

150 FILS
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40 PAGES

OPPOSITION MPs URGE GULF TO ACT OVER ALEPPO 'GENOCIDE'

MP: VISITORS SHOULD HAVE HEALTH INSURANCE • COURT TO STUDY POLL PETITIONS

Min 06°
Max 20°
High Tide
12:46 & 23:25
Low Tide
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CIVILIANS 'KILLED ON SPOT' IN ALEPPO

BEIRUT: Syrian pro-government forces have reportedly executed dozens of civilians in Aleppo including women and children, the UN said as the crucial battle for the city neared its end. UN rights office spokesman Rupert Colville said forces loyal to President Bashar Al-Assad had in some cases entered homes and killed those inside, and in others "caught and killed on the spot" fleeing civilians. Fears have been growing for thousands of trapped civilians as rebels make a desperate last stand in their remaining pocket of territory in the former opposition stronghold of east Aleppo.

After weeks of heavy fighting, regime forces were poised to take full control of Aleppo, dealing the biggest blow to Syria's rebellion in more than five years of civil war. Speaking to reporters in Geneva, Colville said the UN had received credible reports that at least 82 civilians, including 11 women and 13 children, had been killed in recent days. Colville said the UN was "filled with the deepest foreboding for those who remain in this last hellish corner of opposition-held eastern Aleppo." Residents in remaining rebel-held territory told AFP they had no hope left.

"Our fate is sealed. Why would we hide, it won't do us any good. We will either die or be captured," said Ibrahim Abu Al-Leith, a spokesman for the White Helmets rescue service. Other witnesses described scenes of carnage in rebel areas, with bodies lying amid the rubble of city streets, as desperate residents
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ALEPPO: Syrian pro-regime fighters gesture in the Fardos neighborhood as they drive past residents fleeing violence in the restive Bustan Al-Qasr neighborhood yesterday, after regime troops retook the area from rebel fighters. — AFP

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MPs yesterday called on the governments of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states to expel Russian ambassadors from their countries in protest over what they called Moscow's role in "genocide" against civilians in the Syrian city of Aleppo. Speaking at a small rally held inside the National Assembly building, MP Jamaan Al-Harbash charged that Russian-backed Iranian and Syrian troops are committing "genocide against civilians in Aleppo amid total international negligence".

He urged the six GCC states to expel Russian ambassadors to protest Russia's military involvement in the brutal attack on the city, and also called for opening mosques for fundraising campaigns for Aleppo residents. Aleppo has been under heavy bombardment by Russian and Syrian jets, as Iranian-backed militias and Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad troops have been advancing on the populated eastern districts of the city held by the Syrian rebels.

Abdullah Fahhad, another Islamist MP, demanded the expulsion of the envoys of both Russia and Iran. MP Waleed Al-Tabtabaei said that a protest will be staged today outside the Russian embassy at 3:30 pm to condemn the massacres against the Syrian people. Several other MPs who spoke at the rally strongly condemned the massacres being committed against Syrian civilians and called on the government to rush aid to the residents of the city.

MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari said several MPs have signed a petition calling to hold an emergency session of the Assembly next Tuesday to discuss the situation and atrocities in Syria. The Islamist-dominated opposition won nearly half of the 50 seats in a snap general election last month.

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News

in brief

Amir thanks state officials, citizens

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday highly appreciated senior state officials, citizens and residents for their warm sentiments and sincere prayers for recovery after he caught a cold.

US approves \$1.7bn tank sale to Kuwait

WASHINGTON: The US State Department has given its approval for a possible \$1.7 billion military sale to Kuwait for the recapitalization of 218 M1A2 tanks and related equipment, services and training, a Pentagon agency said yesterday. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency said the contractors involved included General Dynamics Corp, Raytheon Co, Meggitt PLC, Northrop Grumman Corp, Lockheed Martin Corp and Honeywell International Inc, among others.

Kuwait to cut crude production from Jan 1

DOHA: Oil companies in Qatar and Kuwait yesterday announced that they will reduce production levels from the beginning of the year. National oil conglomerate Kuwait Petroleum Corp (KPC) said yesterday it has informed its clients that their export quantities will be reduced, starting in January. It did not provide any details of the quantities to be reduced, but local media said Kuwait's share is around 130,000 barrels a day out of its daily output of 3.0 million bpd.

Qatar flew home 10,000 labor abuse victims in '15

DOHA: Qatar flew home 10,000 workers who were victims of labor abuse during 2015, official government figures have revealed. The number was released by the Gulf state's Ministry of Administrative Development, Labor and Social Affairs. All the flights were paid for by the state.

INDIA ARRESTS 20 FOR ANTHEM DISRESPECT

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HARDEN'S 36 SEES ROCKETS PAST NETS

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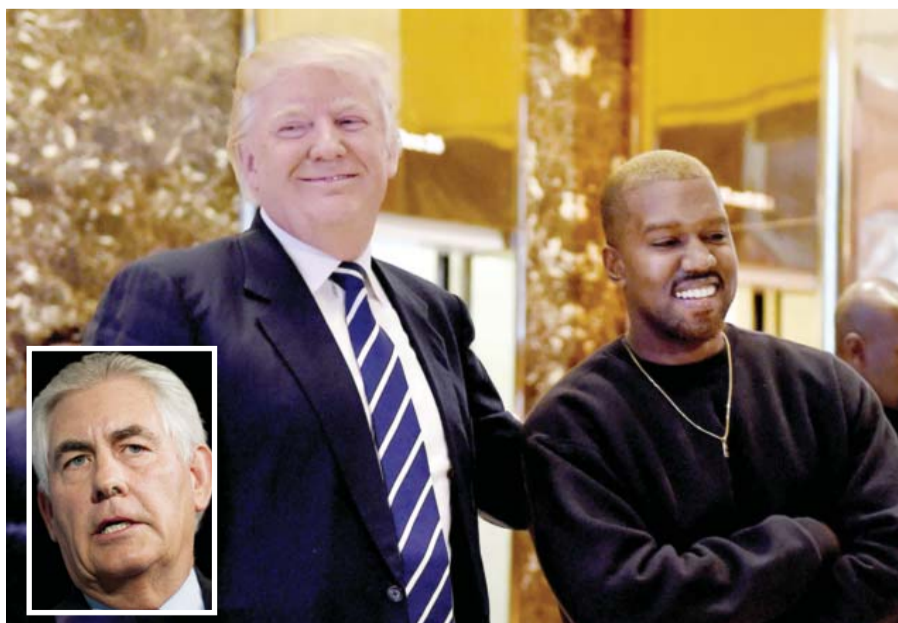
TRUMP TAPS EXXON CHIEF AS TOP DIPLOMAT

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump yesterday tapped ExxonMobil chief Rex Tillerson as his nominee to be secretary of state, despite concerns on both sides of the political aisle about the oilman's deep ties to Russia. The nomination was the one most awaited by observers at home and abroad as the 70-year-old Republican billionaire builds his cabinet before taking office on Jan 20 - and reveals how his administration might alter foreign policy.

The president-elect has stoked alarm - even among fellow Republicans - by call-

ing for closer ties with Moscow, in contrast to the belief in Washington that Russia remains a global security threat. The nomination comes just days after the CIA accused Russia of interfering to help Trump win the US election - a development which could complicate Tillerson's confirmation hearings before the Senate. Trump promised that the executive, whose nomination was immediately welcomed by Vladimir Putin's Kremlin, has relationships with world leaders that are "second to none."

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NEW YORK: Singer Kanye West and US President-elect Donald Trump speak with the press after their meeting at Trump Tower yesterday. (Inset) File photo shows ExxonMobil President and CEO Rex Tillerson, who has been tapped by Trump as his secretary of state. — AFP

LAST HOPE FOR ANTI-TRUMP CAMP IS ELECTORAL COLLEGE

WASHINGTON: Americans aghast over the idea of Donald Trump as president are turning to the Electoral College - the somewhat puzzling, much criticized institution that will make it official - as a last-ditch recourse to halt the inevitable. Its 538 members - the government says it is not even a body, really, but rather a process - will vote Dec 19 to formally confirm Trump's stunning win over Democrat Hillary Clinton in the November 8 election.

Clinton won the popular vote by two percentage points, but Trump took the only thing that mattered: A majority of the electoral college, and a healthy one at that: 306 to 232. There are Americans out there who want the college to declare Clinton the winner, anyway, because she triumphed in the popular vote. In 21 states, electors can vote their conscience, regardless of who won the popular vote in their state and - thus in theory at least - all that state's electoral votes.

But it is extremely rare for an elector to go rogue. It has happened just nine times since World War II, says FairVote, a non-partisan group working for electoral reform. For people opposed to Trump - the shoot-from-the-hip property tycoon with no experience in government, the man who insulted women, minorities and Muslims during the campaign and has the world watching closely as he hints at upending decades of US foreign policy with blasts of predawn tweets - the nuclear electoral col-

lege option is a godsend.

But it is a fool's errand, to be sure. It would take 37 Republican electors jumping ship and not voting for Trump. If that were to happen, in theory at least the choice of the next president would go to the House of Representatives. But before it got there, judicial chaos would almost certainly break out. Listen to filmmaker Michael Moore, one of the anti-Trump people dreaming of salvation: "54 percent of the voters didn't want Donald Trump. Only 46 percent did."

Indeed, that was Trump's popular vote tally - actually 46.2 percent - compared to 48.2 percent for former secretary of state Clinton. The election year has been utterly crazy, Moore added. "So it is possible - just possible - that in these next six weeks, something else might happen, something crazy, something we're not expecting?" he added, speaking last week on "Late Night with Seth Meyers."

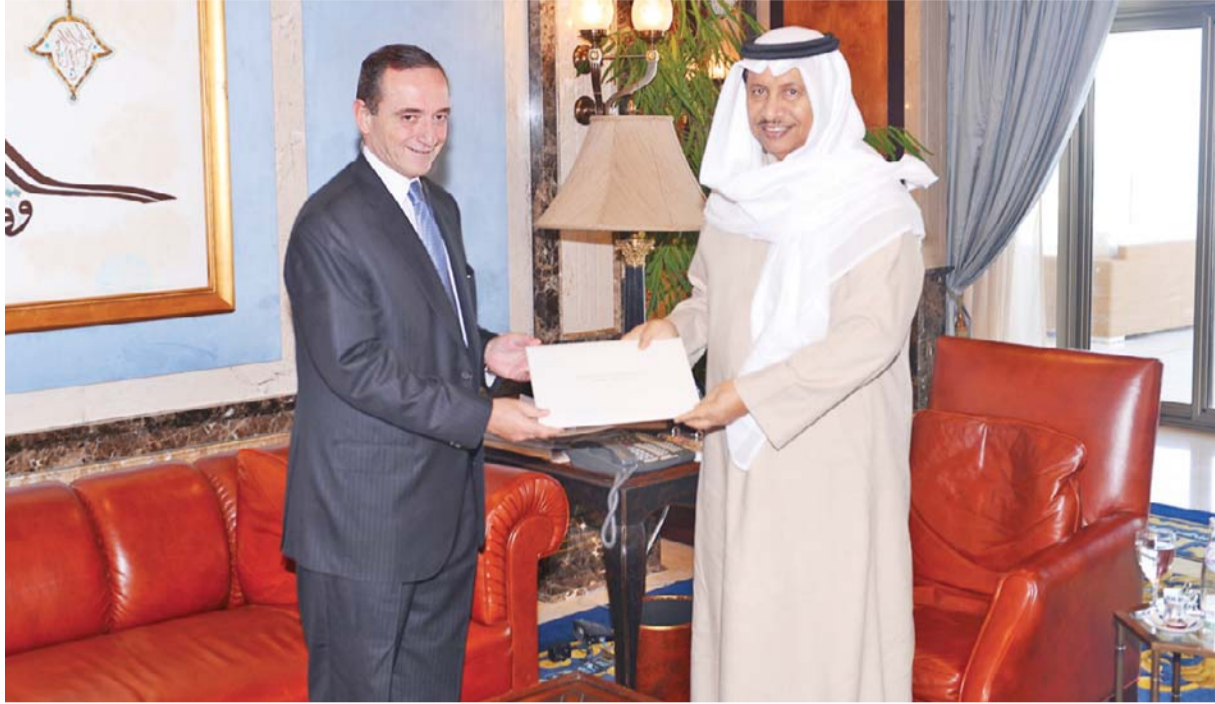
Jim Himes, a Democratic congressman, is on board. He told CNN the Electoral College now has an inherent responsibility to step up and avert disaster. Himes said of the college: "If it exists, why would it exist but for any other purpose than what it could do in one week, which is to say - and something that I think the majority of Americans I think probably believe today - which is that we're about to make a president who is dangerous."

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PM RECEIVES LETTER FROM JORDAN'S KING

KUWAIT: Jordan's Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Al-Kayed handed His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah a letter from Jordanian King Abdullah II yesterday. This letter included

an invitation to His Highness the Prime Minister to take part in the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa (WEF-MENA), which will be held in the Dead Sea, Jordan, on May 19-21 of 2017. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Jordan's Ambassador to Kuwait Mohammad Al-Kayed. — KUNA



CROWN PRINCE RECEIVES OUTGOING PERUVIAN ENVOY

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Seif Palace yesterday the outgoing Peruvian Ambassador to Kuwait Heli Adelfo Pelaez Castro on the occasion of the end of his tenure.

The meeting was attended by head of protocols at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan, Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA

RAIN BRINGS KUWAITI DESERT BACK TO LIFE



Photo feature by Ghazi Qafaf

KUWAIT: Kuwait's thirsty dry soil happily welcomed the rain showers that fed the growing seasonal plants and colorful flowers, promising a bright spring season. — KUNA



KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday received congratulations from the Ministry's officials on the Amiri decree which reinstated him to his position. The meeting was attended by Deputy Foreign Ministry Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah. — KUNA

KUWAIT LAUNCHES RELIEF CAMPAIGN FOR ALEPPO



KUWAIT: The International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) has launched an urgent relief campaign for the residents of the besieged city of Aleppo, Syria, who suffer severely from lack of food, medicine, fuel, and security due to non-stop air strikes on the city.

Aleppo has been suffering for a while from the escalation of systematic air strikes on hospitals, schools, and besieged residential neighborhoods, which is totally against all humanitarian principles and charters, international traditions, and religious laws, Dr Abdullah Al-Maatouq, IICO's Chairman and Amiri Diwan Advisor, said in a press statement yesterday.

The continued aggression, hostility, and violence against the city is a blatant violation of the basics of the international humanitarian law, Maatouq said, adding that such intense violence is hindering the civil defense teams' efforts to pick up dead bodies and save lives under the rubbles of destroyed buildings. He stressed the importance of consolidating all efforts to launch more humanitarian campaigns in order to alleviate the suffering of the Syrian people, calling philanthropists and good people around the world to support and aid the children and women of Aleppo.

He also urged the UN, international organizations, Arab League, and Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to bare their responsibilities toward the massacres that are being committed in Aleppo. Earlier yesterday, Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) launched yesterday at the society's headquarters in Shuwaikh Administrative area a campaign to collect donations for displaced Syrians in Aleppo.

The society aims to ease the suffering of displaced Syrians in Aleppo, who are living in disastrous humanitarian conditions due to the ongoing Syrian war, KRCS' Deputy Chairman Anwar Al-Hasawi said. He added that donations will be received at the headquarters in morning and evening time periods, while a donation booth will be opened today at 360 Mall. Meanwhile, head of the resources development department at KRCS Lama Al-Othman noted that people in Aleppo are in desperate need of heaters to face the extremely



KRCS' Deputy Chairman Anwar Al-Hasawi



Head of the resources development department at KRCS Lama Al-Othman

cold, as well as food and medicine. She called on humanitarian organizations to provide immediate aid to Syrians in need. According to statistics, about 60,000 in Aleppo

where forced to flee their homes since last August, Othman said. She also added that about 20,000 have fled in the past 72 hours. — KUNA



KUWAIT'S PRESS FREEDOMS ON THE DECLINE

PARIS/KUWAIT: Kuwait's press freedoms took a massive hit in 2016 according to the latest Reporters Without Borders ranking. Kuwait ranked 103 out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index for 2016, dropping 13 spots from its 2015 position. The international press freedom organization warned that the world had seen a sharp

increase in the global number of journalists detained or 'disappeared' and subject to other forms of political censorship or silencing. Kuwait ranks better than neighbors Qatar (117), United Arab Emirates (119), Bahrain (162), Saudi Arabia (165) and Iran (169). But has lost significant ground in the last few years. The oil-rich emirate is known as the

most political vibrant in the Gulf and has long had one of the most active media and press environment in the region. But the 103 ranking for 2016 pales in comparison to Kuwait's 2009 ranking of 60 and indicates growing intolerance from the Kuwait government for any political criticism or commentary.

Freedom of speech and the press are protected under the Kuwait Constitution in Articles 36 and 37 but the 2006 Press and Publications law, the 2015 Cybercrimes law and the 2016 E-Media law place limits on press freedoms. Criticism of the Amir, Islam and the judiciary are punishable crimes as is any harming of Kuwait's relations with other

countries. In recent years, several journalists, bloggers and media activists have faced jail time. "For the time being, the numerous UN resolutions on the protection of journalists [around the globe] and the fight against impunity have not given satisfactory results," the RWB noted in the release of this year's index.



FIRE AT CHEST HOSPITAL GUTS BUILDING, NO CASUALTIES

KUWAIT: A blaze that erupted at the Chest Hospital in Sabah health zone was brought under control yesterday. Crews belonging to Kuwait's Fire Service Directorate (KFSD)

responded to the fire that gutted Al-Sadri Hospital and brought it under control with no casualties reported, KFSD announced. Kuwait's new Health Minister Jamal Al-

Harbi along with KFSD Director General Lt. Gen. Khalid Al-Mikrad visited the scene of the fire. The Ministry of Health (MoH) noted that

the blaze which erupted in a dilapidated building, was the result of an electrical short circuit, adding that the incident was dealt with in a timely manner which prevented

the fire from spreading out of control. Firemen evacuated the building and isolated the ICU to prevent the fire from spreading and harming patients.

FRIEND'S KILLER FOUND GUILTY OF SECOND DEGREE MURDER

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The criminal court yesterday sentenced a citizen who killed his friend in a fight in the Qashaniya desert to three years and four months in jail. The court explained its verdict by considering the killing as second degree murder during a fight. Notably, the public prosecution will file an appeal and demand a stricter penalty.

Economic plan

MP Mohammed Al-Dallal announced that he has collected some of his colleagues' signatures for a demand to hold a

special session to discuss the government's economic plan on Jan 10. He added that the plan needs to be explained.

Hospital tours

Health Minister Dr Jamal Al-Harbi started touring public hospitals and polyclinics to inspect the quality of medical services provided there. Harbi stressed that the tour aims at probing citizens' problems related to medical services, and the main goal in this period is to regain citizens' trust in medical services. Harbi also noted that his motto is 'Outstanding Healthcare'.

17 PEOPLE EVACUATED FROM BURNING HOUSE

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A fire broke out in a Salam house, and firemen freed 17 people trapped due to thick smoke. Two persons suffered light burns, while the rest suffered smoke inhalation. They were sent to hospital for treatment. An investigation was opened to determine the cause of the fire.

Two books

Interior Ministry Undersecretary Lt Gen

Suleiman Al-Fahd received Lt Col Dr Yousuf Al-Yaqout from Saad Al-Abdullah Security Sciences Academy, who presented him with two books: "Encyclopedia of Kuwait laws concerned with fighting terrorism" and "Terrorists and killers".

Airport statistics

Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department said the number of departures during Nov 2016 totaled 398,295 persons - 118,675 Kuwaitis and 29,016 Gulf

nationals, in addition to 250,604 people of other nationalities. Arrivals in Nov totaled 359,949 - 115,825 Kuwaitis, 25,874 Gulf nationals and 218,250 of other nationalities.

Statistics also showed that 19,369 visas were issued at the airport, while deportation fingerprints officers busted 64 persons, while 10 people were allowed in after the deportation ban was lifted. Meanwhile, 124 persons were arrested and sent to concerned authorities.



KUWAIT AIRWAYS REVEALS BOEING 777-300ER'S WORLD-CLASS INTERIOR

TURNING BRANDING INSIDE-OUT • REFLECTING NEW IDENTITY

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways, the official national carrier of the State of Kuwait, yesterday opened the doors to its new Boeing 777-300ER, revealing a world-class interior and on-board features for passengers soon to be travelling in its three-class configured, flagship aircraft.



Revealing its dynamic new livery on its Boeing 777-300ER, in October, at Boeing's factory in Everett, near Seattle; Kuwait's official national carrier welcomed the first of 10 Boeing 777-300ER it has on order, when 'Failaka' landed at Kuwait International Airport,

on Friday. 'Failaka' is the name assigned to the aircraft, so-called after the small island off the East coast of Kuwait. The aircraft's maiden long-haul journey arrived as a non-commercial flight, direct from the US West Coast to Kuwait, arriving at Gate 26, at 3:20pm local time, and was greeted with an event to mark the occasion by: Chairperson and CEO of KAC, Rasha Al-Roumi; Kuwaiti Minister of State for Housing Affairs, Yasser Hassan Abul; US Ambassador to Kuwait, Lawrence R Silverman; and President of the DGCA, Sheikh Mubarak Salim Al-Sabah, as well as other senior officials.

One of the key features of the aircraft is its nine-abreast seating configuration, which means only three seats in the center aisle. With most airlines and aircraft of this size opting for four seats in the middle, this 'passenger-first' policy is already drawing praise from aviation observers, as it will offer the widest spacing in economy class.

Kuwait Airways' world-class interior is clearly an extension of the new branding and livery and this has been expertly crafted into forming a unique interior design experience, with the airline's new identity and logo subtly integrated into all elements of the cabin designs - in all three classes.

In terms of the design and ergonomics of the seating, Kuwait Airways chose to engage three different companies to cater to its three-class set up; the airline opting to retain a First-Class component with the B777-300ER, while many other airlines offering a "3-4-3" set up and only two-classes - Economy and Business.

Having involved some of the world's top designers and aircraft design companies to fit out the aircraft's interiors, Kuwait Airways partnerships included: Stelia, for First-Class seating and suites; B/E Aerospace, for



Business Class seats; and Recaro, for Economy Class, from which there is also a Premium Economy option.

Among many features, in First Class there are a total of eight private suites, with full-flat beds, 26-inch wide seats, a dining facility and a 24-inch screen. In Business Class, there are a total of 36 seats, 22 inches wide with a 68-degree recline, and an 18-inch screen. In Economy Class, there are also 54 Premium Economy seats out of a total of 290, with seats up to 20.4 inches wide, and an 11-inch screen.

In addition to offering further comfort and great features on board, Kuwait Airways has also installed the state-of-the-art Panasonic eX3 entertainment system. In terms of mood lighting, this is from Boeing; however, the lighting effects for the Kuwait Airways branding panels were developed so as to meet the

unique specifications of the new livery and branding guidelines and were created by AIM.

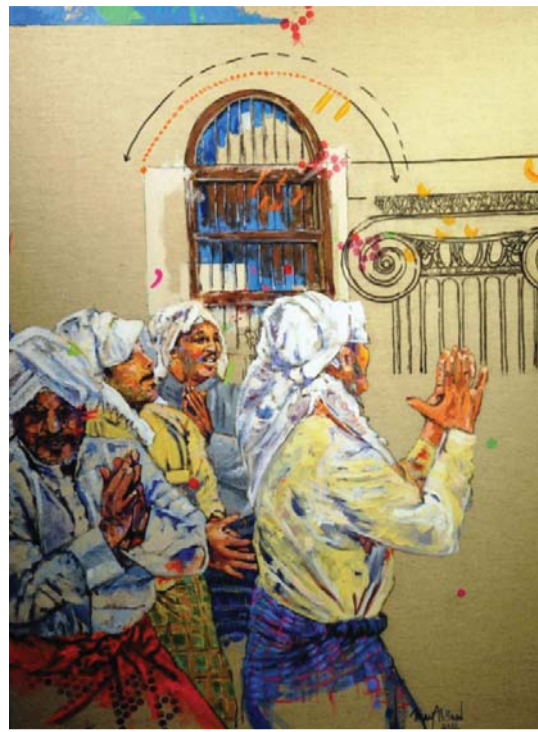
In a world-first for commercial aviation, Kuwait Airways has also announced that it has included a "Do Not Disturb" electronic app, for every seat on the aircraft. The app will inform the flight crew of a passenger's desire to sleep and also provide a timer as to how long the passenger has requested this feature.

"The rebranding and livery design was inspired by an adaptation of the bluebird emblem that has been synonymous with Kuwait Airways for many years. The bluebird's head and beak, from the logo, is now prominently featured on the tail and aft part of the aircraft, with a bold new font displaying the word 'Kuwait' along the side of the aircraft - leaving no doubt as to the fact that it is the official national carrier of Kuwait," a spokesper-

son from the branding agency commented.

"The process of creating a new livery and defining the essence of the airline's brand was the first time it had been done for Kuwait Airways, so the weight of expectation was huge," they continued. "We wanted to create a fresh new look for the airline, yet maintain a link to the proud heritage and legacy of Kuwait Airways as a regional pioneer in the aviation industry."

According to the branding agency, the project to deliver a new livery and rebranding from development to the reveal took approximately 18 months. "The arrival of the Boeing 777-300ER and the new livery reveal was, of course, timed so as to be the chosen 'vehicle' by which Kuwait Airways' new identity and transformation literally came to life," they concluded.



KUWAIT: His Highness Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah tours the 'Hali' exhibition hosted by Kuwaiti and Bahraini artists, Mai Al-Saad and Omar Al-Rashed respectively. — KUNA

HALI: KUWAITI-BAHRAINI ARTISTIC ATTEMPT TO REVIVE HERITAGE

KUWAIT: Hali is an Arabic word meaning fraternity amongst people of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, but on Monday it was associated with cultural and national occasions reflecting Gulf identity. Hali is a joint exhibition by Kuwaiti and Bahraini artists, Mai Al-Saad and Omar Al-Rashed respectively, which conveyed a message of love and fraternity to people of Bahrain who would be celebrating their national day on December 16. The exhibition, displaying 57 paintings, was inaugurated by former prime minister His Highness

Sheikh Nasser Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. The opening ceremony was attended by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah. Mohammad Al-Asousi, Assistant Secretary General for Culture at the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL), said the paintings combined "Kuwaiti and Bahraini environments, and their commonalities." Speaking following the inauguration, Asousi said the exhibition was a documentation of Gulf environment and heritage. The exhibition was part of celebrations in Kuwait as the 2016 Islamic Cultural Capital. Such exhibitions, he said, contributed to exchange of expertise and strengthen of relations among the Gulf people. Mai Al-Saad said she was keen on displaying the Kuwaiti heritage and national identity. She said the artist "is a mean to convey heritage and memories that the artist experienced and memorized." Omar Al-Rashed said his focus on heritage and traditions aimed at raising awareness among the public in the importance of "reproducing the history of human beings." — KUNA



KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah inaugurates Kuwait's 17th Theater Festival. — KUNA

KUWAIT BELIEVES IN THEATER'S ROLE IN DEVELOPMENT: MINISTER

KUWAIT: Minister of Information Sheikh Salman Al-Sabah said yesterday that Kuwait "genuinely believes" in importance of theater's role in development and cultural progress. Sheikh Salman, also Minister of State for Youth Affairs and President of the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL), said Kuwait government has prepared an ambitious plan to promote role of theater. Speaking at the inauguration of Kuwait's 17th Theater Festival, Sheikh Salman said the government planned to modernize existing theaters, as well as building new ones in the six governorates. He said the opening of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, which he described as a

"cultural and artistic icon," would contribute to cultural development in Kuwait. Sheikh Salman said the government was eager to promote role of theater, thus formed a higher committee for theaters aimed at developing the message conveyed by the theater, coupled with other efforts to discover new play writers. He said the Theater Festival would contribute to spreading the culture of diversity, tolerance and accepting of the others. Many play writers, actors, actresses and directors were honored during the opening ceremony of the festival. The festival, to conclude on December 21, would feature seven plays all vying for the best play award. — KUNA



A theatrical display held during the festival.

KU INAUGURATES CANADIAN STAMPS EXHIBITION

KUWAIT: Kuwait University's Dean of Students' Affairs opened the second Canadian stamps exhibition on Monday under the auspices of Kuwait's National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) at Sheikh Jaber Abdullah Al-Jaber Theater in Al Shuwaikh. In a statement on the sidelines of the inauguration, a Canadian embassy official extolled the university's hosting Canadian stamps exhibition, of the Canadian citizen Joseph Khoury, which showcases Canada's history. The official stressed that the exhibition is distinguished as it shows modern and old stamps, referring to some stamps on Superman and hockey game.

Meanwhile, KU's dean Students' Affairs Dr Ali Al-Nami in a similar statement stressed the importance of hosting the exhibition for the second year in a row as it sheds light on Canada's history through stamps. He added that the KU aims to cooperate with various bodies to showcase different cultures. Khoury told reporters that the exhibition aims to disseminate Canadian culture in Kuwait as the stamps show his country's historic development and its influence by different cultures. He said the exhibition contains the first stamp of Canada dating back to 1851, noting that it has all stamps issued since that date until 2016. He expressed his gratitude to Kuwait University and NCCAL for sponsoring his exhibition. — KUNA





KUWAIT: Representatives of advertising agencies honored during the ceremony pose for a group photo with officials.



A group is honored during the event.

ARAB MEDIA FORUM HONORS AD AGENCIES



Information Ministry's Undersecretary Tareq Al-Mezrem (second right) honors actor Dawood Hussein (second left). — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The Arab Media Forum held a ceremony on Monday to honor 19 advertising agencies that won creativity awards. The ceremony was under the patronage of Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah. In his opening speech, Madhi Al-Khamees, Arab Media Forum Secretary General, said the awards are spread over seven categories: Creativity, directing, filming, effects, message, idea, and voluntary, charitable and humanitarian themes. Two new awards were added this year: Public relations and social responsibility.

Khamees noted that advertising market in Kuwait is unique because of the quality and diversity of productions. "Advertisements have recently highlighted humanitarian aspects, which offered a different quality for the agencies." He thanked Sheikh Salman for sponsoring the event, and expressed appreciation to all those who contributed to the success of the event, wishing them

more success. Information Ministry's Undersecretary Tareq Al-Mezrem described the advertising market in Kuwait as "huge and mature", and honored Khamees, the winners, the jury and guests of honor.

List of winners

In the category of public relations, the winners were: Ooredoo, Ministry of Information and the Ministry of Interior. In the category of social responsibility, the winners were: Kuwait Finance House, Zain and the Ministry of Youth. Winners of the category of creativity: "We will sing" for Zain by Joy, and "The relation with God" for Ooredoo by Senyar. For directing: "First newspaper" for Al-Jarida by Local Flavor, "Shamel gives you whatever you want" for Ooredoo by Senyar. For photography: "Peace be upon you" for Zain by Joy, "Better in Kuwaiti" for National Bank of Kuwait by Senyar and "Land Rover" for Ali Alghanim Company by Best.

In the influence category: "Al-Rai No# 1" for Al-Rai newspaper by Local Flavor Production, "We

trusted his word" for Kuwait Financial Centre (Markaz) by Doors, and "Thank you because you are the reason of our success" for Kuwait Finance House by Mindshare and Joy. In the message category: "Asakom mn awada" for Gulf Bank by Impact and Echo, and "Here is Bayan" for QualityNet by Joy.

In the idea category: "Your family is your house" for Kuwait Finance House by Mindshare and Joy, and "Bella lenses" by Dot Space Group. In voluntary and humanitarian campaigns category: "Sharing is a blessing" for Boubyan Bank by Senyar. In national business category: "Saray Al-ummah" for Majles channel by Senyar, and "My country" for Zain by Joy. In charitable and humanitarian category: "My voice for my country" for the participation of women for the Ministry of Interior. And in the press advertising category: "Toyota" for Al-Sayer by Limits. The Arab Media Forum launched the Advertisement Creativity Award in 2012 to shed light on positive domains in media and advertising.

KFH WINS THREE DISTINGUISHED PRIZES FROM ARAB MEDIA FORUM

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House won three remarkable and most distinguished prizes presented by Arab Media Forum in its 4th Session. The first prize represents Creativity in Social Responsibility, bearing in mind that this prize is awarded for the first time this year. Second prize represents the Best Media Message which was awarded to KFH for its Ramadan advertisement titled "I'm you Home". The third prize covers KFH media success and distinction including public relations and marketing activities as per an integrated comprehensive vision that places social service and KFH customers as the main core of focus. Public relations and marketing unit has made high quality social, marketing and media contributions in parallel with grand global companies. Such contributions indicate the well-established ties with society, significant issues and

development opportunities. Prizes are awarded based on questionnaires and on-line voting in addition to the refereeing committee consisting of 18 referees from inside and outside Kuwait.

Social Responsibility Innovation Prize crowns the 4 decades journey of sincere contribution during which KFH has set the best example for financial institutions to bear their social responsibilities. KFH has contributed to all efforts aiming to make the State's Development Project a success by providing support to public authorities and institutions and taking initiatives in several issues including society development, contribution of society members in the fields of health and youth activities and environment. Accordingly, KFH has reinforced its position locally and globally based on this society support strategy.

KFH winning of the best media message prize for

its advertisement (I'm Your Home) which was released during the month of Ramadan indicates the supreme social values and noble human emotions that strengthens the relations between society, KFH and customers.

The most effective advertisement prize covers KFH advertisement titled (KFH is always with you). This prize reiterates the deep recreational thinking which throws light on the significance of supporting youth in various stages of their lives including the building of their careers. The prize highlights KFH support and service for youth.

The prize awarding ceremony was organized under the patronage of the Minister of Information for Youth Affairs - Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah in presence of grand media companies and establishments in addition to marketing experts and media members.



Information Ministry's Undersecretary Tareq Al-Mezrem honors KFH.

KOC: COST OF 'SEDRA 500' PROJECT STANDS AT \$27 M

KUWAIT: The total cost of Kuwait Oil Company's (KOC) 'Sedra 500' solar plant renewable energy project is \$27 million, a prominent KOC engineer said yesterday. In a statement to the press on the sidelines of a panel discussion over the project, organized by the public relations department of the Ministry of Oil, engineer Ammad Safar said that the project which was launched in 2013, had only begun in earnest last month with a total energy of 10 megawatts per day.

Moreover, he noted that the 'Sedra 500' solar plant project is part of efforts to fulfill His Highness the Amir's plan of full use of renewable energy sources by the year 2030, adding energy generated by the 'Sedra 500' solar plant is used to supply around 27 oil wells.

Through this project, Safar underscored that KOC aims to illustrate its commitment to environmental conservation and efforts to reduce lethal carbon emissions for the good of humanity. Meanwhile, KOC energy consultant Dr Raed Sharif spoke of the company's propensity to undertake similar endeavors, most notably, plans to build a power station fueled by solar energy.

On Kuwait's readiness to embrace full renewable energy use, he noted that the country possesses a solar energy capacity of more than 2,000 kilowatts per year, which is conducive to full-fledged use of solar energy. He also underscored the feasibility of renewable energy projects in Kuwait, adding that the cost of such projects has diminished in recent times. — KUNA



Education Minister Dr Mohammad Al-Fares

EDUCATION MINISTER SAYS SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH LINKED TO DEVELOPMENT

KUWAIT: Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr. Mohammad Al-Fares highlighted yesterday the need to revamp scientific research for increased development and to reap the rewards of a boom in technology.

In a speech to open the 38th session of the Federation of Arab Scientific Research Councils (FASRC), Fares noted that the Arab world has long been a pioneer in scientific research, citing a golden era where Europe and the Western world lagged far behind.

Moreover, the Minister of Education underscored the need to prioritize technological research in the Arab world, where spending on research merely amounts to 0.5 percent, adding that the two-day meeting allows representatives of Arab nations to exchange views on strategies to develop scientific research.

Meanwhile, on Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR), he described it as a bastion of technological research, noting that KISR's inception is a testament to the country's cognizance of the importance of scientific research.

In a speech of his own, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research Dr. Azhari Abdulbaqi said that scientific research is the cornerstone of human knowledge and a major indicator of global development.

Representative of the Arab League Ambassador Waleed Othman pointed out that scientific research is an integral component of development, as he spoke of the dire need to establish concerted efforts to promote research and creativity. Similarly, Secretary General of FASRC Dr. Mubarak Majthoub said that research and development are often inextricably linked, urging Arab leaders to step up efforts to support research endeavors. — KUNA

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Crime

Report

TAXI DRIVERS' BRAWL AT AIRPORT

KUWAIT: A bedoon roaming taxi driver attempted to pick up a passenger who arrived at Kuwait airport, which angered official airport taxi drivers, who prevented him from leaving with the passenger. The bedoon driver refused to back down and things escalated to exchanging blows. Policemen attempted to resolve the problem, but matters went out of hand when the airport taxi drivers insisted the bedoon be punished, which created chaos and disrupted traffic in front of the arrivals hall. All those involved were taken to Jleeb Al-Shuyukh police station for questioning.

Illicit material

Jahra police foiled an attempt by a citizen to sell sexual stimulation drugs he had succeeded in bringing into the country. The arrest was made when a patrol stopped him in Rahaya, searched his car and found the illicit material. He was sent to vice detectives for further legal action.

Bootleggers busted

An attempt by two Indian drivers to flee revealed a deal to sell 139 bottles of homebrewed liquor in Farwaniya. A Farwaniya patrol suspected two cars in an open area, and when they approached them, the men fled on foot, but were caught. The liquor was found in one of the cars, and both confessed to a deal to sell them.

Drug possession

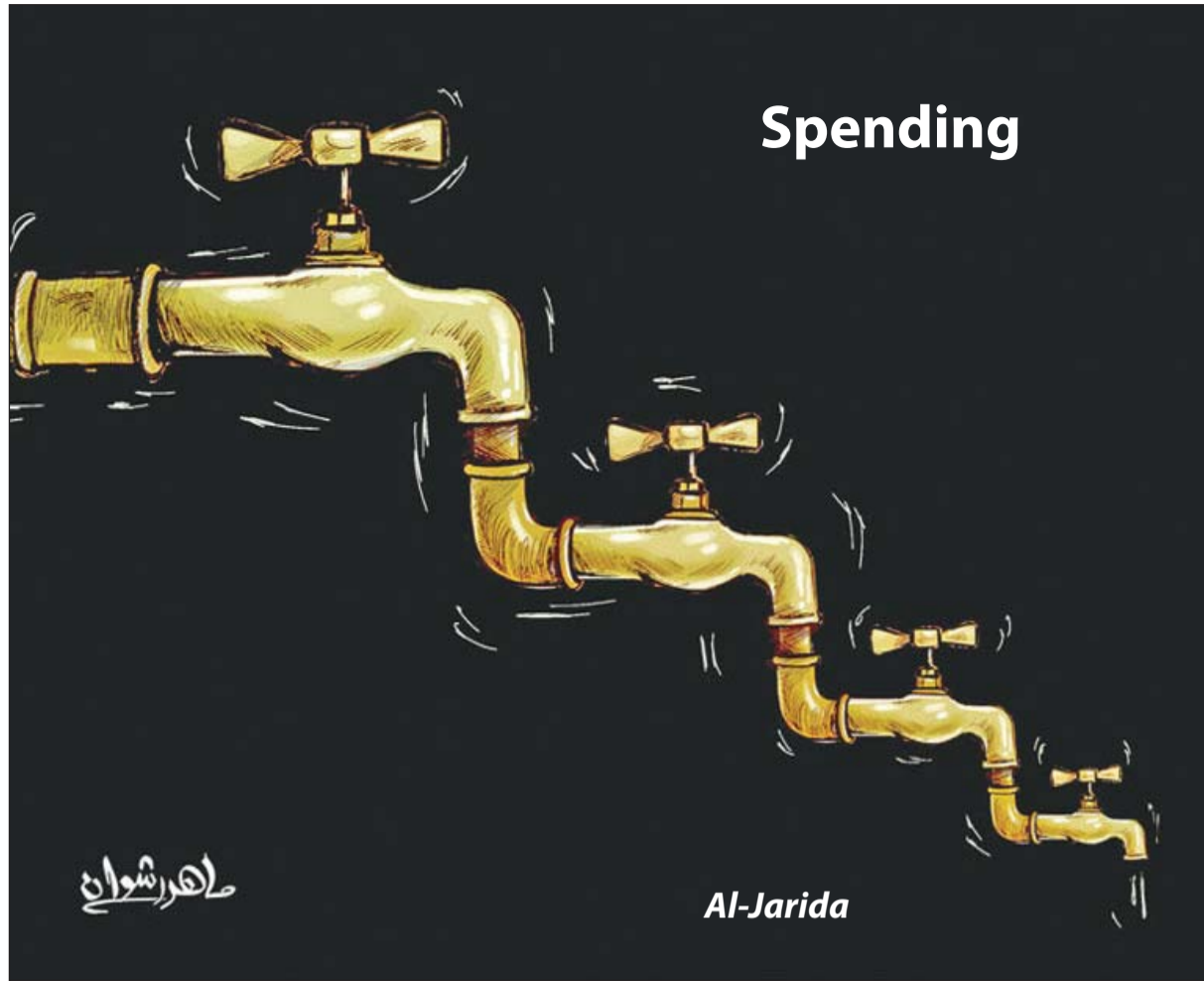
Farwaniya police arrested a citizen with several drugs. He was stopped for driving erratically and police found him in an abnormal condition. He had illicit herbs, chemical and pills. He was also found wanted on a civil case, so he was taken to the police station for further action.

Attempted rape

Ahmadi detectives are looking for a man who abducted an Ethiopian woman, took her to an isolated area in an attempt to rape her, according to her statements. She added that when she resisted him, he tore off her clothes, leaving her half naked. She managed to walk to a street, and someone took her to the police station. — Al-Rai

'MALICIOUS ACTION' NOT ALLOWED

KUWAIT: Mnahi Obaid Al-Osaimi, a student at Kuwait University's Commercial Studies College (Law Department), carried out a study on judicial ruling implementation, which concluded that the implementation of a court's verdict is not to be done without rules and standards. The Kuwaiti legislator allowed the implementation of a court verdict, but did not allow malicious action, which means when a ruling goes in a person's favor in a case in which he is indebted with a small debt, the demand of repayment should not require the sale of a house or any other personal property to repay said debt.



Spending

Al-Jarida

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

WHIRLPOOL OF WARS

By Dr Najem Abdul Kareem

Living in a whirlpool of wars surrounding my Arab nation everywhere made me dig more into the files of some previous wars, a thing which I doubt any of our war leaders and strategy makers have ever done - to explore the results of such wars and the disasters they have brought upon mankind! I chose to read about Hitler's siege of Leningrad and focused more on the social impact of this siege rather than warfare. I did this by reading a series of articles written by Vira Abner in Pravda under the title "I Lived in Leningrad under Nazi German Siege".

She wrote the following:

"Temperatures went below 30 degrees Centigrade and the ice on the streets was over 10 cm thick. There was hardly any house where a man, woman or child had not died of cold or starvation. The living used to walk through the city like ghosts. Women no longer cared about their beauty or makeup. They looked more like dry reeds with eyes looking more like black holes on their bony faces.

"I had a neighbor called Irina Klobovana who used to be Miss Leningrad before the blockade. Her love for her husband was a well-known story throughout Russia. I paid her a visit and found her hair shaggy, as if she was over 60. She was eating the wallpaper off her house walls. "Why not? Isn't wallpaper made of tree leaves? The main thing is to keep my stomach working instead of

leaving it to wither without food," she told me. "How is your husband?" I asked, and she told that he had abandoned her to live with a friend and neighbor of hers. "How come? After all that love?" I asked in shock. "I do not blame him. She has hidden her dead husband and kids' ration cards. And my husband wants to stay alive with her. He even took my ration card," she explained.

"The ration card was a very precious pearl in those days. It was the most precious thing a man could own in Leningrad, where the army was fighting the ration card black market developing under German bombardment. I once saw a lady who used to be very rich selling her precious furs for a ration card. The ration card trade flourished with people who lost family members and buried them secretly in order to keep their cards. Death was more like an everyday event for the city's residents. There were no more undertakers to bury the dead. Corpses were piled in trenches like trash. I once saw a man carrying his wife's body, and as soon as he threw her into the trench, he fell dead on top of her!"

Writing this article, I could not stop my tears for our folks in Syria, Yemen, Libya and other places stricken with daily carnage. The real disaster is that Hitler was not like a brother to the Russians, while we are killing each other despite our fraternity and same religion! The baffling question, however, remains: How much longer will this go on!

— Translated by Kuwait Times

الجريدة

Al-Jarida

OFFICE BOYS BECOME CLERKS

By Mudaffar Abdullah

To start with, asking about a Cabinet formation in Kuwait is motivated by exploring how the inquirer's interests will be handled for a short time rather than by a wish to achieve any development!

He who reads articles 24 and 25 of the civil services decree law number 15/1979 will find an explanation for many phenomenal role-shifts and misunderstandings of the concept of public service and administrative jobs, because these two particular articles have long been neglected. We have all processed transactions at government establishments and experienced repeated unwanted mishaps that we have failed to overcome despite spending millions on training and behavioral courses.

The phenomenon of using office boys in running administrative work and tending to transactions is a great insult to the public. Some office boys have grown so important and influential that they have become responsible for receiving and giving back files

"employee has to do the job himself and treat the public properly"

and even finishing transactions quicker with a little recommendation, which is a clear violation of article 24, clause A, which states that an "employee has to do the job himself and treat the public properly".

Another phenomenal change that is becoming a daily routine people with various transactions have to respect is the ritual of massive breakfasts behind closed doors, during which all transactions are turned down. There is also the changing of offices' interior designs to match the habits and traditions of their occupants, both employees and senior officials. Some have even been using different paints, colors and decorations and allocating special rest or even sleep corners within offices.

The Civil Service Commission (CSC) is to blame for such phenomenal violations because it failed to change administrative methodology by imposing stricter penalties and activating periodic monitoring at all establishments. We have never heard that a newly-recruited employee receives a list of conditions for a certain job including rights, duties and don'ts. What is actually happening is that any new recruit gets assigned to a certain establishment where he meets his future colleagues, and together they go on doing what we mentioned above. How will we ever achieve any development then?

Talk about 'wide gaps' or 'there is no use' that has been used by many officials is only meant to release themselves from blame, while in fact it reflects their incapability and laziness. The main reason behind the deterioration of any public service is blaming public servants alone for it, which can be easily seen in many countries including neighboring ones, if we only learn the lesson!

— Translated by Kuwait Times



Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit is pictured with a group of students from one of the projects.

KIB SUPPORTS STUDENTS AT COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING AND PETROLEUM

KUWAIT: As part of its leading social responsibility program, and its continued moral and financial support of youth and education focused initiatives, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently sponsored a number of graduation projects developed by students from the College of Engineering and Petroleum at Kuwait University, who are taking part in the University's annual Engineering Design Exhibition.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Nawaf Najia, Manager of the Corporate Communications Unit at KIB, said: "Supporting engineering students at Kuwait University and sponsoring their graduation projects every year comes in line with our encompassing program of initiatives specifically targeting the youth population. KIB is a keen advocate of youth across Kuwait, and we are heavily invested in supporting their ideas, fostering their creativity and adopting many of their projects - as we adamantly believe these ideas and projects are a key element that will ensure a bigger and brighter future for our country."

This year, KIB selected a number of graduation projects from the College of Engineering and Petroleum. One the projects selected was the "Production of Benzene" project, spearheaded by engineering students Abrar Al-Kandari, Fajer Al-Hajri, Mariam Huneidi, Munira Al-Hajri, and Shahad Al-Enezi. The project focuses on the re-manufacturing of gasoline to produce various products including aromatic compounds, rubber, plastic, nylon and so on. The second project was the "Eco-Friendly Walking Path", a project developed by engineering students Sarah Al-Jabri, Shouq Al-Sharie, Kolthoum Al-Najdi, Dana Al-Dabassi, and Hadeel Al-Azemy. The project aims to

create a pollution free walking area, providing the community with a healthy venue for them to exercise and get some physical activity. In an effort to promote eco-friendly practices, the flooring of the walking pathway is constructed from a new compound created using solid waste matter.

KIB's sponsorship also included the "Self-Erasing Board" project, which was developed by engineering students Ahmed Al-Mutairi, Abdelaziz Al-Hassan, Ali Al-Oun, and Mohammed Al-Batny. The project focuses on designing a smart board for classrooms featuring two quick and automated erasing systems - the first to erase the whole board and the second to erase select sections of it only. The project aims to develop the learning process and use modern technologies to help educators and ease their burdens. Additionally, "My Zone" was one the projects chosen this year by KIB. Developed by students Hanan Al-Harby, Sarah Al-Khudr, Sheikha Al-Hashash and Nada Al-Eissa, "My Zone" revolves around the idea of designing smart desk which features a wireless charger, a pad for heating and cooling beverages, and a touch screen. All these smart features can easily be controlled via a smart phone application. The smart desk also contains drawers that are opened and locked using a fingerprint, to ensure maximum privacy.

Najia concluded by saying that KIB is always keen on interacting closely with the youth in Kuwait, and keeping an ongoing open dialogue with them. Additionally, the Bank has developed a number of products and services specifically designed to suit their modern lifestyles, including the Shabab Al-Dawli Account, which provides saving and investing capabilities simultaneously.

Photo of the day



KUWAIT: A hallway built with classic designs. — KUNA



Malaysia crowns new youthful king

INDIA ARRESTS 20 OVER FAILURE TO STAND FOR ANTHEM

ALEPPO'S FAMED OLD CITY LEFT 'UNRECOGNIZABLE' BY WAR

ALEPPO: Once renowned for its bustling souks, grand citadel and historic gates, Aleppo's Old City has been rendered virtually unrecognizable by some of the worst violence of Syria's war. For centuries, Aleppo was Syria's economic and cultural powerhouse, attracting tourists from around the world to its celebrated heritage sites. But now, only gaunt stray cats roam the rubble-strewn alleyways of its Old City, a UNESCO World Heritage site, after years of savage conflict. In the famed Al-Hatab Square, recently recaptured by the Syrian army, lawyer and Aleppian historian Alaa Al-Sayyed could scarcely believe his eyes.

Al-Hatab was one of the oldest squares in the city, but it now lay dotted with sand barricades and the charred remnants of overturned buses. "I couldn't even recognize it because it was so severely damaged. I told myself, this can't be Al-Hatab square," he said. The Old City became one of Aleppo's bloodiest front lines after rebel groups overran the eastern half of the city in mid-2012, a year after the conflict began with anti-government protests.

For four years, it was caught between opposition factions in the east and government forces in the west. Fighting destroyed the 11th century minaret of Aleppo's famed Umayyad mosque and heavily damaged the old Crusader citadel. Faced with a blistering offensive by forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad, opposition factions withdrew from the Old City on December 7 in a highly symbolic retreat.

'Irreplaceable heritage'

Aleppo's covered market-the largest in the world-served for centuries as a gathering place for artisans and traders. They came from across the globe to its 4,000 shops and 40 caravanserais, roadside inns for travelers. But now the market's walls are scarred by years of gunfire, rockets and mortar rounds-attacks that Sayyed called "unjustifiable" because of the area's historical value. The market was "the economic heart of Aleppo and an irreplaceable piece of heritage", he said. Attacking it "was a decisive blow against Aleppo's economy, because thousands of Aleppian families, whether rich for poor, relied on the souk for their livelihoods."

Abu Ahmad, 50, once owned several shops in the old market where he sold vibrant fabrics that he produced elsewhere in the city. Forced to leave his storefronts behind as fighting there intensified, he opened a kiosk selling coffee and other hot drinks in the government-held Aleppo district of Furqan. "I sold my wife's jewelry so I could buy this kiosk," Abu Ahmad said, tears welling in his eyes and his voice cracking on a cold December morning. He said he hoped to return and find his old storefront intact, but was prepared to sell his car to rebuild if necessary. "I'm a tradesman, and I don't want to leave my trade. I want to pass it on to my son," he said.

US REPUBLICANS WANT TO OVERHAUL SOCIAL SECURITY

WASHINGTON: A key Republican lawmaker wants to overhaul Social Security, the decades-old program that provides benefits to some 60 million retirees and disabled, with a plan to gradually increase the retirement age and slow the growth of benefits for higher-income workers. Rep Sam Johnson of Texas, the chairman of the House Ways and Means subcommittee on Social Security, introduced legislation just before the end of the congressional session last week that he said would "permanently save" the program. He said the bill would increase benefits for lower-income workers.

About 168 million people work and pay taxes toward the inevitable monthly Social Security benefits. About 42 million of the beneficiaries are retirees and their families. The trustees who oversee Social Security say it has enough money to pay full benefits until 2034, and then Social Security will collect only enough taxes to pay 79 percent of benefits. Unless Congress acts, millions of people on fixed incomes would get an automatic 21 percent cut in benefits. "Americans want, need, and deserve for us to finally come up with a solution to saving this important program," Johnson said. Next year, with Donald Trump as president, congressional Republicans plan to take a wrecking ball to the eight years of President Barack Obama's policies, from the health care law to environmental regulations. Medicare, a program created under another Democrat, Lyndon B. Johnson, is in the crosshairs of Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis., and Trump's pick for Health and Human Services secretary, Rep Tom Price.

Ryan and Price favor privatizing the program, arguing that a voucher-system is necessary to ensure Medicare's long-term solvency. Conservatives like Johnson, who have pushed their priorities for years under divided government, see an opportunity to tackle Social Security next year. Johnson's bill is designed to slow the growth of Social Security costs while boosting some minimum benefits for those who earned lower wages over longer careers. It would also limit the size of benefits for spouses and children of high-income earners, among other changes in how the benefits are calculated.

The retirement age would be gradually increased to 69, starting with those who were born in 1968 and would likely retire in the mid-2030s. Currently, individuals can receive benefits as early as age 62. The bill's summary says the new retirement age would better reflect Americans' longer life expectancy. But it's unclear if his proposal - or any others to revise Social Security - will move. Trump, who enjoyed strong support from working-class Americans, promised during the campaign not to cut Social Security and Medicare. Ryan told CBS' "60 Minutes" earlier this month that he has no plans to change Social Security.

The issue has long been unpopular on Capitol Hill, where even some GOP lawmakers are nervous about changing a program seniors rely on so heavily. President George W Bush proposed a partial privatization of the program in his second term, but the effort failed in a Republican-led Congress and may have contributed to his party's sweeping losses in the 2006 midterm elections. Neither Ryan nor the Republican chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Texas Rep Kevin Brady, would endorse Johnson's bill. AshLee Strong, a spokeswoman for Ryan, said the bill "is one of many Republican ideas put forward to strengthen the program." Lauren Aronson, a spokeswoman for Brady, said he appreciates Johnson's commitment to a thoughtful conversation but also "sees the proposal as one of many ideas" to address the program's challenges. —AP

Ghost town

The war also ravaged the touristic area around Aleppo's famed citadel, including the Al-Sultaniyah mosque and the imposing white-stoned Grand Serail. The luxurious Carlton Hotel was completely leveled by a massive rebel tunnel bomb in February 2014. In nearby Aqyul district, the rows of demolished residential buildings seemed to extend endlessly towards neighboring Bab Al-Hadid. Broken washing machines, air conditioning units, and other household items lay in heaps outside, while torn pieces of blue canvas fluttered in window frames where the glass had been blown out by explosions.

One stray cat wandered aimlessly across the main street, pausing to sniff at a decaying body still lying in the street. Even the local cemetery did not survive the battle unscathed, with parts of shattered tombstones strewn across patches of dried grass. In Bab Al-Hadid, home to one of the city's best-preserved historical gates before the war, there was a similar silence. Near its square, which dates back to 1509 AD, storefronts were still painted with the three-star flag of Syria's beleaguered opposition. "From Houran (in the south) to Aleppo, the revolution continues," reads graffiti scrawled on a wall in the deserted neighborhood. —AFP



ALEPPO: A general view shows a severely damaged street in Aleppo's Al-Kalasseh neighborhood in the eastern part of the war torn city. —AFP

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- Drawing sheets will be given to schools FREE of charge.
- Only drawing sheets provided by the Kuwait Times will be permitted for use in the competition.
- You may use any drawing material such as colour pencils, paint or crayons.

WITH REBEL ALEPPO TO FALL, SYRIANS ABROAD PONDER COST

ATHENS: As the battle for Aleppo enters its final phase, Syrians now living in Greece feel utterly consumed by the human cost of the four-year rebel fight for the traumatized city. "For these years,

Aleppo was free," says Majd Ahmad, a 26-year-old, currently living in a squatters apartment in the bohemian Athens district of Exarchia. "We fought for the revolution and now everything is collapsing.

Every person who wanted more liberty in Syria is either dead or had to flee." Having arrived in Greece nine months ago, like the majority of the 62,000 exiles stuck here since the closure of the country's northern borders, Ahmad feels helpless.

