiang, he says his interrogators had a file on him. They knew he'd been in Montreal for 13 years. And they knew the names of many Uighurs living in Canada. When Kurban protested that he was a Canadian citizen, he said, one of the interrogators replied: "When you're here, we can do whatever we want." At one point, an interrogator asked for his Canadian passport. "He looked at it and then threw it to the ground," said Kurban.

When quizzed about Rebiya Kadeer, the Uighur exile leader living in the United States, he said he told the interrogators he was poorly educated and had no knowledge of her activities. That wasn't true. Kurban and Kadeer say they knew each other when they both lived in Urumqi. Kurban later participated

in Uighur political events in Washington after arriving in Canada in 1999.

Kurban, like most Uighur exiles, refers to Xinjiang as East Turkestan, a politically charged term that Beijing views as tantamount to separatism. He says that mention of Kadeer's name in public is dangerous in China. Uighurs call her Ana (Mama) instead. He said he still gets calls from Xinjiang asking after her: "How is Ana? How is her health?" His interrogators in Xinjiang "asked again, again, and again" about Kadeer, he said. "And I repeated, repeated and repeated: Rebiya Kadeer is an old woman. Why is the Communist Party afraid of her?"

Outspoken Critic

Outside China, the 69-year-old Kadeer is Beijing's most prominent Uighur critic. She became a millionaire property and trading entrepreneur and one of China's richest women as the country's economic reforms took hold in the 1980s. At first she was embraced by the Communist Party. She became a member of China's prestigious but largely rubber-stamp parliament, the National People's Congress.

After Kadeer started speaking out against Chinese abuses in Xinjiang, she was detained in 1999. She was arrested on her way to meet a US Congressional delegation in Xinjiang and sentenced to eight years for "stealing state secrets," according to the website of the World Uyghur Congress. Ultimately, Kadeer spent almost six years in jail. In 2005, under strong international pressure, Beijing allowed her to leave for the United States. Since 2006, she has been president of the World Uyghur Congress.

For that activism, Kadeer says her family has paid a high price. Some of her children were jailed in China after she arrived in the United States and ignored a Chinese demand that she refrain from getting involved in politics. One son, Alim Abdureyym, was given a seven-year sentence, and a second, Kahar Abdureyym, was fined after both were found guilty of tax evasion in 2006, according to the World Uyghur Congress website. The two were sentenced on Nov 27, 2006 - the day Kadeer was elected president of the Congress, the website said. A third son, Ablikim Abdureyym, was sentenced to nine years in jail in 2007 for engaging in secessionist activities.

"They didn't commit any crime," Kadeer told Reuters at her office in Washington. "They just happened to be my children." Because of her political activism, she says, family members are unable to find work and are prohibited from leaving Xinjiang. "It's like living in an open prison," she said.

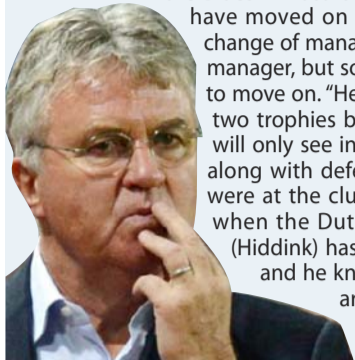
Kurban says his interrogators put him through four hours of questioning about Kadeer and other exiles. When it was over, he was told he must return to Canada within 48 hours. As he got ready to leave the police station, Kurban says, he decided he would pretend to cooperate with the security officers to prolong his stay. That led to another six hours of questioning, during which the security officers filed 10 A4-size pieces of paper with his answers, he said.

At the end, he signed the document, affirming it was an accurate report. "But I had lied about everything," Kurban said. All through the interrogation, Kurban's two younger brothers waited for him in the police station. "When I got out they were white with fear," he said. For the remainder of his almost two-month stay, he visited the police once a week. Before leaving Xinjiang, Kurban said the security agents gave him a mobile telephone number in China and told him he could call at any time. Just before he departed, a Uighur security officer offered him rewards if he cooperated after returning home. One enticement was the offer of a permanent residency card, which would have made it easier for him to return home and travel abroad.

Kurban had no intention of cooperating. "I told my mother I won't come back again," he said. "She knew already it was the last time I'd see her." When he returned to Canada, Kurban called Kadeer and told her the whole story. He also contacted the Canadian Security Intelligence Service and did the same. A month after he got back, one of Kurban's interrogators called and asked if he had information to provide. Kurban said he stalled, explaining he had just gotten home and had been busy. Over the next four or five months, he was called several times. Each time, he said, he made excuses. The calls have stopped, for now. —Reuters

CHELSEA DRESSING ROOM BETTER UNDER HIDDINK

LONDON: Struggling champions Chelsea may not have set the Premier League alight under interim manager Guus Hiddink but the mood in the dressing room has definitely improved since his arrival, midfielder John Obi Mikel has said. Chelsea turned to Hiddink again earlier this month to guide them out of a woeful campaign under Jose Mourinho this season, a spell that saw them fall to 16th place and within a point off relegation. Hiddink had a caretaker spell in charge of the Blues in 2009 after Brazilian Luiz Felipe Scolari departed. "We have moved on and the atmosphere has improved since the change of manager," Mikel told British media. "Jose is a fantastic manager, but sometimes football is a cruel game and you have to move on. He came back to the club a second time and won two trophies but now he is gone. Is it the right decision? We will only see in the future." The Nigerian is one of few players, along with defenders John Terry and Branislav Ivanovic, who were at the club during Hiddink's previous period in charge, when the Dutch manager led them to an FA Cup win. "He (Hiddink) hasn't changed much yet, but he was here before and he knows the place and all the staff," Mikel said. "We are down there in the table for a reason so he can not come in and perform miracles. — Reuters



TEAM WORK WILL PROPEL STOKE UP THE TABLE

EVERTON: Team work will take Stoke City to new heights, winger Xherdan Shaqiri has said after Monday's morale-boosting 4-3 Premier League win over Everton. Despite scoring four goals on Monday, Stoke, who are ninth in the table, are one of the low-scoring teams in the league with 20 goals. "I think you never know what can happen in the Premier League this season. You see that some teams are really down, some teams are really up, like Leicester (City)," Shaqiri told British media. "So anything can happen in this league... but we must work hard like we did at Everton and we must play well. If we do that, then we can see where we finish. "For us it's important to play as a team. We can only win as a team and we showed that at Everton. If we keep going like that anything can happen." The Potters have dropped 10 points against teams in the bottom half of the league and Shaqiri has called on his team mates to change their mentality when they take on teams lower down the table. "I don't know if there's one specific reason. Perhaps it's mentality, but I do know even the smaller teams are good now. They have new players, good players and every game is tough in the Premier League," Shaqiri said. "I always thought it (the Premier League) would be ideal for me. As a player I sometimes have space, inside and outside, and I really enjoy it."

EAGLES FIRE COACH KELLY

PHILADELPHIA: The Philadelphia Eagles fired Chip Kelly with one game left in his third season, dumping the coach after missing the playoffs in consecutive years. Kelly was released Tuesday night just before the end of a disappointing season that began with Super Bowl expectations. The Eagles are 6-9 after going 10-6 in each of Kelly's first two seasons. They were eliminated from playoff contention after losing to Washington at home on Saturday night. Eagles CEO Jeffrey Lurie issued a one-sentence statement to the media, saying he appreciates Kelly's contributions and wishes him success going forward. Lurie told fans in an email that he decided to make a change after "evaluating the many factors involved in our performance as a team." The Eagles also fired Ed Marynowitz, who was vice president of player personnel. Kelly made several bold moves that backfired after assuming full control of personnel decisions last offseason. Since March 2014, he released three-time Pro Bowl wide receiver DeSean Jackson, traded two-time All-Pro running back LeSean McCoy, didn't re-sign 2014 Pro Bowl wideout Jeremy Maclin, cut two-time Pro Bowl guard Evan Mathis and traded quarterback Nick Foles and a 2016 second-round draft pick for Sam Bradford.



WAGES OF SIN RETURN TO HAUNT SPORTS BARONS

PARIS: Judges and prosecutors trashed the reputations of two of the leading Lords of the Rings in 2015 and criminal charges against Sepp Blatter and Lamine Diack were a warning that sport has got to clean up its act.

Bribes, doping, even more bribes, the sky seems to be the limit in the strictly cash underbelly of sports marketing and fixed sporting glory.

The jury is still out on whether the federation chiefs who dominate a sports industry that accounts for up to \$700 billion a year-one percent of world GDP-will get the message though.

"If Blatter and Michel Platini are banned that will have no impact on other sports. But for sure there are other sports with similar problems," said Sylvia Schenk, a sport expert for the Transparency International anti-corruption group.

Patrick Nally, a British entrepreneur who was one of the pioneers of sponsorship for the Olympics and other mega-events, is among the critics who see hope.

He said the focus put on FIFA, football's world body, and the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) means other governing bodies can expect the spotlight.

"It will mean all federations will become more transparent and I think we will see the International Olympic Committee taking a more active role in helping and encouraging federations to meet all the minimum criteria expected of international organisations."

An early wake-up call at the luxury Baur au Lac hotel in Zurich on May 27 blew the lid on soccer's chicanery. The first seven FIFA officials were hauled away in a raid two days before Blatter had expected to seal an easy fifth term as head of football's world governing body.

US attorney general Loretta Lynch said corruption was "rampant, systemic and deep-rooted" in football. Blatter said he suspected the arrests were politically motivated. The battle was on.

Blatter got his vote after his only challenger Prince Ali bin Al Hussein, a FIFA vice president from Jordan withdrew. But four days later Blatter announced that a new election would be held on February 26 and that he would stand down.

Now 39 football officials and business executives who face charges in US courts account for \$200 million in bribes given or taken. A Swiss criminal investigation into FIFA's finances delivered the knockout blow. Blatter is a formal suspect for "criminal mismanagement", European football boss Platini was named in the inquiry over a "disloyal" two million Swiss franc (\$2 million/1.8 million euro) payment he received in 2011. FIFA have banned both men from football for eight years. That means Platini cannot even accept a ticket for the European Championships in his native France in 2016. Blatter and Platini both strongly deny any wrongdoing. But only an appeal miracle will get Platini into the FIFA election in February.

'DISGUSTED'

Swiss investigators are also looking into the FIFA vote in 2010 to give the 2018 and 2022 World Cups to Russia and Qatar.

German police have launched a probe into whether German organisers paid money to get votes for the 2006 World Cup.

Despite the chaos and ignominy, there is no shortage of candidates for the FIFA leadership: Asian football boss Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, South African politician and tycoon Tokyo Sexwale, UEFA secretary general Gianni Infantino, Prince Ali and former FIFA official Jerome Champagne.

The result looks tight. The fallout from the scandal has already been enormous though with sponsors warning they could pull out of FIFA deals if reforms are not convincing. "People are disgusted," said Transparency International's Schenk. "Some think it will never change, while others want radical change now. Neither belief is right. It will take time for deep changes at FIFA." The IAAF has been in the firing line all year over widespread "state-supported" doping in Russia, Kenya and other countries. A World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) report told how one controller had to jump from a window in the middle of the night to stop local police taking samples he had gathered.

But British running legend Sebastian Coe had only been IAAF president for a few weeks when his veteran predecessor Lamine Diack of Senegal was arrested by French investigators.

He now faces charges of corruption, money laundering and accepting bribes to cover up failed Russian dope tests. Russia is suspended from international athletics and racing against time to get back for the Rio de Janeiro Olympics in August. More criminal charges could follow and WADA is to release a new report in January likely to widen the agony in athletics with more countries named and shamed.

Coe has been forced to give up his role as a Nike "ambassador" but he defended the IAAF before the British parliament, insisting: "No, it's not a corrupt organisation." Scandal has not stopped football and other sports attracting ever more money. The English Premier League makes about \$2.5 billion (2.3 billion euros) a year from domestic and foreign television rights. Spain's La Liga, in second place, gets about \$1.1 billion (one billion euros).

Other sports are also attracting extra revenues and are guilty of FIFA-style chicanery, according to Schenk. "Sport could now experience a Big Bang because of FIFA-gate," said sports economist Vincent Chaudé, deputy head of the French group Sport and Citizenship.

"The model for sport's organisation has reached the end of its time. This is the ultra-communication society which demands more transparency."

US prosecutors have played a leading role in pressing FIFA and Switzerland, the home of most leading sporting federations, has changed its legislation to make the sporting barons more accountable. "The more the sporting movement delays making reforms the more governments will be tempted to get a grip through the criminal system," said Jean-François Vilotte, former head of France's Regulation Authority for Online Games. — AFP



FLORIDA: Clemson Quintin Hall, left to right, Chad Smith, Judah Davis, and Collins Mauldin, put their sneakers on the table at media Day for the Orange Bowl NCAA college football game Tuesday in Miami Gardens, Fla. — AP

NO DEFENSIVE SLUGFEST IN ORANGE BOWL PLAYOFF

MIAMI GARDENS: No one will be tuning in to the Orange Bowl looking for a defensive slugfest. Clemson's Deshaun Watkins is used to lighting up the scoreboard. Oklahoma's Baker Mayfield has shredded one helpless defense after another.

"People love seeing high-powered offenses and guys slinging the ball around," said Clemson linebacker Ben Boulware, sounding a bit gloomy as he looked ahead to Thursday's national semifinal game. "The viewers want to see Deshaun throw for 600 yards and Mayfield throw for 600 yards." While no one is ready to bury the old adage that defense wins championships, it needs a bit of tweaking with these teams.

Clemson (13-0) gave up more than 30 points in its last two games, but Watson & Co. made sure it didn't ruin the perfect season. The Tigers held off South Carolina 37-32 in their regular-season finale, then survived a 45-37 track meet with North Carolina to capture the Atlantic Coast Conference championship.

Oklahoma (11-1) followed a similar path to the College Football Playoff. The Sooners gave up at least 20 points in eight games, more than 30 a couple of times. It cost them only once - an upset loss to Texas.

Despite all those shaky performances, neither defense is lacking bravado. "I know what we've got," Oklahoma outside linebacker Eric Striker said Tuesday during media day at Sun Life Stadium. "We know what it takes to win the game. One thing about the media: They've got to talk, they've got to come up with stuff."

NATIONAL STATISTICS

The media has nothing to do with the national statistics, which have Oklahoma outside the top 20 in all four major defensive categories. The Sooners are tied for 22nd in points allowed (20.8 per game). Clemson has been stingy when it comes to defending the pass, but a bit leaky against the run. The Tigers are giving 20.2 points a game, tied for 18th nationally. "It's about getting the W," Clemson cornerback Mackensie Alexander said. "It ain't always gonna be pretty. When I hear people say, 'Aww, you guys gave up all these points,' I'm like, 'We're the number one team in the country.' Everybody is gonna play us hard, have tricks, do everything they can. For the last six weeks, everybody has been throwing everything at us, everything they've got."

Only two teams in the last 30 years have won national titles while allowing at least 20 points a game, but both have come in the last five seasons - mirroring the game's ever-increasing emphasis on offense. Ohio State won the championship a year ago despite giving up 22.0 points per contest, ranking 26th nationally. Cam Newton-led Auburn finished No. 1 in 2010 while surrendering an average of 24.1 points, which placed a mediocre 53rd in the national rankings.

Of course, it's still a better bet that a team will claim the title by stopping the other team from scoring. Between Auburn and Ohio State, three straight national champions (Alabama in 2011-12, Florida State in 2013) ranked No. 1 in points allowed. In the last three decades, just five other

champions finished higher than 10th nationally in points allowed.

None of that seems to faze these teams. "We're very flexible on defense," Alexander said. "What we're able to do on defense, nobody can match that. There are defensive coordinators in college football who are like, 'Man, I wish I could be coaching you guys.' We've got a lot of great players." Playing in the run-and-gun Big 12 Conference, Oklahoma is used to facing dynamic offenses. This might be their toughest challenge yet. Start with Watson, a Heisman Trophy finalist and probably the most dangerous two-way threat in the country. He can beat you with his arm (3,512 yards passing, 30 touchdowns), he can beat you with his legs (887 yards rushing, 11 TDs). He has weapons all around, including running back Wayne Gallman (1,332 yards rushing, 10 TDs) and nine players with double-figure receptions led by Artavis Scott (84 receptions). Mayfield and the Sooners are just as daunting. The junior quarterback has passed for 3,389 yards with 35 touchdowns and just five interceptions. He, too, can take off and run, which led Boulware to describe him as "kind of Manziel-esque" - a nod to former Texas A&M star Johnny Manziel. Three Oklahoma receivers have hauled in more than 40 passes, while Samaje Perine has rushed for 1,291 yards and 15 TDs.

Hard to see this being a defensive struggle. That's not to say it won't come down to a big defensive play. "Whenever you've got two great offenses," said Clemson linebacker B.J. Goodson, "it's always gonna be about who's making big stops in big moments." — AP



BARNAUL: Russia's world champion hurdler Sergey Shubenkov trains in Barnaul on December 15, 2015. Shubenkov is a victim of the fallout from the scandal over doping allegations that has seen Russia's track and field team hit with a provisional ban that could exclude it from next summer's Rio de Janeiro Olympics. He could become the second member of his family to miss out on a shot at Olympic victory. — AFP

SMALL BOATS IN LINE FOR BIG DAY IN SYDNEY-HOBART

SYDNEY: One of the smallest yachts in the Sydney to Hobart race emerged yesterday as a favourite to win overall honours in the rugged blue ocean classic.

Local 33-footer Quikpoint Azzurro would have to meet a pre-dawn arrival deadline on Thursday to lift the treasured Tattersall's Cup as handicap winner for the vessel that performs best according to size. Owner Shane Kearns appeared set to make it to Hobart's Constitution Dock in time, if he can avoid the worst of the light winds that have plagued the final stages.

Teasing Machine from France was one of numerous boats to hold the handicap lead over the past 36 hours only to suffer on the pond-like Derwent River. Skipper Eric de Turckheim needed to bring Teasing home by 5:30 am (1830 GMT) on Wednesday to top the handicap standings. "From the entrance (of the river) we stayed maybe about three hours idle, nothing at all," de Turckheim told Australian Associated Press after finishing 11th.

"Obviously frustrating, but that's sailing, it's not the first time you are leading overall and in the last few miles the wind goes." French 35-footer Courier Leon also

enjoyed time in the overall lead group but the JPK 1080 looked to be losing hope of making it two majors in a row after victory in the Fastnet Race.

Australian 52-footer Balance finished seventh in line honours on Tuesday and could take the overall title if the smaller vessels miss their deadlines. Owner-skipper Paul Clitheroe took the clubhouse lead after a fearsome battering down the east coast of Australia.

"The bottom of my mainsail is torn to pieces," the financial guru said. "It was a terrible, terrible seaway, lumps and bumps. Most of the crew have got the usual bruises and bashes... it was really awful conditions. "Then we got into Bass Strait and we stopped dead." After some of the roughest conditions forced 32 yachts out of the race, American supermaxi Comanche was first across the finish line Monday night. She took line honours in the 71st edition of the 628-nautical-mile event in a time of two days, eight hours, 58 minutes and 30 seconds. Local boat Ragamuffin 100 arrived second in the Tasmanian capital on Tuesday morning, just seconds ahead of another US contender Rambler. — AFP

IN A YEAR OF ODD MOVES, FIFA, AL CAPONE BECOME NEIGHBORS

NEW YORK: All across Europe and the Americas - as they plot legal strategy, await extradition hearings and consider the billable hours run up by their lawyers - FIFA officials can take comfort in this: They are serving the cause of art.

The Mob Museum in Las Vegas opened a wing this year highlighting the alleged crimes and misdemeanors of soccer's governing body. The exhibit is titled "The Beautiful Game Turns Ugly."

US and Swiss authorities have cast a wide net, with 14 soccer officials and sports marketers charged in May with "rampant, systematic and deep-rooted" corruption. By year's end, dozens were charged and FIFA President Sepp Blatter and European soccer leader Michel Platini were banned from the sport for eight years.

The FIFA exhibit is a short kick from space occupied by Al Capone and his machine-gun trappings. It consists mostly of newspaper clippings - a "FIFA Nostra" headline from a French paper is one example - photos and videos. Among those noted is Jack Warner, a former FIFA vice president under indictment who once cited as fact an article in the satirical "The Onion" that the United States was awarded a World Cup in 2015 (a non-World Cup year). The soccer display was designed to give museum-goers a sense of what organized crime in the 21st century may look like. Geoff Schumacher, the museum's content director, says visitors need to look beyond mobsters of yore.

"You don't have Lucky Luciano or Meyer Lansky," he says. "These are not household names today." The Mob Museum was not the only back road sports wandered down. This was also a year in which Serena Williams, in need of a little pick-me-up after losing the first set 6-0 in an Australian Open tuneup, requested a cup of espresso on the court; the Kansas State marching band was fined \$5,000 for mocking its rival Jayhawk mascot with what appeared to be a phallic formation.

Bridge fans were slammed by a British court, which upheld a ruling that the card game is not a sport; and Canadian hockey gold medalist Meaghan Mikkelson and her husband took to Twitter for baby-name suggestions and, rest assured, did not choose Zamboni. (The winning name, however, was true to hockey - Calder.)

The pucks, the plays, the people went every which way in 2015:

FIT TO BE THAI'D: Runners in a half-marathon in Thailand checked their watches and knew something was wrong. And they weren't pleased. By the time the race was over they had run almost 4 more miles than they should have. Like drivers hopelessly lost, they had gotten bad directions from officials along the course. Organizers apologized, and to atone for their error presented the runners with a T-shirt to "express our admiration for your spirit in bravely overcoming the obstacles."

TO CATCH A THIEF: Racing is hard enough in NASCAR. Even harder when you don't have a car. Team EXTREME, not one of the big boys of NASCAR, was unable to race at Atlanta Motor Speedway because thieves swiped the car from a hotel parking lot. The \$250,000 car was recovered fully intact along a remote road some 20 miles away. "I've probably been to 1,200 hotels and 1,200 race tracks," crew chief Peter Sospenzo said. "Never once has this happened. It's crazy." ... Small-time crooks also made their way to Pittsfield, Massachusetts. The Berkshire Eagle reported a break-in at Wahconah Park, home to a college baseball summer league. Among the items stolen were sweat shirts, tank tops, shoes and 100 frozen hamburger patties. The thieves also made sure to take the buns.

EXECS BEHAVING BADLY: Maybe James Dolan should have let his PR department handle this one. A longtime Knicks fan wrote to the Madison Square

Garden chairman in the middle of last season. The fan, appalled by the team's abysmal play, spelled out in a reasoned email to Dolan why he is "utterly embarrassed by your dealings with the Knicks." Dolan could have replied that the team is trying to improve and make its fans proud. He took another tact. "You most likely have made your family miserable," wrote Dolan, who then speculated the fan is an alcoholic and should root for the Nets. ... At least Dolan comported himself better than some Greek soccer executives. The teams Olympiakos and Panathinaikos played a game in which fans hurled rocks and bottles. Officials from the clubs met days later at a league board meeting. Peace, alas, was not at hand. The executives themselves began brawling.

OUCH-CHOO! It's one thing to get plunked in the ribs with a fastball. It's quite another to be knocked out the lineup by a sneeze. Such was the case during spring training with Toronto Blue Jays outfielder Kevin Pillar. A sneeze - presumably one of All-Star quality - brought a sharp pain to his right side. Pillar, well aware this wasn't the most heroic of injuries, could soon be spotted wearing a T-shirt that said: "Ask Me About My Sneeze."

THERE SHE IS: Miss America Betty Cantrell might have been on surer ground at the pageant if she were asked her thoughts for world peace. Instead, she was asked if Patriots quarterback Tom Brady cheated by using deflated footballs. "I'd have to see the ball and feel it," she said tentatively. "If there's any question, then yes, he cheated." Cantrell later brooded over her reply, wondering if it could cost her the crown. She acknowledges she had a "very slim" grasp of the facts, and "hopefully the Tom Brady fans will forgive me." Perhaps she had in mind Patricia M. Shong of Auburn, Massachusetts. In her obituary, Boston.com reported, the 72-year-old woman was said to enjoy scrapbooking and her weekly card night.

She also wanted to "set the record straight. Brady is innocent!!"

DEAR OLD DAD: You would have thought he would be beaming that his son was about to sign with Liverpool for more than \$7 million. But Goran Grujic insisted that 19-year-old son Marko Grujic should stay with the Serbian soccer club Red Star Belgrade until the season's end. The father was so emphatic he forbade his son to leave. "His passport is with me," the father told Belgrade media. "And he is not going anywhere."

ANIMAL HOUSE: Post time at Presque Isle Downs & Casino in Pennsylvania was moved up a few hours to avoid racing at dusk. That's when the deer perk up. Deer had been running in front of horses, forcing races to be canceled, the Erie Times-News wrote. Said Heriberto Rivera, East Coast manager for the Jockeys' Guild: "You can't have animals weighing hundreds of pounds crossing in front of you when you're going 35 to 40 miles an hour." ... Boston Bruins goalie Tuukka Rask knows all about nets, although not the kind to catch wasps. A new species of the winged insect in Kenya was named in his honor. A researcher on the discovery team is from Newton, Massachusetts, and is a great admirer of Rask's glove work. The addition to wasp-dom is the *Thaumatomyia tuukkaraski*.

MERCY, MERCY: Sometimes, it can't possibly get worse, and then it does. The Federated States of Micronesia soccer team opened the Pacific Games with a 31-0 loss to Tahiti. Then it was pummeled 38-0 by Fiji in an Olympic qualifier. The bombardment was not over. Micronesia then fell 46-0 to Vanuatu. Perhaps the Micronesians can look to the University of Tokyo baseball team for hope. This year the school - the country's elite university - ended a 94-game losing streak with a 6-4 victory over Hosei University. — AP

INJURED MCCULLUM MAY MISS THIRD S LANKA ODI

NELSON: New Zealand could get an earlier than expected taste of life without Brendon McCullum yesterday with the swashbuckling captain likely to sit out the third one-day international against Sri Lanka.

McCullum, who will retire from international cricket in February, hurt his back in the second ODI against Sri Lanka on Tuesday. "He's still pretty sore," coach Mike Hesson said after McCullum skipped training yesterday.

"It's unlikely he'll play but he's still a chance." New Zealand won the first two ODIs with ease, and even though they totally outclassed Sri Lanka McCullum was injured when he crashed into the fence in a desperate attempt to cut off a boundary.

A four to Sri Lanka would hardly have made a difference to the result, but Hesson said not trying would have gone against the team ethos. "We don't do things by halves. We're fully committed in the field. If

an injury occurs then so be it," he said.

Kane Williamson, who missed the first two ODIs because of a sore knee, is expected to play Thursday and captain the side if McCullum is unavailable. Hesson said fast bowler Adam Milne, who missed the second game with a troublesome heel, will also play in the next match. Matt Henry, the chief destroyer in the first two ODIs with two four-wicket hauls, has been rested for the third to make way for returning strike bowler Tim Southee but will return to the squad for the final two games. Corey Anderson and Grant Elliott, two of the stars of the New Zealand side that made the World Cup final in March, were named Wednesday in the New Zealand squad to play two Twenty20 matches against Sri Lanka after the ODI series.

Both are returning from injuries and Hesson said all-rounder Anderson would be restricted to batting duties only. — AFP



DURBAN: South African batsman Morne Morkel is dismissed by England bowler Stuart Broad during day five of the first Test match between South Africa and England at Kingsmead Stadium in Durban yesterday. — AFP

CLINICAL ENGLAND BEAT S AFRICA BY 241 RUNS

DURBAN: England captain Alastair Cook hailed the performance and potential of his team after they completed a crushing 241-run win over South Africa on the fifth day of the first Test at Kingsmead yesterday.

It took England only 80 minutes to take South Africa's remaining six wickets for the addition of 38 runs, with man-of-the-match Moeen Ali setting the tone by dismissing batting kingpin AB de Villiers with the third ball of the day. He followed up with two more wickets and had match figures of seven for 116.

Cook said a key factor had been batting solidly in bowler-friendly overhead conditions on the first day after being sent in.

"It was an interesting toss, the overheads were suggesting you want to bowl first but the pitch was quite dry," said Cook. "We would also have bowled first. It was a matter of getting through that first day. The way Nick (Compton) played really set up the first innings. From that moment on, the guys bowled particularly well to take 20 wickets and we scored enough runs in the second innings."

Cook said a convincing win against a strong South Africa A team in the build-up to the Test had given the players a lot of confidence. "It was particularly pleasing to back up our form under pressure in a Boxing Day Test match."

With only a two-day turnaround before the second Test starts in Cape Town on Saturday, Cook said it was important to recover well and to avoid complacency. "It can turn very quickly. They have world-class players so we can't get too carried away. But it would be nice to get our noses ahead again and to continue to put pressure on South Africa." Despite his fifth-ranked side defeating the current Test number ones, Cook said it was too early to predict a period of ascendancy for England. But he said: "The guys have taken big strides forward as a team over the last eight months or so. It's a good side to captain, there's a

SCOREBOARD

DURBAN, South Africa: Final scores on the fifth and final day of the first Test between South Africa and England at Kingsmead yesterday:

England, first innings, 303	J. Duminy not out	26
South Africa, first innings, 214	K. Abbott lbw b Ali	2
England, second innings, 326	D. Piedt c Taylor b Woakes	0
	M. Morkel lbw b Broad	8
	Extras (b2, lb3)	5
	Total (71 overs)	174
South Africa, second innings	Fall of wickets: 1-53 (Van Zyl), 2-85 (Amla), 3-88 (Elgar), 4-136 (Du Plessis), 5-136 (De Villiers), 6-136 (Bavuma), 7-138 (Steyn), 8-143 (Abbott), 9-155 (Piedt).	
	Bowling: Broad 13-5-29-1, Woakes 10-5-25-1, Finn 15-6-42-4, Stokes 7-1-26-1, Ali 26-9-47-3.	
	Result: England won by 241 runs	

good balance, the guys are happy and they seem really hungry.

YOUNG TALENT

"Potentially this team can do some really good things. There's so much talent in this side. But it will take relentless hard work and good results over a long period of time."

South African captain Hashim Amla, meanwhile, admitted that his team's batting had been "most disappointing", especially following a poor performance on a similarly good batting pitch in the final Test in Delhi earlier this month during a losing series in India.

Amla said his team's lack of batting form was "a confidence thing" and acknowledged that his own lack of runs was a concern. "As captain you want to lead from the front not being in the runs is most disappointing from me. It's a developing team but certainly from my perspective getting runs on the board is most important."

Amla admitted that regaining form and confidence could only come from scoring runs. "If you get the runs you get the confi-

dence. You can be doing everything well in the nets and working behind the scenes but it's got to materialise with some sort of runs on the board, especially in the big games." Amla said he still enjoyed being captain but ducked questions about possible changes in the team. "I try and leave those things to the selectors. I can only give my opinion."

He hinted, however, that Quinton de Kock, who has been added to the squad, could come into the side for the second Test as a wicketkeeper-batsman, enabling AB de Villiers to play as a batsman only. "AB's workload has been great than we expected," he said.

South African coach Russell Domingo admitted: "We didn't play half as well as we can." Domingo denied there was a lack of harmony in the camp. "From what I'm aware, it's a happy camp. The players are not happy with their performances but they are all supporting the captain."

Domingo acknowledged that there was bound to be criticism. "There's a lot that went wrong but we need to keep the team tight and keep the noise out." — AFP

BANGLADESH CRICKETER CHARGED WITH ASSAULTING CHILD MAID

DHAKA: Bangladesh police have charged national cricketer Shahadat Hossain with assaulting an 11-year-old girl he employed illegally as a maid.

Police said Hossain, who has played 38 Tests for Bangladesh, and his wife Nitro Shahadat were formally charged on Tuesday with assault and torture. "The allegations against Shahadat and his wife were proved in our primary investigations," police Inspector Shafiqur Rahman told AFP. The 29-year-old cricketer, who denies any wrongdoing, was suspended from all forms of the game on September 13 over the allegations. He and his wife went into hiding after police raided their house in September following a complaint from the young girl. Police said one of her hands had been burnt with a hot

cooking paddle, while other injury marks were also found on her body. Television footage showed her looking frail and thin with swollen black eyes. Hossain, who has also played 51 one-day internationals for Bangladesh, handed himself in to police in October after his wife was arrested. Yesterday he told AFP the allegations were "false" and had ruined his career.

"I am innocent. Everyone who knows me will testify to that," he said, in his first interview since his arrest in October. Hossain said the allegations were part of a conspiracy to destroy his career.

"A man's dignity relies on his professional career. It seems to me that mine is being ruined," he said. Hossain and his wife face up to 14 years in jail if they are convicted. — AFP

S AFRICA ADD TWO PLAYERS TO SQUAD FOR SECOND TEST

DURBAN: South Africa added wicketkeeper Quinton de Kock and fast bowler Chris Morris to their squad for the second test against England, which starts in Cape Town on Saturday, just minutes after being beaten in the first match in Durban yesterday.

Uncertainty over the fitness of world's top test bowler Dale Steyn has seen selectors add Morris while de Kock's inclusion suggests that AB de Villiers might not be required to keep wickets again and will instead be allowed to concentrate on his batting.

De Villiers had returned with the gloves behind the wickets for the first test in Durban to allow South Africa to add an extra batsman in their line-up but the team scored 214 and 174 in their two innings.

Steyn suffered a shoulder spasm in the

second innings and his absence was keenly felt as the home team lost by 241 runs to England.

South Africa had originally named a 13-man squad for the first two tests because of the quick turnaround between the matches. "Following our performance and injuries in the first Test, we have recognised the need to bolster the squad," said Linda Zondi, Cricket South Africa's convener of selectors. "This will provide us with more selection options for the second Test match at Newlands."

Squad: Hashim Amla (captain), Kyle Abbott, Temba Bavuma, Quinton de Kock, AB de Villiers, JP Duminy, Faf du Plessis, Dean Elgar, Morne Morkel, Chris Morris, Dane Piedt, Kagiso Rabada, Rilee Rossouw, Dale Steyn, Stiaan van Zyl. — Reuters



DURBAN: South Africa's cricket coach Russell Domingo looks on after losing the first test cricket match against England, at Kingsmead in Durban. — AP

WOODS TURNS 40 AND HEADS INTO UNCERTAIN FUTURE

WASHINGTON: Ten days after Tiger Woods turned 24, he picked up his 16th career PGA Tour victory by beating Ernie Els in an epic battle at Kapalua. More than winning his fifth straight PGA Tour event - the longest streak since 1953 - it was how he won. They matched eagles on the 18th in regulation and birdies in the playoff, and then Woods ended it on the second extra hole with a 40-foot birdie putt that was downhill, into the grain and broke hard to the left.

Els saw the future that January day in 2000, and it was daunting. "I think he's a legend in the making," Els said. "He's 24. He's probably going to be bigger than Elvis when he gets into his 40s."

Tiger Woods entered his 40s yesterday. Bigger than Elvis? No, because golf isn't in the same galaxy as rock and roll. But he was right about Woods being a legend in the making, and it didn't take long. His 15-shot victory in the US Open that summer at Pebble Beach was the most dominant in 140

years of major championships. He had the career Grand Slam at 24 and remains the only player to win multiple majors in back-to-back seasons. "Everyone has strengths and weaknesses," Adam Scott said. "We've only seen one bloke out here who did everything better than anyone else." His legacy on the golf course is secure no matter what happens the rest of his career, and Woods referred to anything else he achieves as "gravy." That struck a tone of resignation from Woods, who always wanted to be seen as an athlete instead of a golfer and now can do little more than walk. Three surgeries on his lower back in just over 18 months make it hard to gauge his future. There is a tendency to celebrate his 40th birthday by looking back, making it feel more like a retirement party. It's an easy trap. Woods hasn't won in more than two years, and when he won his last major in the 2008 US Open at Torrey Pines, Jordan Spieth had just finished his freshman year of high school.

WINNING MAJOR TOURNAMENTS

When he turned 30, he was No. 1 in the world. At age 40, he is No. 416. When he turned pro at 20, the No. 1 player in the world was 41-year-old Greg Norman.

Woods is 40, and the No. 1 player is 22-year-old Spieth. "Where do I see myself in the next five to 10 years?" Woods wrote in a blog on his website. "I am still playing golf at the highest level and winning tournaments and major championships. My foundation has been implemented around the globe, and we've helped out not just millions, but when I'm all said and done with my life on this earth, it will hopefully be billions."

From the pinnacle of winning majors to the depths of injury, scandal and divorce, the impact of Woods has not changed. Golf is in a good spot with the next generation of stars - Spieth, Rory McIlroy, Rickie Fowler, Jason Day at the moment - though none move the needle like Woods. The reminder came at the Wyndham Championship in Greensboro,

North Carolina, which Woods played for the first time. The tournament printed an additional 39,000 tickets when he signed up, and it set attendance records each day. That doesn't happen with Spieth and McIlroy. It doesn't happen with Phil Mickelson.

HUGE IMPACT

PGA Tour Commissioner Tim Finchem recalled being asked at Torrey Pines this year if he was troubled to see Woods struggling with his short game. He was coming off a career-high 82 in the Phoenix Open. As a fan, Finchem hated to see it. As a commissioner, he wasn't concerned. "They said, 'What do you mean?'" I said, "He's going to tee it up Thursday morning. You know anyone that's not going to be watching?" Finchem said. "Everybody wants to see what he can do. Two years from now, he comes out and starts playing OK - or a year from now, whatever it is - he'll have a huge impact." Els was runner-up to Woods for the second time in three

months at Kapalua in 2000, and he would go on to finish second to Woods three more times that year. He saw it coming. Els knew it was coming in 1996 at Royal Lytham & St. Annes when Woods consulted him on whether he should turn pro.

Is this would he would have expected 20 years later? Woods has 79 PGA Tour victories (second only to 82 by Sam Snead) and 14 majors (trailing the 18 won by Jack Nicklaus). The only reason to suggest those numbers should be higher is because Woods achieved so much so quickly.

