

SUBSCRIPTION

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Amir says GCC
keen on strategic
partnership
with Britain



Frantic search
for survivors
as Aceh quake
kills nearly 100



Time names
Trump its
2016 'Person
of the Year'



Dortmund come
back from 2-0
down to draw
with Real Madrid



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SAUDI KING SALMAN ARRIVES IN KUWAIT ON HISTORIC VISIT

AMIR VOICES DEEP PLEASURE, HAILS BROTHERLY TIES

JUNAID JAMSHED AMONG 48 DEAD IN PAK AIR CRASH

ABBOTTABAD, Pakistan: A plane belonging to Pakistan's national carrier crashed and burst into flames yesterday with 48 people on board, killing all of them, police and an airline spokesman said. According to senior police officer Khurram Rasheed, the plane crashed in a village in the district of Abbottabad, 75 km northwest of the capital, Islamabad. The small twin-propeller aircraft was travelling from the city of Chitral to Islamabad when it crashed shortly after takeoff.

Among those on board was Junaid Jamshed, a former Pakistani pop star turned evangelical Muslim, according to the Chitral



Junaid Jamshed

airport manager and a local police official. The singer's Twitter account had said he was in Chitral. Jamshed rocketed to fame in Pakistan in the 1980s and 1990s as the singer for the Vital Signs rock group, and later launched a solo career, with a string of chart-topping albums and hits. Jamshed abandoned his singing career in 2001 to join the Tableeghi Jamaat group, which travels across Pakistan and abroad preaching about Islam.

In his last tweet, Jamshed posted pictures of a snow-capped mountain, calling Chitral "Heaven on Earth". Tributes were pouring in on social media for the former lead singer of the country's first major pop band, whose popular "Dil Dil Pakistan" became an unofficial national anthem. "The voice of my youth, the voice of my generation... #JunaidJamshed you will be sorely missed," tweeted user Huma A Shah.

According to Daniyal Gilani, the spokesman for Pakistan International Airlines, the plane had lost touch with the control tower prior to the crash. He said the plane was carrying 42 passengers, five crew members and a ground engineer.

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MANAMA: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (left) shares a light moment with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud at the GCC summit in the Bahraini capital on Tuesday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud will arrive in Kuwait today on an official visit, where he will hold talks with HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In his first official state visit to Kuwait since ascending the throne on Jan 23, 2015, King Salman will focus on reinforcing the strong relations with Kuwait. Kuwait is the final stop on King Salman's Gulf tour, which began in the United Arab Emirates, followed by a visit to Qatar. He then traveled to Bahrain, which hosted this year's Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit that ended yesterday.

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HH Sheikh Sabah yesterday expressed overwhelming pleasure on the visit that portrays the brotherly ties between the two Gulf states. The Amiri Diwan, in a statement, quoted HH the Amir as warmly welcoming the Saudi Monarch and Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman and the officials who would accompany him during the visit to the country, "where they will be guests in their second home, among their families and brothers."

This visit clearly reflects the good and brotherly bonds between the two countries' leaderships and peoples that have stood together in face of hardships and dangers, the Amir stated. He lauded the historic and pivotal role played by the Saudi leadership and people in support of the Kuwaiti cause, namely the flagrant "Saddam aggression" in 1990, alluding to the invasion of the country by forces of the ousted and executed Iraqi ruler Saddam Hussein. He recalled in this context bravery of the Saudi forces that had taken part in the epic liberation of the country.

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The Leadership, Government and People of Kuwait

Extend their warmest welcome to

The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (May God Bless and Protect Him)

On the occasion of his visit to his second homeland, Kuwait.

We are most honored to have His Majesty as our dearest esteemed guest.





MANAMA: British Prime Minister Theresa May (center) poses with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders for a group picture yesterday, during a GCC summit in the Bahraini capital Manama. — AFP

GCC KEEN ON STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH UK: AMIR

GCC - UK MEETING TACKLES NEED TO QUELL REGIONAL UNREST

MANAMA: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday that the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region was keen on bolstering strategic ties and relations with the UK. This statement came during the final session of the 37th GCC Summit held in the Bahraini capital Manama. The event was attended by British Prime Minister Theresa May and GCC leaders.

Delivering a speech to the event, His Highness the Amir thanked the Bahraini monarch King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa and the people of Bahrain for hosting the 37th GCC Summit, saying that this was reflective of the Kingdom's efforts in boosting relations among nations within the regional and international arenas.

The summit was within the efforts to enhance strategic, economic, political, and security cooperation between the UK and the GCC, affirmed His Highness the Amir, adding that history proved that relations between the two sides were built on trust and a strong desire to bring security and stability to the region and the world. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah mentioned that the two sides were coordinating efforts on all levels.

On UK-Kuwaiti relations, His Highness Sheikh Sabah said that his country was proud to have historical ties with Great Britain, affirming that both nations were eager to bolster ties on all levels. The Kuwaiti leader fondly remembered the strong UK stance with his country during the Iraqi invasion in 1990, saying that Britain played a pivotal role in liberating Kuwait from the Iraqi aggressors in 1991. His Highness the Amir concluded his speech by welcoming the British Prime Minister Theresa May to the region, re-affirming that the GCC will seek all venues to boost ties with the UK.

Yemen

A meeting between GCC leaders and the British Prime Minister May has underscored the

urgent need to find a peaceful solution to the conflict in Yemen. A statement issued after the meeting, which occurred on the sidelines of the GCC Summit that concluded yesterday, called for increased support of the United Nations' (UN) Special Envoy for Yemen Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, as he works to establish a roadmap for peace in the war-torn nation.

Moreover, the statement urged Yemen's warring parties to remain committed to the peace process, adding that maximal efforts should be expended to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers in the country.

The statement also ramped up pressure on the international community to exert more efforts to put an end to a conflict that has remained unabated, underscoring the need to abide by the UN resolution 2216, which demands an end to the violence in Yemen.

Addressing the conflict in Syria, the statement underscored the need to ensure a sustained political solution to the conflict, while forming a government that will represent the Syrian people. It also added that the solution should guarantee an immediate end to violence in the country.

On deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Syria, the statement expressed "concern," while condemning any attempts to stall the advent of humanitarian aid into besieged areas. Similarly, on the situation in Iraq, the statement underscored the need of increased support of the Iraqi government in the fight to defeat the So-called Islamic State (IS), which can only be possible with concerted international efforts.

On Libya, the statement urged all sides in the conflict to endorse a plan where authority in the North African nation will be evenly shared, in line with UN resolutions and decisions. Meanwhile, on Lebanon, the statement pressed national institutions to fight all forms of terrorism that threaten the country's peace and security.

Dangerous threats

GCC leaders and the British premier pledged to maintain the mutual obligation to "face dangerous threats caused" by the notorious groups Al-Qaeda and so-called Islamic States as well as their offshoot factions.

The two sides decided to form a joint task team charged with combating terrorism and safeguarding states' border security. They also vowed to work together for tracking down, arresting and prosecuting terrorists, in line with national and international laws. They have decided to boost the action against terrorism funding, enhance intelligence cooperation and swap information on terrorists' whereabouts.

Moreover, the UK and the GCC agreed to bolster joint efforts for cooperation in the defense, cyber and marine security, in addition to organizing mutual training courses and drills. They have also agreed on cooperation for aborting cyber, attacks, hacking and misuse, enhancing military coordination, strengthening defenses of the regional countries, including the marine borders.

Business cooperation

GCC leaders and the British premier also decided to enhance mutual cooperation at the commercial and business levels, according to the official statement released after the meeting. The statement said volume of trade exchanges between the UK and the GCC countries exceeded 30 billion sterling pounds last year. It confirmed that the UK, once it has accomplished the 'Brexit,' it would act as a priority to cement the commercial and economic relations with the GCC states.

The two sides agreed on holding the British-Gulf conference on partnership between the private and public sectors in the first quarter of 2017, in London, "which will focus on the schemes for economic diversification in the GCC countries." — KUNA

AMIR BACK HOME AFTER GCC SUMMIT

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with his official entourage, returned home yesterday from the Kingdom of Bahrain where he headed the State of Kuwait delegation at the GCC 37th summit.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was received at Kuwait International Airport by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, senior sheikhs, Deputy Chief of the National Guards Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, senior State officials, ranking chiefs of the Army, the Police, the National Guards and the fire department.

Delegation

His Highness the Amir was accompanied at the summit by First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Mohammad Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and Finance Minister and Acting Oil Minister Anas Khaled Al-Saleh, Director of His Highness the Amir Bureau Ahmad Fahad Al-Fahad, the Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan, Head of the Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, Head of the Media and Cultural Affairs at the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Fawaz Saud Nasser Saud Al-Sabah, Foreign Minister Assistant for the Minister's Bureau Affairs Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Sabah, senior officials of the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Upon his departure from Bahrain, His Highness the Amir was seen off at the airport by Sheikh Ali Bin Khalifa Bin Salman Al-Khalifa, the Bahraini Deputy Prime

Minister, Sheikh Azzam Mubarak Al-Sabah, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps and the State of Kuwait Ambassador to the Kingdom of Bahrain, and embassy staff.

Gratitude

Separately, His Highness the Amir has cabled Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa expressing deep gratitude on the warm hospitality accorded to him and the State of Kuwait delegation at the 37th GCC Summit, hosted by the Bahraini capital.

His Highness the Amir, in the cable to the Bahraini Monarch, expressed deep satisfaction at the brotherly and blessed meeting that grouped him with the top leaders of the other GCC member states, lauding King Hamad's sagacious and effective management of the 37th session, noting its success and "constructive resolutions that will boost our joint Gulf action."

He also lauded the summit that comprised the GCC leaders with the British Prime Minister Theresa May, which constituted an opportunity to hold discussions and exchange views on various issues of common concern, in shadow of rapid developments on the regional arena. His Highness the Amir expressed good wishes to King Hamad, his country and people.

Understanding

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir has cabled British Prime Minister Theresa May expressing deep satisfaction at the atmosphere of understanding that prevailed at the GCC-UK summit. The GCC-UK summit was an opportunity to discuss various issues of mutual concern between the GCC countries and the United Kingdom, he said, affirming that it would contribute to bolstering the distinctive ties and strategic relationship between them.

His Highness the Amir, moreover, hailed the GCC-UK meeting for touching on the deep-rooted historic ties between the two friendly countries and addressing mutual cooperation in various spheres. He expressed good wishes to Premier May and her nation and hoped the bilateral ties would be further enhanced. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is welcomed by His Highness Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival back to Kuwait. — KUNA

GCC UNDERSCORES CLOSER COOPERATION, INTEGRATION

FINAL COMMUNIQUE STRESSES BOOSTING ECONOMIC, MILITARY COORDINATION

MANAMA: The GCC leaders have stressed the significance of continuously propping up and beefing cooperation and integration among the GCC member states, leading up to the implementation of resolutions targeting full equal treatment among Gulf citizens in view of joint Gulf market fields.

In a final communique issued after their 37th summit in Manama, the GCC leaders said it is imperative to share credit information as per a short-term plan and a comprehensive framework for a Gulf credit facilitation exchange mechanism.

They also agreed to build a GCC payment system, and entrust Gulf central banks to own, run and finance the plan by means of establishing an independent company. They approved an anti-fraud bill as a binding law, according to the concluding statement.

Railway project

They further emphasized that the GCC member states have to commit to implementing a Gulf railway project, sending it to the economic and development committee for setting out a necessary mechanism in this regard.

It is also necessary to further promote and develop cooperation and coordination among the GCC member states in the military field, said the communiqué, while appreciating progress in the domain of mutual defensive cooperation in the face of various challenges and threats.

On terrorism, they reiterated their unshakable position of rejection and condemnation of all forms and manifestations of terrorism, but emphasized that more efforts should be exerted to stop terror-financing sources and to fight attempts to distort the image of Islam.

In this regard, they sharply denounced recent explosions and bombings in Saudi Arabia as heinous crimes that have nothing to do with the tolerant religion of Islam or values and principles of humanity and ethics. They reaffirmed their support to all regional and international efforts to fight the so-called Islamic State (IS) and all other terrorist networks and organizations in Syria, Iraq and other regions.

JASTA condemned

On the recent US Justice Against Sponsors of Terror Act (JASTA), the conferees condemned the law as a breach of the fixed principles of international law, mainly the principle of equality among the states.



MANAMA: A handout picture provided by the Saudi Royal Palace yesterday shows Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) leaders attending a GCC summit in the Bahraini capital Manama. — AFP

national developments.

The hailed the announced strategic partnership between the GCC and UK, which reflected historical distinguished relations between both sides and set out frameworks of bilateral cooperation with a view to reaching closer ties in all fields.

Palestine

On Palestine, the GCC leaders reiterated that total, just and everlasting peace could be reached in the Middle East region only when Israel withdraws from all Arab territories it occupied in 1967. They reaffirmed support to an independent Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital in line with the Arab peace initiative and relevant international legitimacy resolutions, the concluding statement added.

They also voiced support to the French initiative, together with other Arab and international efforts, to find a solution to the Palestinian state and to hold an early Middle East peace conference. The GCC leaders further called on the international community to put more pressure on Israel to end its occupation of all Arab territories, including the Syrian Golan Heights, and appreciated a recent UNESCO resolution recognizing Al-Aqsa Mosque as a purely Islamic site.

Iran

On the Iranian-occupied three islands of the UAE, they reiterated their rejection of the occu-

pation of the three islands, and supported anew the UAE's sovereignty over the islands as an integral part of this GCC member state.

In this regard, they called on Iran to positively respond to UAE efforts to resolve the issue through direct negotiations or the International Court of Justice (ICJ), while denouncing Iran's interference in the internal affairs of the GCC member states and the whole region. They also urged Tehran to revise its policies in the region by means of honoring relevant international conventions and treaties, and stop harboring terrorist groups, including Hezbollah, on its soil.

They emphasized that Iran should abide by its nuclear with the G5+1 in July 2015, urging the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to apply an effective mechanism to verify the agreement is put in place.

Syria

Regarding Syria, the statement reiterated the GCC's unwavering support to maintaining Syria's unity, stability and territorial integrity, while condemning nonstop airstrikes by the aircraft of the Syrian regime and their allies on the Syrian city of Aleppo.

The GCC leaders renewed backing to all efforts exerted by UN Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura to find a political solution to the Syrian crisis, and vowed to continue work to ease out the suffering of the Syrian people.

On Yemen, the conferees reaffirmed full sup-

port to Yemen's unity, sovereignty and independence and rejected any attempt to interfere in its domestic affairs, according to the final communique. They underscored the significance of finding a political solution to the Yemeni crisis in line with the Gulf Initiative and its Executive Mechanism, Output of the Comprehensive National Dialogue, Riyadh Conference and UNSC Resolution 2016.

In this context, they voiced much appreciation to Kuwait for hosting UN-mediated peace negotiations among Yemeni political rivals, which began on April 21st and wound up on August 7th, 2016. But, they condemned the formation of a new government by Yemen's Houthis and former president Ali Abdullah Saleh as a serious blow to ongoing efforts to find a political solution to the Yemeni problem.

Iraq

On Iraq, they renewed keenness on maintaining this Arab country's unity, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity, while vehemently rejecting interference in its internal affairs. They voiced total support to the Iraqi government's efforts to liberate Mosul from the grip of the so-called Islamic State (IS), emphasizing that IS-controlled Iraqi areas should be retaken only by Iraqi army and police forces.

However, they denounced crimes committed against civilians in the liberated areas on a sectarian basis, calling on the Iraqi government to live up to its responsibility by protecting civilians and ensuring a safe return of internally displaced persons. Regarding Libya, the GCC leaders, according to the concluding statement issued after their summit in Manama, reiterated backing to UN efforts to ensure this Arab's security and stability.

Finally, they expressed much thanks and appreciation to Bahraini King Hamad bin Isa and Bahraini government for warm welcome and hospitality during the 37th session of the GCC Summit. They also welcomed His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's invitation for hosting the next 38th session in Kuwait in 2017. His Highness the Amir had stated earlier yesterday that the resolutions of the GCC Summit will help to consolidate the bloc's joint action and aid in realizing the people's expectations for further security and stability. This statement came during His Highness the Amir speech to the closing session of the GCC summit. — KUNA



KUWAIT: A banner bearing pictures of Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is seen above an entrance to the historic Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City yesterday, ahead of the Saudi King's visit to Kuwait. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Workers put up a banner bearing pictures of Kuwait's Amir His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud at the historic Mubarakiya Market in Kuwait City yesterday.

KING SALMAN'S VISIT TO KUWAIT COMES AMID VOLATILE REGIONAL CONDITIONS

OFFICIALS, ACADEMICS EMPHASIZE VISIT'S IMPORTANCE

KUWAIT/Riyadh: Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is set to arrive in Kuwait today on an official visit where he will hold talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The upcoming visit will add another milestone to the strong and historic relations linking the two nations. In his first official state visit to Kuwait since ascending the throne on January 23, 2015,

King Salman will focus on reinforcing the strong relations with the State of Kuwait.

King Salman and His Highness the Amir are expected during their meeting to look into topics of mutual concern and will also touch on issues pertaining to bilateral relations. Regional and international happenings will also be on the radar of the top GCC leaders.

King Salman visited Kuwait on numerous

occasions. In December of 2013, King Salman was in Kuwait as representative of the late King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz Al Saud at the 34th GCC summit. In March of 2014, the Saudi King took part in the 25th Arab summit which was also held in Kuwait. He headed the Saudi delegation to the second donors' conference for Syria held mid-January of 2015.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad also made numerous visits to Saudi Arabia before and since becoming the head of the State of Kuwait. The history of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had been interconnected with leaders exchanging visits since the early 1900s.

In 1910, founder of Saudi Arabia King Abdulaziz bin Abdulrahman Al Saud visited Kuwait in the era of the Amir Sheikh Mubarak Al-Sabah. After the death of King Abdulaziz Al Saud, his son Saud - who was born in Kuwait in 1902 - became King of Saudi Arabia.

King Saud bin Abdulaziz Al Saud is remembered fondly by the people of Kuwait with him being one of the first Arab leaders to visit the country after the independence in 1961. Perhaps the most important gesture of solidarity between the two nations came during the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990. Back then, the late Saudi King Fahad bin Abdulaziz Al Saud stood with Kuwait against the Iraqi aggressors. Saudi troops were among the international coalition which liberated Kuwait in 1991.

Cementing ties

First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said the upcoming visit by King Salman will add to the already firm ground of the bilateral ties. "The visit will be a historic juncture in the relationships between the two countries in all fields which stood the test of time and continue to serve the joint interests, and fend off the common threats and challenges," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in statements yesterday.

"His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is keen on strengthening the relations, whether on the state-to-state or the people-to-people levels, with all GCC member countries, particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kuwaiti-Saudi relations continue to grow thanks to the care and keenness of the leaders of both countries," he pointed out.

"King Salman will be more than welcome to be here as guest of His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people who remember with gratitude the Kingdom's historic stances towards, and strong support to, Kuwait," he went on.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled recalled the "heroic and decisive" help offered by Saudi Arabia to Kuwait in the struggle against the Iraqi invasion in 1990-1991 until the liberation

of Kuwait and restoration of legitimacy.

He reaffirmed Kuwait's desire to continue working with the Kingdom to meet the aspirations of the two peoples, boost cooperation among the Arab and Muslim nations, and contribute to international peace and stability.

Very important

The upcoming visit by King Salman will be very important to coordinate efforts between the two countries, said Kuwaiti Ambassador to Riyadh Sheikh Thamer Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. King Salman's meeting with His Highness the Amir will be of utmost significance, affirming that relations between the two nations went beyond the parameters of diplomatic and political ties, the ambassador said.

the visiting Saudi leader and His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. They noted that the importance of the talks stems from the fact that the Kingdom is the strategic depth of the State of Kuwait.

They expected that the talks could also touch upon the Saudi proposal to develop the Gulf Cooperation Council to a union as to unite Gulf states in the face of impending challenges facing the region. King Salman's visit came at a delicate time for the whole the region, Political Science Professor at Kuwait University (KU) Dr Abdullah Al-Ghanem said, he noted that this was the first visit of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques to Kuwait since he assumed power.

Ghanem indicated that the growing dangers and challenges in the region would fea-



People walk under the flags of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia inside the historic Mubarakiya Market yesterday.



Kuwaiti and Saudi flags decorate a street in Kuwait City yesterday, ahead of the Saudi King's visit to Kuwait.

Saudi Arabia had been standing in solidarity with the State of Kuwait since its independence in 1961, said the Kuwaiti Ambassador who also praised the Saudi strong opposition of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in 1990 and also the Kingdom's participation in the liberation of Kuwait in 1991. Kuwait and Saudi Arabia will continue to cooperate and develop ties in order to achieve the aspirations and dreams of people in both nations, said Sheikh Thamer.

Volatile conditions

In the meantime, Kuwait's governors welcomed King's impending visit to the country, which they said comes amid volatile regional conditions. In separate statements, they hailed the Saudi King's historic visit as a testament to the deep-rooted ties shared by both nations, noting that the visit will be instrumental in further bolstering these ties.

"The Saudi King's visit is historic and unprecedented," Governor of Farwaniya Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah said, adding that the visit will provide both countries with the opportunity to exchange vantage points on issues of mutual concern.

Moreover, Governor of Al-Ahmadi Sheikh Fawaz Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah underscored the amicable ties between Kuwait and Saudi Arabia and how both nations' fates have always been intertwined. "Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have shared unforgettable moments," he said, adding they helped solidify bilateral ties.

Meanwhile, Governor of Hawally Sheikh Ahmad Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah described the Saudi King's visit as "historic," saying that Kuwaitis from all walks of life view this visit as an emblem of special ties between the two Gulf neighbors.

Similarly, Capital Governor Lieutenant General Thabet Al-Muhanna noted that leaders of both nations are expected to discuss a series of pivotal issues, chief amongst them, the mounting threat of terrorism. He also foreboded that this "brotherly visit" will yield fruitful results that will serve the interests of the Gulf region.

Heated topics

Kuwaiti academics stressed the importance of the historic upcoming visit of King Salman to the country. In separate interviews, they pointed out that several key and heated topics would be on the table of discussions between

turture high on the bilateral talks. Topping the list was the terrorism threats, especially from groups such as the so-called Islamic State (IS) and Al-Qaeda, as well as the ongoing war in Yemen and its economic cost and impact on the region's security and stability, he said. He also expected that the two leaders would tackle the declining oil prices and its effects on the budgets of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states.

In this regard, the GCC States were exerting relentless efforts to strike a balance on the oil market by cutting their production to stop the deterioration of oil prices, Ghanem boasted. He pointed out that the developments in crisis-hit regional countries such as Iraq, Syria and Yemen need thorough discussions from both leaders.

On the GCC, he clarified that the GCC was formed during the Iran-Iraq war in early 1980s to cement cooperation during that period and now as the challenges grow, work for the transformation to the union stage became more urgent. He underlined that Saudi Arabia has been Kuwait's main strategist backer in crisis times such as the Iran-Iraq war and the subsequent Iraqi occupation of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, Academic and Political Researcher Dr Ayed Al-Manaa Manaa pointed out that the wisdom of the two leaders and their experience in Arab, regional and international policy will increase the feasibility of the talks, especially as it comes after Manama summit.

Manaa stated that Kuwaiti-Saudi political, economic and cultural relations are deeply-rooted at the government and popular levels. He pointed to the unforgettable supportive stance of Saudi Arabia during the brutal Iraqi invasion in 1990.

On the main dossiers to be opened during the visit, he pointed to bilateral relations, regional security, whether in Iraq, Yemen, Syria and its impact on the region as well as relations with Iran. He underlined the importance of mulling the issue of requirements and steps needed to be taken before moving to the union stage.

Manaa stated that relations with the United States after the election of the President-elect Donald Trump and the recently passed the controversial JASTA law as well as the GCC efforts to diversify income resources and study post-oil stage could be discussed during the coming visit. —KUNA

A HISTORIC VISIT AND CONTINUOUS CONTACTS



Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Kuwait Dr Abdulaziz Al-Fayez issued the following statement on Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz's visit to Kuwait, scheduled for today:

"Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud (May Allah support him) begins an official visit to Kuwait at the invitation of his brother, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah (May Allah protect him). This historic visit is confirmation of the depth and strength of relations between the two leaders, ruling families and peoples. It also reflects the advancement and development of these relations in all fields, and it affirms the unity of goals and destinies."

This visit comes during a delicate period the Gulf region and Arab nations are going through, as they face foreign aggression and interventions that threaten the security and stability of the region. The two countries also face these interventions and threats, as it was evident in the Decisive Storm opera-

tion that halted foreign intervention in Yemen. The Kingdom and Kuwait worked with their wise leaderships in facing the threats and thwart foreign plots aiming to weaken Arabian Gulf countries and control brotherly Arab countries.

As for bilateral relations between the two countries, this historic visit represents an extension of the continuous contacts between the two leaders and a confirmation of the strategic relations between the Kingdom and Kuwait, along with consultations and continued coordination between them at all levels and fields.

The Kingdom and Kuwait are keen on pushing the development of joint Gulf action and reclaim balance in oil prices, and to send the distinguished relations between them to larger horizons in the interest of the two brotherly peoples. These are relations that represent a distinguished model in cooperation and coordination between two brotherly countries that have historic links and long for a bright future."

In Brief

AMIR CONGRATULATES AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a congratulatory cable to newly elected Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — KUNA

AMIR CONGRATULATES GAMBIAN PRESIDENT

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a congratulatory cable to Gambia's newly elected President Adama Barrow. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Gambian president. — KUNA

AMIR OFFERS CONDOLENCES

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to Indonesian President Joko Widodo over the victims of the earthquake in Aceh province. His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to President Joko. — KUNA

Photo

of the day



KUWAIT: People cross a busy road in Kuwait City yesterday. Kuwait City is suffering from a severe shortage in available parking spaces; a problem that peaks during working hours, leaving hundreds of drivers forced to park in illegal spots. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

'KASHTA KHALIJIYA' FORUM CONCLUDES

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: The National Society of Domestic Security (RAWASI) held a concluding ceremony for the third edition of 'Kashta Khalijiya' (Gulf picnic) Forum on Tuesday, which was attended by the representative of the State Ministry for Youth Affairs Mohammed Al-Mutairi on behalf of Sheikha Al-Zain Al-Sabah, and Ali Al-Hadad, Chairman of Rawda and Hawally Co-op Society. Hadad noted that the co-op has set 20 percent of its profits for society services and activities.

Tahani Al-Qalaf, Head of the Media Committee at RAWASI said that the 'Kashta Khalijiya' Forum coincides with the Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (ISESCO) decision to select Kuwait City as the Capital of Islamic Culture for the year 2016. A total of 350 young members from Kuwait and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries par-

ticipated in the forum. "We spent four months preparing this cultural activity. Also, it is amazing that female participation reached over 200, out of all the participants," stressed Qalaf.

The activities included different courses and symposiums. A body language course presented by Hisham Abu Shaira, as well as another course titled 'Turning Point' by Faisal Al-Musawi, which showed that creativity and achieving has no limits, while a planning course was presented by Dr Maher Al-Seif accompanied by a workshop. In addition, Hawra' Dashti presented a course on personal charisma directly communicating with the audience. In the meantime, Abdullah Mahdi presented a course titled 'God's Paradise on Earth'. The forum also had comedy sessions and speeches presented by the GCC participants, followed by an open discussion session. The forum concluded with an award ceremony and dinner.



KUWAIT: Columnist and author Abdullah Abbas Bowair presents a copy of one of his books to Sheikha Fareeha Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at a previous function.

BOWAIR'S LATEST BOOK REVIEWS AMIR'S SPEECHES

KUWAIT: Columnist and author Abdullah Abbas Bowair recently published his 11th book about the speeches of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The book consists of three chapters - the first includes the Amir's famous quotes; the second includes his speeches before the UN General Assembly; and the third includes his speeches since assuming power.

Bowair's first book was titled "Kuwaiti Government Ministers' Interpellations - 1963-2008". It consists of seven chapters. The second book was titled 'Sheikh of Diplomacy' (2009). It is a complete biography of HH Sheikh Sabah, reviewing his early life, studies, family, children, diplomatic career and role in cementing Kuwait's relations with various nations, contributions, awards, the positions he assumed before he became Amir, his interests, benevolence, his role during and after the Iraqi invasion as well as his role in supporting the Iraqi people after its liberation, his initiatives and the international conferences he called for and hosted and his vision to turn Kuwait into a regional financial and commercial hub.

Bowair's third book was titled 'Sabah Al-Khair' (The Benevolent Sabah), which focused on HH the Amir's 61-year-long career and the role he has played in Kuwait's foreign policy and Kuwait's diplomacy. His fourth book, published in 2012, was titled 'HH Sheikh Nasser Al-

Mohammed', while his fifth book, also in 2012, was titled 'HH Sheikh Salem Al-Ali - An Oasis of Liberty'. Bowair's sixth book about Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah was published in 2013. His seventh book about HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-

Sabah was published in 2015. His eighth book on HH the Amir as the Humanitarian Leader was published in 2015. Bowair's ninth book on HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah was published in 2015, while his tenth book was on Sheikha Fareeha Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, also in 2015.



KUWAIT: The Albanian Ambassador to Kuwait Saimir Bala hosted a reception recently to celebrate his country's national day. Senior officials, diplomats and other dignitaries attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



The book's cover.



DOHA: The winner of the international Quran memorization contest in Qatar Khaled Jassem Al-Aynati (right) receives his award. — KUNA

KUWAITI WINS PRESTIGIOUS QURAN MEMORIZATION CONTEST IN QATAR

DOHA: Kuwaiti national Khaled Jassem Al-Aynati won Tuesday the world's highest-value and prestigious Quran memorization and recitation prize. "I am very proud of winning this international competition," Aynati said on the sidelines of the prize-giving ceremony held today evening in Doha.

He gifted his achievement to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah,

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwaiti government and people for their unlimited support and care for Quran students and reciters. He commended the competition jury and the peer high-level competitors.

Al-Aynati ranked first at the 'Winner of Winners' Quran competition which was organized by Sheikh Jassem bin Mohammad bin Thani Foundation for

the Holy Quran during the period November 27 and December 6.

Thirty-seven winners of Quran competitions worldwide have participated in the contest. The winner, Aynati, has been awarded a high-value one million Qatari riyals (\$274,000) prize. This contest considered the most prominent event in the Doha cultural scene as it features the broadest categories and highest rewards. — KUNA

21 ELECTION PETITIONS FILED, MORE EXPECTED

NEW MPS PRESS FOR LIFTING OF SPORT SUSPENSION

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Former MPs and candidates who failed to win seats in the national assembly election last month yesterday filed 15 petitions challenging the election results raising the number of petitions received so far by the constitutional court to 21.

The court, whose rulings are final, has only one more day on next Sunday to receive more petitions and then the door for petitions will be shut. Yesterday's petitions included challenges from four former MPs Youssef Al-Zalzalah, Ahmad Al-Azmi, Mohammad Al-Barrak and Hamad Matar. Most of the petitions called for recounts of votes.

The difference between those who got the last two or three seats in each constituency and those who came in the 11th, 12th or even 13th place is sometimes a few dozen votes. The constitutional court will study each

petition separately before deciding whether they are credible enough to be investigated. It may take the court several months to issue its rulings.

Sport crisis

In another development, new opposition MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain said yesterday that he and MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei have prepared an initiative to resolve the sport crisis and help end the international suspension of Kuwait.

He said that the initiative has already been signed by 27 lawmakers and essentially calls on the government to pledge to amend the sports law passed by the previous assembly in June within three months for the international sports organizations to end the freeze. He called on other MPs to sign the initiative before it will be published today ahead of submitting it to the new government after its formation.

Babtain said the lawmakers will assist the government in amending the law within the stipulated period in order to help end the suspension on the local sports bodies. He said that disputes in the sports field has continued for the past 10 years and it is time to tell them "hands off" Kuwaiti sports and let us work to resolve the crisis.

But another opposition MP Riyadh Al-Sane said that Kuwait does not need to pledge to amend its legislation because the country was suspended in 2010 before the specific legislation was issued. He said he believes that the suspension is not related to domestic legislation or the independence of the sports movement but due to the scrapping of financial and administrative supervision. Adasani stressed that the Kuwaiti sports has been badly harmed by continued political disputes and Kuwait and its sportsmen became the victims.

DNA law

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said he has prepared a draft law calling for the abolishing of the controversial laws of DNA testing and a law that bars people convicted of religious crimes or insulting the Amir from running in the polls. Kandari said the proposal will be submitted after the first session, adding that he will review most bills passed by the previous national assembly to see how they should be rectified.

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Sabaei said yesterday that he and MP Mubarak Al-Hajraf yesterday met with MP Hamad Al-Harashani, who will chair the first session on Sunday, and agreed that voting for the speaker and deputy speaker will be through the ballot and not through the electronic system. Other election will be made through the electronic system.

MP Majid Al-Mutairi (left) speaks with MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei during a gathering at the diwaniya of MP Mohammad Al-Mutair on Tuesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyar



KUWAIT: MP Majid Al-Mutairi (left) speaks with MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei during a gathering at the diwaniya of MP Mohammad Al-Mutair on Tuesday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyar

POULTRY BANNED FROM CROATIA, INDIA, AUSTRIA

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for

Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) issued a temporary ban on importing poultry

including chicks and eggs from Croatia, India and Austria on detecting the H5N8 virus. The decision came in compliance with OIE and GCC safety and quarantine procedures, said informed sources, noting that all infected shipments will be rejected and importers will have to re-export them at their own expense.

Low temperature

Meteorologist Essa Ramadan said that the temperature is expected to drop to 2-4 degrees Celsius in desert areas over the next three days in Kuwait, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Qatar and western UAE.

Case adjourned

The court of appeals yesterday adjourned a case until December 22, in which 70 citizens and nine former MPs face charges of breaking into the parliament.

JAIL SENTENCE FOR USING DISABLED PARKING STARTING FROM JANUARY 1

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Director of the public authority for disabled affairs Dr Shafiq Al-Awadhi said that in collaboration with the interior ministry, article 63 of law 8/2010 pertaining the rights of the disabled will be strictly enforced effective January 1, 2017. Awadhi explained that the article states that "Those using disabled parking spaces will be punished by a maximum of one month imprisonment and/or a KD 200 fine". Awadhi urged all disabled people to immediately renew their cards and make sure the ones they have are valid in order to avoid problems with the traffic police.

In related news, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday that four expatriate drivers were deported for driving without a license, after they were caught during crackdowns carried out by the traffic department. The campaigns took place from November 27 to December 3, resulting in issuing 33,012 traffic tickets, 885 vehicles were impounded and 53 persons were jailed for committing grave violations.



commerce and industry and the industries union to select 13 companies to be included on the list. The selected companies will be given certain privileges including assessing their need for labor to get one worker per 5 sq m of the total area of the rented premises, with a maximum of 200 workers per license.

'ENSURING FINANCIAL STABILITY ESSENTIAL IN TURBULENT TIMES'

ABU DHABI: Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel stressed yesterday the importance of ensuring financial stability in turbulent times. Maintaining stability in money world is attained through shedding light on two effective factors; the tech-driven revolution, which has brought its own set of risks and rewards, and the wide range of measures that have been introduced to strengthen the resilience of the banking systems, Hashel said.

He made his remarks in his speech at the 12th High Level Meeting for the Middle East and North Africa region on latest updates on banking supervision, financial stability institute, and the Arab monetary fund, which kicked off earlier in the Emirati capital. "Tech-driven innovations have

unleashed drastic changes in the way we conduct business, interact with each other, or consume various products and services," Hashel said, adding that financial sector is experiencing a major transformation, fueled by advances in technology.

"Technology is supporting the outreach of formal financial services to the millions of otherwise unbanked customers. According to World Bank, the poorest 20 percent of the world population is more likely to have access to a mobile phone than to clean water and sanitation," he said.

Hashel also noted that a number of countries have managed to swiftly expand access to finance in recent years, adding that the number of adults in the world who were previously out of formal financial system has dropped by 20

percent during 2011-14 alone. "As these encouraging trends suggest, digitalization to the millions of people have remained financially excluded so far," he said.

Hashel also noted that programming breakthroughs such as "blockchain" are potentially transforming the way the world verify transactions and enforce contracts, adding that by allowing parties to transact without central intermediaries, blockchain can strip off costs, reduce inefficiencies, and enhance customer service.

"Host of other innovations are reshaping the way we transfer money or obtain credit. For instance, mobile wallets are enabling payments by smart phones, peer-to-peer lending is providing new sources of financing, and robo-advisors are offering financial advice," he said. — KUNA



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Tel.: 25326285 – 66966927



News

in brief

VERBAL FIRING ILLEGAL

KUWAIT: An employer or company has no right to verbally terminate any employee for any reason, Acting Director of the Public Authority for Manpower Abdullah Al-Mutawtah said. The labor law in the private sector stipulates that termination should be done through an official letter signed by the employer and has a specified date, while an employee is given the legal 90 days' termination period, he explained. "Verbal termination is a violation to the labor law, and such practice is subject to punishment according to the law," he explained. — Al-Anbaa

Natural reserves

KUWAIT: Kuwait plans to carry out the 'largest environmental rehabilitation project in the world' by creating five major natural reserves over a total area of 1,600 square kilometers, said a source at the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources. The \$470 million project is expected to finish in 2022, he added. — Al-Anbaa

Education's budget

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Education is requesting a KD 1.6 billion budget to cover its expenses for the 2017/2018 fiscal year, Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs Yousef Al-Najjar said. The budget was recently prepared and submitted to the Finance Ministry for approval, he added. — Al-Rai

Genetic records

KUWAIT: Kuwait is studying a project to collect genome data for Kuwaiti citizens in order to create a genetic record for each individual that can be used to prevent genetic diseases and help cut spending on medicine, said Dr Laila Bastaki, Head of the Kuwait Medical Genetics Center. The project can be applied on all Kuwaitis or certain families, she added. — Al-Rai

Environmental reports

KUWAIT: The Environment Public Authority (EPA) made a request to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to compel companies working in Kuwait to present periodic environmental monitoring reports for developmental and industrial projects, sources said. This condition should also cover projects that require environmental and social impact studies before being executed, they added. — Al-Qabas



Al-Anbaa

STAFF OF MOSES

By Saad Al-Mo'tesh

I enjoy the speeches given by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and like to quote him because the wisdom and lessons that he shares are like roadmaps not only to the cabinet members, but also to ordinary citizens. "It is impossible to please all people," His Highness once said to newly appointed cabinet members. He suggested that everyone must adapt to this concept in all areas of life. These wise words can apply to our children when it is hard to agree with them.

The same applies to ministers who are about to be selected for the upcoming cabinet. They should not surrender to illogical demands of lawmakers who only

aim at pleasing their voters by pressuring ministers to unethically appoint some of them in certain positions. This will create an obstacle for competent citizens who have any parliamentary or tribal support and are capable of achieving prosperity for Kuwait if each MP gives in to his voters' wishes.

The solution is His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah has the Staff of Moses which will help him accomplish our wishes. However,

you have to consider that leading Moses' Staff was more than just making rivers split and driving a herd of sheep.

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Esra Al-Habib attends the Fikra event.



Group picture for the sponsors of Fikra Program.

GULF BANK GOLD SPONSOR OF 2ND FIKRA PROGRAM TRANSFORMING IDEAS INTO BUSINESS PROJECTS

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced its gold sponsorship of Fikra Program in a press conference held to launch the second edition of this program that empowers a new generation of entrepreneurs to develop successful businesses. The press conference, which was organized by Cubicle Services, took place on Tuesday 6 December 2016, at Al-Hamra Tower-Exhibition Hall, in Kuwait City.

Having strategically partnered with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, Fikra Program organizers along with the sponsors confirmed that the deadline for entrepreneurs to submit their projects and ideas is January 1 2017.

Abdulrahman Al-Fawaz, CEO of Cubicle Services addressed the business incubators by explaining that Fikra Program for business development is being launched in its

second edition after accomplishing a great success last year. Fawaz said: "The program seeks to encourage young Kuwaitis to turn their business ideas from mere thoughts into business plans and implementations, by applying the highest standards of development and training before presenting their projects to potential investors."

"Fikra Program embodies the spirit of cooperation between all institutions involved in the youth and SMEs whether these institutions are from the private or public sector. The incubators' business activities are part of an ecosystem where sponsors of Fikra Program are playing a pivotal role in contributing to the promotion and development of SMEs."

Esra Al-Habib, Gulf Bank's External Communications Manager also made a statement highlighting the importance of

supporting young entrepreneurs and said: "Gulf Bank is proud to be the gold sponsor of Fikra Program in its second edition and we are pleased to incorporate it as part of our social responsibility plan. In fact, Gulf Bank is strongly committed to giving back to Kuwait as it supports numerous events and initiatives focusing on youth, education, health and fitness, helping the underprivileged, women's empowerment, as well as promoting Kuwait's heritage and culture."

Habib added: "We believe in the high potential of the youth in Kuwait, we are fond of supporting their innovative ideas and projects. We are here to sponsor Fikra Program in order to contribute in turning youth's dreams into reality which will eventually create new employment opportunities, and enhance our economy by diversifying it."

The main goal of Fikra Program is to empower a new generation of entrepreneurs to develop successful businesses and advance the local Kuwaiti market. It is an intensive entrepreneurship training that provides aspiring entrepreneurs with the technical skills and business knowledge needed to launch their own businesses such as leadership skills, comprehensive business plan, investment opportunities and others. The first edition of the program resulted in establishing 33 percent of businesses, while 44 percent are still in the negotiation phase with investors.

For more information on Gulf Bank, please visit one of Gulf Bank's 56 branches, call the Customer Contact Center on 1805805, log on to www.e-gulfbank.com, Gulf Bank's bilingual website, or visit its social media channels.

KIB SPONSORS JOB FAIR AT COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AT KUWAIT UNIVERSITY

KUWAIT: Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently participated in sponsoring the Annual Job Fair at the College of Business Administration at Kuwait University. The sponsorship came in line with the Bank's efforts to support young national talents, particularly fresh graduates, and provide them with promising career opportunities.

"KIB's participation in this job fair stems from our strong belief in the ability of youth to succeed, innovate and create across all sectors - but especially in the realm of business which remains one of the main pillars of our country's economy," said Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB.

He further added: "These kinds of events are a great opportunity for us to meet with new graduates and to engage with them in an open conversation. It also allows us to introduce these young talents to the many different career opportunities that KIB has to offer, which are tailored to meet their personal and professional aspirations. This all comes in line with our recruitment strategies which focus on attracting the best talents and investing heavily in our human resources."

KIB is always keen on participating in different career and student fairs, as well as other youth-focused events. This comes in line with the Bank's strategic and comprehensive social responsibility program which focuses largely on supporting young national talents, especially fresh graduates, and promoting their future development.



AHLI UNITED BANK PROVIDES VALUABLE JOB OPPORTUNITIES AT COLLEGE JOB FAIR

KUWAIT: In line with its long-term strategy to support young talent in Kuwait, Ahli United Bank is participating in Kuwait University's Business Administration College Job Fair, which commenced Sunday 4, December 2016 at the university campus in Shuaikha.

Through this participation, the Bank seeks to connect with students and graduates of different business majors with the aim of attracting and recruiting young talent, especially Kuwaiti nationals, by discussing internship opportunities across the Bank's departments with them.

Naqeeb Amin, Ahli United Bank's Human Resources Manager underlined the Bank's firm belief in the younger generation of new students, saying:

"Today's youth has great potential with innovative ideas to help any company to grow faster and better compete in a global environment". Amin added: "Kuwait University is a prestigious institution producing thousands of young national and non-national graduates every year. Having a variety of talent and capabilities, we are delighted to support their ambitions and help them attain their career objectives in the banking sector by offering them promising job and/or internship opportunities at AUB".

Ahli United Bank has participated in several job fairs organized by many private and public universities in Kuwait in line with their growing role in the country's economic welfare,

which is to provide job opportunities for young ambitious Kuwaitis, urging them to join the private sector. This enables the youth to contribute to the growth and development taking place in the country, particularly the banking sector.

Kuwait University's Business Administration College Job Fair will welcome students and graduates every day, from 8 am to 3 pm, until the 8th of December, 2016. For more information on AUB's wide range of products and services, please visit any of the Bank's branches, call Hayakum telebanking service on 1812000, or log on the bank's website www.ahlounited.com.kw to find out more about its latest activities.

International

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2016

POLITICAL LIMBO: WHAT NEXT FOR RENZI, ITALY?



Afghan woman goes from refugee to military pilot

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ACEH PROVINCE: The body of a young earthquake victim is carried in Pidie Jaya. — AFP

POWERFUL QUAKE KILLS 97 IN INDONESIA

RESCUERS BEGIN MASSIVE SCRABBLE FOR SURVIVORS

MEUREUDU: A strong earthquake rocked Indonesia's Aceh province early yesterday, killing nearly 100 people and sparking a frantic rescue effort in the rubble of dozens of collapsed and damaged buildings. Maj Gen Tatang Sulaiman, chief of the army in Aceh province, said at least 97 died while four people were pulled from the rubble alive. Another four or five are known to be buried, but he didn't say if they were dead or alive. The Indonesian government declared a two-week emergency period in Aceh.

The rescue effort involving thousands of search officials, villagers, soldiers and police is concentrated on Meureudu, a severely affected town in Pidie Jaya district near the epicenter. Excavators were trying to remove debris from shop houses and other buildings where people were believed buried. TV footage showed rescuers in orange uniforms shining flashlights into the interiors of broken buildings as they searched for signs of life.

The province's disaster mitigation agency said more than 600 people were injured. The national disaster agency said some 245 buildings were seriously damaged or destroyed, mostly in Pidie Jaya, including 14 mosques. The rest were mainly dwellings and shop houses. Roads also cracked and power poles toppled over.

The US Geological Survey said the 6.5-magnitude earthquake struck at 5:03 am and was centered about 19 kilometers southeast of Sigli, a town near the northern tip of Aceh, at a depth of 17 kilometers. The agency had initially placed the epicenter undersea. It did not generate a tsunami. For Acehnese, the quake was a terrifying reminder of their region's vulnerability to natural disasters. More than 100,000 died in Aceh after a Dec 26, 2004, earthquake triggered a devastating tsunami.

Memories of '04

"It was very bad, the tremors felt even stronger than the 2004 earthquake," said Musman Aziz, a Meureudu resident. "I was so scared the tsunami was coming." Aiyub Abbas, the chief of Pidie Jaya district, said there was urgent need for emergency supplies and excavation equipment to move

heavy debris. Footage showed rescue personnel taking bodies in black bags away from the rubble.

Muhammad Reza Faisal, director of the general hospital in Pidie Jaya, said the facility was overwhelmed with the numbers of injured and many people were being treated in tents pitched on its grounds. He said five of the quake victims died at the hospital. In the capital, Jakarta, President Joko "Jokowi" Widodo said he had ordered all government agencies to take part in the rescue efforts for Aceh, a conservative province that has considerable autonomy from the central government under a peace deal with separatists. Indonesian Red Cross deployed emergency response teams and advertised bank accounts for donations. Its head of disaster management, Arifin Hadi, said five water trucks have been sent into the quake area. Aid, including hygiene kits, tarpaulins, jerry cans, blankets and family assistance kits, is being distributed, with more to be sent from Jakarta, he said. The International Organization for Migration said it sent an assessment team to Aceh.

Seaside resident Fitri Abidin in Pidie Jaya said she fled with her husband and wailing children to a nearby hill after the quake jolted the family awake. They stayed there for several hours until authorities reassured them there was no tsunami risk. "It terrified me."

I was having difficulty breathing or walking," Abidin said. She said her husband grabbed hold of her and carried her out of the house. The family's house didn't collapse but the homes of some neighbors did and Abidin is afraid three friends were buried in the rubble.

In Pidie Jaya's neighboring district of Bireuen, a teacher at an Islamic school died after being hit by falling debris, said health worker Achmad Taufiq. The world's largest archipelago, Indonesia is prone to earthquakes due to its location on the Pacific "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin. The 2004 quake and tsunami killed a total of 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Aceh.— AP

MERKEL PARTY WANTS BAN ON MUSLIM FULL-FACE VEIL

ESSEN: Chancellor Angela Merkel's party yesterday toughened its stance on immigration and integration, demanding that dual nationality be scrapped for German-born children of foreigners and calling for a partial ban on the Muslim full-face veil. The hardline measures set the party on a collision course with its junior coalition partner Social Democrats (SPD) ahead of elections next year, and underlined the challenges faced by Merkel to rein in the more conservative wing of her party.

Merkel herself had on Tuesday voiced her backing for a prohibition against the niqab or burqa "wherever it is legally possible," before the leadership of her Christian Democratic Union (CDU) voted on the issue yesterday.

The party has also proposed to ease the deportation process for rejected asylum-seekers. But some in her party sought to go further, with the youth wing defying the leadership and winning a vote for a dual nationality rule to be reversed.

Allowing dual nationality was a key demand of the SPD during negotiations with Merkel's conservatives after the last elections in 2013 that resulted in a hard-fought deal on teaming up in a left-right government.

The move mainly affects Turkish migrants, many of whom had come to Germany in the 1960s and 1970s to work but have stayed on and started families here. Before 2014, their children had to give up either their parents' citizenship or their German one by the age of 23. European Union citizens are already permitted to hold both German

citizenship and that of their country of origin. Interior Minister Thomas de Maiziere warned during a heated debate on the dual nationality motion that it would be wrong to tear up a compromise with its governing partner. "We don't want to reverse that," he said, adding that it was also a blow for children of foreign origin at a time when the country is struggling with integration issues.

No other party would back such a motion, warned de Maiziere, whose separate proposal for jihadists to be stripped of their German nationalities was also approved by the congress. But party delegates voted narrowly, with 319 votes in favor and 300 against, to scrap the compromise. The decision quickly drew a rebuke from the SPD, with Justice Minister Heiko Maas saying that reversing the rule "would be a step backwards for integration".

SPD vice-chair Aydan Ozoguz accused the CDU of attacking "an important integration success". Given the lack of backing for it from other parties, the measure is unlikely to be ever implemented. Likewise, the call for a partial ban on the burqa is unlikely to become law as it would run into a constitutional legal tangle. But they send a potent signal ahead of the general elections expected next September as the party seeks to win back supporters clawed away by the populist and anti-migrant AfD.

In that spirit, the CDU on Wednesday also called for migrants who are due to be deported to be taken into custody a few weeks before their departure rather than a few days ahead. — AFP



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ISRAEL SET FOR VOTE TO ADVANCE BILL LEGALIZING SETTLER HOMES

Jerusalem: Israeli lawmakers could vote yesterday to advance a bill legalizing some 4,000 settler homes in the occupied West Bank despite international criticism and warnings over its implications. The bill was set for a first reading in the Knesset, or parliament, and if approved would require two more full votes before becoming law.

A vote was expected yesterday, though last-minute negotiations could still cause it to be delayed. The bill was given preliminary approval in parliament on Monday, with some of its backers calling it a step towards eventual annexation of most of the West Bank. Some 400,000 Israeli settlers currently live in the West Bank, excluding annexed east Jerusalem, along with 2.6 million Palestinians.

The United States, UN officials and the European Union have warned that

continued settlement building is eating away at the possibility of a two-state solution to the conflict. All Israeli settlements are viewed as illegal under international law and major stumbling blocks to peace efforts as they are built on land the Palestinians see as part of their future state.

Israel differentiates between those it has authorized and those it has not. The bill would legalize nearly 4,000 settler homes built on private Palestinian land. Key figures in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, considered the most right-wing in Israeli history, openly oppose a Palestinian state. Education Minister Naftali Bennett, the bill's main backer, has advocated annexing most of the West Bank, like other Israeli religious nationalists who point to the Jewish connection to the land from biblical times.

Netanyahu says he still supports a two-state solution to the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but is nonetheless supporting the bill.

It has advanced despite concerns from Israeli Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit, who has said he will not be able to defend it before the courts and warned that it would violate both Israeli and international law.

'Profoundly damaging'

US State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Tuesday: "We hope that it does not become law. Enacting this law would be profoundly damaging to the prospects for a two-state solution. We've also been troubled by comments that we've heard by some political figures in Israel that this would be the first step in annexing parts of the West Bank."

Walid Assaf, the Palestinian minister responsible for monitoring Israeli settlements, has called the bill "the most dangerous law issued by Israel since 1967." Israeli occupied the West Bank in the Six-Day War of 1967 and subsequently annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. But while comments by Bennett and others have sparked international condemnation, polls have shown that a significant percentage of Israelis support annexation.

A recent poll by the Israel Democracy Institute think tank says 44 percent of Jewish Israelis support annexing all of the West Bank, while 38 percent are opposed.

According to settlement watchdog Peace Now, the bill would legalize some 3,881 housing units. Most of the homes

are in Israeli-approved settlements but were built on Palestinian land. Around 750 are located in outposts which Israel has not yet approved, Peace Now says. US Secretary of State John Kerry has said there are currently around 100 wildcat outposts in the West Bank and the bill would give retrospective Israeli approval to 54 of them.

An agreement to remove one wildcat outpost from the bill has allowed the legislation to move forward. The outpost known as Amona, home to around 40 families, is under a court order to be evacuated by December 25 since it was built on Palestinian land. Some members of Netanyahu's coalition said they could not support the bill if Amona remained part of it because of the court ruling against it. A solution is still being sought for Amona settlers. —AFP

AS SYRIAN TROOPS GAIN GROUND, ALEPO REBELS PROPOSE TRUCE

FATE OF THE CITY BE NEGOTIATED

Beirut: Staring a punishing and brutal defeat in the face, several Syrian rebel factions yesterday proposed a five-day cease-fire in the eastern part of the city of Aleppo so the wounded, sick and other civilians can be evacuated. The proposal came as Syrian government troops and allied militiamen declared they have seized control of three-quarters of the enclave that the opposition controlled since 2012.