"What was the purpose of our fight?" asks the former university student, exhaling the smoke of one cigarette before lighting another, while scouring his smartphone for the latest news updates. "I have lost so many loved ones. I do not want to lose more." Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces hold more than 90 percent of the onetime opposition stronghold of east Aleppo, and appear on the verge of retaking the entire city. Its fall would deal the rebels their worst defeat since the beginning of Syria's conflict in 2011, and leave the government in control of the country's five major cities.

"I cannot describe my sorrow," says another exile, a 24-year-old former student now in Athens speaking under the pseudonym of Abu Habib. "My entire city has been destroyed, so many children died, and for what?" says Habib, who fled Syria to avoid forced conscription. The rebels seized control of east

Aleppo in 2012, a year into an uprising that began with anti-government protests but spiraled into a civil war after a regime crackdown.

An estimated 120,000 people have fled rebel-held districts, many heading towards displacement centres in government-controlled areas to the west. In the three-week assault by the Russian-backed Assad's forces to retake east Aleppo, the country's biggest city, observers described air strikes and regime rocket fire so intense that windows in the west rattled. Many crushed under rubble have been left to die because rescue crews cannot reach them.

'Pray to stay alive'

Lodged in squats or flats rented by the UN refugee agency, the young men in Athens spend most of their time on Twitter and Facebook, trying to stay in touch with loved ones in the city. "My grandparents and cousins are still in the city," says Habib. "They cannot go out, they are running low on food and medicine and each time they hear a plane fly overhead they pray to stay alive," he adds. Abu Rmsh—another pseudonym—lost his wife and two children, aged one

and three, in the bombardments.

After having fled the country to escape forced military service, the 30-year-old regrets leaving his parents and other relatives behind. "I lost everything. My family, my life," the blue-eyed Syrian says, adding that there was "no sense" in the fight for Aleppo, with both sides guilty of killings and theft of humanitarian aid. Like many fellow Syrian refugees, Abu Rmsh is also seething at the apparent inaction of the international community. "Why did the United States and other great powers allow a massacre of this scale to happen," he asks.

Radoslaw Rzehak, UNICEF's field office chief in Aleppo, estimates that half a million children in Aleppo need some kind of psychological and social support, including 100,000 who need more specialized assistance. "I have never seen in my life such a dramatic situation (as) what is happening to children in Aleppo," Rzehak, who has been working for UNICEF for the past 15 years said. Some Western observers say the fall of Aleppo will be a pivotal turning point akin to Stalingrad in World War II, while others question whether Assad can still prevail in a country where he is widely despised. —AFP



TAL SHEER: The body of a Syrian soldier lies on the ground after heavy clashes with government forces at a military academy besieged by the rebels in Tal Sheer, Syria. —AP

DOUBTS ABOUT SUBMARINE DEAL TRIGGER ISRAELI COURT PETITION

QUESTIONS RAISED ABOUT MIDDLEMAN AND NETANYAHU'S LAWYER

JERUSALEM: Israeli lawyers will petition the Supreme Court yesterday to intervene over the awarding of a defense contract to Germany's ThyssenKrupp amid allegations of a conflict of interest involving Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's own lawyer. The petition, sponsored by Erel Margalit, a high-tech entrepreneur and opposition member of Israel's parlia-

intermediary on the deal, Israeli businessman Miki Ganor, who Israeli media say is set to earn \$10 million. Shimron has denied any impropriety and Netanyahu has said he stands fully behind him. The attorney-general has ordered police to investigate Shimron, but Margalit says it is too narrow an inquiry and a much broader investigation is required.

our ability to understand what's going on... I'm talking about a major diversion of security arms deals. These are serious issues."

The petition is what is known in Israel as a "show cause" order. If acted upon, it would involve the Supreme Court asking the attorney-general to explain why he does not see fit to widen the scope of his investigation. The court has

agreement should give the Israeli public cause for concern.

'Checks and balances'

First, for decades Israel relied on a former brigadier general, dubbed the "Submarine King", to broker orders with Germany. But in 2009 he was unexpectedly replaced by Ganor, who has far less experience. Ganor has not spoken about his role. Secondly, since the deal was finalized in October, it has emerged that Iran's foreign investment fund is a major shareholder in ThyssenKrupp, with a 4.5 percent stake.

With Israel and Iran enemies, Margalit said Israelis deserved reassurances that Tehran is not benefiting from the deal. A further area of concern is that Israel's former defense minister originally planned a tender for the patrol vessels, with several countries interested in bidding. But instead of a tender, the \$450 million contract was awarded to ThyssenKrupp. The government has said it followed all appropriate procedures. "I've taken 14 companies public on Nasdaq," said Margalit, who started one of Israel's most successful venture capital funds. "There's a transparency involved."

"When it comes to these contracts, we do not know many of the issues... You have to ask yourself if there was proper conduct. That's why we need a full investigation." The right-wing Netanyahu, who has been in power for 10 years spread over four terms, has drawn frequent legal scrutiny, including over whether he and his wife have used state funds to support what critics say is a lavish lifestyle. There is no indication the submarine affair reaches his office directly, but Margalit said the public deserved clarity. "We need to make sure the attorney-general explains himself... and that there are checks and balances on a moral and personal level." —Reuters



NEVATIM AIR BASE, Israel: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (3rd right) look at one of the first two F-35 stealth fighter jets purchased in the United States next to its pilot (2nd right), an Israeli officer, after he landed at the Israeli Nevatim Air force base in the Negev desert, near the southern city of Beersheva. —AFP

ment, argues that there was a lack of transparency in how a \$2 billion order for three submarines and four patrol vessels was awarded to ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems.

The concerns focus on the role of Netanyahu's personal lawyer, David Shimron, who is also his cousin. Shimron represented the

"Israel needs to buy arms, planes, ships and missiles," Margalit, a member of the main opposition centre-left Zionist Union party said. "If someone is playing games with that, then it undermines trust and it needs to be investigated. "The way these deals were handled compromised

issued many such orders in the past, including a high-profile one in 2011 when it asked the government to explain its security policies towards Israeli Arabs. As well as the relationship between Shimron and Ganor, which ThyssenKrupp has said it is also investigating, Margalit said several other aspects of the



CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi (center) speaks next to Egypt's Coptic Pope Tawadros II during the funeral of the victims of a bomb explosion that targeted a Coptic Orthodox Church the previous day in Cairo. —AFP

EGYPT ACCUSES BROTHERHOOD OF SUPPORTING CHURCH ATTACKERS

CAIRO: Egypt's Interior Ministry has accused fugitive Muslim Brotherhood leaders who have fled to Qatar of training and financing the perpetrators of the bomb attack on a Cairo church that killed 25 people. It said investigations revealed the group was led by a suspect who received financial and logistical support and instructions to carry out the attacks by Brotherhood leaders residing in Qatar. The Muslim Brotherhood had denied any involvement with the explosion at the Saint Peter and Saint Paul Church on Sunday.

The incident was the deadliest attack in recent memory on the Christian minority, who make up about 10 percent of Egypt's population. In a statement, the interior ministry said investigations showed 22-year-old Mahmoud Shafiq Mohamed Mostafa, the suspected suicide bomber, had been arrested in 2014 while securing Muslim Brotherhood convoys while armed. He was released in May the same year. President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi had named Mostafa as the suicide bomber earlier on Monday, during a funeral held for the victims.

Mostafa was wanted for two other cases in connection with fundamentalist groups, the ministry said in the statement. DNA testing of body parts found at the scene matched with his family, it said. During investigations, authorities found two explosive belts ready to be detonated, as well as other materials used to make explosive devices, at a hideout used by Mostafa and his group. The attack occurred during Sunday service at the church adjacent to Saint Mark's Cathedral, the seat of Coptic Pope Tawadros II. There has been no claim of responsibility for the bombing, but Coptic Christians have been previously targeted in Egypt.

Suspects named

The interior ministry also named the four other people whom Sisi said had been arrested. Rami Mohamed Abdel Hameed Abdel Ghani is suspected to have provided refuge for the suicide bomber, preparing him, and hiding the explosives. The three others are Mohamed Hamdi Abdel Hamid Abdel Ghani, Mohsen Mostafa el-Sayed Qassem, and Ola Hussein

Mohamed Ali, a woman. The detainees will be presented to state security prosecution, while authorities are still chasing others, according to the statement. It said the group was led by suspect Mohab Mostafa el-Sayed Qassem, also known as "The Doctor", who travelled to Qatar in 2015 where he met with some Muslim Brotherhood leaders who had fled Egypt.

Qassem was offered financial and logistical support to carry out attacks in Egypt and upon his return, he travelled to North Sinai province, where Islamist insurgents trained him in using weapons and making explosive devices. When Qassem returned to his home in Cairo, the Brotherhood members residing in Qatar instructed him to start preparing and planning for attacks targeting Copts. The attacks were "aiming to foment a large-scale sectarian crisis" without linking the group with these attacks, the interior ministry said.

The interior ministry statement claims a group named The Egyptian Revolutionary Council, an alleged arm of the Brotherhood, has issued a statement on December 5 "vowing to target the heads of the Orthodox Church because of its support for the state." Sunday's blast was the worst attack on the Coptic Christian community since a 2011 suicide bombing killed more than 20 worshippers outside a church in the coastal city of Alexandria. Copts have faced persecution and discrimination dating back to the 30-year rule of Hosni Mubarak, who was toppled by a popular uprising in 2011.

After the 2013 ouster of Muslim Brotherhood president Mohamed Morsi, his Islamist supporters accused the Christian community of supporting his overthrow. They pointed to the appearance of Tawadros next to Sisi in July 2013, when the then army chief—also surrounded by Muslim and opposition figures—announced Morsi's removal on television. Following the deadly dispersal by security forces of two pro-Morsi protest camps in Cairo in August 2013, at least 42 churches were attacked, as well as dozens of schools, houses and businesses belonging to Copts, according to Human Rights Watch. —AFP

IRAN EYES NUKE-POWERED SHIPS AFTER US SANCTIONS

TEHRAN: Iran's President Hassan Rouhani yesterday ordered the country's scientists to start work on nuclear-powered ships in response to the expected renewal of sanctions by the United States. In letters read out on state television, Rouhani criticized the US move as a breach of last year's nuclear accord and told Iran's Atomic Energy Organization to start work on "planning the design and production of nuclear fuel and reactors for maritime transport." The president said he had also ordered the foreign ministry to prepare a legal complaint to the international committee that oversees the nuclear accord.

Under the deal signed in July 2015, world powers agreed to lift international sanctions in exchange for curbs to Iran's nuclear program. But US lawmakers recently voted to renew 10-year-old sanctions legislation against Iran related not just to nuclear issues, but also ballistic missile-testing and human rights. President Barack Obama is expected to sign the measure into law in the coming days, saying it makes no difference to last year's agreement because the White House will continue to suspend all the sanctions linked to Iran's nuclear program.

Iranian lawmakers had raised the prospect of building nuclear-powered ships and submarines back in 2012 at the height of tensions with the international community over the nuclear program. International analysts said the announcement was likely just a bluff, since it would be an extremely costly effort for little strategic gain. Then nuclear chief Fereydoon Abbasi Davani said that Iran had the capacity to design nuclear reactors for ships but no plans to do so. He also said that nuclear-powered ships did not require the sort of highly enriched uranium which could also be used for weapons.

Agreement wording ambiguous

Iran has always insisted that its nuclear program was entirely peaceful, but hoped an end to sanctions would help revive its battered economy. Although it

has seen a significant boost in oil sales since the deal came into force in January, its hopes of attracting large-scale foreign investment have been thwarted by continuing US sanctions in other areas.

The biggest problem lies with world banks, which are needed to finance the bigger trade deals but remain wary of returning to Iran, fearing they could be fined by Washington. The Iran Sanctions Act passed the US Senate 99-0 earlier this month after easily clearing the House of Representatives in November. The language in the nuclear agreement makes it unclear whether renewing the sanctions—and keeping the nuclear ones suspended—amounts to a violation. At a press conference last week, conserva-

tive parliament speaker Ali Larijani said parts of the deal were "rushed".

"Some of the sections of the JCPOA should have been written with more precision to stop differing interpretations," Larijani said. Rouhani, who is expected to run for a second term in May, has faced a barrage of criticism from conservatives who say his team made too many concessions for minimal economic gain. In a speech last week, he emphasized that his team had not acted alone and that supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was closely involved at every stage of the negotiations. "We took no step on the JCPOA issue without consulting the honorable leader," Rouhani said. —AFP



TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani (right) greets Secretary General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Ramadan Abdullah Shalah, ahead of their meeting in the capital Tehran yesterday. —AFP

ALGERIA EXPELS 260 MALIANS; POLICE ACCUSED OF BRUTALITY

BAMAKO: Some 260 Malians expelled from Algeria in a massive swoop against illegal African migrants arrived home Sunday to Monday accusing Algerian security forces of brutality and saying many had been hurt and some killed. There was no independent or official confirmation available and Algerian authorities offered no comment on the operation early this month when asked by AFP.

"We were beaten up and at least three Malians were killed," said Ousmane Coulibaly, who was among those gathered at a government office who had returned to Mali overnight. He said the Algerian forces were "racist". Rounded up in "a big yard" after their arrest in the capital, Algiers, some of the Malians hurt their heads against walls and iron bars when trying to escape from being beaten, Coulibaly said. "Others were hurt and one died during the

transfer from Algiers to Tamanrasset and the Niger border," he said. The oasis city in southern Algeria, in the Ahaggar Mountains, is the biggest city before reaching the Niger and Mali borders.

Moussa Kante, who was also deported, confirmed the allegations and added that the group "lacked water and food." "When we were being sent to Niger they gave us one loaf for 40 people," he said. Deportees were sent to the Niger border by bus and then put on the road to the Niger capital, Niamey, "in trucks generally used to gather sand," said 22-year-old Oumar. Some said they had been expelled despite having official papers and many claimed their money and phones had been seized. "We were arrested on the first" of December, said Youssouf Doumbia. "We asked people, and the army, why we were arrested. They told us they were vaccinating people." —AFP

TRUMP FILLS TOP JOBS

WASHINGTON: US President-elect Donald Trump yesterday announced Exxon Mobil Corp's chairman and CEO Rex Tillerson as his choice for US secretary of state to serve as the nation's top diplomat. The following is a list of Republican Trump's selections for top jobs in his administration. All the posts but that of national security adviser, the White House chief of staff, White House director of the National Economic Council and White House strategist require Senate confirmation:

Attorney General: Jeff Sessions

Sessions, 69, was the first US senator to endorse Trump's presidential bid and has been a close ally since. Son of a country-store owner, the Alabama senator and former federal prosecutor has long taken a tough stance on illegal immigration, opposing any path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.

CIA Director: Mike Pompeo

US Representative Pompeo, 52, is a third-term congressman from Kansas who serves on the House of Representatives Intelligence Committee, which oversees the CIA, National Security Agency and cyber security. A retired Army officer and Harvard Law School graduate, Pompeo supports the US government's sweeping collection of Americans' communications data and wants to scrap the nuclear deal with Iran.

children to private schools and for the expansion of charter schools.

Environmental Administrator: Scott Pruitt

An ardent opponent of President Barack Obama's measures to stem climate change, Oklahoma Attorney General Pruitt, 48, has enraged environmental activists. But he fits with the president-elect's promise to cut the agency back and eliminate regulation that he says is stifling oil and gas drilling. Pruitt became the top state prosecutor for Oklahoma, which has extensive oil reserves, in 2011, and has challenged the EPA multiple times since.

Health Secretary: Tom Price

US Representative Price, 62, is an orthopedic surgeon who heads the House Budget Committee. A representative from Georgia since 2005, Price has criticized Obamacare and has championed a plan of tax credits, expanded health savings accounts and lawsuit reforms to replace it. He is opposed to abortion.

Homeland Security Secretary: John Kelly

The final leadership role of Kelly's 45-year career was head of the US Southern Command, responsible for US military activities and relationships in Latin America and the Caribbean. The 66-year-old retired Marine general differed with Democratic President Barack Obama

Economic Council Director: Gary Cohn

Cohn, 56, president and chief operating officer of investment bank Goldman Sachs, had widely been considered heir apparent to Lloyd Blankfein, CEO of the Wall Street firm. Trump hammered Goldman and Blankfein during the presidential campaign, releasing a television ad that called Blankfein part of a "global power structure" that had robbed America's working class.

Labor Secretary: Andrew Puzder

Puzder, chief executive officer of CKE Restaurants Inc., which runs the Carl's Jr. and Hardee's fast-food chains, has been a vociferous critic of government regulation of the workplace and the National Labor Relations Board. Puzder, 66, has argued that higher minimum wages would hurt workers by forcing restaurants to close, and praises the benefits of automation, so his appointment is likely to antagonize organized labor.

National Security Adviser: Michael Flynn

Retired Lieutenant General Flynn, 57, was an early Trump supporter and serves as vice chairman on his transition team. He began his Army career in 1981 and was deployed in Afghanistan and Iraq. Flynn became head of the Defense Intelligence Agency in 2012 under President Barack Obama but retired a year earlier than expected, according to media reports, and became a fierce critic of Obama's foreign policy.

Secretary Of State: Rex Tillerson

Tillerson, 64, has spent his entire career at Exxon Mobil Corp, where he rose to serve as its chairman and CEO in 2006. A civil engineer by training, the Texan joined the world's largest energy company in 1975 and led several of its operations in the United States as well as in Yemen, Thailand and Russia. As Exxon's chief executive, he maintained close ties with Moscow and opposed US sanctions against Russia for its incursion into Crimea.

Small Business Administrator: Linda McMahon

McMahon, 68, is a co-founder and former chief executive of the professional wrestling franchise WWE, which is based in Stamford, Connecticut. She ran unsuccessfully as a Republican for a US Senate seat in Connecticut in 2010 and 2012, and was an early supporter of Trump's presidential campaign.

Transportation Secretary: Elaine Chao

Chao, 63, was labor secretary under President George W. Bush for eight years and the first Asian-American woman to hold a Cabinet position. She is a director at Ingersoll Rand, News Corp and Vulcan Materials Company. She is married to US Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, a Republican from Kentucky.

Treasury Secretary: Steven Mnuchin

Mnuchin, 53, is a successful private equity investor, hedge fund manager and Hollywood financier who spent 17 years at Goldman Sachs before leaving in 2002. He assembled an investor group to buy a failed California mortgage lender in 2009, rebranded it as OneWest Bank and built it into Southern California's largest bank. Housing advocacy groups criticized the bank for its foreclosure practices, accusing it of being too quick to foreclose on struggling homeowners.

UN Ambassador: Nikki Haley

Haley, 44, has been the Republican governor of South Carolina since 2011 and has little experience in foreign policy or the federal government. The daughter of Indian immigrants, she led a successful push last year to remove the Confederate battle flag from the grounds of the South Carolina state capitol after the killing of nine black churchgoers in Charleston by a white gunman.

Chief of Staff: Reince Priebus

Recently re-elected to serve as Republican National Committee chairman, Priebus will give up his party post to join Trump in the White House, where the low-key Washington operative could help forge ties with Congress to advance Trump's agenda. The 44-year-old was a steadfast supporter of Trump during the presidential campaign even as the party fractured amid the choice.

Strategist: Steve Bannon

The former head of the conservative website Breitbart News came aboard as Trump's campaign chairman in August. A rabble-rousing conservative media figure, he helped shift Breitbart's into a forum for the alt-right, a loose confederation of those who reject mainstream politics and includes neo-Nazis, white supremacists and anti-Semites. His hiring signals Trump's dedication to operating outside the norms of Washington. As White House chief of staff, Bannon, 63, will serve as Trump's gatekeeper and agenda-setter. — Reuters



President Barack Obama

US 'DECLASSIFIES' DOCUMENTS ON ARGENTINA RIGHTS ABUSES

OBAMA TO PRESERVE BUT NOT DECLASSIFY TORTURE REPORT

WASHINGTON: The US government has declassified a new batch of documents shedding light on human rights abuses under Argentina's military dictatorship between 1975 and 1984. The White House released about 500 newly declassified records, part of President Barack Obama's pledge to provide additional documents to help Argentina hold human rights abusers accountable. Obama, on his March 2016 visit to Argentina, said that more documents would be declassified, following the 2002 release of more than 4,000 records. Those documents showed US officials had encouraged the Argentine junta's purge of leftists.

For the first time, the US this year included military and intelligence records as requested by Argentine President Mauricio Macri and human rights groups. Secretary of State John Kerry delivered a first batch of 1,000 declassified records to Macri in August.

The initial set and the second set of 500 records are available to the public at www.iontherecord.tumblr.com, the White House said in a statement. "The declassification project represents a historic effort by US Government agencies and departments to search, identify, review for public access, and provide records that shed light on human rights abuses in Argentina between 1975 and 1984," the Obama administration said.

"These newly declassified records represent a continued commitment by the United States to promote justice and reconciliation in Argentina, to

underscore the importance of transparency, and to highlight our shared commitment to human rights," it said. "These records represent the second step in a lengthy and ambitious declassification process." Obama's trip to Argentina last March was the first bilateral visit by a US president there since Bill Clinton in 1997. Obama praised Macri for the economic reforms since he took office in December 2015 after 12 years of leftist rule by the late Nestor Kirchner and his wife Cristina.

Senate torture report

Meanwhile, Obama will not declassify a comprehensive Senate report on the CIA's use of torture but he will preserve a copy in his presidential library, according to a White House letter released Monday. Obama stipulated that the material remain classified for 12 years, said the letter from White House Counsel Neil Eggleston to Senator Dianne Feinstein, vice chair of the Senate Intelligence Committee.

Amid worries the incoming Trump administration could move to have all copies of the report destroyed, Eggleston said that the full 6,700-page study will be preserved under the Presidential Records Act. "At this time, we are not pursuing declassification of the full study," the letter said. The Committee Study of the Central Intelligence Agency's Detention and Interrogation Program, completed in 2014, detailed brutal torture methods like waterboarding used by the agency

on detainees following the September 11, 2001 attacks.

It also reportedly deeply questioned the effectiveness of the techniques, since banned by the Obama administration. Several copies were distributed to key parts of the US intelligence community, which has kept them under wraps. In 2015, when Republicans took the lead of the Intelligence Committee, the new Chair Richard Burr sought to collect them all back. Since then, some Democrats have pressed for the release of the full report, fearing Republicans aim to destroy it. Obama's move guarantees at least one copy will survive, if not made public before 2029.

Senator Ron Wyden, a Democratic member of the committee, urged Obama to put the classified study on the public record and to direct that a redacted version be declassified, pointing to the possibility that President-elect Donald Trump could revive the use of torture. "President Obama has made his opposition to torture a central part of his legacy," Wyden said in a statement. "The American people deserve the opportunity to read this history rather than see it locked away in a safe for 12 years."

"It is also more critical than ever that the study be made available to cleared personnel throughout the federal government who are responsible for authorizing and implementing our country's detention and interrogation policies," Wyden said. — Agencies



Rex Tillerson



Ben Carson

Commerce Secretary: Wilbur Ross

Ross, 78, heads the private equity firm WL Ross & Co. His net worth was pegged by Forbes at about \$2.9 billion. A staunch supporter of Trump and an economic adviser, Ross helped shape the Trump campaign's views on trade policy. He blames the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and Mexico, which went into force in 1994, and the 2001 entry of China into the World Trade Organization for causing massive US factory job losses.

Defense Secretary: James Mattis

Mattis is a retired Marine general known for his tough talk, distrust of Iran and battlefield experience in Iraq and Afghanistan. A former leader of Central Command, which oversees U.S. military operations in the Middle East and South Asia, Mattis, 66, is known by many U.S. forces by his nickname "Mad Dog." He was once rebuked for saying in 2005: "It's fun to shoot some people."

Education Secretary: Betsy DeVos

DeVos, 58, is a billionaire Republican donor, a former chair of the Michigan Republican Party and an advocate for the privatization of education. As chair of the American Federation for Children, she has pushed at the state level for vouchers that families can use to send their

on key issues and has warned of vulnerabilities along the United States' southern border with Mexico.

Housing Secretary: Ben Carson

Carson, 65, is a retired neurosurgeon who dropped out of the Republican presidential nominating race in March and threw his support to Trump. A popular writer and speaker in conservative circles, Carson previously indicated reluctance to take a position in the incoming administration because of his lack of experience in the federal government. Carson is the first African-American picked for a Cabinet spot by Trump.

Interior Secretary: Cathy McMorris

McMorris Rodgers, a 47-year-old US congresswoman from Washington state, is the fourth most senior member of the House of Representatives leadership. A member of the House Energy Committee, she has supported efforts to expand the US energy industry such as the recent repeal of the decades-old ban on oil exports and efforts to reject the Environmental Protection Agency's Waters of the United States Act. She has also expressed skepticism about climate change. Before joining Congress in 2004, McMorris Rodgers served for a decade in the Washington state legislature, eventually becoming the first woman there to serve as minority leader.

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BURUNDI REFUGEES MARK ANNIVERSARY OF WORST BLOODSHED

KIGALI: In a church in Rwanda, sobs ring out and candles flicker as refugees from neighboring Burundi mark a year since one of the deadliest episodes of violence in their crisis-wracked country. Darcy, 32, is one of about 200 Burundians who gathered to commemorate those killed when an attack on military installations by gunmen opposed to President Pierre Nkurunziza led to a violent crackdown by security forces against those seen as "enemies" of the state. "They entered homes, killing anything that moved inside. They raped the women they found inside, even though they were state police, soldiers who should have protected the population," said Darcy, who fled Burundi two weeks after the violence of December 11 and 12 last year.

In the church, a weeping woman recounts how her brother was killed in the crackdown. The rampage of violence in which several witnesses described door-to-door killings in opposition strongholds of the capital Bujumbura, left 87 dead according to the government. The United Nations estimates the figure could be as high as 200. "When you see someone you know dead, it is like a nightmare," said Carmel, 19, who fled Burundi with her family in October 2015. Burundi was plunged into crisis in April 2015 when



KIGALI: Burundian refugees stand outside Regina Pacis Church in Kigali before a mass to commemorate the victims of an attack on three military barracks in Bujumbura. — AFP

Nkurunziza decided to run for a third term in office, sparking a failed coup attempt and months of protests that led to a government crackdown, armed

attacks and assassinations. The UN estimates that more than 500 people have been killed and some 300,000 have fled since the crisis began. A September

report by UN rights experts recounted spine-chilling cases of torture and horrific sexual violence, mass arrests and disappearances and warned that "the

crime of genocide also looms large". Burundi has a long history of violence between its Hutu and Tutsi communities, which led to a 12-year civil war that ended in 2006. Bujumbura has reacted to the mounting criticism by cutting ties with the UN's main human rights body and pulling out of the International Criminal Court (ICC), while slamming a "foreign plot" to destabilize the country.

'The Forgotten'

The latest effort to get peace talks off the ground ran into trouble on Friday when mediator Benjamin Mkapa—a former Tanzanian president—urged the opposition to focus on 2020 polls and not those in 2015, which he said had come to a "legitimate conclusion". The main umbrella opposition movement, the National Council for the Restoration of Arusha Agreement and Rule of Law (CNARED) — which is exiled in Brussels — was furious and asked the United Nations to take over as mediator. "It really hurts me. I think that the international community, the region, has forgotten Burundi," said former bank employee Serge Barahinduka, 52.

A Burundian journalist—one of many forced into exile—told AFP she fears that desperation may force some of her countrymen "to go and fight instead of dying of hunger here". — AFP

A SURGE OF VIOLENCE IN CAMEROON'S MINORITY ENGLISH-SPEAKING REGIONS

ANGRY PROTESTERS HOIST SEPARATIST FLAG

YAOUNDE: A surge of violence in Cameroon's two English-speaking regions, both longtime opposition bastions, has spotlighted the simmering anger of the anglophone minority as the nation heads for a key presidential election. Angry protesters torched the national flag and hoisted a separatist one in its place in northwest Bamenda last week, where "at least two" people were killed in clashes with the police, authorities said. The opposition alleged four people had been killed and a police station was set ablaze in the second clash in the city between police and protesters in just over two weeks.

A fifth of Cameroon's population, estimated at over 22 million, are anglophone—a legacy of the unification in 1961 of two colonial-era entities previously run by France and Britain. For years, Cameroon's two anglophone regions—in the neighboring northwest and southwest regions—have complained of discrimination under the regime of 83-year-old President Paul Biya, in power since 1982. The next presidential

vote is due in 2018. Other unrest has been reported in the southwestern towns of Buea and Kumba. "The government doesn't want to listen to the population," said SDF spokesman Denis Nkemlemo. "They send the security forces to repress them."

Anglos versus Francos

An exporter of oil that is rich in timber and agriculture, the central-west African country is among the most prosperous economies of sub-Saharan Africa, measured on a per-capita basis. But the anglophone minority has long complained that wealth has not been shared out fairly, and that they have suffered discrimination at the hands of the francophone majority. The current crisis was triggered by a strike by lawyers demanding that the anglophone regions use Anglo-Saxon common law as their judicial benchmark. Teachers then went on strike.

On Monday, a consortium of journalist associations from the southwest condemned the lack of translated material

from "seminars, workshops and meetings" that they attend and threatened to walk out of government press conferences if handed "French documents without an English version", thus "obscuring the event". Both French and English are official languages.

'Unity is our bedrock'

Part of the protest movement has become radical, with young firebrands backing a 22-year-old demand for the creation of an independent state called Southern Cameroons. That was the term used for today's anglophone region when it became a British mandate territory following World War I, when Germany lost its African possessions, including German Cameroon. The main part of German Cameroon became a French-administered territory. Moderate anglophones, though, are in favor of federalism, a system that operated from 1961 to 1972, when the country's first president Ahmadou Ahidjo proclaimed a united republic.

Biya himself has not taken a stance on the crisis, but with presidential elections looming in 2018 and uncertainty over his intentions, some leading figures in government have moved quickly to rule out concessions. "We are saying loud and clear that demands calling for the return to federalism are unacceptable," Prime Minister Philémon Yang, himself an anglophone, said last week. "Unity is the bedrock of our country."

A veteran figure in national politics, the head of the national assembly Cayaye Yeguie Djibril, a francophone, took a tough line. "I denounce and condemn with every breath in my body any wish to partition Cameroon," he said. The United States has voiced concern over the violence in Buea and Bamenda and called on both sides to exercise restraint. Amnesty International has said the authorities used "excessive force" in Bamenda, while the Catholic Church in Cameroon has condemned "the use of excessive force in pursuit of rights or of maintaining peace". — AFP

News

in brief

Lufthansa flight to Germany diverted over bomb threat

SAN FRANCISCO: A Lufthansa flight bound for Germany from Texas was diverted to New York City on Monday due to a bomb threat, but a subsequent search of the aircraft found no explosive device, officials said. Flight 441 destined for Frankfurt from Houston landed safely at John F. Kennedy International Airport at about 8:30 pm local time, said Steve Coleman, a spokesman for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. The bomb threat was phoned into the airline's headquarters. But a search of the plane was negative, the authority said on Twitter. Calls to the Port Authority and the New York City Police Department remained unanswered. All passengers had left the airplane and were put up at hotels, Lufthansa spokesman Joerg Waber said yesterday morning in Germany. He neither confirmed nor denied the bomb threat. A passenger who was on the plane, who asked to remain anonymous said the pilot announced two to three hours after takeoff that the flight had to be cancelled and diverted to New York due to a bomb threat.



SKOPJE: Supporters of the ruling conservative VMRO-DPMNE party celebrate the victory in general elections while driving through a street in Skopje, Macedonia. — AP

Macedonian opposition rejects election result

SKOPJE: Macedonia's opposition refused to acknowledge yesterday the narrow victory of conservatives in parliamentary elections, denouncing "irregularities" for the first time. Sunday's vote was part of a European Union-brokered deal between Macedonia's four main political parties after a mass wiretapping scandal erupted in February 2015 and sparked street protests. Late Monday, the electoral commission announced that the VMRO-DPMNE party of longtime ruler Nikola Gruevski would have 51 MPs, two more than the Social Democrats (SDSM), having edged the vote 38.06 percent to 36.69 percent. But the SDSM, who initially claimed victory, said Tuesday that "power has been defeated and citizens have chosen life and change," citing "a number of irregularities in the pre- and post-election period". These "influenced the final result of the vote," the party said. Official poll monitor the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe), which had 340 observers, did not speak of irregularities but said there had been problems before the poll.

Israel officials snub Swedish Foreign Minister after row

JERUSALEM: No Israeli officials will meet Sweden's Foreign Minister during her trip to the region, a spokesman said yesterday, after she called for a probe into the killings of Palestinian assailants. Erik Wikenstrom, spokesman for Swedish foreign minister Margot Wallstrom said she had wanted to meet both Israeli and Palestinian officials during her visit from Thursday to Saturday. "This time it was not possible to visit Israel," Wikenstrom said. Asked why there were no meetings planned, he said such questions must be "asked to the Israelis". Israeli foreign ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon blamed "schedule problems" and declined to provide further details. Earlier, Wallstrom told Swedish news agency TT: "I would have gladly seen myself travel to Israel as well, but unfortunately they do not welcome it." There is no international airport in the Palestinian territories. Wikenstrom declined to comment on whether Wallstrom would fly to an Israeli airport and then travel to the occupied West Bank or go via Jordan.

Opus Dei leader Bishop Echevarria dies at 84

ROME: Bishop Javier Echevarria, leader of the controversial Roman Catholic organization Opus Dei, has died after treatment in hospital for a lung infection, according to an official statement posted on Twitter. Echevarria, who was 84, died in Rome on Monday, it said, noting that he had been receiving antibiotics to tackle the infection but it had worsened, resulting in fatal breathing problems. He was born in Madrid and became the third person to lead Opus Dei when in 1994 he succeeded Alvaro Del Portillo—who had taken over from the movement's founder, Josemaria Escriva. Present in many European countries but also in Latin America, Opus Dei is widely considered a secretive institution with politicians and members of the financial world said to be among its members.



FLORIDA: Dalia Dippolito sits between attorneys Greg Rosenfeld (left) and Brian Claypool during her retrial in West Palm Beach, Fla. Prosecutors have long contended Dippolito's own words prove she wanted a hit man to murder her newlywed husband. —VAP

VIDEO VERSES POLICE MISCONDUCT ARGUED IN MURDER-FOR-HIRE TRIAL

WEST PALM BEACH: Prosecutors have long contended that Dalia Dippolito's own words prove she wanted a hit man to murder her newlywed husband. Her attorneys have argued detectives were more interested in starring on the television show "Cops" than they were in pursuing truth and justice. Neither side strayed from their scripts during closing arguments at her retrial Monday. Prosecutor Craig Williams spent most of his closing argument replaying hidden-camera videos that have been seen by millions on "Cops," "20/20" and online since the department made them public in 2009.

In one, Dippolito demanded that her former lover Mohammed Shihadeh find her a hit man, giving him a \$1,200 deposit for his trouble and to buy the killer a gun. In another, she told undercover detective Widy Jean, portraying the would-be hit man, she was "5,000 percent sure" she wanted her husband dead. "This case is based 100 percent on her words, her actions, her intent - all day, every day," Williams told the six-member Palm Beach County jury, pointing at the expressionless defendant.

When Jean said he would put two bullets in Michael Dippolito's head

and she agreed, "it's over," Williams said. When she promised to pay Jean \$7,000 and left the house the morning she thought her husband would be murdered without warning him, "it's over," Brian Claypool, Dippolito's attorney, countered by blasting the Boynton Beach Police Department's investigation, calling it "evil, manipulative, corrupt, self-serving." He said Shihadeh first told detectives Dippolito was a domestic abuse victim, and said they could have handled it simply by calling her.

Instead, he said, detectives "escalated" the investigation to impress "Cops" producers, who were arriving in town to film cases with the department. He slammed detectives for not recording dozens of phone calls and a key meeting between Shihadeh and Dippolito. He said police knew these conversations would damage their "script" by showing she was being pressured to meet with the supposed hit man.

Convicting Dippolito, he said, would reward the department's "lying and cheating." "This case is way bigger than Dalia Dippolito," Claypool said. "This case is about holding law enforcement accountable, not only here but everywhere....You all have a

stake in this." Dippolito, 34, briefly cried during Claypool's argument as other defense attorneys rubbed her back. She is being retried on charges of solicitation to commit first-degree murder. Her 2011 conviction and 20-year sentence were overturned on appeal because of mistakes during jury selection by the previous judge. If convicted as before, she faces a maximum 20-year sentence.

Prosecutors didn't lay out a motive during this trial. Previously, they said they believe she wanted control of her husband's \$250,000 savings and their \$225,000 town house. Neither did Dippolito testify this time. At her previous trial and during court hearings, she said she was only acting, thinking they were involved in an ill-planned video project aimed at landing their own reality TV show. She also said previously that Shihadeh threatened her with a gun if she didn't meet Jean. Michael Dippolito and Shihadeh have denied there was a video project and Shihadeh has denied threatening Dippolito. Shihadeh did say Boynton Beach detectives threatened him with arrest if he didn't stick with the investigation. Such a threat would violate department policy. Jury deliberations are expected to begin today. — AP

TROUBLE STIRS IN SANDS OF WESTERN SAHARA

RABAT: Trouble is stirring in the remote sands of disputed Western Sahara in an area near the Mauritanian border where moves by the pro-independence Polisario Front have riled Morocco. The Algiers-backed Polisario has set up a new military post in the Guerguerat district on the Atlantic coast, within a stone's throw of Moroccan soldiers. In pictures posted online, its leader Brahim Ghali, in military fatigues and sporting a white moustache, is seen reviewing his troops with all-terrain vehicles parked in the dunes behind.

Ghali's mission was to supervise the establishment of a "support base" in Guerguerat, in the far south of the territory, according to pro-Polisario websites. War broke out in 1975 when Morocco sent troops to the former Spanish colony and battled Polisario Front fighters, who declared a Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic the following year. A UN peacekeeping force, MINURSO (United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara), was established in 1991 when a ceasefire took effect.

Morocco insists Western Sahara is an integral part of the kingdom, despite UN resolutions that task MINURSO with organizing a referendum on self-determination. Since mid-August, Guerguerat has become a source of tension between Rabat and the Polisario. In a move it says is designed to counter trafficking, mostly in drugs and stolen cars, the Moroccan army has started to build a tarmacked road beyond the 2,500-kilometre-long (1,600-mile) sand wall that surrounds the 90 percent of the territory which it controls.

Polisario elements have since entered the area, bringing them close to Moroccan military positions, and the two sides have traded accusations of violating the terms of the 1991 ceasefire. The United Nations has deployed a number of unarmed MINURSO blue helmets to the area and warned of the "regional implications" of any resumption of hostilities. Rabat has given assurances of "restraint" but stressed it remains determined to complete construction of the road from Guerguerat to La Guera, a ghost town further south, just 15 kilometers (nine miles) across the border from Mauritania's second city Nouadhibou. At the end of September, less than 3.5 kilometers remained to be built, but there has been no progress report since then.

'Gesturing'

For Morocco, an advanced Polisario outpost amounts to "a serious provocation difficult to leave unanswered", an analyst of the decades-old dispute said. Rabat has so far withheld any public comment, but the website Le360, which is close to palace circles, has branded it a "provocation". It accused MINURSO of failing to act and criticized Mauritania, which allows the Polisario to move freely on its territory. For Le360, "a plot hatched by Algiers, to be executed by the Polisario with the complicity of Nouakchott" aims to snatch control of the Guerguerat area. The Moroccan army "continues to show restraint... but Polisario actions would call for a firm and rigorous response", it said. Khadija Mohsen-Finan, a specialist on the region and professor at the University of Paris I, said the move was "gesturing" by Ghali, who took over as Polisario leader on the death of his predecessor Mohamed Abdelaziz in May. "Nobody expects a military outcome to the conflict any more," she said. "The Polisario can't engage in any confrontation without the agreement of Algiers, which doesn't want one." — AFP

INDIA ARRESTS 20 OVER FAILURE TO STAND FOR ANTHEM

NEW DELHI: Around 20 people have been arrested in India, accused of failing to stand for the national anthem in cinemas, police said yesterday, two weeks after the country's top court made it compulsory. The Supreme Court ruled on November 30 that cinemas should play the national anthem before every screening, and that the audience should stand, drawing angry accusations of an assault on civil liberties.

"All the cinema halls in India shall play the national anthem before the feature film starts and all present in the hall are obliged to stand up to show respect to the national anthem," the judges said. Twelve people were arrested on Monday at an international film festival in the southern state of Kerala for failing to observe the order, police said. They said

the film-goers, who have not been identified, had refused to stand after being asked to do so by organizers and police. "They were formally arrested and later released on bail," said Sparjan Kumar, police chief of Kerala state capital Thiruvananthapuram.

Kumar said six of the 12 had been assaulted after refusing to stand, but that no charges would be brought against the attackers. "We are yet to receive a complaint over the assault. There is no investigation in (that) incident," he told AFP by phone. Another eight people were arrested on Sunday at a cinema in the southern city of Chennai after being assaulted by a group of 20 men during the interval for allegedly refusing to stand. They were reportedly charged under the Prevention of Insults



JAMMU: Indian movie goers stand up as national anthem is played at a movie hall before the screening of a movie in Jammu yesterday. A ruling by India's Supreme Court last month said that the anthem must be played before every film screening in the country and that audiences must stand. The court said the rule was aimed at instilling a sense of patriotism. — AP

to National Honor Act and face up to three years in jail if found guilty.

The Supreme Court did not specify a penalty for failure to stand. Kumar said the 12 cinemagoers arrested in his state had been charged with various related offences, including contempt of court. Before the latest order, the playing of the national anthem was only compulsory in the western state of Maharashtra-home to the Bollywood film industry-and standing was optional.

There were however a number of reports of cinemagoers being attacked for failing to stand, even before the court gave its ruling. In October, a wheelchair-user was assaulted in a Mumbai cinema by fellow members of the audience who apparently failed to realize he was disabled. — AFP

News

in brief

Indonesian mob kills man after school knife attack

KUPANG: A man who attacked a group of school children with a knife in eastern Indonesia yesterday has died after an angry mob beat him to death inside his jail cell, police said. Seven children were injured after a man went on a stabbing spree inside a primary school on Savu, a small island in East Nusa Tenggara province. The 32-year-old attacker tried to flee but was caught and taken to a police station, said local officer Silfeston, who like many Indonesians goes by just one name. But once there hundreds of locals, furious at news of the attack, rushed to the station, forcing their way past police and into the cell where the man was being held. "The suspect was tortured by the mob and died," Silfeston said. Footage aired on local broadcasters showed dozens of shouting men pushing past police and climbing over walls at the station.



BEIJING: A man reads a newspaper with the headline of 'US President-elect Donald Trump delivers a mighty shock to America' at a news stand in Beijing. — AP

China warns Trump of 'crushing his own toes'

BEIJING: China offered its sternest rebuke yet to Donald Trump, saying anyone who challenges Beijing's interests in Taiwan will "lift a rock only to crush his own toes." "If he tries to sabotage the One China policy or harm China's core interests, ultimately he will lift a rock only to crush his own toes," Chinese foreign minister Wang Yi said Monday in Switzerland according to comments posted on the ministry's web site. China is closely monitoring developments, he said, issuing a warning against "any person or force in the world" looking to play tough with Beijing on Taiwan. The comments come after Trump said he could jettison Washington's decades-old "One China policy"—a diplomatic dodge allowing the US to simultaneously do business with Beijing and Taipei. Yesterday Chinese media sent another fusillade toward the "presumptuous and ill-guided" president-elect, slamming his approach to Taiwan as a recipe for disaster.

4 kids killed in Middle Tennessee house fire

SPRINGFIELD: Four children under the age of 10 were killed and another child and an adult were injured when a home in Middle Tennessee caught fire early Monday, a fire official said. Springfield Fire Chief Jimmy Hamill said firefighters arrived within four minutes of getting the call at 3:34 am to find heavy fire coming from the front of the house in Springfield. Crews fought their way into the small home to search for survivors and knocked the blaze down quickly, but found four children, ages 4, 7, 8 and 9, dead near the back of the house. Hamill says the children's father and a female child were taken to Vanderbilt University Medical Center in Nashville. He said the father was in very critical condition. He didn't have information on the child's condition. Hamill said the mother and two other children escaped unharmed. A neighbor, Ricardo Morales, told The Tennessean that his wife was woken by screams coming from the home. "She looked out the window and saw the flames," Morales said in an interview translated from Spanish.



ADEN: Soldiers and locals gather by the bodies of soldiers killed by a suicide bomber, at a base in the southern city of Aden, Yemen. — AP

2.2 million Yemen children acutely malnourished: UN

SANAA: Nearly 2.2 million Yemeni children are acutely malnourished, victims of the near-collapse of the health care system during two years of escalating conflict, UN children's fund UNICEF said yesterday. At least 462,000 are suffering from severe acute malnutrition, as food supplies have been disrupted by the devastating war between the Saudi-backed government and Shiite rebels, the agency said. Saada province, a rebel bastion in the far north, has the world's highest stunting rate among children with eight out of 10 children affected in some areas, it added. "Malnutrition in Yemen is at an all-time high and increasing," said UNICEF's acting country representative, Meritxell Relano. "The state of health of children in the Middle East's poorest country has never been as catastrophic as it is today."

SWIFT CONFIRMS NEW CYBER THEFTS AND HACKING TACTICS

HACKERS BECOMING MORE SOPHISTICATED

LONDON: Cyber attacks targeting the global bank transfer system have succeeded in stealing funds since February's heist of \$81 million from the Bangladesh central bank as hackers have become more sophisticated in their tactics, according to a SWIFT official and a previously undisclosed letter the organization sent to banks worldwide. The messaging network in a Nov 2 letter seen by Reuters warned banks of the escalating threat to their systems, according to the SWIFT letter. The attacks and new hacking tactics underscore the continuing vulnerability of the SWIFT messaging network, which handles trillions of dollars in fund transfers daily.

"The threat is very persistent, adaptive and sophisticated - and it is here to stay," SWIFT said in the November letter to client banks, seen by Reuters. The disclosures provide fresh evidence that SWIFT remains at risk of attacks nearly a year after funds were stolen from a Bangladesh Bank account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. The unprecedented cyber theft prompted regulators around the globe to tighten bank security requirements, amidst a global investigation by the FBI, Bangladesh authorities and Interpol.

Banks using the SWIFT network, which include both central banks and commercial banks, have been hit with a "meaningful

number of attacks - about a fifth of them resulting in stolen funds, since the Bangladesh heist, Stephen Gilderdale, head of SWIFT's Customer Security Program said in an interview on Thursday. SWIFT, a Belgium-based co-operative owned by its user banks, had previously disclosed hacks of three SWIFT users since February but said those did not lead to the loss of funds.

SWIFT's letter to customers warned that hackers have refined their methods for compromising local bank systems. One new tactic, the letter said, involved using software that allows technicians to access computers to provide technical support. "We unfortunately continue to see cases in which some of our customers' environments are being compromised" by thieves who then send fraudulent payment instructions through the SWIFT network - the same kind of messages used to steal Bangladesh Bank funds, the letter said without elaborating further.

On Monday, a top police investigator in Dhaka told Reuters that some Bangladesh central bank officials deliberately exposed its computer systems and enabled the theft. He declined to identify those officials by name or say how many there were. The comments by Mohammad Shah Alam, head of the Forensic Training Institute of the Bangladesh police's criminal investiga-

tion department, are the first sign that investigators have got a firm lead in one of the world's biggest cyber heists. Arrests are likely soon, he said. Bangladesh Bank spokesman Subhankar Saha declined to comment on Alam's comments. A New York Fed spokeswoman also declined comment.

Information sharing

SWIFT's Gilderdale declined to provide further details about more recent attacks or to name victims or amounts stolen. Asked how many heists had been attempted, he said only that it was "a meaningful number of cases." "In all of these cases attackers are suspected of trying to replicate the modus operandi of the Bangladesh attackers," he added.

The intrusions had been detected in a variety of ways, Gilderdale said. In some cases, clients' antivirus software had identified malware. In others, a new feature on software SWIFT provides to clients alerted SWIFT directly of an attempted manipulation of a client's system. In one case, a financial regulator had notified SWIFT of an attempted attack. Gilderdale said despite the new thefts, SWIFT believed the system was becoming more secure. "In 80 percent of the cases that we are aware of and where we have completed investigations, a fraud has not actually ended up taking place," he said.

"I personally am very pleased with the progress that we are making," he added. Successful bank hacks were too rare to say whether an 80 percent success rate was good or bad, Ben Caudill, a cyber security consultant with Rhino Security Labs in Seattle, said. SWIFT said in its letter to clients that the cyber threats were evolving. "There are likely to be multiple groups of cyber attackers attempting to compromise customer environments," it said. "There has been an evolution in the modus operandi, signifying that attackers are further adapting their methods," it added.

Gilderdale said it was impossible to say for sure whether the rate of attacks was increasing because previously SWIFT did not track or receive information from clients about incidents. SWIFT said that in all cases, the infiltrations involved customers' SWIFT interfaces and that its own central communications network had not been compromised. The additional attacks SWIFT disclosed to Reuters do not include others that have already come to light since the Bangladesh Bank heist. Thieves stole \$250,000 from Bangladesh's Sonali bank in 2013. More than \$12 million was stolen from Ecuador's Banco del Austro in 2015. Vietnam's Tien Phong Bank said in May that it foiled an attempt to steal money via SWIFT. — Reuters

BANGLADESH BANK OFFICIALS INVOLVED IN HEIST: INVESTIGATOR

DHAKA: Some Bangladesh central bank officials deliberately exposed its computer systems and enabled hackers to steal \$81 million from its account at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in February, a top police investigator in Dhaka told Reuters on Monday. The comments by Mohammad Shah Alam, head of the Forensic Training Institute of the Bangladesh police's criminal investigation department, are the first sign that investigators have got a firm lead in one of the world's biggest cyber heists, which had prompted months of international fingerprinting. Arrests are soon likely, he said.

On Thursday, the head of a Bangladesh government panel that investigated the heist said five bank officials were guilty of negligence but that they were only unwitting accomplices. Alam told Reuters his investigations had discovered that some bank officials had knowingly created vulnerabilities in the bank's connection to the SWIFT global messaging and payments system. "Bangladesh Bank's SWIFT network was made insecure by some bank employees in connivance with some foreign people," he said. "They knew what they were doing."

He declined to name the suspects or say how many there were. Alam said investigators were now trying to find out how the mid-ranking officials were connected to the hackers and whether they benefited financially from the heist. Asked if the officials would be arrested, he said: "We are very close to it." The apparent momentum comes after months of trading blame among Bangladesh Bank, the New York Fed, SWIFT, and a Philippine lender that received much of the stolen funds before they disappeared. The heist prompted an international probe headed by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Separately SWIFT, or the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, told Reuters its messaging system has been targeted in a "meaningful" number of other attacks this year using a similar approach as the Bangladesh incident. Bangladesh Bank spokesman Subhankar Saha declined to comment on Alam's comments. A New York Fed spokeswoman also declined comment. Another investigator in Dhaka, who declined to be named, said more than 100 Bangladesh Bank employees had been interviewed in connection with the heist, and some were barred from leaving the country. — AFP

CHINA OFFERS PHILIPPINES WEAPONS FOR DRUG WAR

MANILA: China is ready to give the Philippines weapons to help President Rodrigo Duterte wage his controversial war on drugs which has claimed over 5,000 lives, the Chinese ambassador to Manila said. Beijing has previously said it supports Duterte's bloody crime war, which has been slammed by the United Nations and human rights watchdogs over alleged extrajudicial killings. Beijing and Manila have experienced a rapprochement since Duterte's election in May, despite their conflicting territorial claims to the South China Sea. Ambassador Zhao Jianhua, in remarks late Monday, confirmed China was ready to supply the Philippines with weapons. "We're exploring the possibilities of providing arms, light arms," Zhao told reporters. "Arms for fighting against terrorism, (for the) anti-drug campaign." The ambassador said talks were still in the initial stages, adding there was no agreement on price or the specific type of weapons, though they would most likely be rifles. Since he took office the crackdown has claimed over 5,000 lives. — Agencies



GAZA: A Palestinian youth rides a donkey cart loaded with scrap metal in Gaza City yesterday. — AFP

SILENCE AND CONCERN SURROUND GAZA WOMAN'S DEATH SENTENCE

GAZA: The 26-year-old woman facing a death sentence in Gaza was convicted of killing her husband-but her trial was secret and even her family has distanced themselves publicly from the case. Her death sentence, the first for a Palestinian woman in more than 20 years, has raised concerns among rights activists in the Gaza Strip, the small enclave run by Islamist movement Hamas. They are trying to prevent her death by hanging, while navigating traditional values and Hamas's strict rule in the territory, hit by three wars with Israel since 2008 and under an Israeli blockade for a decade. A wall of silence has also surrounded the case.

The family of the woman, identified only as Nahla A., declined to provide her with a lawyer, said Zeinab Al-Ghounimi of the Centre for Women's Legal Research and Consulting. "They were afraid of revenge from the husband's family," she said, explaining that her organization had stepped in and helped. Her lawyer, Bakr Torkmani, said the woman is the mother of a young boy and had been married against her will. She lived in complete destitution and was repeatedly beaten by her husband, he said. He hopes "public opinion and media reports will have an impact on the judges after the haste they showed in handing out this death sentence."

Stabbed in the back?

The woman was arrested on January 31, and Gaza's attorney general Ismail Jaber has provided an outline of what is alleged to have happened. Several days before her arrest, she had asked her husband out for some fresh air near their small home in a poor district of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip, he said. They travelled a short distance by donkey cart before her husband "wanted to relieve himself," Jaber told AFP in his spacious office cluttered with files. She is then accused of pulling out the knife she bought several days earlier and "stabbing him in the back several times," he said.

Authorities say she confessed and that her testimony showed that the killing was premeditated. She was convicted then sentenced on October 5 after a trial held behind closed doors. "Once all procedural steps have been completed, we will sign off on the implementation of the sentence," Jaber said. She is the first woman to be sentenced to death in the Palestinian territories since 1994, said Hamdi Shaqura of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. "There is still the possibility of an appeal and we are placing our hopes in future rulings," he said.

Nahla's case has also highlighted rights groups' concerns over the continued use of the death penalty in the Palestinian territories-and especially

recent developments in the Gaza Strip. In May, Jaber announced that a number of death sentences would soon be carried out in criminal cases. Later that month, three Palestinian men were executed for murder in the strip, drawing condemnation from the UN. Jaber said at the time that the executions were carried out as a deterrence and to reduce crime. Rights activists say there is a lack of transparency surrounding such cases and point out there is no evidence the death penalty is more effective in deterring crime than prison.

Son's visit refused

Under Palestinian law, death sentences can be handed out for those collaborating with Israel, murderers and drug traffickers. But there are stark differences between the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank, the territory controlled by the Palestinian Authority, which is dominated by president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party. No execution has been carried out in the West Bank since 2002, while only two were carried out there between 1994 and 2002. In Gaza, 33 people have been executed since 1994. Since Hamas took power in the Gaza Strip in 2007, 96 death penalties have been handed out, mostly by military courts and often for spying on behalf of Israel, said Shaqura. — AFP

CONGRESS, AT ODDS WITH TRUMP, EYES RUSSIA HACK PROBE

WASHINGTON: Leading senators supported a congressional investigation Monday into US intelligence assessments that Russia interfered in the election, putting top Republicans on a collision course with incoming president Donald Trump. The potential showdown between Trump and Capitol Hill could become more contentious after the president-elect announces his pick for the critical secretary of state post on Tuesday, with key Republicans concerned over his expected choice, ExxonMobil chief executive Rex Tillerson.

The president-elect has dismissed the intelligence reports about Russian interference as "ridiculous," defying an increasing number of senators from his own party, as well as top Democrats, the Central Intelligence Agency and the outgoing White House. US media have reported for days on secret CIA findings that Moscow sought to bolster Trump's election bid, against Democratic former secretary of state Hillary Clinton, by releasing hacked Democratic Party documents. A group of 10 electors who will ratify the election results next week- but one of them Democrats-also called for a full briefing on the accusations before the 538-member Electoral College gathers on December 19.

"Can you imagine if the election results were the opposite and WE tried to play the Russia/CIA card. It would be called conspiracy theory!" Trump tweeted as he began another day of cabinet-

building talks. "Unless you catch 'hackers' in the act, it is very hard to determine who was doing the hacking. Why wasn't this brought up before election?" After the Kremlin dismissed the US intelligence findings as "absolutely unfounded," a Trump transition spokesman dug in further, saying it was "an attempt to try to delegitimize president-elect Trump's win."

'No doubt'

Republican Senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, as well as Democrats Chuck Schumer and Jack Reed called for a bipartisan investigation with public hearings to find out what happened and to stop the threats that "cyberattacks conducted by foreign governments pose to our national security." McCain told CBS television that there was "no doubt" about the hacking. He said the investigation should stretch across armed services, intelligence and foreign relations committees in Congress to get a full picture of the story. But Mitch McConnell, the powerful Senate majority leader whose wife Elaine Chao is Trump's nominee for transportation secretary, said the issue should be handled by the Senate Intelligence Committee, whose leader Richard Burr has been silent on the issue since the reports first appeared on Friday.