The standard kept going up. Woods is hopeful his 40th year brings good health, and a chance to compete again. He remains four majors short of Nicklaus - no one has ever won more than three majors in their 40s. The odds are against him historically, physically, maybe even emotionally. "If that's all it entails," Woods said in The Bahamas about his career, "then I've had a pretty good run. But I'm hoping that's not it." — AP

HORFORD LEADS HAWKS TO 121-115 WIN OVER ROCKETS

HOUSTON: Al Horford had 30 points and 14 rebounds to lead the Atlanta Hawks to a 121-115 victory over the Houston Rockets on Tuesday night. Atlanta trailed by 19 early in the game before rallying for the victory. Kent Bazemore added 26 points and Paul Millsap and Jeff Teague both had 22 as the Hawks won for the seventh time in eight games. Dwight Howard led Houston with 30 points and 16 rebounds, while James Harden had 26 points, 10 rebounds and eight assists. Atlanta took a lead late in the fourth quarter and employed the back-a strategy, intentionally fouling Howard and Clint Capela repeatedly. The strategy was largely successful until Howard made a free throw to take the lead with just over two minutes remaining. Atlanta then scored the final nine points of the game to steal the road victory.

take an 18-point lead on Williams' long jumper with 1:42 left in the game. Williams scored 16 of his points in the final quarter, hitting 5-of-6 shots from the field.

GRIZZLIES 99, HEAT 90, OT

Marc Gasol scored seven of his 23 points in overtime to help the Grizzlies pull away in the extra period for a victory over the Heat. Zach Randolph added 17 points for Memphis. Mike Conley and Jeff Green had 16 apiece, and Mario Chalmers scored 12 points. Gasol would add eight rebounds, six assists and four blocks, including a pair of rejections in the closing minutes. Gasol's overtime performance included a stumbling move in the lane where he flipped the ball to the basket as he was fouled. The shot bounced through, Gasol converted the ensuing free throw and the Grizzlies were up 96-88 with 1:22 left - a lead Memphis would not relinquish. Chris Bosh led Miami with 22 points, while Dwyane Wade finished with 19. Goran Dragic had 16 points. The teams were tied at 83 at the end of regulation.

CAVALIERS 93, NUGGETS 87

LeBron James scored 34 points on the eve of his 31st birthday and Iman Shumpert added a season-high 16 as the Cavaliers beat the Nuggets. Kevin Love had eight points and 14 rebounds to help Cleveland finish off a four-game West Coast swing with a 2-2 mark. The Cavaliers rested Kyrie Irving on the second night of a back-to-back as he works his way back from a fractured left kneecap. Reserve Will Barton had 29 for the injury-riddled Nuggets, who've now dropped six of seven. They were once again without Danilo Gallinari (sprained left ankle) and rookie Emmanuel Mudiay (sprained right ankle). Trailing by 11 with 3:07 remaining, the Nuggets resorted to fouling Tristan Thompson, who's a 56 percent free throw shooter. Thompson struggled at the line, hitting 1 of 4, but Denver couldn't capitalize. — AP

THUNDER 131, BUCKS 123

Russell Westbrook scored 27 points and Kevin Durant added 26 to lead the Thunder to a win over the Bucks. Enes Kanter added 23 while rookie Cameron Payne had a career-high 16 for the Thunder. Westbrook and Durant both scored more than 20 points for the 25th time this season as Oklahoma City overcame an early eight-point deficit to win for the 11th time in its last 14 games. Khris Middleton scored a career-best 36 points to lead Milwaukee.

KNICKS 108, PISTONS 96

Carmelo Anthony scored 24 points and Derrick Williams added 18 to lead six Knicks in double figures as New York snapped a four-game losing streak with a win over the Pistons. Jose Calderon added 15 points, Kyle O'Quinn had 12, Robin Lopez scored 11, and Kristaps Porzingis finished with 10. Ersan Ilyasova led the Pistons with 19 points. Marcus Morris and Reggie Jackson each had 17. The Knicks led by only four points, 80-76, early in the fourth quarter, but went on a 25-11 run to



SUNRISE: Jeff Petry #26 of the Montreal Canadiens checks Reilly Smith #18 of the Florida Panthers as Goaltender Ben Scrivens #40 stops his shot at the BB&T Center on Tuesday in Sunrise, Florida. The Panthers defeated the Canadiens 3-1. — AFP

BARKOV SCORES TWO GOALS TO LEAD PANTHERS PAST CANADIENS

SUNRISE: Aleksander Barkov had two goals and Jaromir Jagr scored the 733rd of his career to lead the Florida Panthers past the Montreal Canadiens 3-1 on Tuesday night for their seventh straight victory. Roberto Luongo stopped 27 shots and the Panthers leapfrogged Montreal for first place in the Atlantic Division. The winning streak is their longest since March 2008 and it matches the franchise record. Max Pacioretty scored for Montreal, but the slumping Canadiens have lost seven of their past eight games and 11 of 13. Ben Scrivens made 27 saves in his first NHL action since April 11 last season. Montreal acquired him from Edmonton on Monday. Jagr gave the Panthers a 2-1 lead 1:16 into the second period. Barkov had an assist. Barkov has 10 points in his last seven games and two goals in back-to-back games.

five skaters paired off with an opponent. Chris Neil had a goal and an assist for Ottawa. Mika Zibanejad and Mike Hoffman also scored.

ISLANDERS 6, MAPLE LEAFS 3

John Tavares was one of six New York players to score in a victory over Toronto for a split in the home-and-away series. Brock Nelson, Frans Nielsen, Nikolay Kulemin, Matt Martin and Anders Lee also scored for the Islanders. Thomas Greiss turned aside 30 shots. Jonathan Bernier again had trouble, getting beaten by the second shot of the game and giving up six goals on just 15 shots through two periods before James Reimer took over to start the third. Brad Boyes, Pierre-Alexandre Parenteau and Shawn Matthias had goals for the Maple Leafs, who beat New York 3-1 on Sunday in Brooklyn.

won six of their last eight overall. Rookie center Robby Fabbri, Kevin Shattenkirk and Dmitrij Jaskin also scored for the Blues. Jaskin snapped his 19-game drought. Nashville got a short-handed goal from defenseman Mattias Ekholm.

JETS 4, RED WINGS 1

Jacob Trouba scored twice and Bryan Little had three assists as Winnipeg beat Detroit. Trouba's short-handed goal in the first period opened the scoring for the Jets, who also got goals from Andrew Ladd and Alexander Burmistrov. Pavel Datsyuk scored on a power play for the Red Wings.

Connor Hellebuyck stopped 33 shots. Jimmy Howard started in net for the Red Wings but was chased in the second period after allowing four goals on 14 shots.

NHL results/standings

Boston 7, Ottawa 3; NY Islanders 6, Toronto 3; New Jersey 3, Carolina 2; Columbus 6, Dallas 3; Florida 3, Montreal 1; St. Louis 4, Nashville 3 (OT); Winnipeg 4, Detroit 1; Anaheim 1, Calgary 0; Los Angeles 5, Edmonton 2; Chicago 7, Arizona 5.

Western Conference						Eastern Conference							
Central Division						Atlantic Division							
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Dallas	27	8	3	132	97	57	Florida	21	12	4	101	84	46
St. Louis	23	12	4	99	93	50	Montreal	21	15	3	111	98	45
Chicago	21	13	4	104	94	46	Boston	20	12	4	115	97	44
Minnesota	19	10	6	95	84	44	Detroit	18	12	7	94	98	43
Nashville	18	12	7	100	96	43	Ottawa	18	13	6	111	112	42
Colorado	18	17	2	106	102	38	Tampa Bay	15	14	4	95	88	40
Winnipeg	17	17	2	97	105	36	Buffalo	15	17	4	85	94	34
							Toronto	13	15	7	92	100	33
Pacific Division						Metropolitan Division							
Los Angeles	23	11	2	98	81	48	Washington	27	6	2	110	72	56
Arizona	17	16	3	100	116	37	NY Islanders	20	12	5	103	88	45
Vancouver	14	15	9	93	109	37	NY Rangers	20	13	4	107	98	44
San Jose	17	16	2	96	100	36	New Jersey	18	14	5	87	92	41
Calgary	17	17	2	96	117	36	Pittsburgh	17	15	3	79	86	37
Anaheim	14	15	6	67	87	34	Philadelphia	15	13	7	76	96	37
Edmonton	15	20	3	97	118	33	Carolina	15	17	5	87	106	35
							Columbus	14	22	3	98	123	31

Note: Overtime losses (OTL) are worth one point in the standings and are not included in the loss column (L).



HOUSTON: Atlanta Hawks' Paul Millsap, top, goes up for a shot as Houston Rockets' Dwight Howard (12) defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, in Houston. — AP

NBA results/standings

NY Knicks 108, Detroit 96; Atlanta 121, Houston 115; Memphis 99, Miami 90 (OT); Oklahoma City 131, Milwaukee 123; Cleveland 93, Denver 87.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference					
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division					
W	L	PCT	GB	W	L	PCT	GB		
Toronto	19	13	.594	-	Oklahoma City	22	10	.688	-
Boston	18	13	.581	0.5	Utah	13	16	.448	7.5
NY Knicks	15	18	.455	4.5	Portland	13	20	.394	9.5
Brooklyn	9	22	.290	9.5	Denver	12	20	.375	10
Philadelphia	2	31	.061	17.5	Minnesota	11	20	.355	10.5
Central Division				Pacific Division					
Cleveland	21	9	.700	-	Golden State	29	1	.967	-
Indiana	18	12	.600	3	LA Clippers	19	13	.594	11
Chicago	17	12	.586	3.5	Sacramento	12	19	.387	17.5
Detroit	17	15	.531	5	Phoenix	12	21	.364	18.5
Milwaukee	12	21	.364	10.5	LA Lakers	5	27	.156	25
Southeast Division				Southwest Division					
Atlanta	21	13	.618	-	San Antonio	27	6	.818	-
Orlando	18	13	.581	1.5	Dallas	18	13	.581	8
Miami	18	13	.581	1.5	Memphis	18	16	.529	9.5
Charlotte	17	13	.567	2	Houston	16	17	.485	11
Washington	14	15	.483	4.5	New Orleans	10	21	.323	16

BLACKHAWKS 7, COYOTES 5

Patrick Kane scored a goal, assisted on two others and raised his NHL-leading point total to 53 in helping Chicago beat Arizona. Andrew Desjardins scored twice for the Blackhawks, who overcame Shane Doan's hat trick and set a season high for goals in a game. Artem Anisimov scored his 13th of the season. Brent Seabrook had two assists and Duncan Keith added a goal and an assist for Chicago. Doan scored three times for the Coyotes, tying Dale Hawerchuk for the franchise record with 379 career goals. Doan's third of the night came on a power play with 27.1 seconds left. Corey Crawford stopped 32 shots for Chicago. Oliver Ekman-Larsson and Tobias Rieder had three assists apiece for the Coyotes.

BLUE JACKETS 6, STARS 3

Nick Foligno and Brandon Dubinsky each had three assists as last place Columbus beat the NHL-best Dallas Stars. Boone Jenner, Kevin Connauton, Matt Calvert, Brandon Saad, Scott Hartnell and Rene Bourque scored for Columbus, which had lost three straight and eight of 10 - prompting coach John Tortorella to call out his team over the past several days.

Curtis McElhinney made 39 saves, and 11 players had at least one point for the Blue Jackets. Colton Sceviour, Tyler Seguin and Patrick Sharp scored for Dallas. The Stars had their five-game point streak broken.

Kari Lehtonen allowed three goals on 14 shots in the first period and was replaced by Antti Niemi to start the second.

BRUINS 7, SENATORS 3

Jimmy Hayes scored three goals, and Patrice Bergeron and Matt Beleskey had two apiece as Boston beat Ottawa to end a three-game losing streak. Torey Krug and Loui Eriksson each had two assists for the Bruins. Tuukka Rask made 29 saves, including 12 in the third period as the Bruins held off the Senators. Boston scored three power-play goals and split the home-and-home series with the Senators, who beat the Bruins 3-1 on Sunday in Ottawa. Ottawa trimmed Boston's lead to one early in the third period, but the Bruins closed it out with three goals in the final 4:11. There were several late fights, including multiple scums during a stoppage with 27 seconds remaining that featured all

DEVILS 3, HURRICANES 2

David Schlemko's tiebreaking goal with 3:05 left in the third period gave New Jersey a victory over Carolina. Bobby Farnham and Kyle Palmieri also scored for the Devils, and Keith Kinkaid stopped 26 shots. Eric Staal scored twice and Kris Versteeg had two assists for the Hurricanes. Cam Ward made 21 saves.

BLUES 4, PREDATORS 3, OT

Alexander Steen scored 4:01 into overtime to give St. Louis a win over Nashville. Steen got the puck from Paul Stastny and scored on a wrist shot in the slot, beating backup goalie Carter Hutton. It was his 13th goal of the season. The Blues improved to 3-3 in overtime, while the Predators dropped to 0-6. Two goals late in the third period lifted Nashville back into the game. Predators defenseman Shea Weber pulled his team within one when he scored at 16:08. Colin Wilson tied it at 18:28. St. Louis earned its third win in three games this season over Nashville. The Blues have

KINGS 5, OILERS 2

Dustin Brown and Trevor Lewis each had a goal and two assists as Los Angeles scored three times in 96 seconds during a victory over Edmonton. Dwight King, Michael Mersch and Tyler Toffoli also scored for the Kings, who have won three straight. Benoit Pouliot and Mark Letestu had goals for the Oilers, who had won seven consecutive home games. Edmonton dropped its third in a row overall. King was playing his first game of the season.

DUCKS 1, FLAMES 0

Shawn Horcoff scored in the second period and John Gibson made 14 saves for his third shutout this season as Anaheim ended Calgary's home winning streak at a club-record 11 games. Tested only seven times over the first 40 minutes, Gibson was busiest in the third as the Flames finally were able to generate some pressure. However, Calgary could not solve the 22-year-old goalie and Sam Bennett, the Flames' best player on the night, put a shot off the crossbar. The loss was the first on home ice since Oct. 30 for Calgary. — AP

BANNED PLATINI COULD FACE FURTHER TROUBLE OVER DUBAI EVENT

MIAMI: Banned UEFA president Michel Platini could face further investigation from FIFA's Ethics Committee after attending an awards ceremony and conference in Dubai despite being barred from "all football activity".

Platini, the head of European soccer body UEFA, was handed an eight year ban from the game by FIFA's Ethics Committee on December 21, along with banned FIFA president Sepp Blatter. He is appealing the decision and insists he has done no wrong. The ban relates to a payment of two million Swiss francs

made by Blatter's FIFA to Platini in 2011, nine years after he finished working as a consultant to Blatter.

On December 27, Platini attended the Globe Soccer Awards organised by the Dubai Sports Council in Dubai, along with soccer stars such as Argentine Lionel Messi and Italian Andrea Pirlo.

Frenchman Platini was photographed at the event and also made comments regarding his ban to the Italian media while in Dubai.

A spokesman for FIFA's Ethics Committee declined to comment on

the specific case but said: "In general terms: The Investigatory Chamber of the Ethics Committee of FIFA investigates any alleged breach of the Ethics Code of FIFA."

A spokesman for Platini did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The December 21 ruling from FIFA Ethics Committee chair Hans-Joachim Eckert stated that Blatter and Platini were banned "for eight years from all football-related activities (administrative, sports or any other) on a national and international level. The bans come

into force immediately."

Platini has said he will fight the ban through the appeals process, which is likely to end up with the Court of Arbitration for Sport in Lausanne, Switzerland, and has also been fiercely critical of the decision and the Ethics Committee itself. Blatter has also said he will appeal.

FIFA has been thrown into crisis by investigations from the FBI and Department of Justice in the United States and Swiss authorities. The Swiss Attorney General has opened a criminal

investigation into Blatter regarding the payment to Platini. The Frenchman is viewed as "somewhere between a witness and an accused person" according to the Attorney General Michael Lauber.

In the United States, prosecutors have indicted 27 current or former soccer officials, including eight ex-FIFA Executive Committee members and the current heads of both the North and South American federations, over allegations they ran bribery schemes connected to the sale of TV rights for football competitions. — Reuters



MANCHESTER: A vendor sells scarves, prior to the start of the English Premier League soccer match between Manchester United and Chelsea at Old Trafford Stadium, in Manchester, England. — AP

FABREGAS GOING NOWHERE: HIDDINK

LONDON: Guus Hiddink says Cesc Fabregas is happy at Chelsea amid speculation he could soon be the subject of a big-money bid from Italian clubs. The Spain midfielder has been linked with both Juventus and Inter Milan following a poor half to the season at the Premier League champions, whose fall from grace has been well-documented.

But Hiddink, interim manager until the end of the season following Jose Mourinho's sacking, gave no indication that Chelsea would sell, and that the player himself seemed content.

"We need all the players here until the end of the season," he said. "Chelsea are still in a position where we have to improve to get up the table, so we need all the players at the moment."

"He's coming in with a smile, which is what I always like. They come in with a smile and not a worn out face." Fabregas missed Monday's 0-0 draw at Manchester United because of a temperature but is now back in training at a time when a number of players are either still unavailable or doubtful for Sunday's London derby at Crystal Palace.

"Cesc was in this morning and trained," Hiddink said. "We played a game with the academy, and he did play a full game. He was out of his temperature problems."

Defender Gary Cahill and striker Loic Remy are receiving treatment, the Dutchman confirmed at a time when Falcao, the on-loan forward, is still injured. "Falcao has the same injury as last week when we tested him, and Remy is also doubtful," Hiddink said. "Gary Cahill didn't go on the pitch this morning, which means he has also a little problem."

"But we have several days to go to prepare, so I'm not negative regarding Gary Cahill." Remy rarely starts a game and is the subject of some very public interest from fellow Frenchman Remi Garde, the Aston Villa manager in need

of goals to take his side off the bottom of the Premier League. But Hiddink said: "He's our player. We don't go into that."

AMBASSADORIAL DUTIES

Hiddink also refused to go into any detail on plans to bring in new players, with a forward to take the burden off Diego Costa, another man struggling to hit the heights of last season, the priority. But one man who knows how to score at Stamford Bridge does appear to be close to a return as Didier Drogba is keen to leave the MLS to rejoin a club where he has already enjoyed two trophy-laden playing spells. Whether the 37-year-old will pull on his boots again seems unlikely as Hiddink has him earmarked for a coaching role with ambassadorial duties. "Those rare kind of ex-players with this big status really would be very good for any club to have, especially him because he's a Chelsea legend," he said. "But he has a contract with Montreal at the moment, and we have to respect that also. "His role will depend on the player himself. You have to give them time and opportunities to find out what's best for them. It might be on the coaching staff, or ambassador. "Those guys need to be in the squad helping younger players, all the players, with their huge experience. I'm not in favour of a big ambassador travelling the world in a tie. I think they must give their huge experience to all, especially young kids, but also the older ones when they are in trouble in their career."

Hiddink does have an extra striker in his ranks now that Patrick Bamford has cut short his loan spell at Palace because of a lack of playing time. But Hiddink gave no indication that Bamford would get a game for Chelsea either, especially as his return has to be officially agreed.

"That's also an issue between the two clubs, us and Palace," he said. "The managers and directors will talk about that situation." — AFP

MAN CITY'S KOMPANY OUT FOR AT LEAST A MONTH

SUNDERLAND: Manchester City are looking at another month without captain Vincent Kompany after the defender suffered a second degree tear in his calf during Saturday's 4-1 Premier League win over Sunderland, manager Manuel Pellegrini has confirmed.

Tuesday's goalless draw against second place Leicester was Manchester City's first clean sheet in the league this season without their Belgian captain. The result also meant City finished the year in third.

Kompany has missed more than half of City's league games this season, playing in nine out of the 19, and hobbled off within 10 minutes of appearing as a second half substitute against Sunderland.

He had not played a game since the

trip to Aston Villa in early November in what was City's last clean sheet. "Vincent has an injury, second degree on his calf so we'll see how many weeks he will be out," Pellegrini told reporters after the Leicester game. "I do not think it will be less than three-four weeks."

"I am not a doctor, but with a muscle injury, it will be very difficult for him to be back in less than four weeks. "But without him, we must continue to defend as did tonight."

"We did more than Leicester to win the game." Manchester City begin the new year with games against eight place Watford in the league, followed by trips to Everton for a League Cup match and to Norwich in the FA Cup - all within a week. — Reuters

SHEIKH SALMAN WANTS TO DIVIDE FIFA IN TWO

MIAMI: The frontrunner in the FIFA presidential election, Asian football chief Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, says he wants to divide the organisation into two separate entities as part of a 'turnaround' plan for the crisis-hit organisation.

Salman, who is president of the Asian Football Confederation, said in a statement on Wednesday that FIFA's governance and business functions would be separated if he took over the helm following the Feb. 26 elections. The Bahraini suggested dividing the organisation into a 'Football FIFA' that will be responsible for governance and running events and tournaments; and a 'Business FIFA' which would handle all commercial, financial and funding matters. "Only by strictly separating the generation of funds and supervising the flow of all monies spent can we guarantee the rebirth of a new FIFA that is accountable and is a good corporate citizen that deserves everybody's respect", Salman said in the statement.

FIFA's 209 member associations will vote for a new president at a congress in Zurich on Feb. 26. Previous president Sepp Blatter was banned from football for eight years by FIFA's Ethics Committee earlier this month.

United States prosecutors have indicted 27 current or former soccer officials, including eight ex-FIFA Executive Committee members and the current heads of both the North and South American federations, over allegations they ran bribery schemes connected to the sale of TV rights for soccer competitions. Twelve people in sports marketing and two companies have been convicted. Swiss authorities are also investigating FIFA and yesterday handed over the first batch of evidence to US authorities after freezing around \$80 million in assets in 13 bank accounts.

"FIFA must be restructured top-down in order to remedy its present ills. Nothing short of a complete organisational overhaul and the introduction of stringent control mechanisms will allow us to re-launch FIFA in its entirety", Salman added.



Sheikh Salman Bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa

Salman said he intended to bring in "external experts" to help with the process including a "top class executive who does not necessarily need to have a football pedigree but is someone who has the expertise of a turn-around manager". Salman also promised an in-depth review of FIFA's senior management structure and vowed to listen to the organisation's staff.

"FIFA is not those 40-odd individuals who have been indicted, arrested or already convicted on various charges. FIFA is above all a 400-strong group of employees from 40 plus countries who have suffered from the mayhem caused by others only marginally linked to the organisation", he said, noting that there have been no arrests or charges against FIFA staff members.

Salman repeated his pledge not to take a salary if elected president and said he would

have a non-executive role. "I shall not be micro-managing the organisation and nor will I play a role in day-to-day to operations," he said, adding there would be full transparency of financial accounts including "minute details".

He said he would aim to win back sponsor support for the body. "My focus will be to make FIFA deserving of corporate support by introducing structures and controls that generate the kind of trust we have lost in many quarters. Pretty PR talk will not remedy the failures FIFA has allowed to occur," he added. The other candidates for FIFA president are UEFA general secretary Gianni Infantino, former FIFA deputy general secretary Jerome Champagne, Jordanian Football Association president Prince Ali Bin Al Hussein and South African politician and businessman Tokyo Sexwale. — Reuters

PSG END 2015 WITH VICTORY AGAINST INTER IN QATAR

DOHA: Teenager Jean-Kevin Augustin scored the only goal as Paris Saint-Germain rounded off a dominant 2015 with victory against Inter Milan in a friendly in Qatar yesterday. The 18-year-old beat Inter's offside trap and slotted home the winner from an acute angle just a minute before half-time, following fine work from midfielder Marco Verratti.

The result was just reward for PSG's dominant performance although they were made to work for their win by the Italian league leaders. Despite being a friendly, both sides could have scored on several occasions and there was enough entertainment for the Doha crowd. Augustin, who had played only six times for PSG before yesterday, himself should have scored after just 36 seconds, missing a great chance by blazing over from some 15 yards when clean through on Inter's goal. Star

draw Zlatan Ibrahimovic, booed by some Inter fans, also went close forcing a fine save from Samir Handanovic in the 13th minute. But despite their dominance of possession, PSG were opened up several times by Inter and the Italians almost broke the deadlock in the 18th minute when Martin Montoya was denied by Kevin Trapp.

Closest of all before the goal though was Verratti who thundered a shot against the bar in the 29th minute, with Handanovic well beaten. The match largely fizzled out in the second half though there were chances for PSG's Adrien Rabiot and Inter's Stevan Jovetic as both teams made wholesale changes.

Inter almost forced an equaliser through Yuto Nagatomo in the 81st minute, but Trapp denied the Italians again.

Inter, who started with just five players

from the team which lost 2-1 at home to Lazio in their last league outing on December 20, made 10 substitutions in the second period.

PSG made five, with Ibrahimovic going off in the 64th minute to a mixture of cheers and jeers. Notably, PSG coach Laurent Blanc did not bring on almost all of his South American stars who had jetted into Qatar just over 24 hours before.

Despite reports that the match was a 15,000 sell-out and it being the most high-profile match played in Qatar throughout the year, only 11,628 fans turned up to watch, with the ground largely emptying before the end. The game brought the curtain down on PSG's four-day winter tour to Qatar. The run-away Ligue 1 leaders return to action on January 9 against Bastia. Inter play again on January 6 against Empoli in Serie A. — AFP



DOHA: Paris Saint-Germain (PSG)'s Congolese forward Hervin Ongenda falls as he fights for the ball against Inter Milan's Chilean midfielder Gary Medel during the friendly football match between PSG and Inter Milan at Jassim Bin Hamad Stadium in the Qatari capital Doha, yesterday. — AFP

VILLA LOOKING TO SIGN CHELSEA'S REMY: GARDE

LONDON: Aston Villa will aim to sign Chelsea's out-of-favour striker Loic Remy when the January transfer window opens, manager Remi Garde said yesterday, as he bids to secure the West Midlands club's Premier League status for next season.

Villa, who are last on the table with just eight points from 19 games and 11 points behind safety, will hope Remy can solve

their problems in attack, having netted just 15 goals so far in the league.

"Loic is a guy I know well, he would be an interesting player for the team. I can't tell you (our chances of signing him)," Garde told reporters yesterday when asked if he is interested in the 28-year-old.

"He is part of some players I am trying to attract to Aston Villa, for sure. Loic is

quite a special one, he knows the country, the league. I also have some targets that would be this level maybe without knowing the country and the league.

"The situation is not the best one you could dream of to speak with players. But what I have done already doesn't show me that nobody wants to join this football club."

Monday's 2-0 loss to Norwich City meant that Villa stretched their winless run to 18 games, and left Garde still awaiting his first win as manager since taking over from Tim Sherwood in November.

Garde also said Saturday's match against second-from-bottom Sunderland is not a make-or-break clash for the club. "The team has to build a new story. I am

still very frustrated not to have won a game in this country, for sure," Garde said.

"I still have an optimistic view. I am still thinking the victory will come soon and that will change the mood of the changing room. "Sunderland is a very important game but it's not the last chance we will have. There are a lot of points to play for." — Reuters

LEICESTER FRUSTRATE TITLE RIVALS MAN CITY

LEICESTER: Manchester City were frustrated again on the road as Leicester bounced back from defeat at Liverpool with a 0-0 draw that maintained their surprise Premier League title challenge. Leicester had to withstand a barrage of first-half pressure from their visitors but they held firm for the point that took them level with Arsenal at the top of the table.

The Foxes grew in confidence after half-time and could have snatched another major scalp in their extraordinary season. Manchester City are without a win in six Premier League away games but boss Manuel Pellegrini will take heart from a dominant performance before half-time.

Leicester abandoned their normal 4-4-2 system and started with Gokhan Inler as an extra midfielder alongside N'Golo Kante and the returning Danny Drinkwater, who was back from a hamstring injury.

Shinji Okazaki and Andy King were the men to make way while City brought back Sergio Aguero in place of Wilfried Bony. The visitors made all of the early running and exploited their hosts repeatedly down the flanks.

Pellegrini's men wasted several decent crossing opportunities before Leicester almost struck a blow against the run of play. Inler was fouled 25 yards from goal and Christian Fuchs' free-kick was headed over by Robert Huth.

But Manchester City were the more likely scorers and should have made the breakthrough when Raheem Sterling burst down the right and squared for Kevin De Bruyne. He hit a firm shot but it was pushed away solidly by Kasper Schmeichel in the home goal.

Leicester had been pinned back in their own half with striker Jamie Vardy isolated for lengthy spells. But Riyad Mahrez, his goalscoring partner in crime, nearly made the most of a slip by Nicolas Otamendi and tried a curling shot from an angle that dipped just over.

Manchester City came again, however, and Schmeichel came to the rescue once more when he pushed away a decent shot from Sterling.

The pair were engaged in a personal battle and Schmeichel succeeded again on 32 minutes when he pushed a left-footed effort by Sterling over the bar.

After withstanding waves of pressure, Leicester should twice have led in the 40th minute. First Fuchs' cross from the left eluded Marc Albrighton at the far post by inches. Then Fernandinho gifted possession to Jamie Vardy, who exchanged passes with Drinkwater on the edge of the box before blasting over.

Aguero should have given the visitors the lead a minute into the second half when he arrived at the near post to meet a De Bruyne cross. But Leicester, who had squandered possession cheaply, were relieved when the Argentine sent a cheeky chip over the crossbar. Albrighton sent a shot into the side netting from a tough angle after a smart pass by Mahrez as Ranieri's men grew in confidence. But they almost fell behind when Otamendi met a corner from De Bruyne with a firm header that forced Schmeichel into another good save.

With momentum behind them, Leicester sent on Leonardo Ulloa for Inler as they went on the attack. It almost paid off instantly as Ulloa's decoy run allowed Vardy to collect Drinkwater's pass, but he shot straight at Joe Hart in the Manchester City goal. Late on Hart had to make a good, flying save to keep out a thunderous shot from Fuchs following a short corner by the Foxes. —AFP



LEICESTER: Manchester City's Joe Hart, centre, saves a shot during the English Premier League soccer match between Leicester City and Manchester City at the King Power Stadium in Leicester, England, Tuesday. —AP

QATARI-OWNED PSG YET TO WIN OVER THE LOCALS

DOHA: Paris Saint-Germain may be Qatari-owned, runaway Ligue 1 leaders, unbeaten all season and an outside bet for this season's Champions League but they are still battling to win over Qatari fans. The French champions are currently on their winter tour in Doha, a four-day visit combining training sessions, PR work and, ultimately, yesterday's friendly against Italian league leaders Inter Milan in front of a sell-out crowd.

The club have been Qatari-owned since 2011, when Qatar Sports Investments became the majority shareholder, in a deal thought to be worth around 50 million euros.

It made Paris not only the richest club in France but one of the wealthiest in the world, pushing PSG into competition for a worldwide fanbase with clubs such as Barcelona, Manchester United and Bayern Munich. But winning over fans even in the country where the club is now owned, is proving considerably more difficult than winning the Ligue 1 title for

PSG. And as on the pitch, off it, in Qatar at least, PSG are in a battle to overcome the Spanish giants of Barcelona and Real Madrid. "They (PSG) are not the most popular because they have just been around for five years," says Mohamed Majidi Al-Jozali, a Qatari football fan. The 23-year-old civil engineer—"Qatar's biggest AC Milan fan"—was speaking after a PSG training session.

Wearing a yellow Swedish national team shirt with the name "Ibrahimovic" emblazoned on the back, Jozali says it will take time, and success, for PSG to become the number one team in Qatar.

"I think we should give them some time and a lot of people will get on the bandwagon. But, for sure, Barcelona and Real Madrid are... probably the two best clubs in history and there is a lot of deep football fans in this country and that is why they choose to support these clubs." Locals favour Barca Talk to any random Qatari football fan and it is more than likely

they will tell you they support Barcelona.

There is a Qatari Barcelona supporters' club and the Catalan side has just signed a contract to set up its first themed cafe in Doha. In contrast, PSG have just announced their first local supporters club on this trip, according to officials. It has even been suggested that one of the reasons domestic Qatari leagues games are poorly attended is because super-rich locals spend their money flying to Spain instead to watch their heroes there.

A visit to one of Doha's biggest sports shops this week and an inquiry about which football shirts sell the most, brought a simple answer: "Barcelona." Asked if PSG shirts sell well, the same shop assistant smiled and simply said "No." Barcelona also have a local connection, being sponsored by Qatar Airways, but Jozali said the club's history and tradition is something that appeals to Qataris. One local sports journalist in Doha, who wished not to be named, said it was vital that PSG replaced Ibrahimovic

with a star name to keep their profile high in Qatar. "PSG have the star factor going for them," he said. "People here tend to gravitate towards the big names like Zlatan but if you remove him, PSG may struggle to be a draw, even in Qatar." However, Mansoor Mohamed al-Ansari, the general secretary of the Qatar Football Association, told AFP that support for the club among Qataris is growing.

"Of course, I believe that all Qataris feel that they have a sense of belonging to the team due to the fact that it is a Qatari-owned club. And most Qataris are also new fans of the club as well," he said. There does seem to be one way though for PSG to make themselves the most popular club in Qatar - winning the Champions League. "They have to prove themselves first," adds Jozali.

"First off, by winning the Champions League, it would definitely get them more fans because the Champions League is... the biggest stage of football every year." — AFP

'NOBODY WANTS TO WIN THE LEAGUE'

LONDON: Leicester City manager Claudio Ranieri has underscored the unpredictable nature of the Premier League this season, stating that it seemed as if "nobody wants to win the league".

Ranieri's side failed to regain top spot after a goalless draw at home against Manchester City on Tuesday, which kept Leicester behind Arsenal only on goal difference. The surge of smaller teams as well as sides eyeing a maiden league triumph have opened up the league at the halfway stage. Tottenham Hotspur, in with a chance of winning their first title, are placed fourth while Crystal Palace, who finished 10th last season, are at fifth spot.

Promoted side Watford too have put their hat in the top-half mix, placed eighth, after stitching up four wins on the trot. "This league is very crazy. I think the big teams have to stay at a high level, but sometimes it means

nobody wants to win the league—it's very strange this league," Ranieri told BT Sport after the City game.

"It's not easy for us but we want to fight with everybody. It's a miracle what we are doing." Despite dropping points at home, the Italian was happy with his team's performance against City, particularly after Saturday's defeat against Liverpool. "I'm very pleased but I'm also very pleased with a clean sheet against these great champions (City). I think we showed a very good performance and after the Liverpool defeat we've played so well," Ranieri told the club's website (www.lcfc.com).

Ranieri also insisted that he went for a win against City. "I saw in the second half we can do something better. Win or lose for me it was the same and the team responded very well. I wanted to put on another striker to try to win," added Ranieri, whose side host Bournemouth next on Saturday. — Reuters



SUNDERLAND: Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp watches his players warm up for the English Premier League football match between Sunderland and Liverpool at the Stadium of Light in Sunderland, north east England, yesterday. — AFP

UNBEATEN RUN HAS BOUGHT SWANSEA TIME: CURTIS

MANCHESTER: Swansea City's three-game unbeaten run in the Premier League has bought the club a little time in their search for Garry Monk's successor, caretaker manager Alan Curtis said ahead of Saturday's clash with Manchester United. The Swans, who have not named a replacement since Monk was sacked earlier this month, have performed well under 61-year-old Curtis as they picked up their first win in eight games. "It has probably bought us a little bit of time, if we had lost the four games that obviously there would be a huge amount of pressure on the club to try to appoint a new manager," Curtis told reporters yesterday.

"But the results in the last three matches have been good and the performances have been good as well. We have shown a lot of spirit and a lot of character as well as the ability to play the type of game that we want to play." Despite being the bookmakers favourite to land the job in a permanent capacity, Curtis refused to comment on his future at the club. "I am quite comfortable with the situation we find ourselves in at the minute. Things can change this week, but it's highly unlikely. I don't need any statement about where we are, we just carry on," Curtis said.

"I am doing what I am paid to do which is preparing the team for the weekend. I will carry on doing that until the situation changes." Swansea, who are fourth from bottom in the table and just two points above the relegation zone, travel to sixth-placed Manchester United, who are on an eight-game winless run in all competitions, on Saturday. — Reuters

Sports

Clinical England
beat S Africa
by 241 runs



Sheikh Salman
wants to divide
FIFA in two



THURSDAY, DECEMBER 31, 2015

WAGES OF SIN RETURN TO HAUNT SPORTS BARONS Page 15



MADRID: Real Madrid's Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo (2ndR) kicks to score during the Spanish league football match Real Madrid CF vs Real Sociedad de Futbol at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium yesterday. — AFP

RONALDO DOUBLE AS REAL SINK SOCIEDAD

MADRID: Cristiano Ronaldo scored twice and missed a penalty as Real Madrid eased the pressure on under fire coach Rafael Benitez by moving to the top of La Liga with a 3-1 win over Real Sociedad.

Real now lead Barcelona and Atletico Madrid by a point, but both can move back ahead of their title rivals with victories over Real Betis and Rayo Vallecano respectively later on Wednesday.

Ronaldo recovered from a terrible start after blasting his first penalty of the day over the bar to put Madrid in front from another spot-kick just before half-time. Bruma levelled for an injury-hit Sociedad minutes after the break, but Ronaldo delivered when his side needed a goal once more to restore the lead 23 minutes from time before Lucas Vazquez added a late third.

"Apart from 10 minutes when they were in command, we controlled the game and had a lot of chances, which, if we had taken them, would have made the second-half more comfortable," said Benitez.

"The team reacted brilliantly (to the equaliser). I congratulate the players for their attitude from start to finish. We worked hard, reacted well and got the three points."

Rumours over Benitez's future refuse to go away

after a disappointing first six months in charge at the Bernabeu with the former Liverpool boss even claiming there is a media conspiracy against him on Tuesday.

However, Madrid had hit 22 goals in their previous three games at home and were only denied another flying start by a hat-trick of brilliant saves from Geronimo Rulli.

CONTROVERSIAL PENALTIES

The Argentine 'keeper tipped over Pepe's looping header before showing great reflexes to deny Ronaldo and Karim Benzema from close range.

Sociedad's luck seemed completely out in the first-half, though, as they lost top-scorer Imanol Agirretxe and playmaker Sergio Canales to injury and saw referee Jose Luis Gonzalez award Madrid two controversial penalties.

The first spot-kick was given for an apparent push by Yuri Beriche on Benzema at the back post.