The cease-fire proposal was signed by the Aleppo command center, apparently a reference to the collection of factions fighting inside the eastern enclave. A rebel

Sergey Lavrov were meeting for talks on Syria in Germany.

Widening control

Earlier yesterday, Syrian government troops and allied militiamen seized more ground in Aleppo's ancient quarters, further widening their control over an enclave in the divided city, Syria's state media and an opposition monitoring group said. With the latest gains, the endgame for Aleppo, which has been carved up between the government and the rebel side for the past four years, appears to draw even closer. If Aleppo - the country's

previously come under rebel fire. No injuries were reported.

It was the second such Israeli strike into Syria recently, according to the Syrian government, following two missiles fired from Lebanon's airspace toward the outskirts of Damascus last week. But yesterday's attack is believed to be the first from Israel into the vicinity of Damascus in years. Israel is widely believed to have carried out a number of airstrikes in Syria in the past few years that have targeted advanced weapons systems, including Russian-made anti-aircraft missiles and Iranian-made missiles.

offensive. The offensive was preceded by an intensive bombing campaign that knocked out medical facilities and left the civilian population reeling from the violence. According to the Observatory, 369 civilians, including 45 children, were killed in eastern Aleppo since Nov. 15. The Observatory said 92 civilians, including 34 children, were killed in the government-controlled western Aleppo that came under rebel fire.

Gaining ground

SANA said Syrian forces yesterday established control over two districts north of the Aleppo Citadel in the heart of the city - the Aghour and Bab Al-Hadid neighborhoods - after rebels abandoned positions and retreated further south. The new gains have choked the rebels, forcing them to pull back to other parts of the Old City, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

A map provided by the Syria army showed a quickly shrinking opposition enclave - a pointed leaf-shaped territory in the center, abutting already government-controlled Aleppo districts. In a statement, the Observatory said dozens of bodies littered streets stretching from al-Shaar to the southern part of eastern Aleppo, including the Old City, as a result of ongoing intense government bombardment.

Capt Abdel-Salam Abdel-Razek of the rebel Nou el-Din el-Zinki faction - one of the largest operating inside Aleppo - said the cease-fire proposal was driven by humanitarian concerns because of the rising death toll and intensive destruction. He said currently there was no talk of rebels leaving the city.

The proposal calls for the immediate evacuation of 500 seriously wounded and for allowing civilians wishing to leave to head to northern rural Aleppo, where there is almost no government presence. It also calls for negotiations over the future of the city of Aleppo once the humanitarian crisis eases. Abdel-Razek said this humanitarian pause is to be monitored by the United Nations. Wissam Zarqa, an English teacher in eastern Aleppo and an outspoken government opponent, said the rebel retreat from large parts of Old Aleppo was "concerning." "We are exhausted. There is a lot of death and unprecedented destruction," he said. —AP

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Also yesterday, the state SANA news agency said that Israel

launched several surface-to-surface missiles that hit near a military airport west of Damascus, triggering a fire. Israel had no immediate comment. SANA said the missiles fell within the perimeter of the Mezzeh military airport, the main air base in the Damascus area. It lies on the western edge of the capital and had

been believed to be destined for the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah militant group, a close ally of the Syrian government and a fierce enemy of Israel. Rebel defenses in eastern Aleppo have collapsed rapidly in the face of a massive government assault backed by Russia and thousands of Iranian-backed Shiite fighters.

On Tuesday, Syrian government forces captured Aleppo's centrally located al-Shaar neighborhood, securing about 45 square kilometers (17 square miles) of the besieged enclave less than two weeks after launching their ground

offensive. The arms are believed to be destined for the Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah militant group, a close ally of the Syrian government and a fierce enemy of Israel. Rebel defenses in eastern Aleppo have collapsed rapidly in the face of a massive government assault backed by Russia and thousands of Iranian-backed Shiite fighters.

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ALEPO: Syrian residents fleeing the violence in the eastern rebel-held parts of Aleppo evacuate from their neighborhoods through the Bab Al-Hadid district after it was seized by the government forces. —AFP

spokesman said Al-Qaeda-linked group Fatah Al-Sham Front, which has a limited presence in the enclave, will abide by the proposal. The offer made no mention of a rebel pullout from Aleppo, though the proposal said the fate of the city is to be negotiated after the humanitarian crisis eases.

The Syrian government and its ally Russia had previously rejected a cease-fire for the war-torn city, keeping up the military offensive that has forced rebel retreats and massive displacement of Aleppo civilians. Yesterday, US Secretary State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister

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GHANA VOTES IN ELECTION AMID ECONOMIC SLUMP

Accra: Ghanaians voted yesterday in tight presidential and parliamentary polls that are seen as a litmus test of stability for Africa's most secure democracy as it wrestles with a stumbling economy and corruption scandals. Once praised by US President Barack Obama for its peaceful transfers of power, Ghana has come under fire amid reports of voter intimidation and questions over the independence of its election agency.

Charismatic President John Mahama is running for reelection against veteran politician Nana Akufo-Addo, who has chipped away at the popularity of the ruling National Democratic Congress (NDC) party by criticizing the country's sluggish growth and high-profile corruption scandals. There are some 15 million registered voters in this West African country, and polling stations opened at 0700 GMT.

The winner will serve a four-year term in a formerly booming country that has seen its economy slow, currency deteriorate and inflation soar. An exporter of gold, cocoa and oil, Ghana was once hailed as a regional growth model but has now taken on too much debt, and in 2015 had to go to the International Monetary Fund for a bailout.

Mahama 'has done well for us'

"We are facing a lot of problems economically, everything is messy," Julie Amofah, 26, who voted in Kibi, a town 80 kilometers from the capital, Accra. "I voted for change so we can move for-

ward." Shadrack Opoku, an 18-year-old high school student, said Akufo-Addo of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) is the "right person for our country" who can secure future growth.

"When we complete university, we want better jobs," Opoku said. "Right now it's not good." There are seven candidates battling for the top job and if the smaller parties perform well and deny either man a majority, a run-off will be held later this month. Mahama, 58, is seeking a second term, with Akufo-Addo, 72, making his third and likely final bid for the highest office.

In the final days of the campaign, Mahama flexed his significant resources to reach as many battleground regions as possible where he inaugurated blockbuster infrastructure projects, including railways and airports. "Mahama has done well for us," said Abdulla Alhassan, a 40-year-old driver in the northern town of Bole, a government stronghold. In contrast, Akufo-Addo has blasted Ghana's poor economic growth which stood at 3.3 percent in 2016 — the slowest rate in two decades and has outlined detailed plans to get the economy back on track.

He has also lambasted Mahama's government over a series of corruption scandals in which scores of judges have been implicated. Critics say he squandered the country's commodity wealth and turned a blind eye to graft within his inner circle. During his tenure, the Bank of Ghana controversially bought half a million dollars worth of

gold Swiss watches for some of its staff. Akufo-Addo has also alleged that the ruling party is fomenting violence, a claim Mahama denies.

Tight race

But ahead of the vote, tensions were building. Police said an NPP supporter was beaten to death and six others were critically wounded during clashes on Monday between supporters of the two main parties following a rally in the north. Elections in Ghana are famously close fought, with Mahama narrowly winning in 2012 with 50.7 percent. But polls in Africa this year have been a mixed bag of surprising triumphs and sobering failures for democracy.

In Gambia, a dictator of 22 years conceded defeat, while in oil-rich Gabon the Bongo family continued its 50-year reign after a disputed election. But Ghana is still seen as an example of peace and stability in West Africa. Pollsters are divided in a country whose democratic credentials have come under scrutiny after criticism of its electoral commission following the 2012 elections. Following the last elections in 2012, Akufo-Addo who polled 47.7 percent of the vote-contested the results in Ghana's constitutional court, although he was ultimately unsuccessful. Akufo-Addo, who said previously that he would accept the results even if he loses, added recently: "Those are hurdles we have to jump once we get there." —AFP



MOSUL: Yousef Odey, 10, who was wounded in the eye by Islamic State militants, is treated by doctors at a clinic in Zahra district. —AFP

IRAQI FORCES BATTLE DEEP INSIDE MOSUL

Bartalla: Iraqi forces battled jihadists deep inside Mosul yesterday, edging closer to the River Tigris that divides the city and looking for a breakthrough in the seven-week-old offensive. The fighting to retake the Islamic State (IS) group's last major stronghold in Iraq has prompted a steady trickle of people to leave their homes, many taking refuge in camps where nighttime temperatures have dipped below freezing. The 9th Armoured Division said it had retaken Al-Salam hospital in a push on Tuesday, the farthest the army has penetrated into east Mosul since the start of a broad offensive launched on October 17.

"We advanced in Al-Salam district but the situation is difficult, there is heavy fighting," Brigadier General Shaker Kadhem told AFP. "We took control of Al-Salam hospital, which was a command centre for Daesh," he said, using an Arabic acronym for IS. The five-storey building towers above the neighborhood and the jihadists had been using the upper floors and roof as sniper positions for some time, Mosul residents said.

The elite Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) has spearheaded the drive into Mosul in the past month, retaking several neighborhoods in the east of the city. The army also punched into Mosul in November but its progress has been slower and Iraqi forces barely control half of the eastern side of the city.

Hospital standoff

Kadhem said the goal of the latest push was to meet up with CTS forces on the banks of the Tigris in the southeast of the city. A senior CTS officer said the fighting in Al-Salam was fierce and the army had asked for backup. "The 9th Division's situation is difficult and they have called for support. We are sending a regiment there," the officer told AFP on condition of anonymity. "They are surrounded now in Al-Salam hospital... we are on the way so we can open a passage for them."

The IS-affiliated Amaq news agency said the jihadists had carried out five suicide car bomb attacks in the area during the past 24 hours. It said the army was holed up in the hospital compound and had suffered heavy losses. Iraqi officers did not

provide any casualty toll for the latest fighting. The Joint Operations Command supervising the fight against IS said CTS forces had retaken the eastern Mosul neighborhood of Iltan yesterday. Officers and analysts had expected the eastern side of Mosul to offer less resistance but the going has been tough and Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi's promise to retake Mosul by year's end has looked increasingly in question.

Hashid Al-Shaabi (Popular Mobilization) paramilitary forces have retaken significant ground in recent weeks on a western front targeting the town of Tal Afar, which lies on the road linking Mosul to Syria.

Water crisis

Forces on the southern and northern fronts made quick early gains when Iraq launched its largest military operation in years but progress has been slow in recent days. One of the main factors hampering Iraqi forces in Mosul is the continued presence of hundreds of thousands of civilians, who either want to stay in their homes or are prevented from leaving by IS.

The United Nations yesterday put the overall number of people displaced by the offensive at more than 82,000. That is still less than half the figure the UN expected before the operation was launched. It its latest situation report, the UN spoke of spiraling civilian casualties as Iraqi forces went

house to house in east Mosul, attempting to battle jihadists and protect civilians at the same time. "Partners are rushing to bring trauma care closer to the front lines to give injured civilians the best chance of survival," the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said. It said work was also under way to repair water and electricity infrastructure in east Mosul, where it described the current water shortage as "critical".

Hundreds of thousands of people in Mosul have gone days without drinking water and have had to boil water from boreholes to survive. The conditions for those massing in the camps on the city's outskirts were hardly better, with the onset of winter bringing freezing temperatures at night. —AFP

MORE THAN 30 MISSING IN YEMEN SHIPWRECK

Aden: More than 30 people were missing off the Yemeni island of Socotra yesterday after a cargo vessel carrying islanders home from the mainland sank in the Indian Ocean, authorities said. At least 26 passengers were rescued from the water after a major search operation in the early hours, President Abdurabbo Mansour Hadi said in a statement on the official sabanew.net website.

The ship sank northwest of Socotra — around 350 kilometers from Yemen's south coast — which has been hit by rare tropical cyclones in recent months. Hadi called for "doubling efforts to broaden rescue operations to reduce the scope of the catastrophe that has struck the inhabitants of Socotra." Officials declined to say if inclement weather was behind the disaster but Yemeni Fisheries Minister Fahd Kavleen earlier told reporters that the vessel had "an accident."

"Sixty people, including women and children, were aboard the vessel, which was also carrying small fishing boats," he said. The government said United Arab Emirates jets were assisting search and rescue operations alongside Yemeni coastguards as well as two ships from Australia and Austria. It did not specify whether those vessels were merchant ships or part of an international flotilla that has been fighting piracy off the nearby Somali coast.

Although long ruled from Yemen, Socotra lies closer to the coast of Africa than it does to the Arabian Peninsula. It sits at the exit of a busy shipping lane from the Suez Canal and the Red Sea into the Indian Ocean. For years it was prey to piracy from the lawless Somali coast and it is one of the most heavily patrolled maritime areas on Earth. —AFP



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POLITICAL LIMBO: WHAT NEXT FOR RENZI, ITALY?

ROME: The final countdown to the end of Matteo Renzi's time in charge of Italy was under way Wednesday amid frenzied negotiations over what comes next for a country in political limbo. Ironically, Renzi's rule was set to come to an end with his govern-

ment winning a vote of confidence in the Senate, the parliamentary chamber he tried to emasculate via a referendum in which he suffered a crushing defeat on Sunday. The confidence vote was expected as a means of curtailing prolonged discussion

on the approval of Italy's 2017 budget—an unfinished task which prompted President Sergio Mattarella to ask Renzi to delay his departure for a few days. Meanwhile, two major questions were exercising Italians over their morning cappuccinos: Will

there be early elections? And what is to become of Renzi? Renzi's destiny looked set to be clearer after a meeting of the executive of his Democratic Party (PD) yesterday. Renzi remains the leader of the centre-left party but it is beset by internal divisions that were painfully exposed by the referendum battle. As PD secretary general, Renzi controls the party apparatus, which he used to stage the coup that deposed his successor, Enrico Letta, in February 2014.

Push for early election

Analysts see the party machinations playing out in one of two ways. Either enough of Renzi's erstwhile allies decide he is damaged goods and he is toppled. Or he survives as leader and reasserts his authority as a precursor to staging a comeback bid at the next elections. An election must be held by February 2018 but opposition parties are clamouring for it to be held up to a year early, saying the referendum was effectively a vote of no confidence in the centre-left coalition.

"Either we have immediate elections or we take to the

streets," Matteo Salvini, leader of the far-right Northern League, warned yesterday. "We cannot make a mockery of the 32 million people who voted on Sunday." After the budget deliberations are completed, Renzi will go back to see the president and formally complete the resignation process.

This could happen later Wednesday or be delayed until Friday, Thursday being a public holiday in Italy. Renzi is reported to favor a February 2017 election, calculating that the PD remains well-placed to emerge with the largest share of the vote, despite the upward trend in backing for the populist Five Star Movement.

Recipe for paralysis

Led by comedian Beppe Grillo, Five Star is skilled at pitching an eclectic message to all shades of opinion—from libertarian leftists and ultra-environmentalists to anti-euro and anti-immigration eurosceptics. The last year has seen Five Star emerge decisively as Italy's biggest opposition force, largely at the expense of 80-year-old Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia, with around 30 percent of voters likely to back the movement. —AFP



ROME: A view of the Italian Senate in Rome yesterday during a confidence vote on the 2017 budget law. —AP

TIME NAMES TRUMP ITS 'PERSON OF THE YEAR'

'PRESIDENT OF THE DIVIDED STATES OF AMERICA'

NEW YORK: Time magazine yesterday named Donald Trump its "Person of the Year" for 2016 for his stunning upset election victory that rewrote the rules of politics, delivering him to the helm of a divided America. The president-elect dialed into NBC television's Today show, welcoming the accolade as a "very, very great honor," denying he was responsible for divisions and praising outgoing Democratic President Barack Obama.

The real estate tycoon, who has never previously held elected office and shocked the political establishment by defeating his Democratic rival Hillary Clinton, is featured on Time's cover described as "Donald Trump: President of the Divided States of America." The magazine said its person of the year, a tradition that began in 1927, "had the greatest influence, for better or worse, on the events of the year."

"So which is it this year: better or worse?" editor-in-chief Nancy Gibbs wrote. "The challenge for Donald Trump is how profoundly the country disagrees about the answer." She said 2016 had been the year of his rise and 2017 would be the year of his rule, after he is sworn into office on January 20. "Like all newly elected leaders, he has a chance to fulfill promises and defy expectations," said Gibbs.

Trump won the title, she added, for "reminding America that demagoguery feeds on despair and that truth is only as powerful as the trust in those who speak it, for empowering a hidden electorate by mainstreaming its furies and live-streaming its fears, and for framing tomorrow's political culture by demolishing yesterday's." In the past Time has showed its editorial teeth by naming sinister figures Adolf Hitler in 1938 and Joseph Stalin both in 1939 and 1942.

The president-elect told NBC's Today show that he thought the sub-heading on the front cover about a divided America was "snarky" and denied that it was his fault. "I'm not president yet so I didn't do anything to divide," he said, despite having inflamed the country by campaign rhetoric disparaging women, illegal immigrants and Muslims among others.

Takes Obama's advice
For years he criticized Obama and was instrumental in the so-called "birther" movement that questioned whether the first black president was born in the United States. "I will say this: I've now gotten to know President Obama, I really like him," Trump told NBC on Wednesday. "I can't speak for him, but we have a really good chemistry together. We

talked," he said. "He loves the country, he wants to do right by the country and for the country and I will tell you, we obviously very much disagree on certain policies and certain things, but I really like him," he added. The billionaire even said that he discussed some of his possible appointments with the outgoing Democratic president. "I take his recommendations very seriously and there are some people that I will be appointing and in one case have appointed where he thought very highly of that person," Trump said.

Clinton, the former secretary of state who became the closest in history to becoming America's first female commander in chief, was named the runner-up, with computer hackers in third place. The former first lady won the popular vote with around 2.7 million more votes than Trump, but the Republican won the crucial Electoral College by 306 to 232. Trump campaigned hard on a promise of bringing back jobs with the old manufacturing heartland hard hit by companies fleeing overseas and taking jobs to cheaper labor markets in China or Mexico.

Trump told Time in an interview that he asked Apple CEO Tim Cook to build in the United States "a great plant, your biggest and your best, even if it's only a foot by a foot bigger than some place in China." He also addressed representing working class Americans despite his lavish wealth, living in a luxurious Manhattan penthouse. "I'm sitting in an apartment the likes of which nobody's ever seen. And yet I represent the workers of the world. And they love me and I love them," he told the magazine. "I think people aspire to do things. And they aspire to watch people. I don't think they want to see the president carrying his luggage out of Air Force One. And that's pretty much the way it is," he said. —AFP



This photo obtained courtesy of TIME shows US President-elect Donald Trump as Person of the Year cover. —AP

PARIS CHOKING UNDER WORST WINTER POLLUTION IN DECADE

PARIS: Paris choked yesterday under its worst winter pollution in a decade, with commuters enjoying free public transport and half of the cars ordered off the road in an effort clear the air. The surge in pollution has been driven by cold weather and near windless conditions that have trapped car exhaust, wood smoke and other pollutants, said the French capital's Airparif air monitoring service.

Though bad by local standards, current levels of fine airborne particles known as PM10 in Paris are around 60 percent of levels in notoriously polluted Beijing and a fraction of readings in New Delhi, known as one of the world's most polluted capitals. City authorities announced a second day of traffic restrictions, with a ban imposed on private cars with registration plates ending in even numbers from between 5:30 am (0430 GMT) and midnight.

They imposed the same restriction on cars with odd-numbered plates on Tuesday. Public transport in the city was also free for a second day running to encourage commuters to leave their vehicles at home, while school children are being prevented from exercising outside. "This is a record period

(of pollution) for the last 10 years," Karine Leger of Airparif told AFP by telephone.

For more than a week now, Airparif has published readings of PM10 at more than 80 microgrammes per cubic meter of air particles, triggering the pollution alert. It recorded the highest level of pollution last Thursday, reporting 146 microgrammes/m³. Other parts of France were also facing pollution alerts, with the air particle concentrations rising to dangerous levels in the southeast and the north of the country. The central city of Lyon was suffering as pollution gathered in the Rhone Valley, also affecting the Alpine towns of Chambery and Annecy.

Fines for motorists

The environmentalist candidate in next year's presidential election, Yannick Jadot, said that politicians needed to target the most polluting vehicles and restrict the use of diesel engines. "We have politicians who tell us they are looking after our health," Jadot said. "The reality is that when they have to choose between traffic, diesel and our health, unfortunately they don't choose our health."

This is only the fourth time Paris has

resorted to traffic restrictions to cope with air pollution. The region's officials took similar measures in 1997, 2014 and 2015. But a parliamentary report has questioned the efficacy of the restrictions, arguing that they do not target the most polluting vehicles. Despite the measures on Tuesday, officials reported heavy traffic jams in and around the city in the morning and evening rush hours.

Traffic police were kept busy trying to enforce the anti-pollution measures, fining more than 1,700 motorists for violations. Paris police chief Michel Cadot warned the traffic restriction might be kept in place for a third day. He called on commuters to limit their car use or organize car sharing to minimize traffic pollution. Adding to the region's problems, the Paris rail link to its main airport, Charles de Gaulle, has been out of action since Tuesday morning after an accident brought down power lines, forcing more people to take to the road. State rail company SNCF said Wednesday they hoped to reopen the line by 1500 GMT. The air particles being measured can cause and exacerbate a range of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses. —AFP



NEW YORK: KT McFarland, Deputy National Security Adviser for President-elect Donald Trump, right, watches as Michael Flynn, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee for National Security adviser, center, takes a selfie with Sukhwinder Sangha of Vancouver, Canada, left, at Trump Tower. —AP

WORRY AS TRUMP SECURITY CHIEF FUELS CONSPIRACIES

WASHINGTON: On issues of national security and intelligence, no one is likely to have more influence in Donald Trump's White House than retired Gen Michael T Flynn. Yet Flynn, Trump's incoming national security adviser, has gained prominence in Republican politics by fueling conspiracy theories and Islamophobic rhetoric that critics warn could create serious distractions—or alienate allies and embolden enemies—if it continues.

"His job is to ensure that the White House is focused at all times on all of the threats that the United States faces abroad," said Julianne Smith, a former deputy national security adviser to Vice President Joe Biden. She said she was "deeply troubled" by a Flynn tendency to promote fake news stories on his Twitter feed. "You don't want to have a distracted national security adviser," said Smith, who now directs the strategy and statecraft program at the Center for a New American Security.

She was among several national security experts who raised concerns Tuesday about Flynn's willingness to share bad intelligence on a social media feed as he prepares to move to the West Wing. Flynn served until 2014 as the head of US military intelligence. Although he left that job over disputes with the Obama administration over policy and his management of the Defense Intelligence Agency, he is widely regarded as a top intelligence officer, a job that requires an understanding of the power of disinformation.

Fake news

The issue of sharing fake news was highlighted when Flynn's son, Michael G. Flynn, tweeted about the false idea that prompted a shooting at a Washington pizza parlor. He had been promoting a conspiracy theory that Hillary Clinton's allies had been operating a secret pedophilia ring in the restaurant and noted it would remain a story until "proven to be false." Vice President-elect Mike Pence acknowledged Tuesday that the younger Flynn was helping his father with scheduling and administrative items during the presidential transition but told CNN "that's no longer the case."

Asked repeatedly whether a security clearance was requested, Pence refused to answer directly. "Whatever the appropriate paperwork was to assist him in that regard, Jake, I'm sure was taking place," he said. Trump's team did not clarify whether Michael Flynn Jr.'s departure from Trump's transition team was related to the tweets. Less than a week before the election, the elder Flynn tweeted a link to a story that falsely claimed Clinton emails contained proof of money laundering and sex crimes with children, among other illegal activities. The incoming national security adviser called the baseless story a "must read" and instructed his followers: "U decide."

Flynn also promoted conspiracy theorists, some of them white supremacists, throughout the campaign even as he emerged as Trump's highest profile national security adviser. He encouraged his followers to read a book by Mike Cernovich, whose website has suggested Clinton's campaign chairman was part of a "sex cult with connections to human trafficking." Flynn also tagged white nationalist Jared Wyand, whose website is popular with "alt-right" followers.

Flynn's appointment is not subject to Senate confirmation. Rep Adam Schiff, the top Democrat on the House intelligence committee, said Tuesday that Flynn's willingness to promote fake news "raises profound questions about his suitability for this important position." Trump's team did not respond to questions about Flynn's social media activity. Pence praised Flynn more broadly on Tuesday, even as he distanced the incoming administration from Flynn's son.

Wealth of experience

"We are so grateful and honored to have Gen Flynn as our nominee for national security adviser. He brings an extraordinary wealth of experience," Pence said. The role of national security adviser has varied by administration, but usually centers on coordinating the policy positions of the secretaries of state and defense, the attorney general and other members of a president's team.

It is an especially important position because of the national security adviser's access to the president in the West Wing of the White House. Flynn's office will be steps away from the Oval Office, proximity that allows him to act as a gatekeeper on a wide range of issues, including matters of war and peace as well as diplomacy and intelligence.

He is expected to have more direct access to the president than national security officials in the Cabinet. Aside from attending Trump's daily intelligence briefings and senior staff meetings, Flynn will also oversee the National Security Council, a White House department that has grown to about 400 people involved in making policy recommendations.

Flynn, who turns 58 in December, served for more than three decades in the Army. "If the national security adviser is going to be the direct conduit between the president and the national security world, of course it's a concern that that adviser is being taken in by conspiracy theories and fake news," said Tom Nichols, a professor at the US Naval War College in Newport, Rhode Island, where Flynn obtained a master's in national security and strategic studies in 2001. Whoever has the president's ear on international affairs, Nichols said, should have "a firm grip on what's true and what's false." —AP

INDIAN MOURNERS SHAVE HEADS IN SHOW OF RESPECT FOR LEADER

CHENNAI: Thousands of ordinary Indians flocked yesterday to the sea-side grave of Jayalalithaa Jayaram, a day after a burial ceremony restricted to politicians, film stars and relatives of the reclusive but hugely popular leader.

Men wearing white dhotis lined up on plastic chairs beside hastily-erected police barricades around the grave to have their heads shaved, a Hindu mourning tradition usually reserved for the death of a close relative.

Many of the mourners were poor women who had travelled long distances in intense heat to pay final respects to the revered former chief minister of the southern state of Tamil Nadu, who died late on Monday aged 68. Among them was Vanita, 50, who ekes out a living rolling the cheap Indian cigarettes known as bidis. Vanita, who like many people in southern India uses only one name, said she had travelled to the state capital Chennai to see Jayalalithaa

many times, and once asked for her help getting treatment for a heart complaint.

"She made sure I got the operation I needed. She even gave me money for medicine. And the next time I met her she remembered me and asked how I was," said Vanita, pulling her sari to one side to reveal the scar from her surgery. "She once said, 'I am everything to my children and they are everything to me,'" she said of the woman who was known simply as "Amma" or mother to her adoring fans.

The former movie star, a populist champion of the poor, enjoyed god-like status in Tamil Nadu and was one of India's most powerful female leaders. She was buried on Tuesday alongside MG Ramachandran, her on-screen lover and predecessor as chief minister, at a ceremony attended by the stars of the film world and top political leaders including Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Media reports said her nephew was among the few relatives who attended, and there has been intense speculation about who stands to inherit the vast wealth she accrued during her time in power. An estimated one million people lined the streets to watch her glass coffin transported to the burial site amid tight security in a city that has seen outbreaks of violence after the deaths of past leaders.

Most shops and restaurants reopened yesterday as the city began returning to normal, although schools and colleges will remain closed for another two days. The atmosphere at her graveside was largely calm, the peace occasionally broken by anguished cries of "Amma" from the mourners. One elderly woman screamed and beat her head repeatedly with her hands, banging herself against the police barricades around the grave. "She took care of everything and we wanted for nothing," said 47-year-old Paramashiva after having his head shaved. —AFP



CHENNAI: Indian supporters of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa Jayaram pay tribute by having their heads shaved at the memorial where she was laid to rest. —AFP



DHAKA: Attorney General of Bangladesh, Mahbubey Alam, center, walks out of the Supreme Court after the hearing of a review petition relating to the death sentence of Harkatul Jihad leader, Mufti Abdul Hannan. —AP

BANGLADESH COURT CONFIRMS ISLAMIC GROUP LEADER DEATH

NEW DELHI: Bangladesh's Supreme Court yesterday upheld death sentences for the leader of a banned Islamic group and two of his associates found guilty in a 2004 grenade attack on a British envoy. Defense lawyers representing Mufti Abdul Hannan, head of the group Harkatul Jihad, said they would appeal for a Supreme Court review of yesterday's ruling, though such reviews are rare.

Hannan and the two others were found guilty in 2008 of orchestrating a grenade attack against Bangladeshi-born British High Commissioner Anwar Choudhury while he was visiting a popular Islamic shrine in the northeastern city of Sylhet in 2004. Choudhury was unharmed, but the attack killed three police officers and wounded 70 others. —AP

The trial court in 2008 sentenced two other associates of Hannan to life in prison in connection with the attack. Hannan took over leadership of Harkatul Jihad in the late 1990s. The group, formed in 1992 by Bangladeshis returning from fighting Soviet forces in Afghanistan, has been blamed for many other attacks in the Muslim-majority nation. Hannan was also sentenced to death for another attack in 2001 that killed 10 people during a new year celebration. He remains on trial in a 2004 grenade attack that killed 24 people which targeted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina when she was the opposition leader. Hasina escaped injury. The group was banned by the government in 2005. —AP

NIGERIA'S BOKO HARAM BATTLE STALLS AS POPULATION STARVES

KANO: Nigeria's military campaign against Boko Haram Islamists is increasingly bogged down as it confronts suicide attacks, looting and indiscriminate slaughter while the UN warns the affected region faces the "largest crisis in Africa". In northern Borno state, the epicentre of the insurgency that has spread to three neighboring countries-Chad, Cameroon and Niger-Nigeria's army has unleashed a barrage of air and land assaults.

The counter-insurgency has clawed back some territory, but Boko Haram has responded by stepping up guerrilla tactics, ambushing troops when it can and terrorizing civilians when it cannot. In late November major general Leo Ibor hailed his men's success in freeing "more than 5,200 people" over a month. But the high number freed merely highlighted Boko Haram's capacity to capture and hold vast, heavily populated areas.

Villagers under siege are typically forced to abandon their crops, devastating local food supplies. Those who are freed by the army are generally transported to camps where basic supplies are also desperately scarce. The United Nations estimates that 14 million people will need outside help in 2017, particularly in Borno State, after seven years of conflict that has killed at least 20,000 people and left 2.6 million homeless.

'Scorched-earth'

The scale of humanitarian suffering has become more apparent as troops recapture and discover the "scorched-earth" conditions of villages that have fallen into the hands of Boko Haram. But local people complain that there are not enough security forces deployed to effectively battle the menace of Boko Haram.

The same day as Ibor hailed the liberation of the civilians, five people were killed in insurgent raids on villages near Chibok, the district that gained notoriety for the Boko Haram kidnapping of more than 200 schoolgirls in 2014. The Boko Haram raiders looted and burned houses, set fire to crops that were ready for harvesting, and killed the locals-even though the army had been alerted to the assault.

"We've heard there are 700 soldiers to secure the zone bordering the Sambisa forest that is the Boko Haram stronghold," said Ayuba Alanson, a resident of Chibok. The forest covers an area of about 1,300 square

kilometers. "We need another battalion," said Alanson. Though Boko Haram has been weakened and casualty numbers following its attacks are often low, the frequency of their strikes "enable it to keep up the pressure on security forces and force them to deploy", said Omar Mahmood, a researcher at the Institute for Security Studies, stretching them further.

'Famine-like'

Troop numbers are also being pulled away to fight on another front, Nigeria's south where militants have been sabotaging oil pipelines and other installations vital to the country's export earnings in a fierce dispute over local autonomy and the distribution of petrodollars. And with tensions mounting between Shiite and Sunni Muslim communities in the country's northwest, authorities are struggling to guarantee security for Nigeria's 180 million people.

The number of killings in the northeast, which increases after the end of the rainy season each year, is a particular cause for concern-especially on the border with Niger. Territory in Niger has become the stronghold of Abu Musab Al-Barnawi, who was declared a local leader by the Islamic State group after Boko Haram declared its allegiance to the jihadists. Anti-terror consultant Yan St-Pierre, director of the Modern Security Consulting Group, said that pressure on Islamic State jihadists in northern Libya has, perversely, pushed its activities further south, to countries bordering Nigeria.

As a result, their "effectiveness for supplying (Nigerian jihadists) with weapons and logistic materiel has greatly improved over several weeks," he told AFP. While IS and Boko Haram fighters battle the Nigerian army, hunger is spreading among both villagers and the swelling ranks of displaced people in the ravaged northeast. The UN has warned that 75,000 children in the region are at risk of death within "a few months".

What the World Food Program has called "famine-like" conditions have prompted experts to warn against seeking victory over the jihadists at all costs. "The Nigerian army, which has adopted a purely military strategy for seven years, needs to change its approach if it wants to win this war," said St-Pierre. —AP

AFGHAN WOMAN GOES FROM REFUGEE TO MILITARY PILOT

AFGHAN WOMEN STEP TO INCREASE THEIR PRESENCE IN SOCIETY

KABUL: From a childhood as a refugee, Capt Safia Ferozi is now flying a transport plane for Afghanistan's air force as the country's second female pilot, a sign of the efforts to bring more women into the armed forces. Along the way, the 26-year-old Ferozi also married another pilot, who flies in the same unit supporting army ground forces. They are part of a small Afghan air force that is trying to take a greater role in fighting the Taliban insurgency.

"When I wear military uniform, I really, really feel proud of myself as a woman," Ferozi said while preparing for a flight at the air force base in the capital, Kabul. She flies a C-208, a turboprop plane used as transport for the armed forces.

Nearly 16 years since the collapse of the militant Taliban regime after the US-led invasion in 2001, Afghan women are taking steps to increase their presence in society, including in parliament, government and the military. Still, they face resistance in a deeply conservative society where women are largely expected to stay in the home and where violence against women remains a widespread problem.

When she was a child, Ferozi's family fled from their home in Kabul in the 1990s, during the civil war among Afghanistan's warlords. They took refuge in Pakistan, returning only after the fall of the Taliban. In high school in post-Taleban Afghanistan, Ferozi saw a TV commercial urging women to join the military. So after graduation she enrolled in the military academy, studying to become a communication officer. Then it was announced at the academy that the air force was looking for women to become pilots.

Flying missions

Ferozi and 12 other women applied, and she was the only one who passed the tests to enter training. While she was training at an airfield in the western province of Herat, she first met Capt Mohammad Jawad Najafi, the pilot who would later become her husband. They married nearly two years ago, and he has since backed her ambitions. She graduated from training in 2015. She gave birth to their first child, daughter Nergis, now nearly 8 months old, and is back flying missions.

Ferozi is one of only two female pilots in the Afghan air force, but five other women are currently going through training. In 2013, Capt

Niloofer Rahmani became the country's first woman pilot in more than 30 years and the first to pilot fixed-wing aircraft - there were a few female helicopter pilots during Soviet-backed rule in the 1980s. She is now in the United States training on the far larger C-130 military transport craft. Ferozi says she hopes to inspire other women.

"As a woman you face many challenges, but you have to deal somehow with all those problems," she said. There are around 1,800 women serving in Afghanistan's 195,000-member military, according to Gen Mohammad Radmanish, deputy Defense Ministry spokesman. The military, which is heavily backed by the

US and NATO, is working to bring the number up to 10 percent of its ranks over the next seven years, he said.

Afghanistan's small air force - just over 100 aircraft - received little attention for years, but in 2015 NATO and the US began focusing on building it up with increased training and equipment. The force has attack helicopters and light attack planes that have been flying combat missions this year, though NATO militaries carry out the vast majority of strikes in the fight against insurgents. The other major role for the air force is in emergency humanitarian missions, helping those hit by flooding, avalanches, landslides or other disasters. —AP



KABUL: In this Monday, Nov 21, 2016, photo, Capt Safia Ferozi, 26, sits in a C-208, a turboprop plane used as transport for the armed forces, before a flight, at the Afghan military airbase. —AP

INDIA RECORDS HUGE SPIKE IN 'HONOR KILLINGS' IN 2015

NEW DELHI: India has registered nearly an 800 percent spike in the number of so-called honor killings reported last year, leading state officials and women's rights groups to urge investigations into how such crimes persist. Indian police registered 251 cases of honor killing in 2015, compared with just 28 a year earlier when India began counting them separately from murder, according to a statement this week by Junior Home Minister Hansraj G Ahir to India's Parliament.

The surge could partly reflect more willingness by people to report such crimes, which many still consider just punishment for women and men who defy communal customs by marrying outside of their religion, clan or caste. Often, the perpetrators are relatives seeking to punish young couples for bringing "shame" to the family.

Women's rights activists say the government must pass legislation to recognize the crime as unique in order to target perpetrators for prosecution. "These figures show that the government has to take this as a priority," said Sudha Sundararaman, head of the All India Democratic Women's Association. Though police are now asked to count honor killing separately, the lack of a separate law defining such crimes means that some officers still record them in the larger murder category and do not investigate the cases further, she said.

Honor killings are still common enough among Hindus and Muslims to regularly make newspaper headlines in a country where most marriages are arranged by families. Most cases are reported in northern states such as Uttar Pradesh and Haryana, where caste councils wield enormous power in village life. The highest number of honor killings recorded last year was in Uttar Pradesh, where police counted 131 killings compared with just two cases in 2014. Ahir said, citing data from the National Crime Records Bureau.

Numbers doubted

State police officers were skeptical. Such a jump "is astronomical" and needs to be looked into, Deputy Inspector General D K Chaudhary said. Women's activists say that's missing the point, and that having 279 honor killings recorded over two years still vastly underestimates the actual numbers. One 2011 study suggested about 900 people are murdered in honor killings every year in India. The study by the All India Democratic Women's Association was based on surveys conducted nationwide. "There is severe under-reporting of such honor crimes. Families are often ashamed to report such crimes," said Annie Raja of the National Federation of Indian Women.

Raja said the situation had worsened in the last few years, noting an increasing trend in village councils run by unelected elders promoting conservative, anti-women values in the name of preserving Indian culture and tradition.

Some observers also noted that social changes were creating friction in communities, as more women step away from traditional home-making roles to join the work force. That makes them more likely to want to delay marriage, while also increasing the chance of finding partners outside of their community.

"There has been a backlash of conservatism," Raja said. "Young people are facing violence and attacks from their families if they fall in love." Analysts say that even as politicians push for better health care and education for girls, they have been unwilling to act against village councils that influence large numbers of voters. "Indian society is unwilling to accept the choices made by young women when it comes to their marriage," said Ranjana Kumari of the Centre for Social Research, a New Delhi-based think tank. "People also have to learn to respect women." —AP

TORRENTIAL RAIN STRANDS TOURISTS ON INDIAN ISLAND

NEW DELHI: Torrential rain and rough seas have stranded around 1,000 tourists on one of India's tropical islands off its east coast, officials said yesterday. Officials from the local Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration said they have asked the Indian navy to help rescue tourists from Havelock, one of the smaller islands most popular with visitors. "Around 1,000 tourists who had gone to Havelock island have been stuck there since Monday because of heavy rains," TKS Ajayan, deputy director at the local disaster management department, told AFP by phone.

The archipelago is one of India's premier domestic tourist destinations thanks to its pristine beaches, marine life and lush-green forests. Ferry services between islands are currently suspended. "The boats (between Havelock and the main island) haven't operated yesterday or today because of bad weather, which is why we have sought the Navy's help. We know all of them are safe," said Ajayan. The navy has deployed four ships to the islands but said the sea was still too rough for them to risk moving the stranded travelers.

"We have reached there but the civilian lives can't be risked in these rough seas," said Captain DK Sharma, a naval spokesman. "We will begin moving them only after the conditions improve." The meteorological department forecast "heavy to very heavy" rainfall and "rough to very rough" seas around the islands in the next 24 hours. —AP

AFTER TRUMP ROW, CHINA URGES US TO BLOCK TAIWAN PRESIDENT

BEIJING: China has urged Washington to block Taiwan's president from passing through the US, after reports said she

may stop in New York for talks with Donald Trump's team, following a protocol-smashing phone call between the

pair. The president-elect broke with decades of precedent last week to accept a congratulatory phone call from Tsai, angering Beijing which regards the island as a rogue province awaiting unification.

Taiwan's Liberty Times reported that President Tsai Ing-wen may seek to meet members of Trump's team while in New York on her way to Central America, though her office would not confirm the plan to AFP. The trip would take place before Trump's inauguration on January 20, the newspaper said. Taiwan has diplomatic relations with 22 states and the island's leaders make regular visits to its small group of allies in Central America and the Caribbean, often stopping in the US for meetings with sympathetic lawmakers.

China's foreign ministry called on Washington to block any stopover in the United States. Tsai's "true intention is self-evident", it told AFP yesterday. "We hope America abides by the principle of the One China policy and the three US-PRC Joint Communiques and does not allow her transit." Countries that have formal diplomatic ties with

Beijing cannot enjoy such links with Taipei and vice versa. Both Beijing and Taipei in principle consider themselves the only legitimate power in charge of both China and Taiwan.

Beijing further warned against Washington giving an "erroneous signal to 'Taiwanese independence' forces". Trump's surprise call with Tsai and subsequent Twitter barrage criticizing Chinese military expansions and accusing it of manipulating its exchange rate seemed to have caught Beijing off-guard.

Diplomatic rookie'

China's foreign ministry repeatedly deflected or downplayed reporters' questions Monday. But by Tuesday, state media were trotting out attacks on Trump as a "diplomatic rookie". Yesterday they emphasized the need for calm, with experts in the often shrill Global Times urging China to "watch and wait" until Trump takes office and not to "play his games". Reports suggest the call was long-planned by both sides, but whether Trump wants a wholesale change in US policy on Taiwan is still unclear.

Communist Party authorities will be

closely watching Trump's picks for secretary of state and ambassador to China as a sign of whether he truly intends to take a hard line on the world's second-largest economy. Although the United States is Taiwan's main ally and arms supplier, it has not had official diplomatic relations with Taiwan since 1979, when it switched recognition from Taipei to Beijing.

Asked about Tsai's visit, a US State Department spokesman said at a briefing on Monday that such transits were in keeping with "longstanding US practice" and noted the US "usually" allows Taiwan's leaders to pass through the country. It would be the second such trip for Tsai, who stopped over in Miami and Los Angeles on her way to Panama and Paraguay earlier this year during her first overseas trip as president.

Beijing protested to Washington over that trip as Tsai met with US politicians in Miami. Previous presidents of Taiwan have also transited the US, with Tsai's predecessor Ma Ying-jeou stopping in Hawaii in 2014 and Boston in 2015. Taiwan has hemorrhaged allies in recent decades as they jumped ship to align with an ascendant China. —AFP



TAIPEI: In this Friday, Dec 2, 2016, file photo, released by Taiwan Presidential Office, Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen speaks with US President-elect Donald Trump through a speaker phone. —AP

WOMAN AT HEART OF S KOREAN SCANDAL REFUSING TO TESTIFY

FINAL DAYS IN POWER FOR PARK

SEOUL: Ahead of an impeachment vote later this week, lawmakers took turns grilling a K-pop music director, a fashion designer and nearly a dozen others said to be linked to a woman at the heart of a scandal that threatens to bring down South Korea's president.

Missing, however, was the woman, the jailed confidante of President Park Geun-hye, who cited a panic disorder for her refusal to attend the hearing yesterday, the latest step in what appears to be the final days in power for Park. Prosecutors say Park, who faces an impeachment vote Friday, let her friend of 40 years, Choi Soon-sil,

control government affairs and extort companies, Park denies it.

On live TV, lawmakers in a hearing room jammed with media sent away a squad of about 20 security officers with orders that Choi and 10 other witnesses attend the hearing. A niece of Choi later appeared at the hearing but others refused to attend, National Assembly officials said. They could face jail or fines, but witnesses who have refused to attend past hearings have mostly been fined.

Choi is being held at a detention center near Seoul. She and two of Park's former presidential advisers have been indicted. One of the two

ex-aides allegedly pressured big companies to donate millions of dollars to foundations controlled by Choi, while the other is accused of passing confidential government documents to Choi. The two men, both jailed at another detention center, also refused to testify yesterday.

Key witness absent

Thirteen people caught up in the scandal were at the hearing, including two of Choi's former associates and former presidential chief of staff Kim Ki-choon. Choi's niece, Chang Si-ho, ran a sports foundation that allegedly received illicit state financial support and other favors.

With key witnesses absent, lawmakers questioned Kim about a 2014 ferry disaster that has long dogged Park's government because of what's widely believed to have been a botched rescue effort. The sinking killed more than 300 people, mostly high school students on a field trip.

Opposition lawmaker Kim Kyung-jin grilled Kim about an allegation that he told junior presidential secretaries that efforts to recover bodies from the wreckage should be stopped because it would be a burden to the government. The lawmaker cited what he called a memo left by a late Park secretary. Kim Ki-choon denied making such an instruction, causing Kim Kyung-jin to erupt. "It will be hard for you to go to heaven after you die. You need a lot of self-reflection," the lawmaker said.

Other witnesses included Cha Eun-tae, a music video director who has been charged with using his ties with Choi to win key culture-related projects from government agencies, and Ko Young-tae, who ran a company that made bags and clothes that Park used during overseas trips at the introduction of Choi.

If impeached, Park's presidential powers will be suspended and the country's Constitutional Court will have up to 180 days to rule on whether to formally unseat her. On Tuesday, Park told ruling party leaders that she is willing to accept the outcome if she's impeached and would make "every available effort" to prepare for a court process. The comments suggest Park is bracing for a Constitutional Court procedure that could determine her fate, according to South Korean media. —AP



SEOUL: A protester shouts slogans in front of a caricature of South Korea's President Park Geun-Hye during a rally urging the impeachment of the president. —AP

BBC UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR PROFILE OF THAI KING

BANGKOK: Thai authorities are investigating the BBC over a Thai-language profile of the new king, officials said yesterday, after the article outraged ultra-royalists in a country where criticism of the monarchy is outlawed. A harsh royal defamation law has been used to jail scores of critics and spawned a culture of self-censorship across the kingdom's media, academia and the arts.

The BBC is now under scrutiny for the profile published out of its London offices of King Maha Vajiralongkorn, who ascended to the throne last week. The royal succession was Thailand's first in seven decades and is considered a delicate moment for the institution. Vajiralongkorn does not command the respect enjoyed by his late revered father.

The BBC profile included information about Vajiralongkorn's personal life that is well-known inside the kingdom but rarely printed by Thai media, such as details about his three marriages that ended in divorce. The article, which has since been blocked online in Thailand, quickly went viral on social media but attracted a torrent of criticism from royalists.

Any member of the public can allege royal defamation and authorities are duty bound to investigate. On Tuesday a team of police officers visited the BBC's Bangkok office but found it closed. "This case is in the process of investigation but I cannot disclose the details," Pornchai Chaloraj, the commander of the Bangkok police station

responsible for the case, told AFP. Top leaders from Thailand's royalist junta, which has ramped up use of the lese majeste law since the 2014 coup, defended the probe on Wednesday.

"As they have an office in Thailand and Thai reporters work there they must be prosecuted when they violate Thai law," junta chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha said of the BBC. The junta's number two, defence minister Prawit Wongsuwon, stressed the police's duty to investigate any wrongdoing. "If anything is illegal we must prosecute accordingly without exception," he told reporters.

The BBC defended the profile in a statement and said its Thai-language service was committed to bringing "impartial, independent and accurate news to a country where the media faces restrictions". "We are confident that this article adheres to the BBC's editorial principles," it added. On Saturday a prominent Thai dissident was arrested for sharing the BBC profile on Facebook. Jatupat "Pai" Boonpattarakas, a leader of a small group of anti-junta students, was released on bail but faces up to 15 years in prison if convicted of lese majeste.

The BBC's Thai service is one of few platforms that publishes comparatively unfiltered reporting in the Thai language. Its articles are edited and published out of London, though the service employs a small number of local staff in Bangkok. The BBC's English-language bureau in Bangkok is an editorially separate entity. —Reuters

DUTERTE VOWS TO PROTECT POLICE

MANILA: Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday defended police officers who killed a detained mayor or on a list of top drug suspects even after another law enforcement agency concluded the death was an extrajudicial killing. The National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) on Tuesday disputed a police account that the mayor from central Leyte Province, Rolando Espinosa, was killed in a shootout in a jail when police came to search for guns and drugs last month.

The bureau described Espinosa's killing as a "rub out". "I will have to defend them," Duterte said during a ceremony at the main army base in the capital, Manila, referring to the police officers. "I will listen to the story and I will take it as the true version ... because they are under me, I should believe them."

Earlier, Duterte had put Espinosa's name on a list of top drug suspects. The mayor, who denied involvement in narcotics, was arrested on Oct 5 on drugs and firearms charges.

Police said Espinosa and a fellow prisoner, Raul Yap, fired at a police team that had come to search their cells. Police returned fire and killed them. Police say 2,004 people have been shot and killed by officers in self-defense during anti-drug operations since the president took office on July 1. Espinosa's killing was also investigated by senators, who doubted the police version of events because they said there were many inconsistencies in the official report and witness accounts.

Duterte said he did not believe the investigation done by the NBI because they had no credible witnesses. "As a matter of fact, I'm ready to go to jail for them, no problem," he added. Investigators have filed murder cases against 21 police officers in connection with Espinosa's death. —Reuters



PEARL HARBOR: In this Dec 7, 1941 photo made available by the US Navy, a small boat rescues a seaman from the USS West Virginia burning in the foreground in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, after Japanese aircraft attacked the military installation. — AP

SURVIVOR RECALLS FEAR, ANGER ON PEARL HARBOR ATTACK DAY

PEARL HARBOR: Surprise, fear, anger and pride overcame Jim Downing as Japanese planes bombed Pearl Harbor. Then a newly wed sailor, he recalled a Japanese plane flying low and slow in his direction as he rushed to his battleship from his home after hearing explosions and learning of the attack on the radio. "When he got the right angle, he banked over, turned his machine guns loose," Downing, now 103, said in an interview at a Waikiki hotel. "But fortunately he didn't bank far enough so it went right over my head."

The next aviator might have better aim, Downing remembers thinking. And with nowhere to hide, "I was afraid," he said. Downing plans to return to Pearl Harbor Wednesday with a few dozen other survivors to mark the 75th anniversary of the attack that plunged the United States into World War II and left more than 2,300 service people dead. Those who gather at the ceremony on a pier overlooking the harbor are expected to observe a moment of silence at 7:55 am - the same moment Japanese planes began their assault.

Tales of war
Thousands of other servicemen and women and members of the public are expected to attend and watch via a livestream feed. Downing said he comes back to Hawaii for the anniversary commemorations to be with his shipmates. "We get together and have a great time and compare our stories," said Downing, a resident of Colorado Springs, Colorado. His ship, the USS West Virginia, was hit by nine torpedoes.

"We were sinking and everything above the water line was on fire," he said. Downing said he felt proud while watching sailors balance the capsizing ship by allowing water to seep in. The tactic let the giant battleship slide into mud below. "They just instinctively did the right thing at the right time without any thought about their own lives or safety," he said.

The West Virginia lost 106 men. Downing spent two hours fighting fires and checking the name tags of the dead so he could write their families personal notes about how they died. "I thought that would give them more closure that just a cold note, 'your son was killed in action,'" said Downing, who also served as the ship's postmaster. Ray Chavez was out on a minesweeper, the USS Condor, in the early hours before the attack. He remembers noticing with his shipmates that a mysterious submarine was lurking off the harbor.

"At 3:45 am on Dec. 7, I look out and spotted a submarine that wasn't supposed to be in that area," the 104-year-old Chavez said. The sailors reported the sighting and Chavez went home to sleep. He told his wife not to wake him because he hadn't gotten any rest during the busy night. "It seemed like I only slept about 10 minutes when she called me and said 'we're being attacked.' And I said 'who's going to attack us?'" She said "the Japanese are here and they're attacking everything," Chavez said. These days, many people treat Chavez and other Pearl Harbor survivors like celebrities, asking them for autographs and photos. But Chavez said it's about the people who were lost. "I'm honoring them, not myself," he said. —AP

TEEN JAILED FOR SEVEN YEARS FOR AUSTRALIA TERROR PLOT

SYDNEY: An 18-year-old was sentenced yesterday to seven years in prison for planning a Mother's Day attack in Melbourne, the latest of a series of plots in Australia involving teenagers. The young man, who was 17 when he was arrested by police last year, pleaded guilty to one charge of committing an act, or planning the preparation of an act, of terrorism.

He will be eligible for parole in five years and three months. The Australian Broadcasting Corporation said the teenager, who cannot be named, was making pipe and pressure cooker bombs for a May 10 Mother's Day attack last year when he was arrested. Police seized several items from his home, including a document entitled "Make a Bomb in Your Mom's Kitchen" on his computer, ABC

said. Canberra has become increasingly worried about homegrown extremism and the terror threat level was raised in September 2014.

Australian officials say they have now prevented 11 terror attacks on home soil in the past two years. But some have gone ahead, including the murder of a Sydney police employee last year by a 15-year-old boy. Counter-terror police have made a series of arrests since late 2014, with the youth and radicalization of many of those detained a growing concern for authorities. Parliament last month passed new legislation to lower from 16 to 14 the age at which people can be subject to a control order which aims to prevent a terror attack by limiting a person's movements, communication and activity. —AFP



A woman walks in a park in Frankfurt yesterday on a cold and grey day. — AP

MAY TO HELP GULF 'PUSH BACK' IRAN

DUBAI: British Prime Minister Theresa May told Gulf leaders yesterday that Britain would help "push back" against Iranian aggression as they agreed on a strategic partnership to deepen ties. Addressing a summit of the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain, May reaffirmed British support for traditional allies in the region, while also seeking to strengthen post-Brexit trade.