"It's an important subject and we intend to review it on a bipartisan basis," McConnell told CNN. Republican Senator Michael McCaul, chairman of the



NEW YORK: Singer Kanye West (center) arrives at Trump Tower yesterday as US President-elect Donald Trump continues to hold meetings in New York. — AFP

Homeland Security Committee, said it must be "a top priority to investigate any outside interference aimed at undermining our democratic process." The White House has also backed a congressional review. Trump has long fanned alarm among some Republicans for calling for closer ties with Moscow, perhaps at their worst since the end of the Cold War, in contrast to received wisdom in Washington that Russia remains a global security threat.

Tillerson questions

American intelligence previously

linked Russia to damaging email leaks from the Clinton campaign, but saw it as a broad bid to undermine confidence in the US political process.

On Friday, however, The Washington Post reported that the CIA has since concluded that the aim of the cyber intrusions was to help Trump win. The report came on the heels of President Barack Obama's order to review all cyberattacks that took place during the 2016 election cycle, amid growing calls from Congress for more information on the extent of Russian interference. Trump's rejection of the CIA conclusions signals a likely rough

start to relations with the spy agency when the president-elect takes office on January 20. "He believes that the CIA is a political institution and he's going to have to learn that it's not. It is apolitical," former deputy CIA director Michael Morell told CBS.

The hacking scandal raised new questions about whether Trump's apparent favored choice for US secretary of state will be able to pass Senate confirmation. Tillerson's extensive dealings on behalf of Exxon with Russian leader Vladimir Putin have raised conflict of interest questions.

Putin bestowed Russia's Order of Friendship on Tillerson. Republican Senator Marco Rubio, a member of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee which must approve the nomination, tweeted: "Being a 'friend of Vladimir' is not an attribute I am hoping for from a #SecretaryOfState."

Separately, Trump is delaying a press conference originally planned for Thursday about his global business dealings until January, top advisor Kellyanne Conway told CNN, as critics point to a myriad of potential conflicts of interest. She attributed the delay to "how convoluted and complex many of these business holdings are," adding that Trump still intends to relinquish operational control of his company while serving as president. "He's just a man who's been incredibly successful and has holdings all across the globe." — AFP

JAKARTA CHRISTIAN GOVERNOR STANDS TRIAL FOR BLASPHEMY

PURNAMA ACCUSED OF INSULTING THE QURAN

JAKARTA: Jakarta's Christian governor choked back tears as he gave an impassioned defense against blasphemy charges yesterday, in a court case that has stoked fears of growing intolerance in the Muslim-majority nation. Basuki Tjahaja Purnama—the first Christian to govern the capital in more than 50 years—is standing trial accused of insulting the Quran, an offence that carries a five-year jail term.

The governor has apologized for his contro-

versial remarks, which angered Muslims across Indonesia and drew hundreds of thousands to the streets of Jakarta in protests larger than any seen in nearly two decades. Facing court for the first time, the governor gave an emotionally charged defense against the charges, pausing several times to compose himself as he maintained his innocence. "I know I have to respect

the holy verses of the Quran. I do not understand how I can be said to have offended Islam," Purnama said, occasionally dabbing his eyes with a handkerchief.

Purnama, better known by his nickname Ahok, ignited a firestorm of criticism in September when he quoted the Islamic holy text while campaigning ahead of elections for the Jakarta governorship. The governor accused his opponents of using a Quranic verse, which sug-

gests Muslims should not choose non-Muslims as leaders, in order to trick people into voting against him.

Politics at play

Prosecutor Ali Mukartono said the governor had "spoken a lie" and insulted Muslims, adding Indonesia's top clerical council had declared his remarks blasphemous. But lawyers for the gover-

nor said their client never intended to commit blasphemy, and expressed concern that Purnama's case was being rushed. President Joko Widodo and police, under pressure as protesters massed in November, promised to resolve the case quickly. Critics say the controversy is as much about politics as religion, as the governor's foes whip up anger to reduce his support ahead of a hotly contested poll in February.

Purnama is running against two Muslim candidates in elections for city hall. He had long been the favorite to win the election owing to the popularity of his no-nonsense style and determination to clean up Jakarta, a crowded, polluted metropolis of 10 million. But the scandal has eroded his chances of victory, with his opponents gaining ground since Purnama was named a suspect for blasphemy in November. Purnama said he was raised a Christian but surrounded by Muslims, including family friends, who had played an enormous mentorship role in his life from when he was a child to adulthood.

The allegations that he had offended their religion hurt him very deeply. "I am very sad," he said, his voice cracking. "This accusation is the same as saying I have offended my god parents and siblings, whom I love and they love me back." He also listed the many services he had provided for his Islamic constituents, including the construction of mosques, support for religious schools and donation of sacrificial cows on sacred days. A small band of his supporters kept vigil outside the court as a larger congregation of hardline Islamists chanted "Jail Ahok" and held signs depicting Purnama in prison garb behind bars.

"We will continue to fight this, and won't be provoked or influenced," one of Purnama's supporters said. The high-profile case has gripped the country. The courtroom was surrounded by police yesterday, with the proceedings being broadcast live on national television. The case has emboldened hardliners, analysts say, who have long opposed a Christian as governor and have used the blasphemy scandal to push their conservative agenda. Rights groups want Indonesia's archaic blasphemy laws overhauled, arguing they are exploited to persecute minorities. The case has adjourned until December 20. — AFP



JAKARTA: Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama, better known by his nickname Ahok, looks at photographers as he sits in the defendant's chair during his trial at the North Jakarta District Court in Jakarta yesterday. — AFP

gests Muslims should not choose non-Muslims as leaders, in order to trick people into voting against him.

Prosecutor Ali Mukartono said the governor had "spoken a lie" and insulted Muslims, adding Indonesia's top clerical council had declared his remarks blasphemous. But lawyers for the gover-



KUALA LUMPUR: Sultan Muhammad V (center), the incoming 15th king of Malaysia, inspects a ceremonial guard of honor during the King's welcoming ceremony at the Parliament House in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. — AFP

MALAYSIA ENTHRONES NEW KING IN LAVISH CEREMONY

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia yesterday installed its 15th king, Sultan Muhammad V, a relatively youthful monarch known for his fondness for four-wheel driving and other extreme sports. In a ceremony steeped in pomp and centuries of tradition, the 47-year-old Sultan, dressed in gold-colored traditional Malay formal wear, took the oath of office in the national palace in Kuala Lumpur.

The ceremony, marked by honor guards and Islamic prayers, was televised nationally and attended by Prime Minister Najib Razak and hundreds of guests decked out in Islamic finery. Sultan Muhammad V, currently the ceremonial ruler of the conservative Islamic northern state of Kelantan, takes the national throne under the rotating monarchy in place since independence from Britain in 1957. In a unique arrangement, the throne of the Muslim-majority country changes hands every five years between the rulers of the nine Malaysian states still headed by Islamic royalty.

Sultan Muhammad V studied at St Cross College at Oxford and the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, according to official media.

He is known for a relaxed public persona, taking part in walkathons to promote health, and has been photographed wearing a baseball cap backwards. The Sultan "fills his free time by reading and has an interest in extreme sports such as four-wheel drive expeditions and endurance challenges and shooting," Bernama news agency said. Despite the merely ceremonial role, Malaysia's Islamic royalty command great respect, especially from Muslim Malays, the country's majority group, and criticising them is strictly forbidden.

Portraits of the king and queen adorn government buildings throughout the country. The king is also the symbolic head of Islam in the nation, as well as the nominal chief of the military. Malaysia's sultans trace a lineage back to Malay sultanates of the 15th century. The king is referred to as Yang di-Pertuan Agong, or "He Who Is Made Lord". Sultan Muhammad V replaces Sultan Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah from the northern state of Kedah, now 89, who was king previously in the 1970s and became the first person to hold the position twice. — AFP

KURIL ISLANDS - STRATEGIC CHAIN AT THE HEART OF RUSSIA-JAPAN DISPUTE

MOSCOW: Known as the Southern Kurils by Russia and the Northern Territories by Japan, a string of desolate volcanic islands are at the heart of a feud between the two countries dating back to World War II. As Russian President Vladimir Putin heads for talks with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Japan over the territorial dispute that has prevented the sides signing a formal treaty to end the war, here are some key facts on the islands:

Location

The disputed islands of Iturup (Etorofu in Japanese), Kunashir (Kunashiri), Shikotan and Habomai at their closest point lie just a few kilometers off the north coast of Hokkaido. They are the southern-most territories in a volcanic chain that separates the Sea of Okhotsk and the Pacific Ocean. They are located to the southeast of the Russian island of Sakhalin and are administratively part of the same region, although Tokyo considers them part of its Hokkaido prefecture and "illegally occupied by Russia."

Torn history

Russian Empress Catherine the Great in 1786 claimed sovereignty over the Kuril islands after her government declared they were discovered by "Russian explorers" and

therefore "undoubtedly must belong to Russia". In the first treaty between tsarist Russia and Japan in 1855 the frontier between the two countries was drawn just north of the four islands closest to Japan. Twenty years later in 1875, a new treaty handed Tokyo the entire chain, in exchange for Russia gaining full control of the island of Sakhalin. Japan also seized back control of the southern half of Sakhalin after its crushing defeat of Moscow in the 1905 Russo-Japanese War.

Soviet takeover

The Kuril islands have been back at the centre of a dispute between Moscow and Tokyo since Soviet troops invaded them in the final days of World War II. The USSR only entered into war with Japan on August 9, 1945 just after the United States had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. The troops completed the takeover of the islands after Japan's general surrender later that month. Russia argues that US president Franklin Roosevelt promised Stalin he could take back the Kurils in exchange for joining the war against Japan at the Yalta conference in February 1945 at which the Allied leaders divided up the post-war world. The Soviet capture of the islands has since pre-



This file photo shows then Russian President Dmitry Medvedev walking near Soviet-era fortifications during his visit to one of the Kuril islands. Russian President Vladimir Putin heads to Japan tomorrow to meet Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the latest bid to reach an elusive deal on a territorial dispute that has prevented their nations signing a formal treaty to end World War II. — AFP

vented Moscow and Tokyo from signing a formal peace treaty to end the war, despite repeated attempts over the past 70 years to reach a deal. In 1956, Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev first offered to give Japan the two smallest islands, Shikotan and Habomai, in exchange for signing a peace treaty, but in the face of US opposition those talks went nowhere.

Strategic value

The islands' current population is less than 17,000 people but the

territory is "important from all points of view," said Valery Kistanov, who heads the Centre for Japanese Studies at the Russian Institute of the Far East.

"They are rich in hot springs and minerals and rare metals such as rhenium" which is used in production of supersonic aircraft, he said. But the "greatest value" of the islands lies in their geographical location at the meeting of warm and cool water currents, which is beneficial both for fisheries and the Russian navy too, he said. — AFP

SOUTH KOREA MPs TO QUIZ DOCTORS AND NURSES ABOUT PARK'S 'MISSING' 7 HOURS

SEOUL: Seven hours may have sealed the fate of South Korea's beleaguered President Park Geun-hye. That was the time between the first news reports that the Sewol ferry carrying hundreds of children was sinking off the nation's southern coast on April 16, 2014 and her first TV appearance that day. The tragedy, which claimed the lives of 304 people - many of them kids from one high school - continues to gnaw at the nation's consciousness, especially because a rescue effort was widely seen as botched. A lack of information on Park's whereabouts and actions during that time has fuelled conspiracy theories which have re-emerged during the investigation into an influence-peddling scandal that is poised to bring down her presidency.

The missing seven hours may have marked a turning point in Park's relationship with the nation's people, breeding mistrust and anger, and leaving many South Koreans, now seething over the current scandal, to question what else may have been covered-up. "What was she doing while the children were dying?" asked Kim Geum-ja-whose son was killed in the tragedy-and who is among a group of activists camped-out in Seoul's main ceremonial plaza since shortly after the disaster. "What was so urgent that she was missing for seven hours?"

Today, a parliamentary panel looking into the influence-peddling allegations will hold a hearing specifically on the missing seven hours and is expected to probe into exactly what Park was doing during that time. The seven hours were included by parliament in its motion to impeach her. Park's former medical staff, including two personal doctors and two nurses, are scheduled to appear, as is an outside plastic surgeon who treated Choi Soon-sil, Park's friend at the centre of the scandal.

Last month, more than two years after the disaster, Park's office published a page on its website detailing what reports the president received, and when, on the day of the sinking in a bid to quell the rumors about what she was doing at the time. "We've repeatedly explained, two years ago and since then, that she had been receiving reports about the Sewol incident all throughout the day and gave instructions either by phone or written reports," Kim Dong-jo, a Blue House spokesman said.

The official timeline details exactly when Park received reports or gave orders, including an early demand-less than an hour after the doomed ferry began to sink-to make sure that there are no casualties and that no one on board is left behind. — Reuters

'REVENGE PORN' TAKES TOLL ON MILLIONS: STUDY

WASHINGTON: It may be a jilted lover looking for payback after a breakup. Or it could be a hacker releasing intimate images of a celebrity. So-called "revenge porn" - or the posting of nude or explicit pictures without that person's consent - affects one in 25 Americans, according to a new study. The issue gained public attention in 2014 when nude photos of celebrities including actress Jennifer Lawrence and model Kate Upton were posted online by a hacker, in the so-called "Celebgate" scandal.

Lead study author Amanda Lenhart at the Data & Society Research Institute said this was the first national survey on revenge, or nonconsensual pornography. Two percent have had someone post an explicit photo or video of them online without their permission, and many others faced such a threat. Taken together, four percent were victimized by posting of images or by threats, which would amount to some 10.4 million Americans, according to the survey.

"Nonconsensual pornography can have a devastating and lasting impact on victims, so it's vital that we understand how common this is and who is affected," Lenhart said. "Even if images are never actually posted publicly, perpetrators may use threats to post such images as a method of controlling or intimidating victims."

In some cases of revenge porn, explicit images were stolen from private online or cloud servers, while others were secretly or forcibly photographed or taped. Some images come from jilted romantic partners while others are stolen by amateur or professional hackers. Public attention on revenge porn increased after the Celebgate hack of actresses, models, and athletes, many of whom spoke of the emotional distress they experience. "Just because I'm a

public figure, just because I'm an actress, does not mean that I asked for this," Lawrence said in an interview after the incident. "It is not a scandal. It is a sex crime. It is a sexual violation."

The survey found three percent of Americans have had someone threaten to post nearly nude or nude photos or videos of them online to hurt or embarrass them. Young people - ages 15-29 - are most likely to report being threatened. More women than men are impacted, with one in 10 women under the age of 30 saying they experienced threats about posting such content. Among internet users who identify as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, 15 percent said someone threatened to share a nude or nearly nude photo or video of them.

"It's important that we recognize that men are also victims of nonconsensual pornography," Lenhart said. "Male victims are often invisible - but hopefully this report will challenge us to think differently." Victims' advocates have called for laws punishing perpetrators of revenge porn, but civil liberties defenders have argued these measures could violate free speech protection. According to the study, 30 states have passed legislation over the past three years attempting to define and criminalize "revenge porn." National legislation has been introduced in Congress without passage.

The report was based on a survey of 3,002 American internet users ages 15 and older, from May 17 to July 31, 2016. The margin of error was estimated at two percentage points. Lenhart said there are no previous comparable studies which show a trend, but noted that revenge porn "has been assisted by the development of digital cameras, smartphones and social media" — AFP

CIVILIANS 'KILLED ON SPOT' IN ALEPPO

Continued from Page 1

sat on pavements with nowhere to shelter. "There are dozens of bodies in the streets because of the intense bombardment by regime forces," Rami Abdel Rahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told AFP.

Abdel Rahman, whose Britain-based group has for years monitored the conflict in Syria, said he was unable to confirm the reports of civilians being executed or other alleged massacres. But UN chief Ban Ki-moon had in a statement late Monday expressed alarm "over reports of atrocities against a large number of civilians, including women and children". French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said there were worrying reports from Aleppo of "cold-blooded killings of entire families", "summary executions, including of women and children" and "people burned alive in their homes". "Such atrocities are unconscionable. Supporters of the regime, starting with Russia, cannot let this happen."

Syria's army has taken more than 90 percent of the territory once held by rebels in east Aleppo, after launching an all-out offensive last month to seize control of the entire city. Aleppo, a cultural and economic hub in northern Syria second only to Damascus in importance, had been split between a rebel-controlled east and government-held west since 2012. Recapturing all of Aleppo will be a huge victory for Assad and leave his regime in control of all five of Syria's main cities.

As of early yesterday, rebel fighters were reported to be confined to just a handful of neighborhoods, including Mashhad and part of Sukkari. "We're living the final moments before victory," a Syrian military source told AFP. It was unclear how many civilians remained in rebel territory, after an estimated 130,000 fled to other parts of Aleppo during the government advance.

Jan Egeland, head of the UN-backed humanitarian taskforce for Syria, told AFP that thousands of civilians were in need of evacuation and safe passage, including hundreds of wounded. "Our appeal to Russia and to the Syrian government is very clear: We need a pause in the

fighting but we also need to get the people inside to help organize an evacuation," he said. The International Committee of the Red Cross said there was only a "last chance to save lives" in Aleppo. "As the battle reaches new peaks and the area is plunged into chaos, thousands with no part in the violence have literally nowhere safe to run," it said.

The government assault has been backed by heavy artillery fire and air strikes, with at least 463 civilians, including 62 children, killed in east Aleppo since mid-November, according to the Observatory. Another 130 people including 40 children have been killed in western districts by rebel rocket fire. Diplomatic efforts to end the conflict have repeatedly failed, and weekend talks between Russia and the United States on a ceasefire to allow the evacuation of civilians made no breakthrough. Moscow is a key Assad ally and launched an air war in support of his forces last year, while Washington and other Western nations have backed the opposition.

Turkey, which has also supported rebel forces in Syria, said yesterday it would intensify talks with Russia on a ceasefire. "Today, tomorrow, everyday, we will intensify our talks with Russia and other countries so we can find a solution to this humanitarian tragedy," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said. "Our efforts continue in particular for civilians to be able to leave and for a ceasefire." More than 310,000 people have been killed since the Syrian conflict began in March 2011, and over half the population has been displaced, with millions becoming refugees.

A rebel official told AFP later yesterday an agreement for the imminent evacuation of civilians and opposition fighters from east Aleppo in Syria has been reached. "An agreement has been reached for the evacuation of the residents of Aleppo, civilians and fighters with their light weapons, from the besieged districts of east Aleppo," said Yasser Al-Youssef from the political office of the key Nurreddin Al-Zinki group. He said the deal was "sponsored by Russia and Turkey" and would be implemented "within hours". — Agencies

LAST HOPE FOR ANTI-TRUMP CAMP IS ELECTORAL...

Continued from Page 1

It is lonely out there for these naysayers. But at least one Republican elector, Chris Suprun of Texas, has said that he cannot vote for Trump, arguing among other things that the Republican tycoon is not qualified for the job. Democrats are complaining about the electoral college system but the Republicans are not listening.

Origins

The process is enshrined in the US Constitution of 1787. America's founding fathers saw it as a reasonable compromise between electing presidents through a direct popular vote - which would favor candidates from states with large populations - and having Congress do the choosing, which was seen as not very democratic. The Constitution lets states decide how to choose their electors. In the beginning, state legislatures designated them and it would be decades before it became voters themselves who chose these people.

Reform attempts fail

Reforms have been proposed many times - especially from the late 1940s through 1979, according to a con-

gressional report, but every time, they failed. Trump himself called the system a mess in 2012, but after he won, he said it was "genius". After Clinton lost, a bill was proposed - by a female Democratic senator - to simply do away with the electoral college. It has zero chance of passage.

The most solid movement for change circumvents the daunting task of amending the constitution and would instead create a coalition of states that agree to allocate their electoral votes to the winner of the nationwide popular vote. This initiative is called the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact. So far, 11 states representing 165 electoral votes have adopted this arrangement. They are still far from the 270 needed for the reform to become a reality.

On Monday, 10 electors found another reason to perhaps not vote for Trump: A CIA finding that Russian hacking of US institutions and people during the White House race was aimed specifically at hurting Clinton and therefore helping him win. "If there is serious interference in our election from a foreign state that impacted the election, that is something that the electors should know and on the basis of that information, vote their conscience," one of them, Clay Pell of Rhode Island, said. — AFP

TRUMP TAPS EXXON CHIEF AS TOP DIPLOMAT

Continued from Page 1

Tillerson "will be a forceful and clear-eyed advocate for America's vital national interests, and help reverse years of misguided foreign policies and actions that have weakened America's security and standing in the world," Trump said. As ExxonMobil CEO, Tillerson - who has spent his entire professional life at the company, joining in 1975 - was a vocal opponent of sanctions on Moscow that thwarted his attempt to strike huge oil deals in the Russian Arctic.

In 2013, Tillerson was awarded Russia's Order of Friendship by President Vladimir Putin. A senior Kremlin aide said Putin and other Russians have "good, business-like relations" with Tillerson and praised him as a "very solid figure". As ExxonMobil's president and chief executive, the 64-year-old Texan oversees the company's business activities in more than 50 countries. Appointed CEO in 2006, he was due to retire in March. "Rex knows how to manage a global enterprise, which is crucial to running a successful State Department, and his relationships with leaders all over the world are second to none," Trump said.

Tillerson - who has no formal foreign policy background - is nevertheless sure to face sharp questions in the Senate confirmation hearings, including from within the Republican party. Senior Republican Senator John McCain has said Tillerson's ties to Putin are "a matter of concern". "Vladimir Putin is a thug, bully and a murderer, and anybody else who describes him as anything else is lying," McCain said before the nomination was formalized.

Senator Marco Rubio, who fought Trump for the Republican White House nomination, tweeted: "Being a 'friend of Vladimir' is not an attribute I am hoping for from a #SecretaryofState". Leading senators - including McCain - on Monday threw their backing behind a congressional probe into US intelligence assessments on Russia election interference, putting top Republicans on a collision course with Trump.

The president-elect has dismissed the intelligence reports about Russian interference as "ridiculous", defying an increasing number of senators from his own party, as well as top Democrats, the Central Intelligence Agency and the outgoing White House. Tillerson bested eight or

nine contenders for the job of secretary of state, including former CIA director David Petraeus, former UN ambassador John Bolton, Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker and erstwhile Trump critic and former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney.

Former US secretary of state Condoleezza Rice and former defense secretary Bob Gates, who have done consultancy work for ExxonMobil, praised the choice. "He will bring to the post remarkable and broad international experience; a deep understanding of the global economy; and a belief in America's special role in the world," Rice said. Outgoing Secretary of State John Kerry congratulated Tillerson and said the State Department would provide "full support for a smooth transition".

Trump's secretary of state will be tasked with overseeing international relations for a president intent on trashing protocol and upending relationships built on decades of delicate diplomacy. Beyond thorny ties with Russia, Sino-US relations are strained after a series of moves by Trump that provoked China, the world's second-largest economy. Trump raised eyebrows by taking a congratulatory call from the president of Taiwan, a self-ruling island that Beijing considers to be part of its territory awaiting reunification.

The president-elect is also courting controversy over the state of his real estate empire. Critics argue that it would be an unprecedented ethical conflict for Trump to maintain interest in properties spanning the globe - investments that rely partly on goodwill from foreign governments and regulators. Trump postponed a press conference originally set for Thursday at which he was to unveil his plans for separating himself from his global business dealings, instead taking to Twitter.

"No new deals will be done during my term(s) in office," he said late Monday, adding that he would leave his businesses before January 20 and that his two adult sons, Don and Eric, would manage his companies. With Tillerson's nomination, Trump is wrapping up the process of building a cabinet. Multiple reports say he has chosen former Texas governor Rick Perry to be energy secretary. He greeted the usual stream of officials at Trump Tower yesterday - along with rapper Kanye West. The president-elect said the unusual pair discussed "life". — AFP

OPPOSITION MPs URGE GULF TO ACT OVER...

Continued from Page 1

But Shiite MP Khaled Al-Shatti rejected calls to stage a demo outside the Russian embassy or hold a parliamentary meeting, saying that Syrian people should be congratulated instead for the liberation of Aleppo from "terrorists".

Meanwhile, opposition MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said he has started collecting signatures of lawmakers to hold a special Assembly session on Jan 10 to discuss the controversial economic reform package. He said many points in the package need to be explained. The package was strongly criticized by a majority of MPs during the election campaign.

In a related development, several pro-government MPs, many of whom were members of the previous

house, proposed a draft law to ban the government from raising the price of services or commodities without the prior approval of the Assembly. Dallal meanwhile said that a majority of MPs support the amendment of the one-vote election system. Also, MP Khalil Al-Saleh submitted a proposal calling on all expatriates who come to Kuwait as visitors to have medical insurance that covers the duration of their visit.

Separately, the constitutional court set Dec 25 to look into the election petitions in the first, second and third electoral constituencies. It also set Dec 26 and 27 to look into similar petitions for the fourth and fifth constituencies respectively. The court will likely set other dates to either hear arguments or issue its verdicts. The process is likely to take several months.



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P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.
E MAIL : info@kuwaittimes.net
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Focus

WILL OIL CUT HAVE
LASTING IMPACT?

It seems like a big deal. But the joint production cut from OPEC and non-OPEC countries - the first in 15 years - might push up the price of oil less than the nations involved are banking on. At over \$50 a barrel, oil prices remained buoyant and well above recent norms on Monday, reflecting the cutbacks to production agreed to this weekend - and with reason. Less than two weeks after members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting countries agreed to pare 1.2 million barrels a day of their production, they were joined by nearly a dozen outsiders Saturday who pledged an addition daily 558,000-barrel cut.

On Monday, the price of US benchmark crude rose \$1.33, or 2.6 percent, to settle at \$52.83 per barrel in New York. The price of Brent crude, the international standard, rose \$1.36, or 2.5 percent, to finish at \$55.69 a barrel in London. The OPEC cutback alone would have been noteworthy as the first time in eight years the cartel was able to agree on such a move. That, the additional reduction by other 11 nations, and Saudi Arabia's pledge to cut its production even further if needed, is leaving even hardnosed analysts impressed.

Jason Schenker of Prestige Economics calls Saturday's decision "a historic deal," and there is little doubt that in the short term the combined cut will result in somewhat more pricey oil - and, by extension, car fuel, heating and electricity. But the upward trend might soon peter out, leaving prices well short of the highs of around \$100 a barrel last seen two years ago. President-elect Donald Trump has promised to free up more oil drilling in the US, which would increase global supply. More US shale oil, which was unprofitable to produce at the price lows around \$35 a barrel touched earlier this year, could become viable again, further increasing supply.

And demand is not expected to rise strongly, as the world economy struggles. China's economy, with its massive, energy-hungry manufacturing sector, is slowing. And Europe's economy, a net importer of oil and gas, is stagnant. Compliance is also an issue.

Compliance

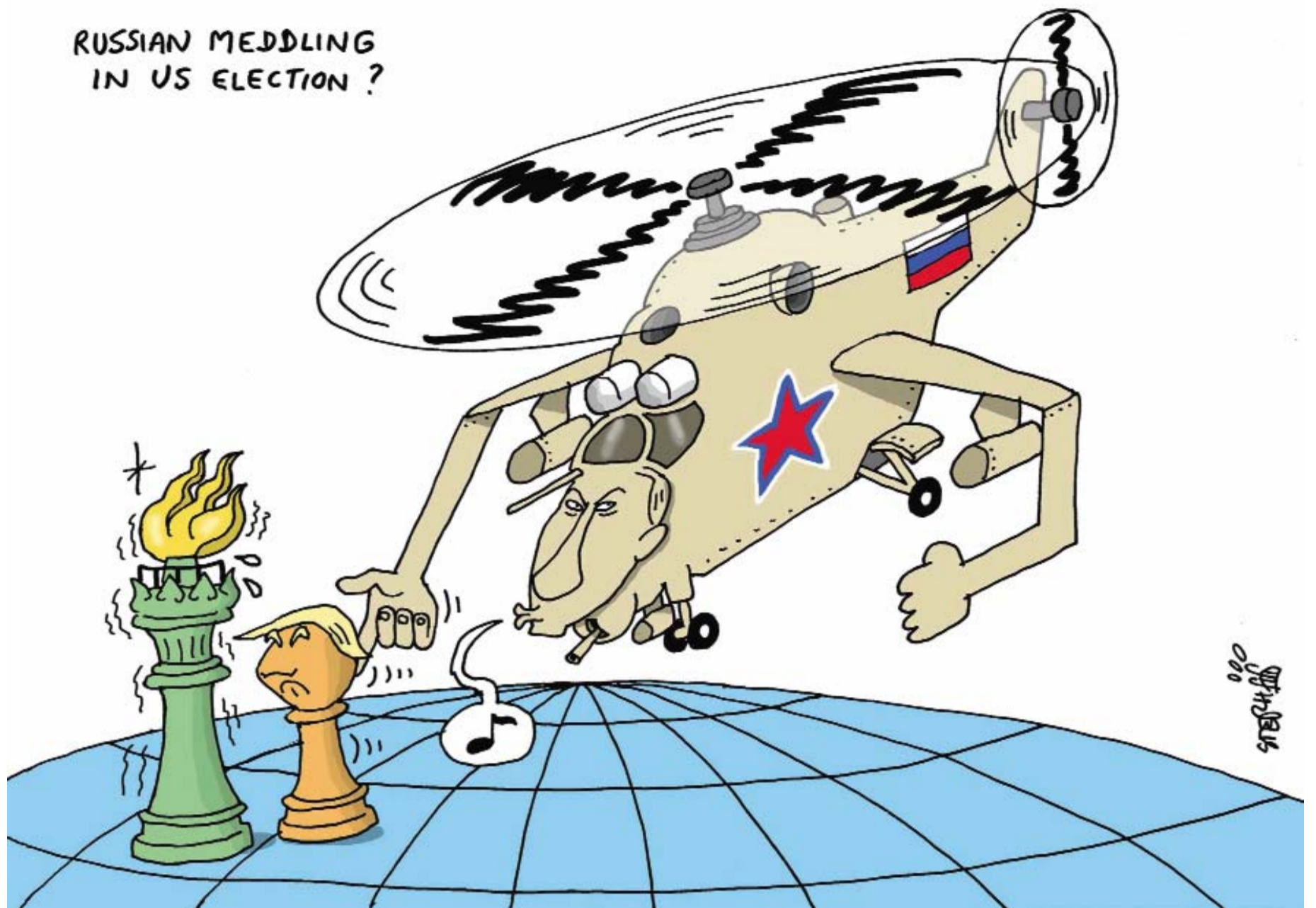
Past OPEC attempts to reduce output and push prices upward have failed due to members pumping above their quotas. That contributed to the worldwide glut that combined with feeble economies of consuming countries to bring down prices to as low as \$35 early this year. And outside OPEC, some of the cutbacks will be difficult to verify, leaving no choice but to take the word of the country involved that it is fulfilling its pledge.

Noting such big ifs, analysts at German bank Commerzbank, in a research note said "we remain skeptical ... despite talk of this being a 'historic demonstration of unity'." "This is because we are convinced that the expectations relating to voluntary production cuts, which have been driven to excessively high levels in recent weeks by oil producers, cannot be fulfilled." The pacing of the cuts also could dent producers' hopes that enough crude will be withdrawn in real time to push prices significantly higher in the long run.

Russia has said it will cut daily output by 300,000 barrels. But it plans to dribble out its share of the reduction over the coming months and JBC Energy said in a research note that the strategy will translate into a drop of only 80,000 Russian barrels for the first half of next year. So, while prices are up, hopes may soon be down for the 22 nations involved that their deal will result in a return to sustained high prices - and some analysts are hedging their bets. "Historic agreement or historic bluff?" asked Commerzbank in its note Monday. — AP



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RUSSIAN MEDDLING
IN US ELECTION ?

REX TILLERSON: OILMAN WITH TIES TO PUTIN

Rex Tillerson, the ExxonMobil chief picked to head the US State Department, has built close ties with leaders around the globe, but most notably - and controversially - with Russia's Vladimir Putin. Trained as an engineer, the silver-haired oilman is 64 and has never worked in government, but his global deal-making experience could be an asset in defending US interests. His close relationship with Putin likely was key to President-elect Donald Trump's choice. Trump is keen to improve ties with Russia which soured greatly when Russia annexed Crimea in 2014.

But it also will be a key point of contention when Tillerson comes up for confirmation by the Senate, against the backdrop of US intelligence indicating that Russia interfered to try to sway the US election for Trump. The ExxonMobil chief "has had more interactive time with Vladimir Putin than probably any other American with the exception of Henry Kissinger," said John Hamre of the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS). Tillerson is a CSIS trustee.

And if Trump sees Tillerson as dynamic and able to get results, critics from Republican John McCain to environmentalists have a long list of concerns and doubts, including putting an oilman in charge of the US role in global climate change accords. McCain has said that Tillerson's close ties to Putin were "a matter of concern." "I'd have to examine it," he said, adding: "Vladimir Putin is a thug, bully and a murderer, and anybody else who describes him as anything else is lying."

Russia's Order of Friendship

Tillerson and Putin met in the 1990s when the oilman supervised an Exxon project on Sakhalin Island and strengthened their ties when Putin took power after Boris Yeltsin resigned in Dec 1999. Their "friendship" was crowned by a historic agreement Exxon signed in 2011 with Russian public energy giant Rosneft to explore and drill in the Arctic and Siberia. The deal, at first valued at \$3.2 billion, could potentially generate a hefty \$500 billion depending on oil discoveries - but has been put on hold by Western sanctions against Russia.

Tillerson, who was awarded the Order of Friendship by Putin in 2012, lashed out against the sanctions at a shareholders meeting in 2014. "We always encourage the people who are making those decisions to consider the very broad collateral damage of who are they really harming with sanctions," he said.

Foreign Policy Goals?

Born in Wichita Falls, Texas, Rex Tillerson has spent his

entire career at Exxon, which he joined in 1975. Appointed CEO in 2006, he was due to retire in March. His views on foreign policy are little known, aside from the fact he is a proponent of free trade. Among the key issues awaiting him as secretary of state, he would oversee the Iranian nuclear deal. Trump has said he wants to review the 2015 accord struck between Iran and the United States, China, Russia, Germany, France and Britain. He also will handle sanctions against Russia, rows with China and the protracted Syrian conflict.

His action on climate change will be closely scrutinized, after he resisted cutting investment in the search for new oil wells. Several US states including New York, supported by environmental activists, are suing the oil giant for allegedly deceiving the public about the role of

fossil fuels in global warming. His nomination is "unfathomable," says environmental group 350.org. "We cannot let Mr. Trump name the world's largest oil company in charge of our international climate policy. Mr Tillerson may be a friend of Mr Putin, but he is not a friend of the planet," the NGO argued, offering an online a petition against his confirmation.

Tillerson did come out in favor of a carbon tax in 2009, which his predecessor Lee Raymond fought. His position as a shareholder of Exxon, in which he holds \$150 million in shares according to stock exchange documents, could pose a conflict of interest since his decisions as top US diplomat could influence the share price. And if sanctions on Russia were dropped, the ExxonMobil share value likely would soar. — AFP



In this June 15, 2012 file photo, Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and ExxonMobil CEO Rex Tillerson shake hands at a signing ceremony of an agreement between state-controlled Russian oil company Rosneft and ExxonMobil at the Black Sea port of Tuapse, southern Russia. — AP

VCS GROWING WARY OF ON-DEMAND DELIVERY

Michael Moritz - chairman of SequoiaCapital and one of the most successful venture capitalists in history - says a simple vision led him to invest hundreds of millions of dollars in on-demand delivery startups. "The movement of goods and services and people, by easier, more convenient means," he said in an interview. "That's a huge trend, enabled by smartphones."

Led by Sequoia and another blue-chip Silicon Valley firm - Kleiner Perkins Caufield & Byers - venture investors have poured at least \$9 billion into 125 on-demand delivery companies over the past decade, including \$2.5 billion this year, according to a Reuters analysis of publicly available data. But that torrent of money has slowed to a relative trickle in the last half of this year, and many VCs have lost faith in a sector that once seemed like the obvious extension of the success of ride-services juggernauts such as Uber.

The bulk of this year's investment - about \$1.9 billion - came in the first half of the year. Only \$50 million has been invested so far in the fourth quarter, the Reuters analysis found. Several prominent Silicon Valley venture capitalists said in interviews that they now believe many delivery startups could fail, leaving investors with big losses. "We looked at the entire industry and passed," said Ben Narasin, of Canvas Ventures. "There is more likely to be a big, private equity-style roll up than a venture-style outcome."

Reuters analyzed investment in on-demand delivery startups using publicly available data from the companies, their

backers and third-party websites including Crunchbase, PitchBook and MatterMark. The analysis likely missed some investments because private firms and their investors do not always disclose funding details. Delivery startups continue to grapple with fierce competition, thin margins and a host of operating challenges that have defied easy solutions or economies of scale, venture capitalists told Reuters. Widespread discounting and artificially low consumer prices have made on-demand delivery "a race to the bottom," said Kleiner Perkins partner Brook Porter in an interview.

That firm has not invested as heavily or broadly in the sector as Sequoia, but has backed US startups DoorDash and Instacart and China-based Meican. This year has seen high-profile failures, including US meal delivery firm SpoonRocket, which went down in March, and PepperTap, an Indian grocery delivery service backed by Sequoia that folded in April. DoorDash, another of Moritz's investments, was able to close its latest venture funding round last March only by cutting the value of its share price by 16 percent, according to data from CB Insights.

The entry of Uber last year into the delivery business with UberEats, for food, and UberRush, for packages, promises to make life more difficult for smaller startups. Established logistics companies including Amazon and DHL are also exploring local on-demand delivery. Sequoia has backed at least 14 local delivery firms, among them four in the United States, five in China and four in India. Sequoia did not respond to Reuters requests for a response

to rising VC skepticism of delivery firms.

Venky Ganesan, of Menlo Ventures, said the sector has no clear way to cut costs or boost revenue. "You can't raise prices on consumers, and you can't cut labor costs," he said. "The core unit economics didn't make sense." Dalton Caldwell, a partner at Y Combinator - the prestigious tech incubator that birthed a number of delivery startups - was also skeptical, though he thought companies with top-notch operational capabilities could succeed. Many delivery startups, he said, "make the assumption that once you get bigger, things will get easier, and that's wrong. There is driver churn, operations people that cost money, more support costs."

Local Delivery 'Dashers'

DoorDash, founded in 2013 by four students in a Stanford University dorm room, has raised nearly \$200 million from top venture firms. Focusing on food and alcohol delivery, DoorDash has agreements with local restaurants, including franchised outlets, in dozens of cities in the US and Canada. But DoorDash still has to figure out comparatively simple challenges - like how to economically deliver pizzas to the fifth floor of a college dorm with no easy street access. "There is an opportunity to redefine local commerce in cities," says DoorDash co-founder Stanley Tang. "But we have to figure out, what are the operational challenges, and then how we can scale it up."

Deliv, a same-day small-package service aimed at online shoppers, uses a model similar to Uber's, with contractor drivers delivering packages. The company has venture

investors and has also lured funds from United Parcel Service and some of the largest US mail owners and operators, including Taubman Centers and Simon Property Group. Founder and CEO Daphne Carmeli says that because Deliv does not maintain warehouses or a vehicle fleet, traditional couriers such as FedEx would be "challenged" to match the startup's low costs.

Uber, however, doesn't face those same challenges. The company has not said how much it has invested in UberEats or UberRush, or whether either turns a profit, and a spokesman declined to comment on those businesses. But Uber does turn a profit on rides services in many cities across the globe and has amassed a war chest of \$15 billion, providing ample resources to expand into delivery. Carmeli is sanguine about the Uber challenge. "Moving people is fundamentally different from moving packages," she said. "Predictability trumps speed."

Robots to the Rescue?

Silicon Valley veterans have long recognized the difficulty in the local delivery business. The online grocery firm Webvan and the urban delivery company Kozmo were two of the highest-profile flops in the late-1990s dot-com boom. Technology was supposed to make things different this time, and smartphone apps that connect customers with fleets of independent drivers have helped. But the technology that some believe could transform the sector - driverless vehicles and sidewalk robots - remains far from a practical reality, leaving many startups with no clear path to innovate their way to profitability anytime soon. — Reuters

PARDEW BIDS TO SHORE UP PALACE DEFENCE

LONDON: Crystal Palace are conceding too many goals in the Premier League and must tighten up the defensive side of their game, manager Alan Pardew said yesterday. Despite scoring an impressive 27 goals in 15 league matches, Palace's efforts have been undermined by a leaky rearguard which has kept only one clean sheet and conceded 29 goals. "Ten goals in three games but we need to tighten up, Southampton (a 3-0 win on Dec. 3) was the benchmark," Pardew told reporters. "Defending is a team duty. Everyone has a responsibility to defend, even the substitutes. That's something we want to improve on. Sometimes our substitutes haven't shored us up as well as they should have. "We were pleased with how we defended set-pieces at the weekend, that's one little box ticked. Now we need to get back to Southampton." — Reuters

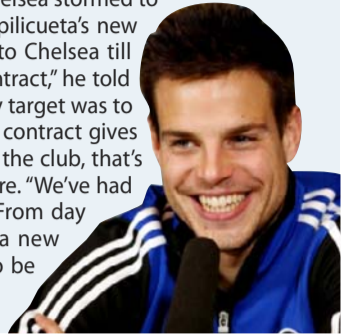


JAGUARS, DOLPHINS, BROWNS TO HOST 2017 LONDON GAMES

LONDON: The Jaguars, Dolphins, Browns and Rams will be the home teams for next season's NFL games in London. The Baltimore Ravens will play Jacksonville in either Week 3 or 4 of the 2017 schedule. That game will be at Wembley Stadium, as will the New Orleans Saints vs. Miami, again in one of those weeks. Cleveland will host the Minnesota Vikings at Twickenham, where the NFL first played this year, in Week 7 or 8. The Arizona Cardinals take on Los Angeles at Twickenham in one of those weeks as well. "Having one of the most famous fan groups in the NFL, Cleveland's Dawg Pound, sharing Twickenham with our UK fans is going to be a lot of fun," NFL UK managing director Alistair Kirkwood said in a statement. It's the first time the league will play four games in London. Game times have not been finalized. Arizona, Baltimore and Cleveland will play regular-season games for the first time in London, bringing the total to 26 different teams since the NFL started playing in the British capital in 2007. It will be the fourth match there for the Dolphins, second for the Saints and the fifth for the Jaguars, who have played annually in London since 2013. — AP

AZPILICUETA SIGNS NEW CHELSEA CONTRACT

LONDON: Spanish international defender Cesar Azpilicueta says he is delighted to have signed a new three-and-a-half year deal with Premier League leaders Chelsea. The 27-year-old signed from French side Marseille in 2012 and was a pivotal member of the team that won the 2015 league title. In the current campaign under Antonio Conte he has been an ever present as Chelsea stormed to the top of the table with a run of nine wins. Azpilicueta's new deal, which he signed on Tuesday, will tie him to Chelsea till 2020. "I'm really happy to have signed a new contract," he told the club's official website. "Since I arrived here my target was to progress as a player and win trophies. "This new contract gives me the chance to continue my relationship with the club, that's what I wanted and obviously I'm really happy here. "We've had some really good moments so far this season. From day one, we started working very hard. "We have a new manager with new ideas and I'm really happy to be working with him." — AFP



COETZEE'S FUTURE TO BE DECIDED IN JANUARY

CAPE TOWN: The future of beleaguered Springbok coach Allister Coetzee will be revealed in January after he submitted a review of his team's dismal 2016 season to South Africa Rugby's Springbok Steering Committee yesterday. Coetzee and senior players, outgoing captain Adriaan Strauss, Pat Lambie and Tendai Mtawarira, gave their analysis of the worst year in Bok history in which the twice World Cup winners lost eight of their 12 tests. The panel included SA Rugby's High Performance Committee, as well as CEO Jurie Roux and president Mark Alexander, and the latter suggested there would be no snap decisions on Coetzee's future.

"We know Springbok supporters and our partners are looking to us for instant answers and many of them may want to see heads roll," Alexander said in a statement.

"But building winning teams is not an exact science and we want to make sure that the changes we make are the right solutions to our current problems.

"This was not a witch hunt but a proper process to interrogate where things went

wrong with a focus on finding answers and ensuring that it does not happen again." Alexander added that the review will continue in the New Year.

"We will act upon whatever interventions are identified as being necessary by all involved," he said. "I would expect that process to be completed before the end of January." There has been an outcry from fans over South Africa's performances this year, including a first ever loss to Italy, a first home defeat by Ireland, a maiden loss in Argentina and a record 57-15 mauling by arch-rivals New Zealand. The results have sparked a comprehensive review of the way the game is administered in the country, with SA Rugby also announcing last week that squad selection will no longer be made by committee.

A single selector will work with the coach. The choice of future Bok coaches will also be made by SA Rugby's Executive Committee, not the heads of the various unions as happened in the past. South Africa next play in a home three-test series against France in June. — Reuters



Kuwait National Women's Cricket team

KUWAIT NATIONAL WOMEN'S CRICKET TEAM TO PARTICIPATE IN T20 TOURNAMENT

KUWAIT: Kuwait National Women's Cricket team is going to participate in the first ever nine-day UAE International Women's T20 tournament from today (Dec 14) in Sharjah.

Kuwait, Kenya, Uganda, Malaysia, Qatar, Oman and host UAE are among the participating teams. The inaugural event where the tournament's first pool games will be played at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium on December 14. Pool games will then alternate between Sharjah Cricket Stadium and Ajman Cricket Council's Eden Ground through to the finals. The finals to

be played on December 19 at the Sharjah Cricket Ground.

This tournament is integral in Kuwait cricket's efforts to develop and support women's cricket in the Kuwait, which dovetails into the International Cricket Council's development program. This tournament will help improve cricketing standards among women in the Kuwait and the GCC countries.

Group A includes: Kenya, Qatar, Malaysia and the UAE, with Group B showcasing Kuwait,

Oman and Uganda.

Kuwait Cricket recently announced the team that will represent Kuwait at the tournament are as follows.

Maryam Omar (Captain), Amna Sharif, Priyada Murli, Khadija Khalil, Varshini Suresh, Maryam Hayder, Maryam Ashraf, Maria Jasvi, Iqra Ishaq, Madeeha, Kala, Amina, Maryam Rashteen, Rida Zanab, Shaikha Al-Khasti.

Reserves: Mahnoor Mahmood, Maryam Khalil.

Coach: Tariq Rasool.
Manager: Mehboob Khan.



Allister Coetzee

SOLOMONA COMPLETES CONTROVERSIAL SWITCH TO SALE

LONDON: English Premiership side Sale acted honourably in signing Super League record try-scorer Denny Solomon on their director of rugby claimed yesterday, despite Castleford Tigers threatening legal action.

The 23-year-old New Zealand-born wing signed a three year contract with Sale after the Samoan international 'resigned' with two years remaining on his contract at Castleford. Solomon-who last season scored 40 tries, breaking Lesley Vainikolo's 12-year-old record for a Super League season-is likely to make his debut in the European Champions Cup pool game with title holders Saracens on Sunday. Steve Diamond, Sale's director of rugby, defended the club's signing of Solomon saying he knew of two other rugby union clubs who had been offered his services. "We've never wanted to go down the route of getting into any legal battles," said Diamond.

"We just wanted the deal done and I'm sure the powers that be are getting on with that as we speak. "I don't think we've done anything wrong at all to be perfectly honest. "Players have agents and agents put players up on the market place. "There were two other rugby union clubs that I know of who were in the market to sign Denny

Solomona. "We've just got to bite our lip and get on with it and be candid. We've got nothing to hide." Diamond, whose side are presently third from bottom of the English Premiership after 10 matches, said Castleford would have lost Solomon a whatever had happened as he was determined to switch codes.

"He said he wanted to play the game he grew up with," said Diamond. "If it wasn't a club in England, he was going to go back to Auckland. "In all honesty, the situation has been blown out of proportion.

"These things happen in sport every week where players move around. It's behaving professional and getting it done." Diamond is positively purring at the thought of the impact Solomon will have.

"He is a great player," said Diamond. "He has an eye for scoring tries and has the added bonus of having played rugby union in his time at school and college."

Solomona, who played rugby union for Melbourne Academy but was released by Melbourne Storm prompting his decision to try rugby league, is the second rugby league star to join Sale in recent weeks with fellow winger Josh Charnley signing from Super League title winners Wigan. — AFP



SOPOT: In this Friday, March 7, 2014 file photo athletes run in a Men's 400m heat during the Athletics World Indoor Championships in Sopot, Poland. The IAAF says it may reanalyze Russian doping samples from the 2014 world indoor track championships. — AP

IAAF TO LOOK INTO 2014 WORLD INDOORS FOR RUSSIAN DOPING

MOSCOW: The IAAF may reanalyze Russian samples from the 2014 world indoor track championships over suspicions that athletes who failed doping tests were allowed to compete.

Messages between then-Moscow laboratory director Grigory Rodchenkov and Sports Ministry official Alexei Velikodny, released on Friday as part of World Anti-Doping Agency investigator Richard McLaren's report into Russian doping, show eight athletes gave suspicious samples the week before they were to travel to the competition in Sopot, Poland.

The samples collected at the national training base near Moscow included three with unusually high testosterone levels, four containing the anabolic agent ostarine, and one containing both ostarine and the banned steroid turinabol.

All were given "save" orders by Velikodny - the command which meant a suspicious sample should be recorded as clean. Rodchenkov, however, responded that some cases would have to be reported positive.

Rodchenkov asked for one sample with a "big" ostarine reading to be given a "quarantine"

order, typically meaning it would be treated as a usual disciplinary case, though whether that happened is not documented elsewhere in the McLaren report files.

The fate of another case with a large ostarine reading is unclear, though the details given appear to match with Svetlana Biryukova, a long jumper who was removed from the team shortly before the championships and later banned for two years. Biryukova was the favorite for gold in the long jump and had set the best indoor result of the year. The identities of the remaining six given "save" orders are unclear, but the events listed for them include some in which Russia won medals in Sopot. It is not clear whether any ever faced disciplinary action.

"We are going through the names we have been given by Prof. McLaren's team and where we have samples from the relevant period we will reanalyze," the IAAF said Tuesday in an emailed statement. Russian officials have not disputed the authenticity of the emails in the McLaren report. Neither Rodchenkov nor Velikodny could be reached for comment. Russia

sent a strong team to the 2014 world indoors, winning three gold and two silver medals to place second behind the United States in the medals table. The IAAF banned Russia from all international competition in November 2015 after an earlier WADA-commissioned report into the Russian track team alleged widespread drug use and extortion. That ban remains in effect and led to Russia being able to field only one track athlete at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

However, in recent months, Russian track officials have said the country could send competitors to the European indoor championships in Belgrade in March if they apply to the IAAF as individuals rather than as representatives of the suspended federation.

"As to competing internationally, the IAAF taskforce was very clear in its last report that Russia still has not met the criteria established for their readmission to membership of the IAAF," the IAAF said yesterday. "There is an existing process whereby athletes can apply ... to participate internationally as independent neutral athletes." — AP



Denny Solomon

AL-HAJIRI CONGRATULATES SHEIKH SALMAN ON REAPPOINTMENT

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait Disabled Sports Club Shafi Al-Hajiri congratulated Information Minister, State Minister for Youth Affairs Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah on his reappointment in the new cabinet. He said Sheikh Salman follows first hand the Youth and Sports Affairs



Sheikh Salman

through being Chairman of Public Authority for Sports and Public Authority for Youth. He also worked on removing all obstacles that Kuwait athletes face particularly the disabled in cooperation with other bodies in Kuwait.

He said this support and continued care the Kuwait Disabled Sports receive from Sheikh Salman had a significant influence in making distinguished results that contributed to hoisting Kuwait flag high in major events, most important of which is athletics player Ahmad Nawa Al-Mutairi's winning the gold medal in Rio Paralympics in September.

Al-Hajiri hoped that fruitful cooperation continues between his club and state ministry for youth affairs to make more achievements in the disabled sports and have Kuwait flag raised high under our wise leadership, headed by HH The Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH The Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

GERMANY OPPOSES BOBSLEIGH WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS BOYCOTT

BERLIN: Germany is against boycotting next year's bobsleigh and skeleton world championships in Sochi in protest against Russian doping but is ready to step in and host the event should it be moved.

Latvia pulled out of the Feb. 13-26 championships following the publication last week of the second part of the McLaren Report into Russian doping which revealed an institutional conspiracy to conceal positive drug tests. South Korea, host nation of the 2018 Winter Olympics, and skeleton athletes from the United States are also considering withdrawing from the championships in protest at Russian doping. "We basically reject a boycott because the biggest loser is always sport itself," German bobsleigh federation (BSV) sports director Thomas Schwab told Reuters yesterday.

"There would be nothing worse than having a world championship where big nations won't be taking part," he added. "But we would be very unhappy if it took place there (Sochi). We have offered the International Bobsleigh Skeleton Federation (IBSF) to jump in and host the event. We would welcome a move of the event to another location." The IBSF could switch the championships from Sochi, host city of the 2014 Winter Olympics, saying last week that it would

"act promptly and decisively following the publication of the final McLaren Report" after reading and digesting it. "The IBSF is having intense talks with Russian organisers," Schwab said.

"We are in contact with the IBSF, they have to check the legal aspects and must also depend on a bit of understanding from the Russians as someone in the end will have to pay it," he added.

"I expect a decision to be made by the end of the week," McLaren's report said analysis of samples from four Russians who won gold medals in Sochi had shown salt readings that were physiologically impossible. There was also evidence of tampering with the samples of 12 Russian medalists at those Games. "We are shocked with what allegedly happened there at Sochi," Schwab said. "We were the first federation that demanded that the anti-doping should be managed by bodies outside Russia."

Spain is also opposing the boycott. "We are awaiting the IBSF's decision," Spanish Ice Sports Federation (FEDH) general secretary Xavier Cherta told Reuters. "Our intention is for our two skeleton athletes, Ander Mirambell and Maria Montejano, to compete." The IBSF declined to comment when contacted by Reuters, saying any information would be published on the organisation's own media channels. — Reuters

RAMS HONEYMOON OVER AS TEAM SLUMPS, COACH FIRED

LOS ANGELES: When the Rams confirmed their return to Los Angeles in January, it seemed like a match made in heaven. The most popular sport in the United States was finally returning to the city after a two-decade absence.

The Rams were ready to rekindle a relationship with the city, after abruptly upping sticks and decamping to St. Louis in 1995.

If Rams fans harbored lingering resentment about the team's acrimonious departure, no one was letting on. Season ticket sales for the 2016-2017 campaign rapidly went through the roof. Excitement built as the team signalled its intent to become a major player by pulling out the stops to land the No. 1 pick in the draft, quarterback Jared Goff.

In August, a record 89,140 fans crowded into Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum to watch the Rams' opening pre-season game against the Dallas Cowboys. It was the largest crowd ever for a pre-season NFL game, and fans basking in the evening sunshine were looking ahead to the new season with optimism. Fast forward four months, and the euphoria which accompanied the Rams' return has long since left the building. On Sunday, the team crashed to a humiliating 42-14 defeat at home to the Atlanta Falcons.

A comically inept performance left fans heading for the exits well before the end, while those who remained booed loudly and called for the dismissal of beleaguered head coach Jeff Fisher.