Yet, for the first time in his Madrid career, Ronaldo failed to even hit the target from the spot as he blasted wildly over.

The World Player of the Year made amends three minutes before half-time when he converted his second

penalty after Yuri was again penalised for blocking Gareth Bale's cross with an outstretched hand.

Despite the adversity they faced, Sociedad kept the ball off Madrid for long spells and hauled themselves level in spectacular style four minutes after the break when Bruma curled home his first league goal for the club into the top corner.

The Portuguese winger then had a huge chance to put Sociedad in front moments later, but a heavy touch allowed Navas to once again scamper from his goal to make a crucial save.

Benitez's popularity with the home fans wasn't helped by his decision to replace James Rodriguez with Mateo Kovacic on the hour mark and later Benzema for Vazquez.

Yet, despite all their troubles, Ronaldo remains ever reliable source of goals and he delivered once more with a sweetly struck volley from Marcelo's corner for his 25th goal of the season.

Benitez's men had to withstand some late Sociedad pressure as Ruben Pardo's deflected effort trickled just wide. However, Vazquez ensured all three points when he coolly controlled and finished Bale's fine cross to make it 3-1 three minutes from time. — AFP

Spanish League results/standings

MADRID: Spanish La Liga table before yesterday's late matches (played, won, drawn, lost, goals for, goals against, points):

Atletico Madrid	17	12	2	3	24	8	38
Real Madrid	17	11	3	3	45	16	36
Barcelona	15	11	2	2	36	15	35
Celta Vigo	16	9	4	3	28	22	31
Villarreal	16	9	3	4	21	15	30
Deportivo	16	6	8	2	25	16	26
Sevilla	17	7	5	5	23	19	26
Athletic Bilbao	16	7	3	6	24	18	24
Valencia	16	5	7	4	21	14	22
Eibar	16	5	6	5	19	19	21
Malaga	17	5	5	7	11	14	20
Real Betis	16	5	5	6	13	19	20
Espanol	17	6	2	9	16	28	20
Real Sociedad	17	4	4	9	18	25	16
Getafe	16	4	4	8	18	26	16
Sporting Gijon	15	4	3	8	15	23	15
Granada	16	3	5	8	17	27	14
Rayo Vallecano	17	4	2	11	18	39	14
Las Palmas	16	3	4	9	12	23	13
Evante	17	2	5	10	12	30	11

ATLETICO STRIKE TO BEAT RAYO AND TOP LA LIGA

MADRID: Late strikes from Angel Correa and Antoine Griezmann gave Atletico Madrid a 2-0 win over Rayo Vallecano that lifted them top of La Liga ahead of Barcelona's clash with Real Betis later yesterday. It was a dour performance from a depleted Atletico side until the game came to life in the final stages. Substitute Correa fired home from a Thomas Partey pass after 88 minutes and Griezmann sealed the victory. Cristiano Ronaldo scored a penalty and missed another as Real Madrid beat Real Sociedad 3-1.

The Portuguese blazed a spot-kick over the bar after 24 minutes but slotted home another three minutes before the break. Sociedad substitute Bruma equalised for the visitors after 49 minutes before Ronaldo struck a volley through a crowded penalty area into the net midway through the second half. Lucas Vazquez sealed the win with a goal after 87 minutes that will ease the pressure on coach Rafa Benitez. "Sometimes you play better or worse but what is important is to get the three points," Vazquez told reporters. "The public has the right to applaud or whistle. We have to keep

working on these lines and win games."

Atletico have 38 points from 17 games, two more than Real, and Barca are on 35 with two games in hand. Madrid started the stronger with defender Pepe having a header from a corner tipped over by keeper Geronimo Rulli and Ronaldo was denied by the Sociedad stopper. Real won a penalty after a slight push from fullback Yuri on Karim Benzema but Ronaldo missed a penalty for the 1th time in his career with a poor effort that went over the crossbar. He made no mistake with a second spot-kick, though, tucking the ball into the right corner after Gareth Bale's cross was handled by Yuri.

Sociedad lost Sergio Canales with suspected knee ligament damage but came out stronger in the second half and Bruma, given too much space on the right of the area, curled a shot into the top corner.

Just as the game was turning Sociedad's way and the fans were starting to get on the back of the Real players, Ronaldo volleyed in from a corner for his 57th goal of the year and Vazquez struck late from another Bale cross. — Reuters



MADRID: Atletico Madrid's Angel Correa, right, scores past Rayo Vallecano's goalkeeper Yoel, left, during a Spanish La Liga soccer match between Atletico Madrid and Rayo Vallecano at the Vallecas stadium in Madrid, yesterday. — AP



PETROCHEMICALS PULL SAUDI DOWN; EGYPT BREAKS RESISTANCE



JAKARTA: A female motorcycle taxi driver checking for an order on her smartphone in Jakarta. — AFP

MUSLIM WOMEN HAIL FEMALE-ONLY MOTORBIKE TAXIS

MOTORBIKE TAXI DRIVERS IN HEADSCARVES ZIG-ZAG THROUGH JAKARTA TRAFFIC

JAKARTA: Female motorbike taxi drivers in headscarves zig-zag through heavy traffic in the Indonesian capital Jakarta, the latest two-wheeled transport service for women making a dent in the male-dominated world of ride-hailing apps in the Muslim nation. A flurry of new motorbike taxi options have in the past year appeared in the metropolis of 10 million, led by popular service Go-Jek, giving Indonesia's growing middle class a greater choice of transport to get through some of the world's worst traffic jams.

The services—many inspired by ride-sharing app Uber and accessible on smartphones—are a challenge to traditional motorbike taxis in Indonesia, known as "ojeks", which are ubiquitous but have drawn criticism with their disheveled, dangerous drivers and unpredictable pricing. Several services with women drivers entered the market in 2015 after years of growing piety in Indonesia, which has the world's biggest Muslim population, and amid heightened safety concerns following reports of attacks on women by male motorbike taxi drivers.

They are in part designed with religious sensitivities in mind, as an increasing number of Muslim women wear head-

scarves and follow strict interpretations of Islam that forbid close contact with the opposite sex, except between married couples. "The need for transportation for women is huge, especially in big cities where rates of crime and sexual harassment are very high," Evilita Adriani, co-founder of motorbike taxi company Ojek Syari said.

Only Muslim drivers

Popularly known by its nickname "Ojesy", it is the service that aims most clearly at devout female passengers, requiring its drivers to be Muslim women wearing headscarves and loose-fitting clothes. Ojesy drivers can currently only be hailed by a phone call or through mobile messaging service WhatsApp, but the service is also developing an app that was being tested out this month. The service, which began in Indonesia's second-biggest city Surabaya in March before expanding across the main island of Java, only accepts female passengers or children.

"I feel more comfortable sharing a ride with a fellow Muslim woman," said Nurlaila, a Surabaya housewife who goes by one name. She uses the service to take her chil-

dren to school—a common practice in the country where whole families often travel squashed together on a motorbike. "Thank God for Ojesy." The company says business is booming—after starting in March with Adriani as its only driver, it now has 350 drivers. Other motorbike taxi companies vying for a stake in the female market include app-based service LadyJek, whose drivers dress in pink jackets and helmets, and Sister-Ojek, a start-up that began operations earlier this year with capital of just \$100.

Indonesia stands out for the number of motorbike taxi services aimed at women that it boasts, with female drivers relatively rare in many developing nations where the mode of transport is popular. But they do exist in some other countries, including in Liberia where a group of female drivers, sick of being robbed, took to the wheel, reportedly donning pink helmets and jackets and calling themselves "The Pink Panthers". The trend for motorbike taxi-hailing services started in earnest last year with Go-Jek in Jakarta, a general service for anyone wishing to order a motorbike ride, which was quickly followed by others such as GrabBike and Blu-jek.

Tough security measures

The women-only services are slightly more expensive than others, but insist they have better security measures. Calls have been growing for heightened security after reports of women being stalked and harassed by male motorbike taxi drivers, while the rape of a young woman in India by an Uber driver last year also added to safety concerns about ride-hailing services. LadyJek drivers can activate a loud alarm if they are attacked or feel threatened, while Ojesy and Sister-Ojek only operate between sunrise and sunset.

However the services are unlikely to overtake major competitors like Go-Jek as many women in Indonesia, where the majority practice a moderate form of Islam, have few qualms about taking a motorbike taxi driven by a man. The services also try to make themselves attractive to drivers, with Ojesy allowing Muslim housewives and university students to work part-time. Housewife Endang Kartini, 38, said working for Ojesy part-time allowed her to buy cosmetics and give her children pocket money, without interfering with other activities. "I can still attend Muslim prayer groups," she said. — AFP

KIPCO GROUP PURCHASES 51%
JKB STAKE FROM BURGAN BANK

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company - has announced the purchase by the Group of a 51 per cent stake in Jordan Kuwait Bank (JKB) from Burgan Bank. The purchase is part of a series of transactions by Burgan Bank to meet capital ratios required under Basel III. Following these transactions, Burgan Bank's balance sheet will be more flexible and will better support its growth plans. Burgan Bank Group will continue to coordinate and cooperate closely with JKB and other banks in the KIPCO Group in delivering the existing regional commercial banking strategy and capturing the scale benefits from the entire Group.

KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), Faisal Al Ayyar, said the transaction reflects KIPCO's ability to support its banking operations to comply with Basel III: "This transaction is a testament to the support that KIPCO provides to its core operations. The purchase of JKB raises Burgan Bank's capital adequacy above that required under Basel III. This will allow Burgan Bank to continue to execute its strategy and long-term plan for building shareholder value."

He added: "JKB is a well-established

bank that is deeply rooted in the Jordanian banking sector. With a history of nearly 40 years of success, it is important for us for the bank to remain within the KIPCO Group. Burgan Bank will continue to work closely with JKB through the Group's network. KIPCO will continue to support all entities within its commercial banking sector and encourage them to benefit from the regional banking network and share group expertise." JKB was founded in 1976 and is a major player in the Hashemite Kingdom's banking sector. JKB has been a cornerstone of KIPCO's banking activities since 1997.



KIPCO Vice Chairman

IRAN'S OPEC ENVOY PREDICTS
OIL COULD REACH \$50 IN 2016

SAUDI WON'T LIMIT OIL PRODUCTION

DUBAI: Iran's national representative to Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) predicted oil prices in 2016 at between \$35 to \$50 a barrel, but that they would not go above \$60 in the next four years. Iran drafted a state budget for next fiscal year (starting on March 20) based on oil at around \$35-40 a barrel. "The oil prices in the next year (2016) will fluctuate between \$35 to \$50, so Iran is not worried about a fall of its oil income," Mehdi Asali was quoted as saying by the oil ministry's news agency, SHANA yesterday.

Iran has repeatedly blamed its regional rival Saudi Arabia and fellow OPEC-member for plotting to bring down crude prices as a tactic to undermine its sanctions-hit economy. "OPEC members should find a solution to (fall of oil prices) as this situation is not economically in their interest... Saudi Arabia has said it would only cut its oil production if Iran, Iraq and Russia do so," Asali added.

Despite the oil price slump, Iran has vowed to ramp up crude oil production and reclaim its lost share of exports shortly after international sanc-

tions are lifted, expected in January 2016. Iran's crude oil exports could rise by half a million barrels per day within 6-12 months once sanctions against it are removed. Asali also predicted that global demand for crude oil will exceed 94 million barrels per day in 2016, and that the price of oil will not surpass \$60 per barrel before 2020.

Saudi oil policy

In another development, Saudi Arabian Oil Minister Ali Al-Naimi said the kingdom, the world's top crude exporter, does not limit its output and has the capacity to meet additional demand, state television Al Ekhbariya reported yesterday. "The increase in production depends on ... the demand of the customers. We meet our customers' demand, there is no longer a limit to production, as long as there is demand, we have the ability to meet demand," Naimi said.

The Wall Street Journal, which reported the same comments as Al Ekhbariya, also quoted Naimi as saying Saudi Arabia's oil policy was "reliable" and would not change. He has made similar comments in the past when asked about

plans to boost production. On Monday, Saudi Arabia, its finances hit by low oil prices, announced plans to shrink a record state budget deficit with spending cuts, reforms to energy subsidies and a drive to raise revenues from taxes and privatization.

Saudi Arabia's planned cuts in spending and energy subsidies signal the kingdom is bracing for a prolonged period of low oil prices which this month hit their lowest levels since 2004. "We expect - from now on - efficiency of energy consumption to increase, which means the energy consumed will be reduced," Naimi said, in reference to the recent subsidy reforms.

On Monday, Saudi Aramco's chairman Khalid Al-Falih said his country was better equipped to wait out low oil prices than other producers. The comment by the head of the state oil company was in line with Saudi Arabia's no-cut oil policy on output despite a sharp fall in global oil prices since mid-2014. Saudi Arabia led a shift in OPEC policy last year by rejecting calls to reduce production to support prices, choosing instead to defend market share. — Agencies

EGYPT ACCOUNT DEFICIT SOARS IN FIRST QUARTER

STATE SUGAR COMPANY RESERVES HITS 270,000 TONS

CAIRO: Egypt's current account deficit more than doubled to \$4 billion in the first quarter of its financial year as tourism revenues plunged, the central bank said yesterday. The deficit was \$1.6 billion in the same period a year earlier, the central bank said in a statement. The 2015/16 fiscal year started in July. The overall balance of payments deficit reached \$3.7 billion in July-September, compared with a surplus of \$410 million in the same quarter a year earlier. The widening current account deficit was driven partly by a decline in

the services surplus, which narrowed by 22.6 percent to \$1.7 billion. "This figure is largely traced to the fall in services and income receipts, especially tourism revenues which fell by 17.5 percent, to register \$1.7 billion," the central bank said. Another factor was a decline in net unrequited transfers to \$4.3 billion from \$6.2 billion in the same period a year before due to a plunge in net official transfers. Net official transfers fell to \$21.9 million in the first quarter from \$1.5 billion in the same period a year earlier. The

trade deficit registered \$10 billion, unchanged from the same period a year earlier, the central bank said. Net inflows of foreign direct investments rose, however, to \$1.4 billion from \$1.3 billion. External liabilities of the central bank dropped to \$1.2 million from \$1.3 million in the same quarter a year earlier, central bank data showed.

Sugar reserves

Meanwhile, Egypt's state-owned Sugar and Integrated Industries Company said that the country's sugar reserves are

at 270,000 tons, a ministry of supply statement said yesterday. The company exported 42,000 tons of brown sugar to Kenya over the past year and 20,000 tons of ethanol to European countries, the statement said. The company said it achieved revenues of 5.8 billion Egyptian pounds (\$740.74 million). The statement added that the company's sugar reserves have allowed the ministry to meet all of its subsidized sugar requirements without importing or purchasing from the private sector. — Agencies

BURGAN BANK SELLS STAKE IN JORDAN KUWAIT BANK

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank Group (BBG) announced yesterday the sale of Jordan Kuwait Bank to subsidiary of the Kuwait Projects Company (KIPCO) Group. Since 2010, Burgan Bank has undertaken a number of steps to enhance its capital, similar to actions taken by leading banks in the world as a result of the introduction of Basel III. These measures included selling treasury shares, issuing new capital via a rights issue, as well as a series of subordinated bond issues.

The sale yields a reduction of over KD 500 million in Burgan's risk-weighted assets. The resultant capital adequacy ratio is forecast to be in excess of 15% at the end of 2015. Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank, commented: "This move has positioned the bank with capital levels comfortably in excess of that required under the Basel III regime. It also gives us capacity to grow for the next few years without the need for further capital." "The transaction reflects the unique opportunity we enjoy as part of a strong group like KIPCO. It demonstrates our flexibility, strategic



Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank



optionality, as well as the strong support of our main shareholder," concluded Al-Ajeel.

On his part, Eduardo Eguen, Burgan Bank's Group Chief Executive Officer, commented: "This capital friendly solution allows us to strengthen our focus on execution and further improve our earnings," Eguen added. "Jordan Kuwait Bank is a great asset that will remain part of the KIPCO Group, allowing us to keep our link to such a well-run bank. Being members of the same diversified


Group, we will continue our strong support and close cooperation with Jordan Kuwait Bank," concluded Eguen.

GFH FINANCIAL REVERSES KUWAIT 'DELISTING PLAN'

DUBAI: The board of GFH Financial Group has suspended its decision to delist from the Kuwait Stock Exchange, the company said on Wednesday. GFH said the decision was made at a board meeting on the previous day and was passed in light of executive management's recommendations and recent amendments to the rules of the country's Capital Markets Authority (CMA). In a statement earlier this week, GFH said the amendments "have resolved many of the shortfalls of the preceding regulations on disclosure and transparency, including those which were conflicting with GFH's other regulators' requirements".

The amended Kuwaiti regulations

allow listed companies to postpone the disclosure of material information without obtaining the CMA's prior approval, if the information might damage the confidentiality of negotiations or implementation of a transaction, GFH said. Disclosure requirements were also eased in other ways. In September, the sharia-compliant investment firm had said it would voluntarily delist from Kuwait in order to focus trading on its home market Bahrain and the main secondary market for its shares, Dubai. It said it also wanted to avoid any risk of violating rules in Kuwait which contradicted regulations in its home market. — Reuters



National Bank of Kuwait
Financial Markets
Daily Report
At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Global Stock Indices						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Dow Jones	17,528.27	17,720.98	192.71 ▲	1.10	-0.57	
NASDAQ	5,040.90	5,107.90	67.00 ▲	1.33	7.85	
S&P 500	2,056.50	2,078.36	21.86 ▲	1.06	0.93	
Financial Times	6,314.57	6,293.15	-19.42 ▼	-0.31	-4.13	
DAX	10,860.14	10,820.15	-39.99 ▼	-0.37	10.35	
CAC 40	4,701.36	4,724.25	2.89 ▲	0.06	10.10	
Swiss	8,883.01	8,887.50	4.49 ▲	0.05	-1.07	
Nikkei 225	18,987.23	19,033.71	51.48 ▲	0.27	9.07	
Topix	1,543.39	1,547.30	3.91 ▲	0.25	9.93	
Hang Seng	21,999.62	21,882.15	-117.47 ▼	-0.53	-7.30	
Straits Times	2,888.22	2,885.51	-2.71 ▼	-0.09	-14.25	

MENA Stock Indices						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Kuwait	5,583.81	5,612.48	28.67 ▲	0.51	-17.05	
Saudi Arabia	6,930.60	6,903.89	-26.71 ▼	-0.39	-16.83	
Dubai	3,134.82	3,150.25	15.43 ▲	0.49	-16.94	
Abu Dhabi	4,296.16	4,276.14	-20.02 ▼	-0.47	-5.14	
Bahrain	1,202.43	1,204.98	2.56 ▲	0.21	-15.71	
Qatar	10,398.33	10,435.67	37.34 ▲	0.36	-15.36	
Oman	5,429.36	5,444.39	15.03 ▲	0.28	-14.41	
Lebanon	1,154.76	1,169.52	14.76 ▲	1.28	-2.46	
Jordan	2,116.26	2,121.58	5.32 ▲	0.25	-2.27	
Egypt	6,794.75	6,971.67	176.92 ▲	2.60	-23.88	
Morocco	8,073.96	8,007.71	-66.25 ▼	-0.75	-7.76	
Tunisia	5,004.26	5,011.96	7.70 ▲	0.15	-1.68	

Global Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar	12.2603	3.2782	3.0009	3.2477	3.9475	4.4918		
Saudi Riyal	0.08156	0.2674	0.2448	0.1804	0.2649	32.20	0.3664	
US Dollar	0.30505	3.7400	0.9154	0.6749	0.9907	120.42	1.3702	
Euro	0.33324	4.0856	1.0924	0.7374	1.0820	131.63	1.4980	
Sterling Pound	0.45202	5.5419	1.4818	1.3561	1.4682	178.52	2.0317	
Swiss Franc	0.30791	3.7751	1.0094	0.9242	0.6811	121.62	1.3831	
Japanese Yen	0.00253	0.0311	0.0083	0.0076	0.0056	0.0082	0.0114	
Australian Dollar	0.22263	2.7295	0.7298	0.6676	0.4922	0.7230	87.88	

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate								
Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar	0.30505	3.7400	0.3742	3.6276	0.3831	3.6574	7.7201	
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.2782	12.2603	1.2267	11.8918	1.2560	11.9895	25.3077	
Saudi Riyal	0.2674	0.08156	0.1001	0.9699	0.1024	0.9779	2.0642	
Bahraini Dinar	2.6773	0.81518	9.9944		9.6940	1.0238	9.7737	20.6304
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.08409	1.0310	0.1032		0.1056	1.0082	2.1282
Omani Riyal	2.6101	0.79620	9.7617	0.9767	9.4683		9.5461	20.1501
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.08341	1.0226	0.1023	0.9919	0.1048		2.1108
Egyptian Pound	0.1295	0.03951	0.4844	0.0485	0.4699	0.0496	0.4738	

Global Interest Rates					
Currency	1 Week	1 Month	3 Month	6 Month	1 Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	0.00	1.19	1.44	1.63	1.94
US Dollar	0.38	0.42	0.60	0.83	1.15
Euro	-0.24	-0.20	-0.12	-0.03	0.05
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.50	0.58	0.74	1.06
Swiss Franc	-0.85	-0.80	-0.76	-0.69	-0.60
Australian Dollar	2.07	2.15	2.08	2.05	2.01
Canadian Dollar	0.00	0.86	0.86	0.95	1.01

Global Bond Yields				
Country	2 Year	5 Year	10 Year	30 Year
United States	1.08	1.79	2.29	3.02
Europe	-0.35	-0.05	0.61	1.46
United Kingdom	0.65	1.33	1.95	2.66

Commodities						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Kuwait Oil	29.04	29.10	0.06 ▲	0.21	-76.07	
Brent	37.66	37.27	-0.39 ▼	-1.04	-47.29	
West Texas	37.93	37.83	-0.10 ▼	-0.26	-40.92	
Gold	1068.61	1066.95	-1.66 ▼	-0.16	-10.79	
Silver	13.95	13.83	-0.12 ▼	-0.86	-12.62	

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		TELEX TRANSFER PER 1000	
Australian Dollar	213.08		
Canadian Dollar	223.37		
Swiss Franc	311.14		
Euro	335.85		
US Dollar	304.55		
Sterling Pound	454.36		
Japanese Yen	2.56		
Bangladesh Taka	3.882		
Indian Rupee	4.586		
Sri Lankan Rupee	2.122		
Nepali Rupee	2.871		
Pakistani Rupee	2.903		
UAE Dirhams	0.08287		
Bahraini Dinar	0.8094		
Egyptian Pound	0.03880		
Jordanian Dinar	0.4331		
Omani Riyal	0.7908		
Qatari Riyal	0.08397		
Saudi Riyal	0.08118		

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
Kenyan Shilling	3.510
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			
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				

POSH NEW YORK CITY HOTELS PLEDGE TO GO GREEN

NEW YORK: Some of New York's most iconic hotels, comprising more than 11,000 guest rooms, promised to cut their carbon footprints on Tuesday and join a city effort to improve the energy efficiency of buildings. The famed Waldorf Astoria, The Peninsula New York and The Pierre are among 16 well-known, high-end hotels that committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30 percent in the next

ten years, according to the Office of Mayor Bill de Blasio. Officials said they hope the move by the ritzy hotels, whose reputations are global, will inspire others to follow suit. "If some of New York's most iconic hotels can significantly reduce their carbon footprint, anyone can," said de Blasio in a statement.

The efforts to go green could include retrofitting buildings with

updated, efficient equipment for heating and cooling, replacing boilers, improving lighting and adding insulation. Meeting the pledge at the glitzy Waldorf Astoria means updating a building that is 84 years old. It has hosted Marilyn Monroe, Fidel Castro and Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev as well as US presidents who stay in a special suite designed to evoke the White House. Cutting emissions follows the

hotel's motto of "the difficult immediately, the impossible takes a bit longer," the Waldorf Astoria management said in a statement.

"We pride ourselves in the ability to embrace a challenge," said Michael Hoffmann, the hotel's managing director, in the statement. The 16 hotels, totaling more than 11,000 rooms, should cut greenhouse gas emissions by 32,000 metric tons to live up to their

pledge, according to city projections. The hotels' pledge is part of a wider municipal initiative to reduce greenhouse gas emissions 80 percent by 2050. Buildings make up nearly three-quarters of citywide emissions, authorities said. At current rates, the pledges citywide to curb greenhouse gas emissions could yield results that compare to removing more than 100,000 cars, according to authorities. — Reuters

PETROCHEMICALS PULL SAUDI DOWN; EGYPT MARKET RISES

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Petrochemical stocks pulled Saudi Arabia's main equity index down yesterday in the wake of gas feedstock price rises in the 2016 state budget, while Egypt's market rose in a broad-based rally, breaking technical resistance. The Saudi index, which had dropped 0.9 percent on Tuesday in an initial reaction to the budget's austerity measures, fell a further 0.4 percent. Saudi companies have begun estimating the impact on their cost bases of energy and feedstock price rises in the budget. Petrochemical producers are hardest hit, with Saudi Basic Industries (SABIC) projecting an 8-percent rise in its 2016 costs. The estimated cost increases are smaller than some analysts had anticipated, and may be mitigated to some extent by efficiency gains at the companies. Nevertheless, retail investors reacted negatively and SABIC shares fell 2.6 percent, with the petrochemical sector index dropping 2.9 percent. Miner Ma'aden dropped 1.5 percent; it said it was still calculating the impact.

But telecommunications firm Mobily rose 1.8 percent after saying it had agreed with the majority of its lenders to waive a breach of

covenant under loan facilities totaling 12.1 billion riyals. In a sign of further austerity to come, finance minister Ibrahim Allassaf said the kingdom expects to introduce value-added tax in two years, aiming for a tax rate of about 5 percent, the Saudi-owned Al-Hayat newspaper reported. Most other Gulf markets rose. Dubai's index was up 0.5 percent as financial firm Shua Capital rose 4.4 percent; the stock has seen unusually heavy volumes in the past week.

Abu Dhabi's index fell 0.5 percent as blue-chip lender First Gulf Bank lost 2.3 percent. Qatar rose 0.4 percent as Qatar National Bank, the biggest lender, added 0.6 percent. Egypt's index surged 2.7 percent to 6,981 points in rising turnover with exchange data showing non-Egyptian Arab investors were heavy net buyers. The index's break of technical resistance on its December peak triggered a minor double bottom formed by the November and December lows and pointing up to about 7,400 points. Palm Hills Development climbed 2 percent while Ezz Steel was flat after saying it had narrowed its net loss in the third quarter of this year by 21.5 percent from a year earlier. — Reuters



SHENZHEN: A stationary high speed train is seen at Futian railway station, Asia's largest underground railway station, in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong province yesterday. Asia's largest underground railway station opens yesterday in Shenzhen, enabling high-speed trains to slash the travel time between Guangzhou and Hong Kong to half an hour. — AFP

GLOBAL GROWTH WILL BE 'DISAPPOINTING' IN 2016

GLOBAL MEDIUM-TERM GROWTH PROSPECTS WEAKEN: IMF

BERLIN: Global economic growth will be "disappointing" next year, the head of the International Monetary Fund said in a guest article for German newspaper Handelsblatt published yesterday. IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said the prospect of rising interest rates in the United States and an economic slowdown in China were contributing to uncertainty and a higher risk of economic vulnerability worldwide.

In addition, growth in global trade has slowed considerably and a decline in raw material prices is posing problems for economies based on these, while the financial sector in many countries still has weaknesses and financial risks are rising in emerging markets, Lagarde added. "All of that means global growth will be disappointing and uneven in 2016," Lagarde said, adding that low productivity, ageing populations and the effects of the global financial crisis were putting the brakes on growth.

She said the start of normalization of US monetary policy and China's shift towards consumption-led growth were "necessary and healthy" changes but needed to be carried out as efficiently and smoothly as possible. The US Federal Reserve hiked interest rates for the first time in nearly a decade earlier this month and made clear that was a tentative beginning to a "gradual" tightening cycle. There are "potential spillover effects," with the prospect of increasing interest rates there already having contributed to higher financing costs for some borrowers, including



IMF Managing Director
Christine Lagarde

in emerging and developing markets, Lagarde said.

She added that while countries other than highly developed economies were generally better prepared for higher interest rates than they had been in the past, she was concerned about their ability to absorb shocks. "Most highly developed economies except the USA and possibly Britain will continue to need loose monetary policy but all countries in this category should comprehensively factor spillover effects into their decision-making," Lagarde said. She warned that rising US interest rates and a stronger dollar could lead to firms defaulting on their payments and that this could then "infect" banks and states. — Reuters

CHINA HALTS FOREX EXCHANGE BUSINESS FOR FOREIGN BANKS

AUTHORITIES WARN OF FURTHER ACTION

SHANGHAI: China's central bank has suspended at least three foreign banks from conducting some foreign exchange business until the end of March, three sources who had seen the suspension notices said yesterday. Included among the suspended services are liquidation of spot positions for clients and some other activities related to cross-border, onshore and offshore businesses, the sources said. The sources, speaking on condition that the banks were not named, said the notices sent to the affected foreign banks by the People's Bank of China (PBOC) gave no reason for the suspension.

The PBOC did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The measure follows a slew of steps taken by the Chinese government to keep the yuan stable since it devalued the currency in August. The spread between the onshore and offshore markets for the yuan, or renminbi, has been growing since the devaluation, making it increasingly difficult for the central bank to manage its currency and stem an outflow of capital from an economy that is facing its slowest growth in 25 years.

The sources told Reuters that authorities had warned the banks that if they engaged in lucrative carry trade, taking advantage of the different exchange rates, the central bank would move to further block arbitrage channels. "This is part of the PBOC's expedient

means to stabilize the yuan's exchange rate," said an executive at a foreign bank contacted separately. The sources said the banks might have been targeted due to the large scale of their cross-border forex businesses.

An economist at a top government think-tank said the measure was a temporary bid to curb demand for dollars that has been strengthening towards the end of the year as the gap between the onshore and offshore yuan exchange rates widens. "They hope to ease foreign exchange buying pressure and ease depreciation pressure on the yuan," said the economist who declined to be identified by name. "But I don't think the authorities will take very strong capital control measures, they are likely to reinforce the existing measures." The move could also ease pressure on the PBOC for direct intervention in offshore markets to support the yuan, which has contributed to a fall of more than \$400 billion in China's foreign exchange reserves this year.

Under scrutiny

In common with forex markets worldwide, there are no official data on which banks are the most active in trading foreign exchange in China. A 2015 Asiamoney survey asking market participants which brokers they used named Deutsche Bank as the top foreign forex provider in China, followed by Australia and

New Zealand Banking Group, HSBC, Citigroup and BNP Paribas.

Asked if they had received the central bank's suspension notice, Citi, Deutsche Bank, HSBC and BNP Paribas declined to comment. There was no immediate response from ANZ. Standard Chartered and DBS, which also conduct trading in foreign exchange in China, did not respond to requests for comment. The latest move comes just three months since the PBOC ordered banks to closely scrutinize clients' foreign exchange transactions to prevent illicit cross-border currency arbitrage between the offshore and onshore yuan.

Yesterday, the country's foreign exchange regulator also said it would improve its reserve position and contingency plans to curb risks from abnormal cross-border capital flows. The yuan has come under renewed pressure since late November amid speculation that Beijing would permit more depreciation after the International Monetary Fund announced the currency's admission into the fund's basket of reserve currencies. The onshore yuan traded in Shanghai has lost 1.44 percent of its value since the end of November, and has repeatedly hit 4-1/2 year lows. The offshore market has traced a similar pattern. The Hong Kong-traded offshore yuan hit an intraday low of 6.5965 yesterday morning, its weakest since late September 2011. — Reuters

A HOME OF THEIR OWN? - 'IMPOSSIBLE' DREAM FOR CHINA MIGRANT WORKERS

BEIJING: He makes less than \$1,000 a month in a city where apartments can cost more than \$1 million, but even so the Chinese government is pinning its improbable hopes for a property revival on the likes of Liu Jun. The electrician and plumber is a recent addition to China's 250 million-plus migrant workers, who have provided the labor force to transform the country's economy in recent decades, emerging from the countryside in droves to seek better lives and incomes in the cities. Construction workers, machine operators in factories, office cleaners—the sweat of their brows has lubricated China's growth as it expanded to become the world's second-largest economy.

But while they are free to move in search of employment, they and their children have long been denied equal access to public services such as schools, hospitals and housing under a decades-old household registration system known as "hukou". As a result they have been denied a full share of the prosperity they have created, while a generation of their children have been "left behind" to be raised by their grandparents or other family members or some simply left on their own. At the same time the property market that has fuelled much of China's growth has hit the doldrums in the last two years, with new buyers priced out despite government borrowing restrictions reining in soaring costs.

Now authorities are trying to address both issues simultaneously, reforming the hukou system to encourage migrants to



BEIJING: A Chinese worker looks on as he walks along a street after work in Beijing. Construction workers, machine operators in factories, office cleaners—the sweat of their brows has lubricated China's growth as it expanded to become the world's second-largest economy. — AFP

buy properties in the towns and cities where they work. Only 10 percent of migrants have bought a home in the places they have moved to, according to the World Bank. But analysts say there are multiple obstacles to the concept, not least affordability. "Without a lot of supporting policies, the initial impact will be relatively limited," Brian Jackson, a Beijing-based analyst with research firm IHS Economics said.

Liu, from Lankao in Henan—a central province that is one of China's poorest—abandoned his life as a farmer and now earns up to 6,000 yuan (\$900) a month in

Beijing. New home prices in the capital averaged 34,925 yuan per square meter in November, according to a survey by the China Index Academy (CIA), which is linked to the country's biggest property website. Liu dreams of owning a home in the capital, but would have to save for decades before that could come true. "I would love to stay in the city," he said. "But I don't have the money and so I don't have any buying plans."

Land rights

The hukou reform plans, unveiled last

week after a key four-day economic planning meeting addressed by President Xi Jinping, would make more migrants eligible for urban registrations more quickly. The thinking is that incomers would be more likely to invest in a permanent home if they could enjoy the same rights as official residents. "We must implement household registration reform plans... to cultivate (migrants') expectations and demand for the purchase or long-term lease of a house in their place of work," said a statement released by the official Xinhua news agency following the meeting. It was the first time authorities have explicitly and publicly linked hukou reform—which has been repeatedly promised over the years—to property sales.

But while holders of urban hukous have access to services, rural hukous give their holders rights to use land, which in China is all owned by the state. Many expect those rights to become tradeable assets if and when China ever reforms its land laws, making them reluctant to give them up. "Not all rural residents are willing to become urban dwellers," said Wendy Chen, an analyst with Nomura International in Shanghai. "One of their concerns is... whether they can retain their land." Across 100 major Chinese cities, November's average new home price was 10,899 yuan per square meter, according to CIA, but employment opportunities—and wages—decline with city size. In lower-tier cities "there might not be a strong labor incentive to move there," said Jackson of IHS Economics. — AFP

CHINESE FIRM TO INVESTORS: 'THIEF TOOK MY FINANCIAL STATEMENTS'

SHANGHAI: A troubled Chinese company has found a novel excuse for continuing to delay publishing its annual results, telling investors that a thief stole all its financial records for the last four years. Hong Kong-listed China Animal Healthcare, which makes vaccinations and other drugs for livestock and poultry, said a truck carrying all its original financial documents for the period was stolen while the driver took a lunch break. The "Lost Documents," as the company referred to them in a statement to the Hong Kong stock exchange, are at the centre of a forensic accounting investigation after China Animal Healthcare delayed releasing its 2014 annual results in March and auditors refused to sign them off.

Trading in its shares has been suspended for nine months because of the dispute. "The board...of directors...of the Company wishes to inform the shareholders of the Company... that on 4 December 2015, a truck of the Group... loaded with, among other things, all original financial documents of

the Group for the four financial years ended 31 December 2014 and for the current year... were stolen," the statement said. "According to the local public security bureau, thefts such as the incident are common occurrence" in the Qingyuan area where the alleged crime took place, it added.

The driver was said to have been transporting documents stored at a facility in Hebei province to the company's headquarters in Beijing, but the truck was stolen when he stopped for lunch at a restaurant. The firm is now trying to track down copies of the missing documents, it said, adding the suspension of its shares would continue "until further notice". The truck was later found by local police but the thief had apparently made off with the documents, although they would have little value except to the company. "Although the possibility of finding the Lost Documents is not high, the group has nonetheless deployed all possible resources in search of the alleged documents," it said. — AFP

GOLD DOWN, HEADS FOR THIRD ANNUAL LOSS

DOLLAR INDEX CLIMBS TO NEAR 1-WEEK HIGH

LONDON: Gold inched lower yesterday, as the combination of a firm dollar and weak oil prices left the metal on track for its third consecutive annual loss. Bullion has lost almost 10 percent of its value this year, largely on concerns that higher US interest rates would hurt demand for the non-yielding asset. Spot gold was down 0.2 percent at \$1,067.01 an ounce by 1044 GMT. Trading volumes were muted in the holiday-shortened week.

"Physical demand in gold continues to be relatively aggressive in the Far East compared with October and November, and on that basis gold should be much higher, but there seems to be this pressure from the dollar, which continues to put a lid on the price," MKS SA head of trading Afshin Nabavi said.

"It looks like support is at \$1,045 and \$1,050, and resistance stands at \$1,085/\$1,095." With little market-mov-

ing data due this week, bullion traders will rely on cues from the currency and oil markets, analysts said. The dollar was up 0.1 percent against a basket of six currencies and was heading for a 10 percent yearly increase, making gold more expensive for foreign currency holders. Following the US Federal Reserve's move to raise interest rates for the first time in nearly a decade this month and indications that the central

bank would resort to gradual increases in 2016, the outlook for gold does not look bullish.