"I want to assure you that I am clear-eyed about the threat that Iran poses to the Gulf and to the wider Middle East," she told leaders of the GCC, which brings together Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. The Arab Gulf monarchies and Iran are bitter regional rivals, at odds over a range of issues including the wars in Syria and Yemen. GCC countries are concerned about Iran's growing influence in the region, especially after last year's nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers took a step towards ending its international isolation.

The Iran agreement was "vitally important for regional security," May told the summit. "But we must also work together to push back against Iran's aggressive regional actions." In a joint statement after the summit, Britain and the GCC agreed to a "strategic partnership" that would foster "political, defence, security and trade" ties, while "developing collective approaches to regional issues". In their statement, GCC states and Britain said they "oppose and will work together to counter Iran's destabilizing activities."

As part of strengthening military cooperation, Britain will maintain a presence "throughout the Gulf," the statement said, including through British defense staff to be based in Dubai. The statement said Britain and GCC countries were "committed to continue working towards a sustainable political resolution in Syria", where President

Bashar Al-Assad "has lost all legitimacy and has no role in Syria's future".

It called for Assad's backers including Russia and Iran "to support a meaningful end to the violence, sustained humanitarian access and an inclusive political process" in Syria. During her speech, May said the two sides would study liberalizing trade as Britain prepares to leave the European Union after the shock referendum vote to quit the bloc. "I want these talks... to pave the way for an ambitious trade arrangement" after Brexit, she said in Bahrain, which was a British protectorate for 100 years and gained full independence in 1971.

May was the first woman and first British leader to address a GCC summit, as Gulf countries deepen ties with major powers beyond longtime ally the United States. In May last year, France's President Francois Hollande became the first Western head of state to attend a GCC summit. US President Barack Obama followed in April this year, seeking to reassure Gulf monarchs about US overtures to Iran.

GCC leaders have expressed concern over the international agreement that lifted sanctions on Iran this year in exchange for guarantees it would not pursue a nuclear weapons capability. Riyadh and its allies fear the pact will lead to more Iranian intervention in a region which, they feel, has suffered from a lack of American involvement under Obama. The EU including Britain is the Gulf's biggest trading partner, with trade flows of more than €130 billion (\$140 billion) annually. But almost 30 years after the Gulf states and EU began talks on free trade, still no deal has been reached. Bilateral trade between Britain and the GCC was worth more than £30 billion (\$38 billion) last year. — Agencies

SUITORS, HUSBANDS SPURN MIDDLE EAST WOMEN DISFIGURED BY WAR

AMMAN: Ahzan was shopping in a market in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad when an explosion ripped through the street, lifting her off her feet and shattering her lower body. As the dust settled, Ahzan saw parts of her body strewn across the ground. The 33-year-old's left leg was so badly injured, the doctors had no choice but to amputate. It was the start of more pain and misery, she said. Ruptures in her abdomen and leg never healed, and offers of marriage quickly dried up.

"I had suicidal thoughts, I wanted to die. I just wanted to stay at home all day doing nothing," Ahzan said through a translator at a Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) hospital in Jordan's capital Amman. As an amputee requiring ongoing medical assistance, which has brought her to the MSF hospital, Ahzan is seen as a burden on her community. For women young and old, being disfigured or maimed by conflicts in Middle East is a stain that stigmatizes them for life, health workers say. Many are shunned by society, divorced by their husbands or deemed unfit for marriage and motherhood.

"People make me feel disabled, like I'm not a whole person who can be depended on," said Ahzan, who asked that her full name be withheld for privacy. Ten years after the bombing, Ahzan, now 43, remains single and childless. A mark of shame for women in her culture, her status is also a source of depression, she said.

MSF staff at the only hospital in the Middle East to perform complex reconstructive surgery on victims who have been blown apart and disfigured by conflicts, say the stigma female patients endure when they return home is far worse than for men. Some young women will drop out of school or university out of embarrassment, others are ostracized by family and friends. This isolation, compounded by their physical ailments, can seriously affect their mental health, MSF says.

Since it opened in 2006, the hospital has transported and treated almost 4,400 patients from Iraq, Yemen, Syria and Gaza, free of charge. Around 60 people, mainly young men, undergo complex orthopaedic, facial and burn reconstructive surgery at the hospital each month,

according to MSF. They also receive psychological care and counseling during their stay. Clinical psychologist Yafa Jaffal, who is treating Ahzan for depression as she recovers from surgery to treat the wound on her leg, said patients who have undergone amputations can at least hide their missing limbs with clothing. They can learn to use prosthetic arms or legs to gain autonomy again.

But convincing women with severely disfigured faces to move on with their lives is near impossible, she said. "Many of them have trouble dealing with their children after the injury ... because sometimes the children don't recognize them," Jaffal told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "This is so difficult for a mother - to say 'hello' to your child and they reply, 'No you're not my mother.'"

It is also common for husbands to divorce their wives, taking their children with him, or to marry a second wife, said MSF mental health worker Muntaha Mashayekh. "I can count on my fingers the females who stay with their husbands after she is injured, especially those who have been burnt. They lose their lives," said Mashayekh, who counsels female patients at the hospital.

As part of their recovery, women at the hospital are offered classes in applying make-up to help cover their facial scars and burns, as well as dance therapy to boost their self-esteem and confidence. Mashayekh takes the women to local markets so they can start integrating into society again. "You have to be confident in yourself, you are a human being and you should be respected," she said. "It will take time for society to accept them, but we are trying."

It will be a few more weeks until Ahzan is physically well enough to return to Baghdad from the hospital in Amman. But as the primary carer of two older brothers with mental disabilities, she said she will not have time to rest and recover from the operation. It is a strange blessing in disguise, she said, as their condition has helped her feel useful again and accepted by her family. "I forced myself to walk again, to do things on my own and be independent to look after my brothers," she said. "I feel like I've gone from being a disabled person to someone who functions wholly." — Reuters

SAUDI KING SALMAN ARRIVES IN KUWAIT...

Continued from Page 1

Elaborating, HH the Amir in his statement welcoming the Saudi monarch noted the great achievements that have been made during King Salman's era, bolstering the kingdom's regional and international status. He also hailed King Salman's firm and brave policies at the Arab and Gulf levels and his foresightedness for bolstering regional security,

peace and prosperity.

Elaborating on King Salman's traits, HH the Amir noted contributions by the "great guest" for strengthening the GCC march and his keenness on achieving "further integration" among the GCC countries at various levels. Sheikh Sabah said he is looking forward to this "exemplary and distinctive visit, forecast to result in further cementing the distinguished ties" between the two GCC countries. — KUNA

JUNAID JAMSHED AMONG 48 DEAD IN PAK...

Continued from Page 1

"There is no survivor," a senior government official at the Interior Ministry said. "All those on board the plane were killed," said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to release details about the crash to the media.

Azam Sehgal, PIA's chairman, said the pilot of plane told the control tower 4:09 pm that an engine had developed a technical fault and moments later he made a "mayday call" shortly before the plane disappeared. Sehgal said the plane was fit to fly but that it was unclear what caused the crash. Pervez George, the spokesman for the Civil Aviation Authority, told AP that a team of experts would determine the cause after retrieving the plane's black box recorder.

TV footage showed debris from the plane and a massive fire at the site of the crash. The footage showed local villagers collecting the remains of the passengers and covering the bodies with cloths. In a statement, the military said that 40 bodies had been retrieved. Several bodies were later transported to the Ayub Medical Complex, where mourning relatives began arriving to receive the remains.

Among such mourners was tearful Ghulam Rasool Khan, 24, who said his brother Umair Khan was on board the plane. Ghulam asked police to allow him to identify his brother's body. However, police officer Iqbal Khan told him there was no point in going to the mor-

tuary as, "there is nothing left which you can recognize." Khan said he had heard that the plane was not fit to fly. "It is a murder and I want to know who killed my brother," he said.

Altaf Hussain, a rescue worker who transported the remains of passengers in an ambulance, told the AP that the crash site smelled of burnt flesh and oil and that body parts were scattered everywhere. "We collected the burned bones of the ill-fated passengers and wrapped them in cloth," he said. Ambulance driver Duray Hussain said the remains of the passengers were "beyond recognition".

One official, Farman Ghori, was crying outside the hospital, saying he saw the faces of two toddlers among the remains. "Oh God, I never saw such a tragedy," Ghori said. A spokesman for the Interior Ministry said at team had been dispatched to help identify the bodies through DNA tests. Authorities have released names of passengers - among them Jamshed and his wife.

Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif expressed his "deep grief and sorrow" over the crash. In a statement, he said "the entire nation is deeply saddened over today's unfortunate crash and shares the grief of the families who lost their dear ones". Plane crashes are not uncommon in Pakistan. About 150 people were killed in a crash in the hills of Islamabad in 2010. In 2015, a military helicopter carrying several diplomats also crashed in the country's north, killing eight people. A private plane also crashed near Islamabad due to bad weather in 2012, killing all 127 people on board. — Agencies

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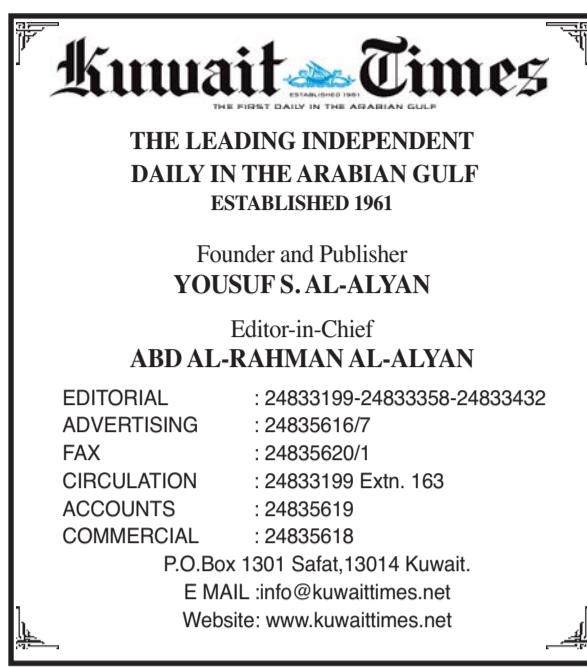
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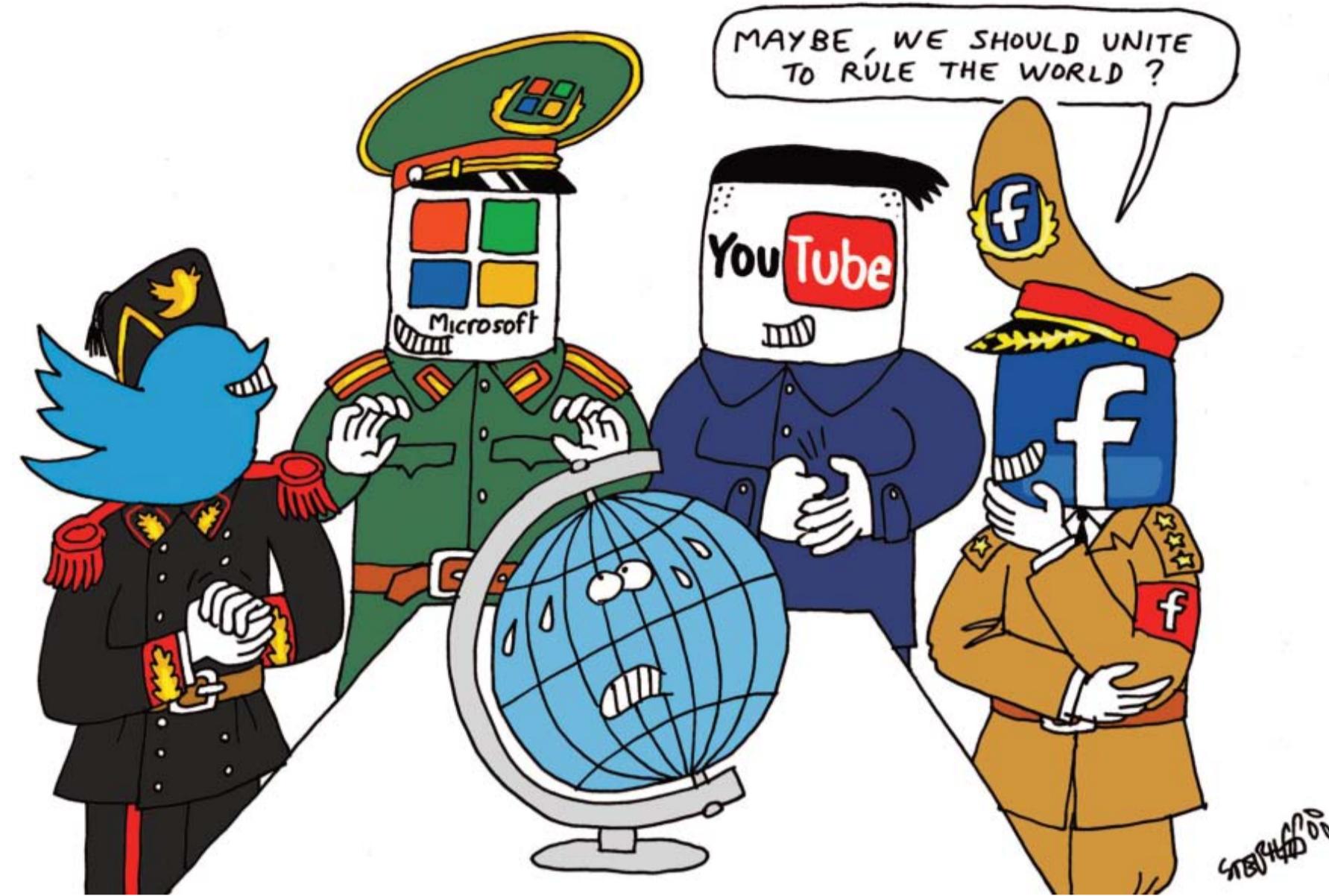
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BIG SOCIAL MEDIA COMPANIES TEAM UP TO FIGHT TERRORIST PROPAGANDA



Focus

WHY INDIA POOR ARE DEVOTED TO DEMIGOD LEADERS

"To me, she was a goddess," said party worker Shankar as he joined a sea of mourners bidding farewell to Jayalalithaa Jayaram, highlighting the messianic devotion of India's poor for often controversial champions. Hundreds of thousands of people attended Tuesday's funeral in Chennai for the veteran Tamil leader, an outpouring of emotion usually reserved for global figures such as Fidel Castro or Princess Diana. AFP looks at other Indian political leaders who engendered similar devotion and why they and former movie star Jayalalithaa were so popular.

Championing the poor

Post-colonial India's first mass funeral saw around two million people mourn Mahatma Gandhi after his 1948 assassination, while millions took to the streets when Mother Teresa of Calcutta died in 1997. Up to 15 million people reportedly attended the funeral of CN Annadurai, one of Jayalalithaa's predecessors as Tamil Nadu chief minister in 1969, while Mumbai ground to a halt when local Hindu nationalist leader Bal Thackeray died four years ago.

Like Jayalalithaa, they drew their support from the legions of poor rather than from within Delhi's corridors of power. "People who are powerless feel compelled to look up to someone who seems to offer some kind of hope," said veteran commentator Perva Venkateswar Rao. "It's a kind of psychological dependency." Teresa, declared a saint in September for her work with the poor, was widely derided in her lifetime as a fraud, while Thackeray was criticized for divisive rhetoric.

Jayalalithaa was twice jailed over corruption allegations and famed for a vast sari collection. But she won the loyalty of many with a series of populist schemes, including lunches that cost just three rupees (five cents) and election-time giveaways ranging from laptops to goats. "Economists criticized her populist schemes but the impact on the people's psyche was immense," said columnist Shubha Singh. "She struck a chord with the masses, there was a direct chord between the leader and the people."

Messiah Status'

While the idea of deifying a living person is idolatrous for South Asia's Muslims, India's Hindus often elevate heroes to God-like status. The now-retired cricketer Sachin Tendulkar was often greeted with banners proclaiming "Sachin is God" while fans of Narendra Modi wanted to open a temple in his honour last year before the Indian premier nixed the idea. "The kind of blind adulation that we see for political leaders is not unique to India but what is perhaps unique in one respect is the fact that these leaders are perceived as superhuman beings," said Paranjay Guha Thakurta, editor of the Economic and Political Weekly.

"They become larger than life, they acquire a messianic status. Here is a person who is a benefactor, saviour of all, he almost becomes God." While neighboring China would never allow a personality cult to develop around a politician from outside the ruling Communist party, India is free to choose its heroes. "Ours is a mass democracy," said Rao. "We give vent to our emotions. We are not restrained, stiff-upper lipped British types."

One of the family

While never marrying or having children, 68-year-old Jayalalithaa was known among Tamils as Amma, meaning mother - a powerful image in a country where the notion of "Mother India" runs deep. The cheap meals were served in "Amma canteens" while state-subsidized products such as "Amma water" and "Amma cement" left people in no doubt over whom they should be grateful to. Annadurai was known as Anna, which translates as elder brother, and Jayalalithaa was often compared to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerji, another unmarried woman known as "Didi", Bengali for elder sister.

Christina Paun, a professor who was among the mourners in Chennai, said Jayalalithaa inspired such adoration partly "because she didn't have a family of her own". "She was always a very loving woman, and her love went to her people," she said. Singh, the columnist, attributed Jayalalithaa's popularity to her image as "a mother figure". "She was a consummate politician and her followers built a kind of aura around her," he said. "The emotional connect they felt with Amma made them blind to her flaws." —AFP

IRAN CLOSED MOSUL 'HORSESHOE' AND CHANGED WAR

In the early days of the assault on Islamic State in Mosul, Iran successfully pressed Iraq to change its battle plan and seal off the city, an intervention which has since shaped the tortuous course of the conflict, sources briefed on the plan say.

The original campaign strategy called for Iraqi forces to close in around Mosul in a horseshoe formation, blocking three fronts but leaving open the fourth - to the west of the city leading to Islamic State territory in neighboring Syria.

That model, used to recapture several Iraqi cities from the ultra-hardline militants in the last two years, would have left fighters and civilians a clear route of escape and could have made the Mosul battle quicker and simpler. But Tehran, anxious that retreating fighters would sweep back into Syria just as Iran's ally President Bashar al-Assad was gaining the upper hand in his country's five-year civil war, wanted Islamic State crushed and eliminated in Mosul.

The sources say Iran lobbied for Iranian-backed Popular Mobilization fighters to be sent to the western front to seal off the link between Mosul and Raqqa, the two main cities of Islamic State's self-declared cross-border caliphate. That link is now broken. For the first time in Iraq's two-and-a-half-year, Western-backed drive to defeat Islamic State, several thousand militants have little choice but to fight to the death, and 1 million remaining Mosul citizens have no escape from the frontlines creeping ever closer to the city center.

"If you corner your enemy and don't leave an escape, he will fight till the end," said a Kurdish official involved in planning the Mosul battle. "In the west, the initial idea was to have a corridor ... but the Hashid (Popular Mobilization) insisted on closing this loophole to prevent them going to Syria," he told Reuters.

The battle for Mosul is the biggest in Iraq since the US-led invasion of 2003. In all, around 100,000 people are fighting on the government side, including Iraqi soldiers and police, "peshmerga" troops of the autonomous Kurdish region and fighters in

the Popular Mobilization units. A US-led international coalition is providing air and ground support.

Iraqi army commanders have repeatedly said that the presence of civilians on the battlefield has complicated and slowed their seven-week-old operation, restricting air strikes and the use of heavy weapons in populated areas. They considered a change in strategy to allow civilians out, but rejected the idea because they feared that fleeing residents could be massacred by the militants, who have executed civilians to prevent them from escaping other battles. Authorities and aid groups would also struggle to deal with a mass exodus.

Kill Box

Planning documents drawn up by humanitarian organizations before the campaign, seen by Reuters, show they prepared camps in Kurdish-controlled areas of Syria for around 90,000 refugees expected to head west out of Mosul. "Iran didn't agree and insisted that no safe corridor be allowed to Syria," said a humanitarian worker. "They wanted the whole region west of Mosul to be a kill box."

Hisham Al-Hashemi, an Iraqi analyst on Islamist militants who was briefed on the battle plan in advance, also said it initially envisaged leaving one flank open. "The first plan had the shape of a horseshoe, allowing for the population and the militants to retreat westward as the main thrust of the offensive came from the east," he said. About a week before the launch of the campaign, Lebanese Shiite Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah, a close ally of Iran, accused the United States of planning to allow Islamic State a way out to Syria.

"The Iraqi army and popular forces must defeat it in Mosul, otherwise, they will be obliged to move to eastern Syria in order to fight the terrorist group," he said. Hezbollah is fighting in support of Assad in Syria. Hashid spokesman Karim Al-Nuri denied that Tehran was behind the decision to deploy the Shiite fighters west of Mosul. "Iran has no interest here. The

majority of these statements are mere analysis - they are simply not true," he said.

Nevertheless, securing territory west of Mosul by the Iranian-backed militias has other benefits for Iran's allies, by giving the Shiite fighters a launchpad into neighboring Syria to support Assad. If Islamic State is defeated in Syria and Iraq, Tehran's allies would gain control of an arc of territory stretching from Iran itself across the Middle East to Lebanon and the Mediterranean coast.

Russian Pressure

Iran was not the only country pressing for the escape to be closed west of Mosul. Russia, another powerful Assad ally, also wanted to block any possible movement of militants into Syria, said Hashemi. The Russian defense ministry did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. One of Assad's biggest enemies, France, was also concerned that hundreds of fighters linked to attacks in Paris and Brussels might escape. The French have contributed ground and air support to the Mosul campaign.

A week after the campaign was launched, French President Francois Hollande said any flow of people out of Mosul would include "terrorists who will try to go further, to Raqqa in particular". Still, the battle plan did not foresee closing the road to the west of Mosul until Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi agreed in late October to dispatch the Popular Mobilization militias. "The government agreed to Iran's request, thinking that it would take a long time for the Hashid to get to the road to Syria, and during that time the escape route would be open and the battle would still proceed as planned," Hashemi said.

The Hashid move to cut the western corridor was announced on Oct 28, 11 days after the start of the wider Mosul campaign. Fighters made swift progress, sweeping up from a base south of Mosul to seal off the western route out of the city. Abadi "was surprised to see them reaching

the road in just a few days," Hashemi said. "The battle has taken a different shape since then - no food, no fuel is reaching Mosul and Daesh (Islamic State) fighters are bent on fighting to the end."

Iraq Stronghold

Once the Iraqi Shiite militia advance west of Mosul had begun, Islamic State leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi told his followers there could be no retreat from the city where he first proclaimed his caliphate in July 2014. Those tempted to flee should "know that the value of staying on your land with honor is a thousand times better than the price of retreating with shame," Baghdad said in an audio recording released five days after the Shiite militias announced they were moving to cut off the last route out.

Since then his fighters have launched hundreds of suicide car bombs, mortar barrages and sniper attacks against the advancing forces, using a network of tunnels under residential areas and using civilians as human shields, Iraqi soldiers say. A senior US officer in international coalition which is supporting the campaign said that waging war amidst civilians would always be tough, but the Baghdad government was best placed to decide on strategy.

"They've got 15 years of war (experience)... I can't think of anyone more calibrated to make that decision and as a result that why as a coalition we supported the government of Iraq's decision," Brigadier General Scott Eflandt, deputy commanding general in the coalition, told Reuters. "The opening and closing of that corridor, hypothetically, realistically, did not fundamentally change the plans of the battle," he added. "It changes how we prosecute the fight, but that does not necessarily make it easier or harder." But the Kurdish official was less sanguine, saying the battle for Mosul was now "more difficult" and could descend into a long drawn out siege similar to those seen in Syria. It could "turn Mosul into Aleppo," he said. —Reuters

'DEMOLITION MAN' ARCHITECT OF HIS OWN DOWNFALL

When former Italian president Giorgio Napolitano tapped Matteo Renzi as prime minister in Feb 2014, he urged his younger colleague to change the constitution in order to make it easier to govern Italy. Early this year, Napolitano fretted that Renzi was taking the wrong approach in doing so. A referendum on the constitutional changes had been called. But instead of focusing on the election campaign on the merits of the ambitious reform, Renzi had turned it into a de facto plebiscite on himself by promising to quit if people voted against the changes.

At a time when anti-establishment parties were gaining ground across Europe and when the Renzi government was struggling to revive an anaemic economy, a popularity contest was a dangerous tactic, Napolitano believed. "If Renzi loses, Italy will also lose a lot of credibility," Napolitano, then 90, told friends at an April dinner, according to one person present. He said he had warned Renzi, 50 years his junior, that it was a "mistake to make this too personal".

On Sunday, Renzi paid the price for that mistake. Sixty percent of Italians voted to reject the plans to abolish a directly elected upper house Senate and streamline the legislative process. Within an hour of polls closing, a chastened Renzi announced his resignation. Interviews with a dozen government officials, ministers and close advisers show that Renzi persisted in effectively making the ballot a vote on himself - despite warnings from some of his closest advisors not to do so.

That allowed disparate politicians from opposition parties to join forces in egging on the electorate to oust him. Even after acknowledging in August that the personalization had been a mistake, Renzi sidelined most of his own ministers to dominate primetime television shows, giving more than 20 major media interviews in the last week of campaigning alone. Renzi's defeat is the story of a personal gamble that went awry. But it also speaks to the fast-shifting loyalties of Europe's electorate amid the rising appeal of populist parties across the continent.

Renzi stormed to power following a ruthless internal party coup less than three years ago, hailed as an anti-establishment figure determined to revitalize a lethargic country. But he was ultimately rejected by the very people he had tried to court, the young and disaffected, who viewed him as one of the elite. Renzi is not disappearing from the political scene; he remains the leader of Italy's biggest party and, at the age of 41, has time to craft a return to government. Still, his biggest rivals are the anti-system 5-Star Movement, founded by a populist former comedian.

Safe bet

Renzi raised the stakes on his flagship reform early in his tenure. "I will bet all my political life on it," he told Corriere della Sera newspaper in March 2014. At the time it appeared a safe bet. The opposition party Forza Italia (Go Italy!) of former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi had given its support and opinion polls suggested that more than 70 percent of the electorate were in favor. But Berlusconi soon pulled his backing as a broad policy pact with Renzi collapsed. That left the government alone as it embarked on the most comprehensive overhaul of the constitution since its introduction after World War Two.

It took two years of fierce debate before the changes finally got parliamentary approval in April. But because they involved altering the constitution, Renzi had to call a referendum to get it turned definitively into law. That same month, with polls still predicting victory, Renzi hired the Messina Group, headed by Jim Messina who led US President Barack Obama's successful 2012 re-election bid, for help in developing his campaign strategy.

Messina at the time was also advising British Prime Minister David Cameron in his efforts to keep Britain in the European Union - an effort that failed. Cameron's defeat in the June "Brexit" referendum shocked Renzi, according to close associates. The premier drew two lessons: He would

not repeat Cameron's so-called "project fear", which had predicted dire economic troubles in case of defeat. Renzi also decided he would not associate himself too closely to corporate leaders to avoid accusations that he was in the sway of big business.

Still, Renzi continued putting himself centre stage, meaning that the merits of his reform were being drowned out. Messina found it hard to convince Renzi to do otherwise, a source close to the prime minister said. "The prime minister needs to be a bit more malleable," the communications maestro told the premier's inner circle in July, provoking a burst of laughter, according to someone present. Messina's office declined to comment.

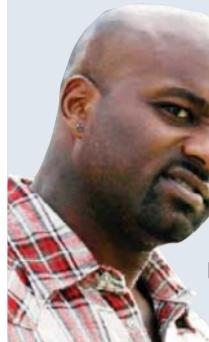
Genie has escaped

Polls showed momentum slipping from Renzi in the summer. In August, the premier finally acknowledged in interviews that he had been wrong to pin his future to the referendum. He tried to change direction by refusing to discuss the vote in connection with what he would do if he lost. But the change in tack came too late: Leaders of the political opposition accused Renzi of trying to go back on his promise to resign. "The genie had escaped and it was impossible to put it back in the bottle," said Matteo Richetti, a lawmaker from the ruling PD who was in constant touch with Renzi.

In the three weeks before the Dec 4 vote, the prime minister went back to his original strategy - playing on his own appeal to try to sway voters and making clear he would indeed quit if he failed. He also played the fear card, warning that defeat could open the door to a tax-hiking technocrat government and presenting himself as the only guarantor of stability. Instead of keeping his distance from business leaders, he campaigned alongside Fiat Chrysler Automobiles Chief Executive Sergio Marchionne, even though a government minister urged against it. "He didn't listen," the minister said. —Reuters

FORMER COLLEGE GRIDIRON STAR SALAAM DIES AT 42

LOS ANGELES: Rashaan Salaam, a former Heisman Trophy winner as America's top college football player, has died at the age of 42, the University of Colorado said Tuesday. The university released a statement saying Salaam's body was found in a park in Boulder, Colorado, on Monday night, and that police do not suspect foul play. "We are heartbroken for Rashaan and his family, and our thoughts and prayers are with them at this very difficult time," athletic director Rick George told the university's website. The Chicago Bears, one of the teams Salaam played for in an abortive NFL career, also acknowledged Salaam. "Our thoughts are with his family," the Bears posted on their website. Salaam won the Heisman Trophy in 1994. The running back was drafted by the Bears in 1995 and enjoyed a strong rookie season. But his NFL career unravelled with Salaam admitting that marijuana use played a role. Salaam broke his leg during the 1997 season and entered a rehabilitation program the following year. But he remained out of football until signing as a free agent with the Oakland Raiders in 1999. After a short stay with the Raiders he briefly played for the Cleveland Browns, before trying his luck with the XFL's Memphis Maniax and the Canadian Football League's Toronto Argonauts. — AFP



PHNOM PENH: Cambodian Minister of Tourism Thong Khon (L) welcomes petanque player, Sok Chan Mean (C) upon his arrival at Phnom Penh International Airport yesterday. Cambodian petanque player, Sok Chan Mean, won a gold medal at the 47th World Championships held from December 1 to 4, 2016 in Antananarivo, Madagascar. Sok Chan Mean defeated his French counterpart, Boursicaud Bruno, 36-29 at the final round. — AFP

HOSSZU LAUNCHES SHORT COURSE WORLDS WITH BANG

MONTREAL: Katinka Hosszu, seeking to add an exclamation point to her sparkling Olympic year, captured gold and silver Tuesday as the Short Course Swimming World Championships began in Windsor, Canada.

Hungary's "Iron Lady" of swimming, a treble gold medalist at the Rio Games in August, powered to a dominant victory in the 400m individual medley.

Her time of 4min 21.67sec was more than two seconds off her own world record, but it was comfortably in front of runner-up Ella Eastin's 4:27.74.

Easton seized silver after Vietnam's Anh Vien Nguyen appeared to touch second but was disqualified. American Madisyn Cox was third in 4:27.78. The triumph came shortly after Italian veteran Federica Pellegrini denied Hosszu in the 200m freestyle. Pellegrini, 28, was closing at the final turn and churned past Hosszu on the final lap to take the first short course world title of her career in 1:51.73.

Hosszu settled for silver in 1:52.28, with 16-year-old Canadian Taylor Ruck third in a national record of 1:52.50. Hosszu, one of the few Rio stars competing in Windsor, pulled triple duty on Tuesday, also booking her place in the 100m backstroke final.

While Hosszu's win was an extension of a stellar year that saw her win 200m and 400m medley and 100m backstroke gold in Rio, South Korean Park Tae-Hwan's 400m freestyle triumph was a turnaround in a largely forgettable 2016.

Park, a 2008 Olympic gold medalist who fizzled in Rio after serving a drugs ban, pounced to overtake Russian Aleksandr Krasnykh in the final 100m, winning in 3:45.99sec.

Krasnykh took silver in 3:35.30 while 2014 short course world champion Peter Berne of Hungary was third in 3:37.65.

Park will be hoping his first short course world crown is a launching point for a new phase of his career as swimmers begin looking toward the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

After serving an 18-month steroid ban, Park battled South Korean team officials for the chance to compete in Rio.

LE CLOS WINS 200M FLY

Chad le Clos also shook off Rio disappointment with a victory in the 200m butterfly. The South African was denied an Olympic title repeat in the 200m fly by US great Michael Phelps. But a storming finish saw him repeat as short course world champion in 1:48.76 — the third-fastest performance ever in a 25m pool.

American Tom Shields, swimming in lane eight, led at the 150m mark but finished second in 1:49.50. Japan's Daiya Seto was third in 1:49.97.

China's Rio bronze medalist Wang Shun won the men's 200m medley in 1:51.74, ahead of Germany's Philip Heintz (1:52.07) and Japan's Seto (1:52.89).

Vladimir Morozov's storming third leg powered Russia to a victory over defending champions France in the men's 4x100m freestyle relay. Morozov took the Russians from third to first, and Popkov held on for the victory in 3:05.90 went into the water for the third leg on Russia's 400m free relay in third place, but he blasted a 45.42 split, by far the fastest in the field, and Aleksandr Popkov held on to give the Russians the gold.

Nikita Lobintsev, Mikhail Vekovishchev, Morozov and Popkov combined to post a time of 3:05.90, with France second in 3:07.35. The United States and Australia shared bronze in 3:07.76.

The United States' quartet of Amanda Weir, Kelsi Worrell, Madison Kennedy and Mallory Comerford won the women's 4x100m free in 3:28.82 ahead of an Italian squad anchored by Pellegrini (3:30.28) and the Netherlands (3:31.10). — AFP



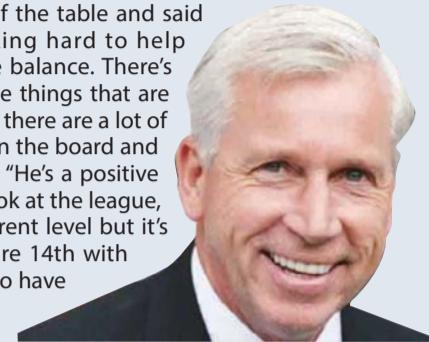
WINDSOR: Katinka Hosszu of Hungary reacts to her victory in the 400m Individual Medley final on day one of the 13th FINA World Swimming Championships (25m) at the WFCU Centre on Tuesday in Windsor Ontario, Canada. — AFP

10 TURKISH FANS HURT AFTER UKRAINE MATCH

KIEV: Ten Turkish fans were treated in hospital, two for stab wounds, after clashes broke out surrounding a Champions League qualifier between Besiktas and Dinamo Kiev, police said yesterday. The violence late Tuesday cast a fresh spotlight on concerns for fans' safety in Kiev as the Ukrainian capital prepares to host the 2018 Champions League final. A police statement said two Turkish fans were stabbed while eight suffered less serious injuries during clashes that began on Kiev's main avenue Khreshchatyk before the game and lasted for nine hours. The match ended with Dinamo thrashing their rivals 6-0. The result means that the Turks progress to the Europa League as third-place finishers in Group B while Kiev finish bottom of the group and are out of the competition despite the win. At the match an AFP reporter saw Turkish fans ripping off seats and throwing them at Dinamo supporters while the police tried to keep the two groups apart. A spokeswoman for the Kiev mayor's office said that eight of the Besiktas fans had been released from hospital by Wednesday while two more needed more time to recover. — AFP

PARDEW'S JOB AS MANAGER IS SAFE

LONDON: Crystal Palace chairman Steve Parish has assured under-pressure manager Alan Pardew that his job is secure and said he was a "positive force" at the Premier League club. The south London side's 3-0 home win over Southampton on Saturday helped them stay three points clear of the relegation zone after six league defeats in a row. "Alan has a 41 percent win record at Palace which is pretty astonishing," Parish told Talksport. "It's totally safe (Pardew's job) in that every manager is under pressure. It's a binary industry and you have to win football matches." Parish said the team was no more in crisis than the other clubs struggling near the foot of the table and said everyone at Selhurst Park was working hard to help Pardew succeed. "We have to find the balance. There's plenty right and we just need to fix the things that are wrong," he added. "If we're in crisis then there are a lot of clubs in crisis. We need to get points on the board and everyone is behind Alan in doing that. "He's a positive force around the football club. If you look at the league, the top teams have gone on to a different level but it's very flat at the bottom." Palace, who are 14th with 14 points, visit second-bottom Hull, who have 11, on Saturday. — Reuters



ETHICS BOARD EXTENDS THREE IAAF OFFICIALS' SUSPENSION

LONDON: Three senior athletics officials have had their provisional suspension from the sport extended by the IAAF's Ethics Board as it continues its investigation into their alleged involvement in a suspected cover-up of Russian doping cases. Nick Davies, who was chief-of-staff to International Association of Athletics Federations president Seb Coe, was initially suspended along with his wife Jane Boulter-Davies and IAAF medical manager Pierre-Yves Garnier in June. Yesterday the Ethics Board issued a statement saying the suspensions had been extended until Jan. 31 2017 "to allow for the conclusion of the disciplinary investigative process, including any hearing ensuing from the investigations." Davies stood down from his role last December pending the investigation into a "potential breach of the IAAF's code of ethics".

The Ethics Board statement yesterday added: "Each of the three individuals continue to enjoy the presumption of innocence and the extension of the orders for provisional suspension should not be interpreted as any departure from the principle that each individual is to be considered innocent until the conclusion of the disciplinary investigative process." The investigations relate to an email reportedly sent by former IAAF consultant Papa Massata Diack to his father, the then-IAAF president Lamine Diack, in July 2013 that allegedly showed the three suspended IAAF officials were in receipt of, or had knowledge of, a cash payment to withhold details of attempted cover-ups of Russian doping cases.

Other emails leaked earlier this year showed Davies had discussed with Papa Diack developing a media strategy to limit the news impact of a series of positive tests by Russian athletes ahead of the 2013 Moscow world athletics championships.

MEDIA STRATEGY

Davies said that the mail was merely "brainstorming for a media strategy" and that he had



IAAF president Sebastian Coe with Nick Davies (right).

done nothing wrong. Last month he told the Daily Mail: "I was conned and never for a second was I told, or thought, this money was to ensure cover-ups of doping in Russia. That would have been abhorrent to me."

"I thought I could trust Lamine Diack and it was my job to promote and protect the image of the IAAF and the World Championships. I was never mixed up or aware of the criminal activities which are now in the public domain."

French authorities are investigating Lamine Diack and Papa Diack on charges of corruption and money laundering. Papa Diack has denied any involvement in bribery or corruption and says his father Lamine is also innocent.

At the time of the initial suspensions in June, the Ethics Board said that Davies, a former IAAF general secretary and head of communications, received an undisclosed cash payment in 2013 from Papa Massata Diack, "the circumstances and concealment of which call into question whether the payment was intended to have and/or in fact produced any manipulative effect."

Boulter-Davies allegedly received, or knew about, a payment to Davies. Garnier allegedly received an undisclosed cash payment at the direction of Lamine Diack and "retained some part of the sum even when aware of its apparent impropriety". — Reuters



DUBLIN: British and Irish Lions coach Warren Gatland, left, with members of his coaching staff, Rob Howley, second left, Andy Farrell, second right, and Steve Borthwick pose for the media following a press conference to announce the 2017 British and Irish Lions coaching staff for next year's tour of New Zealand at Carlton House, Dublin yesterday. — AP

GATLAND NAMES 'CORE' LIONS COACHING TEAM

LONDON: Andy Farrell, Steve Borthwick and Rob Howley will be Warren Gatland's specialist coaches for the daunting British and Irish Lions tour of world champions New Zealand, it was announced yesterday.

All three were widely touted to be named, especially after Ireland head coach Joe Schmidt and future Scotland national handler Gregor Townsend said they wished not to be considered. Gatland, who has been replaced on a temporary basis by Howley as Wales head coach whilst he prepares for the tour, said the trio were his 'core coaching team' though he might add one more to the roster.

"I am excited about this coaching team," said Gatland, who guided the Lions to a series win over Australia in 2013. "I said from the outset it was important to have continuity because we need to hit the ground running, given the limited preparation time."

"In Rob and Andy, we have guys who understand the Lions concept, have worked together and know how to coach a winning Lions team."

"It's also important to have some new input. Steve has done a great job in shaping the England pack and played a major role in their recent run of success, so I am looking forward to working with him," added the 53-year-old New Zealander, whose selection of Howley sees Robin McBryde put in charge of Wales for their tour of the southern hemisphere heavyweights-the first team from the northern hemisphere to achieve that in a calendar year since England in 2003.

Ireland defence strategist Farrell, 41, filled that role on the Australia tour and has boosted his reputation as since joining the Irish after this year's Six Nations they have beaten all three of the southern hemisphere heavyweights-the first team from the northern hemisphere to achieve that in a calendar year since England in 2003.

'GET ON THE SAME PAGE'
Farrell said the squad and coaching staff would need to be on message as quickly as possible given the size of their task against a team who put together a record 18 successive Test wins before Ireland sensationally beat them in Chicago in November.

"The challenge for us will be to get on the same page as quickly as possible, appreciate fully the danger they pose and find solutions to their attacking threats," said Farrell, whose son, England kicker Owen, is likely to be on the Tour as well. Howley, 46, has been a trusted lieutenant of Gatland's since being hired as Wales's attack coach when the New Zealander took over the national coach role in 2008.

Former England captain Borthwick's stock rose on the back of Japan's impressive World Cup campaign last year when he was the forwards coach-which included a victory over two-time world champions South Africa.

The 37-year-old former lock moved to the England set-up when former 'Brave Blossoms' boss Eddie Jones took over the reins after the departure of Stuart Lancaster-under whom Farrell was defence coach-following a first round World Cup exit.

Jones, with Borthwick in tow, has since seen the revitalised England team win 14 Tests in a row.—AFP

TIGER MUST PROVE HE IS OVER CHIPPING YIPS: JACKLIN

LONDON: Former world number one Tiger Woods must prove he has overcome the "chipping yips" in order to fully challenge golf's elite again, according to double major champion Tony Jacklin.

American Woods, 40, made his comeback after an absence of almost 16 months caused by chronic back problems to finish 15th in an elite 17-man field at last week's Hero World Challenge in the Bahamas.

"I thought it was a promising return by Tiger," Jacklin told Reuters in a telephone interview from his Florida home. "It must have been a bit daunting for him after all that time away."

"One comment from Golf Channel analyst Brandel Chamblee attracted my attention. I know he's a bit outspoken at times but he talks a lot of sense as well."

"Brandel maintains he's not seen anybody really come back from the chipping yips," said Jacklin. "He cherry-picked a number of situations from the four

days in the Bahamas where Tiger had delicate shots he didn't do well with."

"If he's ever going to get back to the level of being able to win on the PGA Tour, never mind a major, there's no room for a weakness."

The roller-coaster nature of Woods's form was sharply illustrated by the fact that he led the tournament with birdies (24) and double-bogeys (six).

While he showed flashes of the brilliant golf he produced in accumulating 14 major titles, he also delivered the inept, often finding sandy waste areas off the tee or with approach shots.

"His putting was sound, he hit the ball nicely and his swing looks fine," said Jacklin, winner of the 1969 British Open and 1970 US Open.

"He also looks fitter but if there's a chink in his armour going forward it's going to make things difficult."

"With the putting yips you can go to a long putter, as long as you don't

anchor it, but you can't do that with chipping yips," added Jacklin, an ambassador for the 2017 farmfoods British Par 3 Championship from Aug. 8-11 (britishpar3.com).

"Chris Couch won the 2006 Zurich Classic of New Orleans. He overcame them in that event by chipping left hand below right and then disappeared off the scene, that's the only example I've seen of someone who had chipping yips and adjusted his grip."

PSYCHOLOGICALLY DAMAGING

Jacklin, the most successful European Ryder Cup captain of all time with two wins and one tie from his four matches in charge between 1983-89, knows how psychologically damaging the putting yips can be to a player.

He struggled on the greens at the back end of his career and, even now, when he plays for fun, cannot bring himself to use a conventional putter.

"When you yip you get into outcomes rather than staying in the stroke," said the 72-year-old Englishman. "You start wondering where the ball is going to end up and you can't do that, the mind has got to be in the here and now."

"When you've had a few chipping yips, and Tiger really did because it was for a few weeks in a row, it was nothing to do with his back it was something completely different."

"It's easier said than done in terms of fixing it. There's no hiding place for him, it's hard for him just to shrug things off because he cares so much," said Jacklin.

"He wouldn't be coming back unless he cared. Sometimes you care too much and you don't enjoy it because of that, that's when you put more pressure on yourself and you get into this outcome-over-execution situation."

Jacklin regularly criss-crossed the Atlantic during his playing days and, towards the end of his career, found it

tough to meet high expectations on home soil.

"I putt with a long putter now and I hold it away from my chest," he said. "I don't putt very well but I don't care because I only play charity events and corporate days."

"I've been humiliated often enough over the years using a short putter so I'm not going there again. A lot of people have had it, Sam Snead, Ben Hogan and others, it's not unusual."

"In my case it manifested itself when I was in the U.K. playing in front of British crowds, they expected me to win with one arm tied behind my back and I was trying harder than I was capable of and that made things worse."

"Tiger has to be careful. I'm sure he wants to show the world he's back and win a tournament but the more you want that, the more you put pressure on the weaker elements of your game." —Reuters

TOMIC HAPPY TO PUT 2016 CONTROVERIES BEHIND HIM

SYDNEY: Bernard Tomic has no qualms wiping his hands of a year he would rather forget and, with a reduced schedule next year, is keen to make a fresh start when he opens his season in Brisbane.

The 24-year-old Tomic, once considered Australia's next great hope in men's tennis, was plagued by an abdominal injury, fined for swearing at a fan, accused of not trying and involved in a spat with the Australian Olympic team chief this year. Despite reaching a career-high ranking of 17, the issues only reinforced a feeling amongst fans and the media that he was not overly interested in playing the sport, though that was something he denied yesterday.

"I'm not the best, I'm not the brightest, but we all have our problems," Tomic told reporters on the Gold Coast ahead of the Jan. 1-7 Brisbane International tournament. "I think the main thing is I'm doing what I love and I really respect the sport."

Tomic said he was now clear of the abdominal injury that blighted a year in which he made just one final, at Acapulco, and two other semi-finals, at Brisbane and the Queen's Club in London.

His performances at the grand slams were inconsistent with fourth round

appearances at the Australian Open and Wimbledon but a second-round exit at Roland Garros and a failure to clear the first hurdle at the US Open.

The Flushing Meadows loss, as world number 19 to 72nd ranked Bosnian Damir Dzumhur, earned him a \$10,000 fine for firing lewd comments at a heckler in the crowd. He also drew heavy criticism in May following his exit from the Madrid Open when, facing match point against Fabio Fognini, he held the racquet by the strings and did not offer a shot. He later ruled himself out of consideration for the Rio Games after the head of the Australian team had warned him that his behaviour, and that of Nick Kyrgios, was being monitored to judge their suitability for the Olympics.

Tomic said few people truly understood himself and his 21-year-old compatriot, who had risen to number 13 in the world. "I think sometimes we do push it more than we should," Tomic said. "But that is our personality, our character. "We are young, we are successful. But it turns into a bit of negative energy when we do things wrong. "No one is perfect but I think we are doing a pretty good job." —Reuters

DJOKOVIC HAS NOT WORKED HARD ENOUGH, SAYS BECKER

BELGRADE: Novak Djokovic lost his momentum in the second half of last season and was toppled as the world number one by Andy Murray because his work rate dropped, the Serbian's former coach Boris Becker said yesterday.

Speaking a day after the two terminated their cooperation by mutual consent, German Becker said Djokovic's need to spend more time with his family had derailed him on the court.

"He didn't spend as much time on the practice court in the last six months as he should have and he knows that," said Becker, who helped Djokovic to six grand slam titles after they teamed up in December 2013.

"Success like this doesn't happen by pushing a button. Success like this doesn't just happen by showing up at a tournament. You have to work your bottom off because the opposition does the same," he told Sky News.

"The profession of a tennis player is probably the most selfish one in sports because it has to be about you and he is the first to say he is a family man, so of course his wife and the rest of his family had to take back seats."

"They don't spend enough time together. I had it too, 20 years ago. It is just the nature of the beast, being a tennis player."

Having completed a career slam when he won his maiden French Open title in June, Djokovic suffered an astonishing loss of form. He crashed out of Wimbledon in the third round to American Sam Querrey and made a first-round exit at the Rio Olympics at the hands of Argentine Juan Martin Del Potro. Djokovic then lost the U.S. Open final to Swiss Stan Wawrinka, a defeat six-times major champion Becker said was a massive psychological blow to the Serb.

"I know the U.S. Open loss in the final against Stan hurt," he said.

"I think that is what he needed maybe in a funny way was to lose a little bit, to realise what it is like to lose, because he hasn't been losing for two and a half years. "I am sure the fact that he lost the number one ranking to Andy Murray is going to hurt."

"But he has got to go back to work. He has to go back to the office and practice these hours and refocus on what made him strong in the first place." —Reuters



MINNEAPOLIS: San Antonio Spurs forward Kawhi Leonard (2) works against Minnesota Timberwolves forward Andrew Wiggins (22) in the second half of an NBA basketball game, Tuesday, in Minneapolis. The Spurs won 105-91. —AP

SPURS RALLY, ROLL TOWARD HISTORY ON THE ROAD

MINNEAPOLIS: Kawhi Leonard scored 31 points and the San Antonio Spurs improved to 13-0 on the road this season with a 105-91 victory over the Minnesota Timberwolves on Tuesday night. Leonard hit 11 of 15 shots after not scoring at all in the first quarter and Patty Mills scored 15 points off the bench for the Spurs (18-4), who played without Tony Parker after he bruised his left knee against Milwaukee on Wednesday night. San Antonio overcame a slow start to shoot 52.7 percent. The Spurs moved past the 1969-70 New York Knicks to take sole possession of the second best road start to begin a season in NBA history. The Golden State Warriors started 14-0 last year. Zach LaVine scored 25 points for the Timberwolves. Karl-Anthony Towns had 11 points and 14 rebounds, but shot just 3 of 16.

KNICKS 114, HEAT 103

Carmelo Anthony matched a season high with 35 points, and New York beat injury-ravaged Miami for its fourth straight victory. Kristaps Porzingis had 14 points and 12 rebounds for New York, which is three games over .500 for the first time since the end of the 2012-13 season. The Knicks lost Derrick Rose to back spasms in the third quarter. Goran Dragic scored 29 points and Hassan Whiteside finished with 23 points and 14 rebounds for the Heat, who fell to 2-8 at home. The teams were tied at 68 late in the third quarter, when the Knicks went on a 27-13 run over the next eight minutes to take control. Anthony finished 13 of 27 from the field, and Porzingis and Joakim Noah combined for 22 rebounds.

MAGIC 124, WIZARDS 116

Elfrid Payton scored 22 of his career-high 25 points in the first half and Orlando overcame John Wall's 52-point performance to beat Washington. Wall had the highest-scoring game of his career and kept Washington in it with 33 points in the second half as the Wizards cut the lead below 10 in the fourth quarter. The guard made 18 of 31 from the field and added eight assists. Payton went 8 for 8 from the field and 3 for 3 from the line off the bench in that first half, nearly matching his previous season best of 23 points in the first two quarters alone. Payton finished 9 for 12 and handed out nine assists. Orlando won its third straight game and its 124 points were a season high.

PISTONS 102, BULLS 91

Tobias Harris scored 22 points and Detroit beat Chicago. Andre Drummond added 15 points and 10 rebounds for the Pistons, who won for the fourth time in five games. Jimmy Butler scored 32 points and Dwyane Wade added 19 points and seven assists for Chicago, which lost its third straight. The Bulls were playing their fourth game in five nights

and struggled in the fourth quarter. Rajon Rondo had 10 points in his return to the Chicago lineup.

GRIZZLIES 96, 76ERS 91

Marc Gasol had 26 points and 12 rebounds, and Memphis finally put away short-handed Philadelphia. Memphis scored the game's final seven points to erase Philadelphia's lead with less than 2 minutes left, sending the Sixers to their eighth straight loss. JaMychal Green had 13 points and 10 rebounds, including a pair of free throws with 4 seconds left to seal the Grizzlies' fourth straight win and 10th in the last 13. Ersan Ilyasova had season bests of 23 points and 17 rebounds for Philadelphia. Dario Saric scored 17 points, while Nik Stauskas added 12 points, despite missing seven of his eight shots from outside the arc. The Sixers led 91-89 with 1:57 remaining, but Zach Randolph, who had 12 points and 14 rebounds, scored inside and Memphis made enough free throws in the closing minutes.