'AN EMBARRASSMENT'

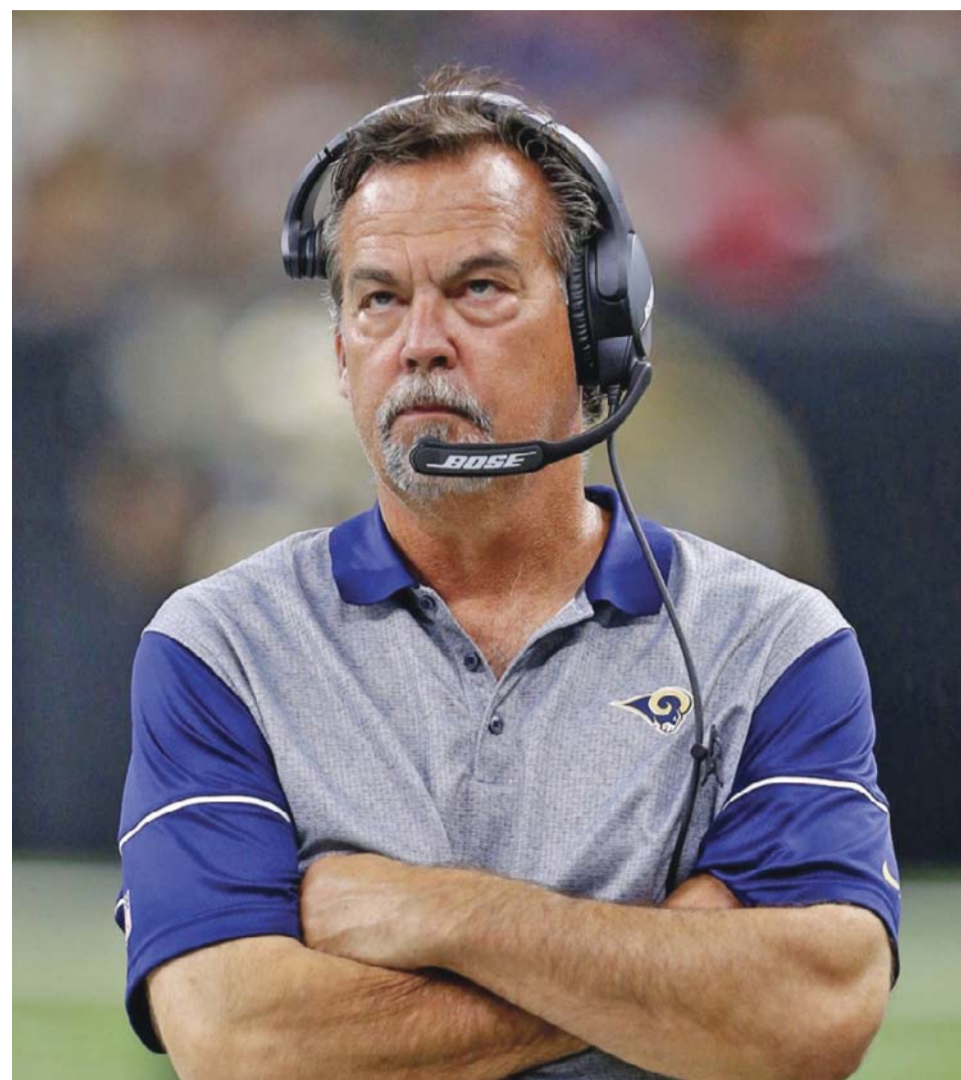
The verdict of Los Angeles Times writer Bill Plaschke was withering. "Against all odds, in a city that embraced them, with fans who loved them, in a stadium that showcases them, the impossible has happened—the return of the Rams has officially become an embarrassment," Plaschke wrote. "A Hollywood reunion that couldn't go wrong has blown up in bits of carpeted red." Todd Gurley, the team's star running back, lambasted what he described as the franchise's "middle school offense."

On Monday, Rams owner Stan Kroenke, the billionaire businessman whose assets also include English Premier League side Arsenal, decided enough was enough.

Fisher was fired in a bombshell move after six years at the franchise, and only two months after signing a contract extension.

"This is the right time to make a change as our performance has not lived up to my or our fans' expectations," Kroenke said.

So what has gone wrong? In a word, everything. The warning signs first started flickering



Head coach Jeff Fisher

when it became clear that Goff, the rookie quarterback, was nowhere near ready to start as signal caller. Instead, the man expected to lead the franchise into a bold new era started the season third in the pecking order.

'RAMS JUNIOR HIGH'

The reluctance of Fisher to promote him fuelled the sense that the Rams had picked unwisely in the draft.

That angst was heightened by the assured performances of Carson Wentz, the Philadelphia Eagles rookie who was overlooked in favour of Goff. A disastrous season opener at the San Francisco 49ers ended in a 28-0 defeat. The Rams bounced back to beat the Seattle Seahawks in their home opener,

and grabbed two more wins to advance to 3-1. But the image of a team on the up was illusory. They lost eight of their next nine games to fall to 4-9.

Along the way Fisher found himself in an embarrassing spat with Rams icon Eric Dickerson, who claimed he had been banned from home games. Last week, Fisher was forced to deny reports of a rift with general manager Les Snead at the team's headquarters, nicknamed "Rams Junior High."

It looked as if Fisher might muddle through to the end of the season. But Sunday's debacle proved the tipping point, leaving Fisher with a 31-45-1 record at the Rams, and with 165 career losses, tied with Dan Reeves for the most defeats in history. — AFP



FOXBORO: Malcolm Mitchell #19 of the New England Patriots is tackled by Lardarius Webb #21 of the Baltimore Ravens during the first half of their game at Gillette Stadium on Monday in Foxboro, Massachusetts. — AFP

BRADY COMES THROUGH AFTER PATS BLOW 20-PT LEAD

BALTIMORE: After the Patriots blew most of a 20-point lead with two special teams flubs, Tom Brady hit a wide-open Chris Hogan with a 79-yard touchdown bomb with 6:18 remaining as New England escaped with a 20-23 victory over the Baltimore Ravens on Monday.

Brady's second touchdown pass of the game was also the 450th of his NFL career, making him the fourth player to hit that mark.

New England led 23-3 in the third quarter before rookie Cyrus Jones had a bouncing punt hit off his foot for a fumble and Matthew Slater dropped a kickoff that allowed Joe Flacco to throw a pair of short touchdown passes.

Baltimore kicker Justin Tucker's 38-yard field goal then made it 23-20 before Brady came through. Flacco took his team to another Tucker field goal (Tucker had one blocked in the first half) with 2:03 left. However, New England's

Patrick Chung recovered the onside kick and the Patriots (11-2) were able to run out the clock.

The Ravens (7-6) dropped a game behind the Pittsburgh Steelers in the AFC North. Brady, 8-1 since returning from his 'Deflategate' suspension, went 25-of-38 for 406 yards, the 76th time Brady has cleared 300 and the ninth time he threw for 400 in a game. He had three touchdown passes and his second interception of the season. LeGarrette Blount (72 yards on 18 carries) tied the club record with his 14th rushing touchdown and also went over the 1,000-yard rushing mark for the second time in his career. He is the Patriots' first 1,000-yard rusher since 2012.

New England's Julian Edelman caught seven passes and Hogan five, the latter finishing with 129 yards for his second career 100-yard game.

New England outgained Baltimore 496 yards to 348. Flacco completed a franchise-record 37

passes—many of them less than five yards—in 52 attempts for 324 yards. He was picked off once.

The New England special teams provided the early story, forcing the Ravens into an eventual safety and blocking a field goal. Ryan Allen's punt was kept out of the end zone by Jonathan Jones and downed by Slater at the one. On the first play, Kenneth Dixon was swallowed up by Malcolm Brown for a safety and it was 2-0.

Later in the quarter, the Ravens lined up for a 34-yard Tucker field goal but Shea McClellin hurdled snapper Morgan Cox and easily blocked the kick. Blount ran for a score and Mitchell caught his fourth touchdown pass in four games to make it 16-0 but Brady's interception throw into the end zone kept things from getting totally out of hand. It got a bit closer when Tucker nailed a 50-yard field goal with 11 seconds left in the half. — Reuters

NFL results/standings

New England 30, Baltimore 23.

American Football Conference						National Football Conference					
AFC East						NFC East					
	W	L	T	OTL	PCT		W	L	T	OTL	PCT
New England	11	2	0	0	.846	Dallas	11	2	0	0	.846
Miami	8	5	0	0	.615	NY Giants	9	4	0	0	.692
Buffalo	6	7	0	0	.462	Washington	7	5	1	0	.577
NY Jets	4	9	0	0	.308	Philadelphia	5	8	0	1	.385
AFC North						NFC North					
Pittsburgh	8	5	0	0	.615	Detroit	9	4	0	0	.692
Baltimore	7	6	0	0	.538	Minnesota	7	6	0	1	.538
Cincinnati	5	7	1	0	.423	Green Bay	7	6	0	0	.538
Cleveland	0	13	0	1	.000	Chicago	3	10	0	0	.231
AFC South						NFC South					
Houston	7	6	0	0	.538	Atlanta	8	5	0	1	.615
Tennessee	7	6	0	0	.538	Tampa Bay	8	5	0	1	.615
Indianapolis	6	7	0	1	.462	New Orleans	5	8	0	0	.385
Jacksonville	2	11	0	0	.154	Carolina	5	8	0	0	.385
AFC West						NFC West					
Kansas City	10	3	0	0	.769	Seattle	8	4	1	0	.654
Oakland	10	3	0	0	.769	Arizona	5	7	1	0	.423
Denver	8	5	0	1	.615	Los Angeles	4	9	0	0	.308
San Diego	5	8	0	1	.385	San Francisco	1	12	0	1	.077

NO GRUDGES AGAINST ARTHUR OVER 'HOMEWORKGATE': KHAWAJA

BRISBANE: Australia batsman Usman Khawaja said yesterday he holds no grudge against Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur over the so-called "homeworkgate" affair ahead of this week's Test series opener against the tourists. Khawaja was one of four players who were banned for one Test for failing to complete a written task set by Arthur when he was

Australia coach during a disastrous tour of India in 2013. Arthur was subsequently fired by Cricket Australia on the eve of the 2013 Ashes after a run of four defeats and replaced by Darren Lehmann. Khawaja said it was "water under the bridge." "I'm not spiteful or vengeful in that sort of respect. Mickey is a very good guy," he told reporters ahead of the day-night

opening Test against Pakistan at the Gabba on Thursday. "I'm not the kind of guy who holds on to grudges. If I get into a fight or I get angry with someone I'm over it (quickly), usually anyway. "I'm sure if I see Mickey there'll be no issues, it'll be fine, everything will be good." Khawaja, who left Pakistan before he was five and is the first Muslim to play for Australia,

said the country of his birth was still "a very big part" of his life, but it would not affect him during the series. "If I broke it down, the way I act and what I do is very Australian, but there's always parts of me—when I talk to my parents I try to speak Urdu with them here and there," he said. "It's not as good as them but they understand what's going on so it is a big part

of my life when I'm with my parents and around my parents." Khawaja heads into the series in top form after his man-of-the-match near-eight hour epic 145 over three days in the first innings of Australia's win over South Africa in Adelaide last month. He has amassed 314 runs at 52.33 in three Tests so far this Australian Test season. — AFP

MAGNIFICENT KOHLI FOLLOWS IN TENDULKAR'S FOOTSTEPS

MUMBAI: India batsman Cheteshwar Pujara could have been forgiven for feeling more than a little aggrieved when his dismissal drew hearty cheers from his home crowd at the Wankhede Stadium on Saturday. Apparently unconcerned that India had lost an important wicket from the second ball of the third day of the fourth test against England, the crowd roared as Pujara trudged back to the dressing room. Then, as a chant of "Koh-liiiii! Kohli!" reverberated around the stadium and out across the Arabian Sea, India's darling walked to the middle to take his guard.

Not since Sachin Tendulkar retired in 2013 has an Indian cricketer commanded the adulation that Virat Kohli is currently enjoying, and few would argue that he is not deserving of it. The atmosphere at the Wankhede was reminiscent of the era when Tendulkar, a Mumbai native, used to walk out to bat at the same number four position.

Kohli, as perhaps he must, dismisses comparison with the batting great but it is clear that they have a similar appetite for runs. During his career-high 235 in Mumbai, his third double century of the year, the Delhi batsman became the first Indian since Rahul Dravid in 2011 to accumulate more than 1,000 test runs in a year.

His rich vein of form has not been restricted to the longest form of the game, however, and he is first batsman to average over 50 in all three formats as well as being the highest international run-scorer of 2016. Kohli's single-minded drive for excellence also echoes Tendulkar, who assiduously refined his craft to accumulate over 34,000 runs and 100 centuries in a 24-year career. Like Tendulkar, Kohli has a near-flawless technique which helps him tackle pace and spin with equal ease and India look to him every time they hit choppy waters, as they did for two decades with the "Little Master". And, like Tendulkar, Kohli is rapidly becoming a darling of corporations keen to associate their brands with a player whose expressive nature has touched a nerve with India's youth.

ENGLAND SETBACK

All was not quite as rosy couple of years back, however. Kohli had made his ODI

debut as a 19-year-old and played his first test three years later, starting on a path that would lead to 15 test hundreds and 26 centuries in the 50-over format. Of his 13 test centuries before the start of the ongoing series, however, only one had come against England, at Nagpur in 2012.

And in the five-test series in England in 2014, Kohli hit a trough, managing only 134 runs at an average of 13.4 with a high score of 39.

"It made me realise what I need to improve in my game so I am pretty thankful to England for that," Kohli recalled at the start of the current series against the English. "I have been a really improved cricketer from then on." After his return from England, Kohli went knocking on Tendulkar's door.

"The best advice was not to read and look up things that are written about me," Kohli told reporters after India took an unassailable 3-0 lead over England on Monday. "I am not joking or being sarcastic, and that was the best advice I have got."

The rewards have come since in a torrent of runs, no more so than over the last four tests where he has scored 640 of them at an average of 128.

CAPTAINCY

One point of difference with Tendulkar is Kohli's success as a captain, a responsibility which hung heavily on the shoulders of the game's most prolific run scorer but has brought out the best in the younger batsman. Before replacing Mahendra Singh Dhoni as test captain at the end of 2014, Kohli averaged just a shade above 41 but since then the number has shot up to 65.5. Five consecutive test series victories for India and a firm grip on the number one test ranking under his leadership have intensified his popularity.

For Kohli, however, burying the ghosts of 2014 in a first series win over England in four attempts was clearly something special. "This series win is probably the sweetest of all we've won in the past 14-15 months," Kohli said.

"It couldn't get any better, in the Wankhede you win 3-0 against a top quality side that has beaten us convincingly. It feels really good." — Reuters



PITTSBURGH: Arizona Coyotes' Lawson Crouse (67) can't get his stick on a rebound off Pittsburgh Penguins goalie Matt Murray (30) in the first period of an NHL hockey game in Pittsburgh, Monday. — AP

CROSBY PICKS UP 21ST GOAL, PENGUINS THROTTLE COYOTES

PITTSBURGH: Sidney Crosby left briefly after taking a stick to the face then returned and picked up his NHL-leading 21st goal as the Pittsburgh Penguins crushed the Arizona Coyotes 7-0 on Monday night.

Bryan Rust, Scott Wilson, Trevor Daley, Phil Kessel, Nick Bonino and Justin Schultz also scored for the Penguins, who won their season-high sixth straight by throttling the struggling Coyotes to celebrate coach Mike Sullivan's first-year on the job in style. Matt Murray finished with 32 saves while picking up his third career shutout.

Arizona's Mike Smith, the lone bright spot for a team with the fewest victories in the league, stopped 18 of 22 shots before being pulled midway through the second period. The Coyotes are 1-4-3 in their last eight games.

BRUINS 2, CANADIENS 1, OT

Ryan Spooner scored in overtime and his goal withstood a video review, lifting Boston over Montreal. Spooner got his goal 3:20 into OT on a partial breakaway off a nice give-and-go with Torey Krug.

Montreal challenged, claiming Spooner was offside, but the goal stood. Austin Czarnik also scored for the Bruins, and Tuukka Rask made 30 saves while Boston handed Montreal a rare home loss.

Paul Byron scored late in the third period to

NHL results/standings

Boston 2, Montreal 1 (OT); Pittsburgh 7, Arizona 0.

Western Conference					Eastern Conference								
Central Division					Atlantic Division								
W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS	W	L	OTL	GF	GA	PTS		
Chicago	18	8	4	81	70	40	Montreal	19	6	4	92	64	42
St. Louis	16	9	4	79	79	36	Ottawa	16	11	2	70	78	34
Minnesota	15	8	4	75	56	34	Boston	16	12	2	71	71	34
Winnipeg	13	16	3	82	96	29	Tampa Bay	14	13	2	81	81	30
Nashville	12	11	4	78	78	28	Florida	13	12	4	70	77	30
Dallas	11	13	6	75	96	28	Detroit	13	12	4	70	77	30
Colorado	11	15	1	60	86	23	Toronto	11	11	5	79	84	27
							Buffalo	10	11	6	56	72	26
Pacific Division					Metropolitan Division								
Anaheim	15	9	5	81	75	35	Pittsburgh	19	7	3	104	84	41
Edmonton	15	11	5	93	85	35	NY Rangers	20	9	1	105	70	41
Calgary	16	13	2	81	86	34	Philadelphia	18	10	3	101	94	39
San Jose	16	11	1	68	61	33	Columbus	17	5	4	87	56	38
Los Angeles	14	11	2	71	70	30	Washington	17	7	3	72	59	37
Vancouver	12	15	2	67	86	26	New Jersey	12	10	6	69	82	30
Arizona	9	14	5	62	90	23	Carolina	11	11	6	69	76	28
							NY Islanders	11	11	5	71	81	27

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

salvage a point for the Canadiens. Carey Price stopped 27 shots in defeat, just his fifth loss in 21 starts this season. David Krejci appeared to give the Bruins a victory 59 seconds into overtime, but officials determined David Pastrnak had interfered with Price. — AP



MUMBAI: This file photo taken on December 11, 2016 shows India's captain Virat Kohli greeting the crowd as he walks back towards the pavilion after his dismissal on the fourth day of the fourth Test cricket match between India and England at the Wankhede stadium in Mumbai. India's Virat Kohli yesterday climbed to a career-best second position in the ICC batting chart after his double-century in Mumbai helped the hosts clinch the five-match Test series against England. — AFP

PAKISTAN FACE BIG TASK TO WIN IN AUSTRALIA

BRISBANE: Pace spearhead Mitchell Starc says Australia plan to inflict a psychological blow on vulnerable Pakistan in today's day-night first Test in Brisbane to set up their three-match series.

The left-armed said Australia, who lost Test series against Sri Lanka and South Africa recently, sense an opportunity to strike with Pakistan struggling for form away from home.

The visitors have never won in 11 series in Australia, dropping their last three series here 3-0 and losing their previous nine Tests Down Under since 1999.

Their recent form in New Zealand on the way to Brisbane does not engender confidence that things will be any different. They were defeated there by hefty margins in both Tests, including an ignominious collapse of nine wickets in the final session of the second Test in Hamilton.

Starc is confident Steve Smith's new-look team, who halted a run of five Test defeats in the third Test against South Africa last month, can press their home advantage at the Gabba where Australia have not lost in 27 Tests stretching back to 1988.

Pakistan have never won in four Brisbane Tests. "They've struggled in New Zealand and probably struggle a little more away from home—they're really comfortable in the UAE (where Pakistan play their home Tests)," Starc said.

"So it's a good opportunity for us in this Test match to assert our dominance first up,

make an impression in the first Test of the series, which goes a long way to working out the final result."

ADDED SPICE

There is added spice to the series with South African Mickey Arthur now in charge of Pakistan three years after he was sacked as Australia coach and replaced by Darren Lehmann. Arthur, who still lives in Perth, faces the huge challenge of not only ending Pakistan's drought in Australia but becoming the first team from the sub-continent to win a Test series here.

He has past form when it comes to plotting series upsets in Australia. In 2008-09 he coached South Africa to a 2-1 victory—the first time any touring team had won a campaign in Australia since the mighty West Indies 16 years earlier.

"For these guys to come here and win would be amazing," Arthur said. "But we are under no illusions. Australia are a fantastic cricket team and, in these conditions, it's going to be very tough for us." Pakistan's big hopes rest with their pace attack led by Wahab Riaz and Mohammad Amir, who is back playing Test cricket after a five-year ban following a spot-fixing controversy in 2010. "He's got great skills, everyone in world cricket knows that," Starc said of Amir. "He bowls at good pace, swings the ball, he's got a fast-arm action and knows his game really well for a young bowler." — AFP



ADELAIDE: This file photo taken on November 27, 2015 shows the sun setting over the Adelaide Oval during the first day-night cricket Test match between Australia and New Zealand in Adelaide. Australia will host England at the Adelaide Oval in the first day-night Ashes Test during the 2017-18 series, building on the success of the concept despite lingering concerns. — AFP

HONG KONG MINNOWS DRAWN WITH GIANTS GUANGZHOU

KUALA LUMPUR: Hong Kong trailblazer Chan Yuen-ting, the first woman coach to win a top-flight men's football title, faces a brutal AFC Champions League initiation after her Eastern SC were bracketed yesterday with Chinese giants Guangzhou Evergrande. Chan will face off in Group G against World Cup-winning Brazilian coach Luiz Felipe Scolari and his Guangzhou side, who will be gunning for their third Champions League title in five years. They are joined in the group by Suwon

Samsung Bluewings of South Korea and a yet-to-be determined Japanese club.

In her debut season, Chan, 28, led Eastern Sports Club to Hong Kong's Premier League title in April for the first time in 21 years. That earned her a Guinness World Record as the first woman coach to win a men's championship title in a top national football league. In a tough Group H, defending Champions League winners Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors were drawn with A-League champions Adelaide United and Jiangsu FC of

China, according to the group-stage draw announced at AFC headquarters in Kuala Lumpur. UAE powerhouse Al Ain, last year's runners-up, will begin their campaign from Group C alongside formidable foes Al Ahli FC of Saudi Arabia, Iran's Zobahan FC, and the winner of a play-off between Qatar's El Jaish SC and FC Bunyodkor from Uzbekistan, the AFC said. The group stage runs from February to May, followed by the knockout phase, with the final set for November of next year.

Group A: Al Ahli FC (UAE), PFC Lokomotiv (UZB), Al Taawoun (KSA), Playoff winner
Group B: Esteghlal Khuzestan FC (IRN), Al Jazira (UAE), Lekhwiyah SC (QAT), Playoff winner
Group C: Al Ahli Saudi FC (KSA), Zobahan FC (IRN), Al Ain FC (UAE), Playoff winner
Group D: Al Rayyan SC (QAT), Al Hilal SFC (KSA), Persepolis FC (IRN), Playoff winner
Group E: Kashima Antlers (JPN),

Muangthong United (THA), Playoff winner, Playoff winner.
Group F: FC Seoul (KOR), Japan 2nd Club (JPN), Western Sydney Wanderers (AUS), Playoff winner
Group G: Guangzhou Evergrande FC (CHN), Suwon Samsung Bluewings (KOR), still-undetermined Japan Club, Eastern SC (HKG)
Group H: Adelaide United (AUS), Jiangsu FC (CHN), Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors FC (KOR), Playoff winner. — AFP

ATLETICO MADRID HITTING LOW POINT UNDER COACH SIMEONE

MADRID: Atletico Madrid is not used to struggling like this, not under coach Diego Simeone. After its third loss in five Spanish league games on Monday, Atletico dropped to sixth place—its worst position at this point in the season since Simeone took charge in 2011.

The 3-0 loss at Villarreal left Atletico 12 points behind leader Real Madrid after 15 matches. It also trails Barcelona, Sevilla, Villarreal and Real Sociedad. "There have been some mistakes," said Simeone, who won the title with Atletico in 2014.

"We accept the criticism. When a team loses two games in a row, things need to improve." Atletico also lost 1-0 at Bayern Munich in the Champions League, a result that snapped the team's perfect record in the European competition. It was held to a disappointing 0-0 draw at home against Espanyol in its previous Spanish league game. One of its recent losses in the league was a demoralizing 3-0 setback against Madrid at home in the city derby.

"The team is trying its best to get in position to win," Simeone said. "But in these last few games we are not having any luck, especially with the scoring chances, and that leads to losses. We have to keep working, because it's the only way we can improve." Atletico has not been worse than third in the league since a fifth-place finish in 2011-12. The club was only 10th after 15 matches that season, but it improved significantly after Simeone took over in December 2011. Atletico was third at the end of the following season and won the league in 2013-14 to end a drought of nearly two decades.

Atletico was third again the last two seasons, and now it has some work to do just

to secure a Champions League spot. "Obviously we have to improve if we want to fight for the spots atop the standings," Atletico captain Gabi Fernandez said.

The letdown comes as a surprise as Atletico entered the season with high expectations. Thanks to a significant increase in income from television rights, Simeone was able to add important pieces to the squad and fans expected Atletico to move even closer to the perennial powerhouses of Barcelona and Madrid.

But Simeone started experimenting with different formations and the team struggled with inconsistency. The squad's offense got a boost but the usually stout defense lost some of its strength. Atletico conceded 11 goals in its last seven league games, and 14 in 15 games, only four goals less than the 18 it conceded in all 38 games in the league last season.

"We have to improve and stop allowing so many goals," Fernandez said. To make things worse for Simeone, he may be without goalkeeper Jan Oblak for a long period because he dislocated his left shoulder in the game against Villarreal, having to be substituted in the 40th minute at El Madrigal Stadium. Defensive midfielder Tiago Mendes also left the game before halftime because of a discomfort in his right knee.

Atletico's next game is Saturday against 10th-place Las Palmas at the Vicente Calderon Stadium. "There is still a lot of league ahead of us," Atletico defender Stefan Savic said. "It's not all lost. Last year Barcelona was 12 points in front and we got to within two at one stage. We are going through a difficult moment but we will rebound." — AP



TURIN: In this Dec. 11, 2016 file photo, Juventus' Gonzalo Higuain celebrates at the end of a Serie A soccer match between Torino and Juventus, in Turin, Italy. — AP

HIGUAIN HITS BACK AT HIS 'FAT' CRITICS IN STYLE

MILAN: Gonzalo Higuain hit back at his 'fat' critics in style, racism isn't a problem for Roma and Palermo are still stuck in the mire. Nikola Kalinic finally found his scoring boots in Florence but grumpy Brazilian sensation Gabiol can't even get a game at Inter.

HIGUAIN ANSWERS FAT APP CRITICS FOR JUVE

Gonzalo Higuain has been criticised throughout his career for missing goal chances and failing to keep his weight down. It reached a peak earlier this year when disgruntled Argentina fans created a smart phone app mocking his appearance, and his tendency to fluff the odd shot. But Higuain is a hard man to keep down. Despite a latest wave of criticism due to a barren spell at Juventus, the Argentina striker was on fire for the Italian champions twice when it mattered most in the past week. 'Pipita' hit a 52nd minute opener in a 2-0 Champions League win over Dinamo Zagreb that secured top spot in Group H. In a Turin derby that may well have gone in Torino's favour, Higuain responded to Andrea Belotti's 16th minute opener with a leveller before the half-hour, and had his third goal in a week when he hit the winner eight minutes from time.

STROOTMAN, AND ROMA LAUGH OFF LULIC RACE ROW

A week after Roma defender Antonio Rudiger was the subject of racist comments by Lazio midfielder Senad Lulic following a bitterly-contested derby, the Giallorossi are laughing the incident off. Lulic was condemned in some quar-

ters for telling a television reporter that Rudiger, "two years ago, was selling socks and belts in Stuttgart and now he thinks he's a phenomenon." Rudiger, who is black, is a Germany international and Dutch teammate Kevin Strootman was the latest member of the Roma family to respond to Lulic's comments with irony. "Antonio wasn't sad, just surprised," Strootman told the Gazzetta dello Sport. "If Lulic thinks like this, I feel sorry for him. If Rudiger really was selling socks and belts two years ago and now he's playing like this for Roma, winning the derby, all I can say is he must be a good worker." Roma won last week's derby 2-0 and beat AC Milan 1-0 on Monday to close to within four points of leaders Juventus.

NEW COACH, SAME PALERMO

Eugenio Corini is Palermo's third coach this season but after two losses in two games he would be forgiven for reading the smallprint on his six-month contract. Club president Maurizio Zamparini brought the 46-year-old Italian on board hoping he can stave off relegation for a second time since the 75-year-old retail tycoon took over the club in 2002. But Corini is already heading in the same direction as predecessors Roberto De Zerbi and Davide Ballardini, the latter lasting only two weeks into the campaign. Under De Zerbi, sacked for an embarrassing exit to second division La Spezia in the Italian Cup, Palermo sunk to a new club record low of seven consecutive defeats. Corini has stretched it to nine after Palermo followed an unlucky, last-gasp defeat to Fiorentina with a 2-0 home reverse to his former club, Chievo.

KALINIC COMES HOME AT LAST

Nikola Kalinic wowed Fiorentina's fan last season with 12 league goals, including a stunning hat-trick in a memorable 4-1 win at Inter Milan that stunned the San Siro. This season, the Croatia international has stood out for scoring all his goals away from home—until Monday, when he redressed the balance in style thanks to a stunning first-half brace in a 2-1 win over Sassuolo that moved Fiorentina up to seventh place. Kalinic, who failed to make an impact at Blackburn Rovers when he moved to the Premier League club in 2009, moved to Fiorentina in 2015 after helping Ukrainian giants Dnipro to the 2015 Europa League final. The 28-year-old Croatia international had hit all six of his goals previous to Monday's brace away from the Artemio Franchi stadium.

GABIGOL SET FOR QUICK RETURN TO BRAZIL?

Bought for 29m euros from FC Santos, Gabriel 'Gabigol' Barbosa was hailed as the next big thing when he arrived at Inter Milan from the former club of Barcelona star Neymar Jr. in the summer. But the love affair is already over, according to his agent Wagner Ribeiro. Gabigol has played 16 minutes, against Bologna, for the Nerazzurri as they look to overcome a disappointing season that has left them in seventh at 15 points off the lead of Juventus. Gabigol is not a happy man and has spoken of a possible return to Brazil, according to reports. "He's not playing, he's played 16 minutes in three months," said Ribeiro. "I will speak with Inter face to face at the start of the year, they paid 30m and now they treat him like this." — AFP



MUMBAI: Mumbai FC's defender Gerson Vieira (C) attempts to head a ball during the Indian Super League (ISL) second leg semi-final football match between Mumbai City FC and Athletic de Kolkata at The Mumbai Football Arena Stadium in Mumbai yesterday. — AFP

AFGHAN BAG SHIRT BOY MEETS HIS IDOL MESSI

DOHA: An Afghan boy who became an internet sensation after pictures of him wearing an improvised Lionel Messi football shirt went viral finally got to meet his superstar idol yesterday. Murtaza Ahmadi met the Barcelona forward in Doha, where the Spanish league champions are due to play a friendly match against Saudi Arabian side Al-Ahli later.

Six-year-old Murtaza, from the rural Ghazni province southwest of Kabul, is also due to walk out onto the pitch with the Argentinian at Doha's Al-Gharafa stadium. "The image the world wanted to see," tweeted Qatar's 2022 World Cup organisers, who brought the pair together. "The six year old boy who dreamed of meeting his hero, #Messi, finally comes true."

A delighted Murtaza said: "I'm very happy to have met my hero. It is a dream for me," according to a statement released by Qatar's

Supreme Committee for Delivery and Legacy, the committee overseeing organisation of the 2022 tournament.

Murtaza became a worldwide online hit earlier this year after he was pictured wearing his hero's shirt, made out of a plastic bag, with the name Messi and the famous number 10 written on it in marker pen. The shirt was made by his teenage brother Homayoun after his neighbour threw away grocery bags.

"I love Messi, he plays really well, and I love the shirt my brother made for me," he told AFP at the time. His family could not afford to buy him a replica kit. Pictures of Murtaza playing football in his improvised kit were first posted on Facebook. After the pictures went viral, Murtaza received a real shirt from his hero. His father, Mohammad Arif Ahmadi, said at the time: "I want my son to become the Messi of Afghanistan." — AFP



DOHA: FC Barcelona Lionel Messi (L) holds the hands of Afghan boy Murtaza Ahmadi on the pitch before the start of a friendly football match against Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli FC yesterday in the Qatari capital Doha. — AFP

ATLETICO'S AGUILAR TO HONOR CHAPECOENSE AT CLUB WCUP

SUITA: Representing South America at the Club World Cup has added significance following the plane crash that killed most of the Chapecoense team, Atletico Nacional defender Felipe Aguilar said yesterday. The Colombian club was to play Chapecoense in the Copa Sudamericana final but the Brazilian team's plane crashed on Nov. 28, killing almost all on board.

The directors of Atletico asked the governing body of South American soccer to award the Copa Sudamericana title to Chapecoense.

"We felt like brothers to the Brazilian team," Aguilar said. "And all of us were very happy to give them the Copa Sudamericana title. It's unfortunate this huge tragedy has occurred. We want to honor the victims and their families by winning this trophy and bringing it home."

Atletico coach Reinaldo Rueda shared the sentiments of his 23-year-old defender. "These past few weeks have no doubt been difficult," Rueda said. "Chapecoense are our brothers. We must win it for them."

Nacional qualified for the Club World Cup by winning the Copa Libertadores in July. They take on Japanese champion Kashima Antlers today.

Kashima has already knocked out Auckland City and Mamelodi Sundowns. "They're a team who play with a lot of intensity," Rueda said. "They're well organized, strong on the counter-attack and they'll give us a very physical game."

The winner of today's semifinal match will likely face European champion Real Madrid in Sunday's final in Yokohama. Madrid faces Mexican team Club America in the other semifinal. European teams have been the most successful in

the tournament, with eight titles, although it is not considered as high on the priority list for European clubs as it is for the South American sides. Atletico Nacional features goalkeeper Franco Armani, who did not concede a single goal during the group stage of the Copa Libertadores,

as well as captain Alexis Henriquez and striker Miguel Borja. "We are representing all the clubs of South America and it is a huge responsibility on our shoulders," Rueda said. "Back in Colombia and even here in Japan many people are supporting us and that give us great energy." — AP



OSAKA: Colombian football team Atletico Nacional player Felipe Aguilar (R) speaks beside head coach Reinaldo Rueda (L) during his team's official press conference for the Club World Cup at the Suita City Football stadium in Osaka yesterday. — AFP

KLOPP EYES BOLSTERING ATTACK NOT POROUS DEFENCE

MIDDLESBROUGH: Jurgen Klopp has dropped his biggest hint yet he is ready to strengthen his Liverpool squad in January but on his freescoring attack and not his error-prone defence. Liverpool travel to Middlesbrough aiming for a first victory in three games to reignite their Premier League title hopes in the wake of a 4-3 defeat at Bournemouth and a 2-2 draw at home to West Ham, which has seen them lose ground to their rivals.

Klopp has recently played down suggestions he will listen to offers for Liverpool's out of favour England international Daniel Sturridge.

The German head coach seems more

intent on keeping Sturridge and bolstering his attacking options when the winter transfer window opens next month, though he warned at the difficulties of bringing in players mid-season.

"The winter transfer market is the most difficult. We are always looking," said Klopp, who will be without the influential Brazilian midfielder Philippe Coutinho for at least another month due to an ankle injury.

"If you look at our bench, we're very experienced in defence, and not offence. If the situation stays like this it is clear we have open eyes." Liverpool enter the latest round of Premier League game six points off leaders Chelsea, having dropped five

points in their last two matches, conceding six goals in the process.

'WE'RE ON A GOOD RUN'

Klopp is set to keep faith with Loris Karius, after hitting back at withering criticism of his goalkeeper's displays in those two games from the television pundits and former Manchester United defenders Gary and Phil Neville. Former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher has also used his position as a TV pundit to hammer Karius, notably after the defeat to Bournemouth. The Liverpool boss will refuse to bow to mounting pressure to drop the 23-year-old, who has largely failed to impress in making 11 appearances since sign-

ing from German side Mainz six months ago for £4.7m. Since beating Watford 6-1 at the start of November, Klopp's side have won only one of their last four league games to raise question marks over their title credentials.

Emre Can is a set to miss out against Middlesbrough with a knee problem, although the German midfielder is expected to be fit for next week's Merseyside derby against Everton. Defender Dejan Lovren, who was forced off with cramp against West Ham at Anfield, is a doubt for the trip to the North-East. Middlesbrough midfielder Adam Forshaw urged his team-mates not to dwell on Sunday's 1-0 defeat at Southampton, which leaves Aitor Karanka's side three

points above the relegation zone.

Boro have won two of their last three home games as they aim to re-establish themselves in the top flight after a seven year absence and can be encouraged by the fact Liverpool are without a win on their last seven visits, a run stretching back to 2002. "We're disappointed with the outcome at Southampton, but it's not something we can dwell on with the games coming thick and fast at this stage of the season," said Forshaw. "We've been playing some decent stuff, and we're on a good run at home. Every game at this level is massive, and we have another exciting opportunity now with Liverpool next up at the Riverside." — AFP

SPURS NEED TO ADAPT TO REVIVE TITLE HOPES: KANE

LONDON: England international striker Harry Kane says teams have worked Tottenham Hotspur out and the Londoners need to adapt if they are to reignite their Premier League title challenge.

Mauricio Pochettino's side have stalled in recent weeks with Sunday's defeat at Manchester United extending a sticky run that has brought just two wins in eight league games. Spurs lie 10 points adrift of leaders Chelsea ahead of their midweek home meeting with struggling Hull City and in desperate need of a lift with the packed holiday programme looming.

Kane. "We have to do the same again and we feel we can beat anyone in this league."

"The two home games coming up are definitely winnable and they are very important to ensure we go into the games ahead with confidence."

Ryan Mason hopes to return to the Hull side to face his former club, with Tom Huddlestone, another member of the Tigers' strong ex-Tottenham contingent, most likely to make way. Mason has struggled to establish himself since his £10m move in August which ended a decade-and-a-half-long association with the London club, for whom he made more than 50 Premier League appearances.

Spurs' title bid ended with them finishing third last season and Kane told the Evening Standard: "People didn't expect us to play so well last year and press so high with such intensity. Now teams are maybe dropping off a bit more, letting us have the ball, and we have to find different solutions to unlock the door. Manchester United made it difficult for us to play out from the back. They made us play more long balls than we are used to playing."

"That was their game plan and it worked." The visit of Hull to White Hart Lane is followed by a home meeting with another struggling side Burnley four days later and anything less than six points from the two games will be a major disappointment.

"Last year December and January were the months when we pushed forward, got good results and moved up the table," said

The 25-year-old has made 11 starts for Hull, scoring twice, but was rested for the 3-3 draw with Crystal Palace, a result which leaves Mike Phelan's side in the relegation zone, a point adrift of safety with only one victory in their last 13 league games.

They go in search of their first away win in the Premier League since they emerged victorious from Swansea almost four months ago. Phelan backed Mason to play a significant role in the second half of the season. "Like any player Ryan will take time to find his feet at a new club," said Phelan. "He's come out of that comfort zone he had at Tottenham, where he was surrounded by excellent players, and has come to a club that was always going to be near the bottom of the table looking upwards." — AFP



Diego Costa

COSTA FILLING VACUUM LEFT BY DROGBA: CAHILL

LONDON: Diego Costa is beginning to have the same impact at Chelsea as Didier Drogba once did, central defender Gary Cahill believes. Costa has come to symbolise the club's transformation under Antonio Conte and ensured the Blues extended their winning streak to nine Premier League games with the winning goal against West Bromwich Albion on Sunday.

That goal, Costa's 12th in 15 league appearances this season, moved Conte's side back three points clear at the head of the table ahead of the midweek trip to face bottom club Sunderland at the Stadium of Light.

made between Costa-who is now in his third season at the club-and the Ivorian.

"Didier was a huge figure goal-scoring wise and also with his personality on and off the pitch," said Cahill. "You need strikers like that and Diego has fitted in nicely. Since he's been at the club he's scored goals but this season he's on fire. Are the fans starting to love him like they loved Didier? Yes of course because he is banging goals in every week. He is winning us matches. At this moment he is right up there among the best in the world. The statistics don't lie."

And the manner in which the Brazil-born Spain striker created and scored an excellent individual goal in the final moments of the game recalled memories of the inspirational Drogba.

The former Ivory Coast international spent nine years at Stamford Bridge, delivering a succession of trophies to the club-including famously scoring the decisive penalty that secured them the Champions League.

Cahill believes there is a comparison to be

FIERY TEMPERAMENT

Costa's talents have been apparent since he arrived at the club while the forward has also developed a reputation for a fiery temperament.

But he has been noticeably more restrained during the club's recent revival, going ten matches without a caution.

"He is not getting as frustrated as he used to. He is channelling (his energy) in the right direction now and is being patient," said Cahill.

"I haven't had to have a word with him about it, I think that's something he has added to his game this season." Conte has no fresh injuries to contend with but may opt to start with Willian ahead of Pedro. Sunderland manager David Moyes has conceded his side need to embark on another run of good form after the 3-0 defeat at Swansea saw them return to the foot of the Premier League table. The Black Cats had won three of their four previous games, but with the bottom six clubs separated by only four points, a similar sequence of victories will boost their bid to pull off a fifth consecutive successful relegation battle.

Certainly they are in a better place formwise than when they failed to win any of their first 10 games. "As a club, we've been in this situation many times before so it's not something that's new to us," said Moyes.

"Those recent three wins in four put us back in with a fighting chance, when a few weeks ago we weren't in with one. We probably need to go on a similar run like that another two or three times this season." — AFP

TOURE BANNED, FINED FOR DRINK DRIVING

LONDON: Ivory Coast football great Yaya Toure has been banned from driving for 18 months and fined £54,000 (\$68,500, 64,600 euros) for drink driving, he said on Facebook yesterday. The 33-year-old Manchester City midfielder insisted though he imbibed the alcohol by accident.

Toure, a four-time African player of the Year and a member of the Ivory Coast side that won the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations, is a Muslim. "Over the last two weeks there has been some confusion as to why I was charged with drink driving, as it is well known that I am a Muslim and do not drink," wrote Toure, who was stopped last month while driving in east London and found to be over the limit.

"I have always refused alcohol. Anyone who knows me or follows football will have seen me refuse champagne for Man of the Match performances because of my commitment to my religion."

Toure, who retired from international

football in September, said the court had also accepted he had not intentionally drunk alcohol but had nevertheless punished him according to the law. Toure did not disclose how the alcohol got into his system.

"The matter has now been resolved in court on Monday," wrote Toure, who only recently returned to first team action with Manchester City after a stand-off with manager Pep Guardiola caused by his agent.

"As I was above the permitted limit when tested on the night, I decided not to challenge the charge. However, it was important to me that I told the court that I had not intentionally consumed alcohol. The judge in his sentencing remarks accepted that I had not been intentionally drinking. Drink driving is a serious crime and even though I was not intentionally consuming alcohol I accept the ban and fine and I would like to apologise for this situation." — AFP



This file photo shows Manchester City's Ivorian midfielder Yaya Toure pictured during the English Premier League football match. Ivory Coast football great Yaya Toure has been banned from driving for 18 months and fined 54,000 GBP (68,500 USD, 64,600 euros) for drink driving, he said on Facebook yesterday. — AFP

MAN CITY SLACKERS MUST SHAPE UP, ADMITS SAGNA

MANCHESTER: Bacary Sagna confesses Manchester City did not give 100 per cent in their 4-2 defeat at Leicester and must show more desire to get their season back on course when they host Watford today.

Pep Guardiola's side have not won a home league game since the middle of September and the Spaniard suddenly finds himself struggling to adapt to life in the Premier League.

Saturday's setback against spluttering champions Leicester was the latest blow for a team that opened the season with 10 consecutive wins in all competitions but now find themselves seven points behind leaders Chelsea.

in all competitions, City's hierarchy insist they will not spend further in the January transfer window. Brazilian forward Gabriel Jesus, signed for £27 million (\$34 million, 32.2 million euros) earlier this year, is scheduled to join the club in the new year and City director of football Txiki Begiristain says he will be the only new arrival.

"We already have done," he said, when asked if City will strengthen. "We have Jesus coming - he will strengthen our attack, so we are happy."

Watford's victory over Everton moved Walter Mazzarri's side up to seventh and the Italian believes the display will provide a timely confidence boost ahead of the trip to Eastlands.

French defender Sagna admits the Leicester embarrassment was unacceptable and he wants to see a positive response. "I'm very disappointed. Even though we scored two goals I can't be pleased with the way we played because we should be performing better," Sagna said.

"No matter who's playing, no matter how many chances we have, we should be able to give 100 per cent and today I don't have the feeling we did. We have to analyse what happened. I don't think we stuck together during the first half. We conceded too many chances and got caught on the break."

"We will be working on it. It was very difficult to play the way we did but in the end we didn't deserve to be ahead."

City's much-criticised defence could be strengthened by the return of Nicolas Otamendi against Watford after a one-match suspension.

But Sergio Aguero and Fernandinho are still serving four and three-game suspensions, respectively, following the recent defeat by Chelsea. And Sagna insisted City's players need to show better collective spirit if they are to avoid a repeat of the Leicester debacle.

"I have told my players we can fight against any of the Premier League teams for the three points but we need to be 100 per cent," he said.

Mazzarri admits he was as surprised as anyone at City's defeat to Leicester but fears the result could work against his own side. "It won't help us because we will find Man City very angry and very concentrated," he said.

"We won't have the luck that they can underestimate us. They won't underestimate us. These things can happen in the Premier League. But Manchester City are a great team and a great manager like Guardiola can change the mistakes they made in these couple of games from one match to another and not commit them any more."

Roberto Pereyra is available again after serving a one-match ban and the Watford playmaker is expected to come straight back into the starting line-up. — AFP

Live		Matches on TV	
		(Local Timings)	
English Premier League		Spanish League 2nd Division	
Middlesbrough v Liverpool	22:45	Levante v Rayo Vallecano	22:45
beIN SPORTS 7 HD		beIN SPORTS 7 HD	
Sunderland v Chelsea	22:45		
beIN SPORTS 2 HD			
West Ham United v Burnley	22:45	French Cup	
beIN SPORTS 5 HD		Girondins de Bordeaux v Nice	20:45
Manchester City v Watford	23:00	beIN SPORTS 9 HD	
beIN SPORTS 1 HD		Paris Saint v Lille	23:05
Tottenham Hotspur v Hull City	23:00	beIN SPORTS 6 HD	
beIN SPORTS 4 HD		Monaco v Stade Rennes	23:05
Stoke City v Southampton	23:00	beIN SPORTS	
beIN SPORTS		Metz v Toulouse	23:05
Crystal Palace v Man United	23:00	beIN SPORTS	
beIN SPORTS 3 HD		Olympique Lyonnais v Guingamp	23:05
W Bromwich Albion v Swansea	23:00	beIN SPORTS	
beIN SPORTS		Saint Etienne v Nancy Lorraine	23:05
		beIN SPORTS	



KUALA LUMPUR: Two men take pictures of a screen displaying the AFC Cup football 2017 official draws for playoff and group stages in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. (See Page 18) — AFP

Sports

Kuwait women's cricket team to participate in T20 tournament



Afghan bag shirt boy meets his idol Messi



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2016

RAMS HONEYMOON OVER AS TEAM SLUMPS, COACH FIRED Page 16



HOUSTON: Brooklyn Nets guard Isaiah Whitehead (15) drives between Houston Rockets forward Trevor Ariza, left, and Clint Capela (15) in the second half of an NBA basketball game on Monday, in Houston. The Rockets won the game 122-118. — AP

HARDEN'S 36 SEES ROCKETS PAST NETS

HOUSTON: James Harden had 36 points, 11 assists and eight rebounds to lead the Houston Rockets to their seventh straight win, 122-118 over the Brooklyn Nets on Monday night. Eric Gordon scored 24 points on 6-for-10 shooting on 3-pointers, and Ryan Anderson added 19 for the Rockets. Houston shot 17 for 43 on 3s, making at least 10 for an NBA-record 24th straight game. Brook Lopez scored 26 points and Sean Kilpatrick added 17 for the Nets. Brooklyn trailed for much of the game until Joe Harris tied it at 118 with a layup with less than 40 seconds remaining. Gordon gave Houston a two-point lead with a free throw with 11.9 seconds left, and the Rockets came up with a key steal on the ensuing inbound pass. Gordon then made two more from the line and the Rockets held on for the win.

11 seconds left, Portland forward Evan Turner and Los Angeles center DeAndre Jordan were ejected after a brief skirmish under the Clippers' basket.

HEAT 112, WIZARDS 101

Goran Dragic scored a season-high 34 points, Hassan Whiteside had 17 points and 16 rebounds and Miami beat Washington to snap a five-game slide. Dragic scored 13 points in the fourth for the Heat, who opened a six-game homestand. James Johnson scored 14 off the bench for Miami, which won for only the third time in 11 games at home. John Wall scored 30 points and Bradley Beal added 29 for Washington, which is 0-2 against Miami this season. Dragic made 14 of 23 shots, on his way to his best scoring night in a Heat uniform.

RAPTORS 122, BUCKS 100

DeMar DeRozan scored 30 points, Terrence Ross added 25 and Toronto beat Milwaukee for the sixth straight time. Jonas Valanciunas had 13 rebounds and 11 points for his team-leading seventh double-double of the season as the Raptors won for the 12th time in the last 13 meetings with the Bucks. Giannis Antetokounmpo had a team-high 30 points and Jabari Parker chipped in with 27 as Milwaukee lost its third straight. DeRozan's free throw put the Raptors ahead for good with 2:52 left in the first quarter and they extended the lead to 26 in the second quarter. The Bucks pulled within eight in the final minute of the

third, but that was as close as they got.

PACERS 110, HORNETS 94

Paul George and Myles Turner scored 22 points each to lead Indiana past Charlotte. Jeff Teague had 16 points, 11 assists and five rebounds, and Rodney Stuckey added 14 points for the Pacers, who have won two straight since returning home from a five-game road trip. Marco Belinelli scored 14 points for the Hornets, Marvin Williams and Nicolas Batum each had 13 and Kemba Walker added 12. C.J. Miles made the go ahead 3-pointer with 5.6 seconds remaining in the third quarter to start an 11-1 run by the Pacers. It gave Indiana a 76-73 lead and Stuckey's two free throws with 8:56 to play put the Pacers ahead 84-74.

KINGS 116, LAKERS 92

DeMarcus Cousins had 31 points, 16 rebounds and five assists and Sacramento used a big third quarter to send slumping Los Angeles to a seventh straight defeat in a game featuring seven technical fouls. After five straight points by Cousins during one sequence, Darren Collison hit consecutive 3-pointers late in the third as the Kings outscored the Lakers 39-13 in the quarter on the way to just their second victory in seven games. Collison wound up with 20 points. First-year Lakers coach Luke Walton was ejected at the 4:14 mark of the first quarter after two technicals in succession for arguing, and he had to be held back by his players near midcourt as he became enraged after Cousins knocked over Julius Randle with no foul called. Randle also received a T on the play and associate head coach Brian Shaw took over. D'Angelo Russell, Shaw, Cousins and Lou Williams also had technicals.

MAVERICKS 112, NUGGETS 92

Wesley Matthews scored 25 points and last-place Dallas enjoyed a rare blowout, beating listless Denver. Harrison Barnes had 18 points for the Mavericks, who led 65-43 at the break. They expanded the margin to their biggest of the season at 28 points in the third quarter and won consecutive home games for the first time in an injury-plagued season. The NBA's worst-shooting team coming in at 41.5 percent, Dallas shot 65 percent in the first half and a season-high 58 percent for the game. The Mavericks were 12 of 26 from 3-point range after missing six of their first seven. — AP



DOHA: FC Barcelona's players celebrate following a friendly football match between FC Barcelona and Saudi Arabia's Al-Ahli FC yesterday in the Qatari capital Doha. Goals from Luiz Suarez, Lionel Messi and Neymar helped Barcelona beat Saudi champions Al-Ahli 5-3 in a thrilling friendly in Doha. The superstar trio all scored by the 17th minute, helping the Spanish giants to stroll into an early three-goal lead. — AFP

BARCELONA BEAT AL-AHLI IN EIGHT-GOAL FRIENDLY

DOHA: Goals from Luiz Suarez, Lionel Messi and Neymar helped Barcelona beat Saudi champions Al-Ahli 5-3 in a thrilling friendly in Doha yesterday.

The superstar trio all scored by the 17th minute, helping the Spanish giants to stroll into an early three-goal lead. And perhaps more importantly for Barcelona, it also ensured all three could be substituted by the 32nd minute to allay any injury fears ahead of the Catalan derby against Espanyol on Sunday.

Suarez opened the scoring with a glancing header in the eighth minute from a Messi cross, before the Argentine quickly added a second just two minutes later.

Neymar, who had been struggling with a muscle strain since the Clasic against Real Madrid earlier this month, netted a fine third with a curling shot in the 17th minute.

Further goals from Paco Alcacer and Rafinha meant the La Liga champions were able to withstand a second-half comeback from the Saudi side.

Among the scorers for Al-Ahli was Omar Abdulrahman, AFC player of the year for 2016, who plays his football in the UAE but was allowed to turn out for the Saudis for the friendly.

He scored with a "Panenka" penalty in the 51st minute after Barcelona goalkeeper Jordi Masip gave away the spot-kick.

The keeper may have been the only Barca player who did not enjoy the run-out in Qatar as he was also easily beaten at the near post for Al-Ahli's second, scored by Muhannad Assiri.

The game was being played as part of Barcelona's sponsorship deal with Qatar Airways, which ends next June. Al-Ahli are also sponsored by the Gulf carrier. The game was billed as the "Match of Champions" and Barcelona were presented with an 18 carat gold cup afterwards, specially commissioned for the game.

Among those watching on in the 18,126 sell-out crowd was Barcelona great Xavi Hernandez, who now plays for Qatar's Al Sadd. — AFP

NBA results/standings

Sacramento 116, LA Lakers 92; Dallas 112, Denver 92; Houston 122, Brooklyn 118; Toronto 122, Milwaukee 100; Miami 112, Washington 101; Indiana 110, Charlotte 94.

Eastern Conference				Western Conference			
Atlantic Division				Northwest Division			
W	L	PCT	GB	Oklahoma City	15	9	.625
Toronto	17	7	.708	Utah	15	10	.600
NY Knicks	14	10	.583	Portland	12	14	.462
Boston	13	11	.542	Denver	9	16	.360
Brooklyn	6	17	.261	LA Lakers	6	18	.250
Philadelphia	6	18	.250	Minnesota	6	18	.250
Central Division				Pacific Division			
Cleveland	17	5	.773	Golden State	21	4	.840
Chicago	13	10	.565	LA Clippers	18	7	.720
Indiana	13	12	.520	Sacramento	9	15	.375
Detroit	13	13	.500	LA Lakers	10	17	.370
Milwaukee	11	12	.478	Phoenix	7	17	.292
Southeast Division				Southwest Division			
Charlotte	14	11	.560	San Antonio	19	5	.792
Atlanta	12	12	.500	Houston	18	7	.720
Orlando	10	15	.400	Memphis	17	8	.680
Washington	9	14	.391	New Orleans	8	17	.320
Miami	8	17	.320	Dallas	6	18	.250

Kuwait Times 55th Anniversary BUSINESS

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ADB lowers 2016 growth forecast for developing Asia

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Resilient non-oil economy helps Bahrain beat oil dip

Page 23



Boursa Kuwait unveils market making model

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BURGAN BANK WINS INTERNATIONAL QUALITY CROWN AWARD

Page 26



CARACAS: A man walking past banners showing Venezuela's currency, the Bolivar, at the Central Bank of Venezuela (BCV) in Caracas. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro on Sunday signed an emergency decree ordering the country's largest banknote, the 100 bolivar bill, taken out of circulation to thwart "mafias" he accused of hoarding cash in Colombia. —AFP

OIL PACT COULD SOP UP MARKET GLUT: IEA

AGENCY HIKES DEMAND FORECAST FOR 2016 AND 2017

PARIS: A pact by leading producers to cut output could quickly begin sopping up the glut on the oil market that has weighed on prices, the IEA said yesterday as it also hiked its demand forecast.

The agreements, if implemented, would "hasten the market's return to balance by working off the inventory overhang," said the International Energy Agency, which analyses energy markets for major oil consuming nations. The recent deals are the first joint cuts by OPEC and non-OPEC nations since 2001 and aim to reduce production by just under 1.8 million barrels per day (mbd).

"If OPEC and non-OPEC were to implement strictly their agreed cuts, global inventories could start to draw in the first half of next year," it added. The IEA said it was not making

any forecast, but suggested that implementation of the pact could result in a draw of 0.6 mbd into stocks.

Oil stocks in the advanced nations which fund the IEA hit a record of 3,102 mb in July. While they have since declined, "they remain 300 mb above the five-year average, providing a more than ample cushion going into 2017," said the IEA.

'Implicit goal'

The IEA also said that "an implicit goal" of the pact may be "to keep the price of oil from falling below \$50" per barrel. Crude oil prices have risen by around \$10 per barrel in recent weeks on the deals by the OPEC and non-OPEC nations.

The benchmark international contract,

Brent crude, was trading at around \$55.99 per barrel in late morning yesterday, around 50 cents up from its level ahead of the report.

"Clearly, the next few weeks will be crucial in determining if the production cuts are being implemented and whether the recent increase in oil prices will last," said the IEA. A price of \$50 per barrel is seen as the level at which it becomes profitable for many companies to produce oil. Oil exporting nations have been suffering with prices under that level, even dropping below \$30 per barrel at the beginning of this year, as Saudi Arabia led OPEC nations in stepping up output in order gain market share and push rivals with higher production costs out of business.

The IEA found that production increases by OPEC nations continued into November, ris-

ing by 300,000 bpd to 34.2 mbd. November output by OPEC nations was 1.4 mbd above that one year ago. The cartel currently accounts for around 40 percent of total output. At a meeting last weekend in Vienna, 11 non-members of OPEC agreed cut of production by 558,000 barrels per day, joining an earlier pledge by OPEC nations to cut output by 1.2 mbd for six months.

The IEA said analysis of the market outlook for 2017 was complicated by the fact that OPEC will review in May whether to extend the output cuts. It said "OPEC also appears to be signalling that high-cost producers should not take for granted that they will receive a free ride to higher production."

The IEA noted however that US shale producers, the higher-cost producers that OPEC

squeezed via low oil prices, appear to be stepping up investment, but made only marginal increases to its forecasts for North American output.