Several traders and brokerages predict a drop in prices to \$1,000 or even lower early in 2016. Gold typically follows oil as the metal is often seen as a hedge against oil-led inflation. Oil prices fell more than 1 percent yesterday after jumping 3 percent in the previous session. Investor interest

remained absent, with assets of SPDR Gold Trust, the top gold-backed exchange-traded fund, still near a seven-year low. Speculative short positions on COMEX gold contracts are close to an all-time high. Silver fell 0.5 percent to \$13.83 an ounce, on track for an 11 percent yearly fall. Palladium gained 0.3 percent to \$558.21 an ounce and platinum fell 0.3 percent to \$885.80 an ounce. — Reuters

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report

Wednesday 30 December 2015

Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low
Price Index	▲ 28.67	5,612.48	5,583.81	5,612.48	5,578.89
Weighted Index	▲ 2.50	381.84	379.34	382.06	379.49
KXSX 15	▲ 6.70	902.30	895.60	903.99	896.17

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
MARIN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	106 - 0.0
IKARUS	90	90	55,000	4,950	4	90 - 0.0
IPG	300	285	115,557	33,734	8	300 ▲ 25.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	650 - 0.0
ENERGYH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	43.0 - 0.0
GPI	53	51	976,925	50,218	45	51 ▼ -1.0
ABAR	124	122	24,397	2,976	5	124 ▲ 2.0
Oil & Gas			1,171,879	91,878	62	816.43 ▲ 9.28

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KFOUC	222	222	4,300	955	1	222 ▲ 2.0
BPCC	520	510	375,251	191,682	6	520 ▲ 20.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	610 - 0.0
ALQURAIN	188	186	29,246	5,467	9	186 - 0.0
Basic Materials			408,797	198,103	16	975.86 ▲ 15.90

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	380 - 0.0
REFRI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	320 - 0.0
CABLE	375	360	16,456	5,935	9	375 ▲ 5.0
SHIP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	148 - 0.0
PCEM	1,080	1,060	1,370	1,475	5	1,080 - 0.0
PAPER	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	390 - 0.0
MRC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	74 - 0.0
ACICO	300	295	10,930	3,224	5	300 ▲ 5.0
GMCC	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
KBMCC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	250 - 0.0
NICBM	226	226	5,000	1,130	2	226 - 0.0
EQUIPMENT	59	58	318,330	18,473	11	59 - 0.0
NCCI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	99 - 0.0
GYPSUM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102 - 0.0
SALBOOKH	85	81	488,950	40,605	38	84 ▲ 1.0
AGLTY	485	460	267,824	128,642	10	485 - 0.0
EDU	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210 - 0.0
CLEANING	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	40.0 - 0.0
CITYGROUP	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	405 - 0.0
KGL	43.0	42.0	671,452	28,548	28	42.5 - 0.0
KPCPC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	218 - 0.0
HUMANSOFT	1,000	1,000	500	500	1	1,000 ▲ 20.0
NAFAIS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	184 - 0.0
SAFWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300 - 0.0
GFC	33.0	33.0	1	0	1	33.0 ▲ 1.5
MAYADEEN	22.0	21.5	2,690,750	58,697	35	21.5 - 0.0
CGC	780	780	20,500	15,990	6	780 - 0.0
MTCC	70	66	1,802,000	123,529	62	68 ▼ -1.0
UPAC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	650 - 0.0
ALAFCCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	210 - 0.0
MUBARRAD	76	76	31,106	2,364	3	76 - 0.0
LOGISTICS	57	54	737,400	40,608	24	55 ▼ -1.0
SCEM	84	83	20,050	1,664	2	84 ▲ 1.0
GCEM	75	75	420	32	1	75 ▼ -3.0
QCEM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75 - 0.0
FCEM	75	75	2,500	188	1	75 ▲ 1.0
RKWC	104	100	149,988	15,297	9	104 ▲ 4.0
SPEC	88	88	10	1	1	88 ▼ -1.0
Industrials			7,235,537	486,901	254	1042.30 ▲ 3.83

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
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	128	128	1,500	192	1	128 ▲ 2.0
DANAH	80	79	138,000	10,976	13	80 ▼ -2.0
POULT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	186 - 0.0
FOOD	2,020	2,000	1,707,675	3,415,353	115	2,020 ▲ 60.0
Consumer Goods			1,847,175	3,426,521	129	1085.71 ▲ 5.19

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
SOKOUC	49.0	48.0	389,1350	187,920	76	48.0 - 0.0
KRE	57	55	5,809,960	322,982	29	55 ▼ -1.0
URC	96	94	60,290	5,787	4	96 - 0.0
NRE	89	87	342,436	30,104	30	88 ▲ 1.0
SRE	370	345	5,000	1,767	2	370 ▲ 20.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	640 - 0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	166 - 0.0
MASALEH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	61 - 0.0
ARABREC	30.0	30.0	170,000	5,100	2	30.0 ▲ 0.5
ERESCO	61	59	130,744	7,852	12	61 - 0.0
MABANEE	940	920	157,186	146,175	7	940 ▲ 20.0
INJAZZAT	81	79	20,100	1,588	2	79 - 0.0
INVESTORS	25.5	25.0	1,601,004	40,027	25	25.5 ▲ 0.5
IRC	29.0	28.5	115,000	3,295	7	29.0 - 0.0
ALTUARIA	81	79	276,000	21,928	8	80 ▼ -1.0
SANAM	44.5	44.5	1	0	1	44.5 ▲ 1.0
AAYANRE	78	75	13,000	1,005	3	78 ▼ -1.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75 - 0.0
ALAQARIA	23.0	20.0	237,000	4,920	22	23.0 ▲ 2.0
MZAYA	102	102	59,640	6,083	3	102 - 0.0
ADNC	27.0	26.0	1,924,500	51,349	26	27.0 - 0.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90 - 0.0
TJARA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	41.5 - 0.0
TAAMEER	24.5	22.5	212,600	4,799	6	24.5 - 0.0
ARKAN	110	110	97,531	10,728	7	110 - 0.0
ARGAN	176	176	6,250	1,100	3	176 - 0.0
ABAAR	29.5	29.5	100,000	2,950	1	29.5 - 0.0
MUNSHAAT	88	85	716,281	62,074	33	88 ▲ 3.0
FIRSTDUBAI	51	48.5	21,450	1,043	6	48.5 ▼ -1.0
KBT	44.0	42.5	3,750,000	162,012	88	43.0 ▲ 0.5
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	132 - 0.0
MENA	24.5	23.0	246,110	5,986	9	24.5 ▲ 0.5
ALMUDON	33.0	31.5	281,713	9,085	20	31.5 ▼ -1.0
MARAKEZ	23.0	22.5	9,800	224	4	23.0 ▲ 0.5
REMAL	34.5	34.5	107,649	3,714	8	34.5 - 0.0
MASHAER	106	106	47,783	5,065	2	106 - 0.0
Real Estate			20,410,378	1,106,662	446	945.10 ▲ 6.93

Security	Trades					
	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last Change
KINV	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100 - 0.0
FACIL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	170 - 0.0
IFA	31.5	29.5	10,465,394	325,941	78	31.5 ▲ 2.5
NINV	89	88	364,638	32,088	21	88 - 0.0
KPROJ	580	570	22,700	13,146	3	580 ▲ 10.0
COAST	32.5	31.5	1,055,452	34,067	33	32.5 ▲ 1.0
SECH	37.0	36.0	640,340	23,563	28	37.0 ▲ 1.0
SGC	106	106	483	51	1	106 ▼ -4.0
ARZAN	39.0	37.0	29,900	1,129	8	38.5 ▲ 1.0
MARKAZ	102	100	110,000	11,020	3	102 - 0.0
KMEFIC	27.0	27.0	500	14	1	27.0 ▼ -0.5
ALAMAN	56	55	186,751	10,358	6	56 ▼ -1.0
ALOLA	57	54	2,200,031	123,979	40	57 ▲ 2.0
ALMAL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.5 - 0.0
GIH	27.0	25.5	2,013,396	53,111	53	26.5 ▲ 0.5
AAYAN	48.0	47.5	230,500	10,949	6	48.0 - 0.0
BAYANINV	34.0	33.0	101,500	3,386	7	34.0 ▲ 0.5
OSOUL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	41.0 - 0.0
KPIC	37.0	36.5	113,100	4,128	12	37.0 ▲ 0.5
KAMCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100 - 0.0
NIH	61	61	510	31	2	61 ▲ 2.0
ISKAN	33.0	31.0	4,045,850	127,170	44	31.0 ▼ -0.5
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	20.5 - 0.0
ALDEERA	33.0	32.0	10,001	320	2	32.0 - 0.0
ALSALAM	36.0	35.0	1,470,654	52,130	42	35.5 - 0.0
EKTTITAB	31.0	29.5	492,391	14,861	23	29.5 ▼ -1.0
ALMADINA	36.0	35.0	1,575,815	55,514	35	35.0 - 0.0
NOOR	49.0	47.0	2,319,519	111,340	70	47.5 - 0.0
TAMINV	42.0	41.5	31,000	12,870	3	42.0 - 0.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	130 - 0.0
TAIBA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	300 - 0.0
KSHC	25.0	24.5	87,971	2,189	6	25.0 - 0.0
STRATEGIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	33.0 - 0.0
ASIYA	38.0	36.0	64,313	2,332	10	37.0 ▼ -1.0
GNAHC	2					

APPLE TO PAY ITALY 318 MILLION EUROS

US TECH GIANT SETTLE TAX FRAUD PROBE

ROME: Apple has agreed to pay Italy 318 million euros (\$348 million) to settle a tax dispute after the US tech giant was investigated for suspected fraud, the country's tax agency said Tuesday. The company's Italian subsidiary and several of its senior executives had been under investigation for fraud over its alleged failure to comply with obligations to declare its earnings in Italy between 2008 and 2013. According to Italian daily La Repubblica, Apple Italia should have paid corporation tax of 880 million euros for the period. After months of negotiations, the tax authorities agreed to close the case in return for a cheque for 318 million.

A spokesman for the tax agency confirmed the newspaper's report was accurate but would not divulge further details. Apple Italia did not respond to a request for comment on a case which could set a precedent for other European countries' dealings with the company. The settlement comes against a backdrop of mounting controversy over the tax arrangements of multinational groups who use cross-border corporate structures to reduce their tax bills, sometimes with the help of secret and potentially illegal 'sweetheart' deals. Apple Italia is part of the company's European operation which is headquartered in Ireland, a country with one of the lowest levels of corporation tax in the European Union.

Ireland taxes corporate earnings from normal business activities at a rate of 12.5 percent, which compares with a standard 27.5 percent rate in Italy. Earlier this month, Apple chief Tim Cook described accusations that the world's richest company was sidestepping US taxes by stashing cash overseas as "political crap" and insisted: "We pay every tax dollar we owe." The settlement of the tax dispute will not halt the criminal investigation into the conduct of three Apple Italia executives but will likely reduce the severity of any sanctions they may face, La Repubblica said.

'Perfectly legal'

Apple's activities in Ireland are currently under investigation by the European Commission, which is due to announce soon whether tax breaks designed to



ROME: A group of youngsters take a selfie picture with an Apple phone in front of the Colosseum in downtown Rome yesterday. Apple's Italian subsidiary has agreed to pay 318 million euros (£235m; \$348m) to settle a tax dispute after the US tech giant was investigated for suspected fraud, the country's tax agency said. — AFP

secure the company's extensive investment in Ireland amounted to illegal state aid. Apple's European operations have been headquartered at the southern city of Cork since 1980. The company is in the process of expanding its workforce there to 6,000 and it has been followed into Ireland by other US tech firms including Twitter, Microsoft and Google.

Cook said on a visit to Ireland in November that he was confident the Dublin government and his company would be found to have done nothing wrong. The issue of Apple's Irish arrangements is separate from but related to the broader one of multinational companies 'parking' revenues and profits in low-tax

countries. That issue has attracted increasing attention from lawmakers across Europe who argue that taxes should be paid in the countries where sales and profits are generated.

In October, the European Commission ordered both Italian auto giant Fiat and coffee chain Starbucks to pay around 30 million euros (\$34 million) in back taxes after they were found to have benefited from illegal deals in, respectively, Luxembourg and the Netherlands. The ruling followed the so-called 'LuxLeaks' revelations that multinationals including Pepsi and Ikea had negotiated tax rates as low as one percent in return for headquartering their European activities in tiny Luxembourg. The

Luxembourg arrangements of online retailer Amazon and fast food giant McDonalds are also being scrutinised by Brussels.

The Grand Duchy is challenging the Fiat ruling through the European Court of Justice, arguing that most other EU states also offer special fiscal incentives to attract inward investment. In the United States, Apple has come under fire in Congress for not declaring overseas earnings to the US tax authorities. Cook has defended this as perfectly legal and sensible given that the company would be liable for 40% taxation if it repatriated all its earnings to the United States. "We have a tax code made for the Industrial Age, not the Digital Age," he complained in November. — AFP

News

in brief

Private sector loans grow in euro-zone

FRANKFURT: The volume of loans to the private sector in the euro area expanded in November, with a bigger bounce recorded than the previous month, European Central Bank data showed yesterday. The statistics are a key indicator of economic health for the ECB, as borrowing is a main financing source for corporate investment which in turn should boost the euro-zone's currently weak economy. In November, approved loans rose 1.3 percent from a year ago, compared to a growth of 1.0 percent in October, an ECB statement said. When certain strictly financial transactions are stripped out from the loans data, the trend remained the same - with credit accorded to households and companies up 1.0 percent in November, compared with 0.8 percent in October. The ECB has launched a raft of policy measures to get credit flowing, most significantly a massive program to buy more than one trillion euros (\$1.1 trillion) worth of public sector bonds to pump liquidity into the system. Earlier this month, ECB chief Mario Draghi said that program would be extended by a further six months in a bid to drive euro-zone inflation higher.

Julius Baer in deal with US on tax-dodging case

GENEVA: Swiss private bank Julius Baer said yesterday it had reached an agreement to settle a US criminal investigation into claims that it helped rich Americans dodge taxes. "Julius Baer has reached an agreement in principle with the US Attorney's Office for the Southern District of New York with respect to a comprehensive resolution regarding its legacy US cross-border business," said a statement from the Zurich-based bank. The bank did not specify the sum it would have to pay in fines but said its new provision for the settlement was \$547.25 million - significantly higher than the \$350 million set aside in June. "Based on the terms of the agreement in principle, Julius Baer has taken an additional provision of \$197.25 million to supplement its preliminary provision of \$350 million in June 2015," its statement said. The settlement must be approved by the US Department of Justice. The bank said it expects this by the first quarter of 2016. "Julius Baer remains committed to cooperating proactively with the DOJ's investigation," the statement said.

Brazil taxi drivers rally against Uber

SAO PAULO: Hundreds of angry taxi drivers protested by blocking roads in Sao Paulo on Tuesday, saying the city hall's plans to regulate the online ride-sharing service Uber will ruin them. About 300 taxis blocked the road in front of the city hall in the huge Brazilian city for more than three hours as their drivers let off firecrackers in protest. Another group of taxis blocked access to the city's Congonhas airport, media reported. The US firm currently operates in 58 countries and is valued at more than \$50 billion. Cutting out conventional taxis by connecting self-employed drivers to passengers online, it has infuriated cab firms and battled regulators worldwide. Sao Paulo's mayor Fernando Haddad has vowed to regulate and tax Uber drivers, but taxi drivers want Uber banned from the city.

Russian economy to endure difficult 2016

MOSCOW: Russia's finance minister predicted yesterday that 2016 would be a difficult year for his country's recession-hit economy, already reeling from low oil prices. As the economy slides, Russia's battered ruble reached a 2015 low on Wednesday, standing at 73.24 against the dollar, a year after suffering its worst decline in 15 years. "Next year will not be simple," Anton Siluanov said in an interview with Russian state television. "The latest predictions show that the price of our main exports could be lower than predicted." The ruble lost around half of its value in 2014 but recovered slightly as energy prices stabilized earlier this year, allowing officials to claim the worst of the crisis had passed. But the recent decline in oil prices - with Brent crude reaching an 11-year low this month - has cast a shadow on the recovery of Russia's oil-dependent economy.

China to merge 2 shipping companies in reform push

SHANGHAI: China will combine two of its state-owned shipping giants, the companies said, the sector's second multi-billion-dollar merger in a month as the government pushes consolidation of its nationalized enterprises. Sinotrans & CSC Holdings Co, the nation's third largest shipping company, will become a wholly-owned subsidiary of China Merchants Group (CMG), a conglomerate with interests in transport, finance and property, according to company statements. Both are among the more than 100 state-owned companies which report directly to the central government, though Sinotrans will no longer do so after the restructuring, said the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission, which oversees them. Earlier in December, China approved the merger of another two of its biggest state-owned shipping companies, China Ocean Shipping Group (Cosco) and China Shipping Group. The moves follow China's release in September of broad reform guidelines for state-owned companies aimed at making them more competitive internationally.

PHILIPPINES TO JOIN CHINA-BACKED AIIB

MANILA: The Philippines said yesterday it will join the China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, despite being engaged in a dispute with Beijing over its claims in the South China Sea. Viewed by some as a rival to the World Bank and the Philippines-based Asian Development Bank, the AIIB is expected to begin operation early next year with an opening ceremony scheduled for January 16-18.

The United States and Japan, respectively the world's largest and third-largest economies and the principal shareholders in the ADB, have both declined to join the AIIB, part of an initiative by China to expand its financial clout in Asia. The move by the Philippines, a key US ally in Asia, comes after it took Beijing to a United Nations tribunal in a bid to challenge its extensive claims in the South China Sea.

"The two (AIIB membership and the maritime dispute) are totally unrelated," Philippine foreign department spokesman Charles Jose told AFP Wednesday. "The decision of the Philippines to be one of the founding members of the China-led AIIB is based on the country's economic development imperatives," President Benigno Aquino's spokesman Hermilio Coloma said. "There is no linkage between this decision and the issues raised by the Philippines with regard to maritime entitlement claims" in the South China Sea, Coloma added.

In a statement, Philippines Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima said his country's infrastructure financing needs would top \$127.12 billion between 2010 and 2020, quoting the ADB. He said the AIIB would "help close infrastructure financing gaps in many countries" and may lead to "widening job and business growth opportunities" for Filipinos. "The Philippines stands to gain from signing on as a founding member. We can look forward to deepening our country's technical expertise in infrastructure as we expand bankable projects," he added.

The Philippines would contribute \$196 million to AIIB capital, he said. Beijing will be by far the largest shareholder of the AIIB at about 30 percent, according to the legal framework signed by 50 founding member countries in late June. The bank is based in Beijing and currently has 57 members, including Australia, Germany and Britain. It expects to offer its first batch of project loans by mid-2016, according to China's official Xinhua news agency. Asked whether the South China Sea dispute would affect the Philippines' AIIB membership, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang told a regular briefing: "I think the operation of the AIIB will be decided by the AIIB rules, which are made by all the members." — AFP



MALABAR GOLD & DIAMONDS OPENS NEW SHOWROOM AT GLOBAL VILLAGE

DUBAI: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the leading jewelry retailers has opened its latest outlet at Global Village, Dubai, the latest showroom was jointly inaugurated by Shamlal Ahamed MP - Managing Director - International Operations & Abdul Salam KP - Group Executive Director, Malabar Group in the presence of Ameer CMC - Director, Finance & Admin, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Regional Heads & other dignitaries of Malabar Gold & Diamonds at Global Village, Dubai which is among the world's largest tourism, leisure and entertainment project. It is the region's first cultural, entertainment, family and shopping destination.

This elegant showroom located at Global Village will be displaying traditional as well modern jewelry pieces from more than 10 countries that can hold you spellbound with their awe-inspiring beauty. The visitors of Malabar Gold & Diamonds

outlet at Global Village will have an opportunity to witness the live jewelry manufacturing & diamond setting. Thus the visitors can see how the different designs of the jewelry are made & the steps involved in the same. Visitors can also see the art of attaching gemstones to jewelry.

One of the most important factors driving the group's success are innovation in their strategies, designs, promotions and the trust Malabar Gold & Diamonds evokes. With a rich mix of traditional and trendy jewelry in gold, diamond and platinum, Malabar Gold & Diamonds is one of the most preferred destinations for quality jewelry. The combination of purest jewelry and cutting edge designs combining unmatched grace and style makes their jewelry unique. The jewelry group achieved another milestone by opening the first outlet at Sharjah International Airport recently, this is the first showroom

of its kind operating 24/7 and throughout 365 days.

The branded jewelry segment of Malabar Gold & Diamonds that includes Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewelry, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewelry, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewelry, Precia - Precious Gem Jewelry and Starlet - Kids Jewelry are renowned globally for their flawless craftsmanship and the impeccable style. The leap from a single store to 143 outlets globally did not happen overnight. It was achieved through consistent effort & an insistence on setting exceptionally high standards to meet the aspiration of customers over a period of 22 years. Their dedicated and highly skilled employees invest heart and soul in striving to achieve maximum perfection. Absolute customer satisfaction is the overriding promise in everything they do.

MOHAMED NASER AL SAYER AWARDS WINNER OF THE SECOND RAFFLE DRAW 'GREATEST TOYOTA PROMOTION EVER'

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al Sayer & Sons has announced winners of the second raffle draw from the "biggest promotion ever" on New Toyota models. The draw on 06 December 2015 was organized by Ministry of Commerce & Industry - for Consumer protection affairs. According to Johan Heislitz Senior Business Director Toyota Kuwait "The biggest promotion ever carries the spirit of Toyota to make ever better cars. In 2015 Toyota has made significant progress towards achieving sustainable growth by

making ever-better cars. Making vehicles that have "Waku-Doki" which translates to being exciting and fun to drive has been the strong commitment from Toyota."

Grand Prizes

Masoud Wahba, General Manager Toyota Sales and Bader Faisal Al Sayer Deputy Manager Marketing awarded the grand prize to the winners during the vehicle awarding ceremony held at Toyota new cars delivery center Ardiya. The ceremony was

also attended by representatives from Group Toyota sales and delivery sections. Fahad Almatouq won 2016 Land Cruiser V6 as the first grand prize meanwhile Hamad Dakheel was the winner of Prado TX, second prize of the draw. "I thank Al Sayer for giving me a fantastic opportunity to be winner of greatest Toyota promotion. Land Cruiser is a legend SUV and receiving this as a grand prize is the biggest New Year gift" said Mr. Fahad Almatouq who took home the first grand prize.



EGYPT'S GROWTH SLOWED IN 2015 AS ACTIVITY HURT BY BOTTLENECKS

NBK ECONOMIC UPDATE

Economic growth slowed in 2015 after a strong pickup in 2014. Economic activity was hurt by foreign exchange shortages and further expectations of currency devaluation. Exports have also been weighed down by worsening security conditions in the region and sluggish global growth. While the economy benefited from a strong recovery in tourism during 2014 and early 2015, and a healthy boost to public capital spending, both factors appeared to fade during the second half of 2015.

Several indicators have pointed to slower activity in the economy since the start of 2015. Real GDP growth began slowing in 1Q15 and continued to ease in 2Q15. The production index began to retreat around the middle of the year against the year before. The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dipped significantly below 50 early in the year and again later in 2015. Private credit growth, which had held up most of 2015, slowed towards the end of the summer, reflecting slowing economic activity.

Egypt's fiscal and external positions continued to face significant pressures, with conditions appearing to deteriorate in 2015. The country continues to record a large fiscal deficit after foreign government grants declined. Reforms to address the deficit have not moved quickly enough. The external position also worsened in 2015, with the current account deficit widening and foreign reserves remaining relatively tight despite generous GCC deposits. Several devaluations helped reduce the pressure on the pound, but expectations of further declines in the currency and difficulties obtaining foreign currency have kept investors in wait-and-see mode.

Recovery lost steam

Following a robust recovery in 2014, economic growth began to lose steam in 2015. Real GDP growth slowed to 2.1% year-on-year (y/y) in 2Q15 (chart 2). Economic growth still managed to average a relatively strong 4.1% in FY14/15, though this was largely due to strong growth in 3Q14 and 4Q14, when output benefited from basis effects. In FY15/16, we expect growth to slow to around 3.5% before accelerating once again to 4% in FY16/17 and 4.5% in FY17/18 (chart 1).

One of the key indicators of the slowdown has come from the Ministry of Planning's production index, which has been solidly in negative territory since June 2015 (chart 5). In August 2015, the 3-month moving average was down 4.5% y/y. The main source of the slowdown has been a contraction in manufacturing activity, which accounts for as much as 38% of the index. The slowdown has been largely in the petrochemicals sector and was due to reduced availability of gas feedstock as authorities prioritized gas for power generation during the peak summer months.

Slower growth in transportation and tourism has also been a source of slowdown, according to the production index data. Indeed, growth in tourist numbers slowed during 3Q15 following strong growth in the previous four quarters. The sector had benefited from strong basis effects in 3Q14 and 4Q14; those began to fade earlier this year. By 3Q15, tourist numbers began to decline. The number of visitors fell by 5% y/y during 3Q15, while the cumulative number of "nights stayed by tourists" fell by 9% y/y (chart 6). Further deterioration can now be expected following the tragic downing of a Russian commercial aircraft carrying largely Russian tourists back home from Sharm El-Sheikh; evidence now points to an act of terrorism.

Markit's Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) has also indicated a slowdown in 2015, though until 4Q15 there was still some hope that the slowdown may only be temporary. The index first fell below the critical 50 mark in January and hit a 17 month low in February of 46.8 before improving somewhat. The index appeared to improve in 2Q15 and 3Q15, but sank back down to 47.2 in October and 45.0 in November. The index has averaged 49.0 during the first eleven months of 2015, down from 50.3 during the same period in 2014.

Credit growth has also eased in recent months, following a strong run. The pace began to slow during the summer, with annualized growth falling to 4.7% during 3Q15 compared to growth topping 27% during the first half of 2015. Despite the slowdown in 3Q15, growth from a year ago remained relatively robust at 16.1% y/y in October 2015 (chart 8).

Inflation eased

Inflation has eased during 2015, with core inflation falling to its lowest level since early 2013. Core inflation fell to 6.3% in October 2015. Headline inflation was somewhat higher at 9.7% but remains below the average of the previous fiscal year ending June 2015. One of the factors is a basis effect; a year ago in June 2014, price levels were pushed higher due to a government hike in fuel prices. With inflation easing, the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) moved to reduce its policy rates by 50 basis points earlier in 2015. Rates have been steady since, with the CBE deposit rate at 8.75% and the CBE lending rate at 9.75%. Treasury bill rates have been largely steady as well, at around 11-11.5% for the 3-month bills. The exception was a brief period in June 2015 when rates rose slightly towards 12.25% before settling back down again (chart 11).

Fiscal deficit remains high

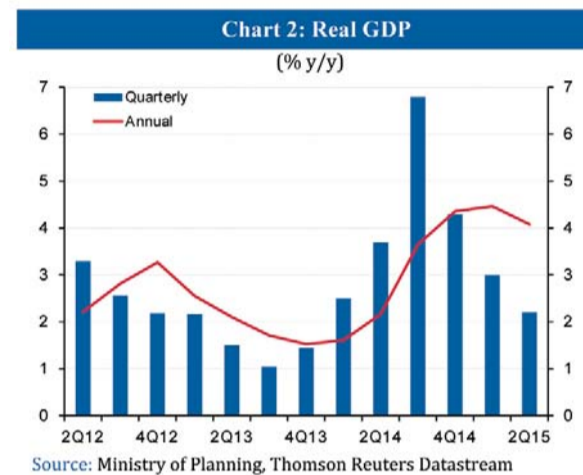
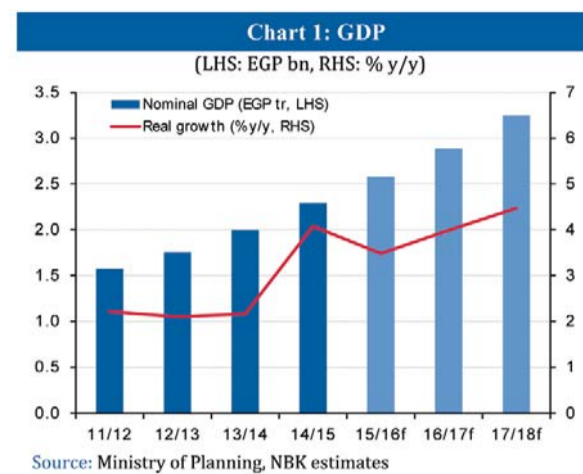
Egypt's large fiscal deficit remains a key concern for the country's outlook. The fiscal position has deteriorated over the last year, in large part due to a decline in official grants. The deficit reached 13.9% of GDP for the 12 months ending in May 2015. This compares to 10.9% a year before. The Ministry of Finance has yet to publish full FY14/15 figures on the budget (chart 9). Spending growth has continued to outpace revenue growth. Spending grew by 24% during the 12 months ending in May 2015 compared to the year before; revenue growth was half that at 13%. As a result, spending has risen to over 34% of GDP, up as much as six percentage points since 2010. Meanwhile, revenues (excluding grants) have been largely steady at around 20% of GDP.

External pressures

The current account deficit deteriorated through 2Q15 largely on a decline in official transfers, though weaker oil exports and strong imports were also to blame. While Egypt continues to benefit from GCC deposits at the central bank, grants to the government have declined. The deficit widened to 4% of GDP on a 12-month trailing basis through 2Q15, its worst level in three years. The trade balance widened by 14% during the 12 months through 2Q15. Lower oil export receipts, largely from a decline in the price of oil, were the main culprit. Oil exports fell by 30% between the 12 months ending in June 2014 and the same period in 2015. Higher imports have also been a source of deterioration, though the pace of growth has clearly eased.

At the same time, official transfers (i.e. grants) have virtually gone to zero after they accounted for 3.6% of GDP in 2014. This has cost the balance of payments around \$3 billion in the 12 months ending in 2Q15, double the size of the loss coming from the deteriorating trade balance. Private transfers, which are almost entirely from worker remittances, remain an important source of foreign currency for Egypt (they amount to around 9% of GDP), though, their growth has been more modest recently, slowing to 4.1% y/y during the last 12 months.

While growth in service receipts (which include tourism revenues) has been healthy, they only offset some of the deterioration in the trade balance. Tourism receipts grew by as much as 45% during the 12 months through 2Q15; this large increase was due to a weak base during the second half of 2013 when receipts had collapsed following the June 2013 removal of President Morsi. But 2Q15 still saw healthy growth of 17% y/y even without this



base effect. Foreign direct investment (FDI) improved somewhat in 2015, which has helped finance a growing current account deficit. FDI rose to 2.1% of GDP during the 12 months ending in 2Q15, compared to 1.4% a year before. The amount of FDI during the period rose to \$2.1 billion, up from \$1.4 billion the year before.

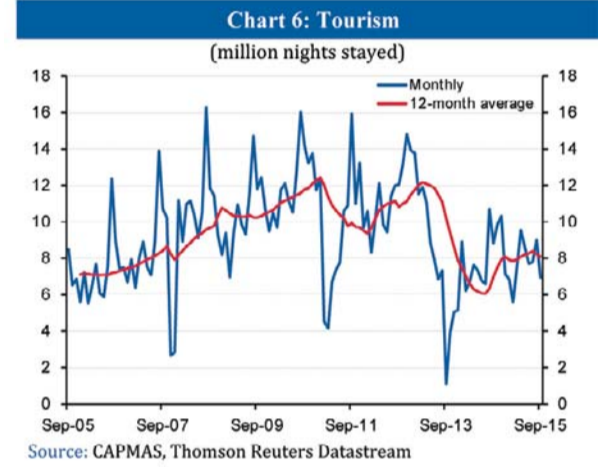
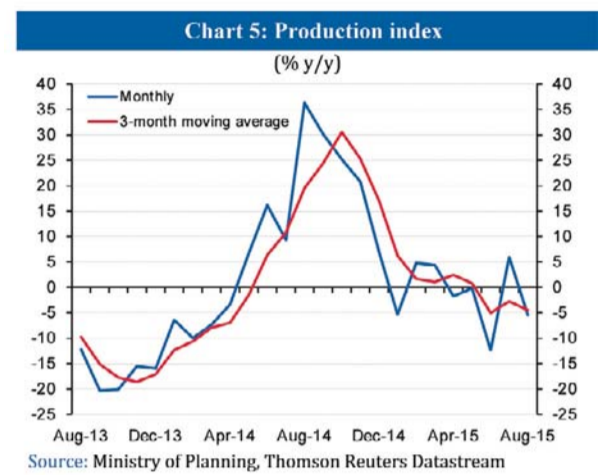
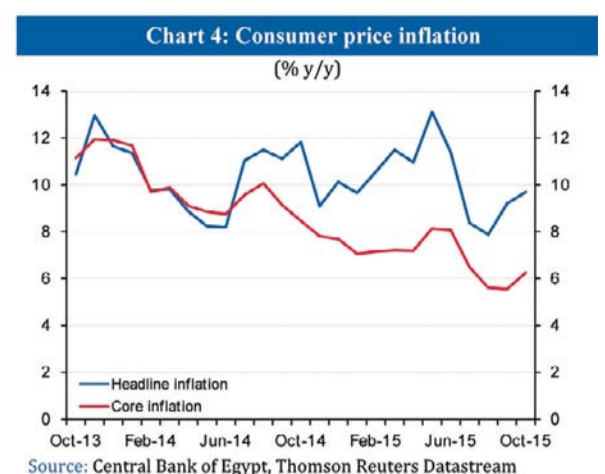
USD-denominated bond yields

Yields on sovereign bonds denominated in US dollars have been rising in recent months. The increase has generally coincided with rising yields in advanced markets and to a greater extent in emerging markets, all driven by expectations of higher interest rates by the US Federal Reserve. However, Egypt has seen yields rise somewhat more rapidly, which could reflect a deteriorating risk profile, given heightened growth and security concerns. Yields on USD denominated sovereign debt due in 2020 and 2040 have risen by 177 and 157 basis points (bps) since July 2015 to 6.5% and 8.9%, respectively (chart 10). The country's credit default swap (CDS) has also been on the rise; it has risen from around 270 bps in late in 2014 to 425bps in early December 2015.

Official reserves stable

Official foreign currency reserves held by the CBE have come under pressure recently, despite a \$6 billion deposit made by GCC allies in April 2015. Reserves stood at \$16.4 billion at the end of November 2015 (chart 13). At around 3.2 months of imports, reserves are near the minimum level recommended by the IMF.

The central bank has sought to devalue the pound several times in 2015 in an effort to stem the pressure and improve access to foreign currency in the market (chart 14). The CBE allowed the Egyptian pound (EGP) to depreciate against the US dollar in February, July and again in October 2015. The last move was reversed a few weeks later in what appeared to be an attempt to



limit expectations of further currency declines. Through November, the EGP was down by 8.7% ytd against the USD and by 0.3% in trade-weighted terms. The pound continues to have an active unofficial market, where the currency trades at a 4-5% premium to the official rate (or 8.15-8.25 EGP/USD) according to press sources.

The main challenge for the central bank has been managing the external pressures on the pound without allowing the currency to devalue too rapidly. CBE policy under the former governor, Hisham Ramez, was to maintain capital controls and ration access to foreign currency through an auction system in place since early 2013. This set of policies has been criticized for creating a severe foreign currency shortage and for negatively impacting economic activity. It is not clear if Tarek Amer, the new governor who took office in November 2015, will change policy in any major way.

Sharp declines in 2015

Egypt's stock market has declined significantly since it peaked in February 2015, mostly in line with similar declines in other emerging markets. Egypt's EGX30 index was down by nearly 29% through November 2015 (chart 15); the Egypt MSCI total return index was down by over 25% ytd. This followed three years of robust gains, when the market largely outperformed markets in the region. In a positive step for investors, authorities recently announced that they paid all pending foreign portfolio fund repatriation requests. The last batch of pending requests, according to the central bank, amounted to \$547 million. It should be noted that these requests were for investors opting not to use the CBE's repatriation mechanism or where investments predated its introduction in 2013. The mechanism remains an option for foreign portfolio investors wishing to repatriate proceeds from their trading activity.

GULF BANK'S 3-IN-1 MEGA DRAW ON 7 JANUARY 2016

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is happy to announce that its exciting 3-in-1 mega trio draw is scheduled to take place on 7 January 2016, in The Grand Avenues at The Avenues Mall starting at 7 pm. This event is the biggest of the year as it includes the Al Danah draw for KD 1 Million, plus cash prizes of KD 250,000 and KD 50,000 which will also be awarded to lucky Al Danah account holders. This mega-trio draw event will also have the Salary and Red account holders draw take place and the prizes include a brand new Cadillac SRX and cash prizes up to KD 1,500. Additionally, the yearly Salary draw will take place with 2 cash prizes of KD 25,000. As with all Gulf Bank's draws, this event

will be held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

To participate in the Al Danah draws, customers must have an Al Danah account containing a minimum of KD 200. Customers can open a new Al Danah account at any one of the 56 Gulf Bank branches in Kuwait. Those who have an account can increase their chances of winning by increasing the amount they have deposited in their Al Danah account. This will also increase their chances of winning one of the two KD1,000 prizes, which are drawn each working day.

Furthermore, new Red Account or Salary Account customers who have

opened an account and transferred their student allowance or salary are eligible to enter the monthly cash draws for a chance to also win up to KD 1,500. In addition, the quarterly car draw will be for 1 lucky winner who will have a chance to win a new Cadillac SRX. Plus, 2 winners will also be announced during the yearly salary draw who will each win a cash prize of KD25,000. For further information about the Al Danah, Salary and Red accounts and prize draws, visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, or call Gulf Bank's Customer Contact Center on 1805805. General information about Gulf Bank's products and services can also be found at the Bank's website at www.gulfbank.com.



JOYALUKKAS OPENS OUTLET AT GLOBAL VILLAGE DUBAI

DUBAI: The world's favorite jeweler, Joyalukkas has opened their jewelry outlet at the destination where the world comes together - Global Village, Dubai. This is a yearly initiative by Joyalukkas Jewelry to bring jewelry from around the world to visitors from all over the world. The Joyalukkas outlet in Global Village is located within the Indian Pavilion and will offer a unique mix of jewelry to the millions of visitors coming to experience this multi-cultural entertainment and shopping spectacle with exclusive offers of up to 65% discount for Diamond & Polki Jewelry, up to 50% discount for Pearl Jewelry, Zero Making charges on selected Gold Jewelry, 50% discount on making charge for selected Gold Jewelry & 10% making charge on selected Precious Jewelry.