JAZZ 112, SUNS 105

Gordon Hayward scored 28 points and Utah held on to beat Phoenix for its seventh victory in eight games. Rudy Gobert scored a career-high 22 points and had 11 rebounds and blocked four shots for the Jazz, who recovered after the Suns erased their big lead to tie it at 103. Hayward had 11 third-quarter points to reach 20-plus points for the ninth consecutive game - the first Jazz player to do so since Carlos Boozer in 2007-08. The Jazz sprinted out to a 25-10 lead thanks to an 8-0 run and never trailed. They led 65-45 at halftime after Hayward's pull-up 3-pointer highlighted a half-closing 11-2 stretch. The 65 points matched a Jazz season high for a half. Devin Booker scored 21 points for the Suns. —AP



SALT LAKE CITY: Phoenix Suns guard Eric Bledsoe (2) passes the ball as Utah Jazz forward Gordon Hayward, rear, defends in the first half during an NBA basketball game Tuesday, in Salt Lake City. —AP



MELBOURNE: In this Jan. 14, 2016, file photo, Serbia's Novak Djokovic, right, walks with his coach Boris Becker during a training session on Rod Laver Arena ahead of the Australian Open tennis championships in Melbourne, Australia. Djokovic says he and coach Boris Becker are splitting up after three seasons together. Djokovic posted a statement on Facebook on Tuesday, saying the duo "jointly decided to end our cooperation." —AP

NBA Results/Standings

Utah 112, Phoenix 105; Memphis 96, Philadelphia 91; San Antonio 105, Minnesota 91; NY Knicks 114, Miami 103; Detroit 102, Chicago 91; Orlando 124, Washington 116.

| Eastern Conference | | | | | | Western Conference | | | | | | | | |
|--------------------|----|-----|------|---------------|------------------|--------------------|------|------|-----|--------------|----|----|------|------|
| Atlantic Division | | | | | | Northwest Division | | | | | | | | |
| W | L | PCT | GB | Oklahoma City | 14 | 8 | .636 | - | | | | | | |
| Toronto | 14 | 7 | .667 | - | Utah | 14 | 9 | .609 | 0.5 | | | | | |
| Boston | 12 | 9 | .571 | 2 | Portland | 12 | 10 | .545 | 2 | | | | | |
| NY Knicks | 12 | 9 | .571 | 2 | Denver | 8 | 13 | .381 | 5.5 | | | | | |
| Brooklyn | 5 | 15 | .250 | 8.5 | Minnesota | 6 | 15 | .286 | 7.5 | | | | | |
| Philadelphia | 4 | 18 | .182 | 10.5 | Central Division | | | | | | | | | |
| | | | | | Cleveland | 14 | 5 | .737 | - | Golden State | 18 | 3 | .857 | - |
| | | | | | Milwaukee | 10 | 9 | .526 | 4 | LA Clippers | 16 | 6 | .727 | 2.5 |
| | | | | | Chicago | 11 | 10 | .524 | 4 | LA Lakers | 10 | 13 | .435 | 9 |
| | | | | | Detroit | 12 | 11 | .522 | 4 | Sacramento | 7 | 13 | .350 | 10.5 |
| | | | | | Indiana | 10 | 11 | .476 | 5 | Phoenix | 6 | 15 | .286 | 12 |
| Southeast Division | | | | | | Southwest Division | | | | | | | | |
| Charlotte | 12 | 9 | .571 | - | San Antonio | 18 | 4 | .818 | - | Houston | 14 | 7 | .667 | 3.5 |
| Atlanta | 10 | 12 | .455 | 2.5 | Memphis | 15 | 8 | .652 | 3.5 | Orlando | 7 | 15 | .318 | 11 |
| Orlando | 10 | 12 | .455 | 2.5 | New Orleans | 7 | 15 | .318 | 11 | Washington | 7 | 14 | .333 | 5 |
| Washington | 7 | 13 | .350 | 4.5 | Dallas | 4 | 16 | .200 | 13 | Miami | | | | |

ONLY PAIN NEESHAM SHOWS IS IN DEFEAT

MELBOURNE: The first thing that went through all-rounder Jimmy Neesham's mind when he was struck by a Mitchell Starc bouncer was the words of from former captain Brendon McCullum—"show no pain".

Neesham failed to pick up a 148kph delivery from the left-arm fast bowler in their second one day international in Canberra on Tuesday and was hit on the right forearm.

The 26-year-old, outwardly at least, showed little effect of the blow and

stared down Starc, who had come down the pitch to offer him some 'advice' before receiving treatment.

But the words of McCullum: 'Not to flinch, show no pain. Even if you think it's broken,' were all he could think of, said Neesham, who scored 74 in the 116-run loss to Steve Smith's side that secured the three-match series for the hosts with a game to spare.

"That's something you were taught very quickly under Baz's captaincy, not to show much pain when that happens,"

Neesham told reporters on Wednesday. "Obviously he's still got a bit of that legacy holding on there."

The left-handed Neesham was on 57 at the time and said his big concern was whether he could continue to bat as the visitors attempted to chase 379 for victory after David Warner top scored with 119 in Australia's 378 for five.

"It was more seeing whether I could hold the bat with the top hand. I gave it a bit of a test and realised I might need couple of minutes to get feeling back in

my hand," said Neesham, who will have the arm examined before the final game in Melbourne on Friday.

"Batting wasn't all that easy after that." With the Chappell-Hadlee Trophy now lost, Neesham said the team had been given a dressing down by coach Mike Hesson and captain Kane Williamson.

"Hess and Kane came out and made it pretty clear they weren't all that happy with the performance and that's fair enough," Neesham said. "We know that's

not the sort of performances we want to be putting out on the park."

Neesham added they would need to work on their bowling at the back end of the innings, having conceded 126 runs in the final 10 overs at Manuka Oval. In the first game in Sydney, the bowlers conceded 113 runs in the final 10 overs. "We started quite well but going for 170 odd in last 15 overs is not what you want from a team that have shown they have the skills to bowl well at the death."—Reuters

RED CARDS TO BE INTRODUCED FOR UNRULY PLAYER CONDUCT

MUMBAI: Cricketers could be 'red-carded' by umpires and ejected from the ground for the duration of a match from next October after the sport's lawmakers yesterday recommended on-field sanctions to address declining standards of player behaviour.

The world cricket committee of the Marylebone Cricket Club (MCC), the guardian of the game's laws, has recommended that a player should be removed from the field for threatening an umpire, physical assault or any other act of violence. Match officials currently report players or incidents to the match referee at the end of the day after which action is taken.

Following a two-day meeting in Mumbai, MCC world cricket committee chairman Mike Brearley said umpires needed to be empowered to impose on-the-spot sanctions, noting that there were more disciplinary problems in the lower-tier leagues.

"There was a survey done of the umpires and 40 percent said they are considering giving up the game or giving up umpiring because of verbal abuse," former England captain Brearley told reporters at the Wankhede Stadium.

"Anecdotal evidence from people who are familiar with leagues in parts of England say that the behaviour has got worse. 'The umpires have to be respected and given the best possible chance and I think cricket is the only game in which there isn't this possibility of an in-match punishment or deterrent,'"—Reuters

ROLE MODELS

The committee discussed sanctions like run penalties and sin bins but felt it would be hard to apply them consistently around the world.

"It got to the state where something had to happen to prevent those things happening on the international stage," former Australia captain Ricky Ponting, a member of the committee, said.

"The modern player now understands their role in society, about being role models, and want to play the game the right way for younger kids."

The committee also decided that no changes were required to the current ball-tampering laws despite recent incidents.

The age-old practice of shining the cricket ball has become a grey area for some cricketers who called for clarity after South Africa captain Faf du Plessis was declared guilty of ball-tampering by the International Cricket Council last month.

Television footage appeared to show du Plessis applying saliva to the ball while sucking on a sweet during the Hobart test against Australia leading to him being sanctioned and losing his entire match fee.

The committee also agreed that the game had tilted too far in favour of the batsmen and therefore recommended specific bat size limitations to the edges and depth of a bat.

The new laws will be implemented at all levels of the game from Oct. 1 next year, subject to approval by the MCC's main committee.—Reuters

JENNINGS TO BE COOK'S LATEST OPENING PARTNER FOR ENGLAND

MUMBAI: Keaton Jennings will make his England debut as captain Alastair Cook's latest opening partner in the fourth and penultimate test against India at the Wankhede Stadium today.

Lefthander Jennings will replace teenager Haseeb Hameed, who broke his little finger during England's defeat in the third test in Mohali and returned home to undergo surgery.

Jennings, the son of South African former wicketkeeper and coach Ray, arrived in India only on Monday after being called up from the England Lions squad in the United Arab Emirates.

"He's going to play. He's going to open the batting and another great opportunity for a guy to come in and play," Cook told reporters, adding he was reminded of his own debut in 2006 when he flew into India 48 hours ahead of the game and hit a century in Nagpur.

"He's in good touch, spending bit of time in the middle with the Lions, getting hundreds and stuff. Pretty special day for him tomorrow."

The 24-year-old Jennings, who scored six centuries for county side Durham last season, is Cook's 11th partner at the top of the order in the game's longest format since the retirement of Andrew Strauss four years ago.

Cook said the frequent changes of his opening partner did not impact his own batting. "It doesn't really affect me," the 31-year-old said. "You don't just bat with your opening partner, you bat with people at three, four, five as well."

"I will just make sure Keaton plays the

way he wants to play, keep him calm I suppose. Obviously it's disappointing about Has, we obviously found a player there.

"But if Keaton comes in and does well again, it's just adding to our top-order players." Fast bowler Stuart Broad, who suffered a foot injury during the second test in Visakhapatnam and subsequently missed the game in Mohali, was still doubtful for the Mumbai match, Cook added.

The Wankhede Stadium, overlooking the Arabian Sea, has been a happy hunting ground for England, who have won their last two test matches against the hosts at the venue in 2012 and 2006. England made a strong start to the series in Rajkot when they made India fight hard in their second innings to eke out a draw but lost the next two tests to trail 2-0 against the world's number one test side.

They drew lot of flak for defensive batting while chasing an improbable 405 to win the second test and coach Trevor Bayliss said it was time for the side to show more positive intent.

"It's a clear message I knew was coming out," Cook said. "We do have to take that second innings in Vizag out of it, where we played that way."

"But I wonder whether that did kind of tie into the third game and there was a bit of hangover and we did go back into our shells a bit."

"After chatting around a bit I think it was quite clear message that we wanted to play a little bit more aggressively and with a bit more intent."—Reuters



PHILADELPHIA: Philadelphia Flyers' Steve Mason (35) blocks a shot by Florida Panthers' Jussi Jokinen (36) as Shayne Gostisbehere (53), Nick Cousins (25) and Colton Sceviour (7) look on during the third period of an NHL hockey game, Tuesday, in Philadelphia. Philadelphia won 3-2 in overtime.—AP

VORACEK AND SIMMONDS LIFT FLYERS TO SIXTH STRAIGHT WIN

PHILADELPHIA: Jakub Voracek scored with 8.6 seconds left in overtime after Wayne Simmonds had two goals in regulation, leading the Philadelphia Flyers to their sixth straight victory, 3-2 over the Florida Panthers on Tuesday night. Steve Mason made 42 saves to help the Flyers to their longest winning streak five years. Mason, who earned the NHL's First Star of the Week on Monday, won his fifth straight start. Aleksander Barkov and Jussi Jokinen scored for Florida, which completed a six-game trip with a 1-5-0 record. Mason turned aside Florida's best chance in overtime when he denied Aaron Ekblad's slap shot from close range.

ISLANDERS 4, RANGERS 2

Andrew Ladd scored in the second period and Jaroslav Halak stopped 36 shots to lead the Islanders over their crosstown-rival. John Tavares, Jason Chimera and Scott Mayfield also scored at the Barclays Center to help the last-place Islanders improve to 4-0-1 in their last five games. Jimmy Vesey and Marc Staal scored for the Metropolitan Division-leading Rangers and Henrik Lundqvist finished with 28 saves. The Rangers have alternated wins and losses in regulation in their last eight games. The Rangers went 0 for 6 on the power play, including a 6-on-3 advantage with Lundqvist pulled over the final 32 seconds.

BLUES 3, CANADIENS 2, OT

Jaden Schwartz got his second goal of the game in overtime, leading St. Louis over Montreal. Paul Stastny also scored for St. Louis, which has won four of five. The Blues rallied from a 2-0 deficit and have a point in their last 13 home games. Tomas Plekanec and Paul Byron scored for Montreal, which completed a five-game trip 2-3. Goalie Jake Allen made 28 saves to improve to 13-3. Schwartz lifted a backhander past goalie Al Montoya with 1:22 left in overtime.

DEVILS 3, CANUCKS 2

Taylor Hall scored a goal, set up a go-ahead tally by Kyle Palmieri and delivered a crushing check that knocked Vancouver defenseman Philip Larsen out of the game to lift New Jersey. Defenseman Ben Lovejoy also scored and Cory Schneider made 22 saves as New Jersey remained the NHL's only team not to lose at home in regulation. This is the first time the Devils have gone 10 home games without losing in regulation - they began 8-0-1 in 1987-88. This was also their first win in regulation in the last 11 games. Daniel Sedin scored a second-period power-play goal with the Canucks on a two-man advantage, and he set up his brother, Henrik, early in the third period when Vancouver closed the deficit to a goal.

PREDATORS 4, AVALANCHE 3

Roman Josi scored a power-play goal 1:04 into the third period to give Nashville a win over Colorado. Viktor Arvidsson, James Neal and P.K.

Subban also scored for Nashville, which ended a two-game losing streak. Matt Duchene scored twice and Nathan MacKinnon also scored for Colorado, which has lost six straight. At the end of 2-minute 5-on-3 advantage, Josi took a pass from Ryan Johansen at the top of the left faceoff circle and dropped to one knee as he fired a tiebreaking one-timer by goaltender Semyon Varlamov.

BLACKHAWKS 4, COYOTES 0

Marian Hossa had two goals, Scott Darling made 22 saves and Chicago beat Arizona to snap a two-game slide. Artem Anisimov and Dennis Rasmussen also scored to help Chicago maintain a three-point lead over St. Louis in the Central Division. Darling made a handful of tough stops but wasn't heavily tested in his first shutout this season and third of his career. He started his third straight game in place of No. 1 goalie Corey Crawford, who had an appendectomy in Philadelphia on Saturday. The 37-year-old Hossa scored his team-leading 13th and 14th goals in his 27th game - surpassing his total of 13 last season in 64 contests.

SABRES 4, OILERS 3, OT

Rasmus Ristolainen scored from the left circle 57 seconds into overtime and Buffalo beat Edmonton. The Sabres scored twice in a span of 86 seconds, with Evander Kane forcing overtime by scoring with 29 seconds left in regulation. Kane had two goals and Brian Gionta also scored as

Buffalo rallied after squandering a 2-0 first-period lead. Anders Nilsson stopped 34 shots, closing his legs to foil Edmonton star Connor McDavid on a short-handed breakaway in the third period. Leon Draisaitl, Milan Lucic and Jordan Eberle scored for the Oilers, who improved to 3-0-2 on the road despite the loss. McDavid had two assists.

RED WINGS 4, JETS 3, SO

Henrik Zetterberg backhanded in the deciding goal in the shootout and Detroit came back from a two-goal deficit to beat Winnipeg. Thomas Vanek also scored against goalie Connor Hellebuyck in the shootout, and Patrik Laine had Winnipeg's tally against Petr Mrazek. Tomas Tatar, Anthony Mantha and Vanek scored in regulation for Detroit, which has at least one point in seven of its last eight games (5-1-2). The Jets got goals from Andrew Copp, Dustin Byfuglien and Laine, whose 17th of the season tied him for the NHL lead with Pittsburgh's Sidney Crosby.

FLAMES 2, STARS 1

Sean Monahan scored on a power play midway through the third period, lifting Calgary over Dallas. Johnny Gaudreau passed to Monahan from behind the net into the slot, and he wristed a shot past goalie Kari Lehtonen. Monahan assisted on Gaudreau's goal that tied it at 1 in the second period. Flames goalie Chad Johnson made 29 saves. Lehtonen had 18. Dallas' Curtis McKenzie opened the scoring with an unassisted goal in the first period.—AP

NHL results/standings

Chicago 4, Arizona 0; Calgary 2, Dallas 1; St. Louis 3, Montreal 2 (OT); Nashville 4, Colorado 3; Detroit 4, Winnipeg 3 (SO); Buffalo 4, Edmonton 3 (OT); New Jersey 3, Vancouver 2; NY Islanders 4, NY Rangers 2; Philadelphia 3, Florida 2 (OT).

| Western Conference | | | | | |
|-----------------------|----|-----|----|----|-------|
| Central Division | | | | | |
| W | L | OTL | GF | GA | PTS |
| Chicago | 17 | 8 | 3 | 78 | 68 37 |
| St. Louis | 15 | 7 | 4 | 72 | 72 34 |
| Winnipeg | 13 | 13 | 3 | 77 | 85 29 |
| Minnesota | 12 | 8 | 4 | 66 | 51 28 |
| Nashville | 12 | 9 | 4 | 75 | 69 28 |
| Dallas | 10 | 11 | 6 | 67 | 87 26 |
| Colorado | 9 | 14 | 1 | 52 | 73 19 |
| Pacific Division | | | | | |
| Edmonton | 14 | 10 | 4 | 83 | 74 32 |
| San Jose | 15 | 9 | 1 | 60 | 51 31 |
| Calgary | 14 | 13 | 2 | 73 | 83 30 |
| Anaheim | 12 | 9 | 5 | 67 | 67 29 |
| Los Angeles | 13 | 10 | 2 | 66 | 66 28 |
| Vancouver | 11 | 13 | 2 | 60 | 78 24 |
| Arizona | 8 | 13 | 4 | 57 | 80 20 |
| Eastern Conference | | | | | |
| Atlantic Division | | | | | |
| Montreal | 17 | 6 | 3 | 76 | 59 37 |
| Ottawa | 15 | 9 | 2 | 64 | 67 32 |
| Boston | 15 | 10 | 1 | 63 | 58 31 |
| Tampa Bay | 14 | 11 | 2 | 77 | 72 30 |
| Detroit | 13 | 11 | 3 | 69 | 72 29 |
| Florida | 12 | 11 | 4 | 65 | 70 28 |
| Buffalo | 10 | 10 | 6 | 55 | 68 26 |
| Toronto | 10 | 9 | 5 | 72 | 77 25 |
| Metropolitan Division | | | | | |
| Pittsburgh | 16 | 7 | 3 | 88 | 80 35 |
| NY Rangers | 17 | 9 | 1 | 97 | 69 35 |
| Columbus | 15 | 5 | 4 | 77 | 53 34 |
| Philadelphia | 15 | 10 | 3 | 90 | 87 33 |
| Washington | 14 | 7 | 3 | 61 | 55 |

PLANE TRAGEDY OVERSHADOWS CLUB WORLD CUP

YOKOHAMA: Atletico Nacional will play through their grief over the Chapecoense plane tragedy when they tackle the Club World Cup in Japan just days after their Copa Sudamericana final opponents were wiped out.

FIFA's global club showpiece, which will also feature Cristiano Ronaldo's Real Madrid, begins this week under the shadow of the air crash that sent football into mourning.

It promises to be an emotional tournament for Colombia's Nacional, who were due to play Chapocoense for the Copa Sudamericana title before the plane carrying the Brazilian team crashed en route to the final.

"Pain overwhelms our hearts and invades our thinking in mourning," Nacional wrote on their website. All but three Chapocoense players died in the

crash, which killed 71 people.

In tribute, the Copa Libertadores champions successfully lobbied South American football officials to award the Copa Sudamericana to the stricken team. "For our part, and forever, Chapecoense are champions of the 2016 Copa Sudamericana," stated the club's website. European giants Real will be favourites to win the tournament, which kicks off today and features football's six continental champions plus Japanese title-holders Kashima Antlers.

But Ronaldo's Real will face the uncomfortable task of having to beat Nacional, now the sentimental favourites, should both teams reach the December 18 final in Yokohama.

Nacional could face South Africa's Mamelodi Sundowns, Kashima or New Zealand part-timers Auckland City in the

competition's first semi-final in Osaka on December 14.

The Colombians, who claimed their second Copa Libertadores title in July, are looking to avenge an extra-time defeat by AC Milan in the tournament's forerunner, the Intercontinental Cup, in 1989. Their stingy defence kept nine clean sheets in a 14-game run to the South American title, and they play a tidy brand of football under coach Reinaldo Rueda. But bookmakers are firmly backing Spain's Real.

RONALDO'S 'PERFECT YEAR'

Zinedine Zidane's table-toppers will be without Gareth Bale as the Welsh wizard continues to recover from ankle surgery, but Real have been boosted by the return of Toni Kroos ahead of their opening game on December 15.

Real face either Mexico's Club America or South Korea's Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors in the competition's second semi-final in Yokohama.

Ronaldo issued a warning as Los Blancos go in search for their second Club World Cup title in three years after lifting the trophy in 2014.

"It has been a perfect year, with the Champions League and the Euros," said Madrid's talisman, who also led Portugal to European Championship glory in July and has signed a new five-year deal stretching to 2021.

"Now we have to win the Club World Cup. I want to win trophies, that's why I want to stay at this club."

Real president Florentino Perez has demanded another international treble.

"It would be a huge satisfaction to win the three international titles—the

Champions League, UEFA Super Cup and Club World Cup," he told AFP.

"We won them in 2014 and we will work towards winning the Club World Cup to do it again."

Real, who beat Argentina's San Lorenzo 2-0 in the final two years ago, also won the Intercontinental Cup in 1960, 1998 and 2002.

Plucky Auckland will look to produce another shock in their eighth appearance in the tournament after their collection of truck drivers, cleaners and zoology students defied the odds to finish third in 2014.

"The game against (Kashima) is going to be tough, but our boys are well prepared and I'm looking forward to it," said New Zealand international Clayton Lewis, ahead of today's tournament-opener. —AFP



Pep Guardiola

ROBERTS FRIENDLY FIRE MAKES PEP TAKE NOTE

MANCHESTER: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola expressed admiration for Patrick Roberts after the loanee scored against his parent club for Celtic in a 1-1 Champions League draw.

City signed Roberts, 19, from Fulham in 2015 for a reported fee of 12 million pounds (\$15.2 million, 14.2 million euros), but he played just three times before joining Celtic on an 18-month loan last February.

He came back to haunt City on Tuesday, jinking into the box from the right to score a fourth-minute solo goal, which Kelechi Iheanacho cancelled out four minutes later.

"We're going to talk about it at the end of the season. We know his quality, but the decision is not talking about one game," Guardiola said when asked about Roberts's future. "It's for one season. We're going to speak with him, with the managers, between each other we're going to decide."

"But of course he has the good quality of a winger, one against one. He worked defensively. So he has potential. I'm so happy about his performance." Celtic manager Brendan Rodgers backed Roberts to go on and enjoy a decorated City career.

"I'm sure he'll come back here in the summer and Pep and his staff will have a real good look at him," Rodgers said.

"You've got a young English talent, a big talent, and I'm sure there'll be a big career for him here." With City already assured of a last 16 berth and Celtic doomed to a fourth-place finish in Group C, there was nothing riding on the game.

City will learn their next opponents in Monday's draw and while Guardiola drew satisfaction from home wins over Barcelona and Borussia Moenchengladbach, he also sounded a note of caution.

RODGERS 'DELIGHTED'

"The group was really, really tough," said Guardiola, a two-time Champions League winner as Barcelona coach.

"We did one (qualifying) game before and our performance at home was really good, against Gladbach, Barcelona and today as well. "The Champions League is not easy, especially for a team that has not experience in Europe. We cannot forget that guys. "We have to show respect for the others, for the history, for many, many reasons. You have to win that respect through our performances through the next years."

"Now we are there and Monday we are going to see the draw and we're going to see how is our level in February."

"It's important how our level will be in February and hopefully it will be good to compete against the best teams in Europe."

Celtic were trounced 7-0 by Barcelona in their first game, but Rodgers said his side's two draws against City—with whom they shared six goals at Celtic Park in September—augured well.

"I'm absolutely delighted with the campaign overall," said the former Liverpool manager. "Apart from the first game, in the main our performance level has been very, very good."

"We competed against two of the super-powers in European football. We haven't been beaten by Manchester City. We arguably could have won both games. I'm absolutely proud of the team. "It now sets the standard for us to continue with this development and look to go on and win the league and be ready to go into the qualifiers for next season again." —AFP

FORMER SAINTS COACH BEHAVIOUR 'VERY VERY WRONG': LE TISSIER

LONDON: Former England and Southampton star Matt Le Tissier became the highest profile former footballer to make accusations of inappropriate behaviour telling the BBC he received a 'naked massage' from former Saints youth coach Bob Higgins.

Higgins, who is still alive unlike several other former coaches who have been subject to a slew of allegations of abuse over the past fortnight, was acquitted of sexual abuse charges in 1992.

But he was linked to abuse again in a 1997 Channel Four documentary while the Football League, police and social services had warned as early as 1989 he was a danger to children.

He has in the past week been accused by several former Southampton players and the club's former manager Harry Redknapp, who was not in charge at the time Higgins was there, criticised the Football Association (FA) for not banning him from football.

The FA have launched their own internal

review into whether their body had been made aware of these allegations at the time as the scandal has been labelled the biggest crisis in English football.

At present 20 police forces are holding their own investigations after being contacted by former players and a source told The Observer at the weekend the allegations concern 55 professional and non-league clubs. In other developments The Daily Telegraph reported the late Chris Gielker has been accused of abuse of apprentices and schoolboys at London club Queens Park Rangers over three decades when he was their youth development officer. Athletes too came into the spotlight as a former aspiring athlete Roy Messenger, 55, went public in The Daily Telegraph and said he had been raped 50 times between the ages of nine and 12 by the man known as Oxford's 'Mr Athletics' Aubrey Harris, including at the track where Roger Bannister broke the four minute barrier for the mile.—AFP

Paris Saint-Germain's players observe a minute's silence for the players of the Brazilian Chapecoense football team who died in a plane crash last week in Colombia ahead of the UEFA Champions League Group A football match between Paris Saint-Germain and PCF Ludogorets Razgrad at the Parc des Princes Stadium in Paris on Tuesday. — AFP

PARIS: After faltering in the Champions League quarter-finals four times in a row, Paris St Germain could face the prospect of a last-16 exit after a mediocre performance against Ludogorets saw them finish the group stage in second place.

PSG needed an extra-time equaliser by Angel Di Maria to salvage 2-2 home draw against the Bulgarian side but that result still allowed Arsenal, who beat Basel 4-1, to leap-frog them into first place in Group A. PSG will now await next Monday's round of 16 draw anxiously, hoping to avoid an earlier-than-hoped meeting with either Real Madrid or Barcelona.

"Top spot was our goal. We are qualified but we should have won this game. I was expecting more from the players," said club president

Nasser al Khelaifi. Defender Thomas Meunier added: "We will see if it was a failure when we know the draw, there are teams that could be good for us." PSG could also face Leicester City, Napoli, Juventus, Sevilla, Atletico Madrid, or Borussia Dortmund. PSG had shown signs of weakness at the weekend, losing 3-0 at Montpellier in Ligue 1 in their biggest defeat in over five years, but they failed to react on Tuesday, defending poorly again.

"It's a bad result. I am worried because we don't usually concede so many goals," said coach Unai Emery. PSG have conceded five goals in their last two games – as many as in their 10 previous matches in all competitions.

In the absence of the suspended Marco Verratti and the injured Adrien Rabiot, they also

lacked creativity in midfield. To add to their woes, Thiago Motta will be suspended for the first leg of their last 16 game.

Despite an under-par performance in the group phase, where they won only three games, the team and Emery are still backed by Al Khelaifi. "I trust my players and my coach," he said. Emery took over from Laurent Blanc during the close season after the former France coach led the club to three successive French titles. PSG lie third in Ligue 1, four points behind leaders Nice, whom they face at the Parc des Princes on Sunday. "I hope the players will react, it's important to beat Nice at home," said Al Khelaifi.

"The squad is experienced enough to deal with that kind of complicated periods," said Meunier. — Reuters

RUNNERS-UP SPOT LEAVES PSG IN DANGEROUS WATERS

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LEVERKUSEN SEAL FIRST WIN OVER MONACO IN SIX

LEVERKUSEN: Bayer Leverkusen earned a first Champions League win over Monaco at the sixth attempt yesterday, sealing a 3-0 victory with both sides already through to the knock-out stages.

A first-half strike from Vladlen Yurchenko, a well-worked goal by Germany winger Julian Brandt and a late own goal by Monaco goalkeeper

Morgan de Sanctis sealed the win at the BayArena. Regardless of the result, Monaco progress as Group E winners, a point ahead of Bayer, who are in the last 16 at the expense of Tottenham Hotspur.

Leverkusen took a deserved lead on the half hour mark thanks to Yurchenko's superb curling long-range shot from just outside the area. It was the 22-year-old

Ukrainian's first appearance of the season having suffered a hairline leg fracture in September. Leverkusen doubled their lead three minutes after the break.

Brandt finished off a flowing move as he floated his shot over De Sanctis after being played into area by Hakan Calhanoglu. Australian winger Robbie Kruse came off the bench to win a

penalty for Leverkusen when he was fouled in the area. Brazilian left-back Wendell hit the crossbar with the spot kick, but the ball bounced in to the net off De Sanctis on 82 minutes.

It was a bit of luck for Leverkusen, who had failed to convert all four penalties awarded in the Bundesliga this season. Leverkusen finish the group stages

unbeaten with two wins and four draws.

This was the first time French league side Monaco have lost to Leverkusen after three wins and two draws in previous meetings. The Germans avenged their 1-1 at Monaco in September when they were denied victory when Kamil Glik equalised for the hosts in the 94th-minute. — AFP

Teams qualified for Champions League last 16

LONDON: Teams qualified for the last 16 of the Champions League following yesterday's final group matches.

GROUP WINNERS
Arsenal
Napoli
Barcelona
Atletico Madrid
Monaco
Borussia Dortmund
Leicester City
Juventus

RUNNERS-UP
Paris St Germain
Benfica
Manchester City
Bayern Munich
Bayer Leverkusen
Real Madrid
Porto
Sevilla
Last-16 draw takes place on Monday.

SEVILLA WITHSTAND LYON ASSAULT, REACH LAST 16

LYON: Sevilla are through to the last 16 of the Champions League for the first time in seven years after soaking up the pressure to draw 0-0 away to Lyon yesterday. Lyon, who lost 1-0 in Seville in September and trailed the Spaniards by three points-needed to win by two clear goals to go through at Sevilla's expense from Group H.

But they could not find a way through, with Corentin Tolisso and Mathieu Valbuena both hitting the woodwork in the first half at Parc OL. A big enough defeat would have seen Sevilla drop down into the Europa League, a competition they have won in each of the last three seasons, but instead it is Lyon who must settle for that consolation. Sevilla go through in second place behind Juventus, who beat Dinamo Zagreb 2-0 in Turin, and make it four Spanish clubs in the knockout stage with Real Madrid, Barcelona and Atletico Madrid already having qualified. Lyon were hoping to join Paris Saint-Germain and Monaco and make it three French representatives in the last 16 for the first time, and had been boosted by the presence of goalkeeper Anthony Lopes in their starting line-up. The Portuguese international was taken to hospital after firecrackers were thrown onto the pitch during Lyon's Ligue 1 game at Metz at the weekend, which was subsequently abandoned.

Lopes reportedly didn't sleep for two nights after the Metz game and suffered headaches as well as a feeling of pressure inside his ears, but he was passed fit to play. He was beaten by Vitolo in the 19th minute but there was relief for the hosts as the Spain winger's effort came back off the far post. Lopes could also have conceded a penalty when he brought down Vitolo inside the box but Swedish referee Jonas Eriksson waved away Sevilla's appeals. Otherwise Lyon dominated the first half on a misty night, setting the tone when a first-time effort by Valbuena had to be turned over by an alert Sergio Rico inside three minutes.

The French club had a huge appeal for a penalty of their own midway through the first period as Valbuena went down under a Mariano challenge that began right on the edge of the box but again the referee gave nothing. Tolisso headed against the bar from a Rafael cross and Valbuena struck the crossbar with a fine first-time shot after a good run by Tolisso as Sevilla withstood the pressure. Lyon had more than 20 attempts on goal and the majority of the possession but they lacked the subtlety to break down the opposition defence and clear chances were at a premium in the second half.

Mouctar Diakhaby headed wide from a Nabil Fekir corner and Sevilla held on to ensure a first appearance in the last 16 since 2009/10. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE

| | |
|-----------------------------------|-------|
| Qarabag Agdam v Fiorentina | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 4 HD | |
| PAOK v Slovan Liberec | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Konyaspor v KAA Gent | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 6 HD | |
| Sporting Braga v Shakhtar Donetsk | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 5 HD | |
| Osmanspor v Zurich | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 3 HD | |
| Villarreal v Steaua Bucarest | 19:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 1 HD | |
| Feyenoord Rotterdam v Fenerbahce | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 2 HD | |
| Zorya Lugansk v Manchester | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 2 HD | |
| Apoel Nicosia v Olympiacos | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Young Boys v Astana | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Anderlecht v Saint Etienne | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 6 HD | |
| Mainz v Gabala | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Maccabi Tel Aviv v Dundalk | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Alkmaar v Petersburg | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Viktoria Plzen v Austria Wien | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 12 HD EN | |
| Astra Giurgiu v Roma | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 4 HD | |
| Sassuolo Calcio v Genk | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Rapid Wien v Bilbao | 21:00 |
| beIN SPORTS 3 HD | |
| Panathinaikos v Vigo | 23:05 |
| beIN SPORTS 6 HD | |
| Liege v Ajax Amsterdam | 23:05 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Red Bull Salzburg v Schalke | 23:05 |
| beIN SPORTS 5 HD | |
| Nice v Krasnodar | 23:05 |
| beIN SPORTS 3 HD | |
| Southampton v Hapoel Beer Sheva | 23:05 |
| beIN SPORTS | |
| Inter Milano v Sparta Prague | 23:05 |
| beIN SPORTS 4 HD | |



TURIN: Juventus' Gonzalo Higuain scores a goal during the Uefa Champions League group H soccer match between Juventus and Dinamo Zagreb at the Juventus stadium in Turin, Italy, yesterday. — AP

HIGUAIN, RUGANI STRIKE AS JUVE SECURE TOP SPOT

TURIN: Gonzalo Higuain hit a slick, second-half winner and Daniele Rugani added a late second as dominant Juventus laboured to a 2-0 Champions League win over Dinamo Zagreb that secured top spot in Group H yesterday. With qualification for the last 16 already secure, Juventus welcomed the Croats looking for a repeat of their 4-0 romp in Zagreb in a bid to beat Sevilla to first place in Group H.

The Italian champions had fans on their toes throughout a one-sided encounter in chilly Turin, but largely flattered to deceive before Higuain broke the deadlock with a clinical strike seven minutes after the restart.

It gave Juve a spur, and when Rugani was left alone at a corner he rose above the Dinamo defence to beat Dominik Livakovic down low.

Juve's fourth win in the campaign left the Italians, beaten finalists in 2015, on 14 points, three ahead of Sevilla after their scoreless draw in Lyon. Juventus have been ravaged by injury, the loss of Andrea Barzagli, Leonardo Bonucci and Giorgio Chiellini leaving the hosts short of their feared 'BBC' defence.

Days before the city derby against Torino on Sunday, coach Massimiliano Allegri added spice when he decided to rest Gianluigi Buffon for Norbert Neto.

Juve were flying from kick-off, Mario Mandzukic setting up Miralem Pjanic with a deft flick from a long ball in midfield.

The Bosnian found Higuain to his right but despite forcing Livakovic down low, the Argentine's drive was blocked. It was an early warning, but Juve were wasteful throughout the remainder of the first half.

Neto was forced into action soon after, the Brazilian reacting well to a snap header from close range, but had little to do for the remainder. From then on, Juve dominated in all departments, the pace of Juan Cuadrado and creativity of Pjanic proving all too much for Ivelo Petev's side. When Mandzukic rose at the edge of the box to meet a superb

Cuadrado cross, the Croat was only thwarted by Leonardo Sigali's timely intervention.

Sigali came to the rescue on the half hour with precious toe-poke for Livakovic as Higuain threatened. Livakovic then got down low to collect Pjanic's downward header from Mandzukic's pinpoint delivery, and minutes later had full-back Gordon Schildenfeld to thank for clearing a loose ball yards from goal as Higuain hovered.

A Pjanic free kick from 35 yards forced Livakovic to parry down low and moments later Higuain was out of position when Livakovic spilled Mandzukic's angled drive from the right.

Juve resumed in positive fashion but Higuain was wasteful after Mandzukic rose to head a floated ball in the Argentine's direction. Higuain made amends moments later when Mario Lemina's fancy footwork left the Dinamo defence in tatters before the ball fell kindly for the Argentine to sweep past Livakovic and into the top corner. Again,

Juventus got stagefright when it came to adding to their tally. Despite Higuain standing in acres of space on the left flank, Pjanic opted to send Cuadrado through on the right in a move that ultimately broke down.

Pjanic was in the thick of it again with a great cross in for Mandzukic but before he could tap home Livakovic came bravely out to smother, requiring treatment for his trouble after clashing with the Croat.

Another counter led by Cuadrado came to nothing, despite both Pjanic and Higuain calling for service from the Colombian, who was dispossessed as he tried to dribble his way into the area. Redemption came in the 73rd minute when Rugani rose to send a bullet header past Livakovic down low.

Juve striker Paulo Dybala made his return from a six-week injury lay-off when he replaced Dybala for the last 10 minutes. But despite three shots towards goal, the Argentine was to be denied a fairytale return to action. — AFP

LEGIA BEAT SPORTING TO EARN EUROPA SPOT

WARSAW: Legia Warsaw defeated Sporting Lisbon 1-0 yesterday to clinch third place in Group F of the Champions League and secure a spot in the Europa League.

Midfielder Guilherme scored from close range in the 30th minute after a pass by forward Aleksandar Prijovic. The strike brought the hosts their first victory since a 1-0 triumph over Blackburn Rovers in 1995, the last time it played in the competition's group stage.

Sporting, which arrived with a two-

point lead and could have secured third place with a draw, played with 10 men from the 85th minute after midfielder William Carvalho was sent off for a second yellow card.

The Portuguese side hasn't won an away game in the competition since 2008, losing six of its seven games since then. Borussia Dortmund, which drew Real Madrid 2-2 in Spain, won the group with 14 points, two more than the defending champions. Legia ended with four points and Sporting three. — AFP

COPENHAGEN BOW OUT IN STYLE WITH BRUGES WIN

BRUSSELS: FC Copenhagen scored twice in the opening 15 minutes to secure a 2-0 victory at Club Bruges yesterday, but saw their hopes of a place in the Champions League knockout stages dashed.

An own goal by Bruges defender Brandon Mechele and a header from Mathias Jorgensen handed Copenhagen a deserved win at the Jan Breydelstadion that in the end was only good enough for third place in Group G.

The Danish side had needed victory and no more than a draw for Porto at home to English champions Leicester City to advance, but saw their hopes of a second round place quashed as the Portuguese side romped to a 5-0 win.

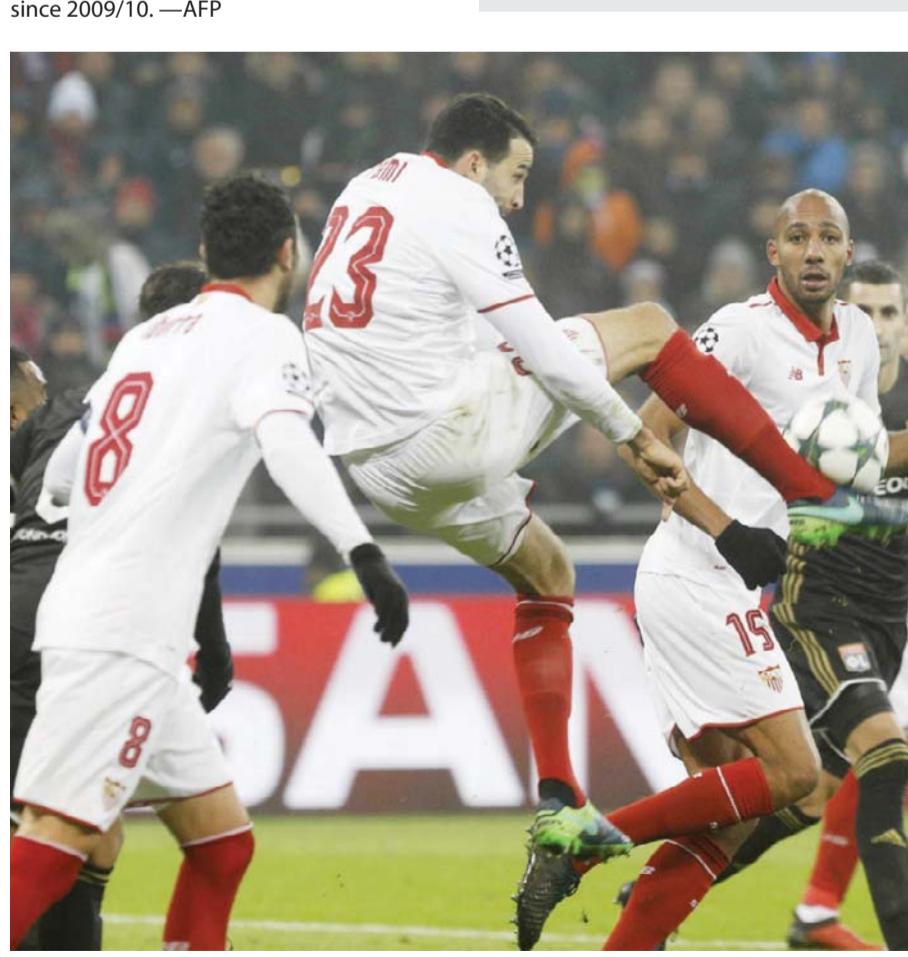
Copenhagen, who will now enter the last 32 of the Europa League, scored both their goals from set-pieces whopped into the box by Ludwig Augustinsson.

Captain Thomas Delaney got a slight touch to a free kick and the ball deflected into the net off the unlucky Mechele.

The visitors doubled their lead when Jorgensen headed home Augustinsson's corner. It was another soft goal conceded by the home side, who lost all six of their group games in this year's competition. — Reuters



BRUGES: FC Copenhagen's Erik Johansson (L) and Club Bruges's Wesley Moraes vie for the ball during their UEFA Champions League football match at the Jan Breydelstadion yesterday in Bruges. — AFP



LYON: Sevilla's Adil Rami clears the ball during the Group H Champions League soccer match between Lyon and Sevilla at the Lyon stadium in Decines, near Lyon, France, yesterday. — AP

Sports

Spurs rally, roll toward history on the road

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Messi or Ronaldo? No thanks, says Leipzig boss

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RED CARDS TO BE INTRODUCED IN CRICKET FOR UNRULY CONDUCT Page 17



MADRID: Real Madrid's Karim Benzema, center, heads the ball as he scores his team's second goal during the Champions League, Group F, soccer match between Real Madrid and Borussia Dortmund at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid, Spain, yesterday. — AP

DORTMUND STRIKE LATE, BEAT MADRID TO TOP SPOT

MADRID: Marco Reus's dramatic equaliser two minutes from time ensured Borussia Dortmund beat holders Real Madrid to top spot in Champions League Group F with a pulsating 2-2 draw yesterday.

With both sides already qualified, a double from Karim Benzema looked to have Real well set to leapfrog Dortmund and secure a home tie in the second leg of their last-16 tie.

However, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang reduced the arrears before substitute Reus slid in to turn Aubameyang's dangerous low cross high into the net.

A point does at least ensure Madrid match a club record 34 games unbeaten in all competitions, while Los Blancos are now also ensured of avoiding the likes of Bayern Munich, Manchester City or Paris Saint-Germain in Monday's draw.

Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane kept his promise to

go for victory despite the possibility of an easier draw by remaining in second with Casemiro and James Rodriguez coming into the side in only two changes from Saturday's Clasico.

However, Dortmund were well worthy of a point having created a huge number of chances in an end-to-end encounter.

Dortmund goalkeeper Roman Weidenfeller was busy early on as he parried a Benzema drive before denying Rodriguez twice in quick succession.

Benzema wasn't to be denied on 28 minutes when he bundled home Dani Carvajal's low cross at the back post. Real only went in ahead at the break, though, thanks to a mixture of good goalkeeping from Keylor Navas and wayward finishing from the visitors.

American wonder kid Christian Pulisic wasted a great chance when his weak effort was placed too close to

Navas before the Costa Rica international produced a brilliant stop to turn Andre Schuerle's free-kick behind.

Another dangerous break moments later saw Gonzalo Castro burst through on goal, but he tried to square for Aubameyang and overhit his pass.

RONALDO FRUSTRATED

Dortmund were even more profligate at the start of the second period as Ousmane Dembele and Castro fluffed their lines from point-blank range.

Benzema should have got his second of the night when Weidenfeller produced a brilliant save to parry the Frenchman's volley.

However, Benzema only had seconds to stew on that miss as moments later he bulleted home a header from Rodriguez's inch-perfect cross.

Just when Madrid looked in control, Dortmund final-

ly took one of their chances when captain Marcel Schmelzer's run wasn't tracked and his low cross was gratefully tapped home by Aubameyang for his 19th goal in as many games this season.

Cristiano Ronaldo's week had been dominated by unwanted headlines off the field surrounding allegations he stored millions of euros from image rights in tax havens.

And there wasn't much for the Portuguese to shout about as he was held scoreless for a fourth straight Champions League game by more Weidenfeller heroics to turn a rising drive headed for the top corner behind.

Ronaldo then seemed in disbelief as he struck the base of the post with just Weidenfeller to beat. And that miss proved costly as Aubameyang stormed past Sergio Ramos and produced the perfect cross for Reus to slide home the equaliser. — AFP

SPURS SINK CSKA TO EARN EUROPA LEAGUE BERTH

LONDON: Tottenham rounded off a frustrating Champions League campaign with a 3-1 victory over CSKA Moscow that secured the dubious consolation of a place in the Europa League. Mauricio Pochettino's side were already eliminated from the Champions League before yesterday's final Group E fixture, but they finished on a high note with their first victory at Wembley at the third attempt.

After falling behind to Alan Dzagoev's strike, Tottenham equalised through Deli Alli and Harry Kane netted in first half stoppage-time before goalkeeper Igor Akinfeev's own goal sealed the points.

Tottenham ended third in the group and the north Londoners will enter the Europa League when the knockout stages begin in February. Playing in the less glamourous of Europe's club competitions, with its gruelling itinerary and far-flung destinations, might be something of an unwanted burden for Tottenham given the potential to damage their Premier League ambitions.

But the Europa League winners qualify for the Champions League so Pochettino's men may yet end up taking it seriously.

CSKA's failure to hold onto their lead meant boss Leonid Slutsky was unable to leave Moscow with the parting gift of prolonged involvement in Europe after revealing on Tuesday that he would quit the Russian champions after the Spurs match.

Defeats against Monaco and Bayer Leverkusen in their other group matches at Wembley had played a major role in Tottenham's exit and contributed to a negative feeling about the stadium among players and fans.

But with Tottenham likely to spend the whole of next season as tenants at Wembley

while White Hart Lane is redeveloped, Pochettino was keen for his team to make themselves more at home by beating CSKA.

The swathes of empty seats at kick-off suggested many Tottenham supporters had already made up their minds about the Wembley experience. But the stay-aways missed Tottenham's only emphatic performance of the tournament.

EXTRA GEAR

Early on, Alli headed wide from Christian Eriksen's cross before Son Heung-Min's low strike was pushed out by CSKA goalkeeper Akinfeev. Another flowing Spurs attack saw Kyle Walker feed Kane, whose instinctive first-time pass released Eriksen, only for the Danish winger to shoot straight at Akinfeev.

Alli wasted a good chance to open the scoring when his tame shot from eight yards barely forced Akinfeev to move.

Not for the first time in their strangely lethargic European campaign, Tottenham were punished for a lackadaisical mistake in the 33rd minute.

A high punt towards CSKA's Zoran Tosic should have been easy for Jan Vertonghen, but the Spurs defender allowed his opponent to win the header and Dzagoev, unchecked by Eric Dier, raced onto the loose ball before firing past Hugo Lloris.

Faced with elimination from Europe, Tottenham found an extra gear and Alli equalised five minutes later when he controlled Eriksen's cross on the left side of the penalty area and whipped a fine finish into the far corner.

Tottenham had failed to score more than once in each of their past nine Champions League games, but 30 seconds into first half stoppage-time, they ended that dismal



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English striker Harry Kane (2nd L) misses with this header during the UEFA Champions League group E football match between Tottenham Hotspur and CSKA Moscow at Wembley Stadium in north London yesterday. — AFP

sequence. Eriksen chipped a pass towards Danny Rose and the left-back's low cross found Kane, who wasted no time dispatching a cool shot past Akinfeev for his seventh goal in his last six appearances.

Having established the lead, Tottenham looked far more composed after the interval and Kane came close to his second goal when he tested Akinfeev with a lunging volley.

Spurs defender Toby Alderweireld, back from a knee injury, came off the bench for his first appearance since October.

And Tottenham wrapped up only their second Champions League win this season in the 77th minute when Alli headed goalwards and Akinfeev saved before accidentally nudging the ball into his own net. — AFP

PORTO CRUSH LEICESTER TO EASE INTO LAST 16

PORTO: Porto eased into the Champions League knockout stages with an embarrassingly simple 5-0 win over Leicester City's hapless second-string side in the Estadio do Dragao yesterday.

With their qualification as Group G victors assured, the English champions rested key players, leaving their Portuguese hosts to cash in hungrily with a double from Andre Silva and fine strikes from Jesus Corona, Yacine Brahimi and Diogo Jota.

Leicester had only conceded one goal in their previously unbeaten first Champions League campaign but shipped three in 45 minutes with Silva starting the rout by heading home unchallenged from Corona's corner after six minutes.

One-way traffic and two brilliant goals ensued, Corona's magnificent first-time volley from Alex Telles' cross in the 25th minute being followed by Brahimi's cheeky back-



PORTO: Porto's Andre Silva, right, fights for the ball with Leicester's Wes Morgan during a Champions League group G soccer match between FC Porto and Leicester City at the Dragao stadium in Porto, Portugal yesterday. — AP

BUSINESS

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MONTE DEI PASCHI BOLSTERS EUROPEAN STOCKS

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Egypt sees 'three-year strategy' to revive its struggling economy

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DHAKA: Bangladeshi worker Russel, and who says he will turn 14 next year, works in a garage in Dhaka yesterday. Bangladeshi child laborers who live in slums work for an average of 64 hours a week, many of them in textile factories making clothes for top world brands, a major study said. — AFP

BANGLADESH CHILD LABORERS TOIL 64 HOURS A WEEK

DHAKA: Bangladeshi child laborers who live in slums work for an average of 64 hours a week, many of them in textile factories making clothes for top world brands, a major study said yesterday. The new report from the London-based Overseas Development Institute has found that 15 percent of Dhaka slum-dwellers aged between six and 14 did not go to school and worked full-time.

The report, entitled "Child labor and educa-

tion - a survey of slum settlements in Dhaka, found that two-thirds of girls from slum areas who are working full-time were employed in the booming garment sector. The findings raised concern over Bangladesh's \$30 billion clothes manufacturing industry, which is one of the world's biggest despite a dreadful safety record. The manager of one unnamed garment factory told researchers that while he was aware children aged 11-14 should not be working, he did

not regard their employment as illegal.

He also admitted that many of his employees did not carry identification cards which would verify their age. There was no immediate comment from Bangladesh authorities or its powerful garment manufacturers, but union leaders said child labor in factories was rampant. The extent of child labor in Bangladesh's textile industry was laid bare in July when a nine-year-old boy was brutally

killed at one of the largest spinning factories. Police probing the factory said they found a quarter of the workforce at the factory outside Dhaka were children.

The ODI report, one of the largest surveys on child work and education conducted in Bangladesh, found that by the age of 14 almost half of the children living in Dhaka's slums were working. The report's co-author Maria Quattri said researchers found many

children wanted to go to school. "But poverty was driving parents to find jobs for their children, even though they could see that it would jeopardize their long-term future," she wrote. The study also found that child labor levels rise from around eight percent at the age of 10 to 45 percent at the age of 14, with 36.1 percent of boys and 34.6 percent of girls saying they had experienced extreme fatigue. — AFP

UAE OUTPERFORMS MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Stock markets in the United Arab Emirates outperformed the region yesterday while investors booked profits in Saudi Arabian petrochemical shares and Egyptian blue chips. Dubai's main index closed 1.3 percent higher in healthy volume as some large and mid-sized shares, which had been relatively quiet so far this week, gained. Emaar Properties rose 2.4 percent.

A Dubai-based stock broker said she was seeing significant buy orders from foreign investors. In Abu Dhabi, investors bid up two banks that were expected to obtain shareholder approval yesterday for their previously announced merger. First Gulf Bank rose 5.4 percent and National Bank of Abu Dhabi rose 2.8 percent. The main Abu Dhabi index added 1.8 percent. Real-estate related shares were the top gainers in Qatar's main index which added 0.1 percent. United Development and Mazaya Qatar each rose 2.1 percent. Activity in other shares was quiet.

Saudi, Egypt

In Saudi Arabia, the general stock index pulled back 0.4 percent as the petrochemical sector, which had lifted the market higher over the last several days, weakened. Investors booked profits in most oil producers, suggesting the market had fully factored in last week's OPEC deal to curb oil output and prop up crude prices. Heavyweight Saudi Basic Industries lost 1.6 percent. Zain Saudi fell 0.6 percent after the company said its chief executive Hassan Kabbani had resigned and it had appointed Peter Kalaiaropoulos as his successor.

Bu Saudi Investment Bank added 1.0 percent after the company said its board had recommended an increase of the bank's capital through bonus shares, to be paid for through the transfer of retained earnings. Egypt's index main retreated 1.3 percent as trading volume jumped by roughly 50 percent from the previous session. Ninety percent of the 30 most liquid shares closed down. Orascom Telecom, which has been hammered since Sunday's news that its chief executive will step down next month and it would wind up a North Korean bank affiliate, fell a further 7.2 percent and was the most heavily traded stock.

"Shares in OTMT have almost doubled since October, so this sell-off is not only specific to this week's news, it's part of the overall sell-off seen across the broader market today," said Allen Sandeep, director of research at Cairo's Naeem Brokerage. Shares in most Egyptian stocks have enjoyed spectacular performances since authorities ditched the Egyptian pound's US dollar peg on Nov 3. Foreign institutional funds, which have been net buyers of Egyptian shares since the float, remained buyers yesterday, exchange data showed. "Sentiment has not shifted, the market is simply taking a breather," said Sandeep. — Reuters

FREE WEDDINGS, GRAVESTONES IN TURKS' PLAN TO BOOST LIRA

ANKARA: Convert your hard currency to Turkish lira and you could enjoy a free wedding package, a meal and a loaf of bread. Or even a gravestone. These incentives are being offered by Turkish businessmen to customers who respond to a call

assets abroad, "it's not going to have a huge impact on our balance of payments or on the value of the currency." Yesterday, the lira was trading at 3.42 to the dollar after rallying slightly this week. It had traded at 2.9 to the dollar at the start of the year.