Demand growth

While supply will be restrained by the pact between leading oil producers, growth in oil demand has been stronger than forecast. "Global oil demand growth of 1.4 mbd is forecast for 2016," said the IEA, which is an increase of nearly 10 percent from its previous forecast and due in part to "robust demand" in the United States. Demand growth in 2017 is now seen at 1.3 mbd, up from its previous forecast of 1.2 mbd. That is still considerably below the five-year high of 1.8 mbd in demand growth registered in 2015. —AFP

UNICREDIT TO RAISE \$13.8BN IN ITALY'S BIGGEST SHARE ISSUE

MILAN/LONDON: Italy's largest bank, UniCredit, plans to raise 13 billion euros (\$13.8 billion) in the country's biggest-ever share issue to shore up its balance sheet and shield itself from a broader banking crisis. The plans announced yesterday, which also include 14,000 job cuts, come at a turbulent time for Italian banks and the economy - with Monte dei Paschi di Siena at risk of failure, a new government just installed in Rome and early elections expected next year.

UniCredit, the only Italian bank deemed important to the stability of the global financial system, has lost about half its market value this year, hit by profitability concerns, bad loans and a weaker balance sheet than major European rivals. Chief Executive Jean Pierre Mustier said the bank planned to launch the share issue in the first quarter of 2017 and use the money to help mop up 17.7 billion euros worth of bad debts from its balance sheet, enabling it to boost its profits and also dividend payouts by 2019.

Drafted in five months ago, the former Societe Generale executive has sought to streamline the bank, selling assets like fund manager Pioneer and Polish unit Bank Pekao. "We've taken some bold actions because self-help is always the best thing to do," the 55-year-old told analysts in a call.

Joseph Oughourlian, CEO at UniCredit shareholder Amber Capital, said he was a firm believer in Mustier and his plan and would participate in the rights issue. "Sorting out UniCredit is huge service and a plus for the Italian banking sector. We now have the two largest banks in Italy well-capitalised, and we'll run after the rights issue," he said. Italy's other major bank is Intesa Sanpaolo.

The issue would take the bank's core capital ratio to above 12.5 percent in 2019, from about 10.8 percent now, though UniCredit envisages deep job cuts. It plans to shed 14,000 jobs, or about 11 percent of its staff as of end-2015. Including announced asset sales, the bank will have a third less staff by 2019, compared with the end of last year, as a result of its turnaround plan.

Mustier pledged to cut his fixed salary by 40 percent to 1.2 million euros with no annual bonus this year or during the plan to 2019.

SHARES LEAP

While UniCredit expects net profit to increase to 4.7 billion euros in 2019 from 1.5 billion last year, it projects revenue will rise just 0.6 percent annually, with growth mainly coming from fees and commissions. Shares in the bank jumped 8 percent on news of its plans, with traders saying its targets seemed realistic. The turnaround, though, would involve 12.2 billion euros in one-off losses in the fourth quarter, including loan writedowns and restructuring costs.

"This is a big 20-billion-euro capital package if we include the recent disposals," said Zenit fund manager Stefano Fabiani. Mustier said no more asset sales were on the cards and that UniCredit itself was not in talks for a possible merger. His appointment this year had revived rumours about a possible merger between UniCredit and Societe Generale.

The success of UniCredit's plan rests on investors believing it will be a long-term solution. The bank has already raised 14.5 billion euros since the global financial crisis struck in 2008. Mustier told reporters that the problems of Monte dei Paschi would not upset UniCredit's plans.

"I am highly confident Monte Paschi will be resolved by year-end and so it will have no impact on our capital increase." Italy is ready to bail out Monte dei Paschi, the country's third-largest bank, if it fails to get the 5 billion euros it needs to stay in business from private investors, a Treasury source said. The European Central Bank has given it by the end of this month to raise the money.

For UniCredit, investment banks have signed a pre-writing agreement to help it market the issue, including Morgan Stanley, UBS, BofA Merrill Lynch, JP Morgan and Mediobanca. —AFP

GULF STOCKS PULL BACK AHEAD OF US HIKE

MIDEAST STOCK MARKETS

DUBAI: Stock markets in the Gulf pulled back yesterday as investors turned their attention to an expected US interest rate hike today and the upcoming Saudi Arabian state budget for 2017. In Riyadh, the index declined for a second straight session, falling 0.8 percent. Trading volume shrank by roughly half from Monday's very large amount. Investors have been readjusting their portfolios in anticipation of the 2017 budget announcement, which is expected late this month. Bankers and analysts in touch with Saudi economic officials say the 2016 deficit is likely to have shrunk much more than originally projected, and this plus higher oil prices should give the government room to spend a little more on economic development projects next year.

But more domestic fuel subsidy cuts still look likely in the 2017 budget. Mohammad Al-Shammasi, chief executive of Riyadh-based Derayah Financial, said the market's uptrend was pausing temporarily, though any pullback in the lead-up to the budget announcement would not be major. "The government had already made it clear in last year's budget announcement that there will be further subsidy cuts, but I don't think the impact will be as negative on sentiment as it was then." Nevertheless, yesterday petrochemical shares remained weak, with all 14 listed producers retreating. Saudi Kayan Petrochemical closed 1.7 percent lower. Retail shares were also hit, with apparel retailer and mall operator Fawaz Alhokair slumping 5.5 percent.

But Knowledge Economic City rose 1.5 percent in heavy trade after the company said it had sold land to hospital operator Mouwasat for a capital gain of 32 million riyals (\$8.5 million), which would be reflected in its fourth-quarter results. Mouwasat fell 0.2 percent.

In Egypt, the index pulled back 0.5 percent in a volatile session, with selling pressure escalating in the final hour. A little over 80 percent of shares in the index declined with Orascom Telecom, the most heavily traded stock, falling 2.6 percent after rising by the same percentage on

Monday. Foreign investors, who have been buyers of stocks since the central bank floated the Egyptian pound on Nov. 3, remained net buyers, bourse data showed. The Egyptian pound hit an all-time low against the US dollar on Monday, trading at 18.50 pounds. A weaker currency will hurt local traders who have seen their purchasing power erode, but it may encourage international funds to continue buying shares at a cheaper exchange rate.

UAE DOWN, QATAR UP

Dubai's main index, which rose on Monday to its highest level this year and above technical resistance on its August peak of 3,624 points, pulled back 0.9 percent to 3,625 points. Trading volume shrank by roughly a fifth from the previous session but held well above this year's average, suggesting foreign investors remain interested in the market. Mobile phone operator du fell 2.8 percent and real estate giant Emaar Properties dropped 1.3 percent. But GFH Financial Group jumped 3.2 percent in heavy trade after multilateral development bank Arab Petroleum Investments Corp bought 30 percent of Falcon Cement Co, Bahrain's largest cement producer, from GFH. The companies did not disclose a purchase price but GFH has previously valued Falcon at \$120 million.

Abu Dhabi's index closed down 0.2 percent but well above its session low. Trading volume shrank by roughly two-thirds from Monday. The main drag came from blue chips with Union National Bank closing 1.1 percent lower.

Qatar's main index, however, bucked the regional downturn to climb 0.7 percent in modest volume. The index is still down 0.5 percent since the start of the year but has gained 7.9 percent since Nov. 29. A Reuters survey of fund managers, published at the end of last month, found more regional funds prepared to return to Qatar because of attractive dividend yields. Qatar National Bank, the largest listed stock, was the top performer yesterday, rising 2.4 percent. —Reuters

ADB LOWERS 2016 GROWTH FORECAST FOR DEVELOPING ASIA

CHINA 2016, 2017 GROWTH AT 6.6%, INDIA GROWTH CUT TO 7%

MANILA: The Asian Development Bank slightly lowered its 2016 growth forecast for developing Asia yesterday, reflecting slower-than-expected expansion in India. Developing Asia, which groups 45 countries in the Asia-Pacific region, is now expected to expand 5.6 percent this year, rather than 5.7 percent, the ADB said in a supplement to its Asian Development Outlook 2016.

The ADB trimmed its 2016 growth estimate for India to 7.0 percent from 7.4 percent due to weak investment, agricultural slowdown and the government's recent demonetization.

But India's growth forecast for 2017 was kept at 7.8 percent. The Manila-based lender kept China's growth forecasts for this year and next at 6.6 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively. "Asian economies continue their robust expansion in the face of global economic uncertainties," said ADB deputy chief economist Juzhong Zhuang. "Structural reforms to boost productivity, improve investment climate, and support domestic demand can help maintain growth momentum," said Zhuang.

The growth estimate for Southeast Asia was kept at 4.5 percent for this year and 4.6 percent in 2017, supported by strong growth in Malaysia and the Philippines. Economies in South Asia are projected to expand by 6.6 percent in 2016, down from the previous estimate of 6.9 percent. For next year, growth in that region will bounce back to 7.3 percent, the ADB said. East Asia as a whole is seen to expand by 5.8 percent this year and 5.6 percent in 2017 as growth stabilizes in line with earlier forecasts.

The report said growth in the major Southeast Asian economies in the third quarter met projections and even surpassed them in Malaysia and the Philippines. The sub-region is forecast to



BEIJING: Workers rest during lunch break outside a construction site at the Central Business District in Beijing yesterday. The Asian Development Bank on Tuesday trimmed its economic growth forecast this year for developing Asia to 5.6 percent. —AP

expand by 4.5 percent in 2016, and picking up to 4.6 percent in 2017.

"Asian economies continue their robust expansion in the face of global economic uncertainties," said ADB Deputy Chief Economist Juzhong Zhuang. "Structural reforms to boost productivity, improve

investment climate, and support domestic demand can help maintain growth momentum," ADB said the combined growth for the major industrial economies exceeded expectations, ticking up 0.1 percentage point to 1.5 percent in 2016. The growth forecast for 2017 is maintained at

1.8 percent, with robust consumer spending supporting the US economy, and monetary policy and improved labor markets fueling growth in the euro area. Japan's expansion, meanwhile, will be buoyed by strong exports, despite a stronger currency, the report said. —Agencies

News

in brief

Emaar appoints hospitality and leisure unit CEO

DUBAI: Dubai's Emaar Properties, builder of the world's tallest tower, announced yesterday the appointment of Olivier Harnisch as the chief executive of its hospitality and leisure business Emaar Hospitality Group. Harnisch joins from Brussels-based Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group, where he previously served as chief operating officer, the developer said in a statement. He will be responsible for overseeing Emaar's three hotel brands: The Address Hotels + Resorts, Vida Hotels and Resorts, and Rove Hotels and leisure assets.

Egypt cancels tender to rent third LNG terminal

CAIRO: Egypt has cancelled its tender to rent a third natural gas import (LNG) regasification terminal as it is no longer needed, Oil Minister Tarek El Molla told Reuters yesterday. "The tender to rent a third regasification terminal was cancelled due to a lack of need for it and until we reassess the gas production capacity of Egypt and the consumption levels over the next few years," he said. Once a net energy exporter, Egypt began importing liquefied natural gas (LNG) last year and has leased two floating and storage regasification units (FSRU) already to help avert power shortages caused by falling energy production and rising consumption.

AfDB approves \$500m loan payment to Egypt

CAIRO: The African Development Bank's board approved yesterday payment of a \$500 million loan to Egypt, the second of three expected disbursements, Minister of International Cooperation Sahar Nasr told Reuters. The loan, approved by the board in light of Egypt's economic reforms, is subject to parliamentary approval. Nasr did not specify when a vote might take place.

Qatar November inflation drops to lowest this year

DOHA: Qatar's Statistics Authority released the following November consumer price data yesterday, showing inflation at its lowest level this year. Housing and utility costs, which account for 22 percent of the consumer basket, rose 1.8 percent from a year earlier but food and beverage costs, which account for nearly 13 percent, dropped 3.4 percent.

DUBAI WORKING WITH HSBC ON \$7BN FINANCING FOR EXPO 2020

DUBAI: Dubai is working with HSBC on the financing of Expo 2020 Dubai, a \$7 billion exhibition centre project expected to attract 25 million visitors, sources familiar with the matter said. The site will host Expo Dubai which will run from October 2020 to April 2021 and will be the first World Expo hosted in the Middle East, according to the Expo 2020 website.

The project provides more evidence that Dubai is back in expansion mode after running into trouble during the 2009 global financial crisis. The expo is a major part of Dubai's plans to expand its infrastructure and boost its credentials as a tourist destination. The financing will come from bank loans and from various export credit agencies, the sources said. HSBC has been appointed to coordinate the export credit agencies and financing supported by them, the sources said, adding that the split between the commercial loans and the export credit financing was yet to be defined.

Export credit-backed financing provides guarantees that support the export and supply of domestic goods or contractors or in some cases direct lending. Expo 2020 Dubai was not immediately available to comment. HSBC declined to comment.

The exhibition centre project, in the Dubai South district, situated midway between Abu Dhabi and Dubai, will be 4 kilometres long and 1.8 kilometres wide, according to its website. The development will include a number of infrastructure projects, an exhibition centre, academic and research institutions and a technology cluster, the website said. It will possibly also need additional funding on top of the \$7 billion for projects linked to the event and led by government entities such as Dubai Municipality, the Dubai Electricity and Water Authority, and Dubai's Roads and Transport Authority, two of the sources said.

The expo site is located near Dubai's new airport, Al-Maktoum International Airport. There are proposals for a \$3 billion expansion of the airport and HSBC is also advising the government on the financing for this project. — Reuters



NANTONG: This picture taken on December 10, 2016 shows a woman working in a textile factory in Nantong in China's eastern Jiangsu province. China filed a dispute resolution case with the World Trade Organization on Monday over the so-called 'surrogate country' approach used by the United States and the European Union to calculate anti-dumping measures applied to Chinese exports. —AFP

IRAN, AIRBUS HOPEFUL OF FINALIZING DEAL IN 2 WEEKS

BEIRUT: European planemaker Airbus and Iran Air will finalize a deal to buy aircraft in two weeks, the head of Iran's flag carrier said yesterday, adding Airbus has agreed to provide financing for 17 planes. Uncertainty over financing of the deal and political opposition in the United States against Iran have slowed down Tehran's efforts to import aircraft following the lifting of sanctions this year.

Iran signed a \$16.6 billion deal for 80 Boeing passenger jets on Sunday, the biggest package of firm contracts with Western companies since Iran's 1979 revolution. Iran Air Chief Executive Farhad Parvareh said he was

hopeful to finalise the deal with Airbus in two weeks. "There are only few small remaining issues like financing. Airbus has agreed to provide financing for 17 planes," he was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.

Iranian officials told Reuters in November that they have reached a deal with a foreign leasing company to finance the first 17 jets from Airbus but declined to name the lessor involved.

Parvareh said Iran Air was trying to get first five Airbus planes before March 2017. During a visit by President Hassan Rouhani to Paris in January 2016, Iran provisionally ordered 118 Airbus jets worth \$27 billion. —Reuters

BANK OF TOKYO-MITSUBISHI TO OPEN BRANCH IN SAUDI

DUBAI: Bank of Tokyo-Mitsubishi UFJ has received a license to open a branch in Saudi Arabia, becoming the first Japanese bank to establish a presence in the kingdom.

The bank, part of Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, has played a central role in the Saudi government's recent financing activity, in April helping to arrange a \$10 billion loan, while Mitsubishi UFJ in October helped with its \$17.5 billion international bond sale.

The bank also signed an agreement in September with Saudi Aramco to assist and collaborate in the company's future development. The oil giant is targeting 2018 for what is expected to be the world's biggest initial public offering. Saudi state news agency SPA said the cabinet licensed the bank to open a branch in the kingdom and authorized the Minister of Finance to decide on any subsequent

request to open other branches. Saudi Arabia and Japan have strong trading ties, with Japan's oil and gas procurement from Saudi Aramco accounting for more than 30 percent of Japan's total imports for the sector, according to a release from the bank in September.

Banking licenses in the kingdom are granted relatively infrequently. Qatar National Bank was the last foreign bank to be permitted to open a branch in September 2015. Out of the 13 foreign banks listed on the central bank's website as being licensed to operate, five are Gulf lenders - two from Bahrain and one each from Kuwait, the UAE and Oman. Other international lenders include JP Morgan, Deutsche Bank and BNP Paribas.

Other Asian banks with licenses include Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, State Bank of India and National Bank of Pakistan. — Reuters

DUBAI'S MEYDAN GROUP TO CLOSE 600M DIRHAM SYNDICATED LOAN

DUBAI: Dubai's Meydan Group, which specializes in real estate projects in the commercial, hospitality and entertainment sectors, will close by the end of next week a 600 million dirham (\$163 million) syndicated loan, sources close to the situation said.

The debt facility, arranged by Commercial Bank of Dubai, will be used to finance a hotel project. The deal was initially expected to reach completion by the end of November.

The company declined to comment. Meydan, mostly known for the Meydan racecourse facility in Dubai, is the developer of Meydan City, a 47 million square foot project including residential, commercial

and mixed-use buildings. It has raised financing from local and regional banks over the year, in a sign that major real estate developments continue in Dubai despite the regional economic slowdown caused by low oil prices.

Earlier this year, Meydan obtained a \$476 million loan from Qatar National Bank and QNB's United Arab Emirates affiliate Commercial Bank International. The company also raised 1 billion dirhams of Islamic financing in June to strengthen its capital structure, diversify its investor base and support new projects. That financing comprised 700 million dirhams of sukuk and a 300 million dirham term loan. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.697
Indian Rupees	4.497
Pakistani Rupees	2.919
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.065
Nepali Rupees	2.812
Singapore Dollar	216.870
Hongkong Dollar	39.459
Bangladesh Taka	3.846
Philippine Peso	6.169
Thai Baht	8.626

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.654
Qatari Riyal	84.101
ani Riyal	795.218
Bahraini Dinar	813.070
UAE Dirham	83.356

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	23.900
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.399
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.229
Tunisian Dinar	133.920
Jordanian Dinar	431.200
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.040
Syrian Lira	2.182
Morocco Dirham	30.909

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	306.000
Euro	324.670
Sterling Pound	390.150
Canadian dollar	230.150
Turkish lira	88.230

Swiss Franc	302.970
Australian Dollar	229.350
US Dollar Buying	304.800

GOLD

20 Gram	241.07
10 Gram	123.46
5 Gram	62.57

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer Selling Rate

US Dollar	305.650
Canadian Dolla	230.085
Sterling Pound	389.515
Euro	324.345
Swiss Frank	302.445
Bahrain Dinar	810.255
UAE Dirhams	83.610
Qatari Riyals	84.830
Saudi Riyals	82.435
Jordanian Dinar	431.775
Egyptian Pound	17.593
Sri Lankan Rupees	2.064
Indian Rupees	4.487
Pakistani Rupees	2.916
Bangladesh Taka	3.878
Philippines Peso	6.150
Cyprus pound	167.850
Japanese Yen	3.690
Syrian Pound	2.435
Nepalese Rupees	3.800
Malaysian Ringgit	69.445

Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.000
Thai Bhat	9.575
Turkish Lira	87.220

Indonesian Rupiah	0.000018	0.000024
Japanese Yen	0.002608	0.002788
Kenyan Shilling	0.002996	0.002996
Korean Won	0.000250	0.000265
Malaysian Ringgit	0.064916	0.070916
Nepalese Rupee	0.002840	0.003010
Pakistan Rupee	0.002670	0.002960
Philippine Peso	0.006074	0.006374
Sierra Leone	0.000052	0.000058
Singapore Dollar	0.209050	0.219050
South African Rand	0.015998	0.024498
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001642	0.002222
Taiwan	0.009428	0.009608
Thai Baht	0.008255	0.008805

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.381639	0.391639
Czech Korune	0.003927	0.015927
Danish Krone	0.039332	0.044332
Euro	0.317427	0.326427
Norwegian Krone	0.032031	0.037231
Romanian Leu	0.072173	0.072173
Slovakia	0.009174	0.01914
Swedish Krona	0.028990	0.033990
Swiss Franc	0.294522	0.305522
Turkish Lira	0.083994	0.094294
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.219571	0.231571
New Zealand Dollar	0.211038	0.220538
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.224135	0.233135
Georgina Lari	0.138207	0.138207
US Dollars	0.301900	0.306600
US Dollars Mint	0.302400	0.306600
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003377	0.003961
Chinese Yuan	0.042940	0.046440
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037368	0.040118
Indian Rupee	0.000096	0.004607

Bahraini Dinar	0.805100	0.813600
Egyptian Pound	0.015640	0.024893
Iranian Riyal	0.000085	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000181	0.000241
Jordanian Dinar	0.426542	0.435542
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000152	0.000252
Moroccan Dirhams	0.020137	0.044137
Nigerian Naira	0.000369	0.001004
Omani Riyal	0.788384	0.794064
Qatar Riyal	0.083239	0.084689
Saudi Riyal	0.080513	0.081813
Syrian Pound	0.001298	0.001518
Tunisian Dinar	0.129939	0.137939
Turkish Lira	0.083994	0.094294
UAE Dirhams	0.081888	0.083588
Yemeni Riyal	0.001013	0.001093

TRUMP TOUGH TALK ON CHINA WORRIES US EXPORTERS

NEW YORK: President-elect Donald Trump's threat to slap punitive tariffs on Chinese goods is a worry for firms that trade with the country in the US Midwest, a decisive region in the Republican's election triumph. Strong support across America's "Rust Belt," and frustration at lost industrial jobs blamed on globalization, carried Trump to victory last month in key battleground states, including Michigan and Ohio.

But some companies in the region that benefit from global trade are worried about early signs the president-elect plans to take a hardline stance with China. "We export a lot of products to China," said David Shogren, president of US International Foods. "My fear is whatever changes Trump makes ... that China will retaliate in some ways."

The St. Louis company depends on China as a key export market for peanut

butter, mustard, nuts, cereals and other items. About 50 percent of its revenues are tied to China, compared with just five percent to its home market. "Our customers may switch from US products to other countries: Europe, Australia, New Zealand or Japan, or other exporting countries," Shogren said.

Shogren said his company is trying to build markets in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore. Trump during the campaign threatened to impose 45 percent tariffs on China, saying the world's second biggest economy has stifled the US with currency manipulation and illegal subsidies. "China will take a tit-for-tat approach," said an editorial in Global Times, a Chinese newspaper that is close to the government.

"A batch of Boeing orders will be replaced by Airbus. US auto and iPhone

sales in China will suffer a setback, and US soybean and maize imports will be halted," it warned. "China can also limit the number of Chinese students studying in the US."

China also responded sharply to Trump's decision to accept a phone call from Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen and to suggestions he is rethinking the decades-old US "One China policy."

The One China policy is the "political bedrock" of relations with the US, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. If it is "compromised or disrupted" cooperation in major fields would be "out of the question," Geng added.

Writing to Trump
Ohio-based Progressive Molding Technologies imports tooling from China that enables it to compete with Chinese rivals. "My fear is we will lose access to

China's cheap tools," said president Laird Daubenspeck. "At that point, I will anticipate the our customers will start to slow down new product launches and we will see less growth."

Daubenspeck has written twice to Trump, once after he was elected and a second time after the Taiwan phone call. "My biggest fear is he doesn't understand the impact his words have."

Among big manufacturers, Boeing is especially vulnerable. About one out of three Boeing 737 planes delivered in 2015 was destined for China. The company just announced Monday that it will reduce production of its 777 starting in August, which will have an impact on employment.

General Motors also could see its business disrupted in a trade war. China is GM's biggest market for cars, with 2.38 million vehicles sold in the first eight

months of 2016, compared with 1.96 million in the US. GM also manufactures the Buick Envision in China, which is exported to the US and could suffer under US tariffs. A GM spokesman said it was too early to comment on any potential shifts in trade policy, but noted that GM chief executive Mary Barra agreed to participate in Trump's strategic and policy forum, along with other top chief executives.

The century-old National Foreign Trade Council on Monday said it will work with the new administration but will fight protectionism. "And we're prepared to argue against the use of trade restrictions as a way of achieving greater economic growth-history has shown that really isn't an effective way of doing that," Rufus Yerxa, head of the 300-company NFTC, whose members export about \$3 trillion a year. —AFP



LONDON: Passengers queue up for an express train to Gatwick Airport, running a reduced service as a result of a train strike, in Victoria rail station London yesterday. —AP

BRITISH COMMUTERS FACE WORST RAIL STRIKE IN DECADES

LONDON: Hundreds of thousands of British commuters faced travel chaos yesterday as train drivers went on strike in what is expected to be the worst rail disruption in decades. Southern Rail, which runs trains between England's south coast and London, warned of severe disruption as it cancelled more than 2,000 services after workers launched three days of industrial action.

Up to 1,000 drivers are involved in the strike which will affect around 300,000 passengers, including those travelling to London's Gatwick airport. A 48-hour walkout began at midnight Monday with a further 24-hour strike planned for Friday and another six days of action in January.

The long-running dispute centres on plans for "driver-only operated trains" which mean guards would no longer be required to open and close train doors.

Union leaders have raised concerns about safety and possible job losses, although the rail company insists staffing levels will not be affected. A train worker at London's Victoria station told AFP on condition of anonymity that the changes, which Southern Rail says will free up guards to help passengers and handle emergencies, constitute "a real culture shock".

Passengers at the station gazed at blank departure boards early Monday as railway staff in fluorescent jackets offered advice on alternative routes. Furious commuter Clarence Quaicoe, running late for work, told AFP: "Of course I'm upset... I will have to take the underground where there are also severe delays."

Passengers on routes from Brighton and other key commuter towns in southern England have already faced months of disruption to services in a series of walkouts that began in April.

The latest strike comes after the train operator's owners, Govia Thameslink Railway, lost a legal bid to halt the action.

The shutdown is expected to cause the worst disruption on Britain's railways since a series of strikes by signal workers in 1994.

'Completely futile'
Southern Rail said it was "sincerely sorry" that trains were at a standstill. "These strikes are wholly unjustified and we must find a way forward," a company spokesman said, adding that it had invited union bosses to talks aimed at resolving the dispute. A reduced service between Victoria, a key station in central London, and Gatwick was running every half hour, the train operator said.

Mick Whelan, general secretary of the train drivers' union Aslef, said the union was prepared to negotiate but added: "It's up to the company, and the government, to be flexible and end the misery of commuters."

The government, which is responsible for awarding franchises to train operating companies, is under mounting pressure to intervene in the dispute. "Doing nothing to help Southern rail commuters is no longer an option" for the government, said London mayor Sadiq Khan in a post on Twitter. Khan suggested that Transport for London, which runs the capital's Tube, would be better placed to operate the southern English rail services.

Britain's transport minister Chris Grayling called it a "completely futile, pointless strike" and said his offers to intervene had been ignored.

He told BBC's Radio 4 that he did not agree with the action but: "I don't have the power to order people back to work. This is a lawful strike." In an emotional message on Facebook, commuter Jenny Lehane told lawmakers: "I am writing this on a bus with tears streaming down my face at the utter failure of our MPs and government to do anything to stop this completely intolerable failure... to run the service that my fares and taxes are paying for."

The rail walkout comes after Post Office workers also voted Monday to strike in a row over job cuts, closures and pensions. The five days of strikes next week by members of the Communication Workers Union will hit postal services during their busiest period in the run up to Christmas. —AFP

NIGERIANS VENT FRUSTRATIONS ON BUHARI AS COSTS SKYROCKET

LAGOS: With Christmas just weeks away, Dolapo Beckley was among a throng of shoppers haggling at a market in Nigeria's commercial capital Lagos, where the prices of some goods have doubled in the last year. Beckley voted for President Muhammadu Buhari in the election that swept him to power last year on promises to fix endemic mismanagement and corruption.

But 19 months into his term, public support is crumbling as people like the 34-year-old baker blame Buhari for Nigeria's first recession in 25 years and a rise in inflation to an 11-year high of 18.3 percent.

"I do regret voting for Buhari. We wanted a better economy and things are turning upside down, even worse than the way it was before," said Beckley, who was at the Lagos Island market to buy gifts for her children. Buhari's aides say the woes of Africa's biggest economy stem from the previous government's failure to set money aside in the years when Nigeria's crude oil fetched over \$100 a barrel, before the price plunged in late 2014. It now stands around \$56.

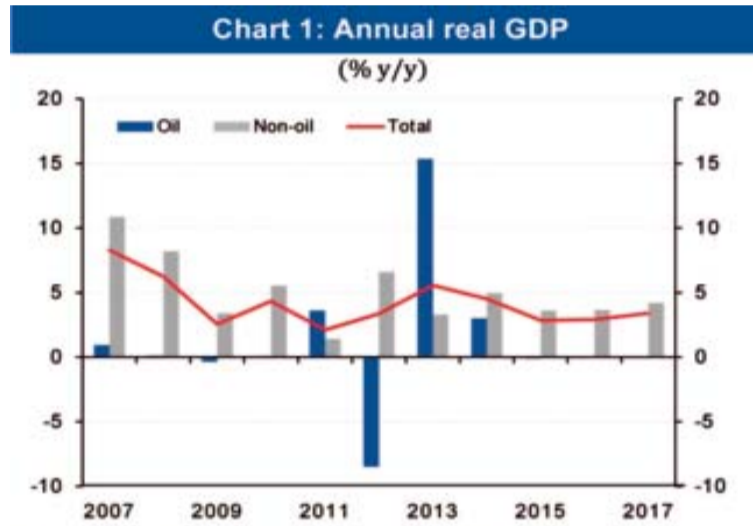
The OPEC member relies on oil sales for two-thirds of state revenue, and Buhari has said his government is working to diversify the economy by boosting manufacturing and farming. Today he will submit a record budget worth 7.2 trillion naira (\$23.6 billion) to lawmakers, drawing partly on foreign borrowing to pay for a boost in capital spending.

But in a country where the UN estimates that 70 percent of the 180 million inhabitants live on a dollar a day, anger at the state of the economy is tangible. "We are no longer asking President Buhari to develop Nigeria," states a message shared widely on social media. "At this point, we are only asking him to return Nigeria to the state it was before he became president."

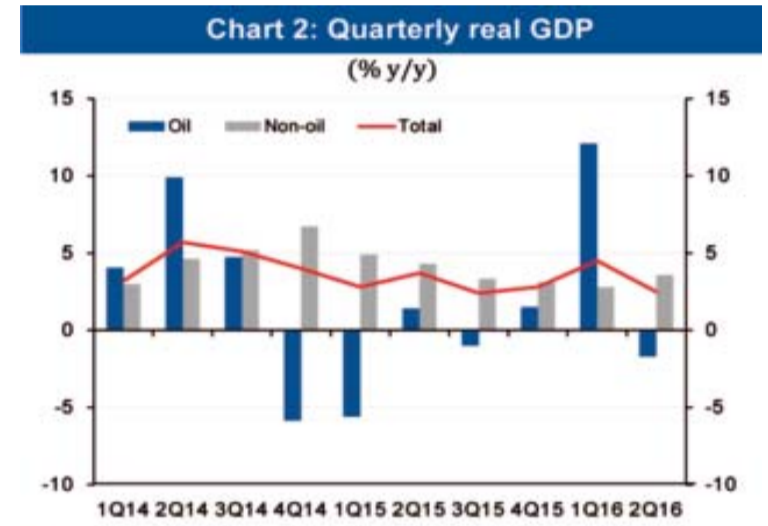
Despite a 40 percent devaluation of the naira currency in June, a shortage of dollars persists, and they fetch a premium of up to 40 percent on the black market. In Nigeria's import-driven economy, this has pushed up the cost of everything from rice to spare machine parts. —Reuters

RESILIENT NON-OIL ECONOMY HELPS BAHRAIN BEAT OIL DIP

NBK ECONOMIC REPORT



Source: Central Informatics Organization, NBK estimates



Source: Economic Development Board

Bahrain's economic growth is set to hold steady in 2016, as a resilient non-oil economy helps weather some of the on-going weakness in the oil sector. We foresee growth in real GDP to hold at around 2.9 percent year-on-year (y/y) in 2016, before climbing to around 3.4 percent y/y in 2017 on stronger non-oil growth. Growth in real oil GDP is set to remain flat in 2016 and 2017 amid steady oil production levels. Real non-oil growth is expected to remain broadly stable at a relatively solid 3.6 percent y/y in 2016 before edging up towards 4 percent y/y on high levels of investment.

In the first quarter of 2016, real GDP growth recovered relative to 4Q15 and accelerated to 4.5 percent y/y. However, the acceleration was mostly attributed to a one-off jump in real oil GDP growth. Indeed, growth in real GDP slowed once again to 2.5 percent y/y in 2Q16, after real oil activity contracted by 1.7 percent y/y.

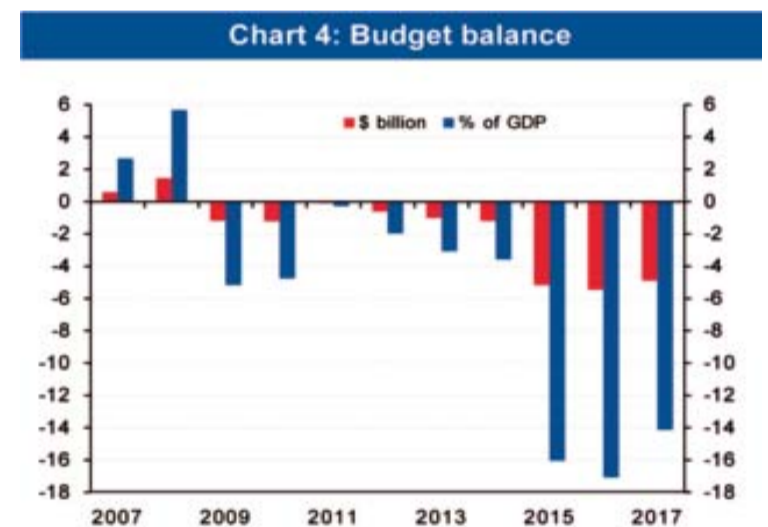
In contrast, growth in real non-oil activity climbed from 2.8 percent y/y to 3.6 percent y/y during the same period, helping shore up some of the weakness in oil activity. Non-oil GDP recorded its highest growth rate in a year in 2Q16, thanks to faster than expected utilization of GCC grants, which helped prop up investment. The GCC pledged \$10 billion in investment over ten years which Bahrain has vowed to devote to infrastructure and housing developments.



Source: Central Informatics Organization

Inflation higher
Inflation in the consumer price index (CPI) rose for the most part of 1H16, after subsidy cuts in the food and housing components led the respective inflation rates higher (Chart 3). However, the initial impact of the subsidy cuts appears to have waned; CPI inflation peaked at 3.8 percent y/y in April and as of October, stood at 1.5 percent y/y on the back of a slowdown in inflation in the housing component and a decline in food prices.

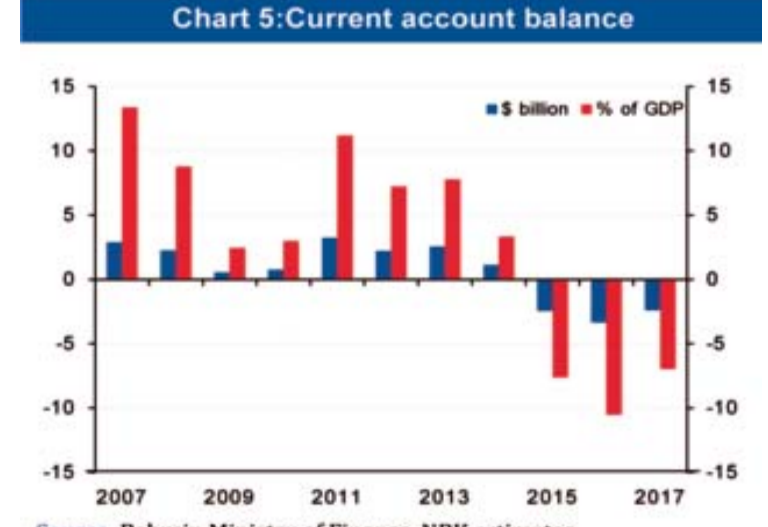
Despite the ongoing ease in the overall inflation rate, we expect inflation to still edge up slightly and average around 2.5 percent in 2016, following the multi-month high readings recorded in 1H16.



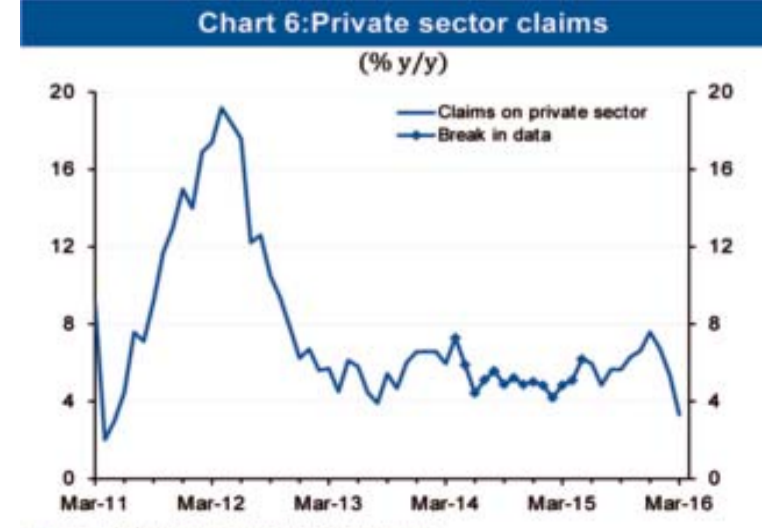
Source: Bahrain Ministry of Finance, NBK estimates

Budget deficit
Bahrain is forecast to see one of the largest budget deficits in the GCC region. With the breakeven oil price estimated at around \$120 per barrel amid a weak oil price environment, the budget deficit is expected to expand to roughly 17 percent of GDP in 2016 before narrowing to around 14 percent of GDP in 2017.

Bahrain remains adamant about imposing fiscal reforms in line with the IMF's recommendations to help shore up its public deficit. So far, it has agreed to cut government expenditures by 30 percent. Spending cuts have been concentrated on subsidies; public spending levels on infrastructure and development projects have remained broadly stable. In August 2015, the government lifted subsidies on meat products. In December 2015,



Source: Bahrain Ministry of Finance, NBK estimates



Source: Thomson Reuters Datastream

Banking sector
After remaining mostly steady in 2015, latest data reveal a slowdown in private sector claims growth (Chart 6). Growth slowed from 5.4 percent y/y in February to 3.3 percent y/y in March. We expect growth in this segment to have eased further in 2016 amid tighter liquidity conditions.

Total deposit growth has been weighed down by an ongoing decline in government deposits (Chart 7). Government deposits have continued to contract on lower oil revenues and high levels of government spending. According to the latest data, government deposits fell by 6.3 percent y/y in March. Growth in private sector deposits also remained weak during the same month, after it came in unchanged from February at 1.9 percent y/y.

Growth in the broad M2 money supply remains weak mainly on tepid growth in quasi-money supply. This, in turn, has continued to push interbank rates higher. In March 2016, M2 money supply growth came in at a mere 2.0 percent y/y. Bahrain's one-month and three-month interbank rates witnessed sharp increases in 2016. As of the end of November they were up 20 basis points (bps) and 27 bps year-to-date, respectively.

Bahrain stock market
In tandem with regional markets, the Bahrain All Share Index has been weighed down by depressed global oil prices. The weak oil price outlook continues to act as a damper on investor confidence and thereby market performance.

UNICREDIT ISSUE LIFTS BANKS BEFORE FED MEETING

LONDON: Global shares edged up yesterday, helped by gains in banks after Italy's largest lender unveiled a 13 billion-euro share issue, while the dollar held steady before a Federal Reserve meeting expected to deliver higher interest rates. Wall Street also looked set to rise, with index futures about 0.3 percent higher. UniCredit launched Italy's biggest share issue to clean up its balance sheet and boost profitability, the latest move to strengthen the Italian banking sector, which has been clouding the outlook for European stocks.

UniCredit shares rose 8.3 percent and an index of Italian banks added 3 percent as the

pan-European STOXX 600 share index gained 0.8 percent. "It's a hard medicine to swallow, but UniCredit's move to raise billions of euros and a restructuring program would put the bank in a much better shape," said Koen De Leus, chief economist at BNP Paribas Fortis.

Markets were otherwise focused on the two-day Fed meeting, which is almost certain to conclude with only the second rise in US interest rates since the global financial crisis. While a hike of 25 basis points in the Fed's target range of 0.25-0.50 percent is priced in, investors will be examining the Fed's statement and economic forecasts for any signs of how the central bank

thinks Trump's election affects the outlook for growth and inflation.

"The big question is, what sort of pace can we expect from the Fed for next year?" said Kaneo Ogino, director at foreign exchange research firm Global-info Co in Tokyo. The dollar was all but flat against a basket of major currencies. The euro fell 0.2 percent to \$1.0612 and the yen fell 0.2 percent to 115.24 per dollar.

Forex fluctuates

US 10-year Treasury yields, which popped above 2.5 percent on Monday for the first time since October 2014, fell 3 basis points yesterday

to 2.45 percent. "We think the meeting may be a catalyst for people to take some profit on long dollar positions," Barclays analyst Hamish Pepper said.

Sterling bucked the trend, rising 0.3 percent to \$1.2715, buoyed by comments from finance minister Philip Hammond that Britain should have a transition period to smooth its exit from the European Union. Data showed UK consumer prices rose 1.2 percent year-on-year last month, their biggest rise since October 2014. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan edged up 0.2 percent, while Japan's Nikkei stock index shrugged off losses as the yen pulled off its highs and ended 0.5 percent higher.

Global shares, as measured by MSCI's all-country world index, rose 0.3 percent but held below Monday's 16-month high, touched as crude oil prices surged after the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and non-OPEC producers reached their first deal since 2001 to reduce output.

Italy's efforts to clean up its banks - the Treasury said on Monday it was ready to bail out Monte dei Paschi di Siena if necessary - pushed yields on its government debt lower and saw the premium the country pays to borrow, compared with Germany, squeezed to its narrowest in more than a month.

Italian 10-year yields fell 10 basis points to 1.91 percent while German equivalents fell 5 bps to 0.36 percent. This followed

new Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni announcing an almost unchanged cabinet on Monday. "The markets appear to be taking the developments in the banking sector quite positively and the cabinet chosen by Gentiloni has reassured investors," DZ Bank strategist Christian Lenk said.

Asian markets mostly fell yesterday as attention turns to this week's much-anticipated Federal Reserve meeting, while analysts said the recent Trump-fueled rally may have been overblown.

"With a rate hike at this week's (meeting) fully priced and given the strong rally in the dollar, we are likely seeing some paring of positions heading into the rate decision," Khoon Goh, head of regional research at Australia & New Zealand Banking Group in Singapore, told Bloomberg News.

"Market participants are also reassessing whether the Trump rally has gotten a bit ahead of itself." Hong Kong edged up 0.1 percent and Shanghai also ended 0.1 percent higher, with gains limited despite a better-than-expected read on Chinese factory output and retail sales.

"The figures are good but the market sentiment remains cautious after a big drop yesterday," Linus Yip, a Hong Kong-based strategist at First Shanghai Securities, said. Shanghai sank 2.5 percent on Monday. Seoul put on 0.4 percent but Sydney lost 0.3 percent while Singapore, Wellington and Manila were also all down. — Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report						
Tuesday 13 December 2016						
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing	High	Low	
Price index	▲ 34.63	5,671.62	5,636.99	5,672.86	5,628.63	
Weighted Index	▲ 1.65	380.11	378.46	380.11	377.36	
KSX 15	▲ 4.45	895.53	891.08	895.53	886.93	

Trades						
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
MARIN	68	65	81376	5,361	8	65 ▼ -5.0
IKARUS	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	38.5 — 0.0
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	365 — 0.0
NAPESCO	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	810 — 0.0
ENERGYH	44.5	42.5	113,100	4,880	6	44.5 ▲ 2.0
GPI	41.0	40.0	7,360,794	297,009	118	40.0 — 0.0
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	102 — 0.0
Oil & Gas			7,556,270	307,250	132	776.02 ▼ -2.47


Trades						
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
KFOUC	178	178	50,000	8,900	5	178 ▲ 2.0
BPCC	480	475	444,686	211,726	16	480 — 0.0
ALKOUT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	640 — 0.0
ALQURAIN	230	228	78,582	18,247	8	228 — 0.0
Basic Materials			574,278	238,873	29	982.41 ▲ 1.75

Trades						
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
SOKOUK	37.0	34.0	13201794	475,556	169	37.0 ▲ 2.5
KRE	62	61	1,499,482	91,982	32	62 ▲ 1.0
URC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	98 — 0.0
NRE	108	108	3,593,318	382,835	91	108 ▲ 2.0
SRE	360	360	10	4	1	360 ▼ -5.0
TAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	470 — 0.0
AREC	200	198	25,000	4,980	3	200 — 0.0
MASSALEH	39.5	39.5	1,500	59	1	39.5 — 0.0
ARABREC	29.0	28.0	512,942	14,619	17	28.5 ▼ -0.5
ERESCO	40.5	40.0	653,600	26,146	18	40.5 — 0.0
MABANEE	840	830	124,181	103,470	15	840 ▲ 10.0
INJAZZAT	77	74	1,972,008	149,301	39	75 ▲ 2.0
INVESTORS	25.0	24.0	33,944,751	833,156	162	24.5 ▼ -0.5
IRC	28.0	27.5	243,542	6,667	11	28.0 — 0.0
ALTJARIA	81	81	573,410	46,448	10	81 — 0.0
SANAM	31.5	31.5	35,293	1,112	3	31.5 — 0.0
AAYANRE	64	64	102,710	6,573	5	64 ▼ -1.0
AOAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	69 — 0.0
ALQAARIA	27.5	25.0	612,500	15,524	50	25.0 — 0.0
MAZAYA	114	114	76,360	8,705	5	114 ▲ 2.0
ADNC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	11.0 — 0.0
THEMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	89 — 0.0
TUJARA	42.0	40.0	160,020	6,401	3	42.0 — 0.0
TAAMEER	22.5	22.0	21,251	468	4	22.5 ▲ 1.5
ARKAN	86	83	171,147	14,245	7	86 ▲ 4.0
ARGAN	170	162	289,900	50,073	13	170 ▲ 8.0
ABYAAH	22.5	22.0	5,039,201	110,917	39	22.5 — 0.0
MUNSHAAT	52	48.5	1,978,390	101,082	48	52 ▲ 3.5
FIRSTDUBAI	62	56	5,713,889	339,353	148	60 ▲ 3.0
KBT	42.0	41.0	1,798,550	74,743	40	41.5 ▼ -0.5
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	196 — 0.0
MENA	21.5	20.5	2,680,400	58,883	85	21.5 ▲ 0.5
ALMUDON	37.0	35.5	8,275,561	299,842	124	36.5 ▲ 0.5
MARAKEZ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	36.0 — 0.0
REMAL	54	49.0	4,230,187	221,041	117	54 ▲ 4.5
AWJ	68	65	1,533,232	102,637	61	66 — 0.0
Real Estate			89,074,129	3,544,651	1,321	873.97 ▲ 10.96

Trades						
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
KINV	81	80	42,000	3,378	4	81 — 0.0
FACIL	156	154	30,309	4,728	3	156 — 0.0
IFA	33.0	32.0	4,141,300	133,809	71	32.5 ▼ -0.5
NINV	99	97	515,874	50,634	17	99 ▲ 1.0
KPROJ	510	500	2,047,309	1,029,431	27	510 — 0.0
COAST	38.5	38.0	1,615,100	61,587	38	38.5 — 0.0
SECH	42.5	42.0	1,278,532	54,188	32	42.0 ▼ -0.5
SGC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	85 — 0.0
ARZAN	32.0	31.0	94,000	2,920	3	32.0 — 0.0
MARKAZ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	83 — 0.0
KMEFIC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	23.5 — 0.0
ALAMAN	49.5	48.5	1,746,026	84,962	38	48.5 ▼ -1.0
ALOLA	45.5	44.5	939,550	42,118	21	45.5 ▲ 0.5
ALMAL	21.0	20.0	4,757,385	96,459	58	20.5 — 0.0
GIH	30.0	28.5	5,843,217	171,046	84	29.5 ▲ 1.0
AAYAN	31.5	30.0	3,211,586	98,371	73	31.0 ▲ 0.5
BAYANINV	34.0	33.5	1,252,204	42,546	44	34.0 ▼ -0.5
OSOUL	62	62	500	31	1	62 ▲ 3.0
KFIC	34.5	34.5	2,148	74	1	34.5 ▼ -2.0
KAMCO	118	118	1,890	235	1	118 ▲ 4.0
NIH	62	61	98,319	5,998	3	62 — 0.0
UNICAP	46.5	45.0	1,001,503	45,933	34	46.0 ▲ 1.0
MADAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	12.5 — 0.0
ALDEERA	32.5	31.5	488,120	15,513	24	32.0 — 0.0
ALSALAM	44.5	44.0	637,000	28,180	22	44.5 — 0.0
EKTTITAB	37.0	36.5	9,932	363	5	37.0 ▲ 0.5
ALMADINA	41.5	41.0	687,045	28,193	21	41.5 — 0.0
NOOR	47.5	45.5	362,633	16,770	13	47.0 — 0.0
TAMINV	280	280	20,000	5,800	1	280 ▼ -5.0
EXCH	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,500 — 0.0
TAIBA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	75 — 0.0
KSHC	28.5	27.5	2,945,525	82,512	63	28.0 — 0.0
ASIYA	32.0	30.0	54,182	1,662	16	32.0 ▲ 1.0
GNAHC	35.0	34.0	1,029,303	35,532	33	34.0 — 0.0
AMWAL	22.0	20.0	1,272,015	26,817	44	21.5 ▲ 1.5
ALMUTIAZ	96	94	2,597,383	246,262	63	96 ▲ 2.0
MANAZEL	29.5	28.5	747,228	21,688	23	29.0 ▼ -0.5
NIND	126	124	3,005,020	372,646	53	126 ▼ -2.0
BIHC	35.5	33.5	23,791,720	585,756	242	34.0 ▲ 0.5
SENERGY	29.5	28.5	854,450	29,928	34	35.0 — 0.0
AGHC	59	58	270,500	15,836	14	58 — 0.0
KPPC	45.0	44.0	429,686	19,111	15	45.0 — 0.0
TAHSSILAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	41.0 — 0.0
JEERANH	53	48.0	83,000	3,027	6	53 ▲ 2.0
EKHOLDING	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	170 — 0.0
GFH	160	154	2,765,763	433,861	54	160 ▲ 4.0
INOVEST	75	75	234	18	2	75 ▲ 3.0
Financial Services			70,649,591	3,897,501	1,301	588.02 ▲ 4.70

Trades						
Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last
ASC	244	240	36,900	8,924	8	244 ▲ 2.0
OSOS	130	130	1,000	130	2	130 — 0.0
FUTURE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90 — 0.0
HAYATCOMM	48.0	45.5	49,000	2,231	8	47.5 ▲ 0.5
Technology			86,900	11,285	18	606.17 ▲ 2.05
SANAD	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	100 — 0.0
AFAQ	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	162 — 0.0
ALSHAMEL	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	460 — 0.0
EFFECT	38.0	38.0	34,355	1,305	1	38.0 ▼ -0.5
AJWAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	40.0 — 0.0
MASAKEN	63	58	1,772,520	106,465	68	59 ▼ -1.0
DALQAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	350 — 0.0
ALCID	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	90 — 0.0
MIDAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1,220 — 0.0
FLEX	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	45.0 — 0.0
THURAYA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	158 — 0.0
AMAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	54 — 0.0
Parallel Market			1,806,875	107,770	69	1042.38 ▼ -3.91

For more information, call Global Investment House on 1 80 42 42, www.globalinv.net



National Bank of Kuwait
Financial Markets
Daily Report
At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Global Stock Indices						
Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Dow Jones	19,756.85	19,796.43	39.58	▲	0.20	13.61
NASDAQ	5,444.50	5,412.54	-31.96	▼	-0.59	8.09
S&P 500	2,259.53	2,256.96	-2.57	▼	-0.11	10.37
Financial Times	6,890.42	6,922.47	32.05	▲	0.47	10

CHINA OUTPUT AND RETAIL SALES ACCELERATE IN NOV

BEIJING: China's industrial output and retail sales growth both accelerated in November, government data showed yesterday, in a sign of stabilization for the world's second-largest economy. Industrial output rose 6.2 percent in the month, ahead of both October's figures and economists' predictions of 6.1 percent in a Bloomberg News survey.

Retail sales rose 10.8 percent on-year in nominal terms, up from 10.0 percent in October, while fixed-asset investment, a gauge of infrastructure spending, rose 8.3 percent in the first 11 months of the year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said. China is a key driver of the world economy but its expansion has slowed significantly from the double-digit years of the past.

Now Beijing is seeking to make a difficult transition away from its dependence on exports and heavy industry towards consumption as the

engine of the economy. After a bumpy start to the year it has shown resilience in the last quarter, aided by ample credit policies and the weakening of the yuan currency, making Chinese goods cheaper to buy for overseas customers.

Total retail sales reached 3.1 trillion yuan (\$450 billion) in the month, boosted by the annual "Singles Day" online sales promotions for November 11. Together the data show that China's recovery "remains intact heading into 2017", Julian Evans-Pritchard of Capital Economics said in a note.

But as credit growth has cooled and the red-hot property sector faces a correction, the economy is likely to begin slowing again next year, he added. And the outlook for China's performance is clouded by uncertainty over the coming US presidency of Donald Trump, who has promised to declare China a currency manipulator

and threatened to slap 45 percent punitive tariffs on imports from the country to protect American jobs.

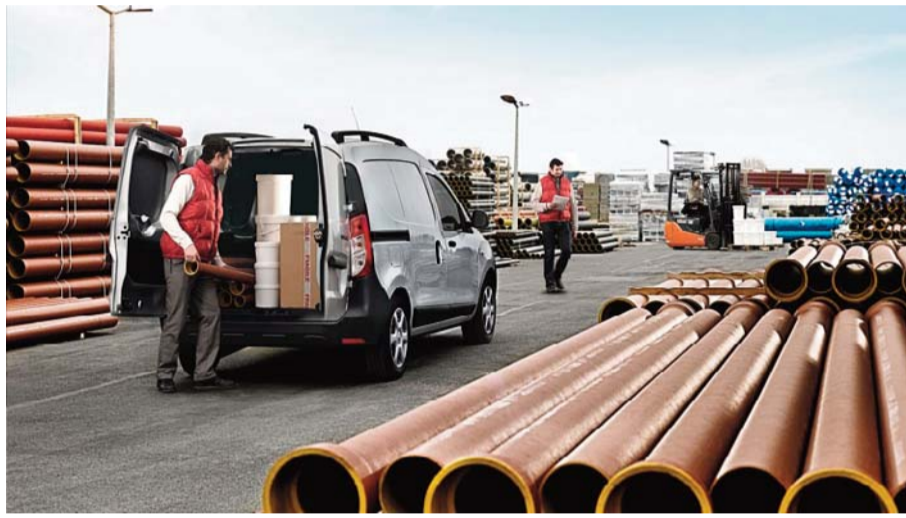
In an interview broadcast Sunday Trump doubled down on tough rhetoric toward Beijing, saying he did not see why the US must "be bound by a one China policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade".

In a statement, NBS analyst Mao Shengyong described economic development as "steady and sound" in November, citing factors including supply-side structural reform, stimulus policies, and improved factory efficiency.

But he added: "We should be aware that domestic and external conditions are still complicated with a number of unstable and uncertain factors." Investors shrugged at the stronger-than-expected results, with Chinese stocks edging down by the noon break. —AFP



HUAXIAN: This picture taken on Monday shows a textile worker at a factory in Huaxian County, in China's northern Henan Province. China's industrial output and retail sales growth both accelerated in November, government data showed yesterday. —AFP



RENAULT AL-BABTAIN INTRODUCES OFFER ON RENAULT DOKKER VAN

KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the authorized dealer of Renault vehicles in the State of Kuwait is still offering its customers an attractive offer on the Renault Dokker Van, the most robust and reliable light commercial vehicle available in its segment.

You can lease the Renault Dokker van for 99 KD monthly without any down payment, or purchase it for 2,999 Kuwaiti Dinars only. The offer includes a 5 year warranty or 200,000 km, free registration and 3rd party insurance upon the purchase of the Renault Dokker Van.

Aimed towards small business owners, the Renault Dokker van is a modern and an efficient transportation solution with an innate sense of practicality and versatility. It offers a 1.6L engine and the best load volume in its category with a carrying payload of 750 KG assisted with sliding doors and two asymmetrical rear doors, a loading capacity of 3.3m³ and a loading length of 1.9m; swiftly meeting the challenges of transport and delivery.

The Renault Dokker van is known to move with times. Its economic engine, low CO2 emissions and respect for both environment and customers' budget make it a truly model employee. The body design and proportions reflect generous interior space and a range of accessories to match the different needs of drivers.

The Renault Dokker exudes aptly the

fineness of Renault's automotive expertise, proving it to be the partner in business and progress. You can use this chance and buy the Dokker from Renault Al-Babtain store in Al-Rai.

Al-Babtain Group was founded in 1948, to present a model of honesty, integrity and total dedication, gaining a solid reputation in the State of Kuwait and the Middle East area. Today, Al-Babtain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East.

For more than 60 years, Al-Babtain Group has experienced continued success and a large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long-term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its sphere of activities; including automotive, technology, investment, information technology, industrial and Finance.