"Global Village showcases the unique cultures, shopping and cuisines of the world and Joyalukkas is a destination that offers jewelry from every nook and corner of the world hence we feel we perfectly compliment the theme of this unique destination" said Joy Alukkas, Chairman & MD, Joyalukkas Group. The Joyalukkas outlet in

Global Village located within the Indian Pavilion was inaugurated by Sreekumar K S Nair, MD, Mac Events LLC in the presence of John Paul Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group, Sonia John Paul, Director, Joyalukkas Group and other Joyalukkas officials.

"We are a global jeweler and our intent is to capture the heart of every jewelry lover in the world. At the Joyalukkas, Global Village outlet the millions of residents and tourists visiting can expect a very unique experience in jewelry shopping," said John Paul Alukkas, Executive Director, Joyalukkas Group. The Joyalukkas Global Village outlet will showcase jewelry from various parts of the world to give jewelry lovers the opportunity to see and buy unique collections of jewelry in gold, diamond, precious stones, pearl and platinum. The designs showcased include special creations from India, Turkey, Italy, Singapore, Bahrain, China, South Africa and other European countries. With over a million designs to choose from, the Joyalukkas Global Village outlet will ensure visitors are spoilt for choice.

NISSAN MIDEAST SCOOPS GOLD AWARD AT MEPRA

DUBAI: Nissan Middle East's recent 'Innovation that Excites' activation for the new Nissan X-Trail on the popular social media platform, Instagram, has won the top prize at the Middle East Public Relations Awards (MEPRA) in the 'Consumer Goods' category. "Working closely with our agency, Memac Ogilvy, we produced a unique and effective activation on the most engaging social media platform of all: Instagram," says Yolande Pineda, Nissan Middle East's Director of Corporate Communications.

"We wanted the introduction of the new Nissan X-Trail to stand out from the hundreds of car launches that happen here each year, and to live up to Nissan's promise of 'Innovation that Excites'. The net result of this campaign for Nissan was an organic 32 percent increase in followers on Instagram, and this award at the prestigious MEPRA is a great recognition of our efforts to bring innovative engagement platforms with our customers."

The new Nissan X-Trail appeals to young and adventurous people with a lust for life - many of whom are avid users of Instagram, attracted by its interactivity with a global audience, and they create engaging content each day that expresses their personalities. With this target audience in mind, an innovative Instagram campaign was deemed to be ideal because it fits in with their existing behavior and interests. After careful analysis and in-depth research, Nissan's team identified six of the UAE's most active and influential Instagram users, all of whom enjoy huge



audiences and embody what the new Nissan X-Trail is all about: cutting edge, connected, confident, adventurous and bold.

Using the 2015 Nissan X-Trail before it was publicly available, Nissan sent these six individuals on a unique road trip to an undisclosed location, during which they competed against one another by sharing their experiences with their followers. Every time the Instagrammers received a strategically chosen 'trigger word' (such as 'adventure', 'X-Trail' and 'road trip') in their comments, they earned points which were added to, the more interac-

tion they had with their followers.

Using Instagram, the six shared their experiences through photographs every step of the way with their followers and, using the hashtag #TheOneToFollow, which communicates the new Nissan X-Trail's superiority over its competition, Nissan managed to effectively communicate its message in the most engaging way possible and the terminology being used by users and followers of the chosen six demonstrated acute awareness of the X-Trail model. Within just six hours and without any monetary support, Nissan Middle East had reached more than 1.8 million people and received over 25,000 social media interactions in the forms of likes, comments and 'regrams', with 'Nissan' and 'X-Trail' being mentioned nearly 20,000 times.



LAST MINUTE HOLIDAY SHOPPER? THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT

ATLANTA: Procrastinators, rejoice. This year there are more apps and services than ever before to help last-minute shoppers.

Apps like Curbside deliver orders directly to the trunk of your car, more retailers are offering incentives to buy online and pick up in store, and Amazon Prime Now and other same-day delivery services have vastly expanded this year.

"In some sense, same-day delivery is going to become the new gift card," said Daphne Carmeli, CEO of Deliv which works with retailers to offer same-day delivery. "It used to be 'uh-oh, too late, here comes the gift card.' Now you've got two hours before the cutoff if you want something from national retailers."

That's good news as on-demand services have trained people to put off things until the last minute. This year, 44 percent of shoppers said they planned to wait

until December or later to shop for holiday presents, up from 39 percent five years ago, according to Deloitte.

And as of Dec. 15, an NRF survey found the average holiday shopper has completed 53.5 percent of their shopping, up from 52.9 percent seen by that time last year. Only about 10 percent of those surveyed had finished shopping.

Jaron Waldman, CEO of Palo Alto based Curbside, said that demand for the service, which delivers packages from stores like Target and Abercrombie & Fitch to the trunk of a shopper's car, has skyrocketed.

The service, which serves the Bay Area and Los Angeles in California and New York, New Jersey, Philadelphia and Chicago, is seeing about seven times the orders it did last year. Target, Best Buy, CVS and other retailers offer the service.

"It's definitely a way to shop to have

the certainty you're not going to miss any kind of shipping window," Waldman said.

Target spokesman Eddie Baeb said the company has been pleased with results from Curbside and expanded the stores that offer the service from 20 in San Francisco last year to 120 stores, adding the New York, Chicago and Philadelphia areas this year.

INCENTIVES

The curbside delivery is "easier and more convenient, knowing how busy people are," at the last-minute, he said. Other retailers are adding incentives so more people choose "buy online, pick up in store" options. For example, Macy's offered a \$10 e-gift card on a purchase of \$50 or more when an online order is picked up in store via coupon aggregator RetailMeNot, said Brian Hoyt, RetailMeNot vice president of communi-

cations. The option lets retailers save on expedited shipping costs and cuts down time for last-minute shoppers, he said.

RetailMeNot's mobile app lets shoppers take advantage of last-minute deals in store too. The app uses a combination of GPS and WiFi signals to pull deals from stores you are in or nearby when you opt in.

"More consumers are using mobile devices versus desktop computers to shop, and that's opened the door to save not just online, but in-store as well," Hoyt said.

Those seeking deals on same-day delivery will find them, too. Shopify, which provides merchants with online checkout services, said last week that its retailers were partnering with Uber to provide free same-day delivery until Christmas Eve.

And for members of Amazon's \$99

annual Prime loyalty program, it's same-day Prime Now service has expanded drastically this year, after launching a year ago in Manhattan only. This holiday season it serves 20 metropolitan areas and is offering free two-hour delivery until midnight on Christmas Eve.

All of these added apps and services are good news for people like Katie Bagley, 23, who lives in Mount Olive, N.J. She shops mostly online and pays close attention to shipping cutoff deadlines. But there's always more shopping left to be done after the cutoff dates have passed, she said.

With Christmas approaching, she bought a bartender gadget online at Bed Bath and Beyond for her father and picked it up in the store on the same day she ordered it.

"I come from an entire family of last-minute shoppers," she said. — AP



SAN FRANCISCO: This Dec. 16, 2014, file photo shows Twitter headquarters in San Francisco. Twitter has revised its rules of conduct unveiled Tuesday, to emphasize that it prohibits violent threats and abusive behavior by users, promising a tough stance at a time when critics are calling for the online service to adopt a harder line against extremists. — AP

TWITTER ACTS TO CURB 'ABUSIVE' CONTENT

WASHINGTON: Twitter said Tuesday it has taken new steps to stem "abusive behavior and hateful conduct" on the global messaging platform.

The move comes with social networks under pressure from the US and other governments following attacks in Paris and California to do more to weed out those plotting violence.

"We believe that protection from abuse and harassment is a vital part of empowering people to freely express themselves on Twitter," said Twitter's director for online trust and safety, Megan Cristina. "Today, as part of our continued efforts to combat abuse, we're updating the Twitter Rules to clarify what we consider to be abusive behavior and hateful conduct. The updated language emphasizes that Twitter will not tolerate behavior intended to harass, intimidate, or use fear to silence another user's voice."

The new rules say Twitter users "may not make threats of violence or promote violence, including threatening or promoting terrorism" and "may not incite or engage in the targeted abuse or harassment of others." The update also states that users "may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or disease."

Twitter said it would ban "accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories" and would also suspend multiple accounts created to evade temporary or permanent suspension. US and European officials have been pressing social media to do more following deadly attacks over the past few weeks in Paris and southern

California which have been linked to supporters of the Islamic State organization.

A White House statement earlier this month called for "a dialogue" with Silicon Valley and others on the subject, saying more should be done "when the use of social media crosses the line between communication and active terrorist plotting."

The European Commission has also called for dialogue with the major social media networks. And France passed emergency measures that could shut down websites or social media accounts which encourage terrorist actions.

Social media groups say they already do what they can to avoid being used to spread hate and violence, but warn that any legislation requiring them to filter or report improper activity could be counterproductive. — AFP

DISSECTING CRITICISMS OF T-MOBILE'S FREE VIDEO

NEW YORK: T-Mobile has introduced a program that lets most customers watch video without using up their data allotment.

The free program, called Binge On, is available to those who have data plans of at least 3 gigabytes. T-Mobile also reduces video quality - even for customers who don't qualify for free video streaming - saying that phone screens are too small for viewers to discern the higher resolution, which uses more cellular data. Customers can choose the full resolution, but they would then pay for the data. Those on Wi-Fi networks automatically get the highest quality available.

Because the program works with only two dozen leading video services - Facebook and YouTube are excluded - it has drawn complaints from advocates of net neutrality, the concept that Internet service providers shouldn't discriminate in favor of some content over others. The Federal Communications Commission is taking a look.

Some video providers are upset, too. YouTube says that "reducing data charges can be good for users, but it doesn't justify throttling all video services, especially without explicit user consent." Here's a look at what's going on at T-Mobile:

WHAT'S THE POINT OF BINGE ON?

Streaming video eats up a lot of data on a phone. An hour of high-definition video can use nearly 1 gigabyte. With Binge On, video streams from 24 services, including Netflix, Hulu and ESPN, don't count toward T-Mobile's data caps. The company also degrades all video - even from providers that aren't part of Binge On. T-Mobile offers DVD-level quality, which is less than high definition. T-Mobile says that allows customers to watch up to three times as much YouTube, Facebook and Amazon video, even though they aren't part of Binge On.

THE CRITICISM: Customers don't have the option to watch in HD quality unless they turn off Binge On.

THE ASSESSMENT: Being able to stretch your data further is a plus, but customers may be unaware or unhappy that a higher-quality video option was taken away - unless they take steps to disable Binge On.

ARE T-MOBILE CUSTOMERS FORCED TO USE BINGE ON?

It's the default for customers. T-

Mobile notified them through email and text messages.

Customers can choose the full resolution by calling T-Mobile or changing settings through the company's websites or account apps on the phone.

THE CRITICISM: Critics say the company should leave video at higher quality until customers choose otherwise.

THE ASSESSMENT: When something takes an extra step to change, many people won't, so customers are effectively forced on Binge On. That's not necessarily bad, as it means savings on phone bills from less data use.

WILL VIDEO PROVIDERS SUFFER?

T-Mobile says it's not charging companies to participate. As for YouTube and Facebook, T-Mobile says it can't identify in all instances in which they're delivering video rather than some other kind of content. The company says it's working to add more companies to Binge On.

THE CRITICISM: This still discriminates. Customers might be more likely to watch video from a Binge On service rather than one whose viewing counts toward the data caps.

THE ASSESSMENT: It's true customers might gravitate to the 24 Binge On services. However, T-Mobile is inviting all other video services to participate by meeting certain technical requirements, which allow video to be identified as video.

IS DEGRADING ALL VIDEO BY DEFAULT BAD FOR CONSUMERS?

T-Mobile says you can turn it off, and that on a phone, the difference in quality between Binge On and HD is negligible. And T-Mobile spokesman Clint Patterson says whether or not a customer chooses to keep Binge On, video is being delivered at the same speed.

THE CRITICISM: Critics point out the FCC's net neutrality rules prohibit throttling, which it defines as "impairing or degrading lawful Internet traffic." The FCC has banned that to stop broadband providers from behavior "that negatively impacts consumers' use of content, applications, services and devices."

THE ASSESSMENT: It's unclear whether this counts as a negative impact, as customers are ultimately saving money and can choose the full resolution. — AP

KIDDIE TABLETS 'GROW UP' AS COMPETITION GROWS

NEW YORK: Kiddie tablets have grown up. Tablets designed just for kids are getting more sophisticated as they face increased competition from regular tablets. The new products also have better screens, speedier chips and fashionably slim bodies. They let older children do more, yet hold their hands until they're ready for unsupervised access.

Although many of the tablets were originally conceived as educational toys for kids as old as middle schoolers, they've been more popular with younger children. Older kids have been apt to reject them in favor of their parents' tablet or smartphone.

That shift has prompted companies to focus more on preschoolers and kindergartners, as they create super-durable products that can withstand repeated abuse and develop games and apps that teach reading and math.

But now, some of those companies are looking to take back some of the sales to older kids that they've lost over the years, offering premium products - most with price tags of over \$100 - that look and perform less like toys and more like the ones adults use.

LeapFrog, maker of the toy-like LeapPad, released its first Android tablet this year. And Kurio is branching out to Windows 10 and includes a full version of Microsoft Office in a new tablet-laptop combination.

The use of Android and Windows software, in place of the more basic, custom-made systems used in toy tablets, allows for more sophisticated apps and games and a range of content from standard app stores.

Monica Brown, LeapFrog's vice president for product marketing, said the company aimed to "create something that was kind of sleek and more tech forward for kids who were looking for something that felt like their parents' tablet."

But parents still want educational content and safety features that come with a tablet designed purely for kids. LeapFrog's Epic, along with the other new tablets for kids, are attempts to bridge that gap.

The Epic looks like a regular Android tablet, but comes with a removable bright-green bumper. It is much faster than a LeapPad and can run versions of popular Android games such as

"Fruit Ninja" and "Doodle Jump." There's access to the

Internet, but it's limited to about 10,000 kid-safe websites (though parents can add others). Parents can also limit and track how much time a child spends watching videos, playing games or reading.

Lynn Schofield Clark, a professor of media studies at the University of Denver, said kids tablets are a tough sell these days.

"Kids are always aspirational in their ages, and they're always interested in what older kids are doing," Clark said, pointing to the fascination that many preteens have with smartphones as a prime example.

Meanwhile, most parents won't spend money on kids-only gadgets unless they believe they offer significant educational benefits.

"If they're just looking for something to entertain their kid, then why wouldn't they just hand over their smartphone?" she asked. Kurio aims to answer that question with the Smart, a device that let kids do things they previously might have needed their parents' laptop for, such as typing up and saving their homework online or playing video on their TV through an HDMI cable. The Smart is a Windows 10 laptop with a detachable screen and comes with a free year of Microsoft Office.

Eric Levin, Kurio's strategic director, said kids using children's tablets are getting younger, as older kids gravitate toward adult products. Four years ago, he said, most Kurio users ranged from ages 6 to 12. Now, half of them are 3 to 5. — AP



CAIRO: In this March 30, 2011, file photo, an art student from the University of Helwan paints the Facebook logo on a mural commemorating the revolution that overthrew Hosni Mubarak in the Zamalek neighborhood of Cairo, Egypt. In a statement to The Associated Press yesterday, Facebook said it is "disappointed" that a program providing free basic Internet services to over three million Egyptians has been shut down. It said the service provided Internet access to more than a million people who were not previously connected. — AP



HONEYWELL COMPLETES ACQUISITION OF ELSTER BUSINESS

MORRIS PLAINS: Honeywell yesterday announced that it has completed its acquisition of the Elster Division of Melrose Industries plc. Elster is a leading provider of thermal gas solutions for commercial, industrial, and residential heating systems and gas, water, and electricity meters, including smart meters and software and data analytics solutions. The acquisition, which Honeywell announced on July 28, 2015, closed earlier than anticipated following approval by Melrose shareholders and required regulatory approvals, including those in the US, European Union and China.

"The acquisition of Elster adds outstanding technologies, strong well-recognized brands, energy efficiency know-how and a global presence to the Honeywell portfolio," said Honeywell Chairman and CEO Dave Cote. "We see Elster as a great opportunity to deploy HOS Gold to drive new growth and greater profitability in each of Elster's businesses. This acquisition is expected to generate strong future returns for our shareholders, consistent with what you have come to expect from Honeywell."

Elster's gas heating and gas, water, and electricity metering businesses will be integrated with Honeywell's Environmental & Energy Solutions business (E&ES), part of Honeywell Automation and Control Solutions. Elster's upstream and midstream gas applications businesses will be integrated with Honeywell Process Solutions, within Honeywell Performance Materials and Technologies.

There is no change to the Company's 2016 financial guidance provided on December 16 as a result of the announcement.

Honeywell (www.honeywell.com) is a Fortune 100 diversified technology and manufacturing leader, serving customers worldwide with aerospace products and services; control technologies for buildings, homes, and industry; turbochargers; and performance materials.

PARIS CLIMATE GOALS MEAN EMISSIONS NEED TO DROP BELOW ZERO

STOCKHOLM: If governments are serious about the global warming targets they adopted in Paris, scientists say they have two options: eliminating fossil fuels immediately or finding ways to undo their damage to the climate system in the future. The first is politically impossible - the world is still hooked on using oil, coal and natural gas - which leaves the option of a major cleanup of the atmosphere later this century.

Yet the landmark Paris Agreement, adopted by 195 countries on Dec 12, makes no reference to that, which has left some observers wondering whether politicians understand the implications of the goals they signed up for. "I would say it's the single biggest issue that has to be resolved," said Glen Peters of the Cicero climate research institute in Oslo, Norway. Scientists refer to this envisioned cleanup job as negative emissions - removing more greenhouse gases from the atmosphere than humans put in it. Right now we're putting in a lot - about 50 billion tons a year, mostly carbon dioxide from the burning of fossil fuels for energy.

Historic agreement

There are methods to achieve negative emissions today but they would need to be scaled up to a level that experts say could put climate efforts in conflict with other priorities, such as eradicating hunger. Still, if the Paris climate goals are to be achieved, there's no way to avoid the issue, said Jan Minx of the Mercator Research Institute on Global Commons and Climate Change in Berlin. "My view is, let's have this discussion," he said. "Let's involve ourselves in developing these technologies. We need to keep learning." The Paris Agreement was historic. For the first time all countries agreed to jointly fight climate change, primarily by reducing the emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases.

Governments vowed to keep global warming "well below" 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) compared with preindustrial times. But even 2 degrees of warming could threaten the existence of low-lying island nations faced with rising seas. So governments agreed to try to limit warming to 1.5 degrees C (2.7 degrees F), which is just half-a-degree above the global average temperature this year. That goal is so ambitious - some



LEYSIN: Children from ski schools practice on a thin layer of snow towards the resort of Leysin, Swiss Alps. In a season traditionally associated with ice-skating, snowball fights and mulled wine in wintry Europe, birds are chirping, flowers blooming and fake snow covering Alpine ski slopes in one of the warmest Decembers on record. — AFP

would say far-fetched - that there's been very little research devoted to it. In Paris, politicians asked scientists to start studying how it can be done.

Minx and others said it's clear the goal cannot be reached without negative emissions in the future, because the atmosphere is filling up with greenhouse gases so fast that it may already be too late to keep the temperature rise below 1.5 degrees C. "We are late with climate policy. We need to buy back some time," Minx said. That means allowing warming to exceed 1.5 degrees temporarily and then bringing it down by removing carbon dioxide, which traps heat in the atmosphere. The task would be enormous. One recent study said hundreds of billions of tons of carbon dioxide would have to be removed in the second half of this century.

Geoengineering solutions

That has led some scientists to consider controversial geoengineering solutions like fertilizing the oceans with iron to make them absorb more carbon. But the more viable methods being discussed today include planting more forests, which absorb carbon dioxide naturally as they grow, and combining bioenergy with carbon capture technologies. Bioenergy comes from burning biological sources such as trees or crops. That results in zero net emissions, if the carbon dioxide released when one tree is burned is offset by the carbon dioxide absorbed when a new tree grows up.

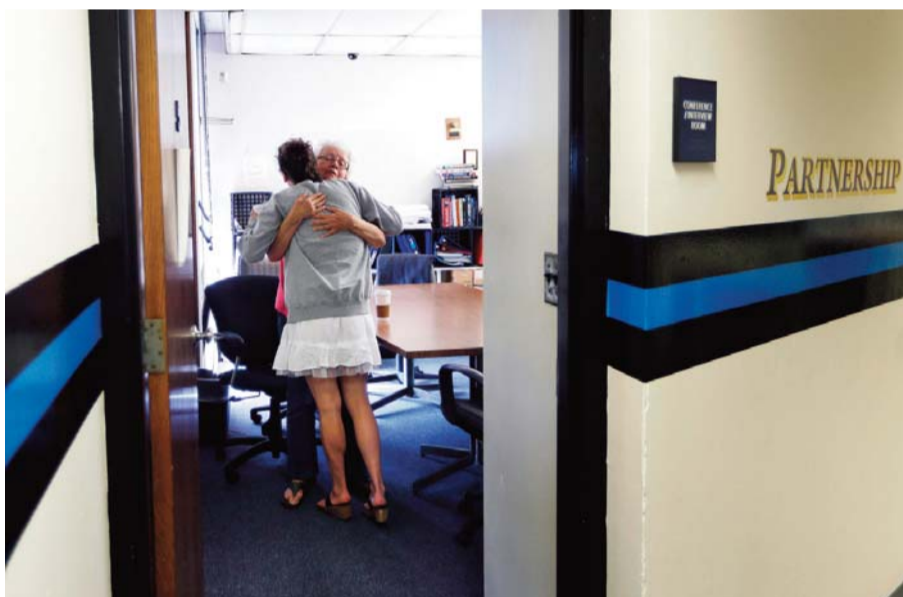
However, if you also capture the emissions from the bioenergy plant and bury them underground,

you are actually removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. Although the technology exists, it has received very little attention from policy makers, advocates say. There's only one large-scale biomass facility worldwide using the method: a bioethanol plant in Decatur, Illinois. "It's been treated as an esoteric, maybe unnecessary field of research," said Henrik Karlsson, who heads Biorecro, a Swedish company that specializes in the process.

The obstacles are many. Carbon capture technology is very expensive. And then there's the issue of finding places to store the carbon dioxide once you've captured it. Typically it is injected into rock formations deep underground, but "people don't like carbon stored under them," said Peters. "It's not just a few tons. It's billions of tons a year." Another problem is that to reach a point where the method actually generates enough negative emissions to enable the 1.5-degree target, bioenergy would need to be much a bigger part of the global energy mix. It's just 10 percent today.

Critics say that could mean converting millions of acres of farmland used for food production to grow biocrops, which could clash with Article 2 of the Paris Agreement, which says the battle against climate change must be carried out "in a manner that does not threaten food production." Right now the idea of achieving negative emissions may seem like a pipe dream. Governments are still trying to stop record emissions from growing even higher, while allowing developing countries including India and China to expand their economies.

Oliver Geden of the German Institute for International and Security Affairs said the temperature goals governments adopted in Paris don't match the actions nations are taking to limit emissions. "It's so easy to have this kind of target," he said. "I don't understand that given the history of the (UN climate talks), everyone is taking this seriously." Peters said achieving the 1.5-degree C target is "pretty unlikely" and that even the higher temperature target would be difficult and most likely require negative emissions. "It's really hard to see that 2 degrees will remain on the table unless you have some fundamental technological breakthrough," he said. "There are just too many competing interests." — AP



GLOUCESTER: Volunteer Ruth Cote (facing) hugs Kylee Moriarty inside the police station in Gloucester, Mass. Moriarty's journey started in July, when she became one of the first to benefit from the Gloucester Police Department's novel approach to the heroin epidemic: Help addicts get treatment rather than throwing them in jail. — AP

HOLIDAYS PRESENT HARD ROAD FOR RECOVERING DRUG ADDICTS

BOSTON: The holidays can be a tough time for addicts in their first year of recovery. Kylee Moriarty's family should know. When the Massachusetts native resolved to kick her heroin addiction this summer, her relatives held out hope she could rejoin them for Thanksgiving or Christmas. Moriarty's journey started in July, when she became one of the first to benefit from the Gloucester Police Department's novel approach to the heroin epidemic: Help addicts get treatment rather than throwing them in jail.

By the fall, the 27-year-old had tackled detox and graduated from substance abuse treatment into a halfway house in Boston. She even reconnected with her mother after years of estrangement. But a relapse soon after that emotional reunion landed her in the hospital. A second round of detox and substance abuse counseling followed. "You could tell she was trying to go too fast," said Joseph Titone, a close family friend who brought Moriarty to the Gloucester police station after finding her beaten, gaunt and homeless in July. "She needed to take baby steps."

Four days before Christmas, Moriarty settled into a halfway house not far from her family in southern New Hampshire. As a new resident, she's under strict rules that limit her phone and Internet use and visits. She wasn't allowed to spend the holiday with her family. "You always have hope she can come home, but it's more important she focus on herself," said Titone, who brought gifts when he stopped by on Christmas Day. "She has the attitude now that this is her last Christmas, her last Thanksgiving away from the family."

The holidays can be challenging for addicts in their first year of recovery because they're still learning how to balance the joys and stresses that celebrations inevitably bring, drug and alcohol treatment counselors say. "Going into the holidays in early recovery takes preparation and support," said Lori McCarthy, national director of clinical outreach at Gosnold on Cape Cod, a substance abuse treatment center in Falmouth. "Addiction brings up feelings of immense shame and remorse, and, around this time of the year, those feelings can really surface."

Every recovering addict's path through the holidays is different, but McCarthy said

her organization - which is not connected to Moriarty's treatment - recommends simply staying the course. "Don't skip a beat," she said. "Keep the consistency of whatever your recovery program is." For most, that means maintaining regular contact with counselors and attending support meetings. For some, it can also mean limiting family interaction.

Family and friends play a key role by making sure unresolved conflicts aren't broached at gatherings, alcohol isn't present and other potentially negative influences are eliminated, McCarthy said. Michaela Maynard, a 21-year-old recovering heroin addict from Falmouth, said she was able to safely enjoy Thanksgiving and Christmas at home this year by checking in each day with her recovery coach, who helps an addict make progress on life goals once they're out of treatment, and her sponsor, a recovering addict who focuses on maintaining sobriety.

"I spent the last holiday season in treatment," she said. "So everything was new for me this year. It was like doing everything for the first time, because I was learning to do it clean and sober." Meanwhile, Gloucester's pioneering program has placed over 300 addicts into treatment since its launch in June, according to John Rosenthal, who co-founded a nonprofit organization that's raising money to help other cities and towns launch similar efforts. Over 40 police departments in 16 states have adopted some or all of Gloucester's ideas, helping another 300 or more addicts get into treatment, Rosenthal said.

More than 80 treatment centers have signed onto the effort and have given "well in excess" of \$5 million in support, mostly in the form of scholarships that cover recovering addicts' costs, he said. As for Moriarty, who declined to talk to The Associated Press in order to focus on her recovery, it's not clear how long she'll be at the halfway house. Titone said she'll need to find a job soon. Moriarty also is hoping to reconnect with her young son, who is now in the sole custody of his biological father after living with Moriarty's mother. "She's doing so much better," said Titone. "She's really slowed down things. She's focused on the future. I don't see her having a relapse. That's how well she's doing." — AP

TO SAVE ZANZIBAR FORESTS, FARMERS TRY A NEW CROP

COLORFUL BUTTERFLIES MEAN SOMETHING MORE: A PAYCHECK

PETE, Tanzania: The colorful butterflies fluttering through Zanzibar's Jozani forest are beautiful to look at, but for farmers and charcoal producers in the region, they mean something more: a paycheck. In an effort to protect the island's threatened forest, local people are being trained to rear butterflies, under a scheme that tries to prevent deforestation by giving people a financial stake in keeping the forest intact.

Jozani forest, which lies between the mangrove-filled bays of Chwaka and Uzi on Unguja Island, is a large mature woodlands that is home to an array of endangered species, including the colorful Red colobus monkey. But for all its beauty, the forest is under huge pressure from rapid deforestation due to charcoal production and unsustainable farming. A community-run initiative, the Zanzibar Butterfly Centre, aims to change that by retraining charcoal producers in villages surrounding the forest as butterfly farmers. "We cannot stop anyone from producing charcoal. However, we try to educate people about the damaging effects it has on the environment," Natalie Tempel-Merzougui, the project's facilitator, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

'Flying handkerchief'

The program offers training and equipment to butterfly farmers, the most successful of whom can earn as much as \$250 a month selling butterfly pupae to the centre's own tourist exhibit and to overseas buyers, she said. Butterfly farmers operate by catching a few female butterflies and transferring them to mesh cages so they can lay eggs. Farmers then collect the eggs and raise the caterpillars by feeding them on host plants until they turn to pupae.

It's at this stage that farmers start earning by selling the pupae to the butterfly centre, which

sells them for export or keeps them until they hatch, to display for tourists. Established in 2008, the centre, located near to Jozani Chawka Bay National Park, is one of Africa's largest butterfly exhibits, housing more than fifty species of native butterflies, including the hard-to-catch flying handkerchief, a black and white African swallowtail. The centre, which works closely with Jozani Environmental Conservation Association, draws tourists interested in seeing and learning about butterfly species.

"The aim is to create awareness on the importance of protecting forests and also to give local residents additional income," Merzougui said. Rungu Hamisi, one of the butterfly farmers who used to earn a living making charcoal, said raising butterflies has improved his income remarkably. "Butterfly rearing is much easier than charcoal making, which requires a lot of work. I get enough money to support my family," he said. He said one of the benefits of farming butterflies, rather than crops, is that they mature quickly.

"Once the eggs hatch and become caterpillars, it takes only a matter of weeks before they transform into butterflies ready for sale," he said. According to butterfly centre officials, the project has also created opportunity for women since butterfly rearing can fit easily around domestic chores. "I get enough money to feed my children without necessarily destroying forests," said Mwamvua Ali, 49, who said she likes raising the "flying handkerchief" as it lays lots of eggs.

An incentive to conserve

While many types of agriculture require the clearing of forest, which can drive climate change and the loss of species, butterfly farming requires intact forest which provides an economic incentive to conserve them, Merzougui said. Alfred George,

the assistant manager of the butterfly centre, said that through the project many farmers at Pete village have realized the importance of conserving forests and some are already reaping better returns from butterfly rearing. "A lot of trees are being cut to provide firewood for local communities who rely on charcoal as their sole source of energy," George told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

But "most of the farmers we have trained to rear butterflies no longer cut down trees," he said. Safina Omar who began producing charcoal after she was banned from farming near the Jozani forest, said butterfly farming has given her a workable alternative. "I knew charcoal trade is bad for environment but I was doing it because I couldn't immediately think of any other way to make money, yet I had many children to take care of," she said. Although the initiative is not in itself a solution for deforestation, it has helped create awareness and a sense of ownership of the forest among the farmers, George said.

A similar project is run by 250 local farmers in Tanzania's East Usambara Mountains, a region known for its biodiversity but where forests are being cleared to produce charcoal and to open up farmland. According to the Zanzibar Butterfly Centre, the amount each farmer earns varies depending on how many pupae they bring to the centre and of what species. "We pay more for species that are rarer and harder to farm. We see some of our top farmers earn up to 500,000 Tanzanian shillings (\$250) per month," Merzougui said. Charcoal and firewood comprise about 90 percent of energy used for cooking in Tanzania, according to the World Bank. The government estimates between 130,000 and 500,000 hectares of forests are destroyed each year as a result of charcoal production, poor farming and overgrazing. — Reuters

GIANT SQUID MAKES A RARE APPEARANCE

TOKYO: A giant squid that wandered into a Japanese port has been guided back out to sea almost a week after it was spotted, giving enthusiasts and experts a rare glimpse of the mysterious creature. The massive invertebrate, four meters in length, was discovered by fishermen on December 24 at a port in the city of Toyama on Japan's northwestern coast. It was later guided by a diver into deeper seas. "Its suckers were so strong that I felt some pain," Akinobu Kimura, who runs a dive shop in Toyama, said on TV Asahi.

"Even though I was trying to let it escape (from the port), it wrapped around my body and clung to my arm." A curator at the local Uozu Aquarium who visited the port and took underwater photos of the squid was surprised at its size. "It was unexpectedly beautiful, its body glowing red," he said in footage shown on broadcaster TBS. Giant squids are sometimes caught in Japanese fishing nets, though filming a live one is rare. The giant squid, "Architeuthis" to scientists, is sometimes described as one of the last mysteries of the ocean, being part of a world so hostile to humans that it has been little explored. — AFP



CALIFORNIA: Photo shows the General Grant Giant Sequoia tree which is the third largest recorded tree by volume in the world, at the King's Canyon National Park in Central California. As many as 58 million large trees in California are threatened by record drought afflicting the state since 2011, says a study published December 28, 2015. Even if the weather phenomenon called El Nino produces more precipitation, California's forests could suffer irreversible change, the report said. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Pedestrians make their way across a footbridge over a steady stream of vehicles crowding an avenue during the evening rush hour in New Delhi. — AFP

SMOG-CHOKED DELHI GEARS UP FOR CAR BAN

CRITICS WARN THE MEASURES WILL BE UNENFORCEABLE

NEW DELHI: Millions of Delhi residents will have to find alternative ways to work from Friday, when authorities launch a trial of draconian traffic restrictions to try to clean up the world's most polluted capital. Private cars will be banned from the roads on alternate days from January 1 as part of a slew of measures aimed at reducing smog levels that include shutting some coal-fired power plants and vacuuming roads to reduce dust. The Delhi government announced the scheme after a court ordered authorities to tackle pollution levels more than 10 times the World Health Organization's safe limits.

It will run for an initial two-week trial period, but many commuters fear the government will have little choice but to introduce a longer-term ban given the scale of the problem. However, some critics warn the measures will be unenforceable in a city where traffic rules are already routinely flouted. Many believe Delhi residents will deploy the famed Indian skill of 'jugaad' creating a cheap alternative solution-by forging number plates or buying second cars. "The biggest challenge is to make people realise that this fight against pollution is for them, for their health, for their own good," Delhi's transport minister Gopal Rai said.

"They will only be cheating themselves with 'jugaad'. There is no magic button that will make the pollution disappear. We must act now." To cope with the extra pressure on the public transport network, Delhi's government has hired around 3,000 private buses to provide shuttle services into the city from residential areas. Schools have been ordered to remain closed until the trial ends on January 15 so that their buses can be pressed into action. Traffic police and



NEW DELHI: An Indian worker displays a sticker on his vehicle that indicates it runs on compressed natural gas (CNG) after getting it checked at a pump in New Delhi. — AFP

10,000 volunteers will monitor cars at checkpoints across the city and violators will be fined 2,000 rupees (\$30) - extremely steep for the average resident.

Travel nightmare

Around 8.5 million vehicles clog up Delhi's roads and 1,400 new cars are being added every day as the city's residents become more affluent. That has contributed to Delhi being the most polluted of 1,600 cities around the world that were surveyed by the World Health Organization last year. Delhi's air quality drops dramatically during winter when farmers in neighboring states burn crop stubble, while poor residents light fires to keep warm and the colder air traps pollutants in the atmosphere.

The city has in recent weeks been enveloped in a toxic soup that has cut vis-

ibility and pushed PM 2.5 levels more than 10 times over the WHO's recommended safe limit. These extremely fine particles-less than 2.5 micrometres in diameter-are linked to increased rates of chronic bronchitis, lung cancer and heart disease. The new restrictions, in place from 8am to 8pm everyday except Sunday, will allow cars with odd-numbered licence plates to drive on odd-numbered dates and those with even-numbered plates on the others. They have divided Delhiites, with many looking forward to the novelty of congestion-free roads while others in the city's vast commuter belt grumble that getting to work will be impossible.

Many have complained the plan ignores other sources like dust-generating construction sites, crop burning and dusty winds from the arid west.

Environmental campaigners point out there are dozens of exemptions to the driving ban, including dignitaries, women driving alone and motorcycles-which it says contribute up to 31 percent of total vehicular pollution. "Let's not convince ourselves wrongly that a simple odd-even policy will solve the overall air pollution issue," Arunabha Ghosh, head of the Delhi-based Council on Energy, Environment and Water, told AFP.

"Otherwise, we will be simply kicking the can down the road and we will create a feeling of distrust among citizens and the government machinery." Delhi's air improved dramatically in 2002 when its diesel-guzzling public transport-buses, taxis and autorickshaws-switched to clean compressed natural gas (CNG). Since then India's breakneck development, generous diesel subsidies and low emission standards have led the city's air to deteriorate to a point where it claims up to 30,000 lives every year, according to the Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment. Beijing imposed similar restrictions ahead of the 2008 Olympics, producing its best air quality in a decade.

Analysts, however, say India's ingrained culture of corruption and non-compliance will make that harder to achieve than in authoritarian China. Complicating things further, Delhi's police force is controlled by the federal government, whose ruling Bharatiya Janata Party lost a bitter election battle against the city's chief minister Arvind Kejriwal this year. Pankaj Mehta, who drives 45 kilometers (30 miles) to work daily, predicted tiring times ahead. "Rickshaw, then metro, then feeder bus, then walk - back and forth. A travel nightmare," the 42-year-old said. "But if it makes breathing easier, then it may be worth it." — AFP

EPA WANTS TOXIC NEVADA MINE ON SUPERFUND LIST

RENO: Fifteen years after US regulators started assessing damage and health risks at an abandoned Nevada copper mine, the Environmental Protection Agency is moving to designate the contaminated land a Superfund site, a step the state could still oppose. Rural neighbors of the World War II-era mine that has leaked toxic chemicals for decades won a \$19.5 million settlement in 2013 from companies they accused of covering up the contamination to drinking water wells near Yerington, about 65 miles southeast of Reno. The EPA sent a letter to Gov Brian Sandoval this week announcing its intention to place the mine on the list of the nation's most polluted sites to "mitigate exposures that are a substantial threat to the public health or welfare or the environment."