'Economic coup'

With growth stuttering and the lira under pressure, Erdogan has turned preserving Turkey's economic stability into a national struggle, like the defeat of the July coup. "They are trying to stage a coup through interest rates, stock exchange and foreign currency transactions," Erdogan said on Sunday. He has repeatedly called for low-

interest rates to boost Turkey's growth, even though the central bank is theoretically independent.

The president also said trade with Russia, China and Iran should be done in local currencies. But Yesilada said they are "not a huge part" of Turkey's trade thus any impact-even if they agreed-would not be "major". "Fifty percent of our trade is with the EU, that's not going to change," he said. But he added that offering tenders in Turkish lira was a positive step. "It's a good idea to sell assets in Turkish lira and to contract tenders in lira. This is sensible." Turkey's privatization authority confirmed on Tuesday tenders would henceforth be offered in the local currency. — AFP



ISTANBUL: A customer shows a dollars exchange receipt to backer Gokhan Kuk (right) for free bread in Istanbul. Convert your hard currency to Turkish lira and you could enjoy a free wedding package, a meal and a loaf of bread. Or even a gravestone. These incentives are being offered by Turkish businessmen to customers who respond to a call

INVESTORS SEE CAUSE FOR WORRY IN TURKEY'S DIVIDED ECONOMIC TEAM

AK PARTY LEGACY BUILT ON ECONOMIC GROWTH

ANKARA: The Turkish government's eleventh-hour rescheduling of a meeting of its economic team to include the president last month was another stark reminder for investors: When it comes to policy, Tayyip Erdogan likes to call the shots. Erdogan's drive for lower interest rates has rattled financial markets and, along with alarm about the crackdown after the July coup and a stronger dollar, contributed to the lira currency losing a fifth of its value this year. Officials say this has widened a rift in the economic team between reformists who want more to be done to appease international investors - such as Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek and Finance Minister Naci Agbal - and populists such as Deputy Prime Minister Nurettin Canikli and Economy Minister Nihat Zeybekci.

Adding to the confusion is the central bank, which raised rates for the first time in nearly three years last month, despite Erdogan's appeals. "There isn't complete harmony among the economic leadership. On one side, there are those who are attuned to the needs of the global economy and act as anchors for the markets. On the other, there are those who want more national economic policies," a senior official from the ruling AK Party said. "It seems Simsek and Agbal are anchors in the eyes of the markets, and they are crucial for the Turkish economy to be understood internationally."

The party has relied on the economy's strong growth as the pillar of its success. Divisions among its top ranks could not come at a more inopportune time, both for Turkey's economic stability, and the party itself, as slowing growth and stubborn inflation risk undermine its achievements in the eyes of voters. Officials at Simsek and Agbal's offices were not immediately available for comment. "The policy setting is not transparent," said Dan Ragoonundon, an emerging markets portfolio manager at Janus Capital. "It's very hard to know who is in charge and when

markets don't have transparency or visibility they tend to assume the worst."

Last-minute change

When Prime Minister Binali Yildirim, an Erdogan stalwart who is generally seen as being aligned with the populists, last month abruptly rescheduled a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (EKK), sources in his office cited a scheduling conflict. However, some analysts saw the last-minute change as a move by Erdogan to stamp his authority on a meeting where weakness in the lira was due to be discussed. Erdogan, who as president is supposed to be above party politics, does not normally attend meetings of the EKK. An official at the presidency said there was nothing unusual in his attendance at the rescheduled meeting. "The economy is very important and President Erdogan just wanted to discuss the latest developments and measures. Such a meeting is not an exceptional issue for the government, officials, or President Erdogan himself," the official said.

In the past, the AKP was seen as being able to balance populist rhetoric with the needs of financial markets - delivering hospitals, roads and airports, and ensuring growth and jobs, while remaining sensitive to the needs of markets. Lately, investors aren't so sure. "Until now, they could always come to a compromise of some sort, and resolve their differences. But now, there are concerns they cannot find middle ground and that the divisions could continue to get worse. This is the risk that has markets worried," a local banker said.

Who's in charge?

Yildirim, who replaced Ahmet Davutoglu as prime minister in May after widespread reports of divisions between Davutoglu and Erdogan over the economy, has gone to lengths to say he is in charge of the economic team. Officials say

he has recently shown some sympathy with the reformist camp, although he maintains his allegiance to Erdogan.

"I am the current chairman of the EKK, and the person who will speak about the economy after me is... Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Simsek," Yildirim said in a recent interview with state broadcaster TRT. "In situations when I am not present, he is the one who has all the say and responsibility regarding the economy." All the while, Erdogan has been unrelenting in calling on the central bank to lower interest rates. "Those in the financial sector can sit comfortably... but the real investor is unfortunately experiencing hardship. So I say: 'Drop these rates, brother,'" he said a speech on Saturday to mark the opening of a new shopping centre in Istanbul.

Investors are still trying to figure out the position of the central bank under Murat Cetinkaya, who was only appointed in April. Policy is decided by the seven-member monetary policy committee which includes the governor, four deputy governors and two other appointees. Erdogan, who has described himself as an "enemy" of interest rates, says the central bank is independent but he has a right to criticize it. The bank initially cut rates following Cetinkaya's appointment, in line with Erdogan's demands. Last month's rate hike, however, was seen as appeasing the markets.

As the lira has hit a series of record lows, Erdogan has responded by urging Turks to cash out their foreign currency holdings and buy either lira or gold. For the time being, that may be the only boost to the lira. "This kind of dissonance between the president's concept of interest rate policy and that of the market is creating a huge obstacle for the central bank to intervene and stabilize the currency," said Phoenix Kalen, director of emerging markets strategy at Societe Generale. There was likely to be "much more pain" for the lira ahead, Kalen said. —Reuters



Representatives from Etihad Aviation Group (EAG) and The Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD) take group photo after the press conference.

ETIHAD AVIATION GROUP MAKES MAJOR COMMITMENT TO HEALTH OF ITS STAFF

KUWAIT: Etihad Aviation Group (EAG) will introduce healthier Weqaya-approved meal options to its staff restaurants after signing an agreement with The Health Authority - Abu Dhabi (HAAD). The agreement represents a significant commitment by EAG to the wellbeing of its employees, while contributing to a healthier community in its home of Abu Dhabi. The "Weqaya" logo, the official mark of healthy eating in Abu Dhabi, is only permitted on foods and at food outlets that meet strict requirements on preparation and ingredients, as governed by HAAD. Weqaya labelling can be displayed when food items, such as a salad or sandwich, contain less than 750 calories, are low in fat, saturated fat, salt and sugar, and high in fibre, among other specifications.

Dr Nadia Bastaki, Etihad Aviation Group Vice President Medical Services, said: "We have been working closely with HAAD for many months to understand the Weqaya requirements and incorporate them into our business so that our staff restaurants offer food of the highest nutritional quality and employees can quickly identify what choices are best for their health." Speaking at SIAL

Middle East 2016 in Abu Dhabi, Dr Bastaki added: "This is a major undertaking by EAG and demonstrates our commitment to a healthier workforce and to the reduction of health conditions in the community linked to a poor diet. We would like to thank HAAD for their guidance and support."

Dr Omniyat Al Hajeri, Director of Public Health and Research at HAAD, said: "HAAD is ramping up its efforts to fulfil its vision for a healthier Abu Dhabi" by promoting a healthy food culture in our community and ultimately increasing demand for it. In parallel to its awareness-raising efforts to increase demand, HAAD is also ensuring the availability of healthy food options across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi and making them easier to identify through the "Weqaya" logo.

We will continue to stress that besides regular physical activity, healthy eating habits are a critical component of leading a healthier lifestyle." Etihad Aviation Group, in collaboration with HAAD, held training sessions for Etihad food handlers on how to prepare healthy food, according to Weqaya food specifications. So far, more than 50 chefs and food and beverage staff have gone

through special training ahead of EAG's launch of nine Weqaya menu options across six staff restaurants this month.

Dr Al Hajeri added: "Our collaboration with EAG today, is an important milestone in promoting the Weqaya Nutrition Program, and encouraging its adoption across the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. We will continue to work diligently with all our partners in both the public and private sector to ensure a smooth implementation and adoption of healthy food specifications at food supply companies, cafes, restaurants and market stores."

The Weqaya Nutrition Program was launched in September 2013 to raise awareness about healthy food items available at food outlets in the Emirate, while encouraging outlets to increase their healthy offerings. HAAD collaborated with the Quality Conformity Council (QCC) and Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFA) to update the standards. The program will help contribute to the effective reduction of risk factors associated with major non-communicable diseases, such as heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| Japanese Yen | 2.680 |
| Indian Rupees | 4.515 |
| Pakistani Rupees | 2.920 |
| Srilankan Rupees | 2.062 |
| Nepali Rupees | 2.812 |
| Singapore Dollar | 215.700 |
| Hongkong Dollar | 39.408 |
| Bangladesh Taka | 3.835 |
| Philippine Peso | 6.157 |
| Thai Baht | 8.604 |

GCC COUNTRIES

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Saudi Riyal | 81.561 |
| Qatari Riyal | 84.004 |
| ani Riyal | 795.309 |
| Bahraini Dinar | 812.140 |
| UAE Dirham | 83.261 |

ARAB COUNTRIES

| | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Egyptian Pound - Cash | 23.000 |
| Egyptian Pound - Transfer | 17.180 |
| Yemen Riyal/for 1000 | 1.228 |
| Tunisian Dinar | 133.760 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 430.710 |
| Lebanese Lira/for 1000 | 2.038 |
| Syrian Lira | 2.179 |
| Morocco Dirham | 31.030 |

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

| | |
|--------------------|---------|
| US Dollar Transfer | 305.650 |
| Euro | 329.340 |

STERLING EXCHANGE CO.

GOLD

| | |
|---------|--------|
| 20 Gram | 239.11 |
| 10 Gram | 122.48 |
| 5 Gram | 62.08 |

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

RATE FOR TRANSFER

| | RATE FOR TRANSFER | SELLING RATE |
|-------------------|-------------------|--------------|
| US Dollar | 305.100 | 304.500 |
| Canadian Dollar | 230.445 | 229.800 |
| Sterling Pound | 390.340 | 389.000 |
| Euro | 330.010 | 328.500 |
| Swiss Frank | 285.180 | 283.500 |
| Bahrain Dinar | 808.795 | 807.500 |
| UAE Dirhams | 83.460 | 82.500 |
| Qatari Riyals | 84.680 | 83.500 |
| Saudi Riyals | 82.285 | 81.500 |
| Jordanian Dinar | 431.490 | 429.500 |
| Egyptian Pound | 17.561 | 17.000 |
| Sri Lankan Rupees | 2.058 | 2.000 |
| Indian Rupees | 4.487 | 4.300 |
| Pakistani Rupees | 2.910 | 2.800 |
| Bangladesh Taka | 3.871 | 3.700 |
| Philippines Peso | 6.148 | 6.000 |
| Cyprus pound | 167.550 | 165.000 |
| Japanese Yen | 3.680 | 3.500 |
| Syrian Pound | 2.430 | 2.300 |

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY

| CURRENCY | BUY Europe | SELL |
|--------------------|------------|----------|
| British Pound | 0.380067 | 0.390067 |
| Czech Koruna | 0.04093 | 0.016093 |
| Danish Krone | 0.039950 | 0.044950 |
| Euro | 0.321998 | 0.330998 |
| Norwegian Krone | 0.032262 | 0.037462 |
| Romanian Leu | 0.072657 | 0.072657 |
| Slovakia | 0.009157 | 0.019157 |
| Swedish Krona | 0.029383 | 0.034383 |
| Swiss Franc | 0.296080 | 0.307080 |
| Turkish Lira | 0.083891 | 0.094191 |
| Australia | 0.218700 | 0.230700 |
| New Zealand Dollar | 0.21155 | 0.220655 |
| America | 0.224493 | 0.233493 |
| Canadian Dollar | 0.138049 | 0.138049 |
| Georgina Lari | 0.301550 | 0.306250 |
| US Dollars | 0.302050 | 0.306250 |
| US Dollars Mint | 0.302050 | 0.306250 |
| Asia | 0.003373 | 0.003957 |
| Bangladesh Taka | 0.042953 | 0.046453 |
| Chinese Yuan | 0.042953 | 0.046453 |



CHINA WARNS AGAINST 'IRRATIONAL' OVERSEAS ACQUISITIONS

SHANGHAI: China has urged domestic companies to avoid "irrational" overseas investments following a record-setting buying spree that has worried authorities about capital outflows and rash spending. The rebuke carried by the Xinhua news agency did not single out particular firms but highlighted areas such as sports, hotels and entertainment where there have been major deals involving Chinese groups.

"We advise such companies to make cautious decisions," according to a joint statement issued by the Ministry of Commerce and other agencies and published late Tuesday. "Regulatory departments are also closely watching the irrational tendency in overseas investment in fields including real estate, hotels, cinemas, entertainment, and sports clubs."

The wave of overseas investment this year has complicated efforts by Beijing to stem capital outflows, which are putting downward pressure on the yuan.

Chinese mergers and acquisitions abroad in the first eight months of the year reached \$61.7 billion, surpassing those for all of 2015, official data showed recently. Among the more high-profile deals are Wanda Group's purchase of Hollywood studio Legendary for \$3.5 billion, as well as London-based Odeon & UCI cinema group in a deal worth around \$1.2 billion. The Chinese property-to-entertainment conglomerate also paid more than one billion euros for Swiss-based Infront Sports & Media. Appliance giant Midea took over leading German robotics firm Kuka for \$5 billion, and insurer-turned-hotelier Anbang paid



BEIJING: A woman uses her mobile phone outside a hotel in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

\$6.5 billion for 16 luxury properties from hedge fund Blackstone.

Chinese companies have increasingly gone abroad for investment opportunities as domestic growth slows and the government has encouraged firms to seek technology, resources and market access overseas.

"One of the reasons regulators are doing this is because the yuan (currency) has been under depreciation pressure and it is hard to control capital outflows," said Li Jiachao, marketing director for mergers and acquisitions advisory firm DealGlobe. China's foreign exchange reserves plunged by \$69 billion in November to \$3.05 trillion, its fifth straight monthly contraction and the largest month-on-month decline since January. — AFP

News

in brief

Iran to sign oil and gas deals with Total, Shell

TEHRAN: Iran was set to sign preliminary agreements with Total and Shell yesterday to develop major oil and gas fields as it seeks to boost its output, an oil official said. The deals include a \$10-12 billion expansion of the South Azadegan oil field and another project at the Yadavar oil field, both in southwestern Iran, as well as an offshore gas field near Kish Island in the Gulf. The official, speaking on condition of anonymity, did not specify how the projects would be divided between France's Total and Anglo-Dutch giant Shell. The agreements are only preliminary and must be finalized in the coming months, the official said. The decision to award major energy projects to foreign firms caused some controversy when the tenders were first announced in October. A senior commander in the paramilitary Revolutionary Guards, which has extensive economic interests in the energy sector, said it was a "disgrace" for Iranian firms to be subordinated to foreigners in the proposed contracts. But the oil ministry says foreign capital and know-how are vital to expanding the country's energy sector.

Credit Suisse steps up its cost cutting drive

ZURICH: Credit Suisse, Switzerland's second-biggest bank, said yesterday it was stepping up its cost cutting drive as market turbulence would crimp the performance of its wealth management units. The bank said it now aims to make 4.2 billion Swiss francs (3.8 billion euros, \$4.2 billion) in savings by the end of 2018, up from its previous target of 3.8 billion. It said it aims to reduce operational costs to 17 billion Swiss francs by 2018, instead of 18 billion. Credit Suisse has been undergoing a massive cost-cutting program since Tidjane Thiam, a former insurer, took the helm in October last year. It shook up its structure, pivoting away from risky investment banking towards wealth management. But the bank lowered the earnings target for its wealth management unit, saying "we have seen major changes in the market environment and political outlook, which have negatively impacted the market-dependent portion of our targets." It now expects the international wealth management unit to earn 1.8 billion Swiss francs in 2018, down from its earlier target of 2.1 billion, due to lower commissions on asset management.

UK industrial output unexpectedly drops

LONDON: Britain's industrial production has taken an unexpected tumble, hurt by a sharp slide in oil and gas extraction, official data showed yesterday. Output sank 1.3 percent in October compared with activity in September, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) revealed in a statement. That confounded market expectations for a slight gain. Over 12 months, it was down by 1.1 percent. Production was hurt by the shutdown of the Buzzard North Sea oil field—one of Britain's biggest—which was closed for maintenance, the ONS noted. Manufacturing output, which excludes mining and quarrying, electricity, gas and water supply, slid 0.9 percent in October from the previous month, dented by falling pharmaceuticals production. The ONS added that it decreased by 0.4 percent year-on-year. "October saw a sharp fall in UK oil output, largely down to the total shutdown of the major Buzzard oil field," said ONS senior statistician Katie Davies. "Small falls in output across a range of sectors also contributed to a drop in overall manufacturing."

BMW to compensate its Australian clients

SYDNEY: German car giant BMW has agreed to pay Aus\$77 million (US\$57 million) to compensate thousands of Australians who were misled into taking loans they could not afford in the country's largest consumer payback scheme. The Australian Securities and Investments Commission said at least 15,000 customers may have "suffered hardship as a result of BMW Finance's compliance failure". ASIC deputy chairman Peter Kell highlighted BMW's "sales-driven culture that failed to comply with the requirements of the credit laws and resulted in poor outcomes for many consumers. "We are encouraged that BMW Finance has recognized these shortcomings and agreed to a remediation program that will see thousands of consumers compensated," Kell said in a statement released Tuesday. "This is an example of the staggering cost of poor business practices." BMW said yesterday it was actively working with Australian authorities to meet its regulatory commitments.

AUSTRALIA ECONOMY IN A RARE CONTRACTION; SPENDING FALLS

ECONOMY SHRINKS 0.5% IN Q3

SYDNEY: Australia's economy contracted for just the fourth quarter in 25 years, official data showed yesterday, slowing the annual growth rate to 1.8 percent amid weaker government and consumer spending on top of softer trade figures. The Australian Bureau of Statistics reported a 0.5 percent contraction for the September quarter. It was the weakest figure in eight years—despite the recent upswing in commodity prices—and underlined the challenges facing a country in transition from a mining investment boom.

The contraction in real GDP (gross domestic product) recorded in the September quarter is not just a reminder, not just a wake-up call or a warning about being complacent when it comes to economic growth," Treasurer Scott Morrison told reporters in Canberra. "It is a demand to support economic policies that drive the investment needed... to survive in a tough and competitive environment." The latest figures—at the lower end of forecasts—came after a stellar second-quarter report that saw the economy expand by a revised 0.6 percent for 3.1 percent year-on-year, to mark a quarter of a century that Australia has avoided recession.

The Australian dollar fell about half a US cent to 74.25 cents. "It was even weaker-than-expected, and consumer (spending) was a big disappointment," JP Morgan economist Ben Jarman said. "We are of the view that the RBA (Reserve Bank of Australia) is going to have to ease to keep growth at a satisfactory level." Government investment fell by 0.2 percent for July-September, while household spending grew by a slow 0.4 percent. Net exports detracted 0.2 percentage points from growth. The central bank on Tuesday held interest rates at a record-low 1.50 percent, with governor Philip Lowe noting "some slowing in the year-ended growth rate is likely, before it picks up again."

Sustained weakness?

The Australian economy has charted a bumpy path since the end of the mining investment boom, with the data showing that resources spending was continuing to fall while business investment was weak. The RBA has eased rates by 300 basis points since November 2011—including two cuts this year—to support growth in non-resources industries. The focus now shifts to the October-December figures. Two consecutive quarters of negative growth would meet the technical parameters for a recession, but analysts say the latest disappointing data is more likely to be a one-off than a sign of sustained



SYDNEY: Construction personnel work on a building site in central Sydney yesterday. Australia's economy contracted for just the fourth quarter in 25 years, official data showed, slowing the annual growth rate to 1.8 percent amid weaker government and consumer spending on top of softer trade figures. — AFP

weakness. Construction and government spending look set to improve for the next quarter, while rebounding commodity prices should feed through to better export numbers, Westpac senior currency strategist Sean Callow said. Australians' willingness to spend has been dampened by slow wage growth while the third-quarter period also coincided with the fiercely fought federal election and a protracted vote count that may have left consumers unwillingly to loosen the purse strings, he added. "Almost everything that could have gone wrong has gone wrong in the same quarter, which at least raises the hope that there's a sharp rebound in Q4," Callow said. AMP Capital chief economist Shane Oliver expected Australia to avoid a recession, although growth was "still likely to be fragile and constrained". Inflation also remains well off the RBA's target range of 2.0-3.0 percent, giving the central bank scope to ease further. Despite the negative quarter, Australia's economy was still powering forward in comparison to developed world peers, Morrison said. "Our annual real growth is still higher than six out of the world's G7 economies, second only to the United Kingdom. Higher than the US, Canada, Japan, Germany, and higher than the OECD average," he said. — AFP

EGYPT SEES '3-YEAR STRATEGY' TO REVIVE ITS STRUGGLING ECONOMY

CAIRO: Egypt has an ambitious three-year reform plan that, with foreign help, can revive its struggling economy, the minister of international cooperation said. In an interview, Sahar Nasr said the "three-year strategy" will lead to a return of investments, boost industrial production and create jobs. It comes as Egypt faces not only falling growth and a currency crisis following years of political turmoil, but also increasing public discontent over rising prices.

"Once these reforms are all in place, there will be a positive impact on the economy, and on the social front," Nasr said. "Especially in the medium and long term." The economy of Egypt, the most populous Arab country, has faced major challenges since the 2011 ouster of longtime ruler Hosni Mubarak. President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, who took power after the 2013 overthrow of his Islamist predecessor Mohamed Morsi, has vowed to get the economy back on track.

His government has sought help abroad and on November 11 the International Monetary Fund approved a \$12 billion loan to Egypt over the next three years. The country will also benefit from the release of the first tranche of a \$1 billion World Bank loan and the deposit by the African Development Bank of the first tranche of a \$1.5 billion loan. Cairo is also finalizing an \$800 million loan with the European Union. Nasr said the aid programs are helpful but will provide only temporary support. Donors are "helping Egypt to stand on solid ground, helping Egypt not to rely on foreign aid, and not to

rely on any borrowing from international financial institutions" in the long run, she said.

'Three pillars' of reform

The international aid is "to improve Egyptians' living standards", she said, in a country where 27.8 percent live below the poverty line and public debt is nearing 100 percent of Gross Domestic Product. The goal is a return to sustainable economic growth of six percent by 2018, compared with 3.5 percent in the first half of this year. The government's reform plan is based on "three pillars", Nasr said.

The first is to boost private sector investment. "The key of the reform program is improving the business environment, encouraging industrialization, and also promoting exports," she said.

The second is restructuring the budget, including by cutting subsidies, which represent 7.9 percent of government spending. "On social housing, subsidies were initially going to the developers and we moved from this supply side to the demand side, so that subsidies would be effectively targeted to the low-income or middle-income households in a very transparent and effective manner," Nasr said. The third pillar is monetary reform, she said, describing it as "a major step in terms of economic stability". Egypt floated its currency on November 3, which was followed by a devaluation from the fixed rate of 8.8 pounds per dollar to a traded rate of 18 pounds per dollar last week. — AFP



NEW DELHI: Indian laborers walk past an elephant and others working in a field on a cold foggy morning in New Delhi yesterday. — AFP

INDIA HOLDS INTEREST RATES STEADY DESPITE CASH CHAOS

NEW DELHI: India's central bank left interest rates unchanged at 6.25 percent yesterday, defying expectations of a cut following the government's shock move to withdraw high-denomination banknotes from circulation. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the benchmark repo rate—the level at which it lends to commercial banks—would stay steady after it was cut to 6.25 percent in October.

Lower interest rates boost consumer spending, which is likely to see a sharp downturn in the wake of the government's so-called demonetization scheme but it can also cause an uptick in inflation. "The MPC (monetary policy committee) was of the view that given the reduction of policy rate of 25 basis points in October... a further reduction in the policy rate is not warranted at this juncture," RBI governor Urjit Patel told reporters.

The central bank also lowered its outlook for gross value added growth from 7.6 percent to 7.1 percent. GVA is different from gross domestic product, the measure typically used to show a country's economic growth. However, it is indicative of how the GDP could move, although not by the same amount. Pressure to cut rates mounted last week, with analysts expecting a 25 basis points cut after India reported a lower-than-expected 7.3 percent growth of GDP in the three months to the end of September. While that is better than most major economies, it is still lower than earlier predictions.

Analysts expect a further dip in those numbers driven by a spending slowdown after most of India's currency was withdrawn from circulation last month by the government in an effort to bring back billions in so-called 'black', undeclared, money into the formal system. The move unleashed chaos and a spending crunch across sectors. Ratings agency Fitch has already lowered its India growth forecast for the current fiscal year from 7.4 percent to 6.9 percent, saying the cash crunch will bring "temporary disruptions" to economic activity. Ashutosh Datar, an economist at IIFL Institutional Equities, said he was surprised the RBI had not taken action to boost consumer spending.

"This is a negative surprise for sure. I was expecting a 50 basis points rate cut and they've done nothing," he said. "Since the impact of the demonetization is unclear, I expected them to be proactive and do a rate cut. They've done the exact opposite by deciding to wait and watch." However Sunil Sinha, principal economist at rating agency India Ratings & Research, said that the decision to keep rates unchanged was logical. "RBI had already accounted for inflation in the last monetary policy and a further rate cut was not warranted," said Sinha.

Speaking alongside Patel, the RBI's deputy governor Rama Subramanian Gandhi insisted there was no reason for consumers to panic despite the lack of cash and said machines were working flat out to print more notes. — AFP



CAIRO: Egyptian Minister of International Cooperation Sahar Nasr works at her office in Cairo. — AFP

MONTE DEI PASCHI BOLSTERS EUROPEAN STOCKS

LONDON: European shares followed Asian stocks higher yesterday, buoyed by reports Italy would step in to rescue troubled bank Monte dei Paschi and expectations the European Central Bank would extend its bond-buying stimulus scheme this week. Italian government bond yields fell, narrowing the premium investors demand to hold them rather than benchmark German debt, to its tightest for about a month. The pan-European STOXX 600 index rose 0.8 percent, led by banks, and Italy's FTSE MIB share index gained 1.2 percent, hitting its highest for six months.

Shares in Monte dei Paschi, Italy's oldest bank and the focus of investor concerns over the country's banking sector, rose 9 percent. Reuters reported exclusively on Tuesday that Italy was preparing to take a 2-billion-euro controlling stake in the bank as prospects of a private funding rescue faded following Prime Minister Matteo Renzi's decision to resign. Investors' concerns were that a defeat for Renzi in a referendum on constitutional reforms could further undermine faith in the European Union - following Britain's decision to quit the bloc - as well as confidence in the euro currency.

Market reaction to Renzi's defeat and his resignation was relatively muted, partly as a consequence of a pledge by the ECB to buy Italian government debt if markets became unsettled. "Despite the fact that the probability of early elections has risen, the market is focusing on the banking sector and the fact the government seems to be showing more urgency in dealing with that problem," Mizuho strategist Antoine Bouvet said. Italian 10-year government bond yields fell 6 basis points (bps) to 1.92 percent yesterday, having hit 2.17 percent in the run-up to the vote. Yields on German 10-year debt, the euro zone benchmark, fell 1 bps to 0.36 percent.

The euro edged up 0.1 percent to \$1.0730. It fell as low as \$1.0505 on Monday in reaction to the referendum before hitting a three-week high the same day. "People had gone into the referendum with a very pessimistic view and I think the last five years have taught us that, as far as the euro is concerned, political issues often don't have a lasting impact," DZ Bank currency analyst Sonja Marten said. The dollar index, which measures the US currency against a basket of six of its major peers, was marginally down on the day. The yen fell 0.3 percent to 114.13 per dollar, approaching a 10-month low.

Many market participants were looking to the ECB's policy meeting today, at which it is widely expected to announce an extension of its quantitative easing program. Uncertainty remains over whether the size of monthly purchases will be kept steady or scaled back, and over whether it will send a formal signal on the eventual end of the program. One of the biggest movers in the currency markets was the Australian dollar, down 0.4 percent after data showed the Australian economy shrank by 0.5 percent, its biggest contraction since 2008, in the third quarter.

Australian stocks, however, closed 0.9 percent higher in anticipation of more fiscal and monetary stimulus. While rate futures imply scant chance of a Reserve Bank interest rate cut in the coming months, prospects of a hike vanished. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan rose 0.4 percent while Japan's Nikkei added 0.7 percent. Chinese shares gained 0.7 percent. China's foreign exchange reserves fell by more than expected last month to \$3.05 trillion, their lowest since 2011, the central bank said.

The yuan currency last stood at 6.8850 to the dollar, compared to a mid-point of 6.8808 set by the



TOKYO: People are reflected on the electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo. — AP

central bank. The currency is down 5 percent so far this year. Oil prices fell as investors questioned whether a deal to cut output agreed last week by the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and others would be enough to drain that global glut that has pushed prices lower.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, fell 30 cents to \$53.63 a barrel. "Investors are torn between hopes that producers will cut enough production to balance supply and demand, and fears that they won't," brokerage PVM Oil Associates' senior analyst, Tamas Varga, said. — Reuters



BEIJING: Photo shows Chinese 100 yuan notes. China's foreign exchange reserves plunged by \$69 billion in November to a five-year low, according to central bank data released on December 7, 2016 as policy-makers battled to support the yuan currency against a resurgent dollar. — AFP

CHINA NOV FOREX RESERVES FALL MORE THAN EXPECTED

THE LOWEST IN NEARLY 6 YEARS

BEIJING: China's foreign exchange reserves fell far more than expected in November to the lowest level in nearly six years, as authorities struggled to stem capital outflows and shore up the sliding yuan in the face of a relentlessly rising dollar. Reserves fell by \$69.06 billion last month, the fifth straight month of declines, to \$3.052 trillion, levels not seen since March 2011, central bank data showed yesterday. Some traders believe the \$3 trillion mark is a key psychological level for the People's Bank of China, but it risks rapidly churning through its still massive stockpile if the US dollar continues to rise against other currencies.

Last month's drop was the largest since January, when a sharp fall in the yuan and worries about China's slowing economy raised fears that Beijing would devalue its currency, roiling global financial markets. Economists polled by Reuters had expected reserves to drop \$30 billion to \$3.091 trillion in November, after a decline of \$45.7 billion in October. The central bank is widely believed to have sold US dollars to support the yuan currency as it sunk to more than 8-1/2 year lows last month.

China's foreign exchange regulator said the decline in reserves was partly due to the dollar's 3 percent rally versus major currencies in November. But the yuan's more than 5 percent slide so far this year has sparked a flurry of bets that the currency will weaken further, leaving traders wondering how long China can maintain its yuan defense and withstand a prolonged drain on reserves if the US dollar continues to rally. The yuan fell 1.6 percent in November alone, its worst month since August 2015 when Beijing shocked global markets by devaluing the currency by almost 2 percent overnight.

Adding to pressure on the currency, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has vowed to label China a currency manipulator on his first day in office on Jan. 20 and has threatened to impose huge tariffs on imports of Chinese goods. A senior central bank researcher told Reuters last week that Beijing needs to break a potentially destructive feedback loop, where expectations of further yuan weakness spur outflows, and fresh capital flight in turn puts more pressure on the currency. The central bank is also likely to worry about a faster drawdown of its reserves, which are approaching the closely watched \$3 trillion level, analysts said.

French bank Societe Generale said earlier this year that International Monetary Fund guidelines put \$2.8 trillion as the minimum prudent level for China, which is not far away if reserves keep falling at the current pace. Since mid-2014, China's forex reserves, which include a hefty amount of US government bonds, have shrunk by more than the gross domestic product of Switzerland. "Our baseline is that tightened capital controls enable the authorities to stay the course during the Trump dollar rally, which on

likely accounted for some of the fall in reserves. But China also has announced a string of measures in recent weeks to tighten controls on money moving out of the country, adding to market speculation that potentially destabilizing capital outflows are on the rise.

"The capital control tightening that Chinese authorities announced at end-November is a very good indicator that capital outflows continue from China and are turning threatening," analysts at Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ said in a note this week. The PBOC had sold a net \$39.2 billion worth of foreign exchange in October, indicating continued official intervention to support the yuan. To be sure, the yuan is falling alongside other emerging market currencies in the face of the strong dollar, which is being buoyed by hopes that President-elect Donald Trump will be able to shift the US economy into faster gear. It has been more steady lately against a basket of currencies of major trading partners.

But China, with its huge trade surplus with the United States, is firmly in Trump's sights. He has vowed to label China a currency manipulator on his first day in office on Jan. 20 and has threatened to impose huge tariffs on imports of Chinese goods. A senior central bank researcher told Reuters last week that Beijing needs to break a potentially destructive feedback loop, where expectations of further yuan weakness spur outflows, and fresh capital flight in turn puts more pressure on the currency. The central bank is also likely to worry about a faster drawdown of its reserves, which are approaching the closely watched \$3 trillion level, analysts said.

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ING's forecasts will persist through the first quarter of 2017," Tim Condon, ING's chief Asia economist, wrote in a note. — Reuters

But he warned that capital outflows during the dollar rally could become "excessive". The State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) has begun vetting transfers abroad worth \$5 million or more and is increasing scrutiny of major outbound deals, even those with prior approval, sources said last week. Currency analysts polled by Reuters expect the yuan to plumb its lowest level in nearly a decade next year on sustained capital outflows and further gains in the dollar. China's gold reserves fell to \$69.785 billion at end-November from \$75.348 billion at end-October. — Reuters

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But doubts have emerged over whether the planned cuts will be big enough to rebalance the market. Since the deal was announced, both OPEC and Russia have reported record production and output elsewhere is also resilient. The US Energy

CAB-HAILING COMPANY CAREEM LAUNCHES WOMEN DRIVERS IN CONSERVATIVE PAKISTAN

KARACHI: Taxi-hailing service Careem introduced women drivers in Pakistan yesterday, a rare initiative in a deeply conservative Muslim country where women account for only 22 percent of the workforce.

Careem has a larger market share than rival Uber in most of the 32 cities in the Middle East, North Africa and Pakistan region in which it operates. Now it has a new idea for Pakistan: taxis driven by women, who will pick up both male and female customers. The start-up operates in the Pakistani cities of Lahore, Islamabad and Karachi. "We want to give women the same opportunities and the same chance that men have of leveraging our platform to generate healthy income," said Careem's Pakistan General Manager Ahmed Usman. Usman said seven women drivers had qualified to join the fleet but applications were open and the company hoped more would apply.

Zahra Ali, 30, heard about Careem from a friend and thought it would be an "honorable" way to support her two children, who she is raising alone since the death of her husband two years ago. She had just enough money to buy a car and got her driving license this year. When Ali applied to be a Careem driver a few months ago, she was told there was no provision for women drivers. Then Careem called back with good news. "The only skill I know is driving," Ali told Reuters at her home in the city of Lahore. "Now I can raise my children honorably, I can give my children a good education."

'Women are not weak'
Launched in Dubai in 2012, Careem



KABUL: An Afghan money changer (second from right) counts a pile of Pakistani currency banknotes at a money exchange market in Kabul, Afghanistan. Afghans are increasingly uncertain about their future, less confident in their government and more pessimistic than before on issues such as security, corruption, and rising unemployment, according to the annual survey by the San Francisco-based Asia Foundation released yesterday. — AP

OIL PRICES STEADY NIGERIA PLANS TO RAISE OUTPUT SHARPLY

LONDON: Oil prices steadied yesterday as investors waited to see if OPEC and Russia would deliver promised production cuts designed to end a supply overhang that has weighed on the market for more than two years. North Sea Brent crude oil was up 10 cents a barrel at \$54.03 by 1130 GMT. US light crude was up 15 cents at \$51.08 a barrel. Oil prices surged almost 20 percent after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and Russia announced last week that they would cut production next year in an effort to prop up markets.

But doubts have emerged over whether the planned cuts will be big enough to rebalance the market. Since the deal was announced, both OPEC and Russia have reported record production and output elsewhere is also resilient. The US Energy

Information Administration said on Tuesday it expected domestic crude oil production for 2016 and 2017 to fall by less than previously expected. "Investors are torn between hopes that producers will cut enough production to balance supply and demand, and fears that they won't," said Tamas Varga, senior analyst at London brokerage PVM Oil Associates.

OPEC and non-OPEC oil producers meet this weekend in Vienna to agree details of the output cut, which targets an overall reduction of around 1.5 million barrels per day (bpd). OPEC member Nigeria, exempt from the cuts, said yesterday it hoped to boost its oil production to 2.1 million bpd in January, up from 1.9 million bpd now.

"We will see whether belief in the (OPEC production) deal will hold," said Eugen Weinberg, head of commodities

research at Commerzbank in Frankfurt. "There is a big discrepancy right now between expectations, perception and reality."

Despite widespread skepticism, many analysts say 2017 will likely see a more balanced oil market. "Oil markets are on track to tighten over 2017, which will be accelerated by OPEC's decision to reduce production alongside non-OPEC countries," said BMI Research. "If effectively implemented, we expect the global oil market will return to balance in Q1 2017." Oil production has been outpacing consumption by 1 to 2 million barrels per day since late 2014. "The average annual oil price will be higher in 2017 than in 2016, with Brent at \$55 per barrel for the year," BMI Research said. The average 2016 Brent price has so far been \$44.47 per barrel. — Reuters

FRENCH SOCIALISTS RISK MELTDOWN IN STRICKEN STEEL BELT

FLORANGE: Towering above the Moselle valley in northeast France are two rusting testaments to the dashed hopes of François Hollande's presidency that loom large over the election of his successor next year. Five years after steel giant ArcelorMittal snuffed out the last two blast furnaces in a crucible of France's heavy industry, the workers who fought to save their beloved "cathedrals", as they call them, are still seething. Lakshmi Mittal, the Indian billionaire owner of the sprawling steelworks that runs between the towns of Florange and Hayange, is the target of much of their ire. But the ruling Socialists are also feeling the heat. They are accused of betraying voters who elected Hollande on a promise to tame capitalism and keep the Florange fires burning.

"I will never again vote Socialist. Never. It's over," said Lionel Burriello, a 39-year-old mechanic, who followed his Italian immigrant father into the steel mills. "It was a shit job, toiling in the heat and the dust. But we took pride in it," said the trade unionist, one of the 629 workers who were moved to jobs in the site's rolling mills or pensioned off under a 2012 compromise brokered by the government. For Olivier Weber, another son of the valley who carried out the last smelting operation in October 2011, the loss of the hot steel mills robbed the region of a key marker of its identity. "Seeing the furnaces is like seeing

the graves of relatives in the cemetery. It's painful," the 35-year-old said. The deindustrialization that fuelled Brexit and Donald Trump's rise to the White House has created fertile ground for far-right leader Marine Le Pen, who is hoping to pull off a similar upset in the April-May election on a protectionist platform. More than 1.5 million manufacturing jobs have been lost in France in the past 25 years, with some of the country's best-known manufacturers like Peugeot and TGV high-speed train maker Alstom among those requiring a leg-up recently from the state. Situated at the crossroads between France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Germany, the Lorraine region where the Moselle valley is situated has kept afloat thanks to a broad manufacturing mix.

But the signs of decline sparked by the crisis in Europe's steel sector, which claimed a steelworks in Gandrange in 2008, are starting to stack up. "It's becoming a wasteland here," said Gabriele Mariotti, the owner of a cafe on the main street of Hayange, a grey town at the foot of the blast furnaces.

"The gold in this valley was steel. Now there's nothing left. They sent it all overseas," said Fernand, a scrap metal dealer and FN supporter whose son was among hundreds of people laid off from ArcelorMittal subcontractors in the past five years. In 2014, Hayange made head-



HAYANGE: Photo shows blast furnaces of steel giant ArcelorMittal at the Florange site, in Hayange, eastern France. — AFP

lines when it dumped its longtime Socialist mayor for a young gun from Le Pen's National Front (FN). Trade unionist Frederic Weber fears the FN could spring a similar surprise in the presidential election, which polls show ending in a duel between Le Pen and François Fillon, a Thatcherite conservative. "People here are lost," says Weber. "They tell us they will either not vote at all or vote FN."

On a visit to Florange in October Hollande defended the five-year commit-

ment he secured from ArcelorMittal in 2012 to preserve jobs and plough 180 million euros (\$193 million) into the area in return for the mothballing of the furnaces. "The battle was won," Hollande declared, an assessment contested by the workers, who resent him for overriding former economy minister Arnaud Montebourg's proposal to temporarily nationalize the site. Last week, Hollande announced he would not stand for re-election, paving the way for his prime minister, Manuel Valls, to

throw his hat in the ring. "Whether it's Hollande or Valls, it's the same thing. It's just a change of packaging," Weber said.

Globalisation's losers

Local Socialist lawmaker Michel Liebgott accuses "Made in France" champion Montebourg—who is also running for the party's presidential nomination—of perpetuating "a romantic vision of the working class that no longer exists". "In today's factories, people are sitting at computers," Liebgott argues, calling for greater investment in training people to work in high-tech plants.

Burriello, who is running for parliament next year on a hard-left list, said voters drawn to populist candidates faced a choice between two "us-versus-them" programs. "With the National Front, it's us versus contract workers from other European countries. With the far left, it's us versus the financial oligarchy." The opportunities and pitfalls of Europe's open borders are on daily display in Lorraine, where 90,000 skilled workers commute across the border each day to Luxembourg for better wages, while the unskilled eke out a living at home. It's a politically toxic cocktail for Liebgott, whose 20-year parliamentary career could be in jeopardy if he stands again in the general election in June. "I'd be happy to make it to the second round," he says. — AFP

TRUMP INTERJECTS HIMSELF IN AIR FORCE ONE AND BUSINESS DEALS

FAYETTEVILLE: President-elect Donald Trump, a political newcomer who touts his corporate skills, turned businessman-in-chief Tuesday, first demanding the government cancel a multibillion-dollar order for new presidential planes and then hailing a Japanese company's commitment to invest billions in the US. "We will defend American jobs. We have to look at it almost like a war," Trump thundered in North Carolina, vowing to keep companies from moving overseas during the second stop of his "thank you" tour to salute his supporters. "We want the next generation of innovation and production to happen right here in America."

Trump was far less bombastic than during the tour's kickoff in Ohio last week, striking more of the healing notes traditionally delivered by a president-to-be in the weeks after a bruising election. He will travel to Ohio State University on Thursday to meet with some of the victims of the recent car-and-knife attack that left 11 people injured, according to a person familiar with the plan but not authorized to discuss them before they are announced. "We will heal our divisions and unify our country. When Americans are unified there is nothing we cannot do - nothing!" Trump told the crowd in Fayetteville. "I'm asking you to dream big again as Americans. I'm asking you to believe in yourselves."

The Republican businessman largely stuck to the script Tuesday - and, in a change, even stopped the crowd when it started to boo the media - and avoided some of the score-settling and scorched-earth rhetoric that defined his campaign and was present again last week in Cincinnati. He also repeated his vow to fortify the nation's military and brought Marine Gen James Mattis on stage, officially naming his choice to be Defense Secretary after teasing it last week.

Boeing's stock drops

Earlier in the day, Trump plainly telegraphed that when he takes office in six weeks he'll take an interventionist role in the nation's economy - as well as play showman when he sees a chance. The celebrity businessman's declaration about Air Force One caused manufacturer Boeing's stock to drop temporarily and raised fresh questions about how his administration - not to mention his Twitter volleys could affect the economy. "The plane is totally out of control," Trump told reporters in the lobby of Trump Tower. "I think Boeing is doing a little bit of a number. We want Boeing to make a lot of money, but not that much money." Earlier he had tweeted that the deal's costs were "out of control, more than \$4 billion. Cancel order!"

Not long after his first appearance, Trump returned to the lobby with Masayoshi Son, the CEO of SoftBank, a massive telecommunications company that counts Sprint among its holdings. Trump pointed proudly to Son's commitment to invest \$50 billion in the United States, which Trump said could create 50,000 jobs. Trump - who also tweeted the deal - shook Son's hand and posed for photos, revealing as he had last week when he toured a Carrier plant in Indiana where he said he had instigated an agreement that will preserve about 1,000 jobs the appliance maker had planned to move to Mexico. Details of the deal were scarce and it was unclear if the money

was part of a fund of up to \$100 billion in global technology investments that SoftBank and the government of Saudi Arabia announced in October. As for Air Force One, the government has agreed that Boeing will build two new planes, which would go into service around 2024. That means Trump might never fly on the aircraft, which carry US presidents around the globe. The Air Force has pressed for a faster schedule, saying the aging current Boeing 747s are becoming too expensive to repair and keep in good flying shape. The overall deal for researching, developing and building new planes was to be about \$3 billion, but costs have been reported to be rising.

The General Accountability Office estimated in March that about \$2 billion of the total - for work between 2010 and 2020 - was for research and development on complex systems, not for building the actual aircraft. The inflated \$4 billion figure Trump cited appears to include operation and maintenance as well. Boeing responded to Trump Tuesday in a statement: "We are currently under contract for \$170 million to help determine the capabilities of these complex military aircraft that serve the unique requirements of the president of the United States. We look forward to working with the US Air Force on subsequent phases of the program allowing us to deliver the best planes for the president at the best value for the American taxpayer."

Cancel order!

The \$170 million figure is just for a portion of the research and development efforts. Trump began his onslaught against Boeing at 8:52 am, tweeting "Boeing is building a brand new 747 Air Force One for future presidents, but costs are out of control, more than \$4 billion. Cancel order!" That tweet came 22 minutes after the Chicago Tribune posted a story in which the Boeing CEO voiced concerns about Trump's views on trade.

The president-elect then descended to the lobby of the Manhattan skyscraper that bears his name to reiterate his case. Trump had tweeted in 2013 that he owned Boeing stock, but a spokesman said Tuesday he sold all of his stock holdings in June. That sale was not publicized by the campaign at the time, and aides did not reveal how much cash it might have generated. If Trump had held onto his stock portfolio, he would have been required to repeatedly file reports with the US Office of Government Ethics. A 2012 update of the Ethics in Government Act obliges presidents and other senior government officials to report such transactions.

Trump now uses his own plane, a Boeing 757, which he has outfitted with white leather and gold, a large flat-screen television and a bedroom. But as president it is expected that he would travel aboard the Air Force jet, which is equipped with special safety, defensive and communications equipment. Air Force One also has seating for reporters; Trump generally does not allow the press on his own plane. Later this week, Trump will use that plane to travel to rallies in Iowa and Michigan. And on Saturday, Trump will attend the 117th annual Army-Navy football game.

The game between the two military academies often draws the commander in chief; both Barack Obama and George W. Bush have attended in recent years. — AP



NEW YORK: President-elect Donald Trump, accompanied by SoftBank CEO Masayoshi Son, speaks to members of the media at Trump Tower in New York on Tuesday, Dec 6, 2016. — AP

TRUMP WOOS ASIAN FIRMS

SOFTBANK'S SON PLEDGES \$50 BILLION

NEW YORK: Two of Asia's biggest technology companies said they were looking to expand investment in the United States, as President-elect Donald Trump pushes to bring manufacturing and jobs back home. Billionaire businessman Masayoshi Son, also the head of Japan's SoftBank Group Corp, pledged a \$50 billion investment in the United States, and Apple Inc supplier Foxconn said it was in preliminary discussions to expand its US operations.

Son said on Tuesday, after meeting Trump, his investment would create 50,000 new jobs, a move the US President-elect claimed was a direct result of his election win. The investment pledge revived speculation that US telecoms giant Sprint Corp, 82 percent owned by SoftBank, might rekindle merger talks with T-Mobile US Inc that died under pressure from US regulators. The lack of details on the investment timetable also prompted doubts on whether the promise of money and jobs will be met, as Sprint is slashing staff numbers to cut more than \$2 billion in costs this fiscal year.

Trump's moves since the election to engage with individual companies, while turning his back on broader, years-in-the-works trade deals, show that he is leaning on the deal-making skills he honed in the boardroom. Trump campaigned against the over-regulation of business and is expected to be more open to mergers than President Barack Obama. The \$50 billion investment, announced jointly by Trump and Son in the lobby of the Trump Tower in Manhattan, would come from the \$100 billion tech investment fund the head of SoftBank is setting up with Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund and other potential partners, according to the Wall Street Journal.

"Ladies and gentlemen, this is Masa from SoftBank of Japan, and he's just agreed to invest \$50 billion in the United States and 50,000 jobs," Trump said. "He would never do this had we (Trump) not won the election!" Trump later Tweeted. Son, who wore a red tie and red sweater under his suit jacket, told reporters his company, a \$68 billion telecommunications and tech investment behemoth, would create the jobs by investing in startup companies. He also said he expected a lot of "deregulation" under a Trump administration. Trump and Son did not give a timeline for the investment. Trump's four-year term will begin after his Jan. 20 inauguration.

Son's business partner Foxconn issued a brief statement after a report by broadcaster CNBC showing a snapshot of a page held by Son outlining the investment carrying the logos of SoftBank and the Taiwanese firm, formally known as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co. "While the scope of the potential investment has not

been determined, we will announce the details of any plans following the completion of direct discussions between our leadership and the relevant US officials," the Foxconn statement said. Son and Foxconn founder Terry Gou are considered close and have several business ventures together, including launching humanoid Pepper - which is manufactured by Foxconn - into several markets, and investing jointly in India.

Shares surge

In October, prior to the election, SoftBank said Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) would be the lead partner in the \$100 billion tech fund and could invest up to \$45 billion over the next five years. SoftBank expects to put in at least \$25 billion. Shares in SoftBank jumped 6.2 percent yesterday in Tokyo to their highest since August last year. "Now the market sees SoftBank as a Trump-related stock and that's because it reacted favorably to their meeting," said Fumio Matsumoto, a fund manager at Dalton Capital in Japan.

Son had hoped to merge Sprint with T-Mobile US to take on US market leaders AT&T Inc and Verizon Communications Inc. Shares of Sprint

briefly reached their highest level in 2-1/2 years, soon after Son's comments. They closed up 1.5 percent, while shares of T-Mobile US rose 1.8 percent. It was not immediately clear how much of SoftBank's investment had been disclosed before. SoftBank said on Nov 7, the day before the US election, it planned to make future large-scale investments via the \$100 billion fund, rather than on its own, to avoid growing already-bloated debt. Whether or not Trump's election led to SoftBank's planned investment, the billionaire's victory has been a boon to stock investors.

The Dow Jones industrial average closed at another record level on Tuesday, its 11th new high since the Nov 8 vote. Should the SoftBank fund grow as large as \$100 billion, it would be one of the world's largest private equity investors and a potential kingpin in the technology sector. SoftBank, a diverse firm that also holds stakes in Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, has been stepping up investment in new areas, as Son aims to make the firm the "Berkshire Hathaway of the tech industry". It purchased UK chip design firm Arm Holdings for \$32 billion this year in Japan's largest ever outbound deal. — Reuters

TRUMP MISSES TARGET WITH CHINA ONSLAUGHT: EXPERTS

BEIJING: US President-elect Donald Trump accuses China of keeping its yuan currency artificially low and slapping unfair taxes on American exports. However, analysts say Beijing is in fact struggling to prop up the yuan as capital flows out of China's flagging economy in search of better investments in the United States. "Did China ask us if it was OK to devalue their currency (making it hard for our companies to compete), heavily tax our products going into their country (the US doesn't tax them)? Trump wrote Sunday in a Twitter outburst. 'I don't think so!'

Close controls

China keeps close controls on its currency, allowing it to fluctuate within a two percent margin from a point fixed by the central bank each day. And its value has been steadily dropping for over a year. The yuan, also known as the renminbi, is currently at an eight-year low of 6.89 to the dollar. Yet the evidence suggests the currency is over, not under, valued. On August 2015, the People's Bank of China announced a surprise five percent devaluation of the yuan. Since then, the currency has fallen another six percent.

The initial devaluation, Beijing said, was intended to make the yuan trade closer to its market value as the country lobbied to have the unit join the International Monetary Fund's elite basket of currencies—not export taxes, as Trump claims.

But downward pressure proved to be stronger than expected, and since that time the PBOC has been scrambling to prop it up. China is hemorrhaging foreign currency reserves. Data released on Wednesday show they plunged by \$69 billion in November alone. China has spent that money on buying back its own currency, analysts say, in an effort to keep the yuan's value artificially higher.

China prefers to see the yuan strengthen, or at least be stable; to avoid volatility that compromises the currency's evolving internationalisation, Credit Agricole analyst Dariusz Kowalczyk said.

Meanwhile, the US dollar is soaring on expectations Trump will embark on an infrastructure spending spree that would fan inflation and force the Federal Reserve to hike interest rates. That expectation is fuelling demand for US assets—causing capital to flee China and other emerging markets. — AFP



FLORIDA: Air Force One is seen on the tarmac at Andrews Air Force Base, Md Tuesday, Dec 6, 2016, before President Barack Obama boards en route to MacDill Air Force Base in Tampa, Fla. President-elect Donald Trump wants the government's contract for a new Air Force One canceled. — AP

BOSNIAN BUSINESSES GO HALAL TO SERVE GULF VISITORS, EYE EXPORTS

SARAJEVO: Bosnian banks, food producers and hoteliers are adopting halal standards to tap a fast-growing market thanks to the country's large Muslim population, an influx of Gulf tourists and growing trade with the Arab world. Bosnia has one of Europe's largest indigenous Muslim populations, traditionally liberal in its interpretation of Islam, but the arrival of Arab fighters during the 1992-95 war and an influx of Saudi money has spurred an Islamic revival.

The country, half of whose population is Muslim, has become a regional hub for halal products since it set up Europe's first agency for halal quality certification in 2006. "Market potential is high because the phenomenon is new and there is a gap between demand and supply," said agency head Amir Sakic, adding the halal market in the Balkans had grown by about 17 percent each year over the past decade.