The automotive sector is the main activity within Al-Babtain Group's business, which represents some of the bestselling brands in Kuwait, in addition to heavy equipment. The Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC) is proud to be the exclusive agent and distributor of leading Japanese, European (French) and Chinese vehicles in Kuwait such as Nissan, Infiniti Renault & Citroen.



UBM TO BUY ALLWORLD IN ASIA PUSH, MIDEAST FORAY

DUBAI: Event organizer UBM Plc said it would buy Asian exhibitions company Allworld for \$485 million in cash, strengthening its position in Asia and providing an entry into the Middle East. The deal, which will be funded with a new \$365 million bridge facility and by part of the proceeds from UBM's sale of PR Newswire, is expected to add to 2017 earnings.

The cash consideration, which values Allworld on a debt and cash free basis, looked like a "very high price", Investec analysts wrote in a client note. Allworld, which operates tradeshows in 11 countries, posted revenue of \$97.2 million in the 12 months ended June 30. The company complements UBM's existing portfolio in food and hospitality, and packaging and manufacturing, while allowing UBM to enter the oil and gas market.

"Oil and gas is probably nearer the bottom of the cycle than the top, so it's a good time to be entering oil and gas," UBM Chief Executive Tim Cobbold told Reuters. Oil closed at \$55.7 a barrel on Monday, down from highs of about \$100 a barrel in June 2014.

N+1 Singer analyst Johnathan Barrett said major exhibition operators had switched their

acquisition focus from emerging markets to the United States. "UBM is doing the opposite and lifting its exposure to Asia and gaining a Middle East presence as well. Near term this looks likely to be questioned but may well pay off in the long term if the Middle East and Asia regain confidence," Barrett added.

Peer Informa Plc in September agreed to buy US-based information services company Penton for 1.18 billion pounds (\$1.50 billion). UBM spent \$972 million to buy US trade show organizer Advanstar in 2014, which analysts said was dilutive to the company's Asia exposure. "I don't think we're moving in the polar opposite direction at all," Cobbold said, adding that post the deal emerging markets including China would account for about 40 percent of group sales, up from 36 percent. UBM unveiled its "events first" strategy in November 2014, with a focus on spending resources on its largest and most profitable shows and acquisitions. UBM would continue to make bolt-on acquisitions and keep looking at "bigger" ones, Cobbold added. JP Morgan Cazenove provided financial advice to UBM, while BCMS advised Allworld. —Reuters

BOURSA KUWAIT UNVEILS MARKET MAKING MODEL

MARKET MAKING TOOL TO BOOST LIQUIDITY OF SHARES

KUWAIT: Boursa Kuwait yesterday announced that it has issued detailed regulations on market making after the adoption of these regulations by the Boursa Kuwait Board of Directors. Market making is considered as a crucial tool that serves in boosting liquidity of securities listed in the stock market, as well as generally in enhancing efficiency of the market as well as in activating its tools.

Khaled Al-Khaled, Chief Executive Officer and Vice Chairman of Boursa Kuwait said: "Market making is a crucial part of stock exchange operations across the world. It serves as an important tool to boost liquidity of shares by creating specific markets, thereby helping improve the efficiency of markets and assisting in economic growth overall. Applying market making principals to Boursa Kuwait is a major milestone towards developing the Kuwaiti capital market as a major regional trading hub, which will benefit Boursa Kuwait and the Kuwaiti economy in general. "I would like to thank the CMA for



Khaled Al-Khaled

their wise counsel, their guidance on this matter, their conscientious response to the market making model that was produced by Boursa Kuwait, and their efforts in amending regulations pertaining to the CMA Laws in a way that are aligned with this new model.

"I would also like to extend my thanks to Boursa Kuwait team for their dedication and efforts in creating the right legal and technical

conditions in order to prepare for the launch of market making operations in Kuwait. A comparative and thorough case study was prepared



in order to reach to the best model that fits international standards as well as the nature of Kuwaiti market," he said.

Market Makers must first be licensed by the Capital Markets Authority before practicing their activities, then registered and meet criteria laid down by Boursa Kuwait. Once registration is complete Market Makers will only trade in the specific security they are registered

for, earning rebates which are based on meeting their various obligations.

Boursa Kuwait is a private entity that was established in April 2014, with the aim to take over and manage the Kuwait stock market and progressively transition its operations, while delivering on three main fronts; transparency, efficiency and accessibility.

Officially licensed on 3 October, 2016, Boursa Kuwait's mission is to upgrade the exchange infrastructure and business environment to international standards and create a robust, transparent and fair capital market platform that services all relevant asset classes, whilst focusing on clients' interests. Its mission driven strategy focuses on developing the overall market status and addressing market needs through the provision of investment tools, restructuring the market to increase its competitiveness and liquidity, and attracting investments with a view to issue an IPO to Kuwaiti citizens.

GARY COHN: ANOTHER GOLDMAN BANKER IN TRUMP'S INNER CIRCLE

NEW YORK: Gary Cohn, tapped Monday by President-elect Donald Trump to head the White House's National Economic Council, is second-in-command at investment banking giant Goldman Sachs, which he once hoped to lead. Cohn, 56, has worked on Wall Street since the 1990s and is one of the firm's best known public faces. He makes frequent television appearances to talk about the health of financial markets and the global economy.

Before joining the Wall Street powerhouse, the married father of three—who comes from a humble family background and struggled with dyslexia in his youth—started out selling windows and worked in the steel industry. At Goldman, Cohn was in charge of some of the firm's cash-cow businesses, including the division overseeing fixed income, currency and commodities. As president and chief operating officer, he has been heir apparent to CEO Lloyd Blankfein since 2006.

But after it became clear that Blankfein, who announced early this year he was "probably cured" of lymphoma, would not hand over the reins any time soon, senior figures in the bank began to consider Cohn's future there, according to a person with knowledge of the matter.

A Goldman government?

Cohn's selection for the Trump administration will require a new line of succession within Goldman, and the bank could take advantage of the opportunity to promote a new generation of leaders. It doubtless also will fuel criticism that Trump's inner circle is packed with Goldman alumni, with Cohn being the fourth to join.

Trump already had picked Steven Mnuchin to lead the Treasury Department, and Steve Bannon as chief strategist in the White House, while Anthony Scaramucci is a member of Trump's transition team, all former Goldman bankers. The nominations fly in the face of Trump's attitude toward the bank on the campaign trail, when he attacked rival Hillary Clinton's ties to it.



NEW YORK: This file photo taken on October 5, 2016 shows President of Goldman Sachs, Gary Cohn, and Lisa Pevaroff attending the Jon Bon Jovi Soul Foundation's 10 year anniversary at the Garage in New York. President-elect Donald Trump on Monday named Gary Cohn to lead the White House's National Economic Council. —AFP

In the campaign's closing moments, Trump went as far as to use Blankfein's face in a TV spot accusing elites of illegitimately holding the "levers

of power," drawing outraged accusations of anti-Semitism.

But the bank's shares have soared more than 32 percent since Trump's shock triumph at the polls last month over Clinton—a \$24 billion capital gain in about a month. Two former Treasury secretaries were Goldman alumni: Robert Rubin and Henry Paulson, under the Bill Clinton and George W. Bush administrations.

Top economic advisor

Clinton established the National Economic Council in 1993 to advise the president on domestic and global economic policy, and named Rubin to head the body. Larry Summers and Larry Lindsey were subsequent leaders.

President Barack Obama's NEC director is Jeffrey Zients. Trump has promised tax cuts, boosts to infrastructure spending and the return of industrial jobs to the United States, all while dismantling the post-crisis financial reforms of the Obama administration and calling US trade agreements into serious doubt. He said Cohn will be his key advisor.

"As my top economic advisor, Gary Cohn is going to put his talents as a highly successful businessman to work for the American people," Trump said in a statement. "He will help craft economic policies that will grow wages for our workers, stop the exodus of jobs overseas and create many great new opportunities for Americans who have been struggling."

Cohn, who during the campaign had been a supporter of Florida Senator Marco Rubio, but who also contributed to Democrats in the past, said he was honored to be chosen.

"I share President-elect Trump's vision of making sure every American worker has a secure place in a thriving economy, and we will be completely committed to building a nation of strength, growth and prosperity," Cohn said. —AFP

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percent in the first 11 months of the year, the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) said. China is a key driver of the world economy but its expansion has slowed significantly from the double-digit years of the past.

Now Beijing is seeking to make a difficult transition away from its dependence on exports and heavy industry towards consumption as the engine of the economy. After a bumpy start to the year it has shown resilience in the last quarter, aided by ample credit policies and the weakening of the yuan cur-

cy, making Chinese goods cheaper to buy for overseas customers.

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But as credit growth has cooled and the red-hot property sector faces a correction, the economy is likely to begin slowing again next year, he added. And the outlook for

China's performance is clouded by uncertainty over the coming US presidency of Donald Trump, who has promised to declare China a currency manipulator and threatened to slap 45 percent punitive tariffs on imports from the country to protect American jobs.

In an interview broadcast Sunday Trump doubled down on tough rhetoric toward Beijing, saying he did not see why the US must "be bound by a one China policy unless we make a deal with China having to do with other things, including trade". —AFP

BURGAN BANK WINS INTERNATIONAL QUALITY CROWN AWARD DIAMOND CATEGORY FROM BUSINESS INITIATIVE DIRECTIONS

KUWAIT: Borgan Bank announced that it has won the prestigious International Quality Crown award in diamond category from Business Initiative Directions (BID), an organization which recognizes companies

that implement and promote a strong culture of quality, and recognizes progress, achievement, improved productivity and solutions proposed by organization and business leaders who have reached a level

of success which before had seemed unreachable.

The recent award is a token of appreciation to Borgan Bank's continuous commitment to the provision of best interna-

tional practice and quality control which reach optimal levels to its clients, while applying industry best practice methods that support the delivery of a trusted banking service.

Venkat Menon, Borgan Bank Group Chief Operations & Technology Officer said: "The prestigious International Quality Crown Award reflects Borgan Bank's application of industry leading quality solutions which supports our customers' financial needs. We are proud to be recognized as a prestigious outstanding company in the business world and we will continue to exert our utmost efforts in securing quality assurance in every aspect of our operations."

"This latest achievement builds on Borgan Bank's attainment of International awards and marks the Bank as an industry leader in the Banking sector," he added.

Receiving this award for the third time is another achievement the bank is proud of, through applying best international quality standards and being committed to remain from the influential leaders in the banking sector.

Established in 1977, Borgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a

growing retail, and private bank customer base. Borgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Borgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has its credit distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.

Borgan Bank, a subsidiary of KIPCO (Kuwait Projects Company), is a strongly positioned regional Bank in the MENA region.



GULF BANK AWARDED 'ENTERPRISE RISK TECHNOLOGY IMPLEMENTATION IN 2016' 'BEST IN MIDDLE EAST' AWARD FOR THIRD TIME THIS YEAR

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is pleased to announce that it has been awarded the 'Enterprise Risk Technology Implementation of the Year in the Middle East' by The Asian Banker. This is Gulf Bank's third recognition for excellence in the Middle East region in 2016, having previously won 'Best Credit Card Product of the Year in the Middle East' and 'Best Internet and Mobile

at Gulf Bank, said: "Gulf Bank is proud to be the recipient of this prestigious award recognizing the Bank's efforts and continuous commitment to providing innovative solutions to real customers' problems. We are proud that Gulf Bank was selected for this award from all the applicants across the Middle East and North Africa region. We are also extremely pleased that this

requirements of the project were taken directly from feedback from both our consumers and corporate customers and have led to significant improvements in customer service and a dramatic reduction in operational risk."

All banks and non-bank financial institutions (including insurance companies, brokerages, credit companies and finance companies) with operations in Middle East and Africa were eligible for submission. The entrants for the Enterprise Risk Technology Implementation award were assessed based on detailed descriptions and documentations of how the strength of the institution's risk management core competencies was applied.

Prior to its selection, Gulf Bank was carefully assessed by a panel of industry experts and judges across a stringent set of criteria to determine the Bank's overall performance and services compared to other local banking competitors. The selection process began in August and finished in October, and involved a team of researchers working in tandem. The initial selection is through a survey and desk research done by the research team at the Asian Banker. The identified candidates are then subject to further scrutiny through interviews and their names are put into a poll that is distributed to The Asian Banker's 38,000 readers. After the results of the poll and the research have been compiled, a short-list of candidates is then submitted for review by the international board of advisors for a final evaluation and recommendation to determine which candidate should receive the award. The exemplary implementations are subsequently documented and published as research noted in the Risk and Regulation Working Group, the Asian Banker's repository of best practices in the industry.



Security Technology Implementation of the Year in the Middle East' from The Asian Banker. Gulf Bank received the award at a ceremony following the 'Future of Finance Middle East and Africa Dialogue' at the Ritz Carlton DIFC Hotel in Dubai. The Asian Banker is one of Asia's leading consulting companies in financial services research, benchmarking and intelligence.

Commenting on this award Peter Roberts, General Manager for Information Technology

is the third award the Bank has received for excellence in the Middle East region in 2016."

Roberts emphasized the Bank's ability in delivering robust projects and integrating its risk capabilities by saying: "We created a Transactional Banking Platform which was capable of solving real customer problems for our corporate clients by automating the end-to-end process of key customer transactions, including complex largely manual risk management components of the process. The

CHEVROLET ALGHANIM EXTENDS FREE SAFETY CHECKUP OFFER UNTIL YEAR-END

KUWAIT: As part of its aim to offer customers more opportunity to stay safe and benefit, Yusuf A. Alghanim & Sons Automotive, the exclusive distributor of Chevrolet vehicles in Kuwait, is excited to extend its free winter checkup promotion on all Chevrolet vehicles being serviced at the Chevrolet service centers until December 31st, 2016. The promotion has started on October 16th and saw a massive reception from customers ever since.

This special safety checkup entails a detailed inspection performed by a team of professionally trained service advisors using the latest tools and technology available for car inspection and service. The checkup covers the most important mechanical and electrical components related to a car's operation and safety, including disk brakes, tire treads and pressure, car battery, windshield wipers, front and rear lights, suspension, shock absorbers and controlling sticks.

Once the checkup has been performed, customers will receive an exhaustive report detailing the condition of the car, the required maintenance and pricing. With great savings on maintenance cost and professional service, customers can enjoy driving their Chevy safely this winter-a season known to initiate car malfunctions and other mitigating effects due to the extremely low temperatures.

The Yusuf A Alghanim & Sons Service Center in Shuwaikh is the biggest and most advanced automotive service center in the world, with 73,000 sq m

of built up area, servicing 1,000 vehicles every day. Throughout the facility, advanced technology is used to provide customers with reliable service performed by a team of proficiently trained technicians, on-site and ready to offer necessary advice and support as well as cost-effective operations to customers' vehicles.

In addition, the service center is furnished with spacious and comfortable lounges for customers whose cars are being attended and serviced. With a variety of TV channels, ready-to-use Internet stations, free wireless access, customers can relax and enjoy a sip of coffee from the café on-site as they utilize their time more effectively.

Chevrolet Alghanim encourages customers to take advantage of this free checkup before it's too late and certainly before their cars get untimely malfunctioned in the unbearably cold weather.

Customers can benefit from this amazing checkup offer by visiting either the Shuwaikh Service Center, located in Shuwaikh Industrial Area, Airport Road and opposite Kaifan Communication Center, from Saturday to Thursday, 7:00am till 7:00pm, and Friday, 2:00pm till 7:00 pm, or the Fahaeel Service Center, located in Al Dabbous Street, right side of Sultan Center, from Saturday to Wednesday, 7:30 am till 1 pm and from 2 pm till 6 pm, and Thursday, from 7:30 am till 1 pm.



ZAIN ANNOUNCES MOHAMMED AL-KHARAFI SECOND WINNER OF 4 PRIZES IN 'PAY ONLINE AND WIN'

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced the winner of the second week of its "Pay Online and Win" draw that will see a weekly postpaid winner of four valuable prizes when paying their bill using Zain's website or app as well as a grand prize at the final draw at the end of January.

Zain announced Mohammed Nasser Abdullah Al-Kharafi winner of 4 valuable prizes in the second week of the draw, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and a PlayStation 4 (1 TB).

The draw, held weekly until the 22nd of January 2017, will see one weekly winner of four valuable prizes, including iPhone 7, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months,

and an entertainment device. The grand prize winner, announced at the end of the campaign, will receive iPhone 7, iPhone 7 Plus, Touch Hotspot LTE-A with free 1.5 TB Prepaid Internet line valid for 3 months, and a PlayStation 4 (1 TB).

Postpaid customers will get one chance to enter the weekly draws as well as the final draw for every KD1 paid through Zain's digital channels, including the company's website (pay.kw.zain.com) and Zain's app available for iOS and Android.

Zain launched this exciting promotional campaign to reinforce its leadership position and its pledge in offering the best products and services to meet its customers' personal and professional telecommunications needs, who are considered Kuwait's biggest family of subscribers.

AL-SAYER BRINGS THE BEST TOYOTA OFFER OF 2016

KUWAIT: Mohamed Naser Al-Sayer & Sons, one of the Al-Sayer Group Holding Companies has announced the best Toyota offer of 2016 with special prizes with "end the year with a bang" special promotion.

Every customer is a winner with Toyota and Al-Sayer's special Toyota deals for the month of December are even more aggressive in terms of offering unrivaled value and benefits.

The December promotion which will be valid till the end of the month will entitle customers purchasing a brand new Toyota for the best offer in addition to registration benefits such as 5 years warranty, T-Connect service for 3 years and Musaada roadside assistance.



UPAC RECEIVES ISO 9001:2008 CERTIFICATION IN KUWAIT

KUWAIT: United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), a leading commercial real estate and facilities management company, recently acquired the ISO 9001:2008 certification for quality management systems by SGS Kuwait. The certificate was awarded following a stringent site audit of all UPAC managed facilities, the first time the company has received this certification.

ISO 9001:2008 is an internationally recognized quality management system standard that provides benefits through continual improvement, consistency in supply and increased marketing power with focuses on business processes. The certification reflects the company's commitment to achieving the highest standards of quality and environment management.

Nadia Akil, UPAC CEO said, "The certification demonstrates UPAC's commitment to continually improve its process to provide services that consistently meet customers' needs and expectations."

UPAC manages over 24,000 square meters of commercial space at the Kuwait International Airport, Sheikh Saad Terminal, and other prominent locations in the country. The Company is also developing Reem Mall in partnership with NREC, and has committed to investing, through its real estate subsidiary, up to \$224 million into the project over the next three years. Located in Abu Dhabi, Reem Mall will cover an area of 2 million square feet and is slated to become a major retail, leisure, and entertain-

ment destination once complete in 2018. UPAC is also credited with introducing and managing the first of its kind fully automated and pre-paid parking system in the airport. This system is aimed at improving current operations at the car park and reducing congestion during busy travel seasons. The company's other services include project management, consultancy and real estate development. Its customer base includes leading retailers, financial institutions, and entertainment companies.

Established in 2000, publicly listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange, and headquartered in Kuwait, UPAC is a leading commercial real estate and facilities management company with a specialization in Build Operate Transfer (BOT) initiatives. Its ser-

VICES cover project management and consultancy, real estate development as well as property and facilities management. UPAC manages over 24,000 sqm of commercial space at the Kuwait International Airport, Sheikh Saad Terminal and other prominent locations within the country. In 2015, UPAC partnered with the National Real Estate Company (NREC) for the development of the Reem Mall in Abu Dhabi. UPAC has committed to investing up to US\$224 million in the Reem Mall project over the next three years through its subsidiary, Al-Arfaj Real Estate Company. Reem Mall is one of the largest projects undertaken by UPAC and will soon be included in the company's portfolio of successful projects.

2017 THE YEAR OF....



Alastair Paterson

By Alastair Paterson,
CEO and Co-Founder, Digital Shadows

As we approach the year-end attention of course turns to what we can expect to see in 2017 and what we are security professionals need to be prepared for.

In many ways, 2016 was very much the 'Year of the Ransomware Threat,' and it is very hard to see that changing much next year. After all most cyber-crime is driven by hard cash and the fact remains that most ransomware and extortion attacks are successful.

Estimates from the FBI suggest ransomware could be worth \$1 billion this year but the agency pointed to a jump in cases where victims reported bigger losses, and also hinted that the actual ransom payment totals may be even larger since many choose not to report

the crime. So ransomware and extortion is not going away in 2017, but what else can we expect next year?

First, in 2016 there were some very high profile Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) and we can expect to see even more in 2017 with criminals making more use of techniques like Mirai to leverage IoT and networked devices to amplify their attacks. These sorts of DDoS attacks powered by cheap, insecure IoT devices could become more common, but they are also likely to become less lethal suppliers harden their defenses and device manufacturers adopt identity-based security to close vulnerabilities.

Second, I expect there will be a change in approach by the criminals using DDoS extortion attacks. Not only will they continue to go after larger demands for payment, but also they will

utilize malware like Mirai to target network enabled devices like routers and remote cameras to amplify the attacks and make them more prolonged and adaptive. We are becoming more used to the Internet of Things, but what if criminals turn this against us to demand money via extortion attempts? We have already seen IoT linked attacks in 2016 and this can only increase in 2017.

Third, in all the 'excitement' of IoT and DDoS attacks we cannot afford to lose sight of the continuing threat caused by data breaches. Whether deliberate or accidental, data breaches cost businesses millions of dollars each year in loss of business; brand damage and reputation. A recent IBM study found that the average cost of a data breach has hit \$4 million-up from \$3.8 million in 2015.

But while these three are likely to be the most common threats faced in

2017, it is important to mention how some threats are more relevant to some organisations than others. The most targeted sectors include healthcare, financial services, retail, and communications and media.

But in no way can any business or individual afford to be complacent. It is critical that you understand your individual threat model and plan in case the worst does happen. You also need to monitor inside and outside of your network and look at the threats revealed through the eyes of an attacker. Only then can you begin to ensure you have enough intelligence and awareness to manage the risks effectively for when the inevitable attack happens.

All in all it's critical that you make sure 2017 is the year you take control of your security intelligence and awareness.

CANON MIDDLE EAST PARTNERS WITH MEED TO HOST 'FRONTIERS OF INNOVATION' FORUM

Canon Middle East, the leader in imaging products and solutions, has partnered with MEED to host the 'Frontiers of Innovation' Forum. The Forum will be held on December 14, 2016 at the Oberoi Hotel in Dubai, and will provide an ideal platform for addressing how innovative technologies can help strengthen operational efficiency.

The key topics to be covered include the innovative possibilities of 3D printing, efficient connectivity through managed print services, and realizing the true potential through the use of revolutionary technology.

Canon Middle East speakers include Anurag Agrawal, Managing Director, Canon Middle East, who will highlight Canon's unique role within the UAE in supporting future business growth through cutting edge innovation and technology, and how company is supporting the industry with its up to date solutions and products.

Anurag Agrawal, said: "The Frontiers of Innovation Forum is a great opportunity for industry experts to meet and discuss innovative technologies, advancements and solutions across the spectrum of imaging solutions. We are very enthusiastic about hosting this Forum through which

we will be highlighting our most up to date products and innovations, while also discussing the latest trends in the industry." "Working with a highly insightful organization such as MEED will be a great opportunity as we will be collaborating to deliver industry insights and solutions. This is in line with our corporate philosophy of 'kyosei', meaning 'living and working together for the common good,'" he added.

Zabeen Bint Ahmed, Founder & Chief Innovation Officer, SEVIA added: "We are delighted to be a part of the conversation on innovation. Innovation is a solution to a problem. It is functional, practical, useful, and accessible and is also something in which there is a need for, whether the market knows it or not. It doesn't have to be sophisticated; sometimes the simplest innovations are the most ground breaking."

Becky Crayman, Program Director, Awards & Managed Events, MEED concluded: "MEED is pleased to announce the 'Frontiers of Innovation Forum, hosted by Canon'. In support of the UAE Vision 2021, we look forward to welcoming innovators from UAE government departments, who will learn important insights on innovation to drive efficiency, digitalizing and revolutionizing of processes, IoT and wearables, connectivity strategy, 3D printing and disruption in making things."

For more information on the Frontiers of Innovation Forum, follow us on #frontiers16, which will be our social media hub leading up to this exciting event.

TITANS OF NEW INDUSTRY SPRING \$1 BILLION CLEAN ENERGY FUND

INITIAL INVESTMENTS TO START NEXT YEAR

DALLAS: Some big names with big money say they plan to put more than \$1 billion into developing technologies that will reduce greenhouse-gas emissions and lower the price of energy.

Bill Gates said the fund plans to make its first investments next year and run for 20 years. A year ago, the co-founder of Microsoft Corp. started the Breakthrough Energy Coalition, whose members include Mark Zuckerberg, George Soros and Richard Branson, with a commitment to invest in new types of energy.

Monday's announcement comes less than a week after President-elect Donald Trump announced he will nominate the attorney general of Oklahoma, a climate-change skeptic, to lead the Environmental Protection Agency.

The fund, however, was in the works long before the election. It is the investing venture of a coalition formed in November 2015.

Gates is the chairman of a group of 20 investors who call their fund Breakthrough Energy Ventures. They want to speed innovation in the \$6 trillion energy market. At the top of the investors' list of criteria: nurture technologies with the potential to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least a half gigaton.

Initial investments next year

Gates said the fund plans to hire staff and make initial investments next year. The fund identified several areas for investment, and Gates highlighted an even more-targeted approach aimed at helping startups

that can reduce emissions from electricity generation, transportation, and industrial processes in steel-making, cement production and agriculture. "This fund is to get things at an early stage, so we're willing to take high risk," Gates said in an interview.

Given the net worth of the individuals involved, Gates acknowledged that \$1 billion might not seem like an overwhelming commitment. "When you meet these guys, they won't have sold one of their cars. There is no deep sacrifice involved here," Gates said. He left

open the possibility that the pool of money could grow, either from his investors or partners such as corporations and universities.

The initial \$1 billion sum, he said, is still much bigger than any previous clean-energy fund and is enough to signal the investors' seriousness.

Gates has said that the investments he makes won't matter as much as the choices that governments make. He believes there is broad support in Washington for energy research and development. But, he added, "it's hard to say"

whether clean energy continues to get government incentives or what energy policies a Trump administration might pursue. "I had a phone call with Trump a couple weeks ago, Gates said. "It wasn't some super-long call. I talked a little bit about the innovation in various spaces that got me excited. He seemed to think innovation might be a fruitful area and said that we should talk more. At some point we'll get into some depth."

Gates said he is absolutely convinced that goals for reducing carbon emissions will be met. "If you told me there was no innovation and not the kind of private, risk-taking capital we've got here, then I would be very pessimistic because year after year the problem would get worse," he said. "I see the work going on ... we are going to surprise people with the kind of innovation that will come out of the Breakthrough Energy Ventures investment pool."

Separately, a report Monday suggested that a growing number of investors are considering dumping fossil-fuel stocks. Arabella Advisors said institutions and individual investors with more than \$5 trillion in assets are pledging to divest some of their holdings, double the amount of 15 months ago.

Environmentalists pointed to the report as evidence that the notion of divesting oil and coal holdings has spread from a few colleges to mainstream investors such as insurance companies and pension funds. —AP



BANGKOK: In this Oct 11, 2016, file photo, Jack Ma, founder and chairman of Alibaba, delivers a speech titled "A Conversation on Entrepreneurship and Inclusive Globalization" at the Foreign Ministry. —AP

COLORADO INTERNET-TAX CASE COULD CHANGE ONLINE SHOPPING

DENVER: Buying things online could get pricier after the US Supreme Court rejected a case Monday that could ultimately lead to states collecting billions of dollars in sales taxes lost to increasingly popular internet retailers.

The court would not hear a challenge to a Colorado law requiring online sellers such as Amazon.com to notify customers and the state how much they owe in taxes. State officials have estimated that Colorado alone has been missing out on as much as \$172.7 million a year.

At least three other states - Louisiana, Oklahoma and Vermont - have passed similar laws that could take effect given the resolution of the Colorado case. Though the court didn't endorse Colorado's law and could even weigh in against it if given a different case, other states are likely to see Monday's move as a green light to step up collection efforts. That comes despite a 1992 Supreme Court decision saying retailers must have a physical presence in a state before officials can make them collect sales tax.

A change is coming

Online shoppers always have owed state sales taxes on their purchases, but the rule has been widely ignored. States have spent years examining ways to capture those lost tax dollars, but their options are limited when the retailers are not based in the state. So-called Amazon taxes that started in New York have not been adequate to fill the widening gap, said Mark Behlke, director of budget and tax policy for the National Conference of State Legislatures.

Sales taxes account for about a third of revenue in many states, more in those with no income taxes, such as Texas and Florida. And with online sales going up about 15 percent a year, states are increas-

ingly feeling the effects of those taxes going unpaid.

The Colorado Legislature found a possible solution in 2010 when it passed a law requiring online retailers to notify customers to pay sales tax and report purchases to the state. That's not the same as demanding tax payments from out-of-state retailers.

The Data and Marketing Association sued, and a federal judge put the law on hold in 2012. A year later, a federal appeals court sided with Colorado. The association appealed to the nation's highest court, arguing that the law would meddle in interstate com-

merce. The marketing group said the Supreme Court's refusal to hear the case could have far-reaching implications for online shoppers. "It will only encourage other states to adopt similar laws and regulations that are designed to put arbitrary burdens on out-of-state sellers," association spokesman Mike Uehlein said in a statement.

Supporters of Colorado's law agreed it sends a strong signal that reporting requirements don't infringe on constitutional protections for interstate commerce. "This settles the issue, once and for all, that the 2010 law is constitutional, it was not an undue burden on

business," said Tim Hoover, spokesman for the Colorado Fiscal Institute, which supported the law.

George S. Isaacson, who represented the marketing group and teaches constitutional law at Bowdoin College, said the high court may simply be waiting to see more states copy Colorado. "Colorado was the first state to pass such a law, and the Supreme Court may be waiting to see how other state legislatures and lower courts deal with this type of highly controversial state legislation before addressing the constitutional issues," Isaacson said in a statement. —AP



HAVANA: Google chairman Eric Schmidt and Mayra Arevich Marin, president of state telecom monopoly Etecsa, sign an agreement on Monday, Dec 12, 2016. —AP

GOOGLE, CUBA SIGN ALLOWING FASTER ACCESS TO COMPANY'S DATA

HAVANA: Google and the Cuban government signed a deal Monday allowing the internet giant to provide faster access to its data by installing servers on the island that will store much of the company's most popular content.

Storing Google data in Cuba eliminates the long distances that signals must travel from the island through Venezuela to the nearest Google server. More than a half century after cutting virtually all economic ties with Cuba, the US has no direct data link to the island. The deal removes one of the many obstacles to a normal internet in Cuba, which suffers from some of the world's most limited and expensive access. Home connections remain illegal for most Cubans and the government charges the equivalent of a month's average salary for 10 hours of access to public WiFi spots with speeds frequently too slow to download files or watch streaming video.

No effect on public access to the internet

The agreement does not affect Cuba's antiquated communications infrastructure or broaden public access to the internet, but it could make Google websites like YouTube or Gmail up to 10 times faster for users inside Cuba. Content hosted by other companies will not be affected.

Neither Google chairman Eric Schmidt nor Cuban officials spoke to the press after the signing ceremony in Havana.

In a blog post, Marian Croak, Google's vice president for access strategy and emerging markets, and Brett Perlmutter, head of strategy and operations for Google Cuba and the lead negotiator of the deal, said, "Cubans

who already have access to the internet and want to use our services can expect to see an improvement."

Cuban officials appear to be accelerating their approvals of deals with US companies in an attempt to build momentum behind US-Cuba normalization before President-elect Donald Trump takes office next month. The Google pact was announced less than a week after Cuba gave three US cruise companies permission to begin sailing to the island next year. Officials familiar with the negotiations say other deals, including one with General Electric, are in the works.

The US and Cuba have struck a series of bilateral deals on issues ranging from environmental protection to direct mail since the declaration of detente on Dec. 17, 2014, but business ties have failed to keep pace. The Cuban government has blamed the US trade embargo on Cuba. Many US businesses say Cuba has been moving on most proposals so slowly that some suspect the government has been deliberately limiting the development of economic ties.

The Google program could provide ammunition for US advocates of closer ties with Cuba. Both pro-detente forces and those arguing for a hard line on President Raul Castro's single-party government have been pushing for Cubans to have better access to information.

If the Google deal proves to truly improve internet access for a significant number of Cubans, it ties information access to US-Cuban detente in a way that could prove politically difficult to undo for anti-Castro officials in the incoming Trump administration. —AP



PHOENIX: In this Dec 2, 2013 file photo, Amazon.com employees organize outbound packages at an Amazon.com Fulfillment Center on "Cyber Monday" the busiest online shopping day of the holiday season. —AP

EUROPE'S OWN SATNAV, GALILEO, DUE TO GO LIVE

PARIS: Seventeen years and more than 10 billion Euros (\$11 billion) later, Europe's Galileo satnav system is set to go live Thursday, promising to outperform US and Russian rivals while boosting regional self-reliance.

Initial services, free to use worldwide, will be available only on smart phones and navigation boxes already fitted with Galileo-compatible microchips.

Some devices may only need a software update to start using the new technology,

and European Commission spokeswoman Mima Talko said several smartphone giants were already making chips compatible with it. "It will be the first time that users around the world will be able to be guided by Galileo satellites," said Lucia Caudet of the Commission, which funds the project.

Somewhat fuzzy at first, the signal will be boosted with help from satellites in the US military-run GPS system, growing stronger over time as orbiters are added to the now 18-strong Galileo network circling 23,222 kilometers (14,430 miles) above Earth.

According to its proud parents, the Commission and European Space Agency (ESA), Galileo should be fully operational by 2020, providing time and positioning data of unprecedented accuracy. "GPS allows a train to know which area it is in-Galileo will allow it to identify the track it is on," according to Jean-Yves Le Gall, president of France's CNES space agency, one of ESA's 22 country members.

Such precision would also be invaluable for safer driverless cars and nuclear power plants, as well as better telecommunications.

Setbacks

The civil-controlled service is also of great strategic importance for Europe, which relies on two military-run services-GPS and Russia's GLONASS, which provide no guarantee of uninterrupted service.

It will be interoperable with these, but also completely autonomous. "Having a sys-

tem that is somewhat independent of the US system that is controlled by the military is probably a good thing," explained George Abbey, a senior fellow in space policy at Rice University in Houston, Texas.

This would be especially pertinent "if there were some conflicts or disagreements... that would cause the United States to have to limit GPS," he told AFP. Named after Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei, the project was first approved with an initial budget of around three billion Euros and plans to be operational by 2008. But it has suffered several technical and budgetary setbacks, including the launch of two satellites into the wrong orbit in 2014. The European Commission expects the project will ultimately be an important commercial venture. Almost 10 percent of Europe's gross domestic product is thought to depend on satellite navigation today-a figure projected to grow to about 30 percent by 2030.

By 2020, says the commission, the global satnav market will be valued at about 244 billion euros.

Billionth of a second

Galileo itself is expected to add some 90 billion Euros to the EU economy in its first 20 years. The system's groundbreaking accuracy is the result of best atomic clocks ever flown for navigation-one per satellite-accurate to one second in three million years. A mere billionth-of-a-second clock error can mean a positioning error of up to 30 cen-

timeters (12 inches). Galileo also has more satellites than either GPS or GLONASS, and better signals which carry more information.

With these features, Galileo's free Open Service will be able to track positions to within a meter (3.3 feet), compared to several metres for GPS and GLONASS. Its signal will eventually reach areas where none is possible today-inside traffic tunnels and on roads where high buildings shield radio waves from some satellites. A paying service will allow clients to track locations even closer, to within centimeters, and governments will have access to an encrypted continued service for use in times of crisis.

Faster rescue

Another key feature is a service allowing rescuers to locate people lost at sea or in the mountains much faster than before. Currently, satnav technology can take up to three hours to track a person to within a 10-kilometre (six-mile) range.

"With Galileo's Search and Rescue Service, the detection time is reduced to 10 minutes and the localization is reduced to less than five kilometers," Caudet told AFP. Satellite navigation works by ultra-precise clocks in orbit broadcasting their time and position to Earth via radio waves travelling at the speed of light.

Anyone with a receiver can combine data from at least three satellites to determine their position, speed and local time on Earth. —AFP



KOUROU, French Guiana: This file photo taken on November 17, 2016 shows a handout released on November 17, 2016 by the European Space Agency (ESA), the Center national d'etudes spatiales (CNES, the French government space agency) and the Arianespace satellite launch company shows the Ariane 5 rocket with a payload of four Galileo satellites lifting off from ESA's European Spaceport. —AFP

MOSUL DOCTORS STRUGGLE TO SAVE CIVILIANS ON IRAQ FRONT LINE

LIBERATED AREAS STILL UNDER ATTACK

MOSUL, Iraq: A crowd of men rushed through the narrow hallway of Mosul's al-Zahra clinic carrying a slight 10-year-old boy. Yousef Oday's face was covered in blood. A team of doctors quickly gathered around his cot. "What happened to you?" one of the men asked. "I have no idea. I was bleeding on one side," the boy said. He didn't make another sound, lying motionless as a doctor put an IV into his arm. His eyes were wide and pupils dilated.

east is being pushed forward in two columns: one led by the Iraqi army's 9th Division and the other by the special forces. In some places, Iraqi forces are just over two kilometers (1.2 miles) from the Tigris River that splits the city. But along the main highway that cuts through the center of Mosul's eastern half, Iraqi forces have made hardly any advances at all.

The jagged edge leaves troops vulnerable to counterattacks, but

"This is nothing," whispered one of the nurses in the emergency room where Oday was being treated. "We have people who come in here without any arms or legs," she said, asking to only be identified by her first name, Malkiya, out of concern for her safety.

Doctors in the small clinic in eastern Mosul say that since the operation to retake the city began nearly two months ago, they've only received intermittent deliver-

ic to obtain antibiotics. Since the operation to retake Mosul began, temperatures have dropped and, without electricity or fuel, her children have all gotten sick.

The women spoke on condition of anonymity as they were still living in a Mosul neighborhood controlled by IS. "We have no protection," the mother said, walking inside the examination room and lifting the black veil she wore to travel to the clinic. He youngest daughter screamed as the nurse gave her an immunization shot.

During the first few battles of the Mosul operation, IS fighters largely fled the villages around the city, giving Iraqi and coalition commanders hope they would do the same inside the city. But as the battle reached the city's edge, intense resistance has repeatedly stalled advances and at times forced Iraqi forces to retreat.

Unlike in past fights where civilians were moved out of the way of front-line clashes, in Mosul, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi has asked civilians to stay in their homes. The move prevents massive displacement - Mosul is still home to an estimated one million people - but it also leaves thousands in harm's way and thousands more out of reach of aid organizations wary of operating close to the front.

The clinic inside Mosul estimates it has treated at least 800 severely wounded civilians since Iraqi forces first pushed into the city in early November. "All we can do is work as a stabilization unit," said Dr. Muhammad Hassan Ali, explaining that without the ability to perform surgery, most of the emergency cases he receives need to be transferred to a hospital in Irbil more than an hour's drive away across bad roads and through half a dozen checkpoints.

Oday, the young boy, lost his left eye, but the doctors at the clinic were able to bandage his wound and slow the bleeding. As quickly as he was rushed into the building, he was carried out into an ambulance bound for Irbil.

"He'll live," said Hussam, the doctor who treated him. "He's very lucky." —AP



MOSUL, Iraq: In this Wednesday, Dec 7, 2016 file photo, Yousef Oday, 10, who was wounded in the eye by Islamic State militants, is treated by doctors at the al-Zahra clinic. —AP

Oday was hit in the side of his head with a stray bullet as he was waiting in line to gather water from a well in eastern Mosul. Two other young men waiting with him were also shot. Dr. Ahmed Hussam methodically tended to Oday's wounds. "He's in shock," he explained.

While Iraqi forces announce daily advances, the city's civilians continue to be killed and maimed by indirect fire, clashes and counterattacks.

The Mosul front line in the city's

also thousands of civilians exposed to ongoing clashes as the operation slowly grinds forward.

Liberated areas still under attack

Oday was shot in al-Zahra, a neighborhood declared liberated nearly a month ago. Since then, Iraqi forces have captured nearly half a dozen other neighborhoods and districts, but have not managed to completely secure al-Zahra so that aid groups and supply trucks can access the hundreds of civilians still living there.

ies of supplies. Nurses say they're running out of basic items like clean bandages. In a hallway that's been converted into an emergency room, doctors say all they have are bottles of saline solution, gauze and iodine. Like nearly all of Mosul, the clinic also lacks running water.

Hundreds of other patients also filled the dim hallways waiting for antibiotics, cough syrup, allergy medicine or insulin. A woman and her three daughters said they walked 3 kilometers (1.8 miles) across a front line to reach the clin-



WASHINGTON: In this June 3, 2015 file photo, first lady Michelle Obama talks with children who participated in events with the "Let's Move!" campaign after preparing and eating food harvested from the White House Kitchen Garden, in the East Room at the White House. —AP

HOPEFUL SIGN IN OBESITY FIGHT? CHUBBY BABIES ON THE DECLINE

CHICAGO: A decline in chubby babies and toddlers is providing a glimmer of good news in the nation's fight against obesity. The trend was found in a study of children up to age 2 enrolled in a government nutrition assistance program for low-income women and children. Half of all US infants up to 12 months old are enrolled in the program.

The rate of youngsters at risk for obesity fell during the study, from almost 15 percent in 2010 to 12 percent overall in 2014, researchers from the federal Centers of Disease Control and Prevention reported Tuesday in the journal Pediatrics.

The rate declined in all ages studied. It was lowest - about 8 percent in 2014 - for the youngest infants, from 3 to 5 months, versus almost 15 percent among toddlers. The results were unexpected, given rising rates earlier in the decade, said CDC researcher David Freedman, the lead author. "People are thrilled," he said.

Echoing reports

Freedman said reasons are uncertain for the decline, but it came amid changes designed to improve nutrition and health in food packages, including more whole grains, fruits and vegetables. Also, breastfeeding among participating women increased in 2009 and that can protect against obesity.

The results echo a reported decline in older children in the program,

referred to as WIC for women, infants and children. Also previous CDC data showed a similar decline in all US youngsters from 2 to 5 years old, from about 14 percent in 2004 to 9 percent in 2014, coinciding with national campaigns targeting childhood obesity. Obesity rates tend to be higher in children from low-income families including WIC participants.

Dr. David Ludwig, director of obesity prevention at Boston Children's Hospital, called the results encouraging but said, "It's too soon to tell whether these new data represent a statistical fluke or evidence of real progress with the pediatric obesity epidemic."

The researchers analyzed WIC survey data from 2000 to 2014 involving almost 17 million infants and young children. Rates increased early on, then remained stable from 2004 to 2010 until the decline.

Doctors don't usually describe babies as obese, but measure their risk using a weight-for-length ratio. Those with a high ratio, generally heavier than 95 percent of their peers, face an increased chance of becoming obese later on.

Whether the decline has continued is uncertain and the study didn't track infants to see if they became overweight or obese later on. According to the CDC, US obesity rates total almost 18 percent among all 6- to 11-year-olds and nearly 21 percent among 12- to 19-year-olds. —AP

POLAR BEAR NUMBERS SEEN DECLINING A THIRD FROM ARCTIC SEA ICE MELT

ARCTIC: Rising temperatures that melt sea ice in the Arctic will probably reduce the polar bear population by a third over the next few decades, and the same warming trend is likely to worsen the decline of wild reindeer, scientists said on Monday.

The new findings by university and government researchers were presented as part of a panel discussion about climate impacts on wildlife during a meeting of the American Geophysical Union in San Francisco. The presentation was streamed live on the internet.

The polar bear research is drawn from new satellite data documenting a loss of Arctic sea ice - the animal's chief habitat - from 1979 to 2015, and forming the basis of projections in further declines of both ice and bears over the coming decades.

Polar bears currently number about 26,000, but their population is expected to diminish by some 8,600 animals over the next 35 to 40 years, the scientists said. At the time polar bears were

declared a threatened species in 2008, one study predicted they could vanish from two-thirds of their native range by mid-century.

Large reduction

The latest data better quantifies such an outcome. "There is the potential for a large reduction in the global population of polar bears over the next three generations if the sea ice loss continues at the rate we've seen it," said Kristin Laidre, a marine mammal ecologist at the University of Washington's Polar Science Center.

Polar bears, standing as tall as 11 feet (3.35 meters) and weighing up to 1,400 pounds (635 kg), use floating sea ice as platforms for everything from mating and rearing their young to hunting their preferred prey of ringed seals.

The study was led by the US Fish and Wildlife Service's Eric Regehr, who told Reuters habitat loss was unequivocal but that effects have varied among the world's 19 sub-popula-

tions of polar bears, whose range lies mainly within the Arctic Circle. He pointed to a region north of Alaska where the number has dropped sharply amid significant sea ice losses. Another population west of Alaska appears to have experienced less impact, but that area may sustain larger, healthier populations of seals and other polar bear prey, Regehr said.

A warmer climate also is thought to be a primary culprit in the rapid decline of wild reindeer and their close cousins, caribou, Andrey Petrov, head of the Arctic Center at the University of Northern Iowa, said at Monday's symposium.

Petrov's study of wild reindeer in Taimyr in northern Russia shows that herd's population has fallen to about 600,000 animals, from 1 million in 2000.

The Taimyr population, accounting for about 24 percent of all wild reindeer, is challenged by such factors as loss of young because of migration patterns hampered by a warming climate. —Reuters

S KOREA EXPANDS CULL TO CONTAIN BIRD FLU

SEOUL: South Korea said yesterday it was expanding a major bird flu cull to try and contain a damaging outbreak that has continued to spread during an all-consuming political crisis.

Since the first case of the highly pathogenic H5N6 virus was confirmed in mid-November, another 43 cases have been reported and close to 10 million chickens and ducks have already been slaughtered in farms across the country.

In a statement, the agriculture ministry announced plans to cull an additional 2.5 million birds, making it the worst bird flu outbreak since 2014 when nearly 14 million were slaughtered. The announcement came a day

after health authorities issued a second nationwide "standstill" order-effectively restricting workers at poultry farms from moving around the country for 48 hours in an effort to stop the virus from spreading.

There have been no cases of human infections from H5N6 in South Korea, although the virus killed six people in China between 2014 and April 2016. The World Health Organization warned earlier this year that the strain has caused "severe infection" in humans.

The current outbreak has coincided with a deepening political crisis that saw the impeachment last week of President Park Geun-Hye and has paralyzed her administration. —AFP

LACK OF FUNDS THREATENS MALARIA PROGRESS: WHO

LONDON: Global progress on controlling malaria risks stalling due to an "urgent need" for more funding, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned in its annual report Tuesday.

Overall, the number of new cases fell by 21 percent between 2010 and 2015, and mortality rates fell by 29 percent — 31 percent in the African region. But globally there were still 212 million new cases and 429,000 deaths last year, and 43 percent of the population in sub-Saharan Africa were not protected by treated nets or indoor spraying.

The WHO warned that "sustained and sufficient funding for malaria control is a serious challenge", saying that after a steep increase between 2000 and 2010, investment had "flat-lined". "In 2015, malaria funding totaled \$2.9 billion, representing only 45 percent of the funding milestone for 2020 (\$6.4 billion)," it said.

The United States provided about 35 percent of all malaria funding in 2015, while governments of countries with malaria provided about 32 percent, and Britain provided 16 percent. "We are definitely seeing progress," said Dr Pedro Alonso, director of the WHO Global Malaria Program, ahead of the report's

launch in London. "But the world is still struggling to achieve the high levels of program coverage that are needed to beat this disease."

Resistance to anti-malarial drugs is also a challenge, as is growing mosquito resistance to insecticides, the report said. The WHO however highlighted improvements in sub-Saharan Africa over the past year in providing help for pregnant women and children against malaria. "Malaria-related deaths among children under five in sub-Saharan Africa are at their lowest point in history," said Ray Chambers, the UN Secretary-General's special envoy for malaria. "This is largely attributable to the nearly 500 million insecticide-treated bed nets delivered over the past three years, the highest ever, along with significant expansion of diagnosis and treatment."

Deaths from malaria among the under fives globally have fallen by 69 percent since 2000 to 303,000 last year.

Sub-Saharan Africa was home to 90 percent of global malarial cases and 92 percent of deaths. "We must now not grow complacent, but drive forward to end the epidemic once and for all," said Chambers. —AFP



AUSTIN: In this July 13, 2013 file photo, abortion rights advocates, left, protest in the State Capitol as anti-abortion rights supporters pass them. —AP

LAWSUIT CHALLENGES NEW TEXAS RULES OVER FETAL REMAINS AGAINST SANITARY LANDFILL

AUSTIN: Advocacy groups filed a lawsuit yesterday seeking to prevent Texas from requiring hospitals and abortion clinics to bury or cremate fetal remains rather than disposing of them in a sanitary landfill, as they most often currently do with such remains and other biological medical waste.

The lawsuit filed in a federal court in Austin by the Center for Reproductive Rights and other groups contends that the rules set to take effect next Monday serve no medical purpose and are meant to shame women who seek abortions and make it harder for doctors to provide them. "Texas has failed to provide any credible evidence of what health benefit this might serve because there aren't any," Nancy Northup, the Center for Reproductive Rights' president, said on a conference call. "Women do not want these laws. Doctors do not want these laws. And the Constitution does not allow them."

Carrie Williams, a spokeswoman for Texas' Health and Human Services Commission, said the agency is reviewing the lawsuit and will respond "at the appropriate time." Louisiana and Indiana have similar requirements, but they are on hold due to court challenges.

Texas officials have denied that their new requirements are meant to shame women who get abortions or make things harder on abortion providers. In response to the more than 35,000 public comments it received about the proposed rule changes, the health department wrote it "believes the methods allowed by the rules will protect the public by preventing the spread of disease while also preserving the dignity of the unborn in a manner consistent with Texas laws."

Struck down

The new rules were proposed to the health commission at the behest of Republican Gov. Greg Abbott in July, just days after the US Supreme Court struck down anti-abortion laws that would have left Texas with 10 abortion clinics, down from more than 40 in 2012.

They would require fetal remains from miscarriages and abortions, regardless of the state of gestation, to be treated like those of a deceased person by having them buried or cremated. Cremated remains would still have to be buried or scattered.

Remains are currently most often disposed of in sanitary landfills, and that cost is included in the price of getting an abortion or otherwise undergoing treatment for a terminated pregnancy. Critics say cremation, and especially burial, would cost more and force women to have to cover the additional expenses.

Mandating burial or cremation "imposes a funeral ritual on women who have a miscarriage management procedure, ectopic pregnancy surgery, or an abortion," the lawsuit argues. "Further, it threatens women's health and safety by providing no safe harbor for sending tissue to pathology or crime labs."

Amy Hagstrom-Miller, president of Whole Woman's Health, which operates Texas abortion clinics and is a lead plaintiff in the case, said it would be absurd to require all fetal tissue to be disposed of in this way. "For every embryo. Even at five weeks. Even if you can't see it," Hagstrom-Miller said.

Republican state lawmakers also have filed bills that would codify the coming agency rule into Texas law. The GOP-controlled Legislature convenes Jan 10. —AP



CAIRNS, Queensland, Australia: This handout photo from Robert Willemse taken on December 10, 2016 and received on December 13, 2016 shows a python wrestling with a wallaby in the middle of a fairway on a golf course. —AFP

PYTHON EATS WALLABY ON AUSTRALIAN GOLF COURSE

SYDNEY: A routine round of golf has taken a uniquely Australian turn with stunned players finding a giant python wrestling with a wallaby on a fairway.

Robert Willemse was on the 17th hole at the Paradise Palms course in Cairns in north Queensland on Saturday when he heard that a four-meter (13-foot) scrub python was gorging on the native marsupial nearby. "It had (the wallaby) in a vice-like grip and it was swallowing it," Willemse, who regularly plays at the course, told AFP, having halted his game to take a look.

He snapped photos of the encounter before heading back to finish his round. "I heard later on... as other golfers and staff members came out to have a look at it, that it did actually succeed in swallowing it all and then it rolled into a dry

creek nearby and slithered away into the bush, probably to digest its rather large meal," he said. "There's a lot of wildlife in the tropical north," Willemse added, noting that wallabies, which resemble a smaller version of kangaroos, were a common sight on the fairways, although snakes were not.

Willemse said the scrub python—Australia's largest snake which can grow to 8.5 meters long—was likely to have dropped onto the unsuspecting wallaby from a tree. "The snake would never have been able to catch the wallaby in the open like where it was eating it," he said. "It looked like it might have dropped out of a tree, got a hold of (the wallaby), then there was a bit of a struggle and it rolled into the middle of the fairway." —AFP

DRUG GIVES LUNG CANCER PATIENTS FOUR EXTRA MONTHS

PARIS: Most lung cancer patients survived four months longer on an immunotherapy drug than those treated with chemotherapy, according to trial results published Monday.

Importantly, they also experienced fewer side-effects, researchers reported in The Lancet medical journal. Patients with non-small-cell lung cancer—which represents by far the majority—survived for 13.8 months on average on the drug called atezolizumab, compared to 9.6 months for those on chemotherapy, the

study authors said. And the difference was likely even bigger, as several participants on chemotherapy were given immunotherapy after the trial ended, possibly boosting their survival. "Atezolizumab reinvigorates patients' immune systems against cancer," the study's lead author Achim Rittmeyer of the University of Goettingen in Germany, said in a statement.

"Our trial has shown that this has significant results for their survival." Lung cancer is the most common cancer,

affecting some 1.8 million people in the world every year, said Rittmeyer. It is also the leading cause of cancer death in the world. According to the American Cancer Society, 80-85 percent of lung cancers are non-small-cell types. The trial recruited 850 patients without any remaining treatment options, and compared how long they survived—half on atezolizumab and the rest on chemotherapy, the standard treatment. Immunotherapy trains people's immune systems to attack tumor cells without killing healthy cells.

Chemotherapy, in contrast, targets all fast-dividing cells in the body, good and bad alike. Unlike viruses or bacteria, cancer cells are not intruders but our own cells gone haywire, which explains why they circulate undisturbed by the immune system. Still in its infancy, immunotherapy—including atezolizumab—is being tested on many cancer types. In October, America's Food and Drug Administration fast-tracked atezolizumab for the treatment of patients with non-small-cell lung cancer. —AFP

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Dr. Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem
د. فهد علي المخيزيم

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

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

THE APPLIED BEHAVIOR CENTER OF KUWAIT (ABC) RECENTLY HELD ITS ANNUAL END OF YEAR DINNER AT THE C-CLUB



The event featured a presentation by the Co-founder of ABC, Dr. Abdullah Al Ali showcasing the center's achievements for 2016, followed by an award ceremony to reward the ABC team for their strengths and achievements. "I am proud to say that 2016 has been a great year for ABC. In line with our mis-

sion and our vision for Kuwait, our greatest achievement to end 2016 is the integration of 10 children into mainstream education in the past 2 years and a further 14 students into special education schooling without assistance. We look forward to integrate more children into society in 2017, with hopes to work closely with the

Kuwaiti government to increase the number of children we assist. I would like to thank the ABC team for working day in and day out for the children and families, and the families for trusting us with their children, we are all one family here at ABC," stated Dr. Al Ali.

ABC is a center that provides evidence based early

intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The children receive individualized programs in a one to one setting, led by a professional team.

The center is committed to its mission to provide every child with ASD with the tools to unlock their potential and become independent children and adults.

JUMEIRAH MESSILAH BEACH HOTEL & SPA AWARDED WITH PRESTIGIOUS RECOGNITIONS IN CELEBRATION OF OUTSTANDING HOSPITALITY

Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, Kuwait's idyllic resort, takes home several leading awards this year for exceptional dining, the luxurious Talise Spa, and Conference & Events in recognition for excellence in the luxury hotel industry. The luxurious landmark was recently acknowledged as the country winner of Best Luxury Hotel in Kuwait for the 2nd consecutive year at the highly coveted World Luxury Awards ceremony in Doha, Qatar, on October 29th, 2016.

Attending the ceremony and receiving the award, General Manager Hakan Petek, said: "We are extremely proud and honored to have been recently awarded by the "World Luxury Hotel Awards" as the winner of Kuwait's Luxury Beach Resort for the 2nd consecutive year. This award represents the collective efforts of our hotel team and I would like to extend special gratitude to our guests and industry peers for making us the best in the category. The outstanding results will only further our commitment to carry on providing guests with memorable and exceptional experiences and inspiring us to strengthen the momentum of our achievements."



Regarded as the most scenic hotel in Kuwait, the luxurious landmark was also named The Luxury Hotel of Kuwait and Eco Luxury Hotel of Kuwait by Luxury Lifestyle Awards.

Judged and voted by the travel and tourism professionals worldwide, the World Travel Awards selected Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa as Kuwait's Leading Business Hotel for the 3rd consecutive year for its premier space for meetings and events. In fine-dining, Salt Seafood & International Restaurant was awarded for Eclectic International Cuisine by World Luxury Restaurant Awards. Known for its ornate and striking interior themed around the ocean, Salt Restaurant serves international and contemporary cuisine specializing in the freshest seafood dishes.