"If we do not receive a written response from the state by Jan 29, we will assume that Nevada is in agreement with EPA and will proceed with proposing the site for addition to the NPL," Jared Blumenfeld, the agency's regional administrator in San Francisco, wrote in a Dec 22 letter obtained by The Associated Press. NPL is the acronym for the Superfund's National Priority List. State officials said they needed to review the letter and determine their next steps. "We're not going to

worry about turf," said Leo Drozdoff, director of the Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. "What we want is the best and quickest remedy for the site."

Nevada has opposed past EPA proposals to list the site, fearing a stigma that might affect property values and any precedent that could be set by federal intervention in the mining-friendly state, the world's sixth-biggest producer of gold. Nevada regulators estimated earlier this year that it would cost \$30.4 million to address only what the EPA considers the most immediate health and safety concerns, and the state has been unsuccessful in obtaining financial assistance from those responsible for the damage.

Under the Superfund listing, the EPA would cover 90 percent of the costs. "Without an identifiable private source of funding, the only mechanism to make federal funding available is to add the site to the NPL," Blumenfeld said. It comes after residents filed a class-action lawsuit in 2011 accusing Atlantic Richfield Co and parent company BP America Inc of "intentionally and negligently" concealing the extent of uranium, arsenic and other pollutants leaking into their drinking water wells from the mine.—AP

SEAWORLD: CALIFORNIA AGENCY OVERREACHED IN BREEDING BAN

SAN DIEGO: A California commission was overreaching when it banned the breeding of captive killer whales at a \$100 million planned exhibit at San Diego's SeaWorld, the park claimed in a lawsuit. The suit filed Tuesday in San Diego County Superior Court asserts that the park's treatment of its whales is subject to federal law and not the decisions of the California Coastal Commission, which must approve major new building developments in coastal cities.

The commission endorsed the orca tank expansion known as "Blue World," but in a surprising and serious blow to the park included a ban on breeding at the planned facility and prohibitions on the sale, trade or transfer of the whales. "This last-minute 'no breeding or transfer' condition is unprecedented," SeaWorld said in the lawsuit, which claims the commission's action is illegal because it has no jurisdiction over the orcas. "The orcas are not, in any way, part of the coastal or marine environment," the lawsuit says. "All of SeaWorld's activities with respect to the care, breeding and transportation of orcas occur onshore in the orca pools and not in the marine environment and are specifically governed by

federal law." Noaki Schwartz, spokeswoman for the Coastal Commission, said the agency could not comment on the particulars of the lawsuit, but the commission said in a statement that it "stands by its decision in October to protect killer whales." People For the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the main group opposing the project, said in a statement Tuesday that the commission was within its rights and made the correct decision.

"It's clear that the company's primary intention in pursuing the Blue World Project was to breed more orcas to confine to tanks," PETA said in a statement. SeaWorld said in October that it would challenge the decision and that it had hired attorneys to examine it but did not give specifics before filing the lawsuit Tuesday. Last month, the Orlando, Florida-based company said it would end theatrical orca shows at the San Diego park after visitors at the tourist attraction made it clear they prefer seeing killer whales act naturally rather than doing tricks. The shows will continue at the company's Orlando and San Antonio parks, which are not affected by the breeding ban.— AP

'PRE-HISTORIC' ANIMAL SHELL FOUND

CARLOS SPEGAZZINI: A passer-by on Christmas Day found a meter-long shell on a riverbank in Argentina which may be from a glyptodont, a prehistoric kind of giant armadillo, experts said Tuesday. A local man thought the black scaly shell was a dinosaur egg when he saw it lying in the mud, his wife Reina Coronel said. Her husband Jose Antonio Nieves found the shell beside a stream at their farm in Carlos Spegazzini, about 40 kilometers south of the capital Buenos Aires. "My husband went out to the car and when he came back he said, 'Hey, I just found an egg that looks like it came from a dinosaur,' she said. "We all laughed because we thought it was a joke."

Nieves told television channel Todo Noticias he found the shell partly covered in mud and started to dig around it. Various experts who saw television pictures of the object said it was likely to be a glyptodont shell. "There is no doubt that it looks like a glyptodont," said paleontologist Alejandro Kramarz of the Bernardino Rivadavia Natural Sciences Museum. "The animal became extinct thousands of years ago and it is very common to find their fossils in this region," he said. Glyptodonts are the ancestors of modern armadillos. They had big round armored shells and weighed up to a ton. They lived in South America for tens of millions of years. Kramarz estimated the specimen found by Nieves was relatively young at 10,000 years. — AFP

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X-CITE ANNOUNCES THE FINAL WINNERS IN 'WIN MORE THAN \$500,000 CASH'



X-cite by Alghanim Electronics is pleased to announce the names of the fifth and final week winners of the biggest shopping festival in Kuwait, which offered its customers the opportunity to win more than \$500,000 cash in 5 weekly draws with a weekly grand prize of KD 25,000. This one-of-a-kind promotion was launched on November 19th and ended on December 26th.

The fifth week's winners are: 1st place winner of KD 25,000: Mohammad Ahmad Al-Kilani, 2nd place winner of KD 5,000: Bader Mane Al-Duraie, 3rd place winner of KD 2,500: Rukaya Bandar Al-Humaidhi, 4th place winner of KD 1,000: Hussain Ali Al-Jumaa, 6th place winner of KD 500: WasimWael Adnan, 7th place winner of KD 500: Ahmad Abdulkader Ahmad

First Place winner Mohammad Ahmad Al-Kilani was very pleased with the prize saying, "I was very happy when I got the call from X-cite, I was lost for words. This was definitely unexpected. I want to thank X-cite with my heart!"



ARABIC DIWANIYA

Gain insight into Arab culture through our free weekly diwaniya, where you will discover and celebrate everything Arab through art, history, language, food, and traditions, past and present. After a 15-minute presentation on a selected topic by local professionals, you will have the chance to apply new skills, ask questions, practice Arabic and socialize among friends over refreshments. Every Wednesday Starting January 20 @ 7pm Villa No 67, Street 413, Block 4, Shuhada Area, Kuwait

WHAT'S ON - SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

All photos submitted for What's On should be minimum 200dpi. Articles must be in plain text and should include name and phone numbers. Articles and photos that fail to meet these requirements will not be published.

Please send them to news@kuwaittimes.net



ARMENIAN PRELACY HOSTS CHARITY BAZAAR

The women's committee for charitable and cultural works at the Armenian Prelacy of Kuwait and the Neighboring Countries hosted a charity bazaar recently for handicrafts, on the occasion of the Christmas and New Year holidays. The event was held under the patronage of Sheikh Amir Al-Fahad Al-Malik Al-Sabah. —Photos by Joseph Shagra



AL-HUMOUD RECEIVES IRANIAN AMBASSADOR

Prof Moudi Al-Humoud, Rector of the Arab Open University (AOU) received Iranian Ambassador to Kuwait Dr. Ali Reza Enayati accompanied by a delegation from the Iranian Embassy. The meeting addressed the relationship of Kuwait and Iran in the academic and cultural fields, and the opportunities of

enhancing cooperation and developing relations between AOU and Iranian universities in the areas of academic work and research. Al-Humoud said that AOU, which adopts a blended learning approach, has a strategic partnership with the Open University in the UK, adding the University has eight branches

across the Arab world and a new branch would be opened in Palestine soon.

Al-Humoud stressed on the important role played by the Chairman of the AOU Board of Trustees, its members, AOU Vice Rectors, Deans and Branch Directors in the University development and its achievements.

"The AOU development comes in line with the vision of HRH Prince Talal bin Abdulaziz, the AOU founder, and the AOU noble mission that seeks to provide opportunities of higher education to all knowledge seekers, including the Iranian students who live in the Arab world," Al-Humoud says.

Dr. Enayati expressed his gratitude to Al-Humoud for the warm welcome and commended the Kuwaiti-Iranian solid relations and the constructive cooperation between scientific and cultural institutions in both countries. He also commended AOU's role. Dr. Enayati says, "This visit is an opportunity to enhance cooperation and develop relation between AOU and educational and cultural institutions of Iran for serving the students who live in the AOU branch countries". In addition, the meeting addressed the issue of accreditation of AOU certificates in Iran, in particular for the Iranian students who study in the AOU Kuwait branch. Al-Humoud said that AOU is willing to cooperate and place all its potential at the service of scientific and cultural cooperation and of enhancement of mutual interests between the AOU branch countries and Iran.



OOREDOO SPONSORS OPEN DAY FOR EGYPTIANS IN KUWAIT

Ooredoo Kuwait, a member of the international Ooredoo Group, has sponsored the Egyptian Embassy's open day that took place on Friday 25 December 2015 at Al Surrah Sports Arena, which belongs to the Public Authority of Youth and Sports. His Excellency Yasser Atef, the Egyptian Ambassador in Kuwait was present at the event.

In support of the event, Ooredoo Kuwait has provided exclusive offers on prepaid lines as well as postpaid packages. Also, Ooredoo's representatives were able to interact with the attendees and distributed gifts through the company's booth, from which the staff have answered all questions about the company's products and services.

The event was attended by Captain Ahmad Nakhla, the former Egyptian National Team star; Nakhla was also a key player in Al Ahli Sporting Club, El Mokawloon El Arab Sporting Club, Al Mahalla Sporting Club and Ghazl Shebeen Sporting Club. The event included a number of entertaining segments such as authentic skirt and pony traditional dance, which are considered a celebratory Egyptian ritual.

In addition to the traditional amusing segments, the open day included music, games, competitions, children fun program, and a raffle draw. Also there was a friendly football matches between the Egyptian football star and former members of the diplomatic mission in Kuwait.

DURRAR TOASTMASTERS CLUB MARKS FINAL 2015 MEET

Durrar Toastmasters Club marked its last meeting of the year 2015 on the 19th of Dec filled with the spirit of the season of Christmas and approaching New Year marking the Theme of the Meeting "LOVE".

The ambience of the venue reflected the theme with a bunch of heart-shaped balloons and a solemn Christmas tree set at the backdrop at the dais. The Toastmaster of the Day effortlessly wove the expression of love through all the sessions of the meeting with the Table Topics mas-

ter riding the waves of endearment and beseeching all the Table Topic participants who did not hesitate to share their sentiments on various theme-related topics. Most of the toastmasters donned themselves in red and white to accentuate the theme and the short break satiated the taste buds with sumptuous cake and cookies, which brought on a more festive feeling.

During the last six months, the Club has had meetings on various themes varying from "Power of Words" to "The Best Lesson I have learnt" and had celebrations includ-

ing Ramadan and Diwali. It also had one of its meetings in unique surroundings, viz., at Riggae Park, where the families of members also joined and participated in table topics and enjoyed listening to prepared speeches by members. Even though the club is less than a year old, its enthusiastic members conduct each meeting with aplomb and style. The members plan to bring in the New Year 2016 also in style by having its first meeting as a Speech Marathon on the 9th of January, 2016. Guests are always welcome to attend the club meetings.



The Embassy of China in Kuwait hosted a New Year reception at Regency Hotel. The staff of several Chinese companies and the cross section of the community attended the event. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



00:20 Fast N' Loud
01:10 Mythbusters
02:00 The Carbonaro Effect
02:25 The Carbonaro Effect
02:50 You Have Been Warned
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 Ed Stafford: Into The Unknown
15:10 You Have Been Warned
16:00 You Have Been Warned
16:50 You Have Been Warned
17:40 You Have Been Warned
18:30 You Have Been Warned
19:20 Fire In The Hole
20:10 Property Wars
20:35 Storage Wars Canada
21:00 Predators Up Close With Joel Lambert
21:50 Deadly Islands
22:40 Amish Mafia: Amish Confidential
23:30 Junkyard Empire

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 Liv And Maddie
21:10 Austin & Ally
21:35 The Next Step
22:00 Jessie
22:25 First Class Chefs
22:50 Austin & Ally
23:10 Miraculous: Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
23:35 Best Friends Whenever



00:05 Henry Hugglemonster
00:20 Calimero
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopdidoo
02:30 Art Attack
02:55 Henry Hugglemonster
03:05 Calimero
03:20 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
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05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopdidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopdidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:30 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
08:55 Sofia The First
09:20 Doc McStuffins
09:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
10:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
10:30 Doc McStuffins
11:00 Sofia The First
11:55 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
12:25 Doc McStuffins
12:55 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
13:10 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
13:35 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
14:00 Sofia The First
14:50 Doc McStuffins
15:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
16:10 Sofia The First
16:40 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
17:10 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
18:05 Doc McStuffins
18:35 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
19:00 Sofia The First
19:55 Doc McStuffins
20:15 Jake And The Never Land Pirates
20:45 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
21:05 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
21:35 Sofia The First
22:00 The Adventures Of Disney Fairies
22:25 The Adventures Of Disney Fairies
22:55 The Adventures Of Disney Fairies
23:20 Lilo & Stitch
23:50 Zou



00:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
01:00 Chopped
02:00 Chopped South Africa
03:00 Man Fire Food
03:30 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
12:00 Chopped
13:00 Guy's Big Bite
13:30 Guy's Big Bite
14:00 Diners, Drive-Ins And Dives
15:00 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 Rev Run's Sunday Suppers
22:00 Siba's Table
23:00 Reza Spice Prince Of Vietnam



00:10 Come Date With Me Australia
00:35 Come Date With Me Australia
01:05 The Jonathan Ross Show
02:00 Emmerdale
02:25 Coach Trip
02:55 Coronation Street
03:25 The Syndicate
04:20 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
05:15 Come Date With Me Australia
05:40 Come Date With Me Australia
06:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
07:05 Coronation Street
07:30 The Syndicate
08:25 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
09:20 Paddock To Plate
10:10 The Jonathan Ross Show
11:05 Coach Trip
11:35 Keep It In The Family Christmas Special
12:30 Come Date With Me Australia
12:55 Come Date With Me Australia
13:25 Emmerdale
13:50 Coach Trip
14:20 Coronation Street
14:45 Paddock To Plate
15:35 Big Star's Little Star Christmas Special
16:30 The Royal Variety Performance 2014
19:10 Coronation Street
19:35 Big Star's Little Star Christmas Special
20:30 A Merry Murdoch Christmas
22:20 The Royal Variety Performance 2014

06:00 The Wine Quest: Spain
06:25 Poh & Co.
06:50 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
07:40 World's Best Chefs
08:05 The Wine Quest: Spain
08:30 Top Tables, Top Cities
08:55 Street Food Around The World
09:20 Grandma's Boy
09:45 Grandma's Boy
10:10 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
10:35 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
11:00 Dream Cruises
11:50 The Wine Quest: Spain
12:15 Poh & Co.
12:40 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
13:35 World's Best Chefs
14:00 The Wine Quest: Spain
14:30 Eat Street
14:55 Eat Street
15:25 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
15:50 David Rocco's Dolce Vita
16:20 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
16:45 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
17:15 Access 360 World Heritage
18:10 The Wine Quest: Spain
18:35 Poh & Co.



00:20 Africa's Deadliest
01:10 World's Deadliest Animals
02:00 Africa's Deadliest
02:50 Night Stalkers
03:45 Caught In The Act
04:40 Ultimate Predators GPU
05:35 Africa's Deadliest
06:30 Night Stalkers
07:25 Caught In The Act
08:20 Croc Inside Out
09:15 Caught In The Act
10:10 Monster Fish
11:05 Outback Wrangler
11:30 Outback Wrangler
12:00 Red Sea Jaws
12:55 Africa's Creative Killers
13:50 World's Deadliest
14:45 Caught In The Act
15:40 Animal Autopsy
16:35 Caught In The Act
17:30 Monster Fish
18:25 Outback Wrangler
18:50 Outback Wrangler



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 Jerrod Carmichael: Love At The Store
23:30 Late Night With Seth Meyers



00:00 Justified
01:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
02:00 The Flash
03:00 American Horror Story: Hotel
04:00 The Fosters
05:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
06:00 Castle
07:00 Bones
08:00 The Fosters
10:00 Castle
11:00 Bones
12:00 Emmerdale
12:30 Coronation Street
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
15:00 Castle
16:00 Emmerdale
16:30 Coronation Street
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
19:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
20:00 The Flash
21:00 Blindspot
22:00 Empire
23:00 Secrets And Lies



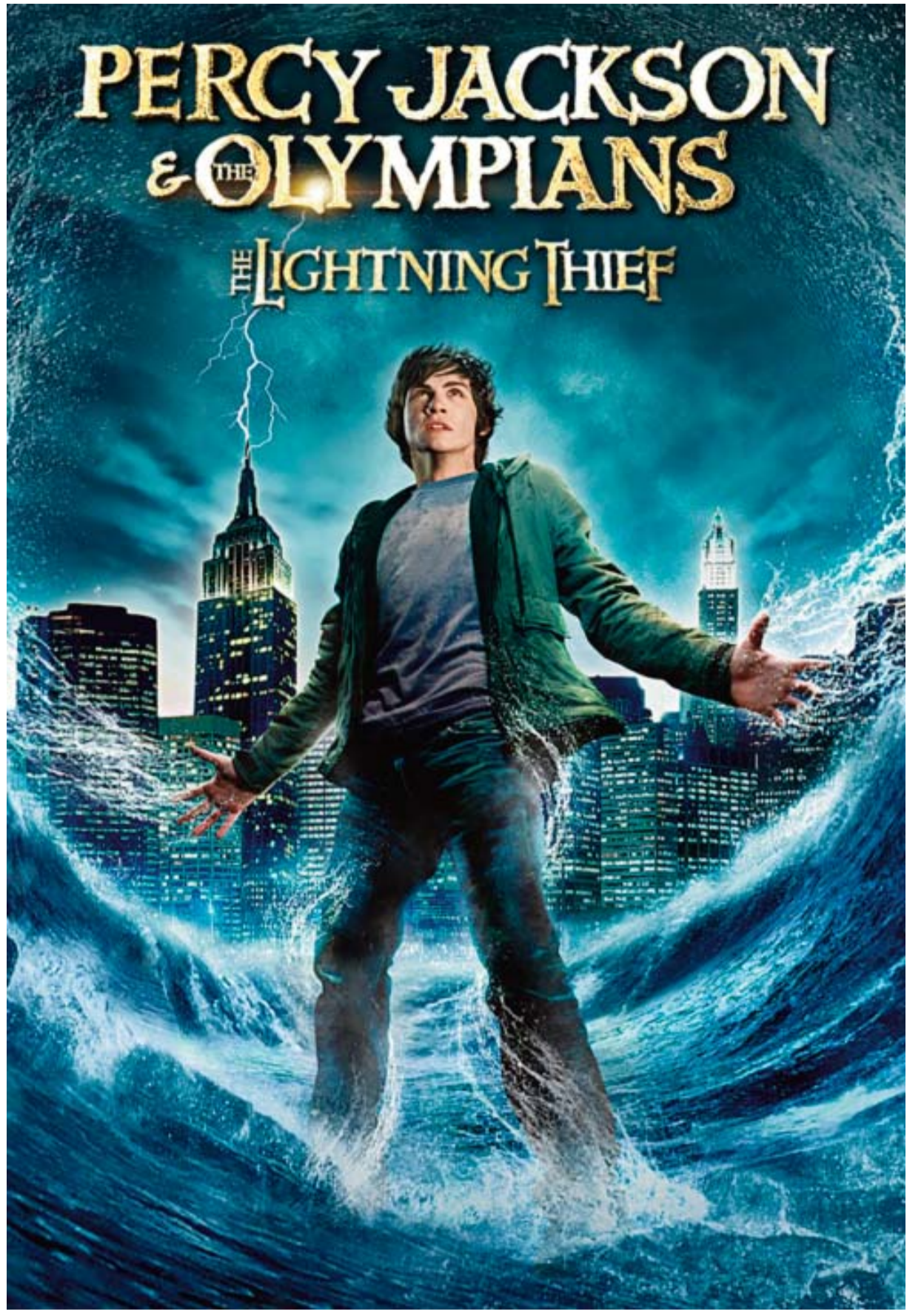
00:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
01:00 Good Morning America
03:00 Devious Maids
05:00 Good Morning America
07:00 Emmerdale
07:30 Coronation Street
08:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
10:00 Emmerdale
10:30 Coronation Street
11:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
15:00 Live Good Morning America
22:00 Mistresses



00:10 Do Or Die
00:35 Do Or Die
01:00 Man V. Viral
02:00 Car SOS
02:55 Air Crash Investigation
03:50 Do Or Die
04:15 Do Or Die
04:45 24 Hours In A&E
05:40 Utos: The Untold Stories
06:35 Mega Factories: Supercars
07:30 Megastructures
08:25 Situation Critical
09:20 24 Hours In A&E
10:15 Ultimate Airport Dubai
11:10 Innovation Nation
11:35 Innovation Nation
12:05 The Border
13:00 Situation Critical
14:00 Megastructures
15:00 Mega Factories: Supercars
16:00 Ultimate Airport Dubai
17:00 Innovation Nation
17:30 Innovation Nation
18:00 Breakthrough



00:10 The Wine Quest: Spain
00:35 Eat Street
01:00 George Clarke's Amazing Spaces
01:50 World's Best Chefs
02:15 The Wine Quest: Spain
02:40 Top Tables, Top Cities
03:05 Street Food Around The World
03:30 Grandma's Boy
03:55 Grandma's Boy
04:20 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
04:45 Lee Chan's World Food Tour
05:10 Dream Cruises



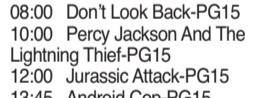
PERCY JACKSON AND THE LIGHTNING THIEF ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD



00:00 Swelter
02:00 The Frozen
04:00 The Prince
06:00 Android Cop
08:00 Christmas Twister
10:00 Don't Look Back
12:00 Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief
14:00 Jurassic Attack
15:45 Arachnophobia
17:30 Arachnophobia
19:30 Don't Look Back
21:30 The Hulk



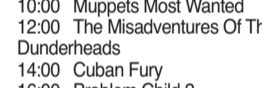
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02:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
05:00 Miss Julie-PG15
07:15 Penthouse North-PG15
09:00 Mood Indigo-PG15
10:45 Miss Julie-PG15
13:00 Still Mee-PG15
14:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
17:00 Mood Indigo-PG15
19:00 A Long Way Down-PG15
21:00 Draft Day-PG15
23:00 Maps To The Stars-18



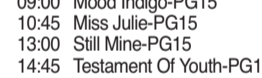
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04:00 Android Cop-PG15
06:00 Christmas Twister-PG15
08:00 Don't Look Back-PG15
10:00 Percy Jackson And The Lightning Thief-PG15
12:00 Jurassic Attack-PG15
13:45 Android Cop-PG15
15:30 Arachnophobia-PG15
17:30 Don't Look Back-PG15
19:30 The Hulk-PG15
22:00 Automata-PG15



00:00 Happy Gilmore
02:00 Baggage Claim
04:00 Muppets Most Wanted
06:00 Problem Child
08:00 Problem Child 2



10:00 Muppets Most Wanted
12:00 The Misadventures Of The Underhounds
14:00 Cuban Fury
16:00 Problem Child 2
18:00 The Love Punch
20:00 Save The Date
22:00 We're The Millers



01:00 The Fold-PG15
02:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
05:00 Miss Julie-PG15
07:15 Penthouse North-PG15
09:00 Mood Indigo-PG15
10:45 Miss Julie-PG15
13:00 Still Mee-PG15
14:45 Testament Of Youth-PG15
17:00 Mood Indigo-PG15
19:00 A Long Way Down-PG15
21:00 Draft Day-PG15
23:00 Maps To The Stars-18



01:00 Mr. Pip
03:00 Collaborator
05:00 Against The Ropes
07:00 Waitress
09:00 Sunshine On Leith
11:00 Against The Ropes
13:00 October Sky
15:00 Won't Back Down
17:00 Sunshine On Leith
19:00 True Colors
21:00 Eternal Sunshine Of The Spotless Mind
23:00 Her



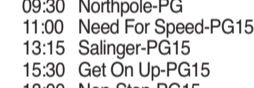
01:45 Sabotage-PG15
03:30 Big Eyes-PG15
05:15 Tinker Bell And The Legend Of The NeverBeast-FAM
06:45 The Fault In Our Stars-PG15
09:00 The Book Of Life-PG
10:45 Transformers: Age Of Extinction-PG15
13:30 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles-PG15
15:15 The Hundred-Foot Journey
17:15 The Book Of Life-PG
19:00 Lucy-PG15
21:00 Project Almanac-PG15
23:00 The Wedding Ringer-18



01:00 Moomins And The Comet Chase
02:45 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
04:30 Jelly T
06:00 Blue Elephant 2
08:00 Krazzy Planet!
10:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
11:30 The Heart Of The Oak
13:00 True Story Of Puss'n Boots
14:30 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
16:00 Blackie And Kanuto
18:00 Daddy I'm A Zombie
20:00 Back To The Sea
22:00 Ploddy Police Car On The Case
23:30 Blackie And Kanuto



00:00 Bad Words-18
02:00 HairBrained-PG15
03:45 Robot & Frank-PG15
05:14 40 Days And Nights-PG15
07:00 Get On Up-PG15



03:14 Grojband
03:35 Johnny Test
05:05 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:27 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:50 Regular Show
06:00 The Amazing World Of Gumball
07:00 Adventure Time
07:25 Teen Titans Go!
08:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
08:35 Ben 10 Omniverse
09:20 Regular Show
10:10 Clarence
10:30 Johnny Test
11:20 Uncle Grandpa
11:40 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
12:05 Teen Titans Go!
12:50 Steven Universe
13:02 Steven Universe
13:15 Regular Show
14:00 Johnny Test
14:50 Adventure Time
15:10 The Amazing World Of Gumball
15:35 The Amazing World Of Gumball
16:00 Ben 10 Omniverse
16:45 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
17:10 Ninjago: Masters Of Spinjitzu
17:30 Teen Titans Go!
18:20 Regular Show
19:05 The Amazing World Of Gumball
19:30 Johnny Test
19:40 Johnny Test
19:51 Adventure Time
20:15 Steven Universe
20:27 Steven Universe
20:40 Teen Titans Go!
21:25 Ben 10: Omniverse
21:50 Ben 10: Omniverse
22:15 Uncle Grandpa
22:40 Adventure Time
00:10 Regular Show
01:40 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:02 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:25 Grojband
02:51 Grojband



03:25 Hurlly Burly
05:30 Saved!
07:00 The Watsons Go To Birmingham
08:30 Improv
10:15 The Man In The Iron Mask
12:25 High Spirits
14:00 Robinson Crusoe
15:30 Saved!
17:00 The Man In The Iron Mask
19:10 Dirty Rotten Scoundrels
21:00 Breaking Bad
22:00 Follow That Dream
23:50 Kid Galahad
01:25 LA Bamba



03:35 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
04:25 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
05:15 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
06:02 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
06:49 Dogs/Cats/Pets 101
07:36 Call Of The Wildman
08:00 Call Of The Wildman
08:25 Into The Pride
09:15 Into The Pride
10:10 Into The Pride
11:05 Into The Pride
12:00 Into The Pride
12:55 The Lion Queen
13:50 The Lion Queen
14:45 The Lion Queen
15:40 The Lion Queen
16:35 The Lion Queen
17:30 The Lion Queen
18:25 Killer Ig: Lion vs Hyena
19:20 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
20:15 Queens Of The Savannah
21:10 Queens Of The Savannah
22:05 Queens Of The Savannah



03:20 Sally Lockhart Mysteries
05:00 Teletubbies
05:25 The Green Balloon Club
05:45 Nina And The Neurons: In The Lab
06:00 Nuzzle & Scratch: Frock n Roll
06:25 Teletubbies
06:45 The Green Balloon Club
07:10 Nina And The Neurons: In The Lab
07:25 Sally Lockhart Mysteries
09:00 Doctors
09:30 Eastenders
10:00 The Office Specials
10:55 BBC Proms 2011: Hooray For Hollywood
12:50 Sally Lockhart Mysteries
14:25 The Office Specials
15:20 Doctors
15:50 Eastenders
16:20 Doors Open
18:00 Absolutely Fabulous: Christmas 2011
18:30 Absolutely Fabulous: Christmas 2011
19:00 Doctors
19:30 Eastenders
20:00 The Lady Vanishes
21:30 Russell Brand: Messiah Complex
23:00 Sherlock
00:30 Doctors
01:00 Eastenders



03:14 Grojband
03:35 Johnny Test
05:05 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
05:27 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
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20:27 Steven Universe
20:40 Teen Titans Go!
21:25 Ben 10: Omniverse
21:50 Ben 10: Omniverse
22:15 Uncle Grandpa
22:40 Adventure Time
00:10 Regular Show
01:40 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:02 Transformers: Robots In Disguise
02:25 Grojband
02:51 Grojband



03:40 The Ghost Inside My Child
04:35 I Survived
05:25 The Haunting Of...
06:15 My Haunted House
07:05 The First 48
08:00 The First 48
09:00 The First 48
10:00 I Survived
11:00 I Survived
12:00 I Survived
13:00 The FBI Files
14:00 The FBI Files
15:00 The FBI Files
16:00 The FBI Files
17:00 The FBI Files
18:00 The FBI Files
19:00 The FBI Files
20:00 I Dated A Psycho
21:00 I Dated A Psycho
22:00 I Dated A Psycho
23:00 My Crazy Ex
23:55 My Crazy Ex
00:50 My Crazy Ex
01:45 My Crazy Ex
02:45 My Crazy Ex
Discovery Science HD
03:42 NASA's Unexplained Files
04:29 Investigation X



THE FROZEN ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

CLASSIFIEDS



Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Arrival Flights on Thursday 31/12/2015				Departure Flights on Thursday 31/12/2015			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	415	Sohag	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
KLM	411	Amsterdam/Dammam	00:20	JZR	528	Asyut	00:05
JZR	267	Beirut	00:30	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:10
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40
FDB	069	Dubai	00:55	MSC	404	Asyut	00:55
RJA	642	Amman	01:05	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:55
THY	772	Istanbul	01:05	MSC	416	Sohag	01:00
SAI	441	Lahore	01:30	KLM	411	Amsterdam	01:35
DLH	635	Doha	01:35	KAC	283	Dhaka	02:10
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	01:45	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	SAI	442	Lahore	02:30
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	DLH	635	Frankfurt	02:35
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	02:45
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	203	Lahore	03:05
FDB	067	Dubai	03:05	KAC	381	Delhi	03:30
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	UAE	854	Dubai	03:45
QTR	1076	Doha	03:15	PGT	859	Istanbul	03:55
KKK	6507	Istanbul	03:20	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:25	FDB	068	Dubai	04:00
JZR	503	Luxor	04:25	MSR	613	Cairo	04:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:15
QTR	8511	Doha	06:10	KKK	6508	Istanbul	04:20
FDB	5061	Dubai	06:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
BAW	157	London	06:40	THY	765	Istanbul	05:15
JZR	529	Asyut	06:50	JZR	560	Sohag	06:10
KAC	412	Manila/Bangkok	07:20	FDB	070	Dubai	06:30
QTR	1086	Doha	07:40	JZR	164	Dubai	06:55
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	RJA	643	Amman	07:05
SVA	512	Riyadh	07:50	THY	771	Istanbul	07:05
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:50	FDB	5062	Dubai	07:10
KAC	206	Islamabad	08:25	JZR	240	Amman	07:15
KAC	352	Kochi	08:30	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	08:30	QTR	8512	Doha	07:40
KAC	344	Chennai	08:30	FDB	054	Dubai	08:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	QTR	1087	Doha	08:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:50	BAW	156	London	08:45
KAC	362	Colombo	08:50	SVA	513	Riyadh	08:50
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:00	JZR	256	Beirut	09:05
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	KAC	101	London/New York	09:55
OMA	641	Muscat	10:05	UAE	856	Dubai	09:55
IRM	1180	Mashhad	10:10	KAC	541	Cairo	09:55
IRA	673	Ahwaz	10:10	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	561	Amman	10:00
UAE	873	Dubai	11:05	KAC	671	Dubai	10:05
RBG	553	Alexandria	11:15	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:25
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	JZR	778	Jeddah	10:30
AGY	682	Asyut	11:40	FDB	056	Dubai	10:35
NIA	151	Cairo	11:55	KAC	153	Istanbul	10:40
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	KAC	677	Abu Dhabi/Muscat	10:50
KAC	204	Lahore	12:20	QTR	1071	Doha	11:00
FDB	075	Dubai	12:25	KAC	165	Rome/Paris	11:00
MSC	401	Alexandria	12:30	OMA	642	Muscat	11:05
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	IRA	672	Ahwaz	11:10
JZR	241	Amman	12:50	IRM	1181	Mashhad	11:25
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	RBG	554	Alexandria	12:00
SYR	341	Damascus	13:30	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:20
THY	766	Istanbul	13:45	UAE	874	Dubai	12:30
KNE	460	Riyadh	13:50	AGY	683	Alexandria	12:40
KAC	382	Delhi	13:50	MEA	405	Beirut	12:55
FDB	057	Dubai	14:10	NIA	152	Cairo	12:55
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	KAC	785	Jeddah	13:00
AXB	393	Kozhikode	14:20	FDB	076	Dubai	13:10
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:30	MSC	402	Alexandria	13:30
KAC	284	Dhaka	14:45	KAC	537	Sohag	13:35
KAC	672	Dubai	14:45	JZR	176	Dubai	13:45
KAC	788	Jeddah	14:50	MSR	611	Cairo	14:00
GFA	221	Bahrain	15:00	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KNE	472	Jeddah	15:05	SYR	342	Damascus	14:40
OMA	645	Muscat	15:30	THY	767	Istanbul	14:45
NIA	251	Alexandria	15:30	KNE	481	Taif	14:50
KAC	562	Amman	15:40	JZR	124	Bahrain	15:00
ABY	127	Sharjah	15:45	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
UAE	857	Dubai	15:45	QTR	1079	Doha	15:10
JAD	301	Amman	15:55	FDB	058	Dubai	15:10
QTR	1072	Doha	16:10	AXB	394	Kozhikode	15:20
JZR	779	Jeddah	16:10	JZR	188	Dubai	15:40
JZR	535	Cairo	16:10	KAC	617	Doha	15:45
FDB	051	Dubai	16:30	KAC	222	Bahrain	15:45
JZR	257	Beirut	16:30	GFA	741	Dammam	15:50
KNE	474	Jeddah	16:35	KAC	773	Riyadh	15:50
ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	16:40	KAC	613	Bahrain	15:50
RJA	640	Amman	16:55	KAC	505	Jeddah	16:00
KAC	542	Cairo	16:55	SVA	473	Jeddah	16:05
SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15	KNE	128	Sharjah	16:25
GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30	ABY	252	Alexandria	16:30
KAC	678	Muscat/Abu Dhabi	17:50	OMA	646	Muscat	16:30
MSR	614	Cairo	17:50	JAD	302	Amman	16:40
JZR	125	Bahrain	17:50	KAC	563	Amman	16:45
JZR	777	Jeddah	17:55	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	118	New York	17:55	KNE	475	Jeddah	17:25
UAE	875	Dubai	18:00	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	17:30
KAC	502	Beirut	18:00	FDB	052	Dubai	17:35
FDB	063	Dubai	18:05	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
UAL	982	IAD	18:15	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
JZR	177	Dubai	18:20	JZR	538	Dubai	17:45
KAC	786	Jeddah	18:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
ABY	123	Sharjah	18:45	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
QTR	1080	Doha	18:55	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	742	Dammam	18:55	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	614	Bahrain	19:10	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	19:25	JZR	238	Amman	18:50
GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30	MSR	615	Cairo	18:50
KAC	618	Doha	19:35	JZR	554	Alexandria	19:10
KAC	104	London	19:40	FDB	064	Dubai	19:20
KAC	154	Istanbul	19:45	ABY	124	Sharjah	19:25
KAC	674	Dubai	19:45	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
KAC	176	Geneva/Frankfurt	19:55	UAL	982	Bahrain	19:30
MSR	618	Alexandria	20:05	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
KAC	538	Sohag	20:05	KAC	353	BLR	20:40
KNE	480	Taif	20:10	QTR	1081	Doha	20:50
JZR	189	Dubai	20:15	KAC	351	Kochi	20:50
FDB	061	Dubai	20:20	KAC	543	Cairo	20:55
OMA	647	Muscat	20:20	KAC	343	Chennai	21:00
ABY	121	Sharjah	20:35	MSR	619	Alexandria	21:05
FDB	5053	Dubai	20:50	KNE	461	Riyadh	21:10
DLH	634	Frankfurt	20:55	ABY	122	Sharjah	21:15
JAI	572	Mumbai	20:55	OMA	648	Muscat	21:20
MEA	402	Beirut	21:20	FDB	062	Dubai	21:20
ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20	DLH	634	Doha	21:45
ALK	229	Colombo	21:25	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
UAE	859	Dubai	21:40	FDB	064	Doha	21:55
GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
QTR	1082	Doha	22:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:10
KLM	417	Amsterdam	22:05	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:10
AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:25	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KAC	564	Amman	22:25	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
FDB	059	Dubai	22:30	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
JZR	185	Dubai	23:15	QTR	1083	Doha	23:05
UAL	981	Bahrain	23:25	KLM	417	Dammam/Amsterdam	23:05
PIA	205	Lahore	23:40	KAC	205	Islamabad	23:10
FDB	071	Dubai	23:45	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:15
THY	764	Istanbul	23:50	FDB	060	Dubai	23:35
JAI	574	Mumbai	23:55	KAC	411	Bangkok/Manila	23:35
MSC	403	Asyut	23:55	KAC	415	Kuala Lumpur/Jakarta	23:40

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

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) **30-12-2015**

THE PUBLIC AUTHORITY FOR CIVIL INFORMATION Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is **1889988**