The agency has certified thousands of products from Bosnia, Serbia, Montenegro and Lithuania and helped Croatia, Serbia and Macedonia to establish their own halal quality agencies.

The halal market was worth more than \$1 trillion in 2015, according to Deloitte Tohmatsu Consulting, and growing by about 15 percent a year. Halal certification confirms that a product was manufactured in keeping with Islam's Sharia law. It must not contain traces of pork, alcohol or blood, and must be made on factory lines free of

contamination risk, including from cleaning. "At Klas, all products are halal," said Vasilija Poljo, quality manager at Sarajevo-based food producer Klas, explaining that people often confuse halal products with products that lack pork content.

"It's much more - it requires that all raw materials must also be cleared of pesticides, heavy metals, GMO, antibiotics and other elements that have a negative effect on our health." The Gulf-owned Bosna Bank International (BBI), Bosnia's only bank operating on Islamic principles, helps exports with its 550 million marka-strong (\$300 million) portfolio of halal projects. "The halal industry is a corridor to the Islamic world because the largest investments today come from that part of the world," said Amer Bukvic, the director of the BBI, which together with the Sarajevo Stock Exchange (SASE) launched the Balkans' first Islamic share index of listed firms in October.

Gulf investors have bought large swathes of agricultural land and food-producing companies in Serbia and Bosnia to help address weaknesses in the supply chain of halal ingredients. "The first thing that visitors from the Arab world look at is if there is a halal certificate," said Saljo Mrklic, an owner of two large hotels in Sarajevo. "It is expensive to maintain the certificate - organic food is more expensive - but in the end it pays back. You get more guests." — Reuters

PETER KALIAROPOULOS PICKED AS CEO OF ZAIN SAUDI ARABIA

RIYADH: Zain Saudi Arabia announces the appointment of telecom stalwart Peter Kaliaropoulos as CEO of Zain Saudi Arabia (Zain KSA), effective January 1, 2017. Peter joins the company to continue the healthy foundation of transformation and growth achieved over the past three years by Hassan Kabbani, who has decided to step down from his post for personal reasons, effective 31st December 2016.

An Australian national, Kaliaropoulos joins Zain Saudi Arabia as a highly-accomplished telecom professional having enjoyed over 30 years of experience in the international ICT sector, and playing a key role in the transformation and growth of a number of companies operating across the Asia-Pacific and Middle East regions. In his most recent role, Kaliaropoulos was the GM



Peter Kaliaropoulos

of 'touch' Lebanon until June 2016, the country's leading operator that Zain manages on behalf of the Lebanon Telecom Ministry and then took on the role as an advisor to the 'touch' Chairman and Vice Chairman of Zain Group, Mr Bader Al Khafrafi.

In his varied roles over the years, Mr. Kaliaropoulos has been responsible for driving customer-centric operating cultures, optimization of productivity levels and implementing growth strategies. He has also served as a Director on the Board of various technology and telecommunication companies in Singapore, India, USA, Australia, New Zealand and the Middle East.

His Highness Prince Naif bin Sultan bin Mohammed bin Saud Al Kabeer, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Zain Saudi Arabia said, "Peter Kaliaropoulos joins Zain Saudi Arabia at an important stage of the company's evolution and we have the

utmost confidence he has the right leadership qualities to take the operation to next phase of growth, building upon the many achievements accomplished by Hassan Kabbani during his tenure."

HH the Chairman noted, "In recent years Zain Saudi Arabia has witnessed many highlights, notably the Company's recent High Order granting of a 15 year license extension as well as a universal license to provide all telecommunication services, including fixed services. The High Order also granted Zain Saudi Arabia the opportunity to coordinate with the Ministry of Finance to discuss alternatives regarding the amounts due to the government. In addition, the reduction by the CRTC to reduce Mobile Termination Rates (MTRs) will all support the financial and future prosperity of the company." Furthermore HH the Chairman added, "The company's transformation plan and continuous investment in 4G LTE network upgrades and expansion combined with numerous data monetization initiatives has resulted in the recording of impressive revenue growth and being EBITDA positive."

HH the Chairman concluded by saying, "I am confident that Zain Saudi Arabia will enter a new and prosperous era, playing a key role in the growth of the telecommunications sector and the economic and social development of the Kingdom. As the country evolves, we have an important role to play in the transformation of the Kingdom towards a digitally enabled and diversified economy. On behalf of the Board of Directors I would like to thank Mr. Kabbani for his success in managing the transformation of Zain Saudi Arabia. We all wish him well in his future endeavors."

Scott Gegenheimer, CEO of Zain Group noted, "I would also like to express my profound gratitude to Hassan Kabbani's efforts in the successful transformation of Zain Saudi Arabia over the past three years, fulfilling the mission that was set when he joined. With Peter Kaliaropoulos' vast and impressive experience in technology and management over the past 30 years, and the compelling support of Zain Group's resources in all facets of the business, we are confident that he will build on the solid foundations laid by his predecessor and will bring new innovation and take full advantage of the digital growth opportunities in the Kingdom." Peter Kaliaropoulos has a Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical) from the University of NSW (Sydney, Australia) and has a Master of Business Administration, from Macquarie University (Sydney).

ABK ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF 'DOUBLE YOUR SALARY' DRAWS

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) held its 32nd 'Double Your Salary' weekly draw on 5th December, 2016 at the Bank's Head Office in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, announcing the names of the winners for this week. The promotion includes weekly draws, with two winners per draw. The campaign will run until 27th June, 2017. The winners this week were: (1) Hasan Hussain Taher Al Shemali - Quran Branch. (2) Fajer Ali Salem Ali - Andalus Branch.

New customers who transfer their salary to ABK receive KD 100 and will automatically

be entered into the weekly draws to double their salaries. Existing customers who are already transferring their salary to ABK are entered into a separate draw.

The next 'Double Your Salary' draw will be held on 12 December, 2016 where two new lucky winners will be announced. All winners will be contacted personally and a weekly announcement will be made through the media with the winners' names. For more information about Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlal' at 1899899.



CAIRO: An Egyptian man carries bread as he rides his bicycle in downtown Cairo. — AFP

EGYPTIAN BEEKEEPERS UNDER THREAT AS ECONOMY SLUMPS

SHIBIN EL KOM: Egypt's beekeepers say their hives are under threat because of a shortage of sugar, as are the flowers and crops that their bees pollinate. Sugar became hard to find in recent months after the government took control of stocks to counter what it said was an epidemic of hoarding by merchants reacting to rising prices as a result of a shortage of foreign currency. Bees are fed sugar to tide them over the winter and to compensate for honey vested from their hives.

Beekeeping in Egypt can be traced back to the time of the Pharaohs, with the first hieroglyphs of bees dating back thousands of years.

"There is a sugar crisis and the bees have to receive nutrition through their winter hibernation," said commercial beekeeper Saeed Hagrass. With sugar in short supply, beekeepers had to let their bees consume honey instead. "So now instead of profiting from taking the honey produced and selling it, we are now supplying it for the bees again instead of the sugar," Hagrass told Reuters Television at his farm in Shubin El Kom, the capital of the Nile Delta province of Menoufia.

His son Mohamed said the government should step in to help, particularly as there were opportunities to export honey profitably to the

United States and Canada. "We are calling on the government to help the beekeepers to provide support."

This will create employment opportunities to the youth and open up investment." Mohamed added: "Many will be employed and the country will receive hard currency. We are in dire need of hard currency and investment." Another beekeeper, Rayhan Meligy, said crops would suffer if bees were allowed to die out. "The crops are pollinated through bees. There will be no crops and the corn will decline, the harvest will decline and the clover will decline. All the crops will decline," he said. — Reuters

CURRENCIES TREAD WATER AS ALL EYES TURN TO ECB STERLING FALLS AFTER WEAK INDUSTRIAL DATA

LONDON: Most major currencies treaded water yesterday with traders looking ahead to a meeting of the European Central Bank today that could set the tone for markets after the sharp moves in the wake of last month's US elections. The ECB is widely expected to announce an extension to its quantitative easing program, but uncertainty reigns over whether the size of the monthly asset purchases will be kept steady or scaled back, and over whether a formal signal on the eventual end of the asset-purchase program will be sent.

If the ECB does say it will start to reduce its asset purchases - so-called tapering - the euro would probably rebound following a 4 percent fall against the dollar over the past month, analysts said. Yesterday the European single currency edged up 0.2 percent to \$1.0734. It had slumped on Monday to \$1.0505, its lowest since March 2015, in a knee-jerk reaction after Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi lost a referendum on constitutional reform and said he would resign.

But the euro quickly jumped back to a 3-week high of \$1.0797 on the same day as a worst-case political scenario for Rome appeared to have been averted for the time being, and as investors turned their attention to the ECB. "People had

gone into the referendum with a very pessimistic view and I think the last five years have taught us that, as far as the euro is concerned, political issues often don't have a lasting impact," DZ Bank currency analyst Sonja Marten said in Frankfurt. The dollar was flat at 114.03 yen, not far off the peak of 114.83 hit last week, its highest against the Japanese currency since early February. The greenback has surged over 10 percent against the yen in the past month.

Bank of Japan Deputy Governor Kikuo Iwata said yesterday that the central bank had not shifted its focus away from the pace of money printing and stressed it remained committed to using both rate cuts and asset purchases as key tools to revive the economy. "The Fed is hiking rates, the ECB might extend the duration of its program... but the next big thing is going to be tapering," said Marten. "There's a general move away from adding onto expansionary measures. So the central banks that continue to signal that they are willing to do that stand out."

Fiscal largesse
Against a basket of currencies, the dollar edged down 0.1 percent to 100.44, having

poked above 102.00 to a 13-1/2-year high in late November as US Treasury yields soared on prospects of President-elect Donald Trump adopting large fiscal spending and inflationary policies. "While we still think that the dollar could bounce further, especially in 2017, euro/dollar's short-term direction will ultimately depend on what the Fed has to say about the future direction of US interest rates at its meeting next week," said Kathleen Brooks, research director at City Index.

"If the Fed believes that President-elect Trump's fiscal largesse warrants a faster pace of rate increases than is currently being priced in, then the market will rush to price in higher yields, which will boost the dollar and weigh on currencies like the euro." The biggest mover among major currencies was sterling, which fell as much as 0.8 percent to hit a one-week low of 85.255 pence against the euro. It also slid half a percent against the dollar after data showed British industrial output suffered its biggest monthly fall in more than four years. The Canadian dollar was flat ahead of a Bank of Canada policy meeting that is expected to see interest rates left unchanged. — Reuters

NISSAN SCOOPS SILVER AT THE MENA EFFIE AWARDS

DUBAI: At this year's MENA Effie Awards, Nissan Middle East's recent campaign around its partnership with the International Cricket Council (ICC), has landed the Japanese automaker a silver award in the 'Entertainment and Sports' category, for its campaign, "#MomentsThatCount". Nissan becomes the first automotive brand in the region to win an award in this category. The winning campaign, "#MomentsThatCount", was aimed at creating awareness around Nissan's recent sponsorship agreement with the International Cricket Council (ICC). Nissan executed the campaign by taking over a street cricket game and providing players with an incredible and an unexpected experience that they will never forget.

Nissan surprised the players having one of the greatest bowlers of all time, Wasim Akram, to drop in on them unannounced and join in their game. To add more excitement to the match, the company set a pop-up cricket pitch, as well as provided players with world class kit, which included branded equipment and clothing. The Nissan match takeover engaged with fans globally by tapping into the heightened excitement around ICC World Twenty20, owning moments of cricketing excitement on and off the field.

Overall opinion of Nissan amongst Asians improved dramatically and the campaign was a great contributor to the sales growth among the target audience. Commenting on this achievement, Samir Cherfan, Managing Director at Nissan Middle East said, "The #Moments That Count campaign had a tremendous impact on the community and showed how a small gesture of goodwill among strangers can have a landslide effect on



public opinion. We are extremely proud that this has been recognized by the Effie Awards which is a trusted index for the most comprehensive global rankings in marketing effectiveness."

Cricket is extremely popular in the Emirates with many residents taking part in matches in car parks and other public spaces. Nobody could anticipate that one of the greatest bowlers of all time, Wasim Akram, would drop in unannounced and join such a casual public match.

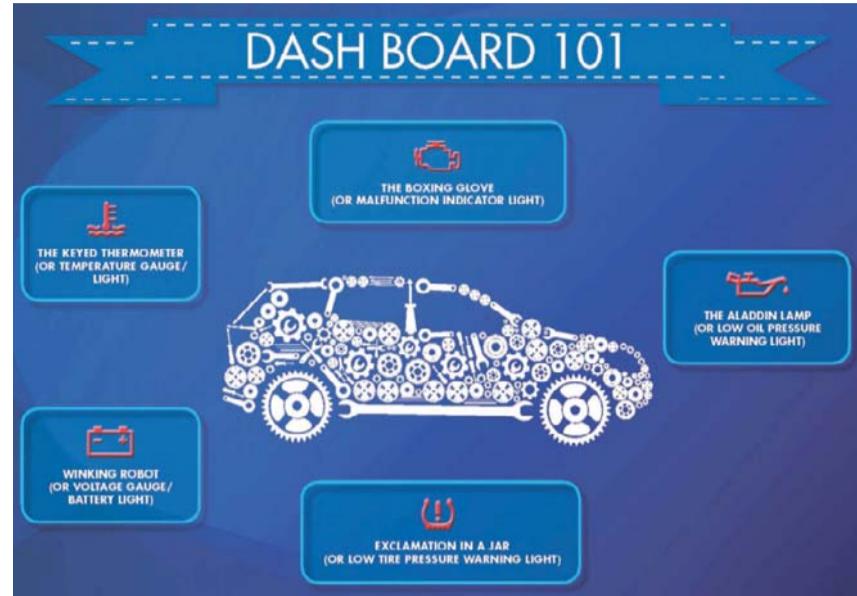
The Nissan team arrived in Patrol pickups loaded with high quality equipment for the players including flags, stumps, helmets, gloves, sweaters, kit bags, balls, and of course, the finest English Willow bats autographed by Wasim Akram.

The equipment was given to the players as gifts for them to enjoy for years to come. Nissan became a global sponsor of international cricket in October 2015 when it announced an eight-year deal with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

DECIPHERING AND DECODING THE MOST COMMON DASHBOARD WARNING LIGHTS

We have all experienced that vexing moment when we are casually driving to our destination, and suddenly - out of nowhere - a flashing warning light appears on our dashboard. We're all too familiar with the feelings of sheer panic and confusion that often ensue.

The fact is, for some of us who aren't exactly mechanically-inclined, decrypting those blinking warning lights on our dashboard can be tricky - which, let's face it, is a real issue considering that some of these symbols are designed to flag an urgent and sometimes dangerous underlying problem.



Seeing that these warning signs could be indicating anything from needing a minor top up of fluid to a catastrophic engine meltdown, understanding whether you need to be concerned or act quickly is essential, to say the least.

With this in mind - and to help you better assess if you are driving under the best possible conditions - we have rounded up the most common warning lights that typically pop up on our dashboards to explain what message they are trying to convey.

Here they are:

- **Exclamation in a Jar (or Low Tire Pressure Warning Light):** This symbol looks like an exclamation point in parenthesis. What it alerts to is a significant loss in pressure of one of the vehicle's tires. In other words, at least one of your tires might be getting flat. If the warning light comes on, stop as soon as safely possible and inflate the tires to the recommended pressure shown in the driver's manual.

- **The Aladdin Lamp (or Low Oil Pressure Warning Light):** if this sign - which bears an uncanny resemblance to Aladdin's magic Genie Lamp - comes on,

it means that the engine oil pressure might be low. This may simply mean that the oil levels need to be topped up, or could indicate a more complex issue. According to ACDelco, which sells car parts and fluids for many car makers, low engine oil pressure can cause extensive and costly damage to your engine. If this warning light displays, safely bring your vehicle to a stop and do not restart your engine. Check the engine oil level. If it's not low, or if you're not sure how to check it, note that many vehicles, such as Chevrolets, GMCs and Cadillacs come with region wide roadside assistance (the phone number should be on a sticker on the car window), so call the experts to take a look and advise you on your next steps. Note that most auto insurance policies come with roadside assistance too. Remember, it is important not to operate the engine with the oil pressure warning light on.

- **The Keyed Thermometer (or Temperature Gauge/Light):** this symbol is fairly easy to remember - it looks like a thermometer in water. It basically indicates the temperature of your vehicle's coolant. A reading in the "H" zone of any light means "HOT" and is an indication of trouble. If you receive this notice, simply

pull over to a safe location, shift into neutral (N) and allow the engine to idle. Do not continue to drive if the temperature does not return to normal or the "HOT" light stays on!

- **The Boxing Glove (or Malfunction Indicator Light):** this is known as a 'check engine light', but what exactly are you supposed to check? Well, it could indicate a number of potential issues, which is why, if it remains on while driving then be sure to seek service promptly! But, there's no need to panic if you see this light briefly when you turn the ignition on. As long as it doesn't stay on, it's ok.

- **Winking Robot (or Voltage Gauge/Battery Light):** this light is just a tiny battery and indicates the electrical system's voltage when the engine is running. You need to service your vehicle if the battery light comes on or if the pointer moves to either "HIGH" or "LOW," indicating too much or not enough voltage.

Remember, knowledge is power. Now that you have armed yourself with this pertinent information, you will hopefully no longer find yourself struggling to decipher your dashboard warning lights - instead, you will be able to swiftly take action!

SAMSUNG PREVAILS OVER APPLE IN \$399M PATENT APPEAL

WASHINGTON: The US Supreme Court on Tuesday overturned a \$399 million patent infringement penalty imposed on Samsung for copying Apple's iPhone design, in a case watched for its implications for technology innovation.

The shorthanded justices ruled 8-0 that Samsung should not be required to forfeit the entire profits from its smartphones for infringement on design components, sending the case back to a lower court.

While the ruling was short on specifics, analysts said it was likely to curb litigation from patent holders expecting to reap big profits from infringement on a component.

A jubilant Samsung hailed the "victory for Samsung and for all those who promote creativity, innovation and fair competition in the marketplace."

The 11-page ruling found that the \$399 million penalty-one element of a major patent infringement case-was inappropriate because it represented "Samsung's entire profit from the sale of its infringing smartphones" for copying the iPhone's "rectangular front face with rounded edges and a grid of colorful icons on a black screen." But the court stopped short of delving into details of how the lower court should determine the penalty.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote in the opinion that "doing so would require us to set out a test for identifying the relevant article of manufacture... and to parse the record to apply that test in this case."

The court sent the case back to the appellate court in Washington to resolve the details. The case is one element of the \$548 million penalty-knocked down from an original \$1 billion jury award. Samsung was ordered to pay for copying iPhone patents.

No clarity

Observers had been watching to see how the court-which had not taken up a design patent case in more than a century-would tip the balance between technological innovation and protecting intellectual property. Dennis Crouch, a University of Missouri law professor and co-director of the Center for Intellectual Property and Entrepreneurship, said the ruling may leave both sides disappointed. "Although the case

offers hope for Samsung and others adjudged of infringing design patents, it offers no clarity as to the rule of law," Crouch said in a blog post.

Crouch said the court allowed for damages at the component level but also indicated that the product as a whole is "an article of manufacture," leaving the matter open to interpretation. "Thus, it will be up to courts to figure out which level of damages applies in particular cases," he wrote.

Samsung won the backing of major Silicon Valley and other IT sector giants, including Google, Facebook, Dell and Hewlett-Packard, claiming a strict ruling on design infringement could lead to a surge in litigation.

Apple was supported by big names in fashion and manufacturing. Design professionals, researchers and academics, citing precedents like Coca-Cola's iconic soda bottle. Reacting to the verdict, an Apple spokesman said in an email, "Our case has always been about Samsung's blatant copying of our ideas, and that was never in dispute... We remain optimistic that the lower courts will again send a powerful signal that stealing isn't right." Samsung did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

'Sign of relief'

Florian Mueller, an intellectual property analyst who writes a closely followed patent blog, wrote that "large parts of the (US and global) tech industry will breathe a sigh of relief now," even if the case is not settled.

Ed Black, president of the Computer & Communications Industry Association, which represents major tech firms, welcomed the ruling. "This was a pivotal court case for the technology industry and it is encouraging to see the law interpreted and applied in a way that makes sense in a modern era and protects both inventors and innovation," Black said.

The lower court's interpretation of design patents, Black said, "would have had a chilling effect on investment and the development of products-especially in the tech sector." Brian Love, a law professor who follows technology at the University of Santa Clara, said it was noteworthy that the top court declined to provide detailed guidance on how to resolve the damage award. —AFP



SEOUL: This file photo taken on October 26, 2016 shows people on an elevator as the logo of Samsung Electronics is seen on a glass door at a flagship store. — AFP

NEW ZEALAND PASSPORT ROBOT TELLS APPLICANT OF ASIAN DESCENT TO OPEN EYES

SYDNEY: A New Zealand man of Asian descent had his passport photograph rejected when facial recognition software mistakenly registered his eyes as being closed. Richard Lee's attempt to renew his passport was blocked after he submitted the picture to an online passport photo checker run by New Zealand's department of internal affairs.

The automated system told the 22-year-old engineering student the photo was invalid because his eyes were closed, even though they were clearly open, according to a copy of the notification posted on social media site

Facebook. "No hard feelings on my part, I've always had very small eyes and facial recognition technology is relatively new and unsophisticated," Lee told Reuters. "It was a robot, no hard feelings. I got my passport renewed in the end."

Up to 20 percent of passport photos submitted online are rejected for various reasons, an Internal Affairs spokesman said. "The most common error is a subject's eyes being closed and that was the generic error message sent in this case," he said. The lighting in Lee's first photo was uneven, but a later one was accepted, he added. — Reuters



LAS VEGAS: Screens show the feeds from traffic cameras at the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada's FAST traffic management center on Tuesday, Dec 6, 2016. — AP

CAR COMPANY OFFERING RED LIGHT-READING VEHICLES IN LAS VEGAS PICKED FIRST-IN-THE-NATION

LAS VEGAS: On the theory that a driver who knows when a red light will turn green is more relaxed and aware, vehicle manufacturer Audi is unveiling this week in Las Vegas a technology that enables vehicles to "read" traffic signals ahead and tell the motorist how long the wait will be.

It's a simple display for the driver - a dashboard traffic signal icon and a timer next to the digital vehicle speed and area speed limit displays already common in newer cars. The technology behind it is more complex. It uses 4G LTE cellular communication between the vehicle and a centralized traffic management control network- dubbed vehicle-to-infrastructure or "V2I". Audi offers it through a subscription service not unlike commercial satellite radio. The company calls it "traffic light information."

Company executive Pom Malhotra terms it "time to green." "You don't have to constantly stare at the traffic light. You have that information right in front of you," Malhotra told reporters who test-drove the system Tuesday in vehicles on and around Las Vegas Strip.

Can't see the light because there's a tour bus ahead? No problem. The icon says you have 37 seconds. "A lot of behavior in the car changes," Malhotra said. "You have time to relax your hands

and shoulders ... time to hand a milk bottle to your child in the back seat ... while knowing you're not taking attention away from the road."

First-in-the-nation

Audi and Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada officials said Tuesday that Las Vegas was picked for the first-in-the-nation debut because it has a single centralized traffic management center covering all jurisdictions in Clark County, a region nearly the size of New Jersey.

Malhotra said Audi hopes to expand the system soon to other big U.S. cities, including places like Los Angeles, which have patchwork traffic management systems run by varying jurisdictions in a sprawling urban landscape.

The Las Vegas-area program, dubbed the Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation, or FAST, collects data and synchronizes 1,300 traffic signals in a region home to more than 2 million people and host to more than 40 million tourists a year. It also has 508 cameras and freeway flow detectors, and controls 106 message signs and freeway on-ramp meters.

Tina Quigley, transportation commission general manager, said other car companies will be able to tap into the Las Vegas data, which

she said should improve mobility and safety - particularly in the congested Las Vegas Strip tourist corridor and around McCarran International Airport.

About 150 Audi owners are using the system in Las Vegas, Malhotra said. The car company official called the debut of the commercial service "a small step forward in V2I," but a key demonstration of the kind of technology that will enable vehicle-to-vehicle communication and driverless cars.

Using cellular communication for smart car systems differs from vehicle-to-vehicle and vehicle-to-traffic signal programs using dedicated short-range communication.

DSRC has been tested since 2012 at the University of Michigan, said Debra Bezzina, senior program manager for the Ann Arbor Connected Vehicle Test Environment. The university Transportation Research Institute program is backed by several federal traffic safety, research, trucking and transit agencies, and pilot programs are slated for Wyoming, New York and Tampa, Florida. Bezzina said properly equipped vehicles with DSRC are able to detect traffic signal phase signals at intersections. "If the light has turned yellow, it can tell the driver, 'You're not going to make the light,'" Bezzina said. —AP

MALLS TAKE THE SANTA EXPERIENCE HIGH-TECH

NEW YORK: Hop on a virtual sleigh ride to the North Pole. Stand on the "Naughty or Nice O'Meter." Snap a selfie and see your face on a dancing elf. The Santa experience has gotten a makeover as many malls install shows and games they hope will lure shoppers who are buying more online.

About 40 malls in the US and one in London have the high-tech Santa displays, most of them located near major cities that tend to house pricier stores. Taking photos on Santa's lap costs about \$30 and up, around the same as at other malls, but most of the malls say people can walk through without purchasing anything. "It was a half-hour of entertainment that was free," says Katie Mass, who took her twin daughters through Santa's Flight Academy, a 3,000-square-foot setup at The Mall at Short Hills in New Jersey.

She had gone to the mall to return some dresses, but had to stop when her 2-year olds saw the spectacle. "They started running," says the stay-at-home mom from Westfield, New Jersey. The girls tapped touch screens, pulled levers and watched as flight suits were

virtually fit over their bodies on a screen. The final stop was a two-story tall enclosed sleigh that dropped fake snow upon them. One girl made snow angels on the floor while her sister danced under the colorful lasers. "It was extravagant and well done," says Mass.

Malls are hoping the over-the-top Santa visits remind people what brick-and-mortar stores can offer. They're increasingly trying to offer special experiences as they compete with online rivals, says Howard Davidowitz, chairman of New York-based retail consulting group Davidowitz & Associates. "The parents love it, the kids love it and Amazon can't do it," says Davidowitz.

Santa's Flight Academy was developed by mall operator Taubman Centers Inc., which spent two years on the idea. After testing it last year at The Mall of San Juan in Puerto Rico, the company rolled it out to 11 other Taubman malls this year, replacing a low-tech ice palace that had housed Santa for years. Like other malls with elaborate Santa sets, Taubman declined to say how much it spent on Santa's Flight Academy. — AP



ALPHARETTA, Georgia: In this Sunday, Nov 20, 2016, photo, mall shoppers line up to visit the "Adventure to Santa," a DreamWorks DreamPlace experience at North Point Mall. — AP

GLOBAL PRESCRIPTION DRUG SPEND SEEN AT \$1.5 TRILLION IN 2021

NEW YORK: Global spending on prescription medicines will reach nearly \$1.5 trillion by 2021, although the annual rate of growth will decrease from recent years, according to a forecast by Quintiles IMS Holding released on Tuesday.

That figure, based on wholesale pricing, is up nearly \$370 billion from estimated 2016 spending. The United States will account for up to \$675 billion of the \$1.5 trillion. When accounting for anticipated discounts and rebates to health insurers and other payers, 2021 net spending will be closer to \$1 trillion, the QuintilesIMS Outlook for Global Medicines through 2021

report found. Annual spending growth over the next five years is forecast at 4-7 percent, primarily driven by newer medicines for cancer, diabetes and autoimmune diseases in developed markets. That compares with spending growth of nearly 9 percent in 2014 and 2015 fueled in part by surging demand for new hepatitis C cures that has since leveled off. "After two years of unexpectedly high levels of growth, we are returning to a more balanced and sustainable level of expansion that we think health systems and payers will be able to manage," Murray Aitken, executive director of the QuintilesIMS Institute which compiled the

data, said in an interview. QuintilesIMS regularly tracks prescription drug data for the industry. Spending in the United States, the largest market with by far the highest drug prices, is expected to account for more than half of global growth over the period, at a compound annual rate of 6 to 9 percent, or 4 to 7 percent including discounts and rebates. That is down from 12 percent spending growth in 2015.

The report projects a slowdown in US branded drug price increases, possibly a result of rising political pressure. It sees annual wholesale price increases of 8 to 11 percent and net prices rising 2 to 5 percent.

The report predicts an average of 45 new drug launches each year, a historically high rate. While many will be very expensive treatments, the report sees rising costs partially offset by a higher level of drugs going off patent than in the previous five years. That includes the anticipated effect of more biosimilars - cheaper versions of high-priced biotech medicines - entering the market. "We are projecting they will have a total impact over the next five years in the range of \$27 billion to \$58 billion in savings in the US market," Aitken said.

Economic slowdowns in Europe and emerging markets, such as China, Brazil and

Russia, will contribute to an overall drag on spending growth and slow plans to expand access to more medicines, the report said. For example, China is expected to spend between \$150 billion and \$180 billion in 2021, but annual spending growth for medicines will fall to less than 7 percent over the next five years from about 14 percent over the prior five. The compound annual growth rate of drug spending in Europe is estimated at just 1 to 4 percent through 2021. "Economic growth remains relatively weak across Europe, so that constrains expansion in healthcare and drug budgets," Aitken said. — Reuters



BOHICON, Benin: This file photo taken on November 29, 2016 shows Blandine Mekpo, a midwife at a maternity ward, providing information about AIDS to pregnant women. — AFP

BENIN CLINIC BATTLES MOTHER-TO-CHILD HIV TRANSMISSION

BOHICON, Benin: Pregnant with her fourth child in a clinic in Benin, Rosine is relieved to learn that she does not have AIDS, after a free test considered a national health priority. "I was afraid the test would be positive. My husband is a driver, you know," the woman in her 40s told AFP at the maternity clinic in the small town of Bohicon, where she was screened.

For 15 years, authorities in Benin have sought to tackle mother-to-child transmission of HIV with free care, from the initial tests to antiretroviral (ARV) drugs if a patient proves seropositive. A program that covers 87 percent of the public and private maternity clinics in the small west African country has been a success, cutting the rate of mother-to-child transmission almost by half between 2012 and 2016, from 14 percent of cases to 7.6 percent. "This is completely integrated into maternal care, it's routine," said Blandine Mekpo, who has been a midwife for 11 years. "All the women who come in for a prenatal consultation agree to the test."

Elise cradles her little son in her arms. Fifteen months ago, the young mother learned that she was infected with HIV. The clinic at once provided her with a free box of ARV drugs, which worked. Her child of six months does not have the virus. "This is a great joy," Elise says. "The treatment saved me, they saved my son and my husband. He is the only one to know. I live a normal life, like all women and all mothers."

Medical staff will nonetheless continue to monitor Elise's son until he is 18 months old. "When a mother takes ARVs, she doesn't transmit the virus to her child, neither during pregnancy nor at birth, nor while breast-feeding," Mekpo points out. The risk of transmission is less than one percent, compared with a risk of 35 percent in the absence of preventive treatment. At 1.2 percent across Benin, the rate of HIV-positive people is low by African standards. Of every hundred births recorded at the Bohicon clinic during a month, two mothers on average have proved seropositive. But during the entire year, only one child was subsequently infected.

Get the men involved

Several factors contribute to such good results, with free provision of screening and

care at the top of the list. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) provides test kits, while the Global Fund against AIDS, TB and Malaria provides ARV therapy.

In Bohicon, the drugs are now stored on hospital premises. "Before, there was a risk of running out because everything was stocked in Cotonou," the economic capital on the Gulf of Guinea, said Nicole Paqui, the doctor heading up UNICEF's AIDS program. "Today, test kits and medication are available in permanent fashion in all the public health zones," she added.

Training for nurses and care assistants has helped to make maternity clinics friendlier places to welcome mothers. AIDS has become less of a taboo subject and health workers no longer take fright when a new case is detected. But in Bohicon as elsewhere, difficulties arise for medical and social reasons. Some patients give up on treatment because of unpleasant side-effects, while others shrug off their HIV-positive status for fear of being stigmatized. Money can also be a problem, for instance whenever a man refuses to pay for his wife to travel to the maternity clinic. Female mediators help to overcome such obstacles by accompanying women during the medical process. "When they notice that some women are no longer attending, they go out to their homes to fetch them," said the head coordinator of health care in the area, Blaise Guezo-Mevo.

Seventy percent of the women concerned are found. "And when we recover them, we don't lose them again," the doctor added. In mid-November, the ministry of health launched an ambitious campaign to bring the rate of mother-to-child transmission of HIV down below five percent in the next four years.

If this goal is to be achieved, men have to be brought into the process. "The involvement of spouses is indispensable," Paqui said. "When the man is informed and supportive of his spouse, she'll go all the way. But if she has to hide, the protocol is not effective."

Elise is one of the lucky ones. Her husband came to take a test, which proved negative, and he is ready to fetch drugs for her from the clinic. "Screening husbands is still difficult," Mekpo says. "Yet screening is a matter for couples." — AFP

S KOREA EXPANDS CULL TO CONTAIN BIRD FLU

SEOUL: South Korea on Tuesday said it was expanding a cull of chickens and ducks to try to contain a damaging bird flu outbreak. The H5N8 virus was first confirmed on November 18 at a farm in central South Korea and has since spread to farms around the country, with the total number of cases now standing at 28.

The agriculture ministry said in a statement that it has culled more than 4.4 million birds and would slaughter another 2.7 million. Health authorities agreed to issue a so-called "standstill" order to restrict workers at poultry farms from moving around

the country if the virus continues to spread, the ministry said in a statement.

There have been no cases of human infections from H5N8 in South Korea, although between 2014 and April 2016, the virus killed six people in China, according to the South's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The World Health Organization warned earlier this year that the strain "has caused severe infection in humans" but added "until now human infections with the virus seem to be sporadic with no ongoing human to human transmission." — AFP

ALL OF FRANCE PLACED ON 'HIGH RISK' RESTRICTIONS OVER BIRD FLU

PARIS: France widened "high risk" restrictions to the entire country after the detection of several cases of the highly pathogenic H5N8 avian flu strain in farms in southwest France and in wild ducks in northern France, the farm ministry said on Tuesday.

The decision was also motivated by the "rapid change in the ... situation in France and in several European countries," the statement said. The ministry had already imposed tighter restrictions on several zones mostly located in humid areas last month in an effort to avoid contamination.

But France, which has the largest poultry flock in the European Union, has since been hit by several outbreaks, in a setback for French poultry and foie gras producers still reeling from a bird flu epidemic that started a year ago. Poultry farmers will have to keep their flocks indoors or apply safety nets preventing contact with wild birds, it said.

Those who may not use confinement or safety nets because of animal welfare or quality requirements can ask to be exempted if they can prove sufficient biosecurity measures. — Reuters

TRUMP'S CORPORATE TAX HOLIDAY COULD SPUR PHARMA M&A BUYING WAY INTO GROWTH

NEW YORK: US President-elect Donald Trump's plan to incentivize US companies to repatriate their swelling overseas cash piles could spur a new wave of deal making in a pharmaceutical industry seeking to buy its way into growth.

For years, big US drugmakers have turned to acquisitions of foreign companies to put their overseas cash to work, rather than bring it home at a 35-percent tax rate. Trump has proposed allowing repatriation of this cash at a 10-percent tax rate, hoping some of it will be spent on hiring and investing in their businesses.

However, drugmakers are much more likely to spend this money on acquisitions that could revive their drug development pipeline by acquiring smaller peers with promising offerings, as opposed to risking more of their own dollars on research and development, corporate executives and dealmakers say.

Some of these deals could even result in job cuts as companies seek to eliminate overlaps. "Would we consider to repatriate the cash? I would say yes, and what we would look at would be first to maintain the lowest weighted average cost of capital for the company," Amgen Inc chief financial officer David Meline told analysts and investors on the company's most recent earnings call in October. "Then we would look at certainly deploying cash towards external opportunities, but in that instance we would certainly lead with other strategic opportunities that make sense where we could get a return for our own shareholders from such investments."

Trump's transition team did not respond to a request for comment on the potential impact of his proposed tax holiday on the drug industry. Corporate America had \$1.3 trillion, or 74 percent of its total cash, stashed overseas in 2016, according to Moody's Investors Service Inc. That's up from an estimated \$1.2 trillion, or 72 percent of total cash, a year earlier.

While the top five overseas cash holders are technology companies such as Apple Inc and Microsoft Corp., the pharmaceutical industry accounts for a big chunk of that cash. The five US pharmaceutical companies with the largest cash piles, namely Pfizer Inc, Merck & Co, Johnson & Johnson, Amgen and Eli Lilly and Co, hold nearly \$250 billion in overseas funds, according to data from US non-profit research and advocacy group Citizens for Tax Justice.

At the same time, big pharma is in hot pursuit of the next blockbuster drug. Many of the industry's most successful franchises, from Gilead's Hepatitis C cure and Biogen Inc's multiple sclerosis treatments, to AbbVie Inc's arthritis drug Humira, are all bracing for declining revenues as patents age and competition heats up.

Valuations of biotechnology companies that could be acquisition targets for major drug firms



FAYETTEVILLE: In this Dec 6, 2016, photo, President-elect Donald Trump speaks to supporters during a rally. — AP

are still hovering near historic lows after being dragged down by election-season political criticism of high drug prices.

"Tax repatriation is a more likely situation now, benefiting large biotechs and (pharmaceutical companies) with significant offshore cash and a desire to buy mid-cap companies," RBC Capital equity analyst Michael Yee wrote in a research note. The last time tax considerations fueled a wave of dealmaking in the pharmaceutical industry was in 2014, when companies sought to redomicile abroad through acquisitions, referred to as corporate inversions. But US President Barack Obama subsequently announced curbs to limit inversions, culminating in Pfizer abandoning its \$160-billion agreement to acquire Allergan Plc, the biggest attempted merger of all time.

Pharmaceutical M&A involving US companies has been around \$90 billion year-to-date, down from nearly \$270 billion the year before.

On the hunt

Executives at Pfizer, which has already said it is looking to do more deals after its \$14-billion acquisition of cancer drugmaker Medivation Inc, have told investors in private meetings that its M&A appetite would grow even bigger if it could bring home its more than \$70 billion in overseas cash, according to people familiar with the matter. Pfizer could potentially use its newfound firepower to buy a company as large as Bristol-Myers Squibb Co, a \$92-billion market capitalization cancer drugmaker that fueled takeover

speculation after a disappointing drug trial in August sent its stock down more than 25 percent. Bristol-Myers Squibb's blockbuster cancer drug Opdivo could compliment Pfizer's plan to become a leader in immuno-oncology, which seeks to use the body's own defenses to treat cancer, industry bankers said, without suggesting that any deal is in the works.

Pfizer declined to comment, while Bristol-Myers Squibb did not respond to a request for comment. Another cancer drug company that could attract takeover interest following a cash repatriation is Incyte Corp, as it could make an attractive target for Gilead Sciences Inc if it was able to bring home its nearly \$25 billion in overseas cash, bankers said.

Gilead has been under pressure to find a new blockbuster because of declining sales from its aging Hepatitis C franchise and the recent failure in clinical trials of a cancer drug that would have competed with Incyte's successful blood cancer drug, Jakafi. Gilead declined comment; Incyte did not respond to a request for comment.

Beyond cancer drug makers, other biotechnology companies that could attract takeover interest include those specializing in neurology companies, such as Acadia Pharmaceuticals Inc., that have promising treatments for ailments such as Alzheimer's psychosis and migraine.

Acadia did not respond to a request for comment. "We believe the vast majority of investors have been underweight biotech all year," said Yee in his note. "A coiled spring of money flow may need to shift back over to biotech." — Reuters

CONSERVATIVE SERBIA BECOMES UNLIKELY SEX CHANGE CENTER

BELGRADE: In a country where Gay Pride parades require massive security and almost half the citizens think homosexuality is a disease, Serbia is drawing patients from around the world seeking sex change operations to become men.

Offering experts in the field for a fraction of the cost in western Europe and America, Belgrade has become a surprising centre for the complex gender reassignment surgery. One Italian patient began the transition to become a man 14 years ago and visited Belgium, Britain and Germany looking for the best clinic to complete the procedure.

In the end the 38-year-old anesthetist chose the Belgrade Centre for General Reconstructive Surgery, led by Miroslav Djordjevic, a professor of urology and surgery in the Serbian capital. "I did a lot of research and contacted many centers and I found that almost everyone was a student of Professor Djordjevic, so I wanted to go to the source of this knowledge," said the bearded and softly-spoken patient, speaking to AFP a few days after surgery.

He asked to be identified only by the initials A.T. Djordjevic operates on about 100 international sex change patients each year from countries including Japan, Brazil, South Africa, Australia and the United States. Another 20 or so come from around the former Yugoslavia. Eighty-five percent of his patients are seeking female-to-male operations, a rarer and more complicated procedure than the reverse.

Yugoslav pioneers

For general healthcare Serbia is not widely considered a medical tourism destination, although it does draw some foreigners seeking cheap dentistry. Take, for example, gallstone treatment in Serbia, which "is five times cheaper than in Germany, but nobody comes here for gallstone treatment," said 51-year-old Djordjevic. He said patients come to his centre, which opened in 2006, because it's one of fewer than 20 around the world that can perform the full female-to-male surgery and it's unique because "we perform everything in one stage." "We do, at the same stage, the removal of the breasts, removal of female internal genitalia... and then we finish our surgery with the creation of a neophallus," he explained.



BELGRADE: An anonymous Italian anesthetist (R) speaks with the Professor Miroslav Djordjevic (L), after his sex change operations at a specialized clinic on October 11, 2016. — AFP

This medical specialty started in Serbia in the late 1980s under Djordjevic's mentor Sava Perovic, a surgeon who pioneered developments in treatment for transgenders. Another centre in his name, the Sava Perovic Foundation, also performs female-to-male sex changes in Belgrade.

Media-savvy Djordjevic denies that value-for-money is the main reason for Serbia's popularity, although A.T. paid 15,000 Euros (\$16,000) in Serbia for surgery that would have cost 60,000 euros in Britain. The Italian patient said he could have had his operation for free at home but he believed the surgeons there lacked enough experience.

David Ralph, a London-based consultant urologist who specializes in penile construction, said lower hospital costs rather than surgical expenses appeared to be what drove down prices in Serbia. "At the end of the day the patients get the same," Ralph told AFP, although he said he preferred to do female-to-male surgery in a series of smaller opera-

tions to reduce the chance of complications. In any case the pre-surgical procedure is lengthy: a patient should undergo a thorough psychiatric evaluation and hormone treatment totaling up to two years.

'Violence, bullying, rejection'

Serbia's success in this special strand of medical tourism is incongruous with the widespread attitudes towards gays and transgenders in the patriarchal country of seven million people. At Belgrade's Gay Pride march in 2010, hardline nationalists attacked participants and clashed with police, wounding 150 people and prompting officials to ban the parade for the next three years.

Thousands of riot police are now deployed for the annual event and the city centre is locked down. A UN-backed survey on discrimination in late 2013 showed that 49 percent of Serbians believed homosexuality was a disease that should be treated. — AFP

'OBAMACARE' REPEAL-ONLY WOULD MAKE 30M UNINSURED

'REPLACE' STALLS

WASHINGTON: Repealing President Barack Obama's health care law without a clear replacement risks making nearly 30 million people uninsured, according to a study released yesterday. Republicans say that won't happen because they are working on replacement legislation for a President Donald Trump to sign. Nonetheless, the complex two-stage strategy the GOP Congress is contemplating has raised concerns.

The plan is for Congress to first use a special budget-related procedure to repeal major portions of the Affordable Care Act, or ACA, next year. The effective date of that repeal would be delayed by months or years to give lawmakers time to write replacement legislation.

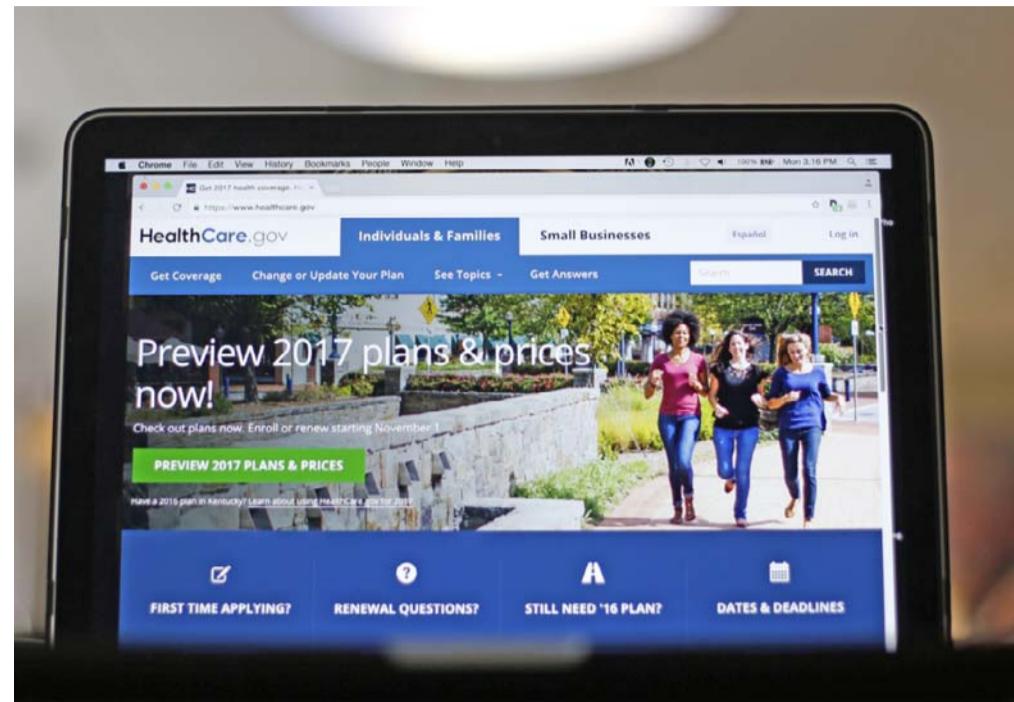
The replacement law would presumably do many of the same things that "Obamacare" does, such as subsidizing coverage and protecting people with health problems. But it would not involve as much federal regulation, and it would eliminate a highly unpopular requirement that most Americans get health insurance or face fines.

'Replace' stalls

Yesterday's analysis from the nonpartisan Urban Institute looks at a scenario where "repeal" goes through, but "replace" stalls. It predicts heavy collateral damage for people buying individual health insurance policies independent of government markets like HealthCare.gov. Though nonpartisan, the Urban Institute generally supports the goal of extending coverage to all Americans. Previously it has criticized some of the subsidies provided under Obama's law as insufficient.

The new analysis warns that repealing major parts of the health law without a clear replacement could upend the health insurance market for people buying their coverage directly, outside of the workplace. That group has grown substantially under the health care law, but also includes millions of other customers.

The study found that 22.5 million people would lose coverage directly due to repeal of the law's subsidies, Medicaid expansion, and its individual requirement to carry health insurance.



WASHINGTON: In this Oct 24, 2016, file photo, the HealthCare.gov 2017 web site home page. — AP

try back to the situation before the ACA," the study concluded. "It moves the country to a situation with higher uninsurance rates than was the case before the ACA's reforms.

"To replace the ACA...with new policies designed to increase insurance coverage, the federal government would have to raise new taxes, substantially cut spending, or increase the deficit," the authors added. That's because the taxes used to finance Obama's coverage expansion would also be repealed. Republicans say they won't allow chaos to happen. "We are not going to rip health care out of the hands of Americans," House Ways and Means Chairman Kevin Brady, R-Texas, said in a recent interview with Associated Press reporters and editors. "Republicans are going to give Americans choices and an appropriate transition." — AP

CAPTIVE ELEPHANTS HELP SAVE WILD COUSINS ON FOREST FRONTLINE



INDONESIA: This photo taken on November 8, 2016 shows a ranger atop a patrol elephant with her calf in Way Kambas National Park, where human settlements border a tranche of lowland forest home to an estimated 250 wild Sumatran elephants. — AFP

tusks but many elephants are killed simply for trespassing on land. This month an elephant was found dead near a palm oil plantation in the island's northeast. Authorities believe it accidentally ingested fertilizer but an investigation is continuing, the local conservation head told AFP. — AFP

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Kuwait Times

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DEMOCRATS: MCCONNELL FIX FOR MINERS' HEALTH CARE INADEQUATE

WASHINGTON: Senate Democrats on Tuesday blasted a proposal by Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to temporarily protect health care benefits for thousands of retired coal miners.

The benefits are set to expire at the end of the year, and McConnell said he is working with House Speaker Paul Ryan to include money for the miners in a short-term spending bill slated for a vote this week. But Democrats said the GOP solution only lasts for a few months and does not protect pension benefits that also are at risk. McConnell's proposal would pay for miners' health care for the next four months by seizing money from their current health-care plan, Democrats said.

"The Republican leader is turning his back on American coal miners," said Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-Ohio. Brown and other Democrats said they will

push for a bipartisan bill that would protect retirement and health-care benefits for about 120,000 retired coal miners and their families.

Vote blocking

Republicans have blocked a vote on the bill on the Senate floor. McConnell and other GOP leaders are wary of bailing out unionized workers, with some arguing that all coal miners should get the help. Some Republicans also say the bill could pressure Congress to offer similar help to other cash-strapped pension funds. Their opposition was criticized by Brown and other Democrats. "We had the chance to protect the retirement and health care coal miners have earned and save taxpayers money in the process, but Washington leaders chose to pull a bait and switch instead,"

Brown said. "This is everything that's wrong with Washington."

Sen. Joe Manchin, D-W.Va., said he would block other bills on the Senate floor until miners get their full health care and pension money - about \$3 billion over the next 10 years. Manchin warned colleagues they may have to stay through Christmas unless the issue is resolved.

In a speech on the Senate floor, Manchin said retired miners deserve benefits that are now at risk amid the coal industry's steep decline and bankruptcies of several large mining companies. Without congressional intervention, some of the funds could run out of cash by next year, according to the United Mine Workers of America. "We are the country that we are because of the hard work that they've done," Manchin said, referring to

miners in his state and across Appalachia. "If we don't stand for the people that have made our country as great as it is, we stand for nothing," Manchin said.

McConnell said his plan would protect benefits for miners suffering from what he called the Obama administration's "war on coal," combined with "challenges within the energy market (that) have led to a dramatic increase in bankruptcies and lost coal jobs, exhausting the health benefits of thousands of coal workers and retirees."

While he recognizes the plan "will not solve the challenges of every coal miner or retiree in Kentucky, this provision will help address many of the health care needs of thousands of miners who fell victim to the steep downturn in coal production," McConnell said. —AP



ATLANTA: In this Thursday, Nov 10, 2016 photo, CDC workers look through microscopes at an image of a skin biopsy displayed on a screen at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. —AP

GOALS MISSED ON OBESITY, FOOD POISONING, DESPITE GOVT PUSH

A FRANK SELF-ASSESSMENT

NEW YORK: Progress in the US against obesity, food poisoning, and infections spread in hospitals has been uneven and disappointing, despite dedicated efforts to fight these health threats by the nation's top public health agency.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued a frank self-assessment Monday of its campaign to focus on certain health problems, an effort it called "winnable battles." While there have been clear successes in areas like smoking and teen pregnancy, other areas have seen little change or even gotten worse.

Particularly disappointing is the battle against childhood obesity, said Dr. Tom Frieden, the CDC's director. "The data speak for themselves," Frieden said of the obesity statistics. "If you look for the goal we set for ourselves, and look at what happened, we didn't achieve it."

Frieden set a list of priorities he called "winnable battles" shortly after he was named to lead the CDC in 2009. The list included smoking, AIDS, obesity and nutrition, teen pregnancy, auto injuries and health care infections. It later grew to include food poisoning.

On Monday, the agency released what it described as its third and final report card on the campaign. Frieden is expected to leave office

next month, as the Trump administration takes control of federal agencies and appoints its own administrators.

The most clear-cut progress was in cigarette smoking and teen pregnancy. Last year, national goals were met for reducing adult smoking by more than 17 percent, and youth smoking by 12 percent. The goal of cutting the teen birth rate by 20 percent was also met.

Critics argued that those were relatively easy goals - smoking and teen pregnancy rates were already trending down before Frieden arrived. But Frieden argued that the goals his agency set were ambitious and never assured.

Another goal once considered within easy reach was the reduction of car crash deaths by 31 percent by 2015. Earlier in this decade those deaths were plummeting and the goal seemed well within reach. But crash deaths only fell 21 percent because of a recent uptick, which many attribute to distracted driving.

The report card also found:

Disappointing results in meeting two food safety goals. Rates of illness from harmful E. coli bacteria dropped, but didn't reach the goal of a 29 percent reduction goal. And illness rates from salmonella increased.

Mixed progress on cutting down infections spread in hospitals and medical clinics. Three kinds of infections declined. They haven't yet hit target levels, but there's some hope they will when more data are available. And rates for certain urinary tract infections didn't fall at all.

Inability to reduce the number of new HIV cases by 25 percent. The number of new cases fell by 18 percent. Failure to reduce obesity rates for toddlers and older children. Instead, the rate grew slightly, to more than 17 percent. Despite the mixed grades in the CDC's report card on itself, some experts applauded CDC efforts, saying the agency had only limited abilities to prevent illness or stop people from doing things that hurt their own health. "I think, to CDC's credit, they picked a broad range of public health challenges and they set the bar high enough that they could not automatically declare success at the end of an administration," said Jeff Levi, a George Washington University professor of health management and policy.

The Atlanta-based CDC has an annual budget of more than \$13 billion and a staff of more than 15,000. Much of its funding is distributed to state and local health departments, and many of them follow the CDC's agenda-setting lead. —AP

CLEAN COOKSTOVES FAIL TO CURB PNEUMONIA IN KIDS: STUDY

PARIS: Disappointed researchers reported yesterday that a two-year trial in rural Sub-Saharan Africa showed clean-burning indoor cookstoves did not reduce cases of pneumonia in young children, as hoped.