Talise Spa, the award-winning haven for relaxation, was voted by spa guests as the Best Luxury Destination Spa and Best Luxury Resort Spa in Kuwait by World Luxury Spa Awards for the 3rd consecutive year. The ultimate destination for wellness and signature spa experiences provides guests with bespoke treatments designed to match their needs and desires.



KALA (ART) DISTRIBUTES PRIZES TO WINNERS



Kala (Art) Kuwait "NIRAM 2016" Children's Day painting competition has concluded with the prize distribution to all winners at a colorful ceremonial function held at Indian Community School, Khaitan on December 8, 2016. The program was witnessed by Indian embassy officials, community leaders, school principals, art teachers and media representatives. The painting competition was held on the occasion of the birthday of late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of Independent India.

A K Srivastava, Second Secretary, Indian Embassy Kuwait, inaugurated the function and appreciated all winners for their fabulous painting works, which were displayed at the entrance. The 12th Anniversary souvenir of "NIRAM" was released by Srivastava by handing over the first copy to K Hassan Koya, Convener Public Relation and Mukesh V.P, Convener Souvenir.

The welcome speech was addressed by Rakesh P. D. General Secretary, Kala (Art) Kuwait. Organization President Jaison Joseph Chaired the function. NIRAM-2016 program reporting done by General Convener Sunil Kumar and Judging Assessment was briefed by Artist Sasikrishnan.





OOREDOO KUWAIT WINS 3 'CREATIVITY AWARD' TROPHIES

TWO TVC AWARDS AND AN AWARD FOR INNOVATIVE PUBLIC RELATIONS

Ooredoo, Kuwait's fastest network in 2016, has recently received three trophies in the fourth 'Creativity Awards' night by the Arab Media Forum. The ceremony was conducted under the patronage of Sheikh Salman Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs.

The event held Monday evening in Alraya Ballroom was attended by the Information Ministry Undersecretary Tareq Al Mizrim and the Undersecretary of New Media at the Ministry of Information Youssef Mustafa. The event was attended by a number of distinguished media personalities and celebrities from Kuwait and the region. Representing Ooredoo at the event were Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub, Public Relations and Internal Communication Senior Manager Fatima Dashti, and Branding Senior Manager Fatima Al-Mukhaizeem.



Ooredoo won in the categories of best Ramadan advert, best products and services advert, and innovative public relations team category. The awards shed light on Ooredoo's great efforts to engage with the local community, in creative and innovative ways and in areas and matters of their interest. Commenting on this, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub said: "We are proud to be winning such a distinguished award for the third consecutive year, and we dedicate this to our beloved customers for believing in us. We at Ooredoo are always striving to connect better with our

customers, which reflects from our deep-rooted values of caring, connecting and challenging. We're honored to see our efforts awarded here tonight, and we promise to deliver and engage even more with our customers."

Closer connection

Ooredoo's Ramadan TVC focuses on the true spiritual essence of Ramadan, and is entitled "Closer Connection" in reference to the connection between man and God.

The star-studded production's lyrics are written by Emirati lyricist Ali Al-Khawar and the music is composed by Kuwaiti composer Fahad Al-Nasser. The song is a duet performed by Saudi singer Rashed Al-Majed and Egyptian star Angham, and features Tunisian singer Lutfi Boushnaq. The lyrics focus on the simplicity of making a strong connection with God by asking for His help sincerely and honestly, and it touches on the themes of God's support and unconditional love to all people, regardless of their background.

The video features a number of well-known character, including Turkish actor Burak Ozcivit, Kuwaiti retired actress Raja Mohammed and the actor couple Fouad Ali and Haya Abdulsalam, in addition to a number of social media influencers known for their philanthropic work, such as Safa Al-Failakawi, an advocate of adoption, in addition to Kuwaiti university students in the USA, Group 228, Dr Majeda Al-Yatama, Sundus Al-Qattan, and Oman footballer Ali Al-Habsi.

The commercial is produced by Senyar Productions, and is directed by Italian director Marco Bellone. This is the first joint production between Ooredoo Group's operating companies in the region.

Creative messages

Ooredoo's second TVC, which one the category of best video for products and services, tracks the history of



mobile phones in Kuwait from the '80s through '90s all the way to the millennium and the present time. Clothing, furniture and colors in the TV commercial were inspired by 1980s and 1990s. The commercial was performed by the rising stars Dhari Abdul-Redha and Ilham Ali, with a cameo role for social media influencer Musaed Al Mutairi.

Central to this TVC is a comedic character, Abu Al Hesh,

whose comical situations reflect the evolution of mobile services in Kuwait.

The Arab Media Forum awards ceremony is considered as one of the renowned events that take place in the region, which brings together representatives from the different industries in one place to celebrate their tremendous revolutionary efforts in innovation and creativity.



ICSK ROCKS WITH CBSE KUWAIT CLUSTER ATHLETICS WIN 15TH TIME

The Indian Community School, Kuwait has once again emerged as an overall champion in the 18th CBSE Kuwait Cluster Athletics Meet 15th time in a row with 366 points. The Athletics meet was held from 3rd to 7th December, 2016 at Kheifan Stadium. It's indeed a proud moment for the entire ICSK fraternity as the glorious achievement of this monumental institution stands unbeatable in athletics with its long history. With the growing competition among all CBSE schools in Kuwait, ICSK has kept its point table rising year by year and maintained the supreme legacy.

The students of ICSK have also stood apart in merit as Ms Christa Filo Vincent of Class XII has set two new meet records in High Jump and Triple Jump respectively and bagged the individual championship in Under 19 Girls' category. Similarly, Arnold Andrade of class VII for Under 14 category, Dinah Stephen of Class IX and Hanan K. Abdulla of Class XII for Under 19 Girls' category have bagged prestigious individual championships. ICSK has also grabbed the overall category championships for Under 14 Boys with 40 points, Under 14 Girls with 37 points, Under 17 Boys with 68 points and Under 19 Girls

with 102 points respectively. Out of total 56 individual and 10 relay, ICSK scored 16 and 6 Gold, 17 silver, and 9 and 2 bronze medals respectively in these two types of events.

The management, principals, staff and students of ICSK family congratulated the winning team and appreciated the efforts of physical education teachers, who worked passionately for bringing this laurel to the school. The qualifying players will now be going India to participate in CBSE National Athletics Tournament, which will be held at Vadodara from 27th to 30th Dec. 2016.



Christa Filo Vincent



Dinah Stephen



Ms. Hanan K. Abdulla



Arnold Andrade



00:50 Gator Boys
01:45 Mountain Monsters
02:40 Mutant Planet
05:15 Wild Animal Repo
06:02 Mutant Planet
06:49 River Monsters (Best Of Series 1-5)
07:36 Swamp Brothers
08:00 Swamp Brothers
08:25 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
09:15 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
10:10 Wild Animal Repo
11:05 Tanked
12:00 Too Cute! Pint-Sized
12:55 Bondi Vet
13:50 Life On Earth: A New Prehistory
14:45 Gator Boys
15:40 Wild Animal Repo
16:35 Mutant Planet
17:30 My Wild Affair: The Elephant Who Loved Too Much
18:25 River Monsters
19:20 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
20:15 Tanked
21:10 The Real Lion Queen
22:05 Wild Animal Repo
23:00 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet

Grylls
13:05 How It's Made: Dream Cars
13:30 Storage Hunters UK
13:55 The Liquidator
14:20 Edge Of Alaska
15:10 Diamond River Hunters
16:00 Deadliest Catch
16:50 Fat N' Furious: Rolling Thunder
17:40 Wheeler Dealers
18:30 How It's Made: Dream Cars
18:55 How Do They Do It?
19:20 Diamond River Hunters
20:10 Storage Hunters UK
20:35 The Liquidator
21:00 Blue Collar Backers
21:50 Incredible Engineering
Blunders: Fixed
22:40 World's Top 5



00:00 America's Book Of Secrets
01:00 Tanked
02:00 Ancient Aliens
03:00 Missing In Alaska
03:50 Ancient Impossible
04:40 Patton 360
05:30 In Search Of Aliens
06:20 America's Book Of Secrets
07:10 The Universe
08:00 Ancient Aliens
09:00 Missing In Alaska
10:00 Ancient Impossible
11:00 Patton 360
12:00 In Search Of Aliens
13:00 America's Book Of Secrets
14:00 Ancient Aliens
15:00 Missing In Alaska
16:00 Ancient Impossible
17:00 Patton 360
18:00 In Search Of Aliens
19:00 Ancient Aliens
20:00 Missing In Alaska
21:00 Ancient Impossible
22:00 Patton 360
23:00 Last Days Of The Nazis



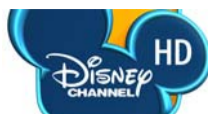
00:40 Forbidden: Dying For Love
01:30 Paranormal Lockdown
02:20 The Haunted
03:10 Six Degrees Of Murder
04:00 Suspicion
04:48 Love The Way You Lie
08:00 I'd Kill For You
08:50 I Almost Got Away With It
09:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
10:30 Love The Way You Lie
11:20 Blood Relatives
12:10 I Am Homecoming
13:00 I'd Kill For You
13:50 I Almost Got Away With It
14:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
15:30 Beauty Queen Murders
16:20 Blood Relatives
17:10 Monsters: When Moms Go Bad
17:35 Monsters: When Moms Go Bad
18:00 I'd Kill For You
18:50 I Almost Got Away With It
19:40 Deadline: Crime With Tamron Hall
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 Bad Dog
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?



00:00 Crime Stories
01:00 Deadly Wives
02:00 Killer Kids
03:00 The Jail: 60 Days In
04:00 Crime Stories
05:00 Deadly Wives
06:00 Killer Kids
07:00 The First 48
08:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
09:00 Homicide Hunter
10:00 It Takes A Killer
11:00 It Takes A Killer
12:00 Evil Up Close
13:00 Evil Up Close
14:00 Evil Up Close
15:00 The First 48
16:00 Hatton Garden Heist: One Last Job
17:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
18:00 Deadly Wives
19:00 Nightmare In Suburbia
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 It Takes A Killer
21:30 It Takes A Killer
22:00 The First 48
23:00 My Crazy Ex



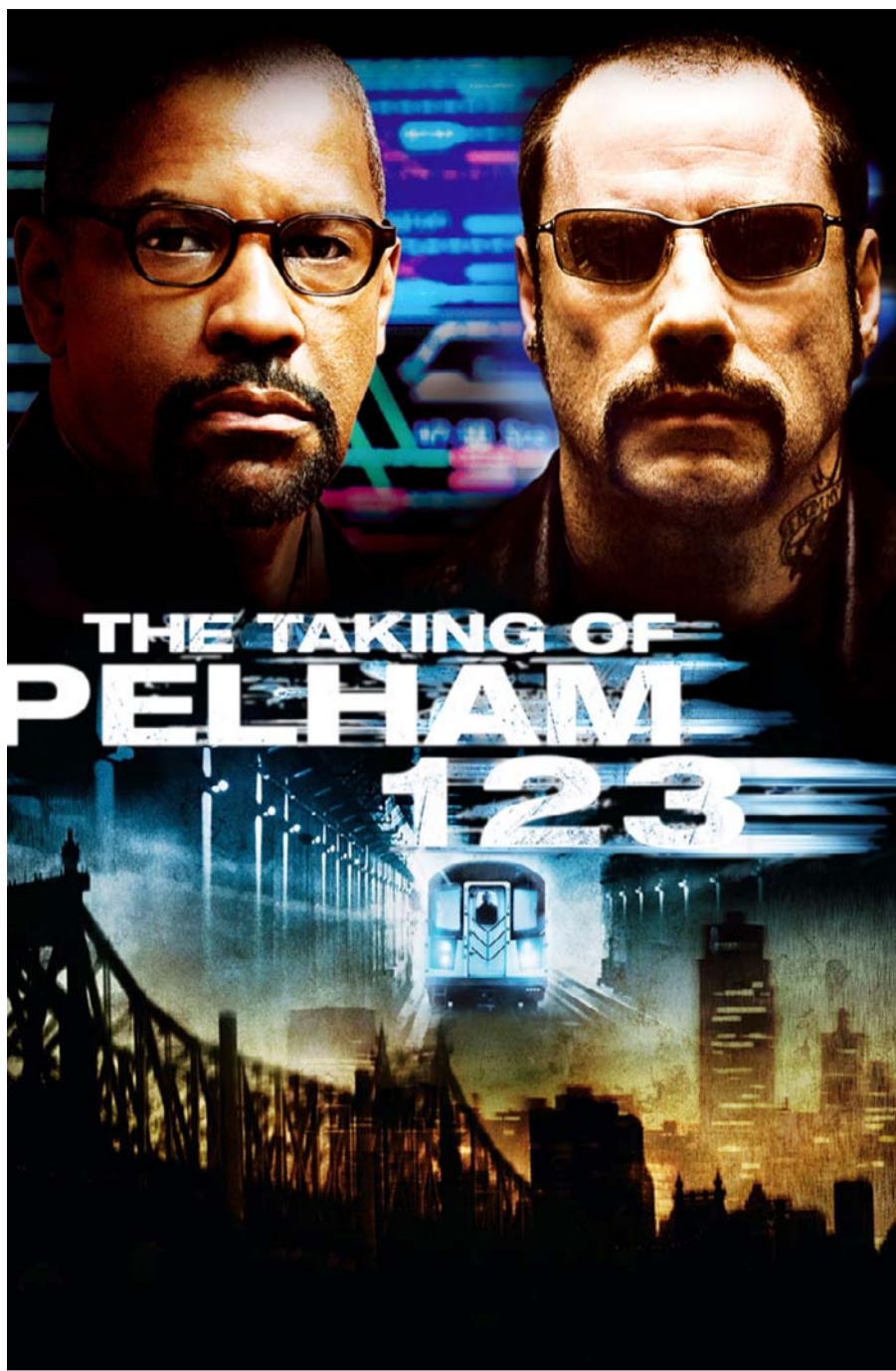
00:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
01:20 Playhouse Masters
02:10 Incredible Food Race
03:00 Destroyed In Seconds
03:25 Destroyed In Seconds
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 How It's Made
05:05 How It's Made
05:30 Dirty Jobs
06:20 Mythbusters
07:00 Kenny The Shark
07:25 Awesome Adventures
07:50 Bad Dog
08:40 How It's Made
09:05 How It's Made
09:30 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?



00:10 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 Mouk
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
08:20 Elena Of Avalor
08:45 Star Darlings
08:50 Liv And Maddie
09:15 Jessie
09:40 Jessie
10:05 Jessie
10:30 Disney's Descendants
12:30 Descendants Wicked World
12:35 Austin & Ally
13:00 Liv And Maddie
13:25 Liv And Maddie
13:50 Shake It Up
14:15 Shake It Up
14:40 Dog With A Blog
15:05 Dog With A Blog
15:30 Good Luck Charlie
15:55 Good Luck Charlie
16:20 Girl Meets World
16:45 Girl Meets World
17:10 Elena Of Avalor
17:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug And Cat Noir
18:00 The Next Step
18:25 Descendants Wicked World
18:30 Liv And Maddie
18:55 Star Darlings
19:00 Shake It Up
19:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
19:30 Austin & Ally
19:55 Descendants Wicked World
20:00 Backstage
20:25 Tsum Tsum Shorts
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
20:55 Best Friends Whenever
21:20 Jessie
21:45 Jessie
22:10 Jessie
22:35 H2O: Just Add Water
23:00 Binny And The Ghost
23:25 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch



00:00 Doc McStuffins
00:30 Minnie's Bow-Toons
00:35 Zou
00:50 Loopdidoo
01:05 Art Attack
01:30 Henry Hugglemonster
01:45 Calimero
02:00 Zou
02:15 Loopdidoo
02:30 Art Attack
06:00 Supa Strikas
06:25 Supa Strikas
06:50 Counterfeit Cat
07:00 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
07:15 K.C. Undercover
07:40 Atomic Puppet
08:10 Lab Rats
08:35 Danger Mouse
09:00 Lab Rats: You Posted What?!!
09:50 Kirby Buckets
10:20 Kirby Buckets
10:45 Gravity Falls
11:10 Gamer's Guide To Pretty



THE TAKING OF PELHAM 123 ON OSN MOVIES ACTION HD

22:30 Doc McStuffins
23:00 The Adventures Of The Disney Fairies
23:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:05 Pawn Stars
08:30 Storage Wars Texas
08:55 Fifth Gear
09:45 Fifth Gear
11:00 Shipping Wars
11:25 Ozy & Jack's World Detour
12:15 Shark Wranglers
13:05 Ice Road Truckers
13:55 Sean Bean On Waterloo
14:45 Mountain Men
15:35 Pawn Stars
16:00 American Pickers
16:50 Storage Wars
17:15 Storage Wars
17:40 Swamp People
20:10 Pawn Stars
20:35 Pawn Stars
21:00 Counting Cars
21:25 Counting Cars
21:50 Fifth Gear
22:40 Time Team
23:30 Counting Cars
23:55 Counting Cars



12:40 Fish Of The Day
13:35 My Dubai
14:00 Places We Go
14:30 My Restaurant In India
14:55 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
15:50 A Is For Apple
16:45 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
17:15 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
17:40 Eat Street
18:35 Tripping Out With Allie & Georgia
19:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
20:00 A Is For Apple
20:50 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
21:15 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
21:40 Eat Street
22:30 Tripping Out With Allie & Georgia
22:55 Fish Of The Day
23:45 My Dubai



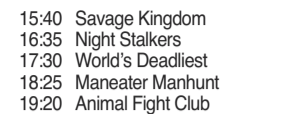
00:10 Tonight At The London Palladium
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:30 Catchphrase
03:00 More Tales From Northumberland With Robson...
03:25 5 Star Family Reunion
04:20 Doc Martin
05:10 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
06:10 Tonight At The London Palladium
07:00 Catchphrase
07:35 More Tales From Northumberland With Robson...
08:00 Broadchurch
09:00 Doc Martin
09:55 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
10:55 Tonight At The London Palladium
11:45 Catchphrase
12:20 More Tales From Northumberland With Robson...
12:45 Emmerdale
13:15 Coronation Street
14:15 Tonight At The London Palladium
15:10 Catchphrase
16:00 Jericho
16:55 Royal Stories
17:50 The Doctor Blake Mysteries
18:50 Emmerdale
19:15 Coronation Street
20:10 Catchphrase
21:00 Jericho
21:55 Royal Stories
22:25 Royal Stories
22:50 Emmerdale
23:15 Coronation Street



00:20 Attack Of The Big Cats
01:10 Savage Kingdom
02:00 Dark Side Of Crocs
02:50 Animals Gone Wild
03:45 Raccoon: Backyard Bandit
04:40 Savage Kingdom
05:35 Dark Side Of Crocs
06:30 Animals Gone Wild
07:25 Raccoon: Backyard Bandit
08:20 Savage Kingdom
09:15 Night Stalkers
10:10 World's Deadliest
11:05 Maneater Manhunt
12:00 Shark Men
12:55 Brutal Killers
13:50 Animals Gone Wild
14:45 Animal Fight Club



00:35 Food Lover's Guide To The Planet
01:00 Fish Of The Day
01:25 Fish Of The Day
01:50 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
02:15 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
02:40 My Dubai
03:05 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
03:55 A Is For Apple
04:20 A Is For Apple
04:45 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
05:10 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
05:35 Dream Cruises
06:25 Tripping Out With Allie & Georgia
06:50 Fish Of The Day
07:15 Fish Of The Day
07:40 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
08:05 Lyndey Milan - Taste Of Australia
08:30 My Dubai
08:55 Charlie Luxton's Homes By The Sea
09:45 A Is For Apple
10:10 A Is For Apple
10:35 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
11:00 My Sri Lanka With Peter Kuruvita
11:25 Dream Cruises
12:15 Tripping Out With Allie & Georgia



15:40 Savage Kingdom
16:35 Night Stalkers
17:30 World's Deadliest
18:25 Maneater Manhunt
19:20 Animal Fight Club
20:10 Savage Kingdom
21:00 Night Stalkers
21:50 World's Deadliest
22:40 Maneater Manhunt
23:30 Shark Men



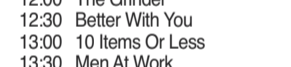
00:10 Years Of Living Dangerously
01:00 Continent 7: Antarctica
02:00 Air Crash Investigation
02:55 Live Free Or Die
03:50 Years Of Living Dangerously
04:45 Eat: The Story Of Food
05:40 Paranatural
06:35 Do Or Die
07:00 Do Or Die
07:30 Bizarre Dinosaurs
08:25 Seconds From Disaster
09:20 Eat: The Story Of Food
10:15 Science Of Stupid Sports
10:40 Science Of Stupid Sports
11:10 Years Of Living Dangerously
12:05 Mars
13:00 Seconds From Disaster
14:00 Bigger Than T. Rex
15:00 Do Or Die
16:00 Science Of Stupid Sports
17:00 Years Of Living Dangerously
18:00 Mars
19:00 Startalk
20:00 Science Of Stupid Sports
20:50 Years Of Living Dangerously
21:40 Mars
22:30 Startalk



00:00 Mad Dogs
01:00 Pitch
02:00 Supergirl
03:00 The Strain
04:00 Live The Voice
06:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
07:00 Drop Dead Diva
08:00 Castle
09:00 The Voice
11:00 Pitch
12:00 Shark Tank
13:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
14:00 Drop Dead Diva
15:00 Live Good Morning America
17:00 The Ellen DeGeneres Show
18:00 The Voice
19:00 The Voice
21:00 Marvel's Agents Of S.H.I.E.L.D.
22:00 Scream Queens
23:00 The Strain



00:30 Cougar Town
01:00 Cougar Town
01:30 Family Guy
02:00 Family Guy
02:30 It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia
03:00 Last Man Standing
03:30 The Simpsons
04:00 Better With You
04:30 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
05:30 10 Items Or Less
06:00 The Grinder
06:30 Men At Work
07:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
08:00 Better With You
08:30 10 Items Or Less
09:00 Last Man Standing
09:30 Truth Be Told
10:00 Dr. Ken
10:30 Men At Work
11:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
12:00 The Grinder
12:30 Better With You
13:00 10 Items Or Less
13:30 Men At Work
14:00 The Simpsons
14:30 Truth Be Told
15:00 Dr. Ken
15:30 Cougar Town
16:00 Cougar Town
16:30 The Grinder
17:00 Late Night With Seth Meyers
18:00 Last Man Standing
18:30 The Simpsons
19:00 Truth Be Told
19:30 Young & Hungry
20:00 The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon
21:00 Cougar Town



01:15 Blue Elephant 2
03:00 Bolts And Blip
04:30 Dixie And The Zombie Rebellion
06:00 Rugrats Go Wild
07:45 Elf: Buddy's Musical Christmas
09:15 Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
11:00 Jungle Book: Mowgli's Adventure
12:45 Bolts And Blip
14:30 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
16:15 Moomins And The Comet Chase
18:00 Rugrats In Paris: The Movie
20:00 Justice League: Attack Of The Legion Of Doom
22:00 Ghatotkach - Master Of Magic
23:45 Moomins And The Comet Chase



01:00 Earth To Echo
03:00 Snow Day
05:00 Dunston Checks In
07:00 The Education Of Little Tree
09:00 Bark Ranger
11:00 Dunston Checks In
13:00 House Arrest
15:00 Looney Tunes: Rabbit's Run
17:00 The Last Song
19:00 Paranormal House Arrest
21:00 Looney Tunes: Rabbit's Run



DAD'S ARMY ON OSN MOVIES HD

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
16:10 Kenny The Shark
16:35 Awesome Adventures
17:00 Dogs: The Untold Story
17:50 Wildest Africa
18:40 What Could Possibly Go Wrong?
19:30 How It's Made
19:55 How It's Made
20:20 Mythbusters
21:10 Dogs: The Untold Story
22:50 Destroyed In Seconds
23:15 Destroyed In Seconds
23:40 Ultimate Survival



00:40 Prototype This
01:30 Mythbusters
02:20 Joe Rogan Questions Everything
03:10 How Do They Do It?
03:35 Food Factory
04:00 You Have Been Warned
04:48 Prototype This
05:36 Joe Rogan Questions Everything
06:24 Mythbusters
07:12 How Do They Do It?
07:36 Food Factory
08:00 How Do They Do It?
08:26 Prototype This
09:14 Mythbusters
10:02 You Have Been Warned
10:50 How Do They Do It?
11:14 Food Factory
11:38 Joe Rogan Questions Everything
12:26 Prototype This
13:14 Mythbusters
14:02 How Do They Do It?
14:26 Food Factory
14:50 You Have Been Warned
15:38 Joe Rogan Questions Everything
16:26 Prototype This
17:14 Mythbusters
18:02 You Have Been Warned
18:50 Prototype This
19:40 Weird Or What?
20:30 Curiosity: How Does Life Begin?
21:20 How Do They Do It?
21:45 Food Factory
22:10 Penn & Teller Tell A Lie
23:00 Curiosity: How Does Life Begin?

03:00 Calimero
03:15 Zou
03:30 Loopdidoo
03:45 Art Attack
04:10 Henry Hugglemonster
04:25 Calimero
04:45 Loopdidoo
05:00 Art Attack
05:25 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 Calimero
05:50 Zou
06:00 Loopdidoo
06:15 Art Attack
06:35 Henry Hugglemonster
06:50 Calimero
07:00 Zou
07:20 Loopdidoo
07:35 Art Attack
08:00 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
08:30 Sheriff Callie's Wild West
09:00 Goldie & Bear
09:30 Sofia The First
10:00 Sofia The First
10:30 Mickey Mouse Clubhouse
11:00 Sofia The First
11:30 The Lion Guard
12:00 Doc McStuffins
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
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 Jake's Never Land Rescue
22:00 Doc McStuffins

Much Everything
11:35 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
12:00 Counterfeit Cat
12:30 K.C. Undercover
12:55 K.C. Undercover
13:20 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
13:45 Lab Rats
14:10 Disney Mickey Mouse
14:15 Lab Rats
14:40 Counterfeit Cat
14:50 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
15:05 K.C. Undercover
15:30 Atomic Puppet
15:55 Lab Rats
16:25 Danger Mouse!
16:50 Future-Worm!
17:15 Lab Rats: Rise Of The Secret Soldiers
18:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
18:10 Supa Strikas
18:35 Supa Strikas
19:00 Star Wars Freemaker Adventures
19:25 Gamer's Guide To Pretty Much Everything
19:55 K.C. Undercover
20:20 Counterfeit Cat
20:45 Mighty Med
21:10 Pickle And Peanut
21:20 Pickle And Peanut



00:20 Mountain Men
01:10 Forged In Fire
02:00 Storage Wars
02:25 Storage Wars
02:50 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
03:40 Alaska Off-Road Warriors
04:30 Pawn Stars
05:00 Ozy & Jack's World Detour
06:00 Shipping Wars
06:25 Shipping Wars
06:50 American Pickers
07:40 Pawn Stars



THE RAILWAY MAN ON OSN MOVIES FESTIVAL

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KNCC PROGRAMME FROM THURSDAY TO WEDNESDAY (08/12/2016 TO 14/12/2016)						
SHARQIA-1	THE LAST KING	12:00 PM	THE LAST KING	12:30 AM	MOANA	6:00 PM
	THE LAST KING	2:00 PM	FANAR-1		DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	8:15 PM
	DHRUVA - Telugu	3:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	1:15 PM	ALLIED	11:15 PM
	TAHT AL TARABEZA	4:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	3:15 PM		
	DHRUVA - Telugu	6:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	5:15 PM	AVENUES-2	
	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	6:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	7:15 PM	MOANA -3D-4DX	12:00 PM
	DHRUVA - Telugu	9:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	9:15 PM	MOANA -3D-4DX	2:30 PM
	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:30 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	11:15 PM	MOANA -3D-4DX	5:00 PM
	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	9:30 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	1:15 AM	MOANA -3D-4DX	7:30 PM
	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	11:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	1:15 AM	MOANA -3D-4DX	10:00 PM
	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:00 AM	FANAR-2		FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM	12:30 AM
			UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	11:30 AM		
SHARQIA-2	MOANA	12:45 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	1:30 PM	AVENUES-3	12:15 PM
	MOANA	3:00 PM	TAHT AL TARABEZA	3:30 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	2:15 PM
	MOANA	5:15 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	5:45 PM	DHRUVA - Telugu	1:30 PM
	MOANA	7:30 PM	TAHT AL TARABEZA	7:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	4:30 PM
	THE LAST KING	9:45 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	10:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	6:15 PM
	THE LAST KING	12:05 AM		12:15 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	8:15 PM
			FANAR-3		WOLVES AT THE DOOR	10:15 PM
			THE LAST KING	1:30 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:15 AM
			THE LAST KING	1:45 PM		
			THE LAST KING	4:00 PM	360°-1	
			WOLVES AT THE DOOR	6:15 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	12:45 PM
			WOLVES AT THE DOOR	8:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	2:45 PM
			THE LAST KING	9:45 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	4:45 PM
			THE LAST KING	12:05 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	6:45 PM
					THE NEIGHBOR	8:45 PM
					THE NEIGHBOR	10:45 PM
					THE NEIGHBOR	12:45 AM
MUHALAB-1	TAHT AL TARABEZA	11:30 AM	THE NEIGHBOR	12:45 PM	360°-2	
	TAHT AL TARABEZA	1:45 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	3:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:15 PM
	DHRUVA - Telugu	4:00 PM	TROLLS	5:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	3:15 PM
	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	4:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	7:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	5:15 PM
	DHRUVA - Telugu	7:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	9:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	7:15 PM
	DEAR ZINDAGI -Hindi	7:00 PM	THE NEIGHBOR	11:00 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	9:15 PM
	DHRUVA - Telugu	10:00 PM	MARINA-2	1:00 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	11:15 PM
	TAHT AL TARABEZA	10:00 PM	THE LAST KING	11:30 AM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	1:15 AM
	TAHT AL TARABEZA	1:00 AM	THE LAST KING	1:30 PM		
			THE LAST KING	3:30 PM	360°-3	
			TAHT AL TARABEZA	5:45 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:15 PM
			TAHT AL TARABEZA	8:00 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	2:15 PM
			THE LAST KING	10:15 PM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	4:15 PM
			THE LAST KING	12:30 AM	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	6:15 PM
					UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	8:15 PM
					UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	10:15 PM
					UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	12:15 AM
MUHALAB-2	THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 AM	MARINA-3	1:00 PM	AL-KOUT.1	1:15 PM
	DHRUVA - Telugu	1:45 PM	MOANA	3:15 PM	MOANA	1:30 PM
	THE NEIGHBOR	1:45 PM	MOANA	5:30 PM	THE LAST KING	3:30 PM
	THE NEIGHBOR	3:45 PM	MOANA	7:45 PM	MOANA	5:45 PM
	UNDERWORLD: BLOOD WARS	5:45 PM	MOANA	10:00 PM	MOANA	8:00 PM
	THE NEIGHBOR	7:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR	12:05 AM	MOANA	10:15 PM
	THE NEIGHBOR	9:45 PM	WOLVES AT THE DOOR		THE LAST KING	12:30 PM
	THE NEIGHBOR	11:45 PM			THE LAST KING	
MUHALAB-3	MOANA	1:15 PM				
	THE LAST KING	1:30 PM				
	MOANA	3:30 PM				
	MOANA	5:45 PM				
	MOANA	8:00 PM				
	THE LAST KING	10:15 PM				

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- AL JABRIYA AREA**
♦ Featured Site
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ACCOMMODATION

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 13-12-2016

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Chejalla Nageshwar Raju** (old name) S/o. Chejarla Pedda Chengal Raju, R/o. H.No. 2/150, Bommaravaram (V) & (P), Obulavaripalli (M), Y.S.R. Kadapa, Dist., A.P. hereby state that I have changed my name as **CHE-JARLA NAGESWAR RAJU** (new name). (C 5247)
 13-12-2016

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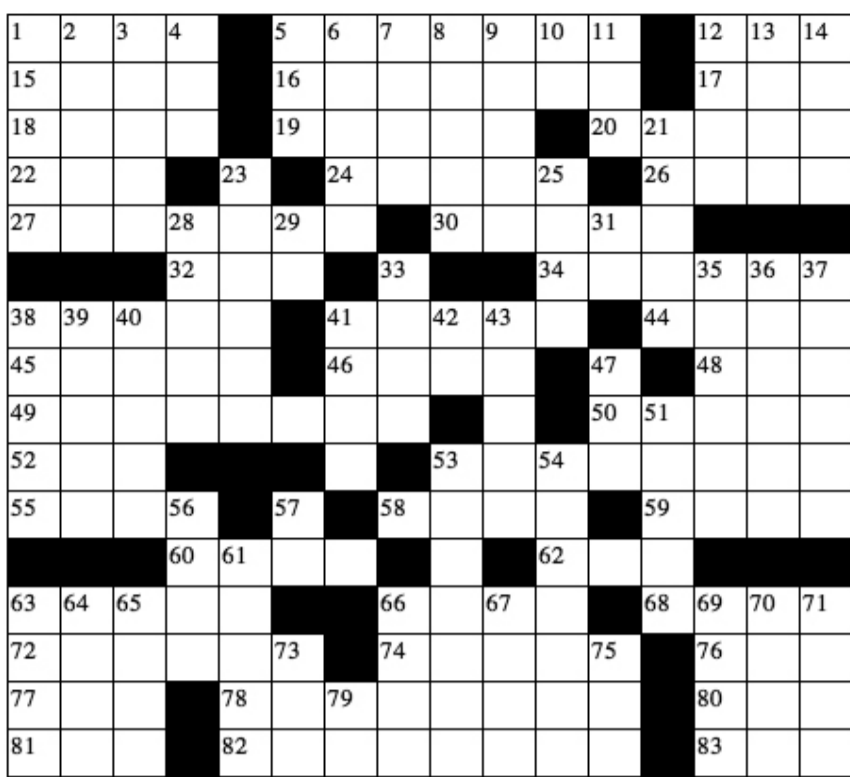
TEL: 50294929

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 14/12/2016				Departure Flights on Wednesday 14/12/2016			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
ELN	1999	ISU	00:30	CLX	792	Hanoi	14:30
JZR	539	Cairo	00:40	KAC	693	Muscata	14:30
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	KNE	382	Taif	14:50
KAC	102	London	00:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
FDK	803	Damascus	01:00	KAC	561	Amman	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	01:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	785	Jeddah	15:15
DLH	635	Doha	01:55	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	02:00	IRC	6512	ABD	15:30
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:05	QTR	1079	Doha	15:40
MSC	405	Sohag	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
UAE	853	Dubai	02:30	KAC	777	Riyadh	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	KAC	619	Doha	16:00
KKK	6506	Istanbul	02:55	KNE	684	Madinah	16:00
FDB	069	Dubai	03:05	JZR	554	Alexandria	16:10
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	16:15
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:10	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:30
CEB	0018	Manila	03:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:35
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	16:50
KAC	358	Kochi	03:30	SAW	706	Damascus	16:55
KAC	1544	Cairo	03:55	SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
KAC	784	Jeddah	03:55	JZR	266	Beirut	17:05
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	240	Amman	17:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:55	FDB	052	Dubai	17:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	KAC	363	Colombo	17:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:35	QTR	1073	Doha	17:40
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:45	JZR	538	Cairo	17:45
THY	770	Istanbul	05:55	UAE	858	Dubai	17:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:20	RJA	641	Amman	17:55
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	06:25	KAC	331	Trivandrum	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:40	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
KAC	204	Lahore	07:15	KAC	353	BLR	18:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:45	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	08:20	JZR	184	Dubai	18:40
UAE	855	Dubai	08:40	FDB	064	Dubai	19:05
KAC	382	Delhi	08:45	JZR	124	Bahrain	19:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	UAE	876	Dubai	19:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
KAC	362	Colombo	09:05	QTR	1081	Doha	19:50
KAC	352	Kochi	09:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	GFA	218	Bahrain	20:15
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	FDB	058	Dubai	20:35
IRC	6511	ABD	09:55	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:55
MSC	415	Sohag	10:15	KAC	545	Cairo	21:00
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:10
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	205	Islamabad	21:25
KAC	774	Riyadh	11:05	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	21:30
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	QTR	1089	Doha	21:35
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	DLH	634	Doha	21:35
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	MSR	619	Alexandria	21:45
IRC	526	Mashhad	11:40	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	FDB	5054	Dubai	21:50
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	JAI	571	Mumbai	21:55
KAC	744	Dammam	12:10	KAC	351	Kochi	22:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:40	KAC	203	Lahore	22:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	KAC	413	Bangkok	22:15
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:15	MEA	403	Beirut	22:20
KAC	614	Bahrain	13:30	JZR	528	Asyut	22:25
KAC	564	Amman	13:40	ALK	230	Colombo	22:25
KAC	788	Jeddah	13:45	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:30
KNE	231	Riyadh	13:55	KAC	301	Mumbai	22:45
KAC	514	Tehran	13:55	KAC	381	Delhi	22:45
QTR	1078	Doha	14:10	JZR	502	Luxor	22:55
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	UAE	860	Dubai	22:55
FDB	059	Dubai	14:20	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

CROSSWORD 1460



ACROSS

- Interface consisting of a standard port between a computer and its peripherals that is used in some computers.
- A unit of apothecary weight equal to 20 grains.
- An American doctorate usually based on at least 3 years graduate study and a dissertation.
- A human female who does housework.
- A staff surmounted by a crook or cross carried by bishops as a symbol of pastoral office.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
- The state of being unsure of something.
- The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
- An anticipated outcome that is intended or that guides your planned actions.
- A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
- Young sheep.
- A contorted facial expression.
- A member of a North American Indian people of southeastern California and northwestern Mexico.
- A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
- The arch of the foot.
- Any plant of the genus *Canna* having large sheathing leaves and clusters of large showy flowers.
- The immaterial part of a person.
- A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
- A French abbot.
- Sexually transmitted urethritis (usually caused by chlamydia).
- Low stinging nettle of Central and South America having velvety brownish-green toothed leaves and clusters of small green flowers.
- Realistic Norwegian author who wrote plays on social and political themes (1828-1906).
- A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
- Resist or confront with resistance.
- On or toward the lee.
- A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
- A mature blood cell that contains hemoglobin to carry oxygen to the bodily tissues.
- Sour or bitter in taste.
- Tropical starchy tuberous root.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- An associate degree in applied science.
- Being one more than two.
- A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
- Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
- A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
- A large estate in Spanish-speaking countries.
- Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and

also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.

DOWN

- Lean end of the neck.
- A seat for one person, with a support for the back.
- Ragout of game in a rich sauce.
- A strong emotion.
- An honorary degree in science.
- (in Indian English) The number that is represented as one followed by 7 zeros.
- A dissolute man in fashionable society.
- A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
- Any bird of the genus *Pitta*.
- A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
- A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
- Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
- Any physical damage to the body caused by violence or accident or fracture etc.
- Lacking in liveliness or charm or surprise.
- People having the same social or economic status.
- A deep bow.
- Type genus of the Amidae.
- Hardened sugary exudation of various trees.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- Not out.
- An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
- Either of two masses of lymphatic tissue one on each side of the oral pharynx.
- Austrian general in the service of the Holy Roman Empire during the War of the Spanish Succession (1663-1736).
- A brief swim in water.
- (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
- Indian religious leader who founded Sikhism (1469-1538).
- A large indefinite number.
- A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
- Coffee with the caffeine removed.
- Step on it.
- A support that steadies or strengthens something else.
- Periapsis in Earth orbit.
- A polyhedron having a polygonal base and triangular sides with a common vertex.
- An association of people to promote the welfare of senior citizens.
- A radioactive element of the alkali-metal group discovered as a disintegration product of actinium.
- Cause to be embarrassed.
- (Old Testament) Cain and Abel were the first children of Adam and Eve born after the Fall of Man.
- English essayist (1775-1834).
- Cassava with long tuberous edible roots and soft brittle stems.
- Acquire or gain knowledge or skills.
- (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
- Any of a group of Indic languages spoken in Kashmir and eastern Afghanistan and northern Pakistan.
- United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
- An accountant certified by the state.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You will see that your businesslike abilities are at a high. You could find yourself involved in some in-depth discussions now-you are at your mental best. Now is the time you will see why it is you had to study that dull class that was required in high school. The subject just may be the favorite pastime of a very rich customer who will appreciate your input. Sweethearts, children, and other folks or things that you consider near and dear to your heart are emphasized at this time. There may not be a more powerful need in your life just now than knowing people admire you for your capabilities and talents. Someone younger than yourself may look to you for answers to problems that are of great importance to him or her.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Professional advice may work in your best interest-whether you give or receive, it does not really matter. You have a sense of mass psychology about how to organize sale items or fast sale items and can manipulate sensitive areas of the public mind. You may find the results of your efforts are quite successful. Work and career may become a primary focus during this time. There are opportunities to make good decisions. You are at your most practical. Just be careful that you do not become so over-stressed with your work that you neglect home, family and your health. A neighbor may require a bit of your time this afternoon but all is upbeat. This evening you are very passionate and are willing to go all out in an effort to please your lover.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You appreciate the freedom to express your ideas in the workplace-others are usually listening. You are good at laying out a foundation for yourself and others to build upon. This could be anything from architectural planning to outlining the outcome of a fictional story. Many people need an instruction book but you seem to intuitively and creatively complete projects, fit things together and create a positive outcome to difficult situations. Your ability to understand life in general makes you a good teacher. Your capacity to make good decisions will be respected. Underneath that hardworking person is a very curious person. Now is the time to be expressive and allow these good qualities to surface. Research is the next project on your list today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

A new goal in the workplace seems to be a good idea, but you may wonder if you are on the right track. The goal is probably a very good one, so keep the plan on paper for now and use the next few weeks to firm up your idea. Many people will be out of town just when you want to gain support for your idea-patience. Your innate ability to understand and be sensitive to others' needs places you in the driver's seat when it comes to communicating regarding groups or society in general. Knowing what people really want and need is the main key to your success. You may find yourself more involved in getting things and people organized. Managing a team is successful at this time. Making your own gifts for the holiday is a good idea this year; get busy!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Conversations at a meeting may take the road to a misunderstanding-careful. Perhaps rephrasing your words or asking another to rephrase his or her words would be helpful toward a better understanding. You have a talent for writing and may be able to rise above the usually overworked ad department this particular day. You are kind-hearted, understanding and sensitive to the needs of others. This puts you in an excellent position to communicate with all concerned. You find many ways to broaden your horizons this afternoon. You may feel the need to involve yourself in many areas of endeavor, possibly education, politics, religion or law. Travel is also a subject of attraction and you may decide the travel industry could use your creative mind.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Those in authority know of your ability to manage and direct other people. They could be seeking you out to take responsibility for a particular job requiring your special talents. It is a great time to be with others and to work together. Now is a particularly good time for you to use your imagination and creative ability when it comes to ideas and thinking. Your talent for being able to put your thoughts into words will allow you to delight and fascinate those around you. You may find a good book or movie for your preferred entertainment this evening. You should find no problem in being able to enjoy your own life situation, or feel especially kindhearted toward a friend or loved one. Expect some nice compliments to come your way tonight.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A great deal of interaction with your co-workers may keep you in the same job position for much too long. If you want to encourage your supervisor to pay attention to your great potential, you will do well to request work that would put you in a team situation or create an opportunity to lead a group. The most emotional satisfaction at this time comes from the friends you have made during this last year. This may be a good day to plan some type of get-together. An exercise routine that you tolerate would work best if you could move the time you exercise to the early afternoon. Later today you will gently encourage a smoker to take up a different habit. At home this evening you become more comfortable in helping a friend with a homework assignment.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Your business expertise is showing this morning as you try to find the code, equation or key to some difficult problem. Figuring out how to organize people or a project is likely to be a topic of special appeal, as well as a challenge. When you see that there is practical worth and application in some activity, you push with everything you have to see the end result. This may be a time of concentrated study and thought. Your mind is very quick and you seem to understand your emotions and drive. If necessary, you have no problem in discussing your feelings with great insight and ease. This should be a particularly great time to be with others and to work together. A social engagement this evening turns out to be a great deal of fun!



Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

You are feeling reenergized. You consider any difficulties you might encounter as an opportunity to manage and problem-solve. You work to find the answer that will pull in the best for everyone. You look at life as an adventure and you carry that expression with you wherever you go. It is no wonder people flock to you-they love that contagious, love of life mindset that you express so easily. Today, an angry child and a difficult customer give you the opportunity to find the key of comfort. Communication with others is upbeat today as you seek to encourage customers to buy your product. If you are voted the employee of the month or year, it would only be a surprise to you! Everyone wants to celebrate you this evening.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Money matters are on your mind today. It is time to find ways to increase the income and you know you are worth it. It could also be that you realize a career change makes sense now. Do not wait for success to come to you-reach for it. Through your words and ideas, you will make a difference in other people's lives. Psychiatry, poetry or perhaps art may be a part of this. Because of your eloquence in speech and communication, you should find others being very responsive to what you have to say. A parent meeting or community get-together will give you an opportunity to create some positive input to help increase the safety in a neighborhood. Conditions are perfect for self-expression, wherever you find yourself.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Spend some time in thought before making your final decision about an important work issue. This is a time when it will pay for you to be very careful in making a decision that might involve a change in direction where your professional life is concerned. There could be a tendency to make choices too quickly. Later today, you help a friend to make a wonderful presentation at her school or committee meeting. You teach young people to choose their friends with the idea that they and their friends interact with one another to help each other grow and learn. Someone in your life is learning a lot and they want to share new information with you. You have probably heard it all before-but listen anyway-this person might soon be doing the same for you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Today you may find yourself lecturing or judging. Your thoughtful appreciation for ideas and thoughts should make this an excellent time to study. You may find yourself in the middle of a very enjoyable long conversation, writing a letter, or making that special phone call. You have an abundance of beautiful and harmonious relationships in your life and may find yourself in a creative-writing class, house-design class, flying lessons, etc., with one or more of these beautiful people. You require and enjoy your close personal relationships, to assure a well-rounded life style. Those around you will have no problem in knowing just where you are coming from, as you are quite forceful and eloquent in your ability to communicate.

Wordsearch Puzzle

90's Songs 4

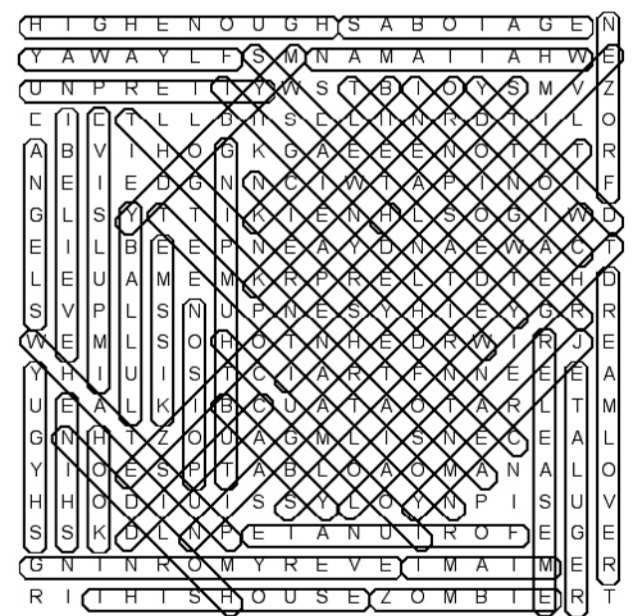
Find and circle all of the 1990's songs that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell an additional song.



- | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| ADIA | DISARM | LATELY | SAY IT |
| ALRIGHT | EVERLONG | LOUNGIN | SLIDE |
| ANGEL | EVERYTHING | MASTERPIECE | SUKIYAKI |
| ANYTHING | FINALLY | MISSING | TELL ME |
| ANYWHERE | FOOLISH GAMES | MR. JONES | TIME |
| BIG POPPA | HERO | NO DIGGITY | TOO CLOSE |
| BLACK CAT | I KNOW | NO RAIN | TWO PRINCES |
| CRAZY | I SWEAR | NOBODY KNOWS | UNBELIEVABLE |
| CREEP | INFORMER | NOT TONIGHT | WANNA BE |
| DEAR MAMA | JUMP AROUND | RUN-AROUND | WHO DAT |
| DECEMBER | JUMPER | RUNAWAY TRAIN | WITHOUT YOU |
| DISAPPEAR | LAST KISS | SAVE TONIGHT | YOU'LL SEE |

Yesterday's Solution

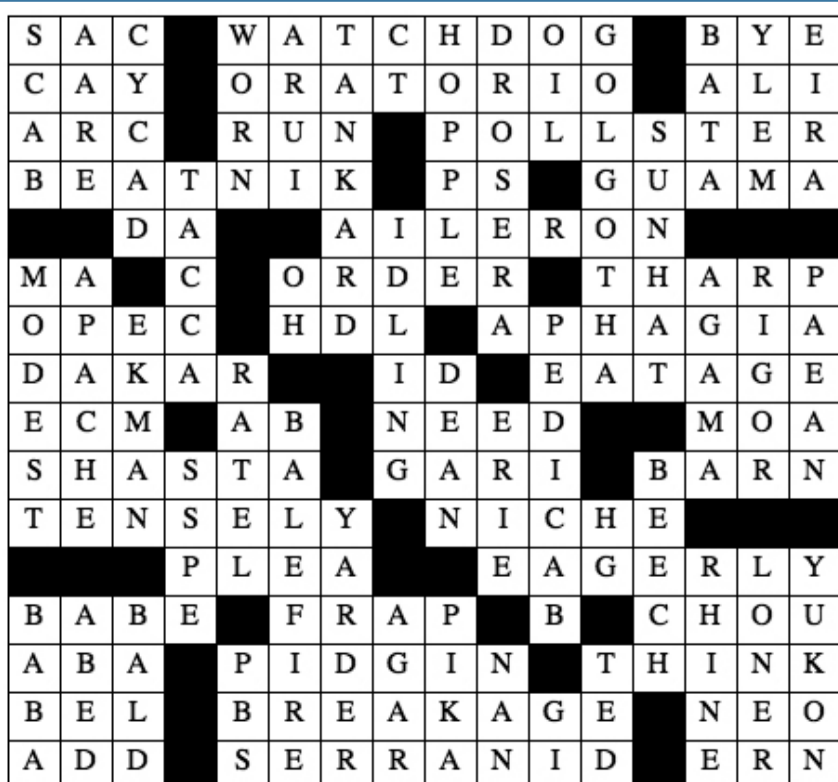
90's Songs 3



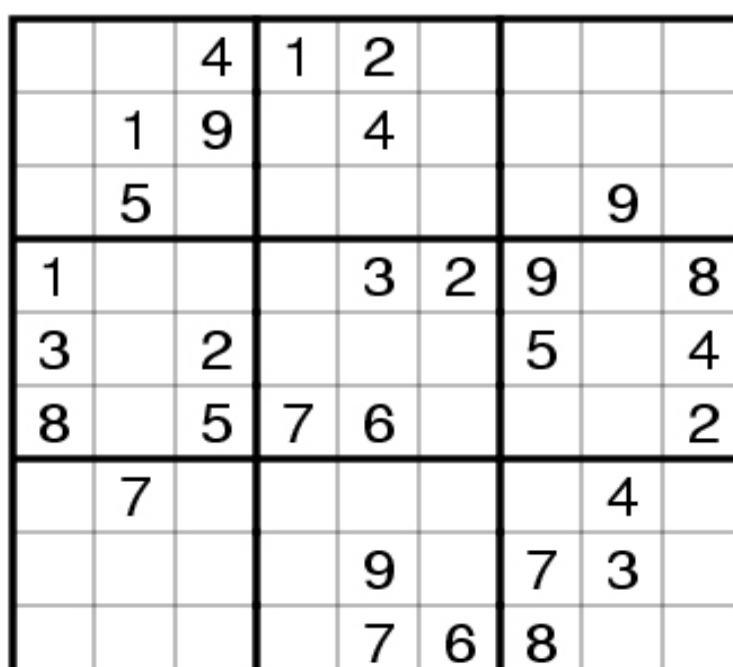
- | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| ANGELS | HANDS | LULLABY | THE POWER |
| ANOTHER NIGHT | HIGH ENOUGH | MIAMI | THIS HOUSE |
| BABy | HOLD ON | MY BODY | TOGETHER AGAIN |
| BLACK | HOOK | ONE WEEK | TOO MUCH |
| CANDY RAIN | HYPNOTIZE | POISON | TUBTHUMPING |
| CUPID | I BELIEVE | REGULATE | UNPRETTY |
| DITTY | IMPULSIVE | RELEASE ME | WATERFALLS |
| DREAMLOVER | INSENSITIVE | SABOTAGE | WHAT'S UP |
| EVERY MORNING | IRONIC | SHINE | WHATTA MAN |
| FLY AWAY | JEREMY | SHY GUY | WILD NIGHT |
| FORTUNATE | KISS ME | SWEET LADY | ZOMBIE |
| FROZEN | LAST NIGHT | TEMPTATION | |

The hidden song title is: SMELLS LIKE TEEN SPIRIT

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



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



PHARMACIES
ON 24 HRS DUTY

INTERNATIONAL CALLS



Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khalidiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401
Jabriya	25316254
Maidan Hawally	25623444
Bayan	25388462
Mishref	25381200
W Hawally	22630786
Sabah	24810221
Jahra	24770319
New Jahra	24575755
West Jahra	24772608
South Jahra	24775066
North Jahra	24775992
North Jleeb	24311795
Ardhiya	24884079
Firdous	24892674
Omariya	24719048
N Khaitan	24710044
Fintas	23900322

GOVERNORATE	PHARMACY	ADDRESS	PHONE
Ahmadi	Sama Safwan Abu Halaifa Danat Al-Sultan	Fahael Makka St Abu Halaifa-Coastal Rd Mahboula Block 1, Coastal Rd	23915883 23715414 23726558
Jahra	Modern Jahra Madina Munawara	Jahra-Block 3 Lot 1 Jahra-Block 92	24575518 24566622
Capital	Ahlam Khalidiya Coop	Fahad Al-Salem St Khalidiya Coop	22436184 24833967
Farwaniya	New Shifa Ferdous Coop Modern Safwan	Farwaniya Block 40 Ferdous Coop Old Kheitan Block 11	24734000 24881201 24726638
Hawally	Tariq Hana Ikhlas Hawally & Rawdha Ghadeer Kindy Ibn Al-Nafis Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Salmiya-Amman St Hawally-Beirut St Hawally & Rawdha Coop Jabriya-Block 1A Jabriya-Block 3B Salmiya-Hamad Mubarak St Mishrif Coop Salwa Coop	25726265 25647075 22625999 22564549 25340559 25326554 25721264 25380581 25628241

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



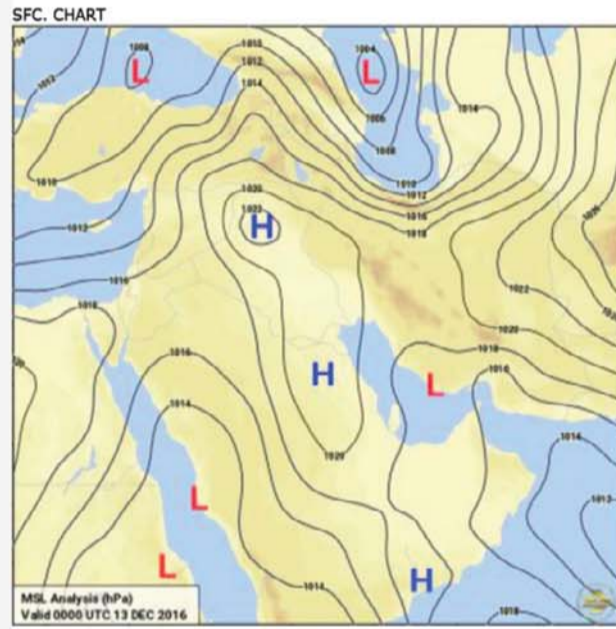
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 2627 - 2630
Fax: (+965) 24348714
www.met.gov.kw



Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours
Issued 13/12/2016-07:00 LT UTC +3hr

Max Temperature 20 °C

By Day : Sunny with variable wind changing to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear
By Night : Cold with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear



Four-Day Forecast

	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Expected Weather	sunny + scattered clouds	sunny + raising dust	sunny	sunny
Min Temp °C	08	10	06	08
Max Temp °C	22	20	18	18
Wind Direction	south easterly	north westerly	north westerly	north westerly to northerly
Wind Speed km/h	10 - 30	15 - 40	08 - 28	12 - 35

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	09		19	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	04		20	
ABDALLY	05		18	
BUBYAN	06		18	
JAHRA	08		19	
FALAKA ISLAND	07		18	
SALMIYAH	11		18	
AHMADI	11		18	
JAL ALIYAH	06		18	
QAROH ISLAND	16		19	
UMM AL-MARADEM	16		19	
NUWAISIB	06		21	
WAFRA	05		20	
MANAGISH	04		17	
SALMY	05		16	
MUTRIBA	04		21	