EMERGENCY 112

PRAYER TIMINGS

Fajr: 05:17
Shorook 06:42
Duhr: 11:50
Asr: 14:41
Maghrib: 17:00
Isha: 18:22

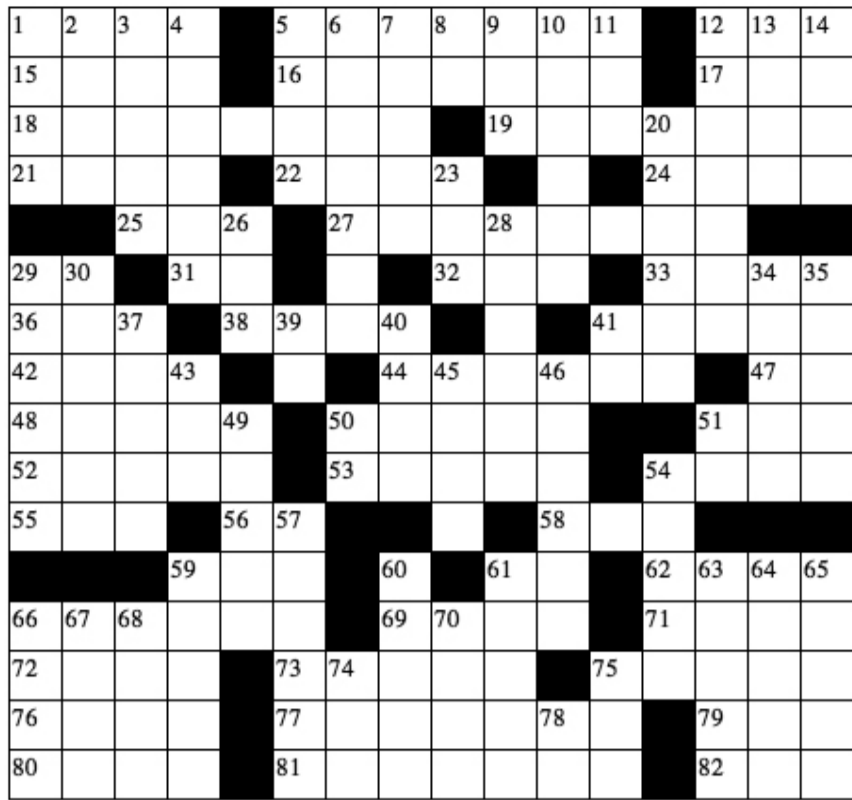


Kuwait CINEMA

KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (31/12/2015 TO 06/01/2016)

SHARQIA-1			
THE PEANUTS MOVIE	11:30 AM	THE BIG SHORT	2:15 PM
POINT BREAK	1:30 PM	BANG BANG BABY	5:00 PM
THE PEANUTS MOVIE	4:00 PM	THE BIG SHORT	7:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi	6:00 PM	BANG BANG BABY	9:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi	9:00 PM	NO THU	
POINT BREAK	12:05 AM	THE BIG SHORT	11:45 PM
		NO THU	
SHARQIA-2		MARINA-2	
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	12:00 PM	POINT BREAK	12:00 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	11:05	EXTRACTION	2:30 PM
JOY	3:30 PM	SNOWTIME!	4:30 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	6:15 PM	POINT BREAK	6:30 PM
JOY	8:00 PM	EXTRACTION	9:00 PM
APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	10:45 PM	EXTRACTION	11:00 PM
JOY	12:30 AM	NO THU	
		POINT BREAK	1:00 AM
		NO THU	
SHARQIA-3		MARINA-3	
BANG BANG BABY	12:30 PM	JOY	1:00 PM
THE BIG SHORT	2:30 PM	APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	3:30 PM
BANG BANG BABY	5:00 PM	THE GOOD DINOSAUR	5:30 PM
THE BIG SHORT	7:00 PM	APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	8:00 PM
BANG BANG BABY	9:45 PM	JOY	10:00 PM
THE BIG SHORT	11:45 PM	APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	12:30 AM
		NO THU	
MUHALAB-1		AVENUES-1	
SNOWTIME!	12:30 PM	THE PEANUTS MOVIE	12:30 PM
SNOWTIME!	2:30 PM	THE PEANUTS MOVIE	2:45 PM
DILWALE - Hindi	4:30 PM	THE PEANUTS MOVIE	5:00 PM
DILWALE - Hindi	7:30 PM	APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	7:15 PM
POINT BREAK	10:30 PM	APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	9:15 PM
POINT BREAK	1:00 AM	APARTMENT NO. 6 - Kuwaiti Film	11:1

CROSSWORD 1124



ACROSS

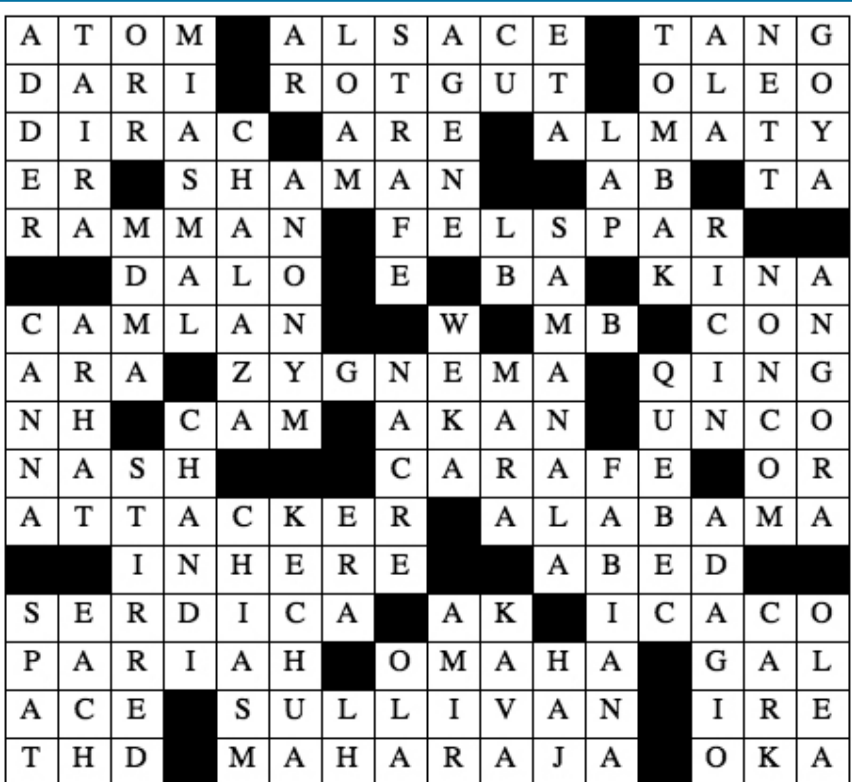
1. A wound made by cutting.
5. The Japanese art of folding paper into shapes representing objects (e.g., flowers or birds).
12. Syndrome resulting from a serious acute (sometimes fatal) infection associated with the presence of staphylococcus.
15. A fit of shivering.
16. A word that names a part of a larger whole.
17. Black-and-white short-necked web-footed diving bird of northern seas.
18. An infant who is sponsored by an adult (the godparent) at baptism.
19. Whip scorpions.
21. A city in northern India.
22. A member of the Pueblo people living in northern New Mexico.
24. Set down according to a plan.
25. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
27. A colorless liquid aldehyde.
29. A metallic element of the rare earth group.
31. An international organization of European countries formed after World War II to reduce trade barriers and increase cooperation among its members.
32. An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.
33. (computer science) A kind of computer architecture that has a large number of instructions hard coded into the cpu chip.
34. An ugly evil-looking old woman.
36. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
42. Mild yellow Dutch cheese made in balls.
44. In the Arabian Nights a hero who tells of the fantastic adventures he had in his voyages.
47. Date used in reckoning dates before the supposed year Christ was born.
48. A pale rose-colored variety of the ruby spinel.
52. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
53. A Hindu disciple of a swami.
55. (British) Your grandmother.
56. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
58. A pass between mountain peaks.
62. A town and port in northwestern Israel in the eastern Mediterranean.
66. A deep bow.
69. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
71. (biology) Shed at an early stage of development.
72. Using speech rather than writing.
73. Having the leading position or higher score in a contest.
76. Fallow deer.
77. French painter best known for his satirical lithographs of bourgeois society (1808-1879).
79. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
80. A Kwa language spoken in Ghana and the Ivory Coast.
81. A small republic in the eastern Pyrenees between Spain and France.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
2. Highly excited.
3. A member of the lowest or worker Hindu caste.
4. (Greek mythology) Greek goddess of fertility

- who later became associated with Persephone as goddess of the underworld and protector of witches.
5. Prevent from being included or considered or accepted.
6. A failure to maintain a higher state.
7. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
8. Functioning correctly and ready for action.
9. (Babylonian) The sky god.
10. Too numerous to be counted.
11. The United Nations agency concerned with international maritime activities.
12. A language spoken by a Malaysian people on Formosa.
13. Tall evergreen of Japan and China yielding valuable soft wood.
14. One of a pair of planks used to make a track for rolling or sliding objects.
20. Situated in a particular spot or position.
23. Piece of solid food for dipping in a liquid.
26. A graphical recording of the cardiac cycle produced by an electrocardiograph.
28. Any of a class of weakly acidic organic compounds.
30. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
34. A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
35. Any tropical gymnosperm of the order Cycadales.
37. A mountain peak in the Andes in Argentina (21,654 feet high).
39. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
40. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
41. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
43. A member of a Mayan people of southwestern Guatemala.
45. A distinct part that can be specified separately in a group of things that could be enumerated on a list.
46. Positioned so as to be ready for confrontation or danger.
49. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
50. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
51. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
54. Bottle that has a narrow neck.
57. A large fleet.
59. A drug (trade names Calan and Isoptin) used as an oral or parenteral calcium blocker in cases of hypertension or congestive heart failure or angina or migraine.
60. A person who makes deceitful pretenses.
61. An extreme state of adversity.
63. Botswana statesman who was the first president of Botswana (1921-1980).
64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
65. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
67. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
68. A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
70. Fabric dyed with splotches of green and brown and black and tan.
74. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
75. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
78. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Although you might not do anything special today, you will likely keep busy imagining the biggest and wildest party ever. Your visions can take you anywhere today as irrepresible Uranus excites pleasure-oriented Venus in your 9th House of Infinite Possibilities. But you may be able to satisfy your restlessness without all the fuss and drama, so don't risk everything trying to make your dreams come true yet. Knowing when to turn a fantasy into reality can make the difference between disappointment and happiness. Believe it or not, joy is within your grasp.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your big ideas regarding a hot romance sound intriguing on paper, but they may quickly fade if you end up engaging in an emotional conflict with your love interest. You prefer an easygoing exchange of pleasantries before there's any mention of feelings, but you could be confronted with a radically different point of view today. Fortunately, you might just receive the intimate connection you are seeking if you possess the courage to stick around and stay present in the conversation. You can't find love unless you open your heart.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It's as easy as pie to start the day off right by conjuring up a fantastic plan, and then keep making it even bigger and better by increments. Unfortunately, your current desire to inflate nearly everything could turn a very sensible idea into a strategy that becomes so grandiose that it's impractical. A healthy helping of self-restraint is your key to satisfaction. Less is more is your mantra now, whether you like it or not.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're so intuitive today that you can accidentally confuse an idealistic fantasy with reality. It requires constant vigilance to remain objective now, even if you have a plethora of facts at your disposal. But don't believe for a moment that you own a corner on the truth; even the most unbiased data can become tinted with subjective emotions. Color outside the lines when you dream about your ideal future. Just be sure to also pay close attention to your heart in the present moment.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Distinguishing the real world from your subconscious mind is tricky today because the Moon's opposition to magical Neptune means the veil that separates these two worlds is very thin now. You are entering a creative zone, but the spirit realm feels so close that you could bump into a few ghosts of your own. At first, your visions might seem to have little in common with reality, but don't dismiss them prematurely. Ignoring your dreams can stifle your self-expression, while allowing your imagination to flow naturally should be enough to keep you inspired for weeks.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You might not be able to complete everything that you start today, even if you planned to work hard and stay late. Unfortunately, you may underestimate the time and resources necessary to finish your assignments. Managing your own disappointment will be challenging enough if you don't deliver what you promise, but dealing with others now is even harder. Thankfully, you can rely on your intuition while the Moon is in your sign. Stay alert like a fox, and don't make any commitments you can't keep.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You're ready to toss your schedule aside today so you can be more spontaneous, but it will be nearly impossible to forget your previous commitments. Others may not realize how much you have chosen to take on during the holiday season, because you can easily appear quite cavalier about all your responsibilities. Nevertheless, you are undoubtedly your own worst critic now. Finding a middle ground between extremely productive and totally lazy is your best position.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your main interest in social interactions now is limited to those that deepen your understanding of life and broaden your spiritual purpose. It's crucial to build flexibility into your plans because you may want to change your mind at the last minute. It's not that you are avoiding your friends; it's just that indulging in some quiet solitude sounds more appealing than feeling lost in a crowd. Don't let anyone talk you into something you don't want to do. Cultivating your inner voice often means taking the road less traveled.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You might spend more time than you prefer in the service of others, but there isn't a viable way to completely avoid your duties today. Luckily, sweet Venus is dancing in your sign now, helping you to maintain a positive demeanor in the face of challenges. You want to be seen as the hero who saves the day by going the extra mile, but you didn't expect how much work that entails. Extraordinary things can happen if you temporarily set your own needs aside and act from the heart.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You're lucky that big things come in small packages today because your attention span is somewhat limited by your previous obligations. Nevertheless, you still have an infinite amount of space to wander around in the far corners of your imagination, regardless of your socially pre-determined role. Taking care of business can still be productive now, even if your thoughts are lost in fantasy. Actively playing in both worlds fuels your creativity and your success at the same time.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Fresh waves of cosmic energy wash onto the shores of your awareness today. There's magic in the unrealized potential of the new year ahead and you may be feeling quite optimistic about upcoming social activities. Unfortunately, your unbridled passion can run into practical considerations, preventing you from doing everything on your list. But don't let discouragement overtake your enthusiasm. Just meditate on the old adage that good things come to those who wait.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Keeping your desires in check can be a real challenge as your plans for tonight spin out of control. But rather than arguing with someone who tries to help you see the folly of your ways, demonstrate your wisdom by listening to their constructive advice. No one is raining on your parade; it's just that stretching the limits too far could ruin your fun. Stirring a pinch of caution into the mix actually improves your chances of having one of the best New Year's Eve ever.

WORD SEARCH PUZZLE

Volleyball

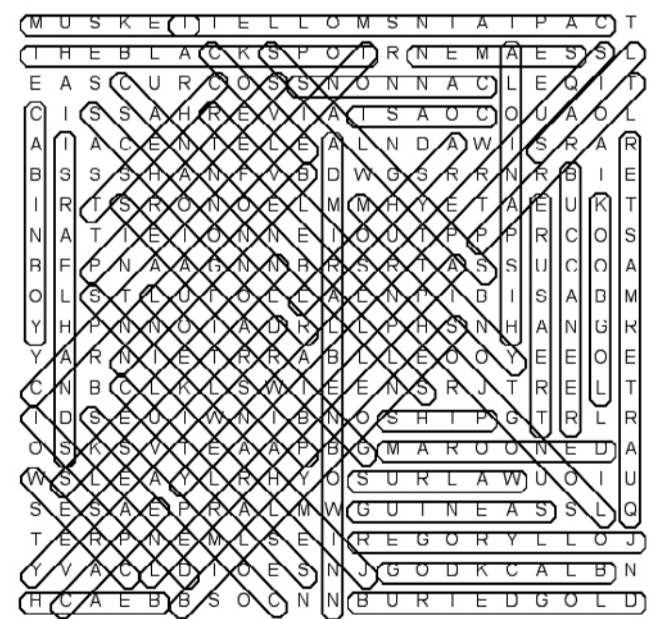
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 39 letters spell a secret message.



- | | | | |
|------------|------------|-----------|---------------|
| APPROACH | FOOTWORK | QUICK HIT | SKY BALL |
| ASSIST | FORMATIONS | RALLY | SLIDE |
| ATTACK | FOWL | REFEREE | SPIKING |
| BLOCKING | GAME | ROTATION | SPORT |
| BUMP | HITTER | SAVE | SUBSTITUTION |
| CAPTAIN | KILL | SCORE | TANDEM |
| COACH | KNEE PADS | SERVE | TEAMS |
| COURT | LIBERO | SETS | TOPSPIN |
| DEFENCE | MATCH | SETTER | TRAJECTORY |
| DOUBLE HIT | OFFENCE | SHANK | VERTICAL JUMP |
| DUMP | PASS | SHOT | WEAK SIDE |
| FAULT | PLAYERS | SIDELINES | WIPE |
| FLOATER | POINTS | SIDE OUT | |

Yesterday's Solution

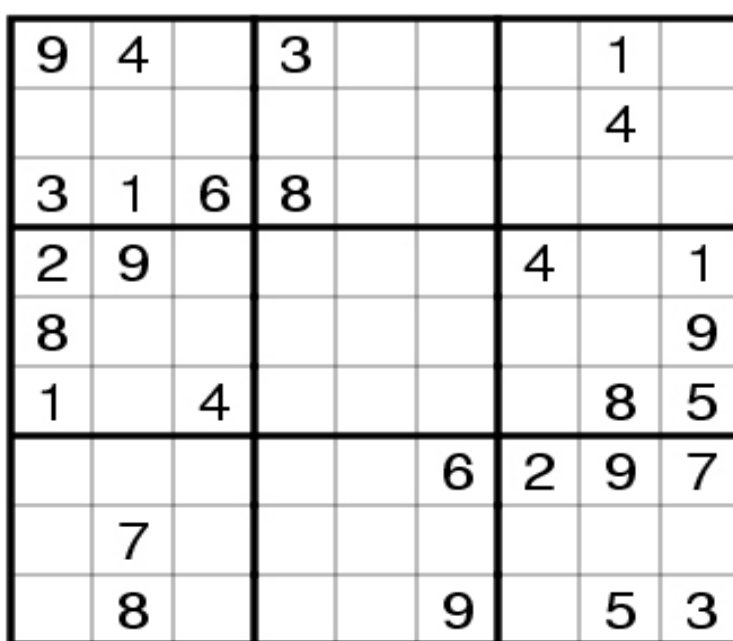
Treasure Island



- | | | | | | | | | |
|---------|--------|-----------|-----------|------------|---------|-----------|------------|---------------|
| ADMIRAL | BENBOW | INN | CAPE | CAPTAIN | FLINT | ISRAEL | HANDS | QUARTERMASTER |
| APPLE | BARREL | ASHORE | CHEST | JOLLY | ROGER | SAIL | SCHOONER | SEA-FARING |
| BEN | GUNN | BILLY | BONES | RI | ACK | DOG | BUCCANEER | BURIED |
| GOLD | CABIN | BOY | CANNON | BALL'S | CANNONS | GUILFINAS | HISPANIOLA | PISTOL |
| LONG | JOHN | SILVER | MARCOONFD | MUSKET | NUTINY | PARROT | PIRATES | PISTOL |
| SKEL | FTON | SPY-GLASS | SQUIRE | TRE-LAWNEY | THE | BLACK | SPOT | TREASURF |
| WALRUS | | | | | | | | |

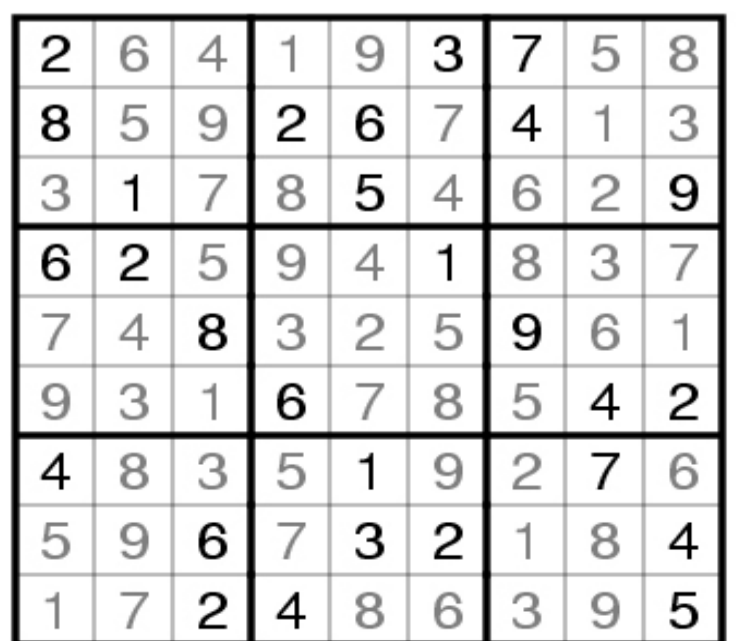
The hidden message is: TREASURE ISLAND WAS WRITTEN BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Daily SuDoku



medium

Yesterday's Solution



hard

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
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadisiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322



PHARMACIES ON 24 HRS DUTY

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khaldiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khaldiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Afghanistan	0093	Luxembourg	00352
Albania	00355	Lesotho	00266
Algeria	00213	Macau	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antigua	001268	Malawi	00265
Argentina	0054	Malaysia	0060
Armenia	00374	Maldives	00960
Australia	0061	Mali	00223
Austria	0043	Malta	00356
Bahamas	001242	Marshall Islands	00692
Bahrain	00973	Martinique	00596
Bangladesh	00880	Mauritania	00222
Barbados	001246	Mauritius	00230
Belarus	00375	Mayotte	00269
Belgium	0032	Mexico	0052
Belize	00501	Micronesia	00691
Benin	00229	Moldova	00373
Bermuda	001441	Monaco	00377
Bhutan	00975	Mongolia	00976
Bolivia	00591	Montserrat	001664
Bosnia	00387	Morocco	00212
Botswana	00267	Mozambique	00258
Brazil	0055	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brunei	00673	Namibia	00264
Bulgaria	00359	Nepal	00977
Burkina	00226	Netherlands	0031
Burundi	00257	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Cambodia	00855	New Caledonia	00687
Cameroon	00237	New Zealand	0064
Canada	001	Nicaragua	00505
Cape Verde	00238	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
Estonia	00372	Samoa US	00684
Ethiopia	00251	Samoa West	00685
Falkland Islands	00500	San Marino	00378
Faroe Islands	00298	Sao Tome	00239
Fiji	00679	Saudi Arabia	00966
Finland	00358	Scotland (UK)	0044
France	0033	Senegal	00221
French Guiana	00594	Seychelles	00284
French Polynesia	00689	Sierra Leone	00232
Gabon	00241	Singapore	0065
Gambia	00220	Slovakia	00421
Georgia	00995	Slovenia	00386
Germany	0049	Solomon Islands	00677
Ghana	00233	Somalia	00252
Gibraltar	00350	South Africa	0027
Greece	0030	South Korea	0082
Greenland	00299	Spain	0034
Grenada	001473	Sri Lanka	0094
Guadeloupe	00590	Sudan	00249
Guam	001671	Suriname	00597
Guatemala	00502	Swaziland	00268
Guinea	00224	Sweden	0046
Guyana	00592	Switzerland	0041
Haiti	00509	Syria	00963
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Serbia	00381
Honduras	00504	Taiwan	00886
Hong Kong	00852	Tanzania	00255
Hungary	0036	Thailand	0066
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Toga	00228
Iceland	00354	Tonga	00676
India	0091	Tokelau	00690
Indian Ocean	00873	Trinidad	001868
Indonesia	0062	Tunisia	00216
Iran	0098	Turkey	0090
Iraq	00964	Tuvalu	00688
Ireland	00353	Uganda	00256
Italy	0039	Ukraine	00380
Ivory Coast	00225	United Arab Emirates	00976
Jamaica	001876	United Kingdom	0044
Japan	0081	Uruguay	00598
Jordan	00962	USA	001
Kazakhstan	007	Uzbekistan	00998
Kenya	00254	Vanuatu	00678
Kiribati	00686	Venezuela	00582
Kuwait	00965	Vietnam	0084
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Laos	00856	Virgin Islands US	001340
Latvia	00371	Wales (UK)	0044
Lebanon	00961	Yemen	00967
Liberia	00231	Yugoslavia	00381
Libya	00218	Zambia	00260
Lithuania	00370	Zimbabwe	00263

STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



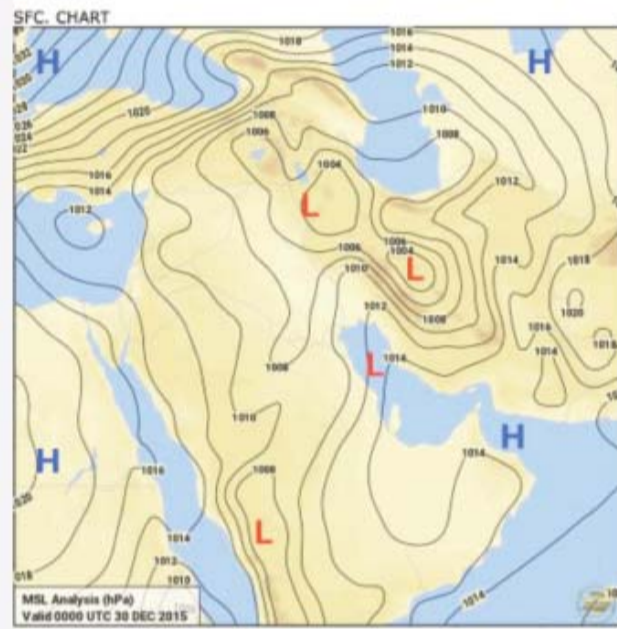
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

Issued 30/12/2015-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 20 °C

By Day : Cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly changing to south westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 45 km/h with a chance for scattered rain that might be thundery at times
By Night : Clouds and chance of rain will decrease gradually with light to moderate south westerly changing to north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 35 km/h with a chance for fog over some areas



Four-Day Forecast

	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
Expected Weather	sunny + scattered clouds later on	Cloudy to partly cloudy + scattered rain	sunny	cool + sunny
Min Temp °C	09	10	06	05
Max Temp °C	19	20	17	15
Wind Direction	north westerly to light variable	south easterly changing to north westerly later on	north westerly	north westerly
Wind Speed km/h	08 - 32	12 - 42	15 - 45	10 - 40

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings

Thunder Rain

Kuwait Forecast

Station	MIN °C	REC	Max °C
KUWAIT CITY	15		19
KUWAIT AIRPORT	12		20
ABDALY	11		19
BUBYAN	14		16
JAHRA	12		19
FAILAKA ISLAND	13		17
SALMIYAH	16		17
AHMADI	15		17
JAL ALIYAH	10		18
QAROH ISLAND	16		20
UMM AL-MARADEM	16		20
NUWAISIB	12		20
WAFRA	12		20
MANAGISH	12		19
SALMY	11		17
MUTRIBA	11		18

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	19
Min Temp (°C)	05
Max Rel Hum (%)	97
Min Rel Hum (%)	33
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	18 SE
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	Plastic Surgeons
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. Mohammed Al-Daary	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	2326920
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

Paediatricians	Endocrinologist
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarouf	25713514
Dr. Pradiip Gajare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam	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

Family Doctor	Psychiatrists	Gynaecologists & Obstetricians
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	

Physiotherapists & VD	Rheumatologists:
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
Consultant Cardiologist	
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	2611555-2622555
MD, PH.D, FACC	
Inaya German Medical Center	
Te: 2575077	
Fax: 25723123	

Rocker Cui Jian says his music hasn't changed but China has

China's godfather of rock Cui Jian says his basic message of personal freedom hasn't changed in his new album, even if the world has. The rocker, who fell out of favor with the government after he sided with demonstrating stu-

dent during the 1989 Tiananmen protests, said the messages in his songs today may not be different "but the way that you understand could be different because of the changes China has gone through. Growing personal wealth among Chinese has created the chance to travel and take control over their private lives, Cui said, a far cry from the tightly controlled society of the 1980s. "They got a chance to make money so this is a big change," he told The Associated Press in an interview Tuesday. At the same time, other things haven't changed, says Cui, wearing a stylish business suit and his trademark white baseball cap adorned with a red star. There are still limits on how freely you can talk, and "you shouldn't say black and white, you could say something gray and then make it safe," he says.

Remain static

Cui's first album in 11 years is called "Frozen Light" and he says he hopes his music will inspire Chinese to think about how some things remain static, then "think about whether you take it or you just try to warm it and change it or break it." The 54-year-old began his musical career with a six-year stint playing trumpet in the Beijing Philharmonic, writing songs and forming a band on the side. He became the symbol of China's embryonic rock scene when he sang his signature tune "Nothing to My Name" at a televised stadium concert in 1986.

That song, in which he sings of desire and dashed hopes, later became the unofficial anthem for student pro-democracy demonstrators. He played on Tiananmen Square just days before the government sent in tanks and troops to crush the protests. Later, Communist authorities refused permission for his concerts in the capital and censored lyrics. In 2005, he was able to headline at a Beijing stadium. In 2006, he performed with the Rolling Stones in Shanghai, singing "Wild Horses" alongside Mick Jagger.

Today, Cui says people view him more as "an old

man" than a rebel, a familiar face on television but no longer influential. "They don't care about someone who is saying some truth, they just care about your age," he says. "They care about whether you say something they like to hear, because they don't have time to think about serious things." "I don't even want people to say I'm the godfather of Chinese rock music. I would like to say I'm the grandson of Chinese rock music," he says. "I want to keep doing something, I don't want to sit there and tell people what you should do. I don't like that." Despite that, Cui says there's greater freedom of expression today and was surprised he'd faced no demands to change the lyrics on "Frozen Light" when he submitted them to authorities, as all artists in China must do. Or perhaps he'd already censored them himself: "The self-censorship is always there."

"Frozen Light" is Cui's first album since 2005, although most of the songs were completed at least five years ago. Cui says he felt the album wasn't ready and, acting as his "own boss," was in no rush. The record was released on Christmas Day in 119 countries, including the U.S. and Japan, according to Cui's manager Yoyo. He'll follow up the release with performances in Beijing and other Chinese cities in the second half of 2016. Some Chinese reviewers have been unimpressed, pointing to simple melodies and lyrics employing hard-to-understand classical riddles.

Dance floor music

"I would say it's more powerful music, and more original even if there is a lot of melody, even if it is rock 'n' roll," says Cui. "In at least two or three songs,

I think I create the groove, which is reggae but it's not like 'on the beach' kind of reggae, not like dance floor music, it's really a heartbeat, with hurt feeling and suffering feeling." The track "Outside Girl" captures those sentiments, he says, with its lyrics about the humiliations migrants from the countryside to the cities must endure, no matter how hard they strive. Appraising China's modern rock scene, Cui says that, unlike well-supported but superficial pop acts, China's most talented rockers exist underground without record contracts or management teams.

"That's why people think they're not successful. But in my eyes they're very, very brave. They're saying something ... They talk about the environment, they talk about pollution, they talk about corruption, everything." Their pop opposites may have music videos, beautiful faces and professional images, but are mere "tools" who don't sing from their souls, says Cui. "They become a soap to wash the people's minds," he says. "I don't believe in that kind of music. But this doesn't mean they're bad, just I'm tired," he says. "The record industry has a lot of dancers. They have a lot of actors and actresses but not too many musicians." Next year he wants to see artists - in music, movies and TV programs - speak out about what they feel. "Don't make it just for money, believe it and then you can see the change," Cui says. — AP



Veteran Chinese rock star Cui Jian gestures while speaking during an interview in Beijing. — AP

dents during the 1989 Tiananmen protests, said the messages in his songs today may not be different "but the way that you understand could be different because of the changes China has gone through.

Growing personal wealth among Chinese has created the chance to travel and take control over



Review

Gerard Depardieu

Charlie Kaufman's 'Anomalisa' will break your heart

In "Anomalisa" everyone looks and sounds the same. They have the same face (Caucasian, bland, nondescript). They have the same voice (Tom Noonan's). They bore our protagonist Michael Stone (voiced by David Thewlis) to death. And this feeling that he's the only individual on the planet among all these clones might be the cause of his unravelling. In this very R-rated stop-motion animated feature, scripted by Charlie Kaufman (writer of "Adaptation" and "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind") and co-directed by Kaufman and Duke Johnson, we spend one day with this sad sack narcissist on an overnight trip to Cincinnati. He's there to give a lecture about his book, "How May I Help You Help Them," a top selling manifesto on the art of customer service. It's successful enough that people in the hotel recognize him immediately.

But he's still sad. He has a stilted conversation with his wife and son who stayed behind in Los Angeles. He calls an ex-girlfriend to see if she'll meet him for a drink. Their breakup was fraught, and so is this encounter. Back in his room, Michael sinks into himself, bereft of an easy hookup. It's just him and his Belvedere martinis with a twist until he hears an alarming sound from the hotel hallway - a voice that's not Tom Noonan's. It's Jennifer Jason Leigh's. Michael bursts out of his room like the owner of this voice is his last chance for survival, frantically knocking on random hotel room doors to find her.

The woman has travelled from Akron, Ohio, (over 200 miles) to hear him speak. She's a big fan, as is her co-worker. And this woman is different in voice and face. Her name is Lisa. She's an anomaly. She's his Anoma-Lisa, he tells her later when things get intimate. Leigh's nuanced vocals bring what could have been a slip of a character to life. It's a stunning, emotionally truthful performance that makes you wish more awards would recognize voice acting. Lisa has the confidence of a middle school girl (read: none). Her levels might even be in the negative numbers. She is sweet and excitable and good-natured, but crippling self-conscious. She second-guesses everything she says. She ends sentences with "shut up Lisa!" She thinks she's ugly, dumb and unsophisticated.

Surprising ways

Actually, Lisa is basically a girl in an adult woman's body. She is gawky and awkward. She stumbles over her own feet and really likes to press the buttons in the elevator. But she still goes back to Michael's room when he asks her to after a few drinks, knowing full well what that means. The story doesn't willfully hide details from the viewer, but it does evolve in surprising ways. Even after two viewings, I can't settle on a single thesis. That's probably what makes it valuable. You can feel for Michael and empathize with his existential solitude, or you can roll your eyes at him.

I did. He's fairly insufferable, and it takes a while to realize that perhaps the problem isn't everyone else - it's him. He's unable to see outside himself and condescends to others with abandon while profiting off of a customer service ideology that he clearly doesn't believe - that everyone deserves to be loved, that everyone is an individual, that a smile costs nothing and can make a person's day. There is little entertainment in watching a narcissist's worldview realized. It's more like heartbreaking dread. The fact that Kaufman (his follow up to "Synecdoche, New York") and Johnson (his first feature) accomplished all of this with puppets is all the more astounding.

"Anomalisa" is an anomaly. It's distinctive, bold, and achingly human. Sometimes art needs to splash us with cold water to give us an experience that is not just passive enjoyment, but active introspection. Don't say we didn't warn you. "Anomalisa," a Paramount Pictures release, is rated R by the Motion Picture Association of America for "strong sexual content, graphic nudity and language." Running time: 90 minutes. Three and a half stars out of four. — AP

Chinese state TV fights for Xi's right to rule via rap

China's state television broadcaster has proved a poor match for rap giants Public Enemy, Snoop Dogg and Tupac, with Internet users on Wednesday slamming a cartoon video it released to get people revved up about government reform. Rapping about the "Central Leading Group for Comprehensively Deepening Reforms" was probably always going to be a challenge. President Xi Jinping gets a starring role in the video, put out by CCTV for the second anniversary of the high-level government committee, which he leads.

Xi repeatedly appears at a podium as it samples his speeches to a decidedly tinny beat, while clip-art mountains and thumbs-up signs pop up PowerPoint-style against a plain blue background. "Let the people's expectations become our actions," Xi declares. "Hold high the sword of fighting corruption." The lyrics of "The Reform Group is Two Years Old" laud its work in areas including the anti-graft drive, pollution, reform of state-owned enterprises, building infrastructure, and even the yuan's entry into the IMF currency basket.

Singer Wu Wenduo-an in-house CCTV music producer who has 29 followers on China's Twitter-like Sina Weibo-raps: "The reform group is two years old; in these two years it's done quite a lot. Flies, tigers and big foxes, caught, caught, caught, caught!" He adds: "Administer the party strictly, govern through rule of law, the nation rejoices in delight!" But online reception was mostly hostile, with commenters condemning the song's self-congratulatory laundry list of accomplishments in the face of unresolved social problems.

"Why is it that I feel news these days only reports the good and none of the bad?" asked one user on China's Twitter-like Weibo platform. Another added: "Smog and hazy weather, ordinary goods' prices doubling, wages stagnating-the people are in dire straits." The song follows other recent attempts at musical messaging by Communist propagandists. China's dry economic planning was given a chirpy theme song complete with psychedelic music video in an animated clip posted by state news agency Xinhua in October.

In that slickly produced three-minute clip, which went viral, four cartoon characters travelled through a mint-green and fuchsia dreamscape atop lily pads, China's Great Wall and a Volkswagen bus, singing in English about the country's 13th Five-Year Plan. Yet only some 800 users had viewed CCTV's rap video on popular platform Sina even three days after its posting. "Bigger off and go do some real work," said one user, addressing the reform group on Weibo. — AFP

Moore 'invades' Europe to teach us all some lessons

Of course Michael Moore exaggerates. Of course he engages in cheerful, unabashed cherry-picking. Of course he sees black and white where most of us see shades of gray. That doesn't necessarily mean he's wrong. It just means he's being Michael Moore - and in his latest documentary, "Where to Invade Next," it's a more impishly entertaining Moore than usual, using comedy and even a bit of fantasy to prove his point. Which is, basically, that Europe has some ideas on how to run a society that Americans should plunder and pillage - er, adopt! - forthwith. But lest that seem an overly harsh indictment of the United States, Moore also seeks to remind us that many of these admirable ideas originated in America in the first place.

A jocular tone is set from the start, when Moore is "summoned" to the Pentagon. In this fantasy, US military leaders beg him for help. "Michael, we don't know what the (expletive) we're doing," they say. "We've lost all the wars since World War II." Can Moore help? Why yes, Moore replies. Yes he can. Here's the plan: Moore himself will "invade" other countries to bring home what's useful. The first "target" is Italy. "Have you ever noticed that Italians all look like they've just had sex?" Moore begins. In his opening camera shot, they sure do.



This image provided by Dog Eat Dog Films shows director Michael Moore in a scene from his documentary, "Where to Invade Next." — AP



Guns N' Roses to reunite for Coachella, Stadium Tour

Original Guns N' Roses band members Axl Rose and Slash will reunite this spring at Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, Billboard confirmed Tuesday. As the duo's first joint stage appearance in over two decades, headlining Coachella will also mark the launch of a possible North American summer tour-tour that may include up to 25 stadiums and an inaugural performance at the upcoming Las Vegas Arena, which is currently under construction. Though the hard rock band concluded its most recent tour last year, Rose was the only original bandmate involved.