Investigators and health advocates had expected that closed stoves rather than smoke-producing open fires would dramatically curb health problems linked with household air pollution. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that indoor air pollution—notably soot and other fine particles—kills more than four million people every year around the world, mostly in Africa.

Young children are thought to be especially vulnerable. In Malawi, pneumonia is the leading cause of death among under five-year-olds. For the experiment, the families of more than 10,000 very young children in villages across two districts in Malawi were divided into two groups.

One continued using traditional, open-fire wood- or dung-burning stoves for cooking and heating for the duration of the two-year experiment. Families in the other group were given clean-burning cookstoves that also used biomass-organic matter derived from animals or plants. "There had been the assumption that the use of cleaner cookstoves will bring about health benefits and save lives," said lead investigator Kevin Mortimer of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine.

But the new stoves had "no effect on the incidence of pneumonia" in the children, the researchers concluded. Published in the Lancet, the study did show that children living in the clean stove homes had 42 percent fewer burns than their counterparts in the other group. "The reductions in burn-related injuries is encouraging from a safety perspective," Mortimer said. —AFP

JAPAN MERCURY-POISONING VICTIMS DEMAND TESTS, 60 YEARS LATER

TOKYO: Six decades after "Minamata disease" mercury poisoning was first discovered, victims and their advocates are demanding tests for food toxicity and illnesses be carried out to help identify patients.

Such tests could have greatly reduced the number of victims if done earlier, said Toshihide Tsuda, a doctor whose civil lawsuit demanding such tests was rejected by the Tokyo District Court yesterday. Tsuda sued the Japanese government to demand it conduct tests for methyl mercury poisoning. He vowed to appeal the court's decision backing the government, which generally has chosen not to conduct such tests.

Minamata disease, one of Japan's worst environmental disasters, refers to mercury poisoning from eating fish and shellfish. Thousands of people were sickened or crippled by neurological disorders from the mercury leaks into Minamata Bay and nearby waters by chemical company Chisso Corp., which continued for more than a decade. Affected babies were born with severe deformities.

Advocates of the victims have been trying since 1956 for the right to demand such tests, which can only be mandated by the government. Tsuda contends there would have been far fewer Minamata victims if tests had been done right away. Even today, such tests could help identify people suffering from high mercury levels, he says.

Japanese law requires routine and meticulous testing for food poisoning. But such testing is only conducted when the government deems it necessary. That often has been the case in smaller food poisoning incidents. The requirement that the government order such tests is a "legal loophole," said Tsuda. "If this is allowed, it means the government can do whatever it wants - or rather not have to do anything at all," he told reporters after the ruling.



TOKYO: Plaintiff Toshihide Tsuda, a doctor and Okayama University professor, attends the press conference yesterday. —AP

SCIENTISTS DEVELOP ROBOTIC HAND FOR PEOPLE WITH QUADRIPLEGIA

BERLIN: Scientists have developed a mind-controlled robotic hand that allows people with certain types of spinal injuries to perform everyday tasks such as using a fork or drinking from a cup. The low-cost device was tested in Spain on six patients with quadriplegia affecting their ability to grasp or manipulate objects.

By wearing a cap that measures electric brain activity and eye movement the users were able to send signals to a tablet computer that controlled the glove-like device attached to their hand.

Participants in the small-scale study were able to perform daily activities better with the robotic hand than without, according to results published Tuesday in the journal *Science Robotics*.

The principle of using brain-controlled robotic aids to assist people with quadriplegia isn't new. But many existing systems require implants, which can cause health problems, or use wet gel to transmit signals from the scalp to the electrodes. The gel needs to be washed out of the user's hair afterward, making it impractical in daily life. "The participants, who had previously expressed difficulty in performing everyday tasks without assistance, rated the system as reliable and practical, and did not indicate any discomfort during or after use," the researchers said.

How to use the system

It took participants just 10 minutes to learn how to use the system before they were able to

carry out tasks such as picking up potato chips or signing a document. According to Surjo R. Soekadar, a neuroscientist at the University Hospital Tuebingen in Germany and lead author

of the study, participants represented typical people with high spinal cord injuries, meaning they were able to move their shoulders but not their fingers. —AP



BADALONA, Spain: In this undated grab taken from video, a patient uses a robotic hand to drink from a cup. —AP

MANY SMARTPHONE HEALTH APPS DON'T FLAG DANGER, SAYS REVIEW

NEW YORK: Don't count on smartphone health apps in an emergency: A review shows many don't warn when you're in danger. The study published Monday in the journal *Health Affairs* found problems even with apps considered to be among the highest-quality offerings on the market.

There's been a proliferation of health apps for mobile phones. According to the IMS Institute for Healthcare Informatics, there are more than 165,000 health apps out there. "The state of health apps is even worse than we thought," said Dr. James Madara, chief executive of the American Medical Association, who was not involved in the study.

This wasn't a survey of step-counting fitness apps. The research team reviewed 137 apps designed for patients with serious ongoing health problems, including asthma, cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and depression.

The health apps, for example, help those with diabetes track and record every blood sugar reading and insulin injection. One invites users to photograph their moles, and offers analysis on whether they are changing in a way that signals skin cancer.

The study suggests that, though some apps are good, there are problems. Perhaps most concerning was what happened when doctor reviewers

entered information that should have drawn warnings from the app - like selecting "yes" when the app asked if the user was feeling suicidal, or entering extremely abnormal levels for blood sugar levels.

Only 28 of 121 apps responded appropriately to such red-flag information, researchers said. Health apps "should have some common-sense standards" said lead author Dr. Karandeep Singh, a University of Michigan internist. "The vast majority of apps do not have any kind of response."

Medical privacy

Another issue is the safeguarding of medical privacy. While patients commonly enter health information into apps, a lot of the information is shared through insecure methods like text message or emailing, the researchers said.

The reviewed apps came from Apple iTunes and Google Play app stores - most of them free. Each app was reviewed by a doctor and a tech expert. The researchers named most of the apps but didn't publish their reviews. Instead, they shared them with the app companies. Singh said they were interested in "identifying gaps that need to be filled" instead of naming winners and losers. Overall, the industry needs to do more work to improve safety and privacy, he said. —AP



The Promenade expands family offering with opening of Chocomelt

KUWAIT'S NEIGHBORHOOD MALL WELCOMES NEW CHOCOLATE COFFEE SHOP, CATERING TO GROWING FAMILY VISITORS

The Promenade mall has welcomed its latest opening and expansion of its offering to families following the introduction of Chocomelt. The new dessert bar and cafe is set to attract families and friends with passion of chocolate sweets, dipped fruits, hot and cold drinks, and coffee blends with the finest form of chocolate.

The neighborhood mall, which has established itself with the destination of choice for families, is adding to its appeal the latest dining and confectionary outlet. "It is with delight that we welcome Chocomelt to The Promenade. We are continually looking to attract a wealth of outlets, restaurants and activities that provide entertainment and enjoyment for the families who visit us, and the latest opening adds to this offering that I am sure will be a delight for all ages," Alyah Al-Jasser, Marketing Manager at Al Othman, the owning charitable company of The Promenade.



The Kuwaiti concept, founded in 2015 by Abdul Rahman Fahed Al-Oudah and Mishari Jamal Al-Oudah, specializes in the perfect blend of chocolate with sweets, served with both cold and hot sips. Chocomelt dessert bar and cafe serves a variety of sweets prepared by the finest ingredients and best Belgian chocolate featuring "Baby Dynamic", "Red Velvet Souffle Pancake", "French Peanut Butter Brownies" besides of a various cold and hot drinks like "Cafe Mocha", "Nutella Espresso", "Iced Spanish Latte" and "Caramel Frappe" to name some. In addition, the dessert bar and cafe is ready to cater for special events

such as birthday parties and family celebrations.

Commenting on the opening, Mishari Jamal Al-Oudah, Deputy General Manager said: "We are proud to provide creative flavors for sweets lovers in Kuwait. Following our passion of chocolate, we aim at offering special taste to everyone in town. Therefore, The Promenade is always the beginning and we promise our guests to always be closer to them with the new branches that will be launched early next year".

To mark the opening of the new coffee shop, The

Promenade and Chocomelt partnered to host media for a special brunch to showcase the cafe menu and the available activities across the mall for families.

Open from 10am until 10pm Saturday to Wednesday and 10am until 11pm Thursday and Friday, the mall features five floors of shopping and entertainment, providing top fashion brands, a gourmet supermarket and a variety of cafes and dining restaurants, while offering dedicated entertainment and health & leisure options such as a spa.



That Al Salasil hosts book signing of Faisal Al Ayyar's 'Money and Sand'

That Al Salasil bookstore hosted the signing ceremony of Money and Sand: Kuwaiti investments between the hammer of politics and the anvil of mismanagement, a book by the renowned Kuwaiti businessman, Mr Faisal Al Ayyar. The ceremony, held at the bookstore's branch at The Avenues, was attended by people interested in politics and economy, as well as media personalities.

The book, published in Arabic, discusses investment, commercial and financial cases that took place in Kuwait over the past four decades.

On this occasion, Mr Faisal Al Ayyar said:

"For several decades, I observed the investments made by Kuwait both in the country and abroad, and I found that there is much that the public are not aware of. This is why I took the initiative to oversee this project, whereby a research team collected this information from different sources and put it in one book. I hope that this generation and the ones to come will learn from these cases."

Mr Al Ayyar added:

"The book discusses a series of investment cases in Kuwait over a period of time. These include 'K-Dow', an example of the effect of politics on economy; the fourth refinery and the heavy price that is incurred when projects are delayed and stalled; and 'Kuwait Airways', where millions were lost while other airlines in the Gulf were profiting. These are some examples that reflect just how



BURGAN BANK'S AIRPORT BRANCH READY FOR THE PROPHET'S BIRTHDAY HOLIDAY RUSH

With the upcoming Prophet's Birthday holiday expected to be a hugely busy period, Burgan Bank today announced that it is ready to serve its customers in its airport branch which will be open as usual from 8:00 am to 10:30 pm, in an effort to accommodate banking requirements for both travelers and regular customers over the public holiday.

For more information on any products or services, customers are required to contact Burgan Bank's call center 1804080 during the holiday. On this occasion, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the public.



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BURGAN BANK
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1804080
www.burgan.com

KFH CONTINUES TO SERVE CLIENTS ELECTRONICALLY, THROUGH AIRPORT BRANCH DURING HOLIDAY

Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced that it is ready to fulfill its commitments towards its clients during the holiday. The bank will continue to offer various services for its clients in Kuwait and overseas through its website that offers over 150 e-services, in addition to the airport branch and other service channels that provide clients with necessary services round the clock.

Moreover, the Call Center will be ready to receive calls from clients throughout the day, and will work relentlessly to overcome any problems that might face clients in Kuwait and overseas.

In addition, KFH continues to offer its IVR service on

1803333 that is available throughout the day. Clients can call to make account transactions, ask for financial transaction, pay bills, purchase cards to recharge cell phone, and other services.

Further, clients can take advantage of KFH's ATM machines that are available at all vital locations. KFH offers Mobi Baitok vehicles that serve as mobile branches that allow people to deposit and withdraw cash in addition to other usual transactions.

KFH has additional technical privileges, such as allowing clients to conduct basic banking operations through smart phones on kfonline application.



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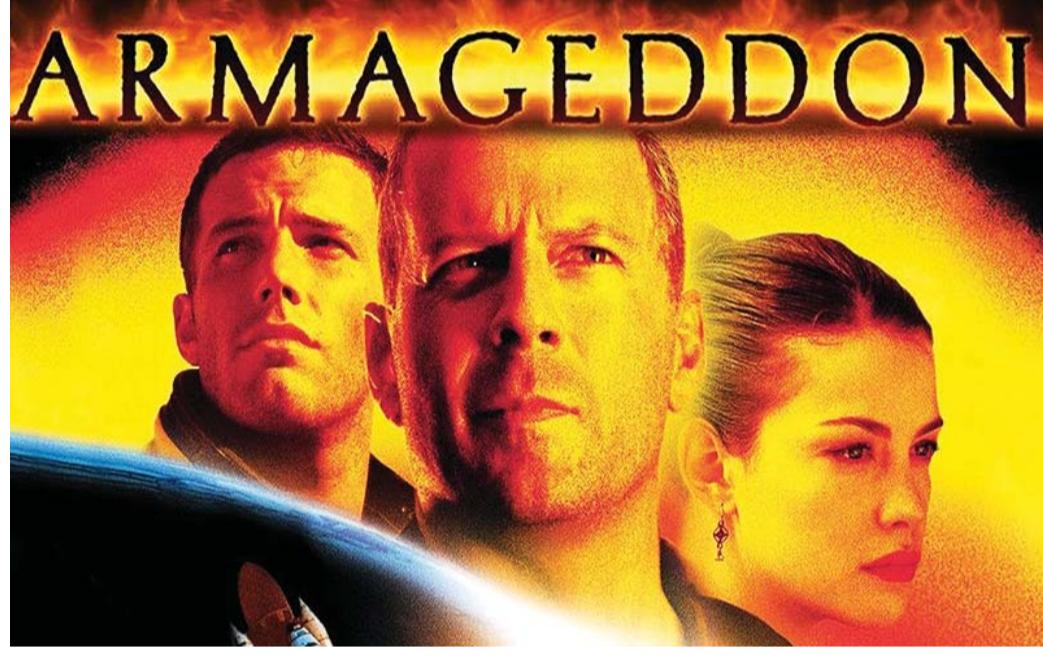
01:45 Session 9
03:30 Mine Games
05:15 Armageddon
08:00 Forbidden Empire
10:00 Heatstroke
12:00 Blackhat
14:15 Armageddon
17:00 Forbidden Empire
19:00 Brick Mansions
20:45 Con Air
22:45 Snatch

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:50 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
01:45 Bondi Vet
02:40 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
03:35 Tanked
04:25 Borneo's Pygmy Elephants
05:15 Gator Boys
06:02 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
06:49 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
07:36 Swamp Brothers
08:00 Swamp Brothers
08:25 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
09:15 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
10:10 Mutant Planet
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 Dr. Jeff: Rocky Mountain Vet
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Mutant Planet
16:35 Tanked
17:30 Borneo's Pygmy Elephants
18:25 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
19:20 Wildest Europe
20:15 Tanked
21:10 Search For The Knysna Elephants
22:05 Mutant Planet
23:00 Wildest Europe
23:55 Gator Boys

BBC FIRST

00:10 Eastenders
00:45 The Durrells
01:35 The Paradise
02:30 Orphan Black
03:15 Silent Witness
04:10 Doctors
04:40 Eastenders
05:10 Doctor Who



ARMAGEDDON ON OSN MOVIES ACTION

06:00 Doctors
06:30 Doctors
07:00 Eastenders
07:30 Holly City
08:30 Father Brown
09:15 Call The Midwife
10:10 Doctor Who
11:00 Doctors
11:30 Eastenders
12:00 Father Brown
12:45 Call The Midwife
13:40 Doctor Who
14:30 Doctors
15:00 Eastenders
15:30 Father Brown
16:15 Call The Midwife
17:10 Doctor Who
18:00 Doctors
18:30 Eastenders
19:05 Father Brown
20:00 Holly City
21:00 Mr Stark
21:55 Moone Boy
22:15 Moone Boy
22:40 Benidorm
23:30 The Detectivists

00:40 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
01:30 Deadly Women
02:20 Suspicion
03:10 Murder Among Friends
04:00 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
04:48 I Almost Got Away With It
05:36 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
06:24 Love The Way You Lie
07:12 Blood Relatives
08:00 I'd Kill For You
08:50 I Almost Got Away With It
09:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
10:30 Love The Way You Lie
11:20 Blood Relatives
12:10 Disappeared
13:00 I'd Kill For You
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
15:30 Love The Way You Lie
16:20 Blood Relatives
17:10 A Crime To Remember
18:00 I'd Kill For You
18:50 I Almost Got Away With It
19:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
20:30 Love The Way You Lie
21:20 Blood Relatives
22:10 I Am Homicide
22:20 Killers
23:00 Six Degrees Of Murder
23:50 Nowhere To Hide

00:00 South Park
00:25 Inside Amy Schumer
00:50 Tosh.0
01:15 Tosh.0
01:40 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
02:05 Hannibal Buress: Live In Chicago
03:00 Workaholics
03:25 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
04:15 Key And Peele
04:40 Impractical Jokers
05:05 Ridiculousness
05:30 Lip Sync Battle
05:55 Lip Sync Battle
06:20 Tattoo Disasters
06:50 Tattoo Disasters

07:15 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
08:05 Impractical Jokers
08:30 Ridiculousness
08:55 Tosh.0
09:20 Key And Peele
09:45 Workaholics
10:10 The It Crowd
10:35 Ridiculousness
11:00 Lip Sync Battle
11:25 Lip Sync Battle
11:50 I Live With Models
12:15 Workaholics
12:40 The It Crowd
13:05 Disorderly Conduct: Video On Patrol
13:55 Ridiculousness
14:20 Lip Sync Battle
14:45 Lip Sync Battle
15:10 I Live With Models
15:35 Ridiculousness
16:00 Impractical Jokers
16:30 Workaholics
16:55 Tosh.0
17:25 Workaholics
18:15 Urban Tarzan
18:39 The It Crowd
19:03 Lip Sync Battle
19:27 Lip Sync Battle
19:50 I Live With Models
20:13 Impractical Jokers
20:37 Ridiculousness
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
21:30 South Park
21:54 Ugly Americans
22:18 The Roast Of James Franco
23:28 The Roast Of Donald Trump

Discovery Family

Disney Junior

00:30 Prototype This
01:20 Buggin' With Ruud
02:10 The Lion Queen
03:00 Untamed & Uncut
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Dirty Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 Bad Dog
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 Prototype This
10:20 Mythbusters
11:10 Dirty Jobs
12:00 Bad Dog
12:50 Ultimate Survival
13:40 How It's Made
14:05 How It's Made
14:30 Dirty Jobs
15:20 Mythbusters

00:00 Doc McStuffins
00:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopidoo
02:30 Art Attack
03:00 Calimero
03:15 Zou
03:30 Loopidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:25 Calimero
05:00 Art Attack
05:15 Zou
05:30 Loopidoo
06:00 Chopped

06:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

07:00 Sofia The First

07:35 Art Attack

08:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

08:30 Sheriff Callie's Wild West

09:00 Goldie & Bear

09:30 Doc McStuffins

10:00 Doc McStuffins

10:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

11:00 Sofia The First

11:30 The Lion Guard

12:00 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital

12:30 Little Mermaid

13:00 Sofia The First

13:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

14:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates

14:30 Doc McStuffins Toy Hospital

15:00 The Lion Guard

15:30 Sofia The First

16:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

16:30 Doc McStuffins

17:00 The Lion Guard

17:30 PJ Masks

18:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies

18:30 Goldie & Bear

19:00 Jake And The Never Land Pirates

19:30 Little Mermaid

20:00 PJ Masks

20:30 Sofia The First

21:00 The Lion Guard: Return Of The Roar

22:00 Miles From Tomorrow

22:30 Miles From Tomorrow

23:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies

23:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse

ID

00:40 Killer Instinct With Chris Hansen
01:30 Deadly Women
02:20 Suspicion
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11:20 Blood Relatives
12:10 Disappeared
13:00 I'd Kill For You
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
15:30 Love The Way You Lie
16:20 Blood Relatives
17:10 A Crime To Remember
18:00 I'd Kill For You
18:50 I Almost Got Away With It
19:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
20:30 Love The Way You Lie
21:20 Blood Relatives
22:10 I Am Homicide
22:20 Killers
23:00 Six Degrees Of Murder
23:50 Nowhere To Hide

00:00 Hank Zipzer

00:35 Binny And The Ghost

01:00 Violetta

01:45 The Hive

01:50 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

02:15 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

02:40 Hank Zipzer

03:05 Binny And The Ghost

03:30 Violetta

04:15 The Hive

04:20 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

04:45 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch

05:10 Hank Zipzer

05:35 Binny And The Ghost

06:00 Violetta

06:45 The Hive

06:50 Mouth

07:00 Dog With A Blog

07:25 Dog With A Blog

07:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts

07:55 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir

08:30 How It's Made: Dream Cars

08:55 How It's Made: Dream Cars

09:20 Gold Divers

09:30 The Liquidator

09:50 How It's Made: Dream Cars

10:10 How Do They Do It?

10:25 Deadliest Catch

10:40 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder

10:50 Storage Hunters UK

11:00 Salvage Hunters

11:20 Marooned With Ed Stafford

11:40 Sharks Among Us

11:50 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder

12:10 Storage Hunters UK

12:30 The Liquidator

12:50 Salvage Hunters

13:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

13:30 Storage Hunters UK

13:50 Marooned With Ed Stafford

14:10 Storage Hunters UK

14:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

14:50 Storage Hunters UK

15:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

15:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

15:50 Storage Hunters UK

16:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

16:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

16:50 Storage Hunters UK

17:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

17:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

17:50 Storage Hunters UK

18:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

18:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

18:50 Storage Hunters UK

19:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

19:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

19:50 Storage Hunters UK

20:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

20:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

20:50 Storage Hunters UK

21:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

21:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

21:50 Storage Hunters UK

22:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

22:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

22:50 Storage Hunters UK

23:10 Marooned With Ed Stafford

23:30 Marooned With Ed Stafford

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 |
| Qadsiya | 22515088 |
| Dasmah | 22532265 |
| Bneid Al-Gar | 22531908 |
| Shaab | 22518752 |
| Qibla | 22459381 |
| Ayoun Al-Qibla | 22451082 |
| Mirqab | 22456536 |
| Sharq | 22465401 |
| Salmiya | 25746401 |
| Jabriya | 25316254 |
| Maidan Hawally | 25623444 |
| Bayan | 25388462 |
| Mishref | 25381200 |
| W Hawally | 22630786 |
| Sabah | 24810221 |
| Jahra | 24770319 |
| New Jahra | 24575755 |
| West Jahra | 24772608 |
| South Jahra | 24775066 |
| North Jahra | 24775992 |
| North Jleeb | 24311795 |
| Ardhiya | 24884079 |
| Firdous | 24892674 |
| Omariya | 24719048 |
| N Khaitan | 24710044 |
| Fintas | 23900322 |



PHARMACIES

ON 24 HRS DUTY

| GOVERNORATE | PHARMACY | ADDRESS | PHONE |
|-------------|--|--|--|
| Ahmadi | Sama Safwan Abu Halifa Danat Al-Sultan | Fahaeel Makka St Abu Halifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd | 23915883 23715414 23726558 |
| Jahra | Modern Jahra Madina Munawara | Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92 | 24575518 24566222 |
| 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 Ghaddeer 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 |

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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

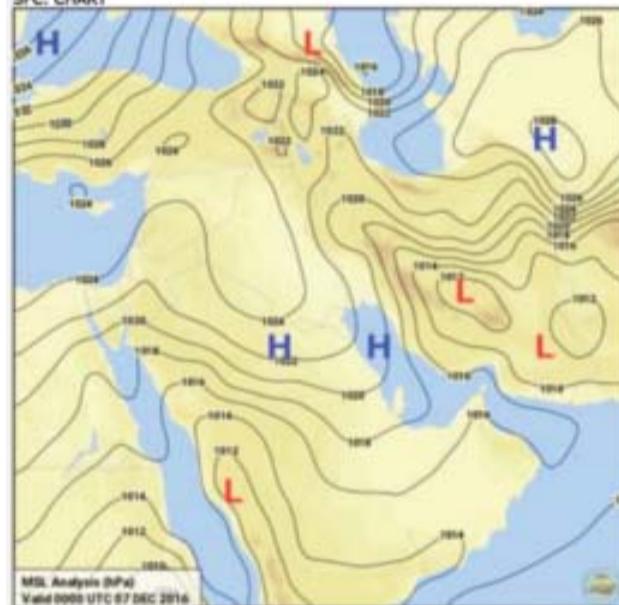


Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 07/12/2016-10:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 18 °C

By Day : Mostly sunny with light to moderate freshening gradually north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h causing raising dust over open areas.

By Night : Cool with light to moderate freshening gradually at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h



Four-Day Forecast

| | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | Sunday |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Expected Weather | | | | |
| Min Temp °C | 07 | 06 | 05 | 04 |
| Max Temp °C | 18 | 17 | 16 | 17 |
| Wind Direction | north westerly | north westerly | north westerly | north westerly |
| Wind Speed km/h | 10 - 32 | 15 - 40 | 12 - 32 | 08 - 30 |

All times are local time (GMT+3) unless otherwise stated

Warnings & Weather Watches

no warnings or weather watches

Kuwait Forecast

| Station | Min °C REC | Max °C EXP |
|-----------------|------------|------------|
| KUWAIT CITY | 12 | 18 |
| KUWAIT AIRPORT | 11 | 18 |
| ABDALY | 07 | 17 |
| BUBYAN | 10 | 18 |
| JAHRA | 10 | 19 |
| FAILAKA ISLAND | 11 | 18 |
| SALMIYAH | 12 | 17 |
| AHMADI | 13 | 18 |
| JAL ALIYAH | 08 | 20 |
| QAROQ ISLAND | 16 | 20 |
| UMM AL-MARADIEM | 17 | 20 |
| NUWAISIB | 13 | 20 |
| WAFFA | 11 | 20 |
| MANAGISH | 09 | 18 |
| SALMY | 07 | 17 |
| MUTRIBA | 06 | 19 |

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

| | |
|-------------------------------------|------|
| Max Temp (°C) | 23 |
| Min Temp (°C) | 14 |
| Max Rel Hum (%) | 82 |
| Min Rel Hum (%) | 31 |
| Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction | 43 N |
| TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR | 0 mm |

Sunrise & Sunset

Sunrise 06:29

Sunset 16:50

Prayer Times

| | |
|---------|-------|
| Fajr | 05:05 |
| Sunrise | 06:29 |
| Zuhr | 11:39 |
| Asr | 14:31 |
| Sunset | 16:50 |
| Isha | 18:12 |

| |
|---------------------------|
| Physiotherapists & VD |
| Dr. Deyaa Shehab 25722291 |

Rheumatologists:

| |
|---------------------------------|
| Dr. Adel Al-Awadi 25330060 |
| Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah 25722290 |

Internist, Chest & Heart

DR.Mohammes Akkad 24555050 Ext 210

Dr. Mohammad Zubaid MB, ChB, FRCPC, 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

Tel: 2575077

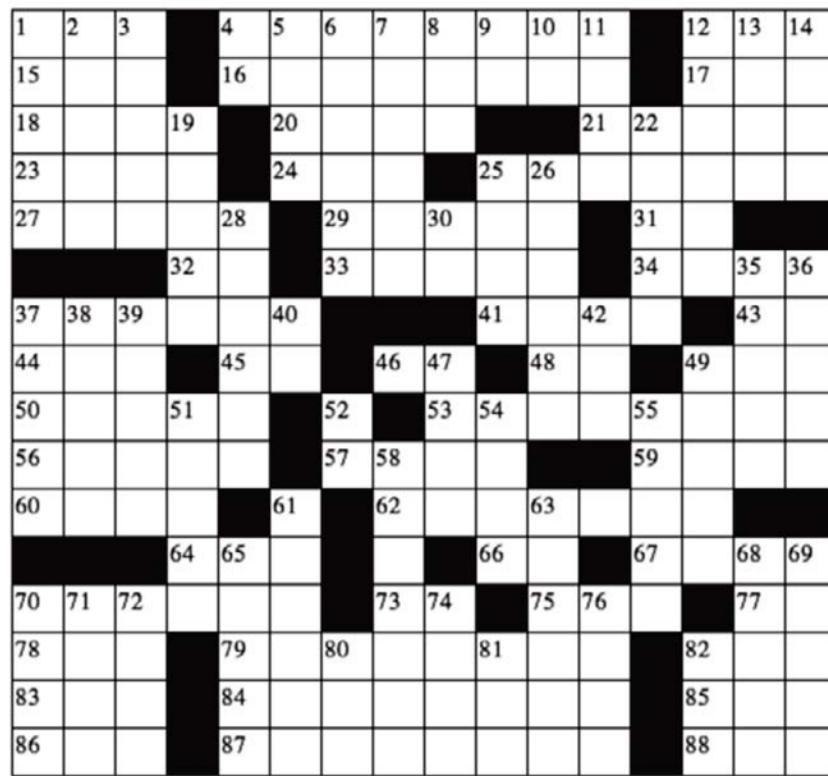
Fax: 25723123

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



| | | | |
|-------------|--------|------------------|-------|
| Afghanistan | 0093 | Lithuania | 00370 |
| Albania | 00355 | Luxembourg | 00352 |
| 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 |
| Azerbaijan | 00994 | Marshall Islands | 00692 |
| Bahamas | 001242 | Martinique | 00596 |
| Bahrain | 00973 | Mauritania | 00222 |
| Bangladesh | 0088 | | |

CROSSWORD 1454



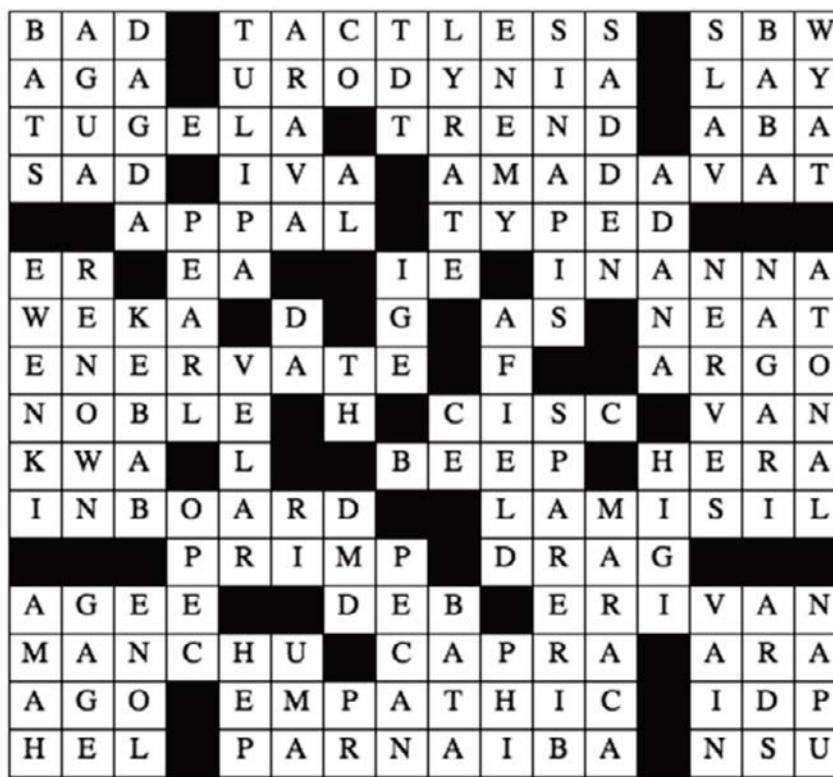
ACROSS

- (informal) Roused to anger.
- Something considered choice to eat.
- A federation of North American industrial unions that merged with the American Federation of Labor in 1955.
- A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
- A town in west central Florida on the Gulf of Mexico.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- The activity of contributing to the fulfillment of a need or furtherance of an effort or purpose.
- The act of deciding to do something.
- Indigo bush.
- A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
- Seed vessel having hooks or prickles.
- Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
- A genus of temperate and arctic evergreen trees (see spruce).
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
- Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
- Add to the very end.
- In bed.
- An expression of greeting.
- A close friend who accompanies his buddies in their activities.
- A unit of magnetomotive force equal to 0.7958 ampere-turns.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A colorless and odorless inert gas.
- Conforming to an ultimate standard of perfection or excellence.
- A great raja.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- Small beads made from polished shells and formerly used as money by native Americans.
- Type genus of the Anatidae.
- A quantity of no importance.
- An ancient country in west central Asia Minor.
- Lacking self-confidence.
- A soft yellow malleable ductile (trivalent and univalent) metallic element.
- The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
- An ancient country is southwestern Asia on the east coast of the Mediterranean.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A vinyl polymer used especially in paints or adhesives.
- The atomic weight of an element that has the same combining capacity as a given weight of another element.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Membranous tube with cartilaginous rings that conveys inhaled air from the larynx to the bronchi.
- The 21st letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Deciduous perennial herbs of South Africa.
- Extremely pleasing.
- An awkward stupid person.
- Eurasian perennial herb having pale pink flowers and curved pods.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- United States naval officer and historian (1840-1914).
- Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
- A city in north-central India.
- A state in midwestern United States.
- A metrical unit with unstressed-stressed syllables.
- The part of a quadruped that corresponds to the human buttocks.
- An alkaloid medicine (trade name Kavrin) obtained from opium.
- The compass point midway between south and southeast.
- A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
- A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).
- Gully or streambed in North Africa and the Middle East that remains dry except during rainy season.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- The United Nations agency concerned with atomic energy.
- A port city in northwestern Algeria and the country's 2nd largest city.
- The state prevailing during the absence of war.
- Combined or joined to increase in size or quantity or scope.
- Stalk of a moss capsule.
- The quarter of many North African cities in which the citadel is located.
- A Chadic language spoken in Chad.
- A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.
- Largest crested screamer.
- (Greek legend) The greedy king of Phrygia who Dionysus gave the power to turn everything he touched into gold.
- A genus of Ploceidae.
- Appeal or request earnestly.
- A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
- A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
- A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
- The capital and largest city of Yemen.
- Squash bugs.
- A person forced to flee from home or country.
- A city in northern India.
- An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
- Jointed and nearly leafless desert shrub having reduced scalelike leaves and reddish fleshy seeds.
- Type genus of the Cynipidae.
- A young upwardly mobile professional person.
- The hole that an anchor rope passes through.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Jordan's port.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- Marked by or showing unaffected simplicity and lack of guile or worldly experience.
- South American armadillo with three bands of bony plates.
- A man's sleeveless garment worn underneath a coat.
- A period of time spent sleeping.
- Being nine more than eighty.
- A master's degree in fine arts.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

The folks around you are appreciative of your ability to be able to make constructive suggestions or to help them with practical decisions. This may mean that you are good in some sort of counseling or social work, or you could work as a consultant for businesses. Knowing exactly what the public wants at this time is yet another feather in your hat. Expect to make clear decisions that will affect others. You have a greater appreciation for your fellow workers as well as the business for which you work. You may find yourself gaining a great deal materially. It is most assuredly a time when tangible things are important to you. The feelings of those around you should be quite clear, making it a successful time for any sort of communication needs.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

If you have given any thought to committing your ideas to a book, journal or periodical, now is the time to put pen to paper. You have a lot of imagination and creativity. Your ideas and thinking, together with your talent for putting your thoughts into words, allow you to captivate and spellbind. Your professional life does not leave you with time for personal projects but you may find yourself writing or creating outlines for a story, poem or jingle to complete and submit later. You are good at using your time well, whether it is for work or your own personal projects. Do not keep any of those personal projects at the workplace. This afternoon you might find yourself enjoying a good movie with a friend. Friendships are most satisfying now.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Escaping from the everyday, ordinary ways of doing things could prove most enjoyable to you. You may find it easy to bring a group together with your words or ideas that move others. Poetry and art may be possible this afternoon. Your whole world may seem meditative or dreamy. It may benefit you in many ways to take the time to reflect and truly understand your own particular situation, just how you feel about yourself. Feelings in particular, or the emotions of those around you, may be very clear. You may realize that now would be the perfect time to get a program of self-help started, especially dealing with your work habits, diet and exercise. The bottom line to all of this is simply the enjoyment of your life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Someone in authority may come to you with a special project that requires a cautious mind. This additional responsibility could put you more in the limelight than usual. Hang in there; this experience will be more enjoyable than you think. New technologies may provide outlets to meet more people and expand your career. A person who is very important to your professional development encourages your self-expression. Some form of flattery regarding your talents comes to your attention. You may find it easy to enjoy and value the path that your life is taking at this time. Your mate encourages you in your work. You spend time in thought, looking for ways to add vitality to life and to instigate methods to achieve a more profound intimacy.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Both projects and people should keep you very busy as well as challenged just now as you assess how to get things organized. You could find this a time of unwavering study and thought, as you are not prone to taking on another's opinion without first investigating that person's motives. People may talk you into some plan but you must have some form of authority. You could find those around you feeling a big sense of appreciation or value for your position. Young people you know are inventive and can create extremely worthy projects. Some of these youth may decide to be of help to the handicapped or invent their own television shows on current events, etc. This is where your future may be oriented: encouraging the young.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Being active on the social scene and demonstrating your social graces will be a big step in paving your path to success. This is a time for forging ahead, a time that you can combine business and pleasure and a time to enjoy your career and rewards. Ambition and achievement are qualities that you hold in special regard. As your professional life progresses, there arises a passion for details. There is a need to do just the right thing at just the right time, and a burning desire to have a place for everything and everything in its place. Care must be taken not to take these feelings to the extreme, or you could find yourself battling such things as ulcers or digestive problems as a result. Knowing that you have done a good job will be your reward.

WORD SEARCH

Meryl Streep Movies

Find and circle all of the Meryl Streep movies that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 40 letters spell an additional Meryl Streep movie.

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

| | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| A CRY IN THE DARK | HEARTBURN | OUT OF AFRICA |
| ADAPTATION | IRONWEED | PLENTY |
| BEFORE AND AFTER | JULIA | PRIME |
| DANCING AT LUGHNASA | KRAMER VS. KRAMER | RENDITION |
| DARK MATTER | LIONS FOR LAMBS | SHE-DEVIL |
| DEATH BECOMES HER | MAMMA MIA | SILKWOOD |
| DEFENDING YOUR LIFE | MANHATTAN | SOPHIE'S CHOICE |
| DOUBT | MARVIN'S ROOM | STILL OF THE NIGHT |
| EVENING | MUSIC OF THE HEART | THE DEER HUNTER |
| FALLING IN LOVE | ONE TRUE THING | |



Libra (September 23-October 22)

If you are feeling that you have little control, this can be restored now by making an effort to be more comfortable and appreciative of yourself. You take action to manifest your dreams and this includes your personal life as well as your professional life. In your professional life, you no longer cling to work practices that are not effective. Steer clear of meddlesome colleagues who try to embroil you in office politics. In your personal life a feeling of security comes from your closest friends, morals and social interaction. This self-clearing is part of your personal and professional transformation. You are letting go of the people, situations and attitudes that are counterproductive to your personal development. Share quality time with a loved one tonight.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This particular day is so much fun that your mind may not be on business as much as it should be. You could be a bit distracted from a meeting. Perhaps a phone call lets you know a loan was approved, or someone agreed to sign a contract so you could get that new car, or a new baby was born. Unfinished business in the workplace will be your first priority this afternoon; double-check your work before you send it on down the line. Children are not apt to be a problem at this time, particularly if you allow them some time for crafts, responsibilities and rewards and attention for any extra chores they might want to perform. You enjoy your friends and your children's friends. Expand your creative talent... Art is calling.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today you are feeling the push to complete unfinished business. Time is fleeting and your own personal goals for this whole year seem to come into your mind when you view your calendar this morning. Easy does it... One day at a time you can do anything, particularly when you have a plan and your determination. A professional project may be moving a bit slow but you give it extra attention. You are focused on your career. Your attitude is achievement oriented. You might consider volunteering in a youth group to teach business techniques, a good thing. Later this evening, a reunion with friends brings about fun conversations. There are lots of pictures and remembering and hugs and fun chatter. Enjoy the party!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are most persuasive with others today. You are determined to stay focused on some particular goal. This could be the day you break all of your own sales records. One of your secrets to success is to back up and see the whole picture instead of becoming involved in one part of the subject. Where some see a problem, you see beautiful ideas and can simplify the most complicated situation. You have a rapport with the public and try to teach others how to gain the same connection. You do not seek to separate yourself from your co-workers. Sophistication and connection to others are the key elements to emotional gratification now. The most enjoyable times you will remember are the social times like the time you enjoy with friends this evening.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may find that your ideas and thoughts run in the opposite direction of today's activity. A little more of a focused effort helps to put you in the moment, however. You look forward to some exciting event occurring soon-this may be where you fight to gain a focus. Regardless of distractions, work proceeds rather well. Evidently, you have done some preliminary work that helps the progress of today's project-not a glitch! A very close friend or relative, whom you care for, could be coming to you for advice concerning a very personal and emotional issue. You may be most helpful through locating some avenue of resources as well as just being available to listen. Help is best when the person in need can help himself or herself.

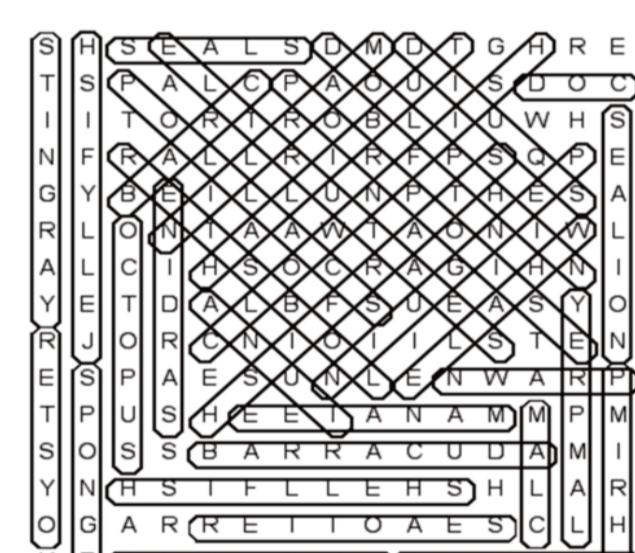


Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Sensitivity is needed today; you may be called upon to use your creative insight when an aggressive person doesn't seem to take no for an answer. You know just how to handle a difficult situation. If you are not in a management position, you might consider the possibility. You seem to enjoy stress and appreciate the challenges. However, it would be a good thing to free up a bit of your time for yourself. Make sure there is laughter in that free time period. You create a positive influence on others in all areas of your life and could enter into a mentor program. This is a time in which you will feel the need to express your talents-a creative awakening. A social gathering will bring just such an opportunity to be expressive and enjoy your friends.

Yesterday Solution

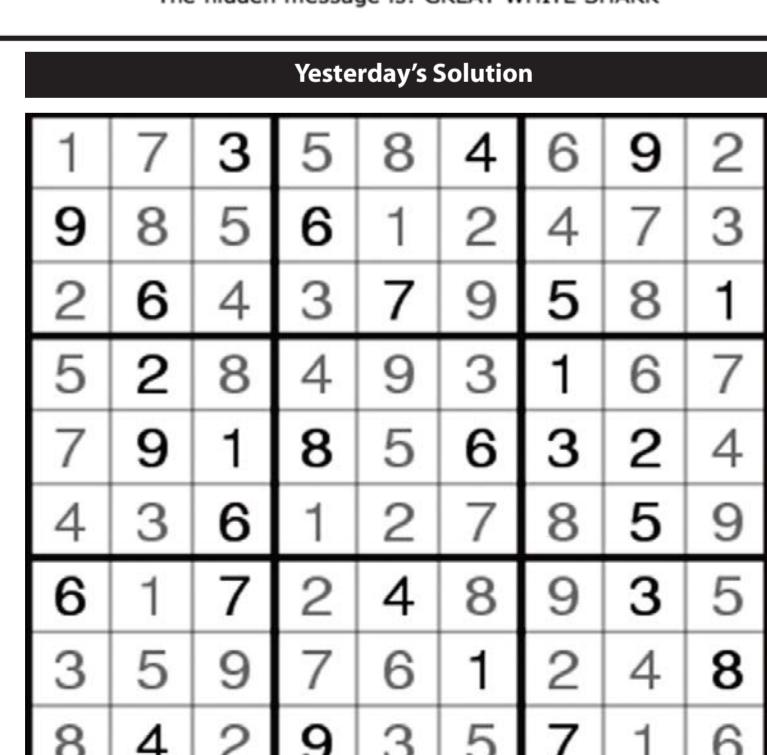
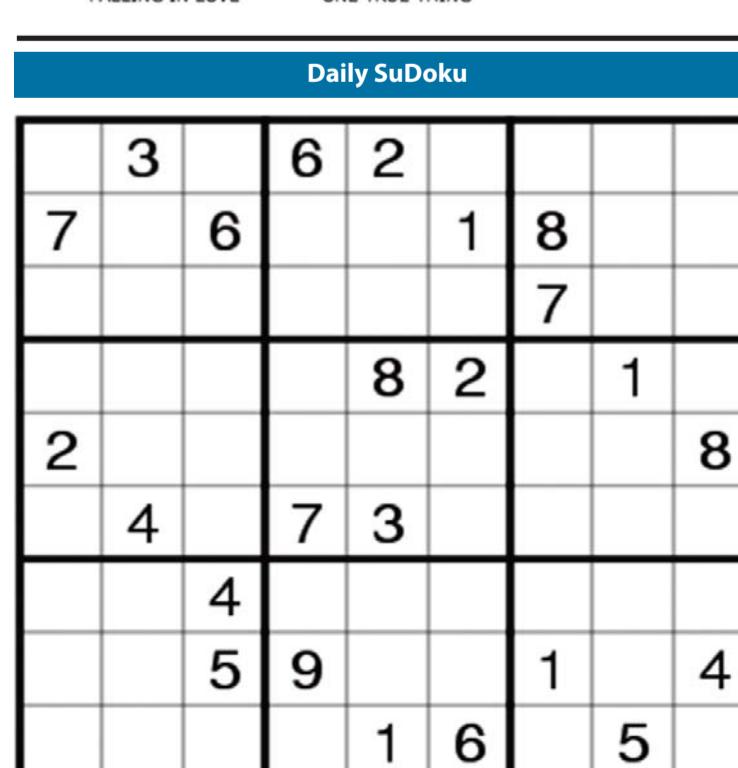
Marine Life



| | | |
|-----------|-----------|------------|
| ANCHOVY | MANATEE | SEA TURTLE |
| BARRACUDA | MARLIN | SEALS |
| CLAM | OCTOPUS | SHELLFISH |
| CLOWNFISH | OSTER | SHRIMP |
| COD | PENGUIN | SPONGE |
| CRAB | PORPOISE | SQUID |
| DOLPHIN | PRAWN | STARFISH |
| HALIBUT | SARDINE | STINGRAY |
| JELLYFISH | SCALLOP | TUNA |
| LAMPREY | SEA LION | WALRUS |
| LOBSTER | SEA OTTER | WHALE |

The hidden message is: GREAT WHITE SHARK

Daily SuDoku



Cruz Beckham reveals his family's Christmas routine

David Beckham pretends his children haven't received many Christmas presents every year. Cruz Beckham - the 11-year-old son of David and Victoria Beckham - has revealed that his dad goes through the same routine every December 25 by trying to trick his children into thinking they have not been left any gifts by Santa. He shared: "We always wake up at 6am. My Dad says, 'Wait, let me check if there's presents downstairs.' After that, he comes up and is like, 'Oh...there's none. We all have to go up to bed!' Cruz - who has brothers Brooklyn, 17, and Romeo, 14, as well as a five-year-old sister called Harper - recently announced he is to launch a debut single, 'If Every Day Was Christmas', in aid of charity.

David, 41, admitted he is "really proud" of his youngest son, who is raising money for Global's Make Some Noise charity, which aims to change the lives of young people across the UK. Speaking to the 'Capital London Breakfast Show', David said: "I'm really proud. I mean he's having fun, he's enjoying it, you know." Victoria was part of the Spice Girls, who have sold over 80 million records worldwide and are the best-selling female group of all time - but her son cited James Arthur and Nathan Sykes as two of his biggest inspirations. Asked to name his favorite song of the moment, Cruz said: "Well I'd have to pick 'Say You Won't Let Go' by James Arthur." Cruz was also happy to dish the dirt on his parents during a game of

"Mr. and Mrs. Asked which of his parents was more likely to swear, he said: "100 percent my mum!" And then questioned on whether David or Victoria was more likely to embarrass him, Cruz replied: "Definitely my dad, he is so embarrassing." David and Victoria are among the most photographed people in the world, but Cruz revealed that his mother takes considerably longer to get ready to go out. He shared: "She takes 10 hours, my dad takes 10 minutes."



Emmy Rossum's wedding dress designed by Carolina Herrera

Emmy Rossum's wedding dress has been designed by Carolina Herrera. The 30-year-old actress is set to tie the knot with 'Mr Robot' creator Sam Esmail after she accepted his marriage proposal in August 2015. Rossum has been busy planning her nuptials and she has let slip that she has hired legendary Venezuelan fashion designer Herrera to create her bridal gown. Speaking to E! on the red carpet at 'An Evening Honoring Carolina Herrera' in New York City on Tuesday evening she said: "Yeah, she'll be making it. That's all I'll say!" The 'Beautiful Creatures' star has been wearing 77-year-old Herrera's creations for many years. After wearing one of her dresses at the New York Botanical Garden's 2015 Conservatory Ball, Rossum took to her Instagram account to thank her "fashion fairy godmother" for dressing her so well. She posted: "She is like a fashion fairy godmother watching over to be sure the fit is perfect! She is kind, elegant, wickedly funny and I'm lucky to call Carolina my friend." Rossum was also invited to attend Herrera's New York Fashion Week show earlier this year. Other than the dress designer, Rossum has been very coy about her wedding plans, even though she has her big day planned out. In her film 'Comet' - previously said: "I'm not even answering my family who asks me. I know everything. I'm just not sharing it!" Rossum was previously wed to music executive Justin Siegel but she filed for divorce in September 2009 after just 19 months of marriage citing "irreconcilable differences" in her legal papers.



CHRIS PRATT'S KARAOKE WOES

Chris Pratt once lost out on a date with a girl because he couldn't pull off Michael Jackson's 'Man In The Mirror' at a karaoke bar. The 37-year-old actor - who has a four-year-old son Jack with wife Anna Faris - had previously been impressed with his own rendition of the late King of Pop's classic track, so decided to sing it again in the bar after meeting a girl he wanted to impress. Speaking on 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon', the 'Jurassic World' star said: "I had killed it one week, I felt really good. I was like, 'That's my song! I can sing 'Man In The Mirror'! It's very difficult. High degree of difficulty but when you nail it, you nail it. I was riding high on the wave of nailing 'Man In The Mirror' the week before, but I went to a new karaoke bar and met a girl, her name was Marina. I was flirting with her, and I had 'Man In The Mirror' in my pocket and I knew I was

gonna kill it. I got up on stage and I said 'This song's for Marina.' Now, I didn't realize there's different notes and different keys and stuff, and it just wasn't my key, it wasn't my night." But the 'Parks and Recreation' actor soldiered on through with the song until someone from the crowd yelled 'You suck' and his evening rapidly went downhill. He continued: "I really started sweating. Some guy yelled 'You suck,' and I look and he's standing right next to Marina! And she left with the 'You suck' guy!" But the disastrous experience hasn't put Christ off karaoke for good. He said: "I am a karaoke guy. I've sung karaoke for a long time, my whole family always sings karaoke at parties."

Amy Schumer thanks Barbie trolls for hateful comments

Amy Schumer has thanked trolls who attacked her casting in a new 'Barbie' movie for proving she is a "great" choice. The 35-year-old actress is to play a character who is expelled from Barbieland for failing to live up to the perfection expected of its residents and will set off on a journey of self-discovery in the upcoming live-action film, which based on the popular Mattel doll franchise. The plot has been described as a "contemporary spin on beauty, feminism and identity"; but despite this message Amy received an avalanche of criticism on Twitter from users who were angry the curvaceous actress was cast in the movie. Taking to Instagram on Tuesday night Amy wrote a lengthy post detailing how the criticism only helped to prove she is a "great choice" for the role. She wrote alongside a photo of herself in a bathing suit: "Thanks to everyone for the kind words and support and again my deepest sympathy goes out to the trolls who are in more pain than we will ever understand. I want to thank them for making it so evident that I am a great choice. It's that kind of response that lets you know something's wrong with our culture and we all need to work together to change it. Anyone who has ever been bullied or felt bad about yourself I am out

there fighting for you, for us. And I want you to fight for yourself too! "We need to laugh at the haters and sympathize with them. They can scream as loud as they want. We can't hear them because we are getting s**t done. I am proud to lead by example, I say if I'm beautiful, I say if I'm strong. You will not determine my story. I will #thegirlwiththelowerbacktattoo (sic)" And Amy also pointed out that she can't be "fat shamed" by people if she knows she's "not fat", and isn't concerned by people's comments about her body. She posted: "Is it fat shaming if you know you're not fat and have zero shame in your game? I don't think so. I am strong and proud of how I live my life and say what I mean and fight for what I believe in and I have a blast doing it with the people I love. Where's the shame? It's not there. It's an illusion. When I look in the mirror I know who I am. I'm a great friend, sister, daughter and girlfriend. I'm a badass comic headlining arenas all over the world and making tv and movies and writing books where I lay it all out there and I'm fearless like you can be. (sic)"



Nicole Richie's favorite trend is the 'turtleneck style'

The 35-year-old American fashion designer - who launched House of Harlow 1960 in 2009 - has admitted she is a big fan of the basic staple and considers the high-neck top a must-have garment to layer dresses or jumpsuits over for the winter months. Speaking to Vogue.com about her wardrobe essentials, the blonde beauty said: "I like the turtleneck style and then I just layer summer dresses or even jumpsuits on top." And the former 'Simple Life' star - who was legally adopted by the 'Hello' hitmaker Lionel Richie and his former partner Brenda Harvey when Nicole was nine years old - has revealed she loves to "pull together my inspiration and favorite looks" in one place to help her fans with fashion advice and styling tips. She explained: "I like being able to pull together my inspiration and favorite looks all in one place for anyone who wants to replicate myself." However, Nicole has admitted she doesn't "expect" people to be dressed "head-to-toe" in items from her label. Speaking previously about the fashion house, Nicole said: "I design every piece thinking about what

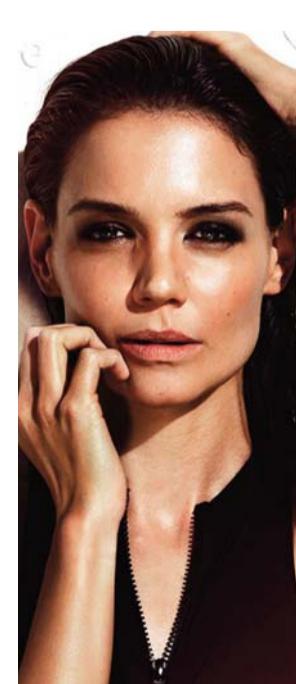


exists in people's closets already. "This is 2016, I don't expect people to wear my brand head to toe. So I love giving girls options layering options - many different pieces they can layer with pieces that they already have." And the television personality - who has eight-year-old daughter Harlow and seven-year-old son Sparrow with her husband Joel Madden - has revealed the inspiration behind her designs was comfort, because she "loves" wearing clothes she can move freely in. She explained: "I love wearing a piece of clothing where I feel like I can run around at any moment and dance in it. So you know, I guess when I'm designing, I want the clothes to feel celebratory and feel very light and fun and feel like you could move seamlessly."