Recorded Yesterday at Kuwait Airport

Max Temp (°C)	18
Min Temp (°C)	03
Max Rel Hum (%)	77
Min Rel Hum (%)	21
Max Wind Speed (km/h) and Direction	32 NW
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR	0 mm

Sunrise	06:34
Sunset	16:51

Prayer Times

Fajr	05:09
Sunrise	06:34
Zuhr	11:42
Asr	14:32
Sunset	16:51
Isha	18:13

Afghanistan	0093	Lithuania	00370
Albania	00355	Luxembourg	00352
Algeria	00213	Macao	00853
Andorra	00376	Macedonia	00389
Angola	00244	Madagascar	00261
Anguilla	001264	Majorca	0034
Antiga	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	00880	Mauritius	00230
Barbados	001246	Mayotte	00269
Belarus	00375	Mexico	0052
Belgium	0032	Micronesia	00691
Belize	00501	Moldova	00373
Benin	00229	Monaco	00377
Bermuda	001441	Mongolia	00976
Bhutan	00975	Montserrat	001664
Bolivia	00591	Morocco	00212
Bosnia	00387	Mozambique	00258
Botswana	00267	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Brazil	0055	Namibia	00264
Brunei	00673	Nepal	00977
Bulgaria	00359	Netherlands	0031
Burkina	00226	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Burundi	00257	New Caledonia	00687
Cambodia	00855	New Zealand	0064
Cameroon	00237	Nicaragua	00505
Canada	001	Niger	00227
Cape Verde	00238	Nigeria	00234
Cayman Islands	001345	Niue	00683
Central African	00236	Norfolk Island	00672
Chad	00235	N. Ireland (UK)	0044
Chile	0056	North Korea	00850
China	0086	Norway	0047
Colombia	0057	Oman	00968
Comoros	00269	Pakistan	0092
Congo	00242	Palau	00680
Cook Islands	00682	Panama	00507
Costa Rica	00506	Papua New Guinea	00675
Croatia	00385	Paraguay	00595
Cuba	0053	Peru	0051
Cyprus	00357	Philippines	0063
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Poland	0048
Czech Republic	00420	Portugal	00351
Denmark	0045	Puerto Rico	001787
Diego Garcia	00246	Qatar	00974
Djibouti	00253	Romania	0040
Dominica	001767	Russian Federation	007
Dominican Republic	001809	Rwanda	00250
Ecuador	00593	Saint Helena	00290
Egypt	0020	Saint Kitts	001869
El Salvador	00503	Saint Lucia	001758
England (UK)	0044	Saint Pierre	00508
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Saint Vincent	001784
Eritrea	00291	Samoa US	00684
Estonia	00372	Samoa West	00685
Ethiopia	00251	San Marino	00378
Falkland Islands	00500	Sao Tome	00239
Faroe Islands	00298	Saudi Arabia	00966
Fiji	00679	Scotland (UK)	0044
Finland	00358	Senegal	00221
France	0033	Seychelles	00284
French Guiana	00594	Sierra Leone	00232
French Polynesia	00689	Singapore	0065
Gabon	00241	Slovakia	00421
Gambia	00220	Slovenia	00386
Georgia	00995	Solomon Islands	00677
Germany	0049	Somalia	00252
Ghana	00233	South Africa	0027
Gibraltar	00350	South Korea	0082
Greece	0030	Spain	0034
Greenland	00299	Sri Lanka	0094
Grenada	001473	Sudan	00249
Guadeloupe	00590	Suriname	00597
Guam	001671	Swaziland	00268
Guatemala	00502	Sweden	0046
Guinea	00224	Switzerland	0041
Guyana	00592	Syria	00963
Haiti	00509	Serbia	00381
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Taiwan	00886
Honduras	00504	Tanzania	00255
Hong Kong	00852	Thailand	0066
Hungary	0036	Togo	00228
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Tonga	00676
Iceland	00354	Tokelau	00690
India	0091	Trinidad	001868
Indian Ocean	00873	Tunisia	00216
Indonesia	0062	Turkey	0090
Iran	0098	Tuvalu	00688
Iraq	00964	Uganda	00256
Ireland	00353	Ukraine	00380
Italy	0039	United Arab Emirates	00976
Ivory Coast	00225	United Kingdom	0044
Jamaica	001876	Uruguay	00598
Japan	0081	USA	001
Jordan	00962	Uzbekistan	00998
Kazakhstan	007	Vanuatu	00678
Kenya	00254	Venezuela	00582
Kiribati	00686	Vietnam	0084
Kuwait	00965	Virgin Islands UK	001284
Kyrgyzstan	00996	Virgin Islands US	001340
Laos	00856	Wales (UK)	0044
Latvia	00371	Yemen	00967
Lebanon	00961	Yugoslavia	00381
Liberia	00231	Zambia	00260
Libya	00218	Zimbabwe	00263
Lesotho	00266		



PRIVATE CLINICS

Ophthalmologists	
Dr. Abdallah Al-Mansoor	25622444
Dr. Samy Al-Rabea	25752222
Dr. Masoma Habeeb	25321171
Dr. Mubarak Al-Ajmy	25739999
Dr. Mohsen Abel	25757700
Dr. Adnan Hasan Alwayl	25732223
Dr. Abdallah Al-Baghly	25732223
Ear, Nose & Throat (ENT)	
Dr. Ahmed Fouad Mouner	24555050 Ext 510
Dr. Abdallah Al-Ali	25644660
Dr. Abd Al-Hameed Al-Taweel	25646478
Dr. Sanad Al-Fathalah	25311996
Dr. Mohammad Al-Daary	25731988
Dr. Ismail Al-Fodary	22620166
Dr. Mahmoud Al-Booz	25651426
General Practitioners	
Dr. Mohammed Y Majidi	24555050 Ext 123
Dr. Yousef Al-Omar	24719312
Dr. Tarek Al-Mikhaezem	23926920
Dr. Kathem Maarafi	25730465
Dr. Abdallah Ahmad Eyadah	25655528
Dr. Nabeel Al-Ayoobi	24577781
Dr. Dina Abidallah Al-Rafea	25333501
Urologists	
Dr. Ali Naser Al-Serfy	22641534
Dr. Fawzi Taher Abul	22639955
Dr. Khaleel Abidallah Al-Awadi	22616660
Dr. Adel Al-Hunayan FRCS (C)	25313120
Dr. Leons Joseph	66703427

Plastic Surgeons	
Dr. Mohammad Al-Khalaf	22547272
Dr. Abdal-Redha Lari	22617700
Dr. Abdel Quttainah	25625030/60
Family Doctor	
Dr Divya Damodar	23729596/23729581
Psychiatrists	
Dr. Esam Al-Ansari	22635047
Dr Eisa M. Al-Balhan	22613623/0
Gynaecologists & Obstetricians	
DrAdrian arbe	23729596/23729581
Dr. Verginia s.Marin	2572-6666 ext 8321
Dr. Fozeya Ali Al-Qatan	22655539
Dr. Majeda Khalefa Aliytami	25343406
Dr. Ahmad Al-Khooly	25739272
Dr. Salem soso	22618787
General Surgeons	
Dr. Amer Zawaz Al-Amer	22610044
Dr. Mohammad Yousef Basher	25327148
Internists, Chest & Heart	
Dr. Adnan Ebil	22639939
Dr. Mousa Khadada	22666300
Dr. Latefa Al-Duweisan	25728004
Dr. Nadem Al-Ghabra	25355515
Dr. Mobarak Aldoub	24726446
Dr Nasser Behbehani	25654300/3

Paediatricians	
Dr. Khaled Hamadi	25665898
Dr. Abd Al-Aziz Al-Rashed	25340300
Dr. Zahra Qabazard	25710444
Dr. Sohail Qamar	22621099
Dr. Snaa Maarroof	25713514
Dr. Pradip Gujare	23713100
Dr. Zacharias Mathew	24334282
Dermatology	
Dr. Mohammed Salam	23845955
Dentists	
Dr Anil Thomas	3729596/3729581
Dr. Shamah Al-Matar	22641071/2
Dr. Anesah Al-Rasheed	22562226
Dr. Abidallah Al-Amer	22561444
Dr. Faysal Al-Fozan	22619557
Dr. Abdallateef Al-Katrash	22525888
Dr. Abidallah Al-Duweisan	25653755
Dr. Bader Al-Ansari	25620111
Neurologists	
Dr. Sohal Najem Al-Shemeri	25633324
Dr. Jasem Mola Hassan	25345875
Gastrologists	
Dr. Sami Aman	22636464
Dr. Mohammad Al-Shamaly	25322030
Dr. Foad Abidallah Al-Ali	22633135

Endocrinologist	
Dr. Abd Al-Naser Al-Othman	25339330
Dr. Ahmad Al-Ansari	25658888
Dr. Kamal Al-Shomr	25329924
Physiotherapists & VD	
Dr. Deyaa Shehab	25722291
Dr. Mused Faraj Khamees	22666288
Rheumatologists:	
Dr. Adel Al-Awadi	25330060
Dr. Khaled Al-Jarallah	25722290
Internist, Chest & Heart	
DR.Mohammes Akkad	24555050 Ext 210
Consultant Cardiologist	
Dr. Farida Al-Habib	2611555-2622555 MD, PH.D, FACC
Inaya German Medical Center	Te: 2575077 Fax: 25723123



Ed Sheeran returns to social media a year after he said he was taking a break

Ed Sheeran has returned to social media a year after he said he was taking a break. The 25-year-old singer made a dramatic return to both Instagram and Twitter yesterday exactly one year after he posted a lengthy note on the photo sharing website claiming he was "taking a break from [his] phone". Posting the same photo on both social media outlets, the 'Sing' hitmaker uploaded a plain light blue background with no caption, before also changing his profile picture on each site to the same image. The 'Thinking Out Loud' musician's last post detailed how he was going to "travel the world" before promising his fans he would be back soon to work on his third studio album. He wrote on the photo: "Hello all. I'm taking a break from my phone, emails and all social media for a while, I've had such an amazing ride over the last 5 years but I find myself seeing the world through a screen and not my eyes so I'm taking this opportunity of me not having to be anywhere or do anything to travel the world and see everything I've missed. To my family and friends, if you love me you will

understand me bugging off for a bit, to my fans, the 3rd album is on its way and is the best thing I have made thus far. "See you all next autumn, and thank you for being amazing. Ed. x (sic)" The short letter was simply captioned: "Please read x (sic)" Ed's return to social media comes after he recently performed his first official show of 2016 last month, during a charity gig in support of the Natural History Museum. The 'Lego House' singer took to the stage showing off a scar on his face he had received from royal family member Princess Beatrice during a party prank gone wrong. He said on stage: "It's nice to be back. I've had a whole year off. I went to Japan for about a month and hung out with Japanese people. Got my face cut open, anyone read about that?"

ROWAN BLANCHARD FINDS PHOTO SHOOTS 'SCARY'

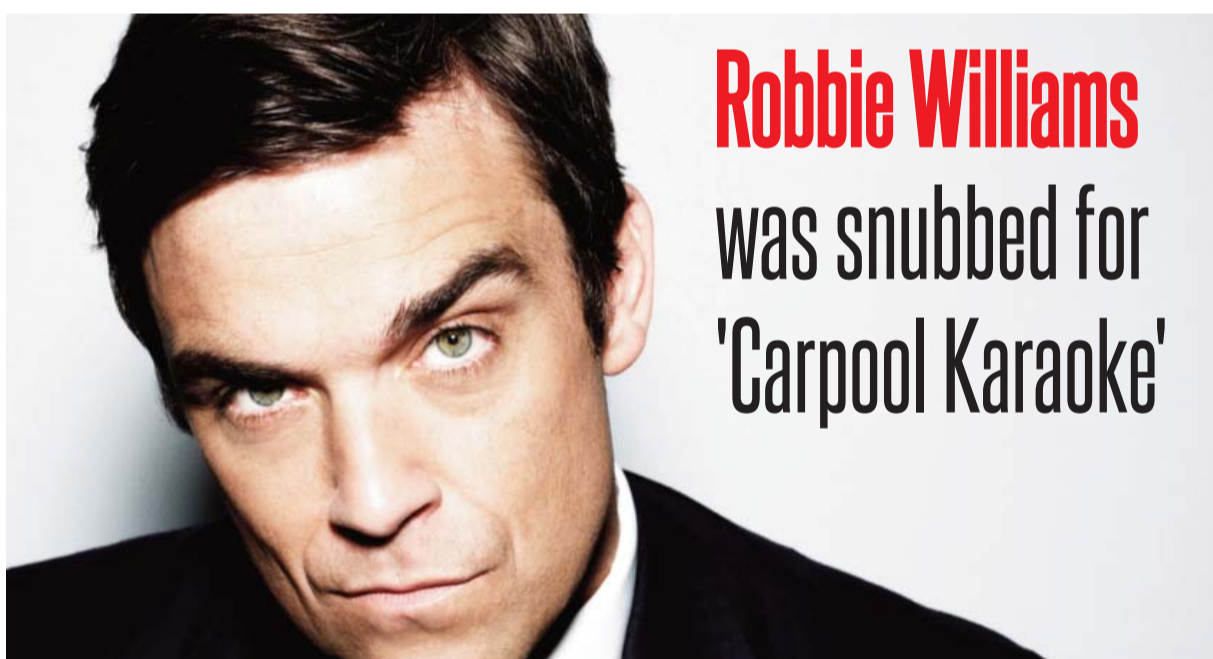
The 15-year-old actress - who starred in the American Eagle Outfitters campaign last month - has revealed she finds it a lot more nerve wracking posing for a fashion shoot than she does shooting scenes for a new film in front of the camera crew. Speaking about her shoots, the brunette beauty said: "I'm not sure there's a specific one I can remember, but I remember getting very nervous before. The environment is kind of scary. I like the whole idea of creating images, but it gets freaky when there's a bunch of people constantly reviewing how you look." And the 'Invisible Sister' star has admitted when she stars in a movie she detaches herself from the character she has been cast in, which she can't do when she is posing for a brand's new commercial. She explained to i-D: "It's very different. In a film set or a TV set, you're hiding behind a character. I don't even consider that I'm on camera. It's like another person. I can watch something with me in it, and be quite okay with it. I don't even feel connected to it, because that character that I embody is so separate from me. "But in a fashion shoot, it's strange because you have to incorporate the clothes and allow yourself to have fun with the clothes rather than feeling rigid, in control. It's not a character but you have to channel something." However, the star believes actors and actresses can use their skill to help them perform on a shoot. She explained: "I feel that's how many actors approach fashion shoots, with their knowledge of acting, by asking 'What do you want to get across?' I'm not a model but that's what my understanding of it is: channeling something, which is different from standing in front of a camera. Channeling the essence of the story."



John Legend missed his daughter's first words

The 'Love Me Now' hitmaker was disappointed he didn't get to hear his eight-month-old daughter Luna - who he has with wife Chrissy Teigen - say 'mama' or 'dada' for the first time. He told Us Weekly magazine: "She said 'mama' the other day. I missed it. She said 'dada' as well!" His comments come after he recently opened up about using IVF to have a baby. He shared: "A lot of people struggle with fertility and you shouldn't be ashamed of it. A lot of people want to have kids and maybe can't do it the natural way so it's an option that's available to a lot of people and I think people should do it if it's the right thing for them ... We'll do it again, we want to have a few kids, I think like three or four." And John penned a special track dedicated to his little girl for his new album. He explained: "I wrote a song specifically dedicated to her [Luna] it's called 'Right By You'. The whole album was influenced by the fact I was becoming a new father, I was writing a lot of it before she was born but when I knew we were having

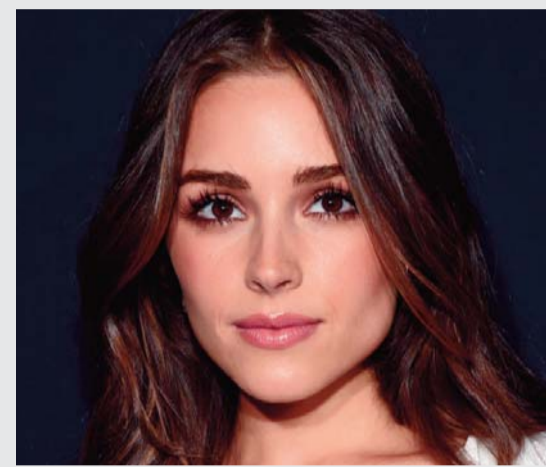
a baby so I was thinking a lot about that when I was writing the songs." Speaking previously about his album, he also added: "I feel good about it. The thing is, you can't believe the artists when they tell you it's their best work, because every artist thinks their current album is their best album, because they just spent all this time working on it. But a lot of my friends and people around me really feel like we put something really special into this album, and I'm just excited for people to finally hear it. "I think [what's different about it is] just growing up. Having been married for a few years, and having a baby, and all those other things, I think it just informs your perspective a bit and it makes you look at the world a little bit differently. It helped me write songs, and be inspired to write better music, I think."



Robbie Williams was snubbed for 'Carpool Karaoke'

The 42-year-old singer contacted the people behind the segment of James Corden's American late night talk show 'The Late Late Show with James Corden' - in which stars go for a ride with the 38-year-old host who interviews them in between sing-a-long sessions - but has yet to receive a call back as he's "not famous" in America. He said: "I suppose you have to be famous in America to do Carpool. I'm not famous there. I'm yet to tick that box." The 'Party Like a Russian' hitmaker - who was formerly a member of boy band Take That - dropped off the music scene for a few years but recently made a comeback with his new album 'The Heavy Entertainment Show' and thinks it would be great for the segment. He told the Daily Star newspaper: "James hasn't got back to me about doing Carpool Karaoke yet. It does need to

happen." If the 'Let Me Entertain You' singer - who shares Teddy, four, and Charlton, two, with wife Ayda Field - was offered a spot on the show, it might not be for a while as he recently admitted to feeling "burnt out" after going on an extensive promotional tour for his album. He said: "I hope I've been OK. And I hope you've had a good time. I'm a bit burnt out, to be honest with you. Listen, I'm having the best time. My job is absolutely amazing ... I'm loving my job, I'm loving my life. But I've been mega busy. "I was in Australia two minutes ago, then Spain then Germany and I've been talking about myself and singing at people. And I realise tonight when 'Rock DJ' came on I was like 'Oh my God, there's nothing in the tank.'"



Olivia Culpo struggles to find the 'good side' of her face

Olivia Culpo is still trying to find the "good side" of her face. The 24-year-old actress and model - who was crowned Miss World in the 2012 beauty pageant when she represented Rhode Island - has admitted despite starring in a number of campaigns for fashion houses, she's "still" unsure about what her best angle is for when she poses. She said: "I actually still don't know what my good side is." And the brunette beauty has hinted there isn't one part of her face she prefers to any other area, which is making it harder for her to have her own signature pose. She explained: "I haven't really found one particular pose I like or more or half of the face I like more. You guys, can you help me figure out what is my good side? 'Cause I don't know!" 'The Other Woman' star has revealed she even recruited the help of her hairdresser to help her come to the decision when she was having her hair plaited. She told PEOPLE: "This morning I was talking to the hairdresser trying to figure out what side to put this braid on. Meanwhile, Olivia has singled out Victoria Beckham and Olivia Palermo as her fashion icons, despite their differing styles. Speaking previously, she said: "I look up to a lot of different people, and their styles are so diverse, but a few to name would be Victoria Beckham and Olivia Palermo. I love Victoria's simplicity and the elegance of that. I think Olivia is really interesting too, she mixes a lot of high and low items and dresses with a lot of different patterns. Those two are pretty all encompassing." And the star has revealed she completes her outfit by making her own accessories out of left over material. She explained: "I am obsessed with chokers - if you're ever altering an item of clothing, and there's a little extra material, you can use it to make a choker - so that's definitely one of my style tips right now!"



Selma Blair 'embarrassed' by outburst on plane

Selma Blair was "very embarrassed" by her mid-flight outburst. The 44-year-old actress was removed from a flight in June this year after a bizarre outburst, which she later claimed was caused by mixing her medication with alcohol, but she insists she has "recovered" now. She told People magazine: "It was embarrassing. I can only say that sometimes you just have a moment that you wish you didn't have. And you do whatever you can to rise above that and get through it and be a better person. "I'm looking forward to how everyone can come together and make this world better and really see the things that make people struggle, and empathy, and helping people, and that we will all have a better 2017 than 2016. I'm ready to put it behind me." Meanwhile, the 'Cruel Intentions' star previously claimed it was a "psychotic blackout" that caused her to have her outburst. She said: "I am someone who should never drink, and I rarely do, and I don't drink anymore, but I was going through something. I had a glass of wine and someone gave me a pill that I thought was something that I'd taken before ... it was something completely different ... and I had a total psychotic blackout. "I had empathy for myself because it was so out of character for me especially now that I'm a mother. I was taken to a clinic to get an IV and get an assessment ... my son was with his father and he had slept through it ... I knew he was going to sleep so that's why I took this pill ... [but] bad choice all around - I totally own it." During the incident, which took place on a flight from Mexico to Los Angeles, Selma allegedly screamed, "He burns my private parts. He won't let me eat or drink ... He's going to kill me" in front of other passengers on the plane.

Lady Gaga praises 'inspiring' Madonna

Lady Gaga has praised Madonna for being the role model "us girls need". The 'Perfect Illusion' hitmaker gushed about the 58-year-old singer as she reflected on Madonna's Billboard Woman of the Year acceptance speech, which was broadcast on television on Monday evening. She wrote on the microblogging site: "@Madonna your speech at the Billboard Music Awards was inspiring. You're so brave & strong. Thanks for being that for us girls we need that. (sic)" In the speech, Madonna spoke of the challenges she faced as a woman in the music industry and opened up about being a victim of abuse, bullying, and sexism in her career. She said: "I stand before you as a doormat. Oh, I mean, as a female entertainer. Thank you for acknowledging my ability to continue my career for 34 years in the face of blatant sexism and misogyny and constant bullying and relentless abuse. "If you're a girl, you have to

play the game. You're allowed to be pretty and cute and sexy. But don't act too smart. Don't have an opinion that's out of line with the status quo. You are allowed to be objectified by men and dress like a slut, but don't own your sluttiness. And do not, I repeat do not, share your own sexual fantasies with the world. Be what men want you to be, but more importantly, be what women feel comfortable with you being around other men. And finally, do not age. Because to age is a sin. "I think the most controversial thing I have ever done is to stick around. Michael is gone. Tupac is gone. Prince is gone. Whitney is gone. Amy Winehouse is gone. David Bowie is gone. But I'm still standing. I'm one of the lucky ones and every day I count my blessings."



GOSSIP

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley struggles to cut out sweet treats from her diet

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley struggles to cut out sweet treats from her diet. The 29-year-old model has revealed her eating plan is "all about balance", because she tries to eat healthy smoothies, which include almond butter and kale, but she also has days where there is "no way" she can exclude pizzas and caked from her feast. Speaking to Elle.com about her healthy eating, the blonde beauty said: "Anything green goes in [my smoothie] ... whether it tastes good or not. "Banana, almond butter, apples, spinach, kale and maybe some probiotic powder. "Less is more in my smoothies. "There's no way I can cut things out and tell myself I can't have pizza or cake, it's all about balance."

Although the catwalk icon - who has her own lingerie and beauty range with the longstanding retail house Marks and Spencer, also known as M&S, called Rosie for Autograph - has revealed she enjoys a few treats now and again, she doesn't like to call them "cheat days" because it stresses her out. She explained: "I don't like to look at them as cheat days. It's just enjoying life. I don't want to be counting calories, or obsessive about things - it's not relaxing to me. "I don't want people to sit at the table with me and feel like they're being judged for what they're eating." Meanwhile, the 'Mad Max: Fury Road' star has revealed she will be launching a sports-wear range complete with 14 pieces suitable for technical

and high intensity workouts, for M&S in January 2017. Rosie announced the news via social media last week, which saw her share a picture of her adorning a new pair of black leggings and matching crop top from the forthcoming capsule. Rosie - who has been collaborating with the fashion house since 2013 - captioned the post: "Super duper excited for the new #RosieForAutograph active collection to launch this January!! Here's an early peak of whats to come! (sic)"



Felicity Jones was 'rebellious teenager'

Felicity Jones was a "rebellious teenager" growing up. The 'Rogue One: A Star Wars story' actress - who grew up in Bournville, Birmingham - admits she was a bit of a rebel in her younger years. She told E! News: "When did I go rogue? Probably when I was growing up and I was a teenager. At times I was a bit of a rebellious teenager!" Meanwhile, the 33-year-old actress previously admitted she thinks it is "wonderful" that young girls can look up to her character, Rebel Alliance fighter Jyn Erso. She said: "I just feel it's a wonderful moment that young girls get to celebrate someone like Jyn just as they did with Daisy Ridley's Rey [in 'Star Wars: The Force Awakens']. She is someone who has great humanity, she has an independent spirit and lives by her beliefs, and I think there's something wonderful about her for a young girl to admire." Felicity has had many great moments on the set of the science fiction movie and described it as "pure joy" seeing Stormtroopers cross the set. She added: "Every single day, you're focused and you're very studious and you're practicing your lines and then all that reverence goes out the window when you feel the pure joy of seeing the creatures. "Obviously there's a person inside, but when you see this creature walking across the set, you just can't do anything but smile." And Felicity also opened up about how she used "The Force" to secure her the part of Jyn. She shared: "The first time I met Gareth [Edwards; the director] for the film, we had to do the whole meeting in whispers ... because we were sitting in a cafe in Los Angeles and we didn't want anyone to overhear. I thought there was a real synergy between us. I thought I got the part ... I remember being very Zen about the whole process because I desperately wanted to do it. But I thought the disappointment would be so great if I didn't get it that I kind of used 'The Force' to get me through."



Will Smith: Willow 'can handle herself' when it comes to dating



Will Smith says his daughter Willow "can handle herself" when it comes to dating. The 'Whip My Hair' singer might have only turned 16 two months ago, but her 48-year-old father Will isn't concerned about having to grill her potential suitors when she brings them to the house, as he says she knows how to "shut it down". He said: "[Willow] can handle herself. They knock on the door and the first couple of questions that Willow asks sort of shuts it down." And the 'Suicide Squad' actor attributed his daughter's tough edge to her mother Jada Pinkett Smith, with whom he also has 18-year-old son Jaden. He added: "The Smith ladies are a lot!" The 'Collateral Beauty' actor - who also has son Trey, 24, from a previously relationship - is "proud" of his daughter for being "confident" in herself. Speaking to 'Entertainment Tonight', he said: "She loves self-expression, you know. She's so confident in who she is and what she wants to be and where she's going. It's just amazing to see that inner energy come out... I'm very proud of her." And the sense of pride is mutual between father and daughter, as Willow admitted earlier this year that her parents had inspired her to want to change the world. She said: "They always give back what people give to them. And sometimes they keep giving and giving and giving. And some people don't feel like they need to give anything back because it's like, 'Oh, if you're famous, you can just keep giving, and it doesn't matter.'" The '21st Century Girl' singer continued: "It's not just about money. It's not just about giving people gifts or whatever. What my parents have given to me is not anything that has to do with money or success or anything that society says people should be focusing on - it's something spiritual that only certain people can grasp and accept. And that's how I act and move in the world today." — Bang Showbiz

Teresa Palmer has given birth to her second son

The 30-year-old actress - who already has two-year-old Bodhi with her husband Mark Webber and is stepmother to his son Isaac, eight - has taken to social media to announce her "sweet littlest love", Forest Sage Palmer, was born on Monday in Adelaide, Australia, and the pair feel "blessed" with their new arrival. The 'Point Break' star shared a picture of her, with her partner - who also has eight-year-old son Isaac from a previous relationship - Bodhi and the new addition to their family on her Instagram account. She captioned the heart-warming photograph: "Our sweet littlest love is here Forest Sage Palmer was born yesterday in Adelaide on 12/12 at 12:18pm weighing 8lb 4oz and 20 inches long! Our hearts are so full and blessed, he is perfect! Picture by our girl@gemma_peanut (sic)." Teresa - who married her actor-and-director partner in 2013 - also shared the same photograph on Twitter. She tweeted: "Forest Sage Palmer has arrived earth side Our hearts are full and blessed. 12/12 at 12:18pm in Adelaide. 8lb 4oz (sic)." Meanwhile, Teresa has revealed prior to giving birth she has been craving the scent of an air detox spray - which claims to disinfect and purify the air - and ordered 10 bottles of the product because she loves to cover her pillows in the smell. Speaking previously the Australian star said: "This is a weird one because it has nothing to do with food! I've been obsessed with smelling Dr Shulze's Air Detox spray! "I literally have ordered a full box of the spray (10 bottles!). I like to spray all of my pillows with it before bed and just engulf myself in the scent as I fall asleep. It's a mixture of eucalyptus, lime and lemon! Mark thinks it's hilarious and I had the exact same obsession with the same smell first pregnancy! I'm convinced it'll help me throughout labour (sic)."



Scarlet Stallone 'probably' won't be allowed Golden Globes date

Sylvester Stallone's youngest daughter doesn't think her dad will allow her to bring a date to the 2017 Golden Globes. The 'Creed' actor's three girls, Sophia, 20, Sistine, 18, and Scarlet, 14, will all share the title and duties of Miss Golden Globe at the upcoming awards ceremony, and while they haven't yet spoken to their action star dad about having male companions on the red carpet with them, the youngest of the trio doesn't think he'd agree. Asked if he'll let her bring a date to the bash, Scarlet said: "Probably not." However, Sistine is hoping to talk to the 70-year-old actor about the possibility of bringing a male friend along, and she thinks he'll be "very nice" about it and quipped that he won't be bringing along the famous bazooka weapon, which he was never without in 'Rambo'. She told E! News: "That's a conversation we need to have now that you just reminded me. "You would think that he's so again it, because he's Rambo and he's going to show up with a bazooka at the door when they come, but really he's very nice!" And the eldest of the trio, Sophia, insisted their father is usually on great form when they introduce their boyfriends to him and he even invites them to play golf with him. She said: "When they show up he goes, 'Alright, do you want go golfing with me?'" The three girls - whom Stallone has with his wife Jennifer Flavin - have collectively been crowned Miss Golden Globe 2017 and their father is "incredibly gracious" to the Hollywood Foreign Press Association for giving them the prestigious honor as it is the first time three females have been chosen to share the accolade. Sly has told them not to take it "lightly" as it is a first for the Golden Globes to have a trio of Miss Golden Globes. He said: "I didn't take it lightly because I know that it hadn't been done before, and I thought it was incredibly gracious of the Golden Globes to present this opportunity." Past holders of the title of Miss Golden Globe have included Demi Moore and Bruce Willis' daughter Rumer Willis, Melanie Griffith - whose mother is 'The Birds' star Tippi Hedren - and her own daughter, Dakota Johnson, and Kevin Bacon and Kyra Sedgwick's daughter Sosie. Miss Golden Globe 2016 was Jamie Foxx's daughter Corinne. The Golden Globes 2017 are slated to take place on January 8, 2017 and will be hosted by comedian Jimmy Fallon.

Peter Andre won't let son join the music industry

Peter Andre doesn't want his eldest son "involved" in the music industry yet. The 'Mysterious Girl' hitmaker has weighed into the debate around David and Victoria Beckham's decision to let their 11-year-old son Cruz release a charity single and whilst he is supporting their choice, Peter admits it isn't something he'd want his 11-year-old son Junior to do. He shared: "Junior asks me all the time if he can audition for shows like 'Britain's Got Talent', but I don't want him involved in that world yet." And commenting on David and Victoria's decision to let Cruz release the track in his new magazine column, he added: "They're great parents. If both parents agree and they keep a close eye on him, it's up to them." Meanwhile, Peter - who has Junior and Princess, nine, with his ex-wife Katie Price and Amelia, two, and three-week-old Theodore, with his spouse Emily MacDonagh - previously admitted he would love to have another son as Junior is his "best mate". Speaking before Emily had given birth to their second child, he said: "I'm usually the only one in the house who thinks we're having a boy. I'll be so happy if we have a girl but I'll be even more buzzing if it's a boy. Junior is my best mate so it would be nice to have another little boy to be pals with, especially as Junior is only with me half of the week ... "For a two year old, her vocabulary is insane. She tells Emily, 'Don't worry mummy, Millie will stroke your tummy.' And she says hello to the bump. Here's a weird thing - Amelia keeps saying that she knows the baby is a boy. Imagine if she gets it right!"



Sara Cox is the fittest she has 'ever been'

Sara Cox believes she is the fittest she has "ever been". The 42-year-old radio presenter - who has daughters Lola, Renee and son Isaac - has admitted she started working out more when she turned 30 and became increasingly more active after giving birth to her brood. Speaking to OK! magazine about her fitness, the blonde beauty said: "I'd say I'm fitter than I've ever been. I don't think your twenties are for fitness, but when I got to my thirties I started to get fit. "I would get fit after having each of my children but it was always slightly tainted with guilt because I would feel

guilty if they were with a nanny or at nursery while I was working out." And the star has revealed she attends body combat classes to help maintain her toned physique. Speaking about her workout plan, Sara said: "I go to body combat classes. There's something very tribal about being in a room with 30 other women punching and kicking! "I also go to this place called Frame, which has lots of mini classes that are high intensity, and sometimes I run home from BBC Radio 2. It's a good five and a half miles. "But I do have weeks where I'm a bit rubbish." However, the television per-

sonality has revealed a slim body is part of her genetics and runs in her family, and Sara has described her family as "slender and lanky". She said: "I did. I'm lucky because, if you look at the Cox side of my family, we're all quite slender and lanky, so I wasn't battling against. But you're just so knackered running after them all, that's exercise in itself!"



The Radio City Rockettes perform 'Finale' in the 2016 New York Spectacular at Radio City Music Hall in New York on July 6, 2016. — AFP

Faith No More singer to head metal supergroup

Faith No More frontman Mike Patton, who has one of rock's most versatile voices, said Monday that he was forming a new metal supergroup with Slayer drummer Dave Lombardo. Patton wrote on Facebook that the supergroup called Dead Cross will release an album next year. The 48-year-old Patton has a vocal range of six octaves—one of the greatest of any living singer, even in opera. Faith No More, with its hard-edged rock and elements of funk and hip-hop, was at the vanguard of the alternative music boom starting in the late 1980s and returned in 2015 with its first album in nearly two decades.

The Cuban-born Lombardo often figures on lists of metal's top drummers. He is best known for Slayer, a macabre thrash metal band, and has also played with Suicidal Tendencies and Misfits. Lombardo and Patton previously joined forces for another supergroup called Fantomas. They will be joined in Dead Cross by guitarist Michael Crain and bassist and vocalist Justin Pearson, who have both played in Retox, a hardcore punk band from San Diego. — AFP



This file photo shows Faith No More lead singer Mike Patton performing at the Hellfest heavy metal and hard rock music festival Hellfest in Clisson, near Nantes, western France. — AFP



Bill Cosby arrives for a pretrial hearing in his sexual assault case at the Montgomery County Courthouse in Norristown, Pa yesterday. — AP

COSBY IN COURT AS PROSECUTORS AIM TO CALL 13 ACCUSERS AS WITNESSES

Bill Cosby returns to a Pennsylvania courtroom yesterday, where his lawyers are expected to renew their battle with prosecutors over whether more than a dozen female accusers can testify at his criminal sexual trial next year. The outcome of the argument is crucial for Cosby, 79. If prosecutors are successful, the entertainer would face a parade of witnesses portraying him as a serial predator, rather than a single woman testifying about a decade-old encounter fueled by drugs and alcohol.

Cosby's reputation as a family-friendly comedian has been shredded by sexual assault accusations from around 50 women going back decades. Thus far, the Pennsylvania case is the only criminal prosecution he faces, though he is fighting multiple civil lawsuits. Judge Steven O'Neill of the Court of Common Pleas in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, has scheduled two full days to hear arguments on various pretrial matters.

Andrea Constand, a former basketball coach at Cosby's alma mater Temple University, has accused him of drugging her

with pills and wine in 2004 at his home before sexually assaulting her. Prosecutors have chosen 13 other women whose accounts bear striking similarities to Constand's story, describing Cosby's efforts to establish a rapport first before using drugs to incapacitate them. Typically, prosecutors cannot introduce evidence of unrelated "prior bad acts," because it could prejudice jurors against a defendant. But state law allows an exception in rare cases if the previous instances show a longstanding pattern of behavior.

Cosby's lawyers have argued that it is unfair to allow testimony about encounters that occurred years or decades ago and remain unproven. Last week, O'Neill ruled that prosecutors can use at trial potentially damaging testimony that Cosby gave about his sexual history in 2005 during Constand's civil case. Cosby acknowledged giving women Quaaludes as a precursor to engaging in what he described as consensual sexual acts. — Reuters

Beckham proud of son's charity work

Former England soccer captain David Beckham said he was surprised and proud that his 11-year-old son, Cruz, had taken it upon himself to raise money for charity by releasing a Christmas single. Cruz Beckham followed in the musical footsteps of his mum, fashion designer and former Spice Girl Victoria, by releasing "If Everyday Was Christmas" last week, with all proceeds from the single going to British children's charity, Make Some Noise.

"He's been listening to his dad and his mum and saying how important it is to help others," David Beckham, a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) ambassador, said in New York on Monday at a 70th anniversary celebration for the charity. "I was quite amazed by that because he's 11 years old and to realize how important it is to give back at that age is something special." David Beckham was joined at the UNICEF celebration, held at the United Nations headquarters, by actors Jackie Chan, Orlando Bloom and Priyanka Chopra. — Reuters



UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador David Beckham attends UNICEF's 70th anniversary gala at United Nations headquarters. — AP

'Spider-Man: Homecoming' swings to social media heights with first trailer

Sony-Marvel's "Spider-Man: Homecoming" dominated social media buzz last week with an impressive 612,000 new conversations, according to media-measurement firm comScore and its PreAct service. The figure represented a nearly four-fold increase over the previous week, when "Rogue One: A Star Wars Story" led with 159,000 conversations. Sony's sixth Spider-Man movie, which sees Tom Holland replacing Andrew Garfield as the lead, released domestic and international trailers and an official image on Dec 9, preceded by a trailer announcement video. The new conversations number is the highest recorded by PreAct since the weeks before Disney-Marvel's "Captain America: Civil War" opened in early May. PreAct reported 749,129 new conversations in the April 25-May 1 week. "Spider-Man: Homecoming" will open on July 7.

"Rogue One," starring Felicity Jones and Diego Luna, also scored impressive numbers with more than 201,000 new conversations. The first spinoff of the new Star Wars franchise, which opens Dec. 16 amid sky-high expectations, has generated more than 2.6 million cumulative conversations on social media. The plot centers on a group of unlikely heroes who band together to steal the plans to the Death Star the Empire's ultimate weapon of destruction. "Rogue One" scored the second-highest day-of-first-day sales last week and is expected to take in \$130 million on its opening weekend.

Disney released new international trailers on Dec 6 and

7, and held its red carpet premiere (complete with an X-Wing on Hollywood Blvd) on Dec 10. Universal generated nearly 179,000 new conversations last week for its romance sequel "Fifty Shades Darker" with a new trailer on Dec 7, along with Taylor Swift and Zayn Malik's soundtrack collaboration "I Don't Wanna Live Forever" two days later. "Fifty Shades Darker," which opens Feb 10, brings back Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan as the leads. The sequel has already generated more than 720,000 new conversations. The original "Fifty Shades of Grey" was a strong performer last year with more than \$540 million in worldwide grosses.

Paramount's "Baywatch" saw more than 61,000 new conversations last week in the wake of a trailer on Dec 8, preceded by a trailer announcement video. The studio also moved the release date for the Dwayne Johnson action-comedy back a week to May 26, the start of the Memorial Day weekend. Paramount also generated a significant response with nearly 60,000 new conversations about its fifth Transformers movie—"Transformers: The Last Knight"—as director Michael Bay released a teaser trailer on Dec 5. "The Last Knight" stars Mark Wahlberg and Anthony Hopkins, who also narrates the first footage, which will screen in front of holiday releases like "Rogue One" and Sony's "Passengers." — Reuters





Tourists watching a Bryde's whale feeding on anchovies in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Samut Sakhon province.



This picture shows a mother Bryde's whale (left) and her calf feeding on anchovies in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Samut Sakhon province. — AFP photos



A Bryde's whale feeding on anchovies in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Samut Sakhon province.



A member of the Wild Encounter Thailand boat crew looking for a Bryde's whale in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Samut Sakhon province.



Tour guide and wildlife photographer Jirayu Ekkul (right) educating tourists about Bryde's whales in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Samut Sakhon province.



The dorsal fin of a Bryde's whale in the Gulf of Thailand, off the coast of Samut Sakhon province.

Whales in the wild: Rare gem amid Thailand mass tourism

Piercing the water's surface with its almond-shaped mouth, a giant Bryde's whale opens wide for one, two, three seconds, gulping in anchovies as a boatload of awed tourist look on in the Gulf of Thailand. It's a rare glimpse of marine life in its natural habitat, in a kingdom overrun with mass tourist attractions such as aquariums and dolphin shows. Once a dream for scuba divers, many of Thailand's coral reefs have been dulled by pollution, over-fishing and increased boat traffic, as well as over-enthusiastic swimmers.

But going out to spot Bryde's whales is a relatively new concept. The 15-metre (50-foot) long mammals flock to the northern Gulf waters to feed on an abundance of anchovies during the September to December rainy season. Many tourists come out to catch a glimpse of their unique feeding habits—observing the way they keep their mouths agape for seconds at a time. "The way they eat is the greatest biomechanical event" in the world, said Jirayu Ekkul, who takes groups out on his converted fishing boat to spot the whales just a few hours from the bustling capital Bangkok. The devout

diver and wildlife photographer's company Wild Encounter Thailand is among only a handful offering whale watching excursions in the Gulf of Thailand.

No regulations

Heading out on the waters in search of Bryde's whales is a ritual he relishes, and one he hopes won't be lost if whale-watching goes the way of so many other mass tourism attractions in Thailand. "Commercial whale-watching is new in Thailand, there are no regulations yet," he tells AFP on his boat, which can carry about 40 people. Ekkul insists he is careful: Last year he took out fewer than 1,000 tourists, he says, and his operation adheres to strict international guidelines for this kind of venture. Boats are expected to slow down near the whales, keep a good distance, and to make sure they do not block their paths.

"This boat has the right way to approach them, by slowing down the engine, slowing down the boat speed," said Surasak Thongsukdee, a whale specialist at the Marine and Coastal Research Center (MCRC). Surasak and other researchers often

join the tourist expeditions, a key opportunity to observe the 50 or so Bryde's whales in the Gulf—all of which he knows by name. Whale-watching has become a significant global industry. The number of people taking such trips grew from 4 million in the 1990s to 13 million by 2008, according to the International Fund for Animal Welfare.

But there are concerns about the impact it has. In 2014 conservationists at the International Marine Conservation Congress warned tourist boats may be causing stress and driving whales from their natural feeding grounds. There is also the risk of death from collision with the vessels. In the Gulf of Thailand, six whales were found dead this year, which is a sharp spike from the average one death per annum. Surasak blames this increase on the toxic waters, though local media also reported illegal fishing trawlers in the area. "These whales might be affected by pollution flowing into the water" he said, adding that many different rivers flow into the Gulf of Thailand. In October, dozens of sting ray and razor clam beds died off due to pollution from one tributary.

Need for green

The junta-ruled kingdom, whose sputtering economy remains hugely reliant on tourists to keep afloat, has come under fire for letting visitors spoil its natural attractions. Precious coral are routinely damaged by throngs of scuba-diving tourists, who scrape reefs with their fins or hands in their hunt to spot tropical fish. Some even pose on the coral to take underwater selfies. "The government is struggling to enforce best practice in terms of tourism," said British marine biologist James Harvey.

He would like to see Thailand embrace green tourism, an increasingly attractive industry among eco-minded travellers. In collaboration with the UN, he founded Green Fins, a program that promotes sustainable diving and snorkeling in Asia to protect coral reefs, and would like to see a more eco-friendly ethos applied in Thailand. "It makes economic sense to be green now," he said. — AFP

Miss Universe criticized for whale shark swim in Philippines

Environmentalists have hit out at organizers of the Miss Universe beauty pageant in the Philippines, calling them "irresponsible" for letting contestants swim with endangered whale sharks. A group of bikini-clad Miss Universe candidates were photographed smiling and waving from boats on their way to swim with the world's largest living fish in waters off the island of Cebu on Tuesday, ahead of January's contest. Tourists swimming with the creatures is strongly discouraged by environmental groups, who say feeding whale sharks makes them dependent and also leaves them vulnerable to poaching or injuries from boat propellers.

"We are afraid because with Miss Universe going there, the Philippines is promoting a bad tourism practice," Vince Cinches of Greenpeace Southeast Asia told AFP. "We are telling the world it's okay to do this, aggravating this kind of behavior." The Philippines is hosting Miss Universe next year and the tourism department said the trip was part of an inspection of potential competition sites. The whale shark visit was coordinated with the help of the local municipality "which promised a well-managed marine interaction experience", tourism undersecretary Kat De Castro told AFP.

Wildlife conservation groups in the Philippines have for years opposed whale shark tourism in Cebu's Oslob city, but local officials say the practice is a source of livelihood for the community. Marine Wildlife Watch of the Philippines opposes this. "It's irresponsible and unsustainable. It's not even ecotourism. You sacrifice the environment just for a selfie," the group's director AA Yaptinchay told AFP. A veterinarian and aquatic ecologist, Yaptinchay urged the government to enforce guidelines including maintaining a three-meter distance from the whale sharks and prohibiting swimmers from touching them. Internet users in the social media-obsessed nation expressed outrage online.

"Miss Universe, please don't be a bitch to the environment," Gabriel Yap wrote on Facebook. Besides environmental issues, security has been a concern for the Miss Universe competition. In August, authorities said they were looking into a "serious" threat by an Islamic State-related group to bomb the pageant. — AP



Performing as the Sugar Plum Fairy, Katherine Free, dances with Pig, the dog, during the Birmingham's Ballet Mutt-cracker, a rendition of the famous ballet 'The Nutcracker,' in Birmingham, Ala. — AP photos



PAW-ROUETTE: DOG NAMED 'PIG' DANCES BALLET IN 'MUTT-CRACKER'

Even casual dance fans have heard of the Christmastime classic "The Nutcracker," but what about "The Mutt-cracker?" The humane society fundraiser features a misshapen little mutt named "Pig" as the pirouetting pet of the Sugar Plum Fairy. The show has been performed by the Birmingham Ballet for the past five years. This year's version was staged Friday to a near sellout crowd at the city's main concert hall.

During the show, a black Great Dane cavorted with Drosselmeyer, who presented his niece Clara with a magical Nutcracker, and a spaniel trotted out on stage with cast members. A pack of pugs did what pugs normally do: They sat and snorted. Pig, outfitted in a pink tutu, was a featured performer, dancing alone with the Sugar Plum Fairy. Born with a condition called short-spine syndrome, the 3-year-old dog hops somewhat like a frog to stand up and has hunched shoulders that make her gait appear somewhat gorilla-like. Owner Kim Dillenbeck said being around so

many people and dogs in the theater was unnerving for Pig, whose Facebook page has more than 100,000 followers.

"She is so easily startled because she can't move her head at all; her head is fused at her shoulders," Dillenbeck said. "So for her to come to a place that has lots of noise and stuff is very difficult." But Pig was a trouper, especially when given an incentive: During a rehearsal, ballerina Katherine Free held a treat up in the air to get her to twirl about at the end of a leash. Free marveled at Pig and the 28 other dogs cast for the show. Only a few of the animals were trained performers, and many were rescues. "They give so much to the stage and project to the audience more than you might think, and it's amazing to see them grow from even their rehearsals to being on the stage," Free said. — AP



Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2016

Whales in the wild:
Rare gem amid Thailand
mass tourism

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In this file photo, SeaWorld trainer Ryan Faulkner, left, with killer whale Melia, and Michelle Shoemaker, right, with Kayla work on a routine for a show at the Orlando, Fla., theme park. — AP photos



SeaWorld trainer Aubrey Taylor interacts with Bossa the dolphin, in Orlando, Fla.

1st SeaWorld park without orcas opening in Abu Dhabi in 2022

Months after SeaWorld Parks & Entertainment ended its orca-breeding program amid pressure from animal rights activists, company officials announced yesterday that they will help develop in Abu Dhabi the first new SeaWorld park without orcas - and the first outside the United States. SeaWorld CEO Joel Manby told The Associated Press that the Abu Dhabi park is an important step for the theme park company's move away from orcas, which long were company icons. The captive orcas have been the focus of blistering campaigns against SeaWorld by animal rights activists.

Officials with SeaWorld and Abu Dhabi-government-backed Miral Asset Management said the SeaWorld park will open in 2022 in Abu Dhabi's Yas Island, a man-made island that is fast becoming a tourism and entertainment hub near the southeast tip of the Arabian peninsula. The Abu Dhabi location will have a research, animal rescue and rehabilitation center, which will open ahead of the park, and the theme park

will focus on educating visitors about ocean conservation, officials said. The two companies had been in talks since 2011 about a park in Abu Dhabi, part of the United Arab Emirates.

Critical documentary

SeaWorld ended its innovative orca-breeding program in March after years of declining attendance and pressure from activists following the 2013 release of the critical documentary "Blackfish." The documentary chronicled the life of Tilikum, an orca that killed a SeaWorld trainer during a performance in Orlando in 2010, and the movie implied that killer whales become more aggressive in captivity. "This gives us a chance to position the new SeaWorld in a very strong way, repositioning it from a company that's only about certain species to a company that is focused on ocean health," Manby said.

The project is to be built and operated by the Abu Dhabi

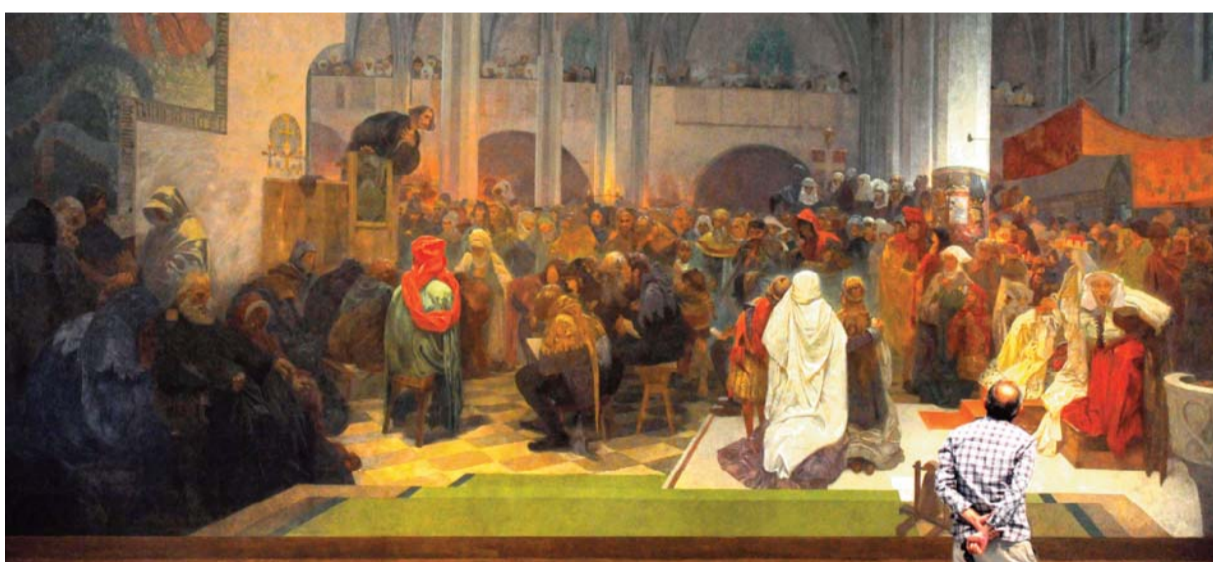
government-backed developer, and SeaWorld will license its brand and provide expertise in animal care. The project is in the early stages of design, and company officials weren't releasing details about its size, costs or types of attractions.

The Abu Dhabi location will have thrill rides and aquariums but it also will use 3-D mapping and virtual-reality technologies that immerse visitors in virtual scientific expeditions or deep-sea dives, said Mohamed Khalifa Al Mubarak, Miral's chairman. "We are going to be investing all the capital but the expertise and the insight that SeaWorld is putting in this project from day one is going to be critical," he said.

Miral is betting that visitors from the Middle East, Asia and eastern Europe will come to Yas Island for the new attraction, said Khalifa Al-Mubarak. The island is already home to the emirate's Formula 1 track and the Ferrari World theme park. Miral earlier this year agreed to develop a Warner Bros. branded theme park on Yas Island. Abu Dhabi's

pursuit of theme park projects follows efforts by nearby Dubai, the UAE's biggest city and commercial hub, to build multiple theme parks of its own in as it prepares to host the World Expo in 2020. "Abu Dhabi is going to be a major tourist destination, not just in the Arab world, but the world," Khalifa Al Mubarak said.

Since the release of "Blackfish," SeaWorld has undergone a management shakeup and currently is in the middle of cost-cutting efforts. Last week, the company announced it was eliminating 320 jobs across its 12 parks. Manby said the vast majority of positions were behind-the-scenes jobs. "It really positions SeaWorld for the future in the right way," Manby said. "This is the right time to do it as we are pivoting the brand in a new direction." — AP



This file photo shows a man looking at the 'Slav Epic,' a cycle of 20 allegories tracing the history of the Slavic people and inspired in part by mythology, by Art Nouveau Czech artist Alfons Mucha, at the National Gallery in Prague.



Visitors looking at paintings of the "Slav Epic". — AFP photos



A visitor looking at the "Slav Epic".

Tensions fly as Mucha's epic Slav paintings set for tour

The giant Slav Epic series by Art Nouveau icon Alfons Mucha is caught in a legal tug-of-war between the city of Prague and the Czech painter's grandson, triggered by plans to send the work on tour to Japan.

Though the late artist seduced early 20th century Paris with his floral posters of actress Sarah Bernhardt, Mucha considered his masterpiece to be the 20 huge paintings that recount the history of the Slavic people.

But his grandson, John Mucha, has sued the city, questioning Prague's ownership of the allegoric cycle inspired in part by mythology, with a local court scheduled to take up the case in January. The legal wrangling puts a question mark on plans to display the canvases ranging between 20 and 50 square meters (215 and 540 square feet) — in Japan next year.

"The Japanese are great admirers of Alfons Mucha," says Magdalena Jurikova, director of the Prague City Gallery in charge of the work. "One of the Slav Epic canvases was already on display in Japan and the Japanese side has always sought to welcome the work as a whole." The National Art Centre in Tokyo wants to exhibit the collection from March to June to coincide with the Year of Czech Culture, marking the 60th anniversary of renewed diplomatic ties between Japan and the Czech Republic. But John Mucha has cited concerns raised by certain conservators that the transportation as well as the different climate in Asia pose risks of damaging the artwork.

Moving the collection to Asia would be "a risky

and irresponsible business," says Karel Stretti, head of the restoration department at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. The Prague City Gallery begs to differ. "I have rolled, installed and uninstalled these canvases in different galleries across the world and the Czech Republic and we never had to restore them after travel," says curator Tomas Berger, who will accompany the work to Japan. In addition, the canvases will be flown in air-conditioned boxes and for security reasons put on three different planes, the gallery director says.

Who's the owner?

Jurikova also says she does not believe the Tokyo exhibition is in jeopardy because of the court case. According to a 1913 contract, the work was commissioned by an American Slavophile, Charles Crane, with the intention to donate it to Prague. John Mucha, who lives in London, believes the contract says Crane donated the work on the condition that the city offer a decent building for it. The versatile artist, who designed furniture, jewelry, stained glass, theatre sets, postage stamps and bank notes, even left in his files architectural sketches for the building he desired. However, a century later the paintings have yet to find a permanent home and are temporarily on display at the national gallery in Prague's Trade Fair Palace.

"Prague has not met this clearly formulated condition to the present day," the grandson's lawyer Frantisek Vyskocil said in a letter to city hall. He said the paintings should therefore return to the family—a claim the city disputes. The contract

"clearly says that the Slav Epic belongs to the city and the conditions do not include the construction of a new building", said Prague councilor in charge of culture, Jan Wolf.

Turbulent history

The row adds another chapter to the work's turbulent history.

In the 1930s and 40s, the canvases were placed in a depository and then hidden under a pile of coal from the Nazis, who considered Mucha a freemason and Jewish sympathiser. The post-war communist regime in turn denounced Mucha, who died in 1939, as a decadent bourgeois. It was only in the 1960s that the collection was taken out of obscurity and put on display at the Moravsky Krumlov castle in the Czech countryside. In 2012, the paintings were moved to Prague as castle conditions deteriorated.

John Mucha would like the work returned to Moravsky Krumlov, which lies only a dozen kilometers from Ivancice, the town where his grandfather was born. He believes the castle could host a Mucha Centre. But Jurikova says the castle is "in a sorry state", adding that because of space issues the "work can't be displayed as a whole there" but would need to be spread across floors. She believes the only solution is to build an ultra-modern pavilion for it. "We do have the money and we are willing to do that," adds city councilor Wolf. — AFP