The confirmation comes after months of speculation that Rose and Slash would rekindle their legendary partnership for a Guns N' Roses reunion performance (or two). Reunion rumors were recently re-ignited by updates to the

group's website and Facebook page over the holiday as well as the airing of mysterious Guns N' Roses concert footage prior to screenings of "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" over the past week. Having recently hosted Outkast's reunion performance in 2014, Coachella has built a reputation for hosting the anticipated resurgences of once-retired performers. The festival also hosted rapper Tupac Shakur's post-mortem hologram appearance and a reunion for English rock group Pulp in 2012. The Guns N' Roses Coachella reunion has yet to be confirmed by the band and festival representatives. — Reuters



Will Smith

Why 'Concussion' changed Smith's life

When Variety Creative Impact Award honoree Will Smith received the script for "Concussion," producer Ridley Scott told him it was a gift. After reading the script, Smith thought, "This ain't no damn gift!" he recalls. "I'm a football dad. Some of my happiest memories are of watching my son catch and throw a football. I didn't want to be the guy who did a movie saying football could be dangerous." But Smith was taken by writer-director Peter Landesman's script, and agreed to meet with the man he would be portraying, Nigerian pathologist Dr Bennet Omalu. It was Omalu who discovered a link between football players and a brain injury known as CTE, a connection the NFL tried to suppress. In that meeting, Omalu said something to Smith that resonated so deeply, it ended up in the film: that while growing up in Nigeria, America was just a step below heaven; it was the place God sent his favorite people.

"He so deeply believes in American ideals. Even now. And I am deeply and profoundly American. There's no country on earth that would allow me to exist and live the way I exist and live; America is the only country that would produce and support a Will Smith. So when he hit me with that, we really connected." Smith spent hours with his counterpart and even attended autopsies. For Smith the experience was life-changing. "He is such a beautiful man. He is really brilliant, but he is innocent. He literally could not understand why the NFL didn't want to know. As an actor, it was such a beautiful thing to get my head around being that smart and that innocent at the same time." — Reuters

Maternity leave

He zooms in on a working-class Italian couple that seems to truly have it all: good jobs, plenty of leisure time, and the money to enjoy it, thanks to seven weeks of paid vacation, an extra month's pay each year, and oh, two-hour lunch breaks. Maternity leave, you ask? Five months paid. To twist the knife, Moore reminds us there are only two countries in the world that don't have mandated maternity leave: Papua New Guinea, and, yes, the USA.

Next stop: France. "As usual, the French offered little resistance," Moore quips. But soon you won't be laughing at France's expense - not when you see how well they feed their schoolchildren. An average district in Normandy serves four-course lunches with scallops to start, followed by lamb on skewers and a cheese course - cambembert is just one option - before dessert. Moore brings a can of Coke. Nah, the kids say.

On to Finland, where a forward-looking education system sees excessive homework as a hindrance to learning, and even eschews multiple-choice questions. Getting the picture? In Slovenia, which looks here like a fairytale kingdom, university tuition is free - even for Americans, some of whom come over to avoid the burden of student debt back home. Eager to question the country's leadership, Moore doesn't need to barge in unannounced: the president of Slovenia welcomes him into his office. In Germany, Moore marvels at worker benefits, like three weeks at a spa to combat stress.

Criminal justice system

In Portugal, the country's drug czar patiently explains that it's not illegal to carry or use drugs; they've found this approach reduces drug-related crimes. In Iceland, the strong leadership of women - in government and business - is extolled. In Norway, Moore visits a prison where guards don't carry weapons, and inmates live in well-furnished apartments. Shifting tone, Moore conducts a heartbreaking interview with the father of a boy killed in Norway's horrendous 2011 mass shooting.

The father tells Moore he wouldn't change Norway's criminal justice system (maximum sentence 21 years) even to see his son's murderer punished more severely. Near the end, Moore detours to Tunisia, where he finds a young radio journalist wondering eloquently why Americans know so little about others. — AP

For Dr Mazin A Moufarij beauty is in simplicity

By Sahar Moussa

Mazin A Moufarij is a Lebanese doctor who completed his education and specialization in Australia and the USA. He is a specialist in medical aesthetics and anti-ageing medicine, a fellow of the American Board of Aesthetic Medicine and member of the American Academy of Aesthetic Medicine. Although

beauty is in the eye of the beholder, for him, it is subjective and objective. From an anatomical point of view, he thinks beauty is the normalizing of features that are out of balance. The subjective part of beauty is personal and he defines beauty as natural elegance. Smooth transitions in harmony are a key to a natural result, whether in the face, breast or other parts of the body. In an interview with Kuwait Times, Moufarij revealed the secrets of Kuwaiti women and their relationship with beauty.



Plastic surgeon Dr Mazin A Moufarij

Definition of beauty

Kuwait Times: How long have you been in Kuwait?

Dr Mazin A Moufarij: I have been in Kuwait for over a year.

KT: What made you passionate about the beauty of the face and skin?

Moufarij: The importance of the face and the skin is fascinating. It helps bring out the greatest potential of a person. I have witnessed the transformation of many young or older men and women who were once withdrawn and greatly lacking in self-confidence due to severe acne or wrinkles, but once their skin was healed, they were beaming with joy and confidence. Being able to give someone the confidence to shine is what really motivates me on a daily basis. Taking care of our face and skin is also a reflection of our self-worth. I truly believe that each and every one of us has the potential to look good and feel great!

Plastic surgeries obsession

KT: What do you think about Arab women and their obsession with cosmetic and plastic surgeries?

Moufarij: Some women have cosmetic surgery not to impress others - they do it to impress themselves. But unfortunately, young Arab women - some aged 14 - are having cosmetic surgery in the hope of attaining "doll faces" to make them look like the actors they see in Hollywood films and satellite television programs from the West.

KT: How do you define Kuwaiti women when it comes to fashion, beauty and style?

Moufarij: Kuwaiti women are very fashion conscious and stylish. They used to have their clothes customized in Beirut in the early '60s, and would fly to Europe to buy the latest trends. Fashion, beauty and style never stop. The majority of Kuwaiti

Botox, manufactured botulinum, is a toxin that relaxes muscles. It works best on horizontal furrows on the forehead or vertical ones between the eyebrows. We put minute amounts of Botox in the muscles that produce those furrows so they are minimized. If you put too much, the muscles won't work at all and you will have that mask-like effect we often see. Fillers are hyaluronic acid, much like collagen, but synthetically manufactured as it turned out many patients were allergic to collagen. It fills in concavities or fine lines and it works best for laugh lines or marionette lines. You can't have too much injected or it will interfere with your speech - which I have seen in patients who come in trying to have it fixed; there is nothing to do but wait until the effect fades. Both Botox and fillers last around 4 to 8 months - in some cases a bit longer.

KT: How do you approach facial procedures?

Moufarij: I believe the key to a natural face is harmony and

comes to the "average lifespan" of implants, there are no guarantees. Some will last a lifetime, while others have complications within seven years. On average, the majority of implants last 10-20 years without complications. Recent FDA reports indicate that about 20 percent of women will have their breast implants repaired or replaced within 10 years of the original surgery.

Latest technologies

KT: What are the latest technologies when it comes to liposuction?

Moufarij: Liposuction technology has experienced several advances in recent years. These advances have decreased side effects, decreased recovery time and increased visual results. This new technology involves the use of lasers. This technique has come a long way from the original liposuction procedure. The newest liposuction technology eliminates the need for incisions. The process is done entirely with lasers. It shows visible results within days instead of weeks. There is no need for general anesthesia.

KT: What are the latest developments in plastic surgery and what do you expect in the near future?

Moufarij: With new technology, invasive surgery is quickly becoming a thing of the past. The future of cosmetic surgery is not surgery at all, but rather safe, non-invasive, non-surgical treatments. Nonsurgical procedures, notably noninvasive skin tightening and fat reduction technologies, will be improved. The predictable and consistent results they achieve in the future will ultimately reduce the demand for surgical procedures. In particular, the combination of new and improved injectables, utility of stem cells and skin-tightening devices may well spell the end of surgical procedures for facial rejuvenation. In the wake of these advances, interest in and demand for nonsurgical aesthetic services will grow even more rapidly than the current pace.

KT: Plastic and cosmetic surgeries can be addictive - how do you deal with women who are addicted to it?

Moufarij: Plastic and cosmetic surgery can definitely become addictive; it's the job of the plastic surgeon and the patient to make sound decisions together. The only real cure for plastic surgery addiction or obsession is for people to realize that it is not the nose but the look in the eyes, not the appearance but the accomplishments, not the fake but the real that actually makes us all who we are.

KT: What advice do you give to women in order to preserve their beauty?

Moufarij: Every woman desires to stay young and beautiful for a very long period of time, preferably her whole life. My advice to every man and woman is to keep the same weight all the time (don't overeat), use sunscreen all the time, exfoliate your skin regularly, hydrate and moisturize your skin daily, be happy and focus on the bright side, get beauty sleep, feel young at heart, get into the gym and eat healthy.



KT: From a man's point of view, how do you define beauty?

Moufarij: When I was a child, I was told that we are all beautiful. I believed it. I was beautiful. At least, I used to be! Then I learned what "beauty" meant to the world.

Sure, everyone has his own taste, but isn't that the beauty of it all? There is no objective measure of beauty or appearance. There is only preference, and the girls I like may be very different than the girls someone else likes. For me, I like girls who look healthy, happy and confident. The color of their hair, breast size, body shape, well... none of that is too important if they fit that description.

KT: How do you explain the approach of women to plastic surgery nowadays to enhance their beauty?

Moufarij: I find most patients want their appearance to fit how they feel inside. They may feel youthful, energetic and active, but have insecurity due to lower lid bags that make them look tired, or excess skin and loose muscle from childbirth preventing them from wearing the swimsuit or evening gown they desire. I find most my patients are in search of a look that suits that personality and attitude.

women try to keep up with it successfully and moderately.

KT: If you have male patients, what is the percentage of men compared to women? And which procedures do they demand the most?

Moufarij: Men are increasingly undergoing cosmetic surgery to enhance appearance, combat the effects of ageing and improve chances of employment in competitive job markets. I have to admit that men are increasingly coming to my consultation room. The range of treatments is the same as those that we offer to women. Nowadays, the aesthetics of appearance also plays a very important role in the world of men. The times when men were ashamed to come to aesthetic medicine clinics are over.

Common procedures

KT: What are the most common procedures demanded in Kuwait?

Moufarij: For surgical procedures in females, breast enlargement, rhinoplasty (nose job), eyelid surgery and liposuction with fat transfer. For males, it's liposuction and hair transplant. As for non-surgical procedures, definitely Botox and fillers.

symmetry. Essentially, attention will be drawn to your most aged component. Therefore, I always ask my patient to describe their concerns in descending order in front of the mirror. I will then discuss why these components have aged and why they are this way. I then take time to teach my patients why the face ages and which areas are safe candidates for surgical correction. This helps my patients understand why they have the lines or tissue excess and what can be done to correct this. This is very educational in combination with before and after photos to provide a realistic idea of what procedures each patient can benefit from and what the expected end result should be.

KT: Is it true that implants (breast, chin, buttocks, etc) need to be replaced every five years?

Moufarij: A common misconception is that breast, chin or buttocks implants need to be replaced or lifted every few years. This idea keeps many women from getting a procedure they want because they are worried about long-term costs and future surgeries. However, implants last longer than you may think. Which means: There is no reason to plan on having major surgery every few years for the rest of your life! When it



In this photo taken with a mobile phone on Thursday, Dec. 17, 2015, Mamadou Aliou Ba, who dresses as Santa Claus poses for a photograph in front of a supermarket in Dakar, Senegal. — AP photos



People walk past Christmas trees at a shopping mall in Dakar, Senegal.



A young boy has his picture taken with Santa Claus at a Plaza in Dakar, Senegal.

Deck the halls! Muslim Senegal celebrates Christmas

After his morning prayers at the mosque, 25-year-old Mamadou Aliou Ba puts on his Santa suit, the padded belly protruding from his thin, tall frame, and goes to work. He stands proudly, smiling from behind a snowy white mustache and beard that take over his face, waving to families walking by the supermarket in one of Dakar's wealthier neighborhoods. Ba is one of many Pere Noels, or Father Christmases, seen in Senegal's capital this festive season. He, like the majority of Senegalese, is Muslim and yet celebrates Christmas.

"Everyone, Christians and Muslims, celebrate Christmas here," he said, holding up a small bag of candies he gives out as gifts. "I like to do this work," Ba says, adding that he also enjoys the extra money. About 94 percent of Senegal's 14 million people are Muslim, but Christmas is everywhere. Street vendors hawk tinsel garlands, blow-up Santas, Christmas trees and ornaments. Giant candy canes line the path to one mall where a sleigh sits in the tropical heat, and at an amusement park a large Santa Claus statue greets visitors.

Senegalese culture

The prominence of the Christian holiday highlights that Senegal is a bright spot of tolerance and diversity in West Africa where many countries are divided by religion and ethnicity and where the threat of Islamic extremism

is growing. Daouda Sow, 45, a Muslim businessman says he has a Christmas tree at home. "This is the culture in Senegal," he said. "It's very open, and it's different from our neighbors such as Guinea or Mali."

Sow says he has celebrated the holiday since he was a child. "The two religions, we are in it together," he said, using a phrase common in Senegalese culture. "We are invited to celebrate holidays like Easter and Christmas, and we invite Christians to celebrate our holidays with us." Members of the same families may also practice different religions, he said. This year is particularly special because the celebration of Moulid Al-Nabi, the birth of the Prophet Muhammed, is followed just a day later by Christmas, said Bakary Sambe, an assistant professor at Gaston Berger university in St Louis, on Senegal's northern coast.

"The celebrations symbolize the uniqueness of Senegal, where we are a Muslim majority and where we have a special cohabitation between Muslims and Christians," said Sambe, also the head of the Observatory on Religions, Radicalism and Conflict in Africa. In Senegal, most Muslims belong to one of the Sufi brotherhoods, "which interpret Islam according to our social values in a peaceful way, based on education and tolerance. ... We have a critical assimilation of Islamic faith.

Month of celebration

We accept it as a faith, but we try always to harmonize between Islamic and local values," said Sambe. This has been a barrier against the Islamic extremism seen in neighboring countries in West and Central Africa, said Sambe. Worries of extremism have caused Senegalese authorities to propose banning fireworks for New Year's Eve celebrations and some vendors have complained that less tolerance for public gatherings could hurt business. Senegalese of whatever faith get into the Christmas spirit of celebration. "For us, it's a night out!" said Ouli Sanokho, a 23-year-old who works at a call center. "In fact, we celebrate the entire month," quickly adding that alcohol is not imbibed. Ashok Chellani said he is pleased to have a Santa in front of the supermarket he manages. He is Hindu and said he welcomes the month of celebration. "We are in this together," he said, adding that the Santa will be at his shop until Dec 31. "A festival is a festival!" — AP

Mamadou Nguaye, who dresses as Santa Claus waits for a guest to take a picture with at the amusement park Dakar, Senegal.





This Dec 12, 2015 photo shows people walking through a traditional-style covered shopping area known as a shotengai in the Kichijoji neighborhood of Tokyo. — AP photos



This Dec 12, 2015 photo shows steps leading into Inokashira Park in the Kichijoji neighborhood of Tokyo. The park has a pond and small zoo.

Small shops and big park in Tokyo's Kichijoji neighborhood

Visitors looking to spend a few hours away from the tourist attractions of central Tokyo might consider taking the train to Kichijoji. Along with the usual department stores and chain retailers like Uniqlo that cluster around large Tokyo train stations, the neighborhood is home to smaller shopping areas, some uniquely Japanese, and a major park.

The JR Kichijoji train station is west of central Tokyo on the Chuo line, one stop away from the popular Ghibli Museum. The museum is devoted to the work of Studio Ghibli, which is known for animated movies including "My Neighbor Totoro" and the Academy Award-winning "Spirited Away."

As you head from the station toward Inokashira Park, you'll find cute shops with a youthful vibe selling clothes and knick-knacks on side streets. Restaurants offer outdoor seating, which isn't common in Tokyo. You'll actually have to look a bit for Japanese food in this part of the neighborhood, but one good choice is on the left as you head into the park: Toriyoshi, which has an English menu and specializes in yakitori (grilled chicken skewers). Nearby cafes specialize in French toast, waffles or crepes, and French and Italian food. At a Starbucks, locals hang out with their dogs and babies.

A flight of stairs leads down into Inokashira Park, full of big trees around a pond, where you can rent pedal boats and see street performers on weekends in nice weather. The park is also a good spot for viewing cherry blossoms in season.

Follow the bridge over the pond to a small zoo. The first section is mostly birds; it's a bit of a hike to the rest of the zoo, but it's a nice walk. Visitors from places where squirrels roam freely might be surprised to find squirrels living here in a walk-through enclosure. Admission to the zoo is 400 yen for adults (about \$3.35) and a small amusement park area has rides for children.



Photo shows a cluttered storefront in the Kichijoji neighborhood of Tokyo.

For a traditional Japanese shopping experience, on the other side of the station look for tall blue-green metal framework. This is the Sun Road shotengai, a shopping street covered by an arcade. It's like a shopping mall unrolled into one long row but a bit more practical, selling everything from eyeglasses to vegetables. Shotengai are fading in some parts of Tokyo, but this one is modernized and vibrant. You'll find boutiques, discount shops, shoes plain and fancy, books, coffee places, all kinds of clothing, drugstores, and restaurants, with more

Japanese food in this area than other parts of the neighborhood. You can get an English brochure about the broader area at a tiny tourism booth (blink and you'll miss it) on the right.

For a trip back in time to the mid-20th century, don't miss Harmonica Yokocho, a warren of narrow alleys full of tiny bars and restaurants that's liveliest at night but worth a look any time of day. (The grid of alleys is said to resemble the reeds of a harmonica.) To find it, look to your left inside the Sun Road entrance; if you see tiny alleys that you're not sure are public,

that's probably it. You can also access the alleys from the main road, directly across from the station. Some stores here are run by younger people, and boutiques are popping up. But there's also an old, cheap clothing shop and a restaurant with the dust of decades on its plastic curtain and paper lantern. That slightly scruffy atmosphere is part of the area's charm. — AP



Photo shows a storefront in the Kichijoji neighborhood of Tokyo.

Resorts find new way to pamper skiers, steps from the slopes

Ski resorts are upping the ante, finding new ways this season to pamper guests who barely want to leave the slopes. Ski-in, ski-out used to just refer to prime lodgings that didn't require a shuttle - or even a walk - to get to the trails. Today that coveted designation has been expanded to bars and even spa treatments. It's the ultimate in luxury - or laziness. "Resorts want to differentiate themselves from one another," says Jennifer Rudolph, spokeswoman for Colorado Ski Country USA. "It's a stand-out perk that guests both want to try - and appreciate - at the same time."

Helping this movement is the changing geography of resorts. Base areas have been reshaped in the past decade, with trails and lifts realigned to better suit real estate developers and expand the number of ski-in, ski-out properties. Those new properties are leveraging their location as a perk to their rich clientele who have already seen and done everything.

"Magical moments with friends and families are the goal and destinations are doing it up big," says Vicki Varela, managing director of the Utah Office of Tourism. "There are only so many hard assets resorts can upgrade within a property, but experiences create lifetime memories." Here is a look at some of the ski-in, ski-out options available this season.

Spa treatments, Viceroy Snowmass, Colorado

Most spas offer a place to unwind, linger and escape the rush of modern life. At the Viceroy Snowmass, skiers now have another option: two quick treatments designed as a mid-day break

from the rigors of skiing. One treatment focuses on rejuvenating skiers' feet, with a warm bath, exfoliating scrub, cuticle grooming, hot stone massage and ending with a moisturizing cream. The other focuses on warming up hands and feet with coconut oil. Each treatment costs \$95 and is 30 minutes long, just quick enough to get you carving through powder in the afternoon.

They were designed "to give guests an opportunity to warm up, relax and give their feet some relief after being in ski boots," says the Viceroy's general manager Hugh Templeman. "The treatments are perfect for anyone who wants to ski for the entire ski day, but seeks a restorative respite from the elements mid-day." Guests leave on the layers of ski gear, just shedding their boots, coats, hats and gloves.

Drink bar, Waldorf Astoria Park City, Utah

Forget ending your day on the mountain with a cold drink. This season, Apres Ski is going upscale at the Waldorf Astoria Park City. The hotel is partnering with hot drink maker Moët to build a \$20,000 ski-in, ski-out ice bar that includes ice sculptures of penguins (Moët's mascot), igloos and ice seating for guests.

The bar will feature drink flights, bottle service and hand-crafted drink-based cocktails, as well as menu items themed around a raw bar concept such as oysters, caviar and sashimi. Glasses of Moët Ice will be \$19, \$40 for a flight and \$95 for a bottle. Cocktails will be \$12. It will open in time for Sundance Film Festival, which starts Jan. 21 this year, and will remain open until the end of the sea-

son. Park City transforms itself into something very special during Sundance," says the hotel's general manager, Kerry Hing. "People are looking for what is new and creative and where to be seen. This is what we are co-branding with Moët to create."

Pedicures, Park Hyatt Beaver Creek, Colorado

This slope-side resort is pairing drinks with pedicures, an end-of-the-day relaxation routine that can be enjoyed moments after popping out of your skis and leaving them with the valet. (Yes, valets are no longer just for cars.) The two different pedicure options (both 55 minutes, \$90) include a new hot drink for the hotel's newly-expanded bar menu. And, when guests are ready to get back on the mountain, their heated boots are ready for them.

Gourmet hot dog cart, Four Seasons Resort & Residences Jackson Hole, Wyoming

When it snows at Jackson Hole, skiers are hesitant to step off the mountain, even for a minute. But racing down the mountain all day burns a lot of calories. So the Four Seasons Resort & Residences found a solution: a gourmet hot dog cart, steps from the ski area's lifts and gondola. This season's menu includes elk chili, smoked buffalo bratwurst, warm chocolate chip cookies and - since you are on vacation - hot chocolate with or without peppermint schnapps.



In this Nov 30, 2006, file photo, people watch through glass as a killer whale swims by in a display tank at SeaWorld in San Diego. — AP

SeaWorld suing California over ban on orca breeding

SeaWorld filed a lawsuit Tuesday challenging a California commission's ruling that bans the company from breeding captive killer whales at its San Diego park. The suit filed in San Diego County Superior Court says the California Coastal Commission was outside its authority when it made the ruling on breeding in October.

The commission endorsed a \$100 million expansion of the tanks known as "Blue World" that SeaWorld uses to hold orcas, but in a surprising and serious blow to the park, included a ban on breeding at the planned facility and prohibitions on the sale, trade or transfer of the whales. The commission had to approve the project as it does all major building plans in coastal cities, but the park's attorneys argued the agency's authority should have ended with the structure itself.

"This last-minute 'no breeding or transfer' condition is unprecedented," SeaWorld said in the lawsuit, which claims the commission's action is illegal because it has no jurisdiction over the orcas. "The orcas are not, in any way, part of the coastal or marine environment," the lawsuit says. "All of SeaWorld's activities with respect to the care, breeding and transportation of orcas occur onshore in the orca pools and not in the marine environment and are specifically governed by federal law."

Noaki Schwartz, spokeswoman for the Coastal Commission, said the agency could not comment on the particulars of the lawsuit, but the commission said in a statement that it "stands by its decision in October to protect killer whales."

People For the Ethical Treatment of Animals, the main group opposing the project, said in a statement Tuesday that the commission was within its rights and made the correct decision. "It's clear that the company's primary intention in pursuing the Blue World Project was to breed more orcas to confine to tanks," PETA said in a statement.

SeaWorld said in October that it would challenge the decision and that it had hired attorneys to examine it but did not give specifics before filing the lawsuit Tuesday. Last month, the Orlando, Florida-based company said it would end orca shows at the San Diego park after visitors at the tourist attraction made it clear they prefer seeing killer whales act naturally rather than doing tricks. The shows will continue at the company's Orlando and San Antonio parks, which are not affected by the breeding ban. — AP



This undated photo provided by the Four Seasons Resort Jackson Hole in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, shows the Handle Bar, a gourmet food cart steps from the ski area's lifts and gondolas. — AP



US' largest national parks hit visitation records

In this Aug 2, 2015, file photo, tourists Joseph Lin, Ning Chao, center, and Linda Wang, left, pose for a selfie along the south rim at Grand Canyon National Park, Ariz. — AP photos



Nate Powell, an employee with Grand Canyon National Park, collects an entrance fee as traffic is backed up as vehicles arrive at an entrance gate at Grand Canyon National Park, Ariz.

Many of the country's most prominent national parks, including Grand Canyon, Yellowstone and Zion, set visitation records in 2015 and are bracing for what could be an even busier new year. The National Park Service celebrates its 100th birthday in 2016 and has been urging Americans to rediscover the country's scenic wonders or find new parks to visit through marketing campaigns that include giving free passes to every fourth-grader and their families.

So the attendance records could be short-lived, with even bigger crowds expected next year. "Everybody's getting psyched and ready for it," Yellowstone spokeswoman Sandra Snell-Dobert said. "We want people to have a good experience when it comes to our national parks. We're trying to keep that wonderful experience while managing large numbers of people."

Overall visitation to national parks is on track to hit 300 million in 2015, besting last year's all-time high of nearly 293 million. Absent December totals, the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona hit almost 5.3 million visits. Zion in Utah is over 3.5 million. Yellowstone, which stretches into Wyoming, Montana and Idaho, is nearing 4.1 million. Yosemite in California is about 220,000 visits shy of the 1996 record 4.2 million - with November and December still left to count.

Busy summer

The past year has meant some adjusting for parks as they manage the crowds. Yosemite lowered the entrance fees during the late fall and winter partly to encourage visitors to consider times other than the busy summer. Zion extended its shuttle bus service when the parking lots became too full for people to access the canyon. It also brought in interns to help study peak times.

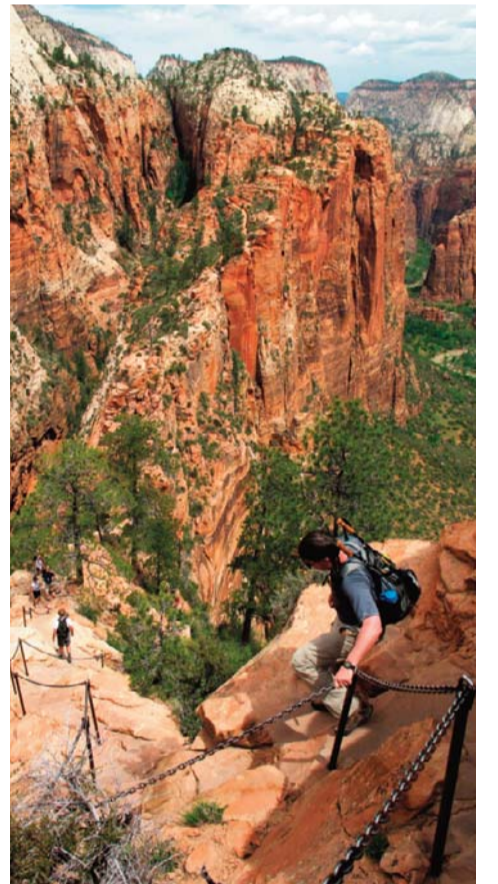
The Grand Canyon opened up its residential and employee entrance at the South Rim to those who already had passes over holiday weekends and plans to do the same in 2016. It has also ramped up hiring for entrance-gate employees but will move them around jobs so they don't get burned out, Grand

Canyon revenue and fee business manager Marlon Avantyr said. "We survived this year pretty much unscathed, just tired, but in a good way," he said. "We have a good plan and a good idea of what to expect, so we're hoping to stay ahead of the curve."

Seasonal employees

More signs around national parks will help direct traffic and officials plan to use social media to help visitors better plan their trips. Park officials say they'll rely more on seasonal workers, interns and volunteers who might suggest less-busy areas to visit or alternate times. The Park Service's fiscal year 2016 budget includes \$8 million for seasonal employees during the centennial, the agency said. Some decisions on crowd-management will be made on the fly, Zion spokeswoman Aly Baltrus said. "We're constantly looking for what's needed," she said. "But at this point we don't have an influx of funds, so we're rearranging things as best as we can."

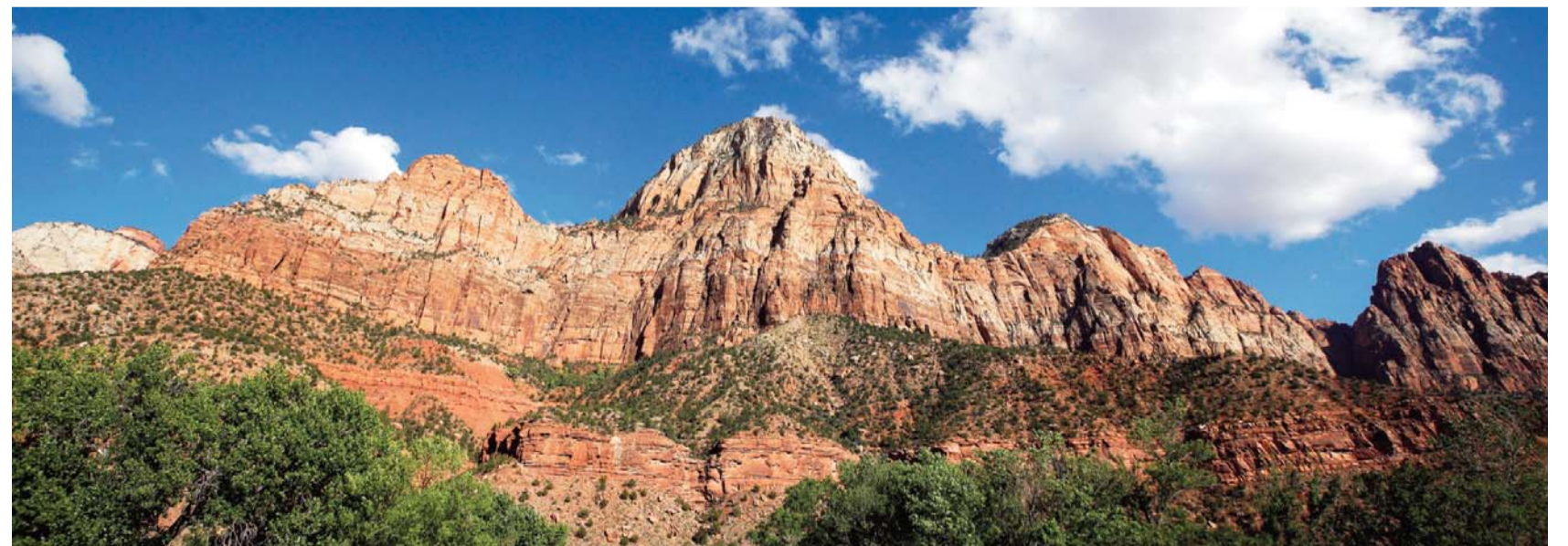
At nearly 2,000 square miles, the Grand Canyon has plenty of room for visitors to branch out for river trips, backcountry hikes and to dozens of lookout points. However, the South Rim remains the most popular tourist spot. Just this year, the park proposed charging at least \$5 for day hikes beyond 5 miles on major trails from the north and south rims to ease congestion. The upcoming year will bring dark skies programs, a Theodore Roosevelt impersonator and historical steam engines to the Grand Canyon. But it won't be all about the Grand Canyon. Workers will be talking up other Arizona parks that don't get as much attention. "Grand Canyon promotes itself," said Vanessa Ceja-Cervantes, the park's centennial community outreach assistant. "We have to do very little to get people to come out to the park." — AP



Hikers climb down the Angels Landing trail in Zion National Park, in Utah.



Hikers look up at a fast moving storm as it makes its way through Zion National Park outside of Springdale, Utah.



Zion National Park, near Springdale, Utah.



Zion National Park is seen near Springdale, Utah.



A view seen on the way to Glacier Point trail in the Yosemite National Park, Calif.



El Capitan in Yosemite National Park, Calif.



Bosnian people dress up in Santa Claus costumes as they travel on a motorbike through the main street in Banja Luka, 240 kms northwest of Sarajevo, Bosnia, yesterday, to mark the upcoming New Year and Orthodox Christmas. — AP

'Un-Islamic' vaping catches fire in Malaysia amid govt backlash



Promoters smoking electronic cigarettes during the Vape Fair in Kuala Lumpur. — AFP photos



Bottles of concentrated flavors displayed at a vape shop in Kuala Lumpur.



A worker inspecting a coil, the metal heating element in an e-cigarette.



Promoters smoking electronic cigarettes during the Vape Fair.

At Malaysian e-cigarette outlet Vape Empire, customers kick back and puff out thick, aromatic clouds of vapor in funky flavors like Horny Mango and Creamy Suckerz' Banana Anna. "Vaping" is soaring in popularity in Malaysia, the largest e-cigarette market in the Asia-Pacific region, but authorities are threatening to ban the habit for health reasons—a move that has sparked anger from growing legions of aficionados. Backing a ban, Malaysian religious leaders this month declared a fatwa on the "un-Islamic" habit, but it remains to be seen whether the decree will dampen enthusiasm.

"The business is growing very fast because there are many people trying to convert from tobacco smoking to vaping," Vape Empire's co-founder Muhammad Sharifuddin Esa said, adding that his business has expanded to 57 locations since it opened just two years ago. The pastime has proved a particular hit in the moderate, Muslim-majority nation, where other vices such as alcohol and drugs are especially frowned upon. Now several Malaysian states say they may impose a ban from January 1 and have threatened to stop issuing new merchants' licenses—a potential blow to a sector worth an estimated 2.8 billion ringgit (\$650 million) last year, according to reports.

Health risks debated

The industry, which is expected to grow by more than 13 percent year-on-year to 2025, is currently unregulated, and many say forbidding e-cigarettes—already outlawed in Thailand and Singapore for health reasons—is a big mistake. "The government must regulate and not ban, because vaping is the future," Sharifuddin said. Research on health risks remains split and like Malaysia, few countries have introduced national legislation to regulate the sector.

The devices function by heating flavored nicotine liquid—or e-juice—into a vapor that is inhaled, much like traditional cigarettes but without the smoke. Some experts warn vaping can produce cancer-causing formaldehyde and one US study said vaping is up to 15 times more harmful than traditional tobacco smoking. The World Health Organization has called on governments to ban the sale of e-cigarettes to minors. But other research suggests vaping is safer than smoking cigarettes and manufacturers tout them as harmless aids to quit tobacco.

Enthusiasts in Malaysia say banning the habit doesn't make economic sense. "Vaping communities are fighting for their rights because the vape scene actually brings profits to the country," said Muhammad Imman, marketing manager of the colorfully named Fcuking Flava vape shop, one of thousands that have popped up across the country.

Marketers cater to local tastes, selling e-juice flavored with snake fruit, lychee and even durian, the notoriously pungent Southeast Asian fruit. The juices are marketed like single-malt whiskies or perfumes, as seen at a recent vaping convention in Kuala Lumpur, their creators extolling organic and other premium ingredients. Aficionados gather daily in Malaysia's vape shops, sometimes for "cloud chasing" competitions to

see who can produce the biggest vapor puffs and to show off vape prowess by blowing rings into the foggy air.

DIY e-juice

Some agree there is a greater need for quality control to keep dodgy DIY e-juice from entering the market and to ensure e-cigarette devices aren't used for smoking drugs like marijuana. A growing number of amateur merchants have emerged across the country, where about a million people smoke e-cigarettes, a five-fold surge since last year, according to the Malaysia E-Vaporizers and Tobacco Alternative Association (MEVTA) activist group. Making e-juice is a simple process that involves mixing readily available ingredients—water, flavoring, nicotine and other easy-to-access chemical compounds.

On a Kuala Lumpur street recently, a vendor set up a table arrayed with a range of flavors, from guava to lychee on sale for about 30 ringgit (\$7). "Mine are the best," he boasted to passing office workers.

But some bottles looked old and reused, and he was tight-lipped on the e-juice's origin. Other more mainstream Malaysian manufacturers have struck deals to distribute their goods elsewhere in Asia and as far afield as Europe, as Malaysian flavors become popular overseas. The habit doesn't appear to be losing steam at home, especially among former smokers. "I actually have reduced the level of nicotine when I vape," said officer worker Nicolas Chan, speaking between puffs on his lunch break. "I feel better and have more energy after quitting cigarettes and starting to vape." — AFP



A worker (right) inspecting a coil, the metal heating element in an e-cigarette that produces vapor from e-juices.



A promoter (center) smoking an electronic cigarette.



Bottles of concentrated flavors displayed at a vape shop.



A worker inspecting a coil, the metal heating element in an e-cigarette that produces vapor from e-juices.

Common terms in the fast-growing vaping subculture

The subculture revolving around the use of e-cigarettes, or "vaping," has grown rapidly in key markets like the United States and Malaysia, replete with a range of unique terms. The following are some commonly used words and phrases in the vaping world.

ADV

"All day vaping"—many like to vape continuously throughout the day and will typically seek a milder flavour of e-juice—the liquid from which inhalable vapour is produced—usually steering away from exotic blends.

Cloud chasing

A competition to see who can produce the largest vapor puffs. Cloud-chasers prefer larger amounts of vapor per drag and blow rings into the air.

Coil

The metal heating element in an e-cigarette that produces vapour from e-juices. Different designs and heating speeds can affect the strength of a drag off an e-cigarette. Coils are usually cleaned every couple of days.

Creamy

Creamy e-juices are more redolent with non-fruit flavours such as peanut, custard, coffee and chocolate.

PG/VG ratio

A measure of the vapor-vs-flavor balance in e-juice. It refers to the ratio of two major ingredients, propylene glycol and vegetable glycerin. More VG produces thicker clouds of vapor, but will dampen the flavor.

Stealth vaping

The opposite of a cloud-chaser—stealth vapers seek smaller volumes of vapor for more discreet vaping in settings such as the office or a restaurant.

Throat hit

Refers to the intensity of a vaping hit. A good throat hit is analogous to that of a strong cigarette and can be affected by nicotine levels.

Vape on

An oft-uttered rallying cry for vaping enthusiasts. — AFP