Katie Holmes' daughter a constant presence on movie set

Katie Holmes has hailed her daughter Suri as an "incredible little girl" after she supported the actress through her directorial debut. The 37-year-old star helmed the new drama movie 'All We Had', and Katie has revealed that her 10-year-old daughter - who she shares with ex-husband Tom Cruise - was a constant presence on the set of the film. Katie said: "My daughter is an incredible little girl. She was with me every step of the way. She means everything to me. Like every mom, you just want to make sure your child knows how special they are." Katie - who stars as Rita Carmichael, a single mother, in the movie - said she was excited by the prospect of combining acting and directing. She told 'Good Morning America': "It was very exciting, powerful and challenging ... I started prepping about a year before we started shooting. Just compiling a lot of inspiration photos, watching a lot of movies." Katie explained that the central theme of 'All We Had', single motherhood, was something she was keen to explore in her directorial debut. The actress also said her movie has a "unique" feel

because the lines between Katie's character and her on-screen daughter are blurred. Katie said: "I felt like that was such a universal theme for all mothers, and yet these two characters are unique in that they're survivors on the road. Sometimes Ruthie's the mom and Rita's the daughter, and they're like sisters sometimes. There was this Thelma and Louise quality to them." Meanwhile, Katie has also revealed she made a conscious effort to ensure there was a positive atmosphere on the set of her movie. She told 'The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon': "We had a great time, because I've been in this business luckily for 20 years now, and I love being on a happy set, and I love it when people actually value me ... so I wanted to provide that for my actors." — Bang Showbiz





Actress Peyton List attends the Lincoln Center Corporate Fund Gala.



Actress Julianna Margulies



Actress Emily Robinson



Model Romee Strijd

CAROLINA HERRERA SAYS IT'S AN HONOR TO DRESS MELANIA TRUMP

While a few designers have made news saying they would not dress the future first lady, Carolina Herrera said she'd be honored if Melania Trump wore one of her outfits. The famed designer spoke about Trump on the red carpet before she received an honor of her own Monday night from the Women's Leadership Council at Lincoln Center. Who might dress the wife of President-elect Donald Trump has become an issue after designers Sophie Theallet and Tom Ford, who have both dressed first lady Michelle Obama, said they wouldn't do so for Mrs. Trump, a former model.

But when asked if she would, Herrera said, "Of course I will, as the first lady of this country I will. Of course." She added, "It is an honor to dress the first ladies of the country and it's something to do

for the United States. It's not for myself. It's for the public." Obama has worn Herrera while in the White House. Herrera was lauded at the event for her 35 years of fashions by Emmy Rossum and Seth Meyers, among others. Diana Ross sang a mini-concert in Herrera's honor, including hits like "Ain't No Mountain High Enough" and "I'm Coming Out."

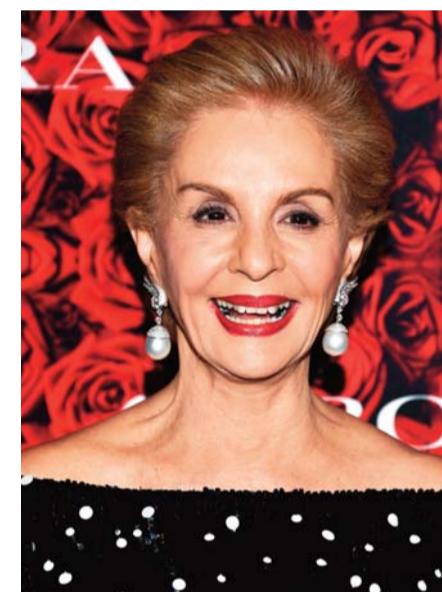
Rossum and Meyers both used wedding dress tales to testify about the greatness of Herrera. The "Shameless" actress said Herrera, whom she called "the chicest women alive," was the first to design for her on the red carpet, and over the years, helped her get out of her comfort zone. "She persuaded me to embrace increasingly bolder and brighter prints," Rossum said. "She dared me to stand out." Rossum said she excitedly called

Herrera to design her gown for her upcoming wedding. "I knew without question that only she could make the wedding dress of my dreams, and she has approached that task with the same care, elegance and enthusiasm that only she can," Rossum said. "I couldn't be more honored at the thought of wearing her dress on my big day."

Meyers' wife also wore Herrera for their wedding. On the day, the late-night comedian recalled how his wife came down with food poisoning and had to go to the hospital, but rallied for the ceremony. "I was still concerned as to how she would look as she walked down the aisle, because I have to be honest, she did not look great in the hospital," he said to laughs. "It was problematic, because I put on the tuxedo, I looked fantastic." But his fears were allayed when she put

on her Herrera gown. "I cannot tell you how much it meant to me and how in awe I was when my wife walked down the aisle after she had been lying on that gurney, on those fluids, and it was all such a credit to this Carolina Herrera wedding gown she was wearing," he said. "She was completely transformed!" — AP

Fashion designer Carolina Herrera attends the Lincoln Center Corporate Fund Gala honoring Carolina Herrera at Alice Tully Hall in New York. —AP photos



Daniele Watts

Cop accused of racism by 'Django' actress fined

A now-retired Los Angeles police officer, who grabbed headlines over the detention of a "Django Unchained" actress, was fined \$500 Tuesday by an ethics commission for leaking audio of the incident. Sergeant James Parker had faced a \$10,000 fine but members of the Los Angeles Ethics Commission said a lower nominal penalty was more appropriate. In a highly unusual move, Parker was accused of violating city ethics rules after he leaked audio of his September 2014 encounter with African-American actress Daniele Watts. Parker's attorney, Lawrence Hanna, expressed outrage at the ethics commission ruling, blasting panel members as "cowards" and vowing an appeal.

"This is the first police officer they've ever done this to... and they are trying to make an example out of him," he told AFP. "They are cowards because they just feel that they have to do something and to show that they're being tough rather than backing a police officer and doing what's right." In the 2014 incident, Watts was briefly handcuffed and detained by police who were responding to a report of a couple having sex in a car parked in Studio City, an upscale neighborhood of Los Angeles. She had refused to show any form of identification to the responding officers and was released after her boyfriend, Brian James Lucas, gave police her ID.

The actress who played Coco in Quentin Tarantino's Oscar-winning 2012 film "Django Unchained" and Lucas initially claimed that the police action was racially motivated. Lucas wrote on his Facebook page that officers acted as though the pair were engaged in prostitution as he is white and Watts is black. Parker defended his actions, which gained national attention, by releasing an audiotape of the encounter to the celebrity website TMZ, prompting a backlash against the couple. He was not paid for the tape, his attorney said. Lucas and Watts subsequently pleaded no contest to disturbing the peace and were ordered to apologize to police officers. As part of their deal with prosecutors, charges of lewd conduct were dropped.—AFP

DiCaprio, former Kremlin aide competing for ivory documentary Oscar

Hollywood heartthrob and environmental activist Leonardo DiCaprio is competing for another Oscar against an unlikely rival - a former top aide to Russian President Vladimir Putin. Critics are touting DiCaprio's "The Ivory Game," about Africa's illegal ivory trade, for a prestigious Academy Award in the documentary film category along with a film on the same subject by Sergey Yastrzhembsky, the Kremlin's best-known spokesman in the West for more than a decade. The silver-haired ex-diplomat spent most of his working life deflecting media criticism as Putin's spokesman on Chechnya and special envoy to Brussels, and earlier as the Kremlin's mouthpiece under the late Boris Yeltsin.

Now Yastrzhembsky is trying to cause a stir with his "Ivory A Crime Story," which names and shames top ivory buyers such as China, the Vatican and Buddhist monks in Thailand. It highlights how the population of elephants in Africa has dropped to less than 500,000 from 1.5 million in the past 30 years and that every 15 minutes an elephant is slaughtered by poachers for its ivory. The price of ivory soared to \$3,000 a kilo from \$6 some 35 years ago, according to the documentary.

If nothing is done, conservationists say the African elephant could be extinct in the wild within a generation. "We can only hope that this film will get the world to pay more attention to this sad situation regarding elephants in Africa," Yastrzhembsky told Reuters in an interview in Paris. His documentary, which took three years and cost \$1 million to make, won prizes this year at the Montreal, Rome and New York film festivals. Harsh scenes include one of an elephant being shot and then moaning as it is hacked to pieces by poachers.

Yastrzhembsky said Pope Francis saw a shortened version of his film before publicly speaking out in Nairobi against ivory poaching in Kenya. He also said he helped convince Russia's nuclear energy agency RosAtom, which he initially approached to co-finance the film, to spend money on protecting wildlife around a uranium deposit it intends to mine in Tanzania.

Yastrzhembsky said he showed a trailer to DiCaprio three years ago on the yacht of a mutual friend, the real-estate oligarch Vladimir Zemstov, in the French resort of Saint Tropez. Yastrzhembsky said he invited DiCaprio to take part in his project financially or do the voiceover, but talks never bore fruit. "I think DiCaprio wanted to do his own film," he said. DiCaprio's "The Ivory Game" debuted at the Toronto Film Festival in September. — Reuters

Kirk Douglas at 100, still in love with soul mate Anne

Kirk Douglas, whose illustrious career has taken in some of cinema's landmark roles, turns 100 tomorrow - attributing his remarkable longevity to his "wonderful marriage" of more than six decades. The iconic actor revealed in a special essay to mark the milestone that his second wife Anne, 97, had been his inspiration in rebounding from adversity over the years. "I was lucky enough to find my soul mate 63 years ago, and I believe our wonderful marriage and our nightly 'golden hour' chats have helped me survive all things," he writes in celebrity magazine Closer Weekly. The three-time Oscar nominee will celebrate with 200 friends and family at a party in California hosted by his son Michael and daughter-in-law Catherine Zeta Jones.

The star, who was forced to retire because of speech problems after a stroke, has practiced delivering a few words on the day with the help of a speech therapist. "I am always asked for advice on living a long and healthy life. I don't have any. I do believe, however, that we have a purpose for being here," he says. "I was spared after a helicopter crash and a stroke to do more good in the world before I leave it." Douglas, the son of illiterate Russian immigrants, appeared in some of cinema's most iconic roles, from slave Spartacus and painter Vincent van Gogh to Western legend Doc Holliday. He was in more than 80 movies but, unlike stars of younger generations, never took a role in a sequel.

'Volcano'

Born Issur Danielovitch in poverty in New York to a Jewish father and Protestant mother, Douglas went to the city's Academy of Dramatic Arts. "Champion" (1949) earned him the



This file photo taken on October 22, 2009 shows actress Anne Douglas (left) and actor Kirk Douglas as they arrive at the 4th Annual Kirk Douglas Award for Excellence in Film for the Santa Barbara International Film Festival at the Biltmore Four Seasons Hotel in Santa Barbara, California. — AFP photos

first of three Oscar nominations for best actor, an award that has eluded him but was finally snared by his son Michael for "Wall Street" (1987). Among his most famous films were 1956 Van Gogh biopic "Lust for Life," "Gunfight at the OK Corral" (1957), "Spartacus" (1960) and "Seven Days in May" (1964). Douglas's first marriage to American actress Diana Webster produced sons Michael and Joel before it ended in divorce in 1951. Three years later he married Belgian-American Anne Buydens, who once wrote of Douglas: "Living with my husband is like sitting in a beautiful garden right next to a volcano that may erupt at any moment."

The couple would go on to have two sons, Eric and Peter. "One hundred years old is certainly a milestone, but the facts are what dad has accomplished in 100 years," Michael Douglas writes in the Closer Weekly article. "I think his stamina and tenacity are the qualities that stand out for me," he continues. "He has taught me always to give it your best shot at whatever you take on. He's the full package."

Jewish faith

The Douglas family has been touched by its fair share of tragedy and disaster over the years. Eric, also an actor, died from a lethal combination of alcohol and prescription drugs at the age of just 46 in 2004, after years battling addiction. Kirk had already been deeply shaken by a mid-air collision between his helicopter and an airplane over California in 1991 that killed two people, prompting him to rediscover his Jewish faith. His 1996 stroke robbed him of the ability to speak entirely, although he managed to make a partial recovery after months of therapy. As his health limited his film roles, Douglas and his wife turned increasingly to philanthropy, and have expressed their intention to give most of their fortune to charity on their deaths.

The couple have rebuilt 400 school playgrounds in Los Angeles and were behind the establishment of "Harry's Haven," an Alzheimer's unit named after Kirk's father at the Motion Picture and Television Fund Home in Woodland Hills, California. Double Golden Globe winner and lifelong friend Angie Dickinson shared a bedroom scene with the legend in "Cast a Giant Shadow" (1966), which required the pair to be naked. "You couldn't ask for more than you get with Kirk," the 85-year-old actress, an ex-wife of legendary composer Burt Bacharach, told AFP. "He's just a perfect man, I must say. Everything he does is perfect!" — AFP



This file photo shows Anne Douglas and actor Kirk Douglas as they arrive to The Heart Foundation Gala at Hollywood Palladium in Hollywood, California.



'How to Train Your Dragon 3' release pushed back a year

It will take a little longer for "How to Train Your Dragon 3" to fly into theaters. The sequel in the popular animated franchise hits theaters on March 1, 2019, nearly a year after it was originally slated for release, DreamWorks Animation said Monday. That gives it a one-week jump on "Captain Marvel," a comic-book adventure featuring Brie Larson. "How to Train Your Dragon 3" was originally supposed to open on May 18, 2018. That would have put it a week before a Han Solo, "Star Wars" spinoff film.

Director Dean DeBlois, who oversaw the previous two "Dragon" films, will return for the sequel. Related 'How to Train Your Dragon 3,' Margot Robbie's 'Larrikins' Officially Move to Universal In addition, DreamWorks Oriental's "Everest" will

open on Sept 27, 2019. The film follows a group of misfits who undertake an epic journey to reunite a magical creature with his family atop the world's tallest mountain. The moves follow Comcast's \$3.8 billion purchase of DreamWorks Animation. That sale will put the animation studio under the umbrella of Universal, the same company that oversees "Despicable Me"-maker Illumination Studios. Last month, DreamWorks Animation announced it had cancelled "Croods 2," a follow-up to its 2013 comedy hit that was slated to hit theaters in 2017. — Reuters

2017 Grammy Awards: A list of the nominees in top categories



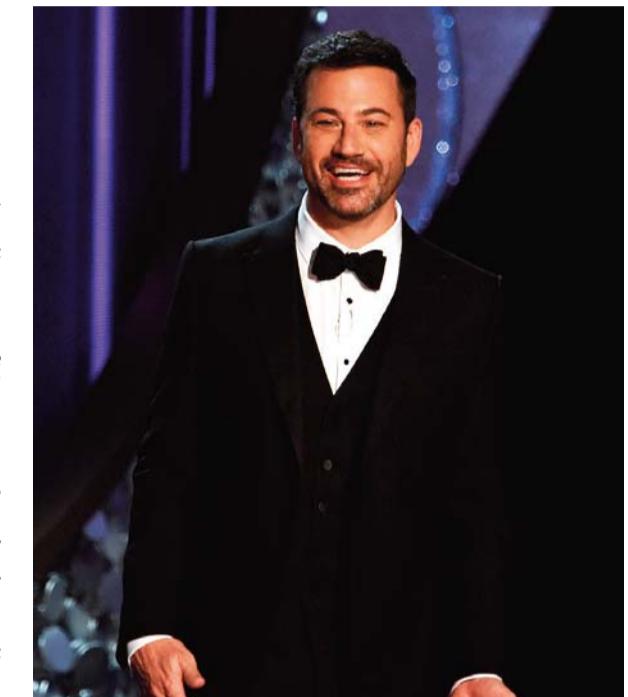
This file photo shows Maren Morris performing 'My Church' at the 50th annual CMA Awards in Nashville, Tenn. — AP

A list of nominees in the top categories at the 59th annual Grammy Awards, announced Tuesday by The Recording Academy.

- Album of the year: "25," Adele; "Lemonade," Beyoncé; "Purpose," Justin Bieber; "Views," Drake; "A Sailor's Guide to Earth," Sturgill Simpson.
- Record of the year: "Hello," Adele; "Formation," Beyoncé; "7 Years," Lukas Graham; "Work," Rihanna featuring Drake; "Stressed Out," twenty one pilots.
- Song of the year (songwriter's award): "Formation," Beyoncé, Khalif Brown, Ashton Hogan and Michael L. Williams II; "Hello," Adele and Greg Kurstin; "I Took a Pill In Ibiza," Mike Posner; "Love Yourself," Justin Bieber, Ed Sheeran and Benjamin Levin; "7 Years," Lukas Forchhammer, Stefan Forrest, Morten Pilegaard and Morten Ristorp.
- Best new artist: Kelsea Ballerini; The Chainsmokers; Chance the Rapper; Maren Morris; Anderson Paak.
- Best pop solo performance: "Hello," Adele; "Hold Up," Beyoncé; "Love Yourself," Justin Bieber; "Piece by Piece (Idol Version)," Kelly Clarkson; "Dangerous Woman," Ariana Grande.
- Best pop duo/group performance: "Closer," The Chainsmokers featuring Halsey; "7 Years," Lukas Graham; "Work," Rihanna featuring Drake; "Cheap Thrills," Sia featuring Sean Paul; "Stressed Out," twenty one pilots.
- Best traditional pop vocal album: "Cinema," Andrea Bocelli; "Fallen Angels," Bob Dylan; "Stages Live," Josh Groban; "Summertime: Willie Nelson Sings Gershwin," Willie Nelson; "Encore: Movie Partners Sing Broadway," Barbra Streisand.
- Best pop vocal album: "25," Adele; "Purpose," Justin Bieber; "Dangerous Woman," Ariana Grande; "Confident," Demi Lovato; "This Is Acting," Sia.
- Best dance/electronic album: "Skin," Flume; "Electronica 1: The Time Machine," Jean-Michel Jarre; "Epoch," Tycho; "Barbara Barbara, We Face A Shining Future," Underworld; "Louie Vega Starring...XXVII," Louie Vega.
- Best rock album: "California," Blink-182; "Tell Me I'm Pretty," Cage the Elephant; "Magma," Gojira; "Death of a Bachelor," Panic! at the Disco; "Weezer," Weezer.
- Best alternative music album: "22, A Million," Bon Iver; "Blackstar," David Bowie; "The Hope Six Demolition

Project," PJ Harvey; "Post Pop Depression," Iggy Pop; "A Moon Shaped Pool," Radiohead.

- Best urban contemporary album: "Lemonade," Beyoncé; "Ology," Gallant; "We Are King," KING; "Malibu," Anderson Paak; "Anti," Rihanna.
- Best R&B album: "In My Mind," BJ the Chicago Kid; "Lalah Hathaway Live," Lalah Hathaway; "Velvet Portraits," Terrace Martin; "Healing Season," Mint Condition; "Smoove Jones," Mya.
- Best rap album: "Coloring Book," Chance the Rapper; "And the Anonymous Nobody," De La Soul; "Major Key," DJ Khaled; "Views," Drake; "Blank Face LP," Schoolboy Q; "The Life of Pablo," Kanye West.
- Best country album: "Big Day In A Small Town," Brandy Clark; "Full Circle," Loretta Lynn; "Hero," Maren Morris; "A Sailor's Guide to Earth," Sturgill Simpson; "Ripcord," Keith Urban.
- Best jazz vocal album: "Sound of Red," Rene Marie; "Upward Spiral," Branford Marsalis Quartet With Special Guest Kurt Elling; "Take Me to the Alley," Gregory Porter; "Harlem On My Mind," Catherine Russell; "The Sting Variations," The Tierney Sutton Band.
- Best jazz instrumental album: "Book of Intuition," Kenny Barron Trio; "Dr. Um," Peter Erskine; "Sunday Night at the Vanguard," The Fred Hersch Trio; "Nearness," Joshua Redman & Brad Mehldau; "Country for Old Men," John Scofield.
- Best compilation soundtrack for visual media: "Amy"; "Miles Ahead"; "Straight Outta Compton"; "Suicide Squad (Collector's Edition)"; "Vinyl: The Essentials Season 1."
- Producer of the year, non-classical: Benny Blanco; Greg Kurstin; Max Martin; Nineteen85; Ricky Reed.
- Best music video: "Formation," Beyoncé; "River," Leon Bridges; "Up&Up," Coldplay; "Gosh," Jamie xx; "Upside Down & Inside Out," OK Go.
- Best music film: "I'll Sleep When I'm Dead," Steve Aoki; "The Beatles: Eight Days A Week The Touring Years," The Beatles; "Lemonade," Beyoncé; "The Music of Strangers," Yo-Yo Ma & The Silk Road Ensemble; "American Saturday Night: Live from the Grand Ole Opry," Various artists. — AP



This file photo shows TV host Jimmy Kimmel during the 68th Emmy Awards show at the Microsoft Theatre in downtown Los Angeles. — AFP

Jimmy Kimmel expecting 2nd child with wife Molly McNearey

Jimmy Kimmel is going to have a busy 2017. After being announced Monday as the host of next year's Oscars, Kimmel said on his ABC late-night show that his wife Molly McNeary is pregnant with their second child together. Kimmel mentioned the Oscars gig before adding: "My wife is hosting a baby inside her body."

Kimmel congratulated himself on his big day of announcements, joking, "I'm hosting the Oscars and I had sex." Kimmel and McNeary have a 2-year-old daughter. Kimmel also has an adult son and daughter from his first marriage.

Dunham and Coates, mutual admirers, talk writing and Trump

"**G**irls" creator Lena Dunham and author-essayist Ta-Nehisi Coates, strangers until Monday night, found they had a lot in common. Especially when the subject was the upcoming presidency of Donald Trump. "If what has to happen is that I get metaphorically strung up by my toes because I think we were all born equal and beautiful, then that's just what's going to happen," Dunham said. "As terrified and as horrible as I think the events of the election were, I live for this moment. I think this is a great time," said Coates, adding that Trump's victory had filled him with determination and a sense of purpose. "I make books and I make articles, and now I have a formidable opponent."

The event was organized by the Peterborough, New Hampshire-based MacDowell artist colony and was held before more than 150 MacDowell supporters at the New Museum in downtown Manhattan. Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and MacDowell board chairman Michael Chabon, who moderated the discussion, says the idea was to have a "sparky" conversation between artists of different fields and backgrounds, an approach similar to last year's MacDowell gathering that featured Martin Scorsese and Lin-Manuel Miranda of "Hamilton" fame.

Dunham, author of the best-selling essay collection "Not That Kind of Girl" and at work on a novel, is a self-described "rich white girl" from New York City. Coates grew up in a rough neighborhood in Baltimore and went on to become one of the country's leading voices on race through his commentary for The Atlantic Magazine and his best-selling "Between the World and Me." But Dunham says that she has long admired Coates' work, and Coates has written warmly about "Girls," which has been criticized for its scarcity of black actors. In 2013, he reviewed the show in The Atlantic, calling it "really, really funny" and praising it for its candid and liberating depictions of sex.—AP



In this file photo, Lena Dunham arrives at the Glamour Women of the Year Awards at NeueHouse Hollywood in Los Angeles. — AP

Documents: Jay Z's company wanted to manage Prince's music

Roc Nation, the entertainment company founded by rap mogul Jay Z, tried but failed to get chosen to manage Prince's musical assets in the weeks after the rock superstar's death, according to court documents released Tuesday. The documents stem from a dispute between Prince's record company and Jay Z's music streaming service Tidal, which is playing out in both state and federal court in Minnesota. The trust company overseeing Prince's estate says the dispute belongs only in federal court, where PRN Records is suing Roc Nation for copyright infringement for making a large part of Prince's catalog available to its subscribers. A closed hearing is set for Thursday in Carver County probate court.

After Prince Rogers Nelson died of an accidental painkiller overdose in April, the court appointed Bremer Trust to run his estate. The company then solicited requests for proposals for managing his music to generate cash. The documents show Roc Nation, founded in 2008 by Shawn "Jay Z" Carter, submitted a proposal in May. That proposal, marked "Proprietary and Confidential," pitched Roc Nation as an "artists first" endeavor that would protect his artistic vision. It noted that Prince had already given Tidal rights to stream some of his recent work.

Prince studio album

"Mr Nelson spoke openly with Mr Carter about the future of his music, and the future of the music industry overall," said the letter, signed by Roc Nation CEO Jay Brown. "Mr Nelson's point of view on art, protecting rights and advocating for social good were directly aligned with those of Mr Carter. He confided in and entrusted Mr Carter and Roc Nation with his most prized possession, his cre-

ative expression." However, Bremer Trust in June instead chose L Londell McMillan, Prince's longtime attorney, manager and friend, and business executive Charles Kopelman to manage Prince's music.

Since then, a dispute has been brewing between the two sides over how Tidal is streaming Prince's music. Bremer Trust acknowledged that an Aug 1, 2015, agreement, which remains sealed, gave Tidal the right to stream new Prince studio album, "Hit n Run Phase One." However, the trust company alleges in court filings, Tidal in June began streaming many Prince albums without permission.

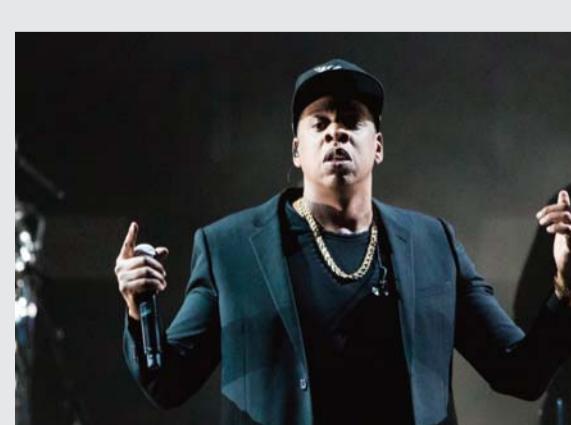
Exclusive rights

According to an October letter to the judge by Roc Nation attorney Rodney Mason, Prince and NPG "granted Roc Nation the exclusive rights to stream the Artist's vast and historic catalogue of master recordings and musical compositions exclusively on the TIDAL service. It was no secret that the Artist did not like competing streaming services and was publicly vocal in support of granting exclusive rights to TIDAL ... and there are many documents which support the parties' agreement to the same."

Bremer Trust disputes that. In a brief dated Monday, attorney Katherine Moerke wrote that the only agreement it knows of between Prince or his companies with Roc Nation or any of its affiliates covered only "Hit n Run Phase One." Roc Nation has failed to produce any other agreements despite several requests and a subpoena, she wrote. Roc Nation also has not responded to a request for an accounting of any payments, she wrote, suggesting that it still owes the estate royalties. Moerke and Mason did not immediately respond to phone calls seeking comment Tuesday. Roc Nation has not formally responded to the copyright lawsuit, which NPG filed last month. — AP



In this Feb 4, 2007 file photo, Prince performs during halftime of the Super Bowl XLI football game in Miami. — AP photos



In this file photo, Jay Z performs during a campaign rally for Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton in Cleveland.



Drake tops iTunes' year-end music lists

Drake was all over Apple Music this year, so perhaps no surprise the rapper tops the iTunes music lists as well. Drake's album "Views" was the best-seller in iTunes, while his hit "One Dance" was the most popular single. Drake debuted his album on Apple Music's Beats 1 Radio in the spring. Rihanna, who collaborated with Drake on her smash "Work," held the No. 2 spot on the top album's list with "Anti," while Adele's "25," Frank Ocean's "Blonde," which also debuted on Apple, and Justin Bieber's "Purpose" rounded out the top five. Justin Timberlake's "Can't Stop the Feeling" was the No. 2 song of the year, followed by Rihanna's "Work," Flo Rida's "My House" and Lukas Graham's "7 Years."

The list is determined by iTunes downloads and streams from Apple Music, which has over 20 million subscribers. In an interview, Eddy Cue, senior vice president of Internet Software and Services at Apple, said that 60 percent of those using Apple Music had not purchased any music from iTunes, and noted the growth in its exclusives with artist, from Frank Ocean to Chance the Rapper. "At the end of the day, we work for the artist. What we are doing is about making sure that we make it easy with our technologies for them to create music, and with our technologies, for them to be able to distribute music and for them to make a great living doing that," he said.

Cue said one of the biggest lessons learned is Apple Music was making it easier for consumers to use, from access to its playlists to its radio stations on Beats 1. Zane Lowe, who runs Apple's Beats 1 Radio, said the integration of all platforms is key for Apple Music as well. "When you go to browse, you know that there's an album out, but there's also an interview that's just been done that there's attached to that, and there's a playlist to that," he said. Elsewhere on iTunes in 2016, the top paid app was Minecraft: Pocket Edition, while the most popular free app was Snapchat; the top movie was "Star Wars: The Force Awakens," and the most popular TV show was "Game of Thrones, Season 6." — AP



This photo taken at Los Angeles handmade clothing boutique Matrushka Construction shows the shop's owner Laura Howe adjusting a long green dress that can be worn as an unconventional wedding dress. — AP photos



Shop's owner Laura Howe standing next to a dress called the 'Jasmine' that can be worn as an unconventional wedding dress.



Shop's owner Laura Howe adjusting a long green dress that can be worn as an unconventional wedding dress.

Nontraditional wedding dresses range from blush to black

By Solvej Schou

When deciding what kind of dress I wanted to wear for my wedding this year, I knew what I didn't want. No lace, no veil, and absolutely nothing long, corseted, traditional and white. So, for our tiny May marriage ceremony, I went with an off-the-rack, navy blue sailor dress with a film noir flair. For our wedding celebration with friends and family six months later, I wore a shorter, stretch velvet halter dress in red - my favorite color - custom-made by a Los Angeles boutique I've gone to for years.

It turns out that unconventional wedding dresses, while still not as popular as their white, floor-sweeping counterparts, are catching on. "We saw a noticeable spike in the number of unconventional dresses - shorter dresses, the use of color - a couple of years ago," said Keija Minor, editor-in-chief of Brides magazine. "There's a move for all couples to want to personalize their wedding and not be the cookie-cutter wedding their parents want. If your dream dress isn't a flowy white gown, and you want a pop of color, then why not?"

According to the magazine's 2016 American Wedding Study, an annual survey of engaged and newlywed women, 93 percent of brides still select white and off-white gowns. Yet 11 percent of brides opt now for something "unique" from cocktail-length and non-white dresses to slinky jumpsuits. The study also found that 73 percent of couples pay for or contribute to the cost of their own wedding. "If your mom's paying for your dress, she would probably want more of a say," said Minor. "The days of the bride's family paying is so over. With this financial shift, you've seen more girls being less traditional."

Popular nontraditional colors range from lighter pastels such as champagne, blush, pale pink and light blue to glittery gold and silver, said Minor. Besides shorter lengths, high-low hemlines appeal to women who want to show off their shoes. Designer Vera Wang has showcased wedding dresses in black and pink. David's Bridal stores sell a white wedding jumpsuit.

"Even traditional designers, and in the mainstream, are giving a nod to the feeling that brides can wear what they want," Minor added. Recently, at Matrushka Construction, a cozy, one-room clothing shop in the hip Silver Lake area of Los Angeles that makes colorful dresses and other apparel by hand, owner Laura Howe - wearing a slouchy, off-the-shoulder sweater - laughed when recalling the most untraditional wedding dress she's ever made.

More distinct

"I once made a tutu dress, like a Degas dress, in lavender, and that was wacky," said Howe, 49. "Usually people who want alternative dresses are people who have an understanding, an



Bride Jennifer Gutowski dancing during her wedding at the Rainbow Club in Chicago, Ill., with her husband John Herndon.

appreciation, for both fashion and handmade fashion. I also have clients who trust me from making dresses for them before." Howe started making custom wedding dresses 10 years ago. They range from \$200 for a dress based on an existing Matrushka design to \$1,500 for a more distinct and complex custom-made look.

Dresses with names such as the Jasmine (in sheer black and embossed green velvet, with long billowing sleeves and a V-neckline) and the Jean Harlow (a clingy Old Hollywood-inspired floor-length and knee-length design, with a plunging neckline and ruching) hang on racks throughout the shop.

For a tall "anti-anything frumpy and kind of punk rock" concert pianist getting married in London, Howe said, she designed a silvery silk halter gown with a full-length skirt. For a customer who runs a yoga studio, she made a Jean Harlow in a creamish yellow.

"People have said, 'I want an orange silkscreen with a poppy on it; or 'I want it to be black,' or whatever color they're really into. It's very personal," said Howe. When Brooklyn, New York-based Jamie Hardy, 37, and her husband were planning their June 2011 wedding celebration - a lunch and dance party - a year after they secretly married, Hardy asked her architect friend Gerri Davis to make the dress. Hardy and Davis - who

plans to make a pantsuit for her own wedding next year - met and hashed out a design. Then they shopped for fabrics, and Davis took a plaster cast of Hardy's body to work off of.

Hardy's neutral-toned, cocktail-length dress ended up being a sleek and artistic combo of raw silk, clear sequins, upholstery fabric and darker, vine-like embroidery, with part of a multi-colored kimono sash on one shoulder. "I wanted it to be tree-like and root-like, and Gerri is an architect brought structure to it," said Hardy, who was then going to school for landscape design. "I also don't like the color white. It doesn't look good on me, and I would get it dirty. Comfort is really important. If I'm in a corset or bodice, that wouldn't work."

A more comfy, translatable wedding look that can also be worn at other events has a certain appeal. Still, while Hardy wanted her dress "to not just be a wedding dress in my closet," she said, she hasn't yet worn it again. "For a certain bride, there's something about a more casual dress, if it's a more casual wedding or party," said Minor. "I have to be honest, though. I haven't seen someone wear their wedding dress again. And we said, 'You're going to wear that again! But she didn't.' — AP



Shop's owner Laura Howe sewing a piece of fabric.



Photo shows a dress called the 'Carli' that can be worn as an unconventional wedding dress.



Jamie Hardy in her unconventional wedding dress made by her friend, and architect, Gerri Davis, at Hardy and her husband's wedding celebration with friends and family in the Brooklyn borough of New York, a year after the couple officially married.

Stepparents at the wedding? Experts advise being inclusive

By Lisa A Flam

With a loving act of kindness, Brittany Peck's dad made her wedding-day dream come true. Just before her father, Todd Bachman, walked her down the aisle on Sept. 26, 2015, he stopped the processional and continued down the aisle alone to grab the hand of her stepfather and make a surprise invitation that left everyone teary-eyed. "He asked my stepdad to stand up and said, 'You deserve this just as much as I do. Will you help me walk our daughter down the aisle?'" Peck recalled, adding that just she and her groom, Jeremy Peck, and their photographer knew of her dad's plan.

For Peck, 22, whose parents split up when she was young and spent years fighting for custody of her and her sister, being given away by her father and her stepfather, Todd Cendrosky, was exactly how she envisioned getting married. But after all her family had been through, she never thought her father would share the spotlight with the second man Peck calls Dad.

"It was the best gift that my father could have ever given me," said Peck, of Elyria, Ohio. "It was a dream of mine, and when it came true, it was so awesome." "Him showing everyone and me how he could just be so humble and put all their differences aside meant the absolute world to me," she added. The moment brought joy and inspiration to millions as the story and photos went viral. It was a nice reminder of how important it is to be inclusive on your wedding day, said Darcy Miller, editor at large of Martha Stewart Weddings.

Bride and groom

"It reminds people again that it's a day to all be together, and it's about two people getting married, and it's not about whatever anyone's personal politics are," she said. Miller believes most couples include stepparents in the wedding. While there is no set rule on how to do so, couples should consider family relationships and dynamics to decide what feels right. "Sometimes it might be pretty straightforward, and other times it's very complicated," Miller said. "You, as a bride and groom, have to know your family politics. It is your day, but it is also about your family and being sensitive to what works for everyone and making sure everyone feels included."

Peck, whose parents divorced when she was 4, grew up feeling as if she had two sets of parents

after her mom and dad remarried, and she gave her stepmother and stepfather prominent roles in her wedding. During her ceremony on March 23, 2014, in Berkeley, California, her mother and stepmother walked down the aisle together on the arm of her brother. Her stepfather, who had long been a spiritual guide in Zimmerman's life, helped create the ceremony and served as the officiant.

"I wanted to keep the tradition of having my dad walk me down the aisle, but I wanted my stepdad involved," she said. "My stepdad has been a huge support of our relationship and also a huge support of me in my life, and he just seemed like the perfect fit to be an officiant." A special moment was walking down the aisle with her dad toward her groom, Noah Schreck, with her stepfather standing at the altar. "It was really, really beautiful to walk down the aisle holding my dad's arm and seeing my husband with my stepdad," recalled Zimmerman, 31. "It was dreamlike to have those men present for that moment in

my life." Whatever you decide, it's crucial - as with most everything in a wedding - to plan it ahead of time, and it's a good idea to communicate your plans with everyone involved, parents and stepparents, so nobody's caught off guard on the already emotional day.

Big day

"The goal is to not only avoid hard feelings but to avoid any extra tension on the wedding day itself," Miller said. There are various ways of acknowledging a stepparent at your nuptials. A stepfather could walk a bride down the aisle with her dad if they all felt comfortable, like what ended up happening with Peck, or stepparents could be part of the processional. If they are not walking down the aisle, you can give them a special role, like reciting a reading or prayer, Miller said. A stepparent's name can be included in the program with some words of thanks, or a stepmom can be acknowledged with a small nosegay or special flower, she said. You can give her a gift like an embroidered handkerchief, and including a note of appreciation goes a long way.

There are even more subtle ways to make someone feel connected to the big day. A stepmom could attend a dress fitting, perhaps when the bride's mother is not there; she could help bake a treat for the favor or be in charge of bustling the gown, Miller says. A stepfather could give a toast during the celebration. Los Angeles wedding planner Beth Helmstetter says most couples she works with include a stepparent in the processional. For those who don't, they may set out a place card so the stepparents have a reserved seat for when their spouse sits down. She said couples shouldn't feel obligated to treat stepparents exactly the same as a parent, but should acknowledge them if they have been a parent to you. Also, think of the future. "Keep in mind the decision you make on your wedding day - hurt or non-hurt feelings - will affect your relationship for a really long time," said Helmstetter. "I wouldn't do anything out of spite or to be hurtful. That's still your family." — AP



Zimmerman, left, and Noah Schreck, join hands as Eva's stepfather Jack Shoemaker officiates their wedding ceremony in Berkeley, Calif.



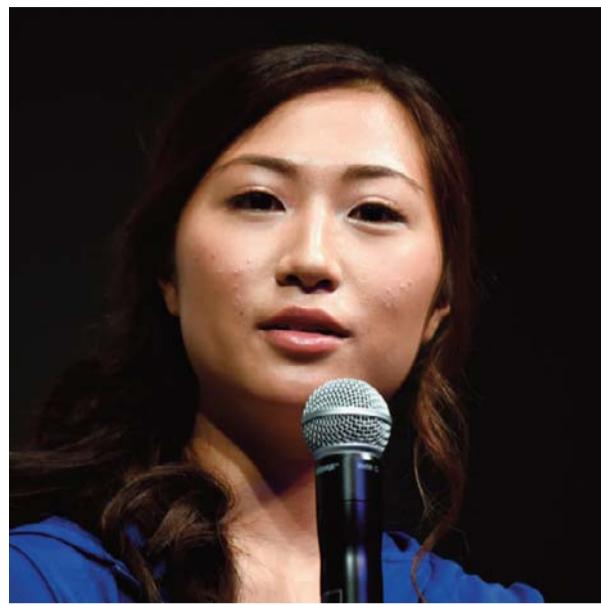
Zimmerman, left, kisses her father Michael Zimmerman, as her stepfather Jack Shoemaker, the officiant of the ceremony, looks on in the background.— AP photos



Zimmerman is walked to the altar by her father Michael Zimmerman during her wedding ceremony in Berkeley, Calif.



This handout from Marin Minamiya shows Japanese mountaineer Marin Minamiya (right) posing for a self-portrait on the peak of Mount Everest. — AFP photos



Marin Minamiya answering questions during a press conference in Tokyo.



This handout released by Marin Minamiya and taken on December 20, 2015 shows Japanese mountaineer Marin Minamiya posing for a self-portrait at the South Pole.

Everest-conquering Japan teen eyes explorers' 'Grand Slam'

Japanese teenager Marin Minamiya has already conquered Mount Everest and the highest peaks on six other continents, plus a journey to the South Pole. Now the 19-year-old university student has the North Pole in her sights as she tries to become the youngest person to ascend the seven peaks and venture to opposite ends of the earth. Only 51 people have completed the feat, known as the Explorers Grand Slam, according to a website dedicated to the challenge. Not bad for someone who thinks scaling jaw-dropping mountains is just a "hobby". "I am not a climber so I do not intend to continue climbing high peaks", Minamiya told AFP in a recent interview in Tokyo.

"I enjoy the process of getting there, meeting people." "(It) is all about challenging yourself, you have to go over your own limits, fight your weakness. It's almost like meditation and I really enjoy that." The inspiration for Minamiya—who recently

landed a sponsorship deal with a major Japanese clothing chain—was a school trip in Hong Kong, where her family had moved for work. The then 13-year-old was fully engrossed in the online world, often chatting with friends through social media rather than in person. One day her class ventured onto some of the southern Chinese city's hilly terrain—and Minamiya was hooked. "It was so refreshing. It was new to us," she said. "We were communicating with each other in real life, using analog map and compasses, and we thought, 'My goodness. I did not know there was so much beauty out there.'"

'Way too determined'

Then she started scaling mountains in Nepal and Tibet. After turning 17, she took up a challenge to complete the Explorers Grand Slam. Now, she just needs to reach the North Pole—hopefully in April—to finish the circuit. "My family was sur-

pised. They said, 'Out of nowhere, why?'" she said, adding that neither of her parents are climbers. "There were times when several adults came to me and said: 'There is no way you can do it. You are just a young Japanese girl without experience.' But that did not matter to me. I was just way too determined," she added.

Minamiya started with the 6,961-metre (22,838-foot) Aconcagua, the highest peak in South America, in early 2015. In December last year she scaled Vinson Massif in Antarctica, where she ventured to the South Pole. She also stood atop Africa's Mount Kilimanjaro, Australia's Mount

Kosciuszko, Russia's Mount Elbrus and in May this year the 8,848 meter Everest. She is the youngest Japanese to reach the top of the world's highest mountain. Her seventh and final summit was North America's Denali, also known as Mount McKinley, in July.

'Grand Slam'

While it is the highest, Everest was not the toughest, she said, shivering at the memory of Mount Elbrus. "It is supposedly one of the easiest mountains of the 'Seven Summits'. However, this was in winter and when I climbed Elbrus it was right before Everest." "I had one week to climb this mountain and the weather was absolutely terrible, the mountain conditions were terrifying, the whole mountain was frozen—it looked like an ice skating rink". And two days later she was scaling Everest in Nepal. "I just don't give up and I feel that every mountain has taught me new lessons and it made me a much stronger person", she said. — AFP



Harvesters, paid in a job-by-job basis, pick saffron flowers at one of Molineta de Minaya saffron company's plots in Minaya. — AFP photos

Saffron, rural Spain's crisis-beating spice

On the arid, wind-swept plateau of central Spain, saffron producers are reaping the benefits of a return to favor of the precious spice introduced by Arabs in the Middle Ages. After a lull in production due to the high cost of growing saffron in Spain, farmers are now back in business as customers have started seeking quality over lower prices. Sitting around three long tables at the Molineta company in Minaya, a 1,600-strong village 200 kilometers (124 miles) southeast of Madrid, elderly ladies extract bright red stigmas from violet saffron crocuses that will subsequently be dried and sold off. Every day during the autumn harvest, Segunda Gascon, 78, blackens her fingers as she works the fragrant petals, a gesture she has practiced again and again since 1964 when she was given a small batch of seedlings for her wedding.

She is part of a group of around 50 people—many of them retired—who are paid to help out at this time of year in the small village of the Castilla-La Mancha region. Nearby Dolores Navarro, 83, sings a folk song as she works: "The saffron rose is a fragrant flower, that grows at sunrise and dies at sunset." She remembers the men who would come to the village in the 1960s to buy the spice "at a high price."

All by hand

But then came the modernization of agriculture, which led to a drop in many food prices. Saffron though, which relies on intensive manual labor, remained expensive and Spanish producers were unable to keep up. From more than 100 tons a year at the start of the 20th century, Spanish production dropped over the decades to reach just 1.9 tons in 2014, the last official figure. By comparison Iran—where the workforce is cheaper and the selection of stigmas less strict—says 93 percent of worldwide saffron production came from the country in 2015, at 350 tons.

Spain, Morocco and Kashmir shared what was left. "In the 1980s, saffron was ruinous," says Molineta founder Juan Antonio Ortiz, a 66-year-old farmer. Standing by his field, he keeps an eye on the basket-carrying Bulgarian, Senegalese and Malian day laborers, who have been picking still-closed flowers since daybreak and are paid 5.20 euros a kilo. Unlike others, Ortiz decided not to abandon his precious flowers, and it eventually paid off.

His 10 hectares (25 acres) of saffron now earn his family "around 500 euros per kilo," which comes to around 50,000 euros a year. "I held on because I always liked growing this," he said. "I was barely walking and I was already in the saffron plots with my mother picking the flowers."

At the turn of the century, Ortiz and his wife Maria Angeles bet on quality to broaden their production, which now comes complete with a protected designation of origin (PDO) label recognized by the European Union. They sell their saffron to distributors from Spain, the United States, European countries and even the United Arab Emirates.

'Threads of gold'

Once Maria Angeles has sorted through the stigmas with tweezers, and dried them on a silk canvas above a small fire,

she puts them in small plastic bags to wait for experts who control their composition to give them their PDO. They will then be able to sell the saffron threads with their distinctive aroma. The price? Four euros per gram. Spanish saffron is "among the best of anywhere," says Pat Heslop-Harrison, professor of agricultural biology at Britain's Leicester University. "Castilla-La Mancha has the perfect conditions," he adds, pointing to "the types of soil, climate, how it is harvested and dried."

That fact has not gone unnoticed among Spain's legion of chefs. "In Spain, we treat it as if it were threads of gold," says Daniel Lasa, chef at Spain's Michelin-starred Mugaritz restaurant. "La Mancha's saffron is much clearer, less bitter" than that of Iran, he adds. He prefers using the spice for soups and gelatinous, and to accompany seafood. In the region around Minaya, Spain's devastating economic crisis, which erupted in 2008, pushed many to return to growing what is known as "red gold." There are now 267 producers of saffron with the PDO label alone in Spain. Just 100 kilometers away in Toledo province where unemployment is sky-high, small-scale producers are on the rise, grouping themselves into cooperatives. And in Minaya, the Ortiz family is no longer alone. Antonio Garcia Filoso, a 36-year-old farmer, started planting saffron two years ago, and produced three kilograms last year. — AFP



A basket full of saffron flowers lies on the ground at one of the Molineta de Minaya saffron company's plots in Minaya.



Saffron stigmas are poured over a sieve used to dry them.



A harvester pulls up a saffron flower from its root.



Molineta de Minaya saffron company owners Mari Angeles Serrano (left) and Jose Antonio Ortiz pose holding a basket full of bloomed saffron bulbs outside their company's warehouse.



A harvester, paid in a job-by-job basis, picks saffron flowers.



Saffron cleaners work at Molineta de Minaya company's warehouse.



A saffron cleaner picks the stigmas of a saffron flower.

Lifestyle

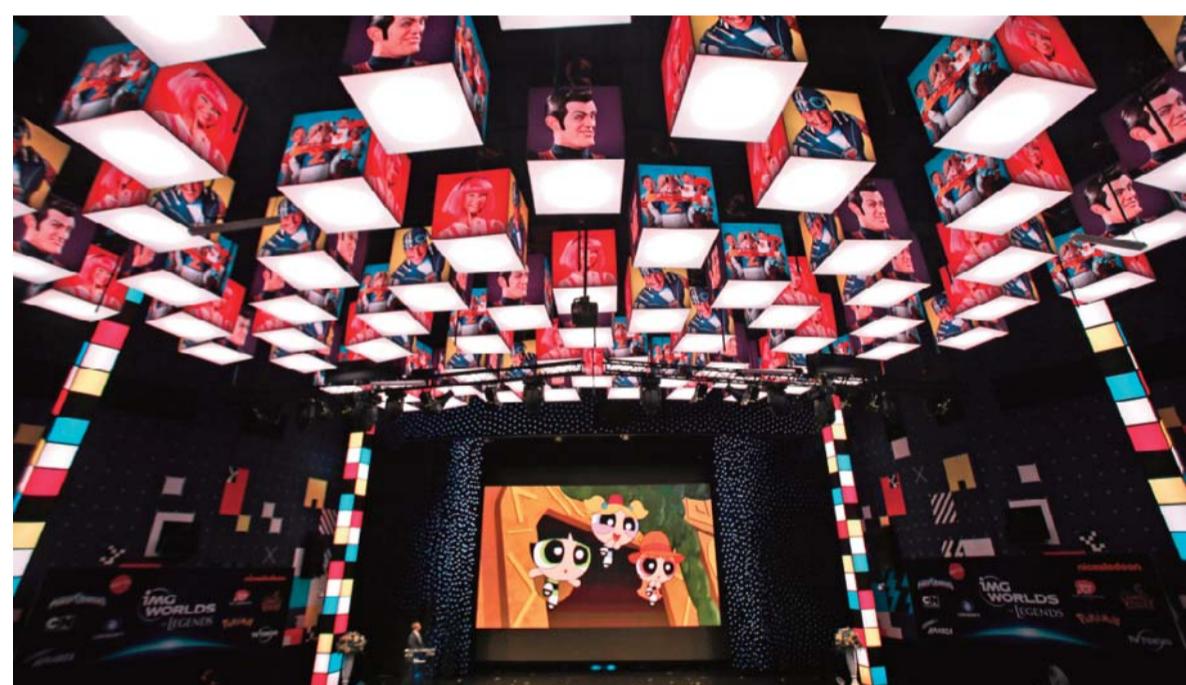
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2016

**Everest-conquering
Japan teen eyes
explorers' 'Grand Slam'**

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People enjoy the Christmas Lunapark in the capital Nicosia, in this eastern Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Christmas events and decorations are taking place all over the island running up to the Christmas celebrations. — AP



Lennard Otto, Chief Executive Officer of IMG Worlds of Adventure, bottom center left, address the audience during a press conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Tuesday. — AFP photos

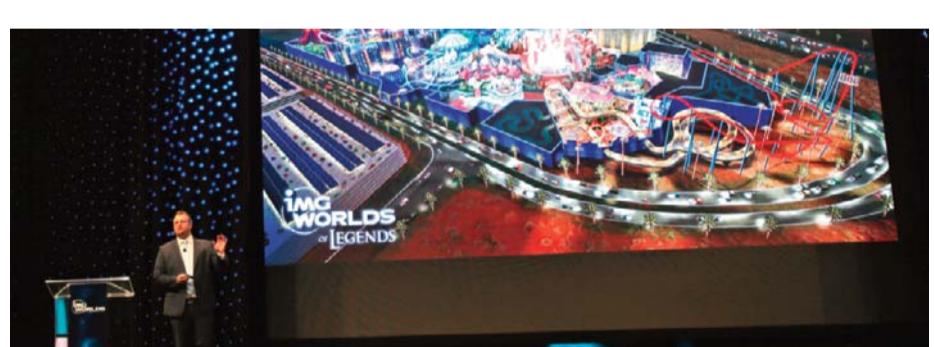


A costumed cartoon character poses at the IMG Worlds of Adventure in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Dubai plans to open yet another amusement park

A Dubai developer that recently opened the world's largest indoor theme park now plans an even bigger attraction next door. The Ilyas and Mustafa Galadari Group said on Tuesday that its planned IMG Worlds of Legends park will spread across more than 2 million square feet (186,000 square meters) near the existing IMG Worlds of Adventure, which opened at the end of August.

The new park will include well-known characters, including Pokemon, Nickelodeon's Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles and Dora the Explorer, as well as Mattel's Barbie and Hot Wheels. Officials didn't say how soon the park will open or how much it will cost. Dubai is building a flurry of new amusement parks and other entertainment venues as it prepares to host the World Expo in 2020. — AP



Lennard Otto, Chief Executive Officer of IMG Worlds of Adventure speaks during a press conference in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

KING'S AMERICAS NEXT SHUFFLE CAT EVENT WITH HANNAH SIMONE



Wylie Coyote Super Genius is the winner of America's Next Shuffle Cat contest after a live cat-walk in New York, Tuesday. Wylie will be featured in the new mobile game from King, Shuffle Cats.



Actress Hannah Simone, left, congratulates Wylie Coyote Super Genius and owner Michelle Meinholt after Wylie wins the America's Next Shuffle Cat contest after a live cat-walk in New York.



Actress Hannah Simone plays with adoptable cats from Brooklyn Cat Cafe during an